

**The Role of Language in the Integration of Repatriated Students in Kazakhstan**

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Dear Marzhan Nurtaikyzy,

This letter now confirms that your research project entitled: **“The Role of Language in the Integration of Repatriated Students in Kazakhstan”** has been approved by the Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee of Nazarbayev University.

You may proceed with contacting your preferred research site and commencing your participant recruitment strategy.

Yours sincerely


A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mukul Saxena".

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### **Abstract**

#### **The Role of Language in the Integration of Repatriated Students in Kazakhstan**

After gaining independence from the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan launched an ethnic migration policy to invite ethnic Kazakhs to return to their historical homeland. Ethnic Kazakhs from non-CIS countries with limited knowledge of Russian have faced language, social, and cultural challenges throughout their migration. This study explores the role of language in the integration of ethnic Kazakh repatriated students from China in Nur-Sultan and Almaty. The rationale for choosing these two cities was based on the fact that the use of the Kazakh language varies significantly between them (Smagulova, 2006). Along with this research problem, the research questions to determine the ethnic Kazakh repatriated students' language background, their attitudes towards the languages in their repertoire and their social integration were developed. This study employed a qualitative research design applying semi-structured interviews and the sample only included ethnic Kazakh students who had returned from China to Kazakhstan, of which there were 10. Ten ethnic Kazakh repatriated students were purposefully selected by snowball sampling. The major findings revealed that all participants cannot express their ideas fluently in Russian, but those participants from Nur-Sultan can communicate in Russian for basic purposes. For all participants, they know Kazakh at different levels based on their educational background and length of time spent living in Kazakhstan, the Chinese language remains dominant, and the majority claim that due to their low Russian proficiency it is difficult to adapt to Kazakhstani society. This study could enable educational staff to better understand the multilingual competences of ethnic Kazakh students repatriated from China studying in Nur-Sultan and Almaty, and it may draw the attention of policymakers to the unique situation of repatriated students from China to provide them with relevant support.

**Андатпа****Қазақстандағы Репатриант Студенттердің Интеграциясындағы Тілдің Рөлі**

Қазақстан Кеңес Одағынан тәуелсіздік алғаннан кейін этникалық қазақтарды тарихи отандарына оралуға шақыру үшін этникалық көші-қон саясатын бастады. Орыс тілін меңгермеген шет елдерден келген этникалық қазақтар көші-қон кезінде лингвистикалық, әлеуметтік және мәдени проблемаларға тап болды. Бұл зерттеу жұмысы Қытайдан Нұр-Сұлтан мен Алматы қалаларына оралған этникалық қазақ студенттерінің бейімделуіндегі тілдің рөлін зерттейді. Аталмыш екі қаланы таңдаудың негіздемесі қазақ тілінің қолданыс аясының айтарлықтай өзгеретіндігіне байланысты (Смагулова, 2006). Осы зерттеу проблемасымен қатар, репатриацияланған этникалық қазақ студенттерінің лингвистикалық шығу тегін, олардың репертуарындағы тілдермен байланысын және әлеуметтік интеграциясын анықтайтын зерттеу сұрақтары дайындалды. Зерттеу жұмысы барысында сапалық зерттеу дизайнының жартылай құрылымдалған сұхбат әдісі қолданылды және іріктеуге Қытайдан Қазақстанға оралған 10 этникалық қазақ студенттері алынды. Негізгі нәтижелер көрсеткендей, барлық қатысушылардың орыс тілін меңгеру деңгейлері төмен, бірақ Нұр-Сұлтан қаласының қатысушылары негізгі мақсаттары үшін ойларын орыс тілінде жеткізе алады. Қатысушылардың қазақ тілі деңгейлері білім алған орталарына және Қазақстанда өмір сүріп жатқан уақыттарының ұзақтығына байланысты әр түрлі болып қалыптасқан, алайда қытай тілінің басымдылығы әлі де жоғарырақ. Ал көпшілігі орыс тілін төмен деңгейде білу қазақ қоғамына бейімделу барысында қиындық туады деп санайды. Бұл зерттеу оқытушыларға Нұр-Сұлтан мен Алматы қалаларында оқитын, Қытайдан оралған этникалық қазақ студенттерінің көп тілдік құзыреттіліктерін жақсы түсінуге және



оларға осы ерекше мәселе аясында қолдау көрсету бойынша саясаткерлердің назарын аударуға көмектеседі.

### **Аннотация**

#### **Роль Языка в Интеграции Студентов Репатриантов в Казахстане**

После обретения независимости от Советского Союза Казахстан представил политику этнической миграции, чтобы пригласить этнических казахов вернуться на свою историческую родину. Этнические казахи из стран дальнего зарубежья с ограниченным знанием русского языка столкнулись с языковыми, социальными и культурными проблемами на протяжении всей своей миграции. Целью данной научной работы было исследовать роль языка в интеграции этнических казахов, репатриированных студентов из Китая в Нур-Султан и Алматы. Выбор этих городов может быть обоснован на том факте, что использование казахского языка значительно различается между ними (Смагулова, 2006). Поэтому данное исследование поставило себе целью определить языковое происхождение студентов репатриантов, их отношения к языкам в их репертуаре и их социальной интеграции. В этом исследовании использовался качественный анализ исследования с применением слабоструктурированных интервью, и были выбраны десять этнических казахских студентов, которые вернулись из Китая в Казахстан. Основные результаты показали, что все участники не могут свободно выразить свои идеи на русском языке. Однако выяснилось, что участники из Нур-Султана могут общаться на русском языке для ежедневных целей. Все участники знают казахский на разных уровнях в зависимости от уровня образования и продолжительности пребывания в Казахстане. Китайский язык остается доминирующим, и большинство студентов утверждает, что из-за низкого уровня владения русским языком трудно адаптироваться к казахстанскому обществу. Это исследование может помочь педагогическим работникам лучше понять многоязычные компетенции этнических казахских студентов, репатриированных из Китая обучающихся в Нур-Султане и

Алматы. А также результат данной научной работы может привлечь внимание политиков к уникальной ситуации репатриированных студентов из Китая, чтобы оказать им соответствующую поддержку.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

After becoming a part of the Soviet Union, the Kazakh nation was russified. Dave and Sinnott (as cited in Amangul, 2013) describe newly independent Kazakhstani society as a "russified cultural landscape" (p.110). In particular, in 1917 the number of Russians increased by 2.4 times, and their proportion of the population reached 17.5%; the number of Ukrainians increased by 8.2 times, their proportion reached 10.4%. More than one-third of these peoples - 33.6%, settled in Northern Kazakhstan, including the Akmola region, where their share in the population was 29.6% respectively, whereas, in southern Kazakhstan, the migration flow was relatively weak. Moreover, based on the demographic census of 1989, described by Oka (2013), the percentage of Kazakh population was only 39.7%, and it was followed by Russians 37.4% (Amangul, as cited in Toktau, 2017).

One of the main issues of the Republic of Kazakhstan, since becoming independent from the Soviet Union in 1991, was returning ethnic Kazakhs from other countries, who departed the country due to historical circumstances. It was deemed to have been an important strategy since Nursultan Nazarbayev, as the former president of Kazakhstan, declared an open opportunity for the Kazakh diaspora in different countries and invited ethnic Kazakhs to return to their historical homeland (Kalshabaeva & Seisenbayeva, 2013; Sancak & Finke, 2005). Moreover, in his speech at the first Qurultay (meeting) in 1992, he underlined that Kazakhstan is the only one homeland for all ethnic Kazakhs outside the territory of Kazakhstan (Bonnenfant, 2012; Diener, 2005; Toktau, 2017). Thus, in May 1992, "The Law on Migration" was passed according to which ethnic Kazakhs started to move to their historical homeland.

Repatriation was of interest to our state for several reasons: Firstly, repatriation will help align the demographic situation, compensate for the migration losses of past years;

Secondly, repatriates can have a positive impact on the change of the economic mentality of Kazakhstan as they have extensive experience in adapting and surviving in a foreign environment; Thirdly, Kazakhs abroad possess knowledge of the original Kazakh culture and language, which can be a significant contribution to the spiritual heritage of the nation; and finally, repatriation is often described as part of a national idea (Abildina, 2017).

According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2017), since independence, more than 1 million ethnic Kazakhs returned to their historical homeland and received the status of oralman. Kazakh diaspora resides in 40 different countries apart from their homeland (Amangul, 2013; Kalshabaeva & Seisenbayeva, 2013), and a large population of Kazakhs outside of the home country, which is about 1.1 million, settled in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, in the north-west of China (Cerny, 2010). In addition, the vast majority of ethnic Kazakh repatriates have returned from Uzbekistan - 126790 families and from China – 25764 families (Kalysh & Egamberdiyev, 2014). However, in spite of the fact that the ethnic Kazakh repatriates enlarge the population (Oka, 2013), after returning to their homeland they face linguistic, cultural and social challenges regarding integration (Amangul, 2013).

Amangul (2013) states that “one of the big problems faced by ethnic migrants is language skills (p.113)” in their social integration, since language is considered to be the main tool of communicating with people and integrating into society. As a result, the lack of language competence or low language proficiency can lead to some language challenges. For instance, if you are ethnic Kazakh who was raised in another country, you might have knowledge of Kazakh, but might not know the Russian language yet. Consequently, based on the predominant use of Russian in many areas of social and

cultural life in Kazakhstan, you may have challenges concerning socialization (Toktau, 2017; Yeskeldiyeva & Tazhibayeva, 2015). According to Bokayev (2013), further issue is related to stigmatization where he indicates the formation of negative attitudes in the society by calling ethnic Kazakhs repatriates as "oralman" or "returnee", and do not acknowledge them as "insiders" (p. 791). However, President Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev instructed people to abandon the word "oralman" in favor of the term "Qandas" which means people of the same nation (Kulshmanov, 2019) and has recently signed a law on the regulation of this process. Oka (2013) also claims the formation of negative attitudes of the local population who consider these ethnic Kazakh migrants as the "other" and "not authentic" co-ethnics, as those who obviously adopt the culture and the dominant language of the host country by having lived under the influence of various cultures for generations (p. 10).

### **Problem Statement**

Research shows that ethnic Kazakh students repatriated from China who are not able to speak Russian face great challenges regarding language socialization and integration (Toktau, 2017). There has not been much emphasis on repatriated students in Nur-Sultan and Almaty, despite the fact that many scholars (Amangul, 2013; Bokayev, 2013; Bonenfant, 2012; Cerny 2013; Kalysh & Egamberdiyev, 2014; Toktau, 2017) explored the integration challenges of the repatriates from China. Thus, this study seeks to see how the adaptation process of ethnic Kazakh repatriates differ in terms of language challenges they might face in these two cities as one of them is Kazakh dominant and the other one is Russian dominant.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study research is to explore the role of language in the integration of ethnic Kazakh repatriated students from China in Nur-Sultan (Astana)

and Almaty and how they relate their language difficulties to integration in Kazakhstan. This study seeks to see if there is any difference in terms of language and integration between the ethnic Kazakh repatriated students in Nur-Sultan and Almaty.

The reason for selecting these two cities is virtue of the fact that the utilization of the Kazakh language, as it was reported by Smagulova (2006), is substantially different in various regions of Kazakhstan. The vast majority of people who speak Kazakh language live in the south and west of Kazakhstan, however, less than 50% of the north and east Kazakhstani residence is proficient in Kazakh (Smagulova, 2006). According to the above-mentioned factors, one city located in the south, Almaty, where Kazakhs range between 70 and 97% (Smagulova, 2008), and one city from the north of the country, Nur-Sultan, which is predominantly populated by ethnic Russian people (Zabirova, 2008), were chosen to explore the study.

### **Research Questions**

For the purpose of the study, the following research questions are addressed:

1. What languages do ethnic Kazakh repatriated students know and what attitudes do they have towards different languages in their repertoire and their sociolinguistic environment?
2. What languages do they use in different domains in their community? Why?
3. How do they value the role of language in integration into Kazakhstani society?

### **Rationale and Significance of the Study**

The reason of being interested in this topic is connected with my experience of studying in China, where I had an opportunity to communicate with many ethnic Kazakhs

who had relocated there earlier. I have noticed the difference between ethnic Kazakh in China and locals here in Kazakhstan. The main difference in oral speech is that they use archaic words and speak pure Kazakh, whereas we, locals, mostly add Russian words in our Kazakh speech. Accordingly, I had to check out each word while having a conversation with them, otherwise, they would not understand me. Besides, the writing style differs; they utilize the Arabic-based script, and are not able to read the Cyrillic-based script (Bokayev, 2013; Cerny, 2013).

Furthermore, understanding the ethnic Kazakh repatriated students' attitudes about languages and their experiences of social integration through this study might be beneficial for other people which is presented in the following paragraph. Firstly, I hope that this study will contribute to raise awareness of Kazakhstani people about the multilingual competences and the challenges, if any, faced by ethnic Kazakh repatriated students from China studying in Nur-Sultan and Almaty. Next, this study might be beneficial for ethnic Kazakhs who are planning to return to Kazakhstan, as they will be informed about the present language situation. Finally, this study may accentuate the unique situation of ethnic Kazakh repatriated students from China by drawing the attention of policy-makers to provide these repatriated students pertinent support.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

Oralman - "foreign citizens or stateless persons of the Kazakh ethnicity, who permanently resided outside Kazakhstan on the date of gaining sovereignty by the Republic of Kazakhstan and arrived in Kazakhstan for the purpose of permanent residence" (The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Migration", 1997).

Ethnic Kazakh repatriated students - this is the same as the “Oralman” students. It refers to ethnic Kazakh students who came from another country and are studying at Kazakhstani universities.

Kazakh diasporas - Ethnic Kazakh people who live abroad and possess one historical homeland - Kazakhstan (Kalshabaeva & Seisenbayeva, 2013).

### **Outline of the Study**

The thesis overall consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter which provides the background of the study, the purpose of the study, research questions and as well as the significance of the study. Chapter 2 presents the review of the relevant literature on language attitudes, language choice and social integration. Chapter 3 is the methodology chapter that describes the research design, the site and the selection of sampling, data collection procedures, and ethical issues. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the results. Finally, chapter 6 presents a summary of the study, limitations, and recommendations for future study.

## Chapter 2. Literature Review

This research attempts to explore the situation of ethnic Kazakh students repatriated from China regarding language and integration. In order to draw a picture of the situation of repatriated students from China in Kazakhstan, research questions about language repertoire, attitudes towards languages in their repertoire and the role of language in the integration process are addressed. In this chapter, I present the concepts, such as ethnic migration, language policy, language attitudes and social integration. People can have different attitudes towards languages, and different languages are used in Kazakhstan. Therefore, language policy in Kazakhstan is reviewed, and in order to understand repatriated students' attitude towards languages in their repertoire and languages used in the country, a basic understanding of language attitudes is presented by using a theoretical framework suggested by Rosenberg and Howland (1960).

### Migration Context

In terms of language and integration, it is important to understand the migration context, including the reasons for migration. For instance, Ravenstein (as cited in Castles, De Haas & Miller, 2014) states that the main causes of migration are economic factors, whereas Lee (as cited in Castles, De Haas & Miller, 2014) argues that migration processes are described by 'plus' and 'minus' factors of the place of origin and destination. According to Kazakhstan's immigration policy, the migration of ethnic Kazakhs from China can be considered as an ethnic-oriented migration which aims at nation-building.

**Conceptualization of ethnic migration.** According to Tsuda (1999) ethnic migration refers to "return migration", which describes an ethnic group who lived abroad and "returned" to their historical homeland (as cited in Toktau, 2017). In this case, Tsuda

(1999) describes “return” in the frame of Japanese migration, which means the descendants of original Japanese emigrants. In the Kazakhstani migration context, long before Soviet times, there were Kazakhs who had lived in countries other than Kazakhstan. In other words, “not all ethnic Kazakhs currently residing beyond the borders of the contemporary territory of Kazakhstan are former refugees (or their descendants) who fled their homeland to avoid political turmoil, repression, and famine under the Tsarist or Soviet regime” (Oka, 2013, p.4). If the government limited “return” only to Kazakhs who had lived in Kazakhstan, other Kazakhs abroad would have been deprived of this opportunity (Oka, 2013).

Scholars have employed different expressions to conceptualize this kind of ethnic migration, for instance, "co-ethnic migration" (Muenz and Ohlinger), "return migration" (Cassarino), and "repatriation" (as cited in Zeveleva, 2014, p.809). In this paper, ethnic Kazakhs migrating from China are referred to as repatriates, a term used in a migration program for refugees (Zeveleva, 2014). Moreover, the current president of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev, has recently signed a law on regulating the migration process. According to this new law, Kazakhstan dismissed the word "oralman" in favor of the term "Qandas", which means people of the same nation (*Tokayev signed*, 2020).

After ethnic migration two stages should be considered. The first stage after ethnic migration embraces the laws and regulations regarding migration, determination of a quota, and, in some cases, access to citizenship after returning (Joppke, 2005). The second stage is related to setting up conditions for the integration of returnees into the society, such as language courses, vocational training, and settlement-housing programs (Joppke, 2005).

### **Language policy**



Language policy is determined as “a situated socio-cultural process – the complex of practices, ideologies, attitudes, and formal and informal mechanisms that influence people's language choices in profound and pervasive everyday ways” (McCarty 2010, p. xii). According to this explanation, it may be concluded that members of the society in line with policy-makers are the implementers of the policies as the language policy is affected by the society. Therefore, it is important to review the language policy of Kazakhstan in order to understand ethnic Kazakh repatriated students' language challenges and/or advantages of knowing other languages which are not widely used in Kazakhstan.

In the scope of language policy, it is important to acquire three languages in Kazakhstan, as the former President Nazarbayev, in his annual message noted that the proficiency in three languages is the requirement for the individual's well-being. In this regard, the goal was set to increase the number of Kazakh (95%), Russian (90%) and English (20%) language speakers by 2020 (MoES, 2011). Thus, these three languages play an important role in Kazakhstan and their role and function is presented in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, the Kazakh language is "the language of government administration, legislation, legal proceedings and paperwork operating in all spheres of public relations in all over the territory of the state" (Basic legislative acts on languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan 2007, p. 5). Besides, “government employees and workers in the field of education, science, health, culture and public service” are required to have a good knowledge of the Kazakh language (Aksholakova & Ismailova, 2013, p. 1582). The former president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, also noted the importance of the Kazakh language, “we must make every effort to further develop the Kazakh language, which is the main factor uniting all Kazakhstanis” (Nazarbayev, 2006).

Secondly, the Russian language has the leading position in Kazakhstan as a means of interethnic communication and as an official language. The Russian language has spread among Kazakhstanis by influence of the Soviet Union which led to the russification of Kazakhstan. The acceptance of the Cyrillic alphabet and teaching Russian at schools are other factors that influenced the widespread use of this language among the population (Sharygin & Guillot, 2013). The Russian language is being displaced out of the public state, economic life, culture and media in order to enhance the status, prestige and usage of the Kazakh language (Kusheeva & Sagatov, 2017). Nevertheless, Russian is a compulsory subject in secondary schools and it is the medium of instruction at Kazakhstani universities as well. Thus, the knowledge of Russian is necessary in education.

Thirdly, the English language is considered to be the language of global communication in Kazakhstan as well as throughout the world. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, proficiency in English, as well as the Kazakh and Russian languages, has become one of the priorities of state policy. As a result, the program documents developed in recent years, such as the State Program of Languages Development and Functioning for 2011-2020, addresses the issues of teaching English and other foreign languages as a means of international communication. Besides, implementation of the Trilingual education is one of the national plans in Kazakhstan which is focused on teaching in three languages, namely Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects through English medium of instruction (Nazarbayev, 2017 as cited in Karabassova, 2018). The study conducted by Aimoldina (2012) on *status and function of English as a language of business communication*, revealed that the majority of the participants expressed their positive views towards the use of the English language in Kazakhstani sociolinguistic place and showed the desire of learning it as it is necessary for professional development. However, the participants who have low

proficiency in English and are not related to the sphere of business communication are ambivalent about its spread and use (Aimoldina, 2012). These participants believed that the spread of English in Kazakhstan may negatively affect the development of other functioning languages, primarily the Kazakh state language, as well as minority languages (Aimoldina, 2012).

Moreover, there are approximately 130 ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan and the former President Nursultan Nazarbayev supports other ethnicities to use and keep their language as well. In his speech at the second Civil Forum on September 12, 2005, he stated: "we must jointly support the languages and cultural traditions of all the peoples of Kazakhstan. No one should be denied the right to use their native language and culture" (Nazarbayev, 2005).

To sum up, it has been shown that the role of the Russian language in Kazakhstan is significant, as is the Kazakh language. Therefore, in order to be able to integrate and socialize, gain good knowledge and have good job opportunities, people should know both of them well. As for the English language, it is necessary for professional growth and education.

### **Attitudes**

This section discusses the concept of attitudes, which plays an important role in language use and language learning. McGuire (as cited in Baker, 1992) gave the definition to the concept of attitudes where he stated that "attitudes locate objects of thought on dimensions of judgement" (p. 11). Thus, language is posed as an object and judgement as a positive and negative view of this object (Baker, 1992).

**Language attitudes.** It is important to understand the repatriates' attitudes towards languages in their repertoire in order to determine the challenges and obstacles they face. Language attitudes, as a conceptual tool, were created by researchers in the second half of the 20th century (Kroskrity, 2016). The main idea of this concept is based on understanding a speakers' feelings and beliefs about a language and a language variety (Kroskrity, 2016) or an individual's perception and evaluation of a language and linguistic variety (Dragojevic, 2017). Additionally, language attitudes have been studied in regards to language use, language preference and reasons of learning a language (Bhat, 2017). In this context, the present study seeks to explore the ethnic Kazakh repatriated students' attitudes, beliefs and evaluation of languages in their repertoire. In regards to attitudes, Gardner and Lambert (1972) categorized attitudes as instrumental and integrative. Instrumental refers to "the practical value and advantages of learning a language" (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, p. 132), whereas integrative means desire to learn a new language on account of positive feelings towards the speakers of that language and their desire to be accepted into their community (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

Language attitudes comprise a broad range of categories. Baker (1992 as cited in Garrett, Coupland, Williams, 2003, p. 12) highlighted the term "language attitude" that has been used as an "umbrella concept" and has various components of language attitudes, such as the following:

1. Attitudes to language variation, dialect and speech style
2. Attitudes to learning a new language
3. Attitudes to a specific minority language
4. Attitudes to language groups, communities, minorities

5. Attitudes to language lessons
6. Attitudes of parents to language learning
7. Attitudes to language preference

The focus of this research is based on the attitudes of ethnic Kazakh repatriated students to learning a new language, language lessons and language preference.

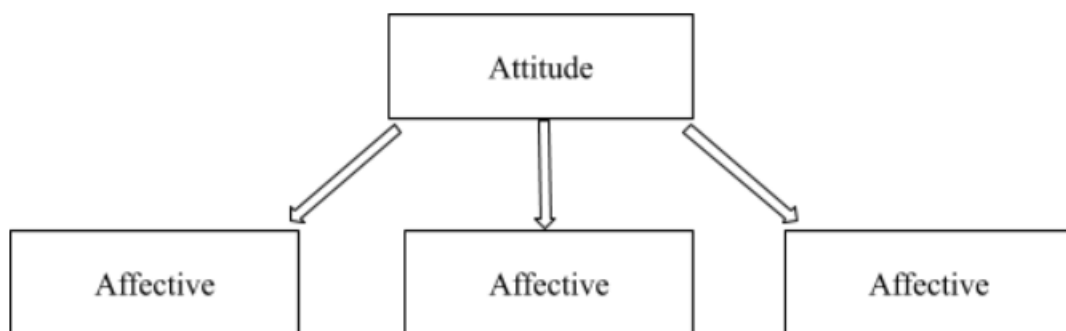


Figure 1. Tripartite model of Attitude Structure (Rosenberg & Howland, 1960)

As can be seen in Figure 1, the current study emphasizes on the three-component model (tripartite) that was introduced by Rosenberg & Howland (1960). This tripartite model of language attitudes comprises three main components: affective, cognitive, and behavioral (Rosenberg & Howland, 1960). The affective component, the first type, refers to an individual's feelings about a language, whether it is positive or negative (Eiser, 2004; Garrett, Coupland, Williams, 2003). This research also examines the different feelings of ethnic Kazakh repatriated students' attitudes towards the languages in their repertoire and learning the Russian language. The cognitive component, the second type, contains beliefs about the world in terms of one's view of a language's usefulness and it can be shaped by knowledge, experience, and stereotypes (Garrett, Coupland, Williams, 2003; McKenzie, 2010). In light of this, repatriated students' different attitudes can be examined by focusing

on those factors. The behavioral component, the third type, refers to the results of the behavioral decisions in terms of languages (Garrett, Coupland, Williams, 2003). For instance, it can be seen in the usage of a language(s) and students' positive or negative attitudes towards learning that/those language(s).

To sum up, language attitude describes an individual's feelings about the languages and it can be explored along with language choice, preference and reasons. The current study focuses on a tripartite model as a theoretical basis for analyzing language attitudes thoroughly.

**Language choice.** Language choice and use can be influenced by different factors, such as domain, interlocutors and topic (Bichani, 2015). First, domain refers to a language or variety of a language that possesses a particular function, such as language used in the family domain, or in the work domain, etc. (Spolsky, 2012 as cited in Bichani, 2015). Thus, Fishman (2010) states that speakers of minority language prioritize the language(s) into specific domains. In other words, language utilized at school can be different from language utilized at home. Second, language is affected by interlocutors. According to Harris (2006) three patterns, parents, siblings and grandparents were differentiated in exploring the linguistic behavior of minority groups. For example, mixed language of minority and mainstream were used with parents, and mostly mainstream language was used with siblings, whereas with grandparents mainly minority language was utilized (as cited in Bichani, 2015). Third, language choice can be influenced by the topic of discussion, as Fishman (2010) states "certain topics are somehow handled better in one language than in another, in particular multilingual contexts" (p. 92). The study of Turkish migrants in the Netherlands conducted by Yagmur (2009 as cited in Bichani, 2015) identified that the mainstream language (Dutch) was used to discuss many topics while

minority language (Turkish) was used to discuss religious topics. To sum up, different factors may affect individuals in employing different languages.

In light of other studies on ethnic communities and their attitudes towards the maintenance of their ethnic language, it has been shown that immigrants in countries such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Canada tend to "encounter difficult dilemma of maintaining ethnic language and being integrated into mainstream culture" (Luo & Wiseman 2000 as cited in Ndhlovu, 2010, p. 301). However, ethnic Kazaks in China made efforts in keeping their ethnic language, but a low quality of bilingual education and Chinese as a dominant language among the ethnic youth in their everyday communication were the struggles which resulted in migration (Toktau, 2017). The study on Jamaican immigrants in Canada revealed the participants' desire to maintain their heritage language, however, the vast majority of the participants argued that in order to accomplish their goals the knowledge of Jamaican Creole would not be helpful (Tucker, 2020). Furthermore, Ianos's (2014) study explored the local and immigrant students' attitudes towards Catalan, Spanish and English. The majority of students showed positive attitudes towards all three languages, Catalan, Spanish and English, but those who had positive attitudes towards Catalan, had less positive attitudes toward Spanish or vice versa to Catalan or English (Ianos, 2014). Another study conducted by Bichani (2015) also revealed a positive attitude towards language. Specifically, the majority of Arabic participants in the UK expressed positive attitudes towards the Arabic language and they referred to it as the "God's language", and see it as a carrier of identity as well as a lingua franca in Arabic countries (Bichani, 2015). Nevertheless, these participants had negative attitudes towards learning Arabic outside of their home (Bichani, 2015). Hence, the analyzed studies show that ethnic minorities are struggling in keeping their minority

language due to fewer opportunities to use it because of the dominant language that is spoken in the society.

**Code-switching.** Code-switching is a common practice among the people in Kazakhstan. Li (2000) defined code-switching as a “systematic alternating use of two languages or language varieties within a single conversation” (as cited in Akynova, Aimoldina & Agmanova, 2014 p. 414). In other words, code-switching refers to a shuttle between languages. Thus, bilingual speakers of two languages who have different proficiencies in those languages can be involved in code-switching and actually can switch based on their demands (Li, 2000). Moreover, Code-switching in the Kazakhstani context is usually considered as the unnoticeable practice among locals, whereas for non-Russian speaking ethnic Kazakhs it is particularly noticeable, which will be discussed in the next section.

**Translanguaging.** Translanguaging is a relatively new practice compared to code-switching. According to Wei (2014), translanguaging promotes the verb "languaging" which comprises “the full range of linguistic performances of multilingual language users for purposes that transcend the combination of structures, the alternation between systems” (p. 159). In other words, translanguaging attaches the same importance to a person's whole linguistic repertoire. Furthermore, scholars (Garcia et al., 2012; Garcia & Li, 2014; Otheguy, Garcia & Reid, 2015, 2018; Li, 2018) distinguish translanguaging from the term code-switching in that it refers not only to a shuttle between languages, but also to "speakers' construction and use of original and complex interrelative discursive practices that cannot be easily assigned to one or another traditional definition of language" (Garcia & Li, 2014 as cited in Bhatt & Bolonyai, 2019).



In the Kazakhstani context, a vast majority of people may consider themselves bilingual or multilingual, as they can be learning English as a foreign language in addition to their first and second language, which is in most cases Kazakh and Russian or minority languages such as Uzbek, Uyghur, Tatar, Tajik, Ukrainian or Turkish (Simons & Fennig, 2018 as cited in Tastanbek, 2019). However, translanguaging in the Kazakhstani context can be dissimilar to other studied sites on translanguaging since Kazakh and Russian are the most commonly used languages, whereas English is not spoken by the majority and is learnt at schools (MoES, 2010).

Nevertheless, translanguaging and code-switching are a common practice among the speakers of the Kazakh language. More precisely, this practice refers to people who are not able to speak "pure" Kazakh and the term Shala Kazakh ("a half Kazakh" in translation from Kazakh) refers to these speakers of the Kazakh language (Akanova, 2017). In this case, translanguaging comprises the communication of code-switching between Kazakh and Russian which makes it challenging for ethnic Kazakh repatriates from non CIS countries to understand the speech of locals (Foster, 2017). Also, Shala Kazakh, the use of "impure" language, is often criticized by the proponents of using pure Kazakh. Thus, nationalists think that Shala Kazakhs are not staunch supporters of their nation (Akanova, 2017). Similar cases can be seen in Spain, where code-switching between languages is used as Spanglish, the shuttling between Spanish and English or as Euskanoñol shifting between Basque and Spanish (Cenoz, 2017).

### **Social Integration**

In light of the purpose of this paper to explore the integration of ethnic Kazakh repatriated students from China into Kazakhstani society, social integration within national and international cases is described in this section. Social integration can be defined in

various ways. Ferguson (2008) defines it as "the process of promoting the values, relations and institutions that enable all people to participate in social, economic and political life on the basis of equality of rights, equity and dignity" (p.6). In the Kazakhstani context, based on the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Population Migration (1997), integration indicates a sustainable reciprocal relationship between newly arrived people and the community that accepts them. Also, different periods of integration support for migrants who are returning to their historical homeland was regulated by the law (Toktau, 2017). Albeit, in reality, these promises for supporting the integration process of ethnic repatriates were not accomplished (Diener, 2005; Kuşçu, 2014).

Language and integration. Language is considered to be an important factor and plays a vital role in the integration of migrants, as has been highlighted in studies of various scholars (Remennick, 2004; Diener, 2005; Bonnenfant, 2012; Ilimkhanova et al., 2014; Kalysh & Egamberdiyev, 2014; Kuşçu, 2014; Pujolar, 2016; Vathi & Duci, 2016). Pujolar (2016) states that "when they settle in a new context, the linguistic capital they possessed in their place of origin is, ... reevaluated according to local hierarchies, most often devalued, such that immigrants must somehow endeavor to acquire the linguistic capital that is locally needed to access symbolic and economic goods" (p. 305). In the Kazakhstani context, the Russian language also plays a significant role in integration. Smagulova (2006) states "Russian is viewed as reliable linguistic capital" in many spheres (p.314). As a result, ethnic repatriates have difficulties due to the insufficient knowledge of Russian. Toktau (2017) states that ethnic Kazakh repatriated students, because of the limited knowledge of Russian are still experiencing difficulties. Similarly, Terlikbayeva (2017) states that repatriated ethnic Kazakh children faced language challenges, both in Kazakh and Russian. Further investigation showed that the Kazakh language proficiency of repatriated students is limited as well as they have been educated

at Chinese schools (Toktau, 2017). As a result, these repatriated students have different levels of competence in Kazakh as it was reported by the participants of the study Bokayev et al. (2012) that majority of the participants are capable of speaking and reading, but are not able to write. In addition, language proficiency affects the formation of identity, thus repatriates because of their poor knowledge of Russian cannot identify themselves completely Kazakhstani (Toktau, 2017). To sum up, it can be concluded that both Kazakh and Russian languages have an important role in the adaptation process as well as in the formation of identity.

Language adaptation is also a challenging issue in other states. For instance, Chinese students in the UK faced challenges due to the linguistic barrier (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2016). Similarly, Asian immigrant students in New Zealand are under pressure when facing language and cultural challenges (Benson, 2016). Ethnic Japanese immigrants from Brazil experience similar challenges, as they were discriminated against in their homeland and were named “Nikkeijin”, which means people of Japanese descent (Yamanaka, 1996). Moreover, in the study conducted by Daller and Treffers-Daller (2014), Turkish repatriates from Germany identified German as their dominant language upon their return to their home country. This changed after living seven or more years in Turkey and, as a result, these repatriates do not show a significant difference in their command of Turkish from native speakers (Daller & Treffers-Daller, 2014). These aforementioned studies reveal that language competence has an impact on the integration process.

Moreover, language challenges can influence the ethnic Kazakh repatriates' identity formation as these repatriates consider themselves as ethnically Kazakh, but not completely Kazakhstani on account of limited Russian (Toktau, 2017). Having been officially called “oralman” creates the feeling of “otherness”, “outsider” which is

according to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan (1997), refers to “foreigners or people without Kazakh citizenship or nationality who lived abroad when the Republic of Kazakhstan gained independence, and then returned to Kazakhstan for permanent residence”. Similarly, Bokayev states that it causes a strained attitude between local Kazakhs and repatriates by creating a reluctance to identify them as "insiders" and "we". Additionally, based on the lack of readiness and integration, ethnic Kazakhs from China are called "second-class citizens" (Cerny, 2010, p. 240).

Furthermore, articles about ethnic Kazakh repatriates are mostly published in Kazakh language newspapers, such as *Egemen Qazaqstan* and *Zhas Alash*, whereas Russian language newspapers like *Kazakhstanskaya pravda* and *Vremia* consider this topic to be less relevant to the Russian speaking people in the society (Dukeyev, 2017). Moreover, there were significant differences in informing citizens about ethnic Kazakh repatriates in Kazakh-language newspapers and Russian-language newspapers. For instance, Kazakh-language newspapers described ethnic repatriates as "*qandas* (kinsmen), *bauir* (brother), *again jurt* (relatives)", but in contrast, Russian-language newspapers described them based on the Soviet notion of nationality as "repatriates, *pereselentsy* (immigrants), and *litsa korennoi natsional'nosti* (people of the indigenous nationality)" (Dukeyev, 2017, p. 8). Bokayev (2013) criticized mass media for "creating a negative image of repatriates and the process of migration" (p. 10) which further exacerbates the difficulties in integration and communication in the society. Even the Kazakhstani youth has negative stereotypes about ethnic Kazakh repatriates, based on a survey conducted among 14-28 years Kazakhstani youth in 2014, it was revealed that 14 percent of respondents did not wish to live near ethnic repatriates (Dukeyev, 2017). To close, , the poor knowledge of Russian, negative stereotypes and attitudes towards ethnic Kazakhs from China cause difficulties in integration into society.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the reviewed literature in this chapter suggests that the relationship between language and social integration among immigrants is complicated. The concepts presented here are integrated and lead to an understanding of how language impacts social integration of China-Kazakh repatriated students in their ancestral homeland. Moreover, repatriated students' language attitudes, choice and practices have been discussed as well as the language policy in the country.

This chapter provided theoretical and empirical knowledge from previous studies. The next chapter, methodology, will describe the research design, data collection tools, sample and site selection and ethical considerations that guided this study.

### **Chapter 3. Methodology**

In the previous chapter, the conceptual framework and relevant literature to the study have been reviewed. This chapter will present the methodology of the study employed to address the research questions that aim to explore the role of language in the integration of ethnic Kazakh repatriated students from China in Nur-Sultan (Astana) and Almaty and how they relate their language difficulties to integration in Kazakhstan. The first section of the chapter will justify and explain the choice of an interview-based qualitative research design developed in the study. The following section will comprise details of sampling, participants and the research site selecting. The third section illustrates the reasons for choosing interview as the research instrument, while the next two sections describe the data collection process and analysis of the data. Finally, the ethical considerations of the study will be discussed.

#### **Research Design**

This section explains the research design that was employed in this study, and besides describes the research process.

This study employs a qualitative research approach which focuses on "... understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences...rather than determining the cause and effect, predicting, or describing the distribution of some attribute among a population" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 5-6). According to Ritchie (2003) qualitative research "offers the opportunity to 'unpack' issues, to see what they are about or what lies inside, and to explore how they are understood by those connected with them" (p. 27). In my study, the purpose of exploring the role of language in the integration of ethnic Kazakh repatriated students from China and how they relate their language difficulties to integration in

Kazakhstan can be achieved by exploring ethnic Kazakh students' experiences. It can be argued that in order to accomplish this goal, a quantitative approach is not applicable as it focuses on numeric data to examine the correlation of tendencies (Creswell, 2014).

More precisely, qualitative case study is employed since I would like to investigate the language attitude, use and its impact on integration of ethnic Kazakh repatriate students from China in-depth. Specifically, a case study of Nur-Sultan and Almaty students. Yin (2003) defined a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (p.13- 14). As Creswell (2014) states, “an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection” (p. 493).

To start with, first the research problem was identified, and the research purpose was determined to solve this problem. After that, three research questions were developed to achieve the goal of the study. Next, a semi-structured face-to-face interview was chosen as the research instrument, thus the interview protocol was developed. After all these steps, an accurate description about the research purpose, questions, design, methods, anonymity and confidentiality procedures, risks and benefits of the study were submitted to the NUGSE Research Committee. After receiving the NUGSE Research Approval, I contacted the participants of the study and arranged a time and place for conducting interviews, and started collecting data.

To sum up, the qualitative interview-based approach was employed in the current study. The research design was helpful to explore the role of language of ethnic Kazakh repatriated students in Kazakhstan.

### **Research Site and Sample**

The previous section presented research design that was applied for this study. This section describes the research site, sampling strategy and the participants of this study.

**Research Site.** The research was conducted at universities in Nur-Sultan and Almaty. The reason for selecting these two cities is virtue of the fact that the utilization of the Kazakh language, as it was reported by Smagulova (2006), is substantially different in various regions of Kazakhstan. The vast majority of people who speak Kazakh language live in the south and west of Kazakhstan, however, less than 50% of the north and east Kazakhstani residence is proficient in Kazakh (Smagulova, 2006). According to the above-mentioned factors, one city located in the south, Almaty, where Kazakhs range between 70 and 97% (Smagulova, 2008), and one city from the north of the country, Nur-Sultan, which is predominantly populated by ethnic Russian people (Zabirova, 2008), were chosen to explore the study.

**Research sample.** On the basis of the purpose of the study to examine the role of language in the integration of ethnic Kazakh repatriated students from China, the researcher purposefully chose the ethnic Kazakh students who resided and were raised in China as the target sample of the study, and employed purposeful sampling, where the researcher selects the participants and site according to exact criteria to reach the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2014). In other words, the purposive sampling is utilized when the researcher “must select a sample from the most which can be learned” (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, p. 96). Therefore, participants were chosen according to the following criteria: who was born and raised in China; who has experience of living in Nur-Sultan and Almaty; who are above the age of 18. More precisely, five students from Almaty and five students from Nur-Sultan universities were chosen. More information about the participants are presented in the table below:



Table 1. Study Participants

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Number of years residence in Kazakhstan</b>
Anar	Female	Nur-Sultan	7
Erbol	Male	Nur-Sultan	2
Sholpan	Female	Nur-Sultan	1,4
Miras	Male	Nur-Sultan	4
Dulat	Male	Nur-Sultan	7
Altin	Female	Almaty	5
Dinara	Female	Almaty	3
Magripa	Female	Almaty	5
Olzhas	Male	Almaty	5
Aigerim	Female	Almaty	2

*Note.* The names of the participants are pseudonyms.

All in all, two cities Nur-Sultan and Almaty has been chosen as a research site, and the researcher recruited five participants from each city through snowball sampling to participate in this study.

### **Data Collection Instrument**

The instrument that was chosen to collect data for this study is presented and justified in the following section.

An interview was conducted in order to answer the aforementioned research questions. The main reason for choosing an interview is that it "has the potential to elicit rich, thick descriptions and offers researchers an opportunity to clarify statements and

probe for additional information" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 154). Also, according to Wellington (2000), interviews allow to understand participants' "thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings and perceptions" (p. 71).

Furthermore, with regard to the types of interview, a face-to-face semi-structured interview was selected as an instrument for this study to understand ethnic Kazakh students' language and integration experience. This kind of interview is applied when the researcher uses the questions that are determined in advance but do not adhere a predetermined question list, rather, it probes more deeply to facilitate the complicated issues and to guide the interview process (Cohen et al., 2007). This description by Cohen et al., (2007) fits my study since the order of questions can be changed and/or additional questions can be added based on the participants' answers. Thus, the interviewer gives the respondents freedom to explain particular issues with the help of open-ended questions. One-on-one interviews allow the researcher to interview one participant at a time (Creswell, 2014). This type of interview is suitable for my study because I want to understand ethnic Kazakh repatriated students' language and integration experience in-depth in order to answer the research questions. Moreover, if the participant feels shy when talking about sensitive issues in front of other people, one-on-one interviews are the best option.

For conducting semi-structured interviews, interview protocol was developed that included 15 questions covering the following topics:

- A. Linguistic Background;
- B. Language Attitudes;
- C. Language use in different domains;
- D. Language and integration (please see appendix A).

To summarize, semi-structured interview was chosen as a suitable method to collect the data. According to semi-structures interview questions the data was collected from 10 participants.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The previous section described the instrument that was chosen to collect the data. This section describes in detail the procedure of collecting the data for the current study.

Based on reviewing previous research studies (Amangul, 2013; Bokayev, 2013; Cerny 2013; Kalysh & Egamberdiyev, 2014; Toktau, 2017) an interview protocol was developed that includes open-ended questions as it "allows the participant to create the options for responding" (Creswell, 2014). The participants were asked open-ended questions about their language repertoire, language preference, language challenges, and integration experiences (see Appendix A). Before conducting an actual interview, it was pilot tested in English on other students as a piloting interview helps the researcher to get high-quality data (Wellington, 2000). Thus, pilot testing helps to prepare for interviews and see possible responses whether they help to answer the research questions. After that, it was translated into Kazakh because actual interviews were conducted in English and Kazakh depending on the participants' language choice. After getting feedback from pilot testing, I revised the interview questions and contacted participants to arrange a time and place convenient for them. Each interview started with an explanation of the study and the introduction of the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix B). Each interview lasted approximately 15-35 minutes. In order to set up a friendly atmosphere, I shared my own studying experience in China with participants before starting the interview.

Answers of the respondents were recorded to the researcher's electronic device with the permission of the participants, as it allowed the researcher repeatedly play the

recorder to transcribe it into words in order to analyze them by coding. Recording is the best choice during the data collection process as it allows the researchers to capture the responses of the interviewees and it is not possible to take detailed notes. Nevertheless, audio-recording cannot capture some details as the facial expressions of the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Therefore, the interviewer should listen to the participants attentively and take notes of some details that cannot be audio-taped. Moreover, the interviews that are well conducted (a) “flow naturally” and (b) “are rich in detail” (Dörnyei, 2007, as cited in Alsaawi, 2014, p. 153). Accordingly, the interviewer should make the participant feel relaxed and be able to attentively “... listen more than to speak” without any interruption, as getting rich data is important in conducting research (Robson, 2011, as cited in Alsaawi, 2014, p. 153).

To summarize, the data collection procedure included several stages. These consisted of preparing interview protocol in two languages, receiving the approval from GSE Research Committee, recruiting the participants and conducting the interviews.

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

Once the data was collected, I started the analysis of the qualitative data from ten face-to-face interviews. It is important to start the analysis of the data during the week of interview conduction in order not to forget or neglect important details that are still fresh in the researcher's mind and to be able to manage a considerable quantity of data more efficiently. Moreover, data collection and data analysis should be contemporaneous and supplement each other (Cohen et al., 2003; Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Merriam, 1998).

This study employed thematic analysis which embraces the identification, development and analysis of meaningful themes that was found in data, and it was used in order to provide a deeper understanding of an issue (Braun & Clarke, 2006). More

precisely, in the present study the researcher employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodological guidelines for thematic analysis: (1) review of data, (2) creation of codes, (3) search for themes, (4) review themes, (5) define themes, (6) produce the report.

The data analysis started with transcribing all interviews, and it was analyzed by focusing on detailed information and after it changed to codes and themes (Creswell, 2012). The interviews were transcribed in Kazakh and English languages and then coded in English. While analyzing the data, some questions that I had not posed started emerging. Therefore, I contacted the participants and asked these questions and was able to get answers from all participants. After finishing analyzing and then completing the findings section, the external audit strategy (Creswell, 2012) was used. This strategy is applied when one of the colleagues, in the researcher's case, one of the GSE students read some transcriptions and findings section and commented based on the consistency of the findings with the words of the participants. Afterwards, according to the comments minor changes have been amended.

In conclusion, the guidelines for thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to analyse the data. In order to fulfill this process, the data was transcribed and reviewed, codes were created and then divided into themes to present findings.

### **Ethical concerns**

In order to address the ethical requirements of academic research, I completed the online CITI training program to be competent in ethical issues, which might arise during the conducting interviews in the study that involves human subjects. After that I submitted my Ethics Review application and assembled NUGSE Ethics committee approval to conduct an interview.

I made sure that the study fully followed the ethical consideration, as it involves a sensitive issue. Therefore, before conducting one-on-one face to face interviews, I prepared an ethics approval form, in order to help participants to become familiar with the research topic, purpose, and research questions. Further, I provided participants with the consent forms and made sure that they are voluntarily taking part in the interview and were ready to share their opinion. All information obtained from the interviews were kept confidential and participants' engagement was anonymous. For example, in order to strictly adhere to confidentiality, I used pseudonyms instead of names and codes were given to each participant. The data was saved on my electronic device which requires a code that only the researcher knows. In addition, the audio recording was utilized only with the consent of the participants as it helps to analyze the collected data properly, and all recorded materials will be kept for three years in a safe place.

Certain aspects within ethical issues were considered to make sure that the risk for participants was minimal. For instance, the participation was voluntary and participants were informed about the right to withdraw from the study any time. The interviews were conducted in a comfortable and convenient place for participants. They were aware to choose not to answer If interview questions touched sensitive topics.

To sum up, this study followed all necessary steps to address the ethical issues: the researcher obtained the approval to conduct an interview from GSE Research Committee, the participants were provided with Consent Forms and confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were ensured.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to provide an overall view of the methods employed in this study. As it can be seen above, the chapter discussed the reasons for choosing

qualitative research methods, and explained the sample population and research sites. Furthermore, the chosen semi-structured one-on-one interview, the data collection process and data analysis were described in detail. Specifically, the study employed qualitative interview-based approach. Ten participants were recruited among ethnic Kazakh repatriated students in Nur-Sultan and Almaty. In order to ensure ethical consideration, the researcher completed CITI training program and obtained approval to conduct research from NUGSE Research Committee. The Next chapter discusses the findings from the collected data.

## Chapter 4. Findings

The previous chapter presented that qualitative interview-based design was employed in the study. Ten ethnic Kazakh repatriated students from two cities were selected to participate in this study. The data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews. In this chapter, the findings that emerged from the collected data will be presented. The current study dwells on exploring the role of language in the integration of ethnic Kazakh repatriated students from China in Nur-Sultan (Astana) and Almaty and how they relate their language difficulties to integration in Kazakhstan. Three research questions were addressed to guide this study:

1. What languages do ethnic Kazakh repatriated students know and what attitudes do they have towards different languages in their repertoire and their sociolinguistic environment?
2. What languages do they use in different domains in their community? Why?
3. How do they value the role of language in integration into Kazakhstani society?

The findings have been presented in three sections. The first section is dedicated to the findings of ethnic Kazakh repatriated students' language background, and the second section is devoted to the ethnic Kazakh repatriated students' attitudes towards the languages in their repertoire including any they are currently learning. The final section analyses the role of language in their integration. Subthemes and respondents' quotes were included in each section to understand the core of the issue.

### **The language background of the Chinese-Kazakh repatriated students**

The language background of ethnic Kazakh repatriated students was defined based on their language learning and use in China and Kazakhstan. The majority of the participants attended primary and secondary schools in China, where Chinese is the medium of



instruction. Thus, they consider Chinese as their first language. Seven out of ten participants (Anar, Erbol, Miras, Dulat, Altin, Magripa and Olzhas) attended upper-secondary schools in Kazakhstan, which means they studied at Kazakh medium instruction schools from 9th till 11th grade. Another three participants (Sholpan, Dinara, and Aigerim) studied only at the Chinese medium of instruction schools in China.

Regarding the language use in China, all ten participants noted that they have lived in a Chinese speaking environment, and most of them adjusted to speak Mandarin Chinese most commonly rather than Kazakh. All participants claimed a high proficiency in Mandarin Chinese and varying levels of Kazakh. Moreover, Anar and Altin reported their competence of Uyghur and Mongolian languages gained through communication with neighborhood friends.

**Language knowledge of Kazakh and Russian.** Initially, when the ethnic Kazakh repatriated students came to Kazakhstan, they had difficulties in understanding people due to the difference of Kazakh spoken in China and Kazakhstan in terms of accent and dialect. However, the language background of ten participants reveals that they have different levels of the Kazakh language based on their educational background and length of time spent living in Kazakhstan. Some participants who studied at Kazakh medium of instruction schools and have lived in Kazakhstan for more than four or five years demonstrated a high level of Kazakh.

... I know a lot of Kazakhs from China here, they can only take basic or intermediate courses, but I am probably the only one person who only studied in Kazakh school for two to three years, and it turned out like advanced courses ... I liked speaking in Kazakh not like remembering vocabulary in the basic level or writing some not so interesting essay in the intermediate level but the advanced, you talk about a lot of quite deep and thought-provoking issues and in Kazakh, you learn a lot of Kazakh words there as well (Anar, from transcript, 2019).

However, a participant whose educational background originates from schools with Mandarin Chinese medium of instruction reported limited or minimal knowledge of Kazakh. This finding is supported by the following quote:

... It's kind of a shame to say but I can't read Kazakh, like I can read it but at a really slow speed. And my Kazakh level is I can say pretty bad, but I can only do daily communications with each other that's it" (Sholpan, from transcript, 2019)

Contrary to Kazakh, all participants have limited proficiency in the Russian language in speaking and writing skills, and the majority of participants in Almaty (3 out of 5) said that they can hardly understand Russian, whereas most participants in Nur-Sultan (4 out of 5) noted that they can understand Russian well. This is because the residents of Nur-Sultan mostly speak Russian, so the participants can understand Russian, yet only reply using basic daily expressions. Not all participants can express their ideas fluently in Russian as they lack confidence and are worried about their accents and making mistakes. This is clearly expressed by Anar's interview:

I don't speak a lot Russian because I am somehow shy of my accent or you know like if grammar is not proper or something like that but I can understand 70 to 80 percent of the Russian people say (from transcript, 2019)

This participant explains that even though she understands Russian quite well, she is not confident and feels embarrassed speaking Russian due to her accent and low level of grammar. Interestingly, some participants started to add Russian words in their Kazakh speech like locals do, and they said that some words are easy to say in Russian rather than in Kazakh, such as *tipa* [like], *davai* [come on], *koroche* [in short]. It shows that they are adapting to the local Kazakh society by taking on some intricate features of the local dialect.

### **Preference of Chinese**

A large proportion of participants (7 out of 10) still highlighted the high preference of the Chinese language in their repertoire, even though they moved to Kazakhstan more than three years ago. They consider Chinese as a mother tongue, so it is easy for them to think and speak Chinese. The participant from Almaty stated the following:

I can say Chinese because all the programs in my phone are in the Chinese language, and I mostly read books in Chinese. Actually I also read books in the Kazakh language, but it is difficult for me to understand and I read very slowly. That's why I like reading books in Chinese (Magripa, translation from Kazakh to English, from transcript, 2019)

Similarly, participants from Nur-Sultan still prefer the Chinese language as well:

Chinese, because back in China my friends were all Chinese and I can express myself freely in Chinese, but in other languages I have some difficulties describing my feelings or something like that (from transcript, 2019).

One of the participants said that she feels comfortable with the Kazakh language, but Chinese still dominates, even though she says of Kazakh:

My group mates say that when I speak, I pause and then talk, I think in Chinese and then translate it in my mind and then speak Kazakh. Some words automatically come out in Chinese (laughter)

Moreover, all participants reported that they use the Chinese language while communicating with other ethnic Kazakhs from China.

... with Kazakhs from China we sometimes speak Chinese but when we speak Chinese we mix with Kazakh as well (Anar, from transcript, 2019)

Another participant from Almaty explains the reason for using Chinese:

... when I can't explain in Kazakh I use Chinese, it's the same here; people use Russian when they can't explain in Kazakh (Olzhas, translation from Kazakh to English, from transcript, 2019)

### **Family language**

Participants were asked to indicate what language(s) they use at home. Eight participants stated that they use only the Kazakh language with their parents, while two participants mix Mandarin Chinese with Kazakh. Erbol states the following:

I use Kazakh at home because my parents were Kazakh language and literature teachers, that's why they insisted on speaking only Kazakh at home. I have a little brother who studied from the first to the sixth grades at Chinese school, so we mix Chinese with Kazakh while talking (translation from Kazakh to Russian from the transcript, 2019)

Interestingly, ethnic Kazakh repatriated students use Kazakh while talking with older relatives in China, but they mostly use Chinese or mix Kazakh with Chinese while communicating with young relatives or friends in China. The data showed that some participants add some easy Russian words in their speech while having a conversation with relatives in China. Thus, these findings indicate that code-switching is used by repatriated students in their daily communication. However, one of the participants says that she does not add any Russian words, she even speaks Kazakh with a Chinese accent as she used to back in China.

### **English and Chinese as academic languages**

The data showed that most participants use Chinese and English languages for academic purposes. They highlighted that they cannot find more information in Kazakh as it is not a scientific language yet. According to one of the participants from Nur-Sultan:

I use mostly Chinese and English languages to get more information, as they are science languages (Miras, from transcript, 2019)

I use English and Chinese when I need some more information/materials as there is not enough information in Kazakh (Dulat, from transcript, 2019)

### **The role of language in the integration**

The data suggests that the majority of participants consider that the role of language is significant as it allows them to communicate with others. The knowledge of Kazakh and Russian is very important because they are official languages and necessary to function adequately in Kazakhstan. One of the participants, Erbol, reported that when he had just come to Kazakhstan he was doing his documents and the girl asked for his ID card and said it in Russian (*udostoverenie*), he did not understand what the woman was asking for. After that he realized that everyone says this word in Russian even if they speak Kazakh. Another participant from Almaty highlighted the importance of the language in the following quote:

Language is very important in adapting to the environment. When you come to Kazakhstan, first you look for a comfortable environment. For example, the Kazakh language was more comfortable for me so I didn't want to have challenges, but my friend wanted to develop, learn, see more of what she did not know, so she chose to study at Russian school. As a result, she is fluent in Russian and doesn't have problems with Russian (Altin, translation from Kazakh to English, from transcript, 2019)

One of the participants also recommended to repatriated ethnic Kazakhs to not only gather together with people from the same background but also to be open and communicate more with local Kazakhs because most of these Kazakhs from China mostly live in their own communities, therefore, it is difficult for them to integrate into the society.

When repatriates come from China, they look for a community with the same background. However, I think that in order to adapt into Kazakhstani society, repatriates should not gather only with the same background of people, but they should communicate with locals too. It will help them adapt better. (from transcript, 2019).

However, another participant stated that the Kazakh language plays a more important role than Russian, therefore they should adapt to the Kazakh language, not Russian. This finding is supported by the following quote:

Kazakh-dominant we didn't come here to learn Russian but because we want to learn Kazakh. Of course learning an additional language is good but I am not sure if we should adapt fully to Russian language as well (from transcript, 2019).

**Language as a challenge to integrate into society.** All participants outlined the difficulty they had, and are still having based on the low proficiency in the Russian language.

Additionally, language challenges refer to the language environment in Kazakhstan, which differs according to the regions. For instance, the vast majority of people who speak Kazakh language live in the south and west of Kazakhstan, however, less than 50% of the north and east Kazakhstani residence is proficient in Kazakh (Smagulova, 2006). Erbol from Nur-Sultan reported,

... most people in Astana (Nur-Sultan) speak Russian, but people in Almaty, Shymkent, and Kyzylorda speak more Kazakh. Actually, I was in Almaty and found out that people there speak more Kazakh than in Astana. Whether you are in a taxi or shop if you speak Kazakh they will answer you in Kazakh, but here in Astana (Nur-Sultan), they will answer in Russian (translation from Kazakh to English from transcript, 2019).

Another participant who has experienced studying and living in both cities stated the following:

I studied in the ninth grade in Almaty; when I was there students spoke more Kazakh than Russia, but in Astana, most of the students speak Russian. I think if I continued to live in Almaty, I would not know Russian that well, because the people in Almaty speak mainly Kazakh and I would use only Kazakh. No one speaks Kazakh in Astana, so after coming here, in Astana, you would adapt to it, and I tried to understand and speak Russian. (translation from Kazakh to English from a transcript, 2019)

This participant explains the language used in these two cities, and it can be seen that his experience and being in the Russian speaking environment helped him to improve his skills in that language. Thus, the language, that is spoken in the society that you live, has an impact on your language development. Another participant from Almaty supports the predominance of Kazakh in Almaty by the following:

Nowadays, Kazakh plays an important role in Almaty compared to the past. Earlier, everyone spoke only Russian on the bus, at that time I was afraid that someone would speak to me, but now the Kazakh language is widely used and I don't have problems.

There still remains a lot of difficulties with the Russian language and most of the participants from Almaty still have challenges regarding the Russian language.

Some participants put forward the idea that people do not realize that they are adding Russian words in their speech, as Dinara says: "they think that they speak Kazakh, but actually they mix Kazakh with Russian words, that's why in my first year in Kazakhstan, it was difficult to understand them". Thus, code-switching (Li, 2000) between Kazakh and Russian is a common as well as the unnoticeable practice among locals. Moreover, even the participants who have studied in Kazakh medium of instruction schools still faced the Russian language challenges as scientific terms were mostly in Russian. Magripa pointed out: "some subjects such as biology and chemistry were challenging because they had a lot of difficult terms and they were mostly in Russian and I did not understand those lessons".

**Language learning methods.** Almost all participants have learned or are learning Kazakh and Russian using different methods. Seven out of ten participants have attended upper secondary schools, while two participants have participated in Russian courses, Dinara from Almaty is one of them:

I am attending Russian courses as my Russian is at a very low level. The teacher taught us the letters, then he gave us words to memorize, but I still cannot use the words to make a sentence (translation from Kazakh to English, from transcript, 2019)

Besides, all of the participants depicted their friends and peers as their main helpers in language learning. A participant described the peers' assistance as following:

I try to speak Russian when I am with my groupmates and they correct me when I make mistakes, so I am learning from my peers' correction (Dinara, translation from Kazakh to English, from transcript, 2019)

Some participants are lucky to have a Russian speaking roommate:

... my roommate at that time was Russian, so basically I spent like six months with her... at the beginning we even used sign language, but after some time with her help, I think my Russian kind of improved a lot (Anar, from transcript, 2019).

Similarly, another participant, Miras added:

I live with two people, one is from Shymkent (South) and another is from Petropavlovsk (North), both of them speak Russian, and know Kazakh, so we mix Kazakh with Russian (translation from Kazakh to English, from transcript, 2019)

Furthermore, out of the ten participants, six are trying to learn Russian and Kazakh by listening to music and watching movies:

I try to read books and watch movies to develop my Russian language skills (Dulat, translation from Kazakh to English, from transcript, 2019)

Similarly, another participant from Almaty added:

I try to watch Russian series and to practice my listening, but it is hard because I don't understand what they say. I also like Russian songs (Dinara, translation from Kazakh to English, from transcript, 2019)

The different methods that are used provide benefits and difficulties in learning Kazakh and Russian, and it will depend on participants' goal and motivation to comprehend these languages better. Similarly, Erbol, a participant from Nur-Sultan added that:

I think my Russian level will increase due to my aspiration and time spent in Astana. Someday, I will speak like locals by mixing Kazakh with Russian (translation from Kazakh to English, from transcript, 2019)

### **Summary of findings**

1. The language background of ten participants reveals that they have different levels of Kazakh language based on their educational background and length of time spent living in Kazakhstan.



2. Comparatively, participants from Nur-Sultan have better skills in Russian than participants from Almaty. However, all participants cannot express their ideas fluently in Russian, but participants from Nur-Sultan can communicate in Russian for basic purposes.
3. The Chinese language still remains a comfortable language for all participants. Most of them still consider it as their first language.
4. English and Chinese are used for academic purposes, while Kazakh is a family language. Moreover, China-Kazakh repatriated students tend to switch Kazakh with Chinese while communicating with other ethnic Kazakhs from China.
5. Language plays a significant role in integration. The majority of the participants claim that due to their low Russian proficiency it is difficult to adapt to Kazakhstani society.

To sum up, this chapter presented an analysis of the data and findings of the research study that was based on responses to questions provided by the participants. The findings will be interpreted in the next chapter, taking into account literature and research.

## Chapter 5. Discussion

This study aimed to explore the role of language in the integration of ethnic Kazakh repatriated students from China in Nur-Sultan and Almaty and how they relate their language difficulties to integration in Kazakhstan. The previous chapter presented the findings obtained from the results of data analysis. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss and synthesize the results of the study that emerged from the findings with reference to the reviewed literature. In this chapter, a narrative and phenomenological inquiry was employed to better answer the research questions by semi-structured interviews with ten participants. The interpretations of each finding will be presented with regard to three research questions.

**RQ1: What languages do ethnic Kazakh repatriated students know and what attitudes do they have towards different languages in their repertoire and their sociolinguistic environment.**

This research question elicited the participants' linguistic background and attitudes towards languages in their repertoire. It was revealed that participants have different levels of competence in Kazakh and Russian, and the Chinese language is still considered to be a comfortable language for them.

**Findings 1: The language background of ten participants reported that their knowledge of Kazakh differs based on their educational background and length of time spent living in Kazakhstan.**

It is important to determine the proficiency of language in order to understand the language attitudes and use as Jamaï (2008) states "the degree of language competence and fluency speakers achieve is a very good indicator of language use and maintenance"

(p.249). Thus, this finding disclosed the ethnic Kazakh repatriated students' knowledge of Kazakh and linguistic background in general.

There are two types of educational schools: bilingual and Han-Majority schools (Toktau, 2017). Shanatibieke (2016) also revealed two types of Kazakh students: *minkaohan* and *minkaomin*. Based on her study (Shanatibieke, 2016), students who "attend Han Chinese schools from elementary to high-school level and take the university entrance exam using the Chinese language" (p.14) are called *Minkaohan*, while students "who attend Kazakh schools and take the university entrance exam in the Kazakh language" (p. 14) are called *Minkaomin*. Today, however minority languages are included as subjects in bilingual schools in China where the medium of instruction is Mandarin Chinese (Dwyer, 2005 as cited in Toktau, 2017). In the present study, seven participants attended Han-Majority schools where Mandarin Chinese was the medium of instruction, whereas three participants had Kazakh language and literature as a subject. Before coming to Kazakhstan, none of them could read or write in Kazakh using Cyrillic script, or heard any dialects in the Kazakh language before. This finding is supported by Kuşçu (2014), who stated that it is difficult to use language as the different writing script is used in host countries. In the history of Kazakhstan, three writing scripts were used: Cyrillic, Latin and Arabic. Nowadays, Cyrillic script is used which was introduced in the 1800s and in the 1940s was adapted by the Soviet Union. However, the Presidential Decree in 2017 ordered the transit from Cyrillic to Latin script and it should be completed by 2025. To sum up, ethnic Kazakh repatriated students experienced difficulties in understanding dialects, and adapting to writing script in Kazakhstani context which was also reported by participants of Dukenova (2019).

**Findings 2: Participants from Nur-Sultan report better knowledge of Russian than participants from Almaty. However, all participants cannot express their ideas fluently in Russian, but participants from Nur-Sultan can communicate in Russian for basic purposes.**

Language plays a significant role in integration into society, and it is a critical issue to ethnic Kazakhs. It appears to be common for ethnic Kazakh repatriated students from non-CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries to experience Russian language challenges, as was revealed in the findings of other studies (Amangul, 2013; Bokayev et al., 2012; Diener, 2005; Kuşçu, 2014; Toktau, 2017). For instance, in the study of Bokayev (2012), the majority of participants who compared local Kazakhs with Kazakhs living abroad stated that local Kazakhs speak Russian and “adjusted to Russian culture” (p. 7). Similarly, in the current study, participants revealed that local Kazakhs do not realize that they add Russian words while speaking Kazakh as it is easier to say some words in Russian. Moreover, the good knowledge of Russian among ethnic Kazakh repatriates from China depends on the place of living and length of staying in Kazakhstan. The majority of participants in Nur-Sultan stated that they can deal with the Russian language informally as people surrounding them mostly use this language. Meanwhile participants from Almaty mostly use the Kazakh language with people surrounding them and have low proficiency in Russian, except one participant who lived with Russian speaking girls. Akhanova (2017) reports that the participants of her study who live in Nur-Sultan tend to communicate with peers and friends in Russian despite having good knowledge of Kazakh. This is based on the reason that using Russian is less problematic as some individuals are dominant in that language (Akhanova, 2017). Thus, the knowledge of Russian is widely used in Nur-Sultan, and generally in the northern and eastern parts of Kazakhstan. All participants of this study in Nur-Sultan and Almaty indicated that their peers, friends and roommates play a

significant role in their learning the Russian language and these repatriated students rely on their help.

**Findings 3: The Chinese language still remains a comfortable language for all participants. Most of them still consider it as their first language.**

This finding showed the importance of the Chinese language in ethnic Kazakh repatriated students' lives. This is based on the fact that they had been immersed in this language from childhood and it is considered as their mother language. During the interview some participants used a few Chinese words in their speech as they were aware that I studied in China and have knowledge of the Chinese language. This kind of practice, code-switching, is a part of translanguaging which means shuttling between languages (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011; Nikula & Moore, 2016). Their code-switching between Kazakh and Chinese might be explained by the fact that they could not remember the right word in Kazakh and used the first word that came to their mind. Similarly, the participants of the study conducted by Toktau (2017) reported a high level of Mandarin Chinese and used this language more than Kazakh.

Moreover, the knowledge of Chinese helped repatriated students as well. Some participants stated that they worked as a translator of Chinese outside the university which is similar to the findings of the study by Dukenova (2019).

**RQ2. What languages do they use in different domains in their communities? Why?**

This research question looked at the usage of language in different domains in Kazakhstan. Subcategories for this question were: family language, academic language, and preferred language.

**Findings 4: English and Chinese are used for academic purposes, while Kazakh is a family language. All participants stated that they codemix Kazakh with Chinese while communicating with other ethnic Kazakh repatriated students from China.**

This finding indicated that ethnic Kazakh repatriated students use their whole multilingual repertoire in various cases. According to Fabrigar, MacDonald & Wegener (2005), language choice is influenced by attitudes which are viewed as a "a general evaluative summary of the information derived from affective, cognitive, and behavioral bases" (p. 82). The choice of the use of a particular language is based on different factors. For example, the participants of this study reported that they use English and Chinese languages for their education. These languages are used for academic purposes due to the lack of academic and scientific information and materials in the Kazakh language. For example, repatriated students have positive attitudes towards Chinese and English languages, as they help them to get more information in their studies, however, the Kazakh language does not help more in their education.

Another factor is a family domain where mostly repatriates use the Kazakh language. Thus, language can be affected by interlocutors, such as parents, siblings and grandparents. For instance, the participants of this study reported that they mostly mix Kazakh with Chinese with youth (siblings, cousins and friends), but with older people (parents, grandparents, aunt, uncles) they speak in Kazakh. It is akin to Toktau's (2017) study where she states that Kazakh language was utilized as a home language in different levels among ethnic Kazakh repatriates from China, but in their oral speech it was mixed with Chinese language. Moreover, one of the participants of the current study reported that while interacting with parents she sometimes answers to them using Chinese whereas parents always speak Kazakh to her. This finding is similar to the Bichani's (2015) study

where participants stated the mixture use of Arabic and English, parents speaking to their children in Arabic, while children answers using English (Bichani, 2015). Thus, the older generation tend to use their native language while younger generation mostly uses the dominant language in the country.

Besides, it was revealed that the repatriated students of this study code-switch between Kazakh and Chinese while communicating with other ethnic Kazakhs as well. This occurs when they have forgotten a word in Kazakh and in this case Chinese words come into their minds. Similar findings among students of multilingual classrooms was revealed in the study of Belova (2018), where students reported code-switching to Kazakh or Russian when they had forgotten words in English. Thus, code-switching between languages is inevitable, and students might do it unconsciously as most Kazakhs are proficient in both Kazakh and Russian languages. The research (Bahous, Nabhani & Bacha, 2014; Ospanova, 2017; Paxton, 2009) shows that code-switching is a natural phenomenon for students, therefore they unconsciously use it. Moreover, code-switching can also be the result of the low language proficiency. For instance, Ma (2012) reported that the lower the students' language proficiency is, the more they use code-switching to respond and in communication.

In correspondence with Rosenberg and Howland's (1960) framework, ethnic Kazakh repatriated students' attitudes towards languages may be referred to as an affective and cognitive component which describes an individual's positive and negative feelings and beliefs about language(s). Similar to the description of this component, the ethnic Kazakh repatriated students in my study had negative attitudes towards the use of the Russian language. Research has been shown that there might exist disharmony between the affective component and the cognitive and/ or behavioral components of an individual's

attitudes to a language (Baker, 1992; Hanson, 1980; Lasagabaster, 2017; Tucker, 2020; Wicker, 1969). For instance, a person can show positive feelings to a particular language, but in fact according to different reasons the same person might have negative feelings to the use of and/or learning of the language (Lasagabaster, 2017). Similarly, the majority of the ethnic Kazakh repatriated students in my study had positive attitudes towards the Russian language as it is good to learn additional languages, but at the same time they had negative attitudes towards the usage of this language. They stated that they didn't come to study the Russian language, but to study the Kazakh language and adapt to the Kazakh language.

In line with international studies on language attitudes, language choice, language use and integration it might be compatible with the study of Aziakpono and Bekker (2010), Gogonas and Michail (2015), Benson (2016) and Spencer-Oatey et al. (2016). Aziakpono and Bekker (2010), investigated attitudes toward the language in South Africa, the country which has 11 official languages such as English, Afrikaans and nine Bantu languages. The authors were concerned with the students' attitudes towards the use of English and isiXhosa where it was revealed that students had positive attitudes towards these languages as they would help them in their studies (Aziakpono & Bekker, 2010). In the setting of the language in integration, the role of the high proficiency of Greek led to the successful integration of Albanian immigrants in Greece (Gogonas & Michail, 2015), while limited language proficiency of English among immigrant students from China in the UK resulted in integration challenges (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2016). Likewise, language issues are problematic for adaptation among Chinese immigrant students in New Zealand (Benson, 2016).

**RQ3. How do they value the role of language in integration into Kazakhstani society?**



This research question refers to the role of language in the integration process of ethnic Kazakh repatriated students from China. Subcategories for this question were: language barriers to social integration.

**Findings 5: Language plays a significant role in integration. The majority of the participants claim that due to their low Russian proficiency it is difficult to adapt to Kazakhstani society.**

The data suggests that the majority of participants consider the role of language to be significant as it allows them to communicate with others. All participants outlined the difficulty they had, and continue having, based on their low proficiency in the Russian language. This finding is similar to most research of ethnic Kazakh repatriates (Amangul, 2013; Bokayev et al., 2012; Diener, 2015; Kuşçu, 2014; Toktau, 2017). Moreover, this finding can be supported by the literature that suggests international and repatriated students usually face language barriers in understanding different dialects and accents that give rise to language challenges in their academic studies (Hanwei et al., 2017; Ma, 2010). Additionally, language challenges refer to the language environment in Kazakhstan, which differs according to the regions. For instance, Kazakh is mostly used in the south and west parts of Kazakhstan, whereas less than 50% of Kazakhs speak the Kazakh language in the north and east of Kazakhstan (Smagulova, 2006). Accordingly, repatriates who live in the north and east of Kazakhstan might face more difficulties. However, they can also benefit from it as they can improve their Russian skills as well. Furthermore, Kazakhstan is putting an effort towards becoming a multilingual nation. According to the State Program of Languages Development and Functioning for 2011-2020 (MoES, 2011) the number of Kazakh (95%), Russian (90) and English (20%) language speakers should be increased.

The knowledge of Kazakh and Russian is very important because they are official languages and necessary to function adequately in Kazakhstan. There is no research studying ethnic Kazakh repatriated students' language learning process (Toktau, 2017). However, it is a very important process as Pujolar (2016) states that the former linguistic capitals of immigrants are devalued, which requires them to learn a new linguistic capital. This new linguistic capital in Kazakhstani context is Kazakh and Russian languages, which accounts for language challenges. The above-mentioned language challenges of participants lead them to learn Kazakh and Russian languages in order to adapt into the Kazakhstani society. Additionally, Russian language is perceived as a “hegemonic language” as it is compulsory for wider access to information, education, and job opportunities (Akhanova, 2017), while Kazakh language is considered to have a high social value when it is unmixed, grammatically correct, and people have extensive vocabulary, otherwise it has low value (Akhanova, 2017). The point is how well people can speak that language. That is another issue for repatriates because during the interview some participants reported that they feel embarrassed and have a lack of confidence when speaking Kazakh and Russian due to the fact that they might make some grammatical mistakes and because of their accent. This finding is also similar to the study conducted by Toktau (2017) where the participants reported that they are able to use the Kazakh language in verbal communication, but sometimes they spell Kazakh words incorrectly and cannot understand Kazakh literature well.

Furthermore, the low proficiency or absence of knowledge of Russian creates difficulties for repatriates in their employment, in the preparation of accurate and timely information, corresponding benefits, education, etc. (Kalysh & Egamberdiyev, 2014, p. 5). The participants of the study conducted by Kalysh & Egamberdiyev (2014) showed positive attitudes towards studying the Russian language as it promotes good job

opportunities and quality education. Similarly, the participants of this study also have positive attitudes towards studying the Russian language, however, they consider that they should adapt more to the Kazakh language, not to the Russian language. Additionally, the absence of the Russian language also influences the formation of identity. Toktau (2017) states that ethnic Kazakh repatriates do not consider themselves as Kazakhstani as they think it is ambivalent for them due to their low Russian proficiency, even some participants identified themselves to have dual identity (half Kazakhstani and half Chinese) or opposite (non-Kazakhstani and non-Chinese), however, all of them perceive themselves as ethnic Kazakhs (p. 67). In the same vein as Toktau's (2017) study, participants in this study reported that they do not feel themselves fully Kazakhstani due to their low Russian proficiency.

To sum up, this chapter discussed the findings of the study in relation to the literature on the topic of the role of language in integration of ethnic Kazakhs repatriated students from China. All these findings revealed the linguistic background, language attitudes and social experiences of participants. In the next chapter, a summary of the main finding as well as recommendations, limitations and future research implications will be presented.

## **Chapter 6. Conclusion**

The previous chapter was dedicated to the discussion of the major findings of this qualitative study based on the data from ten semi-structured interviews conducted with ethnic Kazakh repatriated students from China in Almaty and Nur-Sultan. The following chapter presents the conclusions drawn from this study. The purpose of the study was to explore the role of language in the integration of ethnic Kazakh repatriated students from China in Nur-Sultan (Astana) and Almaty and how they relate their language difficulties to integration in Kazakhstan. The following research questions were addressed to reach the purpose of the study: 1) What languages do ethnic Kazakh repatriated students know and what attitudes do they have towards different languages in their repertoire and their sociolinguistic environment? 2) What languages do they use in different domains in their community? Why? 3) How do they value the role of language in integration into Kazakhstani society?

In the final chapter, in answering the above research questions, the main conclusions are outlined by the following themes: linguistic background of repatriated students, repatriated students' attitudes towards languages in their repertoire, the role of language in various domains, language challenges and social integration. Furthermore, implications of the findings and limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research will be provided.

### **Linguistic Background of Repatriated Students**

The findings of this study have revealed that repatriated students have different levels of competence in the Kazakh language. The reason for that can be the educational background and time spent living in Kazakhstan. Regardless of their Kazakh language competence they consider this language as a native language, while Mandarin Chinese is

considered to be the first and comfortable language that was reported by all participants. A conclusion can be drawn from this finding that different levels of the Kazakh language cannot be an obstacle to considering it as a native language.

### **Repatriated Students' Attitudes Towards Languages in their Repertoire**

The findings in correspondence with the framework have shown that ethnic Kazakh repatriated students' attitudes towards languages can be referred with respect to all the three components, viz. affective, cognitive and behavioral, of the framework (Rosenberg & Howland, 1960). Firstly, in relation to the affective component, it was revealed that repatriated students have negative attitudes towards the use of the Russian language and adaptation to this language. However, they believe that the poor knowledge of Russian poses challenges in their education and future employment, highlighting the cognitive component. Finally, on the basis of the findings, the participants reported that some words are easier to say in the Russian language. These findings have shown that the level of difficulty of using Russian words can be interpreted by the behavioral component. A conclusion that can be drawn from these findings is that repatriated students have positive attitudes towards the Kazakh language and negative attitudes towards the Russian language used in Kazakhstan.

### **The Role of Language in Diverse Communities**

The findings have demonstrated that the repatriated students use their entire multilingual repertoire. Firstly, the Chinese language is considered as their first language and the most comfortable one. The Chinese language along with the English are used for academic purposes as there is not much scientific information in the Kazakh language. Secondly, the Kazakh language is used as a family language. Additionally, translanguaging and code-switching are a common practice among repatriated students as

they mostly mix Kazakh and Chinese with their siblings, cousins and friends with the same background. From these findings it can be concluded that different languages are utilized in different circumstances, such as among family members, friends, in their education and so on.

### **Language challenges and Social Integration**

The study has shown that all participants have difficulties in Russian and Kazakh. The language challenges of Kazakh are based on their experience of learning this language. Namely, difference in writing, Cyrillic script is used for Kazakh in Kazakhstan and Arabic script is used for Kazakh in China. This difference in writing scripts can impact their other skills such as reading. Another conclusion of Russian language challenges is based on their low proficiency in that language and widespread usage in the society. Participants from Nur-Sultan stated that they have good receptive skills and can have conversations on a daily basis, compared with participants from Almaty. The reason for this finding can be the sociolinguistic environment of cities in different regions in Kazakhstan, and length of time of residence in Kazakhstan. However, it was revealed that all participants cannot express their ideas fluently in Russian. Another finding has indicated that the role of language is vital in integration and the low proficiency of Russian problematizes the repatriated students' integration into Kazakhstani society. Participants with limited knowledge of Russian face many more challenges in the environment where Russian is a dominant language.

### **Limitations and Further Implications**

The study has some limitations which should be acknowledged. First, the main limitation of this study is the limited time allowed for the fieldwork of the thesis which prevented the researcher from including more participants in the study for a more diverse

sample. Secondly, the findings cannot be generalized as it is a small scale study focusing on 5 students from each city. Therefore, it cannot represent the situation in the entire country. Another limitation of the current study is the utilization of only one data collection tool to collect data about the language attitudes, language use, language choice and integration of repatriated students. Using observations, recordings of actual practice and a questionnaire survey in a mixed methods research design as other tools would have enhanced the triangulation and validity of the data and findings.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Based on the findings, analysis and limitations of the study, the researcher recommends some recommendations for further research. Firstly, it is recommended to conduct a comparative study among ethnic Kazakh repatriated students from more cities with Russian dominant settings and Kazakh dominant settings, because findings might be different from this study. Secondly, one of the participants mentioned that males adapt into Kazakhstani society quicker than females, therefore, there might be the need to investigate the influence of gender on adaptation. Thirdly, it is suggested to investigate language attitudes together in the context with motivation among repatriated students to see what their language attitudes are and what motivates and or demotivates them to learn Russian and other language(s). Finally, a large-scale quantitative study might be needed in Almaty and Nur-Sultan in order to get richer data and to improve the reliability of the study to these cities. A large-scaled study would recruit a wide range of repatriated students from these two cities.

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**Appendix A: Interview Protocol**

Time of Interview: 14.00

Date: November 29, 2019

Place: Nur-Sultan

Interviewer: Marzhan Nurtaikyzy

Interviewee: Participant 1

Position of Interviewee: student

**Questions:****Background information:**

1. Are you undergraduate or post-graduate student?
2. When did you immigrate to Kazakhstan?
3. Did you come to Kazakhstan alone or with your family members? What are reasons for you to immigrate to Kazakhstan?
4. Have you ever attended a secondary school or a preparatory course in Kazakhstan?

**Language background, language attitudes, choice, use and integration**

1. How do you understand the language environment of Kazakhstan?
2. What is your level of Kazakh and Russian? How do you know these languages? Do you face any problems with languages?
3. Do you know any other languages? What is the level of that language/those languages? How do you know that language/these languages?
4. In what language do you feel comfortable the most?
5. What language do you often use? Social media? Watching mass media? Reading?
6. In what language are you studying at university? How do you find studying in that language?
7. What language do you prefer with your friends? Groupmates?
8. What about your friends in Kazakhstan? Where are they from? What languages do they use with you? In what ways does it help you to improve your language skills? How does it affect your social life?
9. What languages do you use at home? Why? What language do you use with other relatives?
10. Have you experienced any challenges with integration into the wider society? In what ways has your knowledge of your language played a role in that?
11. Would it be good if all ethnic Kazakhs from China forget their Chinese language and adapt fully to Kazakh and Russian? Why? Why not?

**Concluding questions**

1. Is there anything about experience here in Kazakhstan that you want to share which I haven't asked?
2. If I have any additional questions, can I contact you again?

## Appendix B: Consent Forms

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

#### The Role of Language in the Integration of Repatriated Students in Kazakhstan

**DESCRIPTION:** You are invited to participate in a **research study** on exploring the role of languages of ethnic Kazakh students repatriated from China and their social integration into society. You will be asked to participate in a one-on-one face-to-face interview between you and researcher at a public place of your choice. The language of the interview Kazakh or English will depend on the choice of the participants. The interview will be semi-structured with open and closed questions, will be audio recorded in recording device and later will be transcribed for data analysis. Data from records will be analyzed in the final report and findings will be shown at scientific meetings. Recordings will be kept for three years. You might be asked to participate in a follow-up interview if the researcher has further questions.

**TIME INVOLVEMENT:** Your participation will take approximately 30-40 minutes.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:** The risks associated with this study are as such sensitive issue of past experience which might stress the participants. If any question is sensitive, you may choose not to answer. The benefits which may reasonably be expected to result from this study are contribution to a better understanding of the situation of *ethnic Kazakh students repatriated from China studying in Nur-Sultan and Almaty*. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your grades at university.

**PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS:** If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your **participation is voluntary** and you have the **right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate.** You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals.

#### CONTACT INFORMATION:

**Questions:** If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Master's Thesis Supervisor for this student work, Mukul Saxena, mukul.saxena@nu.edu.kz, +7 7172 706412

**Independent Contact:** If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the NUGSE Research Committee to at gse\_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz  
Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided;
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ЗЕРТТЕУ ЖҰМЫСЫ КЕЛІСІМІНІҢ АҚПАРАТТЫҚ ФОРМАСЫ

### Қазақстандағы этникалық қазақ студенттердің интеграциясындағы тілдің рөлі

**СИПАТТАМА:** Сіз Қытайдан келген этникалық қазақ студенттердің интеграциясындағы тілдің рөлін зерттеуге бағытталған зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға шақырылып отырсыз. Сізге сіздің таңдауыңыз бойынша қоғамдық жерде сіз және зерттеуші арасындағы жеке бетпе-бет сұхбатқа қатысу ұсынылады. Сұхбаттың қазақ немесе ағылшын тілінде өтуі қатысушылардың таңдауына байланысты болады, және де сұхбат ашық және жабық сұрақтардан тұрады. Деректерді кейінірек талдау үшін сұхбат дыбыстық құрылғыға жазылады. Деректер қорытынды есепте талданатын болады және қорытындылар ғылыми жиналыстарда көрсетіледі. Таспадағы жазбалар үш жыл бойы сақталады. Егер зерттеушіде әрі қарай қосымша сұрақтары бар болса, сіз кейінгі сұхбатқа қатысуға шақырылуыңыз мүмкін.

**ӨТКІЗІЛЕТІН УАҚЫТЫ:** Сіздің қатысуыңыз шамамен 30-40 минут уақытыңызды алады.

### ЗЕРТТЕУ ЖҰМЫСЫНА ҚАТЫСУДЫҢ ҚАУШТЕРІ МЕН АРТЫҚШЫЛЫҚТАРЫ:

Зерттеу жұмысына қатысудың барысында мүмкін пайда болатын қауіп: қатысушыларға өткен тәжірибесіндегі сезімтал мәселелер әсер етуі мүмкін. Егер қандай да сұрақтар сезімтал болса, онда сіз жауап бермеуден бас тарта аласыз. Зерттеу жұмысына қатысуыңыздың келесідей артықшылықтары болуы мүмкін: Нұр-Сұлтан мен Алматы қалаларында оқитын Қытайдан оралған этникалық қазақ студенттерінің жағдайын жақсырақ түсіну. Зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға келісім беруіңіз немесе бас тартуыңыз Сіздің университеттегі бағаларыңызға еш әсерін тигізбейді.

**ҚАТЫСУШЫ ҚҰҚЫҚТАРЫ:** Егер Сіз берілген формамен танысып, зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға шешім қабылдасаңыз, Сіздің қатысуыңыз **ерікті** түрде екенін хабарлаймыз. Сонымен қатар, **қалаған уақытта айыппұл төлемей және сіздің әлеуметтік жеңілдіктеріңізге еш кесірін тигізбей зерттеу жұмысына қатысу туралы келісіміңізді кері қайтаруға немесе тоқтатуға құқығыңыз бар. Зерттеу жұмысына мүлдем қатыспауыңызға да толық құқығыңыз бар.** Сондай-ақ, қандай да бір сұрақтарға жауап бермеуіңізге де әбден болады. Бұл зерттеу жұмысының нәтижелері академиялық немесе кәсіби мақсаттарда баспаға ұсынылуы немесе шығарылуы мүмкін.

### БАЙЛАНЫС АҚПАРАТЫ:

**Сұрақтарыңыз:** Егер жүргізіліп отырған зерттеу жұмысының процесі, қауіп мен артықшылықтары туралы сұрағыңыз немесе шағымыңыз болса, келесі байланыс құралдары арқылы зерттеушінің магистрлық тезисі бойынша жетекшісімен хабарласуыңызға болады. Мукул Саксена, mukul.saxena@nu.edu.kz, +7 7172 706412

**ДЕРБЕС БАЙЛАНЫС АҚПАРАТТАРЫ:** Егер берілген зерттеу жұмысының жүргізілуімен қанағаттанбасаңыз немесе сұрақтарыңыз бен шағымдарыңыз болса, Назарбаев Университеті Жоғары Білім беру мектебінің Зерттеу Комитетімен көрсетілген байланыс құралдары арқылы хабарласуыңызға болады: электрондық поштамен gse\_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz

Зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға келісіміңізді берсеңіз, берілген формаға қол қоюыңызды сұраймыз.

- Мен берілген формамен мұқият таныстым;
- Маған зерттеу жұмысының мақсаты мен оның процедурасы жайында толық ақпарат берілді;
- Жинақталған ақпарат пен құпия мәліметтерге тек зерттеушінің өзіне қолжетімді және мәлім болатынын толық түсінемін;
- Мен кез келген уақытта ешқандай түсініктемесіз зерттеу жұмысына қатысудан бас тартуыма болатынын түсінемін;
- Мен жоғарыда аталып өткен ақпаратты саналы түрде қабылдап, осы зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға өз келісімімді беремін.

Қолы: \_\_\_\_\_

Күні: \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix C: Transcription Sample of Interview

**Interviewer:** Are you undergraduate or post-graduate student?

**Interviewee:** I am 3<sup>rd</sup> grade undergraduate

**Interviewer:** Did you come to Kazakhstan alone or with your family members? What are reasons for you to immigrate to Kazakhstan?

**Interviewee:** Have you ever attended a secondary school or a preparatory course in Kazakhstan?

**Interviewer:** How do you understand the language environment of Kazakhstan?

**Interviewee:** I think it is very hard for me right now because in our university it is totally different from the world outside. However, I would say I see a language environment that is much different from when I came 8 years ago. It means that at that time probably because I didn't know Kazakh and Russian that well I feel like I couldn't understand people and I feel like everyone was speaking Russian and everyone was mixing Russian into Kazakh, so I couldn't fully understand them. Probably with the knowledge I have gain in both languages now I don't feel very uncomfortable here. However, we shouldn't need that it is still like mixing languages issue, still people mostly put Russian language to their priority when they speak like most of my groupmates would still prefer speaking in Russian and this definitely was the environment like, but I also like that there are a lot of improvement such as a lot of good books were translated into Kazakh of some good quality, like last year I think there were 100 like very good books. In these books for example, for some of the migrated family in china they would buy this kind of books because like parents' generation they don't know English very well so they prefer to read in Kazakh. Now they can also observe some western ideas through those well-known books that were translated into Kazakh. So I think this is definitely an improvement and also it is about changing of the alphabet and would give us some more hopes that when my parents' generation they always told me that they couldn't pronounce some of the sounds that is in Kazakh alphabet here such as very like specific to Russian like автобус such kind of thing

**Interviewer: What is your level of Kazakh**

**Interviewee:** aa my level? Kazakh is good (laughing) I mean I don't feel any difficulty like I mean I am taking advanced Kazakh course in undergraduate if you know that... because I feel kind of proud myself because I know all a lot of Kazakh from China here they can only take like basic or intermediate but I am probably the only one person who was only like few of us can like aa came here for only like studied in Kazakh school for 2 to 3 years and it turned like advanced courses. But the point is that in those advanced courses you have students from who studied Kazakh from 1<sup>st</sup> grade and their Kazakh is super excellent but you just cannot compete with them but still it's a chance to learn and I liked speaking in Kazakh to talk some not like remembering vocabulary in the basic level or writing some not so interesting essay in the intermediate level but in the advanced you talk a lot of like issues quite deep aah quite thought provoking and in Kazakh you learn a lot of Kazakh words there as well. So I kind of like it...

**Interviewer: What about Russian? What is your level of Russian?**

**Interviewee:** Russian emm (laughing) I didn't take like formal course at all almost... I just remember when we prepared for the college entrance examination (ENT) I was like a center focus of my school because they were so afraid that I would get 2 from Russian course (laughing). It was 2014 at that time it was still like 25 score (bal). And then I was like ok if you know the Kazakh .. because the first year I was basically learning Kazakh language like in

terms of grammar лексика all the things and then Russian one isn't like so different from that I mean the way they teach and then you can somehow relate to them... so basically at that time I tried to like memorize all those like tests in Russian structure all the thing, now I don't remember any of them (laughing). So that was the first time. And then some ah some acquaintance of my mother in Aktobe she offered give us give me and my little sister free Russian courses but it was like more fun than like you really structured learn it ah basically at that time I was still on the stage of trying to memorize vocabulary like молоко (laughing) something like that so it was so basic. And then when I came to Astana I realized that a lot of people actually speak Russian and I was a bit lucky enough to have when I had my gap here I participated in one program and my roommate at that time was Russian, ah so basically I spent like 6 months with her... in the beginning we even used sign languages but after with her help I think my Russian kind of improved a lot. And then I came to NU and you know that here people speak Russian all the time... and interesting enough is that all my friends are kind of russified I would say (carefully speaking), so basically we would speak English in our daily conversation sometimes or they would try to speak Kazakh or I would try to speak Russian but know I could say that even though I don't speak a lot Russian because I am somehow shy of my accent or you know like if grammar is not proper or something like that but I can understand 70 to 80 percent of the Russian people speak.

**Interviewer: What other languages do you know?**

**Interviewee:** Chinese, Uyghur I know I mean I can understand almost 100% but recently I find out even though before I can speak somehow Uyghur, but now I just cannot because I always mixed up with Kazakh.

**Interviewer: What is your level of Chinese?**

**Interviewee:** Still good. I mean but because now I immersed myself into probably English language more I find out that I still can speak Chinese, understand it very well but it's just I don't do it very often... And then because those Kazakhs from China we sometimes speak Chinese but when we speak Chinese we mix with Kazakh as well, so basically it would be probably difficult only speak one language for me right now.

**Interviewer: In what language do you feel comfortable the most?**

**Interviewee:** Now probably English and Chinese ehm and Kazakh, but Kazakh is not that I was not that confident in Kazakh as in but other two languages, yeah.

**Interviewer: What language do you use often nowadays?**

**Interviewee:** English I guess. Even some locals here would like speak with me in English so I was like ok (laughing) but some of them would like say in Russian and then I would reply in Russian and they are like wow your Russian is actually quite good, it's like unexpected and I would say ok (laughing)

**Interviewer: What about at home now?**

**Interviewee:** aaa at home Kazakh, because my mom and my sister they mostly speak Kazakh.

**I: How does it help you to improve your language level?**

**P:** (Laughing) I am actually not very good at languages because I always speak like wrong especially in Kazakh. I don't know why but I always mix like when I want to say saying I would use like absolutely different words aha you know that kind of situation happen because you just remember this word just like this but then it just sounds like that but it is absolutely different, so but the point is that there are always people helping you like correct you in the way you speak... also another thing is that I find out that my Kazakh is decreasing again because my daily like acquiring of knowledge all the things in English most of them and those

Kazakh mostly I have Kazakh friends from china and then when we go to eating or go somewhere they prefer speaking Chinese... sometimes I feel like let's speak Kazakh but still like it is for some of them it is hard for always articulating in Kazakh or some of them feel like we should we bother doing this. I like ok basically now with local people I speak Kazakh and I prefer to speak Kazakh, but some of them still like trying to speak in English with me because some of them aaa like super russified they only speak Russian and they feel like they cannot explain to me at all, especially when it comes to study or like you know those scientific areas like communicating mostly in English, but that's probably the case .... I mostly speak Kazakh at home and with only some of my friends yeah anyway it is not enough.

**Interviewer: Have you experienced any challenges in the society?**

**Interviewer:** Now I can feel free to go shops or go to the restaurants and order in Russian because mostly they even if you speak Kazakh sometimes they would reply in Russian then you realize that oh probably you should speak Russian so I can do it. It wouldn't cause a lot of troubles ... and because I understand Russian very well so it also doesn't cause a lot of trouble when I interact with local people because most of them are also the same like they speak Russian but they can understand Kazakh, so if they speak Russian to me I speak Kazakh to them basically be can communicate. Yeah