Polycentricity of Linguistic Landscape and Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan

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Abstract

This study illustrates a key existing challenge to realizing trilingualism as a major nation-building language ideology: the *ideological polycentricity* of multilingual signs—that is, the simultaneous orientation of multilingual signs to several *authority centers*. Combining diverse linguistic landscape (LL) methodologies such as *code preferences* (language choices and placement on a sign), *indexical orders* (patterns that index meta-messages), and *polycentricity* (a simultaneous orientation toward multiple centers), I examine how three state-approved languages (Kazakh, Russian, and English) are positioned on 346 state and private signs in a small town in northern Kazakhstan. The analysis reveals a range of *indexical orders* at the level of sign type: monolingual, bilingual, and trilingual sign types of horizontal, vertical, and centralized code combinations. At the level of signage group, bilingual Kazakh-Russian and trilingual Kazakh-Russian-English signs dominate in the top-down group, while monolingual Russian and bilingual Kazakh-Russian signs with centralized Russian dominate in the bottom-up group. The identified *indexical orders* indicate *ideological polycentricity* in town public signage, which presents a challenge for the nation-building process.

Keywords

Kazakhstan – nation-building – linguistic landscape – polycentricity – indexical orders

Introduction

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, fifteen newly established states initiated a process of nation-building with the aim of honoring their titular

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nations and distancing themselves from the Soviet past. In Kazakhstan, the nation-building process has not been straightforward. The Kazakhstani state began with ethno-centric nation-building, or so-called "Kazakhification," which was designed to establish the dominance of Kazakh ethnicity in all spheres of the country.[1] This was carried out through a revival of Kazakh genealogical lineage (e.g., encouraging individuals to learn their *zhuz*, *ru*, and *taipa*),[2] state planning and recruitment policies (e.g., giving preferential treatment to Kazakh-speaking applicants),[3] demographic and administrative reforms (e.g., re-arranging regions to balance Kazakh and Russian populations),[4] and, most importantly, by promoting the status of the Kazakh language (e.g., making the study of Kazakh mandatory in schools, making Kazakh the language of state correspondence, etc.).[5] However, the ethno-based approach did not produce the desired results due to the resistance of excluded (non-Kazakh) groups.[6] This prompted the Kazakhstani government to implement a new strategy, forging an ethnic Kazakh state and a civic Kazakhstani nation alongside one another.[7] The state has attempted to promote ethnic Kazakh identity via state symbols and an emphasis on the Kazakh language while developing civic national identity through the establishment of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan and the institutionalization of the cultural heritage of non- Kazakh ethnicities.[8]

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1 B. Dave, "National Revival in Kazakhstan: Language Shift and Identity Change," *Post-Soviet Affairs,* 12, no. 1 (1996): 51–72; A. Sarsembayev, "Imagined Communities: Kazak Nationalism and Kazakification in the 1990s," *Central Asian Survey,* 18, no. 3 (1999): 319–346; N. Manasov, "Perceptions of Ethnic and All-National Identity in Kazakhstan," in N. Manasov, E. Karin, A. Chebotarev, and N. Oka (eds.), *The Nationalities Question in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan*, Middle East Series (Institute of Developing Economies and JETRO, 2002).

2 E. Schatz, "The Politics of Multiple Identities: Lineage and Ethnicity in Kazakhstan," *Europe-Asia Studies,* 52, no. 3 (2000): 489–506.

3 P. Kolstø, "Anticipating Demographic Superiority: Kazakh Thinking on Integration and Nation Building," *Europe-Asia Studies,* 50, no. 1 (1998): 51–69.

4 R. Matuszkiewicz, "The Language Issue in Kazakhstan: Institutionalizing New Ethnic Relations after Independence," *Economic and Environmental Studies*, 10, no. 2 (2010): 211–227.

5 Sarsembayev, "Imagined Communities"; D. Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

6 Manasov, "Perceptions of Ethnic and All-National Identity."

7 N.P. Jones, "'Assembling' a Civic Nation in Kazakhstan: The Nation-Building Role of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan," *Caucasian Review of International Affairs,* 4, no. 2 (2010): 159–168.

8 O. Kesici, "The Dilemma in the Nation-Building Process: The Kazakh or Kazakhstani Nation," *jemie*, 10 (2011): 31 and Jones, "'Assembling' a Civic Nation."

The inconsistencies of nation-building are reflected in Kazakhstan's language and education policies.9 The state's nation-building language policies have evolved from nativism (emphasizing Kazakh as a consolidating force for a multi-ethnic population by making its study and use mandatory) and derussification (which saw the introduction of English as a new lingua franca) to recognizing Russian as a local lingua franca and English as a language of business communication.10 As a result, trilingualism is the current nation-building language ideology in Kazakhstan.11

It should be noted that major nation-building policies, including language ones, have been implemented in a top-down manner.12 As such, it is necessary to examine if and how local populations have followed, re-negotiated, or contested the nationhood that has been projected onto them. A 2015 special issue of *Nationalities Papers* articulated the urgency of such inquiry, calling on scholars to take a two-fold approach to understanding nation-building processes in Central Asian countries. It suggests that although the top-down approach to studying nation-building is justified by the presence of authoritarian regimes in the region, this focus overlooks the agency of people, businesses, and even civil servants, who are the only ones who can decide whether they will accept the national identity imagined for them by elites.13 For instance, the cinematic narrative that promotes the state's naïve interpretations of ethnic and civic nationhood (e.g., Nomad, A Gift for Stalin) is contested by another dramatic narrative that depicts people's daily struggles.14 Another example of how local agents do not fully accept this "imagined" nationhood is the Chinese-built monument to Zhanybek and Kerey Khans, which was boycotted by residents of Astana, who demanded that the structure be designed and produced in Kazakhstan.15

9 J. Melich and A. Adibayeva, "Nation-Building and Cultural Policy in Kazakhstan," *European Scientific Journal,* 9, no. 10 (2014).

10 A. Pavlenko, "Multilingualism in Post-Soviet Countries: Language Revival, Language Removal, and Sociolinguistic Theory," *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 11, no. 3–4 (2008): 275–314; Z.S. Beisenova, "Language Shifts in Case of Language Policy of Kazakhstan," *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2, no. 8 (2013): 653–64.

11 P. Mehisto, A. Kambatyrova, and K. Nurseitova, "Three in One? Trilingualism in Education- al Policy and Practice," in D. Bridge (ed.), *Education Reform and Internationalisation: The Case of School Reform in Kazakhstan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 152–176.

12 Melich and Adibayeva, "Nation-Building and Cultural Policy."

13 R. Isaacs and A. Polese, "Between 'Imagined' and 'Real' Nation-Building: Identities and Nationhood in Post-Soviet Central Asia," *Nationalities Papers*, 43, no. 3 (2015): 371–382.

14 R. Isaacs, "Nomads, Warriors and Bureaucrats: Nation-Building and Film in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan," *Nationalities Papers,* 43, no. 3 (2015): 399–416.

15 A. Fauve, "A Tale of Two Statues in Astana: The Fuzzy Process of Nationalistic City Making," *Nationalities Papers,* 43, no. 3 (2015): 383–398.

In addition to monuments, the linguistic landscape includes multilingual public signage (e.g., billboards, shop names, etc.) that can be the means of promoting or contesting an "imagined" nationhood.16 The presence of a certain group's language on the signs enhances the social identity of that group and indicates that the group has gained institutional control of spheres central to daily life.17 For their part, local agents may renegotiate or contest the state's attempts at nation-building by choosing languages other than those approved by the state, manipulating the scripts of state languages, or even painting over state signs.18 Both promotion and contention of state-building efforts have been found on the linguistic landscape of former Soviet states. Nonetheless, existing research on Central Asia's linguistic landscape in this region has not undertaken quantitative comparative work comparing the sign types and tendencies in state and commercial signage, nor has it focused on rural areas or placed data in the ethnic context from which it was drawn. The present study seeks to address this gap by drawing on several linguistic landscape methodologies that illuminate the nuances of signage types, patterns in state and commercial sign groups, and the communicative motivation behind these patterns based on the ethnic composition of the data collection site.

I combine the concepts of *code preferences*,19 *indexical orders*, and *polycentricity*20 to accurately identify different types of signs through positioning of codes/languages on a sign, determine how the identified sign types are distributed in state vs. commercial signage, and explain the communicative motivation underpinning these distributions. I apply this eclectic approach to the public signage of a small town located in the north of Kazakhstan, comparing how the three official languages (Kazakh, Russian, and English) were positioned on 346 signs in top-down (official/state) and bottom-up (commercial)

16 E. Ben-Rafael et al., "Linguistic Landscape as Symbolic Construction of the Public Space: The Case of Israel," *International Journal of Multilingualism,* 3, no. 1 (2006): 7–30; D. Gorter, "Further Possibilities for Linguistic Landscape Research," in D. Gorter (ed.), *Linguistic Landscape: A New Approach to Multilingualism* (2006): 81–89.

17 R. Landry and R.Y. Bourhis, "Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality: An Empirical Study," *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 16, no. 1 (1997): 23–49.

18 A. Pavlenko, "Language Conflict in Post-Soviet Linguistic Landscapes," *Journal of Slavic Linguistics,* 17, no. 1–2 (2009): 247–274; J. Cenoz and D. Gorter, "Linguistic Landscape and Minority Languages," *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 3, no. 1 (2006): 67–80.

19 R. Scollon and S.W. Scollon, *Discourses in Place: Language in the Material World* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 116–127.

20 J. Blommaert, *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 37–49.

signage. The analysis reveals ideological polycentricity of the town's public signage, detected through *indexical orders* at the level of sign type and sign group. The major identified sign types are Kazakh/Russian *monolingual*, Kazakh-Russian *bilingual*, and Kazakh-Russian-English *trilingual*. Among Kazakh-Russian bilingual signs, there are *horizontal*, *vertical*, and *centralized* sub-types. In the *horizontal* sub-type, Kazakh is placed on the left and in the *vertical* sub-type it is placed at the top. In the *centralized* sub-type, meanwhile, either Kazakh or Russian can be placed in the center. The Kazakh-Russian-English trilingual sign type is represented by a *vertical* code combination only, with Kazakh at the top, Russian below it, and English at the bottom.

At the level of sign group, the following *indexical orders* were identified. Russian monolingual signs are notably present in the bottom-up group and absent from the top-down group. Horizontal and vertical Kazakh-Russian bilingual signs are well represented in both signage flows, but centralized Kazakh-Russian bilingual signs with Russian centralized are also well represented in the bottom-up group. These *indexical orders* (at the level of sign type and sign group) point to the ideological *polycentricity* of public signage—it is oriented toward two *centers of authority*, one in Astana and the other in the locality, where Russian is a lingua franca. In other words, despite the fact that Kazakh-Russian bilingual signs—with Kazakh placed in the more prestigious position—are dominant, business names are given in Russian. My findings reveal how a multilingual reality presents challenges to the nation-building process in post-Soviet Kazakhstan by revealing how "imagined" nationhood is creatively contested by local social agents (i.e., small businesses).

Nation-Building, Language, and Education Policies: Major Stepsand Major Challenges

Kazakhstan's nation-building process has involved developing major language policies.21 Mirroring its fragmented nation-building, these language policies have evolved from emphasizing nativization (upgrading the status of Kazakh) and derussification (eliminating the influence of Russian in major spheres) to acknowledging Russian as a local lingua franca and introducing English as a

21 Mehisto, Kambatyrova, and Nurseitova, "Three in One?"; Melich and Adibayeva, "Nation-Building and Cultural Policy"; J. Smagulova, "The Re-Acquisition of Kazakh in Kazakhstan: Achievements and Challenges," in E. Ahn and J. Smagulova (eds.), *Language Change in Central Asia* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), 89–108.

means of business communication.22 Thus, such major initial documents as the Resolution on Improving the Study of the Kazakh Language (1987), Law on Languages (1989), and State Program on Development of the Kazakh Language and Other National Languages (1990) proclaimed Kazakh to be the state language and emphasized its role as a consolidating force for a multi-ethnic Kazakhstani population. These state language policies urged mandatory use of Kazakh in the public sphere and the improvement of all citizens' Kazakh- language proficiency,23 at the same time as derussification efforts attempted to decrease the use of Russian in formal paperwork, formal communication, and state-funded media and public signage. This also resulted in a reduction in the number of Russian-language schools, Russian-teaching positions in higher education, and weekly Russian classes.24

In time, the need to recognize Russian as a local lingua franca at the state level became evident. Thus, the Language Law (1997) upgraded Russian to a language of interethnic communication, legitimizing its usage alongside Kazakh in public institutions. As an attempt to balance the influence of Russian, the Trinity of the Languages (2007) added English as a language of business communication.25 In 2013, the presidential decree on "The Development and Functioning of Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011–2020" sought to improve study and use of the Kazakh language; stimulate the learning of foreign languages, including English; and preserve the existing linguistic diversity. It set benchmarks of 95% of the population speaking Kazakh and Russian and 20% speaking English, with 70% of public media content in Kazakh, by 2020.26 The above-mentioned language policies have resulted in an increase in the number of Kazakh-language schools since the 1990s. By the mid-2000s, the proportion of Kazakh-language schools had increased to 28% (up from 11% in 1998), while the proportion of Russian-language schools declined to 36% (down from 73% in 1988).27 As of 2013, 64.2% of students were enrolled in Kazakh-language schools and 32% in Russian-language ones, with the remaining

22 Pavlenko, "Multilingualism in Post-Soviet Countries"; Laitin, *Identity in Formation*.

23 Sarsembayev, "Imagined Communities"; Smagulova, "The Re-Acquisition of Kazakh."

24 W. Fierman, "Language and Education in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan: Kazakh-Medium Instruction in Urban Schools," *The Russian Review,* 65, no. 1 (2006): 98–116; Z. Smagulova, "Language Policies of Kazakhization and Their Influence on Language Attitudes and Use," *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism,* 11, no. 3–4 (2008): 440–475.

25 Pavlenko, "Multilingualism in Post-Soviet Countries"; Z.S. Beisenova, "Language Shifts in Case of Language Policy of Kazakhstan," *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies,* 2, no. 8 (2013): 653–64.

26 Smagulova, "The Re-Acquisition of Kazakh."

27 Fierman, "Language and Education."

3.8% being educated in other languages.28 It should be noted that there is still a rural-urban divide with regard to enrollment in Kazakh-language schools. In a study of 2,555 respondents, 45.2% of urbanites under 23 attended or had attended school in Kazakh compared to 57.6% of rural respondents under the age of 23.29

Currently, Kazakh and Russian have been approved to be the primary languages of instruction in primary, secondary, and higher education. At secondary level, instruction can also be offered in the titular languages of other ethnic minorities (eg. Tatar, Tajik, and Uyghur). It should be noted that Kazakh is a mandatory school subject in Russian and other minority-language schools, and Russian is a mandatory second language in Kazakh-language schools.30 In Kazakh-language schools, Russian language classes are introduced in the third grade and Russian literature in the fifth grade; both classes continue through the eleventh grade. In Russian-instructed schools, Kazakh language classes are introduced in the first grade and Kazakh literature in the fifth grade. Foreign language classes are introduced in the fifth grade in all schools.31

In addition, 200 preschools, 29 Kazakh-Turkish Lyceums, 31 schools, and 15 Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools offer trilingual education (Kazakh, Russian, and English). The degree of instruction in English varies from a few science classes to all classes. In higher education, meanwhile, a 2009 study found that 50.7% of enrolled students were studying in Russian, 47.6% in Kazakh, and the remaining 1.6% in English.32

Along with an increase in enrollment in Kazakh-language schools, there has been a rise in Kazakh-language proficiency and attitudes toward the Kazakh language are increasingly positive among the younger generation. The aforementioned case study of 2,555 individuals found that reported oral proficiency in Kazakh was at 66.2% among urbanites aged 36–55, but among their counterparts under the age of 23, 77% reported being proficient Kazakh-speakers. In the rural population, this figure stood at 89.4% among older respondents, rising to 95.6% among younger participants. The opposite tendency was found with Russian: 89.6% of urbanites aged 36–55 reported oral proficiency, but this dropped to 66.8% among respondents under 23. Similarly, whereas 62.9% of the older group in rural areas claimed to be proficient Russian-speakers, just

28 Mehisto, Kambatyrova, and Nurseitova, "Three in One?"

29 Ibid., 152–176; Fierman, "Language and Education."

30 Pavlenko, "Multilingualism in Post-Soviet Countries"; Smagulova, "Language Policies of Kazakhization."

31 Smagulova, "The Re-Acquisition of Kazakh."

32 Mehisto, Kambatyrova, and Nurseitova, "Three in One?"

28.8% of their counterparts under the age of 23 reported proficiency.33 In the same study, reported tolerance for a monolingual Kazakh state stood at 63.6% among urban participants aged between 36 and 55, compared to 71.4% among respondents under 23. The same trend—although to a much lesser degree— was visible among rural respondents: 82.8% tolerance among those aged 36–55 and 83.6% among those under 23.34 Another case study of 400 individuals in a northern city shows an increase in the use of Kazakh in all communication regardless of the language in which an individual was educated.35

Despite these positive indications, there are still many challenges to promoting Kazakh as a consolidating force for the Kazakhstani population. Above all, Kazakh still lacks appeal to socially influential middle-class Kazakhs in urban areas, who continue to show interest in Russian culture and view Russian as a path of social mobility.36 The above-mentioned case study of 2,555 respondents found that the value of learning Kazakh decreased from 77.5% to 65.4% when respondents' income level increased from below us$50 to above us$500.37 In addition, highly russified urban Kazakhs have resisted linguistic "kazakhification" by enrolling their children in Russian-language schools that they believe offer a better quality education.38 This is not surprising, as Kazakh-language educators still face such challenges as a scarcity of textbooks, a shortage of qualified teaching staff, and low student achievement.39 Graduates of Russian-language schools therefore tend to have higher achievement scores, leading to the association of Russian with social mobility.40 This situation negatively impacts the development of diverse and crucial registers/genres in Ka- zakh.41 For instance, the academic writing genre (essays, theses, dissertation, research articles, etc.) may lack the vocabulary and grammatical structures

33 Smagulova, "The Re-Acquisition of Kazakh."

34 Ibid.

35 N. Mongilyova, "Research Into Functioning of the State Language in the Situation of Mass Bilingualism of North Kazakhstan Using the Differential Technique," *sage Open*, 5, no. 3 (2015): 1–9.

36 Pavlenko, "Multilingualism in Post-Soviet Countries"; Smagulova, "The Re-Acquisition of Kazakh"; Mongilyova, "Research Into Functioning of the State Language."

37 Smagulova, "The Re-Acquisition of Kazakh."

38 Matuszkiewicz, "The Language Issue in Kazakhstan"; Smagulova, "Language Policies of Kazakhization."

39 Mehisto, Kambatyrova, and Nurseitova, "Three in One?"; A. Verschik, "Contacts of Russianin the Post-Soviet Space," *Applied Linguistics Review,* 1, no. 1 (2010): 85–127.

40 Fierman, "Language and Education"; Smagulova, "Language Policies of Kazakhization"; Verschik, "Contacts of Russian."

41 Verschik, "Contacts of Russian."

that would enable Kazakh writers to express their analytical thoughts, thus diminishing the prestige of Kazakh and Kazakh education. Similarly, the advertisement genre may not include the "catchy" expressions that are readily available in Russian, potentially leading businesses to use Russian rather than Kazakh.

Next, when it comes to actual language use, Russian seems to continue dominating all age groups, especially in northern Kazakhstan.42 In the case study of 886 individuals under the age of 23, Russian tends to be used more than Kazakh in interactions at work (23.7% vs. 15.2%), at banks (43.8% vs. 12.1%), and with friends (33% vs. 24%). Russian is used more than Kazakh with regard to information consumption: listening to radio (38.8% vs. 15.1%), watching TV (35.2% vs. 12.4%), reading newspapers (35% vs. 19.6%), and reading non- academic texts (45% vs. 25.4%).43 Similarly, another study found that more than twice as much information is consumed in Russian as in Kazakh (79% vs. 29%), and public communication far more commonly occurs in Russian (79% vs. 35%).44 The reliance on Russian in information-seeking is not surprising because major TV channels tend to broadcast more Russian-language content in prime time, making Russian programs the most-viewed programs in 2013.45 In addition, resources in Russian are more available on social media.46 There also appears to be an age dimension to the language gap: Kazakh tends to be used more with parents, elderly relatives, and friends, as a marker of respect, than it does with children.47 Thus, the major challenge to the government's efforts to build national identity through language is that increasing formal education in Kazakh has not actually led to Kazakh outpacing Russian as a language of actual communication, either at work or in citizens' private lives.48

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42 Smagulova, "Language Policies of Kazakhization"; Smagulova, "The Re-Acquisition of Kazakh"; Mongilyova, "Research Into Functioning of the State Language"; Mehisto, Kambatyrova, and Nurseitova, "Three in One?"

43 Smagulova, "The Re-Acquisition of Kazakh."

44 Mehisto, Kambatyrova, and Nurseitova, "Three in One?"

45 M. Laruelle, "In Search of Kazakhness: The Televisual Landscape and Screening of the Nation in Kazakhstan," *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization,* 23, no. 3 (2015): 321–340.

46 Pavlenko, "Multilingualism in Post-Soviet Countries"; D. Uffelmann, "Post-Russian Eurasia and the Proto-Eurasian Usage of the Runet in Kazakhstan: A Plea for a Cyberlinguistic Turn in Area Studies," *Journal of Eurasian Studies,* 2, no. 2 (2011): 172–183.

47 Mongilyova, "Research Into Functioning of the State Language."

48 Smagulova, "Language Policies of Kazakhization"; Smagulova, "The Re-Acquisition of Kazakh"; Mongilyova, "Research Into Functioning of the State Language"; Mehisto, Kambatyrova, and Nurseitova, "Three in One?"

Finally, Russians remain a well-represented ethnic minority in Kazakhstan (~21.5%). Other ethnic groups—Germans, Tatars, Ukrainians, Uzbeks, and Uyghurs—comprise a further 13% of the population. Members of all these groups are more proficient in Russian than in Kazakh49 and use Russian as a lingua franca, not least because materials for learning Russian are more readily avail- able than those for studying Kazakh or English.50 This demographic situation is further complicated by noticeable regional variation in the ethnolinguistic composition of the Kazakhstani population. The northern (Uralsk, Akmola, Kokshetau oblasts) and north-eastern (Pavlodar, Semipalatinsk) parts of the country are Russian-dominated, while the southern part (Kyzylorda, Shimkent) is heavily Kazakh.51

Nation-Building, Language Policy, and Linguistic Landscape

Linguistic landscape is a public sphere in which nation-building is carried out through diverse language policies.52 In promoting a certain language, the government promotes a given national identity.53 Landry and Bourhis explain this capacity of ll by pointing out that the presence of the group's language on signs enhances its positive social identity by "imply[ing] that one's own group has gained a measure of institutional control within key sectors [of the state]… [and] symboliz[ing] the vitality of the ethnolinguistic group in other institutional support domains, such as cultural production and commercial and religious activities."54 This symbolic function becomes particularly salient in a context where a language emerges as a crucial dimension of a group or nation- al identity. Post-Soviet Kazakhstan is such a context: the state tries to promote the Kazakh language as a consolidating element of a new national identity by making it more visible on public signage.55

Recent LL research shows that state language policy can have a significant impact on the configuration of public signage by supporting a certain language

49 K.M. Rees, "Citizenship, Identity Politics, and Language Choice in Kazakhstan" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2015).

50 S. Bahry et al., "Bilingual Education in Central Asia," in O. Garcia, A. Lin, and S. May (eds.), *Bilingual and Multilingual Education* (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 259–280.

51 Verschik, "Contacts of Russian."

52 Ben-Rafael, "Linguistic Landscape as Symbolic Construction."

53 Ibid.

54 Landry and Bourhis, "Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality," 27.

55 Pavlenko, "Language Conflict."

and thus a certain national identity. For instance, the intense state language policies of the local Basque government resulted in 50% of state and commercial signs being produced solely in Basque or in Basque and another language, while only 5% of signs were produced in Frisian, despite the fact that a higher percentage of residents were fluent speakers of Frisian.56 However, this process is not straightforward. In an examination of the Israeli linguistic landscape, Hebrew (a state language) was found to be present on state signs across all three major regions—a non-Israeli Palestinian region (East Jerusalem), an Israeli-Palestinian region (Nazareth, Tira, and Jaffa), and a Jewish area (Kfar Shmaryahu and West Jerusalem)—whereas commercial signs also incorporated other languages, like Russian.57 Similarly, in Tokyo, top-down signs are mostly in Japanese (~80%) or in both Japanese and English, reinforcing state language policies, while nonofficial signs have been found to incorporate eleven other foreign languages.58 On Seoul's linguistic landscape, Korean was found to be a dominant code in a government-regulated district, while English took the lead in the rest of the capital's districts.59 Worldwide, local agents re- negotiate state language policies in pursuit of their interests.60

The linguistic landscape of former Soviet states reflects the radical transformations due to nation-building efforts and the shift to a capitalistic and globalized economic system, which have given rise to five major processes.61 The first is *language erasure*, namely removing signs in a particular language (predominantly Russian-language signs in Cyrillic script). For instance, a study in Baku found that state signs arbitrarily used at least one of Azerbaijani and English, but Russian was completely absent from the linguistic landscape, even in commercial signage.62 The second process is *language replacement*, where a new language comes to perform the function of an old one. There were hopes that English would replace Russian as the regional lingua franca, symbolizing a shift away from totalitarianism toward Western-style cosmopolitanism.63 In the same study of Baku's linguistic landscape, Soviet commercial abbreviations

56 Cenoz and Gorter, "Linguistic Landscape and Minority Languages."

57 Ben-Rafael, "Linguistic Landscape as Symbolic Construction."

58 P. Backhaus, "Multilingualism in Tokyo: A Look into the Linguistic Landscape," *International Journal of Multilingualism,* 3, no. 1 (2006): 52–66.

59 C.B. Lawrence, "The Korean English Linguistic Landscape," *World Englishes,* 31, no. 1 (2012): 70–92.

60 Isaacs and Polese, "Between 'Imagined' and 'Real' Nation-Building."

61 Pavlenko, "Language Conflict."

62 J. Shibliyev, "Linguistic Landscape Approach to Language Visibility in Post-Soviet Baku," *Bilig,* 71 (2014): 205–230.

63 Pavlenko, "Language Conflict."

like "*gastronom*," "*univermag*," and "*cafeteriya*" were found to have been substituted with English words like "market," "mall," and "lounge." Corporate and tourism signs in Baku,64 as in Astana,65 now often appear in English. The third process is *language upgrading* and *downgrading*, essentially changing the relative status of languages on public signage. For instance, the usage of Kazakh names in Astana increased from 22.3% in 2008–2010 to 45.6% in 2011–2012.66 The fourth is *language regulation*, which has resulted in signs that aim to control language choice (e.g., signs that call on the general public to speak in a standard variant of the titular language here and now).67

The final process is *transgressive signs*—signs that violate or subvert official norms in their choice of either script or language. For example, the English words "United Credit" and "Beauty Club" have been written in the Azerbaijani Latin script using the norms of the host language, giving rise to written forms like "Yunayted Credit" and "Byuti klub."68 In the ll of Astana, there are instances of "adapted onyms"—the business name "Baursakoff" combines "*baursak,"* a Kazakh traditional bread, and "-off," a Russian suffix used in forming last names. The tendency to combine two codes can also be observed: the restaurant "Toi-Свадьба" combines Kazakh and Russian; security agency "Қасқыр Security" mixes Kazakh and English; and the shop for expectant mothers "Sweet Мама" uses Russian and English. Finally, there are cases of metaphorical and metonymical transfers: "Ап-ақ" (very white) and "Эффект" (effect) for a laundry service; "Воздушная фантазия" (an air fantasy) for an event-planning organization; and "Модница" (Fashionista) for a fashion house.69 These findings highlight that business names are very sensitive to diverse linguistic modifications.70 As research on public signage shows, language choices for business names are very strategic, since the name plays a significant role in promoting the business and increasing sales.71,72

64 Ibid.

65 A. Akzhigitova and S. Zharkynbekova, "Language Planning in Kazakhstan: The Case of Ergonyms as Another Scene of Linguistic Landscape of Astana," *Language Problems and Language Planning,* 38, no. 1 (2014): 42–57.

66 Ibid.

67 Pavlenko, "Language Conflict."

68 Shibliyev, "Linguistic Landscape Approach."

69 Akzhigitova and Zharkynbekova, "Language Planning in Kazakhstan."

70 Ibid.

71 Gorter, "Further Possibilities."

72 J. Cenoz, D. Gorter, and E. Shohamy, "Language Economy and Linguistic Landscape," in E. Shohomy and D. Gorter (eds.), *Linguistic Landscape: Expanding the Scenery* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 55–69.

Currently, the state language policy on public signage clearly regulates the choice and placement of languages on signs. According to Article 21 of the Law "On languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan,"

> Forms, signs, announcements, advertisements, catalogs, price lists, and other visual information shall be in state and Russian languages and in other languages if necessary.… All texts of visual information shall be in the following order: left or top—in state; right or on bottom—in Russian, and shall be written in the same size letters. When the need arises, the texts of visual information can also be provided in other languages.73

Kazakh and Russian are the major languages but Kazakh is given the more privileged positions (i.e., on the left and the top). This language placement is the reflection of state "imagined" nationhood in public signage.

Building on existing research on linguistic landscapes, this study examines if and how state language regulations (and thus the state's vision of nationhood) are followed or re-negotiated on public signage. In addition, it extends existing linguistic landscape research in the post-Soviet region by categorizing signs in a more nuanced way (by the positioning of languages) and assessing the distribution of the identified sign types in state and commercial signage flows, revealing the extent to which the state's nation-building efforts have been realized and/or contested by the daily practices of local actors.

Methodology

Analytical Framework

Following Rafael et al., I conceptualize linguistic landscape as a symbolic construction of public space. This symbolic construction is shaped by the interests of multiple parties, including state agencies and businesses, and is to a large extent communicative.74 The interests of major parties do not always coincide: the state may want the symbolic materials of LL (particularly language choice) to support its vision of nationhood, whereas social actors like local small businesses typically want to design public signs in a way that is profitable for sales, which may involve using languages other than the ones promoted by

73 The Language Law (1997), Article 21, "Language of Requisites and Visual Information," www.adilet.zan.kz.

74 Ben-Rafael et al., "Linguistic Landscape as Symbolic Construction."

the state as markers of national identity.75 To better understand this process, I incorporate Blommaert's concepts of *indexical orders* and *polycentricity*76 as a main analytical framework, along with the *image coding* theorized by Scollon and Scollon77 and the *top-down* vs. *bottom-up* sign categorization theorized by Ben-Rafael et al.78

The concept of *polycentricity* suggests that individuals use language as a set of resources to create a message with one or more *evaluative authorities* or *super-addressees*79 (real and/or imagined) in mind. When the message is oriented toward a certain center of authority, it is created in similar patterns or *indexical orders*. To detect these *indexical orders*—and thus the potential *authority center*—on linguistic landscape signs, I applied Scollon and Scollon's *system of image coding*.80 This system comprises four major categories, of which *code preferences* is the most pertinent to this study. This category focuses on how several languages or codes are distributed on a multilingual sign. In the most studied cases, the *preferred code* is placed above the *subordinate code* in a *vertical alignment*, while the *preferred code* is placed to the left and the *marginal code* is placed to the right in a *horizontal alignment*. A third option is for the *preferred code* to be placed in the *center*, with the *marginal code* on the *periphery*.81 Thus, this coding category is useful in determining how three languages (Kazakh, Russian, and English) are placed on LL signs under examination, thus illustrating certain *indexical orders*. To bring a comparative perspective, I take a *top-down* vs. *bottom-up* approach to data categorization. The *top-down category* is LL elements that are exhibited by institutional agencies, while the *bottom-up category* is LL elements that are utilized by autonomous actors like local businesses.

Data Collection Site and Analysis Process

The study data consists of 260 photos (for a total of 346 LL items) taken in a small town a few hours from the Russian border that was founded by the Russian military in the mid-1800s. I will refer to the town as Town X. Town X is part of a national park that is being considered for inclusion on the UNESCO

75 Ibid.; Gorter, "Further Possibilities"; Cenoz, Gorter, and Shohamy, "Language Economy and Linguistic Landscape."

76 Blommaert, *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization*, 37–49.

77 Scollon and Scollon, *Discourses in Place*, 116–127.

78 Ben-Rafael et al., "Linguistic Landscape as Symbolic Construction."

79 M.M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin, tx: University of Texas Press, 2010).

80 Scollon and Scollon, *Discourses in Place*, 116.

81 Ibid., 120.

list of world heritage sites. The area is famous for its pine woods, which are considered to have healing properties, and its beautiful lakes, which attract thousands of tourists from Kazakhstan and Russia. The town has six factories, two hospitals, an emergency room, a town museum, a cultural center, and a public library, as well as four newspapers, a radio station, five community colleges, and eleven schools.

The town's population is around forty-five thousand people. Unfortunately, there is no specific information regarding the ethnic composition of the town available on official websites. However, information about the ethnic composition and language proficiency of the district (which I will refer to as Y), is avail- able from the government statistics website, www.stat.gov.kz. District Y also includes around 50 other small villages located within several hours' drive of town X. According to the national census of 2009, the total population of the district X was approximately 74,000. The majority of the district's population were Russians (more than 35,000/~48%), followed by Kazakhs (~29,000/~39%), Ukrainians (more than 2,000/ ~3%), and Germans (more than 2,000/~3%).

Statistics about language proficiency are available only at county level (county Z) and for respondents older than 15. County Z includes two other towns and sixteen districts. These statistics indicate that Kazakh proficiency among the entire population of the county (577,044) ranged from 45.1% to 56.1% in regard to three language skills (listening, reading, and writing). Proficiency in Kazakh ranged from 91.6% to 98.4% among the ethnic Kazakh population (more than 250,000/~45%), compared to 5.8% to 18.8% among Russians (~215,000/~37%), 5% to 17.4% among Ukrainians (~34,000/~6%), and 7.1% to 20.2% among Ger- mans (~21,000/ ~4%). In contrast, Russian proficiency among county residents ranged from 92.8% to 97.5%: 88% to 95.8% among Kazakhs, 97.3% to 98.8%
among Russians, 96.6% to 98.8% among Ukrainians, and 96.1% to 98.9% among Germans. No difference was found between the urban and rural populations regarding language proficiency in Kazakh and Russian. Proficiency in Kazakh ranged from 41.25% to 53.4% among urbanites and from 48.6% to 58.6% among inhabitants of rural areas. Proficiency in Russian ranged from 95.5% to 98.5% among urbanites and from 90.1% to 96.5% among their rural counterparts. The population shows low English proficiency, ranging from 5% to 9.6%. Thus, the presence of Russian is very noticeable in this region.

The data collection was carried out by a family member of the researcher, a native of the town who was instructed how and where to take pictures. Data were collected in March 2015 in six major areas of the town: a railway residential area, the town railway station, a railway station/"smaller" market, a governmental sector and main street, a central/"bigger" market, and the mainshopping street.

Data Analysis Process

All ll items were categorized as either *top-down* (i.e., issued by state institutions) or *bottom-up* (i.e., produced by local businesses and individuals), following Rafael at al.'s approach. This resulted in 75 (21.7%) *top-down* LL items (19 state institution entrance signs, 9 school entrance signs, 17 street name signs, 24 railway station signs, and 6 monument signs and billboards) and 271 (78.3%) *bottom-up* LL items (47 shop and mall entrance signs, 32 other businesses entrance signs, 88 printed plastic posters, 44 business paper signs, and 60 individual flyers).

Having been categorized into these two groups, all LL items were qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed. First, the major types were analyzed based on the number of languages/codes they used. Bilingual and trilingual signs were further analyzed for *code preferences* to determine how the Kazakh, Russian, and English languages were distributed on these signs (left-right, up-down). The data analysis was conducted independently by two coders proficient in all three languages who regularly met to compare coding results and reconcile any inter-rater discrepancies. In cases when a foreign or Kazakh/Russian word was spelled in a different alphabet/script, the alphabetic system/script was used to determine the language/code—that is, if English words on signs were transliterated into Cyrillic script, they were coded as Russian. This allowed us to be consistent in coding and rely on linguistic evidence. The results of these qualitative and quantitative analyses will be presented in two parts: description of sign types (with examples) and the distribution of sign types in two signage flows.

Results

Major Types of Signs

The qualitative analysis of ll items revealed three major sign types, with several sub-types in two of them. Table 1 summarizes the three major types of signs and their sub-types, along with their frequencies.

Monolingual signs (either Kazakh or Russian) are the first major type of signs observed. Examples of this type include a welcome sign in Kazakh ("Кел балалар, оқылық!"—Come to study, children!) placed above the door of a Kazakh-language school and a Russian-language paper sign ("САХАР оптом"—SUGAR wholesale) in a shop window.

Bilingual signs are the second major type. The first sub-type is *horizontal bilingual Kazakh-Russian* signs. In this combination of codes, Kazakh is consistently placed on the left side of a sign, demonstrating that it is *a preferred/*

Table 1 *Summary of the major sign types*

MonolingualSigns		**Bilingual Kazakh-Russian Signs**				**Trilingual Kazakh-Russian-English Signs**	
Only Kazakh	Only Russian	Horizontal bilingual	Vertical bilingual	Centralized Kazakh	Centralized Russian	Vertical trilingual (Standard English)	Trilingual (Glocal English)
4 (3.8%)	99 (96.1%)	59 (26.4%)	90 (40.3%)	5 (2.2%)	69 (30.9%)	17 (85%)	3 (15%)
Total: 103 (100%)		Total: 223 (100%)				Total: 20 (100%)	

prestigious code.82 For instance, the entrance sign of a local state office (Akimat of [Region's name] region) has the office name in Kazakh ([Region's name] ауданының әкімдігі) on the left of the sign and the Russian version (Акимат [Region's name] района) on the right. Interestingly, the only instance of Russian being placed on the left/prestigious side of a sign is a sign over the entrance to the Culture House. This may be not surprising, as this type of institution was introduced and established by Russians during the Soviet colonization of Kazakhstan. An example of bottom-up horizontal bilingualism is a plastic printed sign advertising fresh meat for sale, which was placed under a shop window. The Kazakh version (жас ет) is on the left and the Russian version (свежее мясо) at the same level on the right.

Another sub-type in the bilingual sign group is *vertical bilingual Kazakh-Russian* signs. Kazakh, as the preferred/more prestigious code, is consistently located above Russian on the upper part on these signs. For instance, the sign on the wwii monument, which commemorates the lost lives of countrymen, has a Kazakh version ("Майдан мен тылда жеңіс үшін күрескен жерлестерімізге"—To the countrymen who built the victory on the front lines and behind the scenes) on the top of the sign and a Russian version ("Землякам ковавшим победу на фронте и в тылу") right below it. In the bottom-up group, this approach is taken on a law firm's plastic sign, which has the Kazakh ("қорғаушы"—lawyer) at the top of the sign and the Russian ("адвокат") immediately below it.

82 Ibid., 120.

The third and fourth sub-types are *centralized bilingual Kazakh-Russian* signs. These sub-types are predominantly represented by business entrance signs, which are part of the bottom-up group. They identify the business type (shop, dentist, law firm, etc.) in both Kazakh and Russian and give a business name/brand in either Kazakh or Russian. For instance, the entrance sign of a local daycare (see Figure 1) gives its business type in Kazakh ("балабақшасы"— "daycare") at the top of the sign and in Russian ("детский сад") at the bottom. The actual business name/brand ("малыш"—infant) is in Russian in the center of the sign. Another example is a sign for a local mall (see Figure 2). It likewise identifies the business—in Kazakh ("сауда үйі"—mall) on the left and in Russian ("торговый дом") on the right. The business name/brand ("Ақсораң") is in Kazakh and appears in the center of the sign.

Trilingual signs include English. Most trilingual signs are vertical. For instance, an entrance sign above the door of the town railway station has Kazakh at the very top ("кіру"), Russian immediately below it ("вход"), and English ("entrance") at the very bottom. It should be noted that not all trilingual signs included standard English. Those that did not were identified as instances of *glocalization,*83 but most of them were likewise vertically structured. In the top-down group, an entrance sign for the entrepreneur support center gives

Figure 1 *An entrance sign of a local daycare*
Source: Taken by a research assistant of the author.

83 Gorter, "Further Possibilities," 82.

Figure 2 *An entrance sign of a local mall*
Source: Taken by a research assistant of the author.

the center's name, "DAMU." This is actually a Kazakh word, "даму," meaning "growth/development," but transliterated into the Latin alphabet. The name is placed in the center of the sign, while the institution type (support center) is written in Kazakh (Кәсіпкерлікті қолдау орталығы) at the top of the sign and in Russian (Центр поддержки предпринимательства) at the bottom. In the bottom-up group, the plastic sign of a local interior design company gives the business name/brand, "Green-Plast," at the top of the sign, with the rest of the information (services and contact information) in Kazakh and Russian placed below. Another example is the entrance sign of a funeral home, an elite service in a small town. The company name/brand is the English word "help" transliterated into Cyrillic script ("хэлп") and placed in the center. A Kazakh description of the business ("жерлеу жоралары қызметін көрсету"—funeral services) is placed at the top of the sign and a Russian version ("ритуальныеуслуги") below it.

These sign types are the *indexical orders* identified at the level of a sign. The next section of results will summarize how these sign types and subtypes were distributed within and between the *top-down* and *bottom-up* signage groups.

Distribution of Sign Types and Sub-Types in the Top-Down and Bottom-Up Groups

Quantitative analysis of how the sign types and sub-types were distributed across the two sign groups revealed the following *indexical orders*. Table 2 presents the first summary of observed *indexical orders* with regard to the

Table 2 *Distribution of major sign types in two signage groups*

	Monolingual (Kazakh/Russian)	**Bilingual (Kazakh-Russian)**	**Trilingual (Kazakh-Russian-English)**	**Total**	**Grand Total**
Top-Down Group	4 (5.3%)	54 (72%)	17 (22.6%)	75 (100%)	75 (21.7%)
Bottom-Up Group	99 (36.5%)	169 (62.4%)	3 (1.1%)	271 (100%)	271 (78.3%)
					346 (100%)

major sign types. The first striking pattern is the absence of monolingual Russian signs in the *top-down* flow compared to their heavy representation in the *bottom-up* flow (0% vs. 36.1%). This sign type is mostly represented by printed paper signs on the windows and doors of local businesses, as well as flyers produced by individuals and placed on community boards.

Bilingual Kazakh-Russian signs are dominant in both signage flows but with a higher frequency in the *top-down* group than in the *bottom-up* group (72% vs. 62.4%). Another notable pattern is the presence of *trilingual* signs in the *top- down* but not in the *bottom-up* group (22.6% vs. 1.1%). This sign type is mostly found at the town railway station.

Table 3 presents the results of quantitative analysis with a focus on multilingual sign sub-types. It revealed the following *indexical orders*. First, *horizontal* and *vertical* bilingual Kazakh-Russian sign sub-types are dominant in the top-down signage group (38.0% and 32.3%). In contrast, *horizontal* and *vertical* bilingual Russian-Kazakh sign sub-types make up only 5.6% of the top- down group. *Horizontal* and *vertical* bilingual Kazakh-Russian signs are also well represented in the bottom-up group (17.3% and 36.6%). There are no sign sub-types with Russian placed on the left and top; thus, Kazakh is a privileged code in this signage group.

Different *indexical patterns* are found with regard to centralized Kazakh-Russian bilingual sign sub-types. Thus, in the *horizontal* and *vertical centralized* sub-type, we see that the status of Russian is upgraded. Firstly, *horizontal centralized* Russian signs are more frequent than *horizontal centralized* Kazakh ones (26% vs. 1.2%). Secondly, *vertical centralized* Russian signs are more frequent than *vertical centralized* Kazakh ones (26% vs. 1.2%). These signs are mostly business entrance signs where the information identifying a business—shop, dentist, law firm, etc.—is given in both Kazakh and Russian, while the primary brand name is in either one or the other. The upgrade of Russian is due to the higher number of businesses/brands with Russian names.

Table 3 *Ratio of multilingual signs based on code preferences in two ll categories*

	Top-Down Group	**Bottom-Up Group**	
Horizontal Kazakh-Russian	27 (38.0%)	28 (17.3%)	
Horizontal Russian-Kazakh	2 (2.8%)	0 (0%)	
Vertical Kazakh-Russian	23 (32.3%)	59 (36.6%)	
Vertical Russian-Kazakh	2 (2.8%)	0 (0%)	
Horizontal Centralized Kazakh (KZ-KZ-RUS)	0 (0%)	2 (1.2%)	
Horizontal Centralized Russian (KZ-RUS-RUS)	0 (0%)	42 (26%)	
Vertical Centralized Kazakh (KZ-KZ-RUS)	0 (0%)	3 (1.8%)	
Vertical Centralized Russian (KZ-RUS-RUS)	0 (0%)	27 (16.7%)	
Vertical Centralized Russian (KZ-RUS-ENG)	17 (23.9%)	0 (0%)	
Others	0 (0%)	11 (6.3%)	
Total	71 (100%)	172 (100%)	
Grand total	71 (29.2%)	172(70.8%)	243 (100%)

Discussion and Conclusion

The qualitative and quantitative analyses have revealed ideological *polycentricity* in the linguistic landscape of town X. The qualitative analysis revealed such sign types as *monolingual Kazakh* or *Russian*, *bilingual Kazakh-Russian*, and *trilingual Kazakh-Russian-English*. The *bilingual Kazakh-Russian* sign type, in its turn, was found to have *horizontal*, *vertical*, and *centralized* code alignments, while the *trilingual Kazakh-Russian-English* type was found to be mostly *vertically* structured. *Horizontal* and *vertical* bilingual subtypes offered the possibility of placing either Kazakh or Russian in the privileged (left/top) position on a sign. *Centralized* bilingual signs were found to have the Kazakh code on the left and top and the Russian one on the right and bottom, with either Kazakh or Russian in the center. The trilingual sign type has Kazakh on the top with Russian below it and English at the bottom. All in all, analysis of *code preferences* of bilingual and trilingual sign types revealed *indexical orders*, which point out *polycentricity* at the level of a sign type, as both Kazakh and Russian could be placed in the *privileged position*.

To attain a more complete picture, quantitative analysis was carried out. The *indexical orders* in the top-down flow revealed the privileging of the Kazakh language: *horizontal* and *vertical* bilingual *Kazakh-Russian* signs with Kazakh placed on the left and top parts of a sign comprised 70.3% of the top-down group. *Vertical* trilingual *Kazakh-Russian-English* signs with Kazakh placed on

the top amounted to a further 22.9%, resulting in 93.2% of signs that had Kazakh in a privileged position. These *indexical orders*, detected via *code preferences*, adhere to the state language regulations regarding public signage. In addition, the presence of English and its placement in the least prestigious position on signs at the town railway station are in accordance with the language ideology of trilingualism. Thus, the identified *indexical orders* in top-down signage exhibit an official *orientation* toward Astana as *authority center*; they sup- port and reflect the state's attempts to create a dual national identity (ethnic and civic) by privileging Kazakh over Russian and Russian over English.

The identified *indexical orders* in the bottom-up flow did not completely match those found in the top-down flow. Firstly, even though *horizontal* and *vertical* bilingual Kazakh-Russian signs with Kazakh in the privileged positions comprised 62.4% of the total, monolingual Russian signs made up 36.4%, in stark contrast to the top-down group. Secondly, *horizontal* and *vertical centralized* bilingual sign subtypes with Russian in the center made up 42.7% of the total, whereas only 3% of this type had Kazakh in the center. Thus, the majority of business names were in Russian, with business identifications in Kazakh and Russian. The language chosen for a business/brand name is an important strategic move, as the metaphorical and metonymical associations created by this name among consumers are essential to business success.84 The observed *indexical orders* have shown that local social agents prefer to send the meta-message about their business in Russian, not Kazakh. This moment displays a contention of the "imagined" nationhood:85 the orientation toward the official Astana as *authority center* is contested with a simultaneous (and to some extent stronger) orientation toward Russian as a lingua franca and second *au-thority center* at local level.

All in all, the identified *indexical orders* in both signage groups reveal an ideological *polycentricity* in the linguistic landscape of town X. This is not sur-prising. Firstly, there is regional variation in the ethnolinguistic composition of the Kazakhstani population, with the north and north-east being more Rus-sified.86 In the district in which town X is located, Russians are the dominant ethnic group (more than 35,000/48%, compared to ~29,000/~39% Kazakhs). Moreover, the population of the county is much more proficient in Russian than in Kazakh. Next, previous research has shown a preference for Russian

84 Gorter, "Further Possibilities," 81–89; Cenoz, Gorter, and Shohamy, "Language Economy and Linguistic Landscape."

85 Isaacs and Polese, "Between 'Imagined' and 'Real' Nation-Building."

86 Verschik, "Contacts of Russian."

in information seeking and communication in public places.87 All in all, the data support Pavlenko's contention about the post-Soviet space as a whole: daily practices of local social actors do not align with nation-building language policies due to the complex multilingual reality of former Soviet republics.88

In terms of limitations and future pathways for research, it should be not- ed that the present study focused on one specific location, a small town in northern Kazakhstan. Thus, the data did not allow for extensive analysis that might detect *social stratification* across the districts and types of businesses. However, the major findings of this study have paved the way for further explorations of the linguistic landscape of modern Kazakhstan. Among these investigations should be an examination of more locations across the entire territory of Kazakhstan, in order to more accurately detect how regional ethnolinguistic diversity is reflected in public signage and whether these signs adhere to or contest the state's nation-building language policies. The study may explore whether Russian as a sign code holds the same status of local lingua franca and has a similar presence on public signage in the linguistic landscape of the southern, Kazakh-dominated regions. It would be valuable to compare and contrast rural and urban linguistic landscapes across the country, since the rural and urban populations differ in their Kazakh-language proficiency. It would also be worth examining how other symbolic means (e.g., colors and script sizes) are incorporated into the linguistic landscape. Finally, gaining the perspective of individuals who produce and consume information from public signage—through interviews with local residents, etc.—may yield additional insights.

The present analysis reveals ideological *polycentricity*, as evidenced by the *indexical orders* in top-down and bottom-up signage groups that were detected via *code preferences*. These findings offer new insights into how local social actors, through their daily practices, can subvert the power hierarchy enforced by state language policies. The study enhances our understanding of how the multilingual reality of post-Soviet Kazakhstan can be manifested and detected in the linguistic landscape, thus presenting a challenge to the state's nation- building efforts.

87 Smagulova, "Language Policies of Kazakhization"; Smagulova, "The Re-Acquisition of Kazakh"; Mongilyova, "Research Into Functioning of the State Language"; Mehisto, Kambatyrova, and Nurseitova, "Three in One?"

88 Pavlenko, "Language Conflict," 267.

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