

## Article

# Professional Multilingualism in Intercultural Business Communication of Kazakhstan

Aliya Aimoldina<sup>1,2,\*</sup>  and Damira Akynova<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Theory and Practice of Foreign Languages, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana 010000, Kazakhstan; akynova\_db@enu.kz

<sup>2</sup> Philology Department, Kazakhstan Branch of Lomonosov Moscow State University, Astana 010010, Kazakhstan

\* Correspondence: aliyaimoldina@gmail.com

**Abstract:** This study examines the role of multilingualism in intercultural business communication among professionals in Kazakhstan, where business discourse reflects a unique combination of language planning, individual competencies, and integration of traditions with modern economic demands. Shaped by globalization, historical influences, and geopolitical factors, Kazakhstan's business communication is characterized by the use of Kazakh, Russian, and English, along with other foreign languages. Using semi-structured interviews with 19 business professionals from 13 companies, the study examines multilingual practices, language learning processes, and the impact of cultural factors on workplace interactions. Findings reveal that Kazakh, Russian, and English serve distinct functions in professional settings: Kazakh, as the state language, is gaining prominence in the business sphere, particularly in official documentation and government-mandated communication; Russian remains dominant in private and regional business interactions; and English is indispensable for international business. While proficiency in multiple languages facilitates overcoming intercultural barriers, differences in negotiation styles, non-verbal communication, and decision-making processes highlight the need for cultural flexibility in business settings. The study underscores the necessity of implementing well-structured and context-sensitive language policies while advocating for the integration of professional multilingual training into educational curricula to bridge the gap between academic preparation and workplace demands. This research contributes to a broader understanding of how multilingualism shapes professional identity, workforce mobility, and intercultural competence in Kazakhstan's increasingly globalized business landscape.



Academic Editor: Anastassia Zabrodskaja

Received: 31 December 2024

Revised: 11 March 2025

Accepted: 12 March 2025

Published: 14 March 2025

**Citation:** Aimoldina, A., & Akynova, D. (2025). Professional Multilingualism in Intercultural Business Communication of Kazakhstan. *Journalism and Media*, 6(1), 44. <https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia6010044>

**Copyright:** © 2025 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the study of multilingualism within professional environments and business communication. This is primarily because well-developed communicative competencies play a key role in enhancing competitiveness in the labor market and ensuring the effective management of business processes. Professional multilingualism has become the subject of numerous interdisciplinary studies, encompassing fields such as sociolinguistics (Barakos, 2020; Gritsenko & Alikina, 2020; Gunnarsson, 2013; Lønsmann & Kraft, 2018), business communication (Hussain, 2018; Kankaanranta et al., 2018; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012; Prokhorova, 2014), neuropsychological aspects of multilingual brain functioning (Di Pisa et al., 2021; Pavlenko,

2006), and the language practices of multilingual employees in workplace settings (Battilani, 2022; Dijkstra et al., 2021; Gong et al., 2021), among other areas. Research interest and contributions to the study of professional multilingualism continue to expand rapidly (Gunnarsson, 2014; Kraft & Flubacher, 2023; O'Rourke & Brennan, 2023; Van der Worp et al., 2017).

The functioning of languages in Kazakhstan's corporate environment is of particular importance due to the unique linguistic situation in both the business sector and the country as a whole (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023; Suleimenova & Burkitbayeva, 2009; Zharkynbekova & Aimoldina, 2016). According to the Bureau of National Statistics, the number of operating foreign companies in Kazakhstan increased by 30.5% over recent years, with registered foreign companies exceeding 50,000 as of 1 January 2024 (Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024). Consequently, the growing activity of joint ventures and foreign companies, along with the expansion of international cooperation, has created a significant demand in Kazakhstan for multilingual specialists with foreign language competencies for professional purposes.

Modern Kazakhstani business discourse evolves from a distinctive combination of business communication experiences and discursive practices shaped by language planning, individual language competencies, and the integration of established traditions with modern requirements for the sustainable development of the economy and business (Tlepbergen et al., 2024; Zharkynbekova & Aimoldina, 2023). The formation of Kazakhstan's business discourse, influenced by globalization and integration processes, as well as historical, cultural, geopolitical, and economic factors, is characterized by the use of at least three languages in oral and written business communication: Kazakh, Russian, and English, along with other foreign languages (Aimoldina & Zharkynbekova, 2016; Suleimenova & Burkitbayeva, 2009).

Given the multilingual nature of Kazakhstani business discourse, understanding its implications for professional multilingualism is essential. However, despite the increasing global interest in multilingualism in professional contexts, research on this phenomenon remains limited, leaving Central Asia, including Kazakhstan, underrepresented in the scholarly discourse (Bahry, 2016; Landau & Kellner-Heinkele, 2011). Compared to other post-Soviet states, Kazakhstan has actively promoted a multilingual policy, integrating Kazakh, Russian, and English within education (Fierman, 2021; Karabassova, 2020; Smagulova, 2016) and workplace settings (Aimoldina, 2025; Karibayeva & Kunanbayeva, 2018; Suleimenova & Burkitbayeva, 2009). This policy aims to enhance economic and cultural integration in global markets (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023), although its implementation varies across regions and industries (Karabassova, 2020; Kucherbayeva & Smagulova, 2023; Tlepbergen et al., 2024). However, while official policies encourage multilingualism, the extent to which these policies translate into widespread, effective multilingual practices in professional domains remains insufficiently explored. This gap in the literature necessitates a closer examination of Kazakhstan's experience, particularly as it navigates national identity preservation alongside globalization-driven linguistic adaptation (Djuraeva, 2022; Fierman, 2013; Smagulova, 2016). By investigating multilingualism in Kazakhstan's professional contexts, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how post-Soviet countries manage linguistic diversity in the workplace, offering insights into language policy, workforce mobility, and sociocultural integration in multilingual societies.

Given these complexities, a deeper examination of multilingualism in corporate settings is necessary, particularly in understanding its role in intercultural business communication. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the function of multilingualism in workplace

communication among professionals working in Kazakhstani companies. Specifically, it seeks to address the following research questions:

- (i) How do business professionals in Kazakhstan apply their multilingual skills in workplace communication?
- (ii) How do cultural factors influence multilingual workplace interactions in Kazakhstani companies?
- (iii) What role does professional multilingualism play in intercultural business communication?

## 2. Materials and Methods

To answer these research questions, a qualitative data collection method involving semi-structured in-depth interviews was used. This method is considered particularly effective for gaining an in-depth understanding of multilingual contexts and language practices, and for addressing complex issues (Codó, 2008). The interviews collected basic socio-demographic information, focusing on perceptions of multilingualism, language practices, the role of cultural factors in corporate communication, and the language learning processes of Kazakhstani business professionals.

The study involved 19 business professionals in middle management positions from 13 international companies in Kazakhstan. A purposive sampling method was employed to recruit participants, focusing on companies with international partnerships that use at least three languages in their operations: Kazakh, Russian, English, and other foreign languages. Details regarding the economic sectors, company types, and participants' positions are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Detailed information about companies and participants.

Economic Sector	Company	Company Type	Position	Number of Participants
Services	Auditing services company	Foreign	Consultant in the audit department	2
	Consulting services company	Kazakhstani	Expert in the commercial department	1
	Consulting services company	Kazakhstani	Consultant in the audit department	2
Finance	Auditing and consulting services company	Foreign	Expert in the audit department	1
	International financial center	Kazakhstani	PR Manager	1
	Investment holding	Kazakhstani	Chief Manager	2
Transport and Logistics	International bank	Foreign	Lawyer	2
	Transport and logistics holding	Kazakhstani	Chief Manager	1
Technology and IT	IT company	Foreign	Product Manager	1
	IT company	Foreign	Sales Manager	2
Industry and Production	Metal trading company	Kazakhstani	Economist	1
	Mining company	Foreign	Economist	2
	Pipe manufacturing and distribution company	Kazakhstani	Commercialization Specialist	1

Since the main purpose of the study was to investigate the importance of multilingualism for professionals, companies were selected that met the following criteria: practicing multilingualism in their business activities and representing different industries. These companies use at least three languages—Kazakh, Russian, English, as well as other foreign languages. The companies belong to different sectors of the economy: services, finance, transport and logistics, technology and IT, industry, and manufacturing. Each of the selected companies was included in the study based on its importance in an industry where multilingualism is critical for business success.

The following inclusion criteria were established for the study: (1) business professionals with at least 1 year of work experience; (2) age 18 years or older; (3) participants should be in positions involving decision-making, negotiation, or regular communication with local and/or international partners; and (4) willingness to share their experience.

The interview guide was written in Kazakh and Russian. After pilot testing, some changes were made to clarify the wording of the questions, improve the structure of the interview, and ensure that it was in line with the research objectives. The guide included an introduction, main questions, and concluding remarks. For example, the questions were 'Which languages are primarily used for business communication in your company, and in what contexts?', 'Can you describe specific work situations where you use Kazakh, Russian, and English in your organization?', 'How do employees in your organization feel about the use of more than one language in the company?'. Participants were also given the opportunity to discuss other topics that were important to them.

The interviews followed an open-ended questioning design, with opportunities for participants to discuss any topics that were important to them. Participants signed informed consent and were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. They were also informed of the right to withdraw at any stage. The interview questions covered various aspects: level of multilingualism, language requirements, cultural differences, language use, language policy, and education.

The interviews were conducted between January and July 2023, lasting between 40 and 105 min. Fourteen participants chose Russian and five chose Kazakh. Interviews continued until data saturation was reached on the 15th participant; however, four additional participants were interviewed for reliability. Interviews were conducted face-to-face with voice recordings and remotely with 11 business professionals via Zoom, as videoconferencing proved to be a more convenient way for them to conduct interviews. As Zhu Hua notes, interviews can also be conducted via videoconference ('virtual face-to-face') as the comfort level of interviewees 'may depend on factors such as age, education, and level of technology proficiency' (Zhu, 2016, p. 183). ATLAS.ti software version 24.1.0 was used to analyze the data. Data were supplemented with participant quotes and contextual descriptions to emphasize the analytical logic of the study. To ensure anonymity, each interview was assigned a unique code, and identifying information was anonymized during transcription.

Data were analyzed through a process involving the following steps: (1) preparation, (2) data immersion, (3) organization, and (4) category formation. Coding of the transcripts was conducted to identify distinct categories, which helped transform the data from descriptive to interpretive. Major categories and subcategories were formed through open coding and grouping.

Two main techniques were used to ensure the validity of the study: source triangulation and participant checking. Triangulation involved checking data from different offices and companies, and the content of the transcripts was verified by the participants. Additionally, peer checking was conducted and the COREQ checklist (Tong et al., 2007) was used for reporting. Peer checking was conducted by a professor from the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics at a national university. For reliability, the recorded

interviews were transcribed verbatim, as were the other data collected. In addition to these validity techniques, further data collection methods were employed to enhance the robustness of the study. This included an analysis of corporate documents, other forms of multilingual written communication, and observations of daily workplace interactions, including brief informal multilingual meetings. This mixed-methods approach aims to provide a balanced perspective on self-reported perceptions and real workplace practices.

Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of the participants. Nineteen business professionals participated in the study with a mean age of 30.79 years ( $SD = 6.72$ ). Among them, 10 (52.63%) were female and 9 (47.37%) were male. Most of the participants have higher or postgraduate education. The average length of service of the participants is 8 years ( $SD = 5.99$ ).

**Table 2.** Characteristics of participants.

Variable	Frequency (N = 19)
Age	Mean = 30.79 years ( $SD = 6.72$ )
Gender	
- Female	10
- Male	9
Company Sector	
- Services	6
- Finance	5
- Transport and Logistics	1
- Technology and IT	3
- Industry and Production	4
Education Level	
- Higher Education	11
- Postgraduate (Master's)	8
Work Experience	Mean = 8 years ( $SD = 5.99$ )
Interview Duration (min)	40–105

Four main themes were identified during the analysis (see Appendix A). Theme 1: 'Language Practices in Business Communication.' This theme explores the everyday use of languages in the workplace, including language choices based on context and audience, as well as preferences, norms in language communication, and language-related challenges. Theme 2: 'Language training and support for business professionals'. This theme reveals business professionals' personal experiences of language learning and what resources and opportunities are available to employees to learn and improve language skills. Theme 3: 'Cultural competence in a multinational business environment'. This theme covers the extent to which business professionals consider it important to understand and respect cultural differences in the work environment and their impact on communication and cooperation. Topic 4: 'Multilingualism and language policy in international and localized businesses'. This theme highlights the importance of English as a lingua franca, the need to learn additional languages to strengthen competitiveness, and the role of corporate language policy in supporting multilingualism and cultural and linguistic sensitivity in the business environment. All the themes highlighted can be correlated to the adapted model of professional multilingualism in the workplace (Gunnarsson, 2013; Van der Worp

et al., 2017), which includes aspects of: 'Multilingual professional', "Professional language repertoire", and "Social context".

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Language Practices in Business Communication

The interviewed Kazakhstani business professionals highlighted the features of language interaction in the workplace, including the choice of language depending on the context, audience, personal preferences, and communication norms. Most of them emphasized that they actively use multiple languages in their practice, including Kazakh, Russian, English, and other foreign languages.

"Yes, we use three languages across all platforms. The company's website is fully available in Russian, Kazakh, and English. All press releases and articles are translated into Kazakh and English. On social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and YouTube, materials are also published in all three languages." (PR Manager)

"I believe we tend to communicate with clients in Russian or Kazakh, while documentation in English is available in every department. Every employee in the company is proficient in three languages, regardless of their role." (Expert in the audit department)

In some companies, websites are presented in four languages, e.g., Kazakh, Russian, English, and Chinese. According to the interviewees, the defining characteristic of a modern professional working in a business company in Kazakhstan is their multilingualism. Business professionals note that they typically speak several foreign languages at varying levels of proficiency. In addition to Kazakh, Russian, and English, which they learned at school and university, many also study other foreign languages, often abroad or at language centers:

"Some directors also speak other languages such as Chinese, French, Arabic, and others." (Sales Manager)

"Some colleagues from our department also know Czech, Chinese, Korean, and other languages of countries where our citizens frequently pursue higher education." (Lawyer)

"I speak Russian fluently. My English is at an average level. I am currently studying German at a B1 level, which is closer to Intermediate. I also speak Kazakh at an Intermediate level. I understand written text well and can respond in Kazakh, but when speaking, I sometimes don't have enough time to process the information." (General Manager)

At the same time, as business professionals note, regardless of their language proficiency, the extent to which these languages are used in their activities varies. According to them, Russian dominates in everyday business communication, Kazakh is used more for official purposes, and English plays an important role in international business.

"...However, Kazakh is less used in day-to-day business, serving more as an official language to support state events such as Nauryz." (Audit Department Consultant)

"Firstly, a lot depends on who the communication is with. If we talk about business communication within Kazakhstan, then, according to my observations, Russian is most often used. But all managers have a good level of Kazakh, and if communication in Kazakh is required, the conversation will be in Kazakh. It depends on the context." (Commercial Department Expert)

"Most of the staff in our organization speak Russian fluently, except for some international specialists, such as the chairman and his deputy, who only speak English. Almost all lawyers in Astana have a high level of Russian, and most of the staff also possess strong English skills." (Lawyer)

In addition, the responses of business professionals suggest that language competence is a crucial element of professional requirements in Kazakhstani business companies. In Kazakhstan, proficiency in Kazakh and Russian is perceived as a basic requirement for mid-level positions, as bilingualism has been the norm since childhood. However, a high level of English proficiency is increasingly becoming a key prerequisite for a successful career, emphasizing its importance in international business communication:

"Given that we are in an environment where Russian and Kazakh are equally spoken from childhood, it is more of a 'default' for a company to expect knowledge of these languages. The real requirement, of course, is a high level of English." (Consultant in the audit department)

However, as noted by business experts, the requirements for proficiency in Kazakh and English vary depending on the position within the company. Accordingly, the level of proficiency and the extent of actual use in daily work also differ from one role to another. A high level of Kazakh is typically required for managerial positions, especially in leadership roles, while English is more essential for positions involving international communication or trade.

"It all depends on the position. For managerial roles, Kazakh is compulsory, as it is necessary for business communication and documentation." (Commercialisation specialist)

"For example, directors have a high level of English and easily switch between Russian, Kazakh, and English. The manager of our center is fluent in all three languages and can give interviews in any of them, depending on the situation. If he is approached in Kazakh, he will effortlessly answer any financial questions in Kazakh and then switch to English to continue the conversation." (Economist)

Interviews with business professionals also revealed significant differences in English language proficiency among employees at different levels. While senior management, including CEOs and executives, demonstrate a high level of English proficiency that enables them to negotiate, write documents, and participate in video conferences with ease, professionals in certain occupations, such as photographers or line staff, may lack sufficient English skills.

"However, some professionals, such as photographers or line staff, may not have adequate English proficiency." (PR manager)

"Senior management, including CEOs and executives, possess a very high level of English, which allows them to communicate effectively, write, and participate in video conferences seamlessly." (Audit department consultant)

In addition, business experts note that despite efforts to promote the Kazakh language, the level of proficiency among mid-level professionals remains quite low. The actual use of Kazakh in business communication is significantly lower than that of Russian. However, knowledge of the Kazakh language is particularly important in divisions and departments where activities require conducting business communication and working with official documents in the state language.

"In fact, the level of Kazakh language proficiency among most employees is low, with the exception of translators involved in adapting content and documentation into Kazakh." (Economist)

On the other hand, as business experts point out, the extent to which languages are used within organizations, particularly Kazakh and Russian, largely depends on regional characteristics. For example, in a quasi-state company with offices throughout Kazakhstan, the language situation and preferences for using one language over another vary significantly by region.

“For example, in the southern and western regions of our country, Kazakh is more often used in business communication between employees. In Astana, where I work, the language situation is different: employees speak different languages depending on the region, but mostly Russian.” (General Manager)

“In everyday communication, people use the language they are comfortable with. Both Russian and Kazakh are well understood. Sometimes, mixed phrases or expressions are used, which are understood by both Russian-speaking and Kazakh-speaking employees. This creates a mixed language environment.” (Expert in the audit department)

In addition, as business experts note, Kazakh–Russian language mixing is often encountered in everyday informal settings among colleagues. Such combinations as Kazakh–English or Russian–English, according to business experts, are frequently used to ensure accurate and quick communication, particularly for technical terms and professional jargon. The compactness and universality of English words in a professional context make them especially useful: “Пожалуйста, отправьте update по статусу проекта в конце дня,” “Нам нужно провести risk assessment для этого проекта”, “Этот тренинг фокусируется на развитии soft skills”, “Этот процесс требует approval от руководства”, “Проверьте данные отчета на completeness”, “Можете сделать follow-up с клиентом по этому вопросу?”, and “Нужно забукать рум на время митинга”.

Such language mixing is especially common in the IT field:

“It happens often. Sometimes there’s no stable translation, but more frequently, established Anglicisms are used, such as standup, build, deploy, connect, etc. Some of it is due to shorter terms like connect.” (Sales Manager)

“Yes, I use it, mostly among young colleagues. If a colleague is older, I avoid it because they might not understand. For example: back office, the boss has a meeting, a deadline on a project, etc.” (Sales Manager)

According to business experts, the use of hybrid forms allows information to be conveyed quickly and accurately, particularly when discussing technical terms, specific concepts, or professional jargon. English terms are often more compact and universal in professional settings, simplifying and speeding up communication.

As the interview responses revealed, all mid-level employees speak Russian, though not all have sufficient proficiency in Kazakh. When asked about communication difficulties between employees due to a lack of proficiency in one language or another, business specialists noted that such issues are rare in their companies. In most cases, employees speak at least two languages—Kazakh and/or Russian—effectively preventing serious communication barriers. Individuals with higher education generally possess adequate language skills to interact successfully with one another.

However, some nuances may still arise. For instance, one participant highlighted that, when communicating with Kazakh-speaking professionals in southern regions, they occasionally encounter dialectal differences in spoken Kazakh. Nonetheless, challenges in written correspondence were addressed with the help of translators, and oral communication ultimately shifted to Russian, ensuring smooth and effective interactions. Overall, even when minor language difficulties occur, finding common ground is usually possible, particularly since most managers and staff are bilingual.

When discussing language requirements for employment in business companies, the majority of business professionals emphasized the mandatory knowledge of English. However, the need for foreign language certificates varies depending on the type of company. In international companies, certification is often mandatory, along with internal entrance language and professional testing. In contrast, national and quasi-national organizations tend to have more flexible requirements.

“No special exams were required. At the interview stage with the HR department, half of the interview was conducted in English.” (Consultant in the audit department)

“When I applied for a job after university, a language test was not required as our organization is not a state institution but a quasi-state institution. For the managerial position I applied for, no language test was required. However, for promotions, tests may be necessary, though I haven’t encountered this so far.” (General Manager)

“At the interview itself, my language skills, particularly English, were assessed, but this was not the main criterion. The main criterion was work experience. The interview was conducted in Russian.” (Economist)

Proficiency in the Kazakh language was a mandatory requirement for employment in 6 of the 13 companies. In the remaining companies, it was regarded as an added advantage rather than a strict requirement.

“Yes, I provided English language certificates. I was also asked about my Kazakh language skills, as it is important for my work. Now, documentation in the organization is strictly in two languages—Russian and Kazakh—and knowledge of Kazakh is mandatory, especially for business correspondence and official letters.” (Expert in the audit department)

Knowledge of Russian is assumed and therefore is not explicitly mentioned as a requirement. Beyond language skills, professional expertise is cited as the most critical hiring criterion, and candidates are not employed solely for their linguistic abilities.

“In my position, language testing was not required. However, we were tested on other subjects, such as knowledge of laws and the specifics of the department. That said, Kazakh and English language courses were tested upon entry. As far as I know, there is a mandatory Kazakh language test for managers, though I cannot confirm this for certain.” (Sales Manager)

Thus, the analysis of interview responses reveals that multilingualism is a key characteristic of professionals in Kazakhstani business companies, reflecting the country’s bilingual environment and growing emphasis on English proficiency. Employees typically use Kazakh, Russian, and English in varying capacities depending on the context, with Russian dominating everyday communication, Kazakh serving official purposes, and English playing a significant role in international interactions. Despite efforts to promote Kazakh, its proficiency among mid-level employees remains inconsistent, and its usage is often limited to specific roles or regional needs. Hybrid language practices, including Kazakh–English and Russian–English mixes, are common in professional settings, especially in technical fields, where English terms simplify communication. While language requirements for employment vary, English proficiency and certifications are prioritized in international companies, whereas knowledge of Kazakh is mandatory in some organizations for formal documentation. Ultimately, while language skills are important, professional expertise remains the primary criterion for employment, underscoring the functional multilingualism prevalent in Kazakhstan’s business sector.

### 3.2. Language Training and Support for Business Professionals

Business professionals shared their experiences of language training in the context of their professional activities. In terms of English language proficiency, three main groups can be identified. The first group comprises professionals with a high level of language proficiency, often due to studying abroad. The second group includes those who studied English at school and university but whose knowledge remains at a basic or below-average level due to a lack of further development. The third group consists of professionals who also received school and university English training but continued to improve their skills through specialized courses after completing their university education.

Among the 19 interviewees, five specialists graduated from Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS), where education is conducted in three languages: Kazakh, Russian, and English. By the penultimate year, the curriculum shifts predominantly to English. Students enter NIS between Grades 6 and 7 after passing exams in mathematics, Russian, Kazakh, quantitative reasoning, science, and English (Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools, 2023).

*“In our company, approximately 60% of employees acquired foreign language skills at school and university, 20–30% studied abroad, and the smallest percentage consists of those who learned the language independently after graduation.”* (Expert from the commercial department)

However, business specialists who attended traditional public schools noted that their foreign language training was insufficient for full use in their current roles. Many reported needing to improve their language skills through additional language courses after finishing school. There is a general consensus that the education system in Kazakhstan does not adequately prepare students to use foreign languages for business communication.

One key criticism is the methodology of teaching foreign languages. For example, a general manager highlighted that the late start of English learning in schools negatively affects proficiency levels. They suggested revising school language programs to enhance their effectiveness:

*“...learning languages from school years plays an important role, but it doesn’t always go smoothly. For example, I started learning English in 4th grade, while others started in 1st grade. It was a kind of experiment, but, in my opinion, unsuccessful, because we started later, which impacted our level of knowledge. I also learned German, which gave me a better understanding of how to learn a language from the beginning. Looking at the school program now, I think some things should be done differently.”* (Sales Manager)

When asked about company-supported language training initiatives, business professionals noted that their organizations provide opportunities for language development, including Kazakh and English courses, as well as chances to study abroad. Employees in large quasi-governmental companies can participate in government programs, such as Bolashak, with organizational support.

*“We had such an initiative. If I’m not mistaken, it was about six months ago. Our boss paid for language courses, various training sessions, and webinars. Personally, I didn’t attend because I didn’t need them.”* (Sales Manager)

*“In our company, employees can apply for various government programs and internships, including those abroad. Previously, there was an opportunity to send employees for training abroad at the company’s expense for one or two years, including through the Bolashak program, which was connected to the company’s financial centre. Employees could return and continue working in their positions. Now, as far as I know, this opportunity has been closed. However,*

Kazakh language courses are still available for anyone who wishes to study.” (PR Manager)

In addition, as noted by business specialists, the company offers structured language courses in Kazakh and English, providing employees with the necessary resources and creating conducive conditions for training. These include allocating working hours and utilizing specialized applications.

“Each employee has access to the Education First portal, where they can improve their knowledge of English and many other languages.” (Chief Manager)

“Kazakh language classes are held offline twice a week for an hour and a half. Lessons take place during working hours, and employees are released from work to attend. The company provides educational materials, including textbooks, and classes are conducted in specially designated rooms where the teacher comes.” (Commercialization Specialist)

In some business companies, employee requests to participate in language courses are collected at the beginning or end of the year. Following this, an application is submitted, and the company negotiates with third-party organizations to organize training. Testing is then carried out to determine language proficiency levels, and employees are divided into groups accordingly.

“We learn English through a special application. Employees complete tasks in the application daily and also participate in online lessons held once or twice a week, depending on the level of the group. These meetings help consolidate the material covered and address complex topics.” (Lawyer)

“The training format depends on the level of language proficiency. For some groups, General English is provided, while more advanced groups receive a higher-level course. However, the course does not focus on specialized business English but rather on deepening overall knowledge and expanding topics appropriate for advanced levels.” (Audit Department Consultant)

As noted by the interviewed professionals, employees across various age groups actively participate in these courses, demonstrating a high level of motivation and a strong commitment to lifelong learning. This contributes to their professional growth and the strengthening of their language competencies.

“Many employees actively participate in the courses, regardless of age. Even those who graduated from university a long time ago show interest in learning and make significant progress, which reflects high motivation and a desire for self-development. For example, employees over 50 years of age actively participate in classes and complete tasks, demonstrating excellent progress.” (Economist)

Additionally, some business specialists believe that language training at schools and universities should be more practical and focused on real professional situations.

“For example, at university, we had several language courses, but not all of them were useful for practical work. I think that school and university programs should be more focused on real-life and work situations.” (Chief Manager)

“When I studied English at school, the teacher was too strict about pronunciation. This gave me a fear of speaking, and to this day, I struggle with pronunciation.” (Commercial Department Expert)

An auditor from an international company also noted that university programs are often outdated and need to be updated to better align with modern professional requirements.

They suggested placing greater emphasis on practical skills, such as writing business letters and participating in negotiations.

"At university, everything is more complicated. For example, I know that the programs for students in different faculties vary, but they sometimes become outdated. For instance, we had a textbook that we studied from, and the whole group complained about its content. I think it is worth updating the teaching materials, especially to ensure they better meet modern professional realities." (Expert in the audit department)

"Now students are already working or interning, and they need more practical knowledge. For example, in English classes, more attention could be paid to writing business letters, participating in negotiations, and similar skills." (Economist)

Business professionals emphasized the importance of close cooperation between universities and companies, highlighting examples of successful practices in their workplaces where students gained real-life experience that contributed to their subsequent employment.

"Absolutely! This is a key point. For example, at my work, I personally organized internship programs for university students. We invited students, assigned them practical tasks, and many of them later found work in the same companies. This is a great example of how universities and companies can collaborate to prepare specialists who are immediately ready for professional work." (Chief Manager)

Hence, within the given theme this analysis highlights the diverse experiences and perspectives of Kazakhstani business professionals regarding language training and its role in professional development. Three main groups of English proficiency were identified, reflecting varying levels of exposure and dedication to language improvement. While some Kazakhstani professionals benefited from advanced schooling, such as Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools, or studied abroad, others relied on additional courses to bridge gaps left by insufficient school and university training. Many criticized the outdated methodologies in educational institutions, emphasizing the need for practical, real-life applications, such as writing business letters and participating in negotiations. Companies are stepping in to address these gaps by providing structured language courses in Kazakh and English, offering specialized applications, and accommodating working hours. Importantly, successful partnerships between universities and businesses—such as internship programs—demonstrate the value of real-life experience in preparing graduates for the workforce. Overall, the findings underscore the need for a more practical, collaborative approach to language education, bridging the gap between academic preparation and workplace demands.

### 3.3. Cultural Competence in a Multinational Business Environment

The interviewed business professionals, particularly those in the field of international export, emphasized the importance of understanding cultural differences in business communication. They noted that variations in mentality and work approaches across countries significantly influence business processes. For instance, the negotiating styles of Eastern and European colleagues illustrate how cultural features play a crucial role in successful international interactions.

"Such differences sometimes create certain difficulties. For example, this may concern companies from the East, such as China and Japan, as well as representatives from Europe, South America, and Africa." (Product Manager)

The interviews provided specific examples of challenges related to cultural differences, such as variations in decision-making processes and punctuality between Chinese and European colleagues. It was also noted that cultural differences can complicate communication and decision-making:

“These differences manifest themselves in various aspects of business communication, from decision-making to non-verbal signals, such as gestures and facial expressions. For example, Chinese colleagues may behave differently from their European counterparts in terms of punctuality and negotiating styles.” (PR Manager)

These observations align with business communication patterns in Kazakhstan, where interactions often reflect a blend of post-Soviet business traditions, Kazakh cultural values, and international business influences. Compared to Western European firms, where negotiations tend to be direct and structured, Kazakhstani business culture often emphasizes personal relationships, hierarchical decision-making, and more flexibility with deadlines. This is particularly evident in public sector agreements, where establishing trust through extended discussions is often prioritized over strict adherence to timelines (Zharkynbekova & Aimoldina, 2023). At the same time, Kazakhstani professionals, particularly those working in international business settings, exhibit adaptability that aligns with high-context cultures such as China, where indirect communication and long-term relationship-building are highly valued.

Interestingly, several interviewees highlighted that while Kazakhstani business culture differs from European models, they find it more challenging to adapt to Eastern business styles than to European ones. According to them, this is largely because most top-level managers in Kazakhstan have received their education and professional training within European business frameworks, where direct communication, structured negotiations, and efficiency-driven decision-making are emphasized. As a result, adapting to European business environments tends to feel more intuitive.

“Overall, the top management in our company is well acquainted with the European mentality and knows how to conduct a dialogue properly. European partners, in turn, are also aware of the specifics of Kazakhstan and Russia. Our approaches are generally quite similar, especially in terms of mentality, so there have been no major misunderstandings. I believe that people at this level have already developed the ability to adapt effectively and find common ground in business communication. However, the situation may change if someone travels on a business trip to a different cultural environment.” (Economist)

One interviewee highlighted the case of a manager who, thanks to foreign education, was able to adapt to different mentalities and effectively establish a dialogue with international partners. This underscores the importance of cultural flexibility and the ability to navigate diverse cultural contexts.

“I can talk about this because I used to work in a department where the manager had a foreign education. His approach to work was different from what is accepted here. I won’t say that one approach is better than the other—they’re just different. At that time, we had many meetings with foreign companies, and our manager was able to adapt to the difference in mentality, effectively establishing dialogue.” (Sales Manager)

Experienced managers and specialists generally succeed in adapting to cultural differences, which facilitates effective business communication. For example, when organizing delegation visits, attention to the cultural characteristics of guests is a key factor in successful interactions.

As business experts noted, companies prepare for engagement with foreign partners by studying the specific culture and mentality of the target country before trips and visits. Such measures help minimize intercultural barriers and promote smoother interactions. Recognizing the significance of intercultural dialog for critical strategic issues, companies

also take steps to address language barriers. These efforts include providing translators and conducting specialized language training for employees, which is particularly important when employees face difficulties communicating in foreign languages.

“In our company, for example, we provide translator services when necessary, and employees undergo additional language training. Thanks to this, most employees can successfully interact with international partners, despite language and cultural barriers.” (Chief Manager)

“Firstly, a lot depends on who the communication takes place with. If this interaction is with a foreign company, the conversation is conducted in English. Interpreters are always present, although the management team generally speaks English and can freely communicate and negotiate. However, the specifics of the work are not always the same, and each company has its own characteristics. In such cases, interpreters become indispensable for accurately conveying thoughts, especially when it comes to specific terms.” (PR Manager)

Participants also observed how cultural differences between employees from different countries manifest in work styles. For example, employees of different cultural backgrounds are perceived as having a more relaxed approach to work, which contrasts with the tendency of Kazakh colleagues to respond quickly to tasks. Such differences can sometimes create challenges in task management and execution:

“Well, this is, of course, a subjective opinion. If, for example, we take the Vietnamese or the Filipinos, we notice that they are more relaxed and less inclined toward fast and active work. Compared to our employees, who tend to quickly respond to tasks and complete them without delay, they may look for ways to postpone execution or make excuses.” (Product Manager)

Business specialists have acknowledged that managing cultural differences requires flexibility. However, despite recognizing the importance of this aspect, companies often lack a clear or systematic approach to addressing these differences, highlighting the need for more structured adaptation strategies. This gap is particularly evident in the absence of formal language policies in hiring, training, and daily operations. Despite an increasing demand for multilingual professionals, most companies rely on ad hoc solutions (Tietze et al., 2016), such as informal language learning among employees, rather than structured professional development programs. According to employees interviewed, this lack of a systematic approach can lead to inefficiencies in business communication, misunderstandings in multinational collaborations, and missed opportunities in global markets. Given these challenges, future research should explore how structured multilingual policies—such as industry-wide language training initiatives or formalized cultural competency programs—could enhance corporate communication effectiveness and workforce adaptability.

Participants also highlighted the difficulties caused by language barriers. Even among Russian-speaking employees, switching to English can be challenging, particularly when it comes to understanding specific terminology. This underscores the need for more comprehensive language training and employee education to ensure effective communication.

“For example, when Russian-speaking employees communicate with each other, they almost always understand each other. But as soon as it comes to English, some difficulties arise. It happens that terms or words are used that one of the employees may not know, or outdated terms are encountered that are no longer relevant.” (Commercialization Specialist)

The responses also indicate that, despite the presence of intercultural and language barriers, companies do not always implement systematic measures to address these chal-

lenges. This lack of structure can hinder successful international cooperation and highlights the need for a more strategic approach to developing employees' intercultural competence.

In general, business specialists emphasized the importance of recognizing cultural and linguistic differences in a company's international operations, identifying existing challenges, and proposing potential solutions. Cultural competence and an understanding of intercultural differences are critical for successful business communication in international companies. While knowledge of English as a lingua franca is vital, it is not sufficient for effective global interactions. Companies that consider the cultural characteristics of their partners, conduct preparatory activities, and organize language training are more likely to achieve success in the international business environment.

### 3.4. Multilingualism and Language Policy in International and Localized Businesses

Most business professionals emphasized that English is an essential tool for international communication, particularly in companies focused on global markets. However, many also expressed the opinion that in today's world, knowledge of English alone is no longer sufficient. They encouraged learning additional foreign languages, such as Chinese, German, or French, depending on individual professional and personal interests.

The interviewed business professionals highlighted the importance of a corporate language policy aimed at fostering internationalization and enhancing employees' language skills. Such policies help maintain a high level of language proficiency for professional purposes while improving intercultural communication skills—an increasingly important aspect of business interaction in the context of globalization.

Several key conclusions can be drawn from the interview results. First, Kazakhstani business professionals place a high value on multilingualism, viewing it as crucial for successful communication and career advancement. Multilingualism is also seen as a significant factor in a company's success and competitiveness, as it allows businesses to expand market reach and improve teamwork. Many interviewees believe that language skills should be considered when evaluating promotions and salary increases, further underscoring their importance for career growth.

"Professional multilingualism plays a very important role. For example, the level of education in English received here in Kazakhstan differs from that received by colleagues abroad. This is noticeable in communication skills. The interaction of different languages in everyday life also helps to maintain a high level of foreign language proficiency. The company's language policy, focused on internationalization, also plays an important role in supporting and developing these skills." (PR Manager)

At the same time, the interviewees rejected the idea that multilingualism hinders a company's development. Instead, they emphasized its importance, particularly in Kazakhstani business communication, where linguistic and cultural diversity is prevalent.

"I believe that in our country, a person should be proficient in both Russian and Kazakh at the same level. This is important for mutual respect and successful communication between different groups." (Economist)

"The competencies associated with knowledge of both languages will only increase, and knowledge will be better transferred. Knowledge of at least two of these languages is mandatory. As for English, I would like it to be considered the main language people should know. But I think that English alone is no longer enough. Everyone should choose another foreign language based on their interests." (Commercial Department Expert)

“Our company does not have a mandatory requirement to know a second foreign language, but some people think it is worth learning Chinese, German, or French.” (Chief Manager)

Business professionals emphasized the role of languages as tools for integration and professional success while recognizing the importance of expanding language repertoires to address modern challenges. However, they did not support the idea of adopting a single corporate language.

“In a multilingual environment such as Kazakhstan, where Kazakh and Russian also play an important role in culture and business communication, the ‘English only’ policy is no longer so applicable. In any non-English speaking country, the English-only policy is unlikely to be applied 100%.” (Economist)

While the use of English as a lingua franca is considered effective, interviewees noted its limitations. Business experts pointed out that knowledge of English alone is insufficient in international business, as in some countries, such as China or Japan, English may not be widely spoken. Furthermore, addressing partners in their native language is often more highly valued, making knowledge of additional foreign languages a distinct competitive advantage.

“At this stage, it is impossible and unnecessary to apply this everywhere, since there are national companies and corporations that conduct their business exclusively with Russian partners, etc.” (Economist)

An international consultant highlighted that relying solely on English can pose a threat to linguistic diversity. This underscores the importance of preserving and using various languages in business communication, particularly in international companies where people from diverse cultural backgrounds collaborate.

“The company should promote or at least not hinder its employees from communicating in other foreign languages, as this positively affects their communication and mental state. The main language can be English, but interpersonal communication should be at the discretion of the employees.” (Consultant in the Audit Department)

In Kazakhstan, where Kazakh and Russian play significant roles in both culture and business, an “English-only policy” cannot be fully implemented. Local languages remain essential for effective communication and for considering cultural nuances in business interactions. This is especially true in specific fields such as auditing, where knowledge of local languages and an understanding of regional characteristics are often required.

“Officially, English is recognized in our country as the language of business communication, and this is certainly important. But if everything in the company were entirely in English, I would have a negative attitude toward it. We are located in Kazakhstan, and although the main language in financial centres is English, it is important to consider that these centres operate in a specific country, where they aim to attract local companies and businessmen. Including the national language is very important here.” (Economist)

“I believe that if everything were entirely in English, it would create difficulties. Not all employees can be required to work in English, especially line personnel for whom it is not mandatory. It would be challenging for them, and we might even need to hire expats. Additionally, it would be difficult for designers, marketers, or accountants to maintain all documentation solely in English. While many documents are based on English standards, they also include elements of Kazakhstani legislation, and this must be taken into account.” (Commercialization Specialist)

Other specialists emphasized the importance of supporting and promoting the state language in the business sphere.

“I think that the level of use of the Kazakh language needs to be increased. In my opinion, it receives less attention than it should. After all, we are in Kazakhstan, and it is essential for business centres and their employees to comply with local legislation and respect national traditions, including the use of the Kazakh language.” (Chief Manager)

Thus, the analysis of business professionals' responses emphasizes the critical role of multilingualism in modern business communication in Kazakhstan, where linguistic and cultural diversity are deeply ingrained in both cultural and professional interactions. While English is widely recognized as an essential tool for international communication, Kazakhstani business professionals agree that it alone cannot address the complexities of global markets. In Kazakhstan, the coexistence of Kazakh and Russian alongside English is considered vital for fostering mutual respect, ensuring effective communication, and adhering to local cultural and legal norms. This perspective advocates for a balanced multilingual approach that preserves linguistic diversity while meeting the practical demands of both local and international business contexts. Overall, multilingualism is perceived not only as a competitive advantage but also as a cornerstone of successful integration and professional growth in the global business environment.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

The findings highlight the multifaceted role of multilingualism, cultural competence, and targeted language training in Kazakhstan's professional landscape. The corporate language environment reflects the country's multilingual and multiethnic character, with Kazakh, Russian, and English serving distinct functions. Kazakh, as the state language, is gradually gaining prominence in the business sphere, supported by legislative efforts to increase its usage in official documentation and public administration. Russian continues to maintain a fairly strong position in the corporate environment, especially in the private sector and in companies with international participation, as well as in interactions with neighboring countries and Eurasian Economic Union (EEAU) partners, while English is indispensable for international communication, particularly in export-oriented and multinational companies.

While English is recognized as a vital tool for global communication, Kazakhstani professionals agree that it is insufficient on its own, advocating for the learning of additional languages and the preservation of linguistic diversity. The decision to move away from one corporate language policy in Kazakhstan's multilingual business environment further reinforces the need for a balanced approach that respects local languages while addressing global demands. Overall, multilingualism and cultural competence are viewed as indispensable for career growth, professional integration, and the long-term success of businesses in a globalized economy.

##### 4.1. Application of Multilingual Skills in Professional Communication

This study underscores the dynamic and adaptive nature of multilingual practices among business professionals in Kazakhstan, emphasizing that while multilingualism is a functional necessity across industries, its application varies by sector, role, and communication context. Rather than adhering to rigid language policies, Kazakhstani professionals employ flexible language strategies to meet workplace demands. However, a key challenge identified in the study is the gap between formal language education and professional linguistic requirements. Outdated pedagogical approaches in schools and universities often fail to equip professionals with practical multilingual competencies, leading to a

reliance on corporate training programs. In response, businesses implement structured language courses, establish partnerships with universities, and promote cultural competence initiatives. These efforts reflect a broader recognition of the importance of intercultural communication in minimizing misunderstandings and fostering global collaboration.

Based on the interview results, workplace language policies in Kazakhstan vary by industry, reinforcing the need for tailored multilingual strategies (Thomas, 2008). Financial institutions enforce English proficiency as a hiring criterion due to international transactions, Russian for regional trade and legal compliance, and Kazakh for official documentation. IT companies often adopt an informal multilingual approach, where employees blend Kazakh, Russian, and English, depending on their team composition. In logistics and manufacturing, Russia remains dominant due to its established role in regional trade, particularly within the Eurasian Economic Union (EEAU).

Moreover, in line with existing theoretical models (Cenoz et al., 2017; Gunnarsson, 2013, 2014; Van der Worp et al., 2017), the findings emphasize that multilingualism in the workplace goes beyond the ability to speak multiple languages; it also involves creating an inclusive, multicultural environment that enhances communication and collaboration. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the personality of a multilingual professional, their professional language repertoire, and the social context to analyze the role of languages in business communication (Van der Worp et al., 2017). For Kazakhstani business professionals, proficiency in multiple languages is a key aspect of professional identity, enabling them to navigate the complexities of local and international interactions. However, the study revealed discrepancies in language proficiency across professional roles—while senior managers demonstrate higher proficiency in Kazakh and English, mid-level specialists often encounter barriers when engaging with international partners. These findings confirm that multilingual proficiency influences career mobility (Gunnarsson, 2014; Itani et al., 2015; Vulchanov, 2020). Although Kazakhstan's multilingual policy promotes language diversity, its practical application varies by industry, requiring context-sensitive approaches to ensure that multilingualism serves as a strategic advantage rather than a compliance burden.

#### 4.2. The Role of Cultural Competence in Business Success

Beyond language proficiency, cultural competence plays a pivotal role in shaping multilingual workplace interactions, influencing how professionals communicate, negotiate, and collaborate in Kazakhstani companies. Business professionals must navigate cultural differences in punctuality, communication styles, and problem-solving approaches, all of which affect language use and business strategies. For instance, while Western firms prioritize efficiency-driven, direct negotiations, Kazakhstani professionals increasingly recognize the importance of learning additional foreign languages, particularly those relevant to Eastern business cultures such as Chinese and Japanese. In these contexts, relationship-building and indirect communication are essential before transitioning to formal agreements. To succeed in cross-border business environments, many professionals actively develop linguistic competencies rather than relying solely on translator services, allowing them to engage more effectively in culturally nuanced negotiations.

This highlights an important shift in Kazakhstan's multilingual business culture: while traditionally hierarchical and relationship-driven, an increasing number of professionals—particularly those with international education or exposure—are integrating Western efficiency-driven communication models with local and Eastern business traditions. However, engaging with Eastern business partners requires even greater linguistic flexibility, as professionals must adjust both their language use and communication style to align with diverse cultural expectations. Despite this evolving multilingual landscape, many

companies still lack a systematic approach to managing cultural differences, often relying on ad hoc solutions instead of structured policies (Tietze et al., 2016), even as demand for multilingual professionals continues to grow. This gap results in communication inefficiencies, cross-cultural misunderstandings, and missed opportunities in global markets, reinforcing the need for formalized strategies in language training and cultural adaptation to ensure effective cross-border collaboration.

While proficiency in multiple languages helps overcome barriers in intercultural communication, differences in problem-solving approaches and behavioral patterns across cultures can still pose challenges. Several participants noted that such variations often influence the outcomes of negotiations and agreements. For example, Kazakhstani business professionals frequently encounter differences in punctuality and decision-making approaches when dealing with foreign partners. This necessitates a high degree of cultural flexibility and adaptability, reaffirming the importance of intercultural competence in achieving successful business outcomes.

#### 4.3. Challenges and Language Policy Implementation Gaps

Although the results indicate that Kazakhstani business professionals generally have a positive perception of multilingualism in the workplace, they still believe that the Kazakh language should be used more extensively and actively maintained. Recent legislative initiatives, such as the Concept for the Development of Language Policy (2023–2029) (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023), aim to increase the use of Kazakh in official and corporate settings. These efforts reflect the state's commitment to integrating the Kazakh language into business practices while recognizing the indispensable roles of Russian and English in informal and international communication (Atameken, 2023). Moreover, the Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan for Civil Service Affairs proposed amendments in 2023 requiring mandatory Kazakh fluency for civil servants, including senior management (Orda.kz, 2023). Additionally, from 1 January 2024, new communicative requirements were introduced to enhance Kazakh language competence among civil servants (Gov.kz, 2023). For senior executives and managers, high proficiency in Kazakh is becoming a critical prerequisite for professional activity.

However, businesses face significant challenges in implementing these policies due to practical and structural constraints. One key obstacle is the limited availability of high-quality Kazakh-language materials for business and legal documentation, making it difficult for companies to ensure compliance while maintaining operational efficiency. Additionally, there is a shortage of professional translators and interpreters with sector-specific expertise, further complicating the integration of Kazakh into corporate communication. Another major barrier is the inconsistent enforcement of language policies across industries, where economic considerations often take precedence over linguistic regulations (Aimoldina, 2025). These factors create a fragmented approach to multilingualism, leaving many businesses uncertain about the feasibility of transitioning to Kazakh in their daily operations. Addressing these issues requires targeted measures, such as comprehensive employee training programs and improvements in language resources, to facilitate smoother policy implementation (Shayakhmet, 2024).

Furthermore, language preferences within different business sectors influence how companies navigate multilingual policies. Multinational corporations and export-oriented businesses often prioritize English for operational efficiency, while some local firms continue to rely on Russian due to workforce language habits. In customer-facing industries such as retail and hospitality, businesses struggle to adapt their language practices to the increasing number of Kazakh-speaking customers, leading to public dissatisfaction over language use (Prdrive.kz, 2024). This issue is rooted in historical workplace norms preferring

the Russian language (Suleimenova & Burkitbayeva, 2009), insufficient Kazakh-language training for frontline employees, and uncertainty over how to balance multilingual customer interactions. Without clear policy guidelines and economic incentives, businesses may hesitate to fully transition to Kazakh in daily interactions, despite growing demand.

#### 4.4. Study Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study provides insights into multilingual workplace communication in Kazakhstan, it has several limitations. First, its urban-centric focus may not fully capture language practices in rural businesses or domestic-market-oriented companies, where Kazakh may be more dominant. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases, as participants may have overestimated their multilingual competencies or inclusivity within their workplaces. Since the findings are based on individual perceptions rather than statistical generalizations, they should be interpreted as indicative of key trends rather than definitive conclusions about the entire industry.

Another limitation is the lack of sector-specific analysis regarding language policies. While this study identified general trends in multilingual workplace communication, it did not extensively examine how different industries implement language policies or the extent to which corporate strategies align with state linguistic initiatives. Furthermore, the absence of longitudinal data limits the ability to assess how businesses adapt to evolving language policies over time. Without tracking changes in corporate language adoption, it is difficult to determine whether multilingual strategies become more structured or remain inconsistent across industries.

Despite these limitations, the findings highlight key areas for future research. Expanding studies to rural areas and small businesses would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how language policies function outside urban corporate settings. Additionally, incorporating longitudinal data on corporate language adoption could offer valuable insights into how businesses adjust to evolving state policies and economic demands. A mixed-methods approach, integrating surveys, observational studies, workplace ethnographies, and formal language proficiency assessments, would also enhance the depth of analysis and reduce biases inherent in self-reported data.

Furthermore, integrating business and educational discourses is essential to ensuring that language practices cultivated in universities align with corporate requirements. Future studies should examine how students perceive multilingualism and intercultural communication and assess their preparedness for working in multilingual business environments. Insights from such research could inform improvements in educational curricula and professional training programs, bridging the gap between academic language instruction and real-world corporate needs.

Overall, while state policies aim to promote Kazakh in professional settings, businesses continue to rely on Russian and English due to economic priorities and industry-specific demands. Future studies should explore how companies balance linguistic expectations with operational efficiency, ensuring that multilingualism is leveraged as a strategic asset rather than a regulatory challenge. By developing industry-specific language frameworks and aligning educational training with corporate needs, Kazakhstan can foster a more effective and sustainable multilingual business environment.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, A.A.; methodology, A.A.; validation, A.A. and D.A.; formal analysis, A.A. and D.A.; investigation, A.A.; resources, A.A. and D.A.; data curation, A.A. and D.A.; writing—original draft preparation, A.A.; writing—review and editing, A.A. and D.A.; supervision, A.A.; project administration, A.A. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research was funded by the Science Committee of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Grant No. AP14970702).

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and was approved by the Science Department of L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Kazakhstan, approval code 1211201225, approval date 14 January 2025.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. Access to interview data is restricted due to privacy concerns and data protection regulations.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

## Appendix A

**Table A1.** Themes, subthemes, and categories identified in interviews.

Theme	Subthemes	Categories
Language Practices in Business Communication	Multilingualism in Business Communication	Use of multiple languages in different contexts Impact of multilingualism on communication efficiency Influence of international standards on language use
	Language Preferences in Various Situations	Language choice depending on audience and situation Regional differences in language preferences Social status and language choice Language preferences in online communication
	Code-Switching Issues	Language mixing in everyday communication Use of Anglicisms and professional jargon Contextual factors in language use Advantages of hybrid language forms
Language Training and Support for Business Professionals	Language Learning Experience	Personal stories and strategies for language learning Self-study methods and personal initiatives Impact of early language learning Motivation for learning foreign languages
	Courses to Improve Language Skills	Access to training platforms for improving English and other languages Corporate language programs Impact of training levels on outcomes Employer support in learning
	Educational Programs and Platforms for Language Training	Ways to enhance language proficiency among business professionals Implementation of distance learning Special programs for specific positions Impact of international standards on educational programs

Table A1. Cont.

Theme	Subthemes	Categories
Cultural Competence in a Multinational Business Environment	Understanding and Respecting Cultural Differences	Impact of cultural background on workplace interactions Considering national characteristics in work Role of cultural values in business Intercultural conflicts and their resolution
	Adaptation to a Multinational Environment	Considering cultural specifics when working with partners Mentorship programs for new employees Creating multicultural teams Integration of national traditions into corporate culture
	Impact of Economy and Education on Cultural and Language Practices	Prevalence of Russian in business due to historical and educational reasons Role of the education system in linguistic diversity Economic factors and linguistic environment Connection between economic development and language policy
Multilingualism and Language Policy in International and Local Businesses	Importance of English in International Projects	Use of English for interaction with international partners and clients Impact of English proficiency on career growth Challenges in negotiations conducted in English Translation and adaptation of international documents
	Inclusion of National Languages in International Projects	Importance of Kazakh for local projects Adaptation of international products and services to local language requirements Role of national languages in marketing strategies Impact of language policy on international deals
	Language Policy and Its Impact on Corporate Culture	State support for the Kazakh language Impact of legislation on company language policies Implementation of multilingual programs in companies Role of the state in shaping language culture in companies

## References

Aimoldina, A. (2025). Kazakhstan. In K. Bolton (Ed.), *The wiley blackwell encyclopedia of world englishes*. Online Library. Available online: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781119518297.eowe00231> (accessed on 11 March 2025).

Aimoldina, A., & Zharkynbekova, S. (2016). Rhetorical and pragmalinguistic features of business correspondence: The case of sales letters in intercultural business communication in Kazakhstan. *Journal of Applied Linguistics & Professional Practice*, 10(1), 1–22. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Atameken. (2023). *The use of the state language in the sphere of services and trade was told about to entrepreneurs of East Kazakhstan region were told about*. National Chamber of Entrepreneurs of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'Atameken'. Available online: <https://atameken.kz/ru/news/49989-o-primenenii-gosudarstvennogo-yazyka-v-sfere-okazaniya-uslug-i-torgovli-rasskazali-predprinimateljam-vko> (accessed on 15 December 2024).

Bahry, S. A. (2016). 2. Language ecology: Understanding central Asian multilingualism. In E. S. Ahn, & J. Smagulova (Eds.), *Language change in central Asia* (pp. 11–32). De Gruyter. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Barakos, E. (2020). *Language policy in business*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Battilani, B. (2022). Translanguaging, co-learning, and participatory investment in multilingual workplaces. *European Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10(2), 340–369. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (2024). *Main indicators of the number of entities in the Republic of Kazakhstan (as of 1 January 2024)*. Available online: <https://stat.gov.kz/ru/industries/business-statistics/stat-org/publications/113761/> (accessed on 17 December 2024).

Cenoz, J., Gorter, D., & May, S. (2017). *Language awareness and multilingualism*. Springer.

Codó, E. (2008). Interviews and questionnaires. In *The blackwell guide to research methods in bilingualism and multilingualism* (pp. 158–176). Wiley Online Library.

Dijkstra, B., Coler, M., & Redeker, G. (2021). The multilingual workplace realities of Polish truckers: A case study in the Netherlands. *Multilingua-Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication*, 40(5), 589–616. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Di Pisa, G., Pereira Soares, S. M., & Rothman, J. (2021). Brain, mind and linguistic processing insights into the dynamic nature of bilingualism and its outcome effects. *Journal of Neurolinguistics*, 58, 100965. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Djuraeva, M. (2022). Multilingualism, nation branding, and the ownership of English in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. *World Englishes*, 41(1), 92–103. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Fierman, W. (2013). Identity, symbolism, and the politics of language in Central Asia. In *Symbolism and Power in Central Asia* (pp. 122–143). Routledge. Available online: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315875200-8/identity-symbolism-politics-language-central-asia-william-fierman> (accessed on 15 December 2024).

Fierman, W. (2021). Language policy and language in Central Asia. In *Routledge handbook of contemporary Central Asia* (pp. 391–408). Routledge. Available online: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780429057977-33/language-policy-language-central-asia-william-fierman> (accessed on 17 December 2024).

Gong, Y., Gao, X., Li, C., & Xue, L. (2021). Language practice in the multilingual workplace: A Confucius Institute in Macau. *Circulo de Linguistica Aplicada a La Comunicacion*, 86, 43–54. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (2023). *On approval of the Concept of development of language policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023–2029 years. Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 16 October 2023 No. 914*. Available online: [https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=31956658](https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=31956658) (accessed on 15 December 2024).

Gov.kz. (2023). *New requirements for proficiency in Kazakh language*. Available online: <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mti/press/news/details/636969?lang=ru> (accessed on 18 December 2024).

Gritsenko, E. S., & Alikina, A. V. (2020). English in the Russian-based recruitment discourse. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 24(3), 669–686. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Gunnarsson, B.-L. (2013). Multilingualism in the workplace. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 33, 162–189. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Gunnarsson, B.-L. (2014). Multilingualism in European workplaces. *Multilingua*, 33(1–2), 11–33. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Hussain, S. (2018). Managing communication challenges in multicultural organizations. *International Journal of Media, Journalism and Mass Communications*, 4(2), 44–49.

Itani, S., Järlström, M., & Piekkari, R. (2015). The meaning of language skills for career mobility in the new career landscape. *Journal of World Business*, 50(2), 368–378. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Kankaanranta, A., Karhunen, P., & Louhiala-Salminen, L. (2018). “English as corporate language” in the multilingual reality of multinational companies. *Multilingua*, 37(4), 331–351. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Karabassova, L. (2020). Understanding trilingual education reform in Kazakhstan: Why is it stalled? In D. Egéa (Ed.), *Education in central Asia* (Vol. 8, pp. 37–51). Springer International Publishing. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Karibayeva, B., & Kunanbayeva, S. (2018). Kazakh power distance dimension in business discourse. *Social Semiotics*, 28(2), 286–296. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Kraft, K., & Flubacher, M.-C. (2023). Multilingualism in the workplace: Issues of space and social order. In *The Routledge Handbook of Multilingualism* (pp. 369–382). Routledge.

Kucherbayeva, D., & Smagulova, J. (2023). Language revitalization: Challenges for Kazakh in higher education. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 14(2), 166–178. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Landau, J. M., & Kellner-Heinkele, B. (2011). *Language politics in contemporary central Asia: National and ethnic identity and the Soviet legacy*. Bloomsbury Publishing. Available online: <https://books.google.com/books?hl=ru&lr=&id=cANQEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Politics+of+language+in+the+ex-Soviet+Muslim+states:+Azerbaijan,+Uzbekistan,+Kazakhstan,+Kyrgyzstan,+Turkmenistan+and+Tajikistan.+&ots=wNuxf3sKpg&sig=2nFcqQPM79ieX64tRY4iKZbObyo> (accessed on 15 December 2024).

Louhiala-Salminen, L., & Kankaanranta, A. (2012). Language as an issue in international internal communication: English or local language? If English, what English? *Public Relations Review*, 38(2), 262–269. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Lønsmann, D., & Kraft, K. (2018). Language policy and practice in multilingual production workplaces. *Multilingua*, 37(4), 403–427. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools. (2023). *Annual report AEO 'Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools' 2023*. Available online: [https://www.nis.edu.kz/storage/app/media/docs/29.08.2024/%20%D0%9E%D0%A2%D0%A7%D0%95%D0%A2\\_RUS\\_%D0%BD%D0%B0%20%D1%81%D0%B0%D9%D1%82.pdf](https://www.nis.edu.kz/storage/app/media/docs/29.08.2024/%20%D0%9E%D0%A2%D0%A7%D0%95%D0%A2_RUS_%D0%BD%D0%B0%20%D1%81%D0%B0%D9%D1%82.pdf) (accessed on 17 December 2024).

Orda.kz. (2023). *New requirements for proficiency in Kazakh language will be introduced next year*. Available online: [https://orda.kz/novye-trebovaniya-k-vladeleniju-kazahskim-jazykom-vvedut-so-sledujuscheogo-goda-377819/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://orda.kz/novye-trebovaniya-k-vladeleniju-kazahskim-jazykom-vvedut-so-sledujuscheogo-goda-377819/?utm_source=chatgpt.com) (accessed on 15 December 2024).

O'Rourke, B., & Brennan, S. C. (2023). Multilingualism in the workplace. In *Intercultural issues in the workplace: Leadership, communication and trust* (pp. 179–191). Springer.

Pavlenko, A. (2006). *Bilingual minds: Emotional experience, expression, and representation*. Multilingual Matters.

Prdrive.kz. (2024). *How to avoid language scandals in Kazakhstan—Recommendations from PR experts*. Prdrive.kz. Available online: <https://prdrive.kz/page60498459.html> (accessed on 20 December 2024).

Prokhorova, A. A. (2014). Развитие профессионального мультилингвизма: Традиции и инновации [Development of professional multilingualism: Traditions and innovations]. *Инновации в Науке*, 35, 100–109.

Shayakhmet, A. (2024). Kazakh is becoming the language of business, science and technology. *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*. Available online: <https://kazpravda.kz/n/kazahskiy-stanovitsya-yazykom-biznesa-nauki-i-tehniki/> (accessed on 15 December 2024).

Smagulova, J. (2016). 5. The re-acquisition of Kazakh in Kazakhstan: Achievements and challenges. In E. S. Ahn, & J. Smagulova (Eds.), *Language change in central Asia* (pp. 89–108). De Gruyter. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Suleimenova, E. D., & Burkutbayeva, G. G. (2009). *The handbook of business discourse* (F. Bargiela-Chiappini, Ed.). Edinburgh University Press.

Thomas, C. A. (2008). Bridging the gap between theory and practice: Language policy in multilingual organisations. *Language Awareness*, 17(4), 307–325. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Tietze, S., Holden, N., & Barner-Rasmussen, W. (2016). Language use in multinational corporations: The role of special languages and corporate idiolects. In V. Ginsburgh, & S. Weber (Eds.), *The palgrave handbook of economics and language* (pp. 312–341). Palgrave Macmillan UK. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Tlepbergen, D., Akzhigitova, A., & Zabrodskaja, A. (2024). Exploring the language policy and planning: A comparative analysis of language practice in Kazakhstan and Estonia. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 1–14. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Tong, A., Sainsbury, P., & Craig, J. (2007). Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ): A 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, 19(6), 349–357. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Van der Worp, K., Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2017). From bilingualism to multilingualism in the workplace: The case of the Basque Autonomous Community. *Language Policy*, 16, 407–432. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Vulchanov, I. O. (2020). An outline for an integrated language-sensitive approach to global work and mobility: Cross-fertilising expatriate and international business and management research. *Journal of Global Mobility*, 8(3–4), 325–351. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Zharkynbekova, S., & Aimoldina, A. (2016). The role of English in the context of new language policy implementation in Kazakhstan. In *Sociolinguistic transition in former eastern bloc countries: Two decades after the regime change* (pp. 435–458). Available online: <https://elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=38603808> (accessed on 15 December 2024).

Zharkynbekova, S., & Aimoldina, A. (2023). The impact of socio-cultural context on composing business letters in modern Kazakhstani business community: A cross-cultural study. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 52(1), 56–78. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Zhu, H. (2016). *Research methods in intercultural communication: A practical guide*. John Wiley & Sons.

**Disclaimer/Publisher's Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.