

**THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE REFORMS IN THE FORMATION OF THE
MODERN RUSSIAN LITERARY LANGUAGE**

Shakirova Gulmira Rashidovna,

Lecturer of Russian Language and Literature,
Department of Uzbek and Russian Philology,
Asia International University,
Bukhara, Uzbekistan.

Abstract: This article examines the impact of language reforms on the formation and development of the modern Russian literary language. The key stages of reform are analyzed, beginning with the reforms of Peter the Great and ending with the orthographic reform of the 20th century. Particular attention is paid to the role of reforms in language standardization, simplification of writing, and the formation of literary norms. It is concluded that language reforms played a decisive role in the modernization of the Russian language and its adaptation to social and cultural changes.

Keywords: Russian language, language reform, orthography, literary language, standardization, Peter the Great, orthographic reform, language norm

Introduction

The modern Russian literary language is the result of a long historical development in which language reforms have played a significant role. These reforms were driven by social, cultural, and political changes in society and were aimed at simplifying, standardizing, and democratizing the language.

Language reforms not only reflected changes in society but also actively contributed to the formation of new norms and rules ensuring uniformity in both written and spoken communication. This article examines the main stages of Russian language reform and their influence on the development of the modern literary language.

1. The Petrine Language Reform

One of the most important stages in the history of the Russian language was the reform carried out during the reign of Peter the Great. At the beginning of the 18th century, the Russian language was strongly influenced by the Church Slavonic tradition, which complicated its use in secular contexts.

Peter the Great initiated the introduction of the civil script (civil alphabet), which significantly simplified writing. Redundant letters were eliminated, and graphic forms were simplified, contributing to the spread of literacy.

In addition, borrowings from European languages were actively introduced into Russian, especially in the fields of science, technology, and public administration. This expanded the functional capabilities of the Russian language and made it suitable for new domains of communication.

Thus, the Petrine reform laid the foundation for the secular literary language and became the first step toward its standardization.

2. The Role of M. V. Lomonosov in Language Standardization

A significant contribution to the development of the literary language was made by Mikhail Vasilievich Lomonosov, who developed the theory of the “three styles.” He proposed a distinction between linguistic means depending on genre and style: high, middle, and low styles.

This concept contributed to the systematization of language norms and the determination of acceptable means of expression in various spheres of communication. Lomonosov also

advocated bringing the spoken language closer to the written form, which facilitated the democratization of the literary language.

His works played an important role in shaping grammatical and stylistic norms, as well as in the development of the scientific language.

3. The Orthographic Reform of 1917–1918

One of the most significant reforms of the 20th century was the orthographic reform of 1917–1918. It aimed to simplify spelling and eliminate archaic elements.

As a result of the reform:

- the letters “yat” (ѣ), “fita” (ѿ), and “decimal i” (і) were eliminated;
- the mandatory use of the hard sign (ѣ) at the end of words was abolished;
- several spelling rules were simplified.

These changes greatly facilitated literacy acquisition and contributed to the mass eradication of illiteracy. The reform also established unified spelling norms, which became an important step toward language standardization.

4. Language Reforms and Standardization

Language reforms played a key role in the standardization of the Russian literary language. Standardization implies the establishment of unified norms obligatory for all speakers in formal and written communication.

Reforms contributed to:

- the unification of orthography and punctuation;
- the formation of normative grammar;
- the development of vocabulary;
- the elimination of redundant and obsolete elements.

As a result, the Russian language became more systematic, logical, and accessible to broad segments of the population.

5. Socio-Cultural Significance of Language Reforms

Language reforms are closely connected with social and cultural processes. They reflect changes in society and simultaneously influence them.

For example:

- the Petrine reform contributed to the Europeanization of Russia;
- the orthographic reform of the 20th century contributed to the democratization of education;
- modern language changes are associated with globalization and digitalization.

Thus, language functions not only as a means of communication but also as an important instrument of cultural policy.

Conclusion

Language reforms have played a decisive role in the formation of the modern Russian literary language. They ensured the transition from a complex and archaic system to a simpler, more logical, and accessible form.

Reforms contributed to language standardization, expanded its functional capabilities, and adapted it to contemporary demands. As a result, the Russian language has become an effective means of communication in various spheres—from science to everyday life.

Thus, the study of language reforms allows for a deeper understanding of language development processes and its interaction with society.

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