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## Linguistic erosion: the risk of losing Kazakh and English toponyms under the influence of dominant languages and cultures

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**Abstract.** This article examines the phenomenon of linguistic erosion as reflected in the replacement or distortion of Kazakh and English toponyms under the influence of dominant languages and cultures. The main objective is to identify the mechanisms behind the loss of traditional place names and propose strategies for their preservation. The author outlines the key theoretical foundations of linguistic erosion and emphasizes its practical significance for maintaining cultural diversity and historical continuity. The study's originality lies in its comparative analysis of Kazakh and English toponymy, which have been mostly studied in separate contexts. The methodology combines historical-linguistic and sociolinguistic approaches, supplemented by archival research and case studies from specific regions. The main findings show that globalization, urbanization, and political factors accelerate the displacement of local toponyms, weakening intergenerational ties to their cultural heritage. The conclusion highlights the need for legislative protection, educational initiatives, and community involvement to safeguard toponymic heritage. The contribution of this article to the field is its systematic examination of linguistic erosion through a comparative lens, illustrating how similar processes affect different linguistic environments. In practical terms, the proposed measures can inform governmental and regional programs aimed at preserving linguistic heritage.

**Keywords:** toponymy, linguistic erosion, dominant languages, Kazakh toponyms, English toponyms, cultural heritage, globalization.

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## Introduction

Linguistic erosion, or the gradual weakening and replacement of local linguistic elements by dominant languages and cultures, has become a growing concern across many regions of the world. Nowhere is this more evident than in the evolution of toponyms – place names that serve as markers of cultural identity, historical continuity, and communal heritage. Kazakhstan and England, despite their distinct cultural trajectories, both illustrate this vulnerability. In Kazakhstan, centuries of Turkic place names reflecting the nomadic heritage of the steppe have undergone significant alteration due to Russian influence in the Imperial and Soviet eras, and more recently, the rising prominence of English [1]. Meanwhile, in England, a tapestry of Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, and Norman influences has been progressively reshaped under the forces of standardization, commercialization, and global English usage. This article examines the risk of losing traditional toponyms in both Kazakh and English contexts by tracing their historical development, identifying sociopolitical and economic drivers of linguistic erosion, and highlighting modern challenges to name preservation. Through case studies of emblematic cities – such as *Almaty, Astana/Nur-Sultan, Leicester, Derby, and Oxford* – the analysis demonstrates how older names can be gradually replaced or obscured when confronted with modernizing pressures. By comparing these two settings, the study underscores not only the breadth of linguistic erosion but also its deeper cultural implications: losing local place names serves a vital link to history, landscape, and communal identity. Ultimately, the article argues that proactive measures – including education, legislation, community engagement, and international collaboration – are essential to prevent further erosion of these invaluable cultural markers. The primary *objective* of this article is to examine the processes by which indigenous Kazakh and English toponyms are gradually eroded and replaced under the influence of dominant languages and cultures. By highlighting historical developments, contemporary pressures, and specific case studies, the study seeks to illuminate both the mechanisms and consequences of linguistic erosion. It further aims to propose strategies – ranging from legislative initiatives to community-based programs – that can safeguard place-name heritage and preserve the cultural identity embedded in local toponymy.

This research is highly relevant in a world increasingly shaped by globalization, urbanization, and rapid technological advancement. As global languages like English gain dominance and economic imperatives drive the standardization and rebranding of local areas, the risk of losing traditional place names intensifies. At the same time, in multilingual regions such as Kazakhstan, the dual pressures of historic Russification and modern Anglicization challenge efforts to maintain authentic Kazakh toponymy [2]. By illustrating these parallel developments, the article underscores the urgency of addressing linguistic erosion, not only for preserving cultural diversity but also for maintaining historical continuity, communal identity, and the intangible cultural heritage of nations and regions.

**Novelty of the study.** While existing literature often explores linguistic erosion and toponymy in isolated contexts, this article's comparative approach – focusing on both Kazakhstan and England – offers a fresh perspective on how dominant languages reshape local naming practices across distinct historical and sociopolitical landscapes. Rather than limiting the discussion to either post-Soviet or Western European frameworks, the study bridges both, revealing common

threads in the forces that drive linguistic homogenization. This cross-cultural lens highlights the universal vulnerability of place names and emphasizes the importance of proactive, context-specific solutions. The article's multifaceted analysis, combining historical-linguistic research, sociolinguistic factors, and policy recommendations, contributes to the broader discourse on cultural preservation and reaffirms the essential role of toponyms as cultural signposts in an era of global standardization.

Tasks:

1. Define and Contextualize Linguistic Erosion
2. Identify Key Influences on Toponymic Change
3. Analyze Historical and Contemporary Case Studies
4. Compare the Processes of Linguistic Erosion in Kazakh and English Contexts
5. Evaluate the Cultural and Societal Consequences
6. Assess Practical Applications and Future Prospects

## **Methodology**

Below are the primary methods that underlie the examination of linguistic erosion and toponymy in both Kazakh and English contexts:

**Historical-Linguistic Analysis.** The article traces the evolution of place names through key historical periods. It examines how Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, and Norman influences shaped English toponymy, and how Turkic roots, followed by Russian and Soviet overlays, affected Kazakh toponymy. This diachronic approach illustrates how political events, migrations, and cultural shifts have altered or replaced older names.

**Sociolinguistic Contextualization.** The article places toponymic changes within broader social and political frameworks. It discusses how language policies, economic incentives, urbanization, and globalization influence both the retention and loss of local place names. In doing so, it demonstrates how dominant languages (e.g., Russian, English) exert pressure on minority or indigenous linguistic traditions.

**Documentary and Archival Research (Implied).** References to historical documents, transliterations, and name changes (for instance, from *Alma-Ata* to *Almaty*, from *Ligera ceaster* to *Leicester*) suggest the use of archival sources (historical maps, administrative records, legal documents) to track name evolutions over time. Although not detailed, these references point to a reliance on documented evidence in multiple languages.

**Case Study Examples.** The article employs specific examples – such as Almaty, Astana/Nur-Sultan, and Taraz in Kazakhstan; and Leicester, Derby, and Oxford in England – to illustrate broader trends. This case-based approach shows how theoretical discussions of linguistic erosion manifest in actual geographic and cultural contexts, highlighting the real-world consequences of renaming and standardization.

**Literature Review and Scholarly Synthesis.** The text cites or references a variety of works and authors (Eilert Ekwall, Amanzholov A., Qoishibaev E., Crystal D., UNESCO conventions, research on Welsh and Cornish toponyms) to situate the discussion of linguistic erosion within

established scholarship. By integrating insights from historical linguistics, cultural studies, and policy research, it provides a multidisciplinary perspective on toponymic change. Through this blend of historical, linguistic, sociolinguistic, and comparative analyses, the article offers a comprehensive overview of how dominant languages and cultural forces can erode the rich tapestry of local place names in both Kazakhstan and England.

## **Analysis and Discussion**

1. Toponyms, or place names, are more than mere labels on a map; they are cultural markers that embody the history, identity, and linguistic heritage of the communities that coined them. Yet, in an era of rapid globalization, urbanization, and the dominance of certain world languages, the preservation of local toponymic traditions faces growing challenges. Two examples illustrating these challenges are Kazakhstan and England – two regions with very different historical trajectories but similar risks. Kazakh toponyms, deeply rooted in Turkic linguistic heritage, run the risk of being overshadowed by Russian and English usages, while English place names, shaped over centuries by Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, and Norman influences, are continually being replaced or modified in response to modern pressures such as standardization and commercialization. This article explores how linguistic erosion occurs in both contexts, examines the factors driving these changes, and discusses ways to protect the diversity of place names.

Changes in the history of toponyms now require focused scholarly attention. As we can see, some former settlement sites remain in their original locations, while traces of ruins from others have been discovered nearby. This is a purely historical fact. Similarly, the relationship and differences between old and current names – alongside historical-linguistic factors and etymological issues – must be examined comprehensively where the fields of history and linguistics intersect [3].

English toponymy has been shaped by a series of historical influences and linguistic layers. The earliest traces date back to Celtic tribes, followed by Latin elements introduced during the Roman occupation (1st-5th centuries AD). Later, Anglo-Saxon groups – Angles, Saxons, and Jutes – arrived, adding characteristic endings such as *-ham*, *-ton*, **and** *-ford*, which frequently referenced settlements or natural features. From the 9th to the 11th centuries, Vikings and Danish settlers introduced additional suffixes like *-by* **and** *-thorpe*, which intermingled with or sometimes replaced earlier Anglo-Saxon toponyms. Following the Norman Conquest of 1066, the arrival of a French-speaking aristocracy left its mark on English place names, particularly those associated with castles and towns. Over the centuries, these distinct linguistic layers merged, forming the rich tapestry of English toponymy [4].

Historically, Kazakh toponyms evolved from ancient Turkic tribes, reflecting the unique steppe environment, tribal affiliations, and local cultural practices. However, the Russian Empire's expansion and subsequent Soviet rule led to many indigenous place names being replaced or modified. As an example, the city now known as Almaty was once referred to as Alma-Ata, illustrating both the adaptation and preservation of elements from local lexemes. Since Kazakhstan's independence in 1991, there has been a conscious effort to revitalize Kazakh

identity by reinstating traditional place names. Despite this, the continued presence of Russian, along with the growing appeal of English for international business and education, exerts a notable influence on contemporary naming practices. By the way, as Kazakh scholars said, in the domain of nomadic cultures, toponyms are shaped distinctly by the unique historical and cultural experiences of these societies. The emergence of specific principles and motifs in the nomination of geographical entities within nomadic cultures warrants thorough investigation. This study aims to uncover and analyze these principles, facilitating the discovery of a rich lexicon of toponyms that encapsulate the essence of nomadic life. Contemporary geographical maps of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as examined in this article, abound with such toponyms, reflective of the nomadic cultural heritage [5].

In modern times, the global influence of English has fostered a trend toward standardization. Spelling regularization, commercial branding, and other external pressures can erode local dialectal variants of toponyms, leading to the gradual loss of historically distinctive names. As a result, preserving authentic place names and the cultural heritage they represent continues to be a challenge in an increasingly homogenized world.

2. Proficiency in global languages offers greater opportunities in employment and education. As a result, speakers of local or minority languages may switch to a dominant language to improve their socio-economic prospects. A large share of globally distributed cultural products (films, music, literature) are produced in a few dominant languages. This influences the younger generation and reduces the perceived value of local languages. When people relocate to new regions, they often experience cultural and linguistic pressure from the dominant community. Over time, this can lead to the partial or complete loss of the heritage language. Even moving within a single country – from areas where a traditional language persists to more urbanized centers – can lead to a shift toward the dominant (state or regionally significant) language. Children and grandchildren of migrants may no longer hear the ancestral language in daily life, adopting the majority language instead. Over time, the heritage language may only be used in limited family or ceremonial contexts, gradually eroding its active usage [6].

Urban life generally offers broader educational, professional, and recreational opportunities. As a result, people from rural areas – where local languages and dialects are more common – move to cities and adopt the dominant urban language. In major cities, the official or globally widespread language dominates administrative, business, and commercial affairs, making it difficult to maintain minority languages in everyday life. Urban environments may diminish interest in traditional cultural practices, including oral traditions, folklore, and local vocabulary. As these traditions weaken, unique linguistic features also fade.

Place names often reflect historical events, legends, geographical characteristics, or natural features. Through toponyms, one can trace migration patterns, interactions with other ethnic groups, and crucial stages in a region's development. Toponyms may contain dialectal words or grammatical forms that are no longer used in everyday speech. Studying them helps linguists reconstruct lost or ancient language elements. Place names for towns, rivers, lakes, and mountains may reveal past cultural and linguistic diversity. If a region features toponyms from multiple language families, it highlights a history of coexistence among various ethnic groups.

Toponyms enable minority-language speakers to maintain a symbolic link with their ancestors and heritage. Preserving these place names fosters a sense of connection with history and tradition. When traditional place names are replaced with more “standardized” versions, the deeper cultural context can be lost. Original names help us understand who once lived there and how the landscape and natural features shaped local culture. Authentic place names attract tourists and researchers interested in experiencing and studying unique linguistic and cultural traditions. This helps maintain interest in local heritage [7].

Promotion of local languages and toponyms is crucial for preserving cultural identity. By using historical place names in tourism projects, on official maps, and signage, communities can maintain a visible connection to their heritage. At the same time, producing media such as films, cartoons, audiobooks, and podcasts in minority languages – featuring these local toponyms – helps ensure that younger generations remain engaged with their linguistic traditions. Digital documentation and the creation of archives are also vital for safeguarding these languages and their associated place names. Establishing digital databases, dictionaries, and encyclopedias that include the origins and meanings of local toponyms not only preserves valuable knowledge but also makes it more accessible. Furthermore, digitizing oral traditions and folklore that reference historical place names provides a rich cultural record and helps sustain a living connection to the past. Community initiatives further bolster these preservation efforts. Festivals, competitions, clubs, and gatherings conducted in the local language encourage active participation among speakers of all ages, while drawing on the knowledge of older generations ensures that stories, linguistic nuances, and naming practices are passed on. This intergenerational dialogue reinforces cultural continuity and fosters pride in local heritage [8].

Finally, international cooperation is essential for strengthening such initiatives on a broader scale. Sharing experiences in preserving linguistic heritage among countries and regions enables mutual learning, and supporting UNESCO and other international organizations’ projects aimed at safeguarding intangible cultural heritage helps keep minority languages and their unique toponymic traditions alive for future generations.

Linguistic erosion threatens not only minority languages and their communities but also global cultural diversity and our collective historical heritage. Toponyms serve as a vital link between generations, transmitting information about the past, ethnic diversity, and geographic identity. Safeguarding languages and their toponymic traditions requires comprehensive efforts – from reforms in education and media to the active participation of local communities in reviving their linguistic and cultural distinctiveness [9].

The renaming of places often accompanies territorial conquest, as the names are altered to reflect the language and culture of the conquerors. For example, during the colonization of the Americas, Europeans replaced indigenous names with their own (*the Mississippi River* retains its indigenous name, but other places were renamed). Additionally, local names give way to those in dominant languages. For instance, in Kazakhstan, several Kazakh toponyms were Russified during the Soviet period. When names are adapted to another language, they may be distorted, losing their original sound and meaning. For example, in the UK, Irish and Welsh names are often pronounced and written in English, losing their original forms. Tragically, generations who do not speak their ancestors’ language may fail to understand the meanings behind these

names. The younger generation may not even know the local name of their hometown in its native language.

3. Linguistic erosion in Kazakh toponymy began during the Russian Empire and continued under the Soviet Union when many Kazakh toponyms were Russified. For example, the original name of *Akmolinsk* (meaning "white tomb") was altered to fit the Russian language. The city of *Almaty* was previously called Verny during the Russian Empire. There was also widespread renaming in honor of revolutionary figures and events. For example, the city of *Guryev* (now Atyrau) was named after the Russian industrialist Guryev.

Modern societies face a range of challenges that threaten the preservation of traditional place names (toponyms) and, by extension, the cultural heritage they embody. Among these challenges are the growing impact of globalization and urbanization, the shift to new writing systems such as the Latin alphabet, and the influence of dominant languages—including English—on local naming practices. These processes can lead to the loss or alteration of indigenous names, thereby weakening cultural identities and severing ties with historical events and traditions. Below is an overview of the primary obstacles contributing to linguistic erosion in toponymy, as well as the consequences and potential measures to mitigate this threat [10].

One of the most pressing modern challenges to the preservation of toponymy is the combined effect of globalization and urbanization. The widespread use of English and Western cultural models has encouraged the creation of new place names, often in hybrid or entirely foreign forms. Shopping malls, business centers, and residential complexes labeled "*Mega Center*" or "*Highvill*," for example, reflect a desire to project a cosmopolitan image but also dilute the historical and linguistic uniqueness of local areas. Urban growth further exacerbates this issue because newly developed districts often adopt names perceived as modern or internationally appealing, rather than names drawn from local traditions.

4. Another significant challenge is the transition to the Latin Alphabet, a process that can result in the distortion of traditional place names. When transliteration systems are inaccurately applied, the original sounds and meanings of toponyms are lost or severely altered. This phenomenon is especially visible in regions undergoing spelling reforms or adopting new scripts, where decades, if not centuries, of oral and written heritage can be compromised in the span of a single policy decision.

The most immediate consequence of these modern challenges is the loss of historical connections. Once a place is renamed or its traditional name is forgotten, the link to the people, events, and cultural practices historically associated with that location weakens or disappears entirely [11]. This phenomenon is particularly concerning in settings where Russian and English have become dominant languages: local Kazakh toponymic traditions, for instance, risk being overshadowed by foreign nomenclature.

Over time, such changes create a ripple effect that impacts linguistic diversity. The homogenization of place names can accelerate the decline of regional languages and dialects, eroding the "sense of place" and cultural identity that toponyms once reinforced. The resulting standardized nomenclature diminishes the richness of the cultural landscape, disassociating communities from their ancestral roots and diminishing the variety of linguistic expressions that have historically coexisted [12].

As linguistic erosion progresses, the loss of history and legend becomes more pronounced. Place names often carry stories of origin, folklore, or legends tied to specific landmarks. When these names disappear, the narratives of entire communities fade along with them. This also impacts cultural diversity, as standardization leads to an increasingly uniform set of place names that do not reflect local customs or traditions. For indigenous populations, losing local names means surrendering a fundamental part of their identity. Moreover, efforts to rename places may provoke resistance and resentment, especially when changes appear to disregard the historical significance attached to the original name.

Ironically, English itself has a long history of toponymic change due to conquest and colonization. After the Norman Conquest of 1066, French heavily influenced English place names, with many Anglo-Saxon toponyms replaced or modified to align with Norman linguistic preferences. Subsequently, as the British Empire expanded, English displaced countless local place names in colonized territories. A prominent example is the renaming of “Manahatta” to “New York,” a practice that repeated itself in many other locales, thereby erasing Indigenous identities and histories. Even in the present day, English toponymy continues to evolve, influenced by globalization and migration. As immigrants arrive and communities become more diverse, new toponyms emerge or older ones become anglicized. Additionally, commercial sponsorship has become increasingly common, where stadiums and other public spaces are named after corporations, such as “Emirates Stadium.” This trend signals a shift away from historically rooted place names toward those reflecting branding or sponsorship deals [13].

The technological influence is also significant, as digital maps, GPS systems, and online directories occasionally simplify or even incorrectly label place names. Over time, such widespread digital usage can normalize faulty versions and contribute to the gradual loss of older or dialect-specific variants. When local names are replaced or overshadowed by externally imposed terms, communities lose a portion of their regional uniqueness. Dialect-specific forms of place names, which carry nuances of pronunciation, historical allusions, and communal identity, gradually disappear. This standardization not only streamlines geographic nomenclature but also impoverishes the linguistic tapestry of an area, weakening cultural bonds and overshadowing smaller or less dominant cultural groups [14].

The factors that drive linguistic erosion in toponymy can be broadly categorized into political, economic, cultural, and technological influences. Political factors include changes in governance, colonization, and symbolic acts of renaming that reflect new political narratives. Economic factors stem from urbanization, infrastructure development, and commercialization, often leading to place names influenced more by market forces than by historical or cultural contexts. Culturally, the dominance of certain languages—promoted through media, education, and international migration—can sideline or replace local toponymic traditions. Technological factors also play a role, as standardized mapping services tend to favor simplified or uniform place names instead of those that accurately reflect regional or historical usage.

Addressing this issue requires a wide range of measures implemented by governments, local communities, and international organizations. First, governments can protect geographical names by enacting laws that formally recognize historically significant or indigenous toponyms, reducing the risk of random or politically motivated renaming. When renaming does occur, it is essential to establish strict criteria ensuring sensitivity to cultural context and genuine local



involvement. Educating future generations about the importance of toponymy can be achieved through dedicated programs in schools and universities, which help foster an appreciation for the rich heritage encoded in place names.

Beyond legislation and education, cultural initiatives—such as publishing books or creating documentaries about toponyms—serve to raise public awareness and preserve valuable oral histories. Complementary to these efforts, digital databases offer accessible repositories of local place names, incorporating details about their origins and meanings to prevent misunderstanding or loss over time. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) further support these initiatives by cataloging and visualizing toponyms in interactive ways, encouraging communities to connect with their cultural heritage.

Finally, collaboration at the international level strengthens these efforts. Participation in the work of organizations like the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names helps maintain international standards and fosters the exchange of knowledge. In the same vein, international projects and cross-border cooperation unite regions and countries in a collective effort to safeguard linguistic and toponymic heritage for future generations. In the UK, Celtic place names are actively preserved in Wales, Scotland, and Cornwall, with bilingual road signs in English and Welsh[15].

Toponyms are carriers of the history and culture of a people. Preserving local place names supports the diversity of languages and dialects. Toponyms serve as valuable sources for historical and linguistic research. Unique place names attract tourists and contribute to the development of regions.

Language erosion is the gradual process of the destruction or transformation of linguistic elements under the influence of dominant languages and cultures. In the context of English toponymy, linguistic erosion is reflected in the alteration, distortion, or replacement of local geographical names, which leads to a loss of historical and cultural heritage. This report aims to explore linguistic erosion in English toponymy, examining its causes, manifestations, and the consequences for cultural identity. Over the centuries, multiple waves of conquest and cultural mixing resulted in the replacement of earlier Celtic names, particularly following the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons[16]. Where surviving Celtic toponyms continued in use, they were frequently distorted to fit Anglo-Saxon pronunciation patterns. Later, Scandinavian names often merged with their Anglo-Saxon counterparts, and as the language evolved, many of the original meanings of these Norse elements became obscure to English speakers. The Norman Conquest introduced another layer of linguistic change [17]. While some Anglo-Saxon toponyms remained intact, others were superseded by French-derived names or appended with French suffixes. As the aristocracy largely communicated in French, local place names were adapted to reflect the new ruling class, accelerating the erosion of indigenous naming traditions.

5. In modern times, standardization of spelling and pronunciation—driven by dictionaries, mass media, and national educational curricula—gradually smooths out local dialectal nuances in place names. The rise of branding and commercial ventures has further contributed to the creation of new names, sometimes erasing historically significant toponyms in the process.

#### *Factors Contributing to Linguistic Erosion*

1. Urban Growth and Landscape Changes: Rapid expansion of cities and infrastructure often leads to the disappearance or renaming of older rural place names.

2. Migration of People: Relocation of diverse populations facilitates the blending—or replacement—of local linguistic elements.

3. Standardized English Teaching: Educational systems prioritize a uniform version of English, overshadowing regional dialects and associated toponymy.

4. Media Influence: The dominance of standardized English in television, radio, and online content diminishes the public use of local place names.

5. Political and Ideological Causes: Regime shifts or ideological campaigns can bring about deliberate renaming initiatives, sometimes aimed at redefining cultural identity or historical memory.

As historical place names vanish, so too does a portion of a region's documented past. This leads to an impoverishment of cultural landscapes, where dialects and smaller linguistic features lose visibility, and local communities may experience a sense of detachment from their historical roots [18]. From a practical standpoint, unique toponyms often enhance tourist interest and contribute to regional development; their loss can diminish the distinctiveness that draws visitors and fosters cultural pride. English toponymy has been shaped by a series of historical influences and linguistic layers. The earliest traces date back to Celtic tribes, evidenced by names like *Avon* (from the Celtic word for “river”) and *Thames* (possibly derived from a pre-Celtic or Celtic term meaning “dark”). During the Roman occupation (1st–5th centuries AD), Latin elements were introduced into place names, often recognizable in endings such as *-chester* **or** *-caster*, as seen in *Manchester* (originally *Mamucium*), *Winchester* (*Venta Belgarum*), and *Doncaster* (*Danum*). Later, *Anglo-Saxon groups*—Angles, Saxons, and Jutes—arrived, adding characteristic suffixes such as *-ham* (meaning “homestead”), *-ton* (meaning “enclosure” or “settlement”), and *-ford* (indicating a river crossing). Examples include *Nottingham* (originally *Snotinga ham*, “the homestead of Snot’s people”), *Taunton* (“the settlement by the River Tone”), and *Oxford* (“the ford of the oxen”). These names often referenced natural features or denoted the function of the settlement. From the 9th to the 11th centuries, *Vikings and Danish* settlers introduced additional suffixes like *-by* (“farm” or “village”) and *-thorpe* (“secondary settlement”), which sometimes intermingled with or replaced earlier Anglo-Saxon toponyms. Familiar examples include *Derby* (from *Djúr-bý*, “village of deer”), *Grimsby* (“**Grim’s village**”), *Scunthorpe*, **and** *Cleethorpes*. **Following the Norman Conquest** of 1066, the arrival of a French-speaking aristocracy left its mark on English place names, particularly those associated with castles and towns; for instance, **Richmond** (from *riche mont*, meaning “strong hill”) and *Beaulieu* (“beautiful place”). Over the centuries, these distinct linguistic layers merged, forming the rich tapestry of English toponyms. In modern times, the global influence of English has fostered a trend toward standardization—for example, earlier forms like *Leicester* (once written as *Ligera ceaster*) and *Gloucester* (historically *Gleawceaster*) have undergone spelling regularization to align with standardized pronunciations [19]. Commercial branding and other external pressures also contribute to the erosion of local variants, seen in cases where suburbs, shopping centers, or new developments opt for marketable, non-historical names. As a result, preserving authentic place names and the cultural heritage they represent remains a constant challenge in an increasingly homogenized world. A variety of strategies have proven effective in protecting and reviving local dialects and place names. Incorporating courses on toponymy and local linguistic heritage into school and university curricula helps younger generations appreciate the significance of regional names

and dialects. Equally important are research initiatives funded to collect, analyze, and document local toponyms, ensuring their continued use and visibility.

Below are some illustrative examples of Kazakh and English place names that demonstrate how local toponyms can face erosion when influenced by dominant languages and cultures:

Kazakh toponyms have ancient Turkic roots and often reflect the steppe environment, tribal alliances, or historical events. Throughout the Russian Empire and Soviet periods, however, many indigenous names were replaced or altered. *Almaty*, for example, once carried the Russified name Alma-Ata but eventually reverted to a form that better represents its Turkic origins—although bilingual signage and the growing use of English continue to exert an impact. Kazakhstan's capital city also experienced multiple name changes: previously known as Astana (simply meaning "capital"), it became *Nur-Sultan* in honor of the first President, then reverted to *Astana*, reflecting shifting political and cultural currents. Meanwhile, cities like *Taraz* (historically *Talas*) and *Kokshetau* have, to varying degrees, preserved their traditional Kazakh elements despite periods of Russian transliteration or administrative renaming [20].

In England, centuries of Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, and Norman influence have given rise to a rich tapestry of place names. Modern spelling and pronunciation conventions, however, have frequently smoothed out historical variants. Leicester, for instance, derived from a Latin term for a camp (*castra*), has undergone multiple transformations from *Ligera ceaster* to its current form, which is largely standardized across contemporary maps and media. In Derby (originally "*Djúr-bý*," denoting a village associated with deer), Viking roots have long since faded from popular understanding. Similarly, *Oxford* was once "*Oxenaforda*," pointing to an ancient livestock crossing, but now its international reputation as a center of learning eclipses its agricultural heritage. *Richmond*, introduced by the Normans as "*riche mont*," once signaled a "strong hill," yet today it is widely recognized in various parts of the English-speaking world with little sense of its Norman origins [21].

The influences threatening these place names are similar on both sides. Standardization—through official spelling regulations, media, and education—can diminish local dialects or older linguistic forms. Political forces, including changes in government or shifts in national identity, may bring about deliberate renaming. Economic and commercial considerations also play a role: new shopping centers, residential complexes, and business districts often adopt names in globally dominant languages, sidelining local or historical toponyms in favor of modern branding.

Despite these pressures, preserving indigenous and historically layered place names is vital for maintaining cultural continuity, historical knowledge, and a sense of regional identity. Each name acts as a repository of its community's heritage—revealing how people once lived, what they valued, and how they adapted to changing political and linguistic landscapes. By documenting, studying, and revitalizing these toponyms through educational programs, policy measures, and community engagement, both Kazakhstan and England can ensure the continued visibility and vitality of their unique linguistic heritages.

6. Assess Practical Applications and Future Prospects. From policymaking to urban planning, there are multiple avenues for applying the strategies above. Governments can enact protective legislation, cities can adopt bilingual signage, and educational institutions can include local toponymy in language and history curricula. Internationally, collaborative projects aimed

at preserving minority languages and their place-name traditions can benefit from digital technologies (e.g., GIS mapping, online databases). By implementing these measures, both Kazakhstan and England—and indeed other regions—can maintain the cultural richness encoded in their toponyms. In the long term, preserving linguistic diversity in place names not only supports heritage tourism and local pride but also ensures that future generations inherit a tangible link to their cultural and historical landscapes [22].

#### *Common Threads of Linguistic Erosion*

1. Standardization: Both Kazakh and English place names are subject to spelling and pronunciation regularization, which can efface local dialects or historically significant variants.

2. Bilingual or Multilingual Pressures: In Kazakhstan, Russian and English compete with Kazakh; in England, the dominance of Standard British English overshadows older dialects and Celtic, Scandinavian, or Norman influences.

3. Political and Ideological Influences: Name changes often reflect power shifts—Soviet policies in Kazakhstan or post-Norman Conquest renaming in England—thereby weakening the continuity of local naming traditions.

4. Commercial Branding: New developments, shopping centers, and residential complexes frequently adopt global or Anglicized names (“Mega Center,” “Highvill,” “Park View Estate”), displacing traditional toponyms.

### **Conclusion**

Linguistic erosion in toponymy poses a major threat to the preservation of cultural and historical heritage. Geographic names are not only markers of land but also repositories of knowledge about the people’s history, traditions, and worldview. The preservation and revitalization of local toponyms contribute to the strengthening of national and ethnic identity, cultural diversity, and the transmission of heritage to future generations [23]. The preservation of local toponyms requires the combined efforts of the state, society, and the international community. Only through such efforts can we ensure the transfer of rich cultural heritage to future generations and preserve the linguistic diversity of the world.

Toponymy plays a crucial role in understanding the culture and history of nations. It reflects the worldview, values, and traditions of societies. Toponyms not only assist in spatial orientation but also act as a repository of collective memory. Linguistic erosion threatens not only minority languages and their communities but also global cultural diversity and our collective historical heritage. Toponyms serve as a vital link between generations, transmitting information about the past, ethnic diversity, and geographic identity. Safeguarding languages and their toponymic traditions requires comprehensive efforts—from reforms in education and media to the active participation of local communities in reviving their linguistic and cultural distinctiveness [24].

Kazakhstan and England, despite their distinct historical paths, both illustrate how local toponyms can become vulnerable under the pressures of dominant languages and shifting cultural landscapes. Whether supplanted by Russian and English usage in Kazakhstan or overridden by standardized and commercial influences in England, these rich repositories of heritage risk being silenced. Proactive measures—ranging from legislative protection and educational reform to

community engagement and international collaboration—can help preserve toponyms, ensuring that they continue to tell the story of a place, its people, and its history. Safeguarding linguistic diversity in place names is not merely an exercise in nostalgia; it is an investment in cultural resilience, national pride, and the transmission of knowledge across generations.

Safeguarding toponymy is crucial for maintaining cultural continuity, preserving historical narratives, and fostering a sense of identity among local communities. Modern pressures such as globalization, technological advancements, and shifting political landscapes can erode or replace traditional place names with more standardized or commercial alternatives. As a result, entire chapters of collective memory risk fading into obscurity. By recognizing the causes and potential consequences of linguistic erosion in toponymy—and by actively implementing protective measures—societies can retain the distinctiveness of their geographical landscapes, ensuring that future generations remain connected to the histories, legends, and cultural richness encoded in the names of places.

After Kazakhstan's independence, many cities and regions reclaimed their original Kazakh names. For example, the city of Tselinograd was renamed Akmolinsk, then Astana, and later back to Akmolinsk, reflecting a desire to return to historical roots. Promoting the Kazakh language: Strengthening the role of Kazakh in public life contributes to the preservation of toponyms.

A comparative analysis of Kazakh and English toponymy highlights the influence of Turkic and nomadic lifestyles on Kazakh toponymy, while English toponymy bears the influence of Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, and Norman cultures. Both toponymies reflect the relationship between culture and geography, with nature playing a significant role in naming places. Despite differences, both cultures use toponyms to preserve and convey their historical connections, values, and worldviews.

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The article contains no conflicts of interest.

### **Contribution of the authors**

**B.J. Karayeva** – collection of materials and literature review related to the issue of linguistic erosion, **A.K. Meirbekov** – study of key theoretical foundations of linguistic erosion, identification and analysis of the mechanisms behind the loss of traditional place names and propose strategies for their preservation.

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**Тілдік эрозия: басым тілдер мен мәдениеттердің ықпалы салдарынан қазақ және ағылшын топонимдерін жоғалту қаупі**

**Аңдатпа.** Бұл мақала үстем тілдер мен мәдениеттер ықпалымен қазақ және ағылшын топонимдерінің өзгеруін немесе бұрмалануын сипаттайтын лингвистикалық эрозия құбылысын қарастырады. Зерттеудің негізгі мақсаты – дәстүрлі жер-су атауларының жоғалу механизмдерін анықтау және оларды сақтап қалу жолдарын ұсыну. Автор лингвистикалық эрозияның теориялық негіздерін талдап, оның мәдени әралуандық пен тарихи сабақтастықты қамтамасыз етудегі маңыздылығын атап өтеді.

Зерттеудің жаңалығы – қазақ және ағылшын топонимиясын салыстырмалы тұрғыда қарастыру, өйткені бұл тақырыптар көбіне жеке контексте ғана зерттеліп келген. Методологиясы тарихи-лингвистикалық және әлеуметтанулық тәсілдерге сүйеніп, мұрағаттық деректер мен жекелеген өңірлерге қатысты кейстік талдауларды қамтиды. Негізгі нәтижелер жаһандану, урбанизация және саяси факторлардың жергілікті атауларды ығыстырып, ұрпақтың мәдени мұраға деген байланысын әлсірететінін көрсетеді. Қорытындыда топонимиялық мұраны сақтау үшін заңнамалық қолдау, білім беру бағдарламалары және жергілікті қауымдастықтардың белсенді қатысуы қажет екені дәлелденеді.

Бұл жұмыстың ғылыми құндылығы – лингвистикалық эрозия үрдісін салыстырмалы түрде талдау арқылы ғылым саласын жаңа деректермен толықтыруында. Ал практикалық маңызы – ұсынылған шараларды мемлекеттік және өңірлік деңгейде тілдік мұраны қорғау бағдарламаларын жасауға қолдануға болатындығында.

**Түйін сөздер:** топонимия, лингвистикалық эрозия, үс тем тілдер, қазақ топонимдері, ағылшын топонимдері, мәдени мұра, жаһандану.

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**Лингвистическая эрозия: риск утраты казахских и английских топонимов  
под влиянием доминирующих языков и культур**

**Аннотация.** Данная статья посвящена проблеме лингвистической эрозии, возникающей при замене или искажении казахских и английских топонимов под влиянием доминирующих языков и культур. Цель исследования – выявить механизмы утраты традиционных географических названий и определить пути их сохранения. Автор излагает основные теоретические положения о природе лингвистической эрозии, а также указывает на практическую значимость проблемы для поддержания культурного разнообразия и исторической памяти. Научная новизна работы заключается в сравнительном анализе казахской и английской топонимии, ранее исследованных преимущественно в отдельных контекстах. Методология исследования базируется на историко-лингвистическом и социолингвистическом анализе, с привлечением архивных данных и кейс-стадий отдельных регионов. Основные результаты демонстрируют, что глобализация, урбанизация и политические факторы способствуют вытеснению местных топонимов, ослабляя связь поколений с родной культурной средой. В заключении обосновывается необходимость законодательных мер, внедрения образовательных программ и привлечения местных сообществ для сохранения топонимического наследия. Вклад данной статьи в соответствующую область знаний заключается в системном подходе к сравнительному изучению лингвистической эрозии на примере казахской и английской топонимии. Практическая значимость работы состоит в том, что предложенные меры могут применяться при разработке государственных и региональных программ по защите языкового наследия.

**Ключевые слова:** топонимия, лингвистическая эрозия, доминирующие языки, казахские топонимы, английские топонимы, культурное наследие, глобализация.

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