

THESIS APPROVAL FORM
NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

**THE INFLUENCE OF KAZAKHIZATION POLICY ON THE MINORITY
ETHNIC GROUPS: THE CASE OF THE DUNGAN PEOPLE**

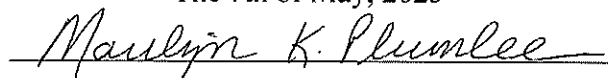
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by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in

Eurasian Studies

at

NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY -

SCHOOL OF SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

2025

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Abstract

The thesis investigates the influence of the cultural decolonization and nation-building process in Kazakhstan, i.e. Kazakhization, on the Gansu Dungan ethnic minority group. The Dungan people, a Muslim Chinese-speaking minority in Kazakhstan, is currently undergoing a language shift and an ethnic identity crisis. This study focuses on how Kazakhization policy and other social factors, such as intermarriage, interethnic relations and societal attitude towards the Dungan people, contribute to these issues.

The thesis used unstructured and semi-structured interviews with native Dungan speakers and participant observation in Taraz and Astana as the main research methodology. The findings revealed the rapid language and identity shift and significant differences in language use and ethnic identification of different generations of Dungan people. The older generation in their 50s demonstrate stronger affiliation with Dungan language and identity, while the younger generation in their 20s have limited proficiency in the Dungan language, while possessing a developing Kazakh language proficiency and possessing a dual identity.

Applying Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (EVT) and Social Identity Theory (SIT), this research analysed the influence of socio-political and interethnic dynamics on Dungan people's language use and ethnic identity. The analysis demonstrates that the Dungan language is greatly susceptible to further language shift and emphasizes the need for community-based language preservation strategies, as institutional support for the Dungan language is currently limited.

This thesis contributes to the understanding of minority linguistic situations and ethnic identity negotiation under the pressure of policies aiming at nation-building and cultural assimilation. It also highlights the complex relations between language, identity, and socio-political policies in the context of a post-Soviet, multiethnic country.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is a result of a lot of effort and energy not only from my side, but also from my dear advisors. I would like to express my endless gratitude to Dr. Marilyn Plumlee, Dr. Eva-Marie Dubuisson and Dr. Sami Honkasalo for their valuable feedback, emotional support and infinite patience. They helped me to improve in the field of linguistic research, guiding and supporting me on every step of this journey.

I also express my gratitude to the participants of this research for their contribution to the study. This thesis has seen the light of day thanks to Arafat Dautov who guided me through Dungan culture and made me a part of this community during the research.

Finally, I would like to thank my Mum and my husband, Beibarys Abik, for believing in me and the success of this research.

Introduction

This thesis analyzes the influence of the cultural decolonization and nation-building process, i.e. Kazakhization in Kazakhstan on ethnic minority groups in the case of the Dungan people. The main focus of the research is the effect of the Kazakhization policy on the Dungan language which currently has an endangered status according to UNESCO (2025) records. The preliminary interviews and secondary source analysis have shown that the Dungan people face not only language perseverance issues but also ethnic identification conflict: while some representatives identify with their Chinese background, others, usually the younger generation, identify with Kazakh or other Central Asia nations. It can be assumed that the process of Kazakhization mentioned earlier influences both language and identity of the younger generation that was born in independent Kazakhstan.

Therefore, the thesis seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the influence of the Kazakhization policy on the Dungan language and ethnic identity?
2. What are other influencing factors?
3. What is the level of the Dungans' linguistic and cultural assimilation with the Kazakh people?
4. How does Kazakhization policy affect Dungan language shift and preservation?

The main hypothesis of the research is that the Kazakhization policy has a negative influence on the Dungan language preservation due to active promotion of the Kazakh language and culture which also complicates Dungan ethnic identification. Intense promotion of the Kazakh language and culture can be one of the main factors leading to the Dungan language loss and an identity crisis. Other factors of influence might be a low level of Dungan literacy and language representation, especially in social media. These two aspects are interconnected since the inability to read and write in the Dungan language, which is currently written in the Cyrillic script and is likely to misrepresent the linguistic features, and limit the speakers' ability to use it in the messengers and social media, reducing the language representation.

The research can also play an important role in identifying the most suitable and effective language preservation methods. As their effectiveness differs according to every case of endangered language, understanding the origins of the language loss will contribute significantly to the further development of preservation strategies.

Literature Review

Relevant Studies

Gansu Dungan Diaspora in Kazakhstan

The Dungan diaspora, sometimes called Hui people or Chinese Muslims, is one of the oldest in Kazakhstan. They arrived in the territory of Central Asia in several waves in the 19th century after the unsuccessful revolt against Manchu rule in China (Khalid, 2021). The Dungan language is a part of the Sinitic language group and is derived from the Mandarin Chinese varieties of the Gansu and Shaanxi regions. The names of the regions correspond to the names of two major dialects of the Dungan language spoken in Central Asia. It should be noted, however, that since all varieties of Central Asian Chinese are referred to as Dungan, the term can be applied to other varieties besides Gansu and Shaanxi. For instance, a minor community in Krasnaya Rechka in Kyrgyzstan speak a Sinitic variety of Qinghai origin, and they are nevertheless considered Dungan both ethnically and linguistically by their Kyrgyz neighbours. Given the linguistic differences in these varieties, it becomes more difficult to define Dungan, both in terms of a language and ethnicity. The Qinghai group moved to the territory of Central Asia after the Second World War, which makes their socio-historical and cultural background significantly different from Gansu and Shaanxi groups. This study is focused on the Gansu Dungan speakers living in Kazakhstan, particularly in Taraz, and Astana.

Previous research has shown that the Dungan language, currently endangered, has a low level of intergenerational transmission and is undergoing a language shift. Smagulova (2015), who has conducted fieldwork in Almaty, which has a great number of Dungan population, has reported the absence of any formal education in and of the Dungan language. Smagulova (2015) has also shown that Dungan language use is decreasing across generations due to mentioned low levels of intergenerational transmission. Respondents in Smagulova (2015) have claimed some proficiency in Kazakh that is growing for the younger generation due to the official language policies.

In addition to the language loss, the Dungan people are experiencing an ethnic identity crisis that is supported by contradictory findings of the previous research. Smagulova (2015) claims that due to traumatic events connected to the revolt in China and subsequent exodus to Central Asia, the Dungan people do not associate themselves with Chinese culture. Rimsky-Korsakoff (2016) also notes that Dungan people living in the 1970s did not identify with

China at all, but instead connected themselves with Arabic, Persian, and Central Asian identities. His view contrasts with the words of some Dungan people interviewed since some of them stated that “they are Chinese in ethnicity”. Kokaisl and Hejzlarova (2023) add another view on this question by claiming that the Dungan people experienced a great alteration of their identity, firstly losing their connection with China due to Soviet policies that aimed at eradicating the similarities between Dungan and Chinese cultures and then regaining them again after the USSR collapse when China made attempts to build those connections back. This contradiction demonstrates the need for a deeper analysis of the Dungan identity through generations since the question seems to be complex and controversial, but understanding it is essential for answering the research questions proposed above.

Language and Identity

Smagulova (2015) has shown that the Dungan people are not a static, bounded, and territorialized community, so language should play an important role in constructing their identity. The connection between language and identity is a frequently addressed topic in research. Bucholtz (2009) examined the influence of stereotypes about particular minority groups on their adaptation from a linguistic perspective. Even a positive image of the minority can be harmful to them by creating tension for those representatives who do not fit into this image. As a result, minority group members adopt the majority group’s language or linguistic characteristics to break their association with their ethnic group’s image.

A similar claim was made by Don (2009) who examined the development of the migrant identity among school students in China through their daily linguistic and sociolinguistic exchange. Although focusing on the effect of linguistic features on the student’s school performance, the research gives a great example of how indexicality works in constructing individual and group identities in a broader context. Conducting an ethnographic observation and interviews, Don (2009) revealed that migrant identity acquired by the students due to their linguistic differences affects the teachers’ and other students’ perceptions of them as “others” or having inferior intelligence. Aware of the negative connotation of them being “migrant”, students were trying to be perceived the same as the majority, by adapting their linguistic identity.

Following Narrotum's (2006) claim mentioned above, minority groups tend to call themselves “Kazakhstani” or even “Kazakhs” when questioned about their ethnic identity. This tendency is frequently seen among the representatives of the younger generation of Dungan

people, so it can be assumed that Dungan people in Kazakhstan are experiencing the same identity negotiation pattern as the one discussed by Don (2009).

Bucholtz (2009) also presents the concepts of adequation and distinction. The former stands for “ideological creation of an interactionally sufficient but necessarily incomplete similarity between social groups or individuals” (p. 26), while the latter is defined as the “ideological production of social differences”(p. 26). The knowledge of these terms facilitates a deeper understanding of the Dungan people’s assimilation in the context of Kazakhization. As Bucholtz (2009) mentioned, the processes of adequation and distinction are mostly noticeable among the young generation. Although the Dungan people relocated to the territory of Kazakhstan many years ago and these processes can be less visible, those concepts can be applied to the young generation’s attitudes towards their ethnic identity negotiation.

Language Ideology

Silverstein (1979, cited in Woolard, 1998) defined language ideologies as “the sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (p.57). This “rationalization” not only explains but can also affect the language structure. (Woolard, 1998, p. 12). Discussing the importance of considering the effect the ideology has Woolard (2020, p. 2) has cited:

Language ideologies are not only about language. They forge links between language and other social phenomena, from identities (ethnic, gender, racial, national, local, age-graded, subcultural), through conceptions of personhood, proper human comportment, intelligence, aesthetics, and morality, to notions such as truth, universality, authenticity. (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994)

The phenomenon of Dungan ethnic identity is not an exception. Language ideology plays an important role in both the identity crisis and language endangerment that the Gansu Dungan community in Kazakhstan currently experience. In this case, according to Henningsen (1989, as cited in Kroskrity, 1998, pp. 31–32), the ideology of linguistic purism has to be investigated closely. As Henningsen claimed, language purism “originates in a quest for identity and authenticity of a cultural Self that feels threatened by the hegemonic pressure of another culture” (as cited in Kroskrity, 1998, p. 109). In other words, the Kazakhstani Dungan community is likely to develop the language purism ideology as the minority group. However, this case is more complicated than that, as the current majority, Kazakh ethnic group, was also a minority for the

long period of the Soviet rule, and the spread of language purism among this group would work under the same principle. So the language purism is a central ideology in the case of this research, that can be both borrowed from the majority group, or developed under its pressure.

Woolard (1998, p. 18) discussed the role of language purism in such cases as following:

Along with the equation of one language/one people has come an insistence on the authenticity and moral significance of “mother tongue” as the one first and therefore the real language of a speaker, transparent to the true self. Another tenet often clustered with the Herderian ideology in both folk and scientific ways demands linguistic purism as essential to the survival of the minority languages, a kind of policing the boundaries that have been drawn to create distinct language forms.

Although the research community expresses the controversial opinion on the effect the language purism has on the language preservation, the ordinary speakers see the language purism and language preservation as inseparable aspects of the language use. It may both have positive and negative effects for the endangered language, but in any case the ideology would be the force that shapes verbal practices and speech genres. Kroskrity (1998) referred to it as “linguistic indexing of identity”, claiming that “one’s speech is one’s linguistic biography”. In multilingual communities, such as Kazakhstan, the language ideology also shapes the pattern of switching between languages and varieties in different social contexts, for embracing or erasing the differences between the different groups. Especially, when the language is seen as the primary or only distinct feature of the group (Blommaert & Verchueren, 1998, p. 193), as it was with all ethnic groups in the Soviet state.

Language Shift and Preservation

Myers-Scotton (2006) discusses the possible outcomes of the minority groups contact with a majority language(s), claiming that there are three main scenarios, specifically, when the speaker does not learn a second language and retain their first language, when both first and the second languages are retained, and when the second language replaces the first one as a general, default language of communication. In most of the cases these options happen one after another through generations which means that language shift happens in or after the third generation of minority language speakers. However, Myers-Scotton (2006) adds that there are other scenarios that happen less frequently. For example, the second language learned by the minority group can be replaced by another language not native to the group. The first language of the minority group can be also relearned by the group members later in life due to its psychological significance. All

of the mentioned scenarios, except the very first one, are possible and existing in the Gansu Dungan group in Kazakhstan and aligns with the generational pattern proposed by Myers-Scotton (2006). There is no confirmative information of the language use of the first generations of the Dungan people migrated to Kazakhstan, but the current research suggests that the speakers in their 50s are either bilingual with a dominant Russian language use, or trilingual in Russian, Dungan and Kazakh (language use in descending order) and the speakers in their 20s are trilingual with the dominant Russian and/or Kazakh language use.

Myers-Scotton (2006) highlights that these scenarios depend on the social organization factors that can favor bilingualism or monolingualism, and the priority given to these factors is especially significant. For example, Myers-Scotton (2006) has mentioned that abundance of people working in farming is a factor favoring monolingualism, as farming does not require a lot of interaction with other people, but although many Dungan speakers work in the farming sector, they are not monolingual and none of the respondents were Dungan language dominant bilinguals. Myers-Scotton (2006) also mentions the low-level education as a factor favouring language maintenance, which contrasts with the social status factor in the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory that will be discussed further.

Mansour (1993) introduced the concepts of horizontal and vertical multilingualism, where the former refers to the people living in established space with limited interaction with other languages, and hence usually monolingual, and the latter refers to the people living in a diverse linguistic environment, often urban, that implies frequent interaction with other languages. In other words, Mansour's (1993) connects the geographical space associated with the language speakers to their multilingualism patterns. Myers-Scotton (2006) expanded this understanding of space to the "cognitive space organization" (p.71), claiming that the mindset of the speakers align with their attitude towards multilingualism. In this understanding, horizontal multilingualism, where people resist adopting the second language, occurs in those groups that have strong associations with their ethnic identity, and prefer to live in isolated villages, small towns or specific areas in urban settings. Vertical multilingualism takes place in an opposite situation, when people identify with a larger group, e.g. "the citizen of Kazakhstan" instead of "Dungan". It often occurs in diverse urban environments and the speakers are more likely to experience language shift. Myers-Scotton (2006) makes a remark that " maintenance and shift

within a bilingual community fall on a continuum with those individuals who use only the L1 at one end to those who use only the L2 at the other end” (p.89).

Tuominen (1999) discussed the language shift in immigrant communities through generations and concluded that although parents (first or second generation of immigrant minority) report speaking to each other in their first language, children (third generation or further) make them speak the dominant group’s language or code-switch between the two languages when speaking to them. The younger generation then is an “engine” of the language shift. Therefore, the experience of the younger generation should be considered as an important factor of the Dungan language shift.

As the Dungan language is experiencing a rapid language shift, the question of language preservation has to be considered too. Brenzinger and de Graaf (2009) presented language documentation as the main tool in language preservation since it helps to produce the materials that can be used for language learning and teaching. While documenting the language, scholars encourage native speakers to increase the intergenerational transmission and help them to re-acquire the language by making the archive materials available. This statement is supported by the fieldwork conducted in the scope of the research, as the participants start to draw more attention towards the existent language issues and make attempts to preserve its usage on the domestic level. In addition, Kucherbayeva and Smagulova (2023) highlighted the connection between the availability of the materials and language development. Although this research was focused on the Kazakh language, the claim is relevant for the Dungan language since it experiences a significant lack of the materials available for the general population.

Talking about reasons that cause language loss, Mufwene (2016) presents the list of the main causes, namely colonialism, globalization, and migration that force people to adopt the majority language as lingua franca and reduce the practice of their native language. Mufwene (2016) concludes that the language preservation process mainly depends on the presence of the environment where the language can be practiced. The author also mentioned the role of interethnic conflicts in language preservation, but its influence is mostly positive, i.e. “interethnic conflicts tend to strengthen people’s loyalty to their heritage language, as this helps strengthen cooperation and solidarity within the group” (p. 128). This claim has to be tested in the context of the conflict in the Qorday region in Southern Kazakhstan in 2020 which was characterized as an ethnic clash between Kazakhs and Dungans. The conflict started on February 5th as a road

incident between two elderly people of Kazakh and Dungan ethnicities and their sons and was recorded and then spread through social media, leading to mass discontentment of two ethnic groups. The conflict quickly escalated to a mass ethnic clash involving over one thousand people, as a result of which around 185 people were injured, 11 people passed away and over 23 thousand people, majority of which were Dungans, crossed the Kyrgyzstan border. Although the main cause of the conflict is considered to be a road incident, it resulted in a language conflict that could be observed in social media. Preliminary findings showed that Dungan people limited the use of their language after the conflict to avoid the conflict's intensification, which contrasts with Mufwene's claim mentioned above.

Ingebretson (2022) examined the language preservation policies in the Huangshan region in China introducing the concept of "preemptive eulogization": instead of reviving or maintaining languages, the rhetoric of imminent language loss can contribute to or even hasten language death. As a form of fractal recursivity, which implies ideological distinctions of one level of social organization being recursively projected into other levels, shift towards dominant language is seen as "modernization", while minority language use is seen as "backwardness". Ingebretson (2022) claims that it is a deliberate action in the frame of the language policy taken to force the people to give up their language and learn Standard Mandarin. In other words, it makes language death a natural and logical outcome that does not play a significant role for the majority of the population. Therefore, the Dungan people's feelings about their language play an important role in language shift and preservation.

Kazakhization Policy

Nation-building has been a major task for all post-Soviet countries and most of them shared the characteristics of authoritarian attitude, ethnic bias, and majoritarianism, which was challenging in multiethnic Kazakhstan that has over 130 different ethnic groups in its population (Narrotum, 2006). Majoritarianism implies that the historical ethnic majority, in this case Kazakhs, have the decisive power and have to be a numerical majority too. Increase of ethnic Kazakh population in the country and hence "strengthening the Independence of Kazakhstan" (Kozybakova & Dossymova, 2020, p. 16) was achieved by repatriation of ethnic Kazakh people from China and other countries, as well as by birth rate increase policies.

Narrotum (2006) examined the process of nation-building, i.e. Kazakhization, in Independent Kazakhstan, referring to both official governmental policy and the implementation

of this policy in practice. While the former established the concept of interethnic friendship, ensuring the right of the different ethnic groups to keep their language, culture, and identity symbols, the latter was characterized by favoring the ethnic Kazakh population in such spheres as employment in state institutions and military service, as well as receiving subsidies and other benefits. Disempowering minority groups, i.e. ethnic groups other than Kazakh, was considered a part of the Kazakhization policy and viewed as “natural justice against 200 years of discrimination, suppression, and injustice caused by the colonial regime” (Narrotum, 2006, p. 66). The intense promotion of Kazakh cultural symbols and language, that started around the mid-1990s, has resulted in ethnic minority identification issues since, as Narrotum (2006) reported, a great number of minority representatives do not identify themselves with their ethnicity but prefer to call themselves “Kazakhstani”. Narrotum (2006) claims that this gap between the official and actual implementation of the nation-building policy harms the state system since ethnic minorities of Kazakhstan contribute to society’s well-being to a great extent. Intensification of the Kazakhization policy has led to migration to their kin countries and negatively affected Kazakhstan’s economic, educational, and healthcare system. According to Qasymuly (2024), non-Kazakh ethnic groups’s population decreased significantly in the period from 1989 and 1999, e.g. 28,6% of Russian, 63,1% of German, 38,9% of Ukrainian and 24,1% of Tatar people have left Kazakhstan.

As Mkrtchyan (2017) has stated it, Kazakhization policy is directed to make “Kazakhs the first among equals” (p. 106). Karin and Chebotarev (2002) support this view claiming that in terms of ideology and culture, as well as education reforms, Kazakhization policy can be characterised as “antidemocratic”. The policy implementation “deliberately forgets that other peoples were oppressed no less than Kazakhs” (Karin & Chebotarev, 2002, para. 49). Karin and Chebotarev (2002) also comment on tribalism in Kazakh culture. Ethnic Kazakh people are believed to be connected not only through close family ties, but also through clan and tribe affiliations, which leads to favoritism in the job sector. Thus, people of other ethnicities who do not have any affiliation with clans and tribes are put in a disadvantageous position in the context of intensified promotion of Kazakh culture that includes tribalism.

A high value is assigned not only to Kazakh culture, but also Kazakh language. The prolonged Kazakh-Russian language conflicts lead to diminishing the role of Russian in official settings, including government sector jobs and media. Mkrtchyan (2017) highlighted that

although the Russian language had an official status of language of interethnic communication, the proficiency in Kazakh gradually became obligatory, starting from the Language Law of 1997 and its amendments in 2010 and 2017, for everyone who aims at working on high level official positions. Smagulova (2010, p. 454) have addressed the official policy as follows:

While they permit the use of Russian, acknowledging citizens' constitutional right to choose a language of communication with the bureaucratic apparatus, the legislative documents also strongly suggest the supremacy of Kazakh, the sole state language, which must be used in all spheres regulated by the state.

Aitymbetov et al. (2015) present the process of Kazakhization as the prioritized policy in Kazakhstan as a nationalizing state. Promoting Kazakh national identity, as Aitymbetov et al. (2015) argue, may result in the inter-ethnic tensions that the government tries to balance and control. However, the minority groups have to “promote their interests intensively in the conduct of national politics” (p. 16), which leads to “the intensification of the process of Kazakhization” (p. 16). It creates a vicious circle of interethnic conflicts that have to be solved to preserve the peace in society. As these conflicts are likely to correlate with language conflicts, Dave (2007) suggested that the state's reaction to those conflicts is expected to be similar to the Soviet policies, as he claims that independent Kazakhstan's policy-making carries a Soviet legacy in it.

Theoretical Framework

Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory

Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977) introduced the theory of ethnolinguistic vitality, presenting a descriptive taxonomy of the variables that affect ethnolinguistic groups' identity formation and alternation. According to it, ethnolinguistic vitality depends on three main factors: status, demographics, and institutional support, each having several subsections. Applying this theory to the case of the Dungan people in Kazakhstan, we can uncover the detailed reasons behind their language and identity crises.

Giles et.al. (1977) highlight four main subfactors of status that are economic status, social status, sociohistorical status and language status. The economic status refers to the “degree of control a language group has gained over the economic life of its nation, region, and community” (p. 310). According to Kazakhstan's mediaportal Caravan.kz 80% of the onion produced in the country are produced in Zhambyl region, specifically by ethnic Dungan people from the villages

Masanchi, Auqatty and Sartobe, as “onions are a specialty of the Dungans, who live mainly in three villages in an enclave on the border with Kyrgyzstan” (Urnamov, 2023, para. 13).

Social status in Giles et. al.'s taxonomy refers to the self-esteem of an ethnolinguistic group and its influence on the group's morale. According to the interview results that will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters, Gansu Dungans have a higher esteem as a group in comparison to ethnic Kazakhs. This phenomenon contrasts with the whole image of the Dungan people as an ethnic minority in context of Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory, and has to be analyzed closely.

Sociohistorical status refers to the struggles the ethnolinguistic group experiences while defending or maintaining their group's right to exist throughout history. In other words, to analyze the sociohistorical status of the Dungan people we need to know what historical events they find the most traumatic for their group. Another question that has to be addressed in this research is whether the historical episodes that ethnic Kazakhs find traumatic coincide with such for Dungans.

Finally, the language status combines the language history, prestige, value and standardization degree and their influence on the feelings of pride for members of the ethnolinguistic community. Giles et. al. (1977) highlighted the importance of understanding the language status in and out of the community, or in the given case, in and out of Kazakhstan. As the Dungan language is a member of the Sinitic language group, and is spoken outside of Kazakhstan borders, mainly in Kyrgyzstan and China, it is important to understand how the status of Chinese language as an international one influences the Dungan language, and what is the status of the Dungan language in Kyrgyzstan. The importance of Chinese language on the international arena is part of the Kazakhstani community's discourse on languages, so it is also important to observe the connection between this factor and the Dungan language vitality.

The demographic factor is divided into distribution (which includes national territory, concentration, and proportion) and numbers (absolute, birth rate, mixed marriage, immigration, and emigration). National territory refers to “the notion of ancestral homeland”, i.e. as Lieberson (1972, as cited in Giles et. al., 1977) pointed out, immigrant minorities tend to assimilate to the majority by giving up their own language at a faster pace, than if the same group was a minority on their “ancestral homeland”. As was discussed previously, Dungan immigrated to the territory of Central Asia from China, but it is a question of what they consider as their homeland. The

unwillingness to associate with China discussed in some previous research mentioned above might also be represented as not considering it their “ancestral homeland”, which would significantly affect their ethnic identity and vitality.

Concentration of an ethnolinguistic group speaks for itself, as it refers to the proportion of the members of the same ethnolinguistic group residing in the same geographical area, and in terms of the linguistic vitality, its correlation with interaction among the members. Dungan people mostly occupy the South Kazakhstan region, specifically Zhambyl region and Almaty, but many of them have moved to Astana and other cities for economic and social benefit. According to the Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the results of the beginning of 2024, there are 83 959 people of Dungan ethnicity living in Kazakhstan, 60 157 of them residing in Zhambyl region, 16 756 in Almaty and 1 735 in Astana (Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, n.d.)

Absolute numbers factor “refers to the numbers of speakers belonging to an ethnolinguistic group” (Giles et. al., 1977, p. 313). This exact definition highlights a problematic aspect of the research, since there is no official statistics on how many members of the Dungan ethnic group are actual speakers of Dungan. The unofficial statistics derived from the interviews suggests that there has been a sharp decline in the proportion of Dungan speakers in the community after the 2000s, as the number of actual speakers of the Dungan language in the generations born after the 2000s is decreasing up till now. The same problem occurs in evaluating the birth rate factor, as it is impossible to compare the ethnic Kazakh’s birth rate with Dungan due to the absence of official data for the latter, and the interview results remain uncertain. What can be assessed despite the absence of statistical data is the language intergenerational transmission in mixed marriages. According to Giles et. al. (1977), a high status language is usually used as a home language and hence is transmitted to the next generation, but it is also important to consider the cultural aspect of this question. In Kazakhstani patriarchal society, the language of the father usually has more value, so it is more likely to be used at home. The case of Dungan-male and Kazakh-female marriage, which happens more often than Kazakh-male marrying Dungan-female, would shed light on this question in the Kazakhstan context.

The final aspect of demography is immigration and emigration. As some Gansu Dungans move to China for study and job reasons, the influence of emigration on their use of the Dungan

language can be analyzed. The primary question here is whether they speak more Dungan or switch to the Chinese variety, or prefer to use Russian or Kazakh as the symbol of their citizenship.

The institutional support discussed by Giles et. al. (1977) is characterized as formal and informal, where the former stands for the representation of the ethnolinguistic group in the government and business at the decision-making level, and the latter refers to the existence of organized pressure groups. Pressure groups are non-governmental organizations aiming at influencing the policy towards the interests of their ethnolinguistic group, and whether such groups exist among the Dungan community in Kazakhstan. According to the data available so far, there are no such pressure groups and the only organization promoting Dungan ethnic group's interests is the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan. Dungan diaspora representatives in the Assembly are responsible for organising cultural festivals, language centers and Sunday schools for their ethnic group to promote and ensure interethnic harmony. However, the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan is a state-sponsored organization that heavily depends on government policy and funding, so it cannot be accounted as a pressure group.

Tajfel and Turner's Theory of the Social Identity and Intergroup Relations

Ethnic identity of the group can be analyzed from the perspective of a social identity construction, as the ethnic identity is an example for the social identity. In their work Giles et. al. (1977) refer to Tajfel's theory of intergroup relations, proving its connection to the question of ethnolinguistic vitality, so the theory of social identity presented by Tajfel and Turner (1986) will facilitate the study of the Dungan ethnic identity in Kazakhstan.

In his work Tajfel (1974, as cited in Giles et.al, 1977, p. 319) presents the following sequence: social categorization -> social identity -> social comparison -> psychological distinctiveness. Social categorization involves the division of the people into the groups that can be conceptualized as "us" and "others". In the context of the thesis, it simply means the division into ethnic groups, i.e. Dungans and Kazakhs. Tajfel suggests that social identity "only acquires meaning by comparison with other groups, and it is suggested that individuals have a desire to belong to groups which give them satisfaction and pride through membership" (1974, as cited in Giles et.al, 1977, p. 319). In the context of ethnic groups, that are not easy, if even possible, to change, the feelings of satisfaction and pride might be constructed through social comparison that makes in-group members act in a way that makes their social group favorable. Psychological

distinctiveness that will occur in this case allows members to share the identity that will satisfy them.

In the case of Dungan ethnic identity the sequence might look as follows:

1. Categorized into ethnic groups that have strict boundaries, Dungan people have to keep the specific traits to construct their identity.
2. Dungan people position themselves as a hardworking agriculture-oriented Muslim community.
3. Supporting this image they behave within the borders of it, i.e. many members of Dungan diaspora work in the agricultural sector (the previously mentioned onion production), tend to do most of the physical work themselves, and practice and transmit Islam to the next generations as their distinct feature.
4. These traits come in contrast with the popular discourse on Kazakh ethnic group's traits, who are representatives of previously nomadic society, often said to be "lazy" and practicing "popular Islam" or "neo-Muslims". Therefore, it creates the mentioned psychological distinctiveness but may create an interethnic tension, as the traits assigned to Kazakhs are not considered to be positive.

As ethnic Kazakh constitute both numerical and cultural majority in Kazakhstan, the relations between two groups can be described as "dominant vs subordinate groups". Tajfel (1974, as cited in Giles et.al, 1977) suggests that if the group has an inadequate social identity or in other words, low self-esteem, they will desire to change it in case there are cognitive alternatives they are aware of, their position in the hierarchy can be changed in a negative way, and they consider their current position unjust. However, as was illustrated above, the Dungan community does not seem to have a low self-esteem. On the contrary, it is higher than Kazakh group's, which makes this case particularly interesting to analyze. This paradox will be discussed in the further sections. Tajfel and Turner (1985) make an additional remark on the connection between the social identity and group's desire to alter it, claiming that such desire might be provoked not only by negative identity, but also by threatened one. Subordinate groups' social identity is usually threatened per se, and in the case of Dungans in Kazakhstan, it can be supported by the violent events in Qorday in 2020 discussed previously. There are three possible reactions of the group to such threat:

1. Social mobility. Tajfel (1974, as cited in Giles et al, 1977) claims that subordinate groups assimilate culturally into the dominant group, where individual members can try to disassociate from their initial group.
2. Social creativity. If mobility is not an option, subordinate groups members may try to change their position by comparing themselves with a dominant group in a new dimension, or changing the value of the traits assigned to the groups.
3. Direct social competition between the groups. It does not occur often, as subordinate groups do not usually possess enough power.

The main assumption of this research is that the Gansu Dungan diaspora in Kazakhstan adopt the first strategy as their primary reaction, but it does not mean that other strategies cannot be incorporated.

Minority Language Typology

Edwards (1992) argues for the need of comprehensive typology for understanding the minority language situations, including language shift and maintenance. He has discussed three existing approaches, namely White's Geographical Approach, Heugel's Ecological Model and Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory discussed previously.

The adapted Geographical Approach analyses the minority languages based on their geographical location and similarity with other languages spoken in the same state or region. The first distinction deals with the uniqueness of the variety, i.e. unique minority that refer to the minority unique to the state, non-unique minority which has similarities with other languages spoken in the state, but still remain a minority language, and local-only minority that refers to the language that is a minority in a specific state, but is a majority elsewhere.

The second distinction Edward (1992) makes in the frame of Geographical Approach is connected with the geographical proximity of the minority language to its historical homeland and/or the speakers of the same minority language in other states, i.e. adjoining and non-adjoining languages. The third distinction deals with the spatial cohesion among the speakers and the degree of social and linguistic unity in the minority community. Cohesive languages are characterized by geographically concentrated communities of speakers that creates an environment for daily usage of the minority language. In contrast, non-cohesive language speakers are scattered geographically and have limited opportunities for language use in daily life. According to the Geographical Approach then, Gansu Dungan language is unique,

non-adjoining and non-cohesive. Such characteristics make Dungan language highly vulnerable to language shift and explains the rapid pace of the language loss. Edward (1992) has highlighted that this categorization is far from perfect since the presented distinctions are not universal and differ in their degrees in every context.

Haugel's Ecological Model presents a broader contextual understanding of the minority language's situation. It focuses on the speakers' role in the language shift and maintenance by analysing their language repertoire, attitudes and language use domains. It is achieved by answering the following questions (Edwards, 1992, p. 43):

1. How is the language classified vis-à-vis other languages?
2. Who uses the language?
3. What are the domains of the language?
4. What other languages are used by its speakers?
5. What are the language's internal varieties?
6. What are its written traditions?
7. What is the language's degree of standardisation?
8. What institutional support does the language have?
9. What attitudes toward the language are held by its speakers?
10. Where do all these factors place the language in relation to other languages?

Although this model analyses the language situation from different perspectives, Edwards (1992) argues that it lacks depth in non-linguistic areas, such as history and psychology. His critique on the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory discussed previously can be summarised as not considering deeper social and historical dynamics. He claims that the speakers' feelings about their language and their understanding of its significance in psychological terms plays a significant role in language shift and maintenance, which is not given enough attention by presented models. Therefore, Edwards (1992) proposes combining these models and paying a greater attention to speaker's beliefs and feelings about their language to be a more effective approach that can facilitate analysis and prediction of the language maintenance and shift.

Methodology

The main methods used for the thesis are participant observation and unstructured and semi-structured interviews. A total of ten interviews were conducted with native Dungan speakers both offline and online depending on the participants' location and comfort. Some of the participants were interviewed more than one time as the new topics for the interview appeared. The participants come from two different age groups (in their 20s and 50s). The duration of the interviews varied from 20-30 minutes to 2 hours depending on the participants' willingness to continue and elaborate on their responses.

All of the interviewees have native or native-like proficiency in Russian, and all of the interviews were conducted in Russian. The Dungan language proficiency varied, but none of the respondents claimed to have the “perfect fluency” as those who had a higher proficiency highlighted the wide use of borrowings from Russian and Kazakh languages. It is a sign of the purism ideology that was mentioned before and that is widespread among the Kazakhstan population.

The interview questions were focused on the linguistic habits and language attitudes of the participants, but since I have chosen the unstructured and semistructured interview method, some of the participants elaborated more on their social experiences. The conflict in Qorday was mentioned too, which allowed me to see that incident from different perspectives and its direct influence on the thesis research topic. The participants also mentioned the relationship between ethnic Kazakh and Dungan populations in South Kazakhstan, hinting at the attitudes existing in the society. Although the discussion of this topic was fully participants' will, they seemed to be “polite” and “gentle” in their statements, likely feeling uncomfortable describing negative experiences associated with the ethnic Kazakh population to an ethnic Kazakh researcher. I did not push the participants to discuss this topic further. Therefore, to know more about the opinions and attitudes of Kazakh people toward Dungans, I had to appeal to the “carriers” of those attitudes - the ethnic Kazakh population of Taraz. Therefore, seven additional informal interviews were conducted with ethnic Kazakh residents of Taraz and the findings will be discussed in more detail further.

The participant observations were done in Taraz, Zhalpaktobe region, which is called Dunganovka by the locals due to the great number of Dungan people living there, and Astana. The observation was small-scale, involving one participant on a constant basis and three other

participants on a short time period. The following will describe the principles that were applied during the process of participant observation in interviews.

Participant Observation

Wolcott (1995) described the goal of this method as “going out to places, coming back with information about how people live there, and making that information available to the professional community in a practical form” (p. 95). Wolcott (1995) highlighted several aspects of the participant observation that have to be addressed to satisfy this goal. Firstly, he claimed that there is no such thing as “just observing” and presence of the researcher in the field always impacts people’s behavioral patterns. It is not novel, but as it results in the hyperfocus on the field observation, Wolcott (1995) highlighted the importance of “observing yourself observing”. Being aware that there are always details left unnoticed, it was helpful to go through the notes and make “notes-on-notes”.

As a human being the researcher cannot keep their attention on the same level for the whole period of the fieldwork and Wolcott (1995) compared the process to the pulse: short bursts of active noticing as many details as possible followed by passive attention times. He suggested “capitalizing on the bursts” and making sure that the pieces recorded include sufficient amounts of details to be reported later. Here it is emphasized that the ultimate goal is to obtain reportable data, not what the researcher thinks they ought to report. Constant self-assessment during the fieldwork helped to achieve that goal.

Discussing note taking, Wolcott (1995) highlighted the importance of finding a balance between writing too much and too little. While the former may confuse the researcher later, the latter may leave important information out. Since it is unique for every research, it is impossible to give specific guidelines on the length of the notes. Wolcott (1995) suggested accompanying the notes on the observations with reflections on and about oneself, i.e. researcher’s mood, reactions, and random thoughts. Such a method helped to recapture the details that were not recorded on the notes.

Adler and Adler (1998) discussed the types of observational methodology, as well as its advantages and disadvantages based on the existing research conducted with this method. They identified four main modes through which the researcher can conduct the observation: complete participant, participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant, and complete observer. It was highlighted that these modes should interchangeably be used during the research process.

However, Adler and Adler (1998) emphasized that the research should not be based solely on observation since it may lead to misinterpretation due to the researcher's own biases and ideology. Following these principles made the participant observation for this research more effective, which was highly important as the small-scale participant observation was used.

Interviews

The interviews for the thesis included questions on native speakers' language attitudes and Dungan language use and acquisition. The unstructured interviews were used since as Fontana and Frey (1998) discussed, such interviews are concerned with more general topics that give the respondents the freedom to express their opinions, experiences, and emotions. It might be more challenging to analyze and systematize later, but it gives a wider range of data. Moreover, the authors mentioned that unstructured interviews often, if not always, go hand-in-hand with participant observation, which makes it even more suitable for the thesis research. However, this type of interview also poses several requirements for its success: establishing trust, having background knowledge of the respondents' cultural norms, and properly presenting yourself. The genuine trust between the participants and the researcher is the most important and challenging part, as it required a prolonged contact with the participant that was not always applicable during the work on this research. Therefore, in case of conducting interviews with newly met participants the semi-structured interviews were used as a more efficient method.

Briggs (1986) provided a model for interview analysis, devoting particular attention to the following concepts: message form and channel, social situation, interactional goals, and types of communicative events. The message form and channel emphasize the presence of nonverbal communication that has to be noticed and interpreted correctly by the interviewer. Gestures, tones, gazes, and other types of information channels were addressed from the cultural background of the respondent since it helps to correctly encode the response itself. For this goal, using my previous experience and own cultural background I firstly achieved a sufficient understanding of the cultural communicative features of the respondents.

The concept of social situation in this discussion deals with sensitive topics. Briggs (1986) stated that several questions in this context can "simply place restrictions on the range of lexical items that may be used" (p.45). It supports the previous claim on the importance of

interpreting nonverbal signs and adds the need to “transport the consultants to another location for interviews” to enhance the psychological comfort of the participants (p. 45).

Interactional goals are more about the understanding of the purpose of the interview by two parties. Summarizing Briggs’s (1986) statement, the questions have to be specific enough for the respondent to answer on the desired point. The researcher’s failure to specify the goal of the interview and the questions would lead to a lengthy response that did not facilitate the research. Moreover, it would be then difficult to return to the original scope, and even if the researcher managed to return, the interview would be less effective. Therefore, interview questions were planned and structured prior to each interview, and adapted to specific participants’ cases.

While discussing the types of communicative events, Briggs (1986) claimed that the researcher and the respondents categorize the interview event differently. Insensitivity to the respondents’ understanding can violate the speech norms, and hence limit the range of interaction and reduce the amount of the obtained data.

Wolcott (1995) provided valuable advice about conducting the interviews, as well as working with them later to make the analysis more effective. First of all, the main rule was introduced - the researcher ought to not intrude. Wolcott (1995) emphasized that during the interview every question can become sensitive, although not always seem as such at the beginning. The respondents might be uncomfortable answering the specific questions due to their personal reasons, but it is highlighted that they are always saying something, although not always in a verbal way. Discussion of the Qorday incident’s consequences on the interethnic relations is an example for such a case. As was mentioned earlier, the respondents were not encouraged to elaborate on it by the researcher. Instead, the issue was approached from a different perspective.

Talking about more practical pieces of advice from the chapter, Wolcott (1995) suggested being an active and creative listener as it facilitates the interview by supporting the respondent's desire to answer or creating this desire. To become an active listener, the researcher has to “talk less, listen more”, particularly highlighting the role of silence in the conversation. Naturally, we usually try to fill the silence with any comments or new questions, but as Wolcott (1995) places it, it can be a “pregnant” silence that leads to a more expanded explanation of the point that the respondent makes.

While preparing for the interview, Wolcott (1995) suggested planning it around a few general topics instead of creating many different questions. It helped the respondent to focus

their attention and provide more detailed data. As for asking questions, it is important to make them short and repeat in the same form if needed, rather than elaborating on the question since it might affect the answer or the researcher may create the answer themselves.

As multiple interviews were conducted for this research, the previous interview materials were relistened or reread as it helped self-evaluation and identifying the points that require particular attention.

Ethical Considerations

As any research that includes human subjects, this study poses small risks for the participants. The first one is that the memories of the Qorday event of 2020 discussed above may cause emotional discomfort. The interview questions did not include mentions of this conflict, but since I have conducted unstructured interviews this topic was mentioned by the participants in the conversation. The participants were informed that they can reject their participation at any time with no questioning for the reasons and no consequences or ignore this topic. They gave an oral consent after being fully informed about this risk and the research process in general. As Sterling and De Costa (2018) have highlighted, the consent has to be adapted to the cultural background of the participants. Since people in post-Soviet countries tend to avoid signing paper documents, recorded oral consent was chosen as a more efficient option. This decision is also motivated by trust-building between me as a researcher and the participants. D'Arcy and Bender (2023) have stated that linguistic researchers have to focus more on the relational ethics, that implies mutual respect, and ongoing collaboration that can only be achieved in the trustful relationships.

The second risk has to deal with the final paper when the results will be published for a broader audience. Misinterpretation of the research results can possibly cause inter-ethnic conflict, as for Kazakh nationalists they may look like questioning the right of Kazakh people to promote their language and culture in their homeland. Therefore the personal data of the participants is fully confidential and all identifiable information is not included in the paper. Both Sterling and De Costa (2018) and D'Arcy and Bender (2023) have emphasized the moral responsibility of the researcher on the further usage of the research materials. Sterling and De Costa (2018) has also mentioned the cases when the participants are willing to be recognised in the paper, but the research ethics require confidentiality. Since it happened during this research process, I balanced these aspects as follows: the participant's name was included in the

acknowledgments, but any data that could possibly indicate his identity in the results and discussion was eliminated and proof-read by the participant himself.

This research has a list of benefits worthy of noting despite the mentioned risks. Acknowledging the Dungan people's role in the Kazakhstani community will help to avoid conflicts similar to the Qorday event or any other interethnic/interlanguage conflicts.

Also, the research process itself encouraged native Dungan speakers to take action for Dungan language preservation and increasing intergenerational transmission by drawing attention to the existing issues and possible ways of solving them. It assures the native speakers that the Dungan language has an important role that is acknowledged in the research paper. So the thesis contributes to preserving the unique cultural and ethnic knowledge of the Dungan people of Kazakhstan.

Results and discussion

Language Shift and Maintenance

All of the interview participants admitted the endangered state of the Dungan languages but argued for different causes. The older generation representatives claimed that the language loss is caused by the lack of technological progress in the Dungan community, the unwillingness of the younger generation to learn and speak the Dungan language, and the limited environment where the language can be used.

- (1) К сожалению, язык вырождается, потому что он как бы... Нет ничего. Прогресса нет у Дунган как таковых. Например, есть технологический прогресс в Китае. Поэтому китайский язык развивается. (excerpt from the interview)

Unfortunately, the language is dying, because... there is nothing. Dungans do not have progress in the first place. For example, there is technological progress in China. So the Chinese language is developing. (translated by the author)

The same participant referred to their child, a teenager who does not speak Dungan, as an example of a younger generation representative who does not express the desire to learn Dungan language despite the family members' attempts to explain the importance of titular language preservation. The participant explains it by claiming that the Dungan language is difficult to learn, and in contrast to their older children who speak Dungan relatively fluently, the child in question does not have a language learning skill and the environment that would provoke the interest for Dungan language. Treating Dungan as a second language that requires in-born skill to learn it represents the overall attitude of the participants to the Dungan language, as other participants expressed the similar opinions. Although it is considered to be a "native language", the participants acknowledge that it is not transmitted in a natural way, therefore in terms of acquisition it has second language characteristics. The participant has also elaborated on their youngest child's Dungan language proficiency by saying that the attempts to speak Dungan that the child took were unsuccessful, as they misused the tones or used borrowings from Russian and Kazakh. Any tone corrections or comments from the older relatives were discouraging and the child gave up their attempts to speak Dungan very fast. That illustrates the negative impacts of the purism ideology on language preservation.

Another participant of the same age groups has mentioned the following:

- (2) Сейчас очень много современных семей которые дома разговаривает по-русски и даже их дети не знают по-дунгански абсолютно ничего. Но есть большое "но" - когда ребенок вырастает, когда он уже взрослеет уже становится становится

старше, мне кажется, кровь всё равно сильнее. Они, становясь уже под 40-50 лет, они всё равно пытаются по-дунгански заговорить. (excerpt from the interview).

Now there are many modern families who speak Russian at home and even their children know absolutely nothing in Dungan. But there is a big “but” - when a child grows up, when he already becomes an adult, becomes older, it seems to me that the blood is still stronger. They, becoming 40-50 years old, still try to learn Dungan. (translated by the author)

Here the participants emphasize that children do not understand the value of the Dungan language unless they become adults and make conscious attempts to start speaking it. It supports the previous statement: we can claim that the natural transmission of the Dungan language is limited, as the majority of the children do not speak it, but may learn it as a second language later in life.

The younger generation representatives argued more on the lack of environment that would require speaking Dungan and the use of social media and other internet resources being the major factors of Dungan language loss. Education and career aspirations usually put the youngsters into the non-Dungan speaking community, reducing their use of the Dungan language.

- (3) Мой круг общения на данный момент в основном ребята из города и ребята из университета. С дунганами я... Ну, процентов 30 друзей, наверное, дунган. С ними в основном я на русском и на дунганском общаюсь. (excerpt from the interview)

My communication circle at this moment mostly consists of the guys from the city or guys from the university. With Dungans.. Maybe 30 percent of my friends are Dungans. With them I mostly speak Russian, and Dungan. (translated by the author)

- (4) Когда я перевелась, допустим, уже в X, там уже в большей степени были казахи, русские, корейцы. И пришлось адаптироваться, то есть не было практически ни одного дунгана, насколько я помню. (excerpt from the interview)

When I transferred to (a more prestigious) school, there were mostly Kazakhs, Russians, and Koreans. And I had to adapt, there was not a single Dungan as far as I can recall. (translated by the author)

When questioned about how it influenced their Dungan language proficiency, the participants gave similar answers, as:

- (5) Вот я иногда могу запнуться, потому, что я забываю, как вот это слово сказать, и у меня происходит небольшой language error, я не могу назвать это слово ни на этом, ни на том, ни на том. И такое случается, да, чаще. (excerpt from the interview).

Sometimes I can stumble, because I forget how to say this word, and I have a slight “language error”, I can’t say it in any of the languages I speak. And it happens more and more often. (translated by the author)

Most of the participant that were in their 20s have younger siblings who have low or zero proficiency in Dungan, but are native speakers of Russian, and all of them gave the following explanation to this phenomenon:

- (6) Но это, наверное, у всех происходит благодаря этому ютубу. Если честно, я не знаю, как это происходит, но смотрит какие-то видосики...И уже потом, когда она чуть-чуть выросла, уже начала уверенно говорить на русском. (excerpt from the interview)

Maybe, it happens because of YouTube. To be honest, I don’t know how it happens, but they watch the videos... and then, when growing up a little, start speaking fluent Russian. (translated by the author)

- (7) ...мой младший брат, он на 7 лет младше меня, он понимает дунганский, но не умеет говорить, очень сложно. Вот эта граница появилась в момент когда медиа и вот эти вот гаджеты стали общедоступными, ну их легко стало получить, потому, что дети залипают в телефоны, в телевизоре, а там на дунганском ничего нету, поэтому они тоже разговаривают на русском, кто-то на казахском. (excerpt from the interview)

...my younger brother, he is 7 years younger than me, he understands Dungan, but he can't speak it, it's very difficult. This border appeared at the moment when the media and these gadgets became publicly available, well, it became easy to get them, because children are glued to their phones, to the TV, and there is nothing in Dungan, so they also speak Russian, someone in Kazakh. (translated by the author)

The lack of use of Dungan language in the media and internet resources is claimed to be the major factor of the low Dungan proficiency among children. The generation of Dungans that was born and grew up in the era of internet development, spend a significant amount of time online, where the Dungan language is not used. The participants added that although they speak Dungan in their families, they use Russian more often while communicating with the family members online, as they do not know how to write and read in Dungan, or the keyboard is more convenient for typing in Russian rather than Dungan, and voice messages can not be used that frequently.

The absence of education on and of the Dungan language also impacts the Dungan language use negatively. The interview results support this claim, as the only Dungan language classes the respondents could recall were one semester-length classes taught in the primary

school of Taraz only to the group with Russian medium of instruction. The quality of this class was assessed as “low” and “not useful” as the students learned the same information in their families. The participants have mentioned that they do not know anything about availability of such classes now or claimed that such classes do not exist anymore.

The participant observation revealed that some of the younger generation representatives use Kazakh language in the non-Dungan speaking environment, even when Kazakh language is not required. One of the participants who is fluent in Russian, Kazakh and Dungan, used Kazakh language more often than the other two in daily life. Sometimes Kazakh was used for self-talk, and when questioned about it, the participant stated that they do not think about what language they are using, the choice is made subconsciously. In contrast, their choice to speak Dungan is often conscious, requiring some effort to switch. The background of this participant is Kazakh-language influenced, as they have studied in the Kazakh Medium of Instruction school and most of their friends are from Kazakh ethnicity. However, the latter speak Russian mostly, therefore the participant’s language choice in this particular case is not heavily influenced by the linguistic environment, at least at the moment of speech, as the participant tends to speak Kazakh more often than their friends of that ethnicity.

The language pattern of the same participant changes slightly when they communicate in their home with family. As not all of their family members are fluent in Kazakh, the amount of this language in their speech reduces, but does not reach zero, and Dungan is used more frequently as well as Russian. Although other members of the family are not as proficient in Kazakh language as the participant in question, they do use Kazakh language in a limited amount on a daily basis too. They explain it the same way, claiming that some words of the Kazakh language had become natural for them, and some already entered the linguistic repertoire of the Dungan language.

However, the influence of Kazakhization on the Dungan language use is not limited to the linguistic repertoire of the speakers. The results demonstrated previously have shown the existence of a borderline between the generations, making the language use of ethnic Dungans in the age of 40+ less influenced by Kazakhization policy, and the generations of 20+ and younger more influenced. While the former use Kazakh language occasionally in an amount limited to some words essential for everyday communication, the latter experience a language shift, the degree of which is dependent on the background of the speaker. These background factors are

usually the education institutes the speakers attended and their place of birth or living. For example, the participants of the project at the age between 19 and 25 were born and raised in South Kazakhstan, the most kazakhized region of the country, where Kazakh language proficiency is often a requirement for a proper communication with the society. This factor has influenced their language use by creating a need of acquiring the Kazakh language at least at the fluent everyday conversational level. Those of the participants who were also studying in the schools with Kazakh language as a medium of instruction, had the need to develop a higher level of proficiency, making most of them native-like speakers of the language. Having this need and living in the environment that not only provided the opportunity for extensive use of Kazakh, but also required to do so, resulted in participants' proficiency in Kazakh language being significantly higher than in Dungan language. The use of Dungan language is limited to the in-home communication which means not only the limited environment, but also the limited genres and styles the speaker can use.

During the fieldwork I have encountered non-Dungan people of the age 50+ claiming that the Dungan community is closed and isolated. This opinion contrasts with the interview results, especially with the responses of the younger generation representatives. If the Dungans were an isolated community in the past, currently we cannot make this claim. The increased number of education opportunities, such as opening NIS (Nazarbayev Intellectual School), KTL/BIL (Kazakh-Turkish Lyceum/ Bilim Innovation Lyceum), and other prestigious schools has pushed the Dungan people to send their children there for a high-quality education and future opportunities. The overall proportion of schools with Kazakh medium of instruction (54,3%) (Nurullin, 2023) has influenced the situation in a similar way, as more people were sending their children there due to the increasing value of the Kazakh language, and availability of the places for new students. However, according to the interviews, this trend is often kept for the primary school classes.

(10) ..наши дунгане отдают (детей) в казахский класс. А потом переводят уже в русский класс. Почему так? Потому что родители дунганы не общаются на казахском дома. Общаются либо на русском, либо на дунганском. И казахскому языку практиковаться негде для ребенка. Поэтому отдают в казахский класс, чтобы сначала были азы, основы казахского языка. А потом, если ребенок не тянет, переводят его в русский класс. (excerpt from the interview).

Our Dungans sent (their children) to a Kazakh class. And then they are transferred to a Russian class. Why is that? Because Dungan parents do not speak Kazakh at home. They

communicate either in Russian or Dungan. And there is no place for the child to practice the Kazakh language. That is why they are sent to a Kazakh class so that they first have the basics, the foundations of the Kazakh language. And then, if the child can't keep up, they are transferred to a Russian class. (translated by the author)

The “if” part in the last response refers to cases when the children’s academic performance in Kazakh is good enough to either stay in the same school with Kazakh medium of instruction, or transfer to a more prestigious school. In other cases, Dungan people are trying to transfer their children to Russian-medium-of-instruction schools. The participants have shared that it is usually done because the position of the Kazakh language in academia is currently weak. This claim has been discussed by Kucherbayeva and Smagulova (2023) who have been examining the lack of academic materials in Kazakh language, and existing issues with a style of Kazakh language suitable for such materials. However, as the excerpt from the interview (10) has illustrated, parents are trying to make sure their children reach at least the intermediate Kazakh language proficiency essential for everyday communication. This observation is supported by Severnyi (2022, para. 29) whose interview respondents have stated that “Most of the (Dungan) youth speak Kazakh, and they send their children to Kazakh groups in kindergartens and to Kazakh classes in schools” (translated by the author).

This discussion has uncovered the role of education in the Dungan language loss, but the influence of the social media and language use environment are no less important. The excerpts from the interviews (6) and (7) has shown that some participants see the absence of the Dungan language in the social media as one of the primary factors of low intergenerational transmission, as children spend a lot of time online where they encounter the content in Russian or Kazakh, and the rest of the time they mostly spend in schools being taught in the same languages. The environment for practicing Dungan language is very limited. As all of the participants recalled, they use Dungan language either only in their families, often with a few relatives of the older age, or in a small group of friends. The limited environment for the language use significantly hinders the language preservation process, as with the younger generation growth, this environment will only narrow. The current endangered status of the Dungan language becomes stronger through time, but the only language maintenance strategy the participants could recall was the family rules of some of their acquaintances. For example, one of the participants referred to their relative who has a home rule of speaking only Dungan to their grandparents, practically forcing them to acquire the language to have an opportunity to communicate with them.

(11) “Изредка бывают вот прям когда, вот у меня есть дядя который своих внуков, он с ними чисто на дунганском разговаривает. Вообще ничего на русском, вообще ничего на другом языке. Чисто на дунганском. И так вот эти дети научились дунганскому хотя бы разговаривать” (excerpt from the interview).

“Rarely it happens that, like, I have an uncle who speaks to his grandchildren purely in Dungan. Nothing in Russian at all, nothing in any other language at all. Purely in Dungan. And so these children have learned to at least speak Dungan” (translated by the author)

However, the effectiveness of such methods cannot be studied fully, as it is only one example that the participants could recall, and the children still spend a significant amount of time being exposed to Kazakh and Russian languages. In addition, as the Gansu Dungan representatives acknowledge the endangered status of their language, openly claiming that it is “dying out”, it is doubtful if preservation methods would be widespread in the community. Referring to Ingebreston (2022), such an attitude is likely to only hinder the situation, as the community can lose hope for preserving the language.

As a summarising point for this subsection, Edwards’ typology can now be implemented for a comprehensive understanding of the Dungan language shift. As was mentioned previously, according to the Geographical Approach, Gansu Dungan language is unique, non-adjoining and non-cohesive. Heugel’s model application is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1
Heugel’s Ecological Model applied to Gansu Dungan language

Heugel’s Model Questions	Gansu Dungan case answers
How is the language classified vis-à-vis other languages?	Gansu Dungan language is a unique minority language in Kazakhstan. It is not widely spoken in regions other than South Kazakhstan. It is also spoken in some parts of North Kyrgyzstan, but manifests some dialectical differences there.
Who uses the language?	The Gansu Dungan language variety is mostly spoken by the older generation of ethnic Gansu Dungsans, while the younger generation’s proficiency and language use is limited.
What are the domains of the language?	The domains are limited to domestic level, including everyday informal interaction and small community gatherings, e.g. wedding, Eid celebrations. Gansu Dungan language is not used in media, education, and other official settings.

What other languages are used by its speakers?	Older Dungan speakers are bilingual in Russian and Dungan, with occasional use of Kazakh, while the younger generation is either trilingual in Russian, Kazakh and Dungan, or bilingual in Russian and Kazakh.
What are the language's internal varieties?	There are two known varieties of the Dungan language: Gansu, Shaanxi. The interview participants who have interacted with speakers of other varieties have commented that they prefer speaking Russian as lingua franca in such interactions, as the level of varieties' mutual intelligibility varies.
What are its written traditions?	The Dungan language is written in Cyrillic script. Lack of literacy and standardization creates difficulties in using the written form, and leads to scarcity of written materials and digital domain usage.
What is the language's degree of standardisation?	The current degree of standardization can be assessed as low, as the extensive amount of borrowings and low literacy resulted in diverse spelling and grammar variations. Even the respondents with comparatively high levels of literacy are often not sure which written form would be the correct one.
What institutional support does the language have?	The institutional support is limited to the activity of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan which currently cannot provide sustained language support.
What attitudes toward the language are held by its speakers?	The older generation demonstrate some amount of pride and psychological bond with Dungan language, but acknowledge its endangered status and mostly give up in trying to preserve it. The younger generation is more ambivalent, claiming psychological significance of the language, but seeing Russian and Kazakh languages as more useful. Purist ideology also discourages some younger generation representatives to speak Dungan more often.
Where do all these factors place the language in relation to other languages?	Gansu Dungan language is currently vulnerable, heavily influenced by the dominance of Russian and Kazakh languages. Kazakhization policy is further encouraging the shift, making Dungan language less relevant.

As can be seen from Table 1, the Dungan language is greatly vulnerable to the language shift and this pattern is especially visible among the younger generation. The current trend can be characterised as a secondary language shift. Dungan people have already experienced the shift to Russian during the Soviet era, but currently experience a shift to Kazakh which is an additional

challenge for language preservation. The following sections discuss the possible factors that contribute to this situation in detail.

Dungan Language Ideology and Media Presence

As was mentioned earlier, Dungan people demonstrate purist tendencies in their view of a “right Dungan language”, claiming that the daily life use that incorporates code-switching and borrowings from other languages to be “non-fluent” or “not real” Dungan. This purism ideology, either developed as a minority group’s trait or borrowed from Kazakhs, is exacerbated by the Kazakhization policy that implies Kazakh language purism as one of the central values. As Kroskrity (1998) stated, purist language ideology can be harmful for the endangered languages, as it stigmatizes the “not perfect Dungan” speakers’ language use and hence lowers the intergenerational transmission rate. The findings support this claim, as one of the participants mentioned that their youngest child gave up on their attempts of speaking Dungan when faced with difficulties in speaking in a “pure” way. As the older generation views borrowings and code-switching as “wrong” Dungan language, it is easier for the younger generation to shift completely to Russian or Kazakh rather than face the risk of speaking “wrongly”. Woolard (2020) supports the idea that in such cases purism ideology will facilitate the language shift and loss, as it restricts the minority language’s adaptability.

It is especially visible in the digital domain, as the Dungan language is absent from social media, TV and other media portals. The lack of literacy in the Dungan Cyrillic alphabet that most of the participants found unrepresentative and not suitable for their language, and no efficient keyboard support on the devices, made the Dungan language presence in the digital domain even more difficult. People tend to switch to Russian or Kazakh when typing, limiting the Dungan language use to occasional voice messages. In terms of language ideology, it creates a conception of Russian and Kazakh languages being more “modern”, and the Dungan language being “outdated” and not suitable for online communication, which is an inevitable requirement for the modern world. Expanding this idea, Russian and Kazakh languages are seen as digital, public, interethnic and “serious” languages, while Dungan is seen as private, in-home oral language. It illustrates the claim made by Woolard (1998, 2020) that language ideologies shape the language and its speakers’ social status and legitimacy. Woolard (1998) also argues that code-switching in such cases is ideological, and the patterns of language use cannot be explained only by practical aspects as they reflect the deeply embedded ideology about the power and

legitimacy of language. Therefore, the Dungan language ends up in a vicious circle that leads to a greater language shift.

Affiliation with China and Other Minorities

Minority language shift is not novel, and although each case is unique in terms of the process, comparing the cases can shed light on the most influential factors. One example that can be used for such comparison is Uighur language shift in China. Answering a reasonable question of why I do not compare the cases of Dungan language in China and Kazakhstan, I would like to highlight that regardless of Dungan people's current identification China is a historical homeland for the Dungan language. Hence, although it is also a minority language in China, the language shift from the Dungan variety to Mandarin Chinese is drastically different from the shift to Russian and Kazakh. The linguistic differences between Dungan and Russian/Kazakh, and Uighur and Mandarin Chinese makes the latter a more suitable option for comparison.

Another question that might arise here is why the comparison is not made with other minority groups of Kazakhstan. The main difference between the Dungan diaspora in Kazakhstan and other ethnic minorities is in the absence of the associated homeland state. While, for example, Russian and Uzbek diasporas have the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan as a separate state that represent their ethnic identity, preserve language and culture and in general is interested in supporting the diaspora's wellbeing, Dungans do not have any similar associations.

As was shown by the interview results, participants claim to have very weak ties with China or don't have it in any form. The latter is especially relevant for the younger generation, as the respondents from this group did not only claim the absence of any ties with China, but were surprised to hear such a question in the first place:

(12) (что я считаю) своей исторической родиной? Вообще это будет странно звучать, но Дунгановка. Это прям аул, откуда я вышел. С Китаем ничего не связывает... Китайцы не могут считаться Дунганами... Если я не ошибаюсь, был какой-то момент, когда Китай, наоборот, дискриминировал Дунганей. Мне не особо нравится Китай, в культурном (плане) очень интересно, очень познавательно, но не нравится. (excerpt from the interview).

(what do I consider) my historical homeland? In general, this will sound strange, but Dunganovka. This is the village where I came from. It has no connection with China... The Chinese cannot be considered Dungans... If I am not mistaken, there was a time when China, on the contrary, discriminated against the Dungans. I do not particularly like China, in a cultural (terms) it is very interesting, very educational, but I do not like it. (translated by the author)

This excerpt summarises the general attitude the younger generation of respondents express towards the relation with China. Most of the older generation representative did agree with it or expressed a neutral attitude, although there was an opposite, although no less controversial, opinion too:

(13) Просто мы же это не пережили, мы же не знаем, но по словам предков, да, по истории читаем, что они когда было изгнание, кто-то говорит революция, там в Дунгане устроили забастовку, восстание, да, (бежали) с Китая. Когда я видела кадры, когда они вот переходили через горы Алатау, где гибли люди, да, Вот мне было до того жалко этих людей...И всё равно это же наша историческая родина. Как ни крути, ни верти, кто бы что бы ни говорил, всё равно наша родина, мы современные, наша родина – это Казахстан. Но наша историческая родина, это всё равно Китай. (excerpt from the interview).

We just didn't experience it, we don't know, but according to our ancestors, yes, we read in history that when they were exiled, someone says, (it was) a revolution, there were Dungans who staged a strike, an uprising, (and fled) from China. When I saw the footage of them crossing the Alatau Mountains, where people were dying, yes, I felt so sorry for these people... And still, this is our historical homeland. No matter how you twist it, no matter what anyone says, it is still our homeland, we are modern, our homeland is Kazakhstan. But our historical homeland is still China. (translated by the author)

Returning to the question of minority groups' comparison, as speakers of minority language in a country with monoglot language ideology and policies, Uighur people living in China face similar challenges as Dungan people in Kazakhstan. Han and Johnson (2021) has discussed that language maintenance is becoming a challenge as more Uighur youth are acquiring Chinese language. Many parents support such a shift, as Putonghua is not only an instrument of communication with Han Chinese people, but also a tool for acquiring a better education and career. Chinese language is conceptualized as prestigious and urban, a language able to “change the fate of the family” (Han & Johnson, 2021, p.190), and “to raise the scientific and cultural level of the whole nation” (Han & Johnson, 2021, p.187). Therefore, some parents not only support but encourage their children to learn and speak Chinese from a young age. However, it also leads to the fear of losing their “home language and culture” (Han & Johnson, 2021, p.191) and parents tend to implement strict rules on language use, making their homes an exclusively Uighur speaking space.

Placed between the devil and the deep sea, Uighur youth in China are trying to find a balance between Chinese language and the opportunities it provides, and Uighur language and mother tongue preservation. Han and Johnson (2021, pp. 192-193) described it as follows:

...all the students were instrumentally oriented towards learning Chinese for educational and career purposes. In addition, however, they believed it was their responsibility to study Chinese because they were Chinese citizens and regarded Chinese as a symbol of national identity. While they highlighted their Uyghur identity and culture, they also emphasized their Chinese-ness...[However] None of them sought complete inland China assimilation, and all retained their unique identities as Uyghur.... Furthermore, the willingness and desire for two-way interaction with majority language users stopped short of what might be considered the ultimate integration—marriage. All of them were against marriage with non-Uyghur people for cultural, linguistic, and religious reasons.

The similar at the first glance cases of Dungan and Uighur languages actually have a number of differences. The most obvious one is the Uighur language being influenced by one dominant language - Chinese, while Dungan is experiencing the influence of both Kazakh and Russian. The perception of the dominant language also differs significantly: while Chinese language is associated with prestige and development, neither Kazakh nor Russian have such strong associations among Dungan speakers. Russian language is seen as a lingua franca, the most convenient language to use in interethnic communication and uniting factor for all post-Soviet countries. At the same time, Kazakh language is viewed as a necessity for peaceful and easy assimilation and communication with a dominant ethnic group, but not a language of “scientific rise” as it was stated by Uighur people about Putonghua.

(14) у нас научной литературы для обучения мало на исконном казахском языке. Научных трудов на казахском языке тоже мало. К сожалению, казахский язык, как сказать, научных этих нет... фундамента, что ли, для того, чтобы на казахском языке делали научные диссертации. (excerpt from the interview)

We have little scientific literature for teaching in the original Kazakh language. There are also few scientific works in the Kazakh language. Unfortunately, the Kazakh language, how can I say, does not have these scientific... foundations, so to speak, for making scientific dissertations in the Kazakh language. (translated by the author)

The opinion expressed by one of the participants and provided above is widespread not only among Dungans, but among Kazakh themselves. Kazakh language is not even a strict requirement for a quality education - although there are more schools with Kazakh medium of instruction, the well-known prestigious schools like NIS, KTL/BIL have classes with both Kazakh medium of instruction and Russian medium of instruction. In terms of language prestige and use in academia, Kazakh language is put in a disadvantage position in comparison to Russian, which is conceptualised as “language of academia” but nevertheless loses to English.

Therefore, the Dungan language shift towards Kazakh or Russian is not a matter of prestige, as in the Uighur shift case.

Another difference is the language maintenance strategies. While Uighur parents make clear attempts for language preservation, some of them even being against their children moving to big cities, Dungan parents show less effort. Previously I have mentioned that one of the participants' relatives did implement an exclusive Dungan-speaking home strategy, similar to Uighur parents discussed, but it is a single case recalled among all of the participants. Most of them claim that they “try, but give up” in making their children acquire Dungan language. In comparison, Dungan people seem to be less zealous in terms of their language and relations with other ethnicities, as interethnic marriages are happening more and more frequently and do not cause major discontent.

Analyzing the differences in these cases, we can conclude that the Dungan language shift has more associations with ideological and communicative parts of Kazakhization. It does not mean that there is no socioeconomic mobility as a motivation for the language and identity shift. Masanov et. al. (2002) have mentioned that there is a list of professions where knowledge of Kazakh is a requirement. Many jobs, especially in the government and military sector are closed to people without Kazakh language proficiency, which is another factor forcing Dungan people and other minorities to assimilate linguistically with the ethnic majority language. But in comparison to the Uighur case discussed, Dungan people choose to increase their Kazakh language proficiency even if it's not as strictly required for achieving higher socioeconomic status, as it is for Uighur people in China. Therefore, assimilation seems to be a conscious choice for the Gansu Dungan community. This claim is supported by respondents who expressed mostly neutral feelings regarding assimilation into Kazakh society, acknowledging that it is a threat for their language and identity but seeing integration into society as a benefit that compensates for it. As participants have described, Dungan is a peace-seeking adaptive community that can integrate into any society and do not express any strong negative feelings about it. Some of the participants on the contrary saw it as an advantage, calling Dungan people “flexible” and “adaptable to any environment”.

Ethnic Identity Crisis

While the linguistic behaviour of the participants is relatively unproblematic in documenting, the ethnic identity patterns are more controversial. The participants' ethnic

identification can be summarised in three unifying points: identified as Dungan, Chinese-related or Kazakh.

When questioned about the ethnic identity, many participants replied “Dungan”, but most of them hesitated explaining what constitutes a Dungan identity. The most frequent mentions were language, traditional cuisine, and religion. However, a subsequent interview has revealed that these three aspects are arranged in ascending order in terms of their importance. Although all of the respondents referred to the Dungan language as one of the primary aspects of the ethnic identity, its role was not that significant as it was presented to be. Practicing Islam and following associated traditions has more significance according to the interviewees' responses. The participants have highlighted that the Dungan person is still considered to be no less Dungan even if they do not speak and/or do not understand the language, but they would be rejected by the Dungan community in case they do not practice Islam. One of the participants recalled the situation when a Dungan person had converted to Christianity, and “their family disowned them”. Marrying a non-Muslim person is something that the participants also named “unbelievable”. Although mixed marriages are a frequent occurrence in the Gansu Dungan community, the majority of these marriages are between the representatives of Dungs and Kazakhs, as the latter usually practice Islam too. In case of the relationship with a person of non-Islam practicing ethnic group, e.g. Russian, the partner converts to Islam before marriage:

(8) у меня племянника вот жена, да на русской, даже не на мусульманке, на русской (женился)... она перед свадьбой, она еще дружа с моим племянником согласилась, сказала “я приму мусульманство”. Она сейчас не то, что она приняла мусульманство, она сейчас покрытая даже. Она намаз пять раз делает. (excerpt from the interview)

My nephew has a wife, and he married a Russian, not even a Muslim, a Russian... Before the wedding, when she was still dating my nephew, she agreed, she said, “I will convert to Islam.” Now, it’s not just that she accepted Islam, she’s even covered now. She prays five times. (translated by the author)

According to the participants, it is an extremely rare case when the marriage occurs with a non-Muslim partner, especially between a Dungan woman and the non-Muslim man. It is very difficult to accept for the Dungan families, and often lead to disowning of the family members. The vast majority of mixed marriages require a partner to convert to Islam and practice it.

When questioned about their favourite holidays, all of the participants regardless of their region of residence have named Mubarak Eid and Qurban Eid as the main and the most favourite

holidays of the year, but the participants from Astana and some of the participants from Taraz has also named the New Year, and Nauryz (Kazakh national holiday). It demonstrates that the Gansu Dungan community is becoming more secularized, as they assign the same value to non-Muslim holidays as they assign to Muslim ones. However, it does not diminish the role of religion in their ethnic identity, as the secular and Kazakh national holidays are added to their value system without changing the role of Muslim celebrations.

On the other hand, some of the participant do create a line between “Dungan ethnic identity” and “Dungan religious identity”:

(9) Я люблю праздники. Вообще мне все государственные праздники нравятся. Мне нравится, ну, у нас особо прям вот дунганских праздников у нас нету. Может быть и есть, но мы как-то их уже, вот даже в интервью со всеми, все говорят про Курбан, про Мубарак, но это всё же мусульманские праздники. Это не чисто (дунганские праздники)...(excerpt from the interview)

I like holidays. In general, I like all state holidays. I like, well, we don't really have Dungan holidays. Maybe we do, but we somehow already, even in interviews with everyone, everyone talks about Kurban, about Mubarak, but these are still Muslim holidays. It's not pure (Dungan holidays)...(translated by the author)

The existence of such borderlines makes it more challenging to research the Dungan ethnic identity, and shows the complexity of this question. Creating those strict boundaries between the ethnic and religious identity might be related to the Soviet ideological system that has differentiated religion from ethnicity in a strict manner. This assumption is supported by the participants' responses, as this difference is highlighted only by the respondents of elder age, who have experienced the Soviet ideology themselves in their younger age, while the respondents in their 20s do not mention any differences between the ethnic holidays and religious ones.

The discussed interview results have shown the primary role is given to religion and associated customs, while language plays the least important role. The reason for such division might be the endangered language discourse - as the representatives of the Dungan diaspora acknowledge that language preservation might not be achieved due to the factors discussed above, they diminish the role of language in their own identity to not harm it. At the same time, those who experience the most influence of Kazakhization policy and get continuously exposed to the Kazakh language and culture develop a dual identity. It is especially visible among the

younger generation representatives who have studied in more prestigious institutions with most of their fellow classmates being from Kazakh ethnicity.

(15) я всегда был, скажем так, где-то в промежутке между двумя нациями. То есть я жил среди дунган, но при этом учился в казахском классе среди казахов, поэтому никогда такой проблемы лично у меня не было. Я был свой и тут, свой и там тоже. (excerpt from the interview).

I was always, let's say, somewhere in between two nations. That is, I lived among Dungans, but at the same time I studied in a Kazakh class among Kazakhs, so I personally never had such a problem. I was one of them here, one of them there too. (translated by the author)

The presented excerpt is taken from the interview with a participant in their 20+ from the moment they have elaborated on the interethnic conflicts. The dual identity of Kazakh and Dungan has been a benefit for the participants when there were fights on ethnic basis:

(16) Сам я прям участником такого конфликта, к счастью, не был. Опять же повезло с тем, что я достаточно хорошо разговаривал на казахском, даже лучше чем сами казахи с которыми я учился, поэтому до меня никто не докапывался, и при этом я был дунганин который, ну дунганин, и дунгане тоже не трогали. (excerpt from the interview).

Fortunately, I myself was not a direct participant in such a conflict. Again I was lucky in that I spoke Kazakh well enough, even better than the Kazakhs with whom I studied, so no one bothered me, and at the same time I was a Dungan who, well, a Dungan, and the Dungans didn't bother me either. (translated by the author)

The native-like proficiency in Kazakh language and, as the participant observation revealed, subsequent acquisition of some behavioural patterns, made the participant “one of their own” for Kazakhs, and the official ethnicity made the participant “one of their own” for Dungans, which helped them to avoid any interethnic conflicts. However, such conflicts did appear, not only on the large scale as the Qorday incident, but on the everyday life level. Some of such conflicts have resulted in violent clashes and hard injuries. In other words, the dual identity that originated in the Kazakh language acquisition has been a solution or sometimes even a salvation for minority representatives.

The dual identity that implies equal balance between being a Dungan and being a Kazakh is not always the case. There is a border line separating those who feel “more Kazakhstani” or even “Kazakh” and those who feel “more Dungan”. The younger generations usually incline towards the former, while the older generation incline towards the latter. This observation

explains the previously popular discourse that Dungan are a closed community, as the older generation do show such tendency to stay within their ethnic community, especially in terms of close interpersonal relations. The younger generation in turn is considerably more open to interethnic relationships, both in terms of friendship and marriage. Their openness and even willingness to develop strong bonds with representatives of other ethnicities, the vast majority of which are Kazakhs, provoke the development of “Kazakhstani”/ “Kazakh” identity. When questioned about their ethnic identity, one of the participants have recalled the quote of famous Kazakhstan boxer, Gennadiy Golovkin, who has said “My father is Russian, my mother is Korean, and I am Kazakh”, changing the wording as “My father is Dungan, my mother is Dungan, and I am Kazakh”. This quote alone shows a lot about the ethnic identification of the younger generation representatives of the Dungan diaspora, but I would like to add another one that I have encountered during the participant observation. One of the participants was jokingly bragging about something and when another person pointed at it, the reply was “Дунганин без понтов - беспонтовый казах” that can be translated as “A Dungan without show-off is a lame Kazakh”. This phrase is popular among younger generation of ethnic Kazakhs, where the original sounds like “Казах без понтов - беспонтовый казах”, i.e. “A Kazakh without show-off is a lame Kazakh”. When asked to elaborate more on such an interesting equation, the participant came up with the following “formula”:

Dungan + show-off = cool Kazakh

Dungan - show-off = lame Kazakh

Which brings us to Dungan = Kazakh. The mathematical background of the participant in question resulted in a thought provoking statement, demonstrating that some young Dungans do not differentiate between being a Kazakh and being a Dungan. Assimilation with Kazakhs is viewed not only as the consequence of Kazakhization, but also as a result of similarities in religious beliefs and traditions. However, this claim is doubtful as such similarities might be the result of the assimilation, not its reason.

(17) ...наши традиции очень похожи, *стали* похожи на казахские, потому что опять же мы живем в Казахстане, на Юге, там где казахов, концентрация высокая... у нас такой симбиоз с казахами возник. (excerpt from the interview)

...our traditions are very similar, they *have become* similar to the Kazakh ones, because again we live in Kazakhstan, in the South, where there is a high concentration of Kazakhs... We have developed such a symbiosis with the Kazakhs. (translated by the author)

Such assumptions were made by the respondents of the younger generation. Older generation representatives, traditionally more informed about authentic cultural features of the group, did not express similar opinions.

The degree of assimilation is also shown by the perception other ethnic groups have towards Dungan people. One of the participants has elaborated on it as following:

(18) Пока я сам не скажу, что я дунганин, никто не воспринимает, как дунганина. Все думают, что я казах. (excerpt from the interview)

Until I myself say that I am a Dungan, no one perceives me as a Dungan. Everyone thinks that I am a Kazakh. (translated by the author)

As can be noticed from the discussion so far, there is a noticeable borderline between the two generations' responses. Table 2 compares and summarizes these differences between the generations.

Table 2

Summary of intergenerational differences among Gansu Dungan people

Aspect	Older generation	Younger generation
Language proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually proficient in Dungan and Russian, with dominant use of Russian and occasional use of Kazakh. • Frequent use of Dungan in family settings and informal interactions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominantly bilingual or trilingual in Russian, Kazakh, and Dungan (with Kazakh and Russian being used mostly). • The Dungan proficiency is limited to in-home use.
Language attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger psychological bond with Dungan language as part of cultural heritage and identity. • Widespread language purism ideology, discouraging code-switching and language mixing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambivalent feelings about Dungan language: acknowledging its psychological significance but seeing Kazakh and Russian as more useful for socio-economic mobility. • The purism ideology is a barrier to language use: preferring speaking Russian or Kazakh instead of “wrong” forms of Dungan.

Ethnic identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily identify as Dungan, with a strong connection to Islamic traditions. More likely to view China as their historical homeland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dual identity is common, with many identifying as Kazakhstani or Kazakh. Having no affiliation with China as historical homeland.
Cultural practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on traditional Dungan and Muslim practices (e.g. Eid being the main celebration). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More likely to celebrate both Kazakh and Muslim holidays (e.g., Eid, Nauryz).
Relationship with Kazakh culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally do not maintain distance from Kazakh culture and recognize Kazakh language as important for social interactions, but prioritizing own culture. Can be characterised as adequation by Bucholtz (2009) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively adopting Kazakh culture, often perceiving its aspects as “natural” and “native”. Kazakh language proficiency is seen as a necessity.
Kazakhization influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kazakhization is seen as part of the natural integration into society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More likely to embrace Kazakh identity while balancing Dungan heritage.
Intermarriage patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower frequency of intermarriage with Kazakh people; preference for partners of the same Dungan ethnicity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher intermarriage rates with Kazakh and other ethnic groups.

Gansu Dungan Ethnolinguistic Vitality

According to Giles’ Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (EVT), whether minority groups thrive or decline, depends on the status, demographic and institutional support factors. Analysing the language and identity shift from the perspective of EVT, the current trend is explained by low status of the Dungan language, geographic concentration and intermarriage, and lack of institutional support . As was previously discussed, the role of the Dungan community in Kazakhstan's economy is strong enough due to their great contribution to the onion production, but the social and language statuses are significantly lower. The findings suggest that Russian and Kazakh languages have a “higher status”, while despite the linguistic connection with

Chinese languages, the status of the Dungan language is low. The language shift towards Russian happened decades ago during the USSR period, but the current shift towards Kazakh language is correlated with the growing status of Kazakh language and the correspondingly growing amount of social and economic mobility opportunities that it provides. The absence of state-supported education of and on the Dungan language hints at the absence of official recognition that corresponds to the low institutional prestige of the Dungan language. It makes the language status of Dungan low and hence more vulnerable to language shift.

Discussing the demographic factors, the small population size of Dungan people in Kazakhstan puts them in a vulnerable position too. The official statistics presented above claims that there are less than 100,000 ethnic Dungan living in the territory of Kazakhstan, however, this statistic does not differentiate between Gansu and Shaanxi groups. The interviews and participant observation suggest that this distinction between the groups play an important role in Dungan identity, and linguistic and cultural differences are significant enough to make the overall community more dispersed as it might seem at the first glance. Giles et. al. (1977), have also noted that dispersed communities usually experience a more rapid language and identity shift. In the beginning of this paper, it was mentioned that linguistic and cultural differences between the two groups make it difficult to define Dungans, but ethnically and linguistically all groups identify as Dungan. In light of EVT it can be assumed that such affiliation is a result of the low ethnolinguistic vitality the groups have when divided. The population size of the Dungan people if Gansu and Shaanxi groups were combined give them a chance for official recognition, and hence higher social status.

Talking about the intermarriage, it is difficult to claim whether it is a reason or result of the Dungan people's assimilation with Kazakhs. On the one hand, intermarriage can be explained by existing cultural similarities, e.g. religion, and two ethnic groups living close to each other. From this perspective the intermarriages can be a natural development of the inter-ethnic contact, that leads to the greater assimilation. On the other hand, Dungan people who undergo assimilation are more likely to have intermarriages with the group they are assimilating with, so in this case, intermarriage would be a result of the assimilation but not the cause. Another argument for this claim is the comparatively lower level of intermarriage between different Dungan groups, e.g. Gansu and Shaanxi. Although respondents mentioned many cases of Dungan-Kazakh marriages, there were fewer marriages mentioned between Gansu Dungans and

Shaanxi Dungans, for example. Both assumptions might be equally right and wrong, but as EVT and the findings suggest inter-ethnic marriages increase the degree of language and identity shift.

From the EVT perspective on the institutional support factors, Dungan people are experiencing a great pressure on their ethnic identity and language. Absence of formal education, and any representation in the social media and other digital spaces make Dungan ethnolinguistic vitality considerably low. Combining these factors with the policy of Kazakhization and the actual implementation (or even absence of implementation) of the policy on multiculturalism, it can be claimed that the Dungan language and identity are at the risk of experiencing a greater crisis in the future.

Official Policies

As was mentioned previously, there is a significant gap between the official policies and their implementation in real life. Here I would like to focus on the discourse on multilingualism in both dimensions. The official policies claim to support multilingualism, but not the one based on the titular languages per se. The discussion of implementing the trilingual policy has started in 2006, and has conceptualized as following:

The goal of Kazakh language education, according to president Nazarbayev, is trilingual competence in ‘Kazakh as the national language, Russian as the language of interethnic communication, and English as the language of successful integration in the global economy’. (Pavlenko, 2008, p. 296).

In other words, trilingualism in Kazakh, Russian and English was a goal for education reforms in Kazakhstan, and minority languages were not taken into this equation. The remarks of official policy on the minority languages were mostly on the absence of linguistic discrimination, i.e. the minority group can and have to preserve their language, while learning Kazakh, Russian and English. It is a challenging task for many citizens, especially given that the Dungan community does not experience any official support in language maintenance, and is a subject for social conflict in the country. The previously mentioned Qorday incident of 2020 can serve as an example of such language conflict. While both president Nazarbayev “warned against ethnic and language discrimination (Kazakhstan Today, December 13, 2006), and president Tokayev claimed that Dungan people have to preserve their language and learn Kazakh, and Russian (Astana TV, March 2, 2020), the comments under the corresponding video show a great amount of disagreement (the orthography and grammar are original, all translations are by the author):

1. Екі тіл тек жыланды болады. Қазақстанда жүрген барлық ұлттар қазақша білу керек. Оз өзімізді бағалау керек. [Only a snake can have two tongues. All nations of Kazakhstan must know Kazakh. We need to respect ourselves].
2. ҚыXXX Уйренсін ҚАЗАҚША бәрлық ұлттар жоқ десе кетсін төрт жағы кубыла. [Make all nations (of Kazakhstan) learn Kazakh, if they don't want to, they are free to leave].
3. Дүнгендерге және басқада дяспороларға да Қазақ тілін міндеттеу керек тіл білмесе кетсін, жетеді құтырғандары, жүз жыл болды ғой үндемегенімізге.... мемлекеттік тіл тек қазақ тілі болуы керек. [Dungans and other diasporas have to be required to speak Kazakh. If they don't, make them leave, it's been enough, we kept silent for a hundred years. Only Kazakh has to be the language of the country].
4. Бізде бейбіт өмір сүру үшін БАРЛЫҚ ҰЛТ өкілдері ТЕК ҚАНА ҚАЗАҚША сөйлеу керек. [For us to have a peaceful life, ALL ethnicities have to speak ONLY IN KAZAKH].
5. Менде бір сұрақ бар? Неге біздің шенділер өзге тілді дәріптеп жүреді әрдайым, мысалы жана президент орыс тілін оқысын дейді неге? Неге дарига назарбай қытай тілін оқындар дейді, ал нұрсұлтан ағылшын тілін оқы дейді? Неге олар өз қазақ тілін биік дәрежеге көтерілуіне атсалыспайды. Бұл деген сөз олардың тарапынан қазақ тілін құрметтемеу! [I have a question. Why do our authorities always praise other languages, for example, here the president says to learn Russian? Why does Dariga Nazarbayeva say to learn Chinese, and Nursultan (Nazarbayev) says to learn English? Why aren't they trying to make their Kazakh language prestigious? It is them disrespecting their own language. Such people have to leave governmental authority positions].
6. я искренне не понимаю почему неказахоязычные граждане Казахстана ДОЛЖНЫ учить казахский язык? упор на слово ДОЛЖНЫ. разве остальные не казахоязычные граждане Казахстана не такие же равноправные граждане Казахстана и разве они не имеют такие же права как остальные? или в Казахстане кто-то равнее всех равных? разве в Казахстане допускается дискриминация по признаку знания или незнания того или иного языка, пусть и государственного? [I sincerely do not understand why non-Kazakh-speaking citizens of Kazakhstan MUST learn the Kazakh language? The

emphasis is on the word MUST. Aren't the other non-Kazakh-speaking citizens of Kazakhstan the same equal citizens of Kazakhstan and don't they have the same rights as everyone else? Or is someone more equal than all others in Kazakhstan? Is discrimination allowed in Kazakhstan based on knowledge or ignorance of a particular language, even if it is the state language?]

Example 6 shows the opinion opposite to the examples 1-5, but represents the smallest proportion of comments under the video. As can be seen, the majority do not only stand against the multilingual policy that implies usage of Russian, but see linguistically homogeneous society as the best scenario for Kazakhstan. It shows the dramatic difference between the official discourse that supports multilingualism and minority language preservation, and real-life language attitudes that demand Kazakh language proficiency from every citizen of the country.

Ethnic Kazakh's view of Kazakhstan Dungans

The previous section has demonstrated the ethnic Kazakh population's attitude towards the multilingualism in the Kazakhstani society, and here I would like to elaborate more on the aforementioned Kazakh-Dungan attitudes and groups' self-esteem question.

The informal interviews conducted with the ethnic Kazakh representatives in Taraz have revealed that the attitudes towards the Dungan people vary according to generation and personal experience of interaction with the diaspora representatives. The most negative attitude was expressed by the older people in their 60s and 70s, who have described Dungan people as wealthy in negative connotation of this word, implying that there might be a dishonest way of earning that wealth. Dungan respondents of the older generation are aware of such attitude, as can be seen in the following comment made during the interview:

(19) Дунгане очень, еще раз повторяю, работоспособные люди. Если они работают, то они не жалеют себя. Они сделают все возможное и невозможное, чтобы дом расширить, квартиру купить, детей выучить, машину поменять. Поэтому они могут с одного огорода вытащить три урожая, когда рядом сосед другой национальности из этого огорода только вытаскивает один урожай для себя. А Дунган может из этого вырасти, три раза вытащить с этого одного огорода урожай. И тем самым, естественно, он что делает? Он богатеет, у него достаток, естественно, хорошая машина. (excerpt from the interview)

Dungans are very, I repeat, hard-working people. If they work, they do not spare themselves. They will do everything possible and impossible to expand their house, buy an apartment, educate their children, change their car. That is why they can get three

harvests from one garden, when a neighbor of another ethnicity only gets one harvest for himself from this garden. But a Dungan can get three harvests from this one garden. And thus, naturally, what does he do? He gets richer, he has wealth, naturally, a good car. (translated by the author)

Although such stereotypes existed before, considering that this response was a part of the participants' comment on the Qorday incident of 2020, we can assume that described tension is exacerbated by that incident. At the time of the actual clash happening, there was a lot of speculation regarding the reason for the clash and the social media were overwhelmed with diverse information on the topic. One of the most popular assumptions was that young Dungans and an elderly Kazakh and his sons were involved in a road conflict that resulted in an older man being injured (Khabdulkhabar, 2020). It then turned into mass riots, causing even more speculations and interethnic tensions. Natural empathy towards one's own ethnic group is likely to cause consequent negative perception of the opposite group even after the conflict resolution.

Another opinion the elder Kazakh respondents has expressed was Dungan being "impudent", "insular" and "poorly educated". These views might be caused by the previously interior and somewhat isolated way of life the Dungan community held, that is perceived negatively in Kazakh culture.

The representatives of ethnic Kazakhs in their 40s have demonstrated mostly neutral opinion, with slight deviation depending on their personal experiences and relationships with Dungan people. As one of the younger Dungan respondents has a close friend of Kazakh ethnicity, it was possible to observe their relationship during the fieldwork. The parents of the latter referred to the respondent in question as "adopted child", highlighting close ties and warm relationships they have. During interviews, those people have expressed a neutral attitude towards the Dungan people in general, commenting that "it depends on specific people, not a nation".

The younger generation of ethnic Kazakh has demonstrated an opinion drastically different from the elder generation, referring to Dungan people as "hardworking", "skilful" and even "superhumans". Those who have friends among the Dungan community commented that they were amazed by Dungan people's hard working attitude and endurance, which contrasts with their own "laziness".

The discourse of Kazakh people being "lazy" is widespread inside the ethnic group, but not that well-known outside. Starting from Abay, the famous Kazakh poet, composer and

philosopher, who constantly called his own people lazy and encourage them to change this trait in his “Words of edification”, till the respondents of Kazakh ethnicity interviewed all of whom have confirmed that “Kazakhs are lazy” without hesitation, everyone inside the group agreed with this claim. Although it is rarely said openly outside the ethnic group, it does form the group's self-perception. Therefore, the difference in Dungan and Kazakh group’s self-esteem is paradoxical, as usually the dominant group is perceived as superior.

Gansu Dungan Identity from the SIT Perspective

According to Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (SIT) people categorise themselves into distinct social groups, i.e. “us” and “them”. In terms of ethnic groups, the social categorization is transmitted by blood relation, but as the findings suggest it can be changed due to socio-political influence. The representatives of the younger generation Dungans calling themselves “Kazakhstani” and “Kazakh” demonstrate the pattern of ethnic identity shift, which correlates with their Kazakh language proficiency and social environment. Interestingly, as the participant observation revealed, those respondents who demonstrated greater identity shift towards “Kazakhness” tend to have looser ties with practicing Islam, the distinct trait of the Dungan people. For example, the participant who referred to themselves as “Kazakh” did not fast during Ramadan for many years, and was not considering fasting in the future. It comes in contrast with an older generation participant who once claimed during the interview that “almost all Dungans fast during Ramadan, unless they cannot do it due to health issues”. However, the participant in question’s choice to not fast was not related to any prohibitions from health or religious perspectives. Overall, the participant’s way of practicing Islam resembled Kazakh “popular Islam”, only omitting some pre-Islamic Turkic beliefs.

The mentioned religious pattern applies to social identification in SIT, which implies adopting the behavioural patterns and values of the chosen group, in this case Kazakhs. Those participants who identified as “Kazakhstani” or “Kazakh” also tend to show some traits often associated with Kazakh ethnicity, e.g. being late for celebrations, showing-off jokingly, and even explaining their “laziness” by referring to it as a natural trait of Kazakhs. The same can be said about the language use patterns, i.e. speaking Kazakh in the situations that do not require its usage, and using Kazakh emotional exclamations in unexpected situations. According to SIT, adopting the dominant group traits signifies that the minority group experiences pressure to assimilate, which corresponds to the comments from the general population discussed

previously. Although the official policy is arguing for multiculturalism, the general population of ethnic Kazakhs promotes the idea of minority groups being assimilated.

The social comparison and psychological distinctiveness in SIT suggests that when the minority group's identity is threatened, which happens in the Dungan case, they either assimilate to the dominant group more extensively, or reinforce their distinct traits. The findings demonstrate that the Dungan people have adopted both strategies, but there is a generation-based borderline between them. As the case of the younger generation identifying with Kazakhs was already discussed, I would like to elaborate on the older generation promoting Islam and being hardworking as the identity markers. The interview results highlight that although one of the participants refer to China as their ancestral homeland, the general trend among the respondents is distancing themselves from Chinese culture. This trend is visible when aligning the responses according to the age of the respondents, the younger the respondent, the more distant is their association with China and closer is their association with Kazakh culture. The similar pattern is visible in the language issue, as not only the Dungan language use is decreasing throughout the generations, but the value the respondents give to the language in their ethnic identity. In turn, all of the participants mentioned Islam as the distinct trait of the Dungan people, assigning it the most value in terms of ethnic identification. It is a sign of an internal identity shift, developed under the pressure of external factors, i.e. Kazakhization. If the policy inhibits the Dungan language maintenance, its role can be re-conceptualised to preserve the ethnic identity of the diaspora. SIT suggests that people seek distinct and positive identity, so in summary, the older generation is trying to achieve it by maintaining the religious identity, while the younger generation lean towards assimilation. This pattern shows how social comparison and psychological distinctiveness reshapes ethnic identity under the influence of Kazakhization.

Limitations and Future Research

As this research is a Master thesis study, its longevity was limited to two years, which is a relatively short period for studying such broad aspects as ethnic identity negotiation and minority language shift. However, I believe that this research makes a contribution to the field of minority ethnic groups' experience, and shows the complexity of these questions. The size of the interview respondents' sample is also not that extensive as I wish it to be; therefore, there can be a more diverse set of opinions that were not expressed in this research paper. This study could also benefit from extensive participant observation that was replaced by a small-scale observation due to external circumstances.

Talking about the predictions we can make based on the data collected here, the trend seems to be firm and not very promising. Rapid language shift, especially visible among the younger generation, threatens the existence of the Gansu Dungan language in Central Asia, as intergenerational transmission and language proficiency of existing speakers decreases from year to year. The younger generation's tendency for dual ethnic identity or even ethnic identity shift only supports this assumption. It is unlikely that the Dungan diaspora in Kazakhstan would receive any official support in the near future, therefore, currently the most realistic language preservation method is creating a Dungan speaking environment on a community level.

Conclusion

The case of the Gansu Dungan people as an ethnic minority in Kazakhstan is representative in terms of Kazakhization's influence on the language and identity preservation. As the research has shown, the Dungan language is in the process of rapid language shift, and if this pattern continues, it is at a great risk of being lost. Although the older generation mostly identify as Dungan and assign a great value to their titular language, they acknowledge its endangerment. The intergenerational transmission of the language is decreasing and occasional attempts of the older generation members to preserve the Dungan language are not systematic. The absence of the Dungan language in official and digital settings, as well as widespread ideology of language purism exacerbates the language endangerment, as it discourages younger generations to use the Dungan language. Therefore, the younger generation demonstrates a significant language shift, as their Dungan language proficiency is often limited, while Kazakh language proficiency is increasing. The major part of the younger generation is trilingual in Russian, Kazakh and Dungan languages with Russian or Kazakh dominance in daily use. The research has revealed the pattern of secondary language shift to the Kazakh language as some of the younger generation Dungans are using Kazakh language in diverse domains more often. The ethnic identity question among the younger generation is complex, since the majority of them either demonstrate dual identity trends or identify with Kazakh ethnicity.

As Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory suggests, this situation is a result of low status, lack of institutional support and dispersed demographics of the Dungan diaspora in Kazakhstan. An increased rate of intermarriage and a desire for socio-economic mobility contributes to the language shift, as the role of Kazakh language is gradually increasing. Social Identity Theory also suggests that ethnic identity shift is likely to have similar reasons, as it is an adaptive response to the changes in the socio-political environment. The gap between the official policy on multiculturalism and multilingualism and its actual adoption characterised as heading to a linguistically homogeneous society contributed to the Dungan language endangerment and ethnic identity shift. As institutional support is very limited, the thesis highlights the importance of community-level efforts for language maintenance.

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