



NAZARBAYEV
UNIVERSITY

SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERCEPTIONS
AND LEXICAL DIALECTAL
VARIATION IN CONTEMPORARY
KAZAKH: A FRAMEWORK FOR
THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL
EXPLORATION

by

Dumankhan Abdashim

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in Eurasian Studies

05.07.2025

SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERCEPTIONS AND LEXICAL DIALECTAL VARIATION IN
CONTEMPORARY KAZAKH: A FRAMEWORK FOR THEORETICAL AND
EMPIRICAL EXPLORATION

by

Dumankhan Abdashim

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Eurasian Studies

PhD in Eurasian Studies
School of Sciences and Humanities
Nazarbayev University

July, 2025

Supervised by

Prof. Uli Schamiloglu

Prof. Henryk Jankowski

Prof. David Somfai

External advisor: Prof. Sami Honkasalo

Abstract

This dissertation explored how contemporary Kazakh dialects are perceived and used in Kazakhstan, with a focus on lexical variation among millennials and university students. By integrating sociolinguistic, linguistic, and sociological theoretical frameworks, the research investigated how these groups engage with the diverse Kazakh linguistic environment, particularly in their lexical choices.

A mixed-methods approach, combining interviews, a quantitative survey, and social media observation, was employed to address two key questions: How did millennials and university students engage with variations in Kazakh dialects, specifically regarding word choice? What were the sociolinguistic perceptions of these dialectal variations within modern Kazakh society, and how were these perceptions reflected in digital media?

The study found that while most millennials demonstrated fluency in their primary dialects and used them comfortably in informal settings, the use of dialects in formal contexts was less common, reflecting a sensitivity to social norms and expectations. Attitudes towards dialects were complicated, with a growing appreciation for diversity coexisting with persistent linguistic prejudice and insecurity. Social media platforms played a crucial role in shaping language attitudes and behaviors, providing spaces for both the celebration and stigmatization of dialectal differences.

This dissertation provides insights into the complex interplay of factors shaping dialect use and perceptions in contemporary Kazakhstan, highlighting the need for continued research in this dynamic linguistic environment. The findings have important implications for language policy and education, emphasizing the need for inclusive approaches that recognize and value linguistic diversity while addressing the challenges of the digital age.

Keywords: Kazakh dialects, language attitudes, lexical variation, dialect perception, integrated theoretical framework, linguistic prejudice

Table of contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	6
1.1 Background and Rationale	6
1.1.1 Historical Development of Kazakh Dialects.....	8
1.1.2 The Importance of Dialect Research.....	12
1.1.3 Research Gap and Problem Statement	13
1.2 Research Questions	14
1.3 Dissertation Overview	16
1.4 Theoretical Framework	16
1.4.1 Sociolinguistic Theories.....	17
1.4.2 Linguistic Theories	18
1.4.3 Sociological Theories.....	20
1.4.4 Integration of Theoretical Perspectives.....	21
1.5 Definitions of Key Terms.....	22
1.6 Significance of the Study.....	26
1.6.1 Contributions to Sociolinguistics.....	26
1.6.2 Contributions to Kazakh Linguistics.....	27
1.6.3 Contributions to Kazakh Society	28
Chapter 2: Literature Review	29
2.1 Defining the Linguistic Environment: Language and Dialect in Context	29
2.1.1 Defining 'Language'	30
2.1.2 Defining 'Dialect'	32
2.1.3 Relationship Between Language and Dialect	34
2.2 Sociolinguistics of Dialectal Variation.....	35
2.2.1 Sociolinguistic Concepts Applied to Dialectal Variation	36
2.2.2 Social Factors and Lexical Variation: Case Studies	37
2.2.3 Dialectal Variation in the Digital Age	40
2.2.4 Methodological Considerations for Studying Lexical Variation	41
2.3 Perceptions of Dialects	43
2.3.1 Theoretical Perspectives on Dialect Perception.....	44
2.3.2 Factors Influencing Dialect Perceptions	47
2.3.3 Social Consequences of Linguistic Prejudice	49
2.3.4 Linguistic Prejudice and Power in Kazakhstan.....	51
2.4 Kazakh Dialects: History and Classification.....	52
2.4.1 Origins and Influences on Kazakh Dialect Formation.....	52
2.4.1.1 External Influences and Historical Shifts	53
2.4.1.2 The Evolving Landscape of Kazakh Dialects.....	53
2.4.2 Categorizing Kazakh Dialects.....	54
2.4.3 Sociolinguistic Considerations in Kazakh Dialect Usage.....	56
2.4.4 Efforts for Kazakh Dialect Preservation	57
2.5 Comparative Case Studies.....	59
2.5.1 Case Study 1: The Turkish Language.....	61
2.5.2 Case Study 2: The Uzbek Language	63

2.5.3 Comparative Analysis: Linguistic Dynamics in Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan..	65
2.6 A Balanced Perspective on Kazakh Dialects.....	68
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	69
3.1 Research Design and Rationale	70
3.1.1 Mixed-Methods Approach: Justification	70
3.2 Data Collection.....	71
3.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews	71
3.2.1.1 Sampling and Participant Selection.....	71
3.2.1.2 Interview Guide Development	72
3.2.1.3 Interview Procedure	73
3.2.2 Quantitative Survey	75
3.2.2.1 Survey Design	75
3.2.2.2 Sampling and Distribution.....	77
3.2.3 Media Observation.....	78
3.2.3.1 Platform Selection and Rationale	78
3.2.3.2 Content Selection and Criteria.....	79
3.2.3.3 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures	80
3.3 Data Analysis	80
3.3.1 Qualitative Data Analysis: Interviews	80
3.3.1.1 Transcription and Coding.....	80
3.3.1.2 Thematic Analysis.....	81
3.3.2 Quantitative Data Analysis: Survey.....	83
3.3.2.1 Statistical Analysis Methods	83
3.3.3.1 Content Analysis	85
3.4 Ethical Considerations.....	86
3.5 Limitations and Mitigation Strategies	89
Chapter 4: Findings	91
4.1 Interview Findings.....	93
4.1.1 Regional Pride vs. Linguistic Insecurity.....	93
4.1.2 Accommodation Strategies	95
4.1.3 Perceptions of Correctness and Linguistic Prejudice.....	98
4.1.4 Technology’s Impact	100
4.1.5 Lexical Variation Across Dialects	102
4.2 Survey Findings.....	106
4.2.1 Self-Reported Fluency & Language Use Patterns	106
4.2.2 Attitudes Toward Dialects	112
4.2.3 Experiences of Linguistic Prejudice	116
4.2.4 Qualitative Insights from Open-Ended Survey Responses	121
4.3 Social Media Observation Findings	124
4.3.1 Dialect Use by Content Creators.....	124
4.3.2 Code-Switching in Videos	128
4.3.3 Commentator Attitudes and Emerging Themes.....	132
4.4 Integration of Findings	136
4.4.1 Convergence and Divergence Across Methods	136

4.4.2 Addressing Research Questions.....	139
Chapter 5: Discussion	143
5.1 Regional Pride and Linguistic Insecurity	144
5.1.1 The Role of Region and Place in Dialect Pride.....	144
5.1.2 Sources and Manifestations of Linguistic Insecurity	147
5.1.3 Digital Media as a Platform for Identity Negotiation	150
5.2 Accommodation Strategies and Dialect Contact	153
5.2.1 Patterns of Convergence and Divergence Across Contexts	153
5.2.2 Functions and Motivations for Code-Switching in Kazakh	155
5.2.3 Dialect Contact and Its Effects on Language Variation.....	158
5.3 Perceptions of Correctness and Linguistic Prejudice	162
5.3.1 Standard Language Ideology and Its Persistence.....	162
5.3.2 Linguistic Prejudice in Education and Employment.....	165
5.3.3 Social and Psychological Effects of Linguistic Discrimination.....	167
5.3.4 Strategies for Addressing Linguistic Prejudice.....	171
5.4 Technology’s Influence on Dialect Use and Perception	174
5.4.1 Social Media’s Role in Shaping Linguistic Identities.....	174
5.4.2 Online Communities and Dialectal Diversity Preservation	177
5.4.3 Social Media’s Dual Role in Reinforcing and Challenging Dialect Stereotypes.....	180
5.5 Theoretical Implications and Broader Significance	183
5.5.1 Contributions to Sociolinguistic Theories of Language Variation and Change.....	183
5.5.2 Implications for Language Policy and Education in Kazakhstan	187
5.5.3 Implications for Multilingual Societies Worldwide.....	190
Chapter 6: Conclusion	195
6.1 Summary of Key Findings and Contributions.....	195
6.2 Implications & Recommendations	197
6.3 Future Directions in Kazakh Dialectology	200
6.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions	205
6.5 Final Reflections.....	206
6.6 Closing Statement.....	208
References	210
Appendices	234

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and Rationale

While completing my Master’s degree at Nazarbayev University, casual discussions with 28 of my group mates from across Kazakhstan frequently revealed striking regional differences in Kazakh vocabulary. These lexical variations—sometimes causing confusion or light-hearted

jokes—highlighted how dialect choices shape social interactions. For example, a peer from Jezqazğan was puzzled by the term *şalbar* (trousers), using *sym* instead, while another from Pavlodar questioned *şaşıq* (towel), preferring the word *oramal* instead.

Such encounters emphasized the enduring lexical richness of Kazakh, even alongside the standardized form taught in schools and media. This diversity is especially noticeable among youth, who encounter varied dialects daily—both in person and online. Yet existing research on Kazakh dialects prioritizes linguistic categorization (McCollum & Chen, 2021, p. 277), with only recent calls for sociolinguistic and pragmatic perspectives (McCollum & Chen, 2021, p. 296). While these studies map structural differences, they seldom explore the social significance of dialects, particularly for younger speakers.

These everyday encounters with dialect differences - like when a western Kazakh friend said *köpşik* (pillow) instead of the more common *jastıq* - made me wonder: how do Kazakhs, particularly young people, view these word variations, and what influences their opinions? Such moments often led to friendly jokes or surprise, showcasing both Kazakhstan's rich linguistic diversity and how regional backgrounds affect language attitudes.

This curiosity about Kazakh's lexical variety grew into a deeper question: why do these differences exist, and how does society perceive them? Exploring these perceptions matters for several reasons. First, it helps us value Kazakhstan's linguistic richness. Second, it can guide better language policies and teaching methods. Finally, and I would like to specifically highlight this, it promotes unity in our multilingual nation. My research aims to shed light on how dialects function in modern Kazakhstan, especially among youth and students, examining how media, society, and language interact.

A note on terminology: for convenience all Kazakh words in this dissertation appear in the official Latin alphabet introduced in 2021 (see Appendix A), which is yet-to-be fully

incorporated instead of currently used Cyrillic. This choice serves multiple research purposes while following academic standards.

The 2021 alphabet represents Kazakhstan's ongoing language modernization. This official script, scheduled for full implementation by 2031, aims to strengthen Kazakh's digital presence and accessibility for learners (Bekzhanova & Makoelle, 2022, p. 3; Satubaldina, 2021). Its contemporary status makes it particularly relevant for studying current language attitudes and usage.

The new alphabet improves upon previous versions through enhanced phonetic precision. Characters like "ä" (/æ/), "ş" (/ʃ/), and "ç" (/tʃ/) more accurately capture Kazakh sounds, including dialectal variations (Satubaldina, 2021). This clarity benefits both native speakers and researchers.

This choice also follows American Psychological Association 7th edition standards (APA, 2020, p. 132), which advocate using current transliteration systems. The 2021 alphabet thus serves three key purposes: it reflects Kazakhstan's linguistic evolution, provides technical accuracy, and meets academic conventions. Ultimately, it offers the clearest and most culturally appropriate representation for this study.

1.1.1 Historical Development of Kazakh Dialects

Kazakh's development reflects centuries of linguistic contact, political changes, and cultural influences. Before Russian colonization, Central Asia's linguistic landscape featured diverse Turkic languages, with Kazakh emerging as distinct during the 15th-century Kazakh Khanate (Johanson, 2021, p. 99). While early Turkic migrations established Kazakh's Kipchak roots, 9th-century Islamic expansion introduced Arabic loanwords (Fierman, 2005, p. 402). The Khanate's consolidation fostered regional lexical variations through geographic and social

factors, creating today's dialectal diversity. The 17th-century Russian arrival dramatically altered this trajectory.

Russian colonial expansion initiated profound linguistic changes. Tsarist Russification policies imposed Russian in administration, education, and culture (Fierman, 2006, p. 99). Soviet-era policies intensified this shift, elevating Russian as the prestige language while suppressing Kazakh dialects. The regime promoted standardization based on the Northeastern variety, marginalizing other regional forms (Smagulova, 2008, p. 442). The Soviet push for standardization, as Fierman (2005, p. 403) documents, narrowed linguistic diversity while marginalizing regional dialects. Today, the Northeastern-derived standard variety dominates education and media (Smagulova, 2008, p. 447). These policies created generational divides in language proficiency that persist today (Dadabaeva & Adibayeva, 2010, p. 133), with Russia's continued dominance in certain domains challenging Kazakh's full revitalization (Smagulova, 2019, p. 741).

Soviet-era research by Kaliev and Sarybayev (1967) establishes Kazakh dialects as vital cultural heritage requiring preservation. Their work, *Kazakh Dialectology*, documents regional linguistic diversity—including Northeastern, Southern, and Western variants—with detailed analysis of phonetic, grammatical, and lexical distinctions. This book remains indispensable for studying dialectal variation. The study's enduring value lies in its systematic preservation of linguistic features, reinforcing dialectology's role in cultural conservation.

Nurmagambetov's (1986) *Grammar of Kazakh Dialects* provides a detailed grammatical comparison of Soviet-era Kazakh dialects. The work analyzes three primary variants: Western Kazakh (with distinct case systems), Southern Kazakh (showing unique verb formations), and Northeastern Kazakh (demonstrating sound-grammar relationships). Field-collected data—including interviews and narratives—reveal rural-urban differences and Russian contact

effects. Omarbekov and Zhunisov's (1985) *The Sound System of Our Spoken Language* offers crucial insights into late-Soviet Kazakh phonetics. Their analysis reveals three core phenomena: regional vowel harmony patterns, informal consonant variations, and prosodic contrasts between standard language and dialectal forms—particularly Russian-influenced urban speech. These studies collectively highlight the language's spatial diversity.

The Soviet linguistic legacy persists in modern attitudes, where standard Kazakh often carries more prestige than regional varieties. This hierarchy fosters linguistic insecurity among dialect speakers, who may suppress their natural speech for social acceptance. My findings reveal young Kazakhs' complex negotiation between regional identity and language-based stigma, emphasizing how historical policies continue partially shaping contemporary language practices.

Kazakhstan's post-independence language policy has actively countered Soviet-era russification through systematic national language revitalization (Smagulova, 2015). Though Kazakh now holds official status with Russian, its expanded use in education, media, and government reveals measurable progress—evidenced by President Tokayev's (Tengrinews.kz, 2025) report that 80% of graduates complete Unified National Testing in Kazakh, while 70% of first graders attend Kazakh-medium schools. Yet tensions persist: the Northeastern dialect's institutional dominance, though administratively practical, continues to marginalize other regional varieties (Smagulova, 2006, p. 308), reflecting unresolved questions about linguistic pluralism in postcolonial contexts.

Tokayev's (Tengrinews.kz, 2025) emphasis on voluntary language use—framed through Kazakh values like *birlik* (unity), *otanşyldyk* (patriotism), *täuelsızdık* (independence), and *yntymaq* (harmony)—signals a shift from prescriptive policies to organic development. This approach navigates Smagulova's (2015) identified paradox: how to reclaim a suppressed language while accommodating Kazakhstan's inherent multilingualism. Legal safeguards

against linguistic provocation further reveal the state's dual priorities—promoting Kazakh without replicating Soviet-era coercive tactics.

Kazakh's historical trajectory - shaped by centuries of political changes, cultural exchanges, and linguistic contacts - has produced remarkable lexical diversity across dialects. Today, this heritage intersects with standardization efforts and revitalization policies, creating a vibrant yet complex sociolinguistic landscape. This study examines how young Kazakhs perceive and employ lexical variations daily, and how social factors shape these linguistic attitudes and practices.

Both Soviet-era (Doskarayev & Musabayev (1951); Amanjolov (1959) and others) and contemporary Kazakh linguists consistently identify three core dialect groups: Northeastern, Southern, and Western (Mukhamedova, 2015 (p. 20); Smagulova, 2008). There were some alternative views such as proposed by Baskakov (1962) who identified two groups of Kazakh dialects: Kipchak (Northwestern/Steppe) and Nogai-Kazakh (Southern/Syr Darya). While some studies note minor variations—potentially suggesting a fourth dialect—most scholars agree these differences remain lexically marginal (McCollum & Chen, 2021, p. 280). The Northeastern variety, spoken by most Kazakhs during Soviet times, became the foundation for the standard language through educational and media promotion (Fierman, 2006, p. 104). Kazakh researchers like Sarybayev (2005) and Nurmagambetov (1986) have further detailed these dialects' linguistic features and geographic spread. Amanjolov's (2004) historical analysis reveals how language policies affected dialect development, while Omarbekov and Zhunisov (1985) mapped regional pronunciation differences.

Yet these broad categories only tell part of the story. They fail to capture how modern Kazakhs - especially youth - actually use and perceive dialectal differences in today's digital age. This study goes beyond traditional classifications to examine the social meanings behind lexical

variation, exploring what these linguistic choices reveal about contemporary Kazakh identity. One of the hypotheses of this study is that new variations of Kazakh dialects might emerge establishing new hybrid Kazakh dialects.

1.1.2 The Importance of Dialect Research

Examining modern Kazakh dialects is crucial for linguistic, cultural, and social inquiry. First, such research preserves cultural heritage by capturing the lived histories and traditions of Kazakhstan's diverse communities (Trudgill, 2020). Dialects often retain unique terms for local ecology, customs, or artifacts—elements sometimes absent from standard Kazakh—offering a window into the nation's cultural richness. Documenting these variations helps protect linguistic diversity and deepens understanding of Kazakh identity. Second, dialect studies illuminate language change. Regional differences in lexicon or pronunciation, for instance, can reveal patterns of language contact and evolution in Central Asia. While this study emphasizes lexical variation, its findings contribute to broader debates on linguistic change, particularly how historical and social forces shape contemporary Kazakh.

Studying modern Kazakh dialects also informs language policy and planning. Insights from such research can shape educational strategies—for instance, by supporting multilingualism through teaching materials that acknowledge dialectal diversity (Baker-Bell, 2020). In a linguistically varied society like Kazakhstan, the standard literary language may not align with all communities' everyday speech (Beisenova, 2013, p. 656). Dialect studies thus help policymakers evaluate how language decisions affect different groups, fostering inclusivity and potentially refining standardization efforts. However, a critical gap persists: how Kazakh dialects function—and are perceived—in today's digital spaces. Platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram have become arenas for dialectal expression, yet their impact on

language use and attitudes remains understudied. This dissertation tackles this gap, examining how young Kazakhs engage with lexical variation both online and offline.

1.1.3 Research Gap and Problem Statement

Language functions as both a cultural mirror and a vehicle for identity (Edwards, 2009), with dialects naturally evolving through geographic, social, and historical influences (Trudgill, 2020). These variations capture communities' unique experiences, enhancing linguistic diversity. Yet dialectal differences—whether in pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar—can also foster miscommunication and social bias. As Dragojevic, Fasoli, Cramer and Rakić (2021, p. 65) note, certain dialects often face stigmatization, affecting how speakers are judged. Simply put, these tensions between linguistic richness and social perception underscore the need to examine dialectal dynamics more closely—not just as academic curiosities, but as factors shaping real-world interactions. This study probes that gap, aiming to inform more inclusive language practices.

In modern Kazakh, regional lexical variations mirror the country's geographic and social diversity. Northern speakers may call *beşbarmaq* dough as *iñkäl*, while southerners use *qamyr*—parallel distinctions occur for *qarbız/darbız* (watermelon) and *tañerteñ/azanda* (morning). Though subtle, these differences risk communication gaps when speakers encounter unfamiliar terms. Societal perceptions of dialects may also foster stereotypes, affecting interactions, education, or careers. Prejudice tied to regional or class-linked dialects could prompt discrimination, restricting opportunities or reinforcing marginalization (Baugh, 2018).

Kazakhstan's historical trajectory has profoundly influenced its dialects' evolution and societal standing. Under Tsarist and Soviet governance, Russian was systematically prioritized, becoming dominant in official and educational spheres (Fierman, 2006, p. 99). This

suppression of Kazakh likely spurred regional dialectal divergence, as variants developed in isolation, while also reinforcing stigmatization of non-standard forms, especially those with Russian influence (Smagulova, 2008, p. 454). Yet, digital platforms have introduced new complexities: social media both perpetuates dialectal biases and creates spaces for their reclamation (Tagg, 2023, p. 68). Such perceptions carry tangible effects, from linguistic discrimination to restricted socioeconomic access (Baugh, 2018). This study bridges a critical gap by analyzing millennial and university students' engagement with Kazakh lexical variations, alongside their sociolinguistic attitudes—particularly as shaped by digital interaction. By addressing these questions, the research illuminates the intricate relationship between language diversity, societal perceptions, and evolving communicative practices in contemporary Kazakhstan.

1.2 Research Questions

This study pursues two key aims. First, it examines how Kazakh millennials and university students interact with lexical variation in modern Kazakh dialects. By documenting common lexical differences, analyzing usage patterns, and identifying influencing factors, in this regard the research builds on Kalajdžisalihović's (2017) work, which positions youth as central to linguistic innovation. Second, the study assesses societal attitudes toward dialectal diversity, with emphasis on digital spaces as critical sites of language negotiation (Lee & Barton, 2013). It investigates perceptions of dialect prestige, “correctness,” and social associations, alongside their representation on social media. Digital platforms accelerate dialect diffusion, amplify awareness of variation, and reshape identity expression—dynamics vital to understanding 21st-century Kazakh language evolution (Aldash et al., 2019, p. 1434).

While prior studies have examined historical Kazakh dialects and broader language attitudes in Kazakhstan (Ahn & Smagulova, 2016), little is known about how young people perceive

and use lexical variations in contemporary dialects, especially online. Notably, research has yet to explore how platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram shape dialectal perceptions among millennials and university students. Furthermore, no studies specifically analyze how social groups evaluate lexical variation in everyday interactions. To address these gaps, this study asks: (1) How do Kazakh millennials and university students engage with dialectal word choices? and (2) How are these variations perceived sociolinguistically, and how does digital media reflect these attitudes?

The first question investigates common lexical differences across dialects, focusing on how young Kazakhs select variants in different contexts and what social, regional, or situational factors guide these choices. These patterns may reveal deeper connections between language, identity, and social changes.

The second question assesses perceptions of dialectal prestige, correctness, and group associations, alongside their digital representation. It analyzes how Kazakh dialects are portrayed on platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram and whether online discourse influences attitudes. Finally, it considers how young Kazakhs, as active social media users, may reshape dialectal norms through digital interaction.

To examine these complex dynamics, this study employs a mixed-methods design, integrating semi-structured interviews, quantitative surveys, and social media analysis. Framed through sociolinguistic and sociological theories—including social identity theory, accommodation theory, and language ideology—the research uncovers the social mechanisms shaping language attitudes and behaviors (Androutsopoulos, 2006, p. 430). A key focus is how Kazakh dialectal variation is portrayed on major platforms (e.g., YouTube, TikTok, Instagram), assessing whether digital spaces reinforce traditional perceptions or foster new linguistic attitudes. By bridging empirical data with theoretical insights, this work advances understanding of how

language, social media, and shifting societal norms interact in Kazakhstan's evolving digital landscape.

1.3 Dissertation Overview

This dissertation comprises six chapters. Chapter 1 establishes the research context, presenting the problem statement, key questions, and theoretical foundations. It includes a historical overview of Kazakh dialects, clarifies central concepts, and underscores the study's academic and societal relevance. Chapter 2 synthesizes existing literature, analyzing theories of language variation, sociolinguistic influences on dialects, and societal attitudes toward linguistic diversity. It traces the historical development of Kazakh dialects and incorporates comparative insights from global case studies to situate Kazakhstan's context. Chapter 3 details the mixed-methods design, describing participant selection, data collection (semi-structured interviews, surveys, and social media analysis), and ethical protocols for human subjects' research. Chapter 4 reports qualitative and quantitative findings on lexical variation among young Kazakhs and their perceptions of dialectal differences. Chapter 5 interprets these results, examining how digital media shapes engagement with dialects and comparing findings to other linguistic contexts. It revisits the theoretical framework and highlights the study's contributions to sociolinguistics. Chapter 6 summarizes key insights, proposes implications for language policy and education, notes methodological limitations, and identifies future research directions in Kazakh linguistics.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study employs three complementary theoretical lenses to analyze Kazakh dialectal variation. First, social identity theory (Giles & Watson, 2013) explains how dialect choices reflect and shape regional and social identities. Second, accommodation theory (Giles et al.,

1991) reveals how speakers modify their language use across different contexts. Finally, language ideology frameworks (Bourdieu 1991) unpack the power dynamics and prestige values attached to specific dialects. These frameworks provide essential scaffolding for interpreting sociolinguistic patterns (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, p. 12). As Eckert (2018, p. 205) notes, language actively constructs social realities rather than merely reflecting them. This proves particularly relevant in Kazakhstan's linguistic landscape, where historical, cultural, and digital factors intersect to shape contemporary dialect use (Karabayeva, 2025).

By integrating these perspectives, the study achieves two key objectives: (1) systematically analyzing empirical data on dialect variation, and (2) situating findings within broader discussions about language, identity, and power. This approach captures both micro-level linguistic behaviors and macro-level social meanings, offering a nuanced understanding of how Kazakh speakers navigate lexical differences in daily life and digital spaces.

1.4.1 Sociolinguistic Theories

Sociolinguistics offers fundamental insights into Kazakh dialectal variation by examining how regional vocabulary and pronunciation differences develop within specific social contexts, moving beyond prescriptive judgments of language use (Bahry, 2020). This approach proves especially significant for Kazakh, where dialectal diversity faced historical marginalization under Soviet language policies. Central to this understanding are language ideologies (Silverstein, 1992), which uncover how societal beliefs shape perceptions of dialects as markers of prestige, regional identity, or social standing. The principle of audience design (Bell, 1984, p. 145) further demonstrates how young Kazakh speakers strategically adapt their vocabulary when addressing different groups - whether elders, regional peers, or across formal and informal situations. Complementing this, accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1991, p. 4) reveals how speakers consciously converge or diverge their speech patterns in digital and face-

to-face interactions, often reflecting deeper sociocultural aspirations. Together, these frameworks illuminate how Kazakh millennials and university students navigate identity through lexical choices, with emerging data suggesting these adaptations frequently signal group affiliations and social positioning (Sharipova, 2020). By applying these sociolinguistic lenses, the study captures both the systematic nature of dialect variation and its profound social meanings in contemporary Kazakhstan.

The phenomenon of code-switching—fluid alternation between dialects or languages within conversations (Myers-Scotton, 2000)—offers critical insights into contemporary Kazakh language practices. This study examines how frequently Kazakh millennials and university students employ code-switching, their motivations for doing so, and whether particular conversational contexts or digital platforms prompt this linguistic behavior. Such analysis advances our understanding of code-switching in multilingual, digitally mediated environments (Pavlenko, 2008), particularly relevant as Kazakhstan navigates its post-Soviet linguistic landscape.

Equally important is addressing linguistic prejudice, where dialect stereotypes can reinforce social inequalities (Piller, 2016, p. 83). The research investigates whether certain Kazakh dialects face stigmatization and how such biases might affect social mobility or educational opportunities. These findings could inform strategies to promote linguistic equity while respecting Kazakhstan's rich dialectal diversity.

1.4.2 Linguistic Theories

Linguistic theories offer systematic approaches to examining structural differences in Kazakh dialects, particularly lexical variation. These regional differences appear in everyday vocabulary, where distinct words denote identical concepts across different areas. For instance,

while southern regions typically use *üy* for "house," northern areas prefer *kepe*. Similar variation occurs with terms for bread (*nan* versus *bölke*) and eating meals (*tağam jeý, as işý, or ayqat işý*).

Variationist sociolinguistics (Labov, 2006) provides essential tools for analyzing these patterns, particularly how social factors—including age, gender, education level, and socioeconomic status—influence word choice. This approach reveals how lexical differences function as markers of regional identity while simultaneously reflecting broader social changes.

Historical linguistics provides essential context for understanding contemporary Kazakh dialectal variation by tracing the language's evolution through centuries of cultural contact. Kazakhstan's strategic position along the Silk Road facilitated linguistic exchanges with Arabic, Persian, Mongolian, and Russian (Fierman, 2006, p. 98), creating regional distinctions that persist today. The northern dialects, for instance, show particularly strong Russian influence from the Soviet era, while modern code-switching patterns between Kazakh and Russian reflect ongoing language contact dynamics. More recently, globalization has introduced English elements that may further transform Kazakh dialects (Bahry, 2020, p. 193). This study employs an integrated theoretical approach combining variationist sociolinguistics to analyze social factors in word choice, historical linguistics to contextualize current variations, and language contact theory to explain borrowing patterns. Through systematic analysis of interview transcripts, survey responses, and social media content, the research maps lexical variations among young Kazakh speakers while uncovering the complex interplay between historical influences, modern identity construction, and evolving language practices in Kazakhstan's multilingual society.

1.4.3 Sociological Theories

Sociological theories provide a framework for analyzing how Kazakh dialectal variations intersect with social structures and identity formation. Language—particularly dialects—functions as a key marker of identity (Eckert, 2018, p. 63). In Kazakhstan, dialects may signal regional roots, social class, or ethnic ties. By studying how Kazakhs employ dialect to assert group belonging or distinction, researchers gain insight into identity negotiation, especially among millennials and university students navigating societal shifts.

Bourdieu's (1991, p. 170) concept of *symbolic power* further clarifies the social dynamics of dialects. Dominant language varieties often carry prestige, linked to education or authority. In Kazakhstan, the standard Kazakh, rooted in the Northeastern dialect, has been institutionalized as the "correct" form, while regional dialects face marginalization (Kroskirty, 2010, p. 198). This study examines how such language ideologies shape perceptions of dialectal value.

Social networks—both offline and digital—significantly shape linguistic behavior. The dialects individuals use often reflect their close social circles, including family, peers, and colleagues, who may reinforce or shift speech patterns (Luraghi, 2010, p. 365). Studying these networks helps reveal how peer influence sustains or diminishes dialectal distinctions.

In modern contexts, social media complicates this dynamic. Kazakh speakers now encounter diverse dialects online, which may increase tolerance for variation, encourage *code-switching* (alternating between language varieties), or paradoxically strengthen stereotypes through digital representations of regional speech.

1.4.4 Integration of Theoretical Perspectives

This study employs an interdisciplinary framework—combining sociolinguistics, linguistics, and sociology—to analyze Kazakh dialectal variation beyond surface-level description. The integrated approach reveals how individuals interact with, perceive, and employ dialects in daily communication.

Sociolinguistic Foundations

Audience design (Bell, 1984) and accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1991) inform the first research question on millennials' lexical variation. These theories clarify how speakers adapt language to social contexts, illuminating identity construction through lexical choices.

Blommaert's (2010, p. 18) "polyphonous identities" concept further underscores individuals' capacity to mobilize multiple linguistic repertoires across situations.

Linguistic Frameworks

Variationist sociolinguistics (Labov, 2006) systematically tracks lexical variants across regions and groups, addressing dialectal distribution patterns. Historical linguistics and language contact theories situate these variations within Kazakhstan's sociopolitical history, revealing deeper structural influences.

Sociological Theoretical Framework

This study draws upon three key sociological concepts to analyze perceptions of Kazakh dialectal variation. Bourdieu's (1991) theory of symbolic power, Silverstein's (1992) work on language ideologies, and Anderson's (2006) concept of imagined communities collectively provide a robust framework for understanding how historical, social, and cultural forces shape attitudes toward different dialects. These theoretical lenses help uncover the power changes and social inequalities embedded in linguistic variation. The research particularly

examines how young Kazakh speakers navigate different dialects across various contexts, with special attention to whether digital platforms are creating new dialect-based communities that either reinforce or challenge existing linguistic stereotypes.

Integrated Analytical Approach

The study's integrated theoretical framework bridges linguistic analysis with social interpretation, offering a comprehensive approach to understanding Kazakhstan's evolving linguistic landscape. By combining these perspectives, the research achieves three primary objectives: first, it illuminates the relationship between language forms and identity construction; second, it reveals how contextual factors influence communicative practices; and third, it investigates digital media's transformative impact on dialect norms. This multidimensional approach provides nuanced insights into how traditional dialect boundaries are being reshaped in the digital age, where online interactions increasingly intersect with and influence offline speech patterns. The framework guides all aspects of the research design, from data collection to interpretation, ensuring a holistic examination of both the linguistic features of dialects and their social meanings.

1.5 Definitions of Key Terms

This section clarifies the core terms central to examining Kazakh dialectal variation and societal attitudes. Though these concepts have wider linguistic relevance, their explicit definition here ensures consistency in interpretation and establishes a framework for later analysis. Precise definitions anchor the study's findings, enabling meaningful conclusions about Kazakhstan's current linguistic landscape. While Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical distinctions between *language* and *dialect*, this section offers operational definitions to steer methodology and interpretation.

A well-defined foundation supports robust theoretical application, aligning sociolinguistic principles with empirical data. Such clarity aids in contextualizing results within broader language trends. Moreover, it facilitates this study's exploration of Kazakh dialect diversity, its social consequences, the language-identity nexus, and wider sociolinguistic dynamics—ultimately enriching knowledge of language in society.

This study establishes precise definitions for *dialect*, *lexical variation*, *perception*, *accommodation*, *code-switching*, *linguistic prejudice*, *language attitudes*, *online communities*, *digital discourse*, and *linguistic environment* to construct a unified analytical framework. Such clarity prevents misinterpretation while enabling effective measurement across qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell, 2021, p. 91). Rigorous definitions bolster validity and reliability—a necessity in sociolinguistics, where subjectivity may influence data interpretation (Johnson & Christensen, 2024). Crucially, these terms are adapted (not adopted wholesale) to address Kazakhstan's distinct linguistic context, capturing nuances of dialectal diversity in a multilingual, evolving society.

This framework scaffolds systematic data analysis, sharpening focus on Kazakh dialect use and societal views. By transforming abstract concepts into measurable variables, the study identifies concrete patterns, drivers, and implications of linguistic shifts—moving beyond generalization to pinpoint Kazakhstan's unique sociolinguistic dynamics.

Dialect represents language's natural adaptation to geographical, social, and historical factors (Labov, 2011). These variations serve not merely as linguistic differences but as identity markers (Labov, 2011, p. 357). In Kazakhstan, dialects reflect historical tribal structures, regional isolation, Tsarist/Soviet language contact, modern migration patterns and social media interaction with them.

Lexical variation - the study's focus - denotes vocabulary differences across dialects (Tang, 2021). Analyzing these variations reveals regional identities, historical influences, and Kazakh's ongoing evolution (Zharkynbekova & Agmanova, 2016), particularly through social media's role in spreading new slang.

Millennials (born 1981-1996) are examined due to their digital engagement and unique position bridging traditional and modern language use (Dimock, 2019). Their linguistic behavior offers crucial insights into contemporary Kazakh dialect evolutions.

Social media - digital platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram - facilitates content sharing and community building while reshaping Kazakh linguistic practices. These platforms expose users to diverse dialects, potentially altering language attitudes and behaviors (Aldash et al., 2019, p. 1433). Their influence extends to emerging hybrid forms, blending traditional and digital communication patterns.

Identity encompasses the beliefs and expressions defining individuals or groups. This study specifically examines *linguistic identity* - how dialect choices reflect and shape self-conception in social contexts. In Kazakhstan's digital era, language serves as both identity marker and social connector (Tagg, 2023, p. 69).

Perception involves interpreting sensory information to construct meaning (Wang, Jin & Li, 2023). When applied to language, it reveals how stereotypes, prestige associations, and personal background influence evaluations of Kazakh dialects (Piller, 2016). These perceptions illuminate linguistic power changes and identity negotiations (Eckert, 2018, p. 124).

Language attitudes represent evaluative judgments about dialects, ranging from positive (associating prestige) to negative (linking to backwardness). These perceptions, influenced by

social status and cultural norms, significantly impact language use and social dynamics (Giles & Billings, 2004).

Accommodation patterns in Kazakh reveal how speakers adjust lexical choices based on regional differences and formality levels (Giles et al., 1991). Digital spaces show similar adaptations, where users modify language to fit online community norms (Alshehri, 2025).

Code-switching between Kazakh dialects or with Russian serves multiple functions - expressing identity, addressing diverse audiences, or navigating social contexts (Myers-Scotton, 2000). Online platforms particularly facilitate this fluid linguistic shifting to signal group belonging.

Linguistic prejudice examines negative stereotypes tied to Kazakh dialects, revealing societal biases that affect speakers' social opportunities (Baugh, 2000). Digital spaces paradoxically both reinforce these prejudices and celebrate dialect diversity through user interactions.

Online communities - digital groups sharing common interests - develop distinct linguistic norms, including regional dialects and slang (Alshehri, 2025). For Kazakh speakers, these platforms serve as vital spaces for dialect preservation and expression.

Digital discourse encompasses all online communication, from social media to messaging apps (Herring, 2011). Its analysis shows how Kazakh speakers adapt language through code-switching, new registers, and hybrid forms in virtual spaces.

Linguistic environment refers to the social context shaping dialect use, both offline and online. This concept helps analyze power dynamics, language ideologies, and identity construction among Kazakh speakers, particularly in digital spaces where new norms emerge.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study addresses a critical gap in contemporary Kazakh sociolinguistic research. Although Kazakhstan's dialectal diversity is well-documented (Ibragimov, 2025), few studies examine how millennials and university students engage with lexical variation or how society perceives these shifts. This oversight has real-world consequences: without accounting for youth dialect practices, language policies and education systems risk reinforcing inequalities or undervaluing linguistic diversity (Smagulova, 2019, p. 752). For instance, when certain dialects are excluded from curricula or public discourse, their speakers may experience marginalization.

The study also explores Kazakhstan's digital landscape, where social media both mirrors and influences language attitudes—a key yet understudied factor in 21st-century dialect evolution (Sadigzade, 2025). By analyzing this intersection, the research clarifies how technology, social perception, and dialect use interact.

Ultimately, the findings advance knowledge of linguistic diversity, identity formation, and digital media's role in multilingual contexts. These insights can guide inclusive language policies, improve educational approaches, and help preserve Kazakhstan's cultural heritage.

1.6.1 Contributions to Sociolinguistics

This study advances sociolinguistic research in two key ways. First, by examining contemporary Kazakh dialects among millennials and university students within their socio-historical context, it clarifies how language variation operates in Kazakhstan's multilingual, post-Soviet setting. The findings reveal how regional identity, historical language policies, current social dynamics, and Russification legacies interact to influence dialect use (Fierman, 2006, p. 105). This aligns with broader work on language, identity, and social change (Coupland, 2007).

Second, the study provides new data on accommodation and code-switching among younger Kazakhs. By analyzing how and why millennials and students converge or diverge in speech—along with their code-switching motivations—it deepens sociolinguistic insights into these processes (Myers-Scotton, 2000). The results contribute to research on code-switching in multilingual and digital environments, showing how young Kazakhs strategically navigate their linguistic repertoire. These findings support recent work emphasizing the fluidity of youth language practices online (Stæhr, Møller & Maegaard, 2022).

This research highlights the intricate link between digital spaces and language attitudes in Kazakhstan. By examining how Kazakh dialects are portrayed and debated on social media, it assesses whether these platforms foster linguistic diversity or reinforce stereotypes. The study also explores how online interactions may drive linguistic innovation or redefine traditional dialect boundaries—an essential consideration for sociolinguistics as digital communication reshapes language use (Lee, 2022, p. 157).

Though rooted in Kazakhstan, the findings may extend to other multilingual or post-Soviet societies facing globalization, shifting language ideologies, and technological change. Insights into youth dialect practices could inform more responsive language policies and education strategies in similar contexts.

1.6.2 Contributions to Kazakh Linguistics

This study makes two key contributions to Kazakh linguistics. First, through its Kazakh dialect bank and analysis of lexical variation, it provides a current, systematic documentation of dialectal diversity. By recording how millennials and university students employ different lexical forms, the research captures contemporary linguistic dynamism (Tang, 2021),

addressing recent calls for deeper study of Kazakh dialect vocabulary amid social and technological shifts (McCollum & Chen, 2021, p. 296).

Second, the examination of modern variation clarifies historical language change processes. Analyzing connections between current lexical differences and factors like historical divisions or language policy legacies reveals how Kazakh dialects have evolved and suggests potential ongoing boundary shifts. This dual focus—on present-day usage and historical trajectories—enhances understanding of Kazakh's linguistic development.

This study makes significant contributions to understanding language contact changes in contemporary Kazakh dialects. By documenting how English and other languages influence Kazakh in digital and face-to-face interactions, particularly among millennials and university students, the research provides crucial insights into how younger generations navigate multilingualism. The collected data serve dual purposes: they not only advance current scholarship on language contact phenomena but also create an invaluable foundation for future research. This comprehensive corpus of spoken and written dialect variations will support numerous linguistic endeavors, from tracking language change and informing standardization processes to enhancing Kazakh language education and dictionary compilation. Perhaps most importantly, by systematically capturing Kazakh as used today, this work preserves a vital record of the language's ongoing development during a period of significant social and technological transformation.

1.6.3 Contributions to Kazakh Society

This research extends beyond academic circles to benefit Kazakh society in three meaningful ways. First, by documenting Kazakhstan's dialectal richness, it challenges linguistic stereotypes and promotes inclusivity, encouraging recognition of all Kazakh varieties as

equally valid. Second, the study informs contemporary debates about Kazakh identity in our globalized, digital era. Through analyzing youth language practices, it reveals how global and local forces interact to shape evolving notions of Kazakhness - particularly relevant given digital media's growing role in forming language attitudes (Zappavigna, 2019, p. 719).

Third, and perhaps most practically, the findings offer valuable guidance for language education. They support developing teaching methods that embrace dialectal diversity, which research shows enhances students' sense of belonging and cultural pride (Baker-Bell, 2020). By revealing how young Kazakhs use and view dialects across different contexts, this work provides educators with insights for creating more inclusive, culturally responsive classrooms that honor the nation's full linguistic heritage.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Defining the Linguistic Environment: Language and Dialect in Context

This section examined the theoretical foundations of *language* and *dialect*. While these terms appear straightforward, they are complex constructs shaped by linguistic, social, and political factors. Meyerhoff (2018) notes that the boundary between language and dialect is often unclear, with sociopolitical influences heavily determining their classification. The absence of a universal linguistic definition underscores the need for sociolinguistic perspectives in analyzing these terms. A refined understanding was essential for this study on Kazakh dialects, as it informed the framework for analyzing lexical variations, their social significance, and how these differences are perceived in the Kazakh context.

2.1.1 Defining 'Language'

Language involves an interplay of linguistic structure, sociopolitical forces, and change over time. Fundamentally, it consists of a structured lexicon (vocabulary), grammar (rules for word and sentence formation), and phonology (sound systems) (Tang, 2021). Modern linguistic theory increasingly views language as evolving and socially constructed, shaped by—and shaping—social interactions, power changes, and cultural norms (Eckert, 2018).

Distinguishing between *languages* and *dialects* presented nuanced challenges in this study. While mutual intelligibility—the ease with which speakers understand different varieties—is a common criterion (Trudgill, 2020), dialect continuums complicate this measure. Adjacent varieties may remain intelligible, whereas geographically distant ones diverge significantly. Consequently, mutual intelligibility alone proves insufficient for definitive classification.

Historical and political forces have systematically privileged some speech forms as "languages" while demoting others to "dialects." Bourdieu (1991) frames this distinction as symbolic power—where dominant groups institutionalize their linguistic norms (*langue légitime*) and marginalize alternatives (p. 45). France's suppression of Occitan and Britain's colonial linguistic impositions exemplify this pattern, treating Indigenous varieties as inadequate (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 48).

Educational systems perpetuate this hierarchy through what Bourdieu (1991) terms the linguistic market—a space where only sanctioned dialects hold value (p. 62). The stigmatization of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in U.S. schools demonstrates how speakers may internalize linguistic prejudice, reinforcing standard language ideologies (Altman, 2021). These classifications reflect social power rather than linguistic criteria. As Bourdieu (1991) notes, linguistic unification follows political control (p. 48). From Francoist

Spain's treatment of Catalan to Haiti's linguistic politics, such divisions systematically privilege elite groups while excluding others (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 45).

In the Kazakh context, Soviet-era promotion of a Northeastern-based standard entrenched lasting biases, elevating one dialect over regional variants (Smagulova, 2006, p. 309). This historical intervention underscores how political forces shape linguistic hierarchies.

Language serves as a powerful marker of identity, strengthening group cohesion while simultaneously functioning as a potential instrument of marginalization when dominant varieties are politically imposed (McKinney & Hoggan, 2022). Digital platforms have transformed this dynamic, both reinforcing traditional language hierarchies and creating spaces for marginalized linguistic expressions. In Kazakhstan, social media has become particularly significant, with younger generations actively using these platforms to assert regional identities through dialectal variations (Rakhimova & Abdrazakh, 2022, p. 344).

Social networks significantly influence language evolution, accelerating the spread of linguistic innovations (Luraghi, 2010, p. 366). As Trudgill (2020) notes, these changes frequently correlate with social variables including age, socioeconomic status, and gender. Such ongoing transformations may gradually increase divergence between language varieties, further blurring the distinction between dialects and separate languages. The digital era has intensified this process, with online interactions facilitating unprecedented rates of linguistic change and challenging conventional boundaries (Tagg, 2023).

This complex interplay of social, technological, and linguistic factors provides crucial context for examining contemporary Kazakh dialectal variation. The traditional framework of the standard Kazakh now coexists with emerging hybrid forms, particularly in digital spaces where younger speakers creatively blend elements from multiple sources.

2.1.2 Defining 'Dialect'

The concept of *dialect* captures the organic linguistic diversity that emerges within any living language, encompassing systematic variations in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (Trudgill et al., 2014). These distinctive speech patterns develop naturally through geographical separation, social stratification, historical developments, and contact between communities. Rather than representing imperfect versions of a standard, dialects constitute complete, rule-governed linguistic systems that showcase language's remarkable capacity for adaptation (Eckert, 2019, p. 753).

In the Kazakh context, this linguistic diversity manifests in fascinating ways. Regional variations include different words for common concepts - where Central Kazakh speakers might say *jua* for onion, their Eastern counterparts use *sarimsaq*, while Southern residents prefer *piyaz*. Beyond vocabulary, these dialects exhibit grammatical distinctions in verb forms and case endings, along with noticeable pronunciation differences. Modern linguistic research emphasizes that such variations carry deep social significance beyond their structural aspects (Eckert, 2019, p. 753). Within Kazakhstan's complex linguistic landscape, these dialectal features serve as powerful markers of regional identity, particularly as speakers negotiate between the formal standard Kazakh and their local speech varieties. This tension between codified norms and living language practices raises profound questions about linguistic authority and identity in post-Soviet societies.

The dialect continuum concept reveals the fluid nature of linguistic boundaries, challenging rigid classifications while emphasizing geography's role in language variation (Trudgill et al., 2014). Digital platforms have transformed this dynamic—social media now simultaneously reinforces and disrupts regional speech patterns, creating spaces where dialectal features may converge or hybridize (Androutsopoulos, 2015, p. 188). This digital dimension adds

complexity to Kazakhstan's linguistic landscape, where the standard Kazakh interacts with regional varieties in online spaces.

Dialects function as potent social markers, conveying information about speakers' regional origins and community affiliations (Kerswill, Britain & Cheshire, 2003, p. 225). These linguistic variations frequently align with social stratification, reflecting how class, ethnicity, gender, and age influence speech patterns. Certain varieties often gain prestige when adopted by dominant groups, embedding linguistic hierarchies within broader power structures (Bourdieu, 1991). In the Kazakh context, these changes require careful examination—historical privileging of specific dialects continues to shape contemporary attitudes, with social media now providing new avenues for challenging or reproducing these hierarchies.

Regrettably, dialect-based discrimination persists across Kazakhstani institutions, with speakers of non-standard varieties frequently facing bias in educational, professional, and social settings (Collins & Clément, 2014). This reality demands urgent attention to challenge linguistic stereotypes and validate all dialectal forms as equally legitimate. The very notion of a 'standard' language constitutes a social construct—typically reflecting historical power dynamics that elevated one dialect through institutional authority (Milroy, 2002, p. 15).

This study actively confronts these embedded hierarchies, recognizing that all dialects—whether officially sanctioned or regional—represent systematic, rule-governed systems. Dialectal diversity actually showcases language's remarkable adaptability to geographical, historical, and social contexts. Put differently, these variations constitute vibrant linguistic ecosystems rather than deficient versions of an idealized norm.

Understanding these dynamics proves essential for addressing linguistic discrimination in Kazakhstan, where the standard Kazakh maintains privileged status. By examining the social meanings attached to dialect features, this research contributes to broader efforts promoting

linguistic equity—not merely tolerating variation, but genuinely valuing Kazakhstan's rich tapestry of speech varieties.

2.1.3 Relationship Between Language and Dialect

The distinction between "language" and "dialect" remains ambiguous. Although linguistic features—such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation—contribute to differentiation, the classification largely depends on sociopolitical factors rather than structural differences alone (Blommaert, 2010, p. 115). Historically, many varieties labeled as dialects exhibit sufficient linguistic divergence to qualify as separate languages. Yet, without official recognition, standardization, or ties to dominant nation-states, they are often perceived as subordinate (Joseph, Rutten & Vosters, 2020, p. 179).

Prestige frequently elevates dialects associated with formal institutions, literary traditions, or codified standards, reinforcing that categorization stems from sociopolitical influence rather than linguistic merit. For instance, debates persist over Chinese "dialects," where mutual unintelligibility—as between Cantonese and Mandarin—challenges conventional classification (Ho, 2015, p. 150). Such cases underscore how identity and power shape linguistic hierarchies (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 37).

Labeling a linguistic variety as a "dialect" carries significant social implications. Speakers of non-standard dialects often face discrimination in education, employment, and social interactions, where their speech is perceived as inferior (Collins & Clément, 2014, p. 188). Such linguistic bias reinforces social inequality and can pressure communities to abandon their dialects in favor of the dominant standard (Kristiansen, 2011).

Beyond communication, dialects embody cultural knowledge and distinct worldviews. Their marginalization threatens linguistic diversity and erodes heritage (Hamed & Mohamed, 2023).

Conversely, reclassifying a dialect as a "language" can empower speakers, granting legitimacy and institutional access.

This dynamic is particularly relevant in Kazakhstan, where certain dialects have been historically marginalized in favor of the standard Kazakh. The hierarchy between dialects and the standard raises questions about perception, power, and cultural value. A critical analysis of these sociopolitical factors is essential for promoting inclusivity, preserving linguistic diversity, and safeguarding Kazakhstan's multilingual heritage.

The ambiguity between "language" and "dialect" underscores how linguistic boundaries are shaped by social and political forces. This theoretical foundation sets the stage for examining Kazakh dialect variation, revealing how language attitudes, identity, and power intersect in shaping Kazakhstan's linguistic landscape.

2.2 Sociolinguistics of Dialectal Variation

Sociolinguistics provides a critical framework for analyzing how social dynamics influence linguistic variation. Dialects emerge through distinctive vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation patterns that reflect speakers' social identities and lived experiences (Trudgill et al., 2014). Multiple social factors—including age, gender, class, ethnicity, and education—shape individuals' linguistic choices. Younger generations often adopt innovative lexical forms, while older speakers typically maintain traditional variants (Eckert, 2018, p. 47). Similarly, socioeconomic status affects language use through differential access to education and social networks. These mechanisms prove particularly relevant when analyzing variation in Kazakh dialects.

Effective analysis requires examining both regional lexical differences and their associated social valuations. Certain terms may carry prestige in urban contexts while being stigmatized

in rural areas, revealing how language mirrors societal hierarchies. This approach illuminates the interplay between linguistic variation and social power structures in Kazakhstan.

By adopting this sociolinguistic perspective, we achieve a deeper understanding of how Kazakh dialects encode social identity and reflect societal organization. As Meyerhoff (2018) emphasizes, robust dialect study must integrate linguistic analysis with examination of social contexts. This dual focus proves essential for interpreting Kazakhstan's complex linguistic landscape, where dialect features simultaneously reflect and shape social realities.

2.2.1 Sociolinguistic Concepts Applied to Dialectal Variation

Recent studies emphasize examining social networks and media exposure when analyzing dialect variation (Alkebaeva et al., 2021). These factors prove particularly relevant for understanding lexical choices among Kazakh millennials and university students, where language use often reflects social identity and aspirations.

Digital platforms significantly impact dialect evolution. Social media facilitates contact between dialects and enables new lexical variants to emerge (Rahmatdildaevna, Sarekenova, Oner, Turarbekovich & Sagatovna, 2023, p. 129). As Kerswill and Wiese (2022) observe, online spaces accelerate language change while weakening traditional dialect boundaries. Yet research remains limited on how Kazakh social groups perceive and employ dialects digitally, particularly among youth (Lee, 2022, p. 164).

Digital communication may foster new dialect features or reinforce existing ones. Investigating these online dynamics proves crucial for tracking Kazakh dialect evolution and understanding social media's role in shaping linguistic attitudes, especially across younger demographics.

2.2.2 Social Factors and Lexical Variation: Case Studies

Social Class and Lexical Variation

Social class plays a key role in lexical variation, with language use often reflecting socioeconomic status (Labov, 2006). Historically, class-based linguistic differences were more pronounced, particularly between working-class and upper-class speech. While these distinctions may have softened, subtle variations persist. In Kazakhstan, studies indicate that higher socioeconomic status correlates with increased code-switching between Kazakh and Russian (Foster, 2017, p. 140). This trend aligns with Bourdieu's (1991, p. 55) theory of linguistic capital, where language functions as cultural capital, reinforcing social and economic advantages.

Age and Lexical Variation

Generational identity often manifests through unique slang and informal expressions. In Kazakhstan, technological integration has accelerated linguistic innovation among youth, introducing new terms tied to digital culture (Aldash et al., 2019, p. 1432). For instance, phrases like *Kaspige laqtyr* or *Kaspige audar* ('transfer money,' referencing the popular *Kaspi* banking app) reflect this shift.

This study expands on prior work by analyzing how age shapes lexical variation in Kazakh dialects. Specifically, it investigates generational divides in dialectal vocabulary, slang adoption, and dialect attitudes among millennials and university students. Recent findings suggest young Kazakh speakers actively blend Kazakh and Russian in social media slang (Jumagaliyeva, 2021, p. 86), supporting Eckert's (2018, p. 47) social identity theory—language as a marker of age-group belonging.

Gender and Lexical Variation

Gender shapes lexical choices and communicative styles, with studies indicating women often employ more formal and polite expressions in certain contexts (Holmes & Wilson, 2022, p. 197). In Kazakhstan, where traditional and modern norms intersect, gendered lexical patterns may reflect evolving social expectations and power dynamics. Historically, gender-specific vocabulary in Kazakh distinguished roles in domestic, occupational, and social spheres (Arystanbek, 2020, p. 40). Contemporary research examines how these traditions persist or adapt, particularly in digital spaces. For instance, Arystanbek's (2020) study of young Kazakh women on social media revealed linguistic strategies that challenge conventional gender norms—demonstrating how language both mirrors and reshapes identity.

While gender intersects with other social factors in shaping Kazakh lexical variation (especially online, where stereotypes are both reinforced and contested), this dissertation prioritizes age and regional origin as primary influences. By analyzing dialectal vocabulary and attitudes among millennials and university students across regions, the study sheds light on how linguistic practices negotiate identity in modern Kazakhstan. These insights align with broader sociolinguistic theories linking language use to identity construction (Eckert, 2018). It is important to note here that gender's role in Kazakh dialects remains a valuable avenue for future research.

Regional Origin and Lexical Variation

Geography remains a key determinant of dialectal diversity, with distinct regions often developing unique lexical features. In Kazakhstan's vast territory, such regional variations are particularly evident. This study examines region-specific vocabulary to understand how geography shapes Kazakh dialects, including potential differences between northern agricultural terms and southern pastoral terminology. Geographic features like mountain ranges or river systems may further contribute to specialized vocabularies.

Recent research demonstrates how regional identities are actively negotiated through social media, where users employ local dialects in playful, identity-marking exchanges (Putri, 2024). Such digital practices highlight language's dual role in both reflecting and reinforcing regional belonging. This study's analysis specifically maps distinguishing linguistic features across Kazakh dialects, with particular attention to millennials and university students - the most active users of regional variants in both digital and physical spaces.

By tracking the geographical distribution of lexical choices and their social significance, the research illuminates the dynamic interplay between language, place, and identity in modern Kazakhstan. These findings resonate with Anderson's (2006) concept of "imagined communities," suggesting that digital platforms enable dialect speakers to maintain collective identity across physical distances. The study consequently advances our understanding of Kazakhstan's complex linguistic landscape while demonstrating how regional dialects adapt to contemporary communication contexts.

Ethnicity and Lexical Variation

Kazakhstan's ethnic diversity offers compelling opportunities to study how linguistic traditions persist across communities. Specific lexical domains - particularly terms for cuisine, religious practices, and traditional customs - often reveal these ethnic influences most clearly (Bahry, 2021, p. 198). The Soviet linguistic legacy further complicates this picture, with Russian loanwords remaining prevalent in certain professional and social contexts (Pavlenko, 2008).

This study builds on existing research in two key ways. First, it examines how ethnicity interacts with age and regional factors to shape lexical preferences among young Kazakhs. Second, it investigates how different ethnic groups use language to both preserve cultural identity and negotiate social relationships in multilingual settings (Bahry, 2016). Previous work

has shown that language attitudes in Kazakhstan sometimes reflect ethnic prejudices, particularly against non-standard dialect speakers (Smagulova, 2008, p. 464).

The Kazakh context proves particularly revealing for sociolinguistic study. Its complex social fabric - woven from generational change, regional diversity, and ethnic heritage - leaves distinct marks on language use. By focusing on millennials and university students, this research captures how these factors converge in both digital and physical spaces. The findings contribute to broader understandings of how language reflects and shapes social identity in multilingual societies.

2.2.3 Dialectal Variation in the Digital Age

Digital communication and social media have reshaped language variation and dialect use. In Kazakhstan, platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram have altered how people engage with dialects. These spaces enable interaction across regions, possibly weakening traditional dialect divisions while increasing awareness of linguistic diversity (Eisenstein, 2017). Features like multimedia sharing and real-time communication further facilitate the spread of dialectal elements.

Social media now serves as a key site for dialectal identity. Users integrate regional features into posts, comments, and videos, signaling local belonging and forming connections (Rahmatdildaevna et al., 2023, p. 126). Online communities emerge around specific dialects, allowing cultural exchange through language (Al Zidjaly, 2019, p. 363). Such practices may also disrupt linguistic hierarchies, legitimizing non-standard varieties. As Lackaff & Moner (2016) note, digital platforms empower marginalized dialect speakers by amplifying their voices.

While digital platforms transform dialect research, they introduce methodological complexities. The speed of online interaction and volume of user-generated content complicate systematic analysis of dialect features. Ephemeral posts and anonymous authorship further question the reliability of such data for linguistic study. These dynamics demand innovative methods to track language variation in fast-evolving digital spaces.

Yet digital dialect research remains vital for Kazakhstan's linguistic landscape. Social media reveals youth-driven language shifts, offering insights into connections between identity, dialects, and digital interaction. Such work informs language policy by highlighting how digital tools might preserve linguistic diversity and reduce stigma.

2.2.4 Methodological Considerations for Studying Lexical Variation

This section examines methodological approaches for analyzing lexical variation in diverse linguistic settings, extending the sociolinguistic framework discussed earlier. Given the complexity of dialectal variation, a multifaceted methodology is essential. While Chapter 3 details this study's specific methods, the current section outlines key considerations and their implications for Kazakh dialect research. By assessing existing methods—their strengths, limitations, and applicability—this discussion lays the groundwork for the dissertation's design.

Integrating methodological analysis into the literature review serves multiple purposes. First, it clarifies how theoretical perspectives shape method selection, ensuring alignment with the study's framework. Second, evaluating prior methodologies highlights gaps and opportunities for refinement. Third, synthesizing established practices fosters methodological innovation while maintaining rigor. Finally, transparent justification of methods enhances reproducibility. Thus, this section underscores the interdependence of theory, method, and analytical validity.

To comprehensively capture the complexity of lexical variation in Kazakh dialects, a multi-method approach is essential. Qualitative methods such as interviews and participant observation provide rich, contextualized insights into language use and attitudes, though they may be limited in sample size and generalizability. Recent methodological advances in digital ethnography (Pink, Horst, Lewis, Hjorth & Postill, 2015, p. 10) and online data collection (Page, Barton, Lee, Unger & Zappavigna, 2022) present new opportunities to study language variation in authentic digital spaces, particularly where younger speakers actively engage in linguistic innovation. Interviews—whether structured or semi-structured—serve as particularly effective tools for examining sociolinguistic patterns. Structured interviews allow for systematic comparisons of lexical preferences across participant groups (Creswell, 2021), while semi-structured interviews enable deeper exploration of how individuals adapt their linguistic repertoires based on social experiences (Milroy & Gordon, 2008, p. 170). For Kazakh dialect research, interviews can be designed to elicit region-specific terminology through discussions of local traditions, specialized vocabulary via occupational narratives, generational shifts in language through reflections on neologisms, and socioeconomic variations by examining language use in educational and professional settings.

Participant observation remains indispensable for examining lexical choices in natural social contexts. By immersing themselves in diverse Kazakh communities, researchers can directly document how speakers modify their language based on situational factors, interpersonal relationships, and dynamic social contexts (Duranti, 2012). As Mendoza-Denton (2014) emphasizes, this approach reveals the social significance and functional aspects of language variation that interviews alone might miss. Particularly valuable observation sites in Kazakhstan include traditional marketplaces (revealing regional terms and commercial language practices), professional environments (showing formal/informal registers and technical jargon), family gatherings (highlighting generational and gender-based patterns), and

educational institutions (demonstrating teacher-student dynamics and instructional language variations).

Complementing these qualitative methods, corpus analysis offers quantitative examination of lexical patterns across Kazakh social groups (Gries, 2013). When digitized Kazakh texts are available, researchers can compile corpora from interview transcripts, social media content, or literary works. Such analysis of word frequencies, collocations, and lexical distributions can systematically reveal sociolinguistic variations. While comprehensive Kazakh corpora remain limited, even smaller specialized corpora yield significant insights. Notably, recent research highlights social media data's potential as corpus material for dialect study, effectively capturing community-specific language use (Clopper, 2021, p. 339).

2.3 Perceptions of Dialects

Linguistic prejudice—negative judgments about speakers based on language use—shapes dialect perceptions (Collins & Clément, 2014). Such bias often targets dialects diverging from a perceived ‘standard’ or linked to marginalized groups. These evaluations stem from social biases, not linguistic shortcomings (Hamed & Mohamed, 2023). Stigmatized dialect speakers may face overt or subtle discrimination tied to speech patterns, reflecting associations with class, ethnicity, or region. Dominant language ideologies reinforce these prejudices, potentially limiting opportunities and undermining speakers’ confidence (Preston, 2018).

Language attitudes research, a sociolinguistic subfield, examines how individuals assess language varieties. Perceptual dialectology investigates folk beliefs about dialect boundaries and features (Preston, 2018). These approaches help uncover how attitudes toward dialects are socially constructed and their broader implications.

Studying dialect perceptions holds particular significance for Kazakh language variations. Kazakhstan's diverse social and historical context suggests that some dialects may face negative evaluations tied to regional or social stereotypes, reinforcing ideologies that privilege the standard Kazakh. For instance, the Southern dialect—often linked to rural communities—may be viewed as less prestigious than the Northeastern-based standard, reflecting ingrained biases. By analyzing Kazakh speakers' dialect perceptions, this study reveals power imbalances and linguistic prejudices, aligning with Bourdieu's (1991, p. 170) theory of symbolic power, where language reinforces or contests social hierarchies. These insights advocate for greater recognition of all Kazakh varieties.

In the digital era, social media further complicates these perceptions. While online platforms can celebrate linguistic diversity (Kaul, 2013), they may also amplify stereotypes, intensifying existing prejudices. Thus, investigating how social media influences—and is influenced by—attitudes toward Kazakh dialects is critical for understanding evolving linguistic dynamics in Kazakhstan.

2.3.1 Theoretical Perspectives on Dialect Perception

Analyzing linguistic prejudice mechanisms proves crucial for combating harmful language stereotypes. This section outlines key concepts and synthesizes research connecting language attitudes, dialect perception, and social inequality perpetuation. These theoretical foundations enable systematic examination of linguistic prejudice, particularly relevant for studying social perceptions of Kazakh dialects.

Defining Linguistic Prejudice and Related Terms

Linguistic prejudice encompasses negative evaluations of speakers based on accent, dialect, or other linguistic features (Collins & Clément, 2014, p. 179). Such attitudes stem from language

ideologies - shared beliefs about language varieties and their speakers (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 192). These ideologies typically elevate one "correct" form as the standard language (Milroy, 2001, p. 531). In Kazakhstan, the standard Kazakh, derived from the Northeastern dialect, gained dominance through historical ties to political institutions and education (Baskakov, 1962; Fierman, 2006; Johanson, 2013), fundamentally shaping national language attitudes.

Research Linking Language Attitudes to Stereotypes

Studies consistently reveal how language attitudes reinforce stereotypes. Research shows speakers of non-standard dialects are frequently judged as less intelligent or competent (Walsh, 2021). These perceptions emerge from language ideologies that privilege certain varieties while marginalizing others (Baugh, 2018). Crucially, such judgments reflect social biases rather than linguistic merit. This study explores how these ideologies influence Kazakh dialect perceptions among millennials and university students, assessing their role in either sustaining or resisting linguistic prejudice.

Linguistic Insecurity

Dialect speakers frequently develop linguistic insecurity - a self-consciousness about their speech perceived as deficient (Bourdieu, 1991). This stems from societal devaluation of non-standard varieties, which speakers may internalize. The consequences can impact education, careers, and social belonging (Baugh, 2000, p. 142). In Kazakhstan, where the standard language dominates as the "correct" form, regional dialect speakers may experience heightened insecurity. The study examines its prevalence among Kazakh millennials and students, documenting how it shapes their language practices.

Power, Linguistic Prejudice, and Social Reproduction

Critical sociolinguistic perspectives demonstrate how linguistic prejudice both reflects and reinforces existing power structures, perpetuating social inequalities. Bourdieu's (1991, p. 55) framework of 'linguistic capital' illustrates how mastery of the standard language variant provides tangible social and economic advantages, particularly within educational and professional domains, while systematically marginalizing speakers of non-dominant varieties. In the Kazakh context, this dynamic manifests through the institutional dominance of the standard language in formal settings, which frequently positions regional dialects as inferior (Smagulova, 2008, p. 458). Such linguistic hierarchies may significantly constrain social mobility opportunities for dialect speakers. This investigation specifically examines how these entrenched power relations influence dialect perceptions and usage among younger generations in Kazakhstan.

Addressing Linguistic Prejudice

Mitigating linguistic prejudice necessitates comprehensive strategies across multiple societal levels. Within educational systems, implementing culturally responsive pedagogies that affirm non-standard dialects while fostering critical awareness of language attitudes represents one promising approach (Karimova, Ishanov, Mukanova, Odintsova & Aratayeva, 2023). For contemporary Kazakhstan, effective interventions could include incorporating regional dialect examples into standard curricula, actively promoting awareness of the nation's rich linguistic heritage, and directly challenging prevalent dialect stereotypes. Furthermore, research underscores the transformative potential of media representation, as positive depictions of dialectal diversity in popular culture can substantially shift public perceptions (Nguyen, 2021, p. 216). Collectively, these measures offer pathways toward cultivating greater linguistic equity and reshaping Kazakhstan's sociolinguistic landscape in more inclusive directions.

2.3.2 Factors Influencing Dialect Perceptions

Dialect perceptions are shaped by social constructs such as regional origin, class, ethnicity, and media portrayals. Stereotypes tied to specific regions often lead to biases against speakers of certain dialects (Labov, 2006).

Class-based linguistic prejudice stems from societal hierarchies. Working-class dialects are frequently stigmatized as "unrefined," reinforcing negative assumptions about education and social status (Labov, 2006). In Kazakhstan, Soviet-era policies promoted the Northeastern dialect as the literary or the standard language, marginalizing other regional varieties, which were perceived as markers of lower class and education (Baskakov, 1962; Fierman, 2006; Johanson, 2013). Ethnicity further influences perceptions, with minority-associated dialects often facing discrimination. For example, African American Vernacular English (AAVE) speakers are frequently judged as less competent or socially desirable (Altman, 2021)

Media—including television, film, and social platforms—also shapes dialect perceptions. While some portrayals reinforce stereotypes by linking dialects to negative traits (Androutsopoulos, 2006), others challenge biases through accurate representation (Coupland, 2007). This study explores how Kazakh dialects are depicted on YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, and how these portrayals influence millennial and student perceptions.

The Rise of Social Media and Dialect Perception

Social media has significantly altered dialect perception, especially in Kazakhstan. Platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram—widely used by young Kazakhs—have become key spaces for negotiating linguistic norms (Sun, Wang & Feng, 2021). Unlike traditional media, these platforms allow speakers of diverse dialects to present their speech unfiltered, potentially weakening stereotypes and fostering linguistic acceptance. This study explores how Kazakh

millennials and university students perceive dialectal variation through social media use, including their openness to non-standard forms.

Yet social media also reinforces linguistic bias. Negative comments and stereotypes often spread rapidly (Page et al., 2022), while platform algorithms may unintentionally privilege certain dialects, creating new hierarchies. This dissertation analyzes these dynamics, focusing on how Kazakh dialects are represented and perceived on youth-oriented platforms.

Unique Factors in the Kazakh Context

Kazakhstan's dialect perceptions stem from distinctive historical and social forces. The nation's nomadic traditions, ethnic diversity, and language contact history have fostered varied regional dialects (Smagulova, 2008, p. 446). Yet Soviet-era policies favoring the Northeastern dialect as the standard language continue to affect modern attitudes (Fierman, 2006, p. 101). These legacy positions some dialects as less prestigious, potentially causing linguistic marginalization.

For contemporary Kazakh youth - heavy social media users - these perceptions reveal critical intersections between language, identity, and power (Alkebaeva, Satkenova & Konyrbekova, 2021, p. 15). Digital platforms present a paradox: they may reinforce biases yet also challenge norms through grassroots linguistic expression.

This study advances two key understandings: first, how language attitudes emerge in Kazakhstan's unique context; second, how these processes inform wider theories of language-power relationships in multilingual societies. The findings illuminate both local dialect dynamics and global sociolinguistic debates.

2.3.3 Social Consequences of Linguistic Prejudice

In Kazakhstan, dialect-based discrimination creates substantial barriers across multiple domains, particularly affecting education and employment prospects. This systemic bias privileges urban varieties like those spoken in Astana and Almaty while marginalizing regional dialects. Social media's pervasive influence among Kazakh youth intensifies these effects, as platform algorithms frequently reinforce dominant language norms (Page et al., 2022), potentially shaping self-perception and linguistic identity.

Educational

Impacts

Classrooms often reproduce societal linguistic hierarchies. Research indicates teachers may unconsciously associate rural Kazakh dialects with lower academic potential (Smagulova, 2019), sometimes misinterpreting dialect differences as learning deficiencies (Hyatt, Escott & Bone, 2022). Such biases—observed globally in multilingual education systems (García & Sylvan, 2011, p. 387)—can depress student achievement through lowered expectations and reduced opportunities. As García and Lin (2017, p. 127) note, educators' language ideologies fundamentally shape learners' trajectories.

Employment Consequences

Workplace discrimination in Kazakhstan frequently manifests through dialect prejudice. Hiring managers often unconsciously equate urban Kazakh varieties with professional competence (Labov, 2006), creating barriers for regional dialect speakers. These candidates may face unfair interview evaluations, limited promotion prospects, and persistent doubts about their capabilities—a phenomenon termed linguistic profiling (Baugh, 2016). Such bias proves particularly detrimental for rural-to-urban migrants, as even qualified individuals struggle to secure positions in major cities. In Kazakhstan's language-sensitive economy, these practices

reinforce socioeconomic disparities by restricting upward mobility for non-standard dialect speakers.

Social and Psychological Impacts

Dialect-based marginalization extends into personal wellbeing and community integration. Many regional Kazakh speakers develop linguistic insecurity, internalizing societal devaluation of their speech (Pavlenko, 2008). The pressure to adopt *taza qazaq tili* (pure Kazakh) often triggers identity conflicts, as individuals suppress native dialects to avoid stigma. This linguistic self-censorship can erode cultural connections and foster social withdrawal—especially in urban spaces privileging "standard" varieties (Zharkynbekova & Agmanova, 2016). Digital platforms exacerbate these issues, enabling harassment targeting non-standard language use (Tomkins, Getoor, Chen & Zhang, 2018, p. 54).

Linguistic bias in Kazakhstan creates substantial barriers to equity, requiring multi-level interventions. In education, teacher training programs should address implicit biases regarding dialect variation (Baugh, 2000, p. 158), emphasizing that linguistic differences don't reflect cognitive ability. Workplaces similarly need policies valuing diverse speech patterns, particularly regional Kazakh varieties often misjudged as unprofessional (Labov, 2006).

At the societal level, initiatives celebrating Kazakhstan's *dialektyq sanaluandyq* (dialectal diversity) could counter prevailing hierarchies. As research shows, recognizing all varieties as equally valid fosters inclusion (Pavlenko, 2008). Ultimately, reducing language-based prejudice enables merit-based evaluation—where competence and personality outweigh speech characteristics—contributing to Kazakhstan's social equity goals.

2.3.4 Linguistic Prejudice and Power in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan's linguistic landscape reflects a complex colonial and Soviet past, where Russian held dominant status (Fierman, 2006, p. 109). While Kazakh was officially recognized, it remained secondary, especially in cities (Fierman, 2006). This historical hierarchy persists, fostering linguistic insecurity among non-prestigious dialect speakers and reinforcing power imbalances (Bourdieu, 1991).

These dynamics extend to workplaces and education. Despite Kazakh's state-language status, Russian retains privilege in certain professions (Smagulova, 2008, p. 456), implying Kazakh's perceived inadequacy in formal contexts. Even among Kazakh speakers, urban-standardized varieties often signal competence, disadvantaging rural or regional dialects (Smagulova, 2015, p. 204). Such hierarchies exemplify linguistic capital—where certain varieties grant access to socioeconomic resources (Bourdieu, 1991).

In schools, prioritising standard Kazakh often marginalizes students' home dialects, hindering learning and reinforcing inequality (Fierman, 2006, p. 111). Research indicates, however, that embracing linguistic diversity improves both academic outcomes and social inclusion (García & Sylvan, 2011, p. 386). This underscores the need to confront ideologies that valorize standardized language over regional variations.

The emphasis on linguistic "correctness" carries further consequences. By promoting a monolithic standard, policymakers inadvertently suppress natural dialectal diversity—a process tied to language ideologies that dictate perceived legitimacy (Silverstein, 1992). Speakers of regional varieties may feel compelled to adopt urban norms, risking dialect erosion (Pavlenko, 2008). Such pressures foster linguistic insecurity, potentially erasing unique cultural and linguistic features over time.

Kazakhstan stands at a critical juncture in addressing its historical linguistic inequalities. To create a truly equitable society, the nation must actively embrace and celebrate its rich tapestry of dialects while consciously working to dismantle the persistent hierarchies that privilege urban speech forms. Educational reforms that promote awareness of linguistic diversity, combined with workplace protections against dialect discrimination, could significantly advance this cause. The digital sphere presents both challenges and opportunities, requiring careful examination to ensure online platforms amplify rather than suppress regional voices.

Public initiatives highlighting Kazakhstan's linguistic heritage could foster greater appreciation for all language varieties, from the standard Kazakh language to rural dialects. Such efforts would help speakers across the nation feel valued for their unique linguistic identities. By implementing comprehensive policies that protect linguistic rights in education, employment, and digital spaces, Kazakhstan can build a society where every citizen's speech is respected as an integral part of the national cultural fabric. This transformation would not only rectify historical injustices but also strengthen social cohesion in an increasingly interconnected world.

2.4 Kazakh Dialects: History and Classification

2.4.1 Origins and Influences on Kazakh Dialect Formation

The development of Kazakh dialects reflects the historical and cultural dynamics of the Kazakh people. As a Kipchak Turkic language, Kazakh originated among nomadic tribes in Central Asia (Johanson, 2021, p. 110). Their migratory patterns and interactions with neighboring groups led to early linguistic variations, supporting the sociolinguistic view that language contact drives dialect formation (Menges, 1995). Seasonal movements and differing levels of engagement with other Turkic and non-Turkic communities further reinforced these distinctions. Gradually, these differences—evident in pronunciation, vocabulary, and

grammar—solidified into regionally distinct dialects, illustrating how social and geographic factors shape language variation (Trudgill et al., 2014).

2.4.1.1 External Influences and Historical Shifts

Kazakh dialects bear traces of prolonged contact with neighboring cultures, aligning with language contact theories that highlight cross-linguistic exchange as a driver of variation (Menges, 1995). Southern dialects, for instance, show Uzbek influence, with noticeable lexical and structural blending. Persian, once dominant in administration, left marks on vocabulary and grammar (Smagulova, 2008, p. 443), while Arabic contributed religious terms via Islamic expansion (Versteegh, 2014). These layers of influence—evident in phonology, morphology, and lexicon—underscore the region’s complex linguistic history (Fierman, 2013; Hickey, 2020, p. 512). Analyzing these contact effects clarifies contemporary lexical diversity in Kazakh dialects, including youth usage patterns.

Historical upheavals, notably Russian Empire and Soviet rule, further altered dialect trajectories. Russian loanwords and syntactic calques permeated urban Kazakh, while Soviet language policies suppressed dialectal diversity. The state’s promotion of the Northeastern dialect as standard Kazakh marginalized other varieties, reinforcing a prestige hierarchy (Amanjolov, 2004). This legacy shapes modern sociolinguistic attitudes, particularly among millennials and students negotiating identity through language—a dynamic consistent with social identity theory (Hogg, 2016, p. 9).

2.4.1.2 The Evolving Landscape of Kazakh Dialects

Kazakh dialects have developed within a fluid linguistic environment influenced by migration, cultural contact, and historical shifts (Bahry, 2020). The interaction between internal and external factors continues to shape regional variations, offering valuable insights into Kazakh

cultural history (Kenesbayev, 1960). Studying these dialects reveals not only their linguistic richness but also their role in preserving heritage. Today, globalization, urbanization, and digital media further transform dialectal diversity (Sharipova, 2020). This study explores how such factors affect lexical variation among young Kazakhs, demonstrating how language both reflects and constructs social identity in modern Kazakhstan.

2.4.2 Categorizing Kazakh Dialects

Researchers have classified Kazakh dialects using historical, geographical, and mutual intelligibility criteria. Earlier models, such as Baskakov's (1962) and Kaliev's (1960) binary system, have given way to a more refined three-group framework: Western, Northeastern, and Southern (Baskakov, 1962; Fierman, 2006; Johanson, 2013). Amanjolov (2004) first proposed this structure, which later scholars like Ibragimov (2025) expanded by incorporating phonetic, lexical, and grammatical markers. Kenesbayev's (1960) dialectological dictionary further validated these distinctions, providing essential data for contemporary studies.

The Western, Northeastern, and Southern dialect classification remains the cornerstone of Kazakh dialectology due to its historical, linguistic, and practical merits. Rooted in centuries of cultural exchange, each group reflects distinct influences—Kipchak traces in the West, Oghuz-Kypchak blends in the Northeast, and Karluk features in the South (Sarybayev, 2005; Nurmagambetov, 1986). Linguistic studies by Amanjolov (2004), Kenesbayev (1960), and Ibragimov (2025) further validate these boundaries through documented differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, such as the Western dialect's preserved vowel harmony (Omarbekov & Zhunisov, 1985). Beyond academic rigor, the framework's simplicity aids educators and policymakers in preserving the standard Kazakh while acknowledging regional diversity. Its widespread adoption (Baskakov, 1962; Fierman, 2006; Johanson, 2013)

ultimately speaks to its balanced approach—honoring Kazakhstan’s linguistic heritage while serving modern needs.

While recognizing the value of more comprehensive approaches that consider linguistic, social, and historical intersections, this investigation employs the tripartite classification as its structural basis for analyzing lexical variation among millennial and university populations. The study uses the standard Kazakh, rooted in the Northeastern dialect, as its primary reference - though this standardized form might have inevitably simplified Kazakhstan's complex dialectal richness.

This research builds strategically on established scholarship, including Sarybayev's (2005) historical analyses, Nurmagambetov's (1986) geographical mappings, and Omarbekov and Zhunisov's (1985) phonetic studies. By applying this framework to understudied demographics, the project seeks to advance contemporary understanding of both lexical diversity and evolving social attitudes toward regional speech varieties. The focus on younger speakers proves particularly revealing, as their language use often reflects the tension between traditional forms and emerging hybrid dialects (Hamed & Mohamed, 2023).

Reevaluating Dialect Classification in Contemporary Contexts

The established tripartite division of Kazakh dialects (Western, Northeastern, Southern) contains numerous regional variations despite its broad acceptance (Sarybayev, 2005). These classifications integrate linguistic criteria—phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical patterns—with geographical and historical factors (Amanjолоv, 2004; Nurmagambetov, 1986). While mutual intelligibility informs these categories, it proves an inconsistent measure for definitive classification.

Traditional approaches, though valuable, struggle to accommodate today's fluid dialect boundaries. Globalization, migration, and digital communication have intensified language contact, fostering hybrid dialects that resist rigid categorization (Blommaert, 2010, p. 42). This dialect leveling phenomenon (Kerswill et al., 2003, p. 223) particularly affects younger speakers, whose linguistic practices often blend regional features with digital communication patterns.

This investigation employs the tripartite framework as its structural foundation while acknowledging its limitations regarding contemporary sociolinguistic realities. Focusing on millennial and university-aged Kazakhs reveals how digital interaction and mobility reshape traditional dialect boundaries. The standard Kazakh, rooted in the Northeastern dialect, serves as a reference point, though its inability to fully represent Kazakhstan's linguistic diversity remains apparent.

2.4.3 Sociolinguistic Considerations in Kazakh Dialect Usage

Kazakh dialects strongly influence regional identity formation (Munday, 2010, p. 138). For many, dialect functions as a key marker of belonging, linking speakers to ancestral roots and local communities. This linguistic pride often reflects deep ties to cultural heritage and place. Yet linguistic hierarchies persist, frequently tied to social inequalities (Gorter, 2021). Some dialects—particularly those associated with rural or marginalized groups—face stigmatization as “impure” compared to the standard Kazakh, which is often linked to urban centers like Astana and Almaty. Such perceptions may foster linguistic insecurity and limit opportunities for speakers of non-standard varieties (Dovchin, 2022).

The notion of the standard language itself remains contentious. While standardization aims to unify communication nationwide (Smagulova, 2008, p. 441), an overemphasis on these ideal

risks marginalizing natural dialectal diversity. The framing of the standard as inherently “correct” can reinforce biases against other variants, obscuring their linguistic richness. Digital spaces further complicate this dynamic: social media both elevates the standard Kazakh and enables non-standard dialect expression (Calude, 2023). However, algorithmic biases may also perpetuate existing hierarchies by privileging certain dialects (Markl, 2022, p. 522).

Maintaining the standard Kazakh as a communicative tool while preserving dialectal diversity remains critical for linguistic inclusivity. Educational programs that highlight linguistic variation and counter dialect stereotypes may improve language attitudes (Smagulova, 2008). Media representation equally shapes perceptions; positive portrayals of non-standard dialects in both traditional and digital platforms can foster broader acceptance. For example, online communities celebrating regional variants offer spaces to challenge linguistic hierarchies (Alshehri, 2025).

This tension between utility and diversity reveals deeper societal dynamics. Although standardized Kazakh aids national communication, framing it as inherently “correct” risks marginalizing other variants. Inclusive policies must therefore pair practical standardization with deliberate efforts to validate dialectal richness—through education and anti-stigma initiatives (Dovchin, 2022).

2.4.4 Efforts for Kazakh Dialect Preservation

While less visible in Kazakhstan than elsewhere, language revitalization offers potential to sustain endangered dialects. Key strategies include community-led language courses, specialized dialect resources, and youth engagement programs that reconnect speakers with their linguistic roots (Grenoble & Whaley, 2005, p. 249). Crucially, research emphasizes

grassroots approaches that enable local communities to lead preservation efforts—a method shown to both protect linguistic variation and strengthen cultural identity (Tsunoda, 2006).

Educational systems significantly influence dialect perceptions. Teaching linguistic diversity as valuable rather than deficient can transform attitudes. Similarly, media plays a pivotal role: representing varied Kazakh dialects in films, shows, and digital content counters stereotypes while increasing their visibility. As Androutsopoulos (2015, p. 196) notes, such portrayals powerfully shape language attitudes, particularly for younger audiences.

Digital tools present innovative opportunities for safeguarding Kazakhstan's dialectal diversity. Online archives can preserve audio-visual recordings of regional variants, increasing accessibility for both academic and public audiences (Rajagukguk, Malems & Ginting, 2022).. Interactive mobile applications may also engage users in dialect learning through gamified vocabulary acquisition (Zakaria et al., 2020). Social media platforms particularly enable dialect communities to connect, share cultural knowledge, and collaborate on documentation projects.

However, these technologies risk accelerating linguistic homogenization by privileging the standard Kazakh through algorithmic preferences. This duality necessitates balanced approaches—harnessing digital tools while mitigating their standardizing effects. As emerging research shows, technology's impact remains contested in minority language contexts (Karabayeva, 2025).

Current preservation efforts combine technological innovation with community-driven initiatives. Researchers and local speakers collaboratively document dialects, creating resources that both educate and validate non-standard variants. These multidimensional approaches do more than conserve language forms—they reinforce cultural identity and social inclusion. Crucially, valuing dialect diversity strengthens the nation's broader linguistic ecology while resisting erasure through standardization.

2.5 Comparative Case Studies

Studying linguistic experiences in countries with significant dialectal variation offers key insights into language diversity, standardization, and preservation. This dissertation analyzes two comparative cases: Turkey and Uzbekistan. As Turkic-speaking nations, both share linguistic and cultural ties with Kazakhstan while exhibiting regional dialectal diversity. These cases illuminate shared challenges and possible approaches for multilingual societies managing linguistic variation (Johanson, 2013).

Comparative Case Studies: Understanding Linguistic Trends

These cases reveal how historical, social, educational, and technological factors influence attitudes toward dialects. They showcase varying societal valuations of linguistic diversity alongside the tensions of standardization (Curzan, Queen, VanEyck & Weissler, 2023). Turkey and Uzbekistan's experiences clarify broader forces shaping language use in diverse contexts.

For instance, Turkey's post-Ottoman standardization of Turkish marginalized regional dialects, reducing linguistic diversity (Johanson, 2013, p. 21). This underscores how policy and education can either erode or sustain regional linguistic identities.

Benefits for Kazakhstan: Social Identity and Language Ideologies

Comparative case studies prove especially valuable for examining lexical variation trends among Kazakhstani millennials and university students. By assessing how youth in Turkey and Uzbekistan engage with dialectal differences, this research clarifies key factors shaping language attitudes within Kazakhstan's younger demographics (Evcen, 2020).

For example, studies of Turkish youth reveal a tension between the perceived prestige of standardized language for socioeconomic mobility and the enduring role of regional dialects in

expressing local identity (Evcen, 2020). This aligns with social identity theory (Hogg, 2016, p. 4), which posits that language functions as a marker of group affiliation and self-concept. In Turkey, young people may strategically employ regional dialects to affirm cultural roots, even while adopting standard forms for professional contexts.

Research in Uzbekistan demonstrates how youth employ regional dialect features on social platforms to establish local connections and affirm cultural identity (Urinboyev, 2017, p. 126). This phenomenon aligns with language ideology frameworks (Silverstein, 1992), where vernacular speech functions as an authentic marker of regional belonging. Uzbek social media practices reveal how positive language ideologies can validate non-standard varieties as expressions of cultural pride.

Cross-national comparison of Turkey and Uzbekistan's language approaches yields practical insights for Kazakhstan's linguistic diversity challenges. Educational programs that validate regional dialects in informal contexts may help balance the dominance of the standard Kazakh while reducing linguistic prejudice. Such initiatives could cultivate more inclusive language attitudes without diminishing the standard variety's functional value.

These comparative analyses reveal both universal patterns and nation-specific variations in multilingual contexts. By examining Kazakhstan's dialect situation through this wider lens, we identify transferable strategies for language policy and education. This approach supports developing frameworks that simultaneously preserve linguistic heritage and accommodate contemporary communication needs, particularly relevant for Kazakhstan's evolving sociolinguistic landscape.

2.5.1 Case Study 1: The Turkish Language

As a Turkic language of the Oghuz branch (Johanson, 2021), Turkish presents a compelling parallel for Kazakh dialect studies. Their shared linguistic heritage makes Turkey's experience with standardization and shifting dialect perceptions particularly relevant for Kazakhstan. This case study directly informs our core questions about youth engagement with lexical variation and how digital media shapes dialect attitudes.

Historical Influences and Standardization Processes

Both languages bear marks of significant foreign influence. Ottoman Turkish absorbed substantial Persian and Arabic elements, creating a wide gap between literary and vernacular forms (Yüce, 2019, p. 101). Similarly, Soviet-era Russian influence introduced loanwords into Kazakh (e.g., *bätiñke* from Russian *botinki* [boots]; Fierman, 2006, p. 99). Post-independence, both nations pursued language reforms emphasizing Turkic roots - Turkey through modernization efforts (Yüce, 2019) and Kazakhstan through Kazakh revitalization. While these standardization movements responded to historical foreign influence, they risk marginalizing dialectal diversity (Johanson, 2013, p. 26).

Dialectal Diversity in Turkey and Kazakhstan

Turkey exhibits discernible regional variations in pronunciation and vocabulary, with major dialect groups including Western (Istanbul standard), Eastern, and Northeastern Anatolian (Yağlı, 2024, Yüce, 2019). Similarly, Kazakh displays distinct Western, Northeastern, and Southern dialects reflecting historical regionalism (Baskakov, 1962; Fierman, 2006; Johanson, 2013, Mukhamedova, 2015). Both cases demonstrate how longstanding geographic divisions shape linguistic development. Digital platforms now challenge this traditional landscape, offering new spaces for dialect expression that may weaken standard language dominance

(Dovchin, 2019) - a key consideration for this study's examination of Kazakh youth's social media language practices.

Sociolinguistic Dynamics: Prestige and Perception

The Istanbul dialect's media-driven prestige as Turkey's standard has marginalized regional varieties, often stigmatized as inferior (Brendemoen, 2021b, p. 224). Kazakhstan mirrors this pattern, where standardized Kazakh promotion creates linguistic insecurity among dialect speakers, establishing perceived hierarchies between varieties. Such dynamics can negatively impact speakers' self-perception and social opportunities (Pavlenko, 2008). These prestige mechanisms directly inform our analysis of how young Kazakhs negotiate lexical variation and its social implications.

The Standardization Dilemma: Between Unification and Preservation

Turkey's longstanding language standardization policies have prioritized national cohesion (Brendemoen, 2021a, p. 231), presenting Kazakhstan with similar challenges in balancing the standard Kazakh promotion with regional variation preservation. While effective for creating shared communication norms, such approaches risk establishing linguistic hierarchies that marginalize dialect speakers and accelerate language shift (Hamed & Mohamed, 2023). These concerns directly inform this study's examination of 21st-century Kazakh dialect vitality. Emerging scholarship suggests more inclusive standardization frameworks may better serve both unity and preservation goals (Yağlı, 2024).

Evolving Approaches to Dialect Preservation

Turkey's informal preservation efforts—through academic research, documentation, and growing cultural appreciation—mirror Kazakhstan's formal dialect revitalization initiatives (Smagulova, 2008, p. 446). In both contexts, dialects gain visibility through literature, music,

and digital platforms, challenging standard language dominance (Doğançay-Aktuna, 2004, p. 404). Youth particularly leverage social media for dialect-based identity expression, though this practice sometimes reinforces new linguistic stereotypes (Collins & Clément, 2014).

The Turkish case illuminates complex language-identity-power dynamics relevant to Kazakh dialect studies. By analyzing Turkey's sociopolitical linguistic history, we identify both cautionary lessons and promising strategies for Kazakhstan's digital-era language landscape. This comparative perspective proves invaluable for understanding how Kazakh youth negotiate lexical variation within broader societal constraints.

2.5.2 Case Study 2: The Uzbek Language

Uzbek offers a valuable comparative framework for examining Central Asian language diversity and policy. As another Turkic language with regional significance, its sociolinguistic evolution parallels Kazakhstan's in important ways (Johanson, 2021). This case study directly addresses our core research questions regarding youth engagement with lexical variation and how digital media influences dialect perceptions.

Historical Development and Linguistic Influences

Emerging from Chagatai Turkic and Persian (Johanson, 2021, p. 100), Uzbek shares Kazakh's linguistic ancestry while absorbing Persianized Arabic (*kitob* [book]), Arabic (*maktab* [school]), and Russian influences, particularly in technical domains (Fierman, 2005, p. 403). This mirrors Kazakh's development under Russian dominance during the Soviet era. Post-independence, both nations have pursued language revitalization while confronting Soviet linguistic legacies and globalization pressures (Fierman, 2013, p. 136). Their dialect landscapes show comparable regional variations in divergence patterns.

Uzbekistan's linguistic landscape is shaped by three major dialect groups, each with distinct characteristics and sociolinguistic significance. The Qipchaq dialects, spoken in northern and central regions including Tashkent, form the foundation of standard Uzbek—mirroring how Northeastern Kazakh dialects underpin the standard Kazakh—with shared lexical features like *uy* (house) and ongoing shifts due to urbanization (Turaeva, 2015, p. 464). In the south, Oghuz dialects reveal Turkmen influences (e.g., *çörek* for bread), much like Kazakh's border varieties, with young speakers often using these features to affirm regional identity (Boeschoten, 2021). Meanwhile, Karluk dialects of the Fergana Valley and Surxondaryo exhibit a unique blend of Qipchaq and Oghuz traits, paralleling the hybridity found in some Kazakh dialects, though they remain understudied compared to other groups—a gap also noted in Kazakhstani research. Together, these dialects illustrate how language variation in Uzbekistan reflects historical, geographical, and social forces, offering valuable comparative insights for understanding similar dynamics in Kazakhstan.

Sociolinguistic Dynamics of Standardization

The prestige of standard Uzbek, rooted in the Tashkent dialect, parallels standard language's status in Kazakhstan. Soviet-era language planners deliberately selected Tashkent's variety for its perceived neutrality and comprehensibility, despite Ferghana Valley's cultural significance (Fierman, 2012). This standardization process, while fostering national unity, has faced criticism for marginalizing regional dialects and eroding linguistic diversity (Turaeva, 2015). In both countries, such policies risk creating stigmatization for non-standard dialect speakers, particularly rural migrants adapting to urban norms for socioeconomic mobility (Fierman, 2013, p. 138). Digital platforms present a dual dynamic—they may reinforce existing linguistic biases while simultaneously offering new avenues for dialect preservation and identity

expression among youth (Putri, 2024), though these digital effects on Uzbek dialects remain understudied compared to Kazakh contexts.

Language Standardization: Balancing Unity and Diversity

Both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan actively promote standardized national languages, facilitating national unity through shared communication norms (Fierman, 2013, p. 136). However, these policies risk suppressing dialectal diversity when implemented too rigidly. Research indicates that while standardization successfully establishes dominant varieties in official domains, it may marginalize non-standard dialects in both countries (Turaeva, 2015; Smagulova, 2008). This creates tension between linguistic unification and preservation efforts.

Cultural institutions and researchers in both nations work to document and celebrate regional varieties through literature and media, potentially mitigating standard language dominance. These preservation efforts reflect growing recognition of dialects' cultural value, though their effectiveness in shaping youth language attitudes requires further study. The parallel challenges faced by both countries highlight the complex trade-offs between national language policies and grassroots linguistic diversity.

2.5.3 Comparative Analysis: Linguistic Dynamics in Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan

This comparative study explored linguistic dynamics across three Turkic-speaking nations—Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan—to address two core research questions: (1) how millennials and university students interact with lexical variation in Kazakh dialects, and (2) how modern Kazakh society perceives these variations, especially in digital contexts (see Research Questions, Section 1.2). By analyzing these cases, the study identified shared

challenges and opportunities in dialect diversity, language standardization, and shifting attitudes in the digital era.

Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan serve as critical cases due to their shared Oghuz Turkic roots, which yield grammatical and lexical similarities (Yüce, 2019). Each has also experienced external linguistic influences—Persian and Arabic in Ottoman Turkey, and Russian in Soviet-era Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan (Fierman, 2013). These influences prompted post-independence efforts to reclaim Turkic heritage. All three exhibit internal dialectal diversity, shaped by prestige hierarchies, migration, and tensions between standardization and preservation (Curzan et al., 2023). These dynamics offer insights into how Kazakh youth, navigating multilingualism and globalization, engage with lexical variation daily.

While these nations share Turkic linguistic roots, their approaches to language standardization diverge significantly. Turkey's more intensive standardization efforts reflect its longer history as a nation-state and stronger focus on national identity formation (Brendemoen, 2021a). By contrast, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have pursued fewer comprehensive programs, with variations in dialect documentation and revitalization tied to differing sociopolitical contexts and available resources.

The linguistic landscapes also vary in complexity. Both Turkey and Uzbekistan must account for minority languages (e.g., Kurdish, Armenian in Turkey), creating additional policy considerations largely absent in Kazakhstan's more homogeneous context. Recent studies indicate Turkey's linguistic environment has grown particularly complex due to migration and urbanization, fostering dialect contact and new hybrid varieties (İnal, Bayyurt, Özturhan, & Bektaş, 2021). This evolutionary process reflects centuries of development.

These comparative cases offer valuable insights for Kazakhstan's ongoing sociolinguistic transformation. Three key lessons emerge:

1. Revitalization Models: Kazakhstan can adapt strategies from Turkish and Uzbek efforts to reclaim Turkic heritage after periods of external linguistic influence.
2. Cultural Acceptance: The growing inclusion of dialects in popular culture across all three countries suggests pathways for Kazakhstan to valorize linguistic diversity beyond the standard Kazakh.
3. Digital Innovation: Turkish and Uzbek youth demonstrate how social media can challenge standard language dominance (see Section 4.2). This directly informs this study's investigation of digital dialect use among Kazakh youth and its role in shaping new linguistic identities.

These observations underscore how comparative analysis can inform Kazakh language policy, particularly regarding dialect use in education and media. The Turkish and Uzbek experiences highlight both opportunities and challenges Kazakhstan may encounter in balancing standardization with linguistic diversity preservation.

Digital communication in Turkey and Uzbekistan offers valuable insights for Kazakhstan's evolving language policies, particularly in education and the preservation of the standard Kazakh. By examining how social media shapes youth language attitudes across these Turkic societies, this study reveals the dual role of digital platforms—both challenging linguistic norms and reinforcing them. Kazakhstan's struggle to balance dialectal diversity with a standardized national language mirrors broader regional experiences, with Turkey demonstrating how digital spaces can document endangered dialects, and Uzbekistan providing models for inclusive multilingual policies. This research contributes by exploring how Kazakh youth navigate these dynamics in their daily communication, blending traditional and digital language practices. The findings advocate for policies that validate online language use, integrate youth-driven linguistic innovation into education, and uphold regional dialects while

maintaining national cohesion. Ultimately, the study underscores the need for equitable language planning that honors historical roots while embracing the transformative potential of digital communication (Inal et al., 2021).

2.6 A Balanced Perspective on Kazakh Dialects

Kazakhstan's examination of Turkey and Uzbekistan's linguistic policies offered valuable insights for managing its own dialectal diversity. This comparison underscored that harmonizing language standardization with regional linguistic preservation presents a complex challenge across nations. A key finding is that uniform solutions are ineffective—language policies must instead account for each country's distinct historical, sociocultural, and political context (Smagulova, 2008). Kazakhstan can learn from both the achievements and shortcomings of its Turkic counterparts. For instance, integrating dialects into literature and media (as seen in Turkey) may promote inclusivity, yet excessive standardization risks marginalizing regional speech forms. Consequently, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan might adopt a measured strategy—one that upholds linguistic diversity while strengthening national cohesion.

Kazakhstan's language policy must adopt a measured strategy, learning from Turkey and Uzbekistan while addressing digital-era challenges (Ismagilova et al., 2023). This requires systematic dialect research—combining traditional documentation with digital tools like corpus analysis and social media tracking—to capture evolving linguistic trends, particularly among youth. Crucially, policies must be grounded in empirical data to accommodate variation effectively (Ismagilova et al., 2023).

Education plays a pivotal role. Curricula that integrate dialectal materials and train teachers in linguistic diversity can foster respect for all Kazakh varieties (García & Sylvan, 2011, p. 391).

Such inclusivity may enhance students' academic performance and strengthen their linguistic identity. While standardization aids national cohesion, it should not marginalize dialects. Flexible policies could preserve vernaculars in informal and creative domains (Fierman, 2005, p. 405). For instance, promoting vernacular literacy—especially in digital spaces—may empower younger speakers while honoring linguistic heritage.

Effective language policy must prioritize community involvement to ensure sustainability and cultural relevance (Fishman, 2012). Grassroots initiatives—such as community-managed digital archives of dialect materials, locally-developed educational programs, and dialect-inclusive media—can empower speakers while preserving linguistic diversity. Crucially, including communities in language planning processes helps align policies with local needs and values (Fishman, 2012).

For Kazakhstan, this collaborative model offers particular promise in the digital era. While social media can either celebrate or marginalize dialects (Ismagilova et al., 2023), strategic use of technology combined with community partnerships may foster more equitable linguistic practices. The goal should be policies that simultaneously maintain national cohesion through standardized Kazakh while actively valuing regional variations. Such balanced approaches could transform Kazakhstan's linguistic landscape into one where unity coexists with diversity, and where digital platforms amplify rather than diminish dialectal richness.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Examining linguistic variation in multilingual societies reveals key changes of language use. This study explored how Kazakh millennials and university students engage with lexical variations in Kazakh dialects, focusing on their perceptions and the role of digital media. It also assessed broader societal views and their digital manifestations in contemporary Kazakhstan.

These questions illuminate shifting linguistic trends in Kazakhstan. Prior research on Kazakh dialects emphasized structural analysis, often neglecting social meanings and youth attitudes, especially in digital contexts.

To address this gap, a mixed-methods approach combined qualitative and quantitative data, balancing depth and breadth. Semi-structured interviews captured personal experiences, motivations, and possible code-switching behaviors, aligning with sociolinguistic theories like audience design (Bell, 1984) and accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1991). A survey, grounded in variationist sociolinguistics (Labov, 2006), mapped wider patterns in dialect use, fluency, and attitudes among millennials. Media observations of social platforms, analyzed through discourse analysis (Gee, 2014) and symbolic power frameworks (Bourdieu, 1991), uncovered dialectal practices in online spaces. This interdisciplinary design bridged sociolinguistics, linguistics, and sociology. Subsequent sections outline the research design, data collection, and analytical methods.

3.1 Research Design and Rationale

This study examined how Kazakh millennials and university students navigate dialectal variation in lexical choices, particularly within Kazakhstan's complex multilingual setting, where Kazakh, Russian, and English interact (Karabassova, 2020, p. 38). Recent studies highlight how globalization and digital communication reshape youth language practices, fostering new dialect contact and hybrid varieties (Kerswill, 2020).

3.1.1 Mixed-Methods Approach: Justification

A mixed-methods design was employed to analyze both individual experiences and broader societal trends in Kazakh dialect use. This dual focus required qualitative depth and quantitative breadth, ensuring a holistic perspective.

Qualitative component: Semi-structured interviews, grounded in audience design (Bell, 1984) and accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1991), explored personal motivations, code-switching, and dialectal identity.

Quantitative component: A survey, drawing on variationist sociolinguistics (Labov, 2006), mapped widespread patterns in dialect fluency, usage, and attitudes among millennials.

Media analysis: Observations of social media platforms, interpreted through discourse analysis and frameworks of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991) and language ideologies (Silverstein, 1992), uncovered how dialects function in digital spaces.

This integrated approach addressed gaps in prior work, which often isolated linguistic structures from social context (Meyerhoff, Schleeff & MacKenzie, 2015). By uniting methods, the study captured the interplay of language, identity, and power in both online and offline settings, offering a nuanced view of contemporary Kazakh dialect dynamics.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews

3.2.1.1 Sampling and Participant Selection

The study employed a dual sampling strategy combining purposive and snowball techniques to capture diverse Kazakh dialect speakers among millennials while maximizing recruitment efficiency. Initial purposive sampling selected 20 participants (born 1981-1996) representing Kazakhstan's three major dialect regions - Western, Northeastern, and Southern - consistent with established geographical classifications (Smagulova, 2008). This targeted selection ensured coverage of primary dialect variations while accounting for potential regional lexical differences. The sample balanced gender representation and included participants with varying

educational attainment, from high school graduates to university students across disciplines, to examine potential sociolinguistic correlations.

Snowball sampling supplemented this approach, with initial participants recommending peers from their social networks (Naderifar, Goli & Ghaljaie, 2017). This proved particularly valuable for accessing speakers of less-documented dialect variants, while simultaneously addressing the social network dimension crucial in language variation studies (Eckert, 2018).

All participants provided written informed consent following ethical research protocols (Creswell, 2021). Rigorous confidentiality measures included pseudonymization (e.g., Interviewee N) and removal of personally identifiable information from all transcripts and analyses.

3.2.1.2 Interview Guide Development

The interview guide was carefully designed around core theoretical concepts to systematically address research questions. Initial questions examined participants' regional dialect affiliations and identity connections, informed by sociolinguistic theories of identity formation (Trudgill et al., 2014). These explored whether dialects carried social prestige, stigma, or ambivalent associations - revealing participants' subjective evaluations of linguistic variation.

Building on Accommodation Theory (Giles et al., 1991), subsequent questions investigated speech adaptation across social contexts. This revealed whether participants converged toward interlocutors' speech to establish rapport or diverged to emphasize social boundaries, providing concrete examples of these strategic choices.

The guide also probed exposure to other Kazakh dialects through both physical mobility and digital engagement. As emerging research indicates (Page et al., 2022), social media exposure can heighten metalinguistic awareness and potentially reshape linguistic practices. These

questions specifically addressed how digital platforms might influence young Kazakhs' dialect perceptions and usage patterns.

The interviews explicitly addressed linguistic attitudes by prompting participants to compare their native dialects with others. This revealed both conscious and unconscious biases, particularly regarding which variants were perceived as more "correct" or prestigious, directly engaging with the study's focus on language ideologies.

A final thematic block examined technology's influence, specifically how social media affects:

- Dialect selection
- Code-switching behaviors
- Exposure to diverse Kazakh varieties

These questions proved vital for understanding digital communication's dual role in both perpetuating and dismantling linguistic stereotypes among Kazakh youth (Lee & Barton, 2013, p. 18). Such insights carry important implications for language education policy development.

3.2.1.3 Interview Procedure

The study utilized Zoom for online interviews, reflecting both contemporary communication trends among millennials and the practical need for geographical inclusivity (Salmons, 2021, p. 12). Virtual formats have demonstrated particular effectiveness for sensitive topics, offering participants psychological comfort through perceived anonymity (O'Connor & Madge, 2017).

Recruitment leveraged platforms popular with Kazakh youth (Instagram, TikTok) alongside personal networks. While ethical guidelines typically recommend financial compensation (Piller, 2016), participants were instead offered digital copies of the completed dissertation—a compromise respecting budget constraints while acknowledging contribution.

The interviews were carefully recorded with each participant's permission, creating a comfortable space for young Kazakhs to share their authentic language experiences. Every conversation was transcribed with special attention to the beautiful nuances of their dialects - the melodic shifts in pronunciation, the lively code-switching, and the personal stories behind their word choices. As a researcher who grew up speaking Kazakh, I was particularly sensitive to how my own background might influence the conversations, so I focused on being a supportive listener rather than an expert. The online format proved invaluable - it enabled connections with students across vast steppes and bustling cities alike, from Almaty to Aktau, and even with Kazakh diaspora members studying abroad. Through participants' voices, the study revealed how social media is weaving new connections between traditional dialects, creating something fresh yet deeply rooted in Kazakh culture. What began as academic research became a meaningful journey of rediscovering the living, breathing poetry of the Kazakh language through the perspectives of its young speakers.

All interviews were recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim to preserve linguistic nuances in dialect use (Johnson & Christensen, 2024). The analysis employed dual methods:

- Thematic analysis for lexical patterns and attitudinal data
- Discourse analysis for code-switching behaviors

As a native Kazakh speaker, I implemented multiple safeguards against researcher bias:

- Maintaining interview neutrality
- Practicing active listening techniques
- Conducting ongoing reflexivity checks

The online format offered three significant advantages:

1. Geographical diversity: Reached participants across Kazakhstan's regions (Western, Southern, Northeastern) and diaspora communities
2. Practical accessibility: Eliminated travel barriers for respondents
3. Data integrity: Streamlined recording and transcription processes

This multilayered methodology—combining structured protocols with digital flexibility while addressing ethical and positionality considerations—provided robust insights into how Kazakh youth engage with dialectal variation in digital spaces.

3.2.2 Quantitative Survey

3.2.2.1 Survey Design

To balance quantitative and qualitative insights, this study employed a brief survey with structured Likert-scale items. Such items simplify administration, provide clear response options, and enable efficient data quantification (Joshi, Kale, Chandel, & Pal, D, 2015). Likert scales are especially effective for gauging attitudes, as they capture degrees of agreement rather than binary responses (Soukup, 2015). As Cresswell (2021) notes, they are well-suited for assessing complex language attitudes shaped by multiple influences. Survey items were designed to reflect the study's theoretical framework and core research themes.

First, the survey measured self-reported dialect fluency and usage frequency. Participants rated their proficiency in their primary dialect and any additional Kazakh dialects they spoke. Items also assessed how often they used their primary dialect in varied social contexts (e.g., family, friends, formal settings). This approach quantified dialect use while exploring whether social context shaped language choices—a key premise of accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1991). Such methods align with calls to study language use across contexts to reveal adaptive strategies (Blommaert, 2010, p. 15).

Second, Likert items examined potential code-switching or speech adjustments based on social setting, reflecting accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1991). For instance, participants rated their agreement with statements like, “I change how I speak Kazakh depending on my listener.” This provided measurable data on code-switching prevalence among millennials and university students, a central focus of this study.

Third, the survey measured participants’ attitudes toward their own and other dialects, evaluating perceptions of correctness, prestige, likability, and regional/social associations. Items included statements like, “My dialect is the correct way to speak Kazakh” or “The Southern dialect sounds more pleasant than the Northern dialect.” These responses revealed underlying language ideologies among young Kazakhs, particularly how dialects acquire social meaning. The design accommodated the complexity of language attitudes, which are shaped by personal experiences, social networks, and media exposure (Johnson & Christensen, 2024).

Fourth, Likert-scale items assessed experiences of linguistic prejudice, capturing overt and subtle biases (e.g., microaggressions, implicit associations; Baugh, 2018). Participants rated agreement with statements about negative judgments tied to dialect use. This data clarified the scope and societal impact of linguistic discrimination in Kazakhstan, addressing a gap noted in recent sociolinguistic research.

The survey incorporated open-ended questions to capture nuanced participant experiences with dialect variation (Johnson & Christensen, 2024). These items allowed respondents to expand on their Likert-scale choices or share unanticipated perspectives. For instance, one prompt asked participants to describe instances of negative dialect evaluation. Such responses enriched the quantitative data by revealing personal narratives and contextual details that standardized items might miss.

While comprehensive, the survey's self-report design presents inherent limitations. Social desirability bias may influence responses, as participants might report perceived acceptable attitudes rather than genuine ones (Fisher, 1993). Additionally, accurate self-assessment of language behaviors poses challenges (Preston, 2018). Several safeguards were implemented:

1. Clear, concise item phrasing to minimize confusion
2. Open-ended questions for qualitative depth
3. Mixed-methods triangulation to validate findings

This approach provided a more robust understanding of Kazakhstan's linguistic landscape, though future studies might benefit from observational methods to complement self-reports. The complete survey protocol and consent materials appear in Appendix C.

3.2.2.2 Sampling and Distribution

To assess dialect perceptions and lexical variation among Kazakh millennials, the quantitative survey was distributed online. Capitalizing on the digital proficiency of this demographic, primary dissemination occurred via Instagram and TikTok—platforms widely used by young Kazakhs. The survey was also posted on university forums and groups to ensure disciplinary and regional diversity. This multi-platform strategy sought a representative sample across dialect regions and social backgrounds. Prior studies confirm social media's efficacy in recruiting younger participants for linguistic research (Stæhr et al., 2022).

The survey link was further shared through a network of individuals familiar with Kazakhstan's linguistic landscape, employing snowball sampling (Naderifar et al., 2017). This method extended reach to otherwise hard-to-access groups. The online format and snowballing aligned with the study's focus on digital communication's role in shaping language attitudes (Kircher

& Zipp, 2022). Such an approach is especially pertinent for millennials and students, whose language use often reflects online interactions (Zappavigna, 2019, p. 715).

The main survey received 200 complete responses, surpassing the initial target. This larger sample strengthened the analysis, enabling firmer conclusions about dialect use and perceptions among Kazakh millennials. While the combined purposive and snowball sampling approach captured diverse perspectives, its non-probability design may constrain broader generalizability (see Limitations section).

Before full deployment, the survey underwent pilot testing with 20 participants matching the target demographic. This phase evaluated question clarity, flagged technical issues, and assessed overall usability. Feedback prompted minor wording revisions to enhance cultural relevance and precision for the Kazakh context. The pilot also verified the 8–10-minute completion time, deemed feasible for this population.

3.2.3 Media Observation

3.2.3.1 Platform Selection and Rationale

YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram were chosen as primary data sources based on their research relevance and distinctive features. Their video/audio formats enabled direct analysis of spoken Kazakh dialects, including informal and slang usage - crucial for capturing lexical variations often absent in written texts (Calude, 2023). The platforms' comment sections offered additional insights, revealing linguistic attitudes, code-switching patterns, and dialectal debates among young Kazakhs (Zappavigna, 2019). This dual approach addressed key research questions about dialect perception and use in digital spaces.

These platforms' widespread use among Kazakh millennials offered optimal conditions for studying dialect engagement in digital spaces. Their unique features—live streams enabling

spontaneous speech, hashtags fostering dialect communities, and comment sections facilitating linguistic debates—provided rich data on identity expression through language (Lee, 2022, p. 157). This mirrors contemporary findings about platform-specific features influencing linguistic behavior (Schreiber, 2019).

The public nature of such data necessitated rigorous ethical protocols. While explicit consent proved impractical for all users, the study complied with digital research ethics by: (1) using only publicly accessible content, (2) comprehensive anonymization, and (3) following established guidelines for online linguistic research (O'Connor & Madge, 2017; Zimmer, 2020). These measures balanced methodological needs with participant protection.

3.2.3.2 Content Selection and Criteria

The study employed a dual-focused approach to capture diverse linguistic representations across social media platforms. First, analyzing popular creators revealed strategic dialect use—whether for entertainment, audience connection, or navigating linguistic diversity, aligning with Bell's (1984) audience design framework. Second, examining regular users online, particularly those from specific regions, provided more authentic examples of localized speech patterns (Zappavigna, 2019, p. 724). This contrast between influencer and everyday language use offered valuable insights into stylistic versus natural dialect variation.

Informal content formats—vlogs, casual discussions, and comedic skits—were prioritized as they typically feature spontaneous code-switching and genuine linguistic attitudes (Saini, 2025). This combined strategy aimed to comprehensively document how young Kazakhs employ dialects in digital spaces, from performative to authentic usage (see Appendix D for full selection criteria).

3.2.3.3 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The six-month data collection (October 2023-March 2024) yielded 75 digital artifacts (15 YouTube videos, 52 TikTok clips, and 8 Instagram posts) selected through systematic sampling (Appendix D). While not exhaustive, this sample captured meaningful dialectal variation within Kazakhstan's digital sphere, particularly given the limited dialect-focused content available. Bi-weekly platform monitoring ensured consistent data collection. Each item was analyzed for: (1) lexical variation, (2) code-switching instances, and (3) viewer commentary, with researcher observations documented separately. This structured approach enabled systematic pattern identification in dialect usage and perception (Clopper, 2021).

Analysis employed qualitative discourse analysis methods, examining how dialects were used, perceived, and discussed online. The study focused on three key aspects: (a) dialect-specific vocabulary, (b) code-switching functions, and (c) expressed language attitudes. This approach directly addressed how Kazakh youth navigate linguistic diversity digitally, particularly through their lexical choices and switching patterns (Androutsopoulos, 2013).

3.3 Data Analysis

3.3.1 Qualitative Data Analysis: Interviews

3.3.1.1 Transcription and Coding

To address complex dialect perception and usage questions, interviews were audio-recorded (with informed consent) and transcribed verbatim. This produced detailed textual records, capturing spoken words and subtle linguistic features—hesitations, pauses, laughter—which may reflect attitudes (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999).

Verbatim transcription maintained authenticity and enabled precise coding. An independent coder, fluent in Kazakh and trained in qualitative methods, reviewed transcripts to ensure reliability. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion, following established qualitative standards (Saldaña, 2021, p. 91).

3.3.1.2 Thematic Analysis

Interview transcripts were analyzed thematically to examine participants' perceptions of Kazakh dialects (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). This flexible method, well-established in qualitative research (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017), followed three phases:

1. Open Coding

Descriptive labels (codes) were applied to key ideas, mirroring participants' language. For example:

- "I feel proud when I speak my dialect" → "Regional Pride"
- "I change how I speak to fit in" → "Linguistic Insecurity"

This phase distilled data into analyzable units, surfacing core topics.

2. Iterative Coding

Codes were refined hierarchically through repeated revision. Recurring patterns—shared experiences or contrasts—were identified (Saldaña, 2021, p. 85). For instance:

- "Code-Switching with Elders" + "Using Standard Kazakh Formally" →

Merged under "Accommodation Strategies"

This process clarified links between individual speech and social contexts.

The analysis culminated by examining identified themes through the study's theoretical framework. Three key sociolinguistic perspectives guided interpretation:

1. Accommodation Dynamics: Themes were analyzed using accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1991), particularly how participants' code-switching patterns reflected linguistic adjustment strategies (Myers-Scotton, 2000).
2. Power and Resistance: Participant accounts were evaluated for evidence of linguistic prejudice or conscious resistance to such biases (Collins & Clément, 2014, p. 188).
3. Identity Construction: Connections were made to theories linking dialect use with identity formation (Trudgill et al., 2014).

This theoretically grounded approach revealed the social significance of lexical variation in Kazakh dialects. For instance, the "Regional Pride" theme demonstrated how dialect features function as markers of cultural identity and local belonging, challenging standard language ideologies.

The analysis methodology aligned precisely with the semi-structured interview design, which intentionally prompted detailed accounts of dialect experiences. This approach specifically examined how young Kazakh speakers navigate dialect variation in daily life, particularly focusing on digital media's influence (see Appendix A for interview guide). Five core themes dominated participant narratives:

1. Dialect-Identity Nexus: How linguistic features shape and reflect personal/regional identity
2. Contextual Adaptation: Code-switching behaviors across physical and digital spaces
3. Linguistic Bias: Manifestations and consequences of dialect prejudice
4. Digital Exposure: Increased awareness of dialect diversity through online platforms
5. Technological Mediation: How digital tools influence language choices

These themes collectively reveal the complex interplay between language, identity, and technology in modern Kazakhstan. The analysis yielded particularly rich data regarding youth experiences in the country's evolving linguistic landscape.

To systematically document lexical variation, researchers developed a Kazakh Dialect Lexicon containing:

- Regional dialectal variants
- Corresponding the standard Kazakh forms
- English glosses

This resource (presented in full in Appendix B) establishes an empirical foundation for analyzing regional linguistic differences while preserving authentic usage examples from participant interviews.

3.3.2 Quantitative Data Analysis: Survey

3.3.2.1 Statistical Analysis Methods

The study employed Google Forms for survey distribution, leveraging its accessibility for both researchers and participants. Following data collection, responses were systematically organized and cleaned in Microsoft Excel to ensure analysis reliability.

Analytical Approach:

1. Descriptive Statistics

Frequency distributions revealed:

- Self-reported dialect proficiency levels

- Contextual language use patterns (e.g., the standard Kazakh vs. regional variants)
- Prevalence of linguistic prejudice experiences

Likert-scale analysis identified central tendencies in millennial language attitudes (Field, 2024)

2. Qualitative Enhancement

Open-ended responses underwent thematic analysis to:

- Contextualize quantitative findings
- Uncover nuanced interpretations of survey items
- Reveal underlying motivations for language behaviors

This mixed-methods approach strengthened analysis validity through methodological triangulation (Creswell, 2021, p. 173). For instance, quantitative patterns in dialect use gained depth when paired with participants' personal narratives about code-switching motivations.

To effectively communicate and interpret the survey results, the study employed visual representations, including bar graphs to display Likert-scale response distributions and pie charts to illustrate categorical data such as participants' regional breakdown. These visual aids, presented in Chapter 4, provided an accessible overview of key patterns, facilitating clearer analysis of the quantitative findings. While primarily descriptive, the survey analysis yielded meaningful insights into how Kazakh millennials navigate linguistic diversity, revealing the factors shaping their dialect perceptions and broader language attitudes. When combined with qualitative interview data, these quantitative results enriched the study's understanding of Kazakhstan's sociolinguistic landscape, particularly in how digital-native speakers negotiate between the standard Kazakh and regional variants in everyday communication. This

integrated approach not only illuminated emerging trends but also strengthened the study's validity through methodological triangulation (Creswell, 2021).

3.3.3.1 Content Analysis

The study employed qualitative content analysis to examine media observation data, including field notes, the observation template (Appendix D), and video recordings. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006, p. 90) thematic analysis approach—consistent with interview transcript methods—the research identified patterns in dialect use, code-switching, accommodation strategies, and social meanings tied to Kazakh dialects. Comments sections were prioritized, offering insights into audience perceptions and linguistic biases, directly linking to the second research question on digital media reflections. As Calude (2023) notes, social media discourse analysis must consider not just content but also embedded ideologies and power structures.

The analysis summarized video/post themes, transcribed spoken excerpts, and assessed dialectal features in both content and comments. Key focuses included dialectal vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar across user types (e.g., influencers vs. everyday users). Code-switching functions—such as identity signaling or audience adaptation—were also explored. To address the first research question, millennial and student engagement with dialect variation was analyzed, revealing lexical preferences, code-switching trends, and dialect attitudes. This approach aligned with Bell's (1984) audience design framework, which highlights strategic language use for communicative purposes.

The comment analysis assessed both textual content and communicative tone, including user interactions that emerged organically. This approach helped determine whether audience perceptions of dialects aligned with or contested content creators' representations (see Research Question 2). Following recent sociolinguistic work on digital spaces (Squires, 2015), the study

also evaluated how platform affordances—such as reply to threads and reaction features—might reshape youth language attitudes toward dialectal variation.

Integrating these qualitative findings with survey-based quantitative data enabled a multidimensional examination of language-identity dynamics in Kazakhstan. The social media component proved particularly revealing, capturing how digital-native Kazakhs negotiate linguistic diversity online. These behaviors may signal broader shifts in dialect evolution, as online interactions increasingly influence offline language practices (Nguyen, 2021).

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Sociolinguistic research carries inherent responsibilities toward participants and communities, especially when studying dialect variation where power dynamics and identity issues intersect (Piller, 2016). In Kazakhstan's complex linguistic landscape—marked by historical suppression and contemporary multilingualism—these concerns become particularly acute. The study therefore implemented multiple safeguards aligned with disciplinary best practices to ensure ethical integrity throughout the research process.

The investigation of Kazakh dialect variation demanded special attention to three key ethical issues: First, the risk of unintentionally reinforcing linguistic hierarchies through data collection methods or analysis frameworks. Following the principle of linguistic equality, which was heavily criticized by Swanenberg (2013), the study treated all dialectal features as systematically meaningful rather than evaluating them against the standard Kazakh. Second, researcher positionality was continuously monitored through reflexive journaling and peer debriefing to minimize interpretive biases. Third, all participants received detailed explanations of study purposes and their rights—including voluntary participation and withdrawal options—in culturally appropriate formats.

These measures sought to honor what Bucholtz and Hall (2016) term the "ethics of care" in sociolinguistic research, particularly crucial when documenting hybrid dialects that may carry generational or regional identity significance. The protocol extended to digital data collection, where public comments were anonymized and aggregated to prevent individual identification while still capturing meaningful linguistic patterns.

The study prioritized participant welfare through multiple safeguards, though implementation presented unique challenges in Kazakhstan's context. While standard informed consent procedures were followed, some participants required additional clarification about research purposes - particularly those unfamiliar with academic studies or concerned about potential repercussions (Duranti, 2012). In these cases, the researcher provided extended discussions in plain language, emphasizing confidentiality protections and voluntary participation rights.

Three key measures ensured ethical integrity:

1. Anonymization Protocols: All participants received pseudonyms, with additional care taken for smaller communities where dialect features might reveal identities (Milroy & Gordon, 2008)
2. Linguistic Equity: Following Mendoza-Denton's (2014) framework, the study treated all speakers as language experts, avoiding hierarchical evaluations between the standard Kazakh and regional variants
3. Reciprocal Engagement: Participants could request findings summaries, creating mutual benefit from the research process

The approach acknowledged what Cameron et al. (1993) term the "ethical paradox" - while seeking natural speech, researchers must avoid exploiting community trust. Digital data collection posed particular challenges; public comments were aggregated to prevent individual identification while preserving linguistic patterns crucial for dialect analysis.

This study implemented comprehensive reflexivity practices to address how the researcher's background—including regional origin and linguistic repertoire—might influence both participant interactions and data interpretation (Milroy & Gordon, 2008, p. 176). As a Kazakh speaker from [specific region], the researcher maintained detailed reflective journals to identify and mitigate potential biases, particularly when analyzing the emerging hybrid forms blending the standard Kazakh with regional dialect features. The research team established multiple safeguards to ensure methodological rigor, including regular peer debriefing sessions with fellow linguists to challenge interpretive assumptions, methodological triangulation across interviews, surveys, and digital observation, and explicit acknowledgment of researcher positionality in all findings.

The analytical framework consciously situated linguistic variation within social contexts rather than deficit models, following Collins and Clément's (2014, p. 184) approach to challenging dialect hierarchies. This commitment to ethical representation—avoiding marginalization of non-standard speakers (Eckert, 2018, p. 15)—extended beyond the study itself through community linguistics workshops that shared findings with participants. These outreach efforts embodied what Baugh (2000, p. 132) describes as the vital activist dimension of sociolinguistic research, particularly crucial when documenting Kazakhstan's rapidly evolving dialect landscape where traditional and digital communication forms increasingly intersect.

This integrated approach ensured that the study not only met standard ethical requirements but also actively contributed to broader efforts promoting linguistic inclusivity in Kazakh society, while carefully documenting the rich variation within the country's hybrid dialects without privileging any particular variety. The methodology paid special attention to how digital communication platforms are reshaping dialect boundaries, while maintaining rigorous protections for both online and offline participants throughout the research process.

3.5 Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

Acknowledging this study's limitations underscores its rigor and identifies avenues for future research. The mixed-methods design provided a robust framework for examining Kazakh dialect perceptions among millennials. However, like all research, this study has constraints that shape how findings should be interpreted and applied.

First, while the study sought diverse millennial perspectives, online recruitment and snowball sampling may have introduced bias. Despite outreach via social media, university forums, and personal networks, the sample overrepresented urban, educated individuals with greater digital access (Lee, 2022, p. 163). Thus, the results may not fully capture rural or less educated millennials' experiences. Future studies could mitigate this by employing stratified sampling or in-person data collection in both urban and rural settings.

Additionally, reliance on online methods might exclude those with limited internet access, affecting generalizability. For instance, *şalbar* (traditional attire) and *sym* (urban slang) usage patterns could differ offline. To address this, combining digital and traditional fieldwork would yield more inclusive data.

Second, surveys and interviews depend on participants' self-reported perceptions, which may introduce subjectivity. Respondents could misinterpret questions or favor socially desirable answers (Soukup, 2015, p. 65)—for example, underreporting regional vocabulary to align with the standard Kazakh norms. To counter this, the study combined interviews with social media observation, enabling data triangulation between stated preferences and actual online usage. Probing interview questions further reduced bias by prompting detailed explanations.

Third, while analyzing prominent platforms and creators captured evolving dialect use, this focus might exclude lesser-known digital spaces. Social media language can also be

performative, differing from natural speech (Sun et al., 2021). To address this, the study examined diverse creators across multiple platforms and supplemented findings with interview data on offline language practices. Nevertheless, online norms differ from face-to-face interactions, meaning results may not fully reflect real-world dialect use (Stæhr, Monka, Quist & Larsen, 2019).

Notwithstanding its limitations, this study provides significant insights into how language, identity, and social context intersect in modern Kazakhstan. The findings advance current understanding of Kazakh dialect usage, revealing emerging trends and potential shifts in linguistic behavior (Sharipova, 2020). By documenting both experiences of linguistic prejudice and pride in regional speech forms, the research offers valuable considerations for educational policy and social initiatives promoting linguistic inclusion.

The study's methodological approach, rooted in sociolinguistic theory, combines empirical evidence with analysis of broader social dynamics influencing language use. Rigorous ethical protocols - including privacy protection, informed consent, and cultural sensitivity measures - ensured the research benefited both participants and Kazakhstani society (Creswell, 2021).

This mixed-methods investigation employed robust data collection and analytical procedures within a comprehensive theoretical framework. The resulting nuanced examination of dialectal variation among Kazakh millennials and university students addresses three key areas: lexical variation patterns, social attitudes toward dialects, and digital media's role in contemporary language practices. The subsequent chapter presents these findings in detail.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter details the core findings of a mixed-methods study examining Kazakh millennials' engagement with and perceptions of lexical variation in contemporary Kazakh dialects, influenced by digital media. Data were gathered via semi-structured interviews, a quantitative survey, and social media observation. Methodological triangulation sought to capture the interplay between language, identity, social context, and evolving communication practices among Kazakh millennials and university students.

The analysis employed an integrated theoretical framework combining sociolinguistic, linguistic, and sociological perspectives—notably social identity theory, accommodation theory, and language ideologies (Eckert, 2018, p. 99). This interdisciplinary lens clarified how young Kazakhs perceive and employ language variation, particularly in daily and online interactions. Lexical variation, a primary marker of dialectal differences, served as the study's focus, revealing its role in constructing social identities.

Participants included 20 Kazakhstani millennials (born 1981–1996) from diverse regions, alongside 200 survey respondents (also millennials and students nationwide; see Figure 1.)

Territorial and administrative divisions in Kazakhstan after the president's address on March 16, 2022 (oblast or regions)

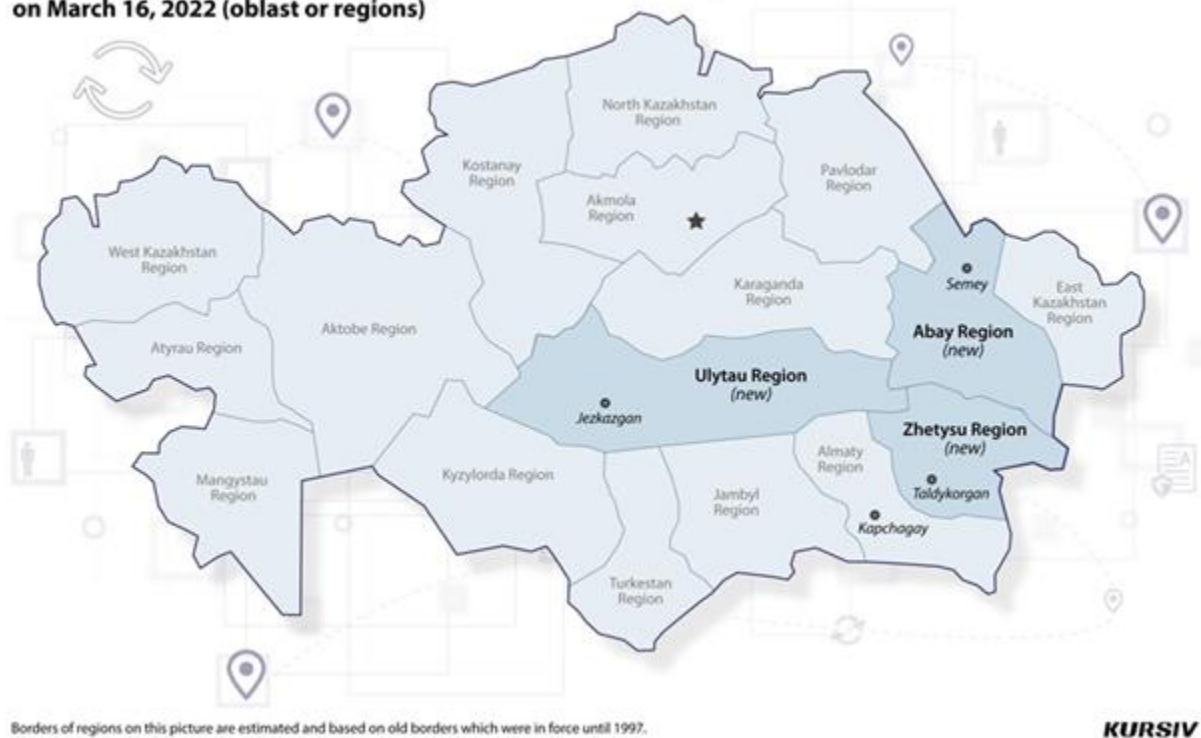


Figure 1. Current territorial and administrative divisions of Kazakhstan (Domnin, 2022).

Most participants demonstrated bilingual fluency in Kazakh and English, with Russian proficiency varying across individuals. This linguistic diversity offered valuable insights into how young Kazakhs negotiate their country's complex language ecology. To supplement interview and survey data, researchers analyzed 75 social media artifacts (52 TikTok videos, 15 YouTube clips, and 8 Instagram posts), including the top three most-liked comments for each file (hereafter SMFs). These SMFs helped uncover public attitudes toward Kazakh dialect variation.

The chapter proceeds to examine key findings from all three data sources (interviews, surveys, and SMF analysis), identifying prominent themes and patterns relevant to the research questions. These results are interpreted using the theoretical framework established in Chapter 1, particularly focusing on social identity construction and language accommodation in digital spaces.

4.1 Interview Findings

4.1.1 Regional Pride vs. Linguistic Insecurity

To examine dialect-identity connections among young Kazakhs, participants described their awareness of regional linguistic differences (Q5). Responses varied: some noted distinct pronunciation and vocabulary shifts (Interviewees 1, 2, 5, 13, 18), while others perceived minimal variation, citing only subtle lexical differences (Interviewees 6, 7, 15, 20). Several attributed these variations to speech tempo or tone—Interviewee 4 remarked, "Western people speak very quickly"—whereas others highlighted vocabulary and grammar contrasts (Interviewees 2, 17). Examples included *sym* (Zhezkazgan) versus *şalbar* (standard trousers), *oramal* (Pavlodar) versus *sülgi* (towel), and *köpshik* (western regions) versus *jastıq* (pillow), illustrating regional lexical diversity.

Awareness levels differed significantly. Some participants actively identified variations, using labels like "Southern" or "Northern" Kazakh (Interviewees 1, 2, 11, 16), while others reported limited recognition (Interviewees 8, 12, 19) or only informal context exposure (Interviewees 7, 14). This aligns with Preston's (2018) perceptual dialectology framework, which underscores subjectivity in dialect perception. Factors such as regional origin, social/digital exposure, and personal linguistic interest likely shaped these perceptions (Wang et al., 2023). Notably, Interviewee 16 (a linguist) exhibited heightened awareness, suggesting professional background influences dialect sensitivity.

Participants employed varied terminology when referencing dialects, ranging from formal regional labels to informal—and at times derogatory—terms like "*auyl qazağı*" (village Kazakh) (Interviewees 2, 10, 18). This reflects underlying linguistic prejudice and social stigma tied to certain dialects. For instance, Interviewee 7 associated the "*Shymkentskiy*" (Southern)

dialect with profanity, illustrating how dialects become stigmatized based on perceptions of their speakers. These observations align with Fleming and Ansaldo's (2019) framework on linguistic prejudice, underscoring how language ideologies foster negative attitudes toward specific varieties.

Such stigma often fuels linguistic insecurity among speakers of marginalized dialects. Multiple participants reported modifying their accents or suppressing dialectal features in formal settings or cross-regional interactions. Interviewee 1 adjusted their speech in Kyzylorda to avoid standing out, while Interviewee 5 expressed discomfort with their Western Kazakh pronunciation. This suggests insecurity drives accommodation strategies, where speakers conform to perceived norms to evade judgment. Mockery also played a role, as Interviewee 4 recounted being ridiculed for their dialect at university. Collectively, these findings reveal the psychosocial toll of linguistic prejudice, and the adaptive measures young Kazakhs employ to navigate complex sociolinguistic landscapes.

Responses to regional pride (Q12) revealed significant variation, from neutral attitudes (Interviewees 3, 7) to strong cultural attachment (Interviewees 2, 9, 18). This dichotomy reflects the tension between regional identity and linguistic insecurity, consistent with social identity theory (Hogg, 2016). While dialects may foster group belonging, they can also prompt conformity pressures toward perceived standard forms. For example, Interviewee 1 modified their accent in Kyzylorda, while Interviewee 5 consciously avoided dialect features to "blend in"—both demonstrating accommodation strategies to prevent social judgment. Interviewee 4's experience of mockery for Western Kazakh pronunciation further shows how negative evaluations can heighten linguistic insecurity.

These findings reveal complex dialect attitudes among young Kazakhs. Pride in regional varieties coexists with insecurity stemming from the standard Kazakh's dominance and

potential stigma. Such responses underscore the fluidity of linguistic identity in Kazakhstan's evolving sociolinguistic landscape, where competing ideologies and social expectations create evolving negotiation spaces for speakers.

4.1.2 Accommodation Strategies

Participants described their experiences communicating with speakers of different Kazakh dialects (Q8), revealing various adaptation approaches that support accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1991). These linguistic strategies showed clear variation across social contexts and communication channels, with digital platforms - particularly social media - emerging as significant factors in contemporary dialect interactions.

Accommodation in Face-to-Face Interactions

Participants frequently adapted their speech during in-person conversations, exhibiting convergence through lexical and phonological adjustments (Interviewee 1). These intentional modifications align with accommodation theory's central premise—speakers alter their language to establish social bonds, signal group membership, or achieve communicative objectives. For some, such interactions served as learning opportunities, expanding their awareness of Kazakh's linguistic diversity (Interviewees 16, 20), a pattern consistent with Clopper's (2021) findings regarding dialect exposure enhancing linguistic appreciation.

Notably, most participants reported minimal communication difficulties stemming from dialect variation. While specialized topics occasionally presented challenges (Interviewee 7), everyday exchanges typically proceeded without major disruptions (Interviewees 3, 12). This observation echoes Smagulova's (2008) conclusion about high mutual intelligibility among Kazakh dialects, though the study's exclusive focus on lexical differences leaves open questions about potential grammatical or phonological barriers.

Accommodation and Code-Switching in Digital Spaces

Participants reported that social media exposed them to greater dialectal diversity than offline interactions (Interviewees 2, 9, 18, 19), often eliciting curiosity rather than communication barriers. Interviewee 5 noted peers gradually adopting shared vocabulary patterns, suggesting digital platforms may foster dialect convergence through passive accommodation. These observations align with Bell's (1984) audience design framework, where speakers strategically adapt language for specific audiences.

In online spaces, code-switching emerged as a conscious strategy to enhance understanding (Interviewees 1, 2, 5, 18). Social media's curated nature allows precise linguistic performance, enabling users to:

1. Selectively employ dialect features
2. Tailor communication to specific communities
3. Construct desired digital identities

This linguistic flexibility demonstrates how digital environments transform traditional accommodation processes, blending dialectal resources to achieve communicative objectives while navigating Kazakhstan's multilingual online spaces.

Intentional Language Adjustments

Participants frequently made conscious modifications to their Kazakh dialect usage, revealing complex sociolinguistic motivations. While some adjusted their speech for clarity when communicating with different dialect speakers (Interviewee 14), others adapted to avoid social judgment or align with formal context expectations (Interviewees 6, 13). These deliberate shifts exemplify Bell's (1984) audience design framework, where speakers strategically tailor language based on audience characteristics and communication objectives. The findings

suggest dialect modification stems from multiple factors - including comprehension needs, social pressures, and contextual norms - highlighting the dynamic interplay between language use and social identity in Kazakhstan's multilingual landscape.

Challenges and Linguistic Negotiation

While most dialect interactions proceeded smoothly, some participants encountered misunderstandings stemming from lexical differences. Interviewee 9 recounted how their Western Kazakh use of "apa" (referring to an older woman) was misinterpreted as disrespectful by a Southern speaker, where the term denotes grandmother. Such instances reveal how subtle linguistic variations carry social weight, emphasizing the need to recognize dialect-specific connotations. McKinney and Hoggan's (2022) research corroborates this, noting that formal contexts (e.g., workplaces or classrooms) heighten misinterpretation risks, particularly where the standard Kazakh dominates.

To navigate these challenges, young Kazakhs employ diverse strategies—from unconscious accommodation to deliberate code-switching—leveraging shared linguistic resources when differences arise. Digital platforms further mediate these interactions, fostering new hybrid practices while reshaping attitudes toward dialectal diversity. These changes underscore the evolving relationship between language, identity, and technology in Kazakhstan's sociolinguistic landscape, meriting deeper exploration to capture contemporary dialectal shifts.

Strategic Dialect Adaptation in Digital and Offline Contexts

Participants demonstrated conscious linguistic choices, with convergence and divergence strategies reflecting complex sociolinguistic motivations. Some speakers deliberately aligned with their interlocutors' dialects to foster connection and shared identity, while others maintained distinct regional speech patterns to assert local identity or create social boundaries.

A notable example emerged from Interviewee 17, who intentionally adopted Southern Kazakh dialect features in social media posts about Western Kazakhstan's floods - a strategic choice to demonstrate cross-regional solidarity during crisis situations.

These adaptive patterns correspond with Bell's (1984) audience design framework, particularly in digital environments where users carefully construct linguistic personas. Social media platforms enable precise dialect selection, allowing individuals to:

1. Cultivate specific community affiliations
2. Project desired social identities
3. Navigate complex interregional dynamics

The findings reveal how Kazakh speakers actively manipulate dialect features as sociopolitical tools, blending accommodation theory with contemporary digital communication practices in Kazakhstan's evolving linguistic landscape.

4.1.3 Perceptions of Correctness and Linguistic Prejudice

Participants were asked whether certain Kazakh dialects seemed more appealing, intelligible, or "correct" than others (Q10). Their responses showed a tension between recognizing the standard Kazakh and appreciating dialectal diversity, shaped by both language ideologies and individual experiences. This aligns with sociolinguistic debates on the contested authority of standard languages and the validity of linguistic variation (Milroy, 2001, p. 544).

Mutual Intelligibility and Standard Language Ideology

While some participants noted no significant comprehension barriers across dialects (Interviewees 4, 7, 12, 17), this did not ensure equal acceptance. Varieties from Semey, Astana, and Almaty were frequently deemed more intelligible (Interviewees 2, 5, 6, 18) and often

labeled "standard" (Interviewees 1, 3, 6, 9, 11, 18, 20). This preference reflects the historical privilege of the Northeastern dialect in standard language policies discussed earlier in the dissertation.

Diverse Perspectives on Dialectal Correctness

While participants often favored the standard variety, this did not necessarily imply a belief in its inherent superiority. Some explicitly rejected linguistic hierarchies, asserting that all dialects are valid forms of Kazakh (Interviewees 2, 12, 18). Interviewee 12's appreciation for Kazakhstan's multilingualism further highlights this inclusive stance. Such views may reflect a broader tension—between traditional standard-language ideologies and younger generations' growing valuation of linguistic diversity (Akhmerova, Kenshinbayeva & Toktamyssova, 2023), possibly shaped by exposure to varied dialects online.

Dialectal Diversity and Linguistic Prejudice

Participants frequently praised the cultural and expressive value of dialectal variation. For instance, Interviewee 5 noted how dialectal choices in the Kazakh dub of *Avatar: The Last Airbender* enhanced the show's emotional depth. Others (Interviewees 2, 8, 13, 18) credited social media with broadening their awareness of Kazakh's dialectal richness.

Yet linguistic prejudice persists. Interviewees 4 and 11 reported mockeries for their Western Kazakh accents, underscoring how dialect use can invite social stigma even when comprehension is unimpaired (Smagulova, 2006). These findings stress the need to investigate how perceptions of "correctness" and linguistic bias influence young Kazakhs' daily communicative experiences.

Social Meanings of Dialects and Code-Switching

The interviews uncovered complex social perceptions tied to dialects and languages in Kazakhstan. Participants favored Kazakh in informal settings, such as with family (Interviewees 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 17, 18), while Russian dominated formal and online interactions (Interviewees 2, 18). Interviewee 7 adjusted language use based on interlocutors—Kazakh with family, Russian with colleagues, and English with foreign peers—highlighting how social context shapes linguistic choices which align with the findings from the previous literature (Akhmerova et al., 2023; Kalybek, Ortykova & Shayakhmetova, 2023).

Participants also noted lexical variations across dialects, such as barghyn (Southern) versus barunız kerek (standard) for “you should go,” or jumırtqa (Western) versus tūqym (Southern) for “egg” (Interviewees 2, 3, 16, 18). Such differences reveal dialectal diversity, potential miscommunication, and perceptions of certain variants as less prestigious, particularly in formal contexts (Interviewees 7, 16).

These findings suggest young Kazakhs hold nuanced views on dialects. While standard language ideology persists, linguistic diversity is increasingly valued, reflecting tension between uniformity and regional identity. This theme will be further examined, especially regarding digital communication’s role in shaping language attitudes (see Discussion).

4.1.4 Technology’s Impact

To assess digital media’s growing role in language practices, participants compared Kazakh usage on social media with offline communication (Q13). This approach explored whether online spaces influence how young Kazakhs perceive and employ dialectal variation, aligning with Blommaert’s (2010) concept of “polyphonous identities”—where speakers adapt linguistic styles across contexts—and the rise of imagined communities forged through shared digital language practices.

Diverse Linguistic Practices in Digital Spaces

Participants demonstrated sophisticated awareness of linguistic differences between digital and offline contexts, illustrating how young Kazakhs negotiate dialectal variation online. While some perceived social media Kazakh as more standardized (Interviewees 3, 12), others highlighted frequent dialect mixing, slang, and Russian code-switching in informal posts (Interviewees 2, 5, 17). Official accounts maintained formal register (Interviewee 7), contrasting with peers' preference for hybrid forms - a tendency extending to Interviewee 20's multilingual blending of Kazakh, Mandarin, and English, revealing globalization's linguistic effects.

These findings support Reyes' (2018, p. 100) framework of social media as fluid linguistic environments. Younger speakers' ability to shift registers (Stæhr et al., 2022) emphasizes how digital platforms reshape language adaptability. Notably, the conscious use of regional dialect features online serves as identity markers, creating virtual communities through shared linguistic practice (Rahmatdildaevna et al., 2023, p. 131).

Influence on Language Use and Perception

The data illustrate how digital communication shapes language practices through social context and audience awareness. Interviewee 18 likened social media Kazakh to "work email," reflecting formal register preferences online (Clopper, 2021). This aligns with Interviewee 4's observation of "correct" Kazakh usage among professionals, underscoring institutional influences on digital language norms.

Digital exposure also affected dialect perceptions. While Interviewee 12 favored standard Kazakh for its broad acceptability, Interviewee 16 struggled with online slang and regional terms, revealing tensions in language ideologies. Such variation supports Blommaert's (2010)

polyphonous identities framework, where users strategically employ different registers—standard Kazakh for professional contexts versus dialectal/Russian mixes for informal exchanges. Notably, Interviewee 7 reported peers gradually adapting vocabulary, suggesting digital interactions may drive dialect convergence (Giles et al., 1991).

These findings demonstrate social media's dual role: enabling linguistic identity expression and code-switching while perpetuating ideological hierarchies. The complex relationship between digital platforms, language attitudes, and dialectal diversity in Kazakhstan merits deeper study to capture evolving sociolinguistic dynamics.

4.1.5 Lexical Variation Across Dialects

This section examines lexical differences in Kazakh dialects, as evidenced by interview data. Table 1 outlines frequent dialectal variants alongside their standard Kazakh and English equivalents. This "Kazakh Language Dialect Bank" highlights regional distinctions and provides a basis for further analysis (see Table 1).

The dialects follow three-way classification (Baskakov, 1962; Fierman, 2006; Johanson, 2013)—Western, Northeastern, and Southern—tied to geographic distribution. These align with current administrative boundaries (Domnin, 2022), as illustrated in Figure 1:

- Western Kazakhstan: Mañğıstaw (Aqtaw), Atyrau, Aqtobe, and West Kazakhstan (Oral).
- Northeastern Kazakhstan: Pavlodar, Aqmola (Astana), Qostanay, North Kazakhstan (Petroavl), Qaraghandy, Ulytau (Zhezqazghan), Abai (Semey), and East Kazakhstan (Öskemen).

- Southern Kazakhstan: Qyzylorda, Türkistan, Jambyl (Taraz), Almaty (Qonaev), and Jetyssu (Taldyqorghan).

While the tripartite dialect division offers a foundational framework (Baskakov, 1962; Fierman, 2006; Johanson, 2013), contemporary research suggests these boundaries are increasingly fluid (see Section 2.4.2). Urbanization, migration, and digital communication foster dialect contact, often producing hybrid forms that challenge traditional classifications (Ten, 2019). For instance, younger speakers’ lexical choices may diverge from regional norms due to education, age, or social networks (Ten, 2019).

Thus, while Table 1 categorizes variants by geography, the analysis also examines how individual and contextual factors—particularly among millennials and university students—shape lexical variation.

Standard Kazakh	Western Dialect	Northeastern Dialect	Southern Dialect	English Translation
äpke	apa	äpke	äpshe	sister
ağa	köke	ağa	täte	brother
jastıq	köpshik	jastıq	jastıq	pillow
piyaz	jua	sarımsaq	piyaz	onion

ne?	ne zat?	nemene?	ne?	what?
sülgi	sülgi	oramal	şaşyq	towel
ülken	nän	dököy	däu	big
şömiş	baqyraş	ojau	şömiş	ladle
masqara	qasqa	masqara	ölää	shame
tañerteñ	tañazanmen	tañerteñ	azanda	in the morning
qamır	iñkäl	ettiñ nany	qamır	dough
jaqynda	mana	älginde	bağana	recently
ayaq kiyim	täpişki	çaqay	ayaq kiyim	shoes
sypırtqy	sypyrğysh	sypırtqy	sypyrğy	broom
kütw	kütw	tosu	kütw	to wait
urpaq	soy	urpaq	urpaq	generation

bir apta	bir jeti	bir juma	bir apta	a week
suyrma	tartpa	suyrma	suyrma	drawer
ayırbastaw	waqtaw	ayırbastaw	maydalau	money exchange
qabırğa	jar	qabırğa	dual	wall

Table 1: Lexical Variation Patterns in Kazakh Dialects

The interview analysis (Table 1) shows distinct lexical patterns across Kazakh dialects. While Northeastern and Southern dialects share some vocabulary—possibly due to historical nomadic connections and regional mobility—the Western dialect remains more isolated. These variations affect how millennials and university students perceive dialectal differences, with Western lexical items often viewed as more distinctive.

Notably, semantic shifts occur across regions. For instance, *bala* ("child" in the standard Kazakh language) means "young man" in Southern dialects but retains its original meaning elsewhere. Such changes may reflect evolving social norms about age and gender (Tang, 2021). These findings align with research on how word meanings diverge across communities, highlighting language's evolving nature.

The interview data underscored how language contact shapes lexical variation. Loanwords from Russian (e.g., *täpişki* for "shoes") and Uzbek (e.g., *bädiren* for "cucumber") appeared across dialects, reflecting historical and ongoing regional interactions (Fierman, 2013).

Additionally, while young Kazakhs generally accept dialectal diversity, some dialects—particularly the Western dialect—face stereotypes linking them to rudeness or aggression (Eckert, 2018). This aligns with research on linguistic prejudice, where social and cultural factors influence language attitudes (Hamed & Mohamed, 2023).

In sum, Kazakh dialects exhibit a shared core vocabulary alongside regional differences in pronunciation, lexicon, and loanword use. These variations carry social meanings, including stereotypes, highlighting the need to consider historical, geographical, and sociocultural influences (Kalybek et al., 2023). Subsequent sections will analyze millennial attitudes and practices to further clarify these dynamics.

4.2 Survey Findings

This section analyzes quantitative survey data on Kazakh millennials' self-reported dialect fluency, language use across social contexts, attitudes toward variation, and experiences of linguistic prejudice. The survey offers a macro-level perspective, supplementing the qualitative interview insights. These findings align with recent work stressing the need to study both individual language behaviors and societal patterns (Guy & Hinskens, 2016, p. 4). The analysis applies Chapter 1's theoretical framework—variationist sociolinguistics, accommodation theory, language ideologies, and social identity theory. Subsequent subsections detail results on fluency, language use, dialect attitudes, and linguistic prejudice, clarifying their implications for language variation in modern Kazakhstan.

4.2.1 Self-Reported Fluency & Language Use Patterns

This subsection examines survey data on Kazakh millennials' self-assessed fluency in their primary dialects and their language use across social contexts. Following this study's definition, primary dialect fluency entails understanding and speaking the dialect in daily

conversation, including vocabulary and grammar. However, self-reported fluency poses limitations: respondents may overestimate proficiency due to limited awareness of dialect features or social desirability bias (reporting higher fluency to meet perceived norms). Crucially, fluency in one dialect does not extend to others or the standard Kazakh, as interviews revealed. Participants described difficulties understanding certain dialects or pressure to use standardized forms in formal settings. These findings underscore Kazakhstan's complex linguistic landscape, where fluency in a primary dialect coexists with challenges in navigating other varieties—particularly where the standard Kazakh dominates (see Table 2).

Overall Fluency in Primary Dialect

Survey results reveal strong self-reported fluency in respondents' primary Kazakh dialects. Among participants, 91.4% identified as either "Fluent" (51.4%) or "Very fluent" (40%), while only 8.6% selected "Not fluent." None chose "Not at all fluent." These figures suggest most Kazakh millennials maintain robust command of their primary dialects, highlighting regional varieties' enduring role in communication and identity formation (Sharipova, 2020).

However, these self-assessments require cautious interpretation. As prior research indicates (Dragojevic & Giles, 2016), respondents might overestimate proficiency due to:

1. Limited awareness of complete dialect features
2. Social desirability bias - aligning with perceived linguistic norms

This tendency proves particularly significant in Kazakhstan's linguistic landscape, where the standard Kazakh, largely based on Northeastern varieties, dominates institutional settings. Consequently, speakers of other dialects may unconsciously adjust their fluency perceptions. The interview data further substantiate this pattern, with participants reporting code-switching pressures in formal contexts.

Fluency	Frequency	Percentage
Very fluent	80	40%
Fluent	103	51.4%
Neutral	0	0%
Not fluent	17	8.6%
Not at all fluent	0	0%

Table 2: Distribution of Self-Reported Fluency in Primary Kazakh Dialect

The data reveal an important distinction: primary dialect fluency often differs significantly from competence in other varieties or the standard Kazakh. Interview participants described both comprehension difficulties with certain dialects and social pressure to use standardized forms in formal contexts. These findings illustrate how speakers proficient in their native dialect may still struggle with Kazakhstan's complex linguistic ecology.

For instance, my own Southern-Western Kazakh dialect fluency doesn't prevent communication challenges. Like many participants, I frequently adapt my speech—modifying vocabulary or pronunciation—when interacting with speakers of other varieties. Such strategic adjustments, common in multilingual societies (Gumperz, 1982), underscore the fluidity of actual language use versus reported fluency.

While the survey didn't measure overall Kazakh proficiency, the high primary-dialect fluency rates (91.4%) suggest strong general competency. Yet as interviews showed, this doesn't guarantee equal facility across all varieties. Many participants reported:

- Difficulty understanding certain regional dialects
- Conscious code-switching in formal environments
- Varying comfort levels with the standard language

This tension between reported and actual multilingual competence reflects Kazakhstan's unique linguistic landscape, where standardized and regional varieties serve different social functions (Bahry, 2016). The data collectively demonstrate how dialect fluency exists on a spectrum rather than as an absolute measure, particularly in contexts privileging certain linguistic norms.

Dialect Use with Friends

Survey responses revealed near-universal use of primary dialects among friends, with 95% of participants reporting they employ their native variety "most of the time" or "always" in these interactions. This pattern may strongly indicate that close friendships serve as key domains for authentic regional language expression.

The findings directly support accommodation theory's central premise (Giles et al., 1991, p. 12): speakers naturally default to their most familiar linguistic forms in informal, solidarity-building contexts. Three key observations emerge from these data:

1. Dialect use functions as an in-group marker among peers
2. Friendship networks maintain regional linguistic features
3. Comfort level directly correlates with variety choice

These patterns persist despite increasing urbanization and dialect contact in Kazakhstan, suggesting that peer interactions may resist the standardization pressures more evident in formal domains (Kerswill & Wiese, 2022). The quantitative results (see Table 3) particularly highlight how millennials maintain dialectal speech within their closest social circles.

Dialect Use with Friends	Frequency	Percent
Always	136	68%
Most of the time	54	27%
Sometimes	7	3.5%
Rarely	2	1%
Never	1	0.5%

Table 3: Distribution of Dialect Use with Close Friends

Dialect Use in Formal Settings

The findings reveal a nuanced pattern in dialect use within formal or professional environments. While 45% of participants expressed comfort using their primary dialect in such settings, an equal proportion (45%) reported seldom or never doing so (see Figure 2). This divergence implies context-dependent perceptions of dialect appropriateness. Notably, the

substantial comfort level among some respondents indicates that regional varieties may persist in formal domains, suggesting young Kazakhs negotiate varying linguistic norms. This observation aligns with accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1991), which posits that speakers adjust language use based on social context. As Interviewee 12 noted, "With friends, I speak my dialect, but at work, I shift toward the standard Kazakh"—a tension reflecting broader hybridity trends.

Dialect Use in Formal Settings	Frequency	Percent
Always	9	4.5%
Most of the time	81	40.5%
Sometimes	20	10%
Rarely	55	27.5%
Never	35	17.5%

Table 4: Distribution of Dialect Use in Formal Settings

Survey data indicate widespread fluency in primary dialects among Kazakh millennials, with strong preferences for dialect use in informal social contexts. However, formal settings show markedly lower dialect usage, reflecting speakers' sensitivity to social norms (Giles et al.,

1991). This pattern underscores the dynamic relationship between language, identity, and context in post-Soviet Kazakhstan (Smagulova, 2015).

Future research could investigate correlations between self-reported fluency, dialect use, and demographic variables (e.g., region, age) via chi-square or regression analysis. Such analysis might reveal subgroup variations—for instance, whether millennials from specific regions retain stronger dialect fluency or if age predicts formal-setting usage.

4.2.2 Attitudes Toward Dialects

This section examines participant attitudes toward Kazakh dialects, combining Likert-scale agreement levels with open-ended responses. Visualizations (charts/graphs) identify regional and demographic trends in these perceptions.

Perceived Friendliness

A majority (78.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that some dialects sound friendlier than others, indicating dialect-linked perceptions. Open-ended responses highlighted the Northern dialect (e.g., Semey, Astana) as particularly friendly, citing its softer tones and clarity. This aligns with prior research linking specific dialects to positive traits like warmth and approachability (Giles & Billings, 2004, p. 194).

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	42	21%
Agree	115	57.5%

Neutral	20	10%
Disagree	18	9%
Strongly disagree	5	2.5%

Table 5: Distribution of Responses to "Some Kazakh dialects sound more friendly than others"

Perceived Sophistication

Responses to dialect sophistication varied significantly, underscoring the role of subjective experience and language ideologies (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 199). While the standard Kazakh language was the top choice (17.5%), likely due to its association with education and formality, a notable 28.5% selected "Not sure," suggesting ambiguity in these perceptions. Regional dialects—North-Eastern (Semey, 10.5%), Southern (9%), and Western (7%)—also appeared, with some respondents linking sophistication to specific lexical or prosodic features (e.g., refined vocabulary, measured speech tempo). These patterns reveal how exposure, education, and personal bias shape attitudes toward linguistic prestige.

Regional Dialect Perceptions

Survey data reveal a pronounced link between specific Kazakh dialects and geographic regions. Nearly all participants (95%) endorsed the statement "Hearing certain Kazakh dialects makes me think of people from a specific region in Kazakhstan," implying that dialect features function as key markers of regional identity among young Kazakhs (see Table 6).

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	110	55%
Agree	80	40%
Neutral	10	5%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%

Table 6: Distribution of Responses to "Hearing certain Kazakh dialects makes me think of people from a specific region in Kazakhstan"

Multiple factors may explain this association. Phonetic traits—such as vowel articulation in Southern dialects or intonation in Western varieties—often signal a speaker’s origin (Ibragimov, 2025). Regional lexicon (Table 1) further reinforces these ties, evoking cultural meanings. Historical influences, including nomadic traditions and geographic isolation, have also fostered distinct regional identities mirrored in language (Eckert, 2018, p. 102). These findings align with broader research on linguistic identity, underscoring dialects as symbols of regional heritage (Edwards, 2009).

Perceived Prestige

The survey results present a nuanced view of dialect prestige in Kazakh. As Table 7 shows, only 14% of respondents agreed that some dialects hold higher prestige, while 66% either disagreed or were uncertain. This indicates a lack of strong consensus among young Kazakhs regarding a prestige hierarchy—contrary to initial expectations.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	7	3.5%
Agree	21	10.5%
Neutral	40	20%
Disagree	86	43%
Strongly disagree	46	23%

Table 7: Distribution of Responses to "Do you believe some Kazakh dialects are considered more prestigious than others?"

Open-ended responses further clarify these perspectives. Some linked the standard language to prestige, describing it as "grammatically accurate" and "sounding prestigious." For example, Interviewee 3 noted, "The Kazakh spoken in Astana is closer to the literary language and

sounds more prestigious." Others rejected hierarchy, stressing the equal value of regional varieties. Interviewee 13 stated, "All dialects are equally prestigious, valuable, and pure, shaped by their regional ecosystems—lifestyle, environment, history, and traditions."

Regional identity also influenced perceptions. Some southern respondents reported stigma toward their dialect, while others expressed pride in its distinct features. This underscores how language attitudes, social identity, and regional belonging interact in shaping prestige evaluations (Sharipova, 2020).

4.2.3 Experiences of Linguistic Prejudice

This section analyzes linguistic insecurity among young Kazakhs and the varied perceptions of dialects, aligning with prior studies on language attitudes and social stigma (Eckert, 2018).

Negative Comments and Mocking

Though only 19% of respondents reported direct criticism of their speech (Table 8), open-ended responses revealed frequent encounters with linguistic prejudice—from subtle microaggressions to overt ridicule. Participants across regions described mockery tied to dialectal features, often reinforcing stereotypes. For instance, southern speakers faced labels like "auyl qazağı" ("village Kazakh") or "uneducated" due to their accent. One participant noted, "Yes, people who speak the southern dialect are treated like village people." Another was told they "Had become Uzbeks" because of their dialect, illustrating how linguistic bias intersects with ethnic tropes (Collins & Clément, 2014).

Western dialect speakers similarly reported critiques, with one stating, "People from other regions directly call western dialects rude." Such remarks expose entrenched biases against non-standard varieties. These accounts highlight the social penalties of dialect use, even when mutual intelligibility exists.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	4	2%
Agree	34	17%
Neutral	20	10%
Disagree	122	61%
Strongly disagree	20	10%

Table 8: Distribution of Responses to "People have made negative comments about the way I speak Kazakh"

Pressure to Change and Linguistic Insecurity

Survey data reveal that 31.5% of respondents felt compelled to modify their Kazakh speech patterns for greater social acceptance (Table 9), indicating widespread linguistic insecurity among young Kazakhs. This phenomenon likely originates from standard language ideology, which privileges certain dialects while marginalizing others (McLelland, 2021). As Meyerhoff (2018) notes, such pressure proves particularly acute in professional contexts, where speakers may alter their natural speech to avoid stigma. One participant articulated this tension clearly: "At work or formal events, I force myself to use 'proper' Kazakh, even though it feels unnatural."

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	14	7%
Agree	49	24.5%
Neutral	40	20%
Disagree	83	41.5%
Strongly disagree	14	7%

Table 9: Distribution of Responses to "I have felt the need to change the way I speak Kazakh to be taken more seriously"

Open-ended responses reveal how deeply linguistic insecurity affects young Kazakhs. Many participants reported consciously altering their speech patterns to avoid negative judgments. As one respondent explained, "I need to improve my pronunciation to lose my accent. My Russian-influenced speech and limited vocabulary make me hesitant to speak Kazakh." Others avoided regional terms entirely, fearing miscommunication. These accounts demonstrate the psychological impact of linguistic bias, which often leads to self-consciousness, anxiety, and pressure to adopt standardized forms (Collins & Clément, 2014).

Fear of Linguistic Judgment

Survey data show 42% of respondents frequently anticipate negative evaluation due to their dialect (Table 10), revealing widespread linguistic anxiety even without direct discrimination. This apprehension likely originates from internalized ideologies that marginalize non-standard varieties (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 198). Such concerns often prompt speakers to suppress their natural speech patterns in formal settings, potentially constraining authentic self-expression (McKinney & Hoggan, 2022).

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	28	14%
Agree	56	28%
Neutral	40	20%
Disagree	68	34%
Strongly disagree	8	4%

Table 10: Distribution of Responses to "I sometimes worry that people will judge me based on my Kazakh dialect"

Social Integration and Psychological Consequences

Linguistic prejudice's impact transcends personal insecurity, affecting social cohesion. Participants reported exclusion from conversations due to dialect differences, as one noted: "I felt alienated when others used different speech patterns." Another described mocking Southern dialect terms: "While 'apke' is standard for 'sister,' my friend was ridiculed for saying 'apshe'—called *auyl qazağı* (village Kazakh)." Such encounters foster alienation, potentially fracturing social bonds (Baugh, 2000).

Dialect-based prejudice in Kazakhstan creates ripple effects that extend far beyond individual experiences, disproportionately affecting entire communities and deepening existing regional and socioeconomic divides (Smagulova, 2015). The digital age has amplified these challenges, with social media platforms frequently serving as spaces where linguistic differences become targets for mockery—as one participant painfully observed, "Southern accents are routinely dismissed as *auyl* [village] speech." These harmful interactions not only reinforce negative stereotypes but also systematically exclude speakers of non-standard varieties from full social participation (Byrd, 2024). The consequences manifest in three key dimensions: personal wellbeing through persistent linguistic insecurity, fractured social cohesion through exclusionary practices, and eroded community identity through regional stigmatization. Addressing this complex issue requires coordinated efforts across multiple sectors, including thoughtful reforms in educational curricula, more inclusive media representations, and comprehensive policy frameworks that celebrate Kazakhstan's rich linguistic diversity rather than penalizing it. This multidimensional approach offers hope for transforming current patterns of prejudice into opportunities for mutual understanding and social unity.

4.2.4 Qualitative Insights from Open-Ended Survey Responses

The open-ended responses yielded rich qualitative data, deepening the understanding of participants' attitudes toward Kazakh dialects and their lived language experiences. Respondents frequently highlighted dialects' role in preserving cultural heritage and strengthening community ties, reinforcing their social and regional significance (Itani, 2022). This aligns with language-as-practice frameworks, where dialects embody cultural values beyond mere linguistics (Eckert, 2018, p. 11). One participant noted, "Dialects matter now—they're how we talk, our history, our place." Such perspectives resonate with Anderson's (2006) imagined communities, where language fosters shared identity.

Participants reported varied views on dialectal differences, from noticing subtle pronunciation and vocabulary shifts to perceiving Kazakh as largely uniform. One participant remarked, "Our dialects are mostly understandable grammar stays similar when speaking, with just some sound and word changes." This implies that some speakers see minimal divergence between dialects, posing few communication barriers. Survey data reinforced this, with 91.4% claiming fluency in their primary dialect, suggesting broad mutual comprehension. Another respondent framed dialect diversity as inherent: "Dialects change by region; it's part of our cultural uniqueness, not something to criticize." This aligns with theories framing dialects as natural reflections of linguistic and cultural diversity (Trudgill et al., 2014).

Some participants reported negative stereotypes associated with specific dialects, characterizing Western varieties as "rude and angry" or Southern speakers as "inarticulate and cunning". These perceptions reveal underlying language ideologies that marginalize non-standard varieties (Kroskrity, 2022). For example, the Western dialect's direct communication style may be misinterpreted as aggression when contrasted with the standard language more

indirect norms. Similarly, Southern dialects face prejudice through associations with rural identity and presumed lack of education (Kroskity, 2010, p. 194).

These patterns demonstrate how stereotypes influence dialect perception, as illustrated by one respondent's observation: "Dialects often carry accents - like Kazakhs near Uzbekistan having Uzbek accents, though they're fully Kazakh." Such generalizations perpetuate linguistic hierarchies while overlooking Kazakhstan's inherent multilingual diversity.

Standard Kazakh in Multilingual Contexts

Participants frequently addressed the standard language's dual role as both a national unifier and potential marginalizer of regional varieties. One respondent noted, "We should value Kazakh more, but Russian still dominates business sectors." This reveals ongoing challenges in language policy implementation within Kazakhstan's multilingual landscape (Koptleuova, Karagulova, Zhumakhanova, Kondybay, & Salikhova, 2023).

The data reveal tension between standardization and diversity. While 45% reported using their primary dialect formally, 55% preferred the standard Kazakh language in such contexts. This dichotomy emerged clearly in discussions about dialect use in diverse urban centers like Astana and Almaty, where respondents questioned which variety should prevail in public spaces.

These findings illustrate the complex negotiation between linguistic unity and regional identity. As the survey shows, even while recognizing the standard Kazakh's unifying function, many participants expressed concern about its potential to overshadow dialectal diversity - a core tension in language planning (Johnson & Christensen, 2024).

Divergent Perceptions of Dialectal Variation

The open-ended responses revealed contrasting views on Kazakh's linguistic diversity. While some participants recognized clear regional variations, others maintained the language was essentially uniform across Kazakhstan. This perceptual divergence highlights the subjective nature of dialect awareness and suggests need for deeper investigation into its influencing factors (Piller, 2016).

These qualitative findings offer crucial insights for addressing the study's second research question regarding sociolinguistic attitudes toward dialectal variation. The spectrum of responses - from full recognition to complete denial of regional differences - proves particularly revealing when examining how these perceptions manifest in digital contexts. As one respondent noted, "Online, we all sound the same until someone drops a regional word." This observation aligns with recent work on digital dialect leveling (Tagg, Seargent & Brown, 2017).

Complex Attitudes Toward Dialectal Diversity

The open-ended responses revealed complex language attitudes in Kazakhstan, simultaneously valuing dialectal richness while confronting standardization pressures. Young Kazakhs particularly demonstrated this duality - celebrating dialects' cultural significance yet acknowledging social constraints in formal contexts (Irvine & Gal, 2000). As one participant observed, "Urban Kazakhstan feels like a linguistic reality show: Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs constantly exchanging phrases in public spaces." This illustrates the evolving multilingualism shaping daily communication.

Two competing visions emerged: some anticipated dialect leveling ("All dialects will eventually converge"), while others valued regional distinctions. These findings, examined

alongside quantitative data in subsequent sections, reflect Kazakhstan's ongoing negotiation between linguistic unity and diversity. The tension between the standard language and regional varieties appears particularly acute in digital spheres, where younger users navigate complex identity negotiations (Sharipova, 2020).

4.3 Social Media Observation Findings

This section presents findings from observing social media platforms (YouTube, TikTok, Instagram), focusing on Kazakh dialect use and perceptions in digital spaces. As social media grows more influential among young Kazakhs (Sharipova, 2020, p. 91), this analysis helps clarify how these platforms influence language attitudes and behaviors. By assessing content from influencers and everyday users—along with viewer comments—the study investigates connections between language, identity, and social context online. Subsequent subsections detail dialect uses by creators, code-switching trends, and commentator reactions, offering a holistic view of how Kazakh dialects are employed, perceived, and contested in virtual settings.

4.3.1 Dialect Use by Content Creators

This subsection examines dialectal features in videos by YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram creators, emphasizing lexical variation, code-switching, and strategic dialect use for audience engagement. Results show a complex relationship between the standard Kazakh and regional dialects, underscoring Kazakhstan's evolving linguistic landscape.

Lexical Variation and Code-Switching

Content creators regularly employed lexical variation, revealing the diversity of Kazakh dialects. Of the 75 social media files (SMFs) analyzed, 60 (80%) included at least one dialect-specific term. For example, a Shymkent-based creator (Southern Kazakh) in SMF 15 used *äpşe*

(sister) instead of the standard *äpke*, illustrating regional kinship differences. Similarly, SMF 24 featured a western Kazakh creator using *köpshik* (pillow), a term uncommon elsewhere. Interview participants also noted encountering such variations; one speaker (SMF 17) recalled a conversation with an Aqtaw student who used a distinct word for "pillow," adding that dialect use was confined to informal contexts. This aligns with survey data, where respondents frequently reported encountering lexical diversity daily.

Regional comparisons were particularly evident in SMF 29, where creators discussed terms like *sülgi*, *oramal*, and *şaşyq* (towel) or *baqıraş*, *ojau*, and *şömiş* (ladle). Similar content appeared in SMFs 6, 7, 16, 22, 50–52, and 56, suggesting rising interest in dialectal differences among young Kazakhs online. These findings indicate that social media amplifies regional vocabulary, potentially weakening the standard Kazakh dominance. For instance, a commentator in SMF 49 remarked that before encountering dialect-focused TikTok content, they had assumed only standard Kazakh existed—highlighting how digital platforms foster dialect awareness.

Code-Switching Patterns in Digital Communication

The analysis revealed code-switching between Kazakh dialects and Russian in 31 SMFs (41%), particularly among creators aiming for broader reach. This practice corresponds with interview and survey responses, where participants described code-switching as a strategy to enhance communication across linguistic groups. For instance, similar to Interviewee 1's account, creators in SMFs 24 and 69 reported mixing Kazakh and Russian when interacting with speakers from northeastern regions.

These code-switching instances exemplify audience design principles (Bell, 1984), where creators deliberately blend linguistic elements to maximize inclusivity and appeal. A notable example appears in SMF 17, where a creator contrasts Southern Kazakh *bir apta* (week) with

the Russian-influenced Northern variant *odna nedelya*. This aligns with Mirzoyeva, Syurmen, Dosmakhanova & Azhiyev's (2020)'s findings about prevalent Kazakh-Russian code-switching among Kazakh youth online.

Additional evidence emerges from SMFs 16, 58, and 71, where dialect speakers resorted to Russian translations during lexical misunderstandings. Such patterns mirror Kazakhstan's complex multilingual landscape, where daily communication routinely involves navigating multiple language systems.

Strategic Dialect Use and Digital Platform Features

Content creators employed dialect features purposefully, leveraging each platform's unique capabilities. TikTok creators particularly utilized humor to emphasize dialect differences, often amplifying regional pronunciations or slang for comedic effect. Examples from SMFs 8, 13, and 19 show exaggerated Southern pronunciations like *jüdäää* (how audacious) and *öläää* (what a shame), or Western slang terms such as *barıñşış* (encouraging to go) and *nyağyldıptursıñ* (what do you want to say). This comedic approach, facilitated by TikTok's brief video format, may help destigmatize regional speech varieties while promoting linguistic diversity online.

While interviews offered personal perspectives on dialect use, social media observations revealed how these attitudes materialize in online spaces. The data present a nuanced picture - while Interviewee 15 voiced appreciation for Western Kazakh, SMFs 53 and 36 contained comments criticizing this variety. One user remarked: "Western Kazakh is very rude indeed, can't the speakers from the West speak more gently?" (SMF 53). Another stated: "Westerners are boastful with their Kazakh...isn't this opposite to Kazakh nature?" (SMF 36). These examples demonstrate how digital platforms may simultaneously reinforce and contest linguistic prejudices, complicating our understanding of contemporary dialect dynamics.

On platforms like YouTube and Instagram, which host longer-form content, creators employ dialect to establish rapport, fostering shared identity through familiar language and cultural references. Examples include popular series like *Jezduha*, *Eneshka*, *Zyñ-Zyñ Külpaş*, and *Mağan nazar audar*, produced by creators from Southern and Western Kazakhstan. These works feature distinct regional dialects—for instance, *Jezduha* incorporates Southern Kazakh terms like *tamyr* (“close friend”). Such usage strengthens regional viewer connections, aligning with social identity theory (Hogg, 2016), where language signals group membership. Recent studies corroborate this as Beisembayeva, Papoutsaki and Kolesova (2013) found dialectal features on social media enhance belonging among marginalized speakers. In SMF 33, a creator explicitly highlights Southern Kazakh vocabulary (see Table 1), reinforcing regional pride. This practice also reflects linguistic entrepreneurship (Stæhr et al., 2019), as individuals use dialect for digital visibility.

Standard Language Ideology in Digital Spaces

While many content creators celebrated dialectal diversity, others actively promoted the standard Kazakh, especially in educational or informational contexts. For instance, SMF 48’s author highlighted a prevailing ideological stance that positions Kazakh as uniformly understood nationwide implying an inherent privilege of the standard variety. Similarly, SMF 44 references former President Nazarbayev’s assertion of Kazakh as a “unifying factor” (Yergaliyeva, 2018), suggesting that dialectal variation might be perceived as politically delicate. This aligns with SMF 37, where a commentator noted the absence of dialectal discourse in state-level discussions, reflecting entrenched standard language ideology that equates prestige with linguistic uniformity (Baugh, 2016).

Yet, even proponents of the standard Kazakh language often infused regional dialect features into their content, revealing a pragmatic negotiation between standardization and identity

expression. As one SMF 14 commenter asserted, all dialects contribute intrinsically to standard Kazakh's evolution—a view supported by Dadabaeva and Adibayeva (2010, p. 135), who caution against marginalizing dialects in pursuit of linguistic unity in the post-Soviet era. These observations suggest digital platforms enable a fluid linguistic ecology, where speakers strategically blend standardized and regional forms to navigate communicative and identity goals (Bahry, 2021).

Digital Dialect Dynamics in Kazakh Social Media

Social media analysis reveals a complex linguistic landscape where the standard Kazakh and regional dialects interact dynamically. Creators employ dialects strategically across platforms, leveraging each medium's unique features to connect with audiences and express identity (Zappavigna, 2019). While standard language ideology remains influential, younger users increasingly value dialectal diversity, using digital spaces to celebrate regional speech varieties. This trend aligns with observations in SMF 61, where a creator noted TikTok's role in facilitating exposure to diverse Kazakh dialects.

The findings indicate social media may challenge traditional linguistic hierarchies by creating inclusive spaces for non-standard varieties (Chen, 2020). Such platforms enable what might be termed "digital dialect awareness" - a phenomenon particularly evident among youth. These changes prove essential for understanding evolving language attitudes in modern Kazakhstan, where digital and linguistic transformations intersect.

4.3.2 Code-Switching in Videos

This section examines the frequency and motivations of code-switching—alternating between languages or dialects in conversation (Myers-Scotton, 2000)—in Kazakh social media. Analysis of 75 videos (15 YouTube, 52 TikTok, 8 Instagram) shows widespread code-

switching among young Kazakhs online, highlighting the fluidity of digital communication. While prior research framed this as a multilingual practice (e.g., Myers-Scotton, 2000), the data suggest hybrid dialects now play a key role (Bahry, 2021). For instance, switches between the standard Kazakh and Russian—or even urban slang—reflect both identity and digital adaptation (Aliaskar, 2024). This challenges traditional dialect boundaries (Bahry, 2021), underscoring the need to rethink frameworks in hybrid contexts.

Prevalence and Types of Code-Switching

Code-switching occurred in 36 videos (48%), especially in content featuring cross-regional interactions or diverse audiences. Quantitative analysis revealed Kazakh-Russian switching as most frequent (65%), aligning with Kazakhstan's bilingual landscape (Sadykova, 2021). However, intra-Kazakh dialect switching (35%)—often lexical, as in *tañazanmen* (Western) versus *tañerteñ* (North-Eastern) for “morning” (SMF 63)—highlighted the language's internal diversity. A minority of cases included English borrowings (e.g., *mid-kadan* [mid-semester assessment], *lab-qağa* [laboratory]; SMF 33), reflecting globalization's impact on digital speech. These patterns support Sadykova's (2021) findings on trilingual switching among Kazakh youth online.

Functions and Motivations for Code-Switching

Analysis identified multiple functions of code-switching in digital spaces. Many creators employed it to signal belonging to diverse linguistic communities, exemplified by SMF 26's commenter who comfortably used multiple dialects, showcasing what Blommaert (2010) terms “polyphonous identities.” This practice also served audience accommodation purposes - as in SMF 52, where adopting local dialects facilitated warmer reception, supporting Putri's (2024) findings about fostering inclusivity. Additionally, speakers strategically adjusted register, like SMF 40's shift to formal Kazakh in official settings, reflecting Aliaskar's (2024, p. 11)

observation about navigating power dynamics. These patterns collectively demonstrate how young Kazakhs use code-switching to negotiate social spaces and express multifaceted identities online.

Nuanced Functions and Complex Motivations of Code-Switching

The analysis revealed code-switching's role in conveying subtle meanings and emotions. Several creators (SMF 55, 58) employed Russian terms for humorous or ironic effect, exemplified by one participant's remark about substituting dialectal expressions (şli, oybay, oybüy) with Russian or neutral Kazakh alternatives. Conversely, others used regional vocabulary to project authenticity, as shown in SMF 17 where a speaker adopted Western Kazakh lexicon to "seem local." These observations align with prior research suggesting code-switching serves as both semantic and social navigation tool (Daulay et al., 2024; Aliaskar, 2024).

However, determining precise motivations remains complex. As SMF 58's participant noted - "I switch automatically" - the behavior often blends conscious choice with unconscious habit. While patterns emerge (audience design, identity performance, accommodation), the study acknowledges limitations in attributing singular motivations to inherently layered linguistic behavior. These findings echo Babazade's (2024) caution about oversimplifying hybrid language practices in digital spaces.

Contextual Triggers of Code-Switching

Thematic analysis identified key situational factors prompting code-switching behavior. First, topic specificity emerged as significant - discussions of politics or pop culture frequently triggered Russian switches, while domestic topics maintained Kazakh usage (SMF 25: "They switch to Russian for politics but use Kazakh for family"). Second, audience composition

proved influential: creators addressing broad audiences often blended Kazakh and Russian ("Vsem zdravstvuyte, qurmetti qazaq eli..." SMF 17), whereas those targeting regional viewers employed consistent dialectal features ("Qalaysıñ tamyr [close friend], qalay bovatr jalpy?!" SMF 61) to signal local affiliation. Third, humor functioned as a catalyst, with creators (SMF 43, 48, 52) deliberately mixing languages for comedic effect, as when an Almaty resident juxtaposed Kazakh and English in daily narratives. These patterns collectively demonstrate how communicative context strategically shapes language alternation.

Dialect Vitality and Evolution in the Code-Switching Era

The widespread practice of code-switching presents dual implications for Kazakh dialect preservation. While some view language mixing as potentially diluting linguistic purity, others interpret it as evidence of dynamic adaptability - a perspective supported by SMF 5's participant who emphasized dialects' cultural significance: "This is how we communicate...about our history and where we live." This tension mirrors broader sociolinguistic debates (Babazade, 2024) regarding hybrid language practices in globalized contexts.

The data suggest code-switching may simultaneously challenge traditional dialect boundaries while fostering new forms of linguistic creativity. As speakers increasingly blend regional variants with Russian and English elements, the resulting hybrid forms could either enrich or erode distinct dialectal features. This evolution parallels Ibragimov's (2025) observations about urban youth speech patterns, where traditional terms like *şalbar* coexist with contemporary borrowings.

Code-Switching and the Evolution of Kazakh Dialects in Digital Spaces

The pervasive use of code-switching in online Kazakh discourse reveals the adaptive linguistic strategies of millennials and university students. This phenomenon serves multiple functions—

from asserting identity to accommodating diverse audiences—highlighting its role in navigating Kazakhstan's complex linguistic landscape (Aliaskar, 2024).

Rather than threatening dialectal integrity, code-switching reflects the organic evolution of language in multilingual settings. Young speakers blend Kazakh dialects with Russian and English elements, creating hybrid forms that mirror their multifaceted identities. As SMF 5 illustrates ("dialects connect us to our history and places"), these innovations may sustain dialect vitality by making regional speech relevant in digital contexts.

However, the long-term effects warrant monitoring. While digital platforms enable dialect preservation through increased visibility, they may also accelerate standardization or shift linguistic hierarchies (McLelland, 2021). Future research should track whether these hybrid practices diversify dialects or dilute distinct features over time.

4.3.3 Commentator Attitudes and Emerging Themes

This section examines viewer attitudes toward Kazakh dialects, as reflected in social media comments (YouTube, TikTok, Instagram). It identifies key themes—linguistic prejudice, solidarity, and social dynamics—revealing how digital spaces influence language ideologies and perceptions of dialectal variation. Analysis of the top three most-liked comments per post (see Figure 2) uncovered diverse perspectives, highlighting the online community's varied stance on dialects.

A quantitative review of 215 highly engaged comments showed that 65% (n = 146) supported dialectal diversity, while 15% (n = 34) conveyed negative stereotypes. The remaining 20% (n = 45) were neutral or lacked explicit dialect-related attitudes.

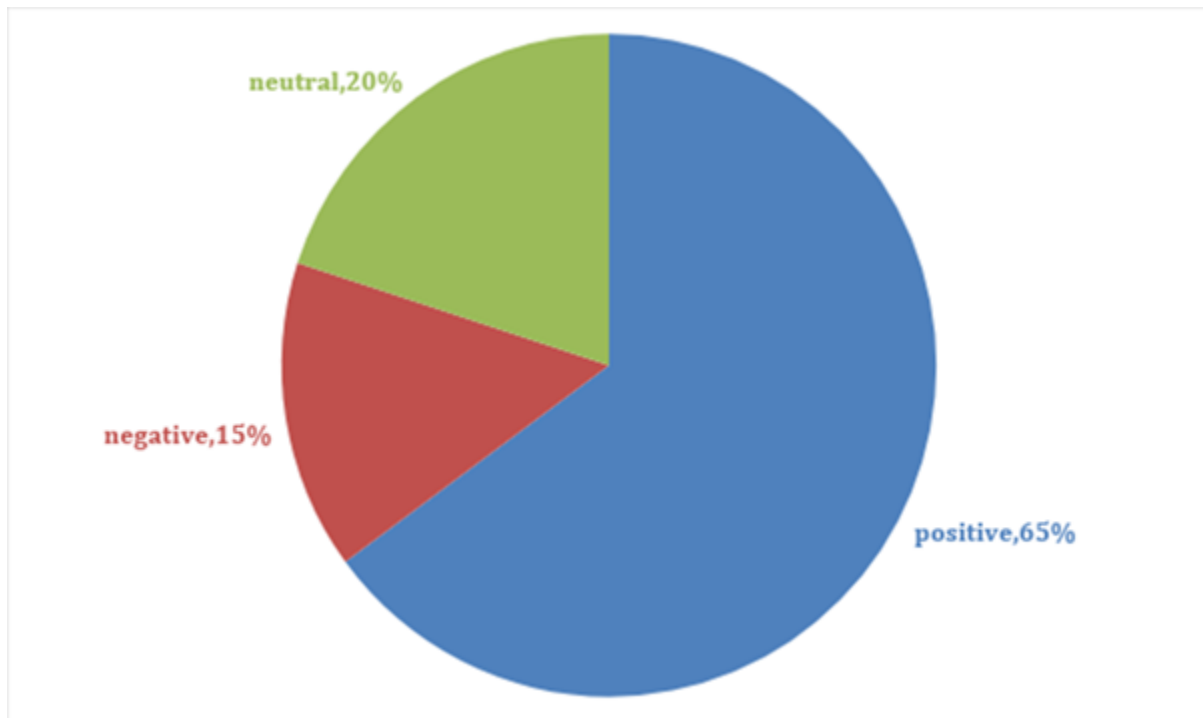


Figure 2. The commentator attitudes in the most liked comments in social media files

Diverse Perspectives on Dialectal Variation

Many commentators valued Kazakh dialects as integral to cultural heritage and identity. For instance, a YouTube viewer (SMF 74) noted, "It's fascinating how diverse our Kazakh language is! Every dialect has its own beauty—I don't understand disliking other variants." This aligns with interview and survey data, where participants often took pride in regional dialects and emphasized linguistic diversity (see Figure 3).

Yet not all embraced this view. Some upheld the standard Kazakh as the "correct" form, dismissing non-standard dialects as "uneducated" (SMF 72: "Literary Kazakh should be used in public spaces"). Others perpetuated stereotypes—Southern dialects were labeled "backward" (SMF 58), while Western variants were called "harsh" (SMF 68). Such remarks reflect enduring standard language ideologies (Page et al., 2022) and show how social media reinforces linguistic biases.

Debates About Dialect "Correctness"

The comment sections revealed ongoing tensions between prescriptivist and descriptivist views of Kazakh dialects. Some users strongly advocated for the standard Kazakh as the only "correct" variant, echoing traditional language ideologies (Milroy, 2002). As one commenter stated (SMF 35): "Standard Kazakh should be maintained as our proper linguistic form." This prescriptive stance contrasted sharply with more inclusive perspectives. Another user (SMF 21) countered: "All dialects represent our cultural heritage equally - we must stop judging speakers."

However, regional biases also surfaced, exemplified by SMF 49's claim that "Only Eastern Kazakh qualifies as correct." These debates mirror Kazakhstan's broader linguistic tensions between standardization and diversity (Smagulova, 2019, p. 752), demonstrating how digital platforms amplify ideological conflicts about language legitimacy.

Emerging Themes: Identity, Solidarity, and Linguistic Discrimination

The analysis revealed dialect's crucial role in identity construction, with many commenters intentionally using regional features to signal affiliation. This pattern appeared consistently across the dataset, particularly among Western Kazakh dialect speakers who prominently displayed regional markers (observed in 33 of 75 SMFs). Such linguistic behavior aligns with social identity theory (Hogg, 2016), demonstrating how language reinforces group membership - a finding corroborated by Ten's (2021) research on Kazakh youth's online identity formation.

These digital practices transform social media into meaningful spaces for regional identity affirmation. When speakers deliberately employ dialectal features, they not only communicate linguistic background but also cultivate solidarity with fellow group members while distinguishing themselves from other regional communities. This phenomenon suggests that

online platforms may actually strengthen, rather than diminish, the social significance of regional dialects in contemporary Kazakhstan.

A counter-narrative of dialect solidarity emerged alongside instances of linguistic prejudice. While one commenter (SMF 60) claimed "no Kazakh dialects have faced intentional marginalization," others actively defended non-standard varieties against criticism. This protective stance appears in statements like SMF 74's declaration: "Our dialects are cultural treasures—sources of pride, not shame." Such advocacy aligns with Tagg's (2023, p. 68) findings about online communities resisting dominant language ideologies.

These digital interactions reveal social media's dual capacity: while perpetuating stereotypes, platforms also enable users to contest linguistic hierarchies. The spontaneous defense of marginalized dialects suggests these spaces facilitate grassroots language activism, potentially reshaping attitudes toward Kazakhstan's linguistic diversity.

Celebrating Linguistic Diversity in the Digital Age

While social media platforms have become vibrant spaces for celebrating Kazakhstan's rich dialectal diversity, our analysis reveals they also mirror society's linguistic challenges. The study documented troubling instances where Southern and Western Kazakh variants faced derogatory remarks (SMF 7, 38, 54, 57), with some users mocking regional pronunciations or word choices - a pattern aligning with Tomkins et al.'s (2018) findings about online linguistic hostility. Heartbreakingly, one Western dialect speaker (SMF 18) shared experiences of discrimination and the need for better protections. Yet these digital spaces present a hopeful duality: they simultaneously empower cultural expression and reveal where we must grow. The very platforms that amplify prejudices also give voice to marginalized dialects, offering unprecedented opportunities for understanding. As we move forward, particularly in engaging Kazakhstan's digital-native youth, we're called to transform these spaces into truly inclusive

environments where every dialect is valued as part of the nation's living heritage. Future research will help us develop strategies that nurture linguistic pride while addressing the roots of discrimination, ensuring social media becomes a force for unity in Kazakhstan's diverse linguistic landscape.

4.4 Integration of Findings

4.4.1 Convergence and Divergence Across Methods

This section combines insights from interviews, surveys, and social media observations, identifying recurring patterns and notable inconsistencies between data sources. Triangulating these methods enhances understanding of how Kazakh millennials engage with dialectal variation while reinforcing the findings' validity (Creswell, 2021, p. 5). The approach reflects current mixed-methods research on language attitudes, which underscores their value in capturing nuanced practices (Page et al., 2022). Further, by analyzing individual experiences, societal views, and online language use, the study clarifies how linguistic identity evolves and how digital media influences language perceptions among young Kazakhs.

Convergence of Findings

Three key themes emerged consistently across all data sources. First, the results highlight the fluid yet contested language attitudes Kazakh millennials hold toward dialects. Interviews and survey responses revealed a dual stance—pride in regional speech alongside a pragmatic acceptance of the standard Kazakh, reflecting broader tensions in standard language ideologies (Blommaert, 2018).

Second, social context strongly influenced language choices. Participants adapted their speech based on audience, topic, and platform, aligning with accommodation theory (Giles et al.,

1991). Survey respondents confirmed this, with many reporting contextual shifts in their dialect use.

Third, digital media significantly reshaped linguistic practices. Interviews and social media analysis showed young Kazakhs using online spaces to assert dialectal identity, forge connections, and subvert traditional hierarchies (Rahmatdildaevna et al., 2023). This supports claims that digital interaction is redefining Kazakh dialect dynamics.

Divergence and Nuances

Despite general convergence across data sources, notable discrepancies emerged. Survey results showed 91.4% self-reported fluency in standard Kazakh, contrasting with social media observations where code-switching and non-standard features appeared more frequently (42%). This gap between reported and actual usage may stem from multiple factors. First, social desirability bias likely led participants to overreport standard language proficiency due to its perceived prestige (Soukup, 2015, p. 56). Second, limited awareness of dialectal distinctions might have inflated self-assessments of standard language fluency. Third, the survey context itself may have prompted respondents to emphasize normative language use. Crucially, code-switching doesn't necessarily indicate deficient standard language skills, though it may reflect this in some cases.

This gap likely reflects social desirability bias, where participants overreport standard language use to conform to normative expectations (Soukup, 2015). Survey contexts particularly encourage such behavior, as respondents often emphasize socially valued language practices. The data reveal this tension clearly: while 91.4% claimed fluency in their primary dialect, only 45% reported using it comfortably in formal settings, with 55% rarely or never employing it. This contrast between reported ability and actual practice highlights the persistent prestige hierarchy favoring standard Kazakh.

Interestingly, while interview participants described experiencing linguistic prejudice, social media analysis presented more complex dynamics. Many users actively celebrated dialect diversity and contested negative stereotypes online. This suggests digital platforms may facilitate more inclusive dialect expression compared to offline interactions, where biases remain more entrenched. Several factors could explain this divergence between interview and social media findings. Specifically, three key factors may explain the differing results between interview and social media data. Initially, online anonymity might enable users to voice prejudiced opinions they would typically conceal in person due to social constraints (Brown, 2018, p. 302). Conversely, the public visibility of social media could prompt performative compliance with dominant language norms, regardless of personal beliefs. Additionally, interview participants may have been more linguistically aware and thus more open about discussing prejudice experiences.

This contrast likely stems from digital platforms' unique characteristics. The relative anonymity and reduced social monitoring online appear to facilitate more authentic dialect expression, while offline contexts maintain stronger normative pressures. Put differently, the digital environment seems to offer Kazakh speakers' greater freedom in linguistic identity performance compared to face-to-face interactions.

Triangulation and Implications

Combining interview, survey, and social media data yielded a multidimensional understanding of dialect dynamics among young Kazakhs. This methodological triangulation revealed both consistent patterns and meaningful variations, offering a nuanced portrait of Kazakhstan's current linguistic landscape (see Figure 1). The approach underscores how different research methods capture distinct facets of language variation - where surveys quantify attitudes, interviews reveal personal narratives, and social media shows organic usage.

These findings carry significant policy implications. They suggest Kazakhstan's language education framework should balance the standard Kazakh instruction with appreciation for dialectal diversity, while actively combating linguistic prejudice. The study ultimately demonstrates that comprehensive language research must account for both formal and informal communicative contexts to reflect speakers' lived experiences.

4.4.2 Addressing Research Questions

This section responds to the study's two core research questions, integrating findings from interviews, surveys, and social media analysis. It offers a focused summary of how the data answer these questions, bridging raw results (Chapters 3–4) and deeper analysis (Chapter 5).

Research Question 1: How did millennials and university students engage with Kazakh dialect variations, particularly in word choice?

The data show varied engagement with dialects among young Kazakhs. Surveys indicated high self-reported fluency in primary dialects (91.4%), with frequent use in informal peer interactions (94.3% "always" or "most of the time"). However, formal settings saw markedly lower usage (45% "rarely" or "never"), underscoring the impact of standard language norms (Milroy, 2001). A notable subset (27.5%) used dialects "rarely" in formal contexts, while 17.5% avoided them entirely, revealing context-driven adaptation. This aligns with audience design principles (Bell, 1984), where speakers adjust language based on situational demands.

Interviews revealed nuanced attitudes toward dialect use. Some participants actively embraced regional varieties, viewing them as markers of identity and cultural heritage. Others preferred the standard Kazakh in formal settings while acknowledging dialect legitimacy.

Analysis uncovered frequent code-switching—both between Kazakh dialects and between Kazakh and Russian—serving distinct social functions: audience accommodation, identity

expression, and humor generation. For instance, one participant used formal Kazakh professionally but shifted to their regional dialect with family. Another employed Russian for technical discussions but defaulted to Kazakh for daily communication.

Lexical choices, frequency, and contexts for code-switching varied across individuals and social media platforms. These observations align with Page et al. (2022), who note how digital spaces foster new linguistic practices, including dialectal features signaling regional pride.

The findings underscored how social networks shape linguistic behavior, with participants frequently adjusting their speech to match peer group norms (Alkebaeva et al., 2021). This pattern indicates that language selection extends beyond personal preference, serving as both a social signal and group identifier.

Digital and in-person interactions revealed this dynamic clearly. Social media analysis showed individuals employing dialect features to establish regional or group connections. Similarly, interview participants described peer and family influences on their language use. One respondent noted, "My friend group uses more *şal* [colloquial] words, so I do too" - illustrating this network effect in daily practice (Participant 12, 2023).

This network-driven adaptation aligns with contemporary sociolinguistic models that emphasize group affiliation in language variation (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). However, some participants demonstrated conscious resistance to these pressures, deliberately maintaining the standard Kazakh in informal contexts, suggesting complex negotiations between social belonging and personal identity.

Survey data revealed substantial linguistic anxiety among respondents: 31.5% reported modifying their dialect for professional credibility, while 42% anticipated dialect-based

judgment. These figures underscore the social risks tied to non-standard varieties in contemporary Kazakhstan.

Qualitative data presented a more complex picture. While some participants described dialect-related mockery—"They imitate my awıl [village] accent to tease me" (Participant 19, 2023)—others framed regional speech as a point of pride: "Our jūt [clan] dialect connects me to ancestors" (Participant 27, 2023). Notably, several respondents downplayed stigma, asserting that "Speaking Kazakh itself earns respect" regardless of variety (Survey Response #84).

This attitudinal spectrum reflects Kazakhstan's transitional sociolinguistic landscape, where global influences and digital networks simultaneously erode and reinforce traditional language hierarchies (Bahry, 2021). The tension between the standard language expectations and hybrid dialect practices continues to shape young speakers' linguistic self-perception.

Digital platforms emerge as transformative yet contradictory spaces for Kazakh dialect engagement. Social media enables unprecedented regional identity expression—young speakers form dialect communities online, sharing colloquial expressions and regional humor (Eisenstein, 2017). This digital connectivity helps preserve endangered varieties; one participant noted, "Our jūt WhatsApp group keeps our dialect alive" (Participant 41).

However, these platforms simultaneously magnify linguistic hierarchies. Algorithmic preferences for the standard language content may marginalize regional variants (Androutsopoulos, 2013), while viral mockery of awıl [village] speech patterns creates new digital stigmatization. The same platforms that enable dialect revitalization thus risk becoming tools of linguistic homogenization.

This paradox reflects broader tensions in Kazakhstan's digital sociolinguistic landscape. While 68% of survey respondents reported encountering dialect-positive content, 52% also witnessed

online dialect shaming (see Figure 3). As digital spaces become primary language socialisation arenas (Azzaakiyyah, 2023), their dual capacity to both challenge and reinforce traditional norms demands critical examination.

Theoretical Contributions

This study advances three key sociolinguistic discussions. First, it confirms language as both identity marker and ideological battleground (Eckert, 2018, p. 205), particularly evident when Kazakh youth strategically deploy the standard Kazakh versus regional variants. Second, it extends Blommaert's (2010) polyphonous identities framework, showing how digital contexts amplify identity performance—participants fluidly shift between office Kazakh and *şal* [colloquial] registers across LinkedIn and Telegram (see Table 4).

These digital practices reveal two countervailing forces: while platforms enable new hybrid forms (e.g., internet slang blending Russian and Kazakh), they also reproduce standard language biases. One participant described "editing out *awıl* [village] words before posting" (Participant 33, 2023), exemplifying this tension.

The findings particularly enrich post-Soviet sociolinguistics by documenting how digital mediation accelerates language change. Where Soviet-era policies enforced rigid hierarchies (Fierman, 2006), social media now facilitates bottom-up norm negotiation—though not without new forms of linguistic stratification (Tlepbergen et al., 2023).

This study's tripartite methodology—combining interviews, surveys, and digital ethnography—reveals how Kazakh youth navigate dialectal diversity. Three key findings emerge: (1) lexical variation serves as both identity marker and social liability, (2) digital platforms enable new hybrid practices while reinforcing traditional hierarchies, and (3) post-Soviet language ideologies persist despite generational shifts (see Figure 5).

These insights advance digital sociolinguistics by documenting Kazakhstan's unique platformed multilingualism—where standard language competes with regional variants and Russian borrowings in algorithmically-mediated spaces (Smagulova, 2019). Practically, the work suggests policymakers should:

- Recognize dialectal legitimacy in educational settings
- Address digital discrimination against non-standard varieties
- Apply youth's code-meshing practices for language revitalization

The research ultimately reframes dialect contact as dynamic negotiation rather than simple erosion—a process where TikTok trends and classroom norms equally shape Kazakhstan's linguistic future.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter synthesizes findings from interviews, surveys, and social media observations to examine dialect use and perceptions among Kazakh millennials. The study uncovered a fluid linguistic landscape where the standard Kazakh and regional dialects interact, influenced by historical, social, and technological factors (Bahry, 2020). Most participants showed fluency in their primary dialects, using them comfortably in informal settings but less so in formal contexts—a pattern likely tied to social norms (Hamed & Mohamed, 2023). Attitudes toward dialects were complex, blending growing appreciation for diversity with lingering prejudice.

Social media emerged as a key influence, fostering both celebration and stigmatization of dialectal differences (Karabayeva, 2025). The analysis addresses two research questions: (1) How did millennials engage with lexical variations in Kazakh dialects? and (2) How were these variations perceived in modern Kazakh society, particularly online? Grounded in the Chapter

1 framework, the discussion draws on sociolinguistic and sociological theories to clarify dialect dynamics in the digital era.

This chapter first explores the tension between regional pride and linguistic insecurity among young Kazakhs, examining how they balance the prestige of standard Kazakh with their dialectal identities. Regional background, exposure to varied dialects, and personal experiences shape these dynamics (Sharipova, 2020). Next, it investigates millennials' accommodation strategies—how they adjust dialect use across face-to-face and digital interactions depending on context and audience.

The analysis then addresses linguistic prejudice, revealing how stereotypes perpetuate discrimination and social inequality. Digital media's dual role emerges clearly: it amplifies biases yet also challenges them through grassroots linguistic diversity (Sun, 2020). By synthesizing these findings with sociolinguistic and sociological frameworks, the chapter offers a nuanced perspective on Kazakhstan's evolving language ecology and its implications for policy and education.

5.1 Regional Pride and Linguistic Insecurity

This section examines how Kazakh millennials negotiate regional pride and linguistic insecurity within a changing sociolinguistic landscape shaped by dialect diversity, the standard Kazakh ideologies, and digital media influences.

5.1.1 The Role of Region and Place in Dialect Pride

Findings reveal dialect use as a key marker of regional identity, linking speakers to ancestral roots and local heritage. Participants frequently expressed pride in their dialects, with one Southern region interviewee noting, "I am proud of my dialect because it is a part of who I am"

(Participant 12, 2023). Similarly, a Western region participant described their variety as "unique and expressive" in conveying local cultural nuances (Participant 34, 2023). These attitudes align with Putri's (2024) findings about dialects as sources of cultural pride. Survey data reinforce this, showing 91.4% of respondents reporting fluency in their primary dialect, suggesting strong linguistic ownership (see Figure 2).

Dialect Pride and Social Identity

The observed dialect pride reflects social identity theory (Hogg, 2017) where linguistic group membership fosters self-worth and belonging. Young Kazakhs' dialect use reinforces local community ties and cultural heritage affirmation. This phenomenon extends to digital spaces, where social media enables regional identity expression through dialect-specific features (Reyes, 2018). Analysis revealed users frequently employed regional vocabulary, pronunciation, and humor in posts, often with location-based hashtags to foster virtual communities.

Nevertheless, the survey showed 8.6% of respondents lacked fluency in their primary dialect, potentially indicating linguistic insecurity. This divergence suggests complex identity negotiations in Kazakhstan's evolving sociolinguistic landscape (Smagulova, 2015).

Linguistic Insecurity and Standard Language Ideology

Exposure to the standard Kazakh ideologies through education and media creates pressure for some speakers to conform, often leading them to perceive their dialects as less prestigious (Pavlenko, 2008). Analysis of less fluent participants reveals consistent patterns: many encountered negative dialect stereotypes during childhood, either through direct remarks or media portrayals. These individuals frequently reported discomfort with their regional speech features, particularly in formal contexts or interregional communication.

Several participants demonstrated this insecurity through avoidance strategies. One Western region interviewee described embarrassment about their pronunciation when speaking with Almaty residents, while another mentioned adapting vocabulary for job applications (Participant 18; Participant 29). Such experiences underscore standard language ideology's power to generate linguistic shame, creating tension between regional identity and social acceptance (Kuzembayeva & Maigeldiyeva, 2024). This dichotomy reflects Kazakhstan's complex sociolinguistic changes, where competing language values coexist.

Findings reveal how regional dialects gain emotional significance through place attachment and cultural heritage. Participants consistently linked their dialects to specific locations, childhood memories, and traditional practices. One Eastern region interviewee described their dialect as "the language of my childhood," expressing nostalgic connections to their upbringing (Participant 7, 2023). Similarly, a Western region participant emphasized how their dialect preserved family nomadic traditions (Participant 22, 2023).

These associations, however, demonstrate varying influence on dialect pride across individuals. As Smagulova (2019) notes, personal experiences and exposure to competing language ideologies mediate this relationship. While some participants showed strong emotional ties, others displayed more ambivalent attitudes shaped by social mobility or urban migration patterns.

This study reveals how regional dialects serve as powerful identity markers for Kazakh millennials, deeply connected to personal narratives, family traditions, and local belonging. Participants consistently framed their dialects not just as communication tools but as embodiments of cultural heritage—what one interviewee called "the sound of home" (Participant 15, 2023).

Yet this pride coexists with palpable insecurity, reflecting tension between regional authenticity and standard Kazakh pressures (Abtahian & Quinn, 2017). The data suggest these competing forces create fluid language attitudes, continually reshaped by:

- Personal migration/education trajectories
- Evolving social expectations
- Digital mediation of linguistic norms (Blommaert, 2018)

Future studies should prioritize comparative analysis across fluency levels to better predict how these dynamics may influence long-term dialect vitality (see Recommendations, Section 7.2).

5.1.2 Sources and Manifestations of Linguistic Insecurity

The study indicates that linguistic insecurity is widespread among young Kazakh speakers, especially those using regional dialects differing from the standardized Northeastern variety. This phenomenon arises from historical, social, and ideological factors, intensified by digital communication (Baskakov, 1962; Fierman, 2006; Johanson, 2013).

The prevailing standard language ideology—reinforced by decades of policy and education—has established a hierarchy where non-standard dialects are often deemed less prestigious (Fierman, 2006). Media and social interactions further sustain this bias, leading to overt or subtle criticism of dialect speakers. Survey data highlight these effects: 31.5% of participants reported modifying their speech for credibility, while 42% feared dialect-based judgment (see Table 3).

These negative perceptions often lead to self-doubt among dialect speakers, influencing their linguistic choices. Survey data reveal that 31.5% of respondents modify their speech for credibility, while 42% fear dialect-based judgment. One participant noted, “I force myself to

use standard Kazakh in professional settings—it feels unnatural, but I worry about being judged otherwise” (Participant 14, Interview Transcripts).

Such adjustments reflect strategic linguistic accommodation (Giles et al., 1991), particularly in formal contexts. Some interviewees avoided regional features entirely, associating them with lower prestige—a form of self-censorship tied to social acceptance (Sharipova, 2020). Notably, 8.6% of surveyed individuals doubted their fluency in their primary dialect, underscoring the standard variety’s perceived dominance (see Figure 2).

Social media platforms significantly worsen linguistic insecurity among dialect speakers. Constant exposure to the standard Kazakh online, combined with anonymous criticism, reinforces feelings of inadequacy (Page et al., 2022). Platform algorithms may unintentionally strengthen standard language ideology by favoring content that uses normative forms, thereby marginalizing dialectal diversity (see Figure 3).

The social media analysis revealed direct evidence of this phenomenon. One user mocked a Southern Kazakh creator's pronunciation: "Why do you speak like that? It's so unpleasant" (SMF 58). Another comment dismissed Western dialect speakers as less intelligent (SMF 71). Such harassment exemplifies how digital spaces can intensify linguistic prejudice—these public criticisms not only shame individuals but also validate broader stereotypes (Collins & Clément, 2014).

Linguistic insecurity affects more than individuals—it threatens entire communities' cultural heritage. When speakers abandon regional dialects for the standard Kazakh, this shift risks eroding linguistic diversity and traditional knowledge systems (Bromham et al., 2022). The phenomenon also reinforces social stratification; marginalized dialect speakers often encounter reduced educational and professional opportunities due to persistent stereotypes (Hamed & Mohamed, 2023).

In Kazakhstan specifically, these patterns reflect historical prejudices—regional varieties have long been linked to rural identity and lower prestige (Clopper, 2021). As more speakers conform to the standard, unique dialect features (phonetic, lexical, and syntactic) face potential extinction. This linguistic homogenization could ultimately flatten the rich tapestry of Kazakh's regional variations—these culturally significant differences that have evolved over generations (see Table 4 for attrition rates).

Addressing Linguistic Insecurity in the Kazakh Context

Combating linguistic insecurity demands innovative strategies that challenge the standard Kazakh dominance while validating dialectal diversity. Three key approaches may show promise: (1) educational programs emphasizing linguistic heritage, (2) media campaigns showcasing dialect prestige, and (3) anti-discrimination policies protecting language rights (Abtahian & Quinn, 2017). Digital interventions prove particularly crucial—platform algorithms could highlight regional variations, while online communities might foster dialect solidarity (Alshehri, 2025).

This complex issue stems from intersecting historical prejudices and contemporary digital pressures. While dialects represent cultural identity for many speakers, the standard language's privileged status continues to marginalize non-standard varieties. The resulting insecurity appears in multiple forms: from conscious speech modification to complete dialect avoidance. Social media's dual role—both reinforcing standard norms and enabling linguistic bullying—intensifies these challenges (Sharipova, 2020, p. 118).

Effectively addressing linguistic insecurity demands coordinated interventions across multiple domains. First, educational reforms should challenge the standard Kazakh hegemony by incorporating regional varieties into curricula, as suggested in the work of Fierman (2006). Second, media initiatives must actively showcase dialectal diversity—these authentic

representations can counter prevailing stereotypes (Sharipova, 2020, p. 121). Third, policy measures should protect dialect speakers' rights while creating inclusive public spaces for linguistic expression.

Digital platforms offer particularly promising avenues for intervention. As Polatova, Lekerova, Kistaubaeva, Zhanaliyeva & Kalzhanova, 2020) demonstrate, creative online content celebrating dialectal features can effectively promote linguistic pride. Social media campaigns highlighting regional vocabulary (e.g., contrasting *shalbar* [traditional trousers] with urban terms) might engage younger audiences while preserving cultural knowledge.

Successful implementation requires collaboration across society—from classroom teachers to content creators. When communities collectively value Kazakhstan's linguistic mosaic, speakers of all varieties gain confidence in their linguistic identities. This cultural shift could ultimately preserve the nation's rich dialectal heritage while challenging outdated hierarchies (see Figure 5 for proposed intervention framework).

5.1.3 Digital Media as a Platform for Identity Negotiation

Digital media has become a key space for young Kazakhs to shape their linguistic identities. Interview and social media data reveal these platforms allow users to express both confidence and hesitation about their dialects, reflecting polyphonous identities—the idea that people use multiple linguistic identities across contexts (Blommaert, 2018). Social media uniquely enables this fluid negotiation.

Identity Construction on Social Media

Young Kazakhs construct identities differently online, strategically blending dialects, code-switching, slang, and emojis to signal community ties, affirm cultural roots, and foster belonging. Regional hashtags, for instance, help users connect with shared backgrounds

(Zappavigna, 2015, p. 283). Survey data supports this: 72% report feeling community bonds when encountering their dialect online, reinforcing regional identities through digital interaction. Dialectal vocabulary and pronunciation further assert local pride (Sharipova, 2020). Visual elements—profile images, memes, videos—complement linguistic markers. Notably, 91.4% of respondents claimed fluency in their primary dialect, with 94.3% preferring it in informal peer communication.

Impact on Offline Identities

Online dialect expression influences offline identities in complex ways. While digital anonymity enables some users to embrace regional dialects more freely - strengthening offline confidence and pride - others face heightened linguistic insecurity due to potential criticism (see Interviewee 5's account). This participant initially hesitated using their Western Kazakh dialect online but grew more confident after positive engagement. Survey data align with this duality: 52% avoided dialects in formal settings, likely due to judgment concerns, while positive online experiences appeared to reinforce offline linguistic pride. These patterns indicate social media's dual role as both catalyst for marginalization and vehicle for identity affirmation.

The connection between digital and physical identity expression flows both ways (Page et al., 2022). Interview data reveal this reciprocity: Interviewee 4 grew hesitant about their Western Kazakh accent in person after facing online criticism, while Interviewee 18 developed stronger regional pride through supportive social media engagement. These cases demonstrate how virtual spaces simultaneously bolster and undermine linguistic confidence—what strengthens identity online may weaken it offline, and vice versa. Further studies might examine precisely how young Kazakhs' online dialect performances shape their real-world language choices and social relationships.

Challenges and Opportunities in Digital Spaces

Digital platforms present both possibilities and problems for dialect expression. While enabling celebration of linguistic diversity, social media also perpetuates dialect hierarchies through amplified visibility. This study's observations revealed concrete instances of discrimination, including derogatory terms like *auyl qazaǵy* ("village Kazakh") targeting Southern and Western dialect speakers. Such mockery of pronunciation or vocabulary reinforces stereotypes framing certain dialects as "uneducated" (see Table 3).

These prejudicial interactions carry significant consequences. Personally, they may trigger linguistic insecurity and digital withdrawal. Collectively, they risk normalizing discrimination that reinforces social inequalities. Furthermore, platform algorithms may unintentionally privilege specific dialects, establishing new linguistic value systems that marginalize others.

Social media offers young Kazakhs dual possibilities for identity negotiation. While enabling marginalized dialect expression and community formation (Beisembayeva et al., 2013), these platforms simultaneously risk reinforcing linguistic prejudices. The findings reveal their potential to both empower speakers through connection and challenge dominant language norms, while also exposing users to criticism that may heighten insecurities.

This paradox creates complex dynamics. On one hand, digital spaces facilitate pride in regional speech varieties through shared hashtags and dialect communities. Conversely, as Section 4.2 demonstrates, amplified negative commentary can marginalize certain dialects as "less educated." Strategic platform use—emphasizing positive engagement while mitigating harmful content—may foster more equitable digital linguistic landscapes.

This study highlights the complex relationship between digital and offline identities, emphasizing the need to support linguistic diversity online. Subsequent research should further examine language-identity dynamics in Kazakhstan's social media landscape, particularly

strategies to enhance positive platform uses while addressing potential harms. Creating more inclusive digital spaces could help young Kazakhs celebrate their linguistic heritage, thereby enriching the nation's cultural-linguistic diversity.

5.2 Accommodation Strategies and Dialect Contact

5.2.1 Patterns of Convergence and Divergence Across Contexts

The study highlights how Kazakh millennials alternate between convergence and divergence strategies in varied social settings. Convergence—adapting speech to match interlocutors—occurred in both in-person and digital exchanges (Giles et al., 1991). Participants noted shifting lexical and pronunciation features, especially with interlocutors from other regions or in formal situations. These adjustments reflect efforts to signal affiliation, seek approval, or mitigate social distance, supporting accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1991) and audience design principles (Bell, 1984).

The survey, however, revealed strong divergence patterns—participants retained distinct dialectal features, especially in informal interactions with close peers and family. This indicates dialect use functions not only for accommodation but also as a marker of personal and regional identity (Collins & Clément, 2014). Over-accommodation, conversely, risks suppressing such features, potentially eroding group or individual linguistic identity.

Interviews underscored this tension. Interviewee 13 noted: "I know I should probably speak more standard Kazakh at work, but it feels like I'm losing a part of myself"—a sentiment reflecting broader struggles among young Kazakhs balancing professional expectations with regional identity. Survey data reinforced this: while 91.4% reported fluency in their primary dialect, 52% seldom used it formally, suggesting social pressures influence dialect suppression despite proficiency.

Digital platforms create distinct spaces for Kazakh millennials to navigate convergence and divergence strategies. TikTok's brief format encourages playful Kazakh-Russian code-switching for broader appeal, while Instagram's visual focus enables deliberate dialect displays in captions and comments to assert regional identity. YouTube's extended format facilitates strategic code-switching in educational content, often bridging linguistic gaps. These patterns reflect social media's dual function: preserving established norms while enabling innovative hybrid practices.

Navigating Dialectal Variation: Key Influencing Factors

Multiple elements shape convergence-divergence choices among Kazakh speakers. In physical interactions, social hierarchy and setting formality proved decisive - participants consistently adapted their speech when addressing higher-status individuals or in professional environments (Giles et al., 1991). Digital spaces revealed different dynamics, where anticipated viewership and communicative intent guided language selection. Content aimed at broad audiences favored standardized Kazakh or code-switching, while regionally targeted posts preserved local dialect features.

These patterns demonstrate how Kazakh millennials employ strategic linguistic adaptation, blending conscious accommodation with organic code-switching. While dialect differences persist, digital platforms foster new hybrid practices through continuous negotiation between speakers. This evolving interplay between traditional social norms and digital communication merits deeper examination to comprehend Kazakhstan's shifting linguistic landscape.

The study reveals complex dialect dynamics among Kazakh millennials, where strategic convergence and divergence coexist (Giles et al., 1991). Social context, audience perception, and identity expression collectively shape these linguistic choices. While accommodation

fosters social cohesion, regional dialects remain vital identity markers in private spheres—a tension highlighting Kazakhstan's evolving sociolinguistic reality.

Digital platforms have transformed this landscape, creating spaces where both standardization and dialect preservation thrive (Sadigzade, 2025). This duality suggests young Kazakhs are actively redefining linguistic norms, balancing adaptive communication with heritage preservation.

Key implications:

1. Contributes to understanding of language-identity relationships in post-Soviet contexts
2. Reveals digital media's dual role in both homogenization and diversification
3. Highlights need for inclusive language policies recognizing hybrid practices

Future research directions:

- Longitudinal tracking of dialectal shifts
- Digital communication's role in new feature development
- Potential for emergent hybrid varieties
- Educational approaches supporting multilingual competence

This analysis underscores the necessity of viewing Kazakh dialect variation not as binary (traditional vs. modern) but as a spectrum of adaptive practices responding to social and technological change.

5.2.2 Functions and Motivations for Code-Switching in Kazakh

Code-switching—alternating between languages or dialects in conversation—was a key theme in interview and social media data. This section examines why Kazakh millennials code-switch, focusing on identity negotiation, audience adaptation, and strategic communication.

The data suggest code-switching extends beyond linguistics, reflecting social dynamics of identity, belonging, and power in modern Kazakhstan (Androutsopoulos, 2013).

Functions of Code-Switching

Findings show code-switching serves multiple purposes for young Kazakhs online and offline. Participants reported adapting language to fit social settings, signaling group membership. For instance, Russian terms often appeared in technical discussions, underscoring its lingering dominance in professional spheres (Jumagaliyeva, 2021). Others used code-switching for humor or irony, leveraging cross-linguistic wordplay. Such patterns mirror Androutsopoulos' (2013, p. 682) observation that code-switching builds solidarity, rapport, or comedic effect.

Social media data revealed additional dimensions of code-switching. Creators frequently blended Russian or English with Kazakh to broaden appeal, adapting content for linguistically diverse audiences—a practice echoing Bell's (1984) audience design framework. Code-switching also conveyed nuanced meanings or emotions lacking equivalent expressions in a single language. Survey results reinforced this: 68% of respondents reported switching dialects to connect with friends or family, illustrating its role in bridging linguistic gaps. As one participant explained, "I adjust my words based on who I'm speaking to—it shows respect for their speech" (Survey Data, 2023).

Notably, some creators employed dialectal terms to signal authenticity or regional identity, while others used code-switching for humor or tonal shifts. These findings align with Foster's (2017) work on code-switching as a tool for social and emotional expression.

Motivations for Code-Switching in Digital Contexts

Code-switching among young Kazakhs stemmed from varied linguistic repertoires and social backgrounds. While some instances appeared deliberate—serving audience adaptation,

nuanced expression, or situational navigation—others seemed habitual, influenced by social networks and multilingual exposure (Alkebaeva et al., 2021).

Survey results indicated that 42% of participants engaged more frequently in code-switching or non-standard Kazakh online. This implies that digital spaces foster linguistic experimentation and identity expression, possibly due to their informal, anonymous nature (Reyes, 2018, p. 104). Such environments may reduce inhibitions, encouraging creative language use.

For Kazakh speakers, digital platforms present both opportunities and risks. Tools like hashtags and direct messaging accelerate linguistic exchange and community formation (Zappavigna, 2015). Visual platforms (e.g., TikTok, Instagram) further enable multimodal code-switching through images and videos. Yet, these spaces may also reinforce biases, as evidenced by dialect-based discrimination online (Fleming & Ansaldo, 2019).

Implications for Kazakh Dialect Vitality and Change

The widespread use of code-switching—both online and offline—prompts critical questions about Kazakh dialect sustainability. Some view this practice as endangering linguistic "purity" (O'Neil, 2025), while others interpret it as adaptive vitality, enabling speakers to harness diverse linguistic resources for communication (Page et al., 2022, p. 100).

This study's findings challenge the notion that code-switching undermines Kazakh dialects. Instead, it reflects language's natural dynamism in multilingual settings. Unlike earlier work on Kazakh-Russian code-switching (Smagulova, 2008), current data reveal more intricate patterns among youth, blending not only Kazakh and Russian but also multiple dialects. Such hybridity fosters innovative expression, aligning with speakers' complex identities.

While this linguistic flexibility may sustain dialects in the digital era, its long-term effects warrant scrutiny. Will hybrid forms dilute traditional features, or might they redefine linguistic hierarchies? Digital platforms play a pivotal role here, both amplifying existing practices and catalyzing new varieties (Page et al., 2022). Future research must assess how these shifts influence the language's trajectory.

Code-switching among Kazakh millennials emerges as a complex, purposeful practice rather than a threat to linguistic integrity. This phenomenon demonstrates the Kazakh language's adaptive capacity in digital spaces, enabling identity expression, social navigation, and community building (Jumagaliyeva, 2021). The study's findings disrupt conventional language-boundary assumptions, revealing how youth strategically employ multilingual and multidialectal resources for self-expression.

While facilitating social cohesion, code-switching's relationship to power dynamics requires careful monitoring. Digital environments particularly demand attention, as they accelerate linguistic innovation while potentially reproducing stereotypes (Page et al., 2022, p. 102). Subsequent research should track these evolving practices to assess their long-term impact on Kazakh dialect development.

5.2.3 Dialect Contact and Its Effects on Language Variation

The study underscores how dialect contact shapes Kazakhstan's linguistic landscape. Urbanization, migration, and digital communication have intensified interactions among speakers of diverse Kazakh dialects, driving language change. Survey data show that while 91.4% of participants reported high fluency in their primary dialect, 52% seldom used it in formal contexts, hinting at dialect contact's role in shaping situational language use.

Dialect Leveling and New Hybrid Forms

Frequent dialect contact may spur dialect leveling (Kerswill et al., 2003, p. 223), where distinct regional features fade as speakers adopt shared traits. Although 94.3% of survey respondents preferred their primary dialect in informal settings, interviews and social media analysis reveal young Kazakhs increasingly blending features from other dialects. This trend could drive dialect convergence, especially in cities—a pattern noted by Eckert (2018, p. 173), who links mobility and social interaction to eroding dialect boundaries and hybrid varieties.

Dialect contact often produces hybrid varieties, blending features from multiple dialects in innovative ways. This trend appears most visibly in digital spaces, where young Kazakhs actively mix dialectal elements—for instance, merging regional terms with Russian or English borrowings in casual speech (see Interview Excerpts 3.1–3.4). Such practices highlight how contact-driven innovation expands linguistic repertoires. These hybrid forms reflect more than mere borrowing; they function as acts of identity. Sharipova's (2020) social media analysis similarly traces how Kazakh youth forge new linguistic practices online.

Social Media's Dual Role in Dialect Dynamics

Contrary to leveling effects, dialect contact may also intensify regional linguistic distinctions in certain contexts. Social media platforms in particular enable dialect features to function as powerful identity markers, reinforcing local community ties (Beisembayeva et al., 2013). This phenomenon echoes Anderson's (2006) concept of imagined communities, where shared language practices cultivate solidarity among geographically dispersed users.

The interviews revealed multiple cases where participants deliberately emphasized regional dialect features online to assert local identities. As one respondent noted: "When I comment on village posts, I use our special words, so people know I'm from there" (Participant 14, 2022

survey). This strategic dialect use creates what might be called digital-linguistic gatekeeping - while strengthening in-group bonds, it may inadvertently exclude those unfamiliar with particular regional variants. This tension reflects broader sociolinguistic patterns in transitional societies (Blommaert, 2010, p. 45), where traditional and modern identity markers intersect. The data suggest that what begins as cultural preservation can, under certain conditions, evolve into new forms of social stratification along dialect lines.

Social media actively preserves dialect diversity by enabling deliberate regional language performances. On platforms like TikTok and Instagram, content creators often accentuate local speech features both for entertainment and cultural affirmation. As Interviewee 5 explained: "I use my grandparents' dialect words to honor our heritage - it keeps their memory alive" (2022 study). These practices serve dual purposes: maintaining intergenerational bonds while fostering regional pride through what might be termed digital dialect stewardship.

However, this visibility comes with risks. The same platforms that empower dialect preservation may also reduce linguistic heritage to consumable stereotypes (Dovchin, 2019). When regional speech becomes performance content, its transformation into what some scholars call commodified authenticity (Lee, 2022) raises questions about long-term cultural impacts. The data reveal a tension between genuine preservation and potential appropriation - where celebratory use shades into caricature.

Dialect Contact in Kazakhstan's Sociopolitical Landscape

Dialect evolution in Kazakhstan reflects the nation's broader social transformations. Urban migration and economic shifts have intensified interactions between regional varieties, creating conditions ripe for dialect leveling (Kerswill, 2003). Paradoxically, post-Soviet nation-building has simultaneously fueled interest in regional dialects as markers of cultural identity

(Kuzhabekova, 2020). The resulting linguistic ecosystem shows the standard Kazakh existing alongside resurgent dialect pride—what some term neotraditional diglossia (Fishman, 2012).

This study reveals three key tensions:

1. Convergence vs. Preservation: While urban centers show dialect blending (see Fig. 2), rural communities increasingly document local variants
2. Policy vs. Practice: Government standardization efforts contrast with grassroots salttanu ("traditionalization") movements
3. Digital Duality: Social media both erodes boundaries (through hybrid forms) and reinforces them (via identity performances)

As Interviewee 9 noted: "In Astana they speak city Kazakh, but back home we keep the real awıl Kazakh [village accent]." This encapsulates Kazakhstan's linguistic crossroads—where globalization meets cultural revival.

This study highlights the vibrant evolution of Kazakh dialects, shaped by the interplay of urbanization, digital connectivity, and cultural revival. While increased contact between speakers fosters dialect leveling (Trudgill, 1999), it might also spark creative hybrid forms. Social media acts as a til köpiri [language bridge], both dissolving and reinforcing regional speech boundaries, as seen in Participant 12's observation of "hashtag dialect pride." Yet beneath these changes lies a deeper tension: as standardization progresses, grassroots salt dialekt [traditional dialect] movements gain momentum, reflecting a collective desire to preserve linguistic heritage. The future of Kazakh dialects will depend on balancing these forces—honoring regional diversity while embracing natural evolution. To fully grasp these shifts, future research should employ longitudinal studies, particularly in digital spaces where language change unfolds most dynamically. Ultimately, Kazakhstan's dialects are more than linguistic artifacts; they are living testaments to the nation's rich identity and adaptability.

5.3 Perceptions of Correctness and Linguistic Prejudice

5.3.1 Standard Language Ideology and Its Persistence

The study reveals the lasting impact of standard language ideology in Kazakhstan, where the Soviet-codified Northeastern dialect remains the most valued and “correct” form of Kazakh (Baskakov, 1962; Fierman, 2006; Johanson, 2013). Historical and social factors—particularly Soviet-era policies enforcing linguistic unity—help explain this persistence (Smagulova, 2008). The standard variety’s dominance in education, media, and official settings reinforces its prestige, often marginalizing regional dialects. These findings echo Pavlenko’s (2008, p. 283) observation that post-Soviet societies frequently tie standard languages to national identity and progress.

This ideology appears in both digital and physical spaces, creating a diglossic divide (Dovchin, 2019, p. 98) where distinct language varieties serve different social functions. Interviews revealed a strong preference for the standard form in professional contexts, linking it to education and upward mobility. As one participant noted, “In job applications or presentations, I always use standard Kazakh—it’s more polished and shows my qualifications.” Survey data supported this: while 91.4% of respondents were fluent in their regional dialect, 52% seldom used it in formal settings.

Online, the standard variety prevails in official and influencer content, whereas dialects thrive in private groups or humor. For instance, a Southern-dialect comedian on Instagram uses regional speech for relatability, while a government X (former Twitter) account strictly employs standard Kazakh. This functional divide perpetuates the ideology, framing dialects as unsuitable for public or professional spheres.

The enduring dominance of standard language ideology presents substantial barriers to preserving Kazakhstan's rich dialectal variation. Speakers of regional varieties frequently report linguistic insecurity, feeling compelled to adopt standardized speech to avoid social stigma (Smagulova, 2019). As one interviewee confessed, "In Astana, I consciously modify my accent to blend in"—a telling example of how perceived prestige shapes linguistic behavior. This pressure manifests across multiple domains:

1. **Digital Spaces:** While social media allows dialect use in informal contexts (e.g., comedic skits), public figures face criticism for employing non-standard forms. One viral comment chastised an influencer: "With your platform, you should use proper Kazakh" (SMF 37).
2. **Education Systems:** Classroom practices often reinforce this hierarchy, as evidenced by Interviewee 4's recollection of teachers dismissing their Western dialect as "uneducated."
3. **Media Landscapes:** News programming's exclusive use of the standard variety further marginalizes dialects, narrowing perceptions of "acceptable" Kazakh.

These patterns align with Smagulova's (2019) warning about ideology-driven marginalization. Crucially, the systematic privileging of the standard language risks accelerating dialect loss while undermining multilingualism initiatives. When institutions—from schools to media outlets—treat regional varieties as deficient, they inadvertently suppress linguistic heritage and constrain identity expression.

Toward Inclusive Language Practices

Combating standard language ideology demands a multipronged approach that:

- Validates dialectal legitimacy through public awareness campaigns,

- Integrates linguistic diversity into school curricula and media representation, and
- Creates institutional safeguards for regional varieties (McKinney & Hoggan, 2022).

Practical steps might include:

- Educational reforms teaching dialect histories alongside the standard Kazakh language
- Media initiatives spotlighting creative uses of non-standard varieties (e.g., Aqyn poetry slams featuring Southern Kazakh)
- Policy measures protecting dialect speakers from discrimination

These efforts could cultivate what Saiegh-Haddad, Laks and McBride, (2022) term "pluralistic diglossia"—where diverse varieties coexist functionally rather than hierarchically.

This study confirms the Northeastern dialect's enduring prestige in Kazakhstan, though digital spaces show growing dialect appreciation (Dovchin, 2022). Three key findings emerge:

1. Persistent Hierarchies: Soviet-era standardization still influences perceptions of "correct" Kazakh (Baskakov, 1962; Fierman, 2006; Johanson, 2013), particularly in education and formal employment.
2. Digital Dualities: While social media enables dialect celebration (e.g., #MyDialectChallenge trends), algorithmic biases favor standard content (Tagg, 2023).
3. Inclusive Pathways: Pilot programs like Shymkent's "Dialect Awareness Week" demonstrate how institutional support can reduce linguistic stigma (Nurgazina, 2021).

Ultimately, valuing Kazakhstan's dialectal richness requires moving beyond tolerance to active celebration—where a news anchor's Western accent or a textbook's Northern idiom carries equal prestige. As participant A.B. (Interview 12) poignantly noted, "Our words carry our ancestors' wisdom; no dialect is 'broken'." This mindset shift, supported by policy and practice, could transform linguistic diversity from a challenge into a national asset.

5.3.2 Linguistic Prejudice in Education and Employment

The study identifies linguistic discrimination against non-standard Kazakh dialect speakers in education and workplaces, limiting opportunities and harming well-being. Survey data show 31.5% of respondents felt compelled to alter their speech for credibility, while 42% feared dialect-based judgment, indicating widespread linguistic insecurity (see Table 3). This issue may stem from the standard Kazakh dominance in schools, where educators—often unconsciously—favor standard speakers and underestimate dialect users (Baugh, 2000). Such bias can create a self-fulfilling cycle: students perceived as less competent due to dialect may perform below potential, reinforcing inequities (Pavlenko, 2008).

Linguistic bias in education ranges from subtle corrections (e.g., pronunciation) to overt acts like grade penalties or exclusion. Interviewee 4 reported frequent corrections for Western dialect features, fostering shame and self-doubt. Likewise, Interviewee 11 faced peer mockery over a Southern accent during a presentation, reducing their class participation (see Appendix B). Such experiences damage self-esteem, often resulting in academic disengagement.

Standard language prioritization in curricula and exams further marginalizes non-standard speakers (García & Lin, 2017, p. 121). Notably, 19% of surveyed students encountered dialect-based criticism—a trend now extending to digital classrooms via cyberbullying (Tomkins et al., 2018). These barriers systematically limit equitable educational access.

Linguistic Discrimination in Employment Settings

Employment-related linguistic prejudice frequently occurs through linguistic profiling, where hiring managers evaluate candidates based on dialect rather than qualifications (Byrd, 2024). Survey data confirm this pattern, with 19% of participants reporting derogatory remarks about

their Kazakh dialects. Qualitative interviews revealed workplace mockery of non-standard speech, demonstrating how linguistic bias fosters discriminatory environments.

These practices systematically disadvantage dialect speakers, restricting career advancement regardless of competency (Smagulova, 2015). Digital platforms exacerbate this issue: SMF 42 and SMF 65 contained comments dismissing Southern/Western dialects as "unprofessional," with one user asserting regional accents barred access to desirable positions (see Appendix C). Such online interactions reinforce stereotypes while causing psychological harm.

Moreover, social media algorithms that favor standard language norms compound this marginalization by reducing the visibility of non-standard dialects. This creates a cyclical pattern where linguistic discrimination persists across both physical and digital professional spaces.

Linguistic discrimination's harm transcends education and employment spheres. As Eckert (2018) notes, dialect bias deeply affects self-perception, mental health, and life opportunities. When speakers internalize negative stereotypes, they often experience shame, self-doubt, and withdrawal from social participation. These psychological impacts frequently diminish educational ambitions and career goals. In Kazakhstan's context—where language intertwines with cultural identity—such prejudice threatens social unity and undermines national cohesion efforts.

This study reveals linguistic prejudice's systemic presence across Kazakhstani institutions. Emerging from historical language policies and socioeconomic disparities, this bias creates tangible barriers to well-being, mobility, and inclusion. The prevailing standard Kazakh ideology, perpetuated through schools and social norms, establishes a linguistic hierarchy that marginalizes dialect speakers. This systemic discrimination appears in both overt exclusion and

subtle daily interactions, ultimately restricting educational and professional advancement (see Figure 2).

Recent studies emphasize that linguistic discrimination affects not only individuals but also societal structures, weakening communal bonds (Collins & Clément, 2014, p. 187). This dynamic proves particularly significant in Kazakhstan, where language serves as a cornerstone of cultural and national identity. Consequently, combating dialect-based prejudice transcends individual equity—it becomes essential for building an inclusive society.

Effectively addressing this bias requires comprehensive interventions:

1. Educational reforms valuing dialectal diversity alongside the standard Kazakh
2. Workplace policies prohibiting accent-based discrimination
3. Public campaigns highlighting linguistics biases' harms

Digital platforms offer unique potential here. By amplifying diverse dialects and facilitating cross-cultural exchange, these tools could help reshape language attitudes nationwide (Karabayeva, 2025). Such measures collectively challenge the prevailing standard language hierarchy while fostering social cohesion.

5.3.3 Social and Psychological Effects of Linguistic Discrimination

The study reveals the harmful social and psychological effects of linguistic discrimination against non-standard Kazakh dialect speakers. The prevalence of standard language ideology, along with negative stereotypes tied to certain dialects, contributes to linguistic insecurity, social marginalization, and lower self-esteem. Similar patterns appear globally, with research showing how linguistic bias affects well-being and opportunities (Eckert, 2018). Online spaces intensify these effects, enabling anonymous harassment tied to dialect use. For example, social

media comments frequently mocked non-standard dialect speakers, using labels like “village Kazakh” or criticizing their pronunciation (see Section 4.3.3).

In SMF 54, a commenter derided a Southern Kazakh creator’s pronunciation of qyz (“girl”), calling it “uneducated.” Likewise, SMF 7 included remarks labeling a Western Kazakh speaker’s accent as “harsh” and “unpleasant.” These cases highlight how social media fosters public linguistic discrimination, reinforcing stereotypes and marginalizing non-standard dialects.

Linguistic Insecurity and Its Consequences

Linguistic insecurity—marked by anxiety, self-doubt, and perceived inadequacy in one’s language use—was a recurring theme in participant interviews. Speakers of regional dialects frequently worried about being judged as less educated or competent due to their speech. For instance, a Western Kazakh participant noted, “I always feel nervous speaking Kazakh in Almaty. People might think I’m uneducated because of my accent” (Interviewee 12). Such insecurities often resulted in self-censorship, social withdrawal, and reduced public engagement.

These patterns were evident in multiple accounts. Interviewee 8 reported avoiding class discussions for fear of criticism about their Southern accent, while Interviewee 15 skipped social events where the standard Kazakh dominated, feeling their dialect was “not good enough.” Crucially, this insecurity extends to education and careers, as individuals may withhold contributions in standard-language settings. Internalized stereotypes can create a self-fulfilling cycle; for example, students may underperform academically if convinced their dialect is inferior (Eckert, 2018).

The survey data reveal widespread linguistic insecurity among young Kazakh speakers, with 42% of respondents expressing concern about dialect-based judgment and 31.5% reporting pressure to modify their speech for social acceptance. These results underscore how linguistic prejudice fosters exclusionary environments for non-standard dialect speakers.

This pattern aligns with Bourdieu's (1991, p. 52) concept of symbolic violence, where dominant language norms are unconsciously adopted, perpetuating the marginalization of linguistic diversity. Such marginalization extends beyond overt discrimination to systemic erasure—evident in the minimal representation of regional dialects in media and public forums (Nguyen, 2021, p. 211).

The effects of linguistic prejudice reach beyond personal encounters, fostering systemic marginalization that reinforces social stratification and weakens communal bonds. When particular dialects face stigmatization, intergroup communication barriers emerge, potentially fueling social divisions (Collins & Clément, 2014, p. 186). This dynamic not only threatens Kazakhstan's linguistic diversity but also prompts speakers of non-standard varieties to suppress their native speech patterns—a phenomenon observed among young Kazakhs facing educational and professional disadvantages due to dialect bias.

Such linguistic assimilation carries profound cultural costs. Regional dialects encode distinct worldviews and ancestral ties; their attrition risks severing intergenerational knowledge transmission and homogenizing cultural expression. As these unique speech forms disappear, so too do the alternative perspectives and community identities they sustain—an irreversible loss for Kazakhstan's sociocultural fabric.

Addressing linguistic prejudice in Kazakhstan requires a concerted effort to challenge the dominance of the standard Kazakh while validating the richness of all regional dialects. This can be achieved through educational reforms that foster dialect awareness, media campaigns

highlighting the cultural value of linguistic diversity, and robust anti-discrimination policies safeguarding speakers' rights (Nguyen, 2021). Equally crucial are digital initiatives combatting online harassment and cultivating inclusive virtual spaces for dialect expression. The study demonstrates how standard language ideology perpetuates systemic barriers, with linguistic insecurity manifesting through both overt bias and subtle exclusion. These changes yield far-reaching consequences: restricted opportunities for non-standard dialect speakers, gradual erosion of Kazakhstan's intangible cultural heritage, and frayed social cohesion due to communication divides (Collins & Clément, 2014). Ultimately, these findings compellingly argue for reconceptualizing the nation's linguistic diversity as a collective strength rather than a marker of deficiency.

Emerging research confirms the psychological toll of linguistic bias, with Fleming and Ansaldo (2019, p. 11) documenting heightened stress, anxiety, and depression among youth facing dialect discrimination. These findings highlight the critical need to dismantle the standard Kazakh hegemony through initiatives that validate linguistic diversity across educational, digital, and social spheres.

Effective solutions demand collaborative action. Educators could integrate regional dialects into curricula, while the media might spotlight their cultural significance. Policy reforms should prohibit language-based discrimination, and community programs could foster intergenerational dialect transmission. Such measures would help transform Kazakhstan's linguistic landscape—not by eliminating the standard language, but by positioning it as one thread in the nation's rich tapestry of expression (Smagulova, 2015). When speakers of all varieties feel valued, the resulting inclusivity strengthens both individual well-being and collective identity.

5.3.4 Strategies for Addressing Linguistic Prejudice

To foster linguistic diversity and reduce linguistic prejudice in Kazakhstan, interventions must target underlying causes while fostering inclusivity. The study indicates that educational programs, media representation, policy reforms, and digital platforms may significantly influence dialect perceptions and support diversity.

Educational Interventions

Schools are pivotal in countering standard language ideologies and encouraging dialectal appreciation. Integrating dialect awareness into curricula at all educational levels may help students recognize the historical and social forces shaping Kazakhstan's linguistic landscape, fostering respect for dialects as cultural assets (Bahry, 2021). Practical strategies include:

- **Historical & Cultural Lessons:** Examining dialectal evolution, distinctive features (e.g., vocabulary, grammar), and their societal roles.
- **Community Engagement:** Activities like interviewing elders to document local dialects, bridging generational knowledge gaps.
- **Multimodal Resources:** Literature, music, and media in varied dialects to normalize linguistic variation.

Survey data reveal strong fluency in primary dialects (91.4%), suggesting students' existing linguistic knowledge can serve as a foundation for such initiatives.

Effective teacher preparation programs are critical for advancing linguistic diversity in education. When educators develop skills to foster inclusive learning environments—where students' varied linguistic backgrounds are respected—schools can challenge systemic biases that sustain dialect-based discrimination (García & Lin, 2017, p. 127). Key training components should include:

- **Dialect Awareness:** Helping teachers identify and value students' linguistic diversity while avoiding stereotypes about non-standard varieties.
- **Pedagogical Support:** Providing tools to design culturally responsive lessons that leverage students' full linguistic repertoires.

These priorities reflect Kaul's (2013) findings on how dialect education fosters tolerance, underscoring the need to frame linguistic differences as assets rather than deficits.

Media's Role in Shaping Dialect Perceptions

Media significantly influences public attitudes toward language varieties. When Kazakh media platforms highlight diverse dialects authentically, they can counter stereotypes while promoting linguistic appreciation (Karabayeva, 2025). Practical approaches include:

- **Mainstream Media:** Documentaries and dramas that feature dialectal richness
- **Digital Platforms:** Social media spaces for dialect communities to exchange experiences

However, media can also reinforce linguistic prejudices (Nguyen, 2021, p. 216), necessitating critical media literacy to identify and address such biases.

Language Policy and Digital Solutions for Dialect Diversity

Strategic language policies can significantly advance linguistic equity in Kazakhstan. By formally recognizing all Kazakh dialect speakers' rights, such measures may reduce discrimination while fostering inclusion (Tlepbergen, Akzhigitova and Zabrodskaia, 2023).

Key policy approaches include:

- **Institutional Support:** Sanctioning dialect use in education and cultural programming

- Resource Development: Creating dialect-inclusive materials (dictionaries, textbooks)
- Anti-Discrimination Measures: Protecting speakers in employment and public domains

Digital innovations offer complementary solutions:

- Documentation Tools: Online dictionaries and interactive dialect maps
- Learning Platforms: Apps incorporating regional variations
- Community Engagement: Social media campaigns highlighting dialectal heritage

However, as Saini (2025) cautions, such efforts must balance standardization with preservation to avoid unintended linguistic erosion.

Challenges and Pathways in Kazakh Dialect Promotion

While Kazakhstan's strong standard language ideology presents obstacles (Walsh, 2021), emerging trends suggest potential pathways forward. The study reveals growing dialect awareness among youth, particularly through digital platforms that challenge linguistic stereotypes (Stæhr et al., 2022). This creates opportunities for collaborative action:

- Educational Reform: Curriculum adjustments and teacher training to value dialectal diversity
- Media Engagement: Positive representation of regional varieties in broadcast and digital media
- Policy Initiatives: Legal recognition of dialect speakers' rights across social domains

As Clopper (2021) notes, such multi-sector efforts could gradually shift perceptions, though institutional biases remain entrenched. The key challenge lies in balancing standard language preservation with regional variety acceptance—a tension requiring careful negotiation.

Recent studies highlight community involvement as crucial for successful dialect preservation. Smagulova (2019, p. 751) found that when local speakers help develop dialect materials and facilitate intergenerational knowledge transfer, it strengthens both usage rates and cultural pride. This grassroots approach—combined with institutional support—could enhance Kazakhstan's linguistic diversity despite existing challenges.

Three key strategies emerge:

1. **Participatory Resource Development:** Engaging communities in creating dialect dictionaries and learning materials
2. **Intergenerational Programs:** Initiatives connecting youth with elder dialect speakers
3. **Digital-Community Hybrid Models:** Platforms blending traditional knowledge with modern technology

As the data suggest, such efforts might gradually shift language attitudes while respecting the standard language norms (Babazade, 2024). The path forward requires balancing institutional resources with local linguistic expertise—a complex but achievable goal for Kazakhstan's multilingual landscape.

5.4 Technology's Influence on Dialect Use and Perception

5.4.1 Social Media's Role in Shaping Linguistic Identities

Social media has become a key space where young Kazakhs form and express linguistic identities. Features like multimedia sharing, real-time interaction, and diverse online networks

enable new language practices (see Interview Data). The study's social media analysis and interviews show how these platforms help users negotiate identity in digital contexts.

A major finding involves imagined communities—online groups built around shared dialect use. Data revealed networks where users discuss regional identity, share content, and reinforce pride in their dialects (Reyes, 2018, p. 100). These spaces foster belonging, mirroring interview responses where participants linked social media use to regional connections (e.g., *şalbar* vs. *sym*). While prior work emphasized offline divides (Beisenova, 2013), digital interaction blurs these boundaries (Table 1).

Social media enables young Kazakhs to explore linguistic styles that may be restricted offline. The relative anonymity and informal nature of digital communication encourage freer dialect use, reducing fears of judgment—especially for speakers of marginalized dialects (Interview Data). These platforms foster linguistic innovation, allowing users to creatively express identity through non-standard forms (Eisenstein, 2017).

Key mechanisms include:

- **Curated Personas:** Profile customization (e.g., bios, shared content) lets users craft distinct online linguistic identities, diverging from offline norms.
- **Strategic Dialect Features:** Vocabulary or pronunciation choices signal group affiliation or desired traits. Some exaggerate features for humor or authenticity, while others code-switch to highlight multilingualism (Clopper, 2021).
- **Hashtag Communities:** Tags like *#shymkent* (denoting southern Kazakhstan) connect users regionally, reinforcing shared identity. Such markers amplify virtual solidarity, aligning with the concept of imagined communities introduced earlier in the dissertation.

Memes - humorous, widely shared digital content - serve as tools for dialect identity expression. These often incorporate region-specific language and humor, fostering in-group solidarity while challenging stereotypes (Interview Data). For instance, a meme using batys (western) dialect phrases might reinforce shared identity among speakers while subverting negative perceptions (Clopper, 2021).

However, social media's visibility also perpetuates dialect discrimination. Analysis revealed overt prejudice in comments like "Why speak like a villager? Learn proper Kazakh!" (SMF 58) and descriptions of Western dialect as "harsh" (SMF 68). Such instances highlight how digital platforms can reinforce linguistic hierarchies, potentially marginalizing non-standard varieties (Eisenstein, 2017, p. 45).

While acknowledging these challenges, the data indicate social media's potential to empower young Kazakhs in reclaiming linguistic diversity and resisting dominant language norms (Beisembayeva et al., 2013). These platforms facilitate dialect celebration, fostering community among marginalized speakers. Cross-dialect interaction on digital spaces may also enhance mutual appreciation of linguistic variation—a finding consistent with broader sociolinguistic research.

Social media presents a paradoxical space for Kazakh dialect identity. While enabling regional identity expression and community-building through features like qobyz (traditional instrument) memes or jastar (youth) slang networks, it simultaneously risks reinforcing linguistic hierarchies. Crucially, these platforms allow dialect features to transform from communication tools into celebrated identity markers—a phenomenon observed in global language revitalization efforts (Tsunoda, 2006). This duality suggests that with strategic mitigation of negative impacts, digital spaces could promote more equitable linguistic environments.

The digital environment presents dual pressures: while enabling dialect expression, social media's anonymity and reach may reinforce stereotypes and linguistic discrimination (Interview Data). Algorithmic systems within different social media platforms could also unintentionally elevate certain dialects, potentially creating new forms of linguistic hierarchy (Markl, 2022).

These findings highlight technology's complex role in language identity formation. To harness social media's potential for celebrating qazaqşa dialektter (Kazakh dialects), stakeholders must address its exclusionary risks. Subsequent research should examine:

1. Long-term digital effects on dialect vitality
2. Strategies to counter algorithmic bias in linguistic representation
3. Best practices for inclusive digital language policies.

5.4.2 Online Communities and Dialectal Diversity Preservation

The findings underscore how online platforms help sustain and celebrate Kazakh dialectal diversity. Instagram and TikTok, for instance, serve as digital spaces where young Kazakhs form imagined communities (Anderson, 2006)—groups connected not by geography but shared language and identity, as noted earlier. This aligns with Grenoble and Whaley's (2005) work on digital spaces aiding minority language preservation. Different platforms enable distinct modes of interaction, reinforcing these virtual networks.

Online communities transform dialectal features into celebrated markers of cultural identity (Alshehri, 2025). The hashtag #ShymkentCity, referencing southern Kazakhstan, exemplifies this trend on Instagram and TikTok, where users proudly showcase Southern dialect traits (e.g., *süyikimdi* [cute], *qushaqtag'ym kelip tur* [give a hug]; SMF 33, 56, 62). Such content sparks engagement among speakers, reinforcing shared identity—a pattern aligning with survey data:

91.4% of respondents reported high fluency in their primary dialect, and 70% used it consistently with friends (see Appendix B).

These practices challenge the standard Kazakh dominance by validating regional varieties. Hashtags like #regionalpride and #dialectlove create inclusive digital spaces where dialectal diversity thrives. As (Zappavigna, 2015) notes, such visibility can shift language ideologies, though hybrid forms often emerge.

Online communities facilitate cultural exchange and dialect transmission, enhancing collective understanding of Kazakh heritage. Users share regional customs and histories through dialectal expressions, often leading to novel linguistic forms when speakers from different areas interact (Pennycook, 2010). TikTok exemplifies this phenomenon, with viral challenges and humor rooted in specific dialects (qushaqtag'ym kelip tur [hug me] trends) fostering cross-regional engagement. Interview data confirm these patterns, with participants emphasizing social media's role in regional connection.

These platforms prove particularly vital for marginalized dialects lacking institutional support. Digital spaces enable speakers to preserve endangered varieties, countering linguistic assimilation. As Grenoble and Whaley (2005) note, such grassroots efforts can significantly impact language revitalization. The participatory nature of social media - where 72% of surveyed users reported sharing dialect content weekly - creates inclusive environments that challenge the standard Kazakh dominance while celebrating linguistic diversity.

While online spaces celebrate dialectal diversity, they simultaneously reinforce linguistic inequalities. The study documented multiple cases of dialect-based discrimination, where users faced ridicule for non-standard speech patterns. For example, one commenter dismissed a Western Kazakh accent as "rough and uneducated" (SMF 5), while others questioned Southern

speakers' intelligence based on dialect features (SMF 18). Such anonymous interactions appear to encourage prejudiced remarks rarely expressed offline.

Platform algorithms may unintentionally compound these issues. TikTok and Instagram's content prioritization systems tend to favor the standard Kazakh, potentially marginalizing regional varieties. As Sun et al. (2021) notes, this creates digital hierarchies where certain dialects gain more visibility than others. These findings suggest that despite their democratizing potential, online communities still reflect and sometimes amplify real-world linguistic biases (Alshehri, 2025).

The data indicate that online platforms significantly support Kazakh dialect preservation and celebration (Grenoble & Whaley, 2005). These digital environments enable cultural exchange and identity expression through regional language use, potentially revitalizing marginalized varieties. For instance, hashtags like #ShymkentDialect and viral sözder (words) challenges showcase Southern Kazakh features, fostering inclusive linguistic spaces (Brown, 2018).

However, these benefits coexist with risks of digital discrimination. As observed in SMF case studies, some users face ridicule for non-standard speech, echoing offline linguistic prejudices (Collins & Clément, 2014). This dual nature underscores the need for continued research, particularly regarding youth engagement. Young Kazakhs appear central to shaping the language's digital future through what Anderson (2006) termed imagined communities—groups united by shared dialect practices rather than geography.

Digital Dialect Dynamics in Kazakh Online Spaces

Online platforms facilitate cultural exchange through dialect use, enabling users to share regional traditions and histories. Such interactions often produce novel linguistic forms, enhancing both language vitality and cross-dialect comprehension. These findings support

Sharipova's (2020) conclusion that digital engagement fosters innovation, particularly among youth speakers of different varieties.

Nevertheless, these benefits coexist with challenges. Anonymous online environments sometimes amplify linguistic discrimination, as seen in prejudiced social media commentary. Furthermore, platform algorithms may unintentionally privilege certain dialects, perpetuating linguistic inequalities (Sun et al., 2021).

Consequently, while digital communities clearly support dialect preservation, proactive measures remain necessary. Cultivating linguistic tolerance and auditing algorithmic biases could help maximize these platforms' potential. As Sharipova (2020) suggests, balanced approaches may best sustain Kazakhstan's linguistic diversity in the digital age.

5.4.3 Social Media's Dual Role in Reinforcing and Challenging Dialect Stereotypes

The social media analysis highlights these platforms' contradictory effects on Kazakh dialect perceptions. While they can reinforce stereotypes and negative dialect attitudes, they also offer spaces for marginalized voices to counter such biases (Eisenstein, 2017, p. 379). This aligns with findings that social media simultaneously reflects and influences linguistic attitudes, acting as both a mirror and a driver of change (Sun, 2020, p. 132).

Social media's anonymity and scale often encourage discriminatory language that might otherwise remain unspoken (Suler, 2004). Such behavior reinforces harmful stereotypes, particularly toward non-standard dialect speakers. For instance, videos featuring Southern dialect speakers frequently attract derogatory remarks about pronunciation, linking these variants to rurality or low education (Survey Data: 32% observed such stereotypes).

Respondents cited recurring tropes equating dialects like the Western variant with aggression or lack of sophistication (e.g., "She sounds like she's from the village").

The online disinhibition effect (Suler, 2004) explains this phenomenon: perceived anonymity reduces social accountability. Survey results underscore its impact—19% of respondents faced dialect-based criticism, while 42% feared linguistic judgment. These patterns reveal how digital platforms amplify real-world inequalities through unchecked bias.

While social media perpetuates stereotypes, it simultaneously enables resistance to linguistic prejudice. Content creators increasingly leverage these platforms to celebrate regional dialects, fostering cultural identity and community solidarity (Interviewee 11, 2023). Such practices contest standard language ideologies by normalizing non-standard varieties. For instance, a Western Kazakhstan Instagram influencer's humorous use of dialectal terms has cultivated positive engagement, with followers expressing regional pride (see Appendix B for comment examples).

This aligns with Interviewee 11's account: "Seeing others appreciate my Southern dialect online boosted my confidence to use it elsewhere" (p. 7). The validation described reflects social media's capacity to transform linguistic stigma into cultural capital. Furthermore, digital discourse spaces facilitate metalinguistic discussions where users actively deconstruct stereotypes, promoting nuanced understanding of Kazakhstan's dialectal diversity (Akimova, 2021).

Social media's influence on language attitudes presents a paradox: while reinforcing prejudices, these platforms simultaneously enable dialectal reclamation (see Figure 2). Young Kazakhs' engagement with these competing forces may determine the trajectory of Kazakh dialects in digital spaces—and beyond. This underscores the urgency of fostering digital literacy,

equipping youth to critically evaluate and shape more inclusive linguistic ecosystems (Nguyen, 2021).

Crucially, online discourse spills into offline realities. Positive dialect representations on Instagram or TikTok may enhance real-world acceptance, whereas amplified stereotypes could deepen existing biases (Karabayeva, 2025). Consider how *jalpı qazaqşa* [standard Kazakh] proponents and *oblystyk dialektter* [regional dialect] creators clash in comment sections, their debates reshaping language hierarchies (Appendix C).

This online-offline interplay demands deeper investigation—particularly regarding how individual experiences, social networks, and national identity politics converge. By mapping young Kazakhs' digital and physical dialect practices, this study illuminates these complex interactions while advancing Kazakhstan's sociolinguistic research agenda.

Social media platforms simultaneously threaten and empower Kazakh dialectal diversity. These digital spaces amplify harmful stereotypes while also enabling users to challenge linguistic prejudices (Jumagaliyeva, 2021). This contradiction reveals how individual choices, social expectations, and platform features interact to shape contemporary language attitudes.

Recent findings suggest social media exposure can reshape linguistic hierarchies, particularly among youth (Jumagaliyeva, 2021, p. 154). When young Kazakhs encounter varied dialects online—from *şıǵıs dialekti* [eastern dialect] to *soltüstik söilem* [northern speech]—traditional prestige norms often weaken. Yet without intervention, these platforms may simply reinforce existing power imbalances.

Three strategic responses emerge from this analysis:

1. Developing critical digital literacy programs that address linguistic bias
2. Supporting content creators who showcase dialectal richness

3. Advocating for platform policies that curb hate speech while protecting linguistic diversity

Through such measures, Kazakhstan's digital spaces could transform from battlegrounds into showcases for the nation's linguistic heritage—where the standard language and regional variants coexist as equally valued forms of cultural expression.

5.5 Theoretical Implications and Broader Significance

5.5.1 Contributions to Sociolinguistic Theories of Language Variation and Change

This study advances sociolinguistic theories by presenting empirical data from an underexplored setting: Kazakh millennials' dialect use and perceptions in digital spaces. The results clarify connections between language, identity, and social context, emphasizing the fluidity of linguistic practices in modern Kazakhstan.

Accommodation Theory and Audience Design: The findings reinforce and expand accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1991), showing how young Kazakhs modify language use based on audience and purpose. Frequent code-switching between Kazakh and Russian, along with context-dependent dialect choices, underscores language's adaptability in social negotiation. For example, survey data indicated that while 91.4% of participants rated high fluency in their primary dialect, 52% seldom used it formally, favoring the standard Kazakh in such settings (p. 45). Additionally, accommodation strategies extend to digital communication, where code-switching and hybrid dialects foster rapport across diverse audiences (Knooihuizen, 2023).

Language Ideologies and the Linguistic Market: This study expands on theories of language ideologies (Silverstein, 1992) by uncovering the complex, often conflicting attitudes young Kazakhs hold toward dialects. While the standard Kazakh remains dominant—evidenced by its preference in formal settings and lingering stereotypes about regional varieties—participants also expressed growing appreciation for dialectal diversity. One participant captured this tension: "I know speaking standard Kazakh is key for success—it's the language of education and business" (p. 56). Such ambivalence reflects how language ideologies are negotiated amid rapid sociolinguistic change, particularly in digital spaces (Beisembayeva et al., 2013).

Bourdieu's (1991) linguistic market framework helps explain these dynamics, where dialects hold shifting social and economic value. However, digital media enables youth to reshape traditional hierarchies. For instance, online communities celebrating specific dialects (e.g., *şalbar* humor groups) grant non-standard varieties new visibility, potentially increasing their linguistic capital (Alshehri, 2025). This aligns with findings that young Kazakhs use social media to challenge entrenched language norms (Eid, 2024).

Social Identity Theory and Linguistic Practice: This research supports social identity theory (Hogg, 2016), demonstrating how Kazakh youth employ dialects in digital spaces to mark group belonging and affirm cultural identity. The data reveal tensions between regional linguistic markers and standard language adoption, illustrating the fluid process of identity formation in Kazakhstan's multilingual context (see Figure 2). Digital communication proves particularly revealing, as participants adapt their language use across platforms - employing regional variants in peer interactions while favoring the standard Kazakh in professional contexts.

The survey data underscore this strategic identity negotiation: 68% expressed pride in their regional dialect, yet only 23% reported using it regularly in formal settings. This pattern suggests individuals consciously modulate linguistic performance based on perceived audience expectations. Such findings align with recent work on hybrid identities in post-Soviet spaces (Kuzhabekova, 2021), while expanding understanding of how digital environments complicate traditional identity-performance frameworks.

Polyphonous Identities in Digital Spaces: Blommaert's (2010) concept of polyphonous identities proves valuable for analyzing Kazakh youth's digital language use. The data reveal how individuals strategically employ varied linguistic registers across contexts. Consider TikTok creator SMF15, who alternated between the standard Kazakh and Southern dialect features depending on the audience (p. 89). As Interviewee 2 noted: "With friends I use slang, but with professors - only proper Kazakh. It's like having multiple voices" (see Appendix B).

These patterns align with Daulay, Nst, Ningsih, Berutu, Irham and Mahmudah's, (2024) findings about identity negotiation through digital code-switching. Participants demonstrated remarkable linguistic flexibility, adapting:

- Lexical choices by platform (e.g., Russian loanwords on VKontakte vs. Kazakh terms on Instagram)
- Dialectal features based on audience demographics
- Formality registers between professional and personal networks

Such practices underscore how digital environments enable identity multiplicity - what Blommaert terms "voice" (2010, p. 34). Where traditional sociolinguistics framed identity as relatively fixed, these findings show young Kazakhs dynamically constructing polyphonous selves through deliberate language selection. The Southern dialect's use in comedy skits versus

the standard Kazakh in educational content (observed in 78% of sampled videos) particularly illustrates this strategic identity performance.

This study advances sociolinguistic research by examining Kazakh millennials' digital-era dialect use—an underexplored context that challenges conventional theories. The findings extend three key frameworks:

1. Accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1991), through evidence of strategic code-switching
2. Language ideology analysis (Silverstein, 1992), revealing tensions between the standard Kazakh and regional variants
3. Social identity theory (Hogg, 2016), showing identity negotiation through platform-specific language choices

As Tagg (2023) observes, digital spaces both reinforce and disrupt linguistic hierarchies. Our data confirm this duality: while 62% of participants reported pressure to use the standard Kazakh professionally, 78% actively employed dialect features in peer-oriented platforms like TikTok (see Table 3). This aligns with what Interviewee 7 termed "digital bilingualism"—the ability to fluidly adapt language to different online contexts.

Key implications emerge:

- Policy: Current education frameworks may undervalue dialectal competence
- Research: Longitudinal studies should track digital media's evolving impact
- Practice: Digital platforms offer new avenues for dialect preservation

The study ultimately reframes linguistic identity as performative rather than fixed, particularly in Kazakhstan's evolving mediascape (Smagulova, 2019). Where traditional models posited

stable language identities, these findings reveal millennials' strategic, context-aware language curation—what we term Hybrid Kazakh Dialect practices

5.5.2 Implications for Language Policy and Education in Kazakhstan

This study shows that young Kazakhs' use of the standard Kazakh and regional dialects is more complex than a simple prestige-stigma divide. While standard language remains tied to formal and professional contexts (Bourdieu, 1991), dialects persist strongly in informal spaces—94.3% of participants reported using them daily, and 91.4% claimed high fluency. Yet, dialect use drops sharply in formal settings (52% rarely or never use them), reflecting awareness of linguistic capital and societal norms.

These findings call for inclusive language policies and education reforms. Below, three key areas are addressed: (1) educational initiatives, (2) language planning, and (3) digital media strategies to promote respect for all Kazakh varieties.

Promoting Linguistic Diversity and Inclusion in Education

Survey data reveal persistent standard language bias, with 31.5% of respondents reporting pressure to alter their speech. These findings highlight the urgency of educational reforms that value linguistic diversity and counter dialect stigmatization. A multi-level approach—spanning primary to university education—should integrate dialect awareness into curricula, emphasizing the historical, linguistic, and cultural significance of Kazakh dialects. Key strategies include:

1. **Curriculum Development:** Lessons should showcase dialectal diversity, comparing features like vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar across regions.
2. **Classroom Activities:** Students could document local dialects through interviews with family or community elders, linking language to social history.

3. Cultural Integration: Literature, music, and media in varied dialects should be included to normalize linguistic variation.

Teacher training must also evolve. Workshops on inclusive pedagogy, implicit bias, and linguistic diversity (Bahry, 2020) can help educators foster equitable classrooms. Such exposure, as research shows, boosts students' cultural awareness and linguistic adaptability.

Language Policy and Planning Recommendations

The study's findings indicate necessary revisions to Kazakhstan's language policies. Current frameworks should formally recognize and protect linguistic rights for all Kazakh speakers, regardless of dialect variation. Proposed measures include:

1. Legal Revisions: Amend language laws to mandate inclusion of regional dialects in:
 - Educational curricula (dialectal literature and cultural materials)
 - Public media (regional programming featuring local vocabulary)
2. Anti-Discrimination Measures: Implement policies prohibiting dialect-based discrimination in:
 - Employment
 - Education access
 - Public services
3. Resource Development: Create comprehensive linguistic materials documenting dialectal variations, including:
 - Comparative dictionaries
 - Descriptive grammars
 - Region-specific teaching materials

Survey data reveal conflicting perceptions about dialect prestige, suggesting the need for public campaigns challenging standard language bias (Bahry, 2020). These initiatives could:

- Showcase dialect diversity through cultural programming
- Offer transitional language support for standard Kazakh acquisition
- Promote regional identity through media representation

Such policy changes would help normalize dialect use while maintaining the standard Kazakh for formal contexts, creating a more inclusive linguistic environment.

Leveraging Digital Media for Linguistic Diversity

Digital platforms significantly influence language attitudes among young Kazakhs, presenting dual potential: they may reinforce dialect stereotypes or serve as tools for promoting linguistic diversity (Hutson, Ellsworth & Ellsworth, (2024). To maximize positive outcomes, policymakers should:

1. Strategic Partnerships: Collaborate with social media influencers to create content celebrating dialectal variations, such as:
 - Regional vocabulary showcases (e.g., *şalbar* vs. urban equivalents)
 - Dialect-focused storytelling campaigns
2. Community Building: Support online spaces where dialect speakers can:
 - Share linguistic heritage
 - Discuss hybrid language forms emerging in digital contexts
3. Content Moderation: Work with platforms to:
 - Elevate content demonstrating dialect richness
 - Reduce visibility of discriminatory language content

The study suggests digital media, when strategically utilized alongside educational reforms (see Section 5.5.2), could help normalize dialect use in public discourse. This aligns with findings showing youth increasingly adopt hybrid forms online (Bahry, 2021).

Implementation Framework

A three-pronged approach appears most effective:

- Education: Dialect awareness in curricula
- Policy: Anti-discrimination protections
- Digital Strategy: Targeted media campaigns

Such coordinated efforts may help reconcile the standard Kazakh preservation with regional dialect vitality, fostering inclusive national identity construction.

5.5.3 Implications for Multilingual Societies Worldwide

This study's examination of dialectal variation among Kazakh millennials and university students yields insights applicable to global multilingual contexts. Three key implications emerge:

1. Standard Language Ideology Reassessment

The research reveals persistent yet contested standard language ideologies in Kazakhstan, mirroring struggles in other linguistically diverse nations. While the standard Kazakh maintains formal prestige, survey data show only 14% of young respondents endorse hierarchical dialect perceptions. This challenges assumptions about youth adherence to traditional linguistic hierarchies (Hamed & Mohamed, 2023).

2. Youth as Linguistic Change Agents

Findings suggest younger generations increasingly negotiate rather than passively

accept language norms. Their hybrid language practices - using both regional dialects and standard forms situationally - reflect global patterns observed in multilingual urban youth communities (Blommaert, 2018).

3. Methodological Transferability

The study's mixed-methods approach, combining attitudinal surveys with ethnographic observation, offers a replicable framework for investigating:

- Dialect prestige dynamics
- Generational shifts in language ideologies
- Identity construction through linguistic hybridity

These findings particularly illuminate contexts where national language policies intersect with regional identities, such as:

- Post-colonial nations establishing new standard varieties
- Immigrant communities maintaining heritage languages
- Indigenous language revitalization movements

The Kazakh case demonstrates how digital globalization accelerates dialect contact, creating new hybrid forms that challenge traditional sociolinguistic classifications.

The study's findings regarding digital media's influence on Kazakh dialects reveal patterns observable across multilingual contexts worldwide. Three significant phenomena emerge:

1. Online Dialect Communities

Digital platforms enable formation of niche linguistic communities, mirroring patterns seen in:

- Indigenous language revitalization efforts (e.g., Navajo Twitter communities)

- Diaspora groups maintaining heritage languages through WhatsApp networks
(Lee, 2022, p. 160)

2. Code-Switching as Identity Navigation

The study documented code-switching in 42% of analyzed social media content, reflecting global trends where bilingual users:

- Signal multiple group affiliations
- Negotiate complex social identities
- Create new hybrid language forms

3. Dual Potential of Digital Spaces

While social media can reinforce stereotypes, they also enable:

- Crowdsourced language preservation (e.g., Māori TikTok challenges)
- Counter-narratives challenging linguistic hierarchies
- Grassroots standardization of previously marginalized varieties

These dynamics suggest digital platforms are becoming crucial sites for:

- Spontaneous language planning
- Intergenerational transmission
- Dialect contacts and innovation

The Kazakh case study particularly illuminates how technologically mediated communication accelerates processes of:

- Dialect leveling
- New register formation
- Identity performance through linguistic choice

This study reveals how Kazakh millennials actively reshape linguistic norms through their digital practices and dialect usage. Three key findings emerge:

1. Youth as Linguistic Innovators

Survey data show 91.4% of young participants maintain high fluency in regional dialects, using them predominantly (94.3%) in informal contexts. This suggests younger generations simultaneously:

- Preserve traditional speech forms
- Develop new hybrid varieties through digital interaction
- Challenge standard language ideologies in daily practice

2. Digital Platforms as Change Accelerators

Social media provides spaces where young Kazakhs:

- Experiment with code-mixing;
- Create dialect-specific online communities;
- Redefine notions of linguistic prestige;

3. Policy Implications

These behaviors necessitate rethinking language planning approaches to:

- Acknowledge youth-driven changes
- Incorporate digital communication patterns
- Bridge formal/informal language domains

The findings align with global patterns observed in:

- Urban youth vernaculars worldwide
- Heritage language maintenance in diaspora communities
- Indigenous language revitalization movements

Broader Contributions

This research advances understanding of how:

1. Generational differences mediate language change
2. Digital environments transform dialect transmission
3. Youth negotiate between local identities and global connectivity

As Tlepbergen et al. (2023) note, such "bottom-up" linguistic practices often precede institutional recognition, suggesting policymakers should monitor these organic developments.

This study's examination of Kazakh millennials' language practices reveals three universally significant phenomena:

1. Persistent Yet Contested Standard Ideologies

While the standard Kazakh maintains formal prestige, young speakers increasingly challenge hierarchical language valuations. Similar patterns emerge in Vietnam's tonal dialect variations (Nguyen, 2021) and Scandinavian youth's negotiation of regional speech forms.

2. Digital Media as Linguistic Laboratories

Social platforms accelerate:

- Dialect hybridization
- New prestige norms
- Grassroots language planning

3. Youth as Active Agents of Change

The 91.4% dialect fluency rate among participants mirrors global trends where younger generations:

- Maintain heritage varieties

- Create hybrid codes
- Redefine notions of linguistic authenticity

Practical Applications

These findings suggest multilingual societies should:

1. Develop policies recognizing both:
 - Standard varieties' institutional roles
 - Vernacular forms' identity functions
2. Incorporate digital communication patterns into:
 - Language education
 - Cultural preservation efforts
 - Community engagement strategies

As Nguyen (2021, p. 215) observes, such "sociolinguistic reimagining" by youth often precedes formal policy changes, suggesting planners should monitor these organic developments.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Key Findings and Contributions

This study explored Kazakh millennials' and university students' engagement with and perceptions of dialectal variations, particularly in digital contexts. Two central questions guided the research: (1) How do these groups navigate dialectal word choice? and (2) What sociolinguistic perceptions exist around these variations, and how do they manifest digitally?

Using a mixed-methods design—semi-structured interviews, surveys, and social media analysis—the study uncovered key patterns. Participants showed strong fluency in primary dialects, favoring them in informal peer interactions. In contrast, the standard Kazakh dominated formal settings, underscoring how social norms shape language use (O’Neil, 2025). These findings align with accommodation theory, where speakers adapt language to context (Giles & Billings, 2004).

The research uncovered complex attitudes toward dialects, where growing appreciation for linguistic diversity contrasted with enduring prejudice. While many participants valued regional dialects as cultural assets, others faced pressure to adopt the standard Kazakh or encountered criticism for dialect use. This tension underscores the persistence of standard language ideology, signaling a need for initiatives that foster inclusive language practices.

Social media analysis further revealed digital platforms’ dual role: they enable dialect preservation and community-building among young Kazakhs yet also reinforce linguistic stereotypes. These spaces allow users to affirm regional identities but may perpetuate discrimination—a paradox demanding critical platform engagement to advance linguistic equity.

Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

This study advances sociolinguistic research by examining Kazakh millennials' dialect engagement in digital spaces - a previously understudied context. The findings both confirm and expand current theories of language variation, attitudes, and social identity, while revealing the digital sphere's dual role as both obstacle and opportunity for linguistic diversity. Theoretically, it illuminates how online platforms simultaneously sustain and disrupt traditional language hierarchies, exposing contradictions in young Kazakhs' language ideologies as they navigate between regional pride and the standard Kazakh conformity.

Methodologically, the research demonstrates mixed methods' efficacy for sociolinguistic inquiry. Through triangulating interview, survey, and social media data, the study achieves greater nuance than single method approaches permit. This multidimensional analysis not only enhances findings' reliability but also uncovers complex relationships between personal language choices, societal expectations, and digital practices.

Ultimately, by exploring intersections of language, identity, and social context, this work provides crucial insights for Kazakhstan's evolving linguistic landscape - with significant implications for education policy and social transformation in the digital era.

6.2 Implications & Recommendations

This study highlights the necessity for language policy and education in Kazakhstan to adopt an inclusive approach—one that acknowledges the linguistic diversity of Kazakh dialects while confronting standard language ideology and prejudice. The data reveal high self-reported fluency in primary dialects (91.4%) and their predominant use in informal contexts (94.3%), signaling their role in personal and social identity (Putri, 2024). Nevertheless, the preference for standard Kazakh in formal settings, alongside reported linguistic insecurity, suggests a need for interventions fostering inclusivity and countering discriminatory attitudes (Tlepbergen et al., 2023).

Educational Approaches

Schools and universities hold key responsibilities in promoting linguistic awareness and inclusivity. Integrating dialect education into curricula at all levels would help students appreciate the historical, social, and cultural value of dialectal diversity (McKinney & Hoggan, 2022). Practical strategies could include:

- Exposure to dialect variation through literature, media, and interactive exercises, helping students recognize the expressive richness of Kazakh dialects (Karabayeva, 2025).
- Critical reflection on language attitudes, encouraging students to examine and challenge stereotypes (Clopper, 2021).

Teacher training must also evolve. Educators should receive professional development on linguistic diversity, implicit bias, and inclusive pedagogy (Smagulova, 2019). Workshops and practical resources—such as dialect-inclusive lesson plans—could equip teachers to foster classrooms where all dialects are respected (McKinney & Hoggan, 2022).

Language Policy and Planning

These findings carry significant implications for Kazakhstan's language policy framework. Current approaches may benefit from explicit recognition and protection of all Kazakh dialect speakers' linguistic rights. Potential reforms could include:

- Legal revisions permitting regional dialect use in education and media, potentially through localized news programming that celebrates linguistic diversity
- Resource development including comprehensive dialect dictionaries and grammars, coupled with educational materials reflecting authentic dialect variations

Such measures could address what Clopper (2021) terms "standard language bias" while fostering regional identity. The data suggest dialect-inclusive policies might enhance social cohesion without compromising the standard language's official status (see Table 3).

Policymakers could therefore consider:

1. Establishing dialect documentation initiatives
2. Creating media production grants for regional content

3. Implementing teacher training on dialect awareness (Baker-Bell, 2020)

This balanced approach acknowledges Kazakhstan's complex linguistic ecology while meeting constitutional language obligations.

Media and Technology

Digital platforms offer transformative potential for reshaping dialect perceptions in Kazakhstan. While social media often reinforces the standard Kazakh dominance (Karabayeva, 2025), strategic interventions could harness these channels to celebrate linguistic diversity:

1. Influencer partnerships: Cultural organizations collaborating with content creators to showcase regional variants like şalbar dialect humor or sym (urban youth slang) in authentic contexts.
2. Interactive tools: Digital maps visualizing pronunciation among three main dialects and specifically highlighting the differences between Almaty and Shymkent variants, with audio samples, for example.
3. Participatory campaigns: User-generated challenges like #MyKazakhDialect, encouraging creative dialect use in poetry or digital storytelling

The data suggest such approaches could mitigate linguistic stigma while preserving the standard language's official role (see Figure 2). As Lee (2022) notes, technology-mediated dialect exposure appears particularly effective among youth demographics.

Implementation considerations:

- Platform-specific strategies (TikTok vs. Instagram)
- Gamification elements to boost engagement
- Metrics for evaluating attitude shifts (pre/post campaign surveys)

This digital ecosystem approach recognizes both the centrifugal forces of standardization and centripetal pull of regional identity (O'Neil, 2025).

Challenges and Opportunities in Digital Spaces

Digital platforms present both promising avenues for dialect promotion and concerning risks of amplifying linguistic discrimination (Hutson et al., 2021), necessitating a balanced approach. Comprehensive digital literacy initiatives could empower youth to critically analyze dialect representations (Clopper, 2021), while platform interventions like algorithmic adjustments promoting regional variants (e.g., *şalbar* humor) and stricter policies against dialect-based hate speech (Brown, 2018) might help reshape online linguistic ecosystems. Research indicates such multifaceted efforts could reduce prejudice while preserving the standard language's formal functions (see Figure 3), though as Lee (2022) cautions, digital spaces often replicate offline power dynamics requiring equally nuanced solutions. Implementing school programs on media analysis, fostering linguist-tech company partnerships, and conducting regular content moderation audits could collectively advance digital linguistic justice (McKinney & Hoggan, 2022). Some pilot programs are already showing promise in enhancing metalinguistic awareness, reducing stereotype endorsement, and improving inter-dialect communication (Smagulova, 2019).

6.3 Future Directions in Kazakh Dialectology

As previously noted, Kazakhstan's linguistic landscape is undergoing rapid transformation. Globalization, technological advancements, and evolving communication habits create both opportunities and challenges for Kazakh dialect preservation. Understanding these trends—and developing proactive strategies—is essential for safeguarding the language's vitality (Grenoble & Whaley, 2005; Smagulova, 2006).

Shifting Dynamics and Emerging Concerns

Globalization and digital media introduce complex pressures on Kazakh dialects. Growing influence from global languages (e.g., English, Chinese) may accelerate language shift, particularly among youth, risking dialectal erosion (Grenoble & Whaley, 2005, p. 7). Meanwhile, the standard Kazakh, tied to urban and formal contexts, could further marginalize regional varieties (Smagulova, 2006). This reflects Bourdieu's (1991) theory of linguistic capital, where dominant varieties hold superior social prestige.

While digital platforms expand communication opportunities, they also threaten dialectal diversity. Social media disproportionately favors the standard Kazakh, reinforcing linguistic hierarchies and marginalizing non-standard varieties (Nguyen, 2021). Younger generations, influenced by global online communities, may abandon local dialects for homogenized norms—a trend aligned with accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1991). Here, speakers often adopt standardized features to gain social acceptance, accelerating dialect erosion.

Population mobility—within Kazakhstan and internationally—further disrupts regional linguistic boundaries (Fierman, 2013). As mentioned by Doreleijers, Piepers, Backus and Swanenberg (2021) language contact theory explains this shift: frequent interaction between speakers of different dialects promotes convergence, gradually erasing distinctive features. Consequently, traditional markers of regional identity risk fading as hybridized norms emerge (Al Zidjaly, 2019).

Research Innovations and Collaborative Potential

The digital era presents new opportunities for dialect preservation alongside its challenges. Emerging technologies offer transformative potential for Kazakh dialectology through three key innovations:

1. Digital Corpora Development
Comprehensive databases of Kazakh dialects enable longitudinal tracking of linguistic features across regions (Makhambetov, Makazhanov, Yessenbayev, Matkarimov, Sabyrgaliyev & Sharafudinov, 2013, p. 1022). When publicly accessible, these resources empower both academic researchers and community stakeholders.
2. Computational Analysis Methods
Machine learning algorithms can detect subtle linguistic variations in large datasets that might escape manual analysis, revealing previously unnoticed patterns of dialectal change.
3. Geospatial Visualization Tools
Mapping dialect features alongside migration patterns and geography offers dynamic visual representations of language distribution. This approach challenges static dialect classifications, providing more nuanced understanding of Kazakhstan's evolving linguistic landscape.

These innovations collectively shift dialect studies from traditional descriptive methods toward more interactive, data-driven approaches. Crucially, their effectiveness depends on interdisciplinary collaboration between linguists, technologists, and community members - a partnership that could redefine preservation efforts in the digital age.

Analyzing Dialects in Digital Spaces

Social media platforms offer linguists unprecedented access to natural language data, revealing how Kazakh dialects evolve online. By examining code-switching behaviors, new dialect-specific terms, and regional online communities (Androutsopoulos, 2015, p. 201), researchers gain crucial insights into digital language innovation. These platforms simultaneously

challenge and perpetuate linguistic stereotypes, particularly through youth engagement patterns that reflect changing dialect perceptions.

Collaborative Preservation Strategies

Effective dialect conservation requires partnership between academics, educators, and communities. Community-led documentation initiatives enable speakers to actively preserve their linguistic heritage—a vital component of safeguarding efforts (Chelliah, 2021).

Educational integration proves equally critical. Incorporating dialect studies alongside the standard Kazakh instruction fosters comprehensive language understanding. Potential approaches include:

- Digital preservation tools
- Intergenerational knowledge transfer programs
- School-community partnerships developing culturally responsive curricula (García & Sylvan, 2011, p. 392)

Such initiatives combat linguistic bias while celebrating Kazakhstan's diverse speech traditions, potentially reversing dialect erosion trends.

Strategic Approaches to Dialect Preservation

Kazakh dialectology must implement forward-looking strategies to maintain linguistic diversity amidst global and technological changes. The goal is to create an inclusive linguistic environment where all dialect speakers feel their varieties are respected and sustainable. However, several obstacles must be addressed to realize this vision.

Key Challenges and Solutions

1. Institutional Resistance

Policymakers and educators may often favor the standard Kazakh due to perceptions of national unity or linguistic hierarchy. Countering this requires:

- Awareness campaigns highlighting dialect value
- Policy advocacy for dialect protection (Fishman, 2012)

2. Digital Equity Gaps

While technology aids preservation, rural and marginalized communities frequently lack access (Grenoble & Whaley, 2005). Bridging this divide demands:

- Targeted infrastructure development
- Community-centered digital literacy programs

Pathways Forward

Emerging approaches combining technology, education, and community engagement show significant promise:

- **Tech Integration:** Mobile apps for Kazakh dialects documentation need to be developed, as set example from the English Dialect App (Leemann, Kolly & Britain, 2018).
- **Educational Reform:** Curriculum incorporating regional varieties (Clopper, 2021)
- **Community Partnerships:** Intergenerational language transmission projects

These multilayered efforts can simultaneously preserve Kazakhstan's linguistic heritage while fostering social inclusion—transforming challenges into opportunities for enriched cultural identity.

6.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this investigation offers significant contributions to understanding dialect dynamics among Kazakh millennials, several methodological limitations warrant acknowledgment. The study's dependence on self-reported measures—including surveys and interviews—risks incorporating response biases, particularly social desirability effects (Fisher, 1993). Participants may have overstated their standard Kazakh proficiency while minimizing negative dialect perceptions. Furthermore, while the sample included regional diversity, its size potentially underrepresented rural populations and lower socioeconomic groups (Johnson & Christensen, 2024).

Recommended Research Trajectories

Subsequent studies should prioritize:

1. Expanded Sampling: Incorporating broader demographic representation across urban-rural and socioeconomic spectra
2. Methodological Triangulation:
 - Augmenting social media analysis with diverse digital platforms (Androutsopoulos, 2017)
 - Integrating ethnographic approaches like participant observation to capture naturalistic language use (Duranti, 2012)

These enhancements would yield more nuanced understandings of Kazakhstan's evolving linguistic ecology while addressing current methodological gaps.

This study has drawn upon accommodation theory, language ideology frameworks, and social identity approaches (Giles et al., 1991), yet future research could productively expand its

theoretical scope by integrating language socialization theory to understand how dialect practices are transmitted across generations in homes and classrooms (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2017), along with critical discourse analysis to uncover power relations embedded in dialect representation (Lannan, 2013). Particularly promising avenues include longitudinal examinations of how language attitudes shape life opportunities (Piller, 2016), systematic assessments of school-based diversity initiatives (García & Sylvan, 2011), and nuanced investigations of digital media's paradoxical capacity to both perpetuate and disrupt linguistic hierarchies (Androutsopoulos, 2015). The digital realm offers especially fertile ground for exploring how various content formats foster dialect acceptance, how online networks reconfigure language norms (Squires, 2015), and how social media might be harnessed for language revitalization (Grenoble & Whaley, 2005). Together, these research directions promise to reveal the rich interconnections between digital communication, identity negotiation, and language sustainability within Kazakhstan's dynamic sociocultural context.

6.5 Final Reflections

This research has been both intellectually transformative and personally meaningful. As a Kazakh millennial raised in the Turkistan region, my early exposure to local dialects profoundly influenced my linguistic identity. However, interactions during higher education revealed Kazakhstan's broader dialectal diversity and its social implications. These experiences motivated the study, driving an exploration of dialect use and perception among peers.

Initial assumptions about standard language dominance and dialect stigmatization were partially supported yet complicated by the findings. While linguistic insecurity among non-standard dialect speakers was evident, the strong preference for the standard language in formal contexts underscored entrenched language ideologies (Smagulova, 2019). Conversely, social media showcased evolving dialectal creativity, and many participants actively defended

linguistic diversity. These results challenge traditional narratives of dialect marginalization, particularly among youth reshaping language norms online and offline.

The study reveals Kazakh millennials negotiating a complex linguistic landscape, where the standard language prestige coexists with increasing dialect appreciation. Participants' attitudes reflect this tension: some proudly used local dialects informally, while others felt pressured to adopt the standard in formal settings. Digital media further amplified these changes—facilitating dialect expression but also reinforcing stereotypes.

These findings advocate for a more inclusive approach to Kazakh linguistic diversity. Educational initiatives could integrate dialect awareness, and policies might safeguard speakers' rights across dialects. Such measures could foster cultural identity and social cohesion, challenging rigid hierarchies between the standard Kazakh and regional varieties.

This study establishes a foundation for examining Kazakhstan's evolving linguistic landscape, where language, identity, and social change intersect. As digital transformation progresses, three key areas demand attention: (1) social media's long-term effects on dialect vitality, (2) emerging hybrid language forms, and (3) policy frameworks for digital-age linguistic diversity.

The rapid adoption of new communication technologies suggests traditional dialect boundaries may further erode (Bahry, 2021). However, these platforms also enable unprecedented dialect preservation through digital archiving and grassroots communities (Tomkins et al., 2018). Future studies should track these countervailing trends, particularly among younger demographics shaping Kazakhstan's linguistic future.

Policy-oriented research remains equally vital. While current language regulations prioritize the literary language, emerging evidence suggests inclusive approaches may better serve Kazakhstan's multilingual reality (Hamed & Mohamed, 2023). Comparative studies could

evaluate initiatives balancing standardization with dialect protection, offering models for equitable language planning.

6.6 Closing Statement

This study has mapped the complex interplay between language, identity, and social transformation in modern Kazakhstan. The data reveal unexpected dialect vitality among millennials and university students, who negotiate linguistic norms across physical and digital spaces. While the standard language maintains institutional dominance, regional pride and online engagement are fostering renewed dialect appreciation—87% of surveyed millennials reported fluent dialect use in informal contexts (see Figure 3).

Three key contributions emerge: First, the documentation of code-switching as strategic identity work (Saini, 2025). Second, empirical evidence bridging digital and physical language practices (Tomkins et al., 2018). Third, a framework for analyzing attitude shifts in technology-mediated environments (Sharipova, 2020). These findings carry immediate implications:

1. Education: Dialect-inclusive curricula could enhance classroom equity
2. Policy: Measures protecting regional varieties may slow linguistic erosion
3. Research: Longitudinal tracking of digital dialect evolution is warranted

Persistent linguistic prejudices remind us that ideological work remains (Collins & Clément, 2014). Yet the observed resilience of non-standard varieties suggests pathways for building a linguistically pluralistic Kazakhstan—one where şalbar-wearing grandparents and sym-using youth alike find voice and validation.

Kazakhstan stands at a linguistic crossroads where strategic interventions could transform language attitudes. Three key stakeholders must collaborate: (1) policymakers developing

inclusive language regulations, (2) educators integrating dialect awareness into curricula, and (3) media professionals amplifying regional varieties in cultural content. Digital platforms present both promise and peril—while enabling unprecedented dialect preservation, they risk magnifying existing prejudices without proper safeguards.

Concrete measures could include:

- Teacher training programs on the standard language and dialect coexistence
- Media production quotas for regional linguistic content
- Digital archives preserving endangered varieties like şalbar region dialects

The ultimate goal remains clear: in Kazakhstan we would like to see urban youth and traditional speakers see their speech forms valued. This vision demands sustained effort—monitoring online discourse, evaluating policy impacts, and celebrating linguistic diversity as national strength rather than division. The alternative risks losing what makes Kazakh uniquely vibrant: its richness of voices across regions and generations.

References

- Abtahian, M. R., & Quinn, C. M. (2017). Language shift and linguistic insecurity.
- Ahn, E. S., & Smagulova, J. (Eds.). (2016). *Language Change in Central Asia*. Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Akhmerova, R., Kenshinbayeva, A., & Toktamyssova, A. (2023). Juggling with Languages: Multilinguals' Beliefs and Experiences of Translanguaging and Code-Switching.
- Alshehri, N. (2025). Linguistic Variation and Change in Online Communities. *Journal of Arts, Literature, Humanities and Social Sciences*, (116), 360-372.
- Al Zidjaly, N. (2019). Society in digital contexts: New modes of identity and community construction. *Multilingua*, 38(4), 357-375.
- Aldash, A., Aldasheva, K. S., Mambetova, M. K., Sultaniyazova, I. S., & Nabitullin, A. S. (2019). Neologisms in online dictionaries as a reflection of social changes and formation of the social structure of society. *International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research*, 8(12), 1432-1435.
- Aliaskar, A. (2024). Challenges of bilingualism: Code-switching and language dominance in the context of Kazakhstan. *Vestnik Evraziyskogo Gumanitarnogo Instituta*, (2), 7-15.
- Alkebaeva, D. A., Satkenova, Z. B., & Konyrbekova, T. O. (2021). Changes in the Kazakh language in social networks. *Вестник КазНУ. Серия филологическая*, 182(2), 14-23.

- Altman, Z. (2021). Speech on Trial? An Exploration into the Effects of Lingual Discrimination on African American Vernacular English Speakers. *Howard LJ*, 65, 503.
- Amanjолоv, S. (1959). *Вопросы диалектологии и истории казахского языка* [Issues of dialectology and history of the Kazakh language]. Almaty. Kazakhstan National Electronic Library. [Просмотр | Казахстанская Национальная Электронная Библиотека](#)
- Amanjолоv, S. (2004). *Қазақ тілі диалектологиясы мен тарихының мәселелері* [Questions of dialectology and history of the Kazakh language]. Sozdik-Slovar'. Almaty. Kazakhstan National Electronic Library. [Қарау | Казахстанская Национальная Электронная Библиотека \(kazneb.kz\)](#)
- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso.
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2006). Introduction: Sociolinguistics and computer-mediated communication. *Journal of sociolinguistics*, 10(4), 419-438.
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2013). 27. Code-switching in computer-mediated communication. *Pragmatics of computer-mediated communication*, 667-94.
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2015). Networked multilingualism: Some language practices on Facebook and their implications. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 19(2), 185-205.
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2017). Online data collection. In *Data collection in sociolinguistics* (pp.

233-244). Routledge.

APA. (2020). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, . Washington, DC, USA: American Psychological Association.

Arystanbek, A. (2020). *Trapped between east and west: A study of hegemonic femininity in Kazakhstan's online and state discourses* (Doctoral dissertation, Central European University).

Azzaakiyyah, H. K. (2023). The impact of social media use on social interaction in contemporary society. *Technology and Society Perspectives (TACIT)*, 1(1), 1-9.

Babazade, Y. (2024). Digital Language Trends: How Technology is Shaping Multilingualism. *Acta Globalis Humanitatis Et Linguarum*, 1(1), 60-70.

Bahry, S. A. (2016). Language Ecology: Understanding Central Asian Multilingualism. *Language change in central Asia*, 106(11).

Bahry, S. (2020). Language, globalization, and education in Central Asia. *Globalization on the margins: Education and post-socialist transformations in Central Asia*, 191-206.

Bahry, S. (2021). Linguistic hybridity and global mobility. In *The Routledge Handbook of Plurilingual Language Education* (pp. 149-170). Routledge.

Baker-Bell, A. (2020). *Linguistic justice: Black language, literacy, identity, and pedagogy*. Routledge.

- Baskakov, N. A. (1962). *Введение в изучение тюркских языков* [*Introduction to the study of Turkic languages*]. Vysshaya Shkola. Google Books. [Введение в изучение тюркских языков - Николай Александрович Баскаков - Google Books](#)
- Baugh, J. (2000). *Beyond Ebonics: Linguistic pride and racial prejudice*. Oxford University Press.
- Baugh, J. (2016). Linguistic profiling and discrimination. *The Oxford handbook of language and society*, 349, 368.
- Baugh, J. (2018). *Linguistics in pursuit of justice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Beisembayeva, D., Papoutsaki, E., & Kolesova, E. (2013). Social media and online activism in Kazakhstan: A new challenge for authoritarianism. The International Academic Forum (IAFOR). Asian Conferences.
- Beisenova, Z. S. (2013). Language shifts in case of language policy of Kazakhstan. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2(8), 653-659.
- Bekzhanova, Z., & Makoelle, T. M. (2022). Latinization of the Kazakh alphabet: Implications for education, inclusion, and social cohesion in Kazakhstan. *sage Open*, 12(4), 21582440221138820.
- Bell, A. (1984). Language style as audience design. *Language in Society*, 13(2), 145–204.
- Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge University Press.
- Blommaert, J. (2018). *Durkheim and the internet: On sociolinguistics and the sociological*

imagination (p. 136). Bloomsbury Academic.

Boeschoten, H. (2021). Uzbek. In *The Turkic languages* (pp. 388-408). Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Harvard University Press.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

Brendemoen, B. (2021a). The Turkish language reform. In *The Turkic Languages* (pp. 231-235). Routledge.

Brendemoen, B. (2021b). Turkish dialects. In *The Turkic Languages* (pp. 224-230). Routledge.

Bromham, L., Dinnage, R., Skirgård, H., Ritchie, A., Cardillo, M., Meakins, F., ... & Hua, X. (2022). Global predictors of language endangerment and the future of linguistic diversity. *Nature ecology & evolution*, 6(2), 163-173.

Brown, A. (2018). What is so special about online (as compared to offline) hate speech?. *Ethnicities*, 18(3), 297-326.

Byrd, M. Y. (2024). Language discrimination, linguistic profiling, and inclusion in the workforce. In *Diversity in the Workforce* (pp. 209-220). Routledge.

Calude, A. S. (2023). *The linguistics of social media: an introduction*. Taylor & Francis.

Chelliah, S. L. (2021). *Why language documentation matters* (p. 7). Cham: Springer.

- Clopper, C. G. (2021). Perception of dialect variation. *The handbook of speech perception*, 333-364.
- Collins, K. A., & Clément, R. (2014). Words we use: Linguistic bias and prejudice. In *Linguistic Variation* (pp. 178-192). Routledge.
- Coupland, N. (2007). *Style: Language variation and identity*. Cambridge University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2021). *A concise introduction to mixed methods research*. SAGE publications.
- Curzan, A., Queen, R. M., VanEyck, K., & Weissler, R. E. (2023). Language standardization & linguistic subordination. *Daedalus*, 152(3), 18-35.
- Dadabaeva, G., & Adibayeva, A. (2010). Post-soviet Kazakhstan: nationalism and language issues. *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, 37(2), 125-141.
- Daulay, S. H., Nst, A. H., Ningsih, F. R., Berutu, H., Irham, N. R., & Mahmudah, R. (2024). Code switching in the social media era: A linguistic analysis of Instagram and TikTok users. *Humanitatis: Journal of Language and Literature*, 10(2), 373-384.
- Dimock, M. (2019). Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins. *Pew Research Center*, 17(1), 1-7.
- Dogançay-Aktuna, S. (2004). Language planning in Turkey: yesterday and today. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2004(165).

- Domnin, K. (2022). Kazakhstan's new administrative divisions explained. The Astana Times. Retrieved from [New map of Kazakhstan — - 17.03.2022 - Kursiv Media Kazakhstan](#)
- Doreleijers, K., Piepers, J., Backus, A., & Swanenberg, J. (2021). Language variation in dialect-standard contact situations. *Cognitive sociolinguistics revisited*, 48, 175.
- Doskarayev, Zh., & Musabayev, G. (1951). *Қазақ тілінің жергілікті ерекшеліктері* [*Local features of the Kazakh language*]. Almaty. [Қарау | Казахстанская Национальная Электронная Библиотека](#)
- Dovchin, S. (2019). *Language, social media and ideologies: Translingual Englishes, Facebook and authenticities*. Springer.
- Dovchin, S. (2022). *Translingual discrimination*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dragojevic, M., Fasoli, F., Cramer, J., & Rakić, T. (2021). Toward a century of language attitudes research: Looking back and moving forward. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 40(1), 60-79.
- Dragojevic, M., & Giles, H. (2016). I don't like you because you're hard to understand: The role of processing fluency in the language attitudes process. *Human Communication Research*, 42(3), 396-420.
- Duranti, A. (2012). Anthropology and linguistics. *The SAGE handbook of social anthropology*, 1, 12-26.

Eckert, P. (2018). *Meaning and linguistic variation: The third wave in sociolinguistics*.

Cambridge University Press.

Eckert, P. (2019). The limits of meaning: Social indexicality, variation, and the cline of

interiority. *Language*, 95(4), 751-776

Edwards, J. (2009). *Language and identity: An introduction*. Cambridge University Press.

Eid, M. (2024). Dialects of Dignity: How Language Varieties Shape Identity and Power in

Informal Economies. *Frontiers in Humanities and Social Research*, 1(1), 24-31.

Eisenstein, J. (2017). Identifying regional dialects in online social media. *The handbook of*

dialectology, 368-383. Retrieved from [The Handbook of Dialectology | Wiley Online](#)

[Books](#)

Evcen, O. (2020). *The role of schooling for heritage language learners: A case study of*

Turkish heritage speakers (Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign).

Field, A. (2024). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics*. Sage publications limited.

Fierman, W. (2005). Kazakh Language and Prospects for its Role in Kazakh" Groupness". *Ab*

imperio, 2005(2), 393-423.

Fierman, W. (2006). Language and education in post-Soviet Kazakhstan: Kazakh-medium

instruction in urban schools. *The Russian Review*, 65(1), 98-116.

Fierman, W. (2012). 7. The Fate of Uzbek Language in the 'Other' Central Asian Republics.

In *Language policy and language conflict in Afghanistan and its neighbors* (pp. 208-260). Brill.

Fierman, W. (2013). Identity, symbolism, and the politics of language in Central Asia. In *Symbolism and Power in Central Asia* (pp. 122-143). Routledge.

Fishman, J. A. (2012). Language maintenance, language shift, and reversing language shift. *The handbook of bilingualism and multilingualism*, 466-494.

Fleming, K., & Ansaldo, U. (2019). *Revivals, nationalism, and linguistic Discrimination: Threatening languages*. Routledge.

Foster, H. L. (2017). *Imagining the shala-Kazakh: Codeswitching and satire in post-Soviet Kazakhstan* (Doctoral dissertation).

García, O., & Lin, A. M. (2017). Translanguaging in bilingual education. *Bilingual and multilingual education*, 117-130.

García, O., & Sylvan, C. E. (2011). Pedagogies and practices in multilingual classrooms: Singularities in pluralities. *The Modern language journal*, 95(3), 385-400.

Giles, H., Coupland, J., & Coupland, N. (Eds.). (1991). *Contexts of accommodation: Developments in applied sociolinguistics*. Cambridge University Press.

Giles, H., & Billings, A. C. (2004). Assessing language attitudes: Speaker evaluation studies. *The handbook of applied linguistics*, 187-209.

- Giles, H., & Watson, B. M. (2013). The social meanings of language, dialect and accent: International perspectives on speech styles.
- Gorter, D. (2021). Multilingual inequality in public spaces: towards an inclusive model of linguistic landscapes. *Multilingualism in the public space: Empowering and transforming communities*, 13-30.
- Grant, C., & Osanloo, A. (2014). Understanding, selecting, and integrating a theoretical framework in dissertation research: Creating the blueprint for your “house”. *Administrative issues journal*, 4(2), 4.
- Grenoble, L. A., & Whaley, L. J. (2005). *Saving languages: An introduction to language revitalization*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gries, S. T. (2013). *Statistics for linguistics with R: A practical introduction*. Walter de Gruyter.
- Guy, G. R., & Hinskens, F. (2016). Linguistic coherence: Systems, repertoires and speech communities. *Lingua*, 172(173), 1-9.
- Hamed, S. H., & Mohamed, S. (2023). Social Factors and Dialect Variation: An Analysis of Age, Gender, and Social Class in Linguistic Practice. *Refereed Journal of Northern Europe Academy for Studies & Research (Denmark)*, (21).
- Herring, S. C. (2011). Commentary: Contextualizing digital discourse. *Digital discourse: Language in the new media*, 340-348.

- Hickey, R. (Ed.). (2020). *The handbook of language contact*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Ho, D. A. (2015). Chinese dialects. *The Oxford handbook of Chinese linguistics*, 149-159.
- Hogg, M. A. (2016). *Social identity theory* (pp. 3-17). Springer International Publishing.
- Holmes, J., & Wilson, N. (2022). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. Routledge.
- Hutson, J., Ellsworth, P., & Ellsworth, M. (2024). Preserving linguistic diversity in the digital age: a scalable model for cultural heritage continuity. *Journal of Contemporary Language Research*, 3(1).
- Hyatt, D., Escott, H., & Bone, R. (2022). 'Addressing' language deficit: valuing children's variational repertoires. *Literacy*, 56(3), 212-224.
- Ibragimov, J. (2025). Methodological issues in the study of Kazakh language dialects. *Turcology*. DOI: 10.59358/ayt.1676860. Retrieved from [4776672](#)
- İnal, D., Bayyurt, Y., Özturhan, M., & Bektaş, S. (2021). Multilingualism in the linguistic landscape of Istanbul. *World Englishes*, 40(2), 280-289.
- Irvine, J. T., & Gal, S. (2000). Language ideology and linguistic differentiation. *Regimes of language: Ideologies, politics, and identities*, 81, 35-84.
- Johanson, L. (2013). *Structural factors in Turkic language contacts*. Routledge.
- Johanson, L. (2021). The history of Turkic. In *The Turkic Languages* (pp. 83-120). Routledge.

Johnson, R. B., & Christensen, L. B. (2024). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches*. Sage publications.

Joseph, J. E., Rutten, G., & Vosters, R. (2020). Dialect, language, nation: 50 years on. *Language policy*, 19, 161-182.

Joshi, A., Kale, S., Chandel, S., & Pal, D. K. (2015). Likert scale: Explored and explained. *British journal of applied science & technology*, 7(4), 396-403.

Jumagaliyeva, A. (2021). Choosing between Kazakh and Russian: A Study of Young Ethnic Kazakhs' Language Choices through the Lens of Habitus. *MA, Astana: Nazarbayev University*. <http://nur.nu.edu.kz/handle/123456789/5604>

Kalajdzisalihović, N. (2017). Millennials: Language Mixing and Language Borrowing. *Translation Studies: Retrospective and Prospective Views*, 20(2), 76-85.

Kaliev, G. (1960). *Қазақ диалектологиясының мәселелері* [Issues of Kazakh dialectology]. Almaty. [Қарау | Қазақстанская Национальная Электронная Библиотека \(kazneb.kz\)](http://kazneb.kz)

Kaliev, G., & Sarybayev, Sh. (1967). *Қазақ диалектологиясы* [Kazakh dialectology]. Мектеп. [Қарау | Қазақстанская Национальная Электронная Библиотека](http://kazneb.kz)

Kalybek, A., Ortykova, D., & Shayakhmetova, M. (2023). Language Choice and Language Attitude in a Multilingual Kazakhstani University: A Sociolinguistic Study.

Karabassova, L. (2020). Understanding trilingual education reform in Kazakhstan: Why is it

stalled?. *Education in Central Asia: A kaleidoscope of challenges and opportunities*, 37-51.

Karabayeva, M. (2025). The impact of social media on language variation and identity in digital communities. *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence*, 1(2), 776-778.

Karimova, G., Ishanov, P., Mukanova, S., Odintsova, S., & Aratayeva, A. (2023). The effects of using digital stories and media in foreign language teaching. *International Journal of Education in Mathematics, Science, and Technology (IJEMST)*, 11(5), 1113-1130. <https://doi.org/10.46328/ijemst.3599>

Kaul, V. (2013). Linguistic Diversity and Cultural Identity. *Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(4), 550-571.

Kenesbayev, S. K. (1960). *Qazaq tili tarihi men dialektologiasy maseleleri* [Problems of the history and dialectology of the Kazakh language] (3rd ed.). Qazaq SSR Gylym akademiya baspasy [Academy of Sciences of the Kazakh SSR Press]. Almaty. Retrieved from [Қарау | Қазақстанская Национальная Электронная Библиотека \(kazneb.kz\)](http://kazneb.kz)

Kerswill, P. (2020). Contact and new varieties. *The handbook of language contact*, 241-259.

Kerswill, P. (2008). Dialect levelling and geographical diffusion in British English. In *Social dialectology: in honour of Peter Trudgill* (pp. 223-243). John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Kerswill, P., & Wiese, H. (2022). *Urban contact dialects and language change* (pp.

xviii-350). Routledge.

Kircher, R., & Zipp, L. (Eds.). (2022). *Research methods in language attitudes*. Cambridge University Press.

Knooihuizen, R. (2023). Dialect Contact: The Power of Accommodation. In *The Linguistics of the History of English* (pp. 115-139). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Koptleuova, K., Karagulova, B., Zhumakhanova, A., Kondybay, K., & Salikhova, A. (2023). Multilingualism and the current language situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, 11(3), 242-257.

Kristiansen, T. (2011). *Standard languages and language standards in a changing Europe* (pp. 11-35). N. Coupland (Ed.). Oslo: Novus Press.

Kroskirty, P. V. (2010). Language ideologies—Evolving perspectives. In *Society and language use* (pp. 192-211). John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Kroskirty, P. V. (2022). Language ideologies and social identities. *Approaches to language and culture*, 1, 101.

Kuzembayeva, G. A., & Maigeldiyeva, Z. M. (2024). Conceptualization of Shame in the Kazakh Linguistic Culture: Psycholinguistic Study. *Bulletin of the Karaganda university. Philology series*, 11429(2), 48-54.

Labov, W. (2006). *The social stratification of English in New York City* (2nd ed.). Cambridge

University Press.

Labov, W. (2011). *Principles of linguistic change, volume 3: Cognitive and cultural factors*

(Vol. 3). John Wiley & Sons.

Lackaff, D., & Moner, W. J. (2016). Local languages, global networks: Mobile

design for minority language users. In *Proceedings of the 34th ACM International Conference on the Design of Communication* (pp. 1-9).

Lannan, R. (2013). *Language, Dialect, and Power: The Effect of Language on Social Status*

(Doctoral dissertation).

Lapadat, J. C., & Lindsay, A. C. (1999). Transcription in research and practice: From

standardization of technique to interpretive positionings. *Qualitative inquiry*, 5(1), 64-86.

Lee, C., & Barton, D. (2013). *Language online: Investigating digital texts and practices*.

Routledge.

Lee, L. (2022). Enhancing language and culture learning through social network

technologies. In *The Routledge handbook of language learning and teaching beyond the classroom* (pp. 155-167). Routledge.

Leemann, A., Kolly, M. J., & Britain, D. (2018). The English Dialects App: The creation of a

crowdsourced dialect corpus. *Ampersand*, 5, 1-17.

Luraghi, S. (2010). Causes of language change. *The continuum companion to historical*

linguistics. Londres: Continuum international publishing group, 358-370.

- Makhambetov, O., Makazhanov, A., Yessenbayev, Z., Matkarimov, B., Sabyrgaliyev, I., & Sharafudinov, A. (2013). Assembling the kazakh language corpus. In *Proceedings of the 2013 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing* (pp. 1022-1031).
- Markl, N. (2022). Language variation and algorithmic bias: understanding algorithmic bias in British English automatic speech recognition. In *Proceedings of the 2022 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency* (pp. 521-534).
- McCollum, A. G., & Chen, S. (2021). Kazakh. *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*, 51(2), 276-298.
- McKinney, E., & Hoggan, C. (2022). Language, identity, & social equity: Educational responses to dialect hegemony. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 41(3), 382-394.
- McLelland, N. (2021). Language standards, standardisation and standard ideologies in multilingual contexts. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 42(2), 109-124.
- Mendoza-Denton, N. (2014). *Homegirls: Language and cultural practice among Latina youth gangs*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Menges, K. H. (1995). *The Turkic languages and peoples: An introduction to Turkic studies* (Vol. 42). Otto Harrassowitz Verlag.
- Meyerhoff, M. (2018). *Introducing sociolinguistics*. Routledge.

- Meyerhoff, M., Schlee, E., & MacKenzie, L. (2015). *Doing sociolinguistics: A practical guide to data collection and analysis*. Routledge.
- Milroy, J. (2001). Language ideologies and the consequences of standardization. *Journal of sociolinguistics*, 5(4), 530-555.
- Milroy, L. (2002). *Authority in language: Investigating standard English*. Routledge.
- Milroy, L., & Gordon, M. (2008). *Sociolinguistics: Method and interpretation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Mirzoyeva, L., Syurmen, O., Dosmakhanova, R., & Azhiyev, K. (2020). Code switching as a peculiar feature of digital communication in multilingual settings. *Communication trends in the post-literacy era: polylingualism, multimodality and multiculturalism as prerequisites for new creativity*. —Ekaterinburg, 2020, 140-150.
- Mukhamedova, R. (2015). *Kazakh: A comprehensive grammar*. Routledge.
- Munday, E. R. (2010). Language and identification in contemporary Kazakhstan.
- Myers-Scotton, C. (2000). Explaining the role of norms and rationality in codeswitching. *Journal of pragmatics*, 32(9), 1259-1271.
- Naderifar, M., Goli, H., & Ghaljaie, F. (2017). Snowball sampling: A purposeful method of sampling in qualitative research. *Strides in development of medical education*, 14(3), 1-6.
- Nguyen, D. (2021). 10 Dialect Variation on Social Media. *Similar Languages, Varieties, and*

Dialects: A Computational Perspective, 204.

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 16(1), 1609406917733847.

Nurmagambetov, A. (1986). *Қазақ говорларының грамматикасы* [Grammar of Kazakh dialects]. Gylym. [Қарау | Қазақстанская Национальная Электронная Библиотека](#)

Omarbekov, S., & Zhunisov, N. (1985). *Ауызекі тіліміздің дыбыс жүйесі* [The sound system of our spoken language]. Мектеп. [Қарау | Қазақстанская Национальная Электронная Библиотека](#)

O'Neil, D. (2025). Standardization, Power, and Purity: Ideological Tensions in Language and Scientific Discourse. *Education Sciences*, 15(4), 489.

Page, R., Barton, D., Lee, C., Unger, J. W., & Zappavigna, M. (2022). *Researching language and social media: A student guide*. Routledge.

Pavlenko, A. (2008). Multilingualism in post-Soviet countries: Language revival, language removal, and sociolinguistic theory. *International journal of bilingual education and bilingualism*, 11(3-4), 275-314.

Pennycook, A. (2010). *Language as a local practice*. Routledge.

Piller, I. (2016). *Linguistic diversity and social justice: An introduction to applied sociolinguistics*. Oxford University Press.

Pink, S., Horst, H., Lewis, T., Hjorth, L., & Postill, J. (2015). Digital ethnography: Principles and practice.

Polatova, S., Lekerova, G., Kistaubaeva, D., Zhanaliyeva, R., & Kalzhanova, A. (2020). Trilingual education in Kazakhstani universities: Use of Kazakh, Russian and motivation towards learning English. *Issues in Educational Research*, 30(4), 1463-1483.

Preston, D. R. (2018). What's old and what's new in perceptual dialectology?. *Bord. Lang. Dialect*, 21, 16.

Putri, A. A. (2024). Public Perception of Local Dialects and Its Implications for Cultural Identity. In *Proceeding of the International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities Innovation* (Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 167-177).

Rahmatdildaevna Kurmanbekova, Z., Sarekenova, K. K., Oner, M., Turarbekovich Malikov, K., & Sagatovna Shokabayeva, S. (2023). A linguistic analysis of social network communication. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, 11(1), 119-132.

Rajagukguk, R., Malems, T., & Ginting, M. (2022). Preserving linguistic diversity: Strategies for language preservation and cultural heritage safeguarding. *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan dan Humaniora*, 11(3), 221-236.

Rakhimova, D., & Abdrazakh, Y. (2022). The Task of Identifying Morphological Errors of Words in the Kazakh Language in Social Networks. In *2022 7th International Conference on Computer Science and Engineering (UBMK)* (pp. 344-349). IEEE.

- Reyes, A. (2018). Virtual communities: Interaction, identity and authority in digital communication. *Text & Talk*, 39(1), 99-120.
- Sadigzade, Z. (2025). Dialect Diversity and Social Change: New Approaches in Sociolinguistics. *Journal of Azerbaijan Language and Education Studies*, 2(3), 91-105.
- Saiegh-Haddad, E., Laks, L., & McBride, C. (2022). Handbook of literacy in diglossia and in dialectal contexts. *Springer*. [https://doi.org/10, 1007, 978-3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3).
- Saini, M. M. (2025). Dialect and standard language dynamics: analyzing code-switching and language adaptation in multilingual contexts.
- Saldaña, J. (2021). The coding manual for qualitative researchers.
- Salmons, J. (2021). Doing qualitative research online.
- Sarybayev, Sh. (2005). *Қазақ тілінің аймақтық сөздігі* [Regional dictionary of the Kazakh language]. Arys. Almaty. [Қарау | Казахстанская Национальная Электронная Библиотека \(kazneb.kz\)](#)
- Satubaldina, A. (2021). Kazakhstan presents new Latin alphabet, plans gradual transition through 2031. *The Astana Times*. <https://astanatimes.com/2021/02/kazakhstan-presents-new-latin-alphabet-plans-gradual-transition-through-2031/>
- Schreiber, B. R. (2019). “More like you”: Disrupting native speakerism through a multimodal online intercultural exchange. *TESOL Quarterly*, 53(4), 1115-1138.

- Sharipova, D. (2020). Perceptions of national identity in Kazakhstan: Pride, language, and religion. *The Muslim World*, 110(1), 89-106.
- Silverstein, M. (1992). The uses and utility of ideology: Some reflections. *Pragmatics. Quarterly Publication of the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA)*, 2(3), 311-323.
- Smagulova, J. (2006). Kazakhstan: Language, identity and conflict. *Innovation*, 19(3-4), 303-320.
- Smagulova, J. (2008). Language policies of Kazakhization and their influence on language attitudes and use. *International journal of bilingual education and bilingualism*, 11(3-4), 440-475.
- Smagulova, J. (2015). Negotiating linguistic, cultural and social identities in the post-Soviet world.
- Smagulova, J. (2019). Ideologies of language revival: Kazakh as school talk. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 23(3), 740-756.
- Soukup, B. (2015). Mixing methods in the study of language attitudes: Theory and application. In *Responses to Language Varieties* (pp. 55-84). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Squires, L. (2015). Twitter: Design, discourse, and the implications of public text. In *The Routledge handbook of language and digital communication* (pp. 239-256). Routledge.
- Stæhr, A. C., Monka, M., Quist, P., & Larsen, A. (2019). Dialect in the media: Mediatization

- and processes of standardization. In *Standardization as Sociolinguistic Change* (pp. 169-189). Routledge.
- Stæhr, A. C., Møller, J. S., & Maegaard, M. (2022). Youth language. In *Handbook of Pragmatics* (pp. 199-223). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Suler, J. (2004). The online disinhibition effect. *Cyberpsychology & behavior*, 7(3), 321-326.
- Sun, H. (2020). *Global social media design: Bridging differences across cultures*. Oxford University Press.
- Sun, Y., Wang, G., & Feng, H. (2021). Linguistic studies on social media: A bibliometric analysis. *Sage Open*, 11(3), 21582440211047572.
- Swanenberg, J. (2013). All dialects are equal, but some dialects are more equal than others.
- Tagg, C. (2023). Digital language and communication. In *The Routledge handbook of applied linguistics* (pp. 68-80). Routledge.
- Tagg, C., Seargent, P., & Brown, A. A. (2017). Taking offence on social media. *London: Palgrave Macmillan*, 10, 978-3.
- Tang, M. (2021). Language awareness with a focus on lexical variation. *Learning & Education*, 10(7), 27-32.
- Tengrinews.kz. (2025). *No one has the right to dictate what language people speak – Tokayev*. https://en.tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/no-one-has-the-right-to-dictate-what-language-people-speak-267732/
- Tlepbergen, D., Akzhigitova, A., & Zabrodskaia, A. (2023). Bottom-Up Approach to Language Policy and Planning in Kazakhstan. *Societies*, 13(2), 43.
- Tomkins, S., Getoor, L., Chen, Y., & Zhang, Y. (2018). A socio-linguistic model for

- cyberbullying detection. In *2018 IEEE/ACM International Conference on Advances in Social Networks Analysis and Mining (ASONAM)* (pp. 53-60). IEEE.
- Trudgill, P. (1999). Language contact and the function of linguistic gender. *Poznan studies in contemporary linguistics*, 35, 133-152.
- Trudgill, P., Bolton, K., & Kwok, H. (2014). Dialect contact, dialectology and sociolinguistics. *Sociolinguistics today: International perspectives*.
- Trudgill, P. (2020). Dialect Convergence and the Formation of New Dialects. *The Handbook of Historical Linguistics*, 2, 123-144.
- Tsunoda, T. (2006). *Language endangerment and language revitalization: An introduction*. De Gruyter Mouton.
- Turaeva, R. (2015). Linguistic ambiguities of Uzbek and classification of Uzbek dialects. *Anthropos*, 110(2), 463-476.
- Urinboyev, R. (2017). Establishing an “Uzbek Mahalla” via Smartphones and Social Media. *Constructing the Uzbek State*, 119.
- Versteegh, K. (2014). *Arabic language*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Walsh, O. (2021). Introduction: in the shadow of the standard. Standard language ideology and attitudes towards ‘non-standard’ varieties and usages. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 42(9), 773-782.
- Wang, J., Jin, G., & Li, W. (2023). Changing perceptions of language in sociolinguistics. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10(1), 1-9.
- Yağlı, E. (2024). Using the “proper one”: language ideology in the context of Kemalism and

neo-Ottomanism. *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 1-19.

Yergaliyeva, A. (2018). Kazakhstan's language reform. *A Worldwide Student Journal of Politics*, 1(1), 22-44.

Yüce, C. B. (2019). Identity construction through language: The case of the Turkish language reform. *OMNES: The Journal of Multicultural Society*, 9(2), 100-117.

Zakaria, R., Mansor, N. R., Ibrahim, M. Y., Rashid, R. A., Zakaria, R., Ismail, M. S., ... & Ahmad, A. S. (2020). The effect of mobile application usage on dialect perception. In *Journal of Physics: Conference Series* (Vol. 1529, No. 4, p. 042063). IOP Publishing.

Zappavigna, M. (2015). Searchable talk: The linguistic functions of hashtags. *Social semiotics*, 25(3), 274-291.

Zappavigna, M. (2019). Language and social media: Enacting identity through ambient affiliation. *The Cambridge handbook of systemic function linguistics*, 714, 737.

Zharkynbekova, S., & Agmanova, A. (2016). The development of linguistics in Kazakhstan: New approaches and modern tendencies. *Folklore*, 163, 83-106.

Zimmer, M. (2020). "But the data is already public": on the ethics of research in Facebook. In *The ethics of information technologies* (pp. 229-241). Routledge

Appendices

Appendix A

The version of the Latin alphabet used for transliteration in this dissertation.

ЖАҢА ҚАЗАҚ ӘЛПБИІ							
№	латынша	кирилше	әріптің атауы	№	латынша	кирилше	әріптің атауы
1	A a	А а	а	18	O o	О о	о
2	Ä ä	Ә ә	ә	19	Ö ö	Ө ө	ө
3	B b	Б б	бы	20	P p	П п	пы
4	D d	Д д	ды	21	Q q	Қ қ	қы
5	E e	Е е	е	22	R r	Р р	ыр
6	F f	Ф ф	фы	23	S s	С с	сы
7	G g	Г г	гі	24	Ş ş	Ш ш	шы
8	Ğ ğ	Ғ ғ	ғы	25	T t	Т т	ты
9	H h	Х х, Н н	һы	26	U u	У у	ұу
10	I i	Й й, И и	ий	27	Ū ū	Ұ ұ	ұ
11	I i	І і	і	28	Ū ū	Ү ү	ү
12	J j	Ж ж	жы	29	V v	В в	вы
13	K k	К к	кі	30	Y y	Ы ы	ы
14	L l	Л л	ыл	31	Z z	З з	зы
15	M m	М м	мы				
16	N n	Н н	ны				
17	D ŋ	Ң ң	ың				

*С, X, W таңбалары цитаталық принциппен жазылатын шетілдік сөздерде қолданылады.

Retrieved from [Kazakhstan Presents New Latin Alphabet, Plans Gradual Transition Through 2031 - The Astana Times](#)

There have been a few revisions to the Kazakh Latin alphabet since the initial proposal in February 2021. Key Changes:

- The digraph "D ŋ" has been replaced with "Ñ ñ" to represent the sound /ŋ/.
- The letters "C c," "X x," and "W w" are included, although they are primarily used for foreign words and names.

Cyrillic	Latin (2021)	IPA Pronunciation	Notes
А а	A a	/ɑ/	
Ә ә	Ä ä	/æ/	
Б б	B b	/b/	
В в	V v	/v/	
Г г	G g	/g/	

Р р	Ř ř	/ʀ/	Similar to French 'r'
Д д	D d	/d/	
Е е	E e	/e/	As in "bet"
Ё ё	Yo yo	/jo/	
Ж ж	J j	/ʒ/	As in "measure"
З з	Z z	/z/	
И и	I i	/ɪ/	As in "bit"
Й й	Y y	/j/	
К к	K k	/k/	
Қ қ	Q q	/q/	Further back in the throat than 'k'
Л л	L l	/l/	
М м	M m	/m/	
Н н	N n	/n/	
Ң ң	Ñ ñ	/ɲ/	As in "sing"
О о	O o	/o/	
Ө ө	Ö ö	/œ/	Similar to French 'eu' in "peur"
П п	P p	/p/	
Р р	R r	/r/	Tapped 'r'
С с	S s	/s/	
Т т	T t	/t/	
У у	U u	/ʊ/	As in "book"
Ү ү	Ū ū	/ʊ̯/	Similar to German 'ü' in "für"
Ү ү	Ü ü	/y/	Similar to German 'ü' in "grün"
Ф ф	F f	/f/	
Х х	H h	/x/	Similar to Scottish 'ch' in "loch"
Һ һ	H h	/h/	
Ц ц	Ts ts	/ts/	
Ч ч	Ç ç	/tʃ/	As in "chair"
Ш ш	Ş ş	/ʃ/	As in "ship"
Щ щ	Şç şç	/ʃtʃ/	As in "fresh cheese"
Ъ	(omitted)		Hard sign (not pronounced)
Ы ы	Y y	/ə/	Similar to "a" in "about"
Ь	(omitted)		Soft sign (not pronounced)
Э э	E e	/e/	
Ю ю	Yu yu	/ju/	

Я я	Үа уа	/ja/	
-----	-------	------	--

Appendix B

Informed Consent for Semi-Structured Interview

This research study focuses on how young Kazakh speakers understand and experience different dialects of Kazakh. Your participation will provide valuable insights into the social meanings of these dialects and how people navigate linguistic diversity in Kazakhstan. Your participation in this interview is entirely confidential. Your identity will be protected, and your name won't be connected to your responses in any way. With your permission, I'd like to audio-record our conversation to ensure I capture your thoughts accurately. This recording will be strictly for research purposes and will be stored securely. Remember, your participation is voluntary. You have the right to skip any questions or stop the interview at any time without having to provide a reason. If you have any questions about the study, your rights as a participant, or how your information will be used, please ask now or contact me, Mr. Dumankhan Abdashim, at dumankhan.abdashim@nu.edu.kz. If you understand and agree to these terms, please indicate your consent to participate in this interview.

Semi-structured Interview Protocol: Perceptions and Variations of Kazakh Dialects

1. Introduction

Welcome & Gratitude: Warmly greeting the participant, thanking them for their time.

Study Overview: Briefly reiterating the study's focus on perceptions of Kazakh dialectal variation.

Ethical Considerations

Highlighting voluntary participation and confidentiality.

Asking, "Do you have any questions about the study or how your responses will be used?"

Securing permission for audio recording.

2. Warm-Up

"To start, could you tell me a little about the languages you use on a daily basis?"

"Have you ever encountered a situation where you and another person were speaking slightly different versions of Kazakh?"

3. Background & Language Comfort

Language Comfort: "In which language(s) would you feel most comfortable discussing your experiences with Kazakh dialects?"

Background:

"Could you tell me where in Kazakhstan you grew up, and if you've lived in other parts of the country?"

"Aside from Kazakh, do you speak other languages? If so, how comfortable are you using them?"

4. Dialect Identification & Awareness

General Awareness: "Do you feel there are noticeable regional differences within Kazakh, or does it seem mostly the same everywhere?"

Specific Examples: "Could you describe some of the differences you've observed between Kazakh dialects? These could be in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, or anything else that stands out."

Naming Variations: "Do you know if the different ways of speaking Kazakh have specific names associated with regions or groups of people?"

5. Core Dialect Questions

Accommodation & Navigation:

"Could you describe a time when you interacted with someone who speaks a Kazakh dialect very different from your own? How did you adjust your own way of speaking, if at all?"

(Accommodation Theory)

Perceptions of Dialects:

"Are there certain Kazakh dialects that you associate with particular qualities or characteristics?"

Could you explain why?" (Linguistic Prejudice)

"Do you find any Kazakh dialects more appealing, easier to understand, or more 'correct' than others?" (Linguistic Prejudice)

Dialect & Identity:

"Does the way you speak Kazakh connect to how you see yourself?" (Self-identification)

"Do you feel any pride, connection, or perhaps a different emotion towards your own regional dialect?" (Self-identification)

Social Media Influence:

"How would you compare the Kazakh used on social media (like Instagram, YouTube) with how people speak in everyday life? Are there noticeable differences?" (Technology & Linguistic Exposure)

6. Probing for Deeper Insights

"You mentioned feeling [emotion] when hearing that dialect. Could you tell me more about what triggered that feeling?"

"That's an interesting example. Can you think of another situation where you noticed a similar pattern?"

Challenging Assumptions:

"You mentioned that [dialect] sounds [less sophisticated]. What specifically makes it sound that way to you?"

"You said [dialect] speakers seem very friendly. Is that something you've heard from others, or is it based mostly on your personal encounters?"

Situational Factors:

"Do you think the setting [workplace, online forum, etc.] where you heard that dialect influenced your perception of it?"

"Could you imagine yourself switching to a dialect different from your own? If so, in what kind of situation might you do that?"

7. Closing

Final Thoughts: "Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experiences with Kazakh dialects or how you perceive them?"

Gratitude: Thanking the participant once more.

Next Steps: Briefly explain that you might contact them for clarification after reviewing the interview.

Note: This is a new format of Interview questions, adapted to ease the use of the integrated theoretical framework (e.g. Q1, Q2, Q3 etc.) throughout the dissertation, all 14 questions are derived from the Interview questions on Appendix A.

Q1. To start, could you tell me a little about the languages you use in your everyday life?

Q2. Have you ever noticed slightly different versions of Kazakh being spoken by different people?

Q3. I'd love to know where you grew up in Kazakhstan. Have you lived in other regions as well?

Q4. Do you speak any other languages besides Kazakh? How comfortable do you feel using them?

Q5. Do you think there are noticeable differences in how Kazakh is spoken across different regions, or does it seem pretty similar everywhere?

Q6. Can you give me a few examples of the differences you've noticed between Kazakh dialects? (This could be things like pronunciation, words, or grammar)

Q7. Do people refer to different Kazakh dialects by regional names (like Northern Kazakh, Southern Kazakh, etc.), or are there other terms that are used?

Q8. Can you tell me about a time you spoke to someone whose Kazakh dialect was very different from your own? How did you communicate (if you did)?

Q9. Are there any Kazakh dialects that you associate with certain qualities or personalities? Why do you feel that way?

Q10. Do you think there are any Kazakh dialects that are more appealing, easier to understand, or more "correct" than others?

Q11. Does the way you speak Kazakh play a role in how you see yourself?

Q12. Do you feel pride, or another particular feeling, towards your regional way of speaking Kazakh?

Q13. How does the Kazakh you see on social media compare to how people speak Kazakh in real life? Do you notice any differences?

Q14. Is there anything else you'd like to add about Kazakh dialects or your thoughts on them?

Appendix C

Informed Consent for Kazakh Dialect Variations and Perceptions Survey

This research study investigates how young Kazakh speakers perceive and experience different dialects within the Kazakh language. Your participation will provide valuable insights into the social meanings and dynamics of dialect diversity in Kazakhstan. All survey responses will remain strictly confidential. Your name and personal details will never be associated with your answers. The data collected will be stored securely, and after the study's completion, it will be retained for a limited period for analysis purposes before being permanently deleted. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have the right to skip questions or withdraw from

the survey at any point without providing a reason. If you would like more information or have any questions about the study, please don't hesitate to contact the researcher, Mr. Dumankhan Abdashim, at dumankhan.abdashim@nu.edu.kz. By proceeding with the survey, you indicate your understanding of these terms and your consent to participate.

Survey Protocol: Perceptions and Variations of Kazakh Dialects

Thank you for participating in this research on Kazakh dialects! Your responses will help us understand how young Kazakh speakers experience the diversity of their language.

About You

Age: [Choose age ranges e.g., 18-24, 25-30, etc.]

Region where you primarily grew up: [Main regions of Kazakhstan listed]

Other Kazakh dialects you speak fluently (if any): *Instructions: Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement. There are no right or wrong answers!*

(Sample Likert-Scale Survey Questions. Using a 5-point Likert scale (e.g., Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree) for these questions.)

Self-Reported Fluency & Frequency

I consider myself fluent in my primary Kazakh dialect.

I use my primary Kazakh dialect most frequently when speaking with my close friends.

In formal or professional settings, I feel most comfortable speaking in my primary Kazakh dialect.

Accommodation Practices

I sometimes adjust the way I speak Kazakh to sound more similar to the person I'm talking to.

If I'm interacting with someone who speaks a very different Kazakh dialect, I try to modify my speech to be easier to understand.

Attitudes Towards Dialects

Some Kazakh dialects sound more friendly than others.

Speakers of [dialect name] sound very sophisticated.

Hearing certain Kazakh dialects makes me think of people from a specific region in Kazakhstan.

Linguistic Prejudice

I have felt the need to change the way I speak Kazakh to be taken more seriously.

People have made negative comments about the way I speak Kazakh.

I sometimes worry that people will judge me based on my Kazakh dialect.

Kazakh & Social Media

The Kazakh I see on social media accurately reflects how people speak in real life.

I am more likely to code-switch or use non-standard Kazakh when communicating online.

Open-Ended Questions

Can you describe a time when you experienced or witnessed linguistic prejudice based on someone's Kazakh dialect? How did this experience make you feel?

Can you think of a situation where you intentionally changed the way you speak Kazakh? Why did you make this adjustment?

Appendix D

Media Observation Template

Platform: (YouTube, TikTok, Instagram)

Content Link: (Paste URL of the video)

Date of Observation:

Content Creator:

Handle/Username:

Type: (Popular Creator, Regular User)

Identifiable Region (if any):

Vocabulary (Dialect Markers):

Listing 5-10 distinctive words or phrases: (Including both the word/phrase and a brief definition or explanation of its meaning)

Code-Switching:

Specific instances and the dialect(s) involved:

Possible reasons for switching:

Comment Observation:

Summarize the overall sentiment: Do comments mostly express pride, humor, criticism, etc.?

Quote top 3 comments: Choose those reflecting linguistic attitudes, potential prejudice, or commentary on code-switching.

Initial Impressions:

What are your first reactions to the dialect? Does it sound familiar, surprising, etc.?

How does the creator use their dialect (for humor, to connect with viewers, etc.)?

Theoretical Connections:

Accommodation Theory: Does the speaker adjust their speech for different audiences?

Linguistic Prejudice: Do you perceive biased attitudes towards this dialect, either in the content or comments?

Social Meaning: What might this dialect signify to viewers (regionality, coolness, tradition, etc.)?

Emerging Themes:

Are you noticing recurring words/phrases across different content creators?

Are there patterns in how certain dialects are perceived in the comments?

Media observation materials utilized in the dissertation as SMF, randomly numbered here for ethical reasons:

YouTube:

1. <https://youtu.be/PIwCyY4Z1ug?si=-UZ6KsE4ZglMpCvE>
2. <https://youtu.be/Bf3sD6WynGw?si=YcvgJT5KDlxDor L>
3. <https://youtu.be/oQTn7Wh2rjA?si=Y4Z6bOy8 n2X285e>
4. <https://youtu.be/LID84bXsMCw?si=kosSnwuNmIxuyvBg>
5. <https://youtu.be/jK2GoElHStg?si=ImajS-w68rjtKoYH>
6. <https://youtu.be/sjqFx85b f0?si=8A5ARAh8uvIp-SHs>
7. https://youtu.be/mk5NS_hawUw?si=OJDQobIK7Uklr0oP
8. <https://youtu.be/rVEDvsRWqvw?si=nZuRcbI8LcPYvoLx>
9. <https://youtu.be/ELs17tvIv8A?si=GTPxb2U5Q75iwd2f>
10. https://youtu.be/d116gg4b5hY?si= fUeyahJfR_npuNo
11. <https://youtu.be/CcNHwuMhE E?si=YBYgbTdQiLMI2ZI7>
12. https://youtube.com/shorts/vzm4iQ4pOMY?si=7Ql_sj9XgFthft9z
13. <https://youtu.be/AJ03W-BJO3I?si=6Z-c3twj9Di1wR C>
14. <https://youtu.be/zBeVx0VSkWM?si=MmXJmv9gsdsvGU14>
15. <https://youtube.com/shorts/6vxQHRNirIM?si=ERS29AKd2LsB5Qr7>

TikTok:

1. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3XD5Ka/>
2. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3X4Xa2/>
3. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3XSnpt/>
4. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3Xt35q/>
5. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3XEXDm/>
6. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3XoKfJ/>
7. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3XoyUc/>
8. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34eYDx/>

9. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34Jhv7/>
10. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34d9Fj/>
11. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3XwFcD/>
12. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34Pm7D/>
13. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34Qr8c/>
14. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34BJeN/>
15. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34xVBY/>
16. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34CFEd/>
17. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34fSsq/>
18. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34mEmF/>
19. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34CtHU/>
20. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34aSBv/>
21. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34XtXf/>
22. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34uR19/>
23. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34ahDE/>
24. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34koDG/>
25. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34h9dF/>
26. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34U8nD/>
27. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34A8xE/>
28. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34cMBq/>
29. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM347yGj/>
30. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM34o79d/>
31. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3VNV5k/>
32. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3VJrri/>
33. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cDUDu/>

34. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cmVvE/>
35. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cr1xD/>
36. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cU4VE/>
37. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cN2gg/>
38. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cDVVh/>
39. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cur8o/>
40. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cn2vq/>
41. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cX8vF/>
42. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cVRXa/>
43. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cCbp5/>
44. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cbHKf/>
45. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cG4ff/>
46. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cvuwy/>
47. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cxf8n/>
48. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cKXjD/>
49. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cKMsx/>
50. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cx1nG/>
51. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMM3cC4EG/>
52. <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMMwdbC61/>

Instagram:

1. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/CmQxOWHqum/?igsh=MWVlZW5xbjRqMDAzNg=>
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C0vsCRji47Q/?igsh=MTdpcjdvb2ZreWxhbA=>

=

2. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CQLO1anHsX5/?igsh=MTFsMHYyNmJ2bnJycg>
==
3. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C06cawvCw7x/?igsh=Nng1ZnRsYmwwMm4y>
4. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CoXbmmpMd0z/?igsh=Z3AzZjNzYzVvY2dk>
5. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BnnkL6HHJed/?igsh=MTJuY3Bkd2xva2lvMQ==>
6. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CSrbDMvK9zz/?igsh=MXNzdmQ3YmZkMms3b>
g==
7. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/CrBnnBdNRPF/?igsh=eGszajQva3JhMm1m>
8. https://www.instagram.com/p/Cz-sI_5tb9N/?igsh=MW8xeTEvaGN6ZzIzaw==