

Vilnius University  
INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

Eastern European and Russian Studies Programme

Aušrinė Vilimaitytė  
2nd year

**MASTER'S THESIS**

**Exploration of language choices and national identity formation among young, mobile  
Kazakhs through in-depth interviews**

Tutor: Dr. Konstantinas Andrijauskas

2025  
Vilnius

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ENTRY

***Vilimaitytė, Aušrinė: Exploration of language choices and national identity formation among young, mobile Kazakhs through in-depth interviews:*** Masters in Eastern European and Russian studies program, Master thesis / Vilnius University Institute of International Relations and Political Science; tutor: Dr. Konstantinas Andrijauskas Vilnius, 2025. – 204 pages

**Keywords:** *Kazakh language, National identity, Trilingualism, Imagined communities, Linguistic capital, Kazakhization, Language choice, mobility*

**Summary:** This thesis explores the factors influencing the perception and adoption of the Kazakh language and identity among young, mobile Kazakhs studying in Europe. Drawing on Anderson's "Imagined Communities" and Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and linguistic capital, it analyzes how historical, social, and political dynamics shape linguistic choices and identity formation. Through in-depth interviews with 27 students, the study examines the symbolic, emotional, and practical values assigned to Kazakh, Russian, and English, languages revealing shifting attitudes towards national identity and the role of language in educational, professional, and social contexts. It addresses gaps in prior research and provides insights for policy and academic discourse on multilingualism and identity in post-Soviet and multilingual contexts.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. THEORETICAL APPROACH	5
2.1 Benedict Anderson's Concept of Imagined Communities	5
2.2 Pierre Bourdieu's Sociological Framework and Symbolic Power of Linguistic Capital	10
3. LITERATURE REVIEW	13
3.1 Literature on national identity in Kazakhstan	13
3.2 Literature on Language Choices	16
3.2.1 Background on Kazakhstan's language policies	16
3.2.2 Previous research on the youth's language choices in Kazakhstan	18
4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	22
4.1 Research design and methodological approach	22
4.2 Data collection method	24
4.3 Ethical Considerations	26
5. RESEARCH RESULTS	27
5.1 Perception of the Value and Role of Languages	28
5.2 The Elements of National Identity	33
5.3 Factors Influencing The Adoption And Perception Of Kazakh Language And Identity	35
5.3.1 Kazakh Language as a Symbol of National Identity	35
5.3.2 Social and Institutional Drivers and Language Adoption	39
6. CONCLUSIONS	43
8. REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY	46
Appendix 1, Sample Demographics	49
Appendix 2, Interview Guide	50
Appendix 3, Transcripts of the Interviews	51

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Language and its relation to national identity has been a subject of heated debate in the post-Soviet space. Linguistic identity has been used as a basis to establish the legitimacy of independence for both Soviet republics and separatist groups within those republics.<sup>1</sup> During the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan was the only country where the titular nation was a minority. In addition, the titular nation itself was highly russified and displayed relatively low levels of competence in the Kazakh language. According to the 1989 census, 83.1% of the population reported being fluent in Russian, and only 40.2% of the population claimed fluency in Kazakh.<sup>2</sup> The gaining of independence of Kazakhstan has forced the country to pass the stages of nation-building, which received the informal name of “Kazakhization”<sup>3</sup>. Since gaining independence, the government has tried to promote the use of the Kazakh language and strengthen national identity through various education, cultural, and legal policies and resettlement programs for ethnic Kazakhs. Paired with heavy migration of ethnic Russians into the Russian Federation over the years it had resulted in quite drastic changes: from ethnic Kazakhs comprising 39.7% of the population in 1989 to 71% by 2024 and 80.1% of Kazakhstanis claiming proficiency in Kazakh as of 2021.<sup>4</sup> However, proficiency does not reflect general usage trends, and Russian remains the dominant language in the public domain. Most young Kazakh speakers still restrict Kazakh to family domain<sup>5</sup>. However, even in the family domain, most people still preferred to speak Russian or a mixture of languages until relatively recently. The overall language trend in Kazakhstan shifted significantly in favour of Kazakh in the last 4-5 years, with Kazakh surpassing the Russian language as primarily used in home settings for the first time since gaining independence indicating the decreasing influence of Russian.<sup>6</sup> In terms of various age brackets, just one-third of individuals under 30 predominantly speak Russian at home. As the age of

---

<sup>1</sup> Irina Paquette, *Language and Cultural Identity in Post-Soviet Frozen Conflicts* (Master’s thesis, Old Dominion University, 2021), [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/gpis\\_etds/140](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/gpis_etds/140). p. 3

<sup>2</sup> Jacob M. Landau, *Politics of Language in the Ex-Soviet Muslim States: Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), p. 37

<sup>3</sup> Juldyz Smagulova, “Language Policies of Kazakhization and Their Influence on Language Attitudes and Use” *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* nr.11 2008, p. 446  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050802148798>

<sup>4</sup> Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, *National Composition, Religion, and Language Proficiency in the Republic of Kazakhstan: Results of the National Population Census of 2021*, Astana: National Bureau of Statistics, 2023, accessed December 15, 2024, <https://stat.gov.kz>.

<sup>5</sup> Aidana Jumagaliyeva, “Choosing between Kazakh and Russian: A Study of Young Ethnic Kazakhs’ Language Choices through the Lens of Habitus.” (Master’s thesis, Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education, 2021), p. vi

<sup>6</sup> Central Asia Barometer, *What Language Do the Kazakhs Speak at Home?* Accessed December 15, 2024. <https://ca-barometer.org/en/publications/what-language-do-the-kazakhs-speak-at-home>.

the respondents increases, there is a corresponding rise in the likelihood of preferring Russian as the primary language at home. Indicating that the language shift is being led primarily by younger people in Kazakhstan.<sup>7</sup>

Due to drastic demographic and historical shifts, the perception of national identity and the importance of languages in Kazakhstan is complex and ever-changing. There is still limited research into Kazakhstan's national identity and perception of language, and most of the research is done by local scholars and specialists in several regions. A lot of research focuses on language policies, educational programs, and the government's efforts to promote the Kazakh language and identity over the years. However, results are often mixed, and opinions on the success of these policies vary. Furthermore, policy research is usually done in the form of statistical analysis or researcher opinion pieces; however, there is a lack of research on how individuals, especially young people, who are the direct products of this policy, perceive and respond to it on a personal level. It also tends to focus on the interplay between the Russian and Kazakh languages or the attitudes towards English as a separate subject. The success of the third part of the policy, integration into the global economy through English, is underexplored. Finally, there is still a lack of studies done post-full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which is highly relevant, as public polls show that young people are more likely to blame Russia for the conflict.<sup>8</sup> This leaves a gap in understanding the recent developments in Kazakhstan regarding language choice and identity dynamics.

In 2007, Kazakhstan adopted a trilingual language policy - Kazakh as the state language, Russian as the language of interethnic communication, and English as the language of integration into the global economy.<sup>9</sup> Today's national policy symbolises a wish to embrace global opportunities outside the traditional Russian-Kazakh dichotomy. English is the most taught foreign language in the educational system of Kazakhstan. It is an academic discipline and the medium of instruction at secondary and tertiary schools, supported at the state level. In recent years, it has enjoyed increased popularity and prestige in Kazakhstan, particularly among the country's youth.<sup>10</sup>

Despite Kazakhstan's official language policy aiming to promote Kazakh while embracing

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Abylai Muzaffar, Medi Edison, Sayat Gani, Serik Beissembayev, Eric McGlinchey, *Echoes of War: Public Perception of the Russian-Ukrainian War in Central Asia* (Analytical Report, 2024), Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Kazakhstan Office.

<sup>9</sup> Aliya Kuzhabekova, Mirjam Kriukow, and Indira Tuleuova, "Understanding Trilingual Education Reform in Kazakhstan: Why Is It Stalled?" *NUGSE Research in Education* 5, no. 2 (2020): 4–16, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344356860\\_Understanding\\_Trilingual\\_Education\\_Reform\\_in\\_Kazakhstan\\_Why\\_Is\\_It\\_Stalled](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344356860_Understanding_Trilingual_Education_Reform_in_Kazakhstan_Why_Is_It_Stalled).

<sup>10</sup> Olga Saparova and Svetlana Shakhova, "Language Choice Among the Youth of Kazakhstan: English as a Self-Representation of Prestige," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 143 (2014): 228–232, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.07.393>.

global ambitions with English, most students who study abroad (around 80%)<sup>11</sup> still pursue their education in Russia, highlighting the lingering influence of Russian linguistic and educational dominance. To explore the part of young Kazakhs choosing their education based on the new opportunities provided by the English language rather than opting for the dominant trajectory, 27 semi-structured interviews were performed with Kazakh students studying in European countries. Unlike studying in Russia, studying in Europe requires an additional command of English or another European language. Therefore, the demographic offers a unique perspective of young people navigating their identity away from traditional influences. While research findings may not reflect the choices of young Kazakhs as a whole, they offer an insight into a unique demographic that grew up in fully independent Kazakhstan, started their education around the beginning of the imposition of Trilingual language policy and chose to embrace global opportunities by seeking education in Europe. The research will focus on factors affecting linguistic choices and identity formation and their impact on the individual decisions of these students.

The problems this research will address are as follows: While since gaining independence, Kazakhstan underwent significant policy-driven demographic and language shifts, statistically indicating the success of fostering Kazakh identity and language, most research identifies the lingering dominance of the Russian language among countries youth, particularly in social and education fields. There remains a limited understanding of how young Kazakhs embracing the new trilingual approach, particularly those pursuing higher education outside of Russian-speaking spaces, navigate linguistic choices and identity formation. This gap is exacerbated by the lack of post-Ukraine conflict studies exploring the shifting perceptions of national identity and the declining dominance of Russia. The research addresses how young Kazakhs studying in Europe perceive and reconcile their linguistic choices and identities in the context of Kazakhstan's evolving sociolinguistic landscape and global ambitions.

**Research Question** - What factors influence the perception and adoption of Kazakh language and identity among young, mobile Kazakhs studying in European countries?

**Research objectives:**

1. Through in-depth interviews, identify how young Kazakhs studying in Europe perceive the role and value of Kazakh, Russian, and English languages.

---

<sup>11</sup> Educationfair.net. "Study Abroad Market in Kazakhstan." Accessed January 10, 2025.  
<https://www.educationfair.net/market-reports/asia/kazakhstan/>.

2. Explore how young, mobile Kazakhs perceive and construct their national identity.
3. Examine the factors that influence linguistic choices and identity formation among interviewed Kazakhs.

The significance of this study lies in addressing current research gaps and its policy and theoretical implications. Previous research on language and identity dynamics in Kazakhstan concentrates on Russian-Kazakh dynamics or local educational settings. By focusing on young, educated Kazakhs studying in Europe, this research addresses a notable gap in previous research. It contributes to understanding the interplay between Kazakh, Russian, and increasingly relevant English in different contexts. By exploring barriers to adopting the Kazakh language in various professional, educational, and social contexts, the research results will also offer implications for policymakers in Kazakhstan. The study also contributes to broader academic discussions on language and identity in post-Soviet and multilingual contexts by providing a case study that connects theories of nationalism and social structures.

The thesis is structured into five chapters, addressing different aspects of this research. The theoretical approach will address how linguistic changes and identity formation are driven by subjective feelings of national pride, cultural revival, and different socio-economic factors. It will use the concepts from Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities." In addition, Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus*, *symbolic power*, and *linguistic capital* will address the socioeconomic factors behind interviewees' choices. Next, the literature review covers two major themes: research on national identity in Kazakhstan and studies on language choices, including the interplay between Kazakh, Russian, and English. It highlights existing gaps and the relevance of the current research in addressing them. The research methodology addresses the study's qualitative approach, analysis and data collection method, research participant demographics, and ethical considerations. Findings from in-depth interviews are presented and analysed in the research results chapter. First, the views and roles appointed to the Kazakh, Russian, and English languages are identified, and then, the perception and construction of Kazakh identity among respondents is explored. Finally, the factors influencing these attitudes and choices are explored. Conclusions summarise the research findings, discuss their implications and offer recommendations for future research.

## 2. THEORETICAL APPROACH

Two theoretical perspectives—Benedict Anderson’s concept of *imagined communities* and Pierre Bourdieu’s sociological framework, particularly his notions of *habitus* and *linguistic capital*—form the foundation of this study’s analysis. This theoretical framework serves as a foundation for analysing how linguistic choices and identity formation among young Kazakhs studying in Europe are shaped by different factors, both national identity formation and broader socioeconomic ones.

Benedict Anderson’s concepts provide insight into how the Kazakh language functions as a marker for national identity and can be seen as a tool to strengthen ties to the *imagined community*. At the same time, the Russian language can be framed as part of the negative colonial legacy diminishing nation-building attempts. The book also provides insight into the significance of state-driven nation-building policy efforts.

Meanwhile, Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, field, and linguistic capital provide a more micro-level analysis, examining how different economic and social factors affect respondents’ decisions. This framework, in particular, offers insights into how language operates as a tool of symbolic power. This is especially relevant in the context of researching the factors behind the persistent dominance of the Russian language in Kazakhstan and the potential of English to grow its influence and eventually impact the prominence of other languages.

Together, Anderson’s and Bourdieu’s frameworks allow for an integrated analysis of the interview data, bridging different aspects affecting the choices of mobile Kazakh youth. By applying these theories, this study seeks to uncover what factors influence participants’ choices on both macro-national idea-driven and micro-pragmatic levels. This theoretical approach not only positions research within established academic discourses but also provides a structure for interpreting the qualitative data collected through interviews.

### 2.1 Benedict Anderson’s Concept of Imagined Communities

Nation, as defined by Benedict Anderson, is an *imagined political community*. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.<sup>12</sup> This creates an artificially constructed and imagined phenomenon, where people living even outside of the boundaries of an imagined nation, can still feel part of the community. Dolby asserts that national

---

<sup>12</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London: Verso, 2006), 6.



identity shifts from passive to active in the global context, and identity increases as students abroad are in a cultural context that makes them feel like the “other.” Students are cross-examining their home country for potentially the first time.<sup>13</sup> This dynamic underscores how national identity is not a given/static construct, but rather one that can be continuously reimagined and reconstructed through individuals' experiences. Studying abroad can potentially amplify the importance of belonging to students' *imagined communities* and increase the importance of identifying with their nation and speaking the national language. This part of the theoretical approach deals with the pull of national self-identification and being a part of the imagined community as a factor in linguistic choices and Kazakh national identity formation, it also reinforces the top-bottom policies as a factor in the identity formation.

One of the key concepts in Anderson's work, which is of particular importance is *official nationalism*, which refers to state-led efforts to construct and promote a unified national identity. According to Anderson, *it is an anticipatory strategy adopted by dominant groups which are threatened with marginalization or exclusion from an emerging nationally imagined community*.<sup>14</sup> It can be claimed that Kazakhstan has encountered this process at least twice, first, at the hands of the Soviet Union and again, following independence with the official ‘Kazakhisation’ policies. Both of these nationalisms have a profound impact on Kazakh national identity today.

Nevertheless, although it can be argued that the phenomenon of Kazakh nationalism is a recent development based on the legitimacy of the Soviet nationality policy, there was a nationalist movement before Soviet rule symbolized by ‘bourgeois nationalists’ as labelled by Soviet historians.<sup>15</sup> The Kazakh nation has had its popular national movement laying the foundation for the symbols of national identity before *official nationalism* policies, although it was done already under Russian influence. No printing press existed in the khanates of Central Asia at the time of the Russian conquest between 1864 and 1876 and the popular movements of the time declared themselves loyal to the Russian empire, especially as they constituted people educated in the imperial system.<sup>16</sup> The first Kazakh language newspapers, books, and journals were created before Sovietization in Arabic script.<sup>17</sup> The three main elements of Kazakh national imagery at the time were the elevation of Islam as a defining feature of the Kazakhs, a new awareness of common Turkic heritage connecting the

---

<sup>13</sup> N. Dolby, "Encountering an American Self: Study Abroad and National Identity," *Comparative Education Review* 48, no. 2 (2004): 150–173, <https://doi.org/10.1086/382620>.

<sup>14</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London: Verso, 2006), p. 101

<sup>15</sup> Azamat Sarsembayev, "Imagined Communities: Kazak Nationalism and Kazakification in the 1990s," *Central Asian Survey* 18, no. 3 (1999), 322

<sup>16</sup> Ibid p. 323

<sup>17</sup> Ibid p. 323

Kazakhs to other Turkic peoples and an upsurge of interest in Kazakh clan-tribal history.<sup>18</sup> The construction of identity through the Islamic lens was rather short-lived, the script was changed in 1929, and years of Sovietization policies made the Islamic identity into a rather symbolic affair. Nevertheless, awareness of Turkic heritage and clan-tribal history together with nomadism remain important symbols of Kazakh identity.<sup>19</sup>

B. Anderson contributes the creation of nations to the phenomenon of *print languages*, which laid the basis for national consciousnesses in three distinct ways: first, by creating unified fields of exchange and communication, second, by giving a new fixity to language, which the long run helped to build an image of antiquity, and third, by creating languages-of-power.<sup>20</sup> Although the process started before Sovietization, it was mostly concentrated within the circle of educated elites. The Soviet period witnessed the rise of publishing in the Kazakh language and language standardization. *Under Soviet rule, great importance was accorded to the creation of fully functional national languages, both for symbolic reasons (as part of the national development policies) and for the purely practical purposes of mass communication, which, by extension, included mass political indoctrination.*<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, despite having two official languages, and creating Kazakh speaking schools, the Soviet period was a heavy Russification period. The script itself was written in Cyrillic, which remains the norm to this day. Kazakh language itself was modernized through the assimilation of large numbers of international/Russian words.<sup>22</sup> By the 1970s, the almost total eradication of Islamic practices and the lack or very poor knowledge of Kazakh among the majority of young, urban-based Kazakhs had become the characteristics of the Soviet Kazakh people.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, strong self-perception of specific Kazakh identity prevailed, even if there was a lack of strong cultural indicators.<sup>24</sup> In Kazakhstan, despite the strong cultural and linguistic assimilation, it was self-perception that remained a powerful marker of belonging even in the absence of tangible cultural indicators.

The modern building of *official nationalism* is marked by Kazakhstan's complex relationship

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid p. 323

<sup>19</sup> Shirin Akiner, *The Formation of Kazak Identity: From Tribe to Nation-State* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995), 64

<sup>20</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London: Verso, 2006), p. 44-45

<sup>21</sup> Shirin Akiner, *The Formation of Kazak Identity: From Tribe to Nation-State* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995) p. 49

<sup>22</sup> Azamat Sarsembayev, "Imagined Communities: Kazak Nationalism and Kazakification in the 1990s," *Central Asian Survey* 18, no. 3 (1999), p. 326

<sup>23</sup> Ibid p. 324

<sup>24</sup> Shirin Akiner, *The Formation of Kazak Identity: From Tribe to Nation-State* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995) p. 52

with the legacy of Russification and Kazakh ethnic state rebuilding efforts, or *Kazakhination*. According to B. Anderson, building historic narratives is one of the most important aspects of modern nation-building. The frame of these narratives is historical and their setting is sociological, meaning, that narratives are influenced by current socio-political realities<sup>25</sup>. It is these narratives that have the power to build the emotional legitimacy of nationalism, where even violent deaths must be remembered/forgotten as 'our own.'<sup>26</sup> When it comes to the interpretation of history three aspects of contemporary Kazakh historiography can be underlined: the rising interest in the genealogical history of clan-tribal formations, the re-evaluation of Kazakh-Russian relations in the light of "newly-discovered" archives material, the state-sponsored project of re-writing "national history" stretching from as far back as two millennia.<sup>27</sup> The collectivization, famine, demographic shifts, and russification can serve as tragedies providing emotional legitimacy to Kazakh nationalism. In addition, the shifting historical narratives can be the basis for rejecting the Russification legacy. These shared experiences can allow Kazakhs to imagine themselves as a distinct community with a common past of suffering and perseverance, reinforcing national identity and providing a strong factor in choosing to adopt a stronger *Kazakh* national identity.

The efforts by the state to create an imagined nation have been present since the start of independence and into recent years. In his *Imagined Communities*, Anderson emphasises census and map as important tools in post-colonial nationalism and nation-building. In Kazakhstan, censuses include more than 100 ethnic groups. Arguably, all contemporary censuses in Kazakhstan directly or indirectly serve the purpose of ethnic nation-building by declaring an 'ethnic balance' in the country.<sup>28</sup> Officially, it has served the purpose of showcasing the changes in ethnic balance publically and reinforcing the idea of the nation, which is increasingly more Kazakh yet still friendly to minorities, which is acknowledged. 'Map' as a tool has also been an important area. Geographic names function as symbolic markers of national identity and history. In the Soviet Union and Tsarist times, towns, mountains, and streets were usually named in Russian manners, which included either Russianized modification of the previously existing Kazakh name or just naming objects with an ideologically charged name (for example, Leninsk, Tselinograd etc.).<sup>29</sup> Post-independence started the imposition of historical Kazakh names or assigning places a new "ideologically" charged name,

---

<sup>25</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London: Verso, 2006), p. 206

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Azamat Sarsembayev, "Imagined Communities: Kazak Nationalism and Kazakification in the 1990s," *Central Asian Survey* 18, no. 3 (1999), p. 331

<sup>28</sup> Ibid p.330

<sup>29</sup> Aziz Burkhanov, "Kazakhstan's National Identity-Building Policy: Soviet Legacy, State Efforts, and Societal Reactions," *Cornell International Law Journal* 50, no. 1 (2017), 10

referring either to the new Kazakhstan or to the names of prominent historical and sometimes imaginary Kazakh figures of the past. Nevertheless, it is hard to say how important these symbols are for young Kazakhs.

The new K. J. Tokayev government, which came to power in 2022 after major protests in the city of Almaty, seems to be following in the footsteps of these policies, although it is hard to say whether with more intensity. The project of Latinization of the alphabet, symbolizing the modernization of Kazakhstan and a symbolic move away from Russian influence, was announced by the old government in 2017 and planned to be implemented by 2025, the government under Tokayev extended the deadline to 2031<sup>30</sup> continuing the policy of changes in writing, but not accelerating it. Nevertheless, promoting the Kazakh language is an important priority for today's government, especially after the start of the Russian-Ukrainian full-scale war. In 2023, Tokayev exclaimed that the development of the Kazakh language will always be among the priorities of state policy.<sup>31</sup> In 2024, naturalization laws were changed so that anyone wishing to become a naturalized citizen will now have to demonstrate proficiency in the Kazakh language and have a basic understanding of the country's history and constitution. The new Concept for the Development of Language Policy for 2023-2029 was also adopted outlining new goals for increasing the usage of the Kazakh language.<sup>32</sup> However, it is still early to assess the impact of these new policies on everyday Kazakhs.

Nevertheless, contemporary Kazakh nationalism has emerged in the light of a strong urban/rural and regional division. This had in a sense created two different nationalisms: that of Russophone, urban population, and more traditional, Kazakh-speaking, often based in southern and western regions and rural areas. There is tension between Russian-speaking Kazakhs and the more traditional ones, especially on the issue of language. Since Russian-speaking Kazakhs have weak knowledge of their native tongue, they may show some resentment against possible discrimination under the ongoing policy of Kazakhization.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, while aiming to privilege the Kazakh language as a core element of national identity, the policy can create resentment among Russian-speaking Kazakhs, who may feel left out from this imagined community or not "Kazakh" enough.

Another important and yet underexplored factor in contemporary perceptions of Kazakh national identity is recent political events that might have affected the perception of Russia in

---

<sup>30</sup> Edward Lemon, "The Latinization of Kazakhstan: Language Modernization and Geopolitics," *The Diplomat*, September 2024, <https://thediplomat.com/2024/09/the-latinization-of-kazakhstan-language-modernization-and-geopolit>.

<sup>31</sup> "Development of Kazakh Language Remains Priority Task for State Policy," *The Astana Times*, October 2023, [https://astanatimes.com/2023/10/development-of-kazakh-language-remains-priority-task-for-state-policy/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://astanatimes.com/2023/10/development-of-kazakh-language-remains-priority-task-for-state-policy/?utm_source=chatgpt.com).

<sup>32</sup> "Kazakhstan Government Taking Action to Promote Kazakh Language," *Eurasianet*, last modified December 27, 2024, <https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-government-taking-action-to-promote-kazakh-language>.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid p. 328

Kazakhstan. Namely, the war against Ukraine with the subsequent influx of Russian migrants into Kazakhstan and protests in Almaty in January 2022, which resulted in over 200 deaths, following the CSTO peacekeeping mission, mostly composed of Russian soldiers. These outside and internal events might have intensified the perceived feelings of the Kazakh imagined community and nationalism by fostering solidarity against perceived foreign threats, particularly Russian influence. It is relevant to analyze how these developments might have promoted the Kazakh language and identity as a way to assert independence from Russia. Thus, as Anderson's theory analyzes how national identity is constructed and reshaped during significant political events and is constantly constructed through changing historical narratives, it may help better understand how these events may have reinforced the symbolic role of the Kazakh language and identity in distinguishing it from its colonial past and asserting sovereignty in a rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape.

In conclusion, the theoretical framework showcases how Kazakhstan's national identity is shaped through the interplay of historical narratives, linguistic policies, and sociopolitical realities. Drawing on Anderson's concepts of imagined communities, official nationalism, and the significance of print languages, it showcases that the formation of Kazakh identity is both a top-down state effort and a reflection of individual self-perceptions. State-led initiatives like Kazakhization and Latinization aim to reinforce the symbolic and cultural significance of the Kazakh Language and Kazakh cultural identity. However, it is not only the national identity question and its symbolic/sentimental value that are affecting the choices of young, mobile Kazakhs today. The perceived social and economic value of the language still plays a role in Kazakh society's choices.

## **2.2 Pierre Bourdieu's Sociological Framework and Symbolic Power of Linguistic Capital**

The linkage between language and identity is deeply rooted in sociocultural and power dynamics, which shape individual and collective perceptions of linguistic practices. Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus*, *capital*, *field*, and *symbolic violence* deal with mechanisms through which social hierarchies are maintained and reproduced, shaping our identity and actions. This part of the theoretical framework deals with everyday sociocultural and structural mechanisms shaping language practices in Kazakhstan and its potential impact on the choices of young Kazakhs studying abroad.

One of the key concepts in understanding Bourdieu's approach is that of *habitus*. 'The habitus is a set of dispositions that incline agents to act and react in certain ways. The dispositions generate practices, perceptions, and attitudes which are 'regular' without being consciously co-ordinated or

governed by any 'rule'.<sup>34</sup> In the context of this research, it suggests that language and national identity are shaped not just through formal education and policies. Instead, it can also be passed down through informal means. "The dispositions constituting the habitus are inculcated, structured, durable, generative and transposable."<sup>35</sup> Inculcation is an instillation of values or habits through repetition from an early age, for example. A person who has used Kazakh from early childhood will have a certain comfort with speaking the language. In addition, the value that was put on embracing the language and culture during formative years may have a strong impact on predispositions today. Dispositions are structural, in a way that they reflect the social conditions in a way that they are required and durable in a sense that they will likely stay with a person through the years, even if subconsciously. For example, in Kazakhstan, more educated urban speakers are more likely to use Russian, while Kazakh is still considered a rural language; a family with a certain language is associated with different education levels may internalize those views. Finally, dispositions are generative and transposable, meaning habitus is not static and can be applied to different contexts; for example, students might switch between languages in different contexts, depending on how they see the switching appropriate, which is likely already predisposed. In short, the habitus provides individuals with a sense of how to act and respond in the course of their daily lives. It 'orients' their actions and inclinations without strictly determining them.<sup>36</sup>

The central notion in Bourdieu's work is the idea that there are different forms of capital: not only 'economic capital' in the strict sense (i.e. material wealth in the form of money, stocks, and shares, property, etc.), but also 'cultural capital' (i.e. knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisitions, as exemplified by educational or technical qualifications), 'symbolic capital' (i.e. accumulated prestige or honour).<sup>37</sup> One of the central properties of capital is that one form can be converted into another. Within this framework, linguistic capital is a form of cultural capital, but it often functions as *symbolic capital* depending on different social contexts. Jan Blommaert extends this idea by emphasising the importance of *sociolinguistics of mobility*, which focuses not on language-in-place but language-in-motion.<sup>38</sup> For instance, while young Kazakhs can value Russian as a language of a career in a local context, it might lose its capital in a global context. At the same time, while English may carry high linguistic capital in social interactions while being abroad, it might lose its importance in Kazakhstan

---

<sup>34</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991) p. 12

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Ibid p. 13

<sup>37</sup> Ibid p. 14

<sup>38</sup> Jan Blommaert, *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) p. 5

Bourdieu conceptualizes different contexts of social interaction as *fields*. A field is the site of struggles in which individuals seek to maintain or alter the distribution of the forms of capital specific to it.<sup>39</sup> In different *fields* different forms of *linguistic capital* can be considered the most valuable. In Kazakhstan, different linguistic fields can be distinguished: the National identity field, Education field, Career field, Family field, and the Social field. Research regarding language use in Kazakhstan usually presents the Kazakh language as most valuable in National identity and family domains and Russian in the *fields* of Education, Career and Social Interaction. However, it is important that the language practices of young Kazakhs should not be narrowly interpreted within the rigid framework of Kazakh vs Russian vs English as distinct and always separate languages. Instead, the linguistic behaviour of young Kazakhs often reflects the practices of *dynamic bilingualism* or potentially even *trilingualism*. As Ofelia Garcia argues: “*Dynamic bilingualism goes beyond the idea that there are two languages that are interdependent; instead, it connotes one linguistic system that has features that are most often practiced according to societally constructed and controlled ‘languages’*.”<sup>40</sup> Bilingual speakers do not always use one or the other language, but often combine different elements or features of languages they know in their speech. These practices might depend on various educational, cultural and social factors attributing more or less value to different forms of speech in different contexts. This approach emphasises that language is not merely a tool for communication but can be a resource for negotiating identity and navigating diverse social fields.

This framework also suggests the reasoning of why, despite different impositions, language might still not become easily recognized as the legitimate (dominant) one: ‘In order for one mode of expression among others to impose itself as the only legitimate one, the linguistic market has to be unified and the different dialects have to be measured practically against the legitimate language or usage.’<sup>41</sup> In other words, while policies might impose acquisition, the generalized usage is harder to control if the current dominant language is perceived as more valuable. For example, if language is not perceived as carrying a high capital in the educational field and a person grew up in a family where education was incalculated as the most important, a person might not see the value in learning something which can not be converted into different forms of capital. Similarly, if a young person is among friends who do not have a good command of Kazakh and do not feel fully comfortable using it, he will not use Kazakh with them, out of risk of becoming isolated in a social field.

This leads to another problem conceptualized in Bourdieu’s framework. Speakers lacking

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid p. 14

<sup>40</sup> Ofelia García and Li Wei, *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) p. 14

<sup>41</sup> Ibid p. 45

legitimate competence are de facto excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required, or are condemned to silence.<sup>42</sup> He conceptualised this phenomenon as *symbolic violence*, which is exercised upon an agent with his or her complicity.<sup>43</sup> In Kazakhstan, it may go both ways. Not being fluent enough in Kazakh, a youngster might face judgment or exclusion from other Kazakh speakers, as proficiency in the Kazakh language is increasingly seen as a compulsory marker of national identity. At the same time not having sufficient command in Russian and in some cases English might exclude a person from certain educational fields or prevent job opportunities. This possibility of dual exclusion highlights the complex dynamics of linguistic capital in Kazakhstan, where proficiency in both Kazakh and Russian—or even English—becomes a determinant of social inclusion and opportunity.

In conclusion, Bourdieu's framework helps to better understand the interplay between language, identity, and socioeconomic dynamics in Kazakhstan, where linguistic practices are shaped by *habitus, capital, and fields of interaction*. The shaping of linguistic and national identity is not solely dictated by formal policies and historical dynamics but is also influenced by informal, structural, and cultural mechanisms that individuals internalize and navigate throughout their lives. The interplay of different forms of capital accentuates the varied perceptions of language value across distinct social fields. The trilingual language policy highlights the varying roles and values assigned to Kazakh, Russian, and English, which makes the competition in the linguistic market even more pronounced. In addition, this framework also draws attention to the challenges of navigating multiple linguistic fields, where proficiency in each language determines social inclusion and access to opportunities.

### **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1 Literature on national identity in Kazakhstan**

National identity is a multifaceted construct that plays a crucial role in shaping the socio-political landscape of a country. Since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, discussions on the essence of national identity, the national ideal, and the Kazakh language have persisted. This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of existing research on national identity in Kazakhstan, highlighting key themes, theories, and gaps in the current understanding.

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid p. 55

<sup>43</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992) p. 167



While a great deal of research has been done on nation-building in Kazakhstan, there has not been much primary research on how the people of Kazakhstan see their national identity, religion, and language. Research tends to focus on ethnic divisions in the country and their historical roots. Scholars generally agree that Kazakhstan has no single, universally recognized definition of national identity, and the lines between different identities are blurred. Scholars like N. Sharipova, a political scientist at the Nazarbayev and Indiana universities, claim Central Asian states, including Kazakhstan, are "nationalizing states". There is a general understanding that perceptions of national identity are changing together with the changing ethnic composition of the state. However, the presence of a large group of ethnic Russians and other ethnic minorities does not allow authorities to implement the ethnicisation policies that were carried out in other states such as Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.<sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, mainly two types of understanding of national identity in Kazakhstan emerge in research articles and books – ethnic Kazakh and civic Kazakhstani identity.<sup>45</sup> The term “Kazakhstani nation” represents a rupture with the neo-Soviet national identity approach that emerged in Kazakhstan and calls for consolidation of the population based on citizenship, highlighting nationhood, regardless of ethnic background.<sup>46</sup> Some scholars, such as Aitymbetov and Toktarov, see the divide very clearly and believe it to be an opinion clash between Kazakhs and Russians, but believe that Kazakh identity will dominate in the future years as ethnic proportions of Turkic people vs other ethnic groups continue to increase.<sup>47</sup> According to Shapirova, previous research has shown that Kazakh people prioritize civic identity first, with their ethnic and regional identity coming second. However, her research based on a survey conducted over 2016-2017 (N=1600) demonstrates that civic identity is not dominant in peoples' self-identification, rather, regional identification, then ethnic and only in third place, civic, though the differences between these categories were not substantial, with all groups scoring similarly<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, these articles demonstrate that ethnic identification in Kazakhstan is increasing.

---

<sup>44</sup> Sharipova, Dina. „Perceptions of National Identity in Kazakhstan: Pride, Language, and Religion“. *Muslim World* 110, nr. 1 (2020): 89–106. <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12320>. p. 105

<sup>45</sup> Aitymbetov, Nurken, Toktarov, Yermek ir Ormakhanova, Yenlik. „Nation-Building in Kazakhstan: Kazakh and Kazakhstani Identities Controversy“. *Bilig Journal of Social Sciences in Turkish World*, nr. 74., 2015, 1–20

<sup>46</sup> Aziz Bukhanov and Dina Shapirova. „Kazakhstans Civic-national identity: Ambiguous policies and points of resistance“. In: *Nationalism and Identity Construction in Central Asia: Dimensions, Dynamics, and Directions*. Blue Ridge Summit, United states: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2014, 49 <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/>

<sup>47</sup> Aitymbetov, Nurken, Toktarov, Yermek ir Ormakhanova, Yenlik. „Nation-Building in Kazakhstan: Kazakh and Kazakhstani Identities Controversy“. *Bilig Journal of Social Sciences in Turkish World*, nr. 74., 2015, 1–20

<sup>48</sup> Sharipova, Dina. „Perceptions of National Identity in Kazakhstan: Pride, Language, and Religion“. *Muslim World* 110, nr. 1 (2020): 89–106. <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12320>. p. 105

As Aziz Bukhanov and Dina Shapirova (2015) point out, the government of Kazakhstan is trying to straddle two worlds to appeal simultaneously to the interests of Kazakh nationalist groups as well as to the Russian-speaking population, the sizable Slavic majority. In their discourse analysis, they have addressed an increasingly nationalist (and nationalizing) domestic policies agenda and statements, never explicitly sanctioned but de facto encouraged, including changes in the interpretation of historical events and manipulations of census statistics to create a more “politically desirable” version of linguistic and political realities.<sup>49</sup> According to the authors, the Soviet-style notion of “one big family,” living in peace and friendship, in which the role of the “older brother” is taken over by the Kazakhs, as opposed to Russians in the Soviet times, seems to be the eventual safe choice that the government of Kazakhstan ended up choosing in the country’s identity politics.<sup>50</sup>

Marlene Laurelle (2014), in her discourse analysis of nation-building narratives of Kazakhstan, argues that three different themes exist after all – Kazakhness, which looks for identity within the nation, Kazakhstaness, which is deeply tied with Eurasianism and Transnationalism, which sees the country integrated into the world trends.<sup>51</sup> According to her, Kazakhstan is a textbook case of hybrid identity, where all identities exist simultaneously and the article focuses more on their relationship with Nazarbayev’s regime. In her view, Kazakhness can be seen as rivalling the regime for multiple reasons. Anti-Nazarbayev narratives are mostly born from the younger generation who embrace increasingly nationalistic themes, in particular against Russia’s policy of the Eurasian Union. Second, it increases ethnic tensions, as ethnic minorities, particularly Russians, protest this kind of policy.<sup>52</sup> And finally, the Kazakhness paradigm is linked with Islam. The authorities are very wary of conflating Islam and national identity, preferring to substitute “Islam” with “Faith” in public discourse.<sup>53</sup> Transnationalism, on the other hand, is considered a product of “Nazarbayenism”, embodied by such projects as changing capital to Astana, investing in soft power, and embracing transnationalism in the country’s strategy papers.<sup>54</sup>

Regarding research on the identity post-full-scale invasion of Ukraine, I was only able to find one senior thesis written in Spring 2024.<sup>55</sup> McLean T. Brown performed ethnographic research in

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid p. 47

<sup>50</sup> Ibid 46p.

<sup>51</sup> Marlene Laruelle. „The Three Discursive Paradigms of State Identity in Kazakhstan: Kazakhness, Kazakhstaness, and Transnationalism“. *Nationalism and Identity Construction in Central Asia: Dimensions, Dynamics, and Directions*. Blue Ridge Summit, UNITED STATES: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2014. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/> p. 23

<sup>52</sup> Ibid p. 27

<sup>53</sup> Ibid p. 28

<sup>54</sup> Ibid p. 34

<sup>55</sup> McLean T. Brown, ‘Kazakh Means Freedom’ - *Kazakh Language Policy and National Identity Before and During*

Kazakhstan in 2023, in two villages in East Kazakhstan, combining it with critical analysis of public discourse. The results showed that war had pushed many Kazakhs toward embracing their ethnocultural identity and feeling more justified in supporting Kazakh language promotion, seeing it as a tool to resist Russian influence. Nevertheless, the study shows that some respondents also hesitated to switch to Russian in urban areas or multi-ethnic communities, where it might be seen as a form of ethnic nationalism. Also, the duality in public and political discourse was highlighted, as there is increased tension between those advocating for stronger nationalistic reforms and those hesitant due to fear of escalating tension with Russia or among different ethnicities in Kazakhstan. Overall, this research demonstrates the impact of war on changing attitudes towards national identity and language and heightened tensions. Nevertheless, the ethnographic study was localised to East Kazakhstan and looked at general attitudes across generations, and neither the ages nor the number of respondents were specified.

All in all, although there is no shortage of scholarly work and discourse analysis regarding national identity in Kazakhstan, there is a shortage of consensus among scholars, regarding what kind of identity takes the top spot in national self-identification, complicated by the lack of primary research. It is also important to note that most of the scholars whose works I read highlight a lack of comprehensive state policy regarding "Kazakhization", resulting in multiple understandings of national identity existing in the country simultaneously. I also struggled to find research explicitly related to youths' understanding of their national identity. As Kazakhstan is still in the nation-building process, new and up-to-date primary identity research is relevant, especially among the young population. As I was not able to find scientific articles regarding national identity post-2022, I believe it would also be interesting to see what kind of national identity understanding predominates among the youth in the context of the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and changes in the Kazakhstani regime.

## **3.2 Literature on Language Choices**

### *3.2.1 Background on Kazakhstan's language policies*

Nations' sociolinguistic environments are greatly influenced by the creation and application of their language policies. As with national identity formation after the fall of the USSR, the Kazakh government pondered various directions with language policy, resulting in chaotic policies and heavy criticism from local scholars. This section aims to provide some background on Kazakhstan's

language policies and their repercussions on constructing national identity.

To begin with, it is important to note the heavy influence of Russification in Kazakhstan. The Russian language progressively spread and had a prominent role in daily life in Soviet Kazakhstan due to enormous Slav migration patterns, demographic changes, and laws supporting language acquisition. According to Chinn and Kaiser, Russians in the republics tended to live in small communities, send their kids to Russian schools, watch and listen to Russian media, and presume that other people would speak Russian when communicating.<sup>56</sup> According to the last Soviet census of 1989, over 80 per cent of Kazakhstan's population comprised either native Russian speakers or those fluent in the language, while only about 40 per cent claimed to be fluent in Kazakh.<sup>57</sup>

On the one hand, the government's call to learn Kazakh post-independence was counterbalanced by the demand to know three languages —Kazakh, English, and Russian, on the other. The country's leader up to 2017, N. Nazarbayev, has claimed that by 2020, every individual in the country should be able to speak Kazakh, while under his governance, the number of hours taught in Kazakh language in Russian schools had reduced.<sup>58</sup> While Russian continues to be the dominant language, the percentage of Kazakh speakers has increased and continues to grow. Kazakh usage has mainly grown in the education field and mass media.<sup>59</sup> So, it would be unfair to say that policies targeted at increasing the usage of the Kazakh language have failed. In July 2007, the government announced the adoption of a cultural project, the Trinity of Languages. The project aimed to develop societal trilingualism whereby most of the population could speak three languages, Kazakh being the main one.<sup>60</sup> This was followed by multiple projects promoting three languages. Although traditionally education in Kazakhstan has been divided among Kazakh and Russian schools, with Russian ones being perceived as better ones, today the focus of aspiration seems to be shifting towards better English command. In 2011, along with the trilingual education mandate, Nazarbayev University (NU) and 20 elite schools for grades 6–12, called Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS), started operating nationwide. Public schools and gymnasiums likewise offer classes in various subjects, not just

---

<sup>56</sup> Jeff Chinn and Robert Kaiser. *Russians as the New Minority: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Soviet Successor States*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429305245>.

<sup>57</sup> Aziz Bukhanov and Dina Shapirova. „Kazakhstans Civic-national identity: Ambiguous policies and points of resistance“. In: *Nationalism and Identity Construction in Central Asia: Dimensions, Dynamics, and Directions*. Blue Ridge Summit, United states: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2014, 42-57 <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/>

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> Smagulova, Juldyz. 'Language Policies of Kazakhization and Their Influence on Language Attitudes and Use'. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 11, no. 3–4 (1 July 2008): 440–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050802148798>.

language and literature, in English<sup>61</sup> The percentage of Kazakh language schools has more than doubled since independence, and the Russian-only school number is twice as low<sup>62</sup>. In 2024, almost half of the students (47,3%) went to mixed language schools, 43% to Kazakh-only language schools, and only 9,3% to Russian<sup>63</sup>. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the report does not specify the language of instruction in ‘mixed language’ schools in 2024. Still, based on earlier years, it appears to be primarily Kazakh-Russian schools. Regarding higher education, Kazakh language enrollment is around 65% without noticeable changes in the last 5 years, Russian - at 26,3% with a 3,9% decrease and English at 8,5%, almost doubling from 4,6 in 2019.<sup>64</sup> The data showcases the dominance of Kazakh language education, decreasing the role of Russian and increasing that of English.

Hig Heller has persuasively argued that when studying multilingual societies, we need to expand our understanding of language as a marker of ethnic identity or national affiliation to include consideration of how the position of a language within the global knowledge-based marketplace can affect how both the language and its speakers are socially positioned.<sup>65</sup> Generally, Kazakh scientists have been critical of language reforms and efforts to strengthen national identity through different policies over the years. In a recent analysis, Larubassova notes that trilingual policy emphasizes development proficiency in English more than in Kazakh among Russian speakers or Russian among Kazakh speakers, further deepening existing inequalities and producing “elite closure”.<sup>66</sup> In her analysis, Smagulova argues: “Kazakhstan’s case highlights that ritualistic and symbolic gestures or even institutionalizing a demographically dominant language are not able to rectify historically formed relations of power.”<sup>67</sup> In her belief, undergoing these reforms without changing speakers' socio-economic positioning can be potentially dangerous. It can propel populist nationalism, feed social tension, and even trigger ethnic clashes.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, it is clear that language policies in Kazakhstan had limited success and faced heavy criticism as socioeconomic factors complicated the

---

<sup>61</sup> Valerie Sartor, "How Perceptions of the English Language Have Changed in Kazakhstan: A Narrative Analysis," *Central Asian Affairs* 8, no. 1 (2021) p. 29

<sup>62</sup> Kanat Makhanov. "The Trends of Language Shift in Education in Kazakhstan." *Eurasian Research Institute*. Accessed January 6, 2025. <https://www.eurasian-research.org/publication/the-trends-of-language-shift-in-education-in-kazakhstan/>.

<sup>63</sup> Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, *Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan: Statistical Compilation 2019–2023*, Astana, 2024, 62–65. Available at: [www.stat.gov.kz](http://www.stat.gov.kz).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 111

<sup>65</sup> Monica Heller. „The Commodification of Language“. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 (2010): 101–14.

<sup>66</sup> Laura Karabassova. 2020. Understanding trilingual education reform in Kazakhstan: Why is it stalled? In Egéa Denis (ed.), *Education in Central Asia: A kaleidoscope of challenges and opportunities*, 37–51.

<sup>67</sup> Juldyz, Smagulova „When Language Policy Is Not Enough“. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 2021, nr. 265–269. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2020-0101>. p.267

<sup>68</sup> Ibid p. 268

situation.

### 3.2.2 Previous research on the youth's language choices in Kazakhstan

The exploration of language choices among the youth in Kazakhstan holds significant importance in understanding the complex interplay between linguistic preferences and the construction of national identity. This literature review examines the body of research on young people's language preferences in Kazakhstan, particularly emphasizing the variables influencing these preferences.

There are surveys, research articles, and a thesis regarding youth's language choices in Kazakhstan; however, limited research is available on mobile university students, who would be the focus of my research. There is a lack of research from foreign scholars, and most of the studies come from local universities in Kazakhstan. While research conducted by scholars from the same country can offer valuable insights into local perspectives and nuances, an overemphasis on research from a homogeneous group of scholars may lead to limited perspectives and cultural bias. Most research focuses on schools and the interplay between Russian and Kazakh languages in speech patterns but less on English.

For instance, a recent study conducted by Kuzhabekova<sup>69</sup> focuses on high-school children in Kazakhstan. In it, she focuses on language use patterns among children going to Russian-speaking and Kazakh-speaking schools. The study revealed a tendency of Kazakh-speaking children to use Russian in communication with peers. It also revealed that children in both groups increasingly rely on using Russian and English in communication across various modern media, such as TV and the Internet. However, the research did not focus on the reasons behind it or touch upon questions of national identity.

The thesis research performed by Jumagaliyeva<sup>70</sup> not only explores the language patterns but aims to identify the reasons for Russian being more dominant than Kazakh among people in the age group relevant to my research (18-25). The findings show that currently, predominantly Russian is used across various domains such as friendship, social clubs, and media, whereas Kazakh is restricted to family usage. As the research was conducted across various geographical regions, clear divisions were visible (Kazakh is more used in western and southern regions, predominantly ethnically

---

<sup>69</sup>Aliya Kuzhabekova. „Language Use among Secondary School Students in Kazakhstan“. *Applied Linguistics Research Journal* 3 nr.2 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.14744/alrj.2019.29964>.

<sup>70</sup>Aidana Jumagaliyeva, "Choosing between Kazakh and Russian: A Study of Young Ethnic Kazakhs' Language Choices through the Lens of Habitus." (Master's thesis, Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education, 2021)



Kazakh). As for the reasons for the lower usage of the Kazakh language, most respondents mentioned a lack of prestige and economic demand. Although the participants were not against using Kazakh, some revealed that the low level of Kazakh proficiency did not allow them to speak it, naming existing shaming from fluent speakers. Although this research was relevant in revealing some language patterns and language choice reasons, it did not focus on identity questions. Furthermore, the study was conducted with few participants (8), not allowing for generalization of its conclusions.

A large-scale study on people's perceptions of national identity in modern Kazakhstan was done by D. Sharipova<sup>71</sup>. The study draws on an original nationwide survey (N = 1,600) conducted in January 2016 in Kazakhstan and two focus groups held in Almaty in April 2017. One of the focuses of this research is language. According to the study, 71% believe that knowing the Kazakh language is an integral part of Kazakh identity, showing that it is considered an essential element for most people. Nevertheless, when broken down by ethnicity, only 38% of Russians believed that language is important, while the figure was 85% among ethnic Kazakhs. Despite this, interviewees still noted that the Kazakh language has a lower status and most favoured Russian in reading and communicating with colleagues; only 2% of respondents claimed not to be fluent in Russian, while the figure was 41% for Kazakh. At the same time, other interviewees strongly disagreed with the idea that the Kazakh language is inferior or not modern. The study is helpful as it reveals people's perceptions of their national identity regarding language. However, this is not a youth survey and does not differentiate the respondents into age groups. Furthermore, while it gives a statistical overview, it is not an in-depth research.

Louise Wheeler<sup>72</sup> conducted in-depth research on multilingualism and identities in Kazakhstan for her doctorate thesis. This thesis presents a linguistic ethnographic study of language ideologies and identities in a multilingual university community at Kazakhstan Scientific University (KSU). The results emphasized the existing tensions when it comes to building an identity. Whilst there was evidence of some students at KSU employing marked use of Kazakh to purposefully construct stances of patriotism, morality, and ethnic pride, for others, lack of communicative competence or confidence in Russian could be interpreted as indexing them negatively, associated with the imposed identities of rural, uneducated, poorer or less 'cultured' speakers. Although a much more recent addition to Kazakhstan's linguistic landscape, English was also an essential ideological resource at KSU for indexing the speaker as globalized, upwardly mobile, educated, and modern. While research is

---

<sup>71</sup> Sharipova, Dina. „Perceptions of National Identity in Kazakhstan: Pride, Language, and Religion“. *Muslim World* 110, nr. 1 (2020): 89–106. <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12320>.

<sup>72</sup> Wheeler, Louise. „A Linguistic Ethnographic Perspective on Kazakhstan's Trinity of Languages: Language Ideologies and Identities in a Multilingual University Community“, (Doctor's thesis, University of Birmingham, 2017)

important in providing insight into the language's relation to the identities of university students, it did not focus on national identity specifically. It is also important to note that the research itself was conducted during the 2013-14 academic year, and there have been further changes in Kazakhstan's society, particularly in its political and economic relationship with Russia, that may have resulted in further shifts in its linguistic and ideological landscape.

A big-scale study regarding English language usage and attitudes towards it was performed among the students in the city of Almaty by Elise Ahn and Juldyy Smagulova<sup>73</sup>. 2,954 students aged between 12-18 were surveyed between 2014 and 2017. Although limited to one city and conducted up to a decade before, this research is particularly relevant as the students surveyed would now be aged 18 to 27, representing the same demographic group I am focusing on, providing valuable observations into language attitudes during their formative years. Several valuable insights emerge: first, English delivers an alternative for those who may not have access to the titular language – Kazakh – to be able to sufficiently advance in terms of career and life, which further incentivizes learning English over other languages, particularly in more densely populated cities like Almaty. The research also found that for most students, English was seen as a tool for accessing better opportunities in the job market, particularly for those wishing for global opportunities. Nevertheless, even those students with good English command barely used it in daily interactions, and it was limited to academic and entertainment purposes, for instance, reading books or watching movies, rather than social interactions. This research showcases that the English language is highly aspirational among young people, although at the time still not integrated into everyday life.

Another study focusing on the English language, although on a much smaller scale, was conducted by Valerie Sartor in Karaganda between 2019 and 2020.<sup>74</sup> The research focused on changes in perception regarding the English language across generations. For the demographic most relevant to my research, 23 school and university students aged 16-21 were surveyed representing the younger generation. 75% of the students were mixed or of non-Kazakh heritage. The findings mostly mirror the previous research. English is seen as a "cool" modern language that students see as a vehicle for mobility potentially enabling them to travel, study, and work internationally. In contrast to middle-aged participants who have seen English mostly as just a pathway to academic and economic mobility, youngsters are also increasingly using it as a tool for global communication and access to

---

<sup>73</sup> Elise Ahn and Juldyy Smagulova, "English Language Choices in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan," *World Englishes* 41, no. 1 (2022): 9–23, <https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12552>.

<sup>74</sup> Valerie Sartor, "How Perceptions of the English Language Have Changed in Kazakhstan: A Narrative Analysis," *Central Asian Affairs* 8, no. 1 (2021): p. 27–57,



international entertainment, such as music, gaming, and social media. Concern over the negative impact on the Kazakh language was also expressed. Despite the trilingual language policy being promoted as aspiring to give equal access to all three languages, the lack of quality Kazakh-language resources and its limited use in educational and professional settings poses a risk of further marginalizing Kazakh in favour of Russian and English.

In summary, existing research highlights the dominance of Russian in social contexts and the increasing role of English. It also raises concern that the continuing dominance of Russian and the increasing popularity of English may negatively affect the Kazakh language. Most of the research is focused on high school students or is limited to university students in single cities. Therefore, research that includes students from multiple regions is relevant for better representation. Furthermore, I believe that recent changes in the political climate in Kazakhstan due to inside and outside political shifts may have contributed to changes in these perceptions, so more up-to-date research in this field is necessary. This study intends to fill the existing literature gap and contribute to a better understanding of the ever-changing development and representation of Kazakh national identity among young, mobile Kazakhs.

## **4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Research design and methodological approach**

To answer the research question, "What factors influence the perception and adoption of the Kazakh language and identity among young, mobile Kazakhs studying in European countries?", a qualitative research approach is adopted. According to John W. Creswell: "We conduct qualitative research because a problem or an issue needs to be explored. This exploration is needed in turn, because of a need to study a group or population, identify variables that can be measured, or hear silenced voices."<sup>75</sup> Quantitative data may overlook intricate social, emotional, and cognitive processes involved in language choice and identity formation process. It is particularly relevant in my research, where reliance on previous studies would not account for the factors that may have happened in the last 3-4 years. Hence, a qualitative approach is a good choice for this study as it allows for a deeper understanding of the complex, changing dynamics of language choice and identity formation among young Kazakhs, addressing gaps that quantitative methods or reliance on past studies may overlook.

---

<sup>75</sup> John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 40.

The approach will also be phenomenological. A phenomenological study "describes the meaning for several individuals of their *lived experiences* of a concept or a phenomenon."<sup>76</sup> It focuses on outlining what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon. This approach was chosen primarily because research of commonalities and essences from those experiences can help better understand the factors affecting this demographic. In essence, the common phenomenon that all of the participants are experiencing is: navigating the perception and adoption of the Kazakh language and national identity while living and studying in a European context. Due to different factors and their individual perceptions and relations with these factors, they may construct their Kazakh identity differently and have different notions about adopting and using the Kazakh language. This research approach helps to explore shared experiences and uncover the essence of how respondents perceive and adopt their language and national identity in a foreign context, providing insights into the interplay of cultural, social, and political influences.

This research will use B. Anderson and P. Bourdieu's concepts to structure the thematic interpretation of the phenomenological findings. B. Anderson's concept of "imagined community" deals with national identity formation in Kazakhstan both on its own and as a factor influencing language choices. It will also help to delve deeper into the effects of "Kazakhization" policies and different political internal and external events. On the other hand, a complementary framework by P. Bourdieu helps to better understand how upbringing, social interactions and economic factors help shape the language choices of young Kazakhs studying abroad. The concepts of *habitus*, *capital*, and *fields of interaction* will be used. The theoretical lens elevates the phenomenological approach by providing a deeper understanding of the social and cultural contexts influencing participants' experiences.

The scope of this study is "young", mobile people from Kazakhstan who are currently studying or have recently (within the last year) studied in European countries. "Young people" is a relatively fluid concept with no exact definition. According to the United Nations, youth is best understood as a period of transition from dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence.<sup>77</sup> The United Nations defines a young person as someone aged 15-24, while the European Commission defines someone aged between 15 and 29. For this research, I will focus on people who have already left the compulsory school education but have yet to establish their own independent families or working relations. Therefore, a young person will generally be over 18, and the upper limit might be up to 29, as the European Commission defines. This demographic represents people who have grown up fully

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 57

<sup>77</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), *Definition of Youth*, 2013, <http://undesadspd.org/Youth.aspx>.

in independent Kazakhstan, and therefore have been affected by both Kazakhisation and trilingual language policies in their upbringing. It is also the demographic, which is at a critical stage of identity exploration and formation as they transition into adulthood and engage with new cultural, social, and educational environments. Ethnicity, class, region or rural vs urban divide were not a specific factor in choosing the research participants. Selecting participants based on these factors would have created a risk of narrowing down a relatively small pool of students. In addition, the study avoids reinforcing stereotypes or oversimplified narratives about the Kazakh society, by focusing rather on factors that are universally experienced, such as mobility, trilingual education policies, and Kazakhisation and not internal divisions within Kazakhstan.

#### **4.2 Data collection method**

The study included 27 participants, 18-26 years of age, 74.1% female and 25.9% male, studying in various European countries, with the majority, 14 out of 27 studying in Lithuania. Participants were initially found through acquaintances in the Erasmus students network (ESN) from different universities in Lithuania and abroad by asking if they knew of any Kazakh students in their sections. After contacting and interviewing initial Kazakh students, they were asked if they could recommend any friends or relatives currently on exchange or studying full-time in Europe, thus applying a snowball technique. Ten respondents are studying abroad full time, but most came to study on an exchange, and back home, they studied mostly either in Astana or Almaty. Although not intentional, the pool of participants resulted in quite a high regional diversity in Kazakhstan (figure 2); several participants were born in or were from ethnic Kazakh families in neighbouring countries. Nevertheless, if they moved to Kazakhstan under the age of 5 and did not attend kindergarten in a foreign country, they were counted as being from the city in Kazakhstan. Regarding ethnicity, most respondents were from families where both parents were ethnic Kazakhs, with two participants having one Kazakh parent and one of non-ethnic Kazakh heritage. Respondents attended high schools which prioritised the English language, with three studying in Nazarbayev's Intellectual schools, one in Bilim Kazakh-Turkish school, and four learning all three languages from the first grade. Respondents also varied in fields of study, ranging from social sciences to engineering and mathematics, with medicine, business, and IT, each around 20%.



length of participants' answers. All interviews were recorded and transcribed first with the otter.ai transcription program and then reviewed manually for any mistakes. Demographic and language fluency data has been written down manually into Excel sheets; the program did not pick up some town names, so to ensure accuracy, they were verified by contacting respondents. Interview answers were then organised by individual questions, creating a comprehensive file where answers were grouped side by side for comparison, with specific demographic data attached to each answer to facilitate nuanced analysis. This structured approach allowed me to identify variations and patterns in participants' answers. I uploaded subsets of data relevant to specific sections of my analysis to the software Atlas for coding. Codes were generated inductively based on recurring themes and linked to theoretical concepts, ensuring a systematic and thorough data exploration.

### **4.3 Ethical Considerations**

Several steps have been performed to ensure the informed consent of the interviews. All participants were only reached via social media after agreeing to consider participation via friends in ESN or other study participants. After agreeing to talk about the possibility of participating, they were informed about the purpose and main topics of the research, technicalities like the length of the conversation, form, and the anonymity of the study. Interviews were planned with participants who agreed to participate via messaging. Participants were also informed they could refuse to answer questions they deemed too sensitive. Before each interview, participants were asked if they had any remaining questions and if they agreed to start recording. Participants were informed that the recording had ended at the end of each interview. There have been several instances where small talk after the recording had brought up interesting points, and some participants were asked if they would consent to repeat them on record.

Anonymity was also an important ethical consideration, as some of the questions and answers delved into sensitive political issues like views regarding the war in Ukraine, relationships between different minorities, opinions on political decisions, and, on a more personal level, family background. Data that can lead to the participant's identity has not been transcribed. When quoting a participant, they will be assigned a unique number (P1, P2, P3, etc.) while reflecting key demographic and linguistic characteristics, including age, gender, language fluency, region, and studies where relevant. This approach ensures that participants' privacy is safeguarded while allowing for a nuanced understanding of the linguistic and cultural dimensions explored in the study.

## 5. RESEARCH RESULTS

In this section, I will analyse the results of my research - in-depth interviews with young Kazakhs studying in Europe. My analysis aims to answer the main research question: What factors influence the perception and adoption of Kazakh language and identity among young, mobile Kazakhs studying in European countries? I will be guided by my research objectives. First, I will identify respondents' general perceptions of each language and the roles they appoint to it in their lives and future. Then I will explore how the respondents perceive and construct their Kazakh identity, and finally, I will identify and examine the main factors influencing these choices and perceptions.

This sequence follows a logical progression from foundational understanding to deeper analysis, ensuring a comprehensive approach to answering the research question. The first part of my analysis uncovers each language's functional and emotional value in participants' lives, delving into individual language perceptions and dynamics between them. Once the linguistic landscape is explored, the research will explore how identity is perceived and constructed in the second part. With a clear understanding of the current linguistic and identity dynamics between research participants, the study is well-positioned to examine the factors influencing these phenomena. Theoretical framework, interview questions and previous literature analysis shape the choice of subsections in the last part. First, the “Kazakh Language as a Symbol of National Identity” focuses on ideological and symbolic motivations in adopting Kazakh to reassert Kazakh national identity, distancing from Russian cultural and linguistic influence. The second, “Social and Institutional Drivers and Language Adoption,” discusses how family habits, childhood experiences and education systems emphasise the role of *habitus* and institutional structures shaping language patterns in adolescence.

## 5.1 Perception of the Value and Role of Languages

In the first part of the result assessment, I will present the different associations each respondent appoints to different languages, giving an overview of general perceptions. Then, I will explore the roles appointed to different languages in the fields of home life, education, job aspirations and social interactions with peers. This part does not yet seek to identify different factors but rather explores the general role and value appointed to Kazakh Russian and English to form a foundational understanding for deeper analysis.

When looking at Kazakh language associations, three main groups of words emerge: those related to national identity, positive linguistic descriptions and family bonds. Almost half of all answers dealt with national imagery (30 out of 66). They can be grouped into three key themes: 1) traditional heritage with words like *heritage*, *horse meat*, *Beshbarmak (national food)*, *Dombra (national instrument)*, *traditions...*; 2) *national* and ethnic identity: *patriotism*, *national*, *ethnic*, *Motherland*, *obligatory (to keep the nation alive)...*; and 3) nomadic culture: *freedom*, *nomad*, *mountain*, *nature...* These themes were present across participants regardless of Kazakh language fluency; for example, one respondent with poor language command still exclaimed: “Mother language, even though I don't actually speak it, I still consider it.” (P17). The high frequency of national identity-related associations suggests that participants view the Kazakh language as a core part of their imagined community. While traditional elements dominate, their mention across all fluency groups, frequently mentioning words such as *freedom*, *patriotism*, and even *obligatory*, suggest that participants view it as a necessary part of maintaining a resilient national identity rather than just a symbolic aspect. High frequency of positive linguistic descriptions: *warmth* ( frequent word), *rich*, *melodic*, *beautiful...*; and family bonds: *family*, *home*, *siblings*, *childhood...* highlight the emotional and relational aspects of language. Respondents who referred to family bonds when talking about language were either primarily Kazakh language speakers or spoke in Kazakh at home or with relatives. As Bourdieu’s *habitus* explains, early exposure to language in family settings creates a predisposition to associate language with comfort and belonging. Positive associations were frequent for all respondents, suggesting that it generally carries positive emotional connotations. On the other hand, while the Kazakh language holds a high symbolic capital, it is not associated with high social or practical utility based on the associations. Only one non-ethnic Kazakh respondent (P14) mentioned *friends* and *people*, but it was more related to her seeing her Kazakh friends speak the

language. Several respondents also mentioned words like *harsh* and *hard* or talked about complex linguistic components, showcasing that language can also be perceived as challenging to learn or maintain fluency in.

In contrast, the Russian language was primarily associated with social utility and, although at a lower frequency, with cultural and educational value. It was also considered a family domain for some respondents who spoke Russian at home. Yet, while Kazakh gathered overwhelmingly positive cultural and linguistic associations, for Russian, they were mixed. Associations reflecting the social utility of the Russian language, like *common* (most frequent), *universal*, *convenient*, *communication*, reflect a high linguistic capital Russian holds in respondents' views as a widely used language: "It's common in post-Soviet countries, so it's useful for us to speak in Russian because, as you know, Kazakhstan is a multi-national country, and the common language to speak is Russian" (P7). *School/education* and *literature*, *Pushkin* were some of the most often named associations highlighting its perceived cultural capital in the form of access to literature and academic knowledge. For some respondents, Russian was also associated with family domain: *family language*, *home*, *childhood*.... All of them were primarily Russian speakers. Nevertheless, out of all primarily Russian-speaking respondents, only less than one-third associated Russian with home or family. The low frequency of this association suggests that Russia's symbolic and emotional role in family contexts may be diminishing, or other domains (e.g., social utility or education) dominate its perceived value. The linguistic associations demonstrate ambivalence with both: *rich*, *powerful*, *open*, *honest*, and *unapologetic*, *harsh*, *aggressive*. For most respondents, the perception was of honest, direct, and assertive language, allowing for open communication. *Unapologetic*, *powerful* or *aggressive* may also suggest cultural narratives affecting language perception. Lastly, for primarily Kazakh speakers, the Russian language also brought a number of historical and political connotations: *war*, *colonisation*, *Putin*, *Soviet Union*. Highlighting the historical and contemporary geopolitical tensions. One respondent with limited Kazakh proficiency remarked:

[The...] past, because we were in the tight boundaries with Russian-speaking society. Therefore, it started from my grandparents. They actually transferred my parents from Kazakh school to Russian school, and from that my parents started to speak Russian on the daily basis, and they still do with me. So I think it's more about the past. Past than the future. [...] I want to speak Kazakh in the future. (P27)

Although primarily Russian speakers tend to focus more so on the utility of the language than historical tensions, in this section dealing with perceptions, it is also essential to highlight that when talking about language proficiency, several respondents who spoke better Russian than Kazakh prefaced their fluency ranking with a sense of regret, e. g.: "Unfortunately, it's Russian; " (P2),



“Unfortunately, in my family, we mostly speak Russian“ (P15). This demonstrates that respondents increasingly aspire to increase their linguistic capital in Kazakh to better align with their national identity and the ‘imagined community’.

When it comes to the English language, there were no negative connotations. Associations could be grouped into words reflecting educational and professional opportunities and various cultural associations. Language itself was perceived as *easy, soft, accessible*. English is perceived as easier to learn due to its less complex grammatical structure than Kazakh or Russian. English simplicity enhances its value as a tool for social and economic mobility. This is reflected in the most frequent associations mentioned by students. English was viewed as a tool for education and intellectual development: *academic, knowledge, studying*; professional and career opportunities: *work, business, opportunities*; and shaping future aspirations: *growth, future, potential*. English holds a high linguistic capital in the educational and linguistic fields. Proficiency in English enhances students’ value within these competitive environments, offering them social mobility. In contrast with Kazakh, whose perceived value is localised and internalised, and Russian, perceived as a valuable social tool only in national and post-Soviet contexts, English is seen as a gateway to global ambitions and oriented towards the future. It is reiterated by the fact that the most common associations among respondents for the English language were words signifying global mobility, like *international, world, global, travel, etc.* Beyond practicality, English carries cultural prestige, mostly from symbolic US and UK imagery: *tea, Big Ben, London, movies, songs, New York, “freedom for the USA”* (P13). Overall, respondents perceive English as both practical and a symbol of global connectivity, offering high linguistic capital by increasing students' opportunities and competitiveness.

Regarding family language, respondents’ answers more or less correlate with previous research, with Kazakh being comfortably situated as the home language, except in cases where parents did not have a good Kazakh command. To begin with, most respondents claimed to be using Kazakh at home to some extent, with half claiming to be primarily using Kazakh and only sometimes mixing in Russian words. Seven respondents primarily spoke Russian at home, but two still spoke Kazakh with their grandparents. Mixing is usual across the entire spectrum: primarily Kazakh speakers sometimes use Russian words, and primarily Russian speakers often use Kazakh phrases, while in some families, respondents were not able to tell precisely which language they are using more or said they speak more Kazakh with one parent and more Russian to another. This highlights *bilingual dualism* in respondents' speech; rather than separate languages, their speech consists of both simultaneously. Those who speak predominantly Kazakh in their households all plan to use Kazakh in their future families, with some noting that they also want their children to know Russian and English. For those from primarily Russian and mixed-language families, a lot depends on their plans.

Of those who consider the possibility of marrying non-Kazakh, four prefer teaching a child partner's language, Russian, and only teach Kazakh if they marry a Kazakh or stay in Kazakhstan, prioritising language's practical utility over symbolic value. Nevertheless, several respondents who thought about the possibility of a multinational family would prefer to teach or at least try to teach their child Kazakh, but not Russian. Around half mentioned no plans to move out, and the majority of them would like to prioritise Kazakh as their primary household language vs just a mixed language approach, even in cases of having poor Kazakh command, but naming it as one of the motivations to learn better Kazakh. To sum up, while much of the perceptions regarding languages among respondents correlate with current research, their plans offer interesting insights. All of the respondents who currently speak Kazakh at home and half of those whose parents primarily use Russian would prefer to use Kazakh in their own families. Some respondents claim they would teach Kazakh but not Russian if they moved abroad. This aligns with the newest surveys indicating that young people increasingly wish to prioritise Kazakh at home. In addition, the influence of the English language is increasing as several respondents indicated that they would also like to use some English at home, whether they choose to emigrate or not. Nevertheless, for some respondents, Kazakh is still perceived as not valuable enough to prioritise in their future families in case of moving abroad.

Regarding their current studies and wishes for job opportunities, English dominates, with Russian coming second. This outcome is unsurprising as the research focuses on individuals pursuing education in Europe rather than choosing Russia or staying in Kazakhstan through the studies, which is a more traditional approach, highlighting their global aspirations. Nine respondents are studying abroad full-time in English, 7 chose English at home university, and one of the respondents is studying master's in German. 10 are studying in Russian back home. While English dominates STEM fields and social sciences, those who study in Russian mainly pursue medical sciences, 3 pursue business and one studies mineral extraction in his regional university. Nonetheless, students cite wishing to meet 'global standards' and be updated with the newest innovations as reasons for coming on an exchange or pursuing a degree in English: "Medicine is always changing. Something's coming up all the time, new drugs, new methods of treatment. They are in English, all of them (P7)". Some respondents claim that despite studying in Russian, they always try to read the same assigned themes in English (P27). It suggests that Russian language materials no longer fully meet their standard, demonstrating a potentially shrinking Russian linguistic capital in higher Education. In addition, most hospitals now require IELTS certification to apply for medical residency in Kazakhstan, prompting students to reach out to English language resources more (P18). Regarding the Kazakh language, only two respondents studied in Kazakh back home, both studying education (P5; P11). Nevertheless, several respondents pursuing higher education in Russian expressed their frustration with barriers for

those wanting to study in Kazakh:

[...] We don't have enough materials in Kazakh. If we have materials in Kazakh, most of them are just translated from Russian with mistakes. [...] in the beginning of my studying, half of the groups were Russian-speaking, and half were Kazakh-speaking, but now, I think we have 80% Russian speaking groups, and 20% in Kazakh speaking groups, due to limit of the accessibility (P27)

This showcases an existing demand for Kazakh language studies in Kazakhstan, but students often perceive English or Russian as better options due to limitations in the quality of studies in Kazakh. In terms of job perspectives, young Kazakhs who choose Europe for their studies abroad do not see Kazakh as a language they would aspire to speak in their future careers, except those who would like to pursue the medical field, but only to the extent of wishing to communicate with Kazakh-speaking patients and several business students, to the extent of speaking with Kazakh-speaking clients. The domination of English is even more visible here. All except for 2 respondents (one said they would speak in Russian and one in German) hoped to speak mostly English in their future careers, whether they choose to live abroad permanently, come back later or stay in Kazakhstan but work in international companies. Even those pursuing education studies in Kazakh hoped to land a job in an international school and teach their subject in English. The roles assigned to the Kazakh language by respondents today generally reflect previous studies on Kazakh language perceptions in the career field and demonstrate the still low linguistic capital of Kazakh in higher education and the job market. However, this study also indicates a demand for higher education in Kazakh. In the case of young Kazakhs studying in Europe, the opportunities perceived to come with the command of English seem to be compelling them to reject the Russian language in their career field, leaving Kazakh behind.

While most studies highlight the dominance of the Russian language in social interactions, interview respondents offered a more nuanced approach. While most recognise that Russian often dominates, rather than being absent, Kazakh is being mixed in subconsciously or used purposefully where fluency allows or notions between peers themselves encourage it. This answer from a 22-year-old student who is more fluent in Russian reflects rather typical sentiments:

“It depends on what kind of friends actually, because some of them prefer speaking Kazakh, so I'm communicating with them in the Kazakh. However, like time to time we're speaking Russian. So it depends on the situation. [...] I'm trying to speak pure Kazakh, however, like time to time there is such [a] feeling when you know the words, it's in your mind, but you don't know the current translation, but you can't just memorise it.” (P21)

This also highlights another notable observation in the data, as almost half of the respondents

report making active efforts to speak more Kazakh with friends, no matter the fluency level. When communicating with fellow Kazakhs abroad, Russian a lot of the time dominates conversations, mainly because people studying abroad come from different regions and friend groups often have different fluency levels. Thus, it is easier to use Russian as the default language; nevertheless, around half of the respondents claim to always approach fellow Kazakhs in Kazakh first. Around a third claim to always prefer Kazakh whenever possible, and two respondents recounted multiple times when they asked their friend group to switch back to Kazakh. Nevertheless, the Russian language still dominates conversations among peers in the case of my respondents, especially when meetings involve people of different Kazakh language fluency levels. Nevertheless, Kazakh is not absent but mixed in, or its use is context-dependent, and a significant number of respondents make a deliberate effort to use more Kazakh in their everyday conversations.

All in all, young Kazakhs studying in Europe perceive the role and value of Kazakh, first of all, as a strong identity marker connected to heritage, warmth and family in many cases. However, its practical utility remains limited in educational and professional lives, although many wish to increase their proficiency in personal and familial settings. Russian is primarily valued for its academic and social utility among peers and often in family contexts. Nevertheless, it also carries mixed associations, including historical tensions and declining relevance in the global aspirations of respondents. English dominates their ambitions in career and academics, being associated with mobility, growth and professional success, reflecting its high linguistic capital.

## **5.2 The Elements of National Identity**

Different views emerge among young Kazakhs studying in Europe when constructing and perceiving Kazakh identity. To better understand the importance respondents place on their ethnic identification and Kazakh language, they were asked these questions: whether they consider themselves to be Kazakhstani (citizens) or Kazakhs (ethnic) first, whether they consider multilingualism a part of Kazakh identity, and what plays the most significant role in defining what it means to be a Kazakh.

To begin with, the majority of the respondents identified themselves as Kazakh first; six respondents preferred Kazakhstani identification and three were not able or did not want to say. The question was easy to answer for most, explaining that Kazakh (cultural, ethnic) identification is more important, but some answers were more nuanced. Respondents who identified as Kazakhstani first did so either because they felt that it was unfair to differentiate or that they were not traditional enough to claim to be Kazakh first, with one respondent explaining her decision as “being the child of the city” (P21). In both instances, saying Kazakhstani first was prefaced with “unfortunately” (P20, P21).

On the other hand, three respondents chose Kazakh because they felt that everyone in Kazakhstan is Kazakh. One said that she would not identify as Kazakhstani because of her dislike of the government (P17). Both ethnically mixed respondents identified as Kazakh first, with the respondent of mixed Russian and Kazakh heritage exclaiming: “I would say I'm Kazakh first. Still, I don't speak Kazakh, but I'm Kazakh. Second, Kazakhstani, and third Russian.” (P24) The results reveal a somewhat fluid understanding of the terms in some cases, some seeing it as a division between ethnic lines, political or traditional observation. Nevertheless, a clear conclusion is seen: being part of Kazakhstan's “imagined community” is essential to Kazakh university students in Europe. However, some raise concerns over the inclusivity of these terms, while others embrace it as a sign of their “Kazakhness”.

Several vital trends emerge when it comes to language's role in self-identification. First, most respondents consider being bilingual or trilingual as part of the Kazakh identity. Slightly more (10 to 7) consider all three languages to be a trait of Kazakh identity, including English. Most respondents considered multilingualism a positive trait of Kazakh identity, talking about it with pride. Respondents often saw the use of Russian as a natural part of their identity. Despite acknowledging its colonial roots, they regarded it as both a marker of their adaptability as a nation (P1) and a practical advantage in today's multilingual context (P17). Nevertheless, six respondents claimed that while multilingualism is a trait of Kazakhs, only the Kazakh language is a part of the identity and is more important, rejecting the Russian language: “It's just more practical and convenient, I think, it's not like a huge part of identity [...] Kazakh language, of course, is part of Kazakh identity, but Russian, no, I don't think so.” (P22). The mixed responses underscore an ongoing negotiation of national identity and different interpretations of their “imagined community”. While some respondents embrace bilingualism and even trilingualism, promoted by the state, as part of the unique Kazakh identity, others see knowing multiple languages simply as a tool, separate from what it means to be Kazakh.

When asked to name the most important thing defining being a Kazakh, most consider keeping traditions and understanding history and culture to be the most important. Respondents were divided on the importance of language; six respondents believed that knowing and using the Kazakh language is central to being Kazakh, while others considered it important, strengthening the Kazakh identity, but not a compulsory feature. Some appointed traditional Kazakh traits such as hospitality and freedom as the identity's core. Several respondents named ethnic heritage but noted that it is only for those identifying as Kazakhs, not Kazakhstani, which is universal. Islam as a part of identity was important only for four respondents, with most claiming it is not important and some even raising worries of increasing “Arabic” influence, which they consider opposite of their identity, with some expressing that Tengrism, if anything, is closer (P14; P17; P27). These responses show that for

Kazakhs studying in Europe religion plays a relatively minor role, while some are even considering it as a threat to contemporary Kazakh identity. These responses reveal a multifaceted understanding of Kazakh identity, where cultural traditions, history, and hospitality take precedence over religious or linguistic uniformity for most.

### **5.3 Factors Influencing The Adoption And Perception Of Kazakh Language And Identity**

#### **5.3.1 Kazakh Language as a Symbol of National Identity**

In general, all respondents believe that the Kazakh language is an important marker that strengthens ties with the imagined community. A notable trend in these interviews was the pull most respondents felt about speaking Kazakh either in recent years or after entering adulthood (sixteen respondents). This section will examine the sociopolitical factors that strengthen the Kazakh identity.

To begin with, most of the respondents relate their wish to speak more Kazakh with “realising their identity” (P10; P22), a wish to save their culture, heritage. Several respondents said they wanted to speak Kazakh to have stronger ties with their ethnicity: “I realised my roots [...] now, I accepted that I'm half and half, not fully some like one thing, and now I want to get to know my Kazakh side. (P22)”; “I want to be a part of my community and like to be confident enough when I say I am Kazakh, not just by my ethnicity.” (P20). Language is seen as a marker of identity, which can position participants as part of their imagined community more confidently. Respondents also believe that by choosing to speak Kazakh, they are helping to ensure the historical continuity of the Kazakh nation and its cultural heritage.

Regarding the image of their nation, most respondents relate the traditional imagery of hospitality, wedding traditions, and food as markers of their ethnicity. At the same time, historical narratives are also relevant, with nomadism, freedom and clan-tribal relations at its centre. Almost all of the respondents knew their tribe, and several talked about recently asking their relatives more about their family history (P13; P26). While there are no power dynamics, respondents spoke about tribal relations being a way to make new friends (P7; P9; P14; P21; P19; P24) and an important part of their ties to their heritage, especially traditionally knowing seven generations of your ancestors, which while some respondents were proud to talk about (P1; P2; P15; P17), others were sad about not saving the names in their family (P1; P27), showcasing the importance of the idea of historical continuity in Kazakh imagined community. When it comes to tragedies providing emotional legitimacy to a nation, all of them were related to either Czarist or Soviet past, often referred to as colonisation by Russia (P7; P8; P11; P14; P17; P18; P20; P27) and some calling the current changes regarding language in

Kazakhstan a decolonisation process (P11; P27). The most often mentioned negatives were Russification, losing cultural heritage, and the famine of the 1930s. Several respondents also wanted to provide a more nuanced approach, that despite losing language and some of the heritage, Kazakhs became more urbanised and educated (P26), and the country is multinational and inclusive because of the Soviet past (P4; P21; P23). The answers by respondents demonstrate the current elements of the “imagined nation” for young mobile Kazakhs. The nomadic imagery and its perceived traditional values are at the centre of it. Nevertheless, some elements of the culture which were perceived as central before Soviet occupation, like Islam or tribal relations are more so symbolic today. Significantly, respondents perceive the Soviet period as a common tragedy experienced by the nation, which has caused a loss of heritage and identity markers like language, even if some try to look for balance in their interpretation. The perception of national identity takes on new dimensions in the light of recent political events.

Regarding the influence of recent political developments as factors in changing perception of the identity and the importance of the Kazakh language, the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine and, in several instances, Kazakh unrest in 2022 was mentioned. Over half of the respondents, fifteen, mentioned the War in Ukraine and subsequent Russian migration to Kazakhstan, which made them reconsider their opinions towards Russia and/or usage of Kazakh and Russian languages. Six respondents named it as the reason they decided to speak Kazakh more:

Russian people started moving here, and we were kind of dissatisfied that they were making fun of us [...] at that time when we saw any Russian people, we started to speak Kazakh with them [...] Russian people think that our national language is Russian, but from the Constitution, Kazakh language is the national language. Russian is for communication. (P2)

Several respondents decided to boycott Russian products and consume English and Kazakh media over Russian (P17; P27), and for some, it made them reconsider Kazakhstan’s historical ties with Russia:

“[The] War in Ukraine was shocking for me, and I started thinking if it happened to my country. How we would react? [...] I think it also gave some impulse to Kazakh people like to start realizing, okay, it can be also dangerous. If Russian language, and like Russia, has big influence, on our country” (P23); Situation in Ukraine [...] it gave an example how other nations and influence can affect the language. Because we also had this thing in Kazakhstan, where we were occupied by Russia. So that’s why, people like my dad, he only was taught how to speak Russian. (P24).

These sentiments reflect how the War in Ukraine made some respondents reexamine the historical and cultural narratives of their nation in light of recent political events. While it had a strong emotional effect, it was a decision-influencing factor only for 6 respondents. For most affected, it reinforced or strengthened their determination to adopt the language. At the same time, many

respondents made divisions between recent Russian migrants, the Russian state and Russian Kazakhs, emphasising that Russian Kazakhs are different, “our” (P4; P14; P16; P17), and none of the criticisms are for them. Underscoring the boundaries of Kazakh “imagined community”. Protests in Almaty and power transition were mentioned as important factors only by three respondents, with others either not mentioning it at all or saying that power transition, in general, had no impact on language/identity developments in Kazakhstan (P1; P4; P16; P17). Nevertheless, for affected students, it had a severe impact; while not from Almaty, respondents P10 and P11 claimed that that was the moment they realised they needed to speak Kazakh more:

It was like the moment when I realised that I live in Kazakhstan and I am a Kazakh so why I'm so dependent on the Russian language [...] I hadn't thought about it before, but it was inside of me, in my mind, and it was the moment I realised everything. (P11).

For respondent P17, who is from Almaty, the events led to a loss of trust in Kazakhstan as a safe and stable environment for the future and a strong rejection of Russian influence, both politically and culturally:

It was after this event I changed my mind. I realized that I don't really see a future in Kazakhstan [...] because, after that, I understood that, first of all, we could hear the shootings outside and all of my family, my parents, were afraid, lying for several days straight on the floor because we were afraid that the bullet will come into our windows. And the horrible thing is that basically what actually happened is that, like lots of Russian military men, they came and just shot innocent citizens like Kazakh protesters, and even some local girl, she was shot just because they gave an order to shoot everyone. Most people understood that Russia is definitely not our friend. [...] And let's say for my future life, my future children. If I'm gonna be honest, I don't want them to have any associations with Russian (language). (P17)

The results showcase that recent political developments have strongly emphasised the Kazakh language and identity while drawing boundaries between “our” Kazakh community and Russia. This underscores the role of collective memory and contemporary political developments in shaping the imagined Kazakh nation for young, mobile Kazakhs.

The experience of being abroad brought similar sentiments to many respondents. To begin with, only two respondents claimed that being abroad had no influence on their views of their language and identity (P1; P13). Others were divided into two groups: those who claimed it had a relatively mild impact but made them more aware of their identity and appreciative of their language and culture, and those who claimed that going abroad had a strong impact on their views. This correlates with assertions by Dolby that studying abroad increases the awareness of national identity and can make



students re-examine their home country for the first time. The majority of those who reported experiencing big changes gave the re-examining of their relationship with the Russian language as a reason. For example:

I'm very amazed that everyone in France speaks only French, and most don't speak English at all. Somewhere deep inside I wish that in Kazakhstan, people also spoke Kazakh that much. (P4); Everyone was asking me, where are you from? I was saying, I'm from Kazakhstan. And they were like, okay, so you have your language. I was like, yeah. But when I say I speak better in Russian, they were like, why? I was like, really, why? I felt that it's not right, like I am a Kazakh. It should not be Russian. For me, it should be Kazakh first. (P10)

As demonstrated, students' experiences reflect Dolby's view that studying abroad strengthens national identity awareness. Most respondents re-examined their relationship with Kazakh identity and language, often reaffirming Kazakh as central to their sense of belonging.

It is important to note that none of the respondents today wish they had not spoken Russian at all. Only one respondent wishes they had spoken it less (P17). While nine respondents wish they had more Kazakh in their lives and education, speaking multiple languages is a benefit for most. Russian is still valued as a social tool for communicating with peers with poorer Kazakh command and getting better access to resources.

In summary, the findings reveal that sociopolitical factors, such as reexamining historical legacies, the War in Ukraine, and personal experiences abroad, have significantly strengthened the Kazakh national identity of the respondents in recent years. This underscores how national identity is not a given, static construct but one that can be continuously reimagined, reconstructed, and strengthened through individuals' experiences.

### *5.2.2 Social and Institutional Drivers and Language Adoption*

Bourdieu's habitus concept underscores the importance of incalculation, or instinction of values

and habits through repetition, from a young age. It can be argued that a person who spoke Kazakh from early childhood, where Kazakh was valued, will feel more comfortable speaking the language today. At the same time, negative dispositions towards language, shaped by societal pressure and *symbolic violence*, can become barriers to linguistic fluency. Nevertheless, the predispositions are durable and can change depending on different experiences and changes in fields where language might be applied with a different value. In this section, I will examine the impact of childhood and teenage years experiences on language and identity for my respondents.

To begin with, 21 out of 27 of my respondents grew up in households where Kazakh was used to some extent. Nevertheless, only eight grew up to be primarily Kazakh language speakers. All seven grew up in households where Kazakh was the primary language. In some, Russian words were mixed in, and in some, parents made it a point to speak “pure” Kazakh (P6; P14), one respondent reported growing up in a household with parents who had poor command of Russian and spoke only Kazakh (P1). They also attended Kazakh schools, with one attending a trilingual language school in the 8th grade (P1). This underscores how early socialisation influences one’s perception of cultural capital. In the early years, going to a different language school may challenge this *habitus*, attributing higher educational value to Russian, but in the respondent’s case, the school environment reinforced the linguistic *habitus* established at home. These schools acted as fields where Kazakh cultural capital was validated and transmitted.

Those who grew up without the Kazakh language at home (P10, P13, P16, P23, P22, and P26) report having very poor Kazakh, with the exception of P13, who, although still attributing Russian more fluency, claims to have no struggles using Kazakh. In P13’s instance, his parents, educated in Russian schools, decided to switch him from a Russian kindergarten to a Kazakh-speaking school, making him the only Kazakh speaker in the family, the fact which he is positive about: “It was actually a very good choice, because they wanted their son to know his own language of his own country, as I finished my school successfully, it means that I know my Kazakh language very well” (P13). The parents’ decision reflects their prioritisation of Kazakh as symbolic capital tied to national identity and demonstrates how the school can act as a transformative field in acquiring linguistic capital. As other respondents went to Russian schools, they did not possess a field to acquire fluency in Kazakh, despite learning it as a compulsory subject, most often from the 1st grade. In two cases, respondents grew up in families where parents understood Kazakh but did not use it with children (P10; P23), which respondents viewed negatively:

It’s not easy for me, because I needed to accept that I’m Kazakh, but I don’t speak Kazakh [...] I think many people don’t learn Kazakh from schools. They actually learn in families [...] My mother can understand, but I never heard her speak Kazakh. (P23)

This underscores the important role of family and institutional fields in shaping linguistic capital, with the absence of Kazakh at home and insufficient school reinforcement often resulting in limited fluency and fragmented identity.

Nevertheless, although school and home language are important factors, they are still not determinants. In several instances, students who grew up in Kazakh-speaking households and went to Kazakh schools still recognise that they are more fluent in Russian than Kazakh. Therefore, understanding the interplay between different languages requires examining the broader sociocultural factors influencing the value of languages in various fields.

Those who went to Russian-speaking schools mostly attributed their lack of fluency to only being able to speak Kazakh at home. As per reasons for going to Russian schools, the most common answer was parents' opinion that they would get a better education and better job opportunities if they went to Russian schools, especially if parents themselves built successful careers, for example: "My parents and also my grandfather, they all got an education in the Russian language. So they did not see a way of getting an education other than in the Russian language;" (P12) "Because they thought that in the future, that would be easier for me to get a job with a higher pay" (P20); demonstrating low linguistic capital attributed to language by some of the respondents parents. For one of them, the choice of school with good English command was more important than in Russian or Kazakh: "They said this school has really good English, and they (parents) didn't care if it's Russian or Kazakh. So they just put me in a Russian school. But for my brother, he went to Kazakh school. (P17)". This nonetheless demonstrates that language utility and potential were the most important factors when choosing a school.

Several respondents recognised that while they only spoke Kazakh as children, attending a Russian school made them lose their fluency (P24; P27). Several students were critical of Kazakh language teaching in Russian schools, claiming they only learned grammar to prepare for exams (P23; P24) but lacked speaking practice. Here, it is important to emphasise that the main factor in losing fluency in many instances was the social field respondents grew up in as children. Even for those who had Kazakh language at home and went to Kazakh schools, Russian could be the dominant language. Students often recognised that during the breaks, everyone was speaking Russian (P4; P5; P9; P20). For instance: "In my childhood, I didn't speak Russian at all, but in kindergarten, I started speaking Russian with other children. So it started from there, yeah, from the first grade, or maybe even kindergarten." (P9) On one hand, it could be expected that children raised in Kazakh-speaking homes and educated in Kazakh schools would develop a Kazakh-oriented linguistic *habitus*. Nevertheless, the dominant use of Russian among peers suggests a parallel *habitus* shaped by the broader sociolinguistic context in which Russian was a dominant and prestigious language.

An important factor shaping the child's perception of linguistic value can also be simple things like cartoons, TV shows, and books. Watching Russian language content as kids and there not being much Kazakh content was an often named factor for those who consider Russian their dominant language today, with some even naming it as the main reason why they speak mostly Russian today: “My father told us always to speak Kazakh [...], but I prefer more Russian, because, you know when I was born, all the cartoons, all the stuff, everything was in Russian. So that's why we are fluent in Russian.” (P2). It is also unsurprising why many respondents attribute the rising popularity of the Kazakh language among youth to the increased availability of Kazakh language content, especially on social media: “Now, rather than earlier, we have our books and our movies are more developed. I watched only YouTube channels in Russian, but now we have a lot of Kazakh channels.” (P5)

If you are an influencer with a lot of followers, you have to know Kazakh because people in comments they would be like, oh my god, shame on you. You don't know the Kazakh language. And you know these trends on Tiktok, “get ready with me” [...] they try to film it in Kazakh. I saw a lot of examples in the comment section, they were like, Oh my God, your Kazakh language is so good. (P1)

A number of respondents also talked about trends in which they themselves are engaging, like wearing traditional jewellery, which used not to be usual (P1; P7; P16; P17; P22) and Kazakh clothing brands (P2; P10; P17; P2) in recent years. According to most respondents, these changes started sometime before the war and accelerated due to it. Demonstrating how cultural products, such as media, clothes, and cartoons, can enhance the cultural value of Kazakh identity and language. This factor has significantly increased the perceived linguistic value, motivating them to embrace their identity more.

Nevertheless, as illustrated by the example by P5 above, the emergence of Kazakh-language content, while fostering linguistic capital, can lead to *symbolic violence* after it starts reinforcing expectations and hierarchies of linguistic legitimacy. Most of the respondents who struggle to speak Kazakh fluently today have experienced some sort of shaming for lack of fluency at some point in their lives, which is particularly affecting in childhood:

“Whenever, like, let's say the relatives from my dad's side, they come, and they would try to speak with me in Kazakh, [...] even though I tried my best to say anything, but then they would just, they would just laugh at me and just make... Yeah. [...] toxic jokes that, oh yeah, your daughter just seems like Russian and things like this. So I think because of that, out of spite, maybe sometimes I had this: I didn't want to speak, or I didn't have the motivation to learn Kazakh even more because I felt offended, not only like because they laughed at me, but also because they had made some toxic comments towards my parents as well.” (P17).

The *habitus* begins in childhood when individuals internalise norms, values and associations. Children for whom exposure to Kazakh was already limited and inconsistent shaming during early attempts to speak Kazakh would make it feel even less natural and instinctive. Nevertheless, today, all respondents with similar experiences are trying to become more fluent in Kazakh again, although only after coming into their late teens, while fighting these internalised fears: “Often I'm conflicted because I feel like, oh my god if they speak fluently, I will make a mistake. They will laugh. So better say it in Russian” (P20). Furthermore, it is not just an internalised fear, as many respondents talked about experiencing or witnessing the shaming of others for their lack of fluency (P1; P2; P3; P18; P20; P22; P23; P26; P27). The *symbolic violence*, which has been present in recent years, together with an increased awareness and pull towards Kazakh national identity, is one of the biggest barriers to Kazakh language fluency among respondents.

In summary, while early exposure to Kazakh at home and in schools can often establish a linguistic *habitus* that aligns with Kazakh identity, dominant Russian linguistic and cultural influences frequently disrupt this process. Among young people, the rising availability of Kazakh language content and Kazakh cultural products has increased the symbolic value of Kazakh identity, encouraging its embrace by the respondents. However, this shift has also introduced *symbolic violence* in the form of shaming for lack of fluency, which can undermine confidence and hinder the adoption of Kazakh in both childhood and adult years. These findings highlight Kazakh linguistic capital's evolving yet fragile nature, shaped by structural factors and individual experiences, and underscore the importance of fostering supportive environments to strengthen Kazakh identity and language fluency.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The master's thesis aimed to explore how young, elite-educated Kazakhs studying in Europe navigate linguistic choices and identity formation in the context of Kazakhstan's trilingual language policy and geopolitical changes. It examined the factors influencing the adoption of the Kazakh language and identity. The research was set against the backdrop of heightening Kazakh language command, increasing English influence, lingering Russian dominance, and the yet underexplored effects of the War in Ukraine and increased tensions within Kazakhstan. The results identify the importance of childhood *habitus*, changing perceptions of language *linguistic capital* among peers, the appearance of Kazakh language content in popular culture and war in Ukraine as leading factors for Kazakh language adoption and stronger identification with Kazakh identity. At the same time, *symbolic violence*, in a form of shaming and judgement for perceived lack of fluency and still low *linguistic capital* of Kazakh in Education and Career fields, paired with the increasing relevance of English as factors acting against it.

The in-depth interviews with young, mobile Kazakhs illustrate the evolving roles of Kazakh, Russian, and English languages and the unique perception of their Kazakh identity. The Kazakh language carries great importance to their imagined community, symbolising cultural heritage and national resilience. In recent years, its importance has been exaggerated, prompting many to aspire to increase its usage in social and family contexts. Yet multilingualism remains a crucial part of their "Kazakhness". The Russian language's role as the one carrying the highest capital in the social field persists, but more so due to its utility and varying Kazakh language fluency created by the students' *habitus* rather than any enduring symbolic or emotional attachment to the language itself. English dominates as the language of global opportunity, reflecting its role in shaping respondents' future ambitions. It also diminishes the role of Russian language in education and career fields while posing a threat to Kazakh language, in these areas, which, despite the high policy backing, struggles to gain practical dominance due to limited resources and low linguistic capital.

The research carries several implications in the field of theory and language policy implementation in multilingual and especially post-Soviet contexts. First, the widespread/persistent underestimation of childhood *habitus* and perceptions of *linguistic capital* of languages should be properly addressed. As research findings illustrate, a child can be from a family where (s)he hears his/her mother language, goes to school where language learning is implemented, with requirements to reach a certain level of language knowledge, but still grows up struggling with language command. For many respondents, the language their parents and themselves perceived as most economically valuable was Russian and, increasingly, English, which led to the de-prioritisation of Kazakh

language learning in their lives. An especially crucial role played in the formation of one's *habitus* is the availability of target language content, and its popularity among peers. For many respondents, the Russian language was prioritised for these reasons, and with the growing popularity and content availability in Kazakh, they found themselves wishing to connect with their *imagined community* stronger and improve their language command. This underscores that policy in the form of educational frameworks and various restrictions and requirements is not sufficient enough on its own. Fostering an environment where language is perceived as culturally and economically valuable and providing engaging content is essential.

The research also demonstrates an example of *symbolic violence*, which typically occurs in the context where social dynamics are embedded within dominant cultural norms and language, being applied in the language revival context, where language is still asserting its universal dominance. Encountering judgement and shaming for not having sufficient language fluency has been an almost universal experience for those struggling to gain better language command, leading to self-limitation of its usage. The experience of *symbolic violence*, which has become even more relevant in the context of increasing geopolitical tensions, can fracture the *imagined community* by reinforcing divisions between fluent and non-fluent speakers. Rather than fostering unity, these dynamics may create a hierarchy, discouraging individuals from participating in cultural or linguistic revival efforts. This demonstrates the importance of ensuring that non-fluent speakers are not alienated but provided with pathways for gradual and voluntary re-engagement with the target language.

It is important to acknowledge that while the pool of respondents in this research provided an opportunity to address an existing research gap regarding underexplored identity formation and language choices among young Kazakhs who chose to seek global education, it is also a certain limitation. Students consciously choosing to diverge from the norm of seeking Russian or Kazakh language education may already possess cultural biases. The respondents' unique choices and experiences may reflect pre-existing attitudes, aspirations, or values that differ from their peers, potentially skewing the results towards a more globally oriented attitude and stronger rejection of Russian influence. Therefore, the research results do not represent the broader population of young Kazakhs. Future studies could expand the participant pool to include young Kazakhs pursuing traditional higher education paths in Russian or Kazakh-medium institutions to provide a broader understanding of language preferences and identity formation among young Kazakhs. Additionally, future research could explore other demographic factors, such as regional background, gender, and socioeconomic status, to uncover more nuanced patterns. This broader perspective would contribute to more inclusive and effective language policy strategies.

Due to the scope and form constraints of the Master's thesis, the interview analysis did not address some of the gathered data. While the interviews collected a rich and nuanced data set, the choice was made not to include the section of students' evaluations of the policies themselves. Instead, the focus was placed on language choices and identity formation rather than the subjective perceptions of policies. Nevertheless, the data collected regarding student's evaluations of policies remains valuable and could serve as a foundation for future research, providing insights into how students perceive and interpret their country's language policies.



## 8. REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan. *National Composition, Religion, and Language Proficiency in the Republic of Kazakhstan: Results of the National Population Census of 2021*. Astana: National Bureau of Statistics, 2023. Accessed December 15, 2024. <https://stat.gov.kz>.
2. Ahn, Elise, and Juldyz Smagulova. "English Language Choices in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan." *World Englishes* 41, no. 1 (2022): 9–23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12552>.
3. Aitymbetov, Nurken, Toktarov, Yermek ir Ormakhanova, Yenlik. „Nation-Building in Kazakhstan: Kazakh and Kazakhstanian Identities Controversy“. *Bilig Journal of Social Sciences in Turkish World*, nr. 74., 2015, 1–20.ty
4. Akiner, Shirin. *The Formation of Kazak Identity: From Tribe to Nation-State*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995.
5. Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised edition. London: Verso, 2006.
6. Bourdieu, Pierre, and Loïc Wacquant. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992.
7. Bourdieu, Pierre. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Edited by John B. Thompson. Translated by Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991.
8. Brown, McLean T. 'Kazakh Means Freedom' - Kazakh Language Policy and National Identity Before and During the Ukraine War. University of South Carolina, 2024. [https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/senior\\_theses/684](https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/senior_theses/684).
9. Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan. *Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan: Statistical Compilation 2019–2023*. Astana, 2024, 62–65. Available at: [www.stat.gov.kz](http://www.stat.gov.kz).
10. Burkhanov, Aziz, Shapirova, Dina. „Kazakhstans Civic-national identity: Ambiguous policies and points of resistance “. In: *Nationalism and Identity Construction in Central Asia: Dimensions, Dynamics, and Directions*, 42–57. Blue Ridge Summit, United States: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2014. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/viluniv-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1903371>.
11. Central Asia Barometer. *What Language Do the Kazakhs Speak at Home?* Accessed December 15, 2024. <https://ca-barometer.org/en/publications/what-language-do-the-kazakhs-speak-at-home>.
12. Chinn, Jeff, and Kaiser, Robert. *Russians as the New Minority: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Soviet Successor States*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429305245>.
13. Creswell, John W. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007.
14. "Development of Kazakh Language Remains Priority Task for State Policy." *The Astana Times*, October 2023. [https://astanatimes.com/2023/10/development-of-kazakh-language-remains-priority-task-for-state-policy/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://astanatimes.com/2023/10/development-of-kazakh-language-remains-priority-task-for-state-policy/?utm_source=chatgpt.com).
15. Dolby, N. "Encountering an American Self: Study Abroad and National Identity." *Comparative Education Review* 48, no. 2 (2004): 150–173. <https://doi.org/10.1086/382620>.
16. García, Ofelia, and Li Wei. *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

17. Heller, Monica. „The Commodification of Language“. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39, 2010: 101–14.
18. Herder on the Relation between Language and World on JSTOR. (n.d.). [www.jstor.org. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27744985?seq=1](https://www.jstor.org/stable/27744985?seq=1)
19. ICEF. (2024, June 19). *Outbound mobility from Kazakhstan up 140% over past decade*. ICEF Monitor - Market Intelligence for International Student Recruitment. <https://monitor.icef.com/2016/12/outbound-mobility-kazakhstan-140-past-decade/>
20. Jumagaliyeva, Aidana. *Choosing between Kazakh and Russian: A Study of Young Ethnic Kazakhs' Language Choices through the Lens of Habitus*; Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education, 2021.
21. Karabassova, Laura. 2020. Understanding trilingual education reform in Kazakhstan: Why is it stalled? In Egéa Denis (ed.), *Education in Central Asia: A kaleidoscope of challenges and opportunities*, 37–51.
22. "Kazakhstan Government Taking Action to Promote Kazakh Language." *Eurasianet*. Last modified December 27, 2024. <https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-government-taking-action-to-promote-kazakh-language>.
23. Kuzhabekova, Aliya. „Language Use among Secondary School Students in Kazakhstan“. *Applied Linguistics Research Journal* 3, nr.2, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.14744/alrj.2019.29964>.
24. Landau, Jacob M. *Politics of Language in the Ex-Soviet Muslim States: Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001.
25. Laruelle, Marlene. „The Three Discursive Paradigms of State Identity in Kazakhstan: Kazakhness, Kazakhstanness, and Transnationalism“. *Nationalism and Identity Construction in Central Asia: Dimensions, Dynamics, and Directions*. Blue Ridge Summit, UNITED STATES: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2014. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/viluniv-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1903371>.
26. Lemon, Edward. "The Latinization of Kazakhstan: Language Modernization and Geopolitics." *The Diplomat*, September 2024. <https://thediplomat.com/2024/09/the-latinization-of-kazakhstan-language-modernization-and-geopolit>.
27. Makhanov, Kanat. "The Trends of Language Shift in Education in Kazakhstan." *Eurasian Research Institute*. Accessed January 6, 2025. <https://www.eurasian-research.org>.
28. Muzaffar, Abylai, Medi Edison, Sayat Gani, Serik Beissebayev, and Eric McGlinchey. *Echoes of War: Public Perception of the Russian-Ukrainian War in Central Asia*. Analytical report, 2024. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Kazakhstan Office.
29. Paquette, Irina. *Language and Cultural Identity in Post-Soviet Frozen Conflicts*. Master's thesis, Old Dominion University, 2021. [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/gpis\\_etds/140](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/gpis_etds/140).
30. Safran, William, Amy H. Liu. "Nation-Building, Collective Identity, and Language Choices: Between Instrumental and Value Rationalities". *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 18, nr. 3 (2012): 269–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2012.707492>.
31. Safran, William, Amy H. Liu. Nation-Building, Collective Identity, and Language Choices: Between Instrumental and Value Rationalities. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 18, (2012)
32. Saparova, Olga, and Svetlana Shakhova. "Language Choice Among the Youth of Kazakhstan: English as a Self-Representation of Prestige." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 143 (2014): 228–232. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.07.393>.

33. Sarsembayev, Azamat. "Imagined Communities: Kazak Nationalism and Kazakification in the 1990s." *Central Asian Survey* 18, no. 3 (1999)
34. Sartor, Valerie. "How Perceptions of the English Language Have Changed in Kazakhstan: A Narrative Analysis." *Central Asian Affairs* 8, no. 1 (2021): 1–25.
35. Sharipova, Dina. „Perceptions of National Identity in Kazakhstan: Pride, Language, and Religion“. *Muslim World* 110, nr. 1, 2020: 89–106. <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12320>.
36. Smagulova, Juldyz. "Language Policies of Kazakhization and Their Influence on Language Attitudes and Use." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 11, no. 5 (2008): 440–452. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050802148798>
37. Smagulova, Juldyz. „When Language Policy Is Not Enough“. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 2021, 265–69. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2020-0101>.
38. Smagulova, Juldyz. *Language Policies of Kazakhization and Their Influence on Language Attitudes and Use*. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 11, nr. 3–4, 2008: 440–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050802148798>.
39. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). *Definition of Youth*. 2013. <http://undesadspd.org/Youth.aspx>.
40. Wheeler, Louise. „A Linguistic Ethnographic Perspective on Kazakhstan’s Trinity of Languages: Language Ideologies and Identities in a Multilingual University Community“. University of Birmingham, 2017.

## Appendix 1, Sample Demographics

	Age	Gender	Study place abroad	Studies	Hometown/study town in Kazakhstan (if exchange)	First language	Second language	Third language	Other
P1	24	Female	France	Biotechnology	Kostanay/ Almaty	Kazakh	Russian/english		
P2	21	Female	Turkey	Journalism	Almaty/Almaty	Russian	Kazakh	English	Turkish
P3	20	Male	Poland	Mining and mineral extraction	Oskemen/Ust-Kamenogorsk	Russian	Kazakh	English	
P4	23	Female	France	Biotechnology	Almaty/Almaty	Russian	Kazakh	English	
P5	21	Female	Poland	Education	Astana/Astana	Kazakh	Russian	English	
P6	20	Female	Lithuania	Education	Shymkent/Karaganda	Kazakh	English	Russian	
P7	21	Female	Lithuania	Medicine	Taldykorgan/Almaty	Kazakh	Russian	English	
P8	18	Female	Lithuania	Software engineering	Urumqi China/Astana	Kazakh	Chinese	English	Russian, Korean, german
P9	23	Female	Lithuania	Mathematics	Astana	Russian	Kazakh	English	Turkish
P10	19	Female	Lithuania	Finance	Arkalyk/Astana	Russian	Kazakh	English	
P11	21	Male	Lithuania	Mathematics teacher	Aygoz/Astana	Kazakh	Russian	English	German
P12	24	Male	Lithuania	Medicine	Shymkent/Almaty	Russian	Kazakh	English	Uzbek
P13	18	Male	Lithuania	Computer science	Karaganda/Astana	Russian	English	Kazakh	Spanish
P14	22	Female	Lithuania	Medicine	Shymkent/Astana	Kazakh	Russian	English	
P15	25	Female	Luxemburg	Cyber security	Almaty	Chala Kazakh (mixed language)		English	
P16	25	Female	Italy	Intenational Business management	Kostanay	Russian	English	Kazakh	Spanish
P17	23	Female	Luxemburg	IT	Almaty	Russian	English	Kazakh	French
P18	24	Female	Slovenia	Medicine	Kostanay/Astana	Russian	Kazakh	English	
P19	20	Female	Germany	Politics	Kokshetau/Astana	Kazakh, English, Russian the same			Italian, slovenian, turkish
P20	21	Female	Turkey	Industrial policy and technology management	Almaty	Russian	English	Kazakh	Uzbek, Turkish
P21	22	Male	Lithuania	Cyber security	Semey	Russian	Kazakh	English	Chinese
P22	22	Female	Lithuania	Medicine	Astana (non-Kazakh)/Astana	Russian	English	Ukrainian	Kazakh (speaks basic Kazakh)
P23	26	Female	Germany	Business administration	Almaty (half russian/halfkazakh)	Russian	English	German	(pretty much)
P24	19	Female	Lithuania	Business administration	Almaty/Almaty	Kazakh/Russian		English	Lithuanian /French
P25	20	Male	Lithuania	Business studies	Temirtau/Karaganda	Russian	Kazakh/English the same		
P26	19	Female	Lithuania	Business administration	Karaganda (Tatar mom)	Russian	English	French	Tatar, Kazakh, Spanish
P27	21	Male	Lithuania	Medicine	Aktobe/Astana	Russian	English	Kazakh	

## **Appendix 2, Interview Guide**

### **Background**

1. Age /Gender /Studies/religion (are you religious?)
2. Where were you born?
3. What languages do you speak? Could you rank them by fluency?

### **Language attitudes and linguistic background**

1. Think about each language you speak and what words you associate with them (give 2-3 words each).
2. Which language do you think was more prevalent in your life and why? Which language did you speak in your family, kindergarten, school, or now?
3. Is there a change between childhood/teens and now regarding attitudes towards languages? What do you think could be the reasons?
4. Do you think there should have been less/more of one of the languages in your life/education growing up?
5. How often do you use Kazakh, Russian, and English when interacting with community members abroad? How do you choose which language to approach a fellow Kazakh, and why?
6. Do you ever feel conflicted about which language to use? Can you give an example?
7. If given the choice, which language(s) would you want to prioritise in your future career and life (if you have a family, what language would you like to use), and why?

### **Representation of national identity**

1. Do you think speaking two or three languages is part of Kazakh identity/what it means to be Kazakh today?
2. If you need to rank it, would you say you are an ethnic Kazakh, a Kazakhstan (Kazakhstani) citizen, or a member of your region/tribe first? Why?
3. In what ways do you express your Kazakh identity?
4. How do you represent your Kazakh identity when explaining your background to non-Kazakh peers?
5. Has the experience of being abroad changed your perception of your national identity and language?
6. Do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be "Kazakh"? What plays the biggest role in defining what it means to be Kazakh?

### **Opinions on Language Policies**

1. Kazakhstan has promoted a trilingual language policy (Kazakh, Russian, and English). Do you think Kazakhstan's trilingual policy aligns with people's needs? Why or why not?
2. How do you feel about government efforts to promote the use of the Kazakh language?
3. How do you view the role of each language (Kazakh, Russian, English) in Kazakhstan's future? How do you think it will change?
4. Kazakhstan plans to transition Kazakh to the Latin alphabet by 2031. How do you feel about this change?

## **Appendix 3, Transcriptions of interviews**

**P1**

**What is your age?**

I'm 24 years old. I will be 25 in two months

**What do you study?**

I study biotechnology, especially environmental.

**In what university do you study?**

Here I study in France, in Loren University in Nancy. Exchange

**What would you say is your religion?**

Not religious I'm neutral. Can I say that? I mean, all my family, are Muslims, but for now, I don't think that I have religion like I'm a Muslim, but in the family gatherings, I can do everything that they ask for to like traditional things.

**Where were you born?**

I was born in Kazakhstan, in Kastanay city. It's North region. It's close to Russia. It has border with Russia.

**What languages do you speak?**

I speak three languages. I can say fluently, Russian, Kazakh and English, but first language is Kazakh, and I think Russian and English, for me is in the same level.

**If you had to think about associations for each language. So, like two or three words, what would you give for them?**

Okay, for Kazakh, I would say native mother language and maybe childhood, because I used to speak only Kazakh before going school. So for Russian, it may be my school, also classic books, because a lot of literature, I mostly read books in Russian. And I think that's all. For English, I would say traveling, because we use only English when we travel, also high school and maybe university, because for like five, for last seven years, I've been using English only for studies.

**So what language do you speak in your family?**

Only Kazakh, because my parents didn't speak Russian a lot. I mean, they, they know Russian and they understand, but they they're not, like, educated in Russian, so it's easier to speak in Kazakh. My parents used to live in the villages, so there were only Kazakh people, Kazakh speaking people. And my grandmothers, my grandfather from both sides, they only speak Kazakh. And my parents, they got their education in Kazakh. So for them it's complicated to write in Russian, to speak in Russian, they have a lot of mistakes when they speak Russian, but that's why we mostly speak Kazakh

**And did you go to a Kazakh or Russian school?**

So all my life, I was studying in Kazakh language. But then I went to this school. It's like, I'd say, intellectual school for intellectual people. And we used to have some subjects in Russian, for example, history or something else I forgot, and in English. So in school, I would say we use three languages. After 8th grade

**Why do you say that? That new school was intellectual?**

Because it has a name, intellectual school. It's, it was named after our president. It has a name like Nazarbayev Intellectual school.

**With your friends in Kazakhstan. What language do you want to use?**

Mostly Kazakh and Russian equally. Well, I have mostly Kazakh friends. I have few of Russian ones, but mostly Kazakh friends. Yeah, so it's just that language levels are very different.

**Was there any change for you in your attitudes towards languages growing up you felt that you wanted to learn one more or less?**

Yes, there were a lot of stuff about that. As I said before, I used to live in the village, so I used to speak only Kazakh, and then when I moved to city, that was really complicated for me to study, because I went to musical school, I used to play piano, and there were only Russian speaking teachers. So for me, it's a little girl, it was really hard to understand and really hard to understand. That's why I think I started learning it. And also, after I moved to city, we started having Russian language subject and Russian literature. And it was, like, really complicated for me, about grammar, about speaking. That's why I started, like, really learning Russia. And also the people around me from in the city, they were Russian speaking ones, even though they were Kazakhs. So that's why it was like, shift in my life to learn Russia, at the same with the English. I had to learn it because school.

**Did these, things change your attitude towards the Kazakh language?**

Yes, yes. It was when I was a teenager, if you know Russian and you speak Russian, you are cool. But if you speak Kazakh it means that you are some kind of, you know, uneducated person. It was like trending. Russian language was really trending. And when I moved to South Kazakhstan, where my university is, I spoke only Russian, and I was like an outsider for them, because I spoke only Russian. And they were like, Oh, my God, you're so uneducated, you don't even know your language. Why are you speaking Russian? And they started texting me, even teachers. So I changed my attitude toward Kazakh. Otherwise it was like, double change, and I started speaking Kazakh after I moved to South because a lot of people in South speak Kazakh because they don't have a lot of Russian people.

**So, what are your attitudes towards Russian and Kazakh today? Do you still feel that Russian is more educated, or is it not that anymore?**

Now, now I feel like knowing Kazakh makes you privileged in Kazakhstan. It sounds weird, but if you know Kazakh, you are like, Oh, my God. You are so cool. Like you how to say you respect your traditions. Because when I speak to people from south of Kazakhstan they were like, Oh, my God, you know Kazakh, even though you are from North. And I'm really surprised. They think that a lot of people there don't know Kazakh. But in the North, we have lot of Kazakh schools, kindergartens, and they were so surprised when they heard that I used. So yeah, now I mostly speak in Kazakh, even though I know Russian, and even though I don't know some words in Kazakh, I speak Kazakh mostly.

**So do you think it's just like self-changing, or do you think that in recent years, the Kazakh language has become more popular in general?**

I think it's second option that Kazakh language became popular because, you know, in Russian classes, in schools, in university, they didn't have these Kazakh classes like mandatory ones, but now it's mandatory. You have to know, even in a governmental level, if you want to pass some exams, you have to have certificate that says that you know Kazakh language in a certain level, like b1, b2, so now it's, must know Kazakh language.

**Would you say it's also becoming more trendy among young people? Like, do you see more influencers and singers and contents and things like that?**

Yes, yes. Because if you are influencer with a lot of followers, you have to know Kazakh, because people in comments, they would be like, oh my god, shame on you. You don't know Kazak language. And you know these trends on Tiktok, "get ready with me" Etc, like outfit of the day. And a lot of influencers, they try to film it in Kazakh. I saw a lot of examples in the in the comment section, they were like, Oh my God, your Kazakh language is so good. And I think that now we are becoming more, how to say we are becoming more creators with Kazakh language content, something like that.

**Do you think it's a positive change?**

Yeah, of course, for Kazakhstan, it's positive, but for Russian people, I don't know.

**Why do you think it's worse for Russian people?**

Because I saw a lot of comments, like we see everything on the internet, right? And I saw a lot of comments, a lot of posts about, oh my god, people are how to say they're being not tolerant to Russian speaking people. They are being so disrespectful to Russian people, speaking people, even though we are not. Like you are welcome to speak Russian. You're welcome to do anything in Russian language, but don't disrespect our language too. So I don't know how it became this way, but like the past two years, it's like that.

**Do you think political changes have had an influence on that, or not really?**

No, I don't think so. I don't. Yeah, political stuff, like Russian situation, and, yeah, maybe it changed, but not certainly because of presidents.

**Did war in Ukraine had an impact?**

Maybe, like, not a big impact, but we have a lot of people from Russia moved to Kazakhstan. I think, in my opinion, we would not start it if Russian people would not start it, like they started like: "Oh my God, in some governmental stuff there are no Russian speaking people that can help us" or in some like Headhunter sites, they were like we need people only who speaks Russian. We need people only who are from Russia. Like for Russian speaking people, the salary is bigger. Of course, we have some we are mad for that.

**Do you think there's like, any difference between Russian Kazakhs and more recent Russian immigrant?**

Yes, like, huge different, difference. I don't know how to say that. I'm not being disrespectful for Russian people who came here, but, you know, I used to be a English teacher, and I had a lot of students from Russia. They moved in, and some of them were, like, so disrespectful for people, for like, everything and I and but the our own Russian people from Kazakhstan, they are mostly loyal to our tradition. They are most loyal to our people. And then they don't think that Kazakh language is hard, that we don't have to learn it. But people who came they're like, oh my god, your language is so hard we don't want to learn it. It's it doesn't make any sense. The grammar doesn't make any sense. I was like, come on, it's not that it, it's hard, but it's just because you think so, and you don't want to change everything in your life. They want to change Kazakhstan for Russia. And they came with their own rules. They didn't want to respect our rules. They came with their own mind, and they don't think that Kazakhstan is different from Russia. Even though it's different, we have different government, right? And they are like, Oh my god, like it's the same as Russia. It has it used to be Russia, yeah. I mean, in Soviet times, and by the independence, I think we have been more Russians from Kazakhs and Kazakhstan, but now it changed drastically.

**Do you think there should have been less or more of some of the languages in your life education when you were growing up? Or do you think it was like the right way?**

I think it was the right way because it was mostly English and Kazakh it was like, for me, it's the perfect educational system for students to know three languages.

**Do you meet Kazakhs in France?**

Yeah, I met a lot of Kazakhs.

**And what language do you most often speak?**

So it's just depends on language level, maybe also topics.

**How it depends on topics?**



Well, when you when you do jokes, you must be doing Kazakh, because it's funnier to us, and like saying bad words, funny for us in Kazakhs, but when it's something, but sometimes your Kazak language is not enough to describe something, because we have a lot of words from Russian language, like some I don't know how To say termins, yeah. And you have to switch to Russian just to clearly say your thoughts.

**So when you let's say, meet a new Kazakh, how do you choose which language to approach a fellow Kazakh in?**

Firstly, it depends on the age. I met a lot of people above 30, and I used to speak Kazakh with them, like in Paris, I went to my relatives house, and there were a lot of elder people. And I was like, Okay, I have to speak Kazakh because it's easier for me and for them. So when I see people my age, I speak mixed language.

**But what would be your first preference to speak?**

Kazakh

**Why?**

Is it easier for me, it's just a thing.

**Do you ever feel conflicted about which language to use?**

Um, no, no, I think no.

**So if given the choice, which languages would you want to prioritize in your future career, and like, what languages would you want to prioritize in your family, if you have kids and things like that?**

Well, for my future career, I would say it's English, because, I had my university degree in English, last two years of school in English, and now I'm studying English. It's easier for me to work in English, but for my family, of course, Kazakh language for my kids.

**Do you think that speaking two or three languages is part of Kazakh identity?**

I think, yeah, because a lot of young people, they know English, third language as their own, and Russian language, knowing Russian language, sometimes we are proud of that, to be honest, like in the foreign countries, you're like, Oh my God, I know two languages. I know three languages, and it's something to be proud of. And yeah, I can say it's our identity to know Russian and to have little bit of Russian culture in our life. It maybe it shows that we are adaptive for changes in our lives that okay we were we had to be adaptive to the life that we had before in the Soviet Union.

**So, okay, this is a bit difficult question, maybe, but how do you view the whole russification process in Kazakhstan?**

Negatives is not knowing our language. It had huge negative impact. Because can you imagine that some generations they don't even know Kazakh language. They're Kazakhs. Like, there are a lot of children, a lot of teenagers, that they don't know their language. And now Kazakh people, they pay for tutors to learn Kazakh. It's nonsense, right? In Kazakhstan, like, come on, it's nonsense. You can learn it by yourself just talking to people around. When the country lose their language, they lose everything identity, they lose their culture, and not knowing even basics of our writers, basics of our literature, it's just shame for me, and just all this process of russification had made that made a lot of people forget their language, so

**Do you know the difference between like terms Kazakh and Kazakhstani?**

No, I don't really know. I have some ideas, but I don't know.

**So Kazakh is like ethnic, and Kazakhstani is more like political or citizen of Kazakhstan.**

Okay. I haven't heard about it.

**Did you know your tribe growing up?**

It is part of our identity. Even when I get acquainted with some people, we are at a partnership level, like boyfriend and girlfriend, we first ask, what is your tribe? If you have same tribe, you have to compare the second name, and if it's identical, you cannot be wife and husband. So when I meet a boy, I was like, What is your tribe like? If it's Kerey, if it's Kerey mataka, no, we are in some level, relatives. We cannot have babies. It's strict rule in Kazakhstan. It's really strict. You have to know seven fathers after that. So, yeah, it's our identity.

**Do you feel more like an ethnic Kazakh a citizen of Kazakhstan, and then a member of your region or tribe? Like, what would be 123?**

So I think being ethnic Kazakh for me is, like, important. It's first place, and then it's rule, I guess. And then citizen of Kazakhstan, for example, if I was born in another country, I would be proud that I'm Kazakh like ethnic first of all.

**So in what ways do you express your Kazakh identity? What do you think you do? That is like a Kazakh thing?**

I don't even know like, maybe liking Kazakh food and cooking, being able to cook that, or also have a lot of information about your own traditions, because in schools, they don't really teach you your traditions. It comes from generation, from generation. And I'm, to be honest, proud that my mother is really like ethnic Kazakh, and she knows everything about traditions and culture, and I know from her, and I think it's just by default. You have to know that. I have a lot of jewelry from my mother and grandmother, like earrings, I don't really wear them every day. I wear it sometimes, for example, for some celebrations, or from some events that has traditional context, like Nauryz, etc. In my childhood, we used to celebrate New Year, like, first of January, really, like, huge, we used to celebrate it really big, like, but not now as everything is changing, this is (Kazakh Nauryz) more important for us. I think so, especially in South of Kazakhstan.

**How do you represent your Kazakh identity when explaining your background to non Kazakhs? So like a person don't really know anything about Kazakhstan, what do you say first?**

Yeah, I had this experience when I used to study in Spain, like there were a lot of international students, because it was Erasmus, too, and they used to ask about our culture. And we would say, first thing, first, about our like, about food, of course, traditional food. We used to say that we eat a lot of horse meat, and they were in shock. And this is the thing that we always say for people first, is horse meat, and then horse milk, that we drink fermented horse milk, like in a big amount. And then we would say that our dances and songs. And yeah, it's like the only stuff that we tell about, also about Gennady Golovkin, our boxer, because everybody knows him. And about Dimash our singer, everybody knows him too. Yes, Russian speaking songs too, but yeah, like, for example, script, and yet, he's known in Russia, in post-Soviet countries, and we and he's actually good singer, not singer, rapper, and his songs are really good, so we show that too. It happened to my friend. I was talking to her, and I was and she said that one person from Iran, or some were, he blamed her that you're Russian, you're bad, etc, etc. And she was like, Oh, my God, do I look like Russian? I'm Asian, like. And she was like, no, no, you speak Russian, and then you're Russian. And to be honest, it's offensive to call us Russians. But if it's someone that I have to talk to in the future thinks that I am Asian, I would say that Japanese and Koreans are different. I'm from Central Asia. It's mostly like Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and we are different, but it's not offensive. It's not offensive at all. For example, in Japan, you would not see a lot of girls that are tanned because they always, like, have SPF on. They're always afraid of sun. But in Kazakhstan, it's totally okay. We have really dark people. We have, like, pale people. We have ginger people. And you can, if you are Asian, you can see the difference, like immediately, even in France, I'm just looking I say, Oh, she is Chinese. Oh, she is Kazakh, or she is Philippine, from Philippines or Vietnam. It's not difficult to differentiate for Asian people, but for European and white people, it's like, yeah, it's kind of different.

**Has your experience of being abroad changed your perception of your national identity and language?**

Not at all. I don't think so.

**Do you think language plays a role in defining what this means to be Kazakh?**

Yes, of course. Language is like the first place in all this stuff that identifies you as a person. It's like a culture.

**What about Kazakh, who doesn't speak Kazakh?**

Like, five years before, of seven years ago, it was okay. It was totally okay, because we used to use Russian in everything, in governmental stuff, and everything. But now people shame, people that they know don't know Kazakh, Kazakh people.

**So for example, if a Kazakh, he doesn't speak Kazakh, well, what are the other things that makes a person Kazakh?**

I think it's the knowledge of traditions and the way how you respect or your traditions, or the way how I think maybe it sounds different, but it's also hospitality. The first thing is hospitality for us, being Kazakh is being hospital. Even if you have somebody you first met, and he or she comes to your house, you have to give food. You have to give all the things that you have in your fridge. I think it's hospitality for me, because my family is like that.

**Is religion important in Kazakh identity?**

No, I don't think so. Now, I don't know why, but in Kazakhstan, it's really trending to wear hijab, to to know little bit Arabic language. I don't know why. Like a lot of school girls, they're wearing hijab. I'm not against religion. I'm neutral. My father, he's like, really religious. He prays five times. But when you see that our culture is becoming more Arabic, it, of course, makes you mad, especially when people don't really know anything about religion. They are just following the trends. I don't think that it will lead to something really good, because by being by following Only religion, we can lose our identity as a nation. And to be honest, a lot of people that are older than us, like 40, etc, they think that first thing first, we are Muslims, and after that, we are Kazakhs. And it doesn't make sense, because, come on, you live in Kazakhstan, you speak Kazakh language. And in our country, every religion is equal. You don't have to be Muslim if you are Kazakh like we have Christians, we have Catholic people, like Orthodox people. And I don't know why people think that if you're Catholic you have to be Muslim.

**So Kazakhstan has promoted a trilingual language policy, so that Kazakh Russian and English are all important in education and like society. Do you think trilingual policy aligns with the needs of people?**

I think people they are not against that, because they got used to it. And I think it's the really good option. I think it's like important, not only for Kazakhstan, but for other countries, because a lot of Kazakh people they can work in different countries by just being able to speak English and understand English. About Russian language. It's not that important for career, maybe, but it's important for people that don't know Kazakh and for people who like, as I said before, we have a lot of Russian people, right? And they cannot, just in one moment, learn Kazakh and be perfect in Kazakh. So for them, it's easier to speak Russian.

**How do you feel about the government efforts to promote the use of Kazakh language? Do you think it is enough, or should we more or less?**

I think it's enough If I not mistaken now to get the like, let's say, to get the permanent living this paper, I don't know how to say that, not visa, but so if you want to live in Kazan, you have to pass this Kazakh test, and it's making people learn basic Kazakh. And I think government is doing their best, even in schools now, everything is in Kazakh language and the Kazak culture, like songs they are being promoted really good from Cultural ministry. They're promoting it. So I think it's enough. It's not being too much pressure. It's just little bit.

**Okay, what do you think are like the best ways to promote the language?**

I think it's just making really good movies in Kazakh, maybe, and songs in Kazakh, and all the stuff that we import from another countries, like entertaining stuff, we can do it in Kazakh, in a good quality why not? I think just the most important thing for people, good quality movies. I think, yeah. I think people will get really anxious and mad with restrictions, and it will lead to like, meetings and protests, and I don't want it.

**How do you think the role of each language will change in Kazakhstan's future?**

I think Russian language will be in the third place, because now it's in a it's equal with Kazakh. And I think in the future it will be first Kazakh and then English and then Russian.  
What?

**How do you feel about the plans to transition to the Latin alphabet?**

I think we will do it, but not soon. I think we need a lot of time for that, because they tried it and it was really bad idea. And we have, we need a lot of money for that to change everything, to change, like maps, to change the books, everything, and like governmental stuff.

For now, I think we have more important problems than that, and but eventually it will change, but we don't know when. Positives from this change, maybe in a political thing will be positive. I remember when they wanted to change it. Russian was against that. I don't know why Russian government was really against that, because they thought that we will be more in the influence of USA or other or English speaking countries. If we want to get rid of a lot of Russian language in our country, maybe it's important. I don't know. I don't really know about that. So it's important, but it's really hard.

it sounds really weird.

### **Is there anything you would like to add to this topic?**

Like, two days ago, one driver, he didn't make stop because person asked in Russia, Russian language, not in Kazakh. And he was, he gets really mad, like, you have to speak Kazakh if you are Kazakh. And we have a lot of these people who are really patriotic, and for them being patriotic songs speaking Kazakh, and they always want to fight people who speak Russian. And I don't think it's a good idea to like. It's bad when you shame person for speaking only Kazak or only Russian, and have to get rid of that. We don't hate Russian language. No, we just want our language to be prioritized more than Russian, because even in our government, governmental stuff, like in we have a lot of documents in Russia and a lot of like Russian is really privileged language in our country, and I, I don't think it's a good idea if we want to be really good, powerful country.

**P2**

### **What is your age?**

I'm 21

### **What do you study?**

International journalism, but in Turkey, I study American culture and literature. Exchange for 1 semester

### **Religion?**

I'm Muslim. So like family tradition, um, I mean, when we have Ramadan, I I'm fasting, for example, and I'm trying to, I mean, I'm practicing it by myself.

### **What city or town you were born in?**

Almaty

### **What languages do you speak?**

I can speak Kazakh, my mother language, Russian and English and a little bit Turkish.

### **Which one do you think is the language you are most fluent in?**

Unfortunately, it's Russian.

### **Associations**

Yeah, so Kazakh language is something like wealth. One word can have 10 meanings. Russian is communication to communicate. English is something International, because I can use it anywhere. And Turkish, I think it's more like soft, because it's very beautiful language.

### **What language do you speak the most at the moment?**

For me, as soon as I'm abroad, I use mostly English, and I try to even my Instagram. I try to write in English, try to speak in English. As soon as I have a lot of English friends, but in Kazakh, Russian, I think it's mixing them. Both of them are the same level. I mean, I have some kind of accent of Kazakh, so that's why shy of it, something like that.

**In what language kindergarten school did you go?**

I was studying in Kazakh school, but my university is in English, I didn't go to kindergarten.

**When you went to school from what grade did you start learning Russian?**

From the first, yeah, from the beginning, like we had a Russian Language, and English in what way, I think they're also the same from the first.

**In your family, do you speak more Russian or Kazakh?**

My father told us always to speak Kazakh, he makes us but I prefer more Russian, because, you know, when I was born, all the cartoons, all the stuff, everything was in Russian. So that's why we are fluent in Russian.

**When you speak with your parents, what kind of language do you speak?**

We're mixing them. We can speak both kind of but when I see my other relatives, I try to speak Kazakh because they are kind of saying speak Kazakh you are a Kazakh, something like that.

**Did you notice maybe in Kazakhstan, any change when it comes to languages, from when you were little to now?**

I mean, there is because before that time. So you see, the thing is that in Soviet Union time, for example, there was only one Kazakh school, and all others were Russian. There was only one school, you see. And nowadays, I think people are making Kazakh more like, you know, something valuable, because time by time, we understand that we are losing something like, for example, the new generation sometimes even doesn't know the Kazakh.

**Okay, but like, from when you were little, like, not from Soviet times to now, but from when you were little to now, what changes do you notice in your life?**

So what changes I see? So the first one is that in the school, I remember when I was on the 10th grade. So I guess the change is that people are wanting to learn Kazakh, more and more people are wanting to learn it.

**Why do you think it happened?**

I think it's because of their like they understand the value of Kazakh tradition that we need to keep it.

**Do you think there were any maybe events which made the Kazakh more popular in recent years?**

It was when the war between Russia and Ukraine started. Russian people started moving here, and we were kind of dissatisfied that they are making fun of us, like making Kazakh language funny, you know? So that's why, at that time, when we saw, any Russian people, we start to speak Kazakh with them, because it's like our principle to speak because they disrespected the kinds of language, I guess. Most of the people started changing their minds after this process. I guess. I mean, for example, Russian people think that our national language is Russian, but from the Constitution, kinds of language is the national language. Russian is for communication. Mix them

**So you said that you grew up learning all three languages in school, and then your family was mixed. Do you think we should have been maybe less or more of some of the languages in your life or school when you were growing up?**

I mean, no, because I was, I started learning English when I was six years old. I knew Russian from cartoons and other as I said before, but maybe I had some problems with Kazakh in the beginning. But I can't say that I'm fluent in Kazakh but there are some sounds that I cannot pronounce.

**Do you wish you were more fluent in Kazakh?**

In Kazakh more, yeah, I wish to be more fluent.

**So, do you know any other Kazakhs abroad? Do you meet with them right now in Turkey?**

I was also on exchange in Korea. Here were a lot of Kazakh students, and I was really amazed that they are speaking only Kazakh. In Turkey, also, we try to speak Kazakh when we see, I mean the Kazakh people, we try to say them, greeting them with Kazakh words, you know.

**Okay, so, like, if you communicate with other Kazakhs abroad, also, which language do you use the most?**

Okay, so there was a situation. We have a group in Telegram, chat, you know, Telegram, right? Sorry, there is like Kazakhs in Turkey. And one of the Kazakhs, I don't know who it is, he wrote, oh my gosh, this chat is Russian in Izmir, because everyone, every Kazakh people speaking Russians there. So I kind of understand that we prefer Russian more than Kazakh in speaking. That's not good fact, I guess.

**And when you meet, let's say, and you guys are person for the first time, what language do you approach him?**

Usually it's up to the Situation. I mean, if he's older, I try to speak Kazakh. Mostly I speak. I introduce myself in Russian.

**So you said you also don't think it's good that you speak mostly Russian in chats. Why do you think that's not good?**

Yeah, because. I don't know. I mean, we prefer more Russian than Kazakh even though we know it, we speak Russian more. And I guess that's the problem, because, for example, I have a nephew. He's three years old, and he knows only Russian. He doesn't speak as he say, maybe some words in Kazakh, but mostly his mind thinks in Russian. I mean, if we, if we will not speak Kazakh, then our next generation will not do it.

**Maybe you have any examples when it was hard for you to decide which language to use. Do you ever feel conflicted about it?**

I feel sometimes, especially in Kazakhstan, I feel this because, for example, we had some I saw, not me, but I see the argument of the woman and men in the bus. Woman was saying, speak Russian. Speak Russian, please, something like that. And the man said, I will not speak Russian with you, because I'm Kazakh and I speak Kazakh. But you see so. Sometimes even some of the people, they are not respecting our language. So why it's I think it's also kind of like problem.

**If given a choice, which language do you think you will want to prioritize in your future career and in your family, if you have children?**

oh, it's up to the situation. I was thinking about it a lot too. In my career, as soon as I'm international journalist, I guess I will prioritize English more. I mean, not Kazakh, because I know if, I mean, I have an accent in Kazakh, and I know that people make some fun of me, like because my pronouns sometimes is not correct, but in family, so it's up. I mean, I will prioritize Kazakh, for example, especially if I will, for example, marry another nationality. If, if I will, of course, I will practice Kazakh, but even though I think Kazakh will be the first one for my family too in the future, like because I think it's my duty to take the knowledge from my parents and give it to my children.

**Do you think that being bilingual or trilingual is part of Kazakh identity today?**

Yes, of course, I think, I mean, I'm very proud that, for example, when I speak Turkish, people are wondering, wow, your Turkish is so good. I mean, Kazakhs are very flexible to any language. Because we know Russian, we can pronounce the sounds. And we know Kazakh, which is tough, like, Yeah, and so, I mean, we are very flexible. I think this is our part, because we can learn a lot of languages and we are bilingual from the beginning.

**So when I was reading about Kazakhstan identity questions. In literature, there's a difference between being a Kazakh and being Kazakhstan. Do you know about this difference?**

I guess I understand it like being Kazakh, it means your nationality is Kazakh, like you're 100% I mean, not 100 but some of your parents probably will be Kazakh but being Kazakhstan, me, it means like you are the part of the country. You're not part generality, but you're part of the country. For example, you can see a big difference between Russian who was in Russia and Russian was brought up in Kazakhstan, because different. I mean being Kazakhstani, it means like taking all the culture, even though your nationality is different. You know, all the cultures, you know, all the things about the country

**Do you know what tribe you belong to? Is it part of your identity? Like, does it play any role in your life? Or is it more like a just a fun fact?**

My tribe is Auburn. The Turkish people were shocked, because how do you know your seven grandparents? I said, I know them. Why do Kazakh people teach it to their children soon as they you know, for example, when you are very close, when people marry and they are close relatives, it can be damaging their children in the future, because the genes are the same, and sometimes, like you can have some syndromes on your child. So Kazakh people know this one not to marry. Their close relatives forbidden to marry if, for example, the seven grandparents are on the same, you cannot marry. So I guess this is one of the wisest things that kazakh people have done, because most of the time, for example, you know the nationality dungans? They also living in Kazakhstan, like we go to gun and they can marry each other's relatives, very close relatives. Yes. And nowadays, for example, there are a lot of children are born with diseases. Why? I guess this is our identity. This is like we know our seven grandparents for a reason.

**Are there like, any specific like character to rain for traditions associated with just your tribe?**

So mostly the my tribe is in Almaty. And I mean, near to Almaty. This is our places. So I think we actually, my tribe is called, like, people of mountains, because, like, you know, amati is surrounded by mountains, and we were growing up here, so that's why, I think. But mostly, what tradition do we have? I'm not sure. Is the same as all the gathering. I mean, we have different people who were in West parts. They are some kind of different but all the others, I think they have the same traditions.

**Okay, so if you would need to rank it, do you think you are a Kazakh a citizen of Kazakhstan or member of your tribe? So like, 123, each of them?**

It's a hard question, I guess, to show your identity and others, I guess you need to. I mean, speaking Kazakh is kind of hard. But even though I'm trying to speak Kazakh, even like, even though my accent. But I guess what makes you Kazakh hits, when you know Kazakh songs, when you know history, when you know people historical. I think that makes you because you are like from, I mean, taking everything from the history.

**When you are abroad, how do you represent your Kazak identity to a non Kazakhs? How do you explain what it is to be a Kazakh?**

I have read one phrase from the internet, yeah, when you are in country, you're representing your family like upbringing, but when you are abroad, you're representing all of your country. But of people, when I went to cafe first time here, the chef was really happy, and he said, Konnichiwa. Sorry, I'm that type of Asian. I eat horses. I'm not kimchi or something like that. But, for example, when I was in Korea, they also feel that I'm not Korean because I don't look like them. So mostly, how do I identify myself as a Kazakh once they say, Are you Korean? Are you Japan? I say, No, I'm Kazakh and not good thing is that everyone, I mean, in Europe, not everyone, but most people think that Kazakhstan, Russia, is together. So we are like, like Tatarstan and other countries. But I say we as the ninth largest country in the world, and I tried to show Kazakh clothing. I say, I'm from Kazakhstan. like I'm showing them our nature. Firstly, I show and I say, I eat horses. And, you know, the Turkish people were shocked, like, what? Because here there are also Muslims, but here, horse meat is counted as some kind of haram, like, it's not haram, but it's not like likely to eat. What would be good to eat? So I show them my country. I try to show their pictures of my country. I put sometimes the songs, even them to listen to them.

Has the experience of being abroad changed your perception of your national identity and language?

I'm really proud when I'm abroad, that I am Kazakh because mostly people are interested. How is the life in Kazakhstan and other things? I mean, it doesn't change the negative side. I mean, I miss my culture, I miss my food. So that's why I think it's only everything is optimistic.

**Do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be a Kazakh?**

Of course, the language is your I mean the weapons that you will use to speak with each other with other people. So I think language is the most I mean, this is your mother language. This your mother like I can say that, and this plays a very crucial role in speaking with other people, because I'm teaching my Turkish friends Kazakh, because they are interested in too.

**So do you think language is most important when defining a Kazakh person or something else?**

I think when speaking especially about Kazakh people. Because, you know, Kazakh people are very like, I think masters in language. I mean, for example, they use the language in they we have idols. If you heard, people are making some debates by word. So I think, as a people, the language is the most beautiful and the most important thing for our identity.

**Do you think that a citizen of Kazakhstan should know Kazakh?**

Of course they have to, even if they are not casa, at least they have to respect it, at least not learning, but they have to know the basic phrases.

**Kazakhstan has promoted a trilingual language policy that Kazakh Russian and English and. In schools and in society. Do you think Kazakhstan's trilingual policy aligns with the needs of people? Or do you think it should be one or two languages? Or do you think this kind of policy is the best?**

I guess being trilingual is the best option for us, because we know Russian. We know Kazakh from our birth and studying English is much more, I mean, useful for the future. So and, you know, at the schools like mostly, they give time for Kazakh and then then English. So they're kind of prioritizing the languages.

**Do you think there are, right now enough government efforts yo promote Kazakh language, or there should be more?**

Unfortunately. I mean, the government tried to speak Kazakh. All the documents are in Kazakh, in Russian. But the thing is that sometimes we cannot understand it like, I mean, the documents for me, I don't know about other people, but for me, it's much more comfortable to read in Russian, understanding, that's why I think it's but at least we have to write everything in Kazakh. I think there should be okay, even if you go to another even when I was in Korea or I mean, in other countries, they don't write in other words, they write in Korean in English. That's all. I think we need to do the same, like Kazakh and English. I think we have to make people understand.

**So how do you view the role of each language in Kazakhstan's future?**

So we are now actively promoting the Kazakh language, so I hope that even not all the nationalities but Kazakh will speak Kazakh at least, yes, the English will be most like prioritizing language in our community. I hope that it will be less Russian, because. I don't know why, but even though, if I say I hope that I'm still speaking Russian, and I feel a little bit ashamed of that, that I'm not trying. But I mean, I think it's the effect of Soviet Union time, like start speaking Russian and others, but I hope that in the future, we will use Russian, but not in speaking with each other. I mean, we will use it at all, but not especially on events. For example, when I go to some events, weddings and others, I always think Kazakh I try to speak as least.

**So Kazakhstan plans to transition to the Latin alphabet by 2031. So how do you feel about this change? Do you think it is possible? And do you think you need it?**

We definitely need it. Because, for example, when I'm in Turkey, they don't know Cyrillic, most of the people don't know Cyrillic. Even Europe, they don't use Cyrillic. Even I was in Uzbekistan, they also let that was fucking fun for me. So I guess we need to do it, because at least the other Turkic countries, other countries will try to read it, at least understand, but some kind of like we should use Latin Firstly, when which was founded. It was in Latin, actually, I guess we have to keep it.

**Do you think it is possible to transition?**



I guess yes, because Latin is not that much hard. Oh, when we were at school, we were practicing it. We were writing dictions in Latin, you know, so, I guess. But Latin looks more beautiful than Cyrillic.

**P3**

**What is your age?**

I'm 20 years old.

**What do you study?**

Mining and mineral extraction.

**Where were you born?**

I was born in the village, but most of my life, I'm living in a city in east part of Kazakhstan, its called Ust-Kamenogorsk

**What languages do you speak?**

I Fluently speak Kazakh and Russian and like a, b1 level of English

**If you need to think like two, three words for each language, what would be association for you? What would you describe it with?**

Do I have to say it in English?

**You can say it in Russian, as I said**

Kazakh. I will say like, *еркіндік, тау, көшпенді*. Freedom, mountain and Nomad. Actually, like an east part , we have got, like, a lot of huge mountain. In Russian, like лес and топор, forest and axe.

**Why is it like that forest and axe?**

Russian, like, a huge country around it, it's like, for me, one big forest. In English. Like, English International, international and Tea, because British.

**What can you tell about your language usage?**

When I was young, like in a kindergarten, I used to be studying Russian, but at school, I was studying in Kazakh, but nowadays, in a university, I'm studying in Russian. With parents like in kazakh, but with my friends and like, brothers sisters, like mixed language, mixed of Russian, Kazakh and English.

**Maybe you can just speak about it a bit more. Like, why do you speak Kazakh with your family and with your friends it is mixed?**

No one has asked me about questions like that. Okay. Now actually for me, like speaking in Russian much is easier than in Kazakh. I mean, I'm watching like a Russian content, like watching films, cartoons, like reading, like scientific lectures in Russian and all sorts about mining, like geology. It is written by Russians. But in general, if I'm just walking around at my city, I'm usually speak in Kazakh, if I want to buy something, or if I like need something.

**I your city is like more Kazakh speaking?**

No, 60% of Kazakh and 40% of Russians

**Do you use Kazakh in your daily life, if, if it's not with your parents?**

Yes, yeah. It is also mixed like, I mean, I expressed myself in also in Russian and kazakh and in English. Like my friends also like, like, me.

**Is it important for you to speak Kazakh?**

Can I say it in Russian?

Yes.

Для меня это то же самое, на каком языке я говорю, я чувствую себя казахом. Я живу в Астане, а на востоке много русскоговорящих, и из-за этого мне приходится говорить по-русски. Потому что многие русские не говорят по-казахски (*For me it is the same what language I speak, I feel like kazakh. I live in Astana and in the east there are a lot of russian speakers, and because of that I have to speak in russian. Because a lot of russians can not speak Kazakh.*)

**Have you ever felt conflicted about which language to use, like, have you ever felt it's difficult to decide in some situation?**

В тот момент я учился на военной кафедре. И наш преподаватель что-то сказал, о том, что я разговариваю по-русски со своим другом. Подошел ко мне и спросил, почему я не говорю по-казахски. Он просто спросил. Угроз или чего-то такого, ничего такого не было. (*At that moment I was studying in the military faculty. And our lecturer said something about the fact, that I was speaking in russian with my friend. Went up to me and asked why I wasn't speaking in Kazakh. He simply asked. Threats or something like this, there was no such thing.*)

**If you need to rank it, would you say you are an ethnic Kazakh, citizen of Kazakhstan or a member of your region/tribe first? Why?**

I'm citizen of Kazakhstan, and my nationality is Kazakh

**So how do you represent your Kazakh identity when explaining your background to non Kazakh peers?**

I usually say like, meaning of my name. And I usually say like, interesting things about Kazakhstan, like, about nature and, oh, actually, about horses. And they are also surprised. Like, I mean, it's a normal thing to eat horse in Kazakhstan. And they are always surprised.

**Has the experience of being abroad changed your perception of your national identity and language?**

Nowadays, I guess I'm most thinking and speaking in Russian. But now I'm little bit miss about my language, and I'm now trying to speak only in Kazakh with my friends and parents.

**So from what I read, Kazakhstan has promoted like a trilingual language policy, what do you think about this kind of policy, it aligns with the needs of people?**

По моему мнению, чем больше языков ты знаешь, тем с большим количеством людей ты можешь общаться. Также в нашей конституции прописано на одинаковых основаниях казахский и русский. Официальными языками они оба считаются. И без английского сейчас никуда. В мире все говорят на английском, и для нас это... Younger generation Очень хорошо знает английский.

**When you were growing up, do you think that there should have been like, more Kazakh or Russian or English in your education?**

Когда я учился в школе, такого понятия как "казахский контент" не было. Все мультики, все было на русском языке. А сейчас есть больше, как контент, дублированный на казахском языке. Для меня было странно смотреть что-то, какой-то фильм на казахском языке. Для меня это было как... как? Также стало больше школ, где преподают только на казахском языке. (*When I was studying in school, such thing as "Kazakh content" there was none. All the multics, everything was in russian. But now there is more, like content dubbed in kazakh language. For me*

*it was strange, to watch something, some sort of film in Kazakh. For me it was like...how? There are also more schools which teach only in Kazakh.)*

**How do you feel about efforts to promote the use of Kazakh language?**

Ну да, для меня это все отлично, все нормально. У нас есть программа «Серпін». Те люди, которые с Юга, самое главное те люди, которые говорят чисто на казахском языке, те студенты, которых они отправляют на Восток, на Север. Когда я учился на своем факультете, со мной было много студентов, которые были с Юга. Мне было интересно, я никогда в жизни не видел Юга. Для меня это был интересный опыт. (Yeah, for me, it's all great, everything's fine. We have a program called 'Serpín.' Those people from the South, especially those who speak purely in Kazakh, are sent as students to the East and the North. When I was studying in my faculty, there were many students from the South with me. I found it interesting; I had never seen the South in my life. It was an interesting experience for me.)

**So how do you view the role of each language in Kazakhstan's future?**

I guess in the future, like most younger generation who speak, only in Kazakh, like government, try to, like, try to most of people like, speak in Kazakh. По моему мнению, молодежь с первого класса будет изучать английский, это хорошо, его также преподают в университете. А чтобы русский язык использовался, усилий таких нет. Просто это предмет в школе и университете. (In my opinion, it's good that young people will learn English from the first grade, and it's also taught at university. But as for the Russian language, no such efforts are made. It's just a subject in school and university)

**Kazakhstan plans to transition Kazakh to Latin alphabet by 203. How do you feel about changing my alphabet?**

For me, it's not a problem. Like the first alphabet in Kazakh, was Latin, and then kirilitza, and now again, Latin. Я думаю, что особой разницы нет. (I think there is not big difference)

**P4**

**What is your age?**

I'm 23

**What and where do you study?**

I study in France. It's called the Bioware program in France. It's biotechnology.

**What is your religion?**

It's most likely to be Muslim, but I don't consider myself as, like, very, very Muslim. It's like a little bit Muslim.

**So like, do you celebrate, Muslim holidays?**

Yeah, but only Ramadan. Like, I don't fast. Just my family is a little bit Muslim, so I'm also a little bit Muslim.

**Where were you born?**

I was born in Kazakhstan. The city is called Almaty. I was born and raised in Almaty. It's one of the biggest cities in Kazakhstan.

**What languages do you speak?**

I speak Kazakh, Russian and English.

**Would you say your Kazakh and Russian is better?**

Oh, my gosh, it's harsh. Like I love Kazakh very much, but Russian is easier for me to explain my feelings to make it clear to others.

**Do you think your Kazakh is better than your English?**

My Kazakh, yeah, of course, it's better than my English.

**If you would think about each language you speak, what words would you associate with them?**

Kazakh is family, warmth and heritage in English, I would say growth, knowledge and exploration, and for Russian community and practical.

**So what language do you speak in your family?**

In my family, we speak kazakh, yeah, we are very traditional family. In my family, with I try to speak pure Kazakh because all, like everyone, speaks only Kazakh. My family, my grandfathers, and like my father and mother, they moved to Kazakhstan from Mongolia, but they are ethnical Kazakh. So I just wanted to say that people who came from other countries, who are ethical Kazakhs from China and Mongolia, their Kazakh is the purest one with no Russian words at all. We celebrate every Kazakh celebrations, everything like every customs.

**What language schools did you go?**

So from kindergarten to to the end, to the 11th grade, I was in Kazakh school. I was good at Kazakh, like all our subjects at school, at kindergarten, they all were in kazakh however, on the breaks or while chatting with my friends, we used to speak Russian very much, very often.

**So how did you learn Russian?**

I don't exactly remember how I learned it and how I started speaking it, but my neighbors all children were Russian kids, and I somehow started playing with them, and then I was, like, four or five years old, and just grew with them and started speaking Russian very often.

**And when did you start learning English?**

at school? When my academic era started from the seventh grade? I guess no, like we started learning it, studying it in kindergarten, like with a few words. However, from the seventh grade, I started learning it very hard.

**And today, with your friends in Kazakhstan, What languages do you use?**

As we got used to speak Russian with my friends, I think mostly we speak in Russian.

**Do you mix languages?**

Oh, yes. Like we don't even know, some translations of some words to Russian from Kazakh Here in France, we actually speak more Kazakhs than Russian.

**And your studies in Kazakhstan, what language they are in?**

My Bachelor and Master's degree. They are in English.

**So did your views towards the language changed from when you were growing up to now?**

Yeah, so, like, when I was a teenager there was, like, some... Russian was more popular to speak in our country. And I think at that time, Russian was on top of the languages that I speak. But now I understand that this influence was very sad and bad for for Kazakh language, and now I prefer speaking Kazakh more.

**Why did this change happen for you? How did you think it happened?**

First of all, the war and second of all, like growing up, I guess I started to understand how important it is to keep your language alive. We have this quote, I guess in Casa. I try to explain it to you as it's in our language. So it says, Like, the nation will be lost if the language is dead. When I grew up, it hit my head and I was like, Oh yeah, it's very important to keep our language alive. I guess from like 2015, or something, the music, we started to have the genre, new genre for Kazakhstan, which is q pop. It's kind of like k pop, but Q pop with Kazakh songs, and it's kind of was something new for Kazakh language.

**You mentioned that war had an impact. What kind of impact do you think it had?**

It was like, some kind of hate for Russian, for Russian culture, for Russian people who came from Russian to Kazakhstan, because even if they were in Kazakhstan, they were like saying, how bad this country is, how bad is everything in Kazakhstan, even though they came here, they should appreciate it, our country, our culture, but they were saying, they kept saying bad things. And it was like boom in Kazakhstan when war started. Boom in prices to the apartments, to flats, to everything. It was like very expensive when Russians started coming, and it's kind of some kind of hate for Russia. Our russians are totally different. Our Russians are so great. They are very amazing. Like, they're Kazakhs, yeah? Like, we are the same with our Russians, Russians from Kazakhstan. Also, there's one thing, if the room is filled with Kazakhs and there's only one Russian people, everyone will speak in Russian, so that person will understand. But if the room is filled with Russians and there's only one Kazakh people, like they will not speak Kazakh to you. I don't know how to explain it, but I also didn't like that fact, I would prefer that if you are in Kazakhstan, please speak in Kazakh

**Do you think that, like this power transition that happened not so long ago, from Nazarbayev to Tokayev had any impact or not really when it comes to identity or languages?**

I didn't notice any changes between Nazarbayev and Takayev. Theres not much difference, I guess.

**Do you think there should have been less or more of one of the languages in your life and education than you were growing up?**

No, I'm I'm pretty comfortable with all three languages that we use in our country, like Kazakh. It connects us to our history, to our traditions, to our relatives. Russian connects us with other nationalities that live in Kazakhstan, which is like 124 nationalities in Kazakhstan, to the people from Soviet Union to speak in Russian and English is more dedicated for education, I guess, for knowledge, and also for some international relations when you go abroad. So I guess all three are fine, but, but also, like I wish Kazakh was more in our lives.

**When you, for example, meet a new Kazakh in what language do you usually approach them?**

It's hard to differentiate like, who speaks more Kazakh, who speaks more Russian, Because there are Kazakhs who doesn't speak Kazakh at all. So first I just greet them in Kazakh. But after some time knowing him, like I speak Kazakh or Russian, if it's like, which language is comfortable for the other person, I try to speak that language. It's not a problem. It's not a big deal for me.

**And why would you approach Kazakh first?**

Because they are Kazakhs.

**Do you ever feel conflicted about which language to use? Is it ever hard for you to decide?**

Yeah, like, for example, like, when I meet a fellow from Kazakhstan. Abroad. I often, like, as I said before, have a like moment of decision whether to speak Kazakh or Russian.

**So if given the choice, which languages would you want to prioritize in your future career and in life?**

So actually, in my career, I would prioritize English for professional opportunities, but I would love to maintain Kazakh as the primary language at home, especially in my immediate family. Yeah, so I think it's not that, I don't think, but it is important to me that future generation, especially in my family, will speak Kazakh.

**Do you think that being bilingual or threelilingual is part of Kazakh identity?**

Yes, I think, like, even from my childhood, multilingualism is very much a part of Kazakhstan, as I said before, because there are, like 124 nationalities that live in Kazakhstan. There are a lot of languages, so I think it is identity, because it comes from very early times, from Soviet Union, yeah, and we got used to it.

**If you had to rank it for like, 123, what would you say is the closest to you being ethnic Kazakh being citizen of Kazakhstan, or being a member of your region tribe?**

I think the first I'm a citizen of Kazakhstan, and then I'm ethnic Kazakh and then a member of my region.

**Why citizen first?**

Because, like, it reflects my connection to the entire country and its diverse culture.

**How do you think you express your Kazakh identity What do you think you do that is uniquely Kazakh?**

So I mentioned before that they celebrate all Kazakh traditions, like me and my family, also, I enjoy our cuisine, participate in cultural events, also share our unique customs and values with international friends. And I always tell about our hospitality and respect for family. I think all of these somehow describes the identity.

**How do you represent your Kazakh identity when explaining your background to non Kazakh peers? So like, if you meet a person and like he doesn't know a lot or anything about Kazakhstan, what do you talk about first?**

First, I would say, I would mention that some very popular people. Do you know Dimash? But again, I would show Dimash and Triple G to them, to show who are they and where are they from. And after that, I would explain our culture, our music history, I would show the beauty of our nature. And I would say some words in Kazakh so they will listen to the language how it sounds. And also, there were some situations like it happened twice in France while me and my friends, we were speaking Kazakh, and people were just coming to us and asking what language we are speaking. And they said that it sounds very beautiful. And they have, they have never heard Kazakh language before. So, yeah, it was very it was a pleasure to hear that. I would share some stories about customs, which are very, very unique.

**For example, what customs?**

So when a baby was born after 40 days, we have a tradition that is called so all the women who are related to the mother, who are related to the family itself, and friends, exactly, women friends come to that to that celebration. And we have a very big table with food, with everything, and with presents for all the women. So the initial thing is to share a good moment so other women also will get pregnant, will have like the same, like a baby. I don't know how to explain it, but that tradition, that custom, is very, very beautiful to be in. Also, there is a bowl with water and all the women sitting on the table, they should say good things, wishes for the baby. So like, be healthy, be rich and etc, etc. And, yeah, I don't know how to describe it in a beautiful way, but it is beautiful. So like, if someone asks you, like about Kazakhstan, you mostly talk about, like, Kazakh tradition and Kazakh things, and not that much about maybe Russian influence.

**Has the experience of being abroad changed your perception of your national identity and language in any way?**

Yeah. It made me feel even more connected to Kazakh identity and more appreciative of the Kazakh language, especially in France, like I'm very amazed that everyone in France speaks only French, and most of them, they don't speak in English at all and actually, somewhere deep inside i i wish that in Kazakhstan, people also spoke Kazakh that much. Yeah, so I just realized how important is it to keep our language strong and relevant, being far away from home.

**Do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be Kazakh?**

Language plays a huge role in the in defining Kazakh identity. The Kazakh language is some kind of a bridge to our traditions, values and sense of belonging, while customs and values and strong community spirit are equally important like, however, I think language is the most important one, because it allows us to keep Our history.

**So for example, um, for Kazakhs who don't really speak Kazakh or don't speak a good Kazakh, what would be things which makes them Kazakh?**

Traditions? Because, like, even non Kazakhs, even like Koreans or Russians who live in Kazakhstan, but like, don't speak Kazakh at all. It's traditions like they also might celebrate, or also like our Kazakh cuisine. Russians and Koreans who live in Kazakhstan, they love our cuisine, and they make our national cuisine themselves, and it's pretty impressive.

**Do you think that religion is part of Kazakh identity?**

Nowadays, like the religion theme is becoming more popular in Kazakhstan, and to be honest, I don't really like it. I don't think that Kazakhs were that into religion. And you know, it was mostly tengrism in Kazakhstan more than Muslim. Like I don't think that religion, somehow describes Kazakh identity. No. You know, Kazakhs also are like from Turkic tribes. Like, Arabic culture, for some reason, is becoming more popular and like it drives me crazy. I don't like it at all. You know, like, to be honest, I've watched the video on Tiktok that shows differences between, like, Egypt, then and now, Afghanistan, then and now, and all the women, they were so nice, so good. Like, it felt like it was some kind of developed countries, but now we see the influence of the religion, and that video said that next is Kazakhstan, and I really don't want it to happen to Kazakhstan, yeah.

**As you also said before, like there's a trilingual language policy in Kazakhstan. So do you think it is the right way to go, or should it be two or one language, or trilingual is the best approach?**

So I think it aligns well with our needs like because Kazakhstan, like Kazakh language preserves our culture. Russian connects us regionally, and English opens global doors, but I think we need a stronger focus on Kazakh language. It should be the main language in schools and public places so that more people feel comfortable using it in daily life.

**So I know there have been like more, also government efforts in Kazakhstan, like introducing it to official places and the universities and things like that. How do you feel about government efforts to promote the use of language? Do you actually think it is enough, or maybe too much?**

I think the government is doing some work, but there's still room for the action. Kazakh could be more widely used in media, education, urban areas where Russian is still very dominant, like we know that in North Kazakhstan, Russian is more dominant, and also, all our streets are named after Russian people I didn't know. Like, also, more could be done to make Kazakh the default language in public life, because, like, it feels like the Kazakh language became home language that you speak only in your home. Yeah, maybe also it works people, HR should ask you to speak Kazakh like It's like priority.

**How do you think the role of each language will change in Kazakhstan's future?**

Kazakhstan will remain as an anchor, like as a cultural anchor, connecting us to our roots, to our history and Russian, I guess, will be essential for regional corporations. English, yeah, it will be like more for knowledge, for education, for global business, science, technology, yeah.

**Do you think the usage of Kazakh is going to increase?**

Yeah, for sure. I think I hope.

**And do you think the influence of English will also increase?**

Yeah. For sure, yeah.

**So, what about Russian?**

I hope it will decrease.

**Why do you like hope so that Russian would decrease, but like for example, English would increase?**

Because English is more like international language, it's it's very helpful for me. Now, it's very helpful to connect with other people, with other nationalities, while, like, not everyone, for example, in the USA, speaks Russian, like, you know what I mean? Also, like we are only 19 million people in Kazakhstan, so not also, like no one from the other country speaks Kazakh as well. So I guess English is, how can you say it is the most perfect option for us?

**So there have been plans to transition from kirilica to Latin when it comes to Kazakh language. How do you think about this change?**

In my opinion, it was one of the most stupid things to do, because, like, because we already had that alphabet in Latin, but it was not perfect, like it was very strange. And for example, like it was too difficult to understand, how should we use it? Because some words in Kazakh, they didn't match with the meanings, with the spellings and etc, and now, not now, when it was said by Nazarbayev, everyone started changing the names of their restaurants, or the places the canteens into Latin. And it's like, it sounds really bad. It was not made perfect. And I guess they should have worked more on how to make it sound good, how to make the letters better. Now it feels like people are uneducated, and they make a lot of mistakes in this Latin alphabet, and no one checks if it's right, if it's spelled right or not.

**But do you think if done well, it could have some positives or not?**

Yes, because I really like how Turkish language is written, is spelled. It's, it sounds and looks very beautiful. And I would not mind changing from Kirillitza to Latin. And I think it's, it looks and feels more modern. Maybe some other positives which could come from the change, I think more people from the other countries could read it. They would not ask it if it's Russian or not.

**P5**

**What is your age?**

I am 21 years old.

**What do you study?**

My major is math teacher.

**Where?**

Poland

**What is your religion?**

My religion is Muslim.

**Are you a practicing Muslim?**

Currently, I am more practicing, but also my family is also Muslims, and now I am more practicing and do some things that we should do for Muslims.

**Where were you born in Kazakhstan?**

I born in the city of Astana, in the capital of Kazakhstan, so, but now I'm living in the small village. It's near city Astana.

**So why did you move to a village?**

Because we want home. We want house with our family. So yes, we moved to village.

**What languages do you speak?**

Now? I speak my mother language is Kazakh and I also speak in Russian and English.

**Which one do you know the best?**

I know Kazakh language the best, and then Russian and English.

**Okay, so if you had to think about like each language you speak, what words come to mind? Like two, three words for each language.**

For Kazakh language, the word family and the word relatives, they all speak in Kazakh. So in Russian language, I first remember friends, because with friends, I we speak in Russian language. And so, yes, in English language, all, all of them words related with future and studying and working.

**What language did you speak in your kindergarten/school? Like to which language schools did you go?**

I spoke in Kazakh language in my kindergarten, school and also at university, also I speak in Kazak languages.

**And in your family you speak in Kazakh?**

Yes, in our family also.

**But is it a bit mixed language, or is it like pure Kazakh?**

Is it a little bit mixed, but not very. Okay, we speak in Kazakh, but some words come in Russian.

**And you said in university, you are also like able to speak Kazakh. So Are there studies in Kazakh too?**

Yes, yes, in Kazakh.



**So it's education studies, right?**

Every disciplines we study in Kazakh language

**With your friends, you speak more Russian, yes?**

Yes, with my friends

**Are your friends, not Kazakh speakers? Or do you just like, think it's easier to speak Russian?**

You know, in Kazakhstan, I always speak in Kazakh language, because it's convenient for me. But here in Poland, I have Kazakh friends, and also Ukrainian friends. So it's more comfortable to speak in a Russian language.

**But like with your friends in Kazakhstan, when you like, meet people. Is it mixed language? Is it Kazakh is it Russian?**

It is mixed language and also more Russian language.

**And how do you choose when you are in Kazakhstan, which language to speak?**

In Kazakhstan, as I said, I speak always in Kazakh language, but when we have some situations, when we meet with another guys from another country, so, and at that time I, I choose to speak in Russian language or in language that they will understand.

**Okay, so when you were growing up, do you think there should have been more or less of one of the languages? Do you maybe you think there should have been more English or more Russian or maybe less of something?**

You know, when I when I was growing up, I always talked in Kazakh language, but I think it's the worst thing, because now I have some troubles with Russian language, because I have a barrier to speak in Russian language. So I would, I would like to if I grew up with mixed language in Kazakh and in Russian. But in English language, I started to learn this when I was 16 years old. So I think it's enough.

**Did you have maybe chances to speak in Kazakh with someone, or are there, like no Kazakhs around you?**

No, yes, yes. I live. My roommate is Kazakh girl. So in each day we speak in Kazakh language.

**So have you ever, felt conflicted about which language to use?**

Yes, for example, one week ago. When we went to one party, and there was my Kazakh friends, but you know, all of them speaks in Russian language. I don't know why, but so this time, at that time, I had some troubles to choose. Will I say in Kazakh or Russian language? But if say in Kazakh language, some of them will not understand. But I also have some troubles with Russian, as I said, so, yes, at that time I have some problems.

**So now, if given a choice in your future career, what language would you want to prioritize? And also, if you have family kids, what language would you like to speak in your family?**

Personally, if I will have career, I would like to speak in English language mostly, and I would like to develop my Russian language. So in career, I would like to speak in these two languages, but in my future family, I will choose speaking Kazakh language. I want to teach in Kazakhstan, but in some places in the in English language I want to learn.

**So you speak three languages, right? And do you think it's like part of Kazakh identity, maybe to have all these three languages? Or do you think that there's like one language which is closest to your heart?**

I think speaking in three languages is our identity for Kazakh people, because in Kazakhstan, rather than other countries, Kazakh people speak at least two languages.

**So if you would need to choose between being ethnic Kazakh, Kazakhstani and being a member of a tribe, what do you think would be first, second and third?**

I think myself like Kazakh, ethnic Kazakh. And the second, like a citizen. Like citizen, you say, we have passports, we have identity cards in Kazakhstan. And the third the last.

**Okay, okay, so how do you represent your Kazakh identity when explaining your background to non Kazakhs, like, what do you talk about first? For example. So when someone says, oh, I don't know anything about Kazakhstan, or you want to something about being Kazakh, what do you talk about at first?**

First thing that come my mind is our national food. And we started from this, and then we say to them, our culture and our rules some, so apparently all of my international friends, like when I talk, when I tell him, tell them about our national foods and that they always tell me that I should bring them one of them.

**When you were growing up in, what language did you read books or, like, watched television?**

Now I watch serials and the movies always in Russian language, and I am starting to watch and read in English language, but with movies with subtitles. And when I when I'm reading books, I always made translating. I always translating all the words. So it's hard for me, and it's easy for me to just watch new films in English.

**And when you were growing up, did you have any Kazakh TV shows or like books in Kazakh language?**

Yes, yes. Now, rather than earlier, we have we our books and our movies are developed more. So I always also read in Kazakh language books about my religion in Kazakh language. Okay, so yes, and some TV shows, okay.

**But when you were little, you didn't have that thing, right?**

Yes, yes. So it was we had, but we had, but not very how to say developing. So I watched the only YouTube channel with YouTube channels in Russian language, but now we have a lot of Kazakh channels.

**So has this experience of being abroad changed your perception about your identity and language?**

Yes, it changed very and now I started to love and I started to like my language. And when I will come to Kazakhstan, I will speak only in Kazakh language. And I don't know why this mind come, but yes, this thing is changed. So because, I think it is because I am missing a little bit my country. So I think I will be here also five months.

**But why do you think you loved Kazakh language less before?**

I don't know, but, I always wanted to improve my Russian, and I always want to speak in Russian language when I was in Kazakhstan. So here I understand that Russian language is not very hard, and you can say with your mistakes, because it's not your mother language. So yeah, and now I start to love my language very much.

**So coming back to Russian, why do you think it was so important for you to learn Russian?**

Because in our country, Russian is more comfortable to speak than our Kazakh language. So if you will work and then in work, you should, if you will work with clients customers, you should speak with them in a language that they for them, convenient, comfortable. So I think that Russian is important to learn.

**Do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be a Kazakh, or is it not that important?**

I think yes, it's very important. But in Kazakhstan, I think some Kazakh peoples don't, some Kazakh people don't think like that, because, you know, it's not how to say a racism.

**If you need to, let's say, define what it means to be Kazakh. What do you think would be the most important?**

Knowing Kazakh culture and Kazakh history. Okay, and then the most important thing, I think, is our language.

**Do you think practicing religion is important in being a Kazakh?**

Yes, I think so. Practicing religion is important for every country, for their religion.

**Do you think like Islam is part of Kazakh identity or not?**

Yes, I think so, because we Kazakh people don't have other religion, I think being a Muslim and the religion Islam is part of our nationality.

**Kazakhstan has promoted a trilingual language policy with Kazakh Russian and English. Do you think this kind of approach aligns with the needs of people, or should it be maybe one single language?**

I think trying, I think that these three languages are the best decision. I think that this is very best decision, because now in our schools and in universities, these three languages are very developed.

**So how do you feel about like government efforts to promote Kazakh language?**

I think that making Kazakh books, how I said, and then filming Kazakh movies right now is one of the kind of the pushing and to develop Kazakh language. Growing up all of the now we have some streets with Kazakh names and then, but yes, now is very more developed than earlier.

**Do you think it's a positive thing?**

Yes, yes, I think it's positive. But now we have, as I said, we have Kazakh name streets, but in Latin.

**So how do you see the role of each language in Kazakhstan's future? What language do you think there will be less, or what language we will see more?**

In the future, you say, yeah, in the future, in the future, I think Kazakh will be more, because now, as I said, we are developing, and I don't say that Russian will be less, but. It will develop also, and I think in English language will a little bit more than rather than earlier. So I think three languages will develop with their level.

**So Kazakhstan now like plans to transition Kazakh alphabet to Latin from by 2031 and how do you feel about this change? Is it good or bad?**

I think it will be hard for Kazakh people to change to this, but I think it is very good, it will be benefit for everyone, for Kazakh people, also for international people who live in Kazakhstan. So I think it's a good decision.

**P6**

**Okay, so you are 20, you study teaching, and you study in which city right now?**

So right now I study in Kaunas in Lithuania Vytautas magnus university, education.

**What would you say is your religion?**

About my religion, so I'm Muslim

**Are you like practicing Muslim? Do you like celebrate Muslim celebrations like Ramadan and things like that. Do you go to mosque? Or are you not very religious?**

Good question, because it's a really confusing thing, because I celebrate really big holidays as well as right now, I don't live with my parents. It's really hard to celebrate some of them, and actually the most of Muslim people usually go to the mosque every Friday, and they prepare, they make bread on Friday, things like that, and I'm a student, and I struggle with that a little bit. And as well as in, I'm in Europe, so I struggle with it again. So that's why I don't do some of them. Maybe I'm not that really, really religious person who makes all the things, who prays five times in a day. I understand I would like to do it maybe after, I don't know, couple of years when I will be stable, when I will have stable job, when I'll decide in which country I'm going to leave. I'll try to be more accurate with that. But right now, I do some how to say I miss some holidays and some things that Muslim people should do.

**In what city or were you born?**

So actually, I was born in South Kazakhstan. It's called, Shymkent maybe you have heard or not, it's pretty big city. Yeah, it's big one, and population in that city is more than million.

**Was it a majority Kazakh, Russian or a mixed city?**

No, honestly, in the north part of Kazakhstan, Russian people, Russians, Russian speakers, but in South Kazakhstan, it's opposite even Russian people speaking Kazakh.

**What languages do you know?**

So in general, I speak in Kazakh in my family, it's my first language. And with international people, I speak in English.

**Which language do you speak the best?**

Of course, my first language, I'm native speaker.

**Is Russian or English better for you? Which one do you command better?**

Um, good question, because I have learned, I have studied English and grammatically, I would say, for me, English is easier. I can find mistakes, or I can easily know if person is speaking correct or not, and as well as it is my major, I can teach it to other people. English language, but about Russian... I grew up with that language I used to hear it from my young age. I didn't study it very well, but I don't struggle in understanding this language. So I can easily speak with native speakers. I can understand them. So it's not an academic level. I cannot stitch it to someone, but I can speak it okay.

**Do you still live in the same city in Kazakhstan?**

My parents lived in South part, but at this moment, I live in North part, in Karaganda.

**Is it more Russian speaking?**

It used to be, Russian factories used to be there, not Russian, I would say, Soviet Union factories. And a lot of Russian speakers came from different countries to Kazakhstan, to Karaganda, and maybe, you know, we had a lot of camps for prisoners. But right now not anymore. That's why everybody speaks in Kazakh. But you know, everybody as well knows Russian.

**When I read about Kazakhstan, and I read, you know, for my master's thesis, it also is written north, it's more Russian. South is more Kazakh. But as you see now, when you go to the north, you can still speak Kazakh. There's not that big of divide, I guess. Or do you? Do you today? Do you need to use more Russian in your everyday life in a different city?**

It's not necessary to speak that language. Okay, so now after the war, this situation is becoming more popular, because after the war, a lot of people from Russia started to move into a as well as its close known visa system, and Kazakhstan is much cheaper than Russia, I mean, or other European countries, or other Asian countries, maybe I would say. And they are more and more again, after the 30 years and they try to speak in their language, but sorry, it's Kazakhstan. You have to speak in Kazakh okay?

**If you have to think about each language you speak, what words would you associate with them? So you could give, like, two, three words each, like just associations which come to mind for you?**

Perfect. Okay, so should I start from English? Yeah, first when I think about the English language, first things that I that comes to my mind, maybe it's Big Ben tower in London. London comes first my mind, because I don't know, maybe when we have started to learn English, it says the capital of Great Britain is London, things like that. And second thing is a uh, about English, maybe movies, movies and songs, because in whole around the world, a lot of movies are in English, songs are in English, and our favorite and popular songs are also in English. So that's why it is associated with things like movies, songs. Second about Russian the first thing that comes to my mind is Soviet Union. I don't know why it's not because, yeah, because all the countries that used to be the part of Soviet Union, it's easy to interact with them in Russian. And the second thing is, uh, war. I don't know why. I mean, it all makes sense. Maybe in all their history, they used to have war. Maybe that's why. And third, my own language, when I think about it, the first thing that comes to my mind is my home, my parents, my siblings, my hometown, my traditional food, my religion, so all the things, yes, okay,

**So in your family, do you speak like pure Kazakh, or do you mix it to the Russian?**

No, I don't. I really hate mixing languages because it shows that your academic level of this language is too low. In my home is the same, even if I speak in English, I try to speak only in English. And sometimes I struggle with some words that I don't really know about translation. And yes, sometimes maybe in those cases, I can just tell those words, in the language that I maybe that I find it easy, but mostly I do my best to not mix them okay. And I think that my language is really rich language. We don't struggle in describing some things or talking about any topic with no difficulties, without any mixing the words. But I see. Lot of people who mix, who mixes the languages, and I have no words, I have no comments, what to do with them, so it's not in my power.

**What age did you move to the north? When did it happen?**

So, when I was 17.

**So you fully then grew up in South.**

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**So did you go to Kazakh language schools all the time?**

Yes, yes,

**When did you start to learn in Russian?**

Fourth grade. It depends on the school, because each school has different systems. So some of them, from the first grade start to try to teach to third to third languages, Kazakh, Russian, English. I think it's really hard for the baby, for the for the child. I don't support this. Okay, I think till maybe seventh grade, the child should know his own language in very good level. After that, he can learn because, because of that, because of the start to learn different languages from the early ages. That's why they start to mix. They mix because they don't know how to translate it. And in their minds, they speak. They tell the word that is the easiest one.

**And English, when did you start to learn English?**

Have started at sixth or seventh grade, but I would say it was in really easy level. I started to learn regularly from the ninth grade. I can say that I have started to learn from ninth grade, because before, I didn't focus on it very well. About

Russian, I would say Russian is pretty hard language, even if I know everything, even if I understand everything, I struggle with grammar mistakes.

**Do you think there has been a change in Kazakhstan when it comes to languages comparing to when you were child?**

Yeah, yeah, pretty big changes, Right now, the children, I think they focused on Kazakh more, because parents say that that's a problem from environment and they should be in Kazakh environment more. So, yeah, Kazakh language is being promoted more, and now there are lots of courses for the Kazakh language. For Russian kids or for international kids, because Kazakhstan is multi multicultural country, throughout the culture, throughout the nationalities in Kazakhstan. So like, personally, I have seen, I have some friends at the university who teach Kazakh language to different nationalities. So it's nice, because maybe 10-15, years ago, we didn't have that.

**Is there more content in like media, movies, books, influencers and things like that?**

Maybe we didn't have a lot because they were more Russian content. But now, I would say, out of Kazakh speakers, they are getting promoted more, and Kazakh contents are everywhere, even in Instagram or Tiktok or TV shows, TV programs, they are covering other Russian channels. I would say, like in my dad's age, even when I was a child, we had a lot of Russian channels, but right now we don't have a lot. Maybe if we have 30 channels, maybe 25-27 of them, Kazakh and other just couple of them, maybe Russian or international channels.

**Do you meet other Kazakhs here? Have you had the chance?**

So before coming to here, I was searching different social medias, different apps for finding Kazakh people, because I was alone, and I have found some group chats from Telegram for the people, for the Kazakh people who live in Kaunas, for the students. So there are lots here, and I have joined them. I met some Kazakh people from that chat, and they helped me a lot with accommodation or with transport, also my dormitory, I have found a lot of people who speak in my own language, or even Russian, so I didn't struggle with them as well, as you know right now with technology, technology center, that is not really hard to find someone who's speaking in your language. So I didn't struggle with that.

**In what language do you speak with them?**

So I speak in Kazakh, and I have some friends who are from North part or from other parts, and I don't really care, because I speak Kazakh. If we are in the place where, if, let's say if we are in the restaurant, where is the Kazakh girls and with and other language speakers or other nationalities, we speak, of course, all together in English. But only with Kazakhs. I speak in Kazakh.

**So when you meet a new Kazakh in Kaunas, you approach them in Kazakh, first of all?**

Sure. They speak in Russian or other languages, but I speak in Kazakh.

**So do you ever feel conflicted about which language to use? Do you have ever like have doubts?**

Hard question. So I think, no, I didn't, if do not remember some particular situations. No, no. I mean, I respect, I respect any people. I mean, it's not his fault that he doesn't know this language very well. Of course, I try to understand, and I'll try to be comfortable that person. If for this person, English or Russian is easier, of course, I speak. I mean, first I will ask, what language is easy for you? I mean, I started to speak in Kazakh, of course. But if the person explains that this language is hard for this person. I mean, of course, I'll try to understand and try to speak in the language that he's good at.

**So if given the choice which language, languages would you want to prioritize in your future career, and what languages in your family?**

See my own language, because I think that, I mean especially for my kids. I don't want my kids to grow up with mistakes or to mix languages. That's why I'll try to speak with them like 100% in my own language, in my mother tongue, and after maybe 12 years, they can choose the easiest language or the comfortable language that they would want to speak.

**Do you think that being bilingual or trilingual is part of Kazakh identity, or like what it means to be Kazakh today?**

I would say because of political situation, because just our politician is like three languages, is a politician already and from the school they make us to learn three languages. That's why, I mean, I would not say that it's in our blood or it's from our birth, just we have to do that. It's just politics for. Example, in American politics, they don't have to learn other

French or Italian languages. They don't have to do that, and that's why all the countries speak only in English. And in our political situation, we learn through language from our childhood. So I would say that's why it's.

**P7**

**What is your age?**

I'm 21 right now.

**What do you study?**

Currently, I'm studying in the national Kazakh National Medical University. I'm on the fourth year of the faculty general medicine, and I'm studying in English.

**Where are you from? In Kazakhstan?**

I'm not sure that people know, but I'm from small town named Taldykorgan its near big city, Almaty. Maybe you know about Almaty, it's near it. So I was born there and grew up, and after passing the exams, I applied for this university, and now I'm living in Almaty.

**What languages do you speak?**

I can speak Kazakh, Russian and English. So

**Which one do you think the easiest for you?**

It's Kazakh, because It was like from my childhood. I was taught only Kazakh, and then when I went to school, I started to learn Russian and English. So my native language is basically.

**Did you go to Russian kindergarten?**

School? As a kindergarten kind of school. Okay, I was. we're talking in Kazakh all the time, and at home, also we speak in Kazakh.

**If you would need to give like, two or three words for each language?**

For Kazakh, I would say native. And it's actually one of the most difficult languages in the world, I guess I don't remember. It has a lot of, like, grammar rules, a lot of new words that I don't even know. And so it's, I can say it's rich and it's difficult. Mm. Hmm, always actually very beautiful, but it doesn't sound like that for foreigners. For me, it's really beautiful. And about Russian, I think it's common in post Soviet countries, so it's useful for us to speak in Russian, because, as you know, Kazakhstan is multi-national country, and the common language to speak is Russian for everybody, for almost everybody. Um, about English, I would say it's the most universal language, because, you know, it's, it's the global language, and we use it everywhere. And every even in medicine, every article, in new studies, a new research, is in English. So it's very useful, and it's universal, and it's easy, actually, there are not so many rules, like in Russian, it has a so it's easy to learn.

**When you went to Kazakh school, did you learn Russian as a second language, or was it like together?**

We we were studying it as a second language. So basically, like, we have two subjects in first four classes. They were Kazakh and Russian, and when we went to the fifth grade, they added English.. And before that, we were working on just two languages, because it's it's necessary for us to know two languages as from history. So it's basically need.

**In your family, do you speak only Kazakh?**

No, actually, we mix up. But my father is very, like, patriotic, I don't know, yeah, and he likes our language very much. He was taught by his mother, his sisters. It's like, very beautiful, reaching, very hard words language. So he speaks only Kazakh at home, and that's because we also try to speak in Kazakh, but we mix up because it's easier to speak by adding Russian words.

**And with your friends, growing up, how, how did you speak?**

We mix up three languages. Also we were studying in the last two years of school, we were studying in English. So basically, we were using like every single word in three languages.

**Now, like when you think, when you were growing up, do you think there should have been, like, more or less Russian, English, Kazakh in your life?**

For me, I think it was ideal, because I think everyone should firstly learn their native language like if they have an opportunity, if they have Kazakh speaking parents, then I think they should learn their native language at first for them

to not to be confused at a very young age. So I think it was ideal for me, because I learned first before school, and then I added Russian, and then added English. And I think it was like very constant, stable way to learn new languages without forgetting the first one.

**Okay, yeah, do you speak with Kazakhs in Vilnius? Did you like find friends?**

Yeah, actually, I had a lot of. There were six of us in our dorm, a lot of Kazakh people. And I also found Kazakh people from other universities, I think Vilnius University, Kaunas. Yeah, I found friends from there and we were speaking Kazakh for foreigners to not to understand what we were speaking.

**Yeah, so with your friends, you spoke more so kazakh than Russian. Or is it again mixed?**

If there are some people who don't know Kazakh, so I try to be flexible all the time, all the time, and if they don't know Kazakh, I speak Russian. If they don't know Russian, I speak English. I try to be, comfortable. We mix up. But mostly I was trying to speak Kazakh if they're not speaking in Russian. To me, I was speaking Kazakh at first.

**So do you ever feel conflicted about which language to use? Like, do you ever like have to think about it a bit more. Do you have maybe some examples?**

What do you mean by a conflicted like, what language should I use?

**Yeah, like before speaking to someone, like, maybe you have like, situations where you think, should I speak with him in this language or this language, or where you maybe we are not sure which language you should use.**

um, so basically, I'm more introverted person, so I don't speak first to people if they don't speak to me, and so that's if they start speaking in Russian. I will speak in Russian. If they start speaking Kazakh, I will speak Kazak but if I have to start the conversation, I first say in Kazakh and then ask, Is it okay if I speak in Kazakh, or do you understand or you don't, should I speak in Russian? And that's it. So basically, no, okay, I'm not sure about that. I think

**Why do you like choose to approach Kazakh and Kazakh first?**

I think it's my upbringing. Like I was like that. I was always how to say. I was learning about our traditions, our culture, from my early childhood, my sisters, my brothers, my grandparents were teaching me how to be how to be polite, how to be respectful to everyone and our cultures that don't basically exist in other countries. So I've always been like that. I think I was taught like that, so I identify as a person.

**So if given the choice which languages or language, would you want to prioritize in your future career and life? And why?**

Since we're living in Kazakhstan, I would like to for Kazakh Language to be the prioritized one. I've always been wanting this, but talking about medicine, books that are written in Kazakh are very difficult to read because they're not so much books in Kazakh at first, there are more books in Russian, not in Kazakh. So most of the people, like almost all of them, almost all the doctors, use Russian books all the time, and I would like to use more Kazakh books, but that are written in an easy way, because it can be written in an easy way. And I would like for doctors to learn medical English, at least, and to use newest researchers, newest articles in English. I think it's more relevant because, like, medicine is always changing. Everything's something's coming up all the time, new drugs, new methods of treatment. They are in English, all of them. So I think for everyone is is beneficial to use English resources than Russian ones and and for them, for those who don't know English, than writing Kazakh, mostly than in Russian. Since the situation now with Russia and Ukraine, we all know all of it, and the importance of Russian language in the world stage declined very dramatically.

**Do you think speaking two or three languages is a part of Kazakh identity/what it means to be Kazakh? Do you feel more connected to one language in particular?**

Due to the events happened in the past, undoubtedly, knowing at least two languages and using them became an irreplaceable part of Kazakhstani society and i think that it makes us unique. We cannot change the history ofc, but at this point, bilingualism or trilingualism has more benefits than drawbacks on youngsters and i love it.

**Okay, so when I read the literature about Kazakhstan, there were like these terms that there are is like a Kazakh and Kazakhstan identity. So for you, if you would need to like rank it, what do you think would be like, first, second, third, by your Kazakh, Kazakhstan, or like your tribal identification?**

I think tribal identification is present in most Asian countries. I think not in not in Kazakh only, but in the past they were, there were differentiation, like Kazakh and Kazakhstani, but from this year or last year, we try to fight with it,

because it's not right to divide people to Kazakhstani and Kazakh only, and our president, I guess if, if I'm not mistaken, has had a speech like we have to like the Kazakhstani term has to be extincted because it's not right. And everyone who is living in Kazakhstan are Kazakh people, because they they were born here, they were working, they were studying in Kazakhstan, and they are part of our big community. So I think using term Kazakh is more relevant to us than Kazakhstani, because it's not right, even if you're Uigur, even if you're Russian who who was born in Kazakhstan, and feel like Kazakh person, then why should you use Kazakhstani term if it's if he's Kazakh, as we are. So, yeah,

**So like, did tribal identification play any role in your life at all? Or was it just, I know it, but it's not really relevant.**

There is like a tendency in like from the east, there are more of other types of tribes in the South. I was born in South, and in South, there are more common, common other common tribes. So they are, like divided into regions. And when we migrate, I think we are mixed up. And everyone, when you when you are new to somewhere new environment, everyone asks, What's your tribe? And that's how you make friends. Actually, if you're from one tribe, you're going to be more closer. It's like, I don't know. It's like, our some kind of tradition, maybe,

**Now when you, like, represent your Kazakh identity to your to non Kazakhs like how do you how do you do it? Maybe, like, main things you say to them.**

The first thing I say that we eat horse meat, and that shocks everyone with horse meat is used in almost all of the Asian countries, and everyone, every foreigner, was shocked about it. The first thing I talk about is a food. And then second one, I actually brought earrings and neck necklace and the ring like our with our ornaments, and I was wearing it all the time. So everyone was like, wondering. If everyone wondered, like, what kind of jewelry, is it? I was like, yeah, it's our Kazakh ornaments. We wear this kind of jewelry in Kazakhstan, and they were interested about our traditions. Like, for example, we have tradition. It's called beta sharin Kazakh. It basically means. Opening the face of the bride for relatives, for relatives of the husband, so something like that. And they were interesting, interested about culture. So basically, I talk about food, about our ornaments, our costumes, traditional, and about the traditions, and of course, which language is very hard to learn and the pronunciation is very hard, so usually people forget what they learned.

**We are also maybe a little bit coming back to language, but I'm like interested on, like, TV, let's say, and books, like, what language we were mostly when You were growing up?**

Like in the early childhood I was I read fairy tales in Kazakh, mostly because they were only Kazakh books in my village. And then I started to read in Russian, a little bit of English, like, not like classic literature, because it's hard in English. So I was reading classic literature in Russian because there were no Kazakh literature. And that times, now there are translations to Kazakh language, and I, I'm trying to read foreign literature like detectives historical books in Kazakh, but it's actually harder than I thought. And I read also Kazakh books of Kazakh authors, Kazakh writers and Russian ones. I usually read detective from Agatha Christie. I love her, okay, yeah, I read them in Russian, usually, like dramas, melodramas and TV. I usually don't watch TV, but if I'm watching TV series or movies, mostly in Russian, because in the even in the cinemas, Russian films are more popular in Kazakh, and now, only now. For example, the venom film was out like week, and first time in our history it was dubbed in Kazakh. Oh, so people started to, started to support this film, and went to the Kazakh dubbed version. Then in Russian, it was like first in our history that Marvel movie is in Kazakh. So yeah, we went also.

**So has the experience of being an exchange student change your perception, maybe of your national identity or language?**

Definitely, since I'm living in Almaty, there are a lot of Russian speaking Kazakh people. And I used to think that speaking Russian is like, more prestigious. When I was at school, I thought like that, like speaking Kazakh is not that important. But when I went abroad, I understood that abroad, like if you're in the foreign country, no one knows about your culture, no one knows who you are, your language, and basically, you are one of the few people who can represent your country. And that's when I understood that Russian is not my native language. My native language is in Kazakh. And I started to speak more Kazakh, surprisingly, in the foreign Lithuania, I started speaking more Kazakh with my parents, with my friends, with everyone whom I can speak with. And coming back to my country, I started to speak more Kazakh and encourage my friends, my family, to speak Kazakh. Here, you have to be good representative of your country. So I started speaking more of Casa and something So I think I understood for myself and that I have to, I have to be patriot of my country and who will be, if not me, so.

**So do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be Kazakh?**

Um, learning, like basic words, like common words, like, Hi, how are you? I'm good, and something like that. I think it's necessary, but it's very difficult language. There are a lot of words, a lot of rules that foreigners are struggling to understand. So it's not necessary to know the language to understand our identity. I think it's just necessary to come here. You have to see what it's like. You have to see the people. You have to understand their mindset. You have to see



the nature, the like Kazakh people are nomads in the history. So you have to see the steps that were in our history. So you will understand the traditions the culture, because every tradition has its own like explanation why it even was, why it was even made. So I think language is not that necessary. If you know basic words, I think it's enough,

**If you need to define a Kazakh What do you think would be the most important for identification? So, like, what would be the criteria?**

Maybe mentality. Because mentality includes the traditions, the culture, the language, even like the the centuries, world, he old history is in our mentality. So if you understand the Kazakh mentality, then you can understand Kazakh people. So basically I identify, I can identify myself as Kazakh because I grew up in this mental mentality, and I know how things should be done here. So I think it includes this word, includes everything, okay, the mentality, Citizen of Kazakhstan is, I think Kazakh people are free like the freedom that defines us, because everyone is free to choose their religion, their culture, their ethnicity, Their how they like, how they live and the freedom is what defines this, like, you don't have to be like, you don't have to follow the rules of only Kazakh, ethnicity, etc. You are free to be who you are. And that's like, like, like, yeah, there are. There is a minority who can judge you, who say that it's not right, but most people accept this fact that we are multinational, and everyone is free to do everything. So I think Kazakh people, Kazakh defining is like Kazakh people are free.

**Kazakhstan has promoted a trilingual language policy. Do you think the aligns with the needs of people? Why? Or why not?**

I think it's useful, because learning new language is always like, if you know more languages, you really become smart, like even your brain will activate, will work more. And I think polyglots are more like clever than us, more clever than us than those who are who is monolingual, even I think like that, and it's cool policy, but, I think, our study system should more emphasize on Kazakh language, because we're living in Kazakhstan, so it's basically has to be our national language that everyone knows. I think because everyone is living in Kazakhstan, of course, their languages should be taught, etcetera. But is important language and Russian is important because, from our history, we were the colony of the Russian republic.

**Because of a way you phrased it, like the term like colony. Does it have negative connotation for you or not? Because you said it so easily.**

Yeah, it's a history. We cannot change it. And I accept this as a fact, but being a colony definitely had more negative effects than positive effects. First of all, we had two famines. Yeah, two big famines that killed almost 40% of Kazakh people, 40% imagine we are now only 20 million. We could be 40 million by now, if there were no famines. This was, this is the most like, I think, disastrous part of it, and also the industrialization. I. It was not so good for our ecology. And that's why the sea is now is very small. And also we had polygon in the West, I think, or East. And in this polygon, there were about 400-500 tests of the atomic bombs. And it also had very negative effect, because a lot of people of the of that region became like invalid, and they are now like they were born, people with one eye, with no brain, with no limbs. So there are a lot of like examples of it, but these are the ones that made really bad impact on our country, and we are still, still having the effect of it, even we have 30 years of independence, there are still negative effects of being a colony. But despite that, we have to use Russian language because it's necessary. Maybe it will change in future. Maybe in the future, Kazakh language will be more used, and maybe English will be more used. But for now, all of these three languages are important in our country.

**So when you think about government efforts to promote because of Kazakh language, maybe by introducing more, like books, documents, having different policies. What do you think about it?**

From government, I don't see anymore, like, maybe there are some changes in the study system in school, but I really don't know, because I'm a student now, and I'm studying also in English, so I don't know, but not from government, from our youth, from the arts people like they're now Kazakh music is more popular than Russian. In our country, and that really surprised me, and it's really cool tendency for us, because Kazakh language is popular, and everyone is singing. Everyone is listening to these songs, and also in YouTube podcasts, in Kazakh, there are a lot of them now, and I listen to them, but then they're not from government. So from government, I can really see only books, more books, yeah, um.

**Kazakhstan plans to transition to level Latin alphabet. So how do you feel about this change?**

Actually, I really don't know. So it could be very good change, or it could harm the language, because Kazakh language was more like, can you say, big, rich language in different words that are forgotten now because they were no like people only could pass it from generation to generation, in by words only, by songs, by different tales, I think, and writing them. And we started writing them only, I think recently, like maybe 100 years ago, and that's really recent compared European countries. So if we change to Latin alphabet, I'm afraid that more words would be forgotten, more songs would be forgotten, maybe more writings. That's the only I think, fear of mine. But changing to Latin alphabet

would be very useful for us, because for future generation, it would be easier to learn English, Spanish, because they're all of them are using Latin alphabet.

**Okay, like, do you think your views would align with other people your age, like the things you said, or do you think it's not in the current trend?**

You mean what I think about our language?

**Or no, like in the things you said, yeah, about language, about identity. Do you like majority of young Kazakh people think that way? Or no?**

Well, basically, I had a chance to study in one of the prestigious schools, I won a scholarship. Well, I won a grant to the school. So we were taught by foreign teachers. We were basically, we were the best students of a Kazakhstan, something like that. And I had a chance to widen my mindset, like very much. And there are children from villages, from towns, from little towns, that didn't have this kind of chance, and maybe they would think in other way, they maybe not be that flexible like me, and they know maybe only Kazakh language, or Kazakh Russian only, but not English. But I really do think that everyone, like every Kazakh people think that Kazakh language is important to our country, like we can be common in this statement, but about being flexible, I'm not sure. But my community, my environment, think like me, like we are same, similar in this field.

**Thank you a lot. It was really interesting.**

And then I wanted to ask, why did you choose Kazakhstan for your masters.

**Okay, so I study political science, and my study is more like focused on post Soviet space.**

**P8**

**So what is your age?**

Well, I'm 18.

**Okay. What do you study now?**

I study software engineering. Yes, it's Vilnius University.

**And what is your religion?**

I'm Muslim.

**Are you practicing Muslim or not?**

Well, my parents do, but I don't, but I usually follow the rules, you know.

**Okay, what city are you from in Kazakhstan? Is it a village or a big city?**

Well, I'm from Astana.

**Were you born in Astana?**

I was actually born in China, and raised in China until 10 years old, and then our whole family moved to Astana.

**Okay, but your family is Kazakh.**

Yeah, they're, they're 100%

**So, What languages do you speak?**

Well, I was born and raised in China. I speak Chinese, and I'm Kazakh, so I speak Kazakh and Russian, English, a little bit of German and a little bit Korean.

**So which language do you speak the best?**

I would say I speak the four main No, this, yes, the four main languages where we will those are English, Russian, Kazakh and Chinese. So because I use these four languages in my daily live with my friends, like in education, like at university, with my parents. So yeah, I will just mix these four languages.

**If you have to think about each language you speak, like, what words would you associate with each language?**

Well, Russia, if we talk about Russia, then my first thoughts about it is colonization, war, Putin. If we talk about English, it's like the New York City and London, like it's like some cities. And if we talk about Kazakh, I would say horse meat. And if we talk about China, I will say strong, also, war, not, not war, actually, well, some political stuffs.

**When you went to kindergarten, what language did you speak?**

So basically, because I was living, in China. Of course, I spoke Chinese.

**But you also went to school in Kazakhstan, right?**

Yes, yes.

**And did you go to Kazakh or Russian language school?**

I did, like in my school, we have both languages. The class that I went, it was in Kazakh.

**How do you speak now in your family, is it a mixture of some languages or just one?**

Yes, as I mentioned, I usually use four languages in my life, and so if I like, usually with my parents, I just mix these four languages. But if we talk about, like, if we talk about it by percentage, I will say Kazakh will occupy the most percentage of it, I don't know, maybe 60% and Chinese, maybe 20% and the English/Russian 20%

**And with your like, friends in Kazakhstan?**

Well, with friends, we usually speak in, as I mentioned, I just mix four languages. So we usually speak in Russian, let's say, because if I just, if I think about it, I just realized that we usually speak Russian, but I always try to speak in Kazakh, because, you know, Kazakh is our mother language, and you want to not forget about it. And nowadays teenagers are being more patriotic.

**Do you wish you had more or less one of the languages growing up in your life?**

I would say that knowing a language is never something wrong you know. Because, like, it's not about only language, it's about communication. If you know this language, you can communicate with those nations. So I would say I don't think that they are too much for me, because I think it's, it's like, actually good that you speak several languages from your young age. So, you know, you can communicate with people from China, from, like, Russian population. So I don't think that any one of them are, you know, useless, or something like that.

**But like, do you wish you had, like, maybe more Kazakh language growing up? Or, would you say, learned it either way?**

I would say yes, because nowadays, like in Kazakhstan, I went to Kazakh classes, but still, we have some teachers who speak Russian in the class. So I don't think it's a bad thing, but you know, due to your going to Kazakh class, they should speak Kazakh language. I'm not talking about majority of them, but still, we have some like that, some teachers who speak Russian in the class. So I would say. That I wouldn't want like. Well, if I think deeply, I wish I had more kazakh in my school life, because you know you have to learn about the literature of kazakh. And you know that when you grow up, if you're not interested in reading some poems, you will not be with it. So of course, it will be better if we had more Kazakh in our school life.

**Do you talk with other Kazakhs Vilnius?**

Yes, I found several of them. And we don't chat every day, but we just, we will have some meetings, like twice a month or something like that. So that's pretty good, because, you know, here you can only speak English or Russian with students or with other international students. And it's actually good that you will be surrounded by Kazakh people again, at least for once, like once two weeks. So yeah, yeah.

**So when you like meet up, what language do you speak mostly?**

Well, I, as I mentioned, I will, I always try to speak Kazakh but, but the direction doesn't go well. So we will start speaking Russian, and I will, like, realize that we're speaking Russian, and I will say, Let's speak in Kazakh, and we'll speak in Kazakh.

**Do you ever feel like conflicted about which language to use? Like, maybe you had like situations where it was hard for you to decide which one is better?**

Well, yes, actually, it's just when you have some interviews with Kazakhstani companies, or Kazakhs not only Kazakhstan companies, the companies that are located in Russia or some countries that speaks Russian, you will, I will

think that should I speak in English or Russian? Because, as I mentioned, that older generation, they understand like Russian more than English, better than English. So you always think, that's which language should you use? But of course, I will end up with English. And if they want me to change language, I will just switch it, but I will always start the conversation with English. So this is the one case. So the next case, it could be, as you mentioned, when you talk with your friends, you will just start speaking Russian. And, you know, I will come back to my mind and I will say, oh, let's speak Kazakh. So this is kind of conflict between, you know, Russian and Kazakh, and the previous one was Russian with English,

**If you're having an interview with a Russian company, why would you prefer to speak English?**

Because we know that for every company English is a global language, and we know that in order to work in such huge companies, you have to understand English no matter what job you're getting. So it is like the first role of getting that, like getting any job that you need to speak English in such huge companies. So I always prefer to speak English first. And if they want me to switch language, I'm afraid to switch it. So it depends.

**If given a choice, would you what languages would you like to prioritize in your career and life, and why? So, like, what do you think in the future you will speak in your career, and if you have a family, what languages would you prioritize?**

If we talk about career, I will prefer English, because I want to work in not only Kazakhstan companies or Russian companies. I want to work in worldwide companies which are like, I don't know, located in the states or go to England, let's say so I would prefer English in my career life. But of course, I can add Chinese, because we know that the development of different technologies in China is also really like increasing. So I might also work in China, I don't know yet. So I would say Chinese or English, but we talk about family. For example, if I'm going to have my own family, I would say Kazakh is the main language. Because as a Kazakh and I need to, you know, if I'm going to have my children, I don't know. I need to teach in Kazakh, and I want my partner to speak Kazakh too.

**Do you think you are a Kazakh or Kazakhstani first?**

I define myself as a Kazakh at first, and then Kazakhstani citizen. I would say that the difference, maybe is about the nationality, because we have a lot of Kazakhstani citizens who are Russian, German and so on. So maybe that's the main, like, the difference between them.

**Do you know where your parents were from before you moved to China?**

Well, so basically, if we talk about the history, when at the start, if I'm not mistaken, at the start of the colonization, Russia started to split the Kazakhstani lands, the territorial Kazakhstan. Like it wasn't Kazakhstan, but it was Kazakhs territory. And so splits the territory into different countries which were not as country at that time, but it is defined as Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and China nowadays. So he split some like territories to those nations, let's say so that's why our I don't know. Maybe my grand, grand grandparents were one of those, like, citizen of that area. So they were split it, and they were like the area were joined to China, so they just stayed in that place. So that's why my parents and me were born in China.

**Okay, so how do you represent your Kazakh identity when explaining your background to non Kazakh peers, like, maybe, what do you like to talk about when you explain your background, maybe there are specific things?**

Well, I will always start with the one word. It is Kazakhstan. It's located in Central Asia. Um, actually, even I'm a really patriotic person, even I love my nation. But as I mentioned, I didn't really have a lot of Kazakh in my school life, so I cannot really, like, say like, describe my country specifically, but maybe I will say that maybe some economy stuff, because that's what I know now. That is like that. That is the information that I gained as a adult. As a teenager, let's say so. I might mention that our economy is like connected with Russia. We were colonized by Russian and maybe I would say that, but Kazakhstan is really great place to visit, especially Almaty and Astan, which the capital used to be Almaty and now it is Astana. And I might show them pictures of I took because in the internet. There they were not too many pretty places. So I'll just show them by my own pictures and show them that it's a pretty nation, and I might show them the developments of technology in Kazakhstan. Well, of course, the development of technology, it's also like connected with China and Russia. But still, I like to show them that Kazakhstan is just, it's not just a country. It's like a country that is developing, that is trying to, you know, be not one of the best, but trying, trying its best, to be a better country.

**Could you, maybe speak more about your Chinese side? So you said you grew up in Kazakh family, and they were part of Kazakh culture. But do you feel like a bit of Chinese identity is, like, also a part of your self identity or not?**

I wouldn't, I wouldn't say so, because there is, there is known that Kazakh from China are more likely to be Kazakh than Kazakh from Kazakhstan. Because, as I mentioned, that Kazakhstan were colonized by Russia. So it's the Russia identity influenced like citizens in Kazakhstan, but in China, I would say the tradition is more pure and and I would say the Kazakh people from China, they are, tend to protect this, I don't know like those traditional stuff from early years. So I don't think it is like stopping me to know my tradition like I don't think that born in China was stopping me to know about my nationality, know about my traditions, because, as I mentioned, in China, they are more like Kazakh from China, are more focused on them.

**Did being an exchange student, maybe for a bit longer time, changed your perception of your national identity for not really?**

I wouldn't say so, because even I'm living abroad now, it doesn't like change anything. So I'm still of me. I'm still the only one that I used to be has my own Kazak identity.

**Okay, um, so do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be Kazakh?**

Of course, because if you are Kazakh, but you don't speak Kazakh language, then it's like, kind of ridiculous, because you don't know your mother language. And it happens in Kazakhstan. We have some teenagers, even young children, who don't speak Kazakh, and it's kind of sad, because Kazakhstan was influenced by Russia so much that their parents didn't decide them to decide to teach them Kazakh. So, like, if you're a Kazakh, but you don't speak Kazakh language, that's like, I don't think that you are, like, really Kazakh. You just have it in your blood. You just have it inside of you, but it's not in your mind. You know what I mean? It's kind of disrespect to follow, like it's not only about Kazakh, it's about every like every nation. If you're a Lithuanian, but you don't speak that language, then what's the point?

**Do you think you need to know some Kazakh or not if you are not an ethnic Kazakh?**

Well, actually, we have a new rule now because, like, it was published a few years ago, if I'm not mistaken, I don't really remember how that rule is called, but the main idea is that if you want to become a Kazakhstani citizen, you have to take a test about Kazakhstan's history, about Kazakh language, so you have to pass the past in order to get this citizenship. So, so I like this rule, because when the war started, the like Russian, like community, let's say, like a lot of Russian started to move to Kazakhstan, and getting Kazakhstan Institute, and then this role changed a lot of things, so I would say that's pretty nice.

**Okay, so now, but like, if you would need to define a Kazakh in both civic and ethnic sense. What do you think would be the most important things?**

Um, I would say that you have to have a heart that you really want to maintain this chaos of traditions. Kazakh, life, let's say because, due to, we're in like, Muslim country. Let's say it's like quite deep, like every, like every Muslim countries, Islamic countries, they are quite sane, like, they're similar to each other, but still, they have their own special specialties. So I would say you like, if you really want to be a Kazakh, you need to support your own language. You need to support your own population. You need to support your because you really, you have to really want this nation to grow. You know, you really need to work on it, not just think about it. You really need to help Kazakhstan to develop more.

**So Kazakhstan has promoted a trilingual language policy. Do you think this policy aligns with the needs of people? Why? Or why not?**

I would say that, as we mentioned 1000 of times, that due to the colonization, Kazakhstan has been influenced by Russia so much so even our some rules, some laws, are written in Russian language that hasn't been translated to Kazakh or even the even they are translated to kazakh, maybe, usually in courts, they don't speak in Kazakh language, and they don't use that. So I would say that, due to the influence, everybody speaks a Russian in those courts or the laws and so on. So I would say it's convenient for citizens, for people to speak, to use this language. But however, of course, I always want our own language be the main language of our country. So I would say that even it's has like made like people's life easier, let's say, because everybody understand it. But even though it's it could bring bad, like negative effects on our national identity, let's say and about English. So due to like, Kazakhstan has a lot of international relations with other countries who speaks English, or other countries who speak their own language, but the common language between those countries are just English. So I kind of support this, because, you know, you need to speak English in order to have this national no international connection with different countries. So yeah, that's what I think about this.

**How do you feel about the government efforts to promote the use of Kazakh language, but not only like do you think it's good or not, but do you think they have been enough?**

So I would say in the past five to 10 years, the use of Kazakh language has increased, as I mentioned, even we have some, like, laws that wasn't translated to Kazakh, and maybe even some people use it when, like, they want to Google something about the law or some stuff. So I would say that, of course, it's not enough yet, because population in, like, most of the population of our country, they still speak Russian language. And it's kind of, they, like, they have this mentality. It's not mentality. They just think that Russian is better than, like, Kazakh because I think it's, again, the influence by Russia. So I think Kazakhstan's government should work on promoting Kazakh more and more. Of course, I have no idea how they can achieve it, because that's not my field. I didn't do any research on it. But still, I don't think the work they are doing now is enough to, you know, promote our own language. So I suggest, of course, I suggest him to do more, but as I mentioned, I don't know how, so I cannot judge them. Maybe they're trying their best, but that's not enough yet.

**So how do you view the role of each language, Kazakh, Russian and English, in Kazakhstan's future? What do you think will dominate in the future?**

Well, I would say that it will be hard for Kazakhstan to just take this Russian language away because, like, it's like our second mother language, let's say, because you speak that language from your young age, from the moment that you were born. So I would say, in the future, we will keep having this Kazakh and Russian language in our life, but maybe, due to the like, like, maybe government will make some, I don't know, works on promoting Kazakh language, so we can, like, split the Russian language away from our life, but I have no idea about it, because for now, it's impossible to not have Russian in our life. I would say that in the future, I think English will be with us again as the Russian because if you want to, you know, develop your international connections in relations with our other countries. You need this language and you in order to, you know, have more connections with them and bring more, I don't know, benefits to our own country, we still need to connect, communicate with them in this common language. So I would say that these three languages will be with us until the day that Kazakh language has its own like place, let's say in the worldwide view, but it could be impossible.

**So Kazakhstan plans to transition Kazak alphabet from kirilica to Latin by 2031 how do you feel about this change?**

Well, few years ago, they already have started. But it stopped. I don't know why. I think it's because in this like, it's kind of hard to change one letter to another type of letter, so I think they had some problems, so they kind of stopped it. So it's kind of impossible to change a nation's alphabet to another type of alphabet. So I think they need to work on it more and more in order to change it, in order to bring change, they maybe need to some like, set some new rules for that, and bring some new laws for that. So it could be hard, but in five years, it might be possible, if you if they really concentrate on this topic, but if they don't, don't like, pay much like, focus on it, it's impossible to change it in five years. So I think it will take at least 10 or 15 years to change the whole nation.

**But do you think it is needed to move to Latin alphabet?**

Well, I would say that I'm already got used to kirilica because I use it from my childhood? Well, not my childhood from 10 years old, let's say so it's not hard for me to change, like bring it out of my life, but I don't know about the like local citizens, because they've been using it for their whole life. But however, if they start from children, then I think it will be easier and about why we need it, I will say that I kind of support it, because we know that clearly it was created by Russia, and you want to, you know, like, have at least something separate from Russia, you need to change it. So I totally support it.

**P9**

**What is your age?**

I'm 23, years old.

**What do you study?**

I study mathematics.

**In which university?**

I'm an exchange student at Vilnius University, but in my home country, I study in Eurasian National University in Kazakhstan.

**What would you say is your religion?**

Muslim

**Are you practicing Muslim or is it like a traditional thing?**

Traditional thing. I'm not practicing it.

**Where were you born?**

I was born in Kazakhstan. Kyzylorda city.

**What languages do you speak?**

I speak Russian, Kazakh, English, and a bit of Turkish, and most fluent Russian, I would say.

**And do you think your Kazakh or your English is better?**

Kazakh is better, it is my nature.

**So if you had to think about each language you speak, what words would you associate with each language?**

So we'll start from Kazakh, maybe warm, beautiful, melodic, that's it. Native. Russian, rich, complex, powerful. English would be global, easy and accessible. And Turkish is intuitive, expressive and harmonic.

**Why for Russian, it's powerful, the association?**

I think that's because of how it sounds when you speak Russian, I would say it's not like very soft or beautiful. It's more powerful. It sounds strong.

**And why Turkish intuitive?**

That's because it's very close to Kazakh language, and I didn't learn it grammatically, but more intuitively, by watching some kind of series, etc.

**What language do you speak in your family?**

In my family, mostly Kazakh.

**Do you mix languages, or do you try to speak like more pure Kazakh?**

I try to speak more pure Kazakh because my mother doesn't really speak Russian, so it's mostly Kazakh.

**And to what language schools did you go?**

Kazakh speaking school.

**Okay, and at what grade did you start Russian?**

Russian, let me I think it started from the first grade.

**You already knew Russian earlier?**

No, in my childhood, I didn't speak Russian at all, but in kindergarten, I started speaking Russian with other children. So it started from there, yeah, from the first grade, or maybe even kindergarten.

**And how do you think it happened that now you think your Russian is better than Kazakh?**

Because the only environment where I speak Kazakh language is my family, and mostly I spend time not with my family, like at school, university, going out with my friends, etc. So the only place I speak Kazakh is my family. That's why Russian is better. I guess. Yeah. Although the school that I went to is like a Kazakh school, the environment is, I would not say Russian, but they mostly talk Russian language. Young generation talks Russian, usually in Kazakhstan. That's why, that's why you have to know Russian.

**Where all subjects in Kazakh, or where some subjects in Kazakh and some Russian?**

No, all of the subjects were Kazakh. But actually, after the sixth grade, like starting from the seventh grade, I started, I went to school, which mixes English language with Kazakh. So sometimes it's a mix, really, Kazakh, Russian, English.

**And in terms of like contents you watch, let's say on YouTube, on TV and like that, are we?**

Yes, also, also Russian.

**Um, and with your friends, do you usually mix Kazakh and Russian, or is it more pure Russian?**

Uh, pure Russian.

**Why is that so, if it's like, Kazakh city?**

Ah, actually, I guess I didn't tell that. I was just born in Kyzylorda, but when I was like one year old we moved to another city, Astana, that's why. And Astana is mostly Russian speakers. Yeah, I didn't tell that. Sorry.

**But your parents still chose you to let you to Kazakh school in Astana?**

Yeah, it's very important for them like to make sure that I know Kazakh, yeah.

**Did attitudes towards languages changed compared to when you were growing up and now?**

Ah, yeah, when I was a child. And I guess yes, because as I've mentioned before, in my childhood, when I spend most of the time with my family, I used to speak Kazakh and now I mostly spend my time with my friends, and like the other environment, university and mostly, I speak Russian. So I speak Kazakh. I say rarely.

**Do you think there is more Kazakh language content and more popularity for Kazakh language compared to when you were little and now?**

I guess when I was a child, I used to read some kind of Kazakh books because my parents bought them for me. But now, or in my teenage years, I started using a smartphone and using social media sites, and there the Kazakh content is very more or less Kazakh content. And it's mostly Russian again,

**Okay, so, so that was like that for you. But like, do you think there's more Kazakh content in your country now?**

No, mostly there is more Russian content.

**Do you think there should have been less or more of some of the languages in your life or education growing up?**

I guess there are some noticeable differences between generations, like older generations, they have grown with a stronger emphasis on the native language, Kazakh language. And we like younger generation, we often experience the heavier focus on English right now, and also we talk Russian mostly. So there is a big difference.

**I guess my main question is like, do you wish you learned more Kazakh, Russian or English?**

No, I'm content with what I have right now. So there was a perfect balance, I guess.

**What language do you use when you meet fellow Kazakhs abroad?**

Mostly Russian.

**Do you like mix in Kazakh? Or is it like just Russian?**

Mix of Kazakh? Yeah, mix of Kazakh and Russian, but mostly Russian.

**I so when you meet a fellow Kazakh abroad, maybe, which you don't really know yet, well, in which language do you approach them?**

Russian

**Why is it for you?**

Because we are just used to talking Russian in our country. And I'm not sure if that person knows Kazakh, but I can be sure that this person knows Russian.

**Do you ever feel conflicted about which language to use?**

No

**Do you try to speak with people in Kazakh, or is that not really that important to you?**

I wouldn't say not important to me, but I can speak Kazakh very well. If I have to, like in Kazakhstan, older generation mostly speaks Kazakh. And if I approach someone from that older generation, I try to speak Kazakh and if it is someone very young, I can speak Russian.

**If given the choice, which languages would you want to prioritize in your future career, and what language would you want to prioritize in your family, if you have like, a family and kids?**

So in my future career, I would prioritize English language, because, as I've said earlier, it is very global, and it opens so many doors for you. But in my family, yeah, it would be Kazakh. So if I were to have a family, I'd love for my children to be bilingual, or even multilingual. So there is no such environment in Kazakhstan where they can learn Kazakh, except for family. So in my family, I would talk mostly Kazakh so they know Kazakh language.



**Why did you say that they can only learn Kazakh in family?**

Because mostly young generations, they talk Russian. And when you are being hired, when you look for a job, there is also a need to know Russian language. So that's why. But there is no need to know Kazakh. So that's why.

**Do you? Do you think speaking two or three languages is part of Kazakh identity?**

Yes, so many Kazakhs speak Russian fluently due to our history, and I would say more recently, English has gained importance in professional spheres, and some people, they feel connected to Kazakh on the cultural level, and Russian may feel more Practical because it's widespread in our country, in my city, at least. So, yeah, it is very typical, I would say, to speak two or three languages in Kazakhstan.

**Do you know a difference between Kazakh and Kazakhstani?**

I think I have an idea of that, but mostly I. I think like Kazakh is someone who's ethnicities like Kazakh and citizen of Kazakhstan might be someone not ethnically Kazakh, but someone Russian, but who is a citizen of Kazakhstan.

**Did you know your tribe growing up?**

Yes

**Is it like a part of your identity,? Was it just more of a fun fact growing up?**

No, that's not a fun fact, but it's more related to your like, how to say inheritance.

**So you think it's like a part of your identity, knowing this?**

Naturally part of my culture, I would say,

**What does it mean to you?**

my tribe? Yeah, so it's like, when you meet the people in Kazakhstan, when you meet people from the same tribe, you just automatically feel close to that person. Somehow, maybe that's like, this is something which unites people.

**Okay, so if you had like to rank it, would you say you were an ethnic Kazakh, citizen of Kazakhstan, or a member of your region tribe? So what would be first, second and third?**

So I'm an ethnic Kazakh, I guess then member of my region tribe and then citizen of Kazakhstan.

**Why is that like more important to you?**

I'm not sure if I can answer that question. So maybe I feel more related to Kazakhstan, not in a political way, but in the more cultural, traditional way. That's why, more ethical way, not just I live in Kazakhstan. I'm a citizen.

**Okay, so in what ways do you think you express your Kazakh identity for yourself? What do you think you do that is Kazakh?**

I would say I speak Kazakh, but I don't do it most of the time here, maybe so I can celebrate national holidays sometimes, or traditional music. I love to listen to Kazakh, traditional music, cuisine, maybe Kazakh food. I sometimes cook something which is traditionally Kazakh. I think that's it. So that's something which I do related to Kazakhstan.

**How do you represent your Kazakh identity when explaining your background to non Kazakh peers?**

So maybe I would explain that Kazakhstan has some nomadic roots, but that's it has a nomadic culture, and that it developed like from for centuries, like on steppe and maybe the customs traditions and about the Hospitality of Kazakh people, we are very how to say hospitable? Is that correct? So we value hospitality? Maybe I will talk about family values, like respect for family and elders is very important in Kazakhstan. I think that's it.

**Has the experience of being abroad changed your perception of your national identity and language?**

I think being away from home always, not like only my case, but just being away from home often can, like, make your pride in like, your national identity very strong, like it strengthens your pride in your home country, maybe traditions and some kind of cultural norms can feel more meaningful when you are back in your home country. And maybe you start appreciating things you might have taken for granted in Kazakhstan, but here, in a different environment, you start appreciating some things you didn't appreciate when you were in your home country.

**So you think like in Kazakhstan, Kazakh language is more family thing and Russian more for public.**

Yes, exactly,

**Do you think it should be that way, or do you wish there would be more Kazakh in public spaces?**

I feel I wish. Yeah, I wish Kazakh would be used more. But it would take maybe ages for that to happen, I guess, because people are, like, used to speaking Russian and everything, like even news agencies, if they publish some kind of news, they publish it in Kazakh and Russian, because, because of the like audience, not all people know Kazakh in Kazakhstan. That's why I wish we could talk more Kazakh. But I also think that it's not possible in nearest years.

**Do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be Kazakh?**

So Kazakh language, it has some unique expressions, idioms, maybe, which are unique to Kazakh language, and they like they reflect the Kazakh way of life. That's why, yeah, it defines what it means to be Kazakh.

**What do you think plays the biggest role in defining what it means to be a Kazakh, if not for language like what would play the biggest role?**

Kazakh, culture, traditions.

Do you think religion is important for Kazakh?

Naturally, yes, naturally, important, I guess,

**Do you notice more like Turkic or Turkish influence in Kazakhstan recently?**

Maybe we have our languages are similar, and we have some shared cultures and traditions. And I feel, yeah, I guess so. Because when I meet some Turkish people and or just people from Turkey countries, I feel somehow close to them, just automatically here in another environment. So I guess Yeah.

**So, okay, if you would have to, like, think about Kazakh identity. What do you think like it's made of? Is it like Russian, Turkic influences, or is it more something like unique Kazakh Nomad culture? So, like, what is it?**

I think it's more close to Turkic culture, not Russian, but Turkic, and it also has some unique Kazakh identity, but it is similar to Turkic culture.

**So Kazakhstan has promoted a trilingual language policy. So Kazakh Russian and English are all important in schools and things like that. Do you think trilingual policy aligns with the needs of people, or it should be bilingual or one language policy?**

So it depends on the region. So the policy has potential benefits, of course, like trilingual language policy, but implementing it effectively across all regions, like all cities of Kazakhstan, can be challenging, like we have some rural areas, if we talk about cities, cities like they may have less access to quality English or Russian language, Russian education, English education. And some regions like Astana or Almaty, they may prioritize Russian over Kazakh. So it is challenging for some people, but it has benefits. I don't think that it aligns with the needs of people.

**But do you think this policy is good to promote three languages in Kazakhstan?**

Yeah, I think it is good. It has benefits, but it might be hard for some people who are like you said, in their bubble, it is very hard for them to adapt. But if it happens that the government somehow like promotes this trilingual language policy, it will have many benefits, like jobs or just in like developing the community.

**So there have been also a lot of efforts coming from the government to promote the usage of Kazakh language and like street science, introducing more of it in universities, institutions and politicians, speaking more Kazakh. Do you see these efforts to like promote the language?**

To be honest, I don't really see the efforts of the government to promote Kazakh language because it is also like a joke, or in our country that the politicians themselves do not know Kazakh language. They struggle to speak Kazakh when they give some kind of interviews, and it is easier for them to speak Russian to express their thoughts, and that's why they should start from their source, I guess, because there is a rule like, if you want to work in the government, you need to know Kazakh. But in reality, most of the politicians, they do not know Kazakh language. So I think government, they try to promote Kazakh language, but actually, in real life, they are not fully effective.

**How do you think it should happen, the promotion of the language? What do you think are the best ways to promote it?**

So, yeah, they should start speaking Kazakh language themselves, like the politicians should start from there, the government and maybe after that, all of the, let's say, advertisements, maybe, or news, mass media and etc, they can slowly, gradually turn into Kazakh language. But I guess that's really far from truth, like from actual, real life. Because if the government quickly switches to Kazakh language, it will be hard challenging for people in our country, because we also have a lot of Russian people who do not know even a word in Kazakh, so that that's really far from reality.

**Do you think it would be like, good or better if, people from minorities would also be learning Kazakh, like, more seriously**

so, yeah, if we switched everything to Kazakh, like the advertisements, etc, work job requirements that you need to know Kazakh to get the job. So maybe those people, minority, like Russian people, etc, some other people from foreign cultures, maybe they will, they will feel the need to learn Kazakh. But right now, they don't have that need.

**How do you think the role of each language, Kazakh, Russian and English, will look like in the future? How it will change?**

So I don't think there will be, like, some very big changes. So English, English would naturally be essential, as it's universal in families, maybe people will continue talking Kazakh, and Russian would be for like practical.

**So Kazakhstan plans to transition to the Latin alphabet by 2031 how do you feel about this change?**

Positive so the Latin, Latin script alphabet is accessible universally, and for Kazakhstan, which like has a goal of preserving Kazakh language, the Latin alphabet could help to like to be the bridge between generations. So also some other cultures, some other other language speaking countries they could also learn Kazakh, because most of the countries they have Latin script. So and it is just easier to use the Latin script, I guess. And a lot of people know Latin script.

**What do you think could be some of the challenges in implementing this policy?**

I think there will be no such huge challenges, but maybe for older people, it might be a challenge. However, the Latin alphabet is not really different from the alphabet which we use now, so only. Few letters can be different. That's why it it's not, it will not be a challenge, I guess.

**P10**

**Okay, so let's start like with basic questions. What is your age?**

I'm 19 years old.

**What do you study?**

I study finance.

**In which city now?**

I am a Vilnius University student.

**And what would you say is your religion?**

I am a Muslim, but it's more like I'm ethnic Muslim, and I'm not really into religion.

**Are you from more of a village or a city in Kazakhstan, from what city?**

I'm from, Astana. It's our capital, and I study in Eurasian National University.

**Were you born in Astana?**

No, actually, I was born in North part, it's more like small city Arkalyk.

**So when did you move to Astana?**

More like teenager

**Was it more a Russian speaking city, or Kazakh speaking? It was half Russian house, Catholic speaking city, but in general, North part, it's more Russian speakers, Okay, so What languages do you speak?**

I speak Russian, Kazakh and English and Russian. I speak most fluently in Russian.

**Okay? So if you would need to think about each language you speak, what associations or words come to mind for each language?**

For Russian, it's childhood literature. For Kazakh, it's home culture history. And for English, it's school abroad, traveling.

**So which language was the most prevalent in your life?**

Russian, is my main language. And I was studying in school in Russian. And also I am in Russian group at the University. So I have always communicated in Russian with my friends, with my parents and with my family in general.

**You went to Russian kindergarten too?**

Actually, I was, I've attended kindergarten.

**Are both of your parents Russian or Kazakh background?**

My mom she's was raised in the region like also north part of Kazakhstan, and in her childhood, she was using only Russian because she lived in this kind of place. And my father, he's from west part of Kazakhstan, and he's native in Kazakh.

**So what role did Kazakh play in your life? When did you learn Kazakh?**

Yeah, actually, my parents, they, and all of my family members, they speak Kazakh, but they didn't used to speak it to me, but it was like, at the time I knew Kazakh, like I could understand everything, what they were saying. And in the high school, when I was into a history of Kazakhstan, I understood the importance of using Kazakh in my life, and it was the starting point for me.

**So you studied Kazakh yourself? When you got interested in it?**

Yes, we studied Kazakh in school, and I used to understand everything, like understanding was at high level, but I never tried to speak.

**Was it from first class, like a subject?**

Yes

**Why do you think your parents didn't speak in Kazakh with you?**

Because they saw so that I don't understand them, but I used to tell them, I understand you, but maybe they thought it would be easier for me, because all of my friends were speaking Russian and I was speaking Russian.

**So do you use Kazakh now sometimes?**

Yes, I speak Kazakh with everyone who speaks Kazakh, my friends, my also the ones who also from Kazakhstan, but lives abroad. I speak in Kazakh with them if they want to and but sometimes I feel that I can express my feelings and my thoughts better in Russian, but I try to do it in Kazakh as well.

**Do you speak? Like, maybe mixed language sometimes?**

yeah, it's like I have even in my Russian speech, I have my favorite words in Kazakh, and I use them in my Russian speech.

**So, like, when you think about, like, your life in Kazakhstan today, I would say so, like, what kind of language is the most often? Is it mixed?**

If I speak with my friends, they mostly use Russian as well because they also were studying it in Russian school. But if I know that they can understand Kazakh I can use mix like Russian plus Kazakh. And if there is someone who speaks Kazakh I'm trying to speak to them in kazakh, but when I'm speaking in Kazakh, I try not to use Russian words.

**Why is it important for you to speak in Kazakh as like as much as possible? Because you said you'll try speak more.**

It's because I realized my identity and I'm I don't want to forget about it. I want my children to speak as well and that's the main reason. So I just want, I just want to know that I'm not forgetting my Kazakh language and I have the ability to speak.

**Has there been, like, any outside changes, or maybe events which like, made you think more about your Kazakh?**

Yes, it was after, I'm not sure you know or not. It was like the moment when I realized that I live in Kazakhstan and I am a Kazakh so why I'm so dependent on Russian language, and it's was just thoughts. I haven't actually thought about it before, but it's was like inside of me, in my mind, and it was the moment I realized everything.

**Okay, so what was that moment? Because I don't know...**

It was like, Oh my God. Now I need to translate this word. Wait a second. Okay, it was like demonstration at first. Ah, yeah, it started. It started as a demonstration, and then it became more like civil war.

**I know about it. It's been like Tokayev changed Nazarbayev after this right?**

Yeah, yeah. And most of the people, they were actually, I don't think that they realized what they were doing, but it was like everyone who felt that they are not being heard, and they just wanted to show that they are not satisfied with what was going on, and that was it.

**But do you feel that in general now there is like more Kazakh language media around you, maybe books and things like letters, like more content in Kazakh?**

Yes. Actually, I started to watch interviews in Kazakh on YouTube, and also started to listen to music in Kazakh. And like artists they started to produce their music in Kazakh. So it's affected not only listeners, but the artists as well. It was like the moment of self expression in Kazakh and the moment when our Kazakh identity was on the peak.

**Okay, well, that's good one, um, do you think there should have been more or less of some languages when you were growing up?**

Actually, Russian takes biggest part in my every aspect of my life. So I think I need to reach some kind of equity equality between Kazakh, Russian and English, but not really English, but Kazakh and Russian. I need to use them in the same amount, I think, Okay, I just wanted that.

**Okay, so, like, when you were growing up, do you wish you, would have had more Kazakh in your education in life or not?**

Maybe, yes, but it's, it sounds hard like, but if I started to my whole education in Kazakh, I think it would be better, because I just need I'm not that sure in my Kazakh, and sometimes I just don't want to speak because I'm afraid of making mistakes or something like that, but I'm confident in my Russian. So when I want to be confident, I speak Russian, so I want to change that. And I think that if I was studying in Kazakh school it would have been easier.

**Do you have friends abroad?**

Yes, and all of them, they speak fluently in Kazakh, so I'm also practicing my Kazakh with them.

**Okay, so when you met or when you meet a fellow Kazakh abroad, how do you choose in which language to approach them?**

At first, English. If I see someone, and I think maybe they are Kazakh, and I'm starting to speak to them in English, because I'm not sure. And if they are from Kazakhstan, it depends. I'm not really think about it a lot, but if they speak in Kazakh and I see that it's easier for them to speak in Kazakh, I choose to speak in Kazakh with them, but if they're fluently speaking in Russian, it's even easier for me. So if given the choice which languages you would you want to prioritize in your future career and in your personal life. So if you have a family, what language would you want to use in your family, and what do you think you will use in your work? I think in my work, I'm going to speak in Russian, because for me to speak in Kazakh, not in just ordinary life situation, but the professional I need to access this level, in my skill in Kazak languages speak on the professional level, but for now, I am a bit far from that level, so I think it would be Russian as well. But in Kazakhstan, you cannot just apply for a job without any knowledge of Kazakh. I don't think so, because they want their employees to speak at least Kazakh on b2 level, because if you are working with people, you need to be ready to speak to them in the language they are speaking to you. So if they're speaking Kazakh, you must to answer in Kazakh. And if they're speaking in Russian, you must speak in Russian. Okay, so it would be mixed, I think.

**And if you have a family?**

I want my family and my children to speak both languages, but not like me, because my Russian is way better than my Kazakh, and I want my children to be like 50% of Russian, 50% of Kazakh, or even more Kazakh, because I want them to be fluent in Kazakh from the childhood and be confident in it.

**Do you think that today and like at this point, speaking three languages is part of being a Kazakh?**

I think speaking two languages is the part of our identity. It's like the main part of our identity because it's our history, and we speak both of these languages because of our history, and we can't just forget about more than 100 years of our history, and that's a part of our identity for now. Maybe it wasn't at some point, like some time in history, but it's like that for now and for three languages I think it's more for younger generation. We were studying three languages at school, and I am happy that we are. And it's more about possibilities in life, more languages you speak, more opportunities you have.

**When I was reading, scientific literature about Kazakhstan, there is a thing that there is a difference between being a Kazakh and being a Kazakhstani. Have you heard about it?**

Yeah, I'm an ethnic Kazakh and I'm also a citizen of Kazakhstan. But there is a lot of citizens in Kazakhstan, like we have a lot of more than 100 nationalities in Kazakhstan, but all of them are our citizens, and even if they are not Kazakhs.

**So, yeah, yeah. I also wanted to ask in the second question, there's another thing. Like growing up, did you know what tribe you're from?**

I don't think there is a huge difference. It's more like a joke, local joke in Kazakhstan, and it's not a big deal. It's like, sometimes I say I am from my tribe, so it's like stereotypes. It's not true sometimes, but it worked for me. So it's more like a joke.

**Okay, what are like tribe stereotypes for you?**

North part don't speak Kazakh. We can speak Kazakh and south part, they are speaking true Kazakh language. That's stereotype, and another stereotype, it's like, South part is more about traditions and so on, and North part, it's more like, forget about traditions. But it's not true. This one is not true. If you want to know, we have traditions, which is, younger son of the family, he is staying with his parents and his family and his wife she becomes a daughter of this family, and she must take care of his parents and so on. It's more about the South and West part of Kazakhstan and North Central part. The east part, they are not really into that tradition. So there is a bit true about this stereotypes, but not like someone presented.

**So if you would need to choose, like being a Kazakh and Kazakhstani, which one would you think would be first for you?**

First, I'm a Kazakh. Whenever even if I'm not living in Kazakhstan, I'm still a Kazakh, so it comes first.

**Okay, so in what ways do you think you express your Kazakh identity other than language?**

Usually, I just say I am a Kazakh I was born in Kazakhstan, and I live in Kazakhstan, and Kazakhs there have rich history, and that's what I usually say.

**Okay, but now, like coming back a bit. Do you like follow any customs or lifestyle which you think are like uniquely Kazakh?**

Uh, usually we do not have anything like this in our daily life. But I really like to, you know, in school, we used to dance in traditional costumes. And I really appreciate, appreciated this at a time, and I really like myself in our traditional clothes and maybe, but as a kid, I didn't realize how important it was. But I just like it, and sometimes even I had a lot of Russian friends in my life, at early age, I had more Russian friends than Kazakh, and I thought that I am a Kazakh. I'm a bit different from them, but I really like it.

**Okay. Has the experience of being away from home being abroad changed with your perception of national identity and language?**

Yes, because when I was there, everyone was asking me, where are you from? I was saying, I'm from Kazakhstan. And they were like, okay, so you have your language. I was like, Yeah. And, but when I say that, I speak better in Russian, and I understand better Russian they were like, why? And that was the time when I was like, really, why? I felt that it's not right, like I am a Kazakh. It should not be Russian. For me, it should be Kazakh first. So, yes, in the process, when I was explaining it, I understood how strange it sounds for other people, like they are from Spain, they speak Spanish. I was like, Yeah, that sounds right.

**So do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be a Kazakh, or do you not have to speak Kazakh to be a Kazakh?**

I don't have to, but it's. Uh, it's just feels right to be Kazakh and to speak Kazakh, because we have our own language. So why? Why I speak Russian? It's like, it's a question. It comes up in my mind, but it's not a requirement to be a Kazakh, it's just my will.

**So what do you think plays the biggest role in defining what it means to be a Kazakh?**

To be a Kazakh is to be a part of our history, our culture, to know our traditions, to respect them, to be worried about future of our nation, and to finally speak

**In Kazakhstan, there has been a trilingual language policy. Do you think it, aligns with needs of the people, or do you think it should have been like maybe one, two languages, or some other languages? Why? Or why not?**

I think those three languages, they are important to our people. So how it was for us? In school, we were told that we live in Kazakhstan and we should have knowledge of this language, it was because we live in Kazakhstan. So why don't we speak Kazakh? So it was the reason for Kazakh language. Russian, because there are Russians, there are Ukrainians

in Kazakhstan. So it's about communication. And in the whole government systems, they also use Russian, because we have Russian people, Russian speakers in our country, and we need to respect them and their, how to say, we should just correspond their rights. And English they said it's about possibility when you speak English, it would be easier for you, for example, to go abroad, if someone came to Kazakhstan and they don't speak Russian or Kazakh so you can speak to them. And also it was for a future career, it would be helpful to speak in English, and these were the reasons, and I really understood these reasons very well, and it was the reason why I studied all of these three languages in school. I decided for myself that I really need them, so I tried to learn as much as they can

**Do you think that minorities, like Russians, Koreans, Ukrainians, should also be learning Kazakh language, maybe learning some basics more?**

Yes, I think that they should do same things that we are doing for them. And everyone who lives in Kazakhstan whole, like their whole life. Why do they not speak in Kazakh? It's really strange. I think that it's at first, it's strange, and second, it's disrespectful, or like, if I was born in Lithuania, and I don't know how to speak Lithuanian. I am saying that you understand my Russian. So why would I speak Kazakh and try to do it? Yeah, it's disrespectful.

**How do you feel about government efforts to promote the use of the Kazakh language?**

You know if there is, if government tries, I think that it's good, and I'm happy about that, but I don't think that it's harsh enough, because it's not that strict. For example, government, yes, they were told to use both or even three languages. But it's not enough for people. There is not that much restrictions or something like that, and also the latest efforts to prioritize Kazakh language, it was not really well met in Russia, they take it as an effort of Kazakhstan to how to say, oh my God, I forgot the word sorry. Discriminate. Maybe, yeah, discriminate Russians in Kazakhstan, and even Russians, they were saying that it's not like, that. It's okay. We live our whole lives in Kazakhstan. So it's not discrimination. There is no place for discriminations. Discrimination in Kazakhstan, really, it's not that country, yeah, but they took it really personally.

**How do you view the role for each language in Kazakhstan's future, what do you think we would see?**

I think we will see more Kazakh language. You know our president, he speaks five languages, and his weakest one was Kazakh. He's taking Kazakh language lessons, and I see him like me. Personally, I see him as an example for me, that I need to start. It's not too late for me to start speaking Kazakh, and not too late for everyone else. And I think we are going in the right direction for now, and if we will achieve it when Kazakh language would be used everywhere by everyone, like they would know even those who are not Kazakhs, they would know basics. If they would know on the level to support a conversation in Kazakh it would be biggest achievement for now.

**And do you think you there will be, more people speaking English?**

Yes. For me, it's like, I I'm not sure which one is better language for me, Kazakh or English, and it's the same, I think for most people of my generation, and English will be like, really, third one, Russian, Kazakh and English in the role.

**Kazakhstan now plans to transition Kazakh language from kirilitza to Latin by 2031. How do you feel about this change? Do you think you need it? And do you think it is possible to do?**

I was like, what are you talking about? And I didn't even know that we used Latin before, and it's like we just started to talk about it to know the specifics of the Kazakh language in Latin alphabet. At first it looked so hard to do it. Like we used Kirilica all our life. And more I got to know about it, more it sounded like a right decision. I think it will be smooth, like there is so much time to do it. And for now, I don't think that the alphabet is ready, so we are not starting and nothing like much happens. But I see that for me, Kazakh language looks like more classy in Latin alphabet. Brands, they start to use Latin alphabet, like we have local brand, Kazak Republic, and they were first ones who started to make clothes, or apparel, or some, maybe bottles, bags with Kazakh in Latin alphabet. And it was like at the same time when most of us started to think about Kazakh identity. That's cool. So I think it would be good and it just feels right.

**Do you think by 31 will it be possible, or will it take more time?**

I think it would be possible in the government system and all everything was official and like this, but for people it would take more time.

**P11**

**Okay, let's start with simple ones. What is your age?**

I'm 21 years old. I'm studying in Vilnius university currently, like doing exchange program, physics faculty and the mathematics, informatics faculty.

**What do you study?**

Actually, in Kazakhstan, my major is the mathematics teacher.

**Okay, what is your religion?**

Islam.

**Are you practicing, or is it more like a family thing celebrations?**

Like I'll just say, they say, like, I'm not practicing like, but I believe.

**Okay, so where are you from? In Kazakhstan?**

Like, I've born in Ayagoz district or this town. t's a eastern part of our country, like in Abai province.

**What languages do you speak?**

I can speak three languages, and a little bit German, like Kazakh, Russian, English and German.

**Um, okay, so if you would have to think about each language you speak, could you give like two, three words you would associate with that language? So for example, when you when you say, what words come to mind?**

Okay, like Kazakh freedom, of course, for Russian, it's like, more aggressive, like, I don't know, yeah,

**You mean aggressive in what?**

You know, like pronunciation, okay, not in a behavior like, you know. English, like, more for like communication with answers. Like communication like I associate with the discipline.

**Also, so which language do you speak the best?**

Of course Kazakh, in my family, I speak Kazakh among the friends, like everyday life, I speak in a Kazakh language but unfortunately, we are mixing it with the Russian.

**In what city do you study in Kazakhstan?**

I'm studying in Astana, and I've moved here. Yeah,

**But there's like more Russian language in Astana, right?**

I think, yeah, but, but my friends and my familiar people's like, speaking in Kazakh, like, my friends.

**So in what language did you go to kindergarten?**

Kazakh, of course.

**Okay, and your school?**

My school, Kazakh, university, is also Kazakh.

**When did you start learning Russian school?**

Second grade? Maybe, yeah, I forgot. Yeah, second grade, second grade

**And before school. Did you already know Russian?**

No, like, a little bit, not, but not much. Like my family, my family is, all of the members of my family speaking in Kazakh only. Yeah, as I mentioned, people like, we are mixing up with Russian.

**Is it important for you to speak in Kazakh?**

Yeah, of course. It's like, after this war, like I was thinking about this thing, but it's really important to keep our national identity, I think, yeah, but unfortunately, some parents like, let's say, How can I say. *Защищает русский язык. Дети отдают на русскую школу. К сожалению, к большому сожалению. И они не хотят, чтобы дети пошли в казахскую школу, потому образование плохой. Не знаю, там висят отличные ребята, которые выигрывают международные олимпиады. Там по физике, математики и информатики. Это я знаю, в отличие, нет, но просто не знаю, какой то там колониальный отношение к казахскому языку. Ну, типа, когда русские пришли, ну, типа нам образования типа привезли. Цивилизацию России и типа казахский язык. Ну, считается, для них все таки это для отстающих, знаете, да? Ну, это, к сожалению, я так думаю.*



**But do you see that there is maybe a change between your childhood teens are now, do you see that more people use Kazakh now?**

Of course, because, like when I moved to the Astana, like my friends, was from not all of them, but almost all of them, like from southern part of our country, which, like all of them, almost speak in a Kazakh language more fluently than Russian.

**Do you think there are, there also maybe some outside changes from your environment which made you speak more Kazakh?**

For me, like, when I saw, like, of course, it's a good example, like, war in Ukraine, like, like, motivated to speak in a more Kazakh, you know, and also after, like, before the war in Ukraine in like, in 2022 Like, we had like, one revolution, let's say kind of the it's also motivated to speak more.

**Do you think there should have been less or more one of the languages in your life, education, growing up. Or do you think it was just right?**

I don't think so. Like, yeah. Right now I don't say so like.

**What language do you most often speak with Kazakhs here?**

It depends on the like, you know, where are they born. Like from the northern part, like they speak in, mostly in Russian, unfortunately, but I speak amazingly in Kazakh.

**So when you meet a Kazakh in what language would you like speak with them first before knowing?**

Of course Kazakh

**Do you ever feel conflicted about which language to use? Maybe sometimes it's hard to decide? Maybe you have some examples.**

Like, it's not hard for me, like speaking like three languages, like, yeah, maybe it depends on the people, but for me, it's not hard. But mostly I prefer speaking Kazakh.

**Okay, so if given the choice, which languages would you want to prioritize in your future career and in your life? Like, if you have a family, what language would you like to speak?**

In family of course Kazakh, because, like, I grew up in a like they say, not much more, but traditional family, and I think I will continue it.

**So yeah. So you plan to be a teacher also...**

Yeah, of course, I will teach in a Kazakh of public school, maybe in a private school, but yeah. So when I will teach, can teach in Kazakh here.

**So in which grade did you start learning English?**

In a third grade.

**You think that it is part of being Kazakh, to be bilingual, or trilingual today, to speak not only Kazakh, but also Russian?**

I don't think so because in the southern part of our country, they are speaking in Kazakh, in a village, say, if you go there like, they don't speak with you, in Russian, like people from northern part of our country, which is close to Russia. Our southern part people they don't speak, as fluent in Russian. So it's not like a national identity maybe, like, I don't think so, because it's, not our languages, like, it's not my mother language. So I'm not considering it's like, national identity.

**So like, growing up, did you know your tribe or your clan?**

Yeah, of course.

**So for you, was it important? Is it part of your identity?**

Of course, it's like our history. Like, currently, it's like, not much important as a past, like, you know, in the present day, because, like, when in the past, like it considered it like, if say people from like in the same tribes, let's say they can't marry each other. Like girls and boys like it if you like, maybe you read like, seven generations after you can marry each other. That's why they keep this kind of like systems, like rules, yeah,

**So if you would need to rank it, do you think you are Kazakh or Kazakhstani first?**

Of course Kazakh.

**So in what ways do you express, maybe your Kazakh identity? What do you think you do that is uniquely Kazakh other than language?**

Hospitality

**So, when you speak with people who are not from Kazakhstan, how do you represent your Kazakh identity? What do you talk about?**

Unfortunately, they are, like, always kind of confused. Like, they say they cannot identify my like, my face when they meet me the first time, like, they think I'm from Philippines, China, Japan or Korea. It's like, thanks to Chingis Khan this one, I think we had like, this kind of face.

**Yeah, so how do you represent your Kazakh identity when explaining your background to non Kazakhs?**

Usually my friend is asking me to speak in Kazakh language, something for fun, and of course, like this, asking about our food, national and holidays, but not much. They don't ask much about my about our holidays, but they especially asking about our foods, of course, which represents us.

**But like, did being abroad maybe change your perception of your national identity or language a bit or not?**

Not like I changed my point of view for 180 degrees because, but like, I started to respect my language, my national identity, much more than in the past, yeah. And I brought little bit knowledge of horizons, like cultural respect to other countries, yeah,

**Okay, um, do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be a Kazakh?**

Yeah, of course, because like, it represents, like, the country, your history, of course. So that's why it's like, important role.

**What do you think is the most important like, if you would need to define, what it means to be Kazakh?**

Speaking Kazakh and respect to our culture and the history is the most important, of course, and now, and use it in a daily life.

**Yeah, but also, I think you are more so thinking about like ethnic Kazakhs, but not all Kazakhs Citizens speak Kazakh Do you think it is important for them to speak Kazakh too?**

Yeah, of course. Like, like, you know, because we are living in a Kazakhstan, not in Russia, so it's important thing. But if I'm not mistakes, our country started to change some laws about language, and it's going to be like, you know, getting better. Like, let's say, decolonization process.

**So you think that everyone living in Kazakhstan should, like, at least understand?**

I think must, because, like, if you go to the plants German, they speak in a German like you from your refuges, or like you are living in the country like, use, you must speak in German. Like, you know you can. You cannot survive without language in in these countries, of course, in Russia. So I think that we, they must speak in Kazakh

**Kazakhstan has promoted a trilingual language policy, so that Kazakh should speak and Kazakh, Russian and English. And it's also like that in education. Do you think it aligns with the needs of people. Why or why not?**

Like knowing language is like necessary soft skill. I think it's just my point of view, to communicate with other people, like easily, of course, in post Soviet Union countries, like a lot of people, cannot speak in English, but they cannot speak Russian. If you want to, like, speak, communicate with this people from these countries, you should know this language. But if you want to more, like, explain, like explore more, like horizons, like your you must speak in English. So in my point of view, like in a Kazakhstan, like they started, they changed some laws about language, but I cannot remember, like, you know, in a primary school, like they they cannot learn some languages, like, I cannot remember, sorry, but yeah, we need to, like, learn other languages from fifth grade, maybe sixth, seventh grade, but not from the primary school, yeah.

**Okay, so there have been some government efforts to promote the use of Kazakh language. Do you think, is it enough right now? Do you feel the changes or not?**

Like people should also join this like movement. Not only like in a level of governments, policies, people also need to do like somewhat about this.

**So what do you think the efforts right now from the government are enough? Or Should there be like more?**

More strictly under like strongly that, you know, because we need to, like, mostly nowadays.

**So why do you feel it is not enough right now?**

Because, like a lot of people in Kazakhstan, like, unfortunately, speaking Russian, yeah. And yeah, of course, one way it's like, they're using the daily life, you know, in a northern part of our country, where is like, percentage of Russian people is very like, like, really high, I think.

**How do you view the role of each language in Kazakhstan's future? .**

I hope, like kazakh language status will grow and the Russian, of course, will proportionally decrease. And I think also young generations start speaking English more than Russian

**Okay, so Kazakhstan plans to transition to Latin alphabet from when it comes to Kazakh language, how do you feel about this change, and is this possible?**

To be more close with Turkish, like it's still, it will be positive, yeah.

**But like, do you think it will be possible to, like, change alphabet?**

I think, yeah, because, like, all of like promotions, you know, like stores, like names of the stores and television shows, names of the stuff is writing starts to write in a Latin, Latin letters, yeah, okay, maybe, maybe they will, Somehow will change. Okay, but it's also helps to avoid from Russia, yeah, little bit, not much, but a little bit.

**P12**

**So let's start. What is your age?**

My age is 24 I'm male, yes, right now I'm studying at a medical university. Fifth year. Right now I'm living in Astana, is the capital of Kazakhstan.

**Okay, where were you born?**

It's Shymkent

**What are your languages?**

So my native and first language was a Kazakh language. My second language is Russian, and also due to the fact that I live really, really close to Uzbekistan. I also know Uzbek language, and my fourth language is English.

**So your Uzbek you think is better than your English?**

Not really. I think I speak uh English better than, Uzbek

**Okay, so when you think about each language you speak, what words would you associate with them? If you think about Kazakh. Like two or three words that come to mind.**

When I when I think about Kazakh language, it's always have an association with home, which is which in Kazakh language can be said as үй and like менің үйім, which means, like my home and like other other words, which also can be associated, he warm, which is translated as жылы. For Russian, at least first thing like which came to my mind, is образование, education, and then swear words, because we tend to use, like, more Russian words. And when I think about English like it's the first thing which came up to my mind is, like it's opportunities. Because in Kazakhstan, if you know like, three languages, you have good chances to, like, boost your career, and you have really good chances to see the world, the world.

**And Uzbek, maybe you have some associations.**

I really can I remember only like this one, the word which means like faith, something like this.

**Okay. So what language did you speak in kindergarten, in school?**

The thing is that since kindergarten, I was getting education only in Russian language, like since the age of six, maybe, I think even five, but originally, like we were speaking in Kazakh language in family. But in, like, seventh grade, I had a chance, like to move like another school where they had like three lingual educational system. So that is where I started, also learning English. So I can say that, since my childhood, I had to speak more than two languages.

**But did you have, like, Kazakh, kindergarten, gardens and schools for small children too?**

Yes, of course. But, like, but my parents and also my grandfather, yeah, they all got education in Russian language. So they did not see the way of getting education other than in Russian language.

**So, like, maybe we thought it's better quality education, like, if it's Russian?**

At least at that time, it was like this, but now it's a different time, and like we have a tendency that number of Russian schools, like Russian language prevalent schools, they are closing down. Then people, they see more opportunities in English language. So they give their children to like English or like Kazakh of speaking kindergartens and schools.

**Okay, so when you think about yourself, do you think there should have been like more or less Kazakh when you were growing up? Or do you think it was okay?**

I think more you know, is better. Knowing Russian language gave me chance like to learn other other language, because at the time I was I was in school there was not like, a lot of information in Kazakh language, like, if to compare like now and past, like 10 years. Now, if you only speak Kazakh language, you have chance, like to know a lot of things. But when I, when I was in school, like you had to know Russian. Yeah, I just, I just wanted to add like, I'm actually satisfied with the level of the like, of the presence of Russian language in one in my life. But the problem is that, like in the childhood I was, I was clearly thinking like in one language, in my native language, but like since I started getting education in Russian language, like my mindset and my inner voice, it changed it to Russian language. So there is a problem with the identity, and I'm not alone with that, with that problem, like, if you think I grew up like in the south part of Kazakhstan, like, which is, like, more traditional and like, we really proud that like most of the population in the south, but they speak only they only speak and communicate in Kazakh language, but Like my, inner voice is Russian. Yeah, so I don't think that it's a problem, but at least until I can clearly communicate because of language.

**With your friends, what language do you mostly speak with people your age?**

It depends on the friend group, because I have a lot of friends from different parts of Kazakhstan, for example, I speak only Kazakh language with the people I grew up with. So like with my with my close friends. But when we talk about, like in medical sphere, a lot of people communicate in Russian language because, like our, our medical literature is deeply connected with like Russian books, and they're like, and they're clinical recommendations. So people, in being a medicine, they tend to use communicate more in Russian language.

**Do you speak with other Kazakhs abroad?**

Yes, I was not alone in Kaunas. We came like, there was, like five students from Kazakhstan, all from Medical University. So we all did Erasmus and but we were all from like different, different universities. Between ourselves, we mostly a small we mostly communicated in Russian language.

**Why do you think that was so? There were like, maybe from, like, different regions, and it was easier, or like, why?**

We were all from a different regions, but we all were from medicine. So as I mentioned before like people who work, who are connected with medical sphere, we cannot be connected to one language, we are all using both Russian and English languages more. Than Kazakh language, because most of the clinical recommendations, like books, they are written in Russian or English because you can't build your career only knowing Kazakh language, at least in medical sphere.

**So do you ever feel conflicted about which language to use?**

Before I came to Lithuania, my friends like they just, they, they say that, like, you better, like, not use Russian language and I obviously, like, knew that, yeah, and in Kazakhstan, that the process is, like, it's actually the beginning right now, because right now, like, if you ask someone, for example, in market, Russian language, if you are like, if you are not Russian and you don't really look Russian there can be the question to you, like, Why are you speaking Russian?

**So in the future, like, which languages do you think you will prioritize and what would you like to speak more?**

Right now I'm learning my German language. Sure, because I want to, like, yeah, maybe I will have a chance, like, to build a career in Germany, at least, I hope so. But right now I'm prioritizing a Russian and English language because, like that is the language I use the most with my work. But, but it is essential to also know Kazakh language, because we are communicating with our patients in Kazakh language. So right now in Kazakhstan, you have to know three languages.

**Okay, so, I mean, we already talked, I think about the first question a bit, yeah, but as I was like reading about, like Kazakhstan, like scientific articles, there was like this thing that some people identify and identify as Kazakh and others like as Kazakhstani...**

Self identification in modern Kazakhstan it's actually a new thing, because, like, for the first time in maybe, like three or 400 years, we really have, like, independence and term ethnic Kazakh means that like, like, I don't really know how to explain it, but to identify yourself as Kazakh you have to know, like your ancestors, like 7 generations of your father and like you have to know your family tree. And Kazakhstani is more to people who were forced to move Kazakhstan during the Soviet times. But they like, they were living there for already, like for several generations. So they, they are also like part of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan itself. It's like, really, we are a really multi national the country and have, more than 120 nations. That is like explanation of of like these words.

**Has the experience of being an exchange student changed your perception of your national identity or language?**

Absolutely, being an exchange student has strengthened my love and pride for my Kazakh heritage. Living abroad, I became even more aware of how special our traditions, language, and values are. Experiencing different cultures made me realize that Kazakh culture has its own depth and beauty, which I now feel a stronger responsibility to represent and preserve. It was a reminder that our identity is something unique that deserves to be celebrated and shared with the world.

**Do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be "Kazakh"? Why or why not?**

Yes, language is deeply tied to what it means to be Kazakh. Kazakh isn't just a means of communication; it's how we express our way of life, our wisdom, and our connection to our ancestors. Through language, we pass down stories, traditions, and the values that define us as a people. So, even though there are many Kazakhs who may be more comfortable in Russian or English, the Kazakh language holds a unique and irreplaceable role in our identity. Speaking Kazakh is a way to stay connected to our roots, and it's an essential part of understanding who we are.

**When you switch between languages, do you notice any changes in how you perceive yourself or how others perceive you?**

Yes, I feel that switching languages can sometimes change how I feel about myself and how others see me. When I speak Kazakh, I feel a stronger connection to my heritage and values. In Kazakh, there are expressions and terms that reflect our unique worldview, and speaking it brings out a sense of pride and warmth. In Russian, I feel like I'm communicating more broadly, especially with those from other post-Soviet countries, and English is a tool to connect globally. But I feel most "myself" in Kazakh, as it's the language that speaks to my identity and upbringing.

**Kazakhstan has promoted a trilingual language policy (Kazakh, Russian, and English). Do you think Kazakhstan's trilingual policy aligns with the needs of people? Why or why not?**

In many ways, yes, I think the trilingual policy serves Kazakhstan's needs. Kazakh is essential for preserving our culture and ensuring we maintain our identity. Russian connects us with our history and our neighbors, allowing us to maintain cultural and economic ties. And English opens doors to the world, offering access to global opportunities and knowledge. If managed well, this policy can empower people to thrive locally and globally. However, it's crucial that Kazakh remains central, not just as a formality but as a living, thriving language.

**How do you feel about government efforts to promote the use of the Kazakh language? Do you think these efforts influence your language use or identity?**

I think the government's promotion of Kazakh is essential and long overdue. Seeing more materials, media, and educational opportunities in Kazakh encourages people to use it in their daily lives, which strengthens our national identity. For me personally, these efforts make me want to use Kazakh more actively. It makes a difference knowing that our language is prioritized and valued at a national level, and it definitely strengthens my pride in being Kazakh. I hope these initiatives continue to grow, especially for the younger generation.

**How do you view the role of each language (Kazakh, Russian, English) in Kazakhstan's future, especially in the context of globalization and international mobility?**

Kazakh will always be the heart of our identity and culture—it connects us to our past and unites us as a nation. Russian will likely continue to serve as a bridge, especially within our region, where it allows us to collaborate and communicate with neighboring countries. English, meanwhile, is the key to global integration. In the context of globalization, all three languages have roles, but Kazakh must remain the priority if we want to keep our unique identity.

alive. It's possible to embrace a global outlook without losing our essence as Kazakhs, and balancing these three languages can help us do that.

**P13**

**So what is your age?**

I'm 18.

**What do you study?**

Information Technologies, computer science in English

**Okay, so in what university are you on exchange?**

I'm from Astana, IT University,

**And right now on exchange, in what university?**

Vilnius university

**Okay, what is your religion?**

My religion is Muslim.

**Are you a practicing Muslim? Do you like celebrate Ramadan? Go to mosque or not? No Right. In what city were you born?**

In the Karaganda

**Where is it that?**

It's in the center of the Kazakhstan, like nearby to the capital Astana, and right now I'm studying at the Astana and also living there, but my family lives still in the Karaganda.

**Yeah, so I understand it's Russian speaking people. But is it like ethnic Kazakhs or ethnic slavs? Like, did you have a lot of Russian people?**

No, like I was studying at the Kazakh school. And also all of my friends and my relatives are just like their nationality is Kazakh, but it's more comfortable to them, and also to my friends, speak in the Russian, like it's most common speaking language, but they also like, know Kazakh very well, because it's our like, national, it's our language. So we know we know this language very well, but mostly speaking Russian.

**Okay, so, what languages do you speak yourself?**

mean with, for example, with my family in the Russian, with my friends, mixed language with someone who speaks only in the Kazakh I speak in Kazakh

**What languages do you know in general?**

Three languages main, like English, Russian and a little bit Spanish, it's not included.

**Which language are you most proficient in?**

Russian

**And then Kazakh, and then English, probably, right?**

Or, I guess yes, the English, English and Kazakh of like, maybe in the same. Level, maybe English, it's a little bit better, something like that.

**If you had to think about each language you speak, what words would you associate with them? If you could give like two three awards each. Just what words come to mind when you think about each language?**

Yeah, yeah, okay, then it's actually interesting question, maybe for the Kazakhs freedom and luxury, I would say, Russian, common calmness, something like that, comfortability, maybe, and the English, I would say, also freedom and the world. Such words.

**Why for Kazakh and English is freedom?**

Actually for the English, I just told it, because, as you know, freedom for the USA, it's the common, like, is the common thing about speaking freedom or something like that. So that's, that's just why. And for the Kazakhstan, like, we really appreciate our freedom, which we which our ancestors got really hard, It's actually a really huge, big history. So our country really, really appreciate the freedom which we have right now.

**And why luxury for Kazakh?**

Because, in the Kazakh, we like have some people who likes to tell about their success, to show it on the public and so on. So that's just why, okay,

**It's interesting. And why Russian comfortability for you?**

Because all my family, all my relatives, they know the Kazakh very bad. Actually, I'm the only one in the whole family who know this language very well. So that's why we only speaking Russian. So comfortability, like, that's, that's why you say this word, because it's comfort to me speaking this in language which is associated with my family.

**Are you from fully Kazakh family? You're, you're like, not mixed?**

No, no. I am from Kazakh family.

**And with your family, you speak in Russian, yes, but not mixed language, just Russian, right? Just**

Russian, yeah, because they do not know the Kazak very well.

**And you don't have like Kazakh speaking grandparents or things like that, like older people?**

Old people also, I guess no, but from my dad side relatives, I did not contact with them so much. But my cousins know Kazakh, but my grandparents do not know Kazakh very well, and they also speak in Russian mostly, but they know the Kazakh a little bit better than my parents compared with them.

**So your parents probably went to Russian speaking schools, right?**

They are from Russian speaking school, because at that time, my parents the most, as you know, it was the USSR time, actually. So they studied at that time. The usual thing was the Russian schools instead of Kazakh schools.

**Okay, but you said you went to Kazakh kindergarten and school?**

Not kindergarten. Firstly, I went to the Russian kindergarten, but then I changed, to Kazakh one, and yeah, I studied all my 11 years at the school, at the Kazakh gymnasium.

**And why did your parents decide to change it to Kazakh language?**

Because it's what it was actually a very good choice, because they wanted to me to their son, to know his own language of his own country, like as I finished my school successfully, it means that I know my Kazakh language very well, and also I can practice my Russian one with my family. So. It was a really good choice. So now I know I can speak fluently in both of these languages.

**So in the Kazakh school from which great Russian language was a subject?**

As I remember from the fifth or fourths. Great. Something like that.

**Okay, and when did you start learning English?**

The English from the first school in the it's not typical for the whole schools in the Kazakhstan, but exactly in mind, it was from the first grade. The English was included. That's interesting. English earlier than Russian, yeah, yeah, yeah. I guess it's, it's actually better. It was a good idea to make such things. I hope that it will be the common thing in all as I know my I have little sister, no, she goes to the like my school was totally Kazakh speaking school. She goes to the different one with the totally Russian speaking. Actually, I could not tell you for 100% but my parents decided to do that because when I went to school, my mother had a lot of friends who knows Kazakh and they was, they were living with us, so they helped me a lot, because otherwise it would be really hard for me, for my parents, because my mom doesn't know Kazakh at all. Okay, some words, but yeah, and exactly at that time when I was at school, it was even worse. So we do not live with them right now. And also I went to the university, so that's why I could not help to my sister when she went to the first grade. I went to the first course of the university. So maybe if I was at the school at the same time, maybe she went to the Kazakh one so I could help her. But now for my parents, they had, they have more job to do, and it's hard to them to help with her school subjects, homeworks and so on. So that's why they decided to but she went to the like, how to say to the personal teaching. She personally like learning the Kazakh language with the individual teacher.

**And you said, with your friends right now you speak mostly mixed language?**

Yeah, we're speaking in the mix like, yeah, just, just mixed language.

**Do you have friends with which you speak only in Kazakh, only in Russian?**

Yeah, I have with the friends, which is who I speak only in the Casa. It mostly, as I said before, from the south part of the Kazakhstan. They, they speak mostly in the Kazakh, so it's more comfortable to them to speak in this language. But I actually did not have, I guess, friends, maybe some people, I would say, but not friends who doesn't know the Kazakh of language.

**Is there a change between when you were teenager, in your childhood and now, do you try to speak more?**

Comparing with the younger age, when I was just a child, I just only spoke in the Russian language, because I didn't go to school and all my family members were speaking in Russian, as I mentioned before. And when I started to go to the school for the first time, it was a really difficult time, because everyone speaks in their Kazakh. And I do not, I do not know it properly, but as fast as hours passed, it was a lot easier to speak in the Kazakh and at my school time, for example, at high school, yeah, I spoke a lot because I had just subjects only in the Kazakh language, so I had to speak with the teacher in Kazakh. And I used this mixed language to speak with my friends.

**Are you trying to use Kazakh more? Or there is, like, no significant change?**

Maybe not significant change. Because I didn't start to speak by force, to speak only Kazakh. I just speak whenever, whenever I want, where the situation, yeah. But for example, in my first course, I was living the in the dormitory in my hometown, and we had a lot of people from the south part. So at that time, I mostly spoke in the Kazakh because they actually did not know Russian very well. So at that time, maybe I used the Kazakh more, but not because I wanted it. The situation was the following.

**So is it important for you to know Kazakh and speaking Kazakh? Do you think it's like part of your identity?**

Of course, yeah, I guess like you should know your own language at the first part, because you just live in the Kazakhstan. So you need at least when you're a little bit older, maybe not for the children, because it's not their fault.



But maybe when you become like adults. I guess it's important to know your own language. So yeah, I guess it's the part of the national identity for me.

**Do you notice any changes in Kazakhstan from when you were a child to now? Do you see more Kazakh language around you?**

Yeah. Content, of course. There are more schools which are only in the Kazakh, like we trying to teach the Kazakh a lot. Even in the Russian schools, Kazakh language is a compulsory subject. So if you're in the Russian school, you will learn the Kazakh at least as a subject. That's why there are a lot of there are more people who speak in the Kazakh language.

**Do you think there should have been less or more of one of the languages in your life and education when you were growing up?**

Actually, I don't think so, because I'm pretty I'd say that pretty comfort with the situation with the languages that I know right now I know, yeah, the Russian is my like main language, I would say, which I know more.

**Okay. Do you meet our Kazakhs in Vilnius?**

yeah, of course I have three four, yeah, I know at least four people from the Kazakhstan which three of them, like, live in the same Dorm as me.

**In what language do you speak?**

In the mixed. The one guy mostly speak in the Kazakh. So I speak with him, mostly in the Kazakh, but sometimes I use Russian. He also understands it. There is no problem.

**So if you meet, let's say new Kazakh person, or the person you think is Kazakh in which language do you approach him first, and how do you say hello?**

Actually, I do not think about in what language to approach of time. It just comes in my mind. Sometimes I could say in the Kazakh, sometimes in the Russian, like I do not say exactly in the same language every time. So it's it changes. I do not think about it.

**Do you ever feel conflicted about which language to use? Is it ever hard for you to decide? Maybe you have some examples.**

Actually, I didn't have have some conflicts with this. For example, if I see that people with who I'm talking, prefer to speak in the Russian or Kazakh, I just speak with them in the same language. There is no problem, conflict with this in my mind.

**If you were given a choice, which languages would you want to prioritize in your future career and in life. So if you have a family, what language would you like to use in your future family?**

Okay, that's a good question. In the career, I would say English, because the whole world speak in English. There are more there are much more opportunities with job or something like that. So I would prioritize English. But when it comes to my family, it actually it depends. I would say I would try to teach them to speak in three also languages, like the English, is just very important in the whole your life. It opens a lot of doors in your future. Like my mom, my mom also saw it in such way. So that's why she, like got the individual tutor for me in English. And Russian, so my children could speak with my mother, and the Kazakh, because it's just our own language. We should know it would be a little bit hard. I do not think about it right now. I'm too young for this.

**But you would probably still so, for example, if you stay abroad, you probably kids would not only speak in Lithuanian, right? Would you still teach them both Kazakh and Russian or not?**

Yeah, that's that's a good question. Actually, yeah, for example, Lithuanian, I would maybe, I'm not sure, but prioritize the Russian, because, as I can see here, as I live here, there are a lot of people who speak in the Russian. So it would be

the like, better, more comfort to them to know at least Russian also. But yeah, I would actually hope, and I would be really happy, that even in such a broad countries, they also know that because of language. That would be amazing, because they should also remember, like every time, wherever they will be, they are kaza at the most, and at the start they are kaza. So it's better to know your own language. But I would never like to force them if they do not want and so on. Yeah, that's actually their choice. But at the childhood I would try to teach them at the from the more younger ages, so it would not be the problem, okay, in the future.

**Do you think that speaking two or three languages is part of Kazakh identity and like, what it means to be a Kazakh today?**

I'm happy that we could speak in three languages. Like, for the Kazakh people, it's the common thing to know at least three languages. I say it's amazing, for example, you know for the kazakh, you can speak whatever you will be in the Kazakhstan. You know the Russian. You can speak with the like, for example, right now, even right now, I'm in the European country, actually, but there are people who speak in Russian as well. For example, a lot of people do not know the English. And the English is just, I guess the English is the most and prioritized language in whole countries across the world.

**Okay, did you know your tribe growing up, or like your clan?**

We name it ru, so, yeah, I know my, actually, most of the Kazakhs know their, as a you say, like, tribe,, it's part of the Kazakhstan whole. Because we had, take Kazakhstan, and there was, for example, not cities, maybe, but the tribes, yes, no more. So it's just, it's just the part of the whole Kazakhstan itself.

**Yes. Was it important for you, for your identity, or was it just fun fact?**

For your identity, it's better to know your tribe, but it depends on your parents. If they don't know, how would you know about it? For example, when I asked my dad, he didn't know about it. When I asked my grandfather, he told me, my tribe, , I guess it's important because, for example, when we meet the Kazakh people, for example, we commonly ask about about this with each other.

**If you would like, need to choose between Kazakh and Kazakhstani, which identity you think is more important for you? Um? So, yeah, so if you would need to rank it. Do you think you are, first of all, Kazakh or like, Kazakhstan? In what ways do you express your Kazakh identity.?**

We have a lot of traditions, for example, some holidays or something like that. Also, there are differences even within the food which we eat. For example, it's not common to eat the horse meat for other countries, but it's the common thing for us. In our country, we have some traditions, maybe even the way in which we speak, in which we think there's also, of course, there's also difference, like we have another behavior, another schools, another government. In these things, actually, my family is not so traditional one. They didn't teach me a lot of kazakh traditions so it's a little bit harder to tell you exact things.

**If you talk with someone who may might not know Kazakhstan very well, how do you explain your background on what it is to be Kazakh?**

I would tell them little bit, maybe some history, because we have a really huge, rich history of Kazakhstan, also about nature, about our food, maybe some some words in our language. Also, because, for example, my roommates, for example, one is Italian so he doesn't know Kazakhstan very well. But when I showed him some pictures, when I told him, like, some words, maybe, and so on, he decided to go to the Kazakhstan like it's his goal now, because he really loves it right now. Maybe I would say him about how we speak, how we interact in Russian also, because it's a little bit interesting part, because we have a lot of Russians how it changes between the parts of the Kazakhstan, north, center, south.

**Has the experience of being abroad changed your perception of your national identity and language?**

No, actually, I don't think so. I would not say like more patriotic, but I still miss my country, of course, because I love it, but I would not say like more.

**Do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be Kazakh?**

My opinion, yeah, it's mostly for all people and for all my friends. It's really important, and in some way, I agree with them. Yeah, you should know your language. For your national identity. Because the language is like the part of tradition, part of the culture, of the politic and so on. But for me, firstly, it should come from your mind, from like, from your heart, your love your country. Not, not like, Yeah, I know the Kazakh language, so now I identify me as a Kazakh. But you do not love the Kazakhstan. So yeah, but in the common way, it's really important. But for me, it firstly, should come from not from the language, but from you.

**So Kazakhstan has promoted a trilingual language policy. Do you think Kazakhstan's trilingual policy aligns with the needs of people like these three languages? Or should it be any different? Any different?**

No, I would say it's like, it's amazing, this three language policy, because we have a lot of people who speak only in Russian, so we could fulfill their needs. And also why I like because it makes you, as I mentioned before, it's amazing to know at least three languages. Like the whole class of people know at least three languages, which amazing the first the first part. So whenever we go, we could speak with everyone, mostly everyone. So yeah, that's why I like such system, trilingual politics. Because, if it would be only, for example, bilingual, only Kazakh and English. So there would be a problem with the Russian people who speak in Russian, even for my family, who speak mostly in Russian, and, for example, with only Russian and Kazakh. So there comes the problem with abroad countries to know the world the English actually it's your ticket for your success.

**Do you think that everyone who is Kazakh citizen should try to learn at least basic Kazakh?**

I think, yeah, it's better to know at least some basics of the Kazakh, but it's better to know it to at least good level, because you should know your own language. Of course, how to not know? Yeah, it's possible to not know your own language, that you could survive in the Kazakhstan even without knowing the Kazakh but I guess it's better for your own to know your own language. Because, for example, right now, my mom says a lot of times, like, she really regrets about not knowing the Kazakh very well. Living in the Kazakhstan. Firstly, when I was a little bit younger, I could not understand her, like, why? Where's the problem? You, like, live here for whole your life, and there is no problem. You still do not know Kazakh very well, but you have no problem with this. But she says, like, maybe when I will be much older, I could understand her, now I do like, why it's so important just to know your own language. So why? Because you can feel yourself, because, for example, she faced some problems. She's has the job to interact with a lot of people. And yeah, there's, of course, people who do not speak in Russian. So she every time, like, write me or ask me to translate something to her, but, yeah, it's, it's really bad, like you are in the Kazakhstan, but you do not know the Kazakh bro. Why? Yeah, it's just, it's just like, for your own you can, you can feel more open, more comfort to know both of this language.

**So you said you didn't think about it that way when you were younger, but it's changed. Why do you think you started to think differently?**

Maybe because I, I'd say, faced more people when I, when I went to the University, and even here, when I went to another country, now I moved to the another city, to the another like to the university a new part of my life. There are so many people, so many different people from every part of the Kazakhstan. And also I went to the another country where's the also so many and other people with much more differences. So that's why, at that time, I start to realize why it's so why it's so important.

**How do you feel about government efforts to promote the use of Kazakh language? Do you think that the effort right now is enough, or it should be more?**

I guess, I guess it's enough. Not, yeah, not amazing, but I see the difference. So I think that, here's the government takes some action at it's already good. And it's not like just showing you're making something. They really do something. They really try to change it. They really try to prioritize the Kazak language. So it's amazing for me. So I guess, yeah, it's good enough.

**How do you view the role of each language, Kazakh, Russian and English and Kazakhstan's future? What do you think the language situation will be? How it will change?**

I guess there will be more Kazakh, of course, because, yeah, the time is coming. We should prioritize our language at the first instead of Russian. But also, I guess it's better to still know the Russians basics, because, as I said before, you

could go to the nearby countries, to Ukraine to the even Lithuania, to Russia, and you can, you can speak with the people. So I guess the three, three of these languages, plays a huge role, and they should be still like how to say in the future.

**Okay, and do you think more people will speak English?**

I could not sell exact, but I hope it will be in that way. But maybe, maybe because, yeah, for example, the now the older generation do not know the English very well, and most of them, but for example, the growing generation now at least know some basics. So when they will become older, it will change like compared with the future.

**So Kazakhstan has plans to transition to the Latin alphabet. So under Nazarbayev, they plan to do it by 2025 and they started this process, but now tokaya moved it to 2031 how? How Do you feel about this change? Do you think it's a good thing to change the alphabet or not?**

It's not bad, but I guess it's not so good because, for example, just maybe it will not take so much forward difference to the younger generation. But for example, for me, it I should now start to learn, like some letters in the Latin alphabet, instead of curious. So it's just, it will take some effort from me, I do not want to I like how I like, like how it's right now. So wait to change and what Please do not make the changes.

**Okay. But do you think there could be any positives from this change?**

Maybe, maybe because the people would be more like closer to the English alphabet, to the English language, because the Latin and the English, English letters a little bit the same. And, yeah, maybe in some way it would be much more better, even for the people from another countries, they could understand our letters more, because most of the countries do not use kitty litza, yeah, compare with the in the multinational way. Maybe, maybe it's better. Yes, if you could, if you, if you think the right way, but, but yeah, just for me. It's just for me. I do not want such changes. It's not so difficult, like, by the time I it, I will not see any changes, any some problems, but at the first time, it would be not comfortable for me. So, yeah, like thinking to the future, maybe some multinational in the multinational way, yeah, maybe it's better, maybe to change, to change it. So, yeah,

**I think it's done more after the Turkish alphabet, right? Like there were some Turkish letters, I don't know if you see seen already, like Kazakh written in Latin.**

Yeah, I saw a little bit because, actually, the how to say the changing from Kiryu, it was planned much earlier, even when I was at the school, like, teacher said, like, we will change, we will change it every time, but it doesn't change. Even now it doesn't change, yeah. Even, even the school, we start that a little bit, just a little bit, like, few lessons learning the Latin alphabet. But it's just like, left, yeah, we, we didn't continue it, yeah, yeah.

But I read about it, and it said that we changed the alphabet three times and we, like, can't agree on, like, grammar rules and exact letters and things like that. Yeah, yeah, because Kazakh was originally written in Arabic letters.

**Yeah. Really So, and now you need to invent a new thing.**

Yes, yes, you're right. So many new things

**Yes, yes, yeah. So you think it's maybe a bit happening, maybe a bit too fast, like the changing of the alphabet?**

Yeah, I don't think so. Actually, I don't know. I think that it really goes very fast. I hope that we, they will at least live at the Latin alphabet moment and do not change it, because I guess it will be not good idea to change it for the first time. And who knows, but who knows, maybe in the future, there will be like such alphabet, which will be for the whole world. So we just will be forced to change it, but at least now, I hope there will not be more changes.

**P14**

**Okay. So what is your age?**

I'm 22 years old. What do you study now? I studied general medicine at Astana Medical University in Kazakhstan.

**What is your religion?**

I'm Muslim.

**Are you practicing? Or is it more like a family thing?**

I think more like family thing? I think, yes.

**Where are you from in Kazakhstan?**

Actually, I'm from Shymkent, but now I live in Astana because of my studies

**What languages do you speak?**

I speak Kazakh, which is my mother language and Russian. I study in Russian and English.

**Which one do you think you speak the best?**

I think probably kazakh of language, because I speak, like, from birth, no, not from birth, like, it's my mother tongue, first language.

**Okay, so if you would have to think about each language you speak, what words would you associate with them?**

Okay, I think when I say Kazakh, I will remember about our national food. Beshbarmak. First, it's our national food. Second is dombra. I think it's national instrument. And the third thing is, I don't know, but I thought about word адам. It means man. Russian. I would think maybe medicine. It means medicine because I studied medicine in Russian. I would say sever, because it means north. Like most people speak Russian in a north. In English, in English, I would say school, because I learned English in school and we studied in English on like last two years, like 11th and 12th grade. So that's why I would say school yes and second opportunities, maybe, Okay, so you said, like your first language was Kazakh, so with your parents and your family, did you speak Kazakh? yes.

**And was it mixed language with Russian, or did your parents want you to speak pure Kazakh?**

Actually, only Kazakh, like my father is more like strict person, and he prefers traditions. And he says us to speak only Kazakh language. But when I got to Medical University and started speaking more Russian, and sometimes I mix it, but they are not used to it. And I can mix now but during my school times, he was saying like only Kazakh language.

**And did you go to Kazakh school and kindergarten?**

Yes, in in kindergarten and school I was studying at Kazakh language.

**When did you start learning Russian?**

Russian? I think it was always part of my life, we always had Russian language, like classes in school, but mostly I started speaking Russian when I changed my school, because I think my environment changed, like class means changed, and I started speaking even more when I got into university.

**So when did you change schools?**

After sixth grade?

**And was it still Kazakh school?**

Yes, still Kazakh school, okay, just more Russians in that school. It was like in my first school, we were studying only in Kazakh language and we had only language classes. But in my second school, we had few subjects on Russian

**And what were the subjects?**

It was, it was Informatica, ITC, I think, and worldwide history.

**Why? Why these subjects in Russia? Do you know?**

I think ITC, because it's more easier to study ITC in Russian, more information in the in Kazakh language translation might be hard and world history, I don't know. I want to say that it's not like this in every school. It was like special kind of school. That's why program difference.

**And why was it a special kind of school?**

Because, like, we all have general schools, and then in one time, they opened schools after our president, it was like intellectual schools, and they have different program from other, from simple schools. Like simple schools, we have 11 grades in Nazarbayev intellectual schools, we have 12 grades and you need to pass exam to get there. And program totally different, and we study it in English at at 11th and the 12th grade, but in simple school, they study on one language.

**Now you speak with your friends more Russian, right?**

Yes.

**So what was kind of and why did you start speaking more Russian in Astana?**

Yeah, I started speaking more Russian in Astana, yes.

**But like, why?**

Because, you know, Kazakhstan is big, and from, like, different people from different cities, different parts are different. And, for example, in North Kazakhstan most people, like, they know Kazakh language less. And I have a lot of Kazakh friends who doesn't know Kazakh language, and they can only speak Russian or English, like they understand Kazakh language, but don't speak fluently. And I need to speak with them in Russian because they didn't understand me. For example, my roommate, I have two roommates, they are from North Kazakhstan, and they don't understand Kazakh language in my group, I also have like, three, four people, well, four group mates who doesn't know Kazakh language also, okay, um, think it's because it was Near to Russia and they are colonized more.

**Do you notice any changes in language usage between when you are little and you are now, not for you personally. But do you notice that there is more Kazakh in Kazakhstan now?**

Really hard question, I think I don't know. I it feels like there is more Russian language.

**Do you think that when you were growing up, there should have been more Russian or English or Kazakh in your life and education or not?**

I don't.

**And in what language did you speak with Kazakh students abroad?**

All of them spoke Kazakh. One boy, he didn't know Kazakh language. I was speaking with him in Russian. But other girls, they were like from south side and from sides where Kazakh language is popular. And I was speaking with them in Kazakh language, and it's good speaking with them on Kazakh language so no one can understand you.

**So when you meet a new Kazakh abroad, which maybe you don't know very well yet, how do you choose which language to speak with them?**

We used to meet other Kazakh people, like, from not Erasmus. They were studying master degree and lived like in same dorm as we and when we saw them, was like, greeting them in our language.

**Okay, why did you choose Kazakh and not English or Russian?**

Ah, because they're not Russian, not Americans.

**Okay. Do you ever feel conflicted about which language to use? Like? Is it ever for you hard to decide?**

I don't know, but sometimes you've got, I don't know, like, but in nowadays, well, I like, usually I speak Russian because, as I told my groupmates don't know, like Russian language or Kazakh language. So I don't know I can mix them like Kazakh and Russian mostly.

**Mm hmm, if given a choice, which language would you want to prioritize in your future career and in life? So if you have family, what language would you like your kids to use and to use in your family and in your career?**

To be honest, I don't know, because if I stay in Kazakhstan, maybe it would be Kazakh language, of course, but if I move out, it will be English.

**So for your career, what language do you think you will use?**

It's also hard, because I don't know if I'm going to stay in Kazakhstan. I want to move out. If I stay in Kazakhstan, it would be more Russian and then if I move out, it will be English.

**And if you move abroad, would you teach your kids Kazakh?**

for example, I want to move to USA. Let's imagine if you'll be American. Of course, our first language will be English language and family. But as well, if my children, children will be interested in Kazakh language, I will teach them Kazakh language, but it's not will be priority, because they might not need this language.

**Do you think that being multilingual or through lingual is part of Kazakh identity today?**

Yes, yes, it's big part to be dealing with speaking Kazakh and Russian is very big part, I think nowadays, Russian is really big part of Kazakhstan.

**So when I was reading about Kazakhstan, I heard that when it comes not, not I heard but, I mean, I read that when it comes to Kazakhstan, there's like, a difference between being a Kazakh and being Kazakhstan. Have you heard about it?**

yeah, it's different, because we have a lot of nations, like multinational country. How to say we have over 100 nations? I think, Oh, it was over 100, but now I don't know. So if you say that you're kazakh of but you are Russian who was born in Kazakhstan and living in Kazakhstan, you say that you're Kazakhstani.

**Okay, so when you were growing up, did you know what tribe you belong to?**

Yes, yeah. I knew it, they teach us this from childhood, when you born, like when you start speaking, they say, which ru are you and do you need to answer.

**So when you were growing up, was it part of your life, part of your identity, or just the thing you knew?**

You know, it was kinda part, not like a big part, but kinda because when you when we meet Kazakh people and you are becoming friends, you need to ask, what is your ru? And they answer, and if you ask from one ru, you say, like, oh, we are relatives, something like this. Also, you can't marry someone from your ru.

**So if you would have to rank it. Do you think you are ethnic Kazakh a citizen of Kazakhstan, or a member of your tribe first?**

What is the most important? First is that I'm Kazakh, then I'm citizen of kazakhstan. And third is tribe

**In what ways do you express your Kazakh identity. What do you think you do, which is like uniquely Kazakh in your life?**

To be honest nothing special. I don't know so hard. Ah, when I was in America, I was doing the, I don't know if you'd know this. When you say something and you knock something. When I was in America, my friend didn't know about this, and I was like, and he was like, What are you doing? And I was explaining him, what is it? Oh, but, but in Europe, they also know this. I don't know, to be honest, not maybe, nothing special.

**Okay, after being abroad for a bit, did your perception of your national identity and language changed somewhat? Okay. Did you felt more patriotic or you wanted to speak Kazakh more that you had this kind of feelings when you were away?**

Yes, I kind of felt patriotic when we were abroad.

**So, how do you explain for people what it means to be Kazakh. So for example, if someone approaches you and they think you are different kind of Asian, how do you explain what it means to be a Kazakh?**

Maybe tell about Central Asia and that we are more Turkic than Chinese or Korean. Yes, our language is more Turcic and our location is different. Our traditions are different. It's like, totally different.

**Um, do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be a Kazakh?**

Yes, it it plays a big role. Because, yeah, I'm happy that we have our own language that didn't disappear. Yeah, it's like big part.

**Okay, so now, if I were to ask this question in a bit different way, how do you describe a Kazakh person? What like? What defines being Kazakh? What is the most important?**

I wouldn't say that speaking Kazakh language would make you Kazakh or identify you as Kazakh. Because have a lot of Kazakh people who doesn't know like language, but they are still Kazakhs. Maybe, maybe just being, maybe just being born in Kazakhstan, as Kazakh person makes you kazakh. I don't know, if there should be any criteria for it, like, if you were in Kazakh, you just Kazakh, like, no matter where you live and no matter which language do you speak.

**Do you think that people who Live in Kazakhstan, they should understand Kazakh or, like they should be learning it in schools and maybe just having basic knowledge. Or it's not that important?**

I think it's not that important because mostly, like other nations, mostly they don't know Kazakh language, and we still speak in Russian like no one it feels like no one cares.

**Okay, so is speaking Kazakh for you, is it important for your Kazakh identity?**

Yes speaking Kazakh is important for my Kazakh identity, because when I'm with friends who doesn't speak Kazakh, like, and I'm speaking with them in Russian. But My Russian is not as good as Kazakh, and I might be like, mistaken. It feels like, it not feels like when you are speaking with friends in Kazakh on your like mother tongue. It's not the same vibes. Maybe for me, yes, for myself, but I don't have anything to do with others.

**So Kazakhstan has promoted a trilingual language policy officially so that and that Kazakh person should be able to speak, and Kazakh and Russian and English. Do you think like that trilingual approach aligns with the needs of people? Why or why not? Or maybe one language is not as important**

I think it's really good approach, because, to be honest, I think English is like language of opportunities, like when you go abroad, most people speak English, and you can easily communicate with them. And for example, for myself, I was taught three languages from school, and there was no problem. Soon I went abroad, like even if it was USA or even it was Europe, it was not that hard for me. But if you don't know English, and you start learning it very late, like after your 20s. It might be hard for you to travel, to teach some to learn something from it's how to say one minute from first source. Yes. I think it's good approach.



**So officially, there have been also efforts in Kazakhstan to promote more Kazakh language so that there would be more Kazakh language documents and like street signs and things like that. And do you think it is needed? Do you see the same? Do you see it happening around you? The promotion of Kazakh language?**

Yes, I think it's need to be, because by the time it feels like we are speaking less and less Kazakh language, and we should, like, bring it back.

**Okay, so do you think the efforts right now are enough, or there should be more efforts to revive like Kazakh language?**

I think there should be more, I think. But I don't know in which way.

**Okay, so maybe I don't know, in schools or in documents or in video content, like, what do you think would be like?**

I think it should be more in social media, because we are easily influenced, and if it's it, would be like in social media, a lot of people will see and they might be interested, I don't know, because a lot of content is in Russian, and you just scroll it, scroll it, maybe it will be in Kazakh.

Yeah, because there is also this debate about having more Kazakh language, also in like Russian speaking schools and international schools. Do you think there should be more as a language where

I don't know, it's so hard, okay?

So you kind of also said that it's not necessary for Kazakh to be a universal language in Kazakhstan, but it's better if it's promoted more...

No. I mean, do you know how to say I want, I don't want to be like racist or nacist, but deeply, I want everyone to know Kazakh language if they live in Kazakhstan, but I can't do anything with it, and I want to be tolerant, and I can deal with it if they don't know. But if I had choice, like everyone in Kazakhstan will know Kazakh language, I will choose this, you know.

How will the language situation change in Kazakhstan? So Will people speak more English? For example?

I think they will speak more English, because it feels like by the time, it feels like by the time a lot of people know English language. Because when I was kid, not everyone knew, maybe, yeah, not everyone knew, but now in my environment, in my friends, most of them know English, and I think by the time there will be more people who can speak English, understand like properly.

And do you think where will be more Kazakh or more Russian in the future? Or will the situation won't really change?

It feels like it will not really change with Russian and Kazakh, to be honest.

so Kazakhstan actually has plans to transition from Kirilitsa to Latin alphabet. When it comes to Kazakh language, it used to be by 2025 and now it's by 2031 how do you feel about this change?

I have to be honest negative, because we all used to Kirilica. Yes, we also all used to it. And there are specific letters that were made by Ahmet Baitursynuly. I don't know, to be honest, like, because Kazakh language was made by scientists. I really don't want it to be changed, because I heard that they just wanted to change so we can easily enter some American community, I don't know, like English speaking community. Also by it, it feels like we might lose our identity.

Yeah. By the way, do you think Islam is important in Kazakhstan, or it's like, not really. Is it part of Kazakh identity, or not that much.

You know, we are not as Muslim as Arabic countries. We mix it with our traditions. How to say, in Muslim religion, women should be lower than men, something like this. But in Kazakhstan, it was always feminism, always gender

equality, because our women's always were warriors. And the Yes, they were warriors, they were giving advices for like kings, like this. There wasn't something like women should be lower always. It was always like women equal to men. And there are a lot of reasons why we don't totally use Muslim rules. We just used what was comfortable for us.

yeah, because some they said that, like, oh, we have celebrations. And some, some of responses, like faced during Ramadan and things like that.

I think we had Tengrism, religion before Muslim, and we still have elements from them. On Fridays we cook like something it's called Seven bread, and we give it to our neighborhood for we cook it for our ghosts. How to say, I also understand that Muslim is a big part of Kazakhstan, when I had from a friend from United Arab Emirates, and they strictly follow rules of Muslim and it was like, Oh, we don't follow as much as they follow.

**P15**

**What is your age?**

I am 25

**What do you study? Now?**

I'm studying cyber security at the University of Luxemburg.

**Is it exchange or full time?**

Full time. I'm studying cyber, cyber Erasmus program.

**So you have a different university in Kazakhstan, right?**

No, I, I've accomplished bachelor's degree, bachelor's degree in Kazakhstan. Ah, yeah, I studied my bachelor in Kazakhstan and then Erasmus cyber us program is master program, like one year you study, for example, in France, and the second year in Luxembourg.

**What is your religion?**

Islam, Muslim.

**Are you like a practice of Muslim? Or is this more following traditions?**

More of following traditions.

**Where are you from in Kazakhstan, is it a village or a bigger city?**

Yeah, I'm from Almaty. It's a big city, one of the biggest cities in in the country.

**Were you born in Almaty?**

I was born and raised there.

**What languages do you speak?**

I speak three languages, Kazakh, my mother language, Russian, almost native language, and English is Level c2 I guess, or c1 I don't know. It's great.

**Which one do you speak? The best?**

The best, I think it's Kazakh and Russian. We have a language, by the way, it's called chala Kazakh. So it's like the mix of both languages. I think that I speak the that language more.

**So if you would have to think about each language you speak, what would you like associate with them? If you could describe it in like two, three words.**

I would say for kazakh, it's warm. Then I would say that it is a bit harsh language. And also, I would say that it's literature. These three words warm literature and harsh. And for Russian, I think it's difficult. Then harsh too, like, it's kind of, for me, it's kind of like a German one, which is, like, really harsh for your ears. And then for English, I would say that it's international. These words come to my mind, international and soft. I think, yeah, these words.

**Which language did you speak in in your family, when you were growing up?**

I spoke Kazakh, mostly prevalently. I went to Kazak kindergarten. In my family, it's also Kazakh language. Then school. School was also Kazakh, but University was more like English, Russian, one.

**From what grade did you start learning Russian? Was it already in kindergarten or just at the start of the school?**

I think it started on the third class. Yeah, I as I remember first two years in the school, at that time was only mainly in Kazakh, and then on the third class we started learning Russian, but commonly we were using like children from my playground were speaking Russian. So I guess it's from school time mostly.

**So you already like knew Russian before starting to learn it in school?**

I don't remember, but I guess, yeah,

**okay, um, and if you like, remember when you watched like TV programs, or you had books. What was the language?**

Like, it depends. I was watching with my sister in Russian, because, like we had in Kazakhstan, we have, like, mostly 10 channels which was like in Kazakh language and etc, but also, for example, Nickelodeon or Jetix, which had a lot of cartoons, they were in Russian. So we were watching in Russian the cartoons. But if when my father was coming from home from work, and we were watching the news, and it was mostly in kazakh.

**And what about like, books?**

Books, I would say that yeah, I think that in my school years, I was mostly reading in Kazakh. But then after I studied in the university, I started reading more in Russian.

**In your university, it's like, mostly Russian, or did you have, like, some English literature as well?**

Yeah, our university was international one, so we were speaking in and writing everything in English, not Russian. It was mainly in English. My university bachelor degree?

**Okay, and when did you start learning English in school?**

Ah, I think it came also with in the third year, it came with Russian. I guess, if I'm not mistaken, I don't remember clearly,

**Okay, so do you feel like there have been change in what languages you use between your childhood and now maybe you speak something more or less.**

Yeah, I think that there is a change, because I was mainly speaking in Kazakh when I was growing up. Like, when I was with my family, I was speaking in kazakh and etc. But after university, it changed a bit. I started speaking more Russian. And currently, I think with my friends, I use more like Russian language, but sometimes, like, it depends on

the people I'm talking, for example, some people with some people I, as I mentioned before, Chala Kazakh. So I just mix both languages, and it happens, like subconsciously, and I start mixing both languages.

**So do you think there should have been less or more some of the languages in in your life growing up?**

I think yes, because I think that Russian language shouldn't have like, big impact in my life, because I wish that Kazakh language was mostly prevalently used in official, in governmental, in everyday life. But unfortunately, it's not like that. And, oh yeah, I wish that Russian was less.

**Um, so, uh, do you know other Kazakhs in Luxembourg? Do you speak with them?**

Yeah, I speak mostly in Russian.

**Why is that? So?**

I think that. I think that it's because the other person doesn't know that much Kazakh, so that's why I'm speaking more Russian so she can understand me.

**So like, if you meet a fellow Kazakh, let's say in Luxembourg, first of all, you would speak with them in Russian?**

Yeah, I guess, yeah.

**Do you ever like feel conflicted about which language to use? Maybe you have like situations where you thought, Should I use this one or this one? Maybe you have some examples,**

Yes, I have that a lot to be honest. Like, for example, when I returned to Kazakhstan this summer, I was mostly speaking in Kazakh. So because, like, even abroad, I'm speaking in Russian, so I just missed my language, and I wanted Kazakh to be more prevalent, and I just wanted everyone to use Kazakh. So that's why I was speaking mostly in Kazakh. But the case is, it's like when you are used to and when in your mind, it's easier to speak in Russian or to find a word in Russian. It's hard to keep one language. But, yeah, I have a struggle with that. Sometimes I want to use Russian because it's like there were Russian words come to my mind, but I am like stopping myself and using Kazakh language.

**Okay, so is like Russian a little bit better for you?**

To be, to be honest, I have a conflict there too, because, like, I don't know some words I like, I remember more in Kazakh, some words I remember more in Russian, some words in English, like, which word I remember In which language first? It depends. Like, even in Russian, if I want to speak clearly in Russian, I have struggled to because I remember Kazakh words. Some Kazakh words come to my mind, and I have to wait in my mind to translate it to Russian. And sometimes, for example, in Russian, I don't know grammar that much. I mean, like, I know it, but I struggle with some grammatical forming, formatting. So, yeah, there is also an issue when I speak in Russian too, I guess

**Why is it important to for you to speak in Kazakh?**

Because I think it's heritage that we should keep and without language, there wouldn't be any identity. That's why I want to. I want to mostly use Kazakh because I want to leave some heritage for my future. I don't know, for future Kazakhs too. And I just want to, I don't know. It's just, I guess, about more identity issue in here.

**So if given a choice, which languages would you want to prioritize in your future career and in your life? So if you have a family like, what language would you like to speak?**

In my career, I guess it depends on the company, because I don't know, like, what's their mostly used, language? I guess it would be English, because I want to continue living like in Luxembourg, so that's why English when it comes to my family, I think I would, I would prioritize Kazakh language so they will know Kazakh language. So do you think speaking two or three languages is part of Kazakh identity and what it means to be Kazakh today. Or do you feel more connected to one language in particular? I think that kazakh is is unique because they're speaking two languages. I think that being kazakh is like since the history, like since it happened in the history. I guess it's like a destiny, like to know

two languages. And I think that it's somehow can be, can be unique future of Kazakhs to speak and use different languages.

**So when I was reading about Kazakhstan, when um, when it came to like identity, there were like, two different groups that you can be a Kazakh or a Kazakhstani, and some respondents understood those terms and, like, heard about it, and some didn't know anything about it. Have you heard about it?**

Yeah, I know the difference Kazakhs are the, like, the ones that are really Kazakh by blood, like, I mean, like, the ethnicity, nationality is really Kazakh, while Kazakhstani is. We have a lot of Russians, Ukrainians and Koreans, for example, and they are Kazakhstani because they're, like, ethnicity is different. For example, yeah, as I mentioned, Ukrainians, Russians, Koreans, but they were born and raised and living in Kazakhstan. That's why they are Kazakhstani,

**Okay, uh, did you know your like tribe growing up?**

Yes.

**Was it a part of your identity, or was it more so like a fun fact for you?**

It is some kind of like an identity, because we can really differentiate, like. Like, how to say, we can really differentiate people by knowing the tribe. And for example, if we see some kind of, like, driven, hot blooded person, we know which tribe approximately he or she is, and we are predicting, and I think that it really describes somehow, but not fully. Of course, it's not possible that it fully describes a person, but it somehow affects, I think so.

**Um, so, okay, so if you would need, like to rank it, like, how you yourself, like feel about it? Do you think you are a Kazakh a citizen of Kazakhstan, or, like, a member of your region tribe? First, if you would say, like, 123,**

I understood, yeah, I don't. I don't identify myself by tribe. I I mostly saying that I am Kazakh I'm from Kazakhstan, but I don't say about my tribe. Even in in in our country, we use tribe now as mostly for blood issues, for not being married with your like with within your tribe, it means that you are kind of relatives, and it's a blood mixing. But apart from that, we are not like that, focusing and paying that much attention on the tribe.

**So with so should you be married within your tribe or not within your tribe?**

You cannot be married within your tribe. We, we, for example, how to how to explain we have like every Kazakh, especially men, they know their seven generations, if like, you have to know your seven generations. Also in your tribe, you are divided by many sub tribes, and you have to know every everyone in of them.

**So when, whenever you meet someone, you are asking, like, especially parents are asking, which tribe are you?**

When you like, want to represent or talk about your Kazakh identity to maybe non Kazakh peers.

**So when you're in Luxembourg, how do you do it. What do you talk about?**

I don't know. I just say that I'm from Kazakhstan, and if they don't know where it's located, I'm just saying that it is, it's in the Central Asia. We speak Kazakh, and we are in between Russia and China, and we speak many languages. We are trilingual, or bilingual. In some cases, I just explain it like this, and that's all.

**Yeah, um, so has the experience of being abroad changed your perception of your national identity or language?**

I don't think that they changed my perception, but I think that since I'm abroad, I'm missing it, and I want to be closer to it, and I want to be like close to my roots, to my traditions. That's why I'm becoming more closer.

**So do you think language plays a role in defining what it means kaza to be Kazakh?**

I think that I would answer yes and no, because of course, for every nationality, you have to have some kind of, like identical features, and that's why I think that language plays a really great role, but also it depends on the people's

behavior. Like, for example, we have this like, kind of you know how to say internal jokes or perception of how we Kazakh operate or think. And for example, when we were abroad, we were saying, yeah, in Kazakhstan, we wouldn't do the same and etc. So I guess it's mostly about identifying being like Kazakh it's mostly about personality, I think, yeah, but kinda, I have mixed feelings about that.

**When you're abroad, you think that Kazakh would do that or do that. So maybe you have, like, some examples of what are those things?**

Yeah, for example, recently, my friend was like, complaining about her stomach issue, and she was saying, Oh, I think that I should go to the doctor and I said, like, how many days it started? And she said, like, one, two days. And I was like, Okay, if it doesn't pass, like, if it's not more than one week, why are you going to the doctor? And my friend, which is from who is also from Kazakhstan, she was like, Okay, we think the same. Because, for example, for Europeans, or for other nationalities, she was from Thailand, my friend, like, if they have some health issues, like they are gonna go to the doctor and solve it, but in Kazakhstan, we are really known for being patient, and we don't pay much attention. If it's not gonna be for a long time, we can just endure, endure, endure, and in the end, like, when there is, like, like, the pain in your body, only in this kind of cases, we go to the doctor, like, this is kind of example. We don't think about it the same way, I guess.

**Okay, so Kazakhstan has promoted a trilingual language policy. So like at Kazakh and Russian and English like are important, and especially in schools. So do you think Kazakhstan's trilingual policy aligns with the needs of people? Why or why not?**

I think that, in my opinion, this policy of like three languages. Ah, is not that helpful. It's not the need of the people. Because I think that we should focus mostly in Kazakh language. I even don't know why we are still keeping Russian, because there is no need in Russian, to be honest, if you look at that. So I think that it would be great if, from governmental side, there would be really high support in Kazakh language, yeah, after becoming perfect in Kazakh language of. Of course we can switch to another language, but the case is we should improve Kazakh language level in the country. And I think that the most attention should be going there, and afterwards we can like, after making it priority. I think that this trilingual policy would be perfect, but before that, no.

**This is a bit of a sensitive question, but do you think that minorities in Kazakhstan should also learn Kazakh?**

It's not like I'm not saying that it should be mandatory to learn, for people to to be in Kazakhstan or to work in Kazakhstan. It's just for example, even for example, how to say, even in here in Luxembourg, French is really required, like, if you even know English, so perfect, you have to know French. So why not to do it the same for Kazakhstan people, like, for in Kazakhstan, for example, even in our systems, it's written in in Russian, for example, in every company that I worked in Kazakhstan, every system is in Russian or English, and that's why, like, people don't feel any need to learn Kazakh. But I guess, like if we were using it by ourselves, like if Kazakh was used by ourselves, by in the official in the companies, it would be great. Like, I'm not saying that the minority should learn Kazakh language. It's just it would be really nice addition, like to know Kazakh, yeah. Okay. How to say I hope that I could explain it, but the case is, I'm not telling that. I'm not being like, really how to say propagative About Kazakh language. I'm just imagining how it would be good.

**Yes, yeah, and it's, as I understand, it is quite a hot topic, also in Kazakhstan language, or not really. How do you think hot topic? You mean, yeah, so something people like talk about or argue a lot nowadays.**

From my experience, I've never, I've never, like, seen someone arguing about this kind of topic, yeah, but I think that it's a really sensitive issue, because how to say, for example, even in Kazakhstan, like when I'm talking in Kazakh, people can say, I don't understand Kazakh speak Russian. So that's why, like you wanna you you get mad if a person is saying that like you are living in Kazakhstan for many years, why you are not learning it like, at least you can understand it, if, even if you don't speak it just just, you can respond, respond in Russian, but I can't speak Kazakh like it's fine, if you understand it at least. So, yeah, I guess sometimes it can be really hot topic, I think. But between my friends and we don't talk and discuss about that.

**So, as I said, there has been, like some efforts to promote Kazakh language. Do you think it is enough, or should like the government do more to for the promotion?**

I didn't feel and I didn't sense any support from governmental structures. Maybe because I wasn't that political, or I wasn't that like, proactive in this, in this question, that's why I didn't feel anything. But might be it there are some like, there are some enhancements. I know that recently, they made obligatory to be a citizen of Kazakhstan, you have to know Kazakh language, for example. And, yeah, that's really great.

**But like in general, comparing to when you were like a child and teenager and now, do you think There is more Kazakh language around you or not? Um? Hmm,**

I think that in my childhood, it was mostly Kazakh. Was more prevalent because every teacher in my school, in my kindergarten, were all speaking in Kazakh. But when I came to university, mostly professors were speaking like Russian and English. And from that moment, I didn't like feel Kazakh that much in my environment, but, but I think that, for example, mostly in with my friends right now, in the university years, for example, we were speaking mostly Russian, but now with my friends, with the same friends, I speak in Kazakh, because even even they understand that Kazakh should be spoken. So that's why we mostly speaking Kazakh language.

**And you said that like your friends also started to speak more. Kazakh, and when did it happen?**

I think it was when we finished university. It happened like, suddenly, like, after one, two years after university, we were like, Okay, why we are speaking chala Kazakh, or why we are speaking Russian, we should speak more Kazakh, like, fully Kazakh. And we are really trying to do it in discussions, in everywhere, all my friends are speaking and posting kazakh, trying to, like, make pay attention and focus on kazakh language, mostly my peers are doing that.

**Do you think maybe some outside events could have like impacted this change, or did it like happen naturally. What do you think was the reason?**

I think that people, I think that it was mostly about bloggers, because bloggers started paying attention. First of all, the era of bloggers started, and we started following them. We started listening to them. And then, like a lot of group bands, Kazakh, group bands, sing. Years, they are making really great song, for example, music in Kazakh language and and it's really nice to hear them. And they created that, like Kazakh, how to say vibe. And I think from that day we started like, talking in Kazakh, for example, I don't know. Do you know or not? There is a group and Irina Kara Tona 91 who have really great songs in Kazakh and and a lot of bloggers are supporting Kazakh language. And I think that somehow we were we started paying attention to that.

**Okay, it's really interesting. Um, so how do you view the role of each language in Kazakh, Kazakhstans future? What do you think the language situation will be in the future?**

Ah, hmm. I think that Kazakh language will be continued as the same, but there is a like, really silver lining, like this, small hope that it's gonna be more. Because I don't know, as I said, my peers are paying attention more to Kazakh, but I don't know younger generation right now. I've never talked with them, and I've never like observed what they are doing. But I think if I look at my peers, I think that Kazakh will be, will be progressing more, I hope so at least. Yeah, but I guess Russian will remain the same. I yeah, I think so. Oh, we are not gonna get rid of Russian too.

**What about English? Do you think more people will know English in the future? Yeah, that is definitely yes, because a lot of parents are paying focusing on English and how English can create career, can give a lot of opportunities and future. So yeah, a lot of parents are giving their children, and even they are speaking in English in their family. So yeah, I think that English will be also becoming more progressive. what parents do, like**

my parents, my father is writer in Kazakh language, by the way, yeah, yeah, he writes the fairy tales for children in Kazakh language. And your mom. And my mom is an engineer in the university. And also, I want to tell that my father's like books in Kazak language are being published, and people are asking and requesting them him to send his work, and they're gonna, like, for example, make a book and etc. So that's why I think that this also gives me a lot of hope for the future of Kazak language, that there is, like, there is the how to say, there is a request, there is the demand on pasa books.

**So Kazakhstan plans to transition to the Latin alphabet by 2031. How do you feel about this change? Do you think it's like possible?**

Yeah, of course it's possible, but it's gonna take a lot of time. But the case is, I think that it can be a bit like, not detrimental, but damaging for Kazakh language, because like to be honest. I cannot imagine myself like writing in Latin alphabet to be honest. And when, for example, a person, our younger generation is learning in kirilitza, and this, they are switch switching to Latin of a bit, I think that it will be hard for them to like, adapt. So that's why I think that it can be like de motivational for some people to learn Kazakh language. And yeah. But apart from that, I think that it was mainly made for getting detached from Russian language to So, for example, Turkish all the Turkish like Turkish language languages, Turkish family languages, are using Latin. That's why I think that Kazakhstan wants to do that because, first of all, to get rid of the Russian kiriletza, and second to be close to the Turkish language group.

**Okay, okay, so this is a bit maybe interesting question, but what part of Kazakh population do you think you are a representative of.**

I think that I am contemporary representative of Kazakh.

**P16**

**What is your age?**

25

**Okay, what do you study?**

I study International Business Management

**Where are you currently in?**

I'm currently in Milan, Italy, full time, in English

**What is your religion? You would say?**

I would say that I'm not religious. I

**Yes, in your household, did you grow up do some religion or not?**

I would say so. This is a tricky question in terms that my household considers themselves being Muslim, but we don't. We're not like, involved, we don't go to mosque, we don't like do kind of prayers and stuff. So, I mean, my grandmother knows some, you know, some prayers maybe, like the general one, maybe, but mainly we just are not engaged in religion. So, so I would say, in general, Muslim, but it's not like we are doing something religious. I would say,

**Do you celebrate religious occasions like Ramadan and things like that?**

No, no, I don't do anything.

**Okay. Where are you from in Kazakhstan?**

Kostanay, which is like a city in the northern part of Kazakhstan.

**Sometimes I know in the north where I'm like, more Slavic people, for example, right?**

Yeah, mostly it was mixed, I would say. And you know, when I was growing up, I think they were, like, more Russian people, maybe. But now the country, like the Kazakhstan has some migration policies, for example. They do have some, they do offer some benefits for people who come from the southern regions to move to the northern parts, like I think, in the last five years, maybe. And so this is kind of now, it's changing. I would say, I cannot say in the percentage, but, but it's definitely mixed compared to the like western part or the southern part, for example. But are there, like, still cities where, where are like, majority Slavic people in North? I think, no, I think not. Because now it's more, yeah, I think, like during the last 5-10, years, it has been changing. And it changes so because actually there is, like, a tendency people from northern cities, they do move to Russia to receive Russian passports, so citizenship. And



sometimes it's just to receive the citizenship, and sometimes they go back, like to Kazakhstan and live here, but have, like, Russian passports. It's, I think it's kind of a typical trend for Russians from the northern parts.

**What languages do you speak?**

So I speak so my native language is Russian, because in my household, we speak Russian. I speak English, a little bit of Spanish, maybe like A2 or something, as for Kazakh language, I can now it's more complicated because, like at school, I had five classes per week, or even more, like six, and I could communicate more efficiently and quickly. However, as I graduated, like seven years ago from school, I was not surrounded by Kazakh language that much. So now I can understand, I can read, but I cannot speak fluently. So yeah, so it's kind of like that. I mean, maybe as well.

**Do you think your English is better than kazakh?**

It is

**Are your parents ethnically Kazakh?**

So my mom is ethnically Kazakh, my father is not. But the thing is that I've never seen him because I'm like, we are the single parent household. So I was brought up in in the Kazakh household, so among like Kazak people, and we don't have like Russian, Russian people in my family, in my close family, I would say, and yes, so I was raised by the Kazakh household, and the main language is Russian.

**Okay, so you, like, didn't speak in Kazakh with your family, even with like, grandparents or things like that?**

Because with my grandparents, also, I have only grandmother, and when she was growing up, she studied at the boarding school where they taught only Russian and German, and there was no Kazakh at all. And during her life, she learned some, you know, like basic Kazakh for everyday communication by herself. And she doesn't know how to write in Kazakh, for example, but she can speak just because she learned throughout her life, I would say so it's some point of her life, but, yeah, but before, at that times, it was kind of prohibited, I would say, because, like in the Soviet Union, they tried to oppress, other languages, I would say, and mostly all the communication was in Russian. So that was one of the main reasons why we couldn't keep the language in our family.

**If you would need to think about each language you speak, what words would you associate with each language? Like two, three words, each**

Yes, so Russian, native language, my language that I speak to my family, like house language, English, for international communication, studies abroad, like traveling Spanish, just for fun, and also for communication when needed. Kazakh. Kazakh, it's like, I don't use it on an everyday basis, especially right now, but I don't know I would say describe then I would just maybe in the future, kind of have, like, some classes with Professor, or just enroll in some speaking club, because I need to Learn it like, more properly. But during the one year and a half, like the past one year and a half, I used to work in Almaty like,

**Yeah. So, yeah, so I didn't have a like, Kazakh part. So, yeah, so just, you know, just simple words you associated with, you know,**

okay, then, like, ethnic, national,

**You went to what language school when you were growing up in kindergarten?**

Russian?

**Okay, yeah, but your parents decided to let you do a russian one, why do you think that is?**

Just because maybe at that time, Kazakh language was not that popular, but mainly just because it was just the nearest like in terms of location, and they didn't have any Kazakh language speaking groups, so it was just just one minute away of my house.

**At what age did you start learning Kazakh?**

At seven, so from first grade. And English from the second grade.

**You said you, you are now thinking about learning Kazakh, maybe in the future, right? Why? Why did you start thinking about that you might want to learn Kazakh better?**

Um, because So, like from 18 years old until 22 years old, I used to live in Russia. Then when I came back to Kazakhstan, I moved to Almaty, which is like the southern part of Kazakhstan, and I noticed how Kazakh language is important, maybe not for everyday communication, it's not like required so that everyone speaks in you, and I cannot understand by but I understood that my surroundings, that I acquired, there all of them, they at least understand normally, and they, majority was speaking really fluently. And there were some cases when I, when I communicated with people who spoke only Kazak language, and I had difficulties. Of course, I can, like, express myself and stuff, so I understood that to speak normally with some, like, other college people. I just need it. And also maybe because, again, it's like a part of the culture, and like this geopolitical situation in our region, I would say, so again, it's like more Kazakh language has been, has become like more introduced, I would say.

**Do you think there have been general change in Kazakh becoming more accessible or more seen in Kazakhstan?**

Kazakh has become much more popular now maybe it's also because of technologies and stuff, you have like so access in terms of internet. You can find, like a lot of teachers, professors online. If you want to enroll, they do have Kazakh language classes. So if you want to, you can also enroll in terms of culture as well. For example, earlier most, how would you call it? Like movies in the cinemas, they were mostly translated into Russian that they translated in Russia, and then they showed it like in Kazakhstan. They still do it sometimes, but now we have, like, a lot of movies produced in Kazakhstan, which are only in Kazakh. And also we have movies translated into Kazakh. You can also see here, and also in terms of music, now much more artists sing in Kazakh, like maybe you've heard like dimash, or like some more popular like boy bands, like 91 and or Like national singers, young singers, and now they more sing in Kazakh, so and now it's kind of, you can see it or like festivals, more ethical festivals are conducted, and again, like in Kazakh, and like, basically you can see, even in terms of like information that it has, it has changed a lot.

**You said also that maybe some political events might have inspired changes. What do you mean, which events and how?**

Like the war in Ukraine, which is happening right now. So the past, during the past two years, Russian government has gotten, more aggressive in terms of, I think other countries that has borders with Russia and to the side of Kazakhstan they also, gave some comments like the northern part of the Kazakhstan, they are mostly russian, which is not true. And yeah, so there were some comments on national Russian television when they say things like that. So I think it also influenced the the general mood, I would say, like in the country, that something similar can happen, like in our land as well. And I think some people even started like, for example, just it became a principle to speak Kazakh only for some people, so that just to have this how to say it. So it's just a principle to speak Kazakh to, I think, stress the identity.

**And did it affect you personally or not really? Like your opinions? Did it made you want, just like, learn Kazakh more or, be more patriotic things like that?**

Yes, I think so. Yes. I mean, I've always been patriotic because Kazakhstan is not that popular country, like, I mean, abroad. So some people may have heard about it, but they don't know about it. And I usually tell them, like, about the country, about the people, and, like, food and stuff so but during the past years, I would say, yes, it influenced me, because again, when I moved back, for me, as I said earlier, I noticed how everything has changed. And yeah, so I think I should, like, I have to learn at some point, like, maybe in the nearest future.

**Did political changes in Kazakhstan, it had some influence, or not really, because you had the really like significant regime change, because it used to be one guy for so many years, and now there's a difference. Did he have that have some sort of change in terms of language and identity?**

In terms of language and identity. I'm not sure, you know, I'm not sure that it's because of the like the president changed, because, like, the party is like, the same, I would say. But I would say the most like, the political situation in the region. Not because the government decided to take, like, more, like, some stricter measures and stuff.

**So do you wish when you were growing up that you had some languages more or less, in your schooling and in personal life?**

I think it yes, it would be nice if we could speak Kazakh in the family.

**okay, so when you are abroad, you meet other Kazakhs?**

I do, but it's just, it's not like I'm looking for it. I'm just happy with my surroundings, as long, like, as it happens, you know, I just go with the flow. But, for example, right now, like here in Italy, I've met, like, a couple of people. We talked, but because we are just in different classes, and we have like, different interests. Maybe we don't talk that much. I mean, we exchange some information, like, but like on Instagram, for example. It's just if I meet, then I meet. If I don't, then I don't. It's not like, I specifically like, look for something, for somebody. I would say, when

**When you meet Kazakhs abroad, what language do you speak?**

I would say Russian. I mean, if they wouldn't speak Russian, then, because I cannot express myself in Kazakh, that's why. But if they wouldn't speak Russian, I would try to, like, use my level of Kazakh, but I wouldn't be able to express myself.

**So when you meet a Kazakh, you usually approach from Russian?**

yes.

**Okay, so you have you tried to speak maybe in Kazakh abroad, or not really?**

For example, a friend of mine came to visit like this weekend, and sometimes when she speaks Kazakh with me, just because I cannot quickly respond, but I understand. I replied in Russian, even though I understand, like, okay, it's like, you know, this form of one way communication, but I can understand, but I cannot reply. So, I mean, I cannot, that's why I cannot approach people in Kazakh. That's the main reason, I would say, but if they say something to me in Kazakh, I would understand. okay. So do you ever feel conflicted about which language to use or not? Not really just because, when it's just the thing, if you speak language normally, then you use them, like, use this languages applicable to the current situation.

**So if given the choice, which language would you want to prioritize in your future career and work?**

In my case, I want to have, international career. So I would choose English, just because I want to, travel around and just to find some job abroad if I can.

**And if you have a family, what language would you like, for example, your kids to use, would you like make maybe some different decisions about language choices or not?**

Maybe, yes. I mean, if, by that time, probably I should have, like, some decent level of Kazakh. So I would introduce Kazakh language, for sure, Russian also will be there just because I want my kids to communicate with my, Russian speaking family So, yeah, so, yeah. But I think I will just if I have some individual classes, and then if my level would, like, at least be to I would say I can communicate. So for sure, I will try to, like, immerse the Kazakh language in my family.

**Do you think that speaking two or three languages is a part of Kazakh identity, or like, what it means to be Kazakh today.**

I mean, I think it depends, like, if looking on average at the country, I would say that Russian, it doesn't characterize the identity like at all. Like, for some people, for me also, like, if you're Kazakh, how to say this? I mean, Russian language does not characterize, like, it's just separate from Kazakh identity. Like, for sure, for me, as a person who doesn't speak Kazakh at a good level, I would say my identity is still Kazakh. Just because I grew up in the Kazakh household, I was exposed to some traditions, to national food, to national holidays, to to national clothes. But just in general, just because in Kazakhstan, we do celebrate all the national holidays, or cook on ever, like in my household, for example, we cook

national dishes for every special occasion. So I think that this is what mostly defines me as, defines my identity as a Kazakh person, I would say.

**Okay, so when I read in literature, there is a difference between Kazakh and Kazakhstan. Do you know about this difference?**

Yes, I know. Like, if you're Kazakhstan, you that you can be of different ethnic origin, like you can be like German for like Turkish, for example, born in Kazakhstan, then you are Kazakhstani. So it's defined passport nationality, and Kazakh is like identity as the ethnicity.

**Did you know your tribe or, like your clan?**

I do know. I maybe I don't know, like, in detail. But my yeah, my family knows it.

**So if you would need to rank it, or like to see which one to you is more important? Would it be Kazakh or Kazakhstan?**

Kazakh? Like, I usually say that I'm Kazakh because I am, yeah. So I Yeah. So for me, it's like, no difference. I mean, maybe for if you're, like, of another ethnicity and you were born in Kazakhstan, maybe people, I think like, definitely people introduce like, I'm like Russian from Kazakhstan, or like, I'm someone from Kazakhstan. But for me, I just like Kazakh, Kazakh

**So in what ways do you express your Kazakh identity? Because you said you don't really speak Kazakh, at home, so, but like, how do you express this identity for yourself?**

I know maybe, like historical knowledge that I that's been, like, studied at school and stuff, then that I know traditions, like the way that we have some like customs made. Like, for example, if you heard like, maybe we have like this cosmic weddings, and they are really, really traditional, like in some households. And do have like this specific, like customs presented. Then, like, again, like the food, maybe I'm not a good cook or something, but because I eat, like, quite often, like Kazak food, I would say because of that as well, and just in general, because I try to not promote, but like, at least inform people about my country. So just, mostly, just because I just keep living in the same environment, like Kazakh environment.

**How do you explain your Kazakh identity abroad? Like, what it is to be Kazakh and like, how do you differ from other Asians? For example, how do you explain it to non Kazakh?**

I don't usually explain, I mean, if it's just a person I will never, ever see, and we have, like, very short conversation, I don't I just say that I'm from Kazakhstan, and I specify that this is a central Asia, like, like, the middle of the continent, if you say, but, and that's it. But if I, like, acquire, new friends, and we have some long conversations, and they interested. I usually express, say, like, some part of the history. Then I tell about, like, how we live, show some pictures of the country, of different cities, of the nature, some national food. But for me, like, because this question is really interesting, because some people get offended when they are, like, when somebody asks you, okay, are you like, from China? But for me, I just think that Kazakhstan doesn't have, like, this strong country brand yet, at least, just because I don't know if you talk about Korea, there's like, okay, k pop, if you talk about Japan, they have, okay, like they have, how do you call it? Like, like games, or like this movies and stuff, like comic says they, like, everybody knows about the country and Kazakhs and not and because people, some people heard about may, may have heard about the country, but they know, don't know the details. And if they see that you are Asian, they are not able to differentiate just because they don't have this knowledge and they approve, you know. So for me, it's not that offensive. It's just another chance for me to, you know, let people know that there is such a big country and that we have, like, we're like, different from other Eastern Asian countries, like, completely different.

**Do if you would need to define, I kind of ask it for yourself, but just in general, if you would need to be defined what it means to be a Kazakh, and what do you think, think like plays the biggest role?**

Yeah, I think I kind of answered this question. I mean, for me again, okay, like, basically, like, the language, the food, the traditions, we have this kind of Kazakh hospitality, which, like a different kind of thing, mostly knowledge of history, and, yes, maybe also know about your like family history as well, I would say so yeah.

**Is blood important? Like, knowing your generations are, like, kaza Kazakh or, or can you, or should you be a bit mixed or, or, can, yeah, I**

know, like, some of my, how do you call it? Like, okay, I know, like, the previous generations, but it's not just because, because, like, when, because we're Kazakh, we know this generation. No, just because my family want, wanted me to know, like, what kind of people were in my family, like, mostly to keep knowledge about them. I would say it's not, it's not about, like, I wouldn't say that it's because of the cosmic identity. It's just because we wanted to keep like our family to be remembered for like by future generations.

**So do you think ancestry is important in defining what it means to be Kazakh?**

I think ancestry, in the past, defines what the family is right now in present, in terms of, okay, I mean, if somebody in my family from the past, from my ancestors, did not keep, you know, some traditions or customs in our family, then probably I wouldn't have been introduced to them right now. So I think in these terms, it is important. But also, as I understand you, like, never got in touch with your father, father side, right? yes. So just mostly grew up in Kazakh household, and I have never, ever been introduced to any of the Father side.

**But do you know what is your father's side like? What nationality?**

I know, I know they are like, Russian, but, I mean, they didn't even like, they didn't even contribute like, like at all. So I haven't even seen them. So that's why I define as a Kazakh and just because I live in the Kazakh household.

**Kazakhstan officially has promoted a trilingual language policy. Does trilingual language policy aligns with the needs of people. Why or why not?**

So I think it has always been like that. I mean, maybe during the past, like 15 years or something. So we had this trilingual policy. I mean, Kazakh clearly this is like the national language. It is the state language which is like the most important one. So for sure it should be there. Russian is an official language, not a state language, but official language is just for intercultural communication inside of Kazakhstan. And now I think some people may, may not like it that much, just because, also because like Kazakhstan is, I think it is like the only country from the Central Asia that speak mostly Russian. Because if you look at like Uzbekistan or Tajikistan, or like any other Central Asian country, then you will notice that, they do, younger generation, they speak only their own languages, mostly, and if they know some Russian, they don't know it as a native language. So I mean, their own language is like priority. Here in Kazakhstan, it's not like that because, again, there are some people like me who don't speak Kazakh that well. So maybe I think it's not that good, just because when sometimes, for example, after the war started, some people came from Russia, and many Russian people, they think that you have to speak Russian. So for example, if they even see that you don't, they still keep asking questions in Russian, just because this is a kind of a must. And I think in these terms, again, during the last year, I see it as a negative way, because they take this for granted. I mean, for communication it is well, but for but the way sometimes people treat it, maybe not like in terms of, you know, you need to speak Russian, because people get used to speak this language. And the way, for example, people from Russia think that we should, and we have to, and it's like, very important language. I don't like this fact. And for English, clearly it is a good thing, just because now, like, we are introduced to the international environment, you should be able to speak with other people, from different countries. So it's definitely good thing from these terms. I would say, I'm not sure, about Russian, on one hand, it is a good thing, just the more languages to speak, the better. But at the same time, it doesn't have to be treated, you know, as equal, maybe just because politically speaking, sometimes it can even be treated in a negative way by like, russians for example.

**There have been some government efforts to promote the use of Kazakh language. So do you see like these efforts around you to promote more of the language?**

Again, it has always, I mean, it it was like that before, even, like, when I was in school, like it was like 15 years ago. Because we do have, I know, maybe you know this, if you like, have the studies, because we have like, two types of school, Russian speaking schools and Kazakh language schools. And Kazakh language school, they have all the subjects, like in kazakh and Russian is like a second language as a kind of as important language, I would say, in this, yeah, so here, I don't really think that there is much difference from this perspective. And in terms of like cities and stuff, like cities and streets, I mean, maybe I don't look at this too much. But I also remember these types of kind of conflicts because I think, like last year, it happened that we renamed street, and there was also conversation of renaming some Russian named cities into Kazakh language. For a lot of people, it's okay, because we return our historical names, right? So, I mean, before like Russian Empire, we had some cities, and they had some names, historical names of

historical areas in Kazakh language, and now they return it. So it's not something, you know, like made up completely out of nowhere. It's not like that. But the way like the like Russia reacts to that. So it's sometimes tricky, because they say, Okay, this is kind of a like, you're doing it like on purpose. Why even you do this? Because they think of Kazakhstan as, like, a supportive state, at least it seems like that. And just because, as a country, we still, we're like, between China and Russia, and we're kind of, you know, on the scale, I would say. But yes, like in terms of political situation, there is, kind of an aggressive reaction from the Russian side, which is not good, but from the governmental terms, I think this is a good way, just because we return our historical names to like that has that had been in our lands before.

**Do you think there is enough efforts from coming from the government, or it should be more?**

I think it's a difficult question, just because I think in order to make like, not make everyone speak, but just in order to raise the general leverage level of Kazakh language, and to make it be spoken everywhere, the whole consciousness of the society should change from these terms, and maybe in these terms, not for Kazakh language speakers, but for people like me. You know when you have to, maybe somehow encourage, because, for example, I talked to my colleagues who are Kazakh, who speak Russian, mostly Russian, and we had a conversation, and they said something like, okay, but it's not necessarily because we don't, because everyone speak Russian, speaks Russian. Why should we learn, you know, like, why should we even use it? Because we don't need it. And some people have this idea, like, in mind that we just don't need it because everyone speaks. So maybe in order to make it work. It's not enough, like the government measures are not enough, just because the question is also about the consciousness of like Russian language speakers.

**Where your colleagues your age, or were we a bit older?**

Older? I mean, the one that we had this conversation with is like, she's like, 40.

**So do you think that, like people who are younger are, like, less likely to have that kind of. Opinion, or it's not age dependent.**

I think younger people are more conscious from these terms, because, you know, again, as I've told before, we have like this. It's a trend in music and cinema, and, for example, now we have, like, a lot of project songs which are like, super nice and people, they're really popular, in fact, among young people. And they do listen to it. And like, I know, it's a lot of young artists. They they write songs in this and they are popular. So and this what one of the major transit influences young people as well. And just because, also young people, they are not afraid, you know, Gen Z, they are not afraid, they have this more over self identity. And they, embrace it, I would say so. And also, you know, you can notice that what is a funny thing, if you visit Kazakhstan, like in summer, for example, and a lot of girls, they wear this national jewelry, like that we use, like in the past, that was kind of also a trend. So it's, it's it became, it's more, it's more in use among, like, young people. So I think it also influences this way. And as for older people, I think because they had more, they were impacted by the Soviet Union, and they had like, you know, their whole, like lives. And they definitely built, maybe somehow, like, by this, by the USSR. So now they may think this way, that, okay, Kazakh, which is not needed, but for young people, it doesn't work like that. They are really proactive. And they do kind of, they do force this, like, not force, but drive this. Like Kazakh identity more for sure. So like, do you think like for minorities, it is also important to like, get more familiar with Kazakh culture and language? I think so, and it's but here, I think, like in general, not only apply applicable to Kazakhstan, similar to all countries. Like, for example. I mean, if you come, you should at least know some day to day language, probably, if you go, like, to a store, then you need to have this in mind that, okay, like Kazakh language kind of default, because there are, actually, there are some people who are not able to speak Russian, like at all, or like, you know, delivery guides. Sometimes, when they come, if you say something in Russian, they will not even understand, because they come like, from, like, smaller towns or like villages, and they speak, just Kazakh, for example, and just to be able to communicate with so it's like, you know, the funny thing is that if you ask something in Russian, and if you don't even try, they will not understand. And then it seems like you discriminate, like a Kazakh person in their own country, because why would you like use, for example, Russian if the language is Kazakh, for example, it's like, kind of tricky here. But in general, I think that even wherever you go, like to any other country, you still need to know, like, at least something like, daily language, because, for example, now, I'm learning Italian, but for February, I will have some course, just because I know that some people don't speak English, and they don't have to, and I need to try to, use, I don't know, use translator, for example, or do some stuff like that. So I think to Russian people who don't speak any Kazakh and has never been exposed to language, okay, they can put, they need to put some efforts to learn, just like, a little bit at least, so that to be able to communicate, with people around, okay, it doesn't have to be, like, advanced or something. It's just some basic thought, it would be nice.

**Did the experience of being abroad changed your perception of your national identity and language?**

Yes, I would say, because when you, like, reach into, I mean, when you're surrounded by, like, different nationalities and different cities, you just feel like that, you, I would say just see the differences. And you see that you have your mentality, have your vision of life, which is different from people from other countries, from these terms. And also, yeah, I would say so. And also, because, when you're like, in Kazakhstan, you don't really, maybe think about it that much. Because you're thrown like, the people of your own, like, ethnicity. So you just, you live in the country, so you don't really pay attention to that. But when you go, like, somewhere else, then you see that there is like, people who are different, and people have, like, different cultural background, and you as well.

**How do you think the role of each language, Kazakh Russian and English, will be in Kazakhstan's future? So which languages will increase and which languages will decrease?**

I think English will always be there, because, again, you know, like international environment. So you Kazakhstan wants to promote the country. So, you know, they want people speak the language to, you know, to be on the international level, like still, to be able to communicate with other people. So it's for sure, it will always be, I guess. I mean, unless, you know, sometimes changes globally, then Kazakh language, it will grow. I think so, just because, again, now the new generation, like this older generation who have this who were mostly tied to the Soviet Union times they are, you know, getting older. So maybe in the next few generations, Kazakh identity will grow from these terms, just because, I guess again, like younger people, they are more self aware from these terms. Kazakh language will be more used, I think so than Russian language. I think Russian language will not disappear or something, just because, again, we, like share the border, like, with Russia, and because it's still we have some, like, a lot of people of different nationalities in here, a lot of nationalities in here, and we still need to communicate somehow, because, you know, like, if you have, like, some, I don't know, like Estonian or German or Turkish. People who don't speak Kazakh well, like, they still need to have, like, an international language, which is probably Russian. So I think it will not disappear, but maybe it will just be useless, at least, as it works, like in Uzbekistan sometimes, or like in Tajikistan, so in Kyrgyzstan, because I've noticed from my experience, like the friends that I had from these countries, they all of them, they do speak fluently in their own language.

**How do you feel about Kazakh language transition to Latin alphabet?**

Well, I think it's very expensive, actually, that we have, like, a lot of things. I mean, Kazakhstan kind of an average developing country. But, like overall, people live not that good, like the social economic status is not that high, and people, like a lot of people, struggling. I mean, all these average salaries that we have, I mean, they are mostly skilled in big cities and in fact, like people in regions they cannot afford, like a normal life, I would say, but so I think maybe investment should be done, like to somehow raise the economic status of people, I would say, because all the changes, they really important, like the you need to rewrite everything. You need to make a lot of changes, which is like, really, really, really big investment. But if not talking about that, then I think it's a good thing, because most languages in other countries, they use Latin alphabet, and I think it's kind of an international so if, like, for example, you as a foreigner, come and you will be able to read it. It will not be some, I don't know some, no name signs in Cyrillic when you are not even able to read some. I don't know this. I think it's better, just because it's more useful. And everybody else also uses Latin mostly, I think it will be more efficient. Um, yes, just why not?

**Okay, so that was the last question. Maybe you have anything else to add to stopping something we didn't talk about.**

In general, you know what's interesting sometimes, as a Russian speaker, the thing is that when you try to speak Kazakh, some people not like they don't make fun of you, but they can be judging, and they can say. Okay, you are like, Kazakh, why don't you speak Kazakh? Like, you know, in this kind of a they can condemn for that, because why you don't speak your own language as it is, as if it is your fault. I mean, maybe at some point, yes, but if it like happens historically. I mean, maybe, you know, it's like 50/50, and sometimes it's really weird to perceive this, when you try to do something, and when they say, okay, just if you don't, because it just shut up and stuff like that. Of course, it doesn't happen like all the time, but still, there are, like, some people you know who are like, hold themselves patriotic and who says things like that. I mean, from my point of view, if you you're still, you need to be supportive.

**P17**

**What is your age?**

Yeah, I'm 23 right now

**what do you study?**

And I study information technologies.

**And do you study in France?**

Actually I did my first year of master in France. Now my second year of Master is in Luxembourg.

**So you're in Luxembourg? Yes, it's nice. So you have been in abroad for quite some time, right already?**

Yeah, I would say so. But like my first year in France, like, last year was my very first time, like, being abroad. I mean, except if we don't count, like, vacations in Turkey, because I don't really think it's the same, but I would say, like, most of my friends or like family members, they've been all abroad, like my parents or, let's say, my sister. So for me, it was like, just a matter of time I'm going to be there as well.

**Do you consider yourself to be like lower middle or upper class?**

I would say definitely just middle class. Yeah. So just like a usual Kazakh family, the average,

**What would be your religion?**

I would say, generally speaking, Islam. But it's not something that we, at least my family, like we don't actively, like, show it. You know how? You know how, like, at least for Europeans or like westerns, they have, like, this image of Middle East, this kind of like Muslims. But for us, it more like, generally, like, you know how? Like, some people, like in Europe, they are Christian in general terms, but they don't really like follow the religion, like rules. Yeah, I would say, yeah, it's more, like, culturally Muslim. So it's just like, since I'm Kazakh, I've been born to Kazakh family. All my parents have been like Kazakh and Muslim. So for me, it's like, natural to be the same, but we don't like actively practice, like, let's say, lots of Kazakhs they like actively drink, or like don't wear a scarf, at least for like, my surroundings, it's considered a bit too much and like weird, like, we don't like people that actively show that they practice religion, because we feel like they try to, like, show off more like, right now, it's a very like hot topic in Kazakhstan that basically, we've been, like, influenced by Russians for such a long time, and now, instead of like, following our own, like, national Kazakh identity. What we do? We just take Arabic culture and Arabic identity and just try to glue it on, just to but we don't actually try to, like, focus on our own, because there are lots of, let's say, influencers, like popular people, that follow Islam too much like, in a very radical way, they, instead of like, using, let's say, Kazakh common like expressions like, hello, like, how are you? They use Arabic ones, which is really weird for us. And lots of people are actually thinking, just like, they're afraid that it will turn into more radical movement, and people don't want that. Yeah. I think as a general rule is just like secular Islam, not actually like practicing it, but like in general terms, we all say that we're Muslim.

**Where were you born?**

I was born in Almaty, biggest city.

**So I know that Almaty has a lot of districts, and maybe some are more Russian and some of them are more Kazakh speaking. What would you say was it was in your environment?**

Oh, I would say it was definitely more of a Russian speaking probably because it's like, like, geographically, it's right in the city center. So definitely like the Russian speaking one, because I feel like the district that are more on the outskirts, they are more like a Kazakh speaking ones, but the central or let's say more high end that are closer to the mountains, I would say probably Russian speaking.

**What languages do you speak?**

I speak English and Russian and for Kazakh, I can speak it, but not currently.



**You would say your English is better in Kazakh?**

Yeah, definitely.

**Do you speak French better? No, not yet, not**

I'm learning, but I'm like A2, but I'm gonna be honest. But I feel like, with me being here in Luxembourg, I feel like I'm gonna like, in a year, I'm gonna know my French is gonna be better than my Kazakh, for example.

**Okay. Um, so if you had to think about each language you speak, what words would you associate with them?**

I would say for English, it would be international, business, communication for Russian, probably like honest, maybe unapologetic, yeah, and maybe like literature. And for Kazakh, I would say soft, and probably like my mother language, even though I don't actually like speak it, but I still consider it.

**Why did you say honest and unapologetic for Russian?**

I feel like, when we talk in English, language turns people a lot nicer because of the culture, like Western culture. But when we switch to Russian, for example, they say the exact things that they think without trying to be nice to you in this way, like maybe on social media is when you view the comments. Usually Russian ones are like the most brutal ones, but honest ones.

**So what language do you speak in your family?**

It depends. I would say, with my dad, I speak mostly Kazakh, but with my brother, sister and mom and grandma, I would I speak Russian.

**Why is it that so?**

Basically because, well, first of all, my dad really wants us to, and also, the thing is, for my dad, he comes from the south of Kazakhstan, so his first language is Kazakh and he learned Russian when he started university. But for my mom, she comes from the eastern part where she basically only spoke Russian. She didn't know Kazakh, and she learned it only when she married my dad. So I guess that's why, maybe out of habit for her, we just, yeah, I think it just outer habit, like she always spoken Russian. So I guess for her, it was also like to speak in Russian with her children as well, was just a matter of habit. And the same for my grandma, even though, like my grandma, she also like my mom's mom, basically, she's also like from Eastern Kazakhstan, but she knew Kazakh fluently, but still, because, of like, region, just a matter of habit to speak in Russian. So yeah, but let's say, when we have like relatives from my dad's side, they only speak Kazakh like they don't even understand Russian. But the thing is, I feel like, like as a child, I had closer connections with the relatives my mom's side, because with my dad side, I didn't talk at all.

**And to what language kindergarten and school did you go?**

It was I went to Russian kindergarten, Russian school and the university with mostly English and some blacks were in Russian.

**Why do you think like your parents made this decision to go to Russian kindergarten?**

It was just like the one that was available near our place, the Russian one, because for Kazakh ones, basically, they were again, like at the outskirts of the city, yeah. And it was like, not like early 2000 but like 2005 so it wasn't really like they were not that well developed, like they are, like. Out. So it just like was, you know, no choice. And for Russian school, I would say quite similar, my sister, she went to Russian school that was near our place, because it's convenient for me, we chose another Russian school that was in the city center. But because, basically all the Russian schools, they were, like, good gymnasiums or lyceums, they had like a profile in good English, or really, like advanced math. They had some advices from from their acquaintances. They said, this school has really good English, and they didn't care if it's Russian or Kazakh. So they just put me to Russian school. But for my brother, he went to Kazakh school. First of all, because, daughters, they went to Russian school, so they became more proficient in Russian, and my dad didn't want that. But also, when my brother already was of age to go to school, there were more Kazakh schools open. And also at

that time, Kazakh schools were really good, or at least were in a nice district in the city center. Like, it's usually like children of like richer parents, or that have like good acquaintances. So because it's just like the school where parents always pay and since for us. I mean, we're not from, like the higher class. It was not really, like affordable. But because my dad, he had some acquaintances, connections, like with his like with other people with whom he worked, they managed to recommend our family, and only then our my brother, he managed to go to that good Kazakh school.

**Yeah, okay. So the Kazakh, like, there are more new Kazakh schools, which are good, but we can, like, be private and expensive, as I understand.**

Yeah, they're either private and expensive. So unless you have good connections, or unless you live in this city's district in the city center. But the thing is, usually, like historically, only people who were from, like famous families live there anyway, because it was so expensive. And now I would say there are more Kazakh schools that are also on a good level, but the selection is a lot tougher. So you have to pass certain exams. And they usually start not from the first grade, they start from like sixth grade or ninth grade, and they need to pass like specific exams. We have very popular Kazakh speaking school. It's called Kazakh Turkish, let's say, where they speak purely Kazakh and Turkish. But the thing to you can't just, you know, put your child there. You need to wait till he's, I think, in the fifth grade, and then he needs to pass, like, exams in math, physics, so it feels like a bit of competition.

**With your friends in Kazakhstan, what language do you mostly use?**

Just Russian, and maybe some, let's say, phrases in Kazakh. Yeah, or maybe some Russian words that were turned Kazakh way, but the majority of the speech is in Russian.

**Did your attitudes towards languages changed between your childhood and now?**

I don't really think so. Like, I think I always knew that, like, I have a problem with Kazakh language because, I mean, in my family, I was always the one that spoke the least Kazakh, and I always wanted to, like, properly, like learn it, but I just it was never like, let's say priority, because I had to learn English to go to university or, like to prepare for IELTS exam. And here is the same now I need to learn French to get a job. So it's not really something that I could put all my focus into, but I would say in the future, I really want to, at least because before I have my kids like. I want them to bring them up in Kazakh language.

**And did this feeling of wanting to learn Kazakh got stronger with time? oh yeah, no, no continue.**

Because, basically, let's say for my sister, even though she went to Russian kindergarten or Russian school at the time, like our family lived more like at the outskirts of Almaty. So that's why she kind of grew up in this Kazakh speaking environment. So she already knew Kazakh, so it was already like her first language before she went to kindergarten or school. But for me, since then, at that point, we already moved to the like, closer to the city center. It was just purely Russian.

**Are you ever like? Maybe afraid to speak like because you might be judged?**

Oh, yeah, definitely. I think it just started from my childhood. Yeah, whenever, like, let's say the relatives from my dad's side, they would come and they would try to speak with me in Kazakh, and they couldn't say anything, or even though I tried my best to say anything, but then I would just, they would just laugh at me and just make... Yeah. And it was always very common topic towards my parents, toxic jokes that, oh yeah, your daughter just seems like Russian and things like this. So I think because of that, like, out of spite, maybe sometimes I had this, I didn't, I didn't want to speak, or I didn't have, like, motivation to learn Kazakh even more, because I felt offended, not only like because they laughed at me, but also because they had, like, maybe some, they made some toxic comments towards my parents as well. Because, I mean, I understand, like, right now that they just had no choice. I mean, Kazakh schools are even currently, I wouldn't say that Kazakh schools are that good in terms of teaching math or English. And then I think, let's say I'm going, I'm getting a taxi in the city, and the taxi driver is the one who's like, because I'm speaking, and he would try to ask questions, like, about what language I speak, but he would become really, like, aggressive, you know, towards me. So it's sometimes I just try to try to ignore his comments as well. So it's very common, I would say. And I think because of that, maybe I was always also kind of like discouraged to speak in Kazakh more, because I know that I have very heavy Russian accent. I'm gonna make mistakes. So I feel like I either need to speak perfect Kazakh like from the literature with no accent, or I'd rather speak no Kazakh at all. Like, I think in my mind, I just have these two options.

**And you still feel like that?**

ah. I think, yes, like, even with my family members sometimes, like, when I'm speaking with my dad, and I know like, I'm going to talk like, let's say I want to talk like, how is Luxembourg, and I want to talk like, about their public administration, how it's all, like, structured. It's very hard topic for me to speak in Kazakh, so since I'm afraid to make any mistakes, I just transition to Russian just to say better, because I know I'm gonna say things correctly, and I know that he's not gonna be confused because of the ground mistakes I made, but he's gonna be more focused on the topic itself.

**Do you see changes in maybe, contents and society comparing to your childhood to now when it comes to?**

Definitely, I think now we have a lot more social media content, like online content in general, in Kazakh, a lot more. And also, I feel like people of my age and younger, they tend to speak Kazakh a lot more than it was before. So for example, when I was a kid, and the young people at that time who are like 30 year years old right now, I would say for them, the majority of them, they don't speak Kazakh at all. They all speak Russian. But my generation, I think, is becoming at least like 50/50, maybe like I tend to hear more Kazakh speech, especially in Almaty, I tend to hear Kazakh speech a lot more. Even I would say, I think I would notice a difference, maybe, compared to like, how it was three years ago. Yeah, but it's becoming more and more popular, so I feel like it's nice.

**Why do you think this change happened?**

Yeah, I feel like because, first of all, they've been more Kazakh schools opened. Also, I think, it has become more accessible to move from the outskirts of the city to the city center. Like, so more people like, there are more people in Almaty now, and lots of them, they come like, from the outside. So I think it's them. And I also think because of the like laws, currently, it's really hard to to find, like, a good management job, like high position job, and not know Kazakh at all. So if 10 years ago, like, let's say you're the Director of University, you could afford yourself not to know any Kazakh at all. But now it's it has changed. Now you're kind of because the thing is, even like at my university or our management board, no matter of their ethnicity, they all speak Kazakh, even Russian ones, because they're, yeah, because it's more like, if you want to have a good job in Kazakhstan, you need to know how to speak Kazakh.

**Okay. Do you think recent like political events like, for example, transition of power from Nazarbayev to Tokyo, or war have an impact?**

Oh, yeah, definitely. I think more people understood that Kazakhstan should, like defocus from Russia. Because all these years, even when we got like, our independence, we had like, close ties with Russia in terms of, like, economy, in terms of TV shows. When I was growing up, there were only, like, cartoons and TV shows, in Russian available, and Kazakh ones were like, they were really bad quality. But now, since more people are kind of like boycotting Russian TV shows, like lots of people like, they don't watch, or they don't like, consume like Russian products because of this war, I think more people, they kind of like, understood that they need to claim their national identity back. So they tried to speak only Kazakh. And also, the thing that happened is that after a war in Ukraine, like after invasion, has started, lots of Russian politicians, they started making lots of jokes about Kazakhstan as well, that basically North Kazakhstan is, like next Ukraine, since there are, like, so many Russians, is basically Russia now. So obviously, lots of people in Kazakhstan do like that. And yeah, like so for us, they shouldn't talk in the aggressors language. So, like, why we're still speaking it? Let's actually all start speaking more in Kazakh. So yeah, so I think it's definitely influenced a lot. And yeah, I also want to add because like, even like, since we have lots of immigrants from Russia as well, they tried to flee, that adds on the political tensions as well. So they came to Kazakhstan, and basically, lots of Kazakh people didn't like that. Lots of Russians came, but they expected it to be the same as Russia. Like everyone speaks Russian. Everyone is serving in Russian, like it's always Russian menu. So lots of Kazakh people didn't like that, and they, I think, try to talk more in Kazakh just to make a point that you're in Kazakhstan, like you're not in Russia anymore, basically. But I would say, I would like to add that it's not towards our Russians, because we have, like, our own Kazakh Russians. It's like a different situation. It's mostly towards, like Russian Russians.

**Do you yourself have those feelings because you said some people, but do you yourself?**

not really. I mean, I can't just go and gradually start talking in Kazakh like it's not possible for me, first of all, and second of all, I understand that things that happening are like, it's the government to blame, but not the Russian people like themselves as well. Because I personally, I know, like lots of Russians who have struggled a lot, who like flee to Kazakhstan or like to Armenia or to like Cyprus, and they like really struggle because of that. So I don't have like any, let's say, hatred towards, like, Russian culture or Russian language, but I do definitely have against the government

itself, more like this. So for me, like still speaking in Russian, it's not really something I would say, like, like not aligning with my values. For me, it's still okay, because, I mean, it's my first language Anyway, okay, I can't do anything about it.

**Okay, yeah, so coming back a bit, do you think the transition of power had any impact, or was it not that significant when it comes to language. Do you think it started more with Tokayev, or was it even earlier changes?**

I think change was probably even earlier. Yeah, it just because it was just a matter of time, because I think even with Nazarbayev vibe like tried to put some efforts into like Kazakh media, but I wouldn't, I don't think that we are like. The change of our presidents has impacted that much, because the thing is, for me personally, they're all like from the same, let's say, from the same surroundings, and then in any way, both of them are for Russia, anyway, like it doesn't matter. So I don't really think it's, it's connected.

**Okay? Okay, this is a bit sensitive question, but it's honestly very interesting for me. Do you think protests in Almaty had an impact of like strengthening identity, language?**

Oh, definitely, yeah, for sure. I mean, for us, it's very, like traumatic experience, I would say, because I mean for me, personally, like, literally, it was after this event, I've changed my mind, and I realized that I don't really see a future in Kazakhstan, and after that, because, like, basically before that, I was questioning whether I should stay in Kazakhstan and to have, like, a good career there, but with all my friends and family, or should I go abroad? Either always wanted to try, but before, I just wanted to try and come back. But after this event, I've changed my mind and decided just to completely, let's say leave Kazakhstan, because after that, I understood that, first of all, we could hear the shootings outside, and all of my family, my parents, were afraid that we were all like laying for several days straight on the floor because we were afraid that the bullet will come into our windows. And the horrible thing is that basically what actually happened is that, like lots of Russian military men, they came and just shot innocent citizens like Kazakh protesters, and even some like local girl, she was shot just because they gave an order to shoot everyone. So I think after that, even though people can't really talk about it, obviously, because if you talk about this in Kazakhstan, it's even a become a target, yeah, for, like, oppressions. So, but most people understood that Russia is definitely not our friend. And like, the thing with Kazakhstan, like, we really want to cut ties with Russia. We really want to like because that people ourselves, not only like Kazakh people, but all our other ethnicities live in Kazakhstan, even like Russian themselves, who live in Kazakhstan for a long time here, they all want to cut ties with like Russian government. But the thing is, we just can't. Because when we tried, it was like, because at the beginning of the protest, people actually had hope that finally, maybe finally, we're going to have like a government that will not be like for Russia, that will not support corruption, that will actually try to care about our people. But once they saw that, just Russian military, they just came and shot everyone. They understood it's not possible. And even, like, with the language, sometimes I feel like, like I was always questioning when I was like a kid. And even right now, like, for example, you know how it is, like in other countries when you leave like, let's say in France, it doesn't matter, like, who you are ethnically, you need to speak French like, that's normal. And even, like, even if they know English, they will speak only in French to you because, I mean, that's their country, and they are right. But the thing is, if you do the same in Kazakhstan, they're especially towards like Russians or other like Slavic ethnicities, Ukrainians, Belarus. Belarus, people. What people start saying? They will say, you're being xenophobic. You're Fashist and Russia will make some movement actions about that. So that's, I think that's the difference. So I think it's definitely, like, politically tight because, yeah, like, it's not just because, like, Russian is so convenient to talk like, it's so convenient, it's out of habit. But I think there's also, like, the second reason behind that, like, it's political as well. Because, I mean, I don't think, like, for government, it would be a problem to just go and, like, fully cut off Russian. It's not a problem. Like, I mean, if everyone was forced to speak Kazakh only, I think in the matter of, like, how it's really, like, happening, but it's happening, like, very softly and slowly. But if government, like, really wanted to develop only Kazakh language, so everything will be in Kazakh only people, just like we all have this like second idea that something horrible would happen to us.

**Yeah. That's interesting, because I last week, I had a girl who lives like just outside of Almaty. She had very strong opinions that no protesters were locals. Everyone were bought from like, Central Asia. And I said, you know, but I talked with people your age who feel very different about it, and she said no, we lied to you.**

but no, it's basically, yeah, it was shifted. It's basically exactly what our government and Takaya wanted to tell us, basically, they came up with this, like, let's say lie, that practical Muslim central Asians came from the south of the country through other Central Asian countries and started like, robbing everything. But the thing is, we all know that the actual participants, like, at the beginning were usual people just like, because even like, let's say part of my family members, like, they also wanted to participate. Because, I mean, for us, it's like fighting for our own like, rights. But then I think at the same time, what the government did, they tried to, I mean, of course it's going to be like that. Of

course they're going to be like from criminal groups being more active. I mean, it's normal, right? But the initial intentions were elected, and the initial and the thing is, since it all got so mixed, the government just tried to use it as an excuse. They said, Oh, okay. But what about participants? They were there the ones who started the shooting. They were the ones who started, like, robbing the shops. But it's not them. I mean, of course, we have, like, some criminal groups as well. Of course they're going to use this. I mean, it's normal. It's always like that. So, yeah,

**I don't know, for me, looking from an outside, it just looked like power transition, you know, like, I have just used it to push out the old,**

yeah, definitely. But the thing is, like, in my opinion, of course, maybe, yeah, maybe he wanted to, like, declare more power towards him personally. But I'm going to be honest, as I said, for me they all came from the same background. They're all, they're still pro Russia. They're still like, they're still going to do whatever Russia says. And that's it. The only thing to kind of he's more, I guess. The only difference is that Nazarbayev has built, like, a code of, um, how does I think it's like idolism, like he became an idol. He forced this image of idol on people, and basically to Christ, kind of like, uh, try to maybe judge this thing. I mean, even, like, the thing is that we, our people, they built a monument to another buyer. But we all know that. I mean, that's not normal, right? Dictatorship. So I think he just wanted to, like, clear his own image, and try to say, yeah, that was dictatorship, but I'm different now, but I'm going to be honest. Like, for me and for many people in Kazakhstan, we both view the same. We all understand that the root is still in Russian government Anyway, okay, yeah, and like, I'm going to be honest. But even, like, for Kazakhstan, I don't really think that there will be really big changes in terms of, like, government, unless the government in Russia changes, which is, I don't think that's happening for the future years, but because, I mean, we have no choice, like, whatever Russia will do we have to follow anyway.

**As a Lithuanian, I feel the same. But I think even if like, Putin dies, he will have someone like Tokayev.**

yeah, yeah. True, true. I mean, because it's going to be the same anyway, because the thing is, it's not only the matter of like, I mean, if you know, like, Russia also had like, different autonomous as well, and part of them are really close to Kazakh in terms of language, in terms of the ethnicity and the same history, like katarstan, Bush, Kristan. So the thing is, like, for Kazan to actually claim its severity, like these turquoise autonomous they also need some way to claim it even more. But I don't think that's happening. I mean, that's not gonna and I don't think even like for Kazan, yeah, of course, we have independence. I mean, we have, we're in a lot better position than, let's say this autonomous or other Central Asian countries, but still, like, I mean, if another country can just, if another country's military can just come and shoot innocent people, I don't. In this country can be considered sovereign, like fully sovereign. So, yeah, but for language, yeah, of course, yeah, because I think I went too much into the politics, not the language itself, yeah, but for the language, yeah, definitely, like, not all, we don't really talk about it. We don't really mention it. But, of course, most people just understood they need to shift away from Russia and Russian, yeah, which is, for example, for me personally, that's, yeah, like, I also, like, understand it. And let's say for the for my future life, or like, my future children. If I'm gonna have any, I'm gonna be honest, but I don't want to for them to have any associations with russian, even though, like, I like, even though, like, sometimes I really value like, sometimes I'm really grateful that I have Russian as my first language, because, let's say here, when I'm like, in Europe, even though there are so many different ethnicities, like, there are so many, like, other central Asians or other Slavic ethnicities, but all with all of them, I can relate with all of them, I can communicate, but it's only because of Russian. So it's a bit of, like, you know, it's like a double edged sword, like, here currently, sometimes really beneficial, but then sometimes I think it's beneficial because it was, like, at the expense of my own, because I language, so It's also, like, a bit, yeah, controversial, I guess,

**Do you wish there have been like, less or more of some of the languages in your education when you were growing up?**

Yeah, definitely. I mean, I wish maybe there was a lot less Russian. I wish maybe I had Russian more at school. It's okay, because I still feel like lots of resources are actually well done in Russian. In Kazakh, there, they just weren't translated yet at the point when I was studying at school. Um, I wish maybe speech in Russian were a lot less like outside when I was walking around the city when I was growing up. For Kazakh, I think I wish I had more Kazakh for sure, like, some, just maybe I wish, it would be, like, the actual language we would all talk with, we would all like, communicate with.

**Do you meet other Kazakhs abroad?**

I've met some not in France, but here in Luxembourg, and one of my classmates from my program is also Kazakh.

**What language do you speak?**

Russian. The thing is, because, like, with her, specifically, she's actually fluent in Kazakh, like she went to Kazakh school and she learned Russian like when she was, like at university. But because she knows that my Kazakh is not that good, we just use Russian.

**In your career, what do you think? Which language would you use?**

Yeah, well, then I'm on Luxembourg now, and I consider to, like, stay on Luxembourg, or in this part of Europe, like Western Europe, I think there's going to be no Kazakh. It's going to be, like, purely French, German or English. So, yeah, for a career, I don't really think I'm gonna use Kazakh unless I go back to Kazakhstan. Only that case, I might consider Kazakh. But for me personally, Kazakh is just purely for, like, my own goals, or, like, my own identity.

**Hmm, do you think that being bilingual or trilingual is part of Kazakh identity?**

Yeah, definitely, for sure. I think it's not like in other countries where, like, let's say you're, like, You're Japanese. So you speak Japanese basically, right? But I think for Kazakhs, it's always like, Russian and Kazakh. And even, like, if a person, for example, he doesn't speak any Kazakh at all, he didn't become any less Kazakh because of that as well. Like, I mean, he's still Kazakh. It's just like part it just how it just happened, you know, by certain, like circumstances because of colonization, and then uses our so it's just part of us. We can't just change it. And I think even, like, for the future, it's still going to be like this anyway, like, even though there are more people talking, like speaking language like younger people still all of them, they still use Russian for some phrases. They still use some Russian as in the form of jargon anyway, even though they speak purely because they will still put some Russian words like, even, like, let's say for my brother, it's the same when he talks with his like, friends in Kazakh, they use Russian, not as a main language, but still as a side language.

**Okay, um, do you know the difference between Kazakh and Kazakhstan?**

So I'll definitely say just Kazakh only because the thing is, when I think of Kazakhstan, I think of the government itself. And for us, government is like, I mean, obviously corrupted is dictatorship. So I will never consider myself. Let's say Kazakhstani, just Kazakh and even like, let's say towards like, I have, lots of friends who are not Kazakh, but they Russians, or like, you know, Kazakh Russian but even for them, I don't really say that, you know, they are Kazakhstani. They're just Kazakh Russians. But it's more because, like, usually, Kazakhstan as a government, like we have the cessation that it's the government, so it's usually like negative.

**Did you know your tribe growing up?**

Yes, my tribe is actually, I've been named because of my tribe, so it's Alim. So I think, like, it's always like been like a good part to know and something we always like to claim. And, yeah, like we, for example, us, it's really important to know all our like, seven generations before us. So I think, like when I was growing up, and even right now, like it has always been like part of our identity. Of course, I'm proud, like, I will always have, like, really good feeling towards, like, my dad's motherland, or my mom's motherland in eastern Kazakhstan. But for me, personally, I would consider myself that I'm from Almaty, first of all, more, because I didn't really grow up, yeah, in, I mean, with a tribe, because usually they all come like from the southern Kazakhstan, and I never lived there anyway.

**In what ways do you express your Kazakh identity? What do you think you do that is Kazakh?**

I don't really think I, like, express it, yeah, like, maybe I don't know I could wear, like, Kazakh jewelry from time to time, but that's it. Like, I don't really think I do anything to, like, to openly express it. I don't think about it.

**By the way, I heard about a jewelry also thing. Do you think it's a more recent trend maybe among you?**

Yeah? Ah, yeah. For sure. For sure. Yeah, I think because, like, let's say, 10 years ago, you wouldn't wear Kazakh Jewelry, like, for every day. It was very uncommon. And usually people would wear this, like, if they had, like, a play at school, like, with national theme. But now I think more people started to wear the Kazakh jewelry, or even there is, like, very popular brand, Kazak Republic that basically they print like sweatshirts that are saying, like, like, Kazakh identity, or like, they have some ornaments. I think several years ago, we just didn't have anything that was looking good enough, it was just like, you know, purely traditional. But now we have some options that are like, correlated to

Kazakh culture, but are still wearable for every day. Yeah. So it's definitely become more popular and more people are actually willing to wear it, even not just Kazakh people themselves, but again, like lots of like Russians or Koreans, Turkish people, but who live their whole life in Kazakhstan, some of them like to wear it.

### **How do you represent your Kazakh identity when explaining your backgrounds to non Kazakhs?**

Ah, well, I just say that we are, first of all, like Turkic ethnicity, like in Central Asia. I would also try to explain that we've been colonized by Russia, so that's why, like, most of us are still speaking Russian. And yeah, and I guess I try to explain that, but usually when I'm asked, I don't, like try to start talking about religion, but when I'm asked, I mentioned, like, the same thing, basically that, yeah, we're Muslim, but we're most of us, secular Muslims. We don't practice it, like, openly, usually. So yeah, I guess that's usually the thing that I mentioned, yeah, because most people, they have no idea usually. So some people like especially Westerners, like Western Europeans, where you're really confused. So lots of them think that we are either, yeah, actually, from many people, I've got comments that they thought I'm Russian. Obviously I don't look Russian. I look is Asian. But lots of people, when they didn't know me personally, like at school, like, also my classmate, they thought that I'm Russian myself, because, like, they heard me like picking Russian, and also because of, like, certain expressions, like my face expressions, they also like, and just they thought, like, I'm somewhere from, like, say, beer, something like this, yeah, so that was a bit weird, I would say, because, I mean, I mean, I definitely don't do question, but because, yeah, I think because of the language they had the same years.

### **Has the experience of being abroad changed your perception of your national identity?**

I guess I've had, more motivation to claim myself more as Kazakh, I would say, like more than it was in Kazakhstan, because in Kazakhstan I don't really think about it. I mean, I just live in Kazakhstan, I live everyday life. But here, I guess, maybe I had, more thoughts on improving my Kazakh as well, a lot more than it was in Kazakhstan. I think so.

### **Do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be Kazakh?**

Yes and no. It depends, of course. I think there are certain opinions that are only by, let's say Russian Kazakhs, you know, like, only by Kazakhs who grew up, like, speaking in Russian only. And then there are Kazakhs who grew up speaking in Kazakh only, I'm going to be honest. But let's say we are completely different. I feel completely different. Like, even like towards my classmate. I don't really think I have like so much in common sometimes because of that. So I think it definitely shaped even though we are from the same culture, from the same ethnicity, we grew up in the same city, but because our experiences are so different, yeah, like, it definitely affected, but at the same time, I don't think of myself, or, let's say, the thing is, for my surroundings, I actually have, considerably good level of Kazakh language. Like, at least I can speak it, I can understand it fluently, but it's just like succeeding part is really bad. But they have like, lots of Kazakh friends who, don't even understand Kazakh at all. But I don't think of them any less Kazakh. I mean, if you're not Kazakh, then who they are? They're definitely not Russians, right? But it just, happened this way they've had, also completely different experience. So, so yeah, it's hard, it's hard to say yes or no.

### **Okay, so like, if not, language, what do you think plays the most important role in defining what it means to be Kazakh?**

I think history and the common experiences. I mean, we've all had, like, the same events happening in our lives, the same traditions, like at home, we all had the same traditions, no matter if our families, like, were more Russian speaking or Kazakh speaking, we all had like, same things happening inside with our homes.

### **Do you think religion plays a role in Kazakh identity?**

Ah, yeah, definitely. I think since, like, usually how we like, we don't have this idea that you can choose your religion. It's usually more like, if you're a Kazakh, then you're probably Muslim, you know, like, same as if, like, if you're like Russian, you're probably like Orthodox, same thing. So I think it's also part of us, because, like, the way how we practice religion is also, like, really unique. Like, it's completely different to, let's say, how other Muslim ethnicities do it? Because the thing is, how, what we combine, like, let's say, some general Muslim ideas, but we also combine them with like, our own, you know, tribal traditions. And the thing is, if, if you're gonna follow really strict Islam, it's actually prohibited to do it this way, because there's only, like, one religion. But thing is, for us, we combine both of them, like lots of our traditions, like for children, for weddings, they all involve these really ancient traditions, like tribal traditions that happened way before we had Islam. So and it's just part of us anyway, but people don't consider themselves less Muslim anyway, even if people, especially in Almaty, we have, really intense nightlife. I would say, like many

Kazakhs, they drink actively. It's a thing to go to the bar on Friday, every single Friday. But because of that, most people wouldn't consider themselves not Muslim. Yeah. They will say, yeah, we all like drink, but then we pray, and it's, normal. And I would say, even most people don't even pray, or never went to Mosque, but they still wouldn't consider themselves less Muslim anyway. I think more people try to practice religion more, but it's usually older people, or there are people who are just more active. But it has been, really recent, and for us, it's something still very controversial. Because we're not sure what to think about it like, let's say, if you're going to compare how much it was 10 years ago, how it is right now, there are a lot more, like young girls, young women wearing, scarves. So I think it's also a bit controversial, and most people, at least from my surroundings, they don't really like it, because for us, it's not like, if she wasn't wearing the scarf before, she wasn't muslim, she was, she was still considered just people count it more as a way to claim Arabic culture, and people don't like it as well.

**Um, how do you feel maybe, about Turkic or Turkish influence or identity?**

I think most Kazakhs feel really close to Turkic identity, because now I feel like this is the way at least many Kazakhs, they want to go like, follow this way, actually like towards Turkic identity, because we all have the same language, same religion. The way, how we practice religion is also similar, because Turkish themselves, or other central Asians, they also follow, secular Islam. They don't practice it actively, but still are Muslims. The language is also very similar, like, in the way, how, let's say I can understand, like, maybe 40% of Turkish and lots of phrases or words are literally the same. And to Kazakhs Turkish is the furthest branch of the Turkic family. So it's still, it's so weird that 1000 years has passed, but the language is so simple, it stayed almost the same. So most people try to follow that one. And I feel like, at least for me personally, I also think this is, the most, I guess, correct way, or if we're going to identify ourselves with something like, it's rather big, Turkic, not like Russian, not, let's say, possibly it, or Arabic, because this is the one that's closest. I mean, it makes sense. Many traditions, like family traditions or family celebrations, are also the same.

**So Kazakhstan has promoted a trilingual language policy. How do you feel about this policy? Do think it's the right way or it should be somehow different?**

I'm going to be honest. I feel like they were trying to do a bit too much. I think it would be better to come up just with Kazakh policy, and that's all. But as I mentioned before, I feel like our government just can't afford to do it, because, again, we're neighboring Russia. So it's a bit tricky to do it, to enforce it, like everywhere. So I think that's why they chose this trilingual policy, so that at least we try to develop Kazakh as we can, we still try to include Russians, as much as we can. But also we have, let's say, for future careers, for future like education. We also have, English in a way. But the thing is, with this trilingual when I was growing up, when I was just starting to go to school, I think this policy came into force. But basically lots of Kazakhs, they end up in situations where their English is a lot better than Kazakh, actually. What happened? I mean, this is the same what happened to me. It wasn't really, I guess effective because, I mean, people will choose the language that will be more profitable to them and to their career. It makes sense, of course, I have, lots of some acquaintances who I would say, never learned Kazakh at all. So they don't even understand Kazakh. But the thing is, they've never even had motivation to learn Kazakh as well. And they just always say, what's the point if I'm planning to leave the country anyway? They live in Canada right now, so it kind of makes sense. At the same time, I feel like it's a bit sad.

**So how do you feel about the government efforts to promote the use of Kazakh language. How do you think it should be done?**

I guess they're doing their best, but, I would definitely prefer if they didn't try to, not to offend anyone and just like, enforce something actually meaningful. Because the thing is, they can, they can just, you know, use only Kazakh media, or the news. They could mostly just use Kazakh. And people will try to learn Kazakh. But the thing that they are afraid of is, again, political tension. So it's just not possible. But I guess I prefer it this way, because, I mean, it's the most normal way. And it's actually has been the case in other Central Asian countries, like in Uzbekistan, like in the 90s, they just enforced language. They stopped speaking in Russian. So when I was in Taskent, I guess I was sometimes a bit jealous, because, they all spoke, really good Uzbek, pure Uzbek language, and even though, they still knew Russian at a certain level. But you know, it wasn't like clashing, you know how I've said, like, even if there are Kazakhs who only speak Kazakh, they still reused Russian a lot, but for the way how they were speaking, they just used, pure Uzbek. And also, for some people from like Azerbaijan, they also had the same thing, like they had more stricter rules towards developing Azerbaijani language. I have Azerbaijani classmate, and with them, I talk in English only because they have no idea what is Russian. They know basic words, you know, like hello, thank you, and things like that, like this. So sometimes maybe I feel like that would be a lot nicer. So yeah, but I just don't think that's I think maybe they can but they're afraid that Russia will say something.



**How do you think the role of each language will change in Kazakhstan's future?**

I think people will definitely speak Kazakh more, I think it's just natural. And I think also, many people will start speaking Kazakh as well, because the thing is, even, like from my friends, or the from the news, I see that more people from, like, other cities that are not Kazakh, they started to choose Kazakh schools as well, because usually how it was Kazakh schools are only for Kazakhs, and then Russian schools are for Kazakh Russians and all the other ethnicities that we have. But now I guess more people are drifting away from Russian schools, and actually are choosing Kazakh schools because they try to, reclaim we live in this country for so many years, so we actually need to, learn the language itself as well. I guess that's going to be the way, but I mean, of course, Russian will still be widely spoken. I don't think it's going anywhere, but it's just going to become lot less, at least within between Kazakhs themselves.

**Okay, and what about English?**

English, for sure, I think it will be more widely spoken as well, because now, like lots of people, have this idea that you don't need to learn Russian anymore, so people try to learn English instead. So I think that it will also have more influence, but the thing is, why Russian still has a good space? Because the old generations let's say people who are, 10 year older than me. They don't know any Kazakh at all anyway. So I feel like it's just gonna feel like, like that.

**How do you feel about the alphabet change? The plans to transition to Latin for Kazakh?**

Yeah, I feel like it's something that we should have done from the beginning after getting independence, just like Uzbekistan. And because it's definitely helping to reclaim Kazakh as a separate language. And when you actually see Kazakh in Latin alphabet, you can directly see the correlation with other Turkic languages as well. It's so much easier. And I think for other Turkic ethnicities, it would be a lot more comfortable to communicate with each other as well. Because, like when I was growing up, I'm going to be honest, when I first I learned Russian alphabet, of course, and when I saw Kazakh alphabet, like at the first grade, I thought of Kazakh language as the extension of Russian. Exactly how they teach it to school, we learn all the Russian Cyrillic letters, but then we just add nine random letters that represent, like unique sounds in Kazakh, so it doesn't feel like it's a separate language. You still like look at Kazakh as if it's like, same Russian, but just like with weird letters, had it. But the thing that's like, it's a very big problem is that the Cyrillic letters. They can't represent the Kazakh language as well. And I think that's why, for example, even for me, no matter how I try, I still have this, very harsh Russian accent anyway, because it's not like a matter of, if I pronounce this unique letters in Kazakh correctly, or no, I pronounce it correctly. But the thing is that the other letters, I learned them from Russian alphabet. And the thing is, they're not the same as in actual Kazakh, so I definitely think that's a good thing, yeah? But people are still like, kind of like reluctant to that, because so many people are still, used to Cyrillic already. But I feel like it's gonna have more advantages the long run, for sure.

**P18**

**Okay, what is your age?**

Um, I'm 24

**What do you study?**

Um, I'm studying medicine on I'm on the sixth course.

**Okay, yeah, so, almost a resident?**

No. We have a little bit different system. In Slovenia, they have six years of bachelor and then six years of the internship. While in Kazakhstan, we have five years of bachelor and then two years of internship. So here I'm I'm like on the final, the course of bachelor, but in Kazakhstan, I'm on the internship.

**Are you on exchange or are you studying in Slovenia?**

No, I'm exchange student, so I'm I'm studying by Erasmus program.

**What language are you currently studying in?**

In my home country I usually study in Russian. I'm still thinking about my future steps. But, anyway, one of the requirements for the residency in KZ is IELTS certificate

**Okay? I What is your religion? You would say**

Religion? I'm Muslim. So, um, yeah, as most of the Kazakh, we are Muslim. What else can I say? But I'm not totally feel like I'm full of the religion thing or something like that. I know that I'm a Muslim. I know our tradition and maybe some our principles, but I'm not just the freak. I mean they totally live with the all the religion things.

**Okay, where are you from in Kazakhstan?**

Kazakhstan? Actually, I was born in the Kostanay. It is that near Russia, but now I'm studying in the capital city in Astana. So because of my university, because of my university and my study, so I moved to Astana. Mm, hmm. But my parents, my family, are living in in the Kostanay.

**Did you grew up in Kazakh family, or you are, like, mixed with Russian, because in the north there's a lot of Russians.**

So as I mentioned before, my city is next to Russia and some of the Kazakh people can say that we are Russian Kazakhs because, sorry, because most of the streets, most of some maybe the names of the school are named by the Russian writers like Lenin, Pushkin, Gorky, something like that. And most of the Kazakh in that region usually speak Russian. But despite that, we do not forget that we are Kazakh. We have a mosque. My family actually very traditional. We follow our traditions customs, just very proud of our heritage. I can't tell you exactly the percentage of the Kazakh and Russian, but I know that previously, maybe 10 years ago, there, there were more Russian people, and there was a program in our government, because it means that the students from the south region that mostly use the Kazakh language, who have a grant, so they moved in the Kostanay. So just to improve the Kazakh language level in our city, and right now, as I'm not living in the Kostanay, I'm just going only on my holidays. And I just noted that nowadays the Kostanay is not the Russian city at all, it becomes more like a Kazakh one. Full of the Kazakh students, most of them in the cafeteria, maybe some restaurant, always waiter only speak in Kazakh and mostly the Kazakh people.

**So what languages do you speak yourself?**

Well? So I know three languages. It's Kazakh, Russian and English, and Kazakh it's supposed to be my mother language, but I unfortunately do not know the Kazakh at that level. So for me, the Russian is my mother language, because I always think it's easy for me to express all my emotions, feelings and opinions in Russian and for me Kazakh, it's like something that's not native for me, yet I'm so embarrassed about that. But now I'm trying. I'm trying to study and use it more often in my life.

**So if you could see an association for each language you speak like what words come to your mind?**

So the Kazakh, it's rich and very expressive. Have a lot of the adjectives and phrases that just describe all of our the features, and even in literature just full of the some tricks in the poetry in something like that. So the Russian, for me, it's mother language, and, well, universal, I think. And what about the English? It's, of course, it's universal and flexible, so you just similar to some of the other languages. So it's not easy. It's not, I mean, difficult if you know maybe some other languages, maybe German. So it's kind of similar to English a little bit.

**So, as you said, you grew up in Russian speaking family, maybe your grandparents, or older people in your family spoke some Kazakh?**

From older generation I know only the grandma from my mother's side. She speaks actually Kazakh, and she tried and made us speak in Kazakh, when we discuss some topics with her and when we have events, we try to to give a toast only in Kazakh. So when we have the event with the older generation, we try to use the Kazakh language. But when I I'm just around my community, my sister, siblings, cousins, friends, I will usually use Russian or maybe some English words.

**Okay, did you go to Kazakh or Russian language school?**

Well, as I said before, I was raised in the family that speak russian, but my parents decided to teach me the kindergarten in Kazakh school. So it was quite difficult for me to switch from one language to another one. So I finished the kindergarten and the school, the primary school in Kazak and then I went to the school named after first president. And for now I have, we have a two diploma, the one for the Kazakh and the next one, the Cambridge. So Its partial. We studied in Kazakh, Russian and in English language in my school. But it's, yeah, it was like, it just one school in Kazakhstan, something like that. The others have only two direction Kazakh or Russian, and only one diploma that it's for Kazakh done.

**Why do you think you were not able to learn Kazakh, well, when you were little?**

Why I thought that I'm not able to study Kazakh when I was a child?

**Yeah. Why do you think you could not, like, learn Kazakh and you had to go to Russian school. So what was the reason? Like, it didn't happen because your parents probably wanted you to learn Kazakh when you were little. But it didn't happen like, why?**

Um, well, maybe because the my, all of my surround, just speak in Russian. And when you do not have the atmosphere. So it was quite difficult to learn the Kazakh just from the books, because you have, you have to have somebody to discuss. And that's why my parents, as I do not have opportunity to, just to learn English, Kazakh in my family, so he, they decided to atleast take me to the school where I was surrounded by the Kazakh speakers.

**So when you talked with your friends in school, they were like, pretty much all Russian speakers, right?**

Yeah, you know, in the school it was interesting, because we have lessons and we have to speak in Kazak, and then when we have a break, we always speak in Russian only. So it was just my city, and maybe just my school. I'm not sure about the others. No, it just, it was my, just my occasion.

**Did you think maybe when you were a child and a teen that it's important to learn Kazakh language, or did that feeling kind of came to you in later years, like it became stronger?**

I have that idea only, maybe right now, when I realized that my native language is supposed to be in Kazakh, and I am Kazakh not because of just my nationality, I am loosing my language. And if you want, if I want to be a specialist the competitive one, I have to know the Kazakh language, because in the most companies, the employees require, not only the English certificate, like IELTS, maybe Russian, and also the test for the Kazakh language. So even if you want, get master degree or maybe PhD, you have to pass our test for the Kazakh, it's not only the language. You have to know the Constitution. You have to know the history, and it's supposed to be on the level like the one. So for now, and as I'm the student in the medical sphere, and now I have the classes like a clinical rotation, where most of our classes right now only in hospital, and we have a discussion with the patients. So most of the patients usually speak Kazakh, and now I'm just limited in my ability. I can totally take the anamnesis from the Russian speakers and to explain them, the disease, something like that. What happens, what kind of analysis they need, but when it comes to the Kazakh, I'm not feel like I'm in my place. It's very difficult for me to explain to them, and I'm very embarrassed in that moment. And I always ask help from my classmates or roommates to help me. To explain what happened to them and what they have to do, or maybe what they do not have to do.

**So, as I understood, one of the reasons why you want to now to learn more Kazakh is practical one. But did do you think something also happened in the last few years that made you want to learn?**

Actually, as now I'm living the capital city. So the capital city is like the most of the citizens of the capital city are just the residents from the other countries. Are the cities of Kazakhstan, and not just there, from the north, also from the south, from West and that region very fluently speaking Kazakh and when I want to communicate with them, I want to understand them, their jokes, and just to be on their vibes. And sometimes it was a kind of the reason for me to know Kazakh. I just want to be able to communicate with them and maybe even survive in the city, because all of the waiters, taxis and maybe in the shop, shop center, all of them talk only in Kazakh, so it just was that the atmosphere like surroundings.

**Do you think maybe some political changes or events had like, any impact on your decision or not really?**

Yeah, as I mentioned before, in order to be a competitive the specialist in Kazakhstan, and if you want to get the PhD master degree and be on the higher level of the your career, you have to know the Kazakh language. It, it just like a green light for you. It opens the door for the most of the famous and maybe competitive, high quality companies.

**Do you see a change in the country in general? Do you see like more kazakh around you when comparing your childhood and now?**

But the change was that, for now, we are more how to say most of my surroundings more likely and mostly use the Kazakh language. So the difference was only in the using of the language.

**Do you think now there is more Kazakh language content, like books, media, influencers, music and things like that, than it used to be?**

yeah, yeah. Actually, now maybe I just noticed some maybe two, three years ago, that the media just was full of the new Kazakh singers and new Kazakh songs, and even have a lot of films and materials in Kazakh language so and now. I'm just, I'm very happy, proud of my government, that they invest money for the development of the Kazakh media.

**Um, do you think there should have been less or more of some of the languages in your education growing up?**

Oh, actually, I can't say that. Multi lingual system is, I think, one of the best systems right now. Well, when you can speak in different language, it's better for you. You can easily communicate. You can easily find some source, some literature. You can be competitive, can be adaptive and communicative, outgoing. It's just up to you. So I don't think that as we are Kazakh, we have to know only the Kazakh language.

**How important still it is for you to know and speak Kazakh as a Kazakh?**

Yeah, there is a kind of bond between the the language and and our identity. When you know the language, it's easier for you to understand that maybe some of the customs and traditions why we are doing something like that. Because now, as I'm not very good in my language, I'm trying to follow all of our principles, but I will not truly understand why we are doing that. Maybe, if I know the the my language totally, I would understand maybe some phrases, actually, when I speak to the Kazakh people, I mean Kazakh speakers, I can understand only some the some of the basic the sentences, phrases. But when I'm trying to read the books, it just straight, catastrophic for me. I can't understand. As I mentioned before, the Kazakh language is very impressive, expressive because of our the literature trick. So if I would understand that, I think it would be more effect to my identity. Maybe I would have more correlations with it.

**When you think about like generations in Kazakhstan, for what kind of Age of people right now, Kazmir language is the most important?**

Ah, well, of course, undoubtedly, for the older generation and now for where the modern generation trying to change their mind from the opinion that Kazakh is not needed for us to the to the another one, like a Kazakh language is our mother language, and it just our aim. Yeah, a purpose, to know and use it without any translator.

**Do you have Kazakh friends abroad right now?**

Au, well, my friends abroad, I have my classmates that we finished the school together, and we have a two diploma, one from the conversation. That's why we have ability to study in the some universities abroad, like Budapest, maybe Austria, Germany, UK, and some of my friends, yeah, they are studying right now here, getting their master's degree. And I know one of my closest friends, she's always studying in Paris, but by the program, at me on the RIN program, okay, but I don't know other. I mean, I have no idea about the other Kazakhs, not from my surrounds, that are studying here. I haven't met them in the RIN at least

**When you or if you meet another Kazakh abroad, and don't yet know them, in which language would you like say, hello? How would you approach them?**

I would say in Russian. For me as a Russian speaker, I'm fluently speaking Russian, I would say in Russian. But if I met only speaking Kazakh, I would try to say something in Kazakh.

**It happened for you?**

No, in Paris, I met some of the student, but they were from Uzbekistan, so we tried to understand each other in our language, but then we just find out that we both know the Russian language, and we start just talking in Russian.

**Do you ever feel conflicted about which language to use or not really? Okay, if given the choice, which languages would you want to prioritize in your future career, and if you have a family, what languages would you like for your family and for your children to speak?**

I do not want to emphasize that one of the languages should be the important one in my life. All of the languages that I'm currently using are important for me. Equally, the Kazakh, the Russian and English, all of them gave me the opportunity in life. If I can say that I use Kazakh, to live in Kazakhstan and the Russian to communicate, and the English to enhance my ability in the study, to enhance my educational level, maybe some study experience and in traveling. So in my future family, I want to speak Kazakh, actually, because I think I just believe that in some years, the Kazakh will be more used than now, but I would always appreciate to know the English and the Russian, but mostly to speak in Kazakh and think in Kazakh.

**Do you ever like feel or think about any negative associations when it comes to Russian language?**

Well, when I am in South regions, like Almaty, and when I hire taxi and try to explain them, because I first try to explain in Kazakh, but when it becomes too difficult for me, I just switch to Russian and most people are trying to judge me, like I'm not a true Kazakh. I'm just Russian. I don't know my identity, and some kind of that negative comment to me it's very offensive. And for me, I'm very worried that I'm a Kazakh, and I can't even just explain in my language, to my citizen. Maybe because of the situation between the Russian and between the Ukraine might be some negative opinion about the Russian people, but I'm not the racist, so I'm just on neutral position.

**Okay, so do you like ever feel that you might be sometimes judged when you are speaking Kazakh? For not speaking very well. Does that make you sometimes afraid to speak?**

Honestly, I'm afraid to speak in Kazakh because I'm afraid to make mistakes and afraid to be laughed at by people, but my boyfriend, he's from the south region of Kazakhstan, and he speaks only in Kazakh and while me, I'm just speaking in Russian, and he tried to teach me the Kazakh language so I can sometimes practice with him and get more confident while talking.

**That's so cute. Yeah, so he does not speak Russian that well. For him, Kazakh is better than Russian?**

Yeah, yeah, his mother language actually Kazakh. And he tried, and he thinks only in Kazakh. So for Russia, it's like alternative language just to communicate with the others with me.

**Did being in a relationship with a person who speaks more Kazakh than Russian, did it change your perspective a bit or or not?**

Um, what could you repeat?

**Yeah, so did this like relationship also changed your perspective on Kazakh language? Did it make you want to speak it more?**

Actually? No, I can't think that. My boyfriend made me to learn Kazakh more than I wanted before. No, it was really my choice.

**Do you think that speaking two or three languages is part of Kazakh identity? What it means to be a Kazakh today?**

I can't say that it's the Kazakh identity, just the one of the teachers of Kazakhstan to know the three languages. But truly the Kazakh identity is to know the Kazakh language, the Kazakh customs, traditions, our heritage.

**Okay, do you know the difference between being Kazakh and being Kazakhstani?**

Yeah, I get it. So well again, I also think about that and Kazakhstan. The Kazakhstan is just the, the multicultural, multilingual country that's full of Russian, other nationalities. Well, I think this relates to each other, because, being Kazakh, it means to be tolerant to other nationalities, to other events and something like that. And maybe to be Kazakh right now can be like a similar to be a Kazakhstan person, like a global just Kazakhstan person.

**Okay, did you know your tribe growing up on your clan?**

Um, well, we have, yeah, we have three main, three tribes. We call it Jüz. So it's we have a three Jüz, the oldest, the middle one and the little one. So I belong to the little one, but as I don't know the grand parents from my father's side. I don't know exactly from which which one I am in the little Jüz. That that is the reason, because the all that is always inherited only by father side, and my grandparents just died in very early age. And even my father don't know that. So I just know that I'm little Jüz, and that's all, unfortunately.

**It's something you think your family would have liked to know, or it's like, not important?**

It was important previously, just to avoid to, you know, in a lot of years ago, when the girl and the boy want to get married, to know that they are not from one Jüz. So just to prevent some of the inherited diseases. So you can, you can be married to the boy, or maybe to the girl, when you have a different the seven grandparents, the seven grandparents should be different on the sevens. But for now, we actually do not use it. It was like our history, and when I just met somebody, and of course, the one of the question would be, what are your Jüz? Yeah, and that's all. So do you still ask that question today? I'm actually, I'm not asking that one, but my parents and my grandparents from the mother side, they ask, yeah, just maybe to know, maybe in a lot of years ago, we was from the one tribe, so we are kinda relatives.

**Yeah, okay, that's that's interesting. Do you think coming a little bit back? Do you think you are a Kazakh or Kazakhstan first? If you had to, like,**

I'm Kazakhstani. I'm representative of the Kazakhstan And why is it like that for you? Well, actually, I think for me that being the Kazakh and being Kazakhstani, they did the same, because in Kazakhstan, even the Russian people are like the Russian Kazakhs. So we have similar, maybe principles, similar features in the raising of child, when it was the big immigration from the Russia, when the the war began between the Russia and Ukraine. And Russian people were different, those from Russian federation and those from Kazakhstan. So for now, I think that being a Kazakh and being the Kazakhstani person is just the same.

**Um, but you still put, like, Kazakhstan first, yeah, yeah, okay, but like, why Kazakhstan first? So it's same, but that one still,**

um, when did you because I'm, well, let me think, maybe because I'm just feel like I'm The Global Citizen, so I'm not just the only the representative of the Kazakh Nation. I'm kind of global one. I like the my customs. I like the some Russian events, holidays and some West, Western cultural events, somebody because of that, I'm just feel like I'm mostly the global

**In what ways do you express your Kazakh identity. What do you think you d, that is uniquely Kazakh?**

Yeah, the principle, I think, of my raising, upbringing, and my the appearance. I'm just the Asian one. It's typical. Well, what else maybe the way of speaking, the way of I am discussing, ah, what else? Maybe, the way I just I communicate with people, maybe that one.

**Is it a part of Kazakh identity, being Muslim?**

Yeah, of course. I've got the culture the religion in the part of of my national identity.

**Okay, how do you represent your Kazakh identity when explaining your background to non Kazakh peers?**

So firstly, I think that we are one of the biggest country in the universe on the ninth place that is next Russian and China. Then I'm talking about our national foods. Our national sweets. What else? Maybe some customs, our national

costumes. I'm trying to show that we are totally different. We are not the Chinese, we're not the Koreans. We have our own pictures and culture.

**But when you are explaining your identity, do you focus more on Kazakh culture, or do you also speak a bit about Russian culture?**

On the first place I mention the Kazakh features, but then, for example, I mention that we equally celebrate Kazakh events, at the Russian events too. So it's yeah, we have a Easter, we have the Christmas, it's national holidays. So we have our own new year, and then we have the Russian New Year. So it's Yeah, so I always mentioned that one, that we are multicultural, a multinational country.

**Oh, so you like, celebrate Christmas and Easter by like, Russian Orthodox calendar, yeah, yeah, yeah, not whole one, okay. Oh, that's interesting. And it's like national holidays in Kazakhstan.**

I know the Christmas on the first 31st, of December, the first of January and the seventh of the January, yeah, it's like national holiday. We are, do not work on that days. It's the four of the country just relaxing and celebrate that moment. And we have our own new year. It's on the 22nd of March, and it also the national holiday. Is it like Kazakh New Year?

**Okay. Um, has the experience of being abroad changed your perception of your national identity and language?**

Um, so actually, it's my first, it my first time on being abroad in the western culture. Last year I was in Istanbul. So they are Muslim too, and we have a kind of similar even the language, even the same, maybe customs, generally, yeah, so it wasn't even... I haven't noticed maybe some difference after that, but after this, I don't know. But now I'm not feeling so different, and maybe some other opinion about my language. I didn't change my mind.

**I think, okay, um, so do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be a Kazakh?**

I think that the the knowing of your national language is one of the important part of the identity of the nationality, or knowing the language, you can inherited heritage, some features of your nationality to the other generation.

**So for you, it's important. But as you said, you also feel like, even if you don't speak Kazakh, that well, you feel very strongly that you are a Kazakh, so what do you think is the most important in defining what it means to be a Kazakh?**

Kazakh is to know, firstly, your Kazakh language, to know the cultural features, to know the tradition, just not to know, just follow, follow the tradition, the customs, the principles of our life, yeah, most of if you just combined all of them, very important for our identity. And now I'm trying to enhance my Kazakh language, just to be the truly the representative of the Kazakh nationality.

**Okay, so officially, Kazakhstan has promoted a thrilingual language policy, so Kazakh, Russian and English. Do you think that Kazakhstan's trilingual language policy aligns with the needs of people, or it should be somewhat different?**

Well, I think maybe actually, my grandparents, they do not understand why it's so important to know three languages right now, but for me, as I'm the fresh one, the new one, I strongly support that policy and that program, when you know all of the languages you have, it's like a foundation to you. You have ability to study in abroad. You have ability to communicate with others and take the experience just to to enhance your mind. Yeah, so for now, for future generation, the trilingual system, I think is one of the most important things, if we want to be the competitive, the high qualified country with the high qualified specialists, we have to follow this program.

**So when you said that maybe older people do not understand...**

Yes, they just they afraid. Older people are afraid that the Kazakh language will not be so significant in the mind of the modern generation. So they just afraid to losing us identity of the nation of the Kazakh people.

**Okay, okay. Um, so how do you feel about the government efforts to promote the Kazakh language? Do you think it is enough, or it should be more or less?**

Well, I think it's enough. Maybe, yeah, it's enough. If you want to be on the high quality jobs and something like that, you should do Kazakh exams. You should do some take some extra classes so that you can freely speak in Kazakh and Russian and in English. Actually, the conditions that made by the government to know the Kazakh just now on the top, because they invest money on the Kazakh tv shows, on the media, on the on the literature, so just force us to know Kazakh, not just for identity, just to know to be on that vibes and just to understand the music, to understand the songs. Yeah, I think that is one of the best motivations.

**How do you think the role of each language will change in Kazakhstan's future? What do you think would become more important? And maybe some languages will become less important?**

I believe that the Kazakh will be the most significant of the Kazakhstan languages. And for now, the Russian is kind of state, the language that used on the state level, so to communication, to maybe some documents. And I just believe in some years, maybe the English would be on the same positions like used as a state language.

**Also, there are plans to transition from kirilica to Latin for Kazakh language. Do you think it's needed or not?**

For me, actually, I don't think that it's the good decision for us. I don't remember exactly when was the decision that we have to change to the Latin and all of the labels at the school, streets, university and advertisement, they rapidly translated it into the Latin. And I thought that it's like English letters, but we have to just to read in Kazakh. But actually, it's not so easy as I thought, we have our own letters, and it was quite difficult to to translate. All of the citizens and even we are used to know the the language that we know. But when it comes to read the translated, it's very difficult. It's even difficult for the modern generation. I can't even imagine how it will be for the older one. But I hope that we're not going to change to the writing. But I'm not the politician. I'm not sure, but for me, it's very difficult and complicated. When I as I went to the Kazakh class, Kazakh school, and my mom just only knew russian, it was very difficult for her to help me, and I do not want to be in the same position with my children.

**P19**

**So what is your age?**

I just turned 20 in September, so two months ago.

**What do you study?**

I study international politics, law and economics.

**Where are you currently?**

I lived in Italy for two years, but before, I was in Erasmus, in Slovenia, and now I'm going to Germany. I already went to Slovenia for exchange for the second semester of the previous academic year, and now I'm going to Germany.

**Okay. What is your religion?**

Agnostic

**But are you from religious family or not?**

No, no, not at all.

**Where were you born?**

I was born in the city called Koshetau. That is close to Astana, three or four hours from the city. Okay, what languages do you speak? I can speak fluently four languages. My first language is Kazakh. Then I learned Russian at school, I learned English. Now, since I live in Italy, I speak Italian. And since I lived in Slovenia, for half of a year, I learned



Slovenian and also lived in Turkey. So I turned I learned Turkish as well, and I lived in Slovakia a little bit, so I know how to speak Slovakian Slovak language.

**So which is your best language?**

Kazakh, English, Russian, they're the same.

**So if you would need to think about each language you speak, if you could give like two, three words about each one, what would be the associations?**

Kazakh, ancestors, mother, Russian. Au, literature, just literature or me and communication, since a lot of people can't speak Russian as well, then should I also tell about English, Italian and so on? Yeah, for English worldwide, tool, Italian, Melody, expressive Slovene, Slovenian language, hearts. Really Slavic, I would say so Turkish Turkic and CD series

**So when you were growing up, what language did you speak in your family with your parents?**

Mostly we speak both languages equally. For example, my mom and her side of the family, they speak Kazakh and Russian. I graduated from Kazakh school. I was studying for 12 years in Kazakh language, as well as my brothers. It is three of us. I have two siblings. They graduated from Kazakh schools. I graduated from Kazakh school, but since in Soviet Union, my parents, they couldn't have an opportunity to study in Kazakh, they studied in Russian. But even so, I don't know how they managed to learn Kazakh. And on everyday basis, they speak Kazakh. We can also speak Russian. So it is helpful. I do not think so, like deeply about which language should I speak. We just somehow, like, speak, choose which language it's better for this kind of situation or something like that. When we speak Kazakh, we can add some Russian words, or vice versa.

**So now when you speak with your friends in Kazakhstan, what language do you use?**

It depends on what kind of people, because some Kazakhs, they don't know Kazakh. So I speak with them in Russian, or some Kazkhs that speak right Kazakh, of course, I speak in Kazakh.

**Did you feel any changes between when you were a child or teenager and now? Do you think that people speak Kazakh more now, or theres not much difference.**

So there was a big difference because in Kazakhstan really... For example, I usually come to Kazakhstan once in a year, and I really noticed that more and more people speak Kazakh, even so, for example, when I am in the capital city, I can come to the shop and someone will say, maybe hello in Russian. But now everyone says it in Kazakh, almost everyone. So I guess now I don't know, promotion of the mother tongue is bigger, like, more strong.

**Why do you think that happened in recent years?**

I'm not sure, actually, because I mentioned before, I'm not in Kazakhstan so much, like only one month or even less. But I think because, first of all, a lot of Russians, because of the mobilization, they moved to Kazakhstan, and our national identity, somehow, I don't know, like rose, and that might be one of the reasons. But also, we started to promote as well our contents. But before, we mostly used only Russian content or from, I don't know, Ukraine or Belarus, like Russian speaking countries as well. But now we have our own YouTubers. We have own, I don't know, a lot of influencers, or we have a lot of TV series as well. Cinematography is also really developed nowadays, so I can see that is also might be a reason.

**Yeah, but did it also start, maybe even before war, right?**

It started before war. But after, like two years ago, it became bigger, like more serious.

**Also, some like of the respondents mentioned that after the protests in 2022, they also started to think more about the language. Do you think it's one of the reasons?**

Might be because, as this protest happens in Almaty, which is in the opposite side of Kazakhstan. I live in the north, and I'm not actually aware about that. And also I don't remember where I was at that time. I didn't follow this event so carefully.

**Okay, so you said your parents led you to Kazakh school, and is all of your higher education in foreign countries, or did you start university in Kazakhstan?**

I finished my school in Kazakhstan, and then when I was when I graduated from my school at the age of 17, I moved to Italy for my bachelor so it's my first degree.

**Do you notice that you use some languages now more compared to when you were a child? Did your language habits change?**

I didn't actually notice, but maybe my family could notice, because I don't know, maybe it just happened naturally, but since I work as a translator, I guess my Kazakh Russian even became better than in school, like, I mean grammatically, because I should translate it in a written form. And three years ago, when I was at school, it's like, and my senior school year, last year, I started to work as a translator, like for Kazakh, Russian, English languages. And at that time, I started to really improve my like, really advanced level of languages. And now I see the difference. Maybe I can use more. Yes, I said advanced words.

**So do you think there should have been maybe less or more of English, Russian and Kazakh in your life, or education growing up? Or do you think the way you grew up, it was the best way?**

I would say that was the best way, because, I was studying in Kazakh, and meanwhile, I knew Russian as well, and I learned English. So, like, trilingual. So yes, that was okay for me.

**When did you start learning Russian?**

From my childhood, I would say, usually, when someone asks me, why do I know Russian? I would say that I'm bilingual. Like from my childhood, I heard two languages in the same time. So there is no like an exit moment when I started to learn Russian. From the beginning.

**And English. When did you start to learn?**

Middle school, maybe when I was 14 or 15.

**Is it for you important to speak Kazakh in your life?**

Sure, it's important. First of all, because I'm a translator, I have to speak or write something on everyday basis. And also, I'm a Kazakh, I guess it's obvious I should speak Kazakh.

**Do you communicate with other Kazakhs abroad?**

We have association of Kazakhstan students in Italy. I'm the Vice President. And usually when we organize some events, I make a speech like in the beginning, I speak in Kazakh first, and then I speak in Russian, because some of us are from Kazakhstan, but also Kazakh Ukrainians or Belarusians or Koreans or Russians or some Kazakhs, except they do not speak Kazakh. So yeah, it's in both languages.

**When you meet, let's say a new Kazakh, abroad. Which language do you approach them first?**

I would say Kazakh, mostly but if I heard before that say were speaking Russian, sometimes I try to start in Russian.

**Okay, and why do you approach people with Kazakh first?**

Well, because they're Kazakhs.

**Okay, okay, um, do you ever feel conflicted about which language to use?**

Usually I don't ever think about the choice of languages. I just ask directly, which language is better to use in with some person, for example? And the just answer, maybe Kazakh, maybe Russian. And it's, it doesn't matter for me, actually.

**So if given the choice, which languages would you want to prioritize in your future career and in life? So if you have a family, what language would you like to speak in your family?**

First of all, of course, when I will have my own family as well, I would like to teach my kids in the future, uh, Kazakh language. And I think my partner will not be from Kazakhstan. So maybe this person will try to speak his language, but of course, English, one will appear somehow as well, like, I don't know, at school in the future, or with us somehow. So yeah, mostly Kazakh.

**Do you think maybe? But do you think you would also teach from Russian or just Kazakh from your part?**

I guess it would be a little bit difficult, because, like, first of all, Kazakhs and another language from a partner, and also English, if it is possible to teach Russian as well, it would be cool, but I'm not sure for now.

**In your future career, what language do you think you will use?**

English

**What kind of job do you think you work in the future?**

I just finished my internship at the Embassy of the Kazakh in Italy, so I hope that I will start my career at the Ministry of international au theories in Kazakhstan or abroad. So maybe in this kind of sphere.

**Do you think that being bilingual or trilingual is part of Kazakh identity?**

I can say. So, yeah, I agree with that. Because all of us, I, I personally, met a lot of people who also can speak Russian from their childhoods, and it became our, I don't know, like the trait of Kazakhs, and it's kind of obvious, at least where I'm from, like, almost everyone can speak both languages. And also, because of the President, the First president, he announced that it will be trilingual now, trilingualism, we started to learn English more seriously, and it's like obvious facts that all people in Kazakhstan mostly can speak at least two languages, or even three languages and more. For example, maybe just because of my group or because of my company with whom I was hanging out, mostly in Kazakhstan in school, and before they even can speak four languages, because they were studying in KTL, that is Kazakh, Turkish lyceum. So they learn, they are studying in Kazakh, they learn as well Russian, English and Turkish. So it was like, I don't know, it is like natural for me to know someone who speaks even four languages or three languages, at least.

**Okay. Um, so when I was like, reading about identity in Kazakhstan and in literature, there were, like, a difference between being Kazakh and Kazakhstan. Do you know about it?**

Yeah, sure. For example, recently, uh. We changed our name of a session. It was before a station of Kazakh students in Italy. Now it is a session of Kazakhstani students in Italy. We, I think, personally, that Kazakh, it is about like the person itself, like the roots, the plot, the ancestors and so on. It can be a Kazakh. For example, I'm a Kazakh, I would say. But also I can be I also a Kazakhstani, because I live in Kazakhstan, if there is a Russian in Kazakhstan, he is a Kazakhstani. But in some ways those, I don't know, Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, and so on. They also can actually call themselves as Kazakhs. If they are really, like, in love with our country, they're like, patriots and so on. But about like passport, I would say it is like, officially Kazakhstani.

**Okay. Did you knew your like tribe growing up?**

I wouldn't say that it played such a big role, but it was an important formation in some ways. For example, when I usually meet Kazakh, especially abroad, mostly, of course, they're also from south, like from Almaty and Shymkent, but some Kazakhs are from the north, as I am as well. And I usually ask them from which tribe are you and they if they say the same as mine I'm like, I feel more, maybe connection with them, but from which city I'm from, like the North, and usually all people in this city, in this region, are from this tribe. So it is like nothing interesting.

**Are there, maybe any specific, like, character traits or stereotypes or traditions associated with specifically your tribe?**

I actually had a book about all the tribes, and they had their own logos and also, like I don't know the phrase, I remember that my tribe is about like, I don't know, like, knowledge, for example. So three Juz, and they are debating dividing into smaller ones, each of them. And I'm from the ortages, which is like middle one. And instead this one, I'm Argyn, and also it divides into many pieces. So mainly Argyn I, as I remember in the book, it was saying that it is about like knowledge. Take your pen, I don't know, use, I don't know your education in the best ways you can something about that. So might be like people from this I don't know, intelligent.

**Okay, so if you would need to, like, rank it, 123, do you think you were first Kazakh Kazakhstan, or a member of your tribe?**

I suppose Sam Kazakh so Kazakhstan and some member of my tribe.

**So, in what ways other than language, do you express your Kazakh identity? Maybe there's, like, some things you follow which you think people from other countries don't.**

First of all, I would say we are really connected to our families. We are really like family guys, all cousins, also, especially when we are abroad, we are really connected with all each other, like. Even we have a station, and we usually gather it so we don't forget our country and we really want to show that everywhere from Kazakhstan, for example, all Kazakhs that I know abroad. Here in Italy or in other countries, they have merch, like you know, QR, we have a brand, Kazak Republic, and say, produce, T shirts, bags, bottles and so on. And there is also written out, like born Kazak. So that is also main traits here to show that they're from Kazakhstan. And I would say that we are really multifaceted. Like all of us, we are really different. I mean, it might be also visually and also inside of us. Maybe you know how Kazakhs look. Mostly, we are like Asians or mongolians, but some of us, because, in the past, we were like, actually looking like Europeans. I don't know, blue eyes, blonde hair, some of us have these features still. So some Kazakhs actually have green eyes or something like this.

**Yeah, but she said a lot also. So how do you represent your Kazakh identity when explaining your background to non Kazakhs?**

That's actually an interesting question, because almost everyone, they are curious about my country and about my background as well. I usually say, Kazakhs, they are Asian looking people, but mostly they can also speak Russian. So there's like, Asians who speak Russian, but Muslims as well. And it is this, the language that we speak is a Turkic language, so we can understand other Turkic languages, but also, since we are, like bilingual, or even some trilingual, we can understand Slavic languages, and we are nomads, so I guess that's why I'm really, I don't know, passionate about living in different countries. So we constantly move, we constantly change our living like spots.

**Has the experience of being abroad changed your perception of your national identity and language?**

I would say, yes, first of all, I feel that I'm more like a patriot here abroad. But before I didn't feel so, maybe that is because I miss my country, my family. So yes, some I try to express here, like also during my merge from Kazakhstan, or meeting with Kazakhs, Kazakhs as well, or Kazakhstan, you people generally and about language. Sometimes it is better just because I hear, because we have a lot of people from just post-soviet Union countries that also can speak Russian, but only Kazakh people can speak Kazakh, and they do not understand Kazakh language. So when I'm in public transport with someone who can speak Kazakh, I try to speak Kazakh because sometimes when I was alone, and I just think that it is an Italian girl, but it's actually, I don't know, Belarusian girl, and she starts to speak Russian, and I can understand everything, but she's talking about something private, and she doesn't know that I can understand, I'm Kazakh, I can speak Russian as well. So I try to speak Kazakh here abroad, but when it Kazakhstan, suddenly it doesn't matter. Everyone can understand what I'm speaking about.

**Do you think language plays a role in defining what it means Kazakh?**

To be a Kazakh in the first place It's to know to possess Kazakh language. But unfortunately, maybe you also heard before that not every Kazakh speaks Kazakh language. A person can be a Kazakh even so he or she doesn't speak

Kazakh. But it is, like an important part. It should be actually achieved even so, maybe in later age, but eventually, I guess I hope it should be.

**Do you think that people, maybe who are like Belarusian or Ukrainian Kazakh, should also, have basic knowledge of Kazakh?**

Oh, yeah, yeah, sure, because they live in Kazakhstan. And nowadays I see, like, more and more advertisements, more and more stuff beginning more, like in Kazakh language, rather than in Russian. So I guess it's important for them to learn Kazakh as well, to live conveniently in Kazakhstan.

**But what do you think plays the biggest role in defining what it means to be Kazakh? Is it language or something else?**

I wouldn't say that the language is the first place. Maybe just to not forget our culture tradition, and then like the language, like second or third place.

**So Kazakhstan has promoted, and you also said it a trilingual language policy. So Kazakh, Russian and English. Do you think Kazakhstan's trilingual language policy aligns with the needs of people. Is it a good policy right now?**

Maybe I have a really, subjective opinion because I only know like specific group of people, and most of them, as I said before, they can speak fluently more than three languages, or something like this. So for me, it's actually a good promotion of legal language policy to know three languages, but some people don't even know Kazakh. So might be it's not a good option to force as well English even so some Kazakhs or slavic peoples, they don't know even Kazakh. So maybe for now, it's better to promote Kazakh as much as possible, and then to promote all three languages in the same level. But trilingual policies already, like I don't know for five and more years, I just don't remember, but it's, it's a good policy as well, but just maybe promotion of Kazakh should be stronger.

**So there have been, government efforts I read about, so like changing street signs, opening more Kazakh language schools and closing some Russian and a promotion of usage of Kazakh in the official documents. So there have been some government efforts to promote language. Do you think it is enough?**

I also heard that they launched some speaking clubs or courses for those who don't know Kazakh or say want to advance their Kazakh language level. Obviously, it is a lot for now, but it's not enough for the future. So it should be constantly adding. Even some people they try to change their surnames, if you know, without this ending off, or, I don't know, ich or ova for girls. So how would my friends say? Start by themselves, to change their surnames, to be like more, I don't know, to get rid of this ending. But about governments, maybe there should be something else to promote Kazakh language, not only changing the names of the streets and so on, changing the documents, but for example, even, like on occasion basis, some media use in restaurants in Kazakhstan, they are in Russian. So we should start from something really simple, or, yeah, when you go to some stores, we see ingredients as well in Russian.

**How do you view the role of each language in Kazakhstan's future?**

First of all, of course, it's really politically important to promote Kazakh language as much as possible. So other people, even so, they are not Kazakhs, at least, should know maybe some basics. And also Russian. It's, I would say it's a great tool to communicate with other countries that also can speak Russian. For example, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, even Russia, of course, Ukraine, Belarus and so on. So it's also, like, important to know, but not as important as Kazakh and English. English, it's a worldwide language, so it is also, I would say, necessary to know this language. So I would that's why I'm, like, I'm supporter of trilingual policy, but in this time, like, maybe it's better to focus on Kazakh.

**But do you think in the future more people will speak Kazakh Russian and English?**

Maybe in the future we'll speak more Kazakh than Russian. So Russian language will not be used as often as it is now.

**And do you think more people will speak English in Kazakhstan?**

Yeah. You feel like there is a focus on only two languages. Maybe it will be Kazakh and English.

**Okay, so Kazakhstan plans to transition Kazakh language to Latin alphabet how do you feel about this change?**

Actually, transition happens, I don't know, three, four or five years ago, maybe when I was at school, and at first I didn't understand why it is so. But now, since I'm abroad, and I can understand that all countries are actually in Latin and also, like even Turkic countries, as well as Turkey, Uzbekistan and so on. So I guess it's also a good step into the future to have a transition to Latin so everyone, can also understand what are like our written form of language. But actually, I'm not against Cyrillic as well, because since we know Cyrillic, we can also understand some Slavic languages, like in Macedonia, in Serbia and Bosnia, Herzegovina and so on. So maybe in the future, and even now, it is a little bit complicated for some people in Kazakhstan to write and to understand Latin, because they didn't face with that before even some people didn't know English. So it might cause some troubles, but maybe, like with time, it will become better.

**P20**

**Okay, okay, let's just start. What is your age? I'm 21 What do you study?**

Currently, I'm studying my masters in Istanbul.

**And what is the subject?**

It's industrial policy and technology management, Yeah, so you're in Turkey right now.

**Are you an exchange student? Or this is full time studies in Turkey?**

Full time studies in Turkey. I'm not sure if you need it, but I also studied my bachelor's in Lithuania as full time student.

**Why did you choose Turkey for masters, by the way?**

Because it's closer to my culture, and I feel myself comfortable here.

**What is your religion?**

I don't consider myself as very religious, but I believe in God, but do not consider myself as like I belong to someone, to have some certain religion.

**Did you grow up in religious family or not really?**

No.

**But your religion will probably be Islam, right? If you had one, yes, traditionally?**

Yes. I was born in Uzbekistan, okay, in the capital Tashkent.

**But you were born in Kazakh family?**

Yes, ethnically were Kazakhs. Currently, we're all living in Almaty, Kazakhstan,

**When did you move to Almaty? What did age?**

When I was five.

**Did you go to Uzbek kindergarten or not?**

I didn't have any education there.

**What languages do you speak?**

I speak Kazakh, Russian, Turkish, English, and a bit of Uzbek.

**Which is your best language?**

I speak in two, the best, I think it's Russian and English.

**And then which would be your third?**

Kazakh

**So if you had to think about each language you speak, what words would you associate with them? So if you could get like, two, three words for each language.**

Okay, let's maybe, let's start with English um. I would associate it with the world, with the work and with opportunities. I would associate Kazakh language with the motherland. Then with patriotism and with love, I would associate Russian language with the literature, emotions. And expression. So if it's going to be Turkish, that would be feelings, then it would be culture as well. Yeah, nothing else comes up to my mind and Uzbek it would be also home, and I have the association with the word soft.

**Do you come back to Uzbekistan sometimes?**

Yeah, I go there often. We have relatives.

**Okay, so for Kazakh, you also mentioned love. Why is that?**

Because I love the language, okay, still, my mother language.

**Okay. And for you, Russian was like emotions. Why emotions for Russian?**

I think that Russian language is very beautiful language to write in to explain feelings in many different layers.

**So to what language kindergarten and school did you go when you were growing up?**

Russian.

**Why did your parents, you think, decided to let you to Russian schools?**

P17

**And in your family, in what language do you speak?**

We speak both Russian and Kazakh.

**Do you mix languages?**

Yes.

**Do you have, maybe family members who prefer more Kazakh and some more Russian grandparents prefer Kazakh?**

Yeah

**And parents, Russian?**

Parents, I can't say just Russian, because they completely mix it.

**All of your grandparents grew up in Uzbekistan, and they all spoke Kazakh, right? But for your parents, they started having a mixed language?**

Because when they had to move back to find a job, they have to speak Russian.

**And with your friends in Kazakhstan, what language do you mostly speak?**

Russian

**Almaty is, like, still pretty, like more, probably Kazakh speaking city. Why is it Russian you prefer when speaking with friends?**

Well, I would say that Almaty is more Russian speaking City. Mostly, it very much depends on the area, district you're in.

**Okay.**

Closer you are to the city center, you'll speak probably Russian, and the majority live in the city center. That's why I also mostly speak Russian. And my school was in Russian, so my friends eventually also speak Russian.

**Um, so how much Kazakh do you use in your daily life?**

If I put it in a percentage, I would say it's very little, unfortunately, like around 40%

**Did you learn kazakh in school?**

Yes. But I spoke with my grandparents

**Was it from first grade because Kazakh language?**

Yes.

**And from what grade was English**

From first as well.

**Was there, like any change for you in your language usage between your like childhood, teenage years and now?**

So the childhood, the majority, like most of the time, I spoke Kazakh, only then the teenage era, it was Russian, and currently, I mostly use English.

**Is it important for you to not forget Kazakh, maybe to speak it if you have opportunity?**

Yes.

**So why is it?**

I'm trying, but it's pretty hard though. Why is this important? Because I want to be a part of my community and like be confident enough when I say I am Kazakh, not just by my ethnicity.

**Do you see like changes in language situation today? Do you see more Kazakh, maybe in media and among influencers and things like that?**

Oh yes, yeah, I do, and I'm really happy to see it, but it's honestly hard to process it. Why? Because I'm not used to get so much Kazakh content in Kazakh language, and sometimes I find it even hard to read it.



**Why do you think this change happened recently?**

I feel like once we got independent and more young people you know, who had a chance to study abroad, those who came back to Kazakhstan understood the value of our country, and eventually, like it, started shaping the society, because we got more freedom on what we can represent in our own media without any like external influence, and in this case, the community and the country realized that we have to call back to our own culture, which is not affected by the Russian language.

**Do you think war had any effect on usage of language**

The war in Ukraine? Yes, but not as much as you might think, because it started way before, like for the past four years, for sure, like the Kazakh language is being more prioritized.

**So. You would see it's like also becoming some sort of a trend for young people, yes?**

Yeah, exactly.

**You think it's positive?**

Absolutely, yes. But at the same time, I would prefer people not to forget, in this case, Russian language because I feel like it's still beneficial to speak several languages, not just like, you know, economically speaking for the future career perspectives, but even for personal development. It's nice to be multilingual, but speaking your own mother tongue better is absolutely a priority.

**Did you yourself felt that strength in English, as you said, in the last four years to speak Gaza?**

Yes, because I moved to another country, and I wanted to feel like as I belong to my own country, even if I'm far, and the best way to do so is to speak Kazakh. But unfortunately, it's pretty hard to do so abroad.

**Do you wish there would have been more Kazakh language when you were growing up, like in your family or school? So what would you have preferred like? How do you how do you think you could have had more Kazakh in your life?**

Yes. I would be glad if my parents would have prioritized speaking Kazakh more instead of mixing languages. Kazakh language used to be perceived as the language that uneducated people speak, and this used to be an ongoing trend when I was at school, and that, of course, impacted how us young people treat language. So I wish that during that period when I was studying at school, we had those, maybe teachers, or maybe the friends to speak Kazakh language because it's your mother tongue, not because, because it's not gypsy language at all, would already exist.

**So you like, maybe felt these attitudes from your classmates or your teachers?**

It was commonly in society, not like just work from everywhere.

**Do you know our Kazakhs abroad?**

Right now? Yes, yes.

**What languages do you speak?**

So it's very interesting. Everyone whom I met in Europe speak Russian everyone whom I met in Turkey, speak Kazakh

**Do you try to speak in Kazakh with them?**

Yes. But it's hard.

**When you speak in Kazakh, maybe the fluent Kazakh speakers, do you ever like are afraid to be judged?**

Maybe, yes. Mm, hmm.

**Does it ever make you maybe want to speak it less?**

Yes, very, good questions.

**When you meet, yeah, when you meet a new Kazakh, how do you approach them in what language?**

Russian.

**What do you think there's this difference between Turkey and Europe?**

I think because the Turkey promotes the patriotism, and they support Turkey community a lot. And they understand, they're aware of the issue of the Russian influence to Kazakh and Central Asian culture. And in this case, they instead support our language. They say how beautiful it is. And in this way, we are also motivated to speak our own language. Europe. A lot of people don't even know the distance they associate us with Russia. And I think this also influenced the way how we are eventually act.

**Maybe you could, like give some examples when you maybe felt conflicted about which language to use, or when it was hard for you to decide?**

When I speak with Kazakhs, yes, often I am conflicted. Which language should I start to speak? For example, when I go back to home, when I go to the shops, how should I talk to those people? How should I, like order food in the cafes? Often I'm conflicted because I feel like, oh my god, if they speak fluently, I will make a mistake. They will laugh. So better say it in Russian, yeah, mostly.

**Do you yourself like feel this Turkic influence on you when you are in Turkey. Does it make you think about those things yourself?**

Yeah, it's a lot, actually.

**So I imagine the process is like kind of moving away from Russian culture and going closer to like Turkic culture when it comes to like Kazakh identity?**

No, I would just say that I realized that the Turkish idea of Turkic identity is different from Kazakh and Central Asian idea of Turkic identity, because Turkey is the only Turkic country which has not been ever colonized, yes, and that's why I would say, I feel like they have this imperialistic behavior, and Central Asian people don't have it. And this affects the way they behave in real life as well. And when it comes to the language, I would never say, you know that I wish I didn't speak Russian. I always say, I wish I spoke Kazakh more.

**Do you think that speaking two or three languages is part of Kazakh identity and what it means to be a Kazakh?**

Exactly. Yeah. I think it shows the potential of our nationality. Mm. And like it shows how educated we are.

**Thank you. So when I read about Kazakhstan, I read that there's like, a difference in between being a Kazakh and Kazakhstan. Do you know about this difference?**

Yeah, yes, for sure, it's different. Because, I mean, there are over 220 nationalities in Kazakhstan cannot be just Kazakh by living in Kazakhstan. And even, like my case, personally that I am, I was born in Uzbekistan as whole my family, that we might put it back to our country. It was like repatriation still affects the way how even ethnic groups might treat us, because there is a lot of cultural misunderstandings in my family. We even, for example, separate Russians right now are coming from Russia because of the war and Kazakh Russians, yes.

**If you would need to choose between this Kazakh identity and Kazakhstan identity, which do you think you are more?**

Unfortunately, Kazakhstani.

**Okay, why that so?**

Because there is a lot that I don't know about Kazakh culture, because I can't express myself well enough in Kazakh language, because I don't feel comfortable when I am in the fully Kazakh.

**But in what ways do you express your Kazakh, identity yourself like what do you think you do? What is uniquely Kazakh?**

Uniquely Kazakh, think the way how I am as well. I think I'm very open, like talkative, very friendly, and always trying to help everyone. But it also very like connects a lot with the Turkic community in general. But again, the ability for me to even learn other languages easily comes from Kazakhstan only, I'd say. And I think as people very open, because we grow in the very international community. I mean, my class, like, there were people from every country, literally, just five Kazakhs ethnically, okay? That's why I say that we are like, much more less racist than I don't know any other nationality.

**How do you represent your Kazakh identity, even explaining your background to non Kazakhs?**

Saying that we eat horses. Yeah, I'm saying that we are the like ninth biggest country, but we also share the biggest land border with Russia. We were part of the Soviet Union. It, of course, affected, but we are Turkic, and it's very important that it's absolutely different things. We speak Russian, but our language is not Slavic language. So I'm trying to explain these important points to make sure that people understand that it's a separate country, and I'm always saying that Borat was filmed in Romania.

**Has the experience of being abroad changed your perception of your national identity and language?**

Of course, yes, in the way that I understand that Kazakh people more often feel like they don't belong anywhere, because there is this loss of understanding, what is it to be Kazakh there are a lot of Kazakhs that don't speak any Kazakh language but they represent Kazakhstan. And I feel like it's very confusing. And a lot of people, when they approach us, they associate it with either Russia, either Borat or saying to us, oh, it's the country that doesn't speak your own language. So very offensive, and we don't really know how to deal with that. Like, also from my own experience and my friends experience abroad, it's really hard, because like to go back to Kazakh language it's either starting to get like online courses of Kazakh language, which only a little bit feels a bit weird, or there's no other way, maybe watching some tv shows

**So do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be Kazakh?**

Yes, there's no way you can understand and Kazakhstan's history better than for the language and from what people say and how they say.

**If you had to say, like, what plays the biggest roles in defining what it means to be Kazakh? Like, what do you think the Kazakh identity is made of?**

It's made of the freedom that was taken from us was mixed, confused, forced and pushed, unfortunately, and then like that was put in the very beautiful candy package, saying that actually those people are your friends and Brothers, and it affects the way we perceive Russia. Currently, me myself as well. Since you see like maybe you already understood that I do like Russian language, but if maybe I knew my own history better, maybe if I saw how our people used to suffer, I would not treat them like, you know, as good as we treat them currently, but that's how our history was shaped, and that's how I feel like we lost a lot from our own identity, from our traditions, but at the same time, we are trying very hard to bring it back.

**When did you start, like having those feelings and thoughts about the Russian influence on Kazakhstan?**

After war, yeah, after the war in Ukraine started, yes, especially after how Ukrainians started, like, treating Russia back, or they were talking to about them and stuff, because I thought that like literally Russian, Ukraine, are much closer.

**So what do you think plays the biggest role in defining what it means to be a Kazakh, if you want to be Kazakh, what is the main thing?**

I want to be a Kazakh, I think as any people, we can be all different. I don't need necessarily, like, you know, follow all of the traditions, because I will not be able to do so, but I feel like the least I can do is to speak my language.

**So Kazakhstan has promoted trilingual language policy. Do you think Kazakhstan's trilingual language policy is the right way and it like aligns with the needs of people, or should it be a different system?**

I really think that it's a very nice idea. Um, I feel like that. At the same time, we should treat that Kazakh language is really important to learn in this case. Um, but in general, I'm supporting this policy. Why? Because it literally gives the opportunities to open up, just to leave the Kazakhstan and open up in how long people think, but at the same time to develop the country itself.

**How do you feel about government efforts to promote the use of Kazakh language in recent years? Do you see it? Do you think it's enough?**

I'm not sure, like how the government affects it. I think they're not really doing enough, because I'm mostly supporting independent media and independent like people that support Kazakh language without the support of the government. So that's for sure, but probably, like behind the scenes, they fund a lot of programs, but I feel like they should do more, for sure.

**So how do you view the role of each language, Kazakh Russian and English in Kazakhstan's future?**

Oh, I feel like more Russian speaking people will kind of like gather in bigger cities, but more of the rest of the Kazakhstan and we will speak more Kazakh. Jobs, job openings will appear because they are now starting to appear, and they pay higher, more, I feel like more Kazakhs consciously will start learning, and as what was treated as the language of the opportunities will keep being treated like that. I just feel like more Kazakhs. Those who didn't have chance to speak Kazakh like because of any other circumstances, they will take their own like steps to learn it.

**If given the choice, which languages would you want to prioritize in your future career and in life. So like, if you have a family, what language would you like to prioritize with your kids and things like that?**

Unfortunately, I've now I'm thinking English very important. It's very much for marrying as well, because I'm not sure that it will be Kazakh person. If it is a Kazakh person, for sure, he will speak Russian and Kazakh languages if it is not, because if it's not a Kazakh person, he would know more about the Kazakh history and culture. But from my side, I prioritize Russian and English.

**Kazakhstan plans to transition from career itself to Latin alphabet for Kazakh language. How do you feel about this change?**

That's the problem. It's a very big change for us because the country itself doesn't know Kazakh well enough, but at the same time, you know it's better now than ever, but I'm not sure whether we have very professional specialists to introduce the new alphabet, but I think it's important, yes, but I'm very curious how those people like me and my parents, my friends, who don't study in school anymore will learn how to write.

**But you think it is a needed change?**

Yes. Because you want to be like closer to identity and become like a country that represents itself to big countries and Central Asia and separate itself from Russia, and the best way so is to make the language less clear to them.

**Okay, that's cool. Um, but do you think it would be hard to do,**

course, with Pakistan many years ago, and they didn't once they got the independency, which was very smart, the rate there was very low, and then they all, top of that, forced people to also use Latin. But right now, there are a lot of people like people don't know how to write. It's really that's the thing. Mostly, I think we will do that eventually as well.

**P21**

**What is your age?**

I am 22 years old.

**What do you study?**

Right now? I'm studying the Master degree of cyber security

**In what university are you studying on your exchange?**

Right now I'm studying in the national Sun Yat Sen University in Taiwan.

**Is it exchange or full time studies?**

It's double degree studies.

**What is your religion?**

I'm agnostic.

**But did you grow up in religious family or not really?**

Not really.

**So where were you born?**

I was born in the city called Semey, which is in the east of Kazakhstan

**And did you move from that city in Kazakhstan, or is your family still there?**

My family is still there.

**Was it more Kazakh speaking, or Russian speaking city?**

Semey, it's more Kazakh speaking city.

**What languages do you speak?**

Like I can speak English, Russian, Kazakh, for sure, and little bit of like I'm studying right now, the Chinese.

**Which language are you most fluent? Which is your best language?**

I guess my best language would be Russian,

**Okay, and then which would be second?**

Second would be Kazakh.

**So if you had to make associations for each language you speak, so like, two or three words, which come to mind first, what would be those words for each language?**

When I hear the word Kazakh, I usually like, I think of like motherland, something like which is really close to me, some kind of that feeling of the words.

**And then Russian language?**

Usually when I hear some Russian speaking. It's more connected with the convenience and ease of talking and communication. For me. And in English, it's mostly connected to something academical or more international stuff.

**Chinese?**

And for Chinese, it's thoughtful, complexity.

**In your family, do you speak mostly Kazakh?**

Unfortunately, in my family, we mostly speak Russian for the reasons that my parents, they were studying in this like Soviet Union time. So most of the education was on Russian, and Kazakh wasn't so popular at that time.

**But your parents, do they know Kazakh or not?**

My parents know Kazakh. They understand it. Sometimes they speak it. But in our family, for more convenience and ease, we speak Russian.

**And did you have, any Kazakh speaking grandparents?**

Yeah, both of my grandparents, like grandmother and grandfather, were speaking Kazakh.

**So you speak Kazakh?**

Yep, with grandparents I speak Kazakh. Time to time I was practicing my Kazakh when I was learning it like at the school.

**Did you go to Kazakh or Russian language kindergarten and school?**

Actually, my kindergarden was Russian, however, my school was in Kazakh.

**So you started to go to Russian kindergarten and then went to Kazakh school. Why do you think your parents decided to let you to kazakh school after Russian kindergarten?**

Actually, at first I was trying to go to the Kazakh kindergarten. However, lack of my knowledge and communication, it was suggested to my parents to, like, send me to the Russian one. However, after that, I took some, like, pre-school courses with which I was more talking in Kazakh and I learned it. Because of that, actually, I went to the Kazakh school. Like, initially it was a plan to, like, teach me Kazakh from my childhood, but then it wasn't so successful. However, like, after some tries, when I was more like, grown and more understandable and more teachable, I went to the Kazakh school.

**Why was it important for you to know and speak in Kazakh and go to Kazakh school?**

Like in my opinion, when I was going to school, it wasn't big part of my decision. Mostly like my parents decision, of course. However, as I understood they, like parents, could understand the importance of the language, especially in the Kazakhstan, the Kazakh language is our nationality, our like National Kazakh identity, and that's why, actually, as I remember my grandfather, like, insisted on giving me for Kazakh education because he believed in the power of the Kazakh identity.

**Did you also feel the importance of Kazakh language growing up or not really? Maybe you wanted to go back to Russian school?**

No, I was pretty much fine in the Kazakh school, because, like, by the time maybe in high school, I was more my capable of understanding about what our cultural traditions are, why are they important, and all the stuff connected to it. That's why, like, I'm sure I even I wouldn't change the Kazakh for Russian.

**And with your friends in Kazakhstan, do you speak in Kazakh Russian, or mixed language?**

It depends on what kind of friends actually, because some of them prefer speaking Kazakh, so I'm communicating with them in the Kazakh. However, like time to time we're speaking Russian. So it depends on the situation.

**Do you mix languages or usually, if it's Kazakh speaking friends, or do you speak like pure Kazakh?**

I'm trying to speak pure Kazakh, however, like time to time there is such feeling when you know the words, it's in your mind, but you don't know the current translation like you know it, but you can't just memorize it. So time, time speaking Russian too.

**Is it important for you to, like, speak and practice your Kazakh?**

For me, Yep, pretty much sure. It's important for me to time to time speak on the Kazakh. That's why, actually, since I am in Taiwan, I haven't like found any Kazakh speaking people. I'm trying to practice my Kazakh, with my friends from Kazakhstan by speaking online with them.

**Okay, why? Why is it important for you to practice and get better at it?**

Maybe because I just don't want to forget it. I just don't want to, like, forget the language, which is part of my identity.

**Have there been change between your childhood and now in your attitude towards languages or not really?**

I would say, not really, like I still understand the importance of my language. However, I don't deny also that I need to learn others for, like, being more open international person. So no it hasn't changed.

**Do you see the change in language situation in Kazakhstan between your childhood and now, do you see more Kazakh being promoted or not really?**

Actually right now, like, if I will, compare with my childhood and nowadays, I think it's totally changed since in my childhood, it was mostly about the Kazakh and Russian language. However, right now there is like three languages, Kazakh, English and Russian, like all three of them at once. So it's totally changed. However, like still the government and like the whole nation are trying to speak more Kazakh right now, because of they understand the importance of it.

**Do you see more Kazakh content around you? So like groups, media, influencers, TV....**

Oh yeah for sure. Like, I could see a lot of some groups which are right now in the media, which are trying to speak, mostly Kazakh, all of the content they're trying to share with everyone about how beautiful our language is and our heritage.

**Why do you think that changed recently?**

I think this change happened because of like, the nowadays politics and because there is a empowering like there is empowering in the English sector. So like most of the internationals choose English as a way of the communication. So it's important for people to like, for sure, it's important to people to communicate with each other. However, they still shouldn't forget their national language. That's why, this kind of changes appeared in Kazakhstan. So they're trying to express like in all three languages, Kazakh, Russian and English.

**When you were growing up, do you think there should have been less or more of one of the languages in Your life and education when you were growing up?**

Actually, I'm pretty much fine with that time balance of the language. Since in my school, I was speaking in Kazakh, and at home, I was again practicing Kazakh. However, like time to time improving my English and Russian. And so I think that by that moment, it was a perfect balance. So I don't want to change anything.

**In what grade did you start learning English?**

I start learning English from the like, six years old. So it was a first grade. My parents just hired extra, like tutors, so from other classes. So I practiced it after school.

**And when in school? When did you had that subject introduced?**

If I'm if I'm correct, it was on the like, fifth grade.

**Why do you think for your parents thought it was important for you to start learning English earlier than in school?**

Because probably, like, my parents were working in the government, so they would understand that at some moment it would be also important for people to at least communicate in English, in case of like, maybe some international events and something like this one, so they thought maybe it would be better for my networking in the future, especially in the International networking and, yep, I think that's the reasons why they like, gave me for the English.

**Did you have Kazakh friends when you were in Lithuania?**

Yep, for sure. There was a lot of Kazakhs from my university. There was exchange students, Erasmus students, so it was a like, more than enough practice of Kazakh for me.

**So when you met with Foreign Kazakh students, not foreign, but foreign country, in what languages did you mostly speak?**

In most cases, again, it was again dependent on people, like, if you prefer Russian, I would speak Russian with him. If you prefer Kazakh, for sure, I will speak Kazakh to him. So it was a balance, actually, but mostly my friends in the Lithuania, they were speaking Russian.

**When you meet new Kazakh, let's say abroad, which you don't know well yet. In what language do you approach him? What language do you say hello?**

Usually, I'll try to say hello on the Kazakh language, and if he will, like, respond me with the Kazakh language, and then we will continue our conversation on Kazakh.

**Why do you prefer Kazakh?**

It just like, I don't know. I just was growing up in Kazakhstan. So whenever I met someone there, I was taught to speak in Kazakh. So I guess it's some kind of the habit already.

**Do you ever feel conflicted about which language to use? Is it ever like hard for you to decide? Maybe you have some examples?**

Actually, no. I could always observe from the situation which language is more preferable while communicating to people like it really depends on with whom I'm speaking right now, so it was fine for me. I never got any conflicts.

**Okay, if given the choice, which languages would you want to prioritize in your future career and personal life?**

Okay, for career opportunities, since like I'm seeking international degree and international job experience, I would prioritize English, I guess, because it will be the most convenient way of communicating with other people from other countries. However, in the like everyday life, in case of the family, for example, I would be more specific, maybe on Kazakh, just like because I was taught to speak Kazakh and my family, like with my grandparents, at least that's why I wanted to continue this tradition. So like my children, my family won't forget where we are from.

**Do you think that being bilingual or trilingual is part of Kazakh identity and what it means to be a Kazakh today?**



I'm not sure about like, like, trilinguality or bilinguality Here. However, like, in my opinion, how the Kazakh expresses their identity is mostly by like, there's values and maybe some hospitalities, because it's one of the most important parts of our culture. It's our national values. Also, there is respect for the elders, some hospitality for the guest. Also, it can be like, I know the identity could be expressed even by supporting some local brands, and for example, wearing traditional clothes or some things which has some national identity, such as, for example, maybe some earrings or something like this. And for sure, is one part of the Kazakhstan with the food cooking our traditional dishes.

**Okay, so do you think, like, Yeah, speaking Kazakh and Russian is like, not part of, like, what it means to be a Kazakh. Other things are more important,**

I guess, yeah, like, I'm thinking it's, it will be more important to speak the Kazakh like than Russian. So this would be more important for expressing identity.

**Okay, so when I was reading literature about Kazakhstan when it comes to national identity, there were a lot of papers about Kazakh and Kazakhstani identities and, difference of between it. Have you heard about this thing?**

Since, in the past, in the like region of the Kazakhstan, there were more only Kazakhs, but after some time, for example, after the Soviet Union, there was a lot of war victims from other national nationalities that came to our place. So Kazakhstan like expanded in like, how to say the amount of people who's inside it. But we don't want it to, like, just separate the Kazakhs and other nationalities, and we just, like, hospital people. So we just, like, take everything as a one it, and we call it Kazakhstani.

**Did you know your tribe growing up?**

yeah, actually, I think you're talking talking about Ru. Yeah, there was tribes in the Kazakhstan from the history, like three big tribes, and inside there was just a smaller one. Yep, like in my childhood, they told me which tribe I am. Like, it is middle tribe, and inside of that tribe it was, it was like group called Argyn, so I'm from that.

**Was it important to you growing up? Did it play any role?**

Actually, for me, time to time, I'm meeting people, like from the one part, like from one group of tribes, and it will just like a really huge helper when starting the communication. Because if the Kazakhs understand that they are from the one tribe, they will actually feel like they are already relative somehow, by some bloodline. So it is opens up people. It's easy of communication. That's why it's beautiful.

**Okay, now it might be a bit difficult question, but if you had to rank it, would you say you are an an ethnic Kazakh, citizen of Kazakhstan, or a member of your region tribe first?**

In this case, unfortunately, I will say, maybe I will be the citizen of Kazakhstan, because, in my like opinion, the ethnical Kazakh is the one who is like, totally like, all traditions. He, like, tries to follow everything. Like, I'm not telling I'm not following tradition, however, like I'm doing it in the less manner than the usual. And mostly like the most ethnical Kazakhs were growing like in the villages, which we call Au. So and I am the, totally, the child of the city, like all my family, like, moved to the city when I was born. So I'm not sure that I'm like ethnical Kazakh. I'm more like the citizen of Kazakhstan, who is just like more relates to the ethnical group.

**Okay, so in what ways do you express your Kazakh identity? What do you think you do that is uniquely Kazakh?**

I thinking mostly, I guess our respect for the elders and some other values that I am like always keeping in mind, and I think time to time, I'm wearing Kazakh brands, or like some things with Kazakh name, just to show where I'm from. I think it's also one way of expressing the Kazakh identity, and maybe listening to the Kazakh music, and like trying to share it with my other international friends. So that would be also, I think, the part of how I express my Kazakh identity.

**So how do you represent your Kazakh identity when explaining your background to non Kazakh peers?**

In my case, it's pretty, like, pretty complicated, since, by my appearance, it's really hard to tell where I'm from, because I got some parts from the European and some parts from the, like, more Asian countries. Like, I'm kind of the mixture. I guess I'm not looking at like total 100% Kazakh, in my opinion, like maybe something like Tatar or some Europeans. So they don't confuse me. Here in the Taiwan, when I'm talking to the locals, they mostly think that I'm somewhere from England or somewhere like, from the European side. And when I'm telling them that I'm from the Kazakhstan, they will, well, you're the first Kazakh we see.

**Okay, that's interesting. But are you mixed?**

Not mixed. Like all my parents are Kazakh, I guess it's just like, appearance. That's it.

**How do you explain what it means to be Kazakh and how you're different?**

I start to tell them about our national traditions, national maybe some celebrations. Like some, for example, Nauryz or like, how we celebrate our marriages. I'm sharing with them some music of Kazakh bands. I'm showing them how the people are playing our National Instruments. And maybe some time to time, I'm showing them our like, national nomadic games, which is more connected with the horses, which is a huge part of our culture.

**Do you talk about maybe, about the fact that you had big Russian influence, or not really?**

In case people are asking, like, some of the people I met here were interested in history. So they know that the Kazakhstan was a part of the Soviet Union, and then they're asking about how this affected the Kazakh kind of speaking community and everything. So I'm just telling them all the information I know from the history.

I usually tell them, like, about the more periods of war, and after that time when we got the independence since, like, when the Kazakhstan joined Soviet Union, It was more propaganda of the Russian speaking and everything. How still the Kazakhs were trying to save their identity, so they were opening the schools to teach only the on the Kazakh language, also some of the other international groups to teach their own language. So they were still like they were still showing the hospitality and our values. They were saving them and not just going after the like Russia at all. So I think I'm speaking mostly about this one.

**Has the experience of being abroad changed your perception of your national identity and language?**

It somehow influenced the way I speak Kazakh. Since in Kazakhstan, for sure, I'm speaking Kazakh every day, but in international community, I mostly speak English and like time to time Russian, but Kazakh not so much compared to them, so I think my level of the Kazakh little bit decreased, but still it's on the second place.

**Okay, so we talked about it a bit, but do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be a Kazakh?**

I think, yeah, even if you are mixing it up with, for example, Russian, which is the most common thing in Kazakhstan. It's still the like, you are showing your identity, like that you haven't forgot your heritage that you got from your ancestors. So, like, even just using some like everyday conversation words, is still already the way of supporting the Kazakh identity.

**Kazakhstan has promoted a trilingual language policy Do you think Kazakhstan's trilingual policy aligns with the needs of people? Do you think it's the right choice? Why? Why not?**

I think it's the right choice. Because in every moment people need to communicate with each other. So communicating inside the Kazakhstan, it would be really helpful to learn the Kazakh and Russian, since its most popular languages and for the international communication to be preferable English one. So I think it's the right decision.

**How do you feel about government efforts to promote the use of Kazakh language? Do you think it is a positive change, and is it enough, or maybe there should be more of these efforts?**

I think it's more than enough currently, like, politicians are making improvements for the Kazakh, like they're making more schools. I don't understand the renaming of the streets, for sure, because, like, for me, I don't think it's somehow like, it somehow supports identity. But like, building new schools where this only, for example, Kazakh classes, or making some TV shows, like maybe some translation of the movies on the Kazakh its good. However, still, I think it's more than enough.

**Why do you feel have like these mixed feelings about changing street signs?**

I don't see a point of it actually, like, even as example, I lived in the one of the kind of streets which was later changed for example to Kazakh writer. Still, the people are mostly using the old name of the street. So like, okay, you just change the site, like, the signs on that street. How? Like, the people still use the older name of that thing. So it's just, like, no use. It's just, I think it's just a waste of money, okay, like, is it changing the like cover of that thing? However, they don't change it in from the inside. I think so.

**What do you think would be the better approach in strengthening the Kazakh identity in Kazakhstan?**

Maybe opening up more TV show programs or media projects which are in Kazakh language, which are, for example, also translated with the Russian subtitles or English ones. So like, it would be helpful for the minorities, at least, to understand what is he talking about, some translation of the worldwide classics, like, for example, some books, some TV shows, movies in the Kazakh. So like, the people will see, some international blockbuster film, for example, and it will go there in the Kazakh language so they will improve like, they will broaden their horizons.

**How do you view the role of each language in Kazakhstan's future? So how do you think the language situation will change in the future?**

I really wish that there would be more Kazakh speaking, rather than, for example, English. However, like still, the Russian and English will take place. It's a development of Kazakhstan since, like the export and import and all politics situation, I think it will be something like this

**Kazakhstan plans to transition to latin alphabet. How do you feel about this change? The changing of alphabet?**

In my point of view, there is no need for change. Since I just don't see any help from that, it just like, made the like more Russian looking Kazakh, look like more English. One still, the words didn't change, and it's only like the way you write it. It would be more harder for the elder generation to learn this way of writing, since they already used to kirilica. It will be easier for the like new generation. However, I just, in my point of view, it will be much convenient if you just don't change nothing, and it will, like, stay the same.

**So I understand you think it is unnecessary. But do you think there could be any positives from this change?**

To say, truth, like, not really. Maybe I know that when you will transfer for the new like, model language, it would be needs for changing all signs, like all the information. So it will be just like rehabilitation for some of, for example, old parts, maybe it would be the advantage, but for like, for the public, I don't think so.

**P22**

**What is your age?**

Well, I'm 22 years old.

**What do you study?**

I'm studying in Medical University in Kazakhstan

**What is your religion?**

Well, I would say that I'm not religious. Talking about languages I can speak four of them. It's Russian, Ukrainian, English, and some Kazakh language. And like, the most fluent is Russian, I would say yes. But like, if you need to rank

all of them from first to last. It will be like the Russian would be in first place. Next will be English, then Ukrainian and Kazakh

**Where in Kazakhstan were you born?**

I was born in, Astana in the capital of Kazakhstan. I am mixed actually, and I have a lot of ethnicities. So it's Russian Ukrainian from my mom and Armenian and Azerbaijan from my dad's side.

**So if you need to think about all four languages, what two or three words would you associate with them?**

Maybe with English, I would associate like the words study, work, etc, and with Russian, it's more like home, family and so on. Ukrainian and Kazakh, though, are more like friends, people, or something like that.

**In your family, you speak only Russian?**

Mostly, yes.

**So what other languages do you mix with your parents and family?**

I speak mostly Russian and some English, because my parents are currently living abroad in USA. I prefer sometimes communicate with them in English. It's easier... Well, I learned Ukrainian when I was a child, and my grandparents speak it till this day, so I sometimes use it with them, and I have several friends, Ukrainian friends who speak it also.

**So did you go to Russian kindergarten and school?**

Yes, I did Russian kindergarten, Russian school, and I am in Russian speaking University, I would say so. Mostly I use this language in my life.

**What languages do you use with your friends?**

Mostly Russian and Kazakh.

**Do you use mixed language?**

Yes, actually yes. We all use some mixed language and sometimes even a little bit of English.

**When it comes to YouTube, Instagram, reels, in what language mostly do you watch?**

I would say like 60, 70% it's in English right now. But also it can, like, vary, maybe in Russian, a lot of them.

**Do you maybe follow any Kazakh language content or not really?**

Yes, I do actually watch Kazakh content, there are not a lot of them, but still I like this content. I am not like an advanced level, but I think it, I can use it in like everyday life, so to communicate with people.

**So did you learn Kazakh in school?**

I learned Kazakh at school.

**From what grade did you have Kazakh?**

From first grade. We did actually in Kazakhstani schools, everyone has to learn Kazakh and Russian. So we have Kazakh classes and Russian classes, and each of them learning both of the languages and English since the fifth grade.

**Do you think you had good quality classes in Kazakh?**

Yes, I think I did, because I'm using these skills up these days, so it helped me a lot.

**Did your attitudes like towards languages changed somehow from when you were a little to now?**

Actually, no, I don't think that it changed at all. Because I don't think that there was, there was this, like, such a big difference between childhood and my nowadays.

**Do you notice any changes in your country when it comes to languages?**

Well, actually, yes, I did notice that, but I think it's a good thing, because maybe in the past, last several years, Kazakh identity is, I don't know, is gradually increasing, and people really using all of this to, like return language. Lot of Kazakh films, a lot of production, I don't know, something like that.

**Did you try in recent years to speak more Kazakh or not really?**

I don't think that, because I've already been speaking it like on the basic level with all of my friends. So I didn't notice something changing like that dramatically.

**So like, you think your language level right now is enough?**

Yes, well, maybe for everyday using guess it is enough, not on a deep level, like I cannot study in Kazakh, it will be really hard for me. I cannot read all of the literature like only the basic ones. but it's not for me, I would say sometimes people are afraid maybe to use Kazakh, because they think that they might get shamed for it.

**So like, if you speak it, you have to speak it very well. Do you ever feel that kind of pressure?**

Well, I haven't, but a lot of my friends who are ethnically Kazakhs, they have felt this way. I've heard it personally, and that is why maybe I, I'm not trying to use the language that often, because it can be yes, sometimes it feels like, like a pressure to speak Kazakh perfectly, but from people your age, you don't feel that pressure. It's from older people

**Now, what do you think could be the reasons why the Kazakh language became more promoted in recent years?**

I don't know. Maybe it's like the politics from the recent years, and Kazakhstan tries to return its own identity. Maybe that is all. And I think I'm agreeing with this. Kazakhstan should remain. Kazakhstan not just part of Russian Empire or something.

**What could be the political reasons?**

In my personal opinion, I would say that it's from the outside politics, but maybe that is just my opinion, but I still think it's the reason because it's been increasing since, like 2022 maybe.

**So, like, how do you think the war, like, actually affected like this, like, language things and maybe nationality things?**

I am identifying as a Russian because my ethnicity is Russian, well, but I was born here, so sometimes it's really difficult to, like, differentiate between like, those Russian people and here so, and I think we still try to, like, integrate more in this, in Kazakhstan culture.

**But you said you have, like, four nationalities, but still, why do you call yourself Russian?**

Because, like in our passports, we have, still this thing, like ethnicity. So we can all be Kazakhstani. Well, I am Kazakhstani, but in my passport, we actually, like, have this ethnicity thing. So I'm Russian in there, and that's why,

like, it's been through my whole childhood. So I was born and raised in Russian culture. So that is why I think, I think, I think that I am Russian, but I am mixed, and I don't quite look like it.

**Do you think there is a difference between, like, Kazakhstan Russian and the Russian Russian. So, like, what could be this?**

I think, yes, there is a difference. Because, like, I hold it, I've already told you about this whole culture thing, because from the young age, we were all raised and, like, we have some different holidays like the Russians don't have so we maybe have different mentality or so I think it differentiates.

**Do you wish there would have been less or more of some of the languages in your life, education, growing up?**

I think everything was enough. So no, I don't think I needed more languages in my education, like I think I have all enough knowledge that I was given.

**When you went abroad, did you meet other Kazakhs?**

Yes, I did, actually, yes. And we spoke several languages. Maybe it was Germany or something like in Europe. And we all met, and we used, like you said, already mixed language. So we use Kazakh, Russian and English altogether. So I think it's, it was pretty nice, so I didn't feel any pressure to choose one language.

**So if given a choice, what language would you prioritize in your future career and in life?**

I'd like to maybe prioritize English. Because, like, I'm in a medical field, so there's, in general, like, quite a lot of scientific works, like articles, technologies, cases, new cases, they're all in English. And I'm still, like, be in Kazakhstan. I'm still looking to them in English. So this knowledge, I feel like it's it'll give more opportunities.

**If you have a family, what language do you think you will speak in your family?**

My native language is, is still Russian and English, and maybe my future husband's possible language. So the more language, the merrier

**Okay, do you think you would teach your kids some Kazakh if you don't live in Kazakhstan or not really?**

If my future husband will be Kazakhs, yeah, I will be teaching it. But I don't think it's that necessary. If I am not living in Kazakhstan, specifically, because I myself, I learned Kazakh only because I am living in Kazakhstan.

**Do you think that being like bilingual or trilingual is part of Kazakh identity?**

I feel like everyone here speaks at least two or three languages, so maybe that's it, like, really huge part of identity. But I don't think that's like in a duty or like obligation, because it's just like more practical and convenient, I think, it's not like a huge part of identity, but it still is here like it's necessity, not like obligation.

**Do you think Kazakh is part of Kazakh identity?**

Yes, Kazakh language, of course, it is part of Kazakh identity, but Russian, no, I don't think so.

**Do you think more of yourself as Kazakh or Kazakhstani?**

I would say Kazakhstani because, like I've already told you that about my childhood, so I was growing up with Russian culture, but I was familiar with the Kazakh culture, so it was like 50/50, for me my whole childhood. So I always knew how to differentiate these things. And like, there is a difference between nationality, ethnicity in our country.

**Have you been to Russia or Ukraine? Do you feel any different from locals?**

Yes, actually, yes, I wasn't feeling like at home at all, despite the fact that I'm like Russian part Ukrainian, so people weren't like... Well, overall, it didn't feel like home, but I still was familiar.

**This is maybe a deep question, but do you feel more Kazakh or Russian?**

Well, in Kazakhstan, I feel like I'm Russian. In Russia, I feel like I'm Kazakhstan. That makes sense. I don't. I wouldn't move, anywhere, especially like Russia, it wasn't nice to visit, I would say, but I don't know why, like people weren't that friendly. Like our people, I don't know. Maybe I'm just used to it

**So in what ways do you think you express this? What do you think your character's traits are somehow different because you are Kazakhstani?**

Maybe, like I'm actually really open minded, and hospitality, actually, I think the huge trait of Kazakh people, because they're really nice, actually really nice. And maybe that's all. And I am also like this. I don't know jewelry things, so maybe I like integrate them in my outfits really often.

**Okay, so like, if you are in a foreign country and you meet someone who maybe don't know anything about your country, Kazakhstan, like, how do you explain to them what Kazakh is?**

I would speak about, well, I try not to answer the questions about Borat the film, because that's the first question that pops in the mind when they hear about Kazakhstan. But it was a funny film, though, I would say, like maybe historical parts and about, how do I say this? I don't know national parks like landscapes kerest, and it's really gorgeous place, actually. So maybe nature will be first thing I would say. Then it will be about people here.

**So what do you say about people?**

Like I said, we really open minded, actually, so really hard, well, welcoming and warm.

**Has being abroad changed your perception of your national identity?**

I don't know, because it's like, everyone everywhere is different place. I don't know. So yes, I've been like, in a lot of new places. I traveled Europe. I've been but I've also wanted to return home, and I don't think it has changed my perception of national identity in language. So like, they're totally different places,

**Do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be a Kazakh?**

Yes, it does. Like I feel like language, yes, it's such a huge role in defining, but at the same time, a Kazakh person can, like, remain a Kazakh without speaking this language. I think it's like a dual thing, because, I told you about ethnicity, so like, if a person has like, Kazakh, parents, Kazakh grandparents, he's still Kazakh, but it's nice for him to speak this language as well. It's, like, important for any ethnic population, and he's not, like, obligated to know the language, I feel, but it's still important, significant, like, huge role, because, like, it helps to to preserve your national identity. It's for every nation.

**So what do you think plays the biggest role in defining what it means to be a Kazakh if, like, language is not obligatory, what do you think is the most important?**

I feel like it's your ancestors, because it's just that if, if you were born in Kazakhstan, and your granddad's, your parents are Kazakh, so you are already Kazakh, so people should not be feeling like, ashamed of not knowing the language, and do not like, feel like they do not belong.

**But if you had, like to define a Kazakh person, not necessarily ethnic Kazakh, but a Kazakh, a citizen of Kazakhstan in general. A foreigner, he would just see you Kazakh because he don't even know a difference, right? So, like, what do you think, like would be the definition for you?**

I would say learning the language first, because it's really important in that way, language plays a huge role, I think, because it's important for us to to integrate in this society, like in this place, language would be first. Then we'll be understanding of customs, traditions, of this of culture, cultural thing, of Kazakh people, because we all actually have a lot of like, niche holidays here, like it's nobody around the world celebrate. So it would be a really good part, and

knowing, like basics of history, of the country, it's important. So I think these three things would be like a great base for a person to understand what it's like to be a Kazakh person.

**Do your parents speak like basic Kazakh?**

Yes, they do, actually, yes.

**Do you think that Kazakhstan's trilingual policy, it aligns with the needs of people, or maybe it should be just one language or some other languages, like, what's your opinion?**

Yes, I think. Why not? Because. Because, like, knowing this amount of languages will never be a disadvantage, I think, for the population. But the first on the first place, on the first place, I would put Kazakh language and Russian and English as well, because I would say that it will bring, like, a huge amount of benefit to the young population, maybe an access to an international markets, platforms of some kind. I think it's a plus that there is a true trilingual language policy developing right now, but Kazakhstan still, we need to put Kazakh language first.

**Um, I don't think like I asked you, but for you personally, did war had impact on your views for yourself, like when it comes to language and identity?**

Maybe it has changed my opinion a little bit. Because earlier, I didn't think that knowing Kazakh language is that important for people, because I always thought like it's just like, if you want to speak it, speak it. If you don't, you don't. So, but now I think that the more people speak this language, it's the better for preserving national identity, especially after this war in Ukraine. So people should not forget the roots. Actually, I've seen so many schools opening this year, only Kazakh speaking schools, and I'm glad, and I do not feel offended or oppressed as a Russian person here, because we still have some Russian classes in school, and that's fine. I don't think that's such a big problem.

**How do you feel about the government efforts to promote Kazakh language?**

Actually, I think it's enough, just right? I think yes, quite a large number of ways being taken to develop this language in a country. So it's quite good. And I think this process is right now. It's happening gradually, and it feels like right process for me and for my friends and family.

**How do you think the language situation will be changing Kazakhstan in the future?**

I think most likely, the transition, to Kazakh language will come to the first place in most cases, like it'd be in the front. So maybe Russian language will remain in some places, I think, but it will insignificantly, like, because, after all, it played a big role, I think still in, like, historical part of Kazakhstan, right now, it's, I feel like it's gradually, like fading into the background, and yes, Kazakh language will be in the front. English think it's growing like progressively, because, in any case, it will remain at least at the same level. I think, if not more.

**Oh, okay, I forgot to ask one more question. Do you think that religion is part of Kazakh identity, like being Muslim, or do you think it's not that relevant in Kazakhstan?**

I think it's not well but that might just be my opinion, because everyone in my friends, they think different, but I think that being Muslim is not, should not associate with Kazakh people, because we have a lot of religion here. Like a lot of people are Christian, a lot of people are Muslims. A lot of people are Buddhist and Kazakh people, actually, from the history, they have their own religion as well. So I don't think it matters that much.

**Do you think that Islam is becoming like more popular also in recent years?**

Maybe not. I I didn't notice that, maybe in some places, but here, not, yeah, so not like enough to Yes, not, not here, yeah? Because for some causes we see that we notice, like, more people wearing hijabs or being more absurd, yeah, maybe in the south, there is, I can say, but not, not in here.



**Kazakhstan plans to transition to latin laphabet. How do you feel about that change?**

I actually really thought about it back in 2017, like, when we're starting, I think it's, it's really complicated process, because, but it's possible. I think it's possible, but it's complicated thing. Because, like, we all use, kirilica so it's like, it's the basic of the language and like, it differentiates with some pronunciations of letters, they're difficult to transfer to laten, I think. And I'm not sure actually, that there are suitable letters in Latin for classic letters, but I still think maybe it's possible, because it's already, already gradually, like being introduced into many areas, already be such, like changing, yeah. I don't know. Right now, I'm neutral about this, but actually it's for me, it's not like convenient, maybe because it's really hard to know, to read in Latin, and because we don't have that letters in Kazakh. But maybe that was because I was learning in different alphabet. I was learning classic language in different alphabet. Maybe that was, that's the reason. Yeah, yeah, so, so the negatives would be, like, the difficulty.

**P23**

**What is your age?**

My age is 26

**What do you study now?**

I'm studying business administration masters degree.

**Are you studying in Germany?**

Yes, yes,

**Exchange or full time?**

No, it's full time.

**What is your religion?**

I'm Christian, Orthodox.

**Are you religious? Or not really?**

How to say I'm quite religious, but I don't pray very often, I would say.

**Okay, I understand. Where were you born?**

In Kazakhstan, Almaty.

**Are you, like, fully Kazakh, are you from a mixed family or minority?**

A mixed family. I'm half Russian, half Kazakh.

**What languages do you speak?**

I speak Russian. I speak English and German. I don't speak Kazakh

**So Russian is your best and first language?**

It's my first language

**Okay, so if you had to think about each language you speak, what words would you associate with each language?**

I will think Russian literature. I don't know why English business and German strict, something like that

**Maybe give like one more word for Russian?**

Russian is home.

**Okay. So which language do you think was the most prevalent in your life?**

Was or is now? Because it's different.

**Oh, it's different. Okay, so now, right?**

I mean, right now I speak more German than Russian, but like the first 20 years, of course, Russian.

**Okay, so you went to Russian language schools and kindergarten?**

Yes, yes, yes, yes.

**Did you have to learn Kazakh in school?**

Yes, yes. I had to learn Kazakh. I learned. I know it to some extent. I mean, like grammar. I can write it or read in this language, but I cannot really speak it, so it will be like, the mix of Russian and Kazakh.

**So you can, like, say that this is one of your languages.**

Not really, not confident about it.

**Maybe you could give some, give some words for Kazakh, also?**

Kazakh, I just came up with words strength from strong. I don't know why. It's quite strong language. When you speak it. I don't know. Kazakh, maybe nature.

**Any other? Okay, from which grade did you started learning Kazakh?**

I think from the first

**And English?**

Also first. But I would say the education level in school for Kazakh, it was okay, but for English, it was poor. So I actually learned English mostly like, how can say independently or with a tutor. So it was not because of school.

**And how did you learn German?**

I started to learn German at the university. When I got to university, it was in Kazakhstan. Yes, I studied it for three, four years, and then, yes, I moved to Germany.

**Do you ever use Kazakh language, or like words or phrases in your daily life?**

Maybe just some phrases, but not like full sentences. No.

**Why do you think you didn't learn the language, even if you had it in school from first grade?**

You know, it's one thing that how to say it's not easy for me, because I needed to accept that, that I'm Kazakh, but I don't speak Kazakh, and now we speak about that. It's interesting. Yeah, so why it didn't work? Because, you know, it's my perspective. But I think many people don't learn Kazakh from schools. They actually learn in families. So when it's spoken in families, and in my family, because it's half like Russian, and my mother is like, she spoke, right? No, she speaks still Russian mostly. And like in my family, we didn't speak Kazakh at all, and I couldn't hear it, you know, from other people. Yes, maybe when I visited some relatives in villages, and but it was like for short time, so I didn't have practice.

**Okay, wait, so your mom speaks better?**

My mother can understand, but also I never heard her speak Kazakh.

**But you said your mom's relatives do?**

Yes, because they live in villages. Yes, same, not because, but they live in village and they mostly use it.

**How do you think was the quality of Kazakh lessons in school?**

I would say it was like, okay, Kazakh lessons were middle because they also explained some grammar rules, of course, and we read some articles and texts, but we didn't speak much. We didn't have this speaking practice, and we also didn't practice writing in Kazakh.

**But you have, like, grammar, Kazakh, writing or not really?**

We just learned grammar. We were like, I'd say, the last years of school? Yes, maybe you know our system, like last years of high school, we just prepared for final exam. It's final test. It's called the entire national test in Kazakhstan, and we just prepare for it. And we had to memorize a lot of grammars. That's why I know grammar, yes and yes, it was mostly just memorizing. But we didn't say learn the language. In school, like it depends on the school, I think because I also heard that there are some very strict teachers who demand from their students. You know what? I never experienced that.

**What do you think prevents you from maybe trying to practice it? Because I still imagine there's Kazakh speakers around you, but you don't generally do it.**

Yes, yes. I already have you know an answer for this. Because in Kazakhstan, I tried when I was already, like 18, no, I would say, maybe still a teenager, but after school, but because people usually approach me speaking Kazakh, because I look Kazakh, but I couldn't answer in Kazakh. But then, okay, I would try to say something in Kazakh, but they will, they would say something, oh, why do you have an accent? Or I cannot understand you? Or something like this, you know, criticizing me and I was shy, and yes, I thought, okay, maybe I don't need to speak as Kazakh, because if I speak like it, it will look ridiculous, you know. Yeah, so I wouldn't say all people, but I had, like, some cases yes, and I thought, okay, maybe after I, like, learn it properly, or have some practice with someone I don't know who, yeah, then I can speak with native speakers, yes. And I also tried with my relatives. But yeah, they would like, they would smile. They say, oh, you also have an accent. And same thing happened to my mom at school, she was also, like, mocked or just laughed because she had an accent, yeah, and that's why she decided not to speak it at all.

**I understand, yeah. Um, there were any changes in your attitudes towards languages when compared to your childhood, teens and now?**

I think yes, because in my childhood, despite. The fact that I also learned English in Kazakh at school. Yes, I couldn't really speak it. But then after school, I realized, Oh, you can actually, like, use the language, not just learning it, you know, at school, at university, but like, put it to some use. And yes, for me, it was just some life changing experience because I could speak, could talk with natives, you know, like English native speakers, and then German, yeah, so I understand it's more like not just some subject at school, but or something you need to do, but it's just like a cool instrument, yes, AU, cool tool that you use in different countries.

**Do you notice a change when it comes to Kazakh language compared to your childhood, teens, and now, do you see more contents online and in real life of Kazakh language?**

I would say yes. Maybe now Kazakh is getting popular in social media, so it's just what I noticed, yes, that more people would public yes or post something in Kazakh, yes, not only Russian, it's interesting, and also some podcast I see In Kazakh, yes, but since like what I said, I cannot really, speak it and also understand when they discuss some, you know, some, some topics. Yes, it requires some knowledge. You know that then it for me, it's very difficult.

**Why do you think this change happened in Kazakh society? Why did it become more popular in recent years?**

I thought about it. I think because, also there there was not much content in Kazakh, you know, mostly because, like some programs, TV shows news. Of course, it was also in Kazakh, but I think more sources information, was in Russian. People want to use Kazakh, not only maybe some like day to day yes level, but also maybe on some higher level, use something like politics, some discussions and so on. Because I also heard that also lawyers. They usually have some translations. I heard from one lawyer, they usually have some translations in Kazakh, but their correspondence, their how to say, no documentation, yes, it's mostly in Russian. So it's it was like dominant language for many years. Yes, for decades.

**And do you think young people like today we understand English better?**

Yes. Yes, of course. Now I think younger people, yes, they can, not all of them, but I think some already, yes, it's getting popular since some can speak English and yes, I think English is getting popular right now.

**Do you wish there would have been less or more of some of of some of the languages in your life when you were growing up?**

Yeah, maybe more Kazakh. Because I think when you are a child, it's maybe it's just, I don't know stereotype, but still, it's easier, just to start speaking the language. Yeah, English, I was okay because I also studied on my own, yes, in German I didn't have but it's still okay, because yes, I love it, so maybe just more Kazakh.

**So when you meet fellow Kazakhs abroad, what language do you use?**

Usually, I use Russian

**Do you always use Russian abroad? Or have you ever, like tried to use Kazakh?**

I try to say something in Kazakh. You know, I sometimes I speak Kazakh in front of my friends or relatives from Russia or from the Ukraine. In front of them, I can speak some Kazakh, yeah, yes. If they ask me just to say something, yes, but with Kazakh people, I don't speak because I'm still shy.

**If given the choice, which language would you like to prioritize in your future career?**

Would say German for my future career, because I am in Germany.

**Okay, and if you have a family, what languages would you like, for example, your children to learn?**

Russian, for family because I speak Russian. And about Kazakh, I also thought, but I'm not sure. So it depends if I learn it till this period, yes, so I can speak fluently, then yes.

**So you do have plans? Learn more Kazakh?**

Yes, yes, I would like to Yes, it's actually my my goal, one of my goals.

**Is it a recent goal?**

Yes, yes. What? Because, see, no, I would just to say because, like, when I was in Kazakhstan, I didn't really want to to learn Kaakh, because I thought, okay, Russian is enough. But now maybe because I miss my country, I also want to connect with it somehow. Yes, that's why I'm Yes, learning about culture, more about language, yes, but I don't invest enough time into it.

**So was it just like because you are abroad, or were any other reasons also?**

Maybe because I got older, yes, because I realized my roots and yes, when you asked me, sorry that, I'm starting to tell all my life.

**No, it's, that's why it's like in depth interview.**

Because I'm from the mixed family, it was also some identical crisis for me, who I really am, you know, Russian Kazakh, but I don't look Russian, but my, how to say upbringing was mostly Russian, because of, like, traditions, cuisine and so on. Also religion. But now, I accepted that I'm half and half, not fully some like one thing, and now I also want to get to know like my Kazakh side.

**So like growing up, did you feel more Russian than kazakh?**

Yes, I would say yes, yes.

**Okay, so you think that like change of giving Kasakh identity a bigger part of you just happened, like, naturally with time?**

I think it's with the time, because it happened really, like 24 like, maybe two, three years ago. It's really with time. And I also realized, okay, people don't identify me as russian here. They identify me here, Asian, for example, they hear from accents, yes, when I speak German, they hear and they say, okay, like you speak Russian, but if I didn't speak Russian, they wouldn't identify me as a Russian, you know, yes, someone from Russia or from the Ukraine or so on.

**Do you think speaking two or three languages is part of Kazakh identity, or what it means to be a Kazakh?**

So two languages, yes.

**Do you know a difference between a Kazakh and Kazakhstani?**

Yes, yes, I know. I know. Yes

**Did you know your tribe?**

I know Yes.

**So like your mom knew it.**

Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, my mom, and also, like my grandmother, yes, they knew

**Yeah. Is it like a fun fact, or is it like important you to know that?**

No, it's just a interesting thing to know. I wouldn't say it's super, super, super important.

**Okay, so how would you say, what is the difference between Kazakh and Kazakhstani?**

I think Kazakhstani is a citizen of Kazakhstan, but origins of the person can be different. Yes, he can have some what we also have, like Russian roots, Korean roots, yes, someone whose ancestors came to Kazakhstan, yes, but I think a Kazakh person is like, who has some Kazakh ancestors. Who has lived here for centuries?

**Do you think you are more Kazakh or Kazakhstani?**

I would say I'm Kazakh first still, I don't speak Kazakh, but I'm Kazakh.

**And then citizen would be second?**

yes, yes, yes, okay.

**And probably tribe, like third?**

Or maybe Russian?

**In what ways do you express your Russian identity and Kazakh identity? So like, what things do you think you do that are Kazakh and what things you do that you think are Russian?**

I'm thinking that Kazakh people, maybe it's also just a stereotypical but I think Kazakh people are more welcoming, yes, in terms of hospitality. And I think I have that and Russian. Sometimes I say I'm aggressive. Yes, it's like a joke, but yes.

**And maybe you do some things which are more related to Kazakh side, like also practices?**

I think because my family said that many Kazakh people can sing, like many, really many, because I can also sing, maybe because it's my Kazakh part. Yes, no. I mean, it's like a job,

**How do you explain to foreigners what it is to be Kazakh and what is Kazakhstan?**

I start talking about our geographical position, yes, that we are between Russia and China, that we have great nature, yes, that we are nice people, that we love some volume. We have steppe. And we also have this feeling that this is just like some you have a big space, you know and it's big country. I start saying that Kazak food is delicious. It's also with a lot of meat. Yes, Kazak people love meat. Of course, there are some vegetarians and vegans right now. Music, National Instruments, dombra, something like that.

**Okay, so do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be Kazakh?**

I think yes, of course, yes, language plays a role

**What do you think plays the biggest role in defining what it means to be a Kazakh?**

Of course language, knowing the traditions. Respecting the history, respecting like museums and so yes, like supporting the culture.

**Yes, okay, but, but what do you think is the most important thing? If you need to define like this person is Kazakh, what would be the most important thing?**

Oh, my gosh, it says some philosophical question. I read that in some sources. How we got this word, Kazakh, yes, it also means free, yes. So maybe Kazakh equals free, yeah. So this freedom maybe is not, not that how to say, like political activism or something like this yet, but freedom in artistry, in expressions themselves, yes, like we have, also many talented directors, operators, singers and so on, and artists, yes, I think in this like freedom of expression.

**How do you, like, interpret the Soviet past, like, what would be the some positives or negatives? Do you think it's more positives or negatives and things like that?**

I understand yes, what you're trying to say. I think for language, Soviet Union was negative yes, because I also heard from people of like, like our parents generation, or grandparents and generations that they could really speak Kazakh maybe just at home, but not at work or in public space. So it was quite difficult and for the language, of course, it was negative that we lost some time, and like Kazakh, became maybe the second language in the country. But what I like, and maybe what we still have in Kazakhstan, is this multinational society, you know, that we have really like we, we also proud of that, that in our country, people of many, many like I also heard 100 nationalities live and it's amazing. I also experienced that in my childhood. And I know also because my family is also mixed, you know, like, I have one grand mother from the Ukraine. She came to Kazakhstan with her mother. Like to Kazakh fathers, and one Russian. She likes. She came from Russia, but my great grandmother, who came from Russia.

**Did war in Ukraine had any effect on you thinking about your Kazakh identity or not really?**

I think yes to some extent, yes. War in Ukraine was also shocking for me, and I started thinking if it happened to my country. No, how we would react? Yes, and I think it's partly oh my gosh, sorry. I think it also gave some impulse to Kazakh people like to start realizing, okay, it can be also dangerous. Yes, if Russian language, and like Russia, has big influence, on our country, maybe. Now people like promoting, you know, more Kazakh, yes, also this way. I think it's also good, but we, we don't need extreme movements. Yes, I don't also want that. People would say we need to prohibit the Russian language, but I think it should be, like, smooth, yes, like, still two, but maybe on equal terms. Yes, it's not Russian which is the most important. But Russian and Kazakh are equally and maybe Kazakh then is more important yes than Russian.

**So you think Kazakhstan's trilingual policy aligns with the needs of people? Is it good, or should it be like two one languages? Or is like having these three as mains in school is the right choice?**

No, I think three is good. Yes, I think, like, both three should be presented at schools, but it depends, like, which language will be, you know, like primary language. No, that's a question because, like in Russian speaking schools, it's usually Russian, yes, in Kazakh, it's Kazakh and everything then in Kazakh. So for me, it's interesting. Then the subjects, yes, how they will be taught, yes. But I think English, of course, it's like the world language and Kazakh and Russian, they should keep their status too.

**Do you think the government efforts are enough, or should there be more?**

I don't follow now what really happens in terms of language promotion. But when I was last time, I would say yes. It was like more people spoke Kazakh and it's also popular among young generation, but I think at schools, it still needs some improvements. Because I think it for me, it was not effective. I don't know if it has changed or no, but from my relatives, their children go to schools right now. They say they also like learn some Kazakh. But like they practice, usually Kazakh at home.

**So how do you think the Kazakh language should be promoted? Should there maybe be I don't know more requirements for official documents or restrictions or things that. Or more of it in science and public spaces or cultural. How do you think it should be promoted? What would be the best way?**

Yes, I think just promotion. I also know there were some free courses provided for Kazakh language, yes, and I also wanted to go there. First just to how to say, promoting language that people could understand it fully. And it schools, and also maybe some camps. Yes, or some courses, maybe for older people. Yes, also too, because there are, like, some Russian speaking people who are, like, over 40-50, years old, and they don't speak any Kazakh, yes, but for Kazakh people, yes, you're right, just some maybe conference in Kazakh. Do you think that Kazakh language should also be promoted for minorities, and they should also be able to speak it? Yes, of course. Minorities shouldn't be excluded from it. I think people also are interested. As I was, and I am. They just need some, like, push, some motivation. To do it. But I think there are some already changes at educational level in universities. At our national universities, that, for example, conferences and papers, yes, are published in Kazakh.

**How do you think the the language situation will change in Kazakhstan in the future?**

Oh, I don't know. I cannot say for sure, yes, but I think yes, Kazakh will get more popular and more represented, as we talked, like in the media and also in papers, yes, in documentation, yes, but I think Russian language will be not excluded from that, because it's not, it's not an easy process, you know, just to change the language. Yes, I don't know how it happened in your country. Yes, I think it was similar situation or so. But still, yes, of course, there are many Russian and Russian speaking people, yes, who are not Kazakh, yes, as I said, like Turk, Korean, yes, different nationality. So I think it will be this two languages for some time, yes. But after that. I don't know if it only like Kazakh will remain, or Russian will be, to some extent, yes will be used, I cannot say. But I think just Russian and Kazakh. But Kazakh is getting more and more like powerful in Kazakhstan.

**Do you think English will play a bigger role?**

Yes, of course, I think English will be also but, like, I'm not sure if the majority of our population will speak it. Yes, I think it will be at school, at schools, at universities, but I don't think it will be for work, yes, and just in some public places. Maybe just for tourists, like some touristic companies, yes, of course, but in every company, I don't think it will be maybe, maybe I'm wrong.

**How do you feel about the changing of alphabet?**

Okay, so at first I wasn't glad, because at that time I was trying to learn Kazakh and I think it was also like during my university time in Kazakhstan. And then I thought, not another change. I don't want to learn it. I don't understand why it happened, and so on, yes, but right now it's okay. So if yes, I think it's more difficult now for me to understand it, yes, because new rules, yes, it's not, it's not just transliteration, yes, language, they just made up this alphabet. And so I don't know if how people like will accept it in Kazakhstan. I already saw some on shops, on, like, banks and so on, like science, yes, but I don't see it in I think maybe I, when I read some papers, I didn't see this alphabet. I'm not sure. Okay, yes, so I don't know if they will really manage to do it, like in the next five years, or like six years.

**The alphabet is based on Turkic alphabets, on like so Turkish letters and things like that. Do you think there's any like Turkey or Turkish identity influence in Kazakhstan?**

Interesting question. Yeah, interesting question. I haven't thought about that. It can be but I don't see it right now. We have some Turkish companies, and we, I think we have some, like, good relations, yes, with Turkey. But I wouldn't say it's very influential. Yes, like the language and, yeah, the policy of country.

**This transition of the alphabet. Do you think it's more positive or negative?**

Maybe it's done for positive causes, yes, but right now, I think this transition is not going smoothly, yes, and I think it will take some time that people can adapt to it.

**What do you think could be the positives out of it?**

It's like based on Turkic alphabet and maybe it will mean some independence in terms of language, yes, because we will use not cyrillic letters, yes, but latin. But when they first presented it, I remember they said it will be not only good for us that we use this alphabet, but also for people who come to Kazakhstan yes for maybe expats. Or people who are working in Kazakhstan, or tourists. But we are not very touristic country, you know. So for me, it was a little bit strange because it's done also for tourists, but I think it was also done so Kazakh language will get some independence, it will not be read as just Russian language.

**P24**

**What is your age?**

I'm 19 years old.

**What do you study?**

My major is Business Administration.

**What university are you at now?**

I am studying currently Vytautas Magnus university in Lithuania.

**Is it exchange or full time studies?**

It is a full time study. Yeah, I'm a currently first year student.

**What would you say is your religion?**

I would say that I'm not a religious person, but if you ask me, like, what religion is near to me more, it is Islam.

**Do you like practice Islamic holidays in your home?**



In my country? Yeah, we celebrate the Islamic celebrations holidays. Yeah, but actually, it's not that serious for me. You know, I cannot say that. I'm, you know, not very religious person.

**Where were you born?**

I was born in Kazakhstan, in Almaty city.

**Were you born in more Kazakh speaking area or more Russian? Because it's a big city.**

Yeah, it's a big city. And actually It has changed, like my place of living many times, and Almaty is like a very big city, so a lot of people, a lot of nationalities, a lot of languages. I would say that even, like I attended the Kazakh kindergarten, but then attended Russian speaking school. So I would say that I use, I used Russian more than Kazakh when studying.

**What languages do you speak?**

I speak Kazakh, Russian, English, I would say a little bit of Lithuanian, and currently I'm studying French.

**Which language are you the most fluent in?**

Most fluent, I would say Kazakh and Russian.

**Do you speak mixed language? Or do you try to not mix when you speak?**

When I'm when I'm speaking to Kazakhs usually, usually I can, we can mix Russian in our like, everyday life conversations.

**Okay if you could give associations for each language you speak, what words would you associate with them?**

Okay, so Kazakh is, like, it's for traditions. Russian is for friends, then English is for studies. Yes, that's all.

**What would be for Lithuanian, French?**

For Lithuanian, I would say that, you know, the traditional food, the cepelinai, and for French croissant

**So in your family, what language do you speak mostly?**

I would say, Yeah, mixed, like Kazakh and Russian mix.

**Are you from Kazakh family? You're not mixed?**

No, my whole family are Kazakhs, but we have these things, like my parents are from different parts of Kazakhstan and speak differently, like my dad speaks Russian better than my mom. My mom speaks Kazakh better than my dad. It was like a mixture, but it depends on the situation. When I'm speaking directly with mom, I use more Kazakh and vice versa.

**You said you went to Kazakh kindergarden?**

Yeah, I went to Kazakh kindergarten. Then my parents decided that it would be also good that I learned Russian.

**So why do you think this change happened?**

As I said, it is worth to know Russian also, so they decided that, but also it's a factor that back then teachers who taught in Russian were stronger academically, they believed I would receive the better quality education study in Russian.

**And with your friends, what language do you want to use?**

It depends, like, if it's Kazakh friends, I would say like Kazakh and Russian, it also depends from which part of the Kazakhstan and they are, like western and eastern Kazakhs tend to speak Kazakh more and like from this big city, like Almaty, Astana, you know, the capital, they tend to speak Russian more, but they know both. But, they can use both, but they use Russian more because of everyday life, you know, work, a lot of people use the Russian at work. It's like a work city where people are going to earn money.

**Did your attitudes towards languages changed over the years?**

Yes, I would say that I used to be more fluent in Kazakh when I was a kid because I was surrounded by the Kazakh people, children, and I would say that it was hard for me to change to Russian speaking school because my classmates were no longer only Kazakh it was like we have Russians and Ukrainians, Belarusians, Turkish, also Jewish people in my class. So it's a lot different from the kindergarten. So it was like a drastic change. But I'm honestly, I'm glad that I undergo this, because it makes me more fluent in both languages.

**And when did you start learning English?**

I cannot say the exact time when I started learning English, but as many people I started learning it from the first grade at school, because it's like a mandatory subject. But if you ask me when I started to learn it seriously for my purposes aims, I would say ninth grade.

**By the way, how was Kazakh lessons in Russian school? Do you think you had like a good teacher, which taught you well?**

Our Kazakh teacher was a good teacher, and she also was homeroom teacher. But she spoke Russian, not really good, you know, she made mistakes but it shows like, it shows that she knows Kazakh very good.

**Did you have Kazakh, speaking, writing practice in your lessons?**

We had, of course, writing, speaking, we had everything, exercises, some practices.

**Do you notice any changes in, let's say, Kazakh society and in the country when it comes to Kazakh language, promotion of Kazakh language?**

Yeah, of course, like the last years, there is a big, you know, movement for Kazakh language prosperity. A lot of people say that we are losing our language if we Kazakhs don't speak mother tongue, so our language can eventually disappear or go to extinction. So yeah, and honestly, I am a kind of in support of this movement, and I if we all speak Kazakh more, only for best.

**But do you try sometimes to, like, get better at Kazakh or speak more?**

Not grammatically, you know, because I had a lot of grammar at school, and I know rules how to write words correctly. But I feel that I lack the speaking opportunity because, as I said, I had a class where I didn't have a lot of Kazakhs with whom I can practice, even if I had, they spoke Russian too. So I studied like last year in Lithuania, and I came back with better Kazakh than before, because I lived with Kazakh girl who spoke only Kazakh for one year.

**What do you are the reasons for these changes?**

Because the language, as I said, like going to extinction. If we do not speak, we we can lose our language and our ethnicity as well as traditions.

**Do you think there have been any specific events?**

Situation in Ukraine, I believe, influenced, because it gave an example how other nations and influence of other nation can affect the language? Because we also had this thing in Kazakhstan, where we were occupied by Russia. So that's why, people like my dad, he only was taught how to speak Russian. So part of Kazakhstan are still influenced by this movement, influence. Change from Nazarbayev, yes, I would say, because Tokayev, it's like a good example of

bilingual person who can, he can speak a lot of languages. I cannot say exactly how much, but fluent in Russian, Kazakh, English, Chinese, I know exactly, and maybe some other.

**Do you think that the change now is more led by younger generation or older generation?**

Of course, I cannot say that like it only by younger or older generation, but I believe that more influence is from younger generation, because they like organize some events to some like social media, reels, videos, information like and from my experience, I would say that even if a like older generation cannot, can be dissatisfied with this situation. They do less to improve it.

**Do you think there should have been less or more of some of the languages in your life or education growing up? Or do you think the way you grew up was the best way for you?**

I would say that I wanted to have more English in my life from the younger age. But to do this, we need to change, like, the whole system of education, like, in perfect situation, I imagine it would be good like to teach only in English from the first grade. Like, it would be hard at the beginning, I know for everyone, but it would be better for me.

**So, like, what do you mean to teach only in English?**

Of course like Kazakh in Kazakh, like Russian in Russian, but like the subject as mathematics or geography, yeah, which it would be like, how international school in Kazakhstan do like they teach in English, everything. Oh, that's why. Yeah. It would be very great.

**Why do you think it will be better?**

Um, as English is very important. Language is like, it would be easier in the future, to be admitted to the university, to pass the international exams, entrance exams to university, and overall, every, every, like a lot of countries, speak English, so it would be easier to live

**When you meet Kazakh people in Lithuania, in what language do you most mostly speak?**

When I understand that they're Kazakh I greet them in Kazakh language, and I'm observing which language they're answering. What accent do they have? So that depends on the person from which part of the Kazakhstan. So in what language is speaking? Well, I prefer to speak Kazakh.

**Why do you prefer to approach in kazakh?**

Because in Lithuania here, a lot of that I met in my university, they speak Kazakh like very good. So that's why, from my experience.

**If given the choice, which languages would you want to prioritize in your future career and in life. So what would be your work language, and what do you think you would speak in your family when you have one?**

So for work, I think English, because I want to work for international companies. I hope so for family, I think it would be the same, because my parents are actually not really people, that do want to change, because they're not young.

**So if you have, you know, your own family, your own kids?**

It really depends on which nationality my husband would be, because I cannot say 100% that he would be Kazakh. If he would be Kazakh, then we would discuss between us, like, for example, which language we're going to teach children.

**But what would you prefer?**

Honestly, I prefer to teach Both. It is better to know more languages.

**Do you think that being bilingual or thrilingual, is part of Kazakh identity and what it means to be Kazakh today?**

Yes, of course. Because. A lot of people, like, from birth, they are teaching English. And other is like, you know, basically teaching for almost everyone, regardless of and then English is, like, from school, from like, courses and self teaching. So, yeah, a lot of three languages is, like basic.

**Do you know the difference between Kazakh and Kazakhstani?**

Yeah, like its country and its national.

**Do you know your tribe?**

Yeah, of course. I'm from the the little one, the little tribe, and my Ru is Alimuly.

**Was it at all important to you growing up, or was it just like, fun fact?**

Um, it is important because a lot of new people that you are meeting are asking this question. It's even could be the first question that they ask, like, what is your name, and then what is your ru? So I think it's a pretty important question.

**If you had to rank it, do you think you are an ethnic Kazakh citizen of Kazakhstan, or a member of your region or tribe first? So what do you think? Which ones are more important to you?**

They are all valuable, but for me, traditions and things that are related to ethnics are valuable, so Kazakh first. Then I would say citizenship, and then Ru and tribes, because it's a very, very fun thing to know, but it doesn't really make sense so much.

**In what ways do you express your Kazakh identity? What do you think you do that is uniquely Kazakh?**

I would say that my habit of drinking tea a lot so people from different nationalities are asking why I'm drinking so much tea, because they usually drink it when they're sick or when they're cold. So it's a main habit that are that is related to my nationality ethics.

**What maybe are other things that you do, not necessarily abroad, but also in Kazakhstan, that like makes you feel closer to your Kazakh identity?**

I think it is like, even when I'm in Kazakhstan I'm I'm already close to this, to Kazakh ethnics and identity. So whenever I am, I feel my ethnicity and who I am. I don't know it is for me. I don't need anything certain to remind me my ethnicity.

**How do you explain what is Kazakhstan and how it's different to foreigners?**

So Usually I'm just saying that geographically, Kazakhstan is in Central Asia, and it's like bordering China, Russia. So they, a little bit understand where at least our country is. I can talk about our tradition. I can say what our national dishes are, what language are we speaking? Tell something about my everyday living as extent, something like that you know about my city.

**Has been abroad changed your perception of your national identity or language?**

Just like overall, I just realized how happy I am to have it and like I'm when I'm abroad, I'm missing my country even more. Yeah, I'm missing the the way people are hospitable. I'm kind of like that when I'm abroad, especially in Lithuania.

**Do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to Kazakh?**

Yes, I think it is directly the way how each person like, define themselves like it is important if your Kazakh it is important to speak Kazakh.

**What do you think plays the biggest role in defining what it means to be a Kazakh? What is the most important?**

I think the most important is the thinking. What language you speak in, yet is like the second plan, and the first is like how you're thinking about your country, about your traditions, how you make the connection with people in your country, like, what meaningful connection you have that your parents are also like, have the same ethnicity. It's all like the one all influence who you are and why you're Kazakh.

**Kazakhstan has promoted a trilingual language policy of Kazakh, Russian and English. Do you think that trilingual policy is the right way to go, or should be somehow different?**

I think it's not bad policy. I think it's good, because not a lot of countries have this policy. It is good to know more languages. It is easier to communicate in the future with different people, create connections, create meaningful connections, and work overall with people communicate. So overall, it's a very good policy.

**How do you feel about government efforts to promote the use of language? Do you see it also? Do you think it's enough or it's too much?**

It's not like too much. It cannot be too much in our situation, because promotion of the language is very important, as now it is still like the problem of non Kazakh speaking part of Kazakhstan. So it's, I cannot say that it's too much. It's like how it's supposed to be. I think even more effort would be good.

**What do you think would be the best approach in promoting Kazakh language, how do you think it should be done?**

I think it's like the policy is very good, but I also think that it would be great if more institutions were built where Kazakh language is promoted by by creating events for promotion of languages, because it is depends on the youth very much. So that's why it's important to make these events at schools and universities. Yeah, because the youth, can make a change in this question.

**How do you think the role of each language, Kazakh Russian and English, will change in Kazakhstan's future, what the language situation will be?**

I believe that in the positive way, it would be like, in a good way, the promotion of, Kazakh language. But also, not forgetting about the Russian language, it's very good like to promote not only one language. Honestly, I'm happy that they have this policy. Do you think the role of English will increase in the future? Yes, of course, I think the role of English will increase. Because even now, the role of English increased like in comparison, like five years ago, not so many people, especially teenagers and youth, spoke English. But now, especially like the influence of abroad education. A lot of students want to receive, like, high quality education. And even in Kazakhstan, there are a lot of international uni that teach only in English. So to be accepted and to enroll to these unis, it is mandatory to know English. So that's why, yeah, the role is increasing very much.

**Kazakhstan plans to transition to the Latin alphabet by 2031, it was announced in 2017 and it was planned to happen by 2025, but now it's extended. How do you feel about this change, going to Latin alphabet for Kazakh?**

I think it's, it is good in a way that a lot of people from different nationalities can at least read it. And it would, it would be easier for them to read it, to understand it, and to learn it. Maybe even. Challenges would be that a lot of people already know the other type of the the other type of the alphabet, so it would be hard to change and learn the new one. Think it is possible because at first I thought it would be very hard, but as I practiced, it is not that hard, and it is very much manageable.

**P25**

I'm 20 years old, and my study in Kazakhstan is restaurant and hotel business, I study in Karaganda, in Russian.

**Why are you studying in Russian?**

I have finished school in russian, so i just continue studying in russian

**In which university are you currently in, your exchange?**

Here in Lithuania, I study in Vytautas Magnus University.

**It's an exchange?**

Yes, I am exchange student.

**What is your religion?**

I can say that I'm Muslim.

**Are you practicing Muslim? Like, do you celebrate holidays? You do certain things, or not really?**

I don't want to answer that kind of questions, actually, to be honest.

**Okay, that's fine. Where were you born?**

Actually, I was born in Uzbekistan.

**And did you grew up there fully, or did you move later?**

I was just born there, and I we moved from Uzbekistan when I was one year and a half, so I can say that I was growing up in Kazakhstan.

**And where in Kazakhstan did you grow up?**

The city is Temirtau, which is close to Karaganda.

**What languages do you speak?**

I speak, to be honest, only three languages. It's English, Russian and Kazakh.

**Which language do you speak the most fluently?**

I can say it's Russian,

**And when is your English or Kazakh better?**

I think it's equal English and Kazakh is on the same level.

**Okay, so if you had to think about each language you speak, what words do you associate with them?**

Russian language, I can say it's maybe Pushkin. He's an artist, writer. With English language, I don't know. Let it be Britain, London, with Kazakh. It's words ainalayyn. What it's? It's, it's words Aina lion.

**And what do they mean?**

You can call in the line someone, if you really love some like the person.

**That's sounds like a really nice word.**

Yeah, yeah, it has a little bit of story behind these words. So if you are ready to sacrifice your own life for another person, you can call him ainalayyn.

**So in your family, what language do you speak?**

Mostly in our family, we speak Kazakh language.

**Is this mixed language? Or do you try to, like, speak pure Kazakh?**

They're speaking pure Kazakh. But sometimes, of course, we can add some Russian words. Most of the time it's pure Kazakh.

**And did you go to Russian or Kazakh speaking school?**

My elementary school was a Kazakh school, but then I moved to Russian school from first class till the end, I was studying in Russian school.

**Why did you change the language of the school?**

I had some reasons, and I don't want to answer this question to be honest. I'm sorry.

**But it was probably more so, like your parents decision, right?**

Fourth grade, yes, yes, of course, I was a kid and I couldn't decide it. So yes, I can say it's more decision of my parents.

**And in the Russian school, did you had Kazakh as a subject?**

Yeah, actually, we had, I can say that the only difference between Kazakh and Russian school, it's that in Russian school you just learn your studies in Russian and that's it, to be honest.

**Okay, and from which grade did you start learning English?**

I started learning English, if I'm not mistaken from ninth or 10th grade.

**Oh, pretty late**

Oh, yeah

**But you speak pretty well. Thank you very much. I studied Well, um, okay, and with your friends in your daily life in Kazakhstan, which language do you use more?**

To be honest, it depends on the person. For example, in Kazakhstan, we have lot of different nationalities. It's more than 100 and the more convenient language to use is Russian because all of them, they know Russian language. It's easier to speak. But with your, for example, Kazakh friends, you, of course, speak in kazakh.

**Did your attitudes towards language usage changed between childhood, teens and now in your life?**

Actually, yes, I can say that. When I was a kid, I was speaking in the Kazakh language I've learned. I started learning Russian a little bit later, when I started watching some cartoons, movies, etc. And of course, when I was when I became a little bit older, I decided to learn English. And yes, I can say that it has changed.

**But like, did your attitude change? Did you start to think that, for example Kazakh is more or less important for you?**

I can say that Kazakh language always was really important for me. And I can say maybe the only one difference that I started paying more attention to English. But there's not big changes in attitudes towards languages.

**Do you notice changes in attitudes towards language maybe in Kazakh society in the last years?**

Yes, it was according to Russian language, of course.

**Okay, so can you maybe speak a bit more on that?**

I don't know. I don't want to. Actually, I can say that attitude has changed to Russia, language, not positively, of course, and that's it, I guess.

**Okay, so, yeah, do you think there is more Kazakh now compared to when you were kid or a teen?**

Yeah, definitely, yes. Now it's more Kazakh language. I can say, for example, why I can speak Russian. It's because I was watching cartoons in Russian. But now you can easily find the cartoons, for example, in Kazakh language, you can find a lot of different books in Kazakh language, because when I was a kid, it was not that popular to translate all of these books. It was only in Russian, I can say, or I think so. I can't really be confident about that, but it was hard to find every book in Kazakh so now it's, of course, it's much more easier to find everything in Kazakh language.

**Why do you think this change happened?**

I guess it's a developing of the country, of our nation, our technologies, I can say that we are very young country. We're just around 30 years old, and we are still improving everything in our sphere, I can say we just keep going, and I guess that's it.

**Do you wish there would have been more or less of some of the languages in your life or education when you were growing up? Do you wish your education, the way you learned languages, would have been any different?**

Maybe I can say about Kazakh language. I can say that when I was studying in Russian school, already it was, it was really hard to learn Kazakh language. So I wanted it to be more progressive. I can say I wanted to be with more practice, maybe more innovative ways how to learn the new languages and etc. So when it comes to Kazakh language in Russian schools, yes, it could be better.

**Is it important for you? To speak Kazakh in your life.**

Yes, it is important if I want to identify myself as a Kazakh, of course.

**Do you meet other Kazakhs here in Lithuania?**

Yeah, I've met, I can say a lot of a lot of Kazakhs

**What languages do you speak when you meet Kazakh abroad?**

It's Kazakh language.

**So is it just that you met only Kazakh speakers? Or do you like prefer it that way to to like speak in Kazakh?**

It depends on situations just we are Kazakhs, and it's more convenient to speak in Kazakh, for example. But sometimes, if it's not only Kazakhs around like us, and for example, if there is someone who doesn't understand, for example, Kazakh language, we can move to English or Russian, so everyone can understand us. So it's it depends on situation, but if it's the Kazakhs. So of course, it's more convenient to speak Kazakh.

**And do you speak Kazakh or like mixed language?**

It's Kazakh, and sometimes it can be mixed with Russian and English also, but most mostly, it's Kazakh.

**Okay, so when you meet a new let's say Kazakh, in which language do you usually approach him in? What language do you say hello?**



Kazakh, of course.

**And why is that? Why do you choose like Kazakh?**

I guess it's because of our culture. For example, if you are growing up in Kazakhstan, you can't, for example, show fully your emotions in Russian language. When you're speaking in Kazakh, you can fully, I can say, show your emotions, expressions, etc. It's, it's something like this. In this field, I can say.

**But do you ever feel conflicted about which language to use? Is it ever hard for you to decide? Maybe you have some examples.**

Sometimes, yes, it can happen, for example, when you meet someone who doesn't speak Kazakh, for example, well, of course, you think that you maybe you need to change a language to Russian, maybe, or to English so you can have a little bit more conversation. I mean, yeah it happens

**But you would prefer to speak in Kazakh, like, if you can, right?**

Yes, yes, if I can, it's better to speak Kazakh

**Um, okay, so if given the choice, which languages would you want to use in your future career and life, and if you like, for example, so when you work in the future, what language would you like to use, and if you have a family and kids and things like that, what language would you like to speak?**

Of course, when it comes to work, it's not surprising that I would say it's English, because I can say it's international language, and it's very, very important to speak English if you want to get a better job, for example. But when it comes to, for example, family, of course, I want my family to speak in Kazakh, but also I can understand that it's very important to teach them English and maybe a little bit of Russian. Anyway, it's better to know.

**I know you said you didn't want to answer this question, but it's kind of important for my thesis, and it's like, but I'm going to ask directly, still, do you think war in Ukraine affected the attitudes of people towards language in Kazakhstan in general, not necessarily for you, but like in Kazakhstan?**

It's kind of hard question, because it depends on, for example, what region depends on situations, it depends on a lot of different stuff. But I can say that for some people, I can say yes, they have changed their attitude that still in Kazakhstan, you can use Russian, and there is no problem with it. Because it's not about Russian people, it's about just language. It's not however connected to the war, I can say so it's still useful language. Yeah, even here in Lithuania, it's sometimes it's convenient to use Russia, for example, yes, with older people, yeah.

**Yeah, I understand, yeah. Just again, FSB is not listening. It's okay, yeah, No. Just Actually, I didn't expect that kind of questions to be honest. Okay, do you think that speaking two or three languages is a part of Kazakh identity and like what it means to be a Kazakh?**

Yes, I can say that the new generations, like the people who are the same age, for example, as me and maybe even older, most of us, we can speak three languages. I can say that, Kazakh and Russian. It's optional, but now learning English, it's becoming more and more popular, and it's, I can say it's important to know English, because you have a lot of different possibilities. I mean opportunities, if you know how to speak in English. So yeah, I can say that if you are Kazakh you can easily speak three languages and yes, maybe it's a part of us.

**Do you know like the difference between Kazakh and Kazakhstani identity.**

First of all, I want to say that I am Kazakh, then I'm citizen of Kazakhstan, and then I'm a member of my tribe, but I can say that every single thing, it's equally important. For example, our tribes. It's important to be Kazakh. It's important for ourselves. Of course, everything is important. So it's really hard to rank it, actually, but let it be yes, I'm Kazakh, then I'm citizen of Kazakhstan, and then I'm member of my tribe.

**For a lot of people, just knowing tribe is like a fun fact, but it's not something that's actually like important to them. But do you think it's part of your identity?**

Of course, definitely it's, it's very for example, when you are looking for brides, or, I don't know, girlfriend, it's very important to know from which tribe she is, because it's our traditions, it's our culture. If you are from the same tribe you cannot, for example, get married, there is a lot of different points. For example, it's also, according to history, it's important to know about your ancestors, about the history of your family, and etc. So I can say it's very, very important, because it's part of us. It's part of our culture. And, yeah, it's important.

**Did you grow up in a family where, knowing your ancestors or your tribe was important?**

Of course it was important, from my childhood, when I was three, I will already knew from which tribe I am.

**Do you think you grew up in like, lower middle or upper class family? In what ways do you express your Kazakh identity? What do you think you do that is uniquely Kazakh?**

Maybe when it comes to our culture, maybe when it comes to our food, for example, when it comes to relationships between other Kazakhs, for example, here, first week, when I was in Lithuania, I've met some Kazakh people. We didn't know each other, but still, we knew that we are Kazakhs, and they were helping me a lot, only just because I'm Kazakh and I can say it's also about hospitality and kindness, if you are kind to other people, if you are hospitable, it's also part of our culture, our identity, to be kind with other people.

**How do you represent your Kazakh identity when explaining your background to non Kazakh peers?**

There is a lot of different ways how I can explain it, but sometimes I can just tell them that we are Kazakhs and we are nomads. For us it's very important to feel freedom, it's very important to be how I already said, hospitable. It's very important to be kind, for example. So yeah, it's more about freedom, hospitality and something in this way.

**Do you have to talk about, maybe about Russian influence, because for some foreigners, it might look weird like, why are you like in Central Asia, and you speak Russian. Did you ever have these situations?**

Oh, yeah, of course, actually, yes, I had that kind of situations where people asked me why I speak Russian. And of course, you explain why you speak, because sometimes they don't understand. And I just tell them that we were part of Soviet Union. And after that some explaining. Of course, they can understand why.

**So what would be the explaining?**

If a person interested in it very much. You can add a lot of different details, but mostly I just said that we were a part of Soviet Union. They had its own influence on us. Everything was in Russian, for example, and we just had to speak Russian. And if you wanted, for example, for us better life, for example.

**Um has the experience of being abroad changed your perception of your national identity and language?**

I can say maybe the only thing that I understood that English is really important, not only in I can say theoretical, but in the practice, it's really important to speak English. But about national identities, I guess I can say nothing has changed. Everything is the same, or there is differences, but they're not that big.

**Okay. Do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be a Kazakh?**

Yes. I can say it's important because, for example, if you know Kazakh language, you can understand Kazakhs much more, because sometimes you can't explain in Russian. For example, I've told you about the word ainalayyn and it's really hard to explain. What does it mean? For example, for you, I just said that it's the person who you love, yes, but behind this word, there are much more different emotions, feelings and something in this way which you don't need to explain, for example, in Kazakh language. But when it comes to, for example, Russian or English, of course, I need to translate. I need to explain what does it mean, and etc. So if you are Kazakh. And you know Kazakh language, it's important to, for example, to speak Kazakh to understand each other more correctly.

**What do you think like plays the biggest role in defining what it means to be Kazakh,**

The most important to be Kazakh... Let it be our culture. It's really important to know our culture, to know about our relationships between each other, to know about our traditions. It's all also very, very important, because if you, if you miss these kind of questions, you cannot understand Kazakh people. And what does it mean to be a Kazakh? So, yeah, I guess these ones, it's the most important things.

**Do you think religion is part of Kazakh identity today?**

I can say that while answering on that kind of questions, you just need to understand that our I can say nation, like we Kazakhs, we are sometimes you can be really different. And for someone to be, for example, religious person, it's really important. But sometimes they think that to be more in traditions. In Kazakh traditions, it's more important, for example. So I can say that there is no one answer. Is it important or not, at the same time it is important. It is and sometimes it's not, but maybe, maybe mostly it is important because I can say, yes, our religion, it's I can say it's already also our culture, and, yes, it's, it's important sometimes.

**Do you think it is a part of your identity for you?**

Yes, yes, of course, it's a part of me also, because at least I always grew up in this kind of circumstances. So it is already I can say Islam is part of me.

**I kind of really want to ask this question. I'm just gonna make an assumption, and you might say it's correct or not. So did your parents decided to let you to Russian speaking school because they thought there would be more opportunities for you?**

Yes, kind of, not only, but one of the reasons why I went to Russian school, of course, opportunities.

**Do you think that trilingual policy is the right approach, or do you think it should be more bilingual or only focusing on one language?**

I think it's really good decision, because that's three languages. They are really important for our country, and of course, it gives a lot of more different opportunities. If you know the languages, it's really good for us. So in Kazakhstan, it's not that hard to learn Kazakh and Russian, for example, if you're Kazakh especially, and to know English, it's better. So if you know a lot of languages, it's just advantages. I don't see any disadvantages here.

**How do you feel about government efforts to promote the use of Kazakh language? Do you think it is enough, or maybe it is too much?**

I can see that is, they're trying to do at least something, but it's not enough. In my opinion, they could do better. They could do a lot better and more, of course.

**Okay, what do you think should be an approach?**

For example, if you already have strict rules to, for example, if you want to work in as, for example, policeman or government kind of works it's demanded to speak Kazakh language. But for example, if you choosing other areas in work, it's not necessary to speak, for example, Kazakh language. But I want it to be that speaking Kazakh could give you much more advantages, for example, in different areas also, but at the same moment, I don't want it to be so strict. I want the people like, let me explain. I want the government to find the way in which they can teach people to speak Kazakh. In that they are satisfied in that way, then they don't feel, I don't know bad about the language when they feel ease to speak, for example, but they need to create something really good so people can understand. But you know, you always have practice teaching people Kazakh language in non strict way. And I can say that people, they don't want to speak Kazakh language. So maybe, maybe it should be demanded and strict. It's because, in these cases, people just don't want to learn.

**Yes, so you think that people like so, if you are a citizen of Kazakhstan, you should at least, like understand the basic Kazakh language?**

I think not only understand basic Kazakhs, I want them to speak Kazakh. Because they are not learning as a language only because it's not necessary, they can live without any problems while not knowing, as if you know Russian, it's enough. In Russia, if you're Russian and you're studying in Russian. Like, I mean, sometimes Russian people, they can

study in Kazakh schools, and they can speak Kazakh language, but it's really rare that Russian people, they choose Kazakh school. They always choose only Russian school. So that's the reason why they don't understand Kazakh language.

**But in Russian schools, there's also like lessons for classes, right?**

Yes, but they are, I can say, not helpful. I was studying Kazakh courses in Russian school and it was absolutely unhelpful. You can even not know the basics because there is no practice. It's per theoretical material. The teachers, they're just teaching, they're talking about Kazakh language, but they're not letting the students speak, for example, because if they are not practicing at all, and they just, for example, sit in the class, they have maybe listened the lecture, for example, they like came out from the class and they forgot everything immediately. There is nothing in their brain after this kind of classes.

**How do you view the role of each language in Kazakhstan's future? How do you think the language situation will change?**

It's really hard to predict, but I guess it will be more Kazakh language, more English, because nowadays we trying to understand that it's very important to speak Kazakh. Of course, it's, I'm talking about our new generations, for example, they grew up in Kazakhstan. Yeah, I want you to understand that, for example, our parents, they grew up in Soviet Union. And I can say that we are first generation that grew up in Kazakhstan, for example, and we are only now trying to understand what does it mean, for example, to be a kazakh what does it mean, or traditions? Why is it important? And nowadays, we are trying to improve, not only like our language, but we are trying to improve other fields. We are trying to understand that, for example. In English. It's also very important if you want to be a very good specialist in your field. For example, when it comes to Russian, it's, it's hard to say because, for example, it's, it feels like it's optional to speak Russian. For example, in Kazakhstan, it's not. For example, if you speak Russian now, it's something usual. So I guess Russian language also will stay Russian. I can say that Russian is really, really important for us. Yeah, but I guess, yes, just Russian will stay as it is.

**So Kazakhstan plans to transition from kirilutta to Latin alphabet. How do you feel about this change in general? Do you think it's positive or negative?**

I guess you will agree with me if I say that it's positive, of course, because, for example, Turkish people, Azerbaijani people, if I'm not mistaken, of course, they use, for example, latin letters. And when you, for example, move to Lithuania it's convenient, for example, for foreigners, they can, for example, read our boards. They can understand our words. And in this way, it's, for example, our language can be more familiar, maybe even more popular. And maybe some foreigners, they will be interested to learn our language. Maybe they can understand how, for example, the language is beautiful, or something like this. So I can say that it's positive. But for example, when I even in my experience, when I was here, some students, they asked me why we use kirilica like letters, and they didn't understand me why I was trying to explain that, of course, they don't understand. They can't read in the kirilica. So if it was, for example, Latin, it would be much better. They can read. They can not understand, of course, but at least they can read.

**And do you think there could be any negatives regarding that change?**

Of course, there can be negatives, for example, older people. For them, for example, it can be hard to write in Latin, for example, or to read it. When it comes to younger people, of course, it's for us, it's easier to understand thro. But for older people, yes, it will be, it will be some problems different, so we need to solve it, for example, in future and etc

**P26**

**What is your age?**

I'm 19 years old.

**What do you study?**

Business Administration, bachelor's degree.

**For how long have you been in Lithuania already?**

I'm here already for one year and two months.

**Okay. What is your religion?**

I do not like have any religion.

**Did you come from religious family or not?**

No.

**Where were you born?**

I was born in Kazakhstan, in city, which is named Karaganda. It is the central region of Kazakhstan. It's more Russian speaking.

**What languages do you speak?**

I speak fluently, Russian, English and French, and on the not really fluent level, Kazakh and Spanish.

**So is it like in that order? Like Russian the best when English, French, Kazakh and Spanish.**

Yeah, I think so.

**So you say Kazakh would be like fourth language for you?**

Yes, for me, actually, Kazakh is fourth language. Of course, I started to learn it from when I was a kid because I went to school and kindergarten and so on. But my priorities changed since I was grown up, and I started when I finished my school, I didn't learn Kazakh anymore, and I started French for my intercultural communication and so on. So that's why French went upper than even than Kazakh.

**So if you had to think about each language you speak, what words would you associate with each language?**

So with Russian language, I would say complicated and rich language. With English, it's words as common, straightforward and useful. French, precise and demanding Kazakh, compound and historical and Spanish, sharp, rapid and sounding.

**Why is Kazakh? You say compound?**

Compound? Because in Kazakh structure, there are a lot of endings which you need to add suffix. It's called, yeah, to form different types of the verbs and so on. And any words you need to form to you need to add a lot of suffix. That's why I found it compound language.

**So you in what in what language kindergarten and school did you go to when you were growing up?**

I went both in Russian, Russian speaking Russian, kindergarten at school, because I was speaking Russian from my childhood, my family's Russian speaking. So it was the logical choice to go there. Are you mixed? I'm mixed. My father is Kazakh and my mom is Tatar. Yes, they weren't like, deported. They were came to Kazakhstan for salary, higher salaries.

**And did, do you have, like, any, maybe older people in your family who speak Kazakh, or just no one really?**

Yes, my my father's mom, my grandmother, from father's line, she speaks Kazakh fluently, but her first language is still Russian. And from my mother's side, they speak their own language, which is called Tatar according to the nation. I understand Tatar actually more than Kazakh. I cannot speak it, but I understand because I was grown up by my father's side more than my father's that's why I was hearing and comprehending this language even more than Kazakh.

**Yeah. So you said you went to Russian kindergarten and school, and from what grade did you start learning kazakh?**

I learned Kazakh from the first grade, ometimes even from the kindergarten. Depends on the kindergarten you go in. So it's kind of from six years old.

**Did you speak in Kazakh with any of your relatives or friends at all?**

No, in the family, we do not speak Kazakh. I mean, we can make some concepts or just some words or some phrases, not like, really speech and so on. And all my friends, they are from Russian speaking school as well. I had an experience of speaking Kazakh in the university in Kazakhstan so when I used to study there for one year, but it wasn't like friends. Was more like classmates or residents of the dormitory I lived in. So yeah, it's a basic conversation, but I had an experience.

**Then which grade did you start learning English?**

From the fifth grade.

**Do you think Kazakh language is important for you for your identity?**

For my identity, I would say that actually, because of the history, because of all that happened in Kazakhstan, we can comprehend like Kazakh as a two language, speaking people. Because even Kazakh, I know my friends whose native is Kazakh, they're still speaking in the mixed language. They're mixing these languages. So I cannot actually imagine Kazakhs without Russian language at all, because it's already got some part of our culture as well. But of course, Kazakh language itself is really I found it, even though I do not know it as good as other people. I still find it part of my identity and so on. Ethnicity, especially I felt here when I come here and I start to communicate with people from other countries, and when even in Russian language, I speak with other people who speak Russian, and they tell that this Russian is different because of the sounds that we miss. We mix sometimes, and so on. So yeah, I thought it's still really important for me.

**Do you think you would like to learn Kazakh better in the future? Or, does it not? Does it not really matter to you?**

It really depends on the my state, my country, what policy it's going to propose in the future. If it will be like still two official languages, because for now, it's two official languages that you can use, both equally in our country, then I think that there is no problem that Russian is, one of the official languages? And if my country starts the policy of, for example, only implementing only one language, then, of course, I should know it, because I'm citizen of this country, and if you don't know the language of your country, it's not really good for you.

**But you yourself are not thinking about it right now?**

I am not thinking about getting better at Kazakh right now, because actually I comprehend languages in practical cue I mean, and then even in my list of the languages, I choose French and Spanish, for example, for first learning, because it's really popular languages in the world. So I found languages more even from practice, if it will be useful for me for communication.

**Do you notice that there's some changes in Kazakhstan comparing your childhood and now in terms of language?**

I would say, Yeah, and change happened in 2019 when our president changed. Because before with our first president, it was more of the Kazakhstan had a lot of ethnicities, different languages, speakers in country. It was more like something that we are proud of. It was that Kazakhstan is multicultural, multi language country and so on. But after 2019 with our new president, this policy lost its power. Lost its significance as it was before. So nowadays, the people do not talk about it as in the same mood, in the same sense, as they used to. So for now, I think the focus changed from that we are a multicultural country. That's good to the focus that we need to renew our history.

**Which approach do you prefer?**

In this case, of course for me, I think my point of view will be subjective, because I do not speak Kazakh. And for me, of course, the first approach, which is better personally, because I understand, I was born in the Russian speaking city. I have a lot of friends from different nationalities. For example, in my class, they were Germans, Koreans, Latvians, Russians, Ukrainians. And of course, each of their language is important. And for me, of course, the first approach is better. I think after, especially after experience here in Lithuania, when I communicated a lot with other people from different countries, and you start to understand that that's not the reason for a conflict. Your differences between the nations. It's actually really good to know and be proud of it.

**Do you think that there should have been less or more for one of the languages in your life, in education, growing up?**

I think it's always good if you have more languages when you grow now, like if you're bilingual, it's always better than your monolingual. So if, for example, in my family, they were speaking two languages, and I was, I was bilingual from childhood, it would be great. Of course, it doesn't matter what language, any language, just bilingual is always good advantage.

**Do you wish you spoke Kazakh better?**

Yeah, I think speaking Kazakh better maybe it will be really valuable, useful for me anyway. And of course, it's going to be just easier for me to communicate in Kazakhstan with more, even more people, not just all who knows Russian.

**So do you meet Kazakhs abroad here?**

Ah, yes, I have actually a lot friends and acquaintances here

**What language do you speak when you get together?**

We usually speak in a mix of three languages. Actually, it's Kazakh Russian in English. Because when you're use a lot of English, you start just to forget some words. This the same words in Russian or Kazakh and you just say it in English.

**Okay when you meet a new Kazakh, let's say who you don't really know. In what language do you approach them usually?**

Firstly, I ask if he's Kazakh or not, because it's kind of hard to determine and when I hear that they're Kazakh, usually it's always Russian, because people comprehend it, almost everyone. So yes, usually it's always Russian.

**Do you ever feel conflicted about which language to use?**

Yes, when I only came here, I was conflicted regarding my Kazakh but it was regarding Ukrainian friends and Ukrainian classmates, because I knew that they know Russian language, but I didn't know if they would like to communicate in this language and so on. So I always start to speak in English. And when they knew that I'm from Kazakhstan, they were just, most of them were shifting to Russian with me and saying, ow, we can speak in Russian.

**Okay, so since you mentioned that. Did war affected you when it comes to your thinking about your identity and language in any way, or did it not have much difference for you?**

Of course war in Ukraine had an impact. But I think it's not inner, not my identity itself, because I find it still like I do not think that it have changed, or something like that, because I do not choose my mother's language. And of course, I know that it's language not a problem at all. I mean, it's just a language. It does not reflect people's character, people's real intentions, so on. I just as I told before, I found language of practical use, but I face it's affected me from the outside point of view that some people started to I would say, comprehend me, accept me differently just because my mother tongue is Russian. For example, I met one guy from Ireland, and he told me that I'm really good person, even though I speak Russian. And I was kind of surprised, but in fact, like how language can determine anything. But for him, it was so, so, yeah, I kind of faced it, not, not often, sometimes very rarely, but still.

**Do you ever, did you ever faced judgment from other Kazakhs?**

Yes, yes, I faced judgement when I studied in University, because there were a lot of people from South Kazakhstan who speaks usually only Kazakh, and they do not even know that outside of their city, people speak two languages so frequently and so fluently. It was, but not from my classmates, I would say, I would say it from older generation, especially from the teachers, Kazakh teachers, Kazakh language teachers, who grown up in Soviet Union. Maybe that's why they were so aggressive.

**Does the fact that you your Kazakh is not fluent ever like stops you from speaking Kazakh? Do you think if it was better, you would use it more?**

Actually, yes, I faced it as well, experience it as well. Because, as I told when I started university, I moved to Astana. And in Asana, it's like Kazakh in fact, 50/50, in comparison with Karaganda. So I needed to communicate in Kazakh especially with people from South Kazakhstan. And sometimes I faced some mocking, probably when I'm trying, I was trying to see Kazakh from them, and it wasn't actually really nice, but not some something really rude, or something really huge, only maybe some jokes.

**If given the choice, which languages would you want to prioritize in your future career and in your family life?**

I think I wouldn't change anything like as an order I have like, Russian and English, two languages in my life, because Russian is my mother tongue, so I wouldn't change it, because I have what I have as nationality, for example, one and English, because it's 100% useful anywhere, everywhere.

**Do you think you would like for your kids to learn Kazakh?**

Teaching Kazakh for my kids really depends on the place I will be living with my children because, for example, if they're going to be a citizen of another country, it's up to them if they want to learn or not. But if we live in Kazakhstan, yeah, sure, it will be actually nice, because, as I told before, we are citizens of this country, and if the policy will change, yeah.

**So do you think that speaking to our three languages is part of Kazakh identity and what it means to be a Kazakh today?**

I would say so. I've never thought about it before this interview, but now I understand that I've never met any Kazakh who speaks only one language without mixing with Russian or English who's studying abroad? Like everyone mixes two languages, and it's already became part of the modern Kazakh, probably and our parents, not maybe our grandparents, but our parents, of course, as well.

**There's a difference between a term Kazakh and Kazakhstan or Kazakhstani. Do you know about this difference?**

I know because in English, it's not so popular difference, because it's kind of sounds strange, but in, for example, Russian language, we have it like tat and it's usual, two words, different, two words, yeah. It's whose nationality is Kazakh, and Kazakhstani, who's was born in Kazakhstan, but it's not necessary that he's a Kazakh. He may be Russian Ukrainian German.

**Did you know your tribe growing up or clan?**

I didn't know it before 16, I think. And when I had friends from southern part of Kazakhstan, they told me about that. I mean, I heard about it, but I didn't know it's really spoken about. The topic is spoken about in the Southern part. So I asked my dad if he knows our tribe and so on. And he told that Yes. And after that, he explained to me, which are we in, and so on. And after that, I know.

**Is it, in any way, a part of your identity important to you, or is it more just a fun fact?**



It actually has a sense in our history, because Kazakh could not marry his close relatives, and you need to know all your relatives. That's why it was important to know your tribe and so on. Nowadays, I think it's still important, because sometimes you can really find someone from your family, not so close relative, but still relative, but nowadays more like just some respect to your history, just to share some knowledge about each other, as like the day when you were born.

**Okay, so coming back to differences between Kazakh and Kazakhstani. If you would need like to say it for yourself. Do you what would come first for you? Kazakh identity or Kazakhstan identity?**

If we're saying like that, because for me, this true terminology are like I would say that. How to say not all Kazakhs are Kazakhstanis, because they could be born outside of the Kazakhstan, but no, Kazakhstanis are Kazakh. For me, yeah, because even my Russian friends, they feel different from their Russians. So for me, it's like all everyone who lives in Kazakhstan they are Kazakhs because of their cultures that we're united with, because of their traditions. They were seeing from the childhood, from their Kazakh friends, for example, and so on.

**In what ways do you express your Kazakh identity? What do you think you do in your life that is unique in Kazakh?**

Probably first thing that comes to me is the food, of course, our national dishes, when I'm here, I really miss it, and I really like to surprise people by the fact that it's with horse because many people, especially from Europe, they are really surprised by the fact that The second, I think some songs historical facts. It's one. It's also like, in my mind, I refer to it a lot, not only to some traditional music, but even like modern music, but from singers or something like that.

**Um, so how do you represent your Kazakh identity when explaining your background to non Kazakh peers?**

Usually, the first thing I explain to people who don't know anything about my country. It's our history that we were for a long time nomads, about our nature, or why we're eating horse meat. Because the main fact, because we're nomads we are free people. We weren't connected to one place or to one state, as it was back then in Europe, for example. First of all, then already from this fact, different other ones, like cuisine, why we have so not so rich cuisine, for example, and some our history, why we experienced some bad things in the history actually also because of the fact that we were nomads, I think in this way I explain our ethnicity.

**Do you think like in Kazakh identity, this Soviet Russian cultural influence is more important? Or, like the old traditions?**

If we talk about exactly what was maybe not better, but helped Kazakhstan back then. I think that many people underestimate the Soviet influence, if you can say, of course, there were many bad things, like the lose of the language, of heritage and so on. But if Kazakhs would stay nomads, it would be really hard for us to get to the high level of development, and to be like on the same level as, for example, European countries. I understand that we're not on the same level still, but it would be even harder, because, as I said before, we didn't even have huge towns where we could develop and so on. So in comparison with nowadays, that our main goals nowadays, yeah, that we want to be developed country, we want to increase our economy level and so on. I think that Soviet influence was more important in comparison with modern goals.

**How do you view maybe the Soviet influence, the Soviet history? Is it more positive or negative?**

Maybe since the fact that I was studying in Russian speaking school, we were talking about two sides equally. We were like debating with our teacher. She was asking us, what do you think? And so on. So I understand some advantages. For example, the education system, it was improved. The percentage of educated Kazakhs improved significantly. Then the urbanization, for example, what else? Some, some significant economical factors, for example, oil production, yes, and so on. Even space station was built in Kazakhstan, so it's also affected that. But of course, at the same time, I remember the things that happened on vice versa. For example, repressions, when people were just killed without any reason. They lose language, some heritage.

**Has been abroad, changed your perception of your national identity and language. For you, did this make you more patriotic or not really?**

Yes, of course. I think everyone, everyone feels more patriotic. Abroad, when you're in your country, you see some disadvantages you didn't like, but outside, you say everyone, we're perfect, we're good. I love it. We don't have any disadvantages or something. Because you, of course, you miss it. You miss, you start understand the good things of your country first. Because when you're in your country, you see some usually bad things, and you're pay attention to negative side. But when you're abroad, you start to comparing things. And of course, you start value the good things more. And not only about like modern world, but also like about history, you start to understand that your history, your ethnicity, is something unique, and it's not similar with any of other as any ethnicity in the world. And you start to value it for more different.

**Okay, so do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be Kazakh, or is it not that important?**

I think it plays a role, but I wouldn't put it on the top, top things like not the first thing that defines it, of course, as I told before, because being Kazakh means to mix language and so on. And it's not for me personally about language itself. It's, of course, about the place you were born in, your surroundings, if you experience traditional traditions and so on. Because, for example, I have even friends who are ethnically Russians, but they still celebrate something in Kazakh way, just because they like it. So it's absolutely not about the language. And for example, I've been in some Kazakh national events, like weddings and so on. And there were really traditional, very traditional customs and so on. And people spoke in Russian. So I think language is important, but not top thing. So what's the top thing? I think, anyways, traditions, foods, customs, I think it's, it's adopting what determines it

**But do you think speaking Kazakh is important for Kazakh ethnicity like to have that connection with language.**

yeah, like for Kazakh ethnicity overall language is important, I would say yes, language was lost during Soviet Union. That's why we still have troubles with it, like me, for example, yes, I do not speak it. So for Kazakh history overall, yes for saving it and developing.

**So Kazakhstan has officially promoted a trilingual language policy. Do you think Kazakhstan's trilingual policy aligns with the needs of people?**

With the needs of people personal, I think not all languages. For example, if people personally do not want to leave Kazakhstan and to live there forever and so on, English probably wouldn't be so important for them as Russian and Kazakh, but if we say about overall, of course, all these three languages are important. Kazakh, as we talked about, ethnicity and so on. And because it's an official and state language in Kazakhstan, Russian is also official language and more for multicultural communication, because here I first understood how it's actually wide used in the world. Because in Russian, I spoke with Ukrainians, Uzbek, Armenian, anyone and English for not only for communication, but even for information and content. We use English as more and more and more wide, more useful than other languages.

**How do you feel about government efforts to promote the use of Kazakh language? Do you see it and do you think it is enough or it should be less?**

I would say, if we talk about promoting Kazakh language, what we need to change is whole educational system. Because I remember how it was in sixth grade, because now, in Kazakhstan we have new education system, like it was implemented seven years ago, or something like that, and it was in sixth grade. It was old system, and I could speak fluent, like fluently on some really easy topics in Kazakh in school, for example. And I remember how I was in 11th grade. It was a new system, and I couldn't speak at all like I knew Kazakh even worse than in sixth grade. And I remember how we're sitting in 11th grade and we're learning some words which were not useful at all in daily life. And my mom, for example, I have little siblings, and they are studying it in the primary school, and in the primary school the same hard work which is not useful. So I think it's about educational system itself, not even like about government issues. I think if the education system was how it was before. It was much better, since I told I knew get better in sixth grade than now.

**Do you think there should be more promotion of Kazakh language or not?**

Yeah, it could be, but I would prefer positive promotion. I mean, not things like restrictions, for example, because some years ago, our government tried to make this restriction. They told us documents must be only in Kazakh, any certificates you want to issue, they must be full in Kazakh, but it's of course a big problem, because even Kazakh speaking people didn't know how to translate the documents properly to Kazakh language. So I think promotion is

really good, positive, for example, something like patriotic, but we need to review, look at our history. It's so great, so wonderful. We need to remember this.

**How do you think the role of each language will change in Kazakhstan's future?**

Looking at the nowadays policy, I think that maybe soon in Kazakhstan, they will eliminate two language policy, two official languages, and will leave only Kazakh language, official one and Russian will be just wide spoken. I think this direction, maybe there will be trying to implement English language, but I don't think it will be in serious future as wide as in India or Pakistan, where a lot of people speak it everyday, so I think the main focus will be on Kazakh as the only language.

**How do you feel about the changing of Kazakh alphabet to Latin?**

When I was in school in the ninth grade, some lessons were already implemented. Like, for example, we were writing some tasks in Latin alphabet, and I didn't understand. Why? Why? Why would you need it? But then I watched some I've heard somewhere in it, I don't really remember some interview or something that Latin is needed to for exactly, for opening this intercultural communication, because Latin is popular also with the world, and even if we just make it Latin, people outside would understand at least anything that's written in Latin, because some words are common in many languages. As the first reason, not, maybe not the main but the first I knew back then. And the second reason referred to history of the Kazakh language, to eliminate all connections with Soviet Union. It's my personal point of view on it. I found it because it was the same with our capital when they make moving new city to make like a new history of Kazakhstan or something like that. So I look at this this way, that to eliminate all connections and bonds with Soviet Union and to really to renew our history itself as well. But if we speak about my personal opinion about it like what I think, if it's good or bad, I found it actually, as I said before, latin it's really wide used and maybe it's even more sometimes, of course, it will be hard to change and shift to it, but I find it good try. But not to good tryin that we're still do not have alphabet.

**Do you think it will be very difficult?**

No, I don't think it will be difficult. Of course it will it will be for people to shift to another alphabet, but I do not understand why it is so difficult and why it requires such amount of funds to do that, that's what I do not understand. But like regarding difficultness, I do not think it will be so, because it will be smooth, still starting from school, some shop signs and so on, because nowadays, actually, I even saw a lot of shop signs that are in latin.

**P27**

**What is your age?**

Hi, I'm 21, I'm studying general medicine.

**You were on the exchange in Lithuania?**

Yes, I was. I did my Erasmus in Lithuania for one semester last spring.

**What is your religion?**

I'm a Muslim.

**Are you like practicing Muslim? How do you express your religion?**

Actually, I celebrate, for example, Eid and I'm fasting. I'm trying to fast every year, but I don't go to mosque on the on a daily basis. So I'm not I'm not practicing.

**Where were you born?**

I was born in Kazakhstan in the western part of the Kazakhstan in the city named Aktobe

**And where do you study?**

In Kazakhstan. Now, I'm studying in the capital, in Astana, in the Medical University.

**Yeah, but you only moved to Astana when you started studying, right?**

Yes

**So, what languages do you speak?**

Um, I speak Russian, Kazakh, English, and also Turkish. I think Russian is my best language, because I started to speak Russian since I was five. Before five, I was speaking in Kazakh only. But then, I don't know why, but I changed to Russian, and since then, I'm studying, I'm learning in Russian, and I speak on daily basis in Russian.

**Do you think your Kazakh or English is better?**

It's a controversial thing, because it's hard to say. But maybe English, because I'm studying. I sometimes search for materials in English, so my Kazakh is more of the household language, I think, because I use it when I'm speaking with my family and relatives.

**And Turkish would be the last language?**

Yeah, Turkish is the last one, because I studied Turkish in high school. So I don't remember Turkish, but I use it only when I'm in Turkey. For example, I went to do internship to Turkey, so there I actually practiced my speaking in Turkish. But it's, I think it's a bit.

**So if you would need to think like two, three associations for each language?**

Russian? I think it's past, daily basis and need. Kazakh, I think it's national identity, traditions and obligatory. English - future, potential and easy, while the Turkish, it's just extra also, it's like school.

**Why, for Russian, the first word is past?**

Past, because we were in the tight boundaries with Russian speaking society. Therefore it started from my grandparents. They actually transferred my parents from Kazakh school to Russian school, and from that my parents started to speak Russian on the daily basis, and they still do with me. So I think it's more about the past. Past than the future. And for example, what's about me? I want to speak Kazakh in the future. I want to speak with my children only in Kazakh or English without Russian.

**For Kazakh, you said it's also obligatory, right?**

Yeah, yeah. Because after traveling abroad, I started to value Kazakh language more. I started to see that I actually need Kazakh language, and think it's obligatory for everyone in my country to know other language. And also to keep, like the nation alive, we have to speak in so it's obligatory.

**Okay? So you said that until five you spoke only in Kazakh to what to which language kindergarten did you go?**

I went to the kindergarten where children spoke like mixed. They mix Russian, Kazakh. They spoke in both languages. But because, as my parents told me, my friends spoke in Russian, and they understand Russian dominantly, like I changed my mind also and started to speak in Russian, just because I want, I wanted to to speak with my friends more. And it's because of the environment. Also, most of the like cartoons, games, they were in Russian. Therefore, I think it was for me, it was easier to start to speak in Russian, to think in Russian.

**What language did you have lessons in?**

Like, both of them. So we have, like, we have two teachers. One spoke in Russian, and second spoken spoke in Kazakh.

**Oh, that's interesting format for kindergarten,**

So actually, I was in the Russian speaking group, but still they were like, sometimes they were changing day by day. And one of the our advisors. She were supervisors, she was Kazakh, and she spoke with us most of the time in Russian, but sometimes she used Kazakh also. But my group was Russian speaking,

**And when you went to like school, high school, was it Russian speaking school?**

So before the high school, I was studying in Russian school, but then I was accepted to the high school for gifted children, and it was in Kazakh. We were studying like languages. We were studying, like literature, geography, history in Kazakh and other lessons were in English. So I changed from Russian to English and Kazakh school.

**So, like, from seventh grade you did not have subjects in Russian?**

Yeah, from 7th grade I only have had Russian literature and Russian language, but in Kazakhstan, actually the schools are divided for Russian speaking in Kazakh speaking, and if we're talking about the Kazakh speaking schools. The literature there, it's more Kazakh orientated. So Kazakh literature there is so hard. And Russian literature, it's so easy for me, for Russian speaker, it was easy. But when I was studying in the middle school, and like first grade, I was studying in Russian school, so there the most of the accent was on the Russian language, and Kazakh it was, you know, just for the talking, like the basics. Until the fifth grade, we were studying only the basics. Yes, but then I changed, and in Kazakh school there was hard things like grammar and advanced grammar. For me, it was hard to change from the Russian speaking school to Kazakh speaking school, because the accent changed from Russian to, like most of the attention in the languages.

**But with your parents when you were little, you spoke only in Kazakh?**

Actually It was because my mom and father, they were working most of the time. I was with my grandparents, they speak in Kazakh, and they know some Russian. But even if, for example, my grandfather, he's actually graduated from the Medical University and he studied in Russian. He doesn't know Russian well. He just spoke with a huge accent, Kazakh accent, and it was easier for them to speak with me in Kazakh, so therefore I knew kind and I spoke in Kazakh most of the time, but when I was actually put in the another environment, Russian speaking environment, I just adapted and started to speak in Russian.

**Why do you think your parents wanted you to go to Russian speaking school rather than Kazakh speaking school?**

It's because actually the parents of my grandparents, they told my grandparents that they have to go to the Russian speaking schools, because the system, the education system, at that time, it was greater in the Russian school, so the teachers were more professional in Russian schools. And from that time, I think it's middle of the 20th century, my grandparents, like, chose this strategy, and my parents just keep using this strategy. Still, for example, with my little brother.

**How did it happen that you transferred to the Kazakh school? Was it just because it was very good school?**

It was elite school, Bilim innovation school, so I actually passed through the exams. During the exams, they give us the choice, variants in Kazakh or in Russian. And I prefer Russian, and because I studied in Russian, but all of this stuff which we had in these exams, they were in English in the school. So actually, I studied like mathematics and other technical subjects in English, while the other humanitarian classes they were in Kazakh, except of the Russian literature and Russian language. So for me, but still, for example, in geography or history classes, teachers saw that it was hard for me to explain in Kazakh, so they allowed me to bring with me the same book, same edition of the that book of the history classes or geography classes, but in Russian, just for me to understand that. So first of all, what I did, I learned the topic of the day in Russian. And then tried to explain it in Kazakh because it was obligatory, and yeah, so they actually gave us this, like discount, I I can say.

**Do you think the situation with like, prestige of schools is changing? Like, is it becoming more prestigious now to go to Kazakh schools than it was before?**

I totally agree with that. Because now a lot of innovative schools are opening, and it's public schools. Most of them are in Kazakh rather than in Russian. So it's elite school, and to enter the school, people have to pass exams and after studying in English and in Kazakh in that school. But still, for example, we have system of the elite school, Nazarbayev intellectual schools. They have some of the Russian speaking classes, maybe out of 10, maybe two of them are Russian speaking classes, or three of them Russian speaking classes. Because even I can see the the difference between the Russian speaking students and Kazakh speaking students, Russian speaking students, they are more technically gifted. I think they have more abilities in mathematics, in physics, chemistry because the teachers who actually try to give it to them they are Russian speakers. But now situation is changing, and most of the schools try to implement Kazakh language, for example, but still technical subjects, they are in English, in elite school. Now English is more preferable for technical subjects like chemistry, biology, physics, mathematics, algebra, geometry, while the humanitarian classes, they are in Kazakh.

**So your parents are more Russian speakers?**

My mother, she knows Kazakh, she can speak other fluently, while my father cannot. He is totally Russian speaker.

**Okay, so and with your friends in Kazakhstan today, like in Astana. Do you speak more Russian or kazakh? Or more like mixed language?**

It depends on who I'm talking to. For example, if I know that this girl or a man, can speak kazakh I try to speak in Kazakh, but most of the time I speak in Russian with them, just because it's easier for them. But yeah, if I know that some people, they are more Kazakh speaking than Russian. They studied in Kazakh, then in universities, they choose the Russian speaking classes. So with them, I try to speak in Kazakh or in English. They just studying in Russian, but not like have good speaking capabilities in Russian. But most of my friends, they speak in Russian, my university friends. But if I meet friends from my school, I try to speak with them in Kazakh, even if we know that both of us know Russian better. We try to speak in Kazakh, both of us, we are valuing our language. And I think that something changed after the first two years of the university, because before that, like 2023 we spoke with my high school friends in Russian, but then we started to value our language, and we still consciously try to speak in Kazakh.

**In what language are you studying in Astana?**

I'm studying in Russian, and that's a huge problem in educational system, because we don't have enough materials in Kazakh. If we have materials in Kazakh, they, most of them are just translated from Russian with mistakes. And even the teachers, because of because of that, they studied at their time in Russian. For them, it's also easier to teach in Russian. And for example, in the beginning of my studying, half of the groups were Russian speaking, and half were Kazakh speaking, but now, I think we have 80% Russian speaking groups, and 20% in Kazakh speaking groups, because, due to limit of the accessibility for Kazakh written materials, it's easier to learn in Russian. Most of the students transferred from Kazakh speaking group to Russian speaking group. I think that university now is trying to implement international groups, where the international students learn with other students in English, maybe one two groups each year, and they are studying in English, but it just started last year, so they started to implement English speaking groups. But we don't have enough of the teachers who knows English well, therefore universities stop on the two three groups per year. So most dominantly, it's a Russian groups in university.

**When you go on YouTube or Instagram, what language content do you think you consume mostly? Is it English, Russian?**

I prefer English. But sometimes I just cannot get all of the information in English. So I transfer to Russian, because we don't have for example, versions of the some silly series, therefore we are watching in Russian. And if we're talking about the materials, study materials, just because some of the teachers request from us exact book, for example, and that book we have only in Russian. I studied this book in Russian first, then I go to YouTube and try to search same topic in English, just because in English, it's more easier to understand. And now I am on that stage that I'm learning more than I need in Russian, just because the some of the teachers require it.

**And when it comes to, let's say, Instagram reels or YouTubers and things like that?**

It's mixed in Instagram, I have in English, Russian, Kazakh, sometimes even Turkish. In Tiktok its the same.

**Did your attitudes towards languages changed when you were little and when you became a teenager, and now, did you start thinking about it differently?**

I think my mind totally changed because among the people of my age at childhood, most of us were thinking that Russian language, it's more modern, while the Kazakh It's more among the people who live in villages, because most of what we consumed like a TV series, cartoons, games, they were in Russian, no Kazakh, and if we had Kazakh series, for example, they were cringe. It was supposed to be cringe, even the music. And we didn't listen to the music. It was popular among elders to listen, for example, radio in Kazakh, so in childhood times, I felt that, oh, it's cringe. I prefer Russian. And when I was a teenager, I started to consume English media, English platforms. Then I changed from thinking that Russian is popular and modern. I changed my mind to that. I think actually English is cooler than Russian. And I think that most of the people my age at that time, they were thinking the same because in Instagram it was popular, for example, to consume English based reels, posts, Tumblr, it was also popular YouTube. We tried to consume more English speaking series for example. But at the same time, I noticed that more and more Kazakh speaking bloggers, for example, became popular, so it become more normal to consume something Kazakh speaking, for example, music. Now I see that Kazakh speaking is more popular and the question of the national identity is more popular. We can see it even in what the people wear. Now it's popular to have, for example, t-shirt with something cultural, for example, the picture or the phrases in Kazakh, it's totally okay. Music also, now I listen. Now it's okay to listen Kazakh songs on the radio for children. Now, for example, I can see that, for example, on TV, we have more cartoons in English translated to Kazakh. In cinema we have alternative version in Kazakh and in Russian, but more people still prefer Russian versions of the some films. For me, I consciously try to go to the Kazakh versions just to support it. Just support the production of the Kazakh films. I think it's hard. I know that it's hard for me to understand in Kazakh, but still, I go there and try to consume more Kazakh speaking audios, cinema, films, media, just because I want to support it, just because it's my intention. I'm not sure that I speak Kazakh well, because, for example if we're talking about how to say, if we're talking about studying, if we're talking about health, something related to health, I change to the Russian because it's easier for me to say in Russian. I'm still like having the language barrier. But it's a language of my nation. Yeah, I have the problems with it. Yeah, even if, when I go to food shops, or restaurants, I noticed that most of the menus they just translated from the Russian. And because I know that maybe there will be mistake if I speak in Kazakh, I try to speak in Russian, but in last three months, I changed my mind and started to speak in Kazakh. I try, even if I do mistakes, I try to speak.

**Why do you think this change happened for you?**

I think because I started to think more about the future that I don't want to feel ashamed or feel guilty when I will have children, for example, or when I will be more experienced in my field as A physician, and for example, if somebody who don't understand Russian, came to me how I will respond, how I will care for this patient, if I don't know if I can communicate. So I feel responsibility to like, to do my job in the future, to do I must be a professional. **And also beyond of that, I must, know like culture or all things, because the language is actually the instrument of the culture. So I have to transfer the key of the nation.** I think that because since High School, in the Kazakh language lessons or the Kazakh literature, there was a huge topic, the national identity. It was like in all of the essays, it was the lesson where we were talking about the national identity with the teacher. So for me, I think it became more important after I have seen the difference abroad. Because abroad, I started to question myself why I'm speaking in Russians and most of the foreigners, when they ask me, asking me and my friends, which language do you speak? I cannot say that with true, honesty that I speak in kazakh because I do not, I speak in Russian. And when I say most of the time I speak in Russian, foreigners start to ask why. I don't know why. I just speak in Russian most of the time, just because the environment. I think, just because it's more orientated for Russian speakers. And I start to see the problem there, that I'm a Kazakh, and why my environment is Russian speaking, so maybe I will try to change it. I thought that maybe I will try to change it, even when I'm abroad. And I noticed that my friends also started to think that, and they also start to speak more in Kazakh. And when I came back here, I started to change my attitude towards my language, and I started to speak more, and moreover, I started to see on Instagram, there's like advertisement of the Kazakh classes, but they are free. So it's just intention from some businessmen to make Kazakh language more accessible for the people who didn't learn the Kazakh language since the childhood and now. I can see that in my town, for example. I mean, in Astana, in capital, in huge cities like Almaty, there are some free classes, clubs, just to improve your language skills in Kazakh.

**Okay, so, you said that it is more visible in, like, the last few years. So, like, do you think that, for example, there are maybe some political reasons? So you had a big power transition, like you went from Nazarbayev, who ruled pretty much all the time since the country was independent, and now you have Tokayev, do you think this power transition changed something, or did it already start happening before?**

I can see that I just noticed with my family that, for example, during the New Year video, when he just did his speech, when he was talking during his speech in Russian, he was more fluent than in Kazakh, while the other president was more fluent in Kazakh, and as I remember that it's Nazarbayev that program like a national identity program. I didn't understand the meaning of that program at that time it was, I think, 2017 2016 when it started, when we actually were forced to talk about this program at school. I remember still we had math lessons, and were just forced to go to the Kazakh language room, and they told us it's obligatory to write essay in Latin. We will help you, but it's like obligatory for every school to write a dictant in Latin in Kazakh. But we didn't know Latin so they showed us the possible alphabet, and we tried to write the whole text in Latin. Even now, I can see people who after the war started, most are elders, when they see youngsters speaking in Russian, they start to shout at them, in streets, to the people they don't know, to youngsters that, why are you speaking in Russian? And they talk in Kazakh. Why are you speaking in Russian? Aren't you a Kazakh? So do you want to be? Do you want to be a slave of Russians or something like that. They are talking to children. And I think they are creating this pressure. They creating this bubble. And most of the children, they just live with the pressure on their shoulders, and because of that, they do not speak Kazakh. **And for me, it was the same when I was teenager, I didn't understand the meaning of that problem, and I felt the pressure on my shoulders, why I must do this, why I must talk about this, why I must write essays so I didn't do anything purposely, or I just cheated on these essays, because I didn't want to. But when all of this anger went out when I just start to think about by myself. I really understand that. Actually, it's a cool thing.** I think that the political thing as war enhanced the growth of speaking Kazakh, because now we, a lot of people, truly understand why we have to not only think about, but we need to speak in Kazakh. In Kazakhstan, more and more teachers, for example, start to talk about this, that even if you do not want to learn Kazakh, you have to know at least basics, because in the future, I remember in the university, we have Kazakh class. Teacher told us, you can cheat on my lesson. You can do whatever you want, but you must understand that it's you who need this in the future. For example, if you have a patient who's speaking kazakh, what you will do? Translator, no, because we don't have good enough translators who truly translate from other languages together. We have a lot of mistakes in these translators, so it's actually hard. Coming back to Nazarbayev, I think it started during his time that people started to think about the meaning of speaking in Kazakh and how we can translate it into the society, that our language is not meaningless. And for example, to have versions in Kazakh films, in Kazakh radio, in Kazakh music, in Kazakh it's really important. We started to think about it in during Nazarbayev. I think Tokayev, actually during the beginning of his ruling period, he talked about this a lot, I agree. But the whole thing in my, in my point of view, started during Nazarbayev. And he actually knows Kazakh better he was born in village, and his Kazakh like even the accent, he has this Kazakh accent, while Tokayev, he doesn't. Tokayev know more languages. He know French, Chinese, Russian, Kazakh. But it, it can be seen for us, for Kazak people that he knows Russian better, and yeah, he he's fluent in Kazakh, but we can see that his main language is Russian.

**So for you personally, do you think there should have been less or more of some of the languages in your like education growing up? Or do you think still it was like the best way to go to these schools?**

For me who was in both of schools, I saw the differences between two schools. I can say that in Russian speaking schools, even during the Kazakh language classes, they divide us into two groups, who knows Kazakh well and who doesn't know at all, and they gave us tasks differently. So in the end of the year, we were on different levels. We had the same books. We had actually the same. We were in one class, but during the classic languages, they just divided us into two rooms and the grades actually, for example, I was, I remember I had four out of five in Kazakh. But I was much better. I know I knew Kazakh language much better than the kids from the different room who studied Kazakh with teacher who gave them easier tasks. So I think the Russian speaking schools, I sometimes ask my little brother, show me the your books, what's changed? So actually, it's still the same. They don't pay a lot of attention to Kazakh classes in Russian schools, I think they have to rise the level of education in Kazakh classes. And also we can see that, because, for algebra for example, books are different in Russian schools, tasks are more harder than in the Kazakh speaking schools. And most of the time, a Kazakh speaking school has books with mistakes, and when somebody notices that, it becomes popular on the internet. So I think the minstry of education, must pay attention at this and how you can learn if you have books with mistakes. I now we see that the a lot of seminars, extra seminars, extra classes for the teachers to educate the teachers how to teach, and most of them in Kazakh, just because the government knows that there is, I think the level gap, like a gap, a huge gap in the educational and teaching skills among The Russian speaking in Kazakh speaking teachers. So I actually think that ministry of government, they know about this, and they try to solve this. So, yeah, the main problem is that sometimes the mistakes published and the level of the teachers, they are not educated enough to teach, that's the main problem, I think.

**Do you wish you have went to Kazakh school?**

I wish I went to Kazakh school. I had like the problem in childhood that I saw. Children who who had the grandparents who speak in Russian fluently, they had more open conversation. They had the good boundaries with their grandchildren than, for example, me as a child with my grandparents, because I couldn't ask the questions I want, or



sometimes I ask in Russian, and they try to answer me, but I wasn't satisfied with these answers. So I wish I went to Kazakh school, even if I know that I could be less educated maybe, and it could be hard for me to pass inference exam to this elite school. But it's more than education, I think, therefore I wish I went to middle school in Kazakh, because I could have more bounds since childhood with my family, I mean, with elders, with my grandparents, because now I understand importance of that, of this linkage with grandparents. Now I can ask them, but, not about everything.

**Are you ever scared to speak Kazakh with someone because you think that your Kazakh is not that good?**

I still have this pressure because it's a problem of our society. I think that even when we see for example, reel on Tiktok, where the Kazakh is speaking in Russian, in the comments, there will be two of three comments in Kazakh language. Why are you speaking in the Russian, are slave or something? Why are you speaking in Russian? And we have the special terminology of the how they describe these people, like a mancurt. It means something as people who depend on another people like it, actually the men of the Kazakhstan who depend on Russians. And they describe what they describe these people like this, and most of the people in my society, what they feel, if, when they feel something like aggression, that a lot of aggression in my society. From the some people I don't understand why, and yeah, I know that as I understand the important importance of the problem that most of the nation do not speak Kazakh, but I think it's wrong approach. They are more rude than they should be. Yeah, even my uncle, I think, two years ago, he was talking with me in Russian, but sometimes he mixed it with Kazakh. But I don't know what happened. He just told me, you know, we don't speak Russian anymore. From this period of time, we speak only in Kazakh, and you will speak with Kazakh only. You speak with me only in Kazakh. And I feel that pressure. In the beginning, I was arguing with them, no, but why I have to? I mean, it doesn't mean that I'm not a patriot. It doesn't mean that I do not value my nation. You can see, do I value my nation if you see my action for example, There are lots of people, experts, or national experts, who doesn't know Kazakh, but at the same time, they contribute to our nation, contribute to society a lot. Could we say that they are not patriot enough? Or couldn't we say that they actually affect positively our society? And me and Uncle had conflict on this. And then I just said to him, Okay, I will speak in kazakh, just because you want to. And I want to, I want to speak in it, after the three or four meetings, I told him, Okay, I will speak just because I want to learn better.

**Are you sometimes afraid of getting shamed?**

Yeah, So when I spoke with him, with a lot of mistakes, he just started to criticize me, okay, just because I made a lot of mistakes, and he just told me many times that, you know, your kind of language downgraded, and I feel guilty because of that. So this guilt is also here. It's my relatives who told me. But I also see a lot of, for example, if I'm in taxi, and taxi drivers sometimes doesn't vspeak good russian, we have a system when we can transfer money by knowing the number, and if I want to transfer money to taxi driver to pay that's the moment when I understand that I'm feeling guilty. Because when they actually say their number in Kazakh, I don't understand it well. I started to talk more, but I am still feeling guilty that I don't speak well, and I'm afraid that somebody will say to me that you don't know your own language. But when I see people from other nationalities, for example, Russian is speaking Kazakh, there are lots of positive feedback. But when we see the Kazakh who is in the same position, a lot of people criticize him, and I am also afraid of that, therefore I'm not practicing a lot and I'm feeling guilty that I don't speak Kazakh well.

**Did you talk with other Kazakhs in Vilnius?**

Yes, In the beginning, we were talking in Russian most of the time, but then we just changed to Kazakh. And I want to highlight that when we started with many Kazakhs who doesn't know each other, and we said let's switch together. It was that we are abroad, we have to speak in Kazakh. So we did this on purpose. Even if it's not comfortable for us. One time we switched together because somebody from the elders, they told us something. We were speaking in Russian with my friend, and one of the elders just came to us and said something in Lithuanian, we didn't understand, and then we switched together, yeah, but I can say that most of the time we just we spoke more Kazakh abroad than we spoke in Kazakhstan.

**In your future career, like, what languages do you think you will speak?**

English for my career. Or, actually, I'm planning to work maybe 10-15, years abroad, to come back to Kazakhstan, and I think most of the time, because I will work abroad English or German, I'm learning German now, and I want to migrate to Germany. But after I come back, I know that I will speak Russian in Kazakhstan because I don't think that a lot will change so, Kazakh maybe I will speak more, maybe something will change, but I don't think so. I think now, at the moment that being bilingual, it's a part of the Kazakh national Kazakh identity, just because, since the childhood, I don't know why, but most of the children, they start to speak in Russian, even if they are supposed to speak in Kazakh. They start to speak in Russian when they go to the kindergarten. I don't know why they start to speak in Russian, but I think

that in next five years it will change. And being Kazakh is actually not only speaking in Kazakh. It's about values, traditions. Knowing traditions. But the value, I mean, the importance of speaking in Kazakh, and speaking in Kazakh will become part of the Kazakh identity in the future.

**Also, you spoke about impact of war. So you said, in society, it made people more radical, maybe a bit, but, did it affect your own attitude?**

Yes, personally war affected me too. I think so. In the first year of the war, I didn't understand it like I didn't have a lot of intention to speak in Kazakh, but then I realized, my political view, It become more supportive for the Ukrainian side. Therefore, sometimes I just prefer to not buy something from Russian side. But also sometimes I prefer to use English study materials over Russian study materials. But it doesn't mean that I study in Kazakh. It doesn't mean that I choose Kazakh study materials. I think I'm not on that level yet. And also I think that my confidence is not so huge. I mean, it's speaking in Kazakh. Therefore I just now now I try to speak more in Kazakh, I try to speak Russian less.

**So sometimes you choose English over Russian content?**

Sometimes when I choose content, I prefer English or Kazakh content over Russian content. When I saw that some content maker is from Russia or still living in Russia, I just don't, I just do not watch it. I just skipped it. So, yeah, it also affected what I watch. I don't watch some shows, for example, Russian shows. But before war, I liked to watch them. I refuse to watch them. After the after war started, I prefer English media now.

**Do you know about the difference between like being a Kazakh and Kazakhstani? Have you heard about it?**

Yes, and I actually had a lot of conversations with my friends about that, Kazakhstani. I don't know why we cannot say that. For example, we highlight that Kazakh, that we are Kazakh, why we cannot, highlight that somebody is Russian or Azerbaijani who was born in Kazakhstan. I don't understand why we do not say I'm Kazakhstani with Azerbaijani roots, or I'm a Kazakhstani with Russian roots, but yeah, Kazakhstani for me, when I try to say to someone that I'm from Kazakhstan, I say, I'm Kazakhstani at first, then I say that I'm Kazakh.

**And why? For you Kazakhstani is first?**

Because it's my country and in my country, not only Kazakh live here and lots of other nations also. I don't think it's good to highlight that they are, for example, Azerbaijani or Russian, because it's sometimes how to say, make an inconvenience when somebody say that I'm Azerbaijani, but I'm from Kazakhstan, so from my point of view, it's better to say I'm Kazakhstani, with Azerbaijani roots, for example, or I'm Kazakhstani, and my parents are Armenian, for example, it's better to say that to show that you are part of the Kazakhstani society. So it works. Also works for me that I'm part of Kazakhstani society, not only Kazakh society.

**So did you know your tribe growing up?**

Yeah. But my problem here that we had a weird tradition that, for example, if there are two brothers and one of them for example, brother A and brother B, brother A have like family with three children, and Brother B doesn't have children at all, so brother A give one of the kids to Brother B. So my father had experience with this tradition, his father actually gave him to his uncle, and my father learned more about the uncle's family than mine. And my father don't know tribe. Like normally, we know our seven grandfathers, but I know only three of them, because my father knows only three of them. But from mother's side, I know that we don supposed to know from the other side, but I know.

**So I asked about tribes. Why do you associate this thing of giving one child to the other brother? Like tribal thing? Do you it is tribal tradition or something like that?**

Actually just the common tradition for Kazakhs. It was one of the traditions in general. Yeah, it's just, I don't know if Kazakhs from the east, have it, but from West and South regions it was more common among the kinds of tribes or kinds of people.

**What role like this tribal identity had like in your life? Is it more like just fun fact, or is like something more to it?**

Actually, my case is that my parents are divorced, and I don't speak with my father, but I want to know about my father's side it's essential for me. I think it's because of the tradition, and I want to know about my roots and I want to transfer this information to my grandchildren. I think it's because of that. It's essential for me, but in general, now I think it's not so useful. Actually, the the main reason of that, it was just to prevent of the prevent blood mixing. Yeah, but now I think it's not so helpful, we have genetics, we have science. So, yeah, it's becoming more like a fun fact, and but for some people, as me, it's more about, I think it's more about knowing your roots.

**So, like, if you meet people and you know, it's from the same tribe, does it make a difference?**

Oh, yeah, for some people, being from the same tribe it affects, yeah, but I think, I'm sorry, I think it's stupid. It must not affect anything like it must not affect social interactions, because it's not professional. For example, it's not professional during professional interaction.

**I think I read somewhere, but like, recently, sometimes people choose to change the last name to, like, get rid of the Russian ending, right?**

Some of them change last names to get rid of Russian endings, yeah. I actually was thinking about that also, but then I felt it's also part of our history. So I just kept it we cannot erase like influence from Russia, from our history, our influence from Russian Empire. We were living together for many years with that, so we have to keep it. I think it's my point of view. But some people think that we were how to say we were offended by Russians, therefore I have to erase it and change it. We as Turk, like nomads, we had like the second name, this surname, it was the name of our grandparents. So it actually meant something, we didn't have ochesvto also, we just had the name of the grandparent, grandfather.

**So for example, when you meet a foreigner who, doesn't know much about Kazakhstan, how do you explain to them, like, what it is to be Kazakh, what is Kazakhstan? What do you speak about first?**

Okay, in the beginning, like I actually noticed the same pattern. For example, if I'm showing the map, if I'm showing where Kazakhstan is located, everyone thinks that we're Chinese mixed with Russians, because near Kazakhstan is Russia in China. Somedy has asked me, what is Kazakhstan, where it's located? I'm trying to say that actually Kazakh were nomads. Then I start to say that Kazakhstan was in Soviet Union, but we also were under the Russian empire. But and we were nomadic, we were Turkic tribes, then I show the map and point he Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. And I'm saying that they also were nomadic. And actually, all of us were under Russian Empire and we were in the Soviet Union. And the reason why we have -stan, it's meaning the land, so the land of Kazakh, land of Uzbek, land of Kyrgyz. And then I'm trying to explain who is actually Kazakh, what Kazakh means. Kazakh means free, free men, men willing to be free. And then I'm talking about the nomadic route, just because, after that, only when I'm talking about this, people start to understand that it's not Turkish, it's not Russian and it's not Chinese. That its something unique, only after that, before I tried to explain that we are between Russia and China. So everyone thought that we're Russian, Chinese, or Chinese Russians. Also, I tried to say that we're Turkic. But people, most of the, not most of the, like a lot of people, don't know what this Turkic means, so they think it's Turkish. So they're thinking that we are Turkish. When I told people that we were tribes. Consisted of tribes. We were nomadic. Some people thought that we are like Mongols. So it was really hard to explain. Only if I'm talking about like one piece from that information that were Turkic, one piece that we were in Soviet Union, and only if I'm showing Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, people start to understand. What is it? Yeah, so I'm putting some effort to really explain. What is it? What is the Kazakhstan? What is the Kazakh and I'm trying to add some historical fact that kind of what Kazakh means, freedom, like men with willing to be free.

**Do you think language plays a role in defining what it means to be Kazakh? Like, what kind of role?**

It definitely has own role. Like, language has own role in the national identity, because the language is an instrument of how the nation identify themselves, how the nation actually try to keep their inherited cultural heritage and language play one of the key roles, but not the most important role, in identifying what actually Kazakh means. So what society think now, it's kind of different from what I think, I think that language must be mandatory if you identify yourself as Kazakh. But society has two opinions. Now, one of them is like mine, and the second is controversial, that language is not important, but not so important as the action of the men who think that he's a part of Kazakh society and part of the and who identify himself or herself as Kazakh.

**So what do you think is the most important to identify yourself as Kazakh?**

I think we are free. I think it's a knowing traditions, keeping these traditions, some part of that at minimum, and the third one language. So three factors of how I can, for example, identify myself as a Kazakh. I can identify myself as a Kazakh if I know the language, if I know the traditions, and if I also sorry I forgot to mention that willing to keep all of these factors together like, I know Kazakh, but I don't speak Kazakh well, but I'm willing, and I'm trying my I have intention to keep Kazakh language alive and to keep my traditions alive, and I have the link to know my traditions, therefore I can say that.

I think there are many factors, and also, like having the inheritance from, yeah, I think I cannot say that the man with English relatives or Saxon relatives can say that he's a Kazakh therefore I think we must say that we are Kazakhstani society, not Kazakh society, because Kazakhstani society consists of the Slavic like a Ukrainian, Russian, Belarusian, Bulgarian, others and others, and we are living together, and we are living in one society. We build this society. Therefore, I think Kazakhstani is more important than Kazakh. We must say that we are Kazakhstani. But I cannot say that you are Kazakh that easily. For example, yeah, some people can identify themselves as Kazakhs. Of course, I will value their intentions. But from my heart, I cannot say that they are 100% Kazakh. I mean, you must have relatives. I cannot say that I'm Korean, like, because my father's side, as I know, has some Koreans, but I don't identify myself as a Korean.

### **Do you think that religion is important for Kazakh identity?**

I think religion is not that important to Kazakh identity, because it's also now controversial topic in society, because most of the people think that we have Arabization now, that most kind of now converts to Islam. But in the beginning we didn't have Islam as a main, main religion. We have Tengrism. So and a lot of traditions actually are from Tengrism. It's the same as a Tengrism cultural things like, And if we have some traditions, some our national traditions, they don't match with Islam. I say that when I'm talking with foreigners that Kazakhs like my nation is like a teenager who tries to find themselves. But really like the place, our place in this world, and we're trying to identify ourselves, there are lots of people, for example, converting to Islam. Many of that really converted, but then they do not follow only part of Islam. Or some of them even do not believe in the God. Like it's just because for almost two centuries, three centuries we were as a colony, because we had the colonization most of the nation were traumatized. A lot of people lost their relatives, and now, when we have freedom, people try to, wear some masks, like they try to wear new clothes, and one of them is Islam, I think so, because Islam actually started to be popular during the last years of the Kazakh khanat. So it's actually before coming of the Russian Empire, before the colonization of Russian Empire, or in the early age of the Russian Empire. And we even brought in Arabic sometime before the writing in the Latin, before writing in kirilitsa, we had, we had some materials written in Arabic.

### **Kazakhstan has promoted a trilingual language policy. Do you think trilingual policy is like the best option for Kazakhstan these three languages, or should it be one or two, or some, I don't know different languages?**

Even if we have three languages, some schools, they have four languages, like a German, French, so we have the like, special schools, so I don't see the like, how to say like focus from the government on the three language policy. Yeah, we try to keep keep up our language level among the youngsters, but we cannot do this if the elders do not know English. So how can transfer all of the our documents in English, if we don't have a lot of our documents transferred into Kazakh. So I think we have to first of all solve the problem with documents in Kazakh language. Then, I mean, we have to know English, because it's globalization, and it's also like a global trend. We have to be in the same level, like, and we have to try to become developed, one of the developed countries. So therefore we need English. Yeah, it's good. I don't think it's not right, but we also must pay attention into our own language. I don't say nothing about Russian at all, because I don't think we have a problems with Russian language. So we have to keep a focus on and also adding English. Actually, maybe we must pay more attention on the Kazakh language now than English. Actually when I talked about my country, I was like, feeling proud that we have trilingual policy. But when I came back to Kazakhstan in autumn, I took off my like pink classes and noticed that we still have the problems with our own language, even if we have the problems in menus, or simple problems that people like waiters do not understand Kazakh, how even we can try to make a trilingual policy if we know only Russian and English. I don't mean that we have a problem with English. Yeah, maybe we have, but the youngsters now, they are, everyone knows English like try to learn English, but the global rankings showing other things, because the society, so I think it's have a power education, like villages, they don't know English.

### **Yeah, so like, how do you feel about the government efforts, maybe the official efforts to promote Kazakh language? Do you think it is enough or too much?**

I think it's enough, because now I can see, as I mentioned before, TV shows in Kazakh. In my childhood, I even didn't have a chance to watch what I want in Kazakh, for example, we have Cartoon Network in Kazakh now, but in my childhood, I had only in Russian. Now the children have a lot of choices, and even in the schools, it's becoming more popular to know Kazakh but we still have some problems in higher education system. For example, in most universities, they still have documents in Russian. They still have materials in Russian rather than in Kazakh that's a problem, but government is trying to solve this problem. Maybe, I think we don't have enough, human resources. We don't have enough specialists, but government is trying to do what they doing, and I think they do everything they can, so it's enough.

### **What do you think is like the best approach to promote Kazakh language?**

Soft tools. I think because, as I told before, if we are giving a lot of pressure to youngsters, for example, or to elders, they will not accept it. They will not even try to learn. Because now I see that society, there is no need to learn. In society, the people who are learning, it's a conscious people who really know, who really see the problem in it, who are more educated, they see the problem and they are trying to learn. One of the factors is also that people try to move out from the country. Therefore, there is no need to learn. I think by implementing more Kazakh in educational system, for example, in my elite school, we have, like, special time when, where we read books for half an hour, we just had a reading books in the end of the semester, we had the like competition from this book, like a test, who will, like top three places they will receive gifts from the school. And it was free, like what you need is just to read book in Kazakh. It was like intention from my school. And I think if we have more intentions from the like this, we will see the results soon.

### **Okay, so how do you think the language situation in Kazakhstan will change in the future?**

I think it's actually depends on how the first of all, politics, how it will be change, because we know about the war, and we saw a lot of like people who really are not happy with it, but still, we are talking in Russian. We're speaking in Russian, but I think if something happens like negative happens to Russia, most people will will speak more Kazakh. I think the next five years is turning point for Kazakhstani society, just now we don't need to learn Kazakh there is no need. Therefore, we see that more and more people start to learn English. We can see that there is actual need, and the request from the society in English books, yeah, like, there are lots of people start to buy, buy books in English, rather, and in Kazakh. Also I can see that demand from the society, was rising in five years, like in last five years. And I think government must do more. And it can be, it can change, but it also could not. It depends on the government. It depends on the how people will accept it. It depends. I don't think it will change, like, significantly.

### **Do you think maybe also the government is kind of still restricting itself?**

It's actually a very good question, yes, yeah, it's actually one of I think it's a scary thing for our government, because we have a lot of people in government who support friendly situation with Russia, that we are friends with Russia. They are supporting that. And I think actually government, yeah, like restricting themselves, because, yeah, there's some good, positive changes in the government that, for example, in Parliament. Now, if you want to be a part of the parliament, you must take a test that you know Kazakhstan history and Kazakh language. If you have like, 60% or something, you will be accepted. You will have chance to be accepted, say, implemented this one. But still, I think they are restricting themselves by not making, by not publishing documents well. We still have some fails which become popular in the internet like Russian version is having, for example, 10 pages, and Kazakh version have five pages or seven pages. Yeah, so it's a difference. We can see this difference, but, yeah, I think government is restricting themselves because some of the faces in the government want to keep, keep the situation to be like this, because they have maybe some favors from the Russian side.

### **How do you feel about changing Kazakh alphabet to Latin? Do you think it's more positive or negative?**

Actually, my opinion on that question changed many times, like three times maybe, and recently, in September, I was searching for information about that. I made a little research, and my point of view now is that its actually good because at the same time, we implemented with Turkic nations the variant of the Kazakh. So for us, it will be easier to like. To enhance undergoing process of the, how to say anti colonization? Because, first of all, Turk alphabet is good because it's for us, for Kazakh people, for Uzbek people, is good because it's undergoing process of the anti colonization that we trying to do this. It's good. Look at Uzbek people who really did this. In Uzbekistan, there is a Latin alphabet, they successfully did it. And I think we also can do this. It also will be easier for us to implement, to find our part in this world. I think that in this global world, because most of the countries has Latin and it will be easier for us to understand maybe other nations, like Azerbaijani nation, because they also have Latin, yeah, and it's part of the identification. Actually, we didn't have Kirilica at all. We were forced to use Kirilica. And I think idea is good, but realization is bad,

because there are not enough of the specialists. Therefore, we will have many consequences. And how government try to do this. They try to do this so fast without implementing it slowly. It's also the real problem, as I noticed before that we were forced to write the whole text in Latin, even if we didn't know latin as teenagers, just because somebody wanted this. It's not how it should work. It must be implemented more like soft approach that you must implement slowly, like step by step, while the government try to do this in two move, like, make a two movement, and they think that whole Kazakhstan will write in Latin, no, that will not happen. I think that when another deadline will be close, they will postpone it again.

## Summary

This thesis investigates the factors influencing the perception and adoption of the Kazakh language and identity among young, mobile Kazakhs studying in European countries. The study explores the interplay between historical, social, and political dynamics in shaping linguistic choices and identity formation, situated within the frameworks of Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities" and Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, linguistic capital, and symbolic power. It fills a gap in existing research by focusing on how young individuals, affected by Kazakhstan's trilingual language policy and Kazakhization efforts, in the context of changing political dynamics, perceive and respond to these changes in a globalized context.

The research is based on qualitative data collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 27 Kazakh students studying in Europe. The participants represent a unique demographic, which grew up in independent Kazakhstan, started going to School with the beginning of the implementation of Trilingual language policy and chose to aspire for more global education. The findings are analyzed within three primary areas: the perceived value and role of Kazakh, Russian, and English; the construction of Kazakh national identity; and the key factors influencing linguistic and identity choices.

Kazakh is primarily perceived as a marker of national identity and cultural heritage, often linked to family and traditional values. However, its practical utility remains limited compared to Russian and English. Russian is valued for its utility in education and social interactions but carries mixed associations due to its colonial legacy and declining relevance in global contexts. English is highly aspirational, symbolizing global mobility, professional opportunities, and modernity.

National identity is a central theme, with most respondents identifying more strongly with their ethnic Kazakh heritage than their civic identity as Kazakhstanis. Nevertheless their imagined community is "multilingual". Many participants expressed a sense of responsibility to preserve and promote the Kazakh language as part of their cultural and national identity, even when their proficiency in the language was limited, showcasing a strengthening pull to identify with their imagined community in recent years.

The study identifies various factors shaping linguistic and identity choices, including family language practices, educational experiences, peer interactions, and broader sociopolitical events such as Kazakhstan's shifting relationship with Russia and the global prominence of English. While policy-driven efforts like

Kazakhization and trilingual education have influenced language use, the persistence of Russian dominance and the growing appeal of English reveal the complex dynamics of Kazakhstan's sociolinguistic landscape.

This thesis contributes to understanding the evolving role of language in post-Soviet nation-building and identity formation. It provides insights into how young Kazakhs navigate their linguistic and cultural identities in a globalized world, offering valuable implications for policymakers and scholars of multilingualism, nationalism, and post-Soviet studies.

## Santrauka

Šiame magistro darbe nagrinėjami veiksniai, darantys įtaką Kazachų kalbos suvokimui ir priėmimui bei tapatybės formavimuisi tarp jaunų, mobilių kazachų, kurie studijuoja Europos šalyse. Tyrime analizuojama istorinių, socialinių ir politinių dinamikų sąveika, kuri formuoja kalbos pasirinkimus ir tapatybę. Teorinis pagrindas remiasi Benedikto Andersono „Įsivaizduojamų bendruomenių“ bei Pierre'o Bourdieu habitus, kalbinio kapitalo ir simbolinės galios koncepcijomis. Darbas užpildo esamą tyrimų spragą, nagrinėdamas, kaip jauni žmonės, paveikti Kazachstano trikalbės kalbos politikos ir kazachizacijos pastangų besikeičiančių politinių dinamikų kontekste, suvokia ir reaguoja į šiuos pokyčius globalizuotame pasaulyje.

Tyrimas pagrįstas kokybiniais duomenimis, surinktais vykdant išsamius, pusiau struktūruotus interviu su 27 kazachais studentais, studijuojančiais Europoje. Dalyviai atstovauja unikalią demografinę grupę, kuri užaugo nepriklausomame Kazachstane, pradėjo lankyti mokyklą įgyvendinant trikalbės kalbos politiką ir pasirinko siekti globalesnio išsilavinimo. Tyrimo rezultatai analizuojami trijose pagrindinėse srityse: Kazachų, Rusų ir Anglų kalbų suvokimas ir vaidmuo, Kazachų nacionalinės tapatybės konstravimas bei pagrindiniai veiksniai, darantys įtaką kalbiniams ir tapatybės pasirinkimams.

Kazachų kalba pirmiausia suvokiama kaip nacionalinės tapatybės ir kultūrinio paveldo žymuo, dažnai siejama su šeimos ir tradicinėmis vertybėmis. Tačiau jos praktinis pritaikomumas yra ribotas, palyginti su Rusų ir Anglų kalbomis. Rusų kalba vertinama dėl jos naudingumo švietimo ir socialinės sąveikos srityse, tačiau turi ir mišrių asociacijų dėl kolonijinės praeities bei mažėjančio aktualumo globaliame kontekste. Anglų kalba suvokiama kaip labai siekiama, simbolizuojanti globalią mobilumą, profesines galimybes ir modernumą.

Nacionalinė tapatybė yra pagrindinė tema, dauguma respondentų stipriau tapatinasi su savo etnine kazachų kilme nei su pilietine kazachstaniečių tapatybe. Vis dėlto jų įsivaizduojama bendruomenė yra „daugiakalbė“. Daugelis dalyvių išreiškė atsakomybės jausmą išsaugoti ir skatinti Kazachų kalbą kaip savo kultūrinės ir nacionalinės tapatybės dalį, net jei jų kalbos įgūdžiai buvo riboti. Tai rodo stiprėjantį siekį identifikuotis su savo įsivaizduojama bendruomene pastaraisiais metais.

Tyrimas išskiria įvairius veiksnius, formuojančius kalbinius ir tapatybės pasirinkimus, įskaitant šeimos kalbos praktiką, švietimo patirtį, bendravimą su bendraamžiais ir platesnius sociopolitinius įvykius, tokius kaip Kazachstano santykių su Rusija pokyčiai ir Anglų kalbos globalus reikšmingumas. Nors politikos priemonės,

tokios kaip kazachizacija ir trikalbis švietimas, paveikė kalbos vartojimą, Rusų kalbos dominavimo išlikimas ir augantis Anglų kalbos populiarumas atskleidžia sudėtingą Kazachstano sociolingvistinį kraštovaizdį. Šis darbas prisideda prie kalbos vaidmens posovietiniame tautų kūrime ir tapatybės formavime suvokimo. Jis siūlo išvalgas, kaip jauni kazachai globalizuotame pasaulyje naviguoja savo kalbinę ir kultūrinę tapatybę, pateikdamas vertingas rekomendacijas politikos formuotojams ir mokslininkams, tyrinėjantiems daugiakalbystę, nacionalizmą ir posovietinius kontekstus.