

Kazakh Language

Learning Resources

UCLA, Slavic 188A

Instructor: Dennis Keen

Textbooks

[Colloquial Kazakh](#), by Zauze Bataeva. Published by Routledge, this is the best-produced modern textbook on Kazakh in English. The [audio tracks](#) used throughout the textbook are available online.

[Kazakh Language Manual](#), by Michael Hancock. Designed for Peace Corps volunteers. The first section of this book is focused on building competency in real-world situations, while the extensive appendix is a very in-depth grammar resource.

[Kazakh Notes](#), by David Pratten. An Australian fellow who lived in Kazakhstan for many years put together this short guide that introduces readers to the basics of Kazakh. Its lo-fi design can be charming, but also makes the material less user-friendly. The book's real innovation is Pratten's clever system for remembering which endings to use where.

[Kazakh Language Made Easy](#), by N. Kubaeva. Phrasebook and grammar, in Russian, Kazakh and English. Dated design but the illustrations can be useful.

[Kazakh Language: Grammar. Texts. Vocabulary](#), by Aijan Akhmetova. A beginner's textbook with fairly limited scope and basic design.

[Beginning Kazakh](#), by Ablahat Ibrahim. This language learning courseware, published by the University of Arizona Critical Languages Program, came out in 1999 on CD-Roms! Now it's licensed to the online language learning site Language Canvas. Only available for purchase.

[Intermediate Kazakh](#), by Akmaral Mukanova. Language learning courseware published by the University of Arizona Critical Languages Program and licensed to the online language learning site Language Canvas. Said to be equivalent to a one-year college course, but I completed the material in 6.5 hours. Consists of dialogues related to five themes, mostly introducing technical vocabulary related to oil and gas or agriculture. The exercises commit the cardinal sin of asking

for knowledge that was never introduced, or expect you to memorize dialogues word-for-word. Not highly recommended. Only available for purchase.

[Til Alemi](#) - Intermediate and advanced learners can find dozens of books here, including state-issued Kazakh textbooks, but all materials are in Kazakh - so you've got to know some Kazakh before you use them, or be very patient!

Grammars and Phonologies

[Kazakh: A Comprehensive Grammar](#), by Raikhangul Mukhamedova. This seminal Kazakh grammar book is highly technical and not suited for most beginner's, but those who love linguistics will rejoice in its thorough coverage and democratic approach, with an analysis that does an especially good job of describing spoken Kazakh. The book is quite overpriced, but you can access some pages using the search function on Google Books.

[Kazakh Grammar with Affix List](#), by Karl Krippes.

[A Grammar of Kazakh](#), by Zura Dotton and John Doyle Wagner.

[Kazak](#), by Kara David Somfai. Based off of research with Kazakhs in China.

[Kazakh and Karakalpak](#), by Mark Kirchner, in "The Turkic languages," edited by Lars Johanson and Eva A. Csato.

[Kazakh Phonology](#), by Edward J. Vajda.

Phrasebooks and Wordlists

[Talking Together](#) - Hosted on Scribd. Well-produced, image-rich phrasebook in Russian, Kazakh and English

[The Kazakh Phrasebook](#), by Aijan Akhmetova.

[Kazakh Roots](#) - List of Kazakh roots.

[Kazakh Insults](#) - List of Kazakh insults with English translation.

[A Learner's Dictionary of Kazakh Idioms](#), by Akmaral Mukan. Only available for purchase, at an absurd price, so try to find it in a library. Samples pages available [here](#).

[Dutta's Little Dictionary](#), by Niki Dutta - "This short 11-page trilingual dictionary was written by Peace Corps worker Niki Dutta in 2005, and has common words sorted by type (noun, verb, adverb) and listed in three languages."

Dictionaries

[Sozdik.kz](#) - Far and away the best Kazakh-Russian dictionary online. If you don't know Russian, you can copy and paste the Russian translations into Multitran.ru. Sozdik has more entries than most other dictionaries, and has useful auto-complete and auto-suggestion functions that makes it easier to find the word you need.

[Kazakh-English Dictionary](#), by Boris Shitnikov - Adapted from a Kazakh-Russian dictionary, so problems sometimes arise because of the intermediary language.

[Kazakh-English Dictionary](#), by Christopher Baker - The first dictionary to directly work from Kazakh to English, this project funded by the US State Department is unfortunately incomplete, with a poor UI and only part of the content available online.

Learning Cyrillic

There are no stand-alone resources for learning Kazakh Cyrillic, so the best thing you can do is learn the Russian alphabet and then just memorize the extra 9 letters that are in Kazakh. Note that you should learn the [cursive version](#) too, even if you don't plan to write things out longhand, because cursive letters are used to make italic script in Russian and Kazakh.

[Learn to Read Russian in 15 Minutes](#), by Ryan Estrada.

[Russian Cyrillic in 3 Hours](#), by Mark (?). I've heard rave reviews about this app for [iOS](#) and [Android](#), which is really just a series of fun videos explaining Cyrillic using signs you can see on Russian streets.

YouTube

There are only two teachers who've put up videos on YouTube in English, but there is a world of Kazakh-language material you can explore once you've built up some vocabulary. See my separate [Guide to Kazakh-language YouTube Channels](#).

[Kazakh Language with Zhannur](#) - 50 videos, with more vocab than grammar, from a diehard fan of Dimash Kudaibergenov. New content weekly.

[Maksat Imangazi](#) - 24 lessons, with more grammar, posted 7 years ago so no new content.

Apps

[Quizlet](#) - Flashcard app, where other users have uploaded some Kazakh vocabulary sets

[Soyle](#) - Kazakh-learning app built in Russian and translated into English.

[Memrise](#) - Language-learning app with a few vocabulary sets available on Kazakh.

[HelloTalk](#) - Language-exchange app for finding Kazakh-speaking chat partners.

Sites

[iTalki](#) - Find Kazakh tutors who teach online.

[Mango Languages](#) - Language-learning web app with a very useful color-coded technique for introducing grammar. Also available for [iOS](#) and [Android](#).

[Clozemaster](#) - Language-learning web app using cloze tests (sentence completion exercises), with some material in Kazakh.

[Glossika](#) - Language-learning web app with a focus on developing listening skills. At around \$35 a month, it's on the pricier side.

[QLang](#) - Online platform for learning Kazakh. Russian only.

[Qaz Comics](#) - Kazakh comics in Kazakh, Russian and English.

[Lyrics Translate](#) - Dozens of Kazakh songs translated into English

Instagram

[@nogat.kz](#) - Well-designed content focusing on Kazakh linguistics. Content mostly in Kazakh and Russian.

[@kazakbubble](#) - New project introducing Kazakh to Russian-speakers in a hip way.

[@qazsoz](#) - Account introducing obscure words from the Kazakh language. Also on [Telegram](#).

[@solkezder](#) - Kazakh quotes and proverbs with scenic photography.

[@janasozdik](#) - A “Kazakh urban dictionary” introducing contemporary neologisms.

[@voca6ulary](#) - Teaches English idioms using Kazakh, so can use it to learn Kazakh equivalents.

[@alpystogyz](#) - Memes in Russian, English, Kazakh

[@qoyanqazaqstan](#) - Kazakh-language memes

[@kiyelitezek](#) - Kazakh-language memes based on classic paintings.

[@qazaq_indie](#) - Kazakh-language indie music

General Online Resources on Kazakhstan

Russian-language sites

[Vlast.kz](#), @vlast.kz - News on government, finance, urbanism from young journalists

[Nur.kz](#), @kaznews- The Kazakh Buzzfeed

[Tengrinews](#), @tengrinewskz - Like Nur.kz, but slightly less sensationalist

[Holanews](#), @holanewskz - Opposition-sympathetic news portal

[The Steppe](#), @thestepppe - The Kazakh Slate.com

[Buro 24/7](#), @buro.kazakhstan - The hippest portal on fashion, culture, food and architecture

[The Village](#), @villagekazakhstan - Almaty culture, franchise of popular Russian site

[Esquire Kazakhstan](#), @esquirekazakhstan - A franchise of the men's magazine but broader coverage

English-language sites

[Eurasianet.org](#), @eurasianet - One of the only news portals dedicated to Central Asia

[RFE/RL Kazakhstan](#), @azattyk.kz - Radio Free Europe's coverage is slickly-produced and well-reported

[Calvert Journal](#), @calvertjournal - Hip site on former Soviet space, with occasional pieces on KZ

Instagram

[@shapalague](#) - Satirical comics about Kazakhstan (Russian)

[@muratdilmanov](#) - Caricatures and satirical comics (Russian)

[@zikibay](#) - Comics on politics and Kazakh culture (Russian/Kazakh/English)

[@unknownkazak](#) - Short lessons on Kazakh history (Russian)


[@rukh2k19](#) - Opposition news

Additional Readings on Kazakhstan

Introduction

Christopher Robbins. Apples are From Kazakhstan. (Book)

Tim Cope. On the Trail of Genghis Khan: An Epic Journey Through the Land of the Nomads. (Book)



Dagmar Schreiber. Kazakhstan: Nomadic Routes from Caspian to Altai. (Book)

Other assorted Travel Literature (ask for spreadsheet!)

History

Nomads and Networks: The Ancient Art and Culture of Kazakhstan. Edited by Karen Sydney Robinson. (Book)

Into the Kazakh Steppe: John Castle's Mission to Khan Abulkhayir (1736). Edited by Beatrice Teissier. (Book)

Sarah Cameron. The Hungry Steppe: Famine, Violence, and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan. (Book)

Michaela Pohl. The 'planet of one hundred languages': Ethnic relations and Soviet identity in the Virgin Lands. (Article)

Matt Payne. The Forget of the Kazakh Proletariat? The Turksib, Nativization, and Industrialization during Stalin's First Five-Year Plan. (Article).

Politics

Joanna Lillis. Dark Shadows: Inside the Secret World of Kazakhstan. (Book)

Sebastien Peyrouse. The Kazakh Neopatrimonial Regime: Balancing Uncertainties Among the "Family," Oligarchs and Technocrats. (Article)

Nargis Kassenova. China's Silk Road and Kazakhstan's Bright Path: Linking Dreams of Prosperity. (Article)

Ethnicity

Cynthia Ann Werner, Celia Emmelhainz & Holly Barcus. Privileged Exclusion in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan: Ethnic Return Migration, Citizenship, and the Politics of (Not) Belonging. (Article)

Koryo Saram - the Unreliable People. (Film)

The Eagle Huntress. (Film)



Religion

Eva-Marie Dubuisson and Anna Genina. Claiming an ancestral homeland: Kazakh pilgrimage and migration in Inner Asia. (Article)

Paolo Sartori, Niccolo Pianciola. Islam, Society and States across the Qazaq Steppe. (Book)

Music

Eva-marie Dubuisson. Dialogic Authority: Kazakh Aitys Poets and Their Patrons. (Article)

Jennifer C. Post. Performing Transition in Mongolia: Repatriation and Loss in the Music of Kazakh Mobile Pastoralists. (Article)

Alma Kunanbaeva. Psychology of the Perception of Kazakh Musical Epics. (Article)

Art and Film

Central Asia in Art: From Soviet Orientalism to the New Republics Book by Aliya Abykayeva-Tiesenhausen. (Book)

Rico Isaacs. Film and Identity in Kazakhstan: Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture in Central Asia. (Book)

Urbanism

Catherine Alexander. Soviet and Post-Soviet Planning in Almaty, Kazakhstan. (Article)

Alima Bissenova. The Master Plan of Astana: Between the "Art of Government" and the "Art of Being Global." (Article)

Gardner Bovingdon. Building National Form in Almaty. (Article)

Алма-Ата: архитектура советского модернизма 1955–1991. (Book)



Food

McLean, Julia. Steppe, Seed, & Supper: An Ethnoarchaeological Approach to Plant Foodways in Kazakhstan. (Article)

Spengler, Robert N. Fruit from the Sands: The Silk Road Origins of the Foods We Eat. (Book)

Gabriel McGuire. Cultural histories of kumiss: tuberculosis, heritage and national health in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. (Article)

