

Nazarbayev University

**Baram, Kelem, Istevatrm: The Role of Phonological Reduction in Forming
Ideologies About Western Kazakh Speech**

WLL 499: Capstone – Final Draft

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Introduction

Growing up in Aktau, in the Western part of Kazakhstan, I was regularly maltreated by teenagers from other parts of Kazakhstan because of my dialect. Comments about the way I speak had a very negative connotation such as “You speak rude and aggressively,” “You speak a wrong and improper language,” and “You destroy our Kazakh language by speaking your dialect.” Cruel remarks made me believe that my dialect was wrong, and I should speak as standard as possible. This led me to spend the following years forcing myself to speak the standard dialect, which was and still is believed to be the *proper* version of Kazakh language. This experience motivated me to investigate the topic in this work.

Aktau is one of the major cities located in West Kazakhstan, alongside Aktobe, Atyrau, and West Kazakhstan regions. In these regions, the local people speak the *Western* variety of the Kazakh language (Amanzholov, 2020).

Western Kazakh (WK) is one of the regional major dialects of Kazakh alongside North Eastern and Southern dialects (Amanzholov, 2020). From my own observations as a native Kazakh speaker, some of the most distinct features of the Western Kazakh dialect are provided in the table below.

Type	Example
Phonetic features	Production of /z/ instead of /dʒ/; Production of /j/ instead of /z/.
Phonological features	Phonological reduction of the word /qazir/ as /qa/; Phonological reduction of the word /tumalas/ as /tuma/.
Morphological features	The suffix <i>-shish</i> in verbs in imperative mood, for example, <i>qarashish</i> ;

	<p>The addition of plural form suffix to 1PL pronoun, as an example <i>bizder</i> instead of standard <i>biz</i>;</p> <p>The reduction of plural form suffix from verbs in second person and plural number agreement, for example, <i>keliń</i> instead of standard form <i>kelińder</i>.</p>
Lexical items	<p><i>Kòpshik</i> ‘a pillow’ with standard alternative <i>jastyq</i> (Muratkaliyev, 2019);</p> <p><i>Jua</i> ‘an onion’ with standard alternative <i>piyaz</i>;</p> <p><i>Táte</i> ‘an uncle’ with standard alternative <i>aga</i> (Interestingly, the word <i>táte</i> is used to refer to ‘an aunt’ in other parts of Kazakhstan).</p>

Table 1. Examples of the distinct features of Western Kazakh

Many languages typically present several variations that are associated with different geographical locations. One of such variations is usually adopted as the standard, often the one which is spoken in the capital due to political reasons. This trend is also observed in Kazakhstan, where the North Eastern dialect, which is spoken in Astana – the capital of Kazakhstan, is considered standard. People of Kazakhstan perceive the North Eastern variation of the language as standard, ‘proper,’ and ‘pure’ Kazakh also because most of the Kazakh poets and writers were originally from North Eastern regions. This linguistic ideology is shared by the inhabitants of these regions, who may refer to their variety as ‘proper’ and ‘pure.’ For example, people from the Abay region mention that they speak in the language of Abay Qunanbaiuly, a wide-known and well-respected Kazakh poet and philosopher. The prestige of the North Eastern variety is nowadays confirmed by the fact that it is spoken in Astana. Other variations of Kazakh, like

Western and Southern Kazakh, are considered non-standard. As mentioned above, one particularly wide-spread linguistic ideology about speakers of Western Kazakh is their perceived ‘rudeness’ when compared to speakers of other dialects. The objective of this work is to examine the origins of this ideology and explore the linguistic features to which they are connected. The ideology seems to be driven by a perception that Western Kazakh speakers speak fast, which in turn is driven by the fact that Westerner Kazakh speakers phonologically reduce words more than speakers of other Kazakh language varieties. As reducing one word gives more space for other words to be pronounced, Westerner Kazakh speakers produce more words within one period of time than speakers of other varieties, which in turn causes them to be perceived as fast..

This capstone project is divided in two parts. In the first, I examine the frequency of phonological reduction in Kazakh conversations, and compare which dialect of Kazakh language produces more phonological reduction. In the second part, I investigate people’s language ideologies about Western Kazakh speech with a matched guise test and follow up interview. The work answers the following research questions:

- How frequent is phonological reduction in Kazakh conversations?
- Which Kazakh dialect tends to produce reduction more frequently?
- What ideologies do Kazakh speakers have about the Western Kazakh dialect?

My expectation is that Western Kazakh speakers produce phonological reduction more frequently than other Kazakh speakers. In the second part of the capstone, I connect the phonological analysis to the linguistic ideology and establish if the process of phonological motivates the perception of Westerner Kazakh speakers being ‘fast’ and ‘rude’. To answer this question, I conducted an experiment and an interview with a focus group. In this capstone project, I will focus on phonological reduction in spoken Kazakh language and its connection with

linguistic ideologies related to perceived rudeness and other stereotypes on Western Kazakh speech. Both aspects of Kazakh language such as phonology and language ideologies were studied insufficiently in the academic world. Therefore, my study will contribute to the studies on Kazakh language in general and bring the novice information about it.

Literature Review

Amanzholov, the very first scholar on Kazakh dialectology, distinguished Kazakh dialects into three major categories: Western, Southern and North Eastern. The dialects were divided into dialects by regions, and each dialect has its distinctive features (Amanzholov, 2020). The Western part of Kazakhstan is Aktobe, Atyrau, Mangystau and West Kazakhstan regions, which are represented as I in the Image 1 below. North Eastern Kazakh variation speakers are Akmola, East Kazakhstan, North Kazakhstan, Karagandy, Kostanay, and Pavlodar regions and Astana city. These are represented as II in the Image 1. This dialect is considered a standard dialect in Kazakhstan. Finally, Southern Kazakh speakers live in Almaty, Kyzylorda, Turkestan, and Zhambyl regions and Almaty and Shymkent cities. They are marked as III in Image 1.

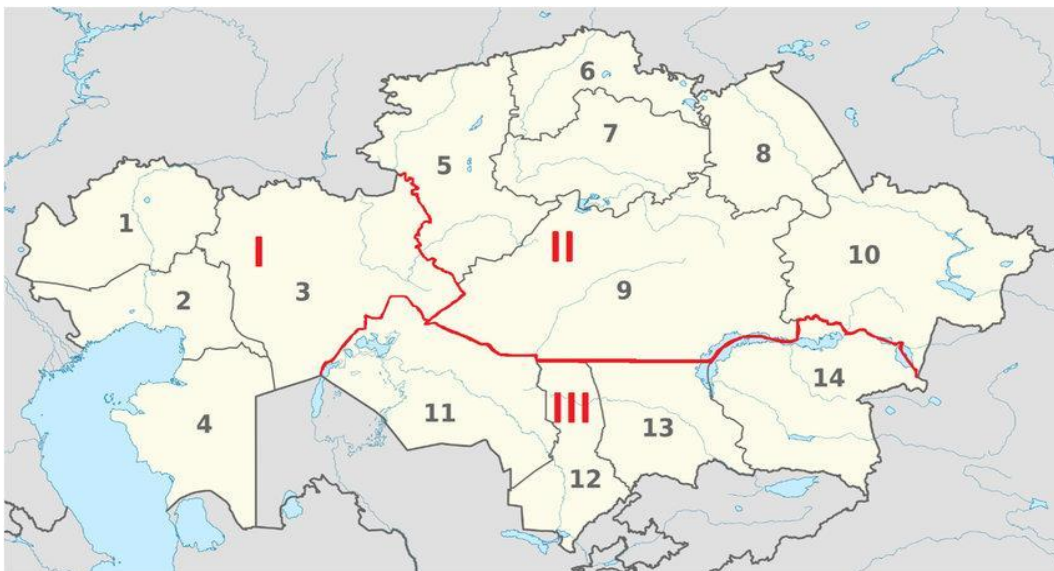


Image 1 The map of Kazakhstan divided into three major dialect groups. Image reprinted from Jianzhong et al (2018).

The major linguistic differences among Kazakh dialects can be observed in lexical and syntactic variations. For example, in the lexical domain, a Southern or North Eastern Kazakh speakers would not understand the word *jýa* ‘onion’ (жыа), which is widely used by Western Kazakh speakers. A difference in the morphosyntactic domain is the use of a specific suffix for the 2nd person in imperative mood. Let us consider the word *baru* ‘to go’ (бару). The Westerner Kazakh speakers use the form *barshish* (*bar-shish* as to go-IMP), the Southerners use as *barsai* (*bar-sai* as to go-IMP), and the North Eastern Kazakh speakers use *barsańshy* (*bar-sańshy* as to go-IMP).

In addition to structural differences, Kazakh dialects are also associated with different cultural stereotypes. If Western Kazakhs are perceived as rude speakers, North Eastern Kazakhs are perceived, on the contrary, as literate speakers. Other well-known opinions, which circulate among Kazakh speakers, are that Westerners tend to speak ‘harsh,’ and ‘aggressively.’ These comments are a form of language ideology. Irvine and Gal (2000) define a language ideology as a set of beliefs about different languages and speakers, which are used in the social world. People develop ideologies to shape the identities of the speakers, as it was done in the example of Kazakh speakers, however, ideologies sometimes might be inaccurate. Irvine and Gal (2000) further discuss that linguistic forms are attributed to language varieties through a process called an ‘iconization process’. The case of Mandarin Chinese shows that the phonological aspect of a language can be linked with perceived prestige, which is an example of the iconization process (Chen, 2018). Mandarin Chinese presents retroflex sounds that are absent in Taiwanese. With time, these sounds came to be associated with prestige and socio-economical achievements, so

that speakers of Taiwanese who cannot produce these sounds are considered to belong to lower classes (Chen, 2018). In my study I aim to illustrate the ongoing iconization process that links the phonological reduction, which is a linguistic form, with the perceived rudeness attributed to Western Kazakh speech. In the case of ideologies about WK a large role is played by phonological reduction. Phonological reduction is a process in which a sound or more is produced less saliently in a continuous speech (van Oostendorp, 2011; Warner, 2011). For example, a Kazakh speaker may produce /bard/ instead of /bardu/ for *bardy* ‘he/she went’ (барды). In Kazakh language, one may observe two types of a phonological reduction: deletion and crasis. The deletion process happens when one or more sounds are deleted completely. For example, the verb /kelemin/ can be pronounced as /kelem/ for *kelemin* ‘I will come’ (келемін). As it can be noticed, the final two sounds were omitted. As per my own observation as a native Kazakh speaker, this type of phonological reduction is particularly frequent in Kazakh speech. Another phonological reduction type is crasis, where a speaker combines two completely separate words into one by merging their phonemic and phonological features. For example, the verbal phrase *bara jatyrmyñ* ‘I am going’ (бара жатырмын) /bara ʒaturmyñ/ can be pronounced as /baraturm/.

To my knowledge, phonological reduction in Kazakh speech has not been investigated prior to this study. The literature on instances of deletion process in other Turkic varieties is also not extensive. Mielke (2002) states that in Turkish language /h/ sound is usually deleted when it precedes sonorant consonants but cannot be deleted if following them. For example, the word /fihrist/ would be pronounced as /fi:rist/ ‘an index’ (Mielke, 2002). In the Uyghur language, the weight of syllables affects the distribution of stress (McCollum, 2020). The stress is located in sonority-sensitive syllables in frequent cases, and this might lead to vowel reduction in Uyghur

language (McCollum, 2020). For instance, the word /sæl.'læ/ 'a turban' and the word /sæl.'læm/ 'my turban' are produced differently, in which the former example is produced with an open final σ , while the latter example is articulated with a closed final σ . In the latter example, the reduction of a vowel sound has taken place. These examples show that the deletion and reduction is present in other Turkic languages. In this paper, I will study the phenomenon of phonological reduction in Kazakh language and link it to linguistic ideologies about the rudeness of WK speakers.

Phonological Reduction: The Frequency of Occurrences

The first step of the study is to understand if WK speakers do actually produce more instances of phonological reduction than other groups. In the first study I investigate the frequency and distribution of phonological reduction among WK speakers I hypothesize that negative ideologies about West Kazakh speech are linked to higher frequency of phonological reduction among Western Kazakh speakers. To achieve this goal, I extracted the occurrences of phonological reduction of different dialects of Kazakh and calculated the frequency of the phenomenon.

Data and Methods:

Data

To find out which dialect presents higher frequencies of phonological reduction, I chose recordings from different dialects. Recordings are naturally occurring and spontaneous Kazakh conversations featuring interactions between family members, acquaintances, and friends. The goal was to analyze the frequency of phonologically reduced verb occurrences of 8 speakers per dialect. The recordings are collected from Multimedia Corpus of Modern Spoken Kazakh

language (MultiCorSKL) (Filchenko et al., 2023). I decided to restrict my focus only on Western and North Eastern dialects, as these are the two dialects better represented in the corpus. Since the corpus does not contain enough Southern dialect data, I excluded it from the research.

I have collected the information on 16 speakers (8 speakers per dialect) and manually counted the frequency of phonologically reduced verbs of each speaker within 5 minutes of conversation. All the speakers I have analyzed are native Kazakh speakers. Although the social features of speakers such as gender and age are not the focus of this research, this information still can be found in the dataset. While choosing which participants to analyze, I kept into consideration that the conversations they are involved in should be approximately the same, so they were all conversational recordings with 2-3 speakers involved, and, conveniently, the distribution of ages of the speakers turned out to be similar as well.

Multimedia Corpus of Modern Spoken Kazakh language (Filchenko et al., 2023) is a newly developing corpus of predominantly Kazakh conversations. It can be available via this link: <http://mcskl.nu.edu.kz/>, and the needed data can be found through search engines. I have access to the primary data because I work as a Research Assistant in this project.

Methods

To narrow down the focus of the research, only verbs were chosen to be analyzed in terms of phonological reduction occurrences. The motivation for this is that verbs tend to be phonologically reduced more than other constructions in Kazakh speech, due to the language's typological feature of having SOV (Subject-Object-Verb) word order (Muhamedowa, 2015). Since verbs are located at the end of Kazakh sentences, they have more possibilities to be phonologically reduced (eliminated or deleted).

As it was described above, I have manually counted the phonological reduction occurrences of verbs in recordings excerpted from the MultiCorSKL. Every verb which was produced in a shorter form than its standard form was marked as a phonologically reduced and I included them into my data sheet. All the occurrences were either deletion or crasis type of the phonological reduction. Finally, I calculated the total and average numbers of phonological reduction occurrences per dialect.

Results

I extracted the phonological reduction occurrences from 5 minutes of conversation per speaker and considered 8 speakers per dialect (making 16 speakers in total), for a total of 80 minutes. All the evidence can be found here: [Statistics.xlsx](#), or if this function does not work, you can access the data via this link:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/18eio2eGBX1_Fr9uRlCmSjY84QuNVNCuF/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=112951100611899436932&rtpof=true&sd=true

Total and average numbers of occurrences of phonological reduction (PR) were calculated and located in Table 2.

Dialect	Total amount of PR	Per speaker per minute	Final-position reduction	Crasis reduction
West	120	3	87	28
East	82	2.05	68	12
In total	202	–	155	40

Table 2. The occurrences of phonologically reduced verbs per each dialect

In total, 16 speakers phonologically reduced verbs 202 times: 8 Western Kazakh speakers - 120 times and 8 Eastern Kazakh speakers – 82 times. If we divide the total number of occurrences into participants number, we can notice that Western Kazakh speakers reduce 15 times in 5 minutes, while one Eastern Kazakh speaker reduces 10.25 times in 5 minutes. To find out how many times Kazakh speakers reduce verbs in 1 minute, we divide the *Per speaker*

indicator into 5 minutes. It can be observed that one Western Kazakh speaker reduces 3 times in 1 minute, while one Eastern Kazakh speaker reduces 2.05 times in 1 minute.

Moreover, it was found that the final-position reduction within one word and crasis reduction are most common in Kazakh speech. In total, out of 202 occurrences final-position reduction within one word appeared 155 times, which is 77% of all occurrences. Crasis reduction appeared 40 times, which is 20% of all occurrences. Other 3% of occurrences are other types of reduction such as initial-position reduction within one word and middle-position reduction within one word.

As it can be seen in Table 1, Western speakers reduce verbs phonologically more than Eastern speakers. If speakers of West Kazakhstan tend to reduce verbs 3 times in 1 minute and Eastern speakers 2.05 times in 1 minute, it shows that a Western speaker reduces verbs 50% more than an Eastern speaker. This proves the initial prediction stated at the beginning of the paper that Western Kazakh speakers phonologically reduce words more than Easterners.

Moreover, this study shows that the final-position reduction within one word is the most common in Kazakh phonological reduction as it was mentioned before in this paper. For example, the word *baramyn* 'I will go' was phonologically reduced to /baram/ from /baramun/ often. This might be due to the statement above about SOV word order influence on the reduction of verbs. That implies that the final sounds of the sentences, which are mostly verbs, tend to be phonologically reduced due to their final location.

Sociocultural Linguistics: Shaping the Ideology

In the second study of this project, I investigate the language ideologies of Kazakh speakers towards Western Kazakh speakers. I predict that mostly non-Western Kazakh speakers

have negative language ideologies about Western Kazakh speech with regards to grammar and politeness. To achieve this goal, I will administer a matched-guise test and follow up with an interview with participants of different dialects of Kazakh language.

Methodology:

Stimuli

For this part of the capstone, I conducted a perceptual experiment and interviewed a focus group. The goal of the matched-guise test is to identify whether people can identify the Western Kazakh dialect without prior knowledge that this is the Western variety being spoken. This information is required to assess if the linguistic features attributed to Western Kazakh speakers do actually exist and can be easily recognizable from the speech or people perceive Western Kazakh speakers as rude only after they are conscious that the speech they have heard was made by Western Kazakh speakers.

The experiment works as follows: firstly, the main stimulus was a pre-recorded audio. As a researcher who is also a native Western Kazakh speaker, I developed a script for the speech to be told in audio and received feedback from other two Western speakers. Eventually, the script of the audio was approved by three native Western speakers to sound as our variety of the language. All of them admitted that every feature (phonological, grammatical, and lexical) of the speech in the audio can be applied to Western Kazakh variety of the language. The interesting features of the audio are the phonemic, phonological, grammatical, and lexical choices of the native Western speaker.

The script:

И сосын сол күні мектепке бардым да, барсам алдымнан класс жетекші апайым күтівалд. Апай **неуолд** десем, **дым**, жай завучқа барамыз **қа** дит. **И апай**

жайшылық па десем, сюрприз саған **дит**. Бардық завучқа. **Үндемит**. Бір кезде сосын **бастад** Нұрбек **сіздің** сынып сайысқа **қатысад** деп. Не сайыс апай десем, нашақорлыққа жол жоқ атты сценка қою керек **дит**. Сосын түсіндім апай мені завучқа ұрсу үшін емес, жақсы зат үшін барыппыз. **Біздер**, біздің сынып, актерлыққа жақсы едік **қо**. Сол, қалалық деңгейде мектебімізді таныстыру үшін біздің сыныпты жіберейін деп жатыр екен. Жақсы апай, **арқайын** бірінші орын аламыз **ғо**, уайымдамыңыз дедім. Апай, Нұрбол саған сенем, старостасың **ғо** деп **жіберт**, ақырын мені. Сосын сыныпқа барып **біздер** сайысқа қатысамыз десем, **у у** деп шулап **бастад**: ей ей **тынышталың**, не шу десем, күшті ғо, сабақтан **босатад дит**. **О қасқа**, сіздікі тек сол **ғо** ойыңыз, сабақтан құтылу деп күлдім сосын.

The variation of the script written in Latin alphabet:

I sosin sol küni mektepke bardym da, barsam aldymnan klass jetekşi apayım **kütivald**. Apay **neuold** desem, **dym**, jay zavuchqa baramyz **qa** dit. **I apay jaysylyq** pa desem, syurpriz sağan dit. Bardyq zavuchqa. **Ündemit**. Bir kezde sosyn **bastad** Nurbek **sizdin** synyp sayısqa **qatysad** dep. Ne sayıs apay desem, nashaqorlyqqa jol joq atty scenka qoyu kerek **dit**. Sosyn tüsindim apay meni zavuchqa ursu üshin emes, jaqsy zat üshin baryppyz. **Bizder**, bizdin synyp, akterlyqqa jaqsy edik **qo**. Sol, qalalyq deñgeyde mektebimizdi tanıstıru üshin bizdin synyptı jıbereyin dep jatyr eken. Jaqsy apay, **arqayın** birinshi oryn alamyz **ğo**, uayımdamaңыз dedim. Apay, Nurbol sağan senem, starostasyñ **ğo** dep **jibert**, aqyryn meni. Sosin synypqa baryp **bizder** sayısqa qatysamyz desem, **u u** dep shulap **bastad**: ey ey **tynystalың**, ne shu desem, küshti ğo, sabaqтан **bosatad dit**. **O qasqa**, sizdiki tek sol **ğo** ойыңыз, sabaqтан qutyly dep küldim sosyn.

All the words formatted in **bold** are linguistic features attributed to Western Kazakh dialect mostly. These features are phonemic, phonological, grammatical and lexical, the examples are provided below in Table 3.

Type	Token
Phonemic	The sound /z/
Phonological	Phonological reduction /kytrıvald/
Phonological	Phonological reduction /neu:old/
Phonological	Phonological reduction /qa/
Phonological	Phonological reduction /dit/
Phonological	Phonological reduction /yndemit/
Phonological	Phonological reduction /bastad/
Phonological	Phonological reduction /qatusat/
Phonological	Phonological reduction /zıbert/
Phonological	Phonological reduction /qo/
Phonological	Phonological reduction /ko/
Grammatical	<i>Bızder</i> (Biz-der as 1PL-PL)
Grammatical	<i>Sız</i> (Siz as 2PL instead of 2SG.HON)
Grammatical	<i>Tynyshtalyń</i> (Tynysh-tal-yń as Quite-VBZ-CVB instead of Quite-VBZ-CVB-PL)
Lexical	<i>Dym</i>
Lexical	<i>Jaıshylyq</i>
Lexical	<i>Satys</i>
Lexical	<i>Apaı</i>

Lexical	<i>Arqatyn</i>
Lexical	<i>Qasqa</i>

Table 3. The dialectal features in the audio

For example, the phonemic difference is that the speaker produced the sound /z/ in the word *jaishylyq* ‘a peace, a serenity’ when other Kazakh speakers produce it as /dʒ/ instead. The phonological difference of this script is that the speaker phonologically reduces the words such as *qoi* /qo/ instead of /qoi/ or *deidi* ‘he/ she/ it said’ /dit/ instead of standard /deidi/. The grammatical Western Kazakh variety feature is that the speaker adds the plural form -der to 1PL word *biz* ‘we.’ Finally, the lexical Western Kazakh variety feature from the script is that the speaker uses the word *qasqa* ‘a poor thing’ which is commonly used in the Western part of Kazakhstan, but not used in other parts of the country at all.

The audio is 1 minute long. This length was chosen for participants’ convenience, due to the fact that they will not get bored and tired by long audio. Also, I took into a consideration that the audio will be listened twice and tried to keep an audio short for listening it twice and respect my participants’ time. Next, I carefully selected a Western Kazakh speaker to record the audio. A twenty two years old man from Aktau city, Mangystau region, was recruited for the role of the speaker. I have chosen a convenience basis for choosing a speaker. He also approved the script he was assigned to use for the audio recording. The further step was to develop the questions for the experiment. It is crucial to identify whether participants are able to recognize linguistic features attributed to Western dialect or not, as well as if they are able to pinpoint the whole dialect.

The questions are as follow:

1. Could you please kindly rate the speech rate? You have three options: slow, normal, and fast.

2. Did the speaker use other than the normal words? Could you please kindly provide examples, if yes?
3. Did the speaker build words and sentences other than the normal way? Could you please kindly provide examples, if yes?
4. Which other features of the speech did you notice? Could you please kindly provide examples, if yes? Did the speech sound different to you?
5. Could you please kindly rate the correctness (grammatical accuracy) of the language from 0 to 10?
6. Could you please kindly rate the politeness/ rudeness from 0 to 10?
7. In your opinion, which dialect does this speech belong to?
8. Do you have any other comments? Could you please kindly provide them, if yes?

I REVEAL THE DIALECT

9. Were you aware of any stereotypes about Western Kazakh dialect? Could you please kindly provide examples, if yes?
10. What do you think of Western Kazakh dialect yourself?

Participants

I recruited the participants among NU community members, who should fit these criteria:

1) being of a legal age (at least 18 years old); 2) identifying themselves as Kazakh speakers; 3) consenting to participate in this focus group study. The number of participants I recruited was 7, 2 of which are Western Kazakh speakers themselves, and the rest was non-Western Kazakh speakers. The experiment was planned to be conducted individually for each participant. Prior to the experiment participant, all of them had to give an oral consent to voluntarily participate in the study and for me to use their answers in this study for research purposes.

Task

Participants went through the matched guise test first and then through a follow up interview, being asked 10 questions in general. In the matched guise test, each participant listened to the audio twice. While listening to the audio both times, they had an opportunity to take notes on a paper and with a pen I have provided them beforehand. After they listened to the audio, they answered the questions listed above and were asked to judge which Kazakh dialect was spoken in the audio.

Results

Seven people have participated in the experiment, 1 man and 6 women. They all are of age from 18 to 22. 4 out of 7 participants identified the dialect in the audio as Western, while the other 3 identified it as Southern. 2 out of 4 speakers who correctly identified the dialect, were Western Kazakh speakers themselves. In contrast, 3 out of 5 non-Western Kazakh speakers estimated the speech inaccurately. All the non-Western Kazakh speakers who judged the variety inaccurately, assumed it as the Southern Kazakh dialect instead.

The results of the matched guise test are shortly presented in Table 4.

Participant	Origin	Judgment	Accuracy
A	Southern	Southern	Inaccurate
B	Southern	Western	Accurate
C	North Eastern	Western	Accurate
D	North Eastern	Southern	Inaccurate
E	Western	Western	Accurate
F	North Eastern	Southern	Inaccurate
G	Western	Western	Accurate

Table 4. The results of the experiment

The participants also assessed the speech spoken in the audio according to the speech rate (the participants had three options: slow, normal, and fast) and how polite and grammatically correct it was from 0% to 100% as per Likert scale type of a measurement. 3 speakers, 2 of which are Westerners themselves, believe that the speech is normal, while the rest think that it is fast. The arithmetic mean of the politeness of the speech is 70%, while the grammatical correctness is 64%. The median value for politeness is 70%, while for grammar it is 65%. The results are represented in Table 5.

Participant	Speech rate	Politeness	Grammatical Correctness
A	Fast	65%	40%
B	Fast	70%	50%
C	Fast	80%	70%
D	Normal	50%	80%
E	Normal	80%	60%
F	Fast	65%	65%
G	Normal	80%	80%

Table 5. Participants ratings

The overview of the participants' answers is represented through visuals in the Chart 1. From these results we can gather that, while people did not recognize that this was WK, they still

did think that the speech was not entirely polite.

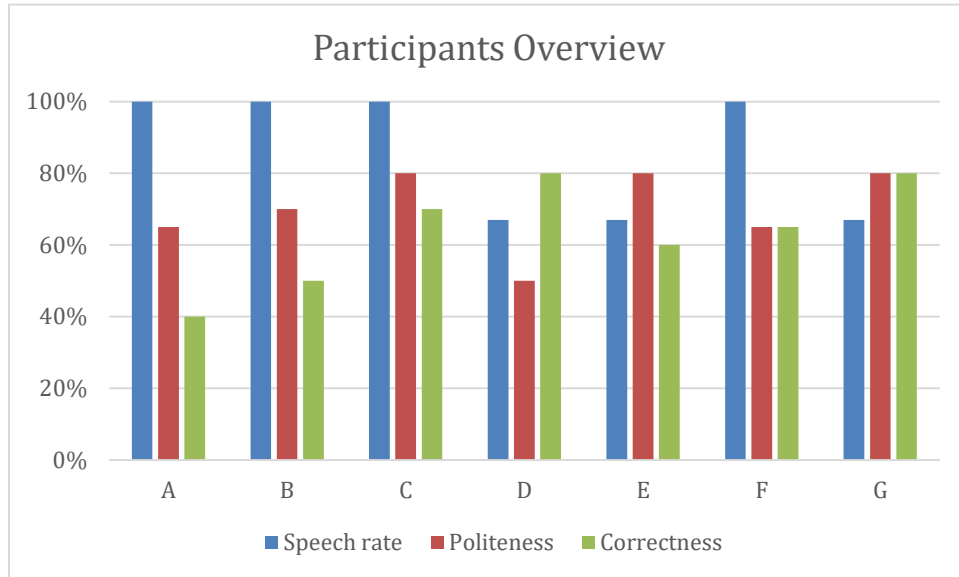


Chart 1. The Participants Overview

Participants shared their honest perception of the speech being spoken in the audio, which I am going to deeply analyze in the next part of the research paper.

Discussions:

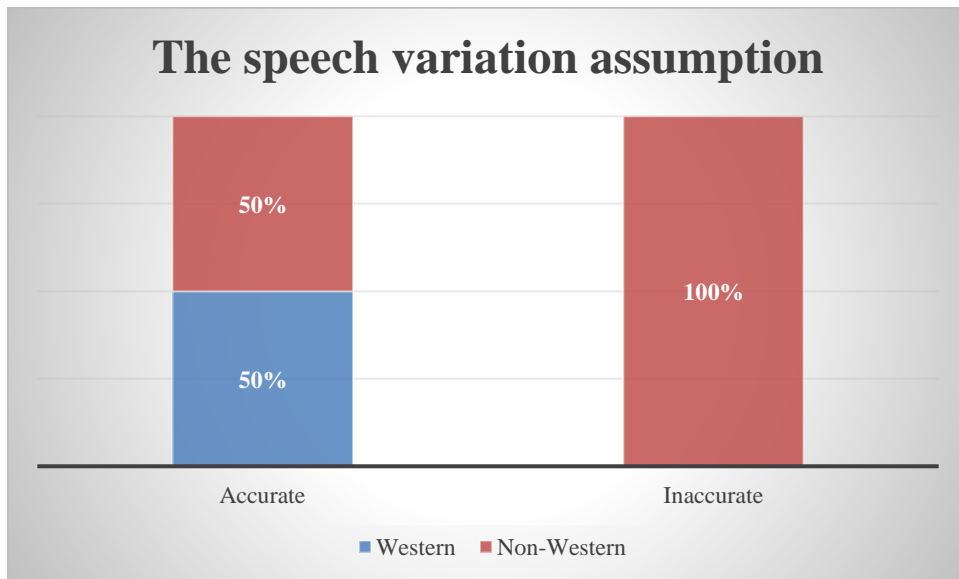


Chart 2. The speech variation assumption

As it was revealed in Table 4 and Chart 2, all Western Kazakh speakers could recognize their native variation, while the majority of non-Western Kazakh speakers confused it with Southern Kazakh. This shows the tendency that Western Kazakh speakers are capable of identifying their variation accurately, while non-Western Kazakh speakers more probably are not. This can be due to the reason that people are able to recognize the language they speak themselves, including the variation of language. Participant E commented that the speech being spoken in the audio is "... mynau dál men söileitindei goi!" (The translation is "Just like how I speak!") which proves the proposed objective. Participant G also revealed that she could recognize her hometown speech because she "just know[s] it." The speaker in the audio and the participant G are from the same city, which is Aktau of Mangystau region. Whereas the non-Western Kazakh speakers who presumed the speech right – participants B and C – shared that they are in close friendship with the Western Kazakhs, which assisted them in identifying the answer accurately. Other non-Western participants, who are speakers A, D, and F, could not recognize the West Kazakh speech in the audio, but instead assumed it as Southern. Speaker A believes that the speech is Southern, their native, dialect. She reasons it with "Sounds like how we usually communicate."

This tendency reveals that the Western Kazakh speech is only recognizable if one has close affiliations with it – either a speaker themselves is a Western Kazakh speaker or has close ties with a person from West Kazakhstan.

Furthermore, the participants assessed the speech rate of the speech with given values slow, normal, and fast. The Chart 3 shows the results.

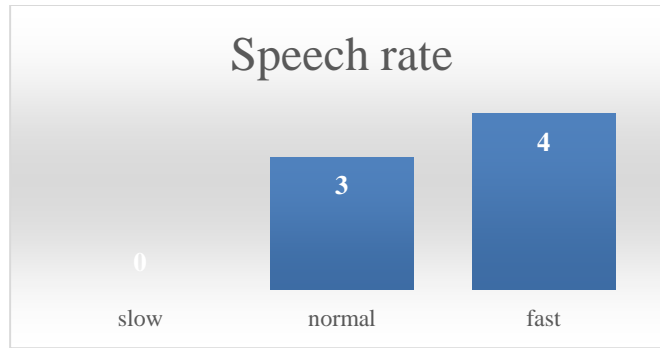


Chart 3. The speech rate assessment by participants

The majority evaluated the speech as fast, while 3 of them claimed it is normal. 2 out of 3 people, who assessed the speech as normal, are Western speakers themselves. As it was claimed before, there are assumptions about Western Kazakh speech that it is being spoken fast. Therefore, the experiment shows that the Western speech is indeed being perceived as fast, even without prior knowledge about it.

Participants were also asked to assess the politeness of the speech from 0% to 100% with 0% being the rudest and 100% being the politest speech according to Likert type of measurement. However, it is important to consider that the numerical assessment through the Likert scale of measurement is not purely reliable due to several reasons, one of which is that researchers cannot accurately judge where participants interpret the values on the scale. This issue can be addressed by including in the analysis also the verbal commentaries produced by participants. Additionally, people might not want to grade the speech lowly, so instead they would evaluate it highly but explain their plausible position through words, which should be analyzed qualitatively accordingly. The Chart 4 shows the answers of the participants.

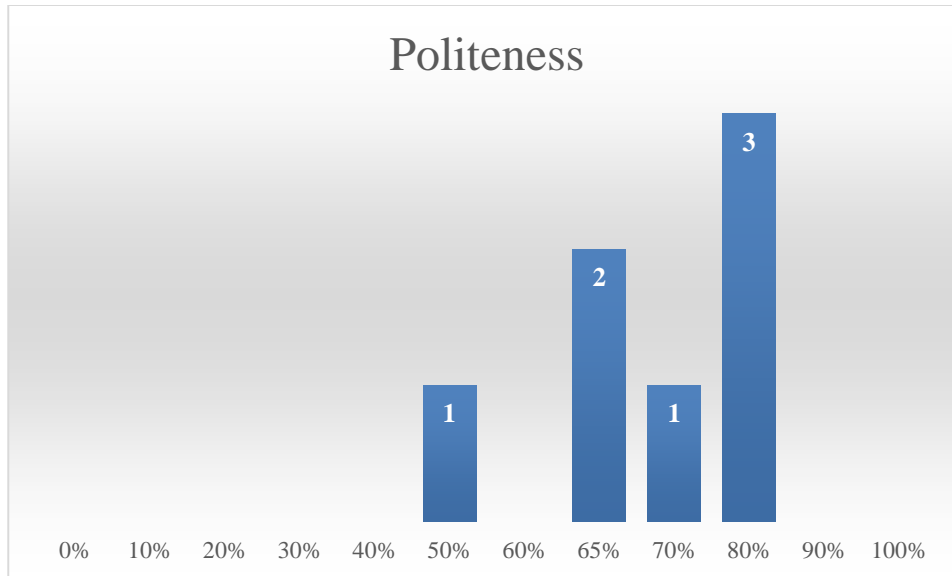


Chart 4. The politeness assessment by participants

As it can be seen from the chart, politeness was always assessed at a value above 50%. Western Kazakh speakers are believed to be rude speakers; however, this chart shows that the speech is mostly not perceived as rude by itself. However, the participants still left the verbal complementary commentary that the speech is still perceived as rude to them since “the speech seems to be rather casual than polite.” This demonstrates that the speech is possibly perceived impolite only when the identity of the speaker as a Western Kazakh is known to the interlocutor.

Since the quantitative data showed a bit of contradictory with the verbal commentary participants made, I proceed next to analyze the qualitative data as well, so the conclusion of the analysis can be made as accurate and considerate as possible

Participant D noted that the speech in the audio seems to her as a naturally occurring language. It was also mentioned by her that the speech seems to be produced by a person who is native and fluent in Kazakh language, in a dialogue with friend, therefore, it is not perceived as rude, but rather friendly. The participant F also agreed that the speech seems to be produced in a friendly atmosphere but would not like it if their friend would talk to them in such a manner.

Moreover, the word *qasqa* ‘a poor thing’ was noted by the speakers A, B, and C, and mentioned to be perceived as rude, because “it sounds scary.” What is interesting about this word is that it is purely attributed to the West Kazakh variation, and is not spoken outside the regions of the West part of the country. The negative perception of this word might be one of the possible reasons for West speech to be perceived negatively as well. The rude quality of this word was explained by participant C with the fact that the sound /q/ sounded harsh, and, therefore, the presence of the sound /q/ twice in the word makes it appear to be rude for speakers.

Next, the grammatical accuracy of the speech in the audio was also assessed from 0% to 100% with 0% being the fully incorrect and 100% being the fully correct speech according to the Likert type of measurement. The chart 5 demonstrates the answers of the participants.

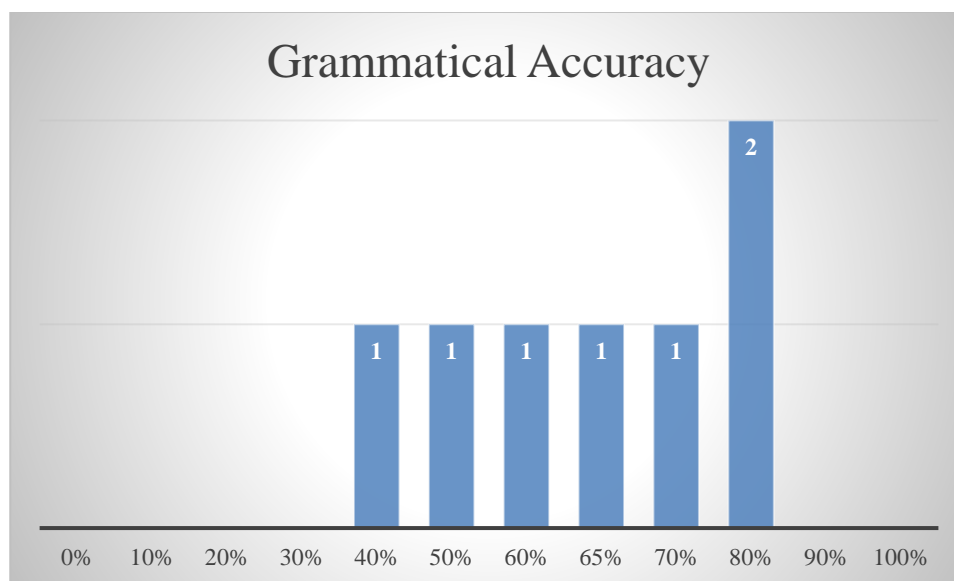


Chart 5. The grammatical accuracy assessment by participants

Here in this question, no tendency is being observed since the rate of the answers from 40%, which constitutes the value under 50%, thus incorrect, to 80%, which represents the value of “correct.” Therefore, no conclusions can be made relying on quantitative data analysis. So, hence, I will proceed to the analysis of qualitative data.

For example, participant C mentioned the word *tynyshtalyń* ‘get quiet’, which is a grammatically incorrect form of the verb *tynyshtalyńdar* ‘get quiet’. The plural number indicator in the language *-dar* was omitted in the speech. Participant F also mentioned that the speech is mostly grammatically inconsistent and incoherent. What is unique about this speaker is that they were raised in a family with members with military backgrounds. This affected the participant speaking in a way that the participants described as “reporting style”. When I asked the participant F to clarify what they mean when mention a “reporting style,” they have described that military people speak in a more “grammatically correct” way, which entails speaking slowly and with an emphasis on each word and preferring the pure language speech over the code-switching, and which affects the general perception of a language of the participant. They also commented that the speaker of the audio might also be considered as someone “non-literate” in the language. Their opinions about the speech in the audio were negative in general. Participant B mentioned that the word *bizder* ‘we’ was produced incorrectly. In a standard correct form, it should be pronounced without the plural form suffix *-der*.

In addition, all the participants agreed that the phonological reduction was happening often in the speech. This shows that the Western Kazakh speech indeed produces a frequent number of reductions in spoken language, and it is easily recognizable to the Kazakh speakers. The previously mentioned example *tynyshtalyń* (correct version – *tynyshtalyńdar*) ‘get quiet’ is also a representation of a phonological reduction, which was made through the final syllable deletion. Participant B mentioned that the word *deidi* ‘they told’ /deidi/ was phonologically reduced to /dit/ several times in the audio.

Overall, the frequent phonological reduction affected the comprehension of the text for all non-Western participants of the experiment – it made it more difficult for them to understand the text.

The language overall appeared to sound unique to participant C. There were numerous words they have never heard; the examples are *arqaiyn* ‘very easy’, *dym* ‘nothing’, and *qasqa* ‘a poor thing’, which are all dialectal features of Western Kazakh. The participant C is from Karagandy region, which is located in the North Eastern part of the country, therefore it is natural that the participant is not aware of these lexical items. However, they commented that the fact that the language is “unique and different” represents that the variations of Kazakh are indeed diverse, and the borders can be more or less created via some lexical items.

Participants E and G shared that they are fond of the West Kazakh speech, which is their native language variation. Whereas non-Western Kazakh speakers, but participant F, were of a neutral attitude towards the dialect, according to themselves. Only participant F revealed that they think of a variation as something to sound “illiterate.”

Discussion: The Role of Phonological Reduction in Shaping the Perceived Rudeness of Western Kazakh Speech

The results section of first part shows that the Western speakers of Kazakh language tend to phonologically reduce verbs 50% more often than the North Eastern speakers of Kazakh language do. Kazakh speakers provide cultural explanations for the phenomenon that link phonological reduction to fast speech to rudeness. An historical context is offered as a reason to explain the Western Kazakh speaker’s frequent phonological reduction. Historically, Westerners are descendants of Kishi (Junior) Juz, who were identified as batyrs (warriors in Kazakh culture)

(Temirgaliyev, 2023, p. 522). The role of batyrs was to engage in battles and defensive military operations. For this reason, a cultural myth that circulates among Western Kazakhs is that our batyr ascendants did not have much time to speak in wars and battles and articulate all sounds fully, so they started to reduce words. The phonological reduction allowed speakers to produce more words in the same time span. For example, if one produces 5 words fully in 5 seconds, through phonological reduction they can produce 7-8 words within the same 5 seconds. Thus, according to this ideology, former batyrs could produce more words and provide more information and context on battles. This strategy was then assimilated into all Kishi Juz people including non-batyrs, such as children and elderly people, entered into their daily routine speech, and possibly transferred further to next generations. And today, although we live in a peaceful timeline, and there is no necessity for us, modern Kishi Juz people, to economize the time and produce more words in the same time span, we inherited this phenomenon and continue to speak such.

As a precise example, Temirgaliyev (2023) in their book “Tamga” reveals that the origins of one of the most known Kishi Juz rus (clans), who is Adai, also might affected the negative attitudes towards their kind of people. The book puts forward the theory that Adai was originated not from paternal but from maternal side of Kishi Juz, which makes them not a direct heir of Kishi Juz. This situation affected other rus (clans) to behave bad towards Adai. Being a subject of this kind of mistreatment, Adai expressed the wish to prove them all wrong. Hereby, they started participating on battlefields and fight for their people and lands. Adai presumed that they could win people back if they showed that they are capable of great things such as power and bravery. Extraordinary bravery and strength made Adai and their descendants the most know among others, however, the initial mistreatment was still taking a place in people’s attitudes.

Perhaps, this negative attitude towards Adai ru (clan), which belongs to Kishi Juz, could possibly also affect the formation of negative attitudes, hence language ideologies, towards them.

This historical context is at the basis of a process of iconization (Irvine and Gal, 2000). Westerners are considered to possess negative attitudes by virtue of the historical role of their ancestors in Kazakh society. Linguistic forms used by Western Kazakh speakers are then considered to be representative of these attitudes and explained in cultural terms. In particular, the phonological reduction, which is a linguistic form, is attributed to the military role of Western Kazakh speech and perceived as rude. Hence, speakers who display a lot of phonological reduction in their speech are perceived as Westerners, and, as such, as rude.

Another reason for phonological reduction of verbs could be the syntactic features of the Kazakh language. As it was mentioned before, Kazakh sentences usually follow the structure of SOV (Subject-Object-Verb), where verbs are put at the end of the sentences. People get a bit lazy to pronounce the sound or more at the end of the whole sentence might affect the verbs to be usually phonologically reduced. What is more, the experience shows that by reducing verbs the meaning of the words does not usually change or get undistinguishable. Thus, the reduction of verbs seems to be a good strategy to produce less sounds and save more energy and air for breath.

All in all, the cultural explanations might function as the social and historical descriptions for why Western Kazakh speakers are perceived in the way they are.

Conclusion

To conclude, my findings explained the link between phonological reduction frequency in Kazakh speech and language ideologies about Western Kazakh variety. The results and discussion parts of the research revealed that the Western Kazakh speakers produce more

instances of phonological reduction than the North Eastern Kazakh speakers do. The Western Kazakh speakers do it 50% more often than the North Eastern Kazakh language speakers do. Additionally, the participants of my experiment part, which consisted of a matched guise test with a follow up interview, explicitly linked the phonological reduction in the audio to the fast speech phenomenon. This implies that the speaker of the audio, who is a native Western Kazakh speaker, was perceived as a fast speaker due to the frequent amount of phonological reductions they made in the speech. Hence, this demonstrates that the speech with the frequent amount of phonological reductions is regarded as fast speech, and as the previous data collection in part 1 shows, the Western Kazakh speakers tend to reduce the words more often. So, not only the speaker in the single audio, but the general population of Western Kazakh speakers are recognized as fast speakers. This study explains one of the plausible reasons for the roots of the language ideology of Western Kazakh speakers being fast speakers of Kazakh language.

What is more, the cultural explanations such as the lifestyle of Western Kazakhs' ancestors of being batyrs and fighting on battlefields can be another reason for why modern Western Kazakh speakers phonologically reduce the words. It is because the batyrs did not have enough time on battlefields, so they were naturally forced to reduce words in sake to economize time. If they did reduce words, they could have more space for more words at heated battles. The nature of people in the past affected the shaping of the identity of modern people as well.

Overall, Western Kazakh speakers are perceived to be fast and rude speakers, and this capstone project examined the possible reasonings for such negative language ideologies.

In the process of conducting this research project, I have faced several restrictions. One of them is the lack of recordings from the Southern Kazakh variety of Kazakh language in MultiCorSKL. Since the corpus has insufficient amount of data for my project to analyze, I could

not include this variety into my analysis. As the future direction of the project, I would like to implement the Southern Kazakh speech into analysis of phonological reduction frequencies.

Another restriction was a lack of scientific work on Kazakh language, so I had difficulties while doing a secondary research, analyzing literature.

I believe that this research project could be helpful for Kazakh language development and have implications for several fields. This study is engaging because it contributes to the field of identity studies in Kazakhstan; and pedagogy, so the speakers and language learners can reproduce the negative ideologies less, since they are not true. All in all, this research project has studied the Kazakh language features and the identity of their speakers, and would be beneficial in several aspects of Kazakh studies.

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