THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL AND LEGAL FACTORS ON THE ECOLOGY OF THE UZBEK LANGUAGE

Suvonova Rukhsora Umarovna

Master's Student in Linguistics: Uzbek Language, UrSU

Abstract. This article analyzes the theoretical foundations of the concept of language ecology and the status of the Uzbek language in the socio-legal space from the perspective of political and legal factors. The study examines the impact of legislation on the state language, constitutional norms, presidential decrees, and state programs on the language environment, its functional load, social status, and interaction with other languages. Based on historical-legal and linguoecological approaches, the article systematizes the stages of language policy during the years of independence and identifies the specific consequences of each stage for the ecosystem of the Uzbek language.

Keywords: language ecology, language policy, state language, legal space, linguistic rights, functional multilingualism, language status, alphabet reform.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a social phenomenon that cannot exist outside society. At the same time, it is directly influenced by political, legal, economic, and cultural changes taking place in society. The field of "language ecology", which emerged in linguistics in the second half of the twentieth century, focuses precisely on this relationship, namely the interdependence between language and its socio-legal environment. Founded in the 1970s by the Norwegian linguist Einar Haugen, this approach proposes studying language not as an isolated system, but as an organism closely connected with the social, political, and cultural environment in which it functions. Later, scholars such as Peter Muhlhausler and Alwin Fill further developed this idea and defined language ecology as a field that studies the relationships among languages and between languages and their surrounding environments.

In Uzbek linguistics, this field is relatively new. Nevertheless, issues such as the status of the state language, multilingualism, language policy, and the development of the Uzbek literary language have been addressed to varying degrees in the works of N.Mahmudov, A.Nurmonov, Sh.Rahmatullayev, B.O'rinboyev, and other scholars. However, studies that comprehensively analyze the ecology of the Uzbek language directly through the prism of political and legal factors remain insufficient. This indicates the need to examine the legal foundations, institutional mechanisms, and socio-political conditions that shape the current state and future development of the Uzbek language.

In this regard, the words of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, are of particular significance: *"Each of us must regard attention to the state language as attention to independence, and respect and devotion to the state language as respect and devotion to the Motherland, and we must turn this view into a rule of our lives".* This statement clearly shows that the issue of the state language is not limited to linguistic policy alone. It is directly connected with national independence, civic responsibility, cultural identity, and devotion to the homeland. Therefore, the legal protection and functional development of the Uzbek language should be considered an important component of national statehood and spiritual development.

The purpose of this article is to systematically analyze the impact of legislative acts, constitutional norms, presidential decrees, and state programs adopted during the years of independence on the ecosystem of the Uzbek language. The article also seeks to reveal how political

and legal factors influence the functional load, social prestige, institutional status, and communicative stability of the Uzbek language.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employs historical-comparative analysis, legal-linguistic analysis, and a systematic approach. The current legislative acts of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Constitution, presidential decrees and resolutions, as well as scholarly literature related to the topic, were analyzed as the main sources. The key concepts of language ecology, including language status, functional load, language environment, linguistic diversity, and language prestige, were used as the theoretical basis of the research.

According to the theory of language ecology, every language exists within a particular "ecosystem". This ecosystem includes the social functions of the language, the spheres in which it is used, such as education, administration, mass media, science, official documentation, and digital communication, its relationship with other languages, and its legal status. The stability of this ecosystem largely depends on legal and political factors. If a language is not legally protected and if its spheres of use are not guaranteed by law, it may occupy a weak position within the ecosystem and become exposed to the pressure of other languages that are stronger in socio-political terms.

From this point of view, political and legal factors constitute the external environment that determines the development of language ecology. These factors include constitutional norms that consolidate the status of the state language at the highest legal level; special laws that regulate the use of language in various spheres; acts of executive authority in the form of decrees, resolutions, and state programs; institutional structures responsible for implementing language policy; and international treaties and integration processes that influence language policy at regional and global levels. Each of these factors affects different layers of the language ecosystem, including functional load, social prestige, intergenerational transmission, institutional use, and balance with other languages.

DISCUSSION

A turning point in the ecology of the Uzbek language is associated with the adoption of the Law "On the State Language of the Republic of Uzbekistan" on October 21, 1989, approximately two years before the declaration of independence. During the Soviet period, the sphere of use of the Uzbek language in public life had gradually narrowed, while Russian had become dominant in administration, science, higher education, and official communication. Under such conditions, the adoption of this law became the first serious legal step toward restoring functional balance in the language ecosystem.

The law granted Uzbek the status of the state language and guaranteed its use in the activities of administrative bodies, education, official documentation, and public communication. From an ecological point of view, this law legally redefined the sphere of use of the Uzbek language within the social system. However, the full implementation of the law required a long period of time. This demonstrates the natural "time lag" between legal norms and social practice: in language ecology, legal change often precedes real communicative change.

Article 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, adopted in 1992, consolidated the status of the Uzbek language at the highest legal level as a constitutional norm. At the same time, the Constitution guaranteed respect for the languages, customs, and traditions of all nations and ethnic groups living in the territory of the country. It also recognized the status of the Karakalpak language in the Republic of Karakalpakstan. This legal approach is consistent with one of the main principles of language ecology – the preservation of linguistic diversity.

Thus, the strengthening of the state language was not intended to exclude or weaken other languages. On the contrary, it was implemented within a multilingual social environment. This balance is important for the stability of the language ecosystem, because a healthy language environment requires both the development of the state language and respect for other languages used by the population.

The amendments and additions introduced to the law on December 21, 1995, in particular, legally regulated the gradual transition of the Uzbek language to the Latin-based alphabet. Alphabet reform is of particular importance from the perspective of language ecology, because it changes not only the graphic system of a language, but also the entire mechanism of reading, writing, information exchange, and cultural continuity.

In practice, the transition period created a complex ecological situation. The parallel use of the Cyrillic and Latin scripts led to a division between generations, types of documents, educational materials, and information resources. Older generations often continued to use the Cyrillic script, while younger generations were gradually educated in the Latin script. As a result, the language ecosystem experienced a certain imbalance in written communication. This situation, which has not yet been fully resolved, illustrates the complex relationship between legal reform and social practice.

As the first decades of independence came to an end, a new stage in state language policy began to take shape. The Decree “On Measures to Fundamentally Increase the Prestige and Status of the Uzbek Language as the State Language”, adopted on October 21, 2019, played an important role in this process. According to this decree, October 21 was designated as Uzbek Language Day, and this norm was later strengthened by a separate law adopted on April 10, 2020. In addition, the Department for the Development of the State Language was established within the Cabinet of Ministers, and the Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature named after Alisher Navoi was founded.

From the point of view of language ecology, this stage is significant because attention shifted not only to the legal status of the language, but also to its social prestige, practical use, and institutional infrastructure. The creation of special institutions serves as supporting infrastructure within the language ecosystem. It helps ensure the stable and continuous implementation of language policy and increases the responsibility of state bodies in the use of the state language.

The legislative amendments adopted in 2020 and 2021 further clarified the requirements for conducting official work in the state language and improved the procedure for the adoption and publication of documents by local government bodies in Uzbek. These measures strengthened the institutional layer of the language ecosystem and reinforced the use of the state language in public administration.

Legal norms determine in which spheres a language must be used and in which spheres its use remains optional. The Law on the State Language made the use of Uzbek mandatory in administration, judicial proceedings, official documentation, and other public spheres. As a result, Uzbek acquired a central position in the institutional structure of society.

At the same time, the law preserved the right to freely choose the language of education, thereby maintaining an ecological balance in the field of education. This approach reflects the principle of functional multilingualism, in which the state language performs its official functions while other languages continue to serve the communicative needs of different social and ethnic groups.

Alongside legal norms, the symbolic and educational aspects of state policy also have a significant influence on language ecology. The designation of Uzbek Language Day, the promotion of

respect for the mother tongue in education, and public initiatives aimed at increasing the prestige of the state language all contribute to the development of linguistic consciousness.

In language ecology, the prestige of a language is regarded as one of the factors that directly affects its actual use. A language may have official legal status, but if its social prestige is low, speakers may use it less actively in important domains. Therefore, strengthening respect for the Uzbek language is not only a cultural task, but also an ecological necessity for ensuring its functional stability.

Today, the Uzbek language ecosystem exists under conditions of complex multilingualism. Russian continues to function as a means of regional communication and historical heritage. English is increasingly used as a language of international integration, science, technology, and business. Karakalpak and the languages of other ethnic groups serve as means of local, ethnic, and cultural communication.

The principle of respect for other languages, enshrined in legal documents, helps maintain the stability of this multilingual ecosystem. However, in practice, the functional load of English is increasing in certain spheres, especially in the private sector, information technology, international education, and academic publishing. This situation may require new regulatory approaches in future language policy in order to ensure that the Uzbek language remains active in modern professional and scientific domains.

In recent years, the digital space has become one of the most important areas of language use. The expansion of Uzbek in digital communication, online education, electronic documentation, mobile applications, and artificial intelligence technologies is becoming an urgent task. Initiatives such as the digitalization of official work in the state language, the development of Uzbek-language online educational platforms, and the creation of digital dictionaries are forming a new virtual layer of the language ecosystem.

However, this sphere has not yet been fully regulated from a legal point of view. The rapid development of digital communication requires special norms that would support the use of Uzbek in software, websites, databases, artificial intelligence systems, and electronic government services. Without such measures, there is a risk that other languages may dominate the digital environment, while Uzbek may remain limited in modern technological communication.

RESULT

The analysis shows that the influence of political and legal factors on the ecology of the Uzbek language has not always been linear or uniform. The gap between law and practice is particularly evident in several cases.

First, although alphabet reform was legally established many years ago, the parallel use of the Cyrillic and Latin scripts continues to this day. This is a clear example of a legal decision encountering socio-cultural inertia. Second, despite legal requirements, the practical dominance of other languages still continues in some institutional, business, and technological environments. This indicates the need to further improve monitoring and implementation mechanisms. Third, although state-level educational and awareness-raising initiatives contribute to increasing the prestige of the language, this process is long-term and multifactorial. It cannot be achieved through legal instruments alone.

These contradictions confirm an important conclusion of language ecology theory: political and legal factors are decisive in shaping the language ecosystem, but they are not the only factors. Their effectiveness depends on their connection with socio-economic, cultural, educational, psychological,

and technological factors. Therefore, the development of the Uzbek language requires a comprehensive approach that combines legal guarantees, institutional support, public awareness, quality education, and digital modernization.

CONCLUSION

The analysis conducted in this article shows that political and legal factors have had a long-term and multi-stage impact on the formation of the ecology of the Uzbek language. The path from the 1989 Law on the State Language to constitutional consolidation, alphabet reform, and the institutional and legal reforms of 2019–2021 represents the gradual strengthening of the Uzbek language ecosystem. Each stage, through its own legal instruments, redefined the functional load, social prestige, institutional position, and balance of the Uzbek language in relation to other languages.

At the same time, the study demonstrates that the implementation of legal norms in practice always takes place in a complex relationship with socio-cultural reality. Therefore, the future development of the Uzbek language requires not only the improvement of legislation, but also the strengthening of its practical use in education, science, public administration, business, digital technologies, and everyday communication.

Future research may focus on the legal regulation of language policy in the digital space, mechanisms for developing multilingualism in the education system on the basis of ecological balance, and the long-term impact of regional and international integration processes on the Uzbek language ecosystem. From a linguoecological point of view, the main task is to ensure that the Uzbek language functions actively and effectively in all spheres of modern society while maintaining a balanced relationship with other languages.

REFERENCES

1. Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. – Tashkent: O‘zbekiston, 2023.
2. Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On the state language”, October 21, 1989; revised edition of December 21, 1995.
3. Decree of the president of the Republic of Uzbekistan “on measures to fundamentally increase the prestige and status of the uzbek language as the state language”, October 21, 2019.
4. Haugen E. “The ecology of language.” In essays by Einar Haugen. – Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972.
5. Fill A., Muhlhausler P. The ecolinguistics reader: language, ecology and environment. – London: Continuum, 2001.
6. Mahmudov N. Essays on the philosophy of language. – Tashkent, 2012.
7. Nurmonov A. History of uzbek linguistics. – Tashkent: Sharq, 2002.
8. Rahmatullayev Sh. Modern literary uzbek language. – Tashkent: Universitet, 2006.
9. O‘rinboyev B. Stylistics of Colloquial Speech. – Tashkent: Fan, 1997.
10. Skutnabb-Kangas T. Linguistic Genocide in Education – or Worldwide Diversity and Human Rights? – Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000.