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Multilingualism, nation branding, and the ownership of English in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan

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Abstract

This study examines the ownership of English and linguistic (in)security of multilingual English learners in two post-Soviet nation-states. Using the chronotopic and scalar analysis of discourse, I examine students' ideologies of English *vis-à-vis* their linguistic repertoires in the context of national imaginary and globalization. I utilize the concept of 'nation branding' to trace the relationship between language ideologies and broader sociopolitical factors, including neoliberalism. The analysis of 60 individual student interviews revealed that the state-circulated nation-branding discourse is a powerful tool for instilling the sense of linguistic ownership. The findings showed that students in Uzbekistan regard English as opportunistic and more valuable in the global market than their local languages. In contrast, students in Kazakhstan see all of their languages including English as pivotal in enacting trilingual identity at local, national, and global scales.

1 INTRODUCTION

Scholars of world Englishes have noted a gap in research on the role of English in multilingual practices of speakers in the Expanding Circle where it is often regarded as a *lingua franca* and a globalizing language (Bolton, 2018; Mauranen, 2018; Seidlhofer, 2011). Scholars that have examined Englishes in multilingual Expanding Circle communities have often analyzed their data by focusing solely on English without accounting for other languages in study participants' linguistic toolkits (Seilhamer, 2015). Additionally, scholars of language policy and political economy have emphasized the need for the study of English as a means for 'social mobility and an inhibitor of local development' (Ricento, 2012, p. 49). Others have highlighted the importance of 'macro issues of language ideology,' along with 'the super macro dimension of political, historical, and economic forces, including neoliberalism' (Kubota, 2018, p. 94; Park & Wee, 2009). These forces are beyond the nation-state, and along with national and local ideologies may restrict the ways multilingual identities are negotiated in the Expanding Circle. For example, in his study of non-native professionals of English, Kumaravadivelu (2016) notes that these professionals' self-marginalization in relation to English is difficult to change due to the limitations imposed by the sociopolitical and historical factors. In this article, I respond to these multiple calls by: (1) focusing on the role of English in multilingual post-Soviet communities; (2) examining multilingual students' ideologies of English in relation to their other languages; and (3) tracing the relationship between language ideology and broader sociopolitical factors, including neoliberalism.

The data for this study came from individual interviews with and fieldwork observations of students in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan between 2015 and 2019. The rationale behind the original research was to investigate participants' lived histories of becoming and being multilingual. In this article, I focus on students' attitudes toward and ideologies of English in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In analyzing these attitudes, I attend to participants' construction of linguistic ownership and (in)security and invocation of neoliberal ideals in the context of national imaginary and globalization. In order to analyze this relationship between participants' attitudes to English *vis-à-vis* their linguistic repertoires and their immediate, as well as imagined environment, I utilize the analytic lens of chronotopes and scaling. In this study, chronotopes (Bakhtin, 1981) are spatiotemporal configurations of discourse that are indicative of the times, places, and people that form participants' social realms in relation to their linguistic repertoire. Scaling (Blommaert, 2007) is a discursive move used by the speaker to ensure the communicability of the invoked chronotopes

for the interlocutor. For example, for my study participant, learning English may result in study abroad scholarships. He says, 'it can open many doors.' This participant scales the material value of English at a global level and it is done so in relation to the participant's future chronotope—an imagined and desired community—and through horizontal and vertical scaling, because English does not only take one to places, but it also offers opportunities for growth. My analysis showed that learners from both countries regarded English as instrumental and opportunistic. Notably, students in Kazakhstan also demonstrated a degree of linguistic ownership of English, which was absent in the narratives of students in Uzbekistan. I argue that in Kazakhstan, this difference could be attributed to the nation-state's trilingual policy and the subsequent circulation of nation branding, which stands in contrast to Uzbekistan's one nation—one language policy. I further argue that the availability of the state level narrative on trilingualism in Kazakhstan equipped my participants with the necessary discourse to claim citizenship and belonging (Foucault, 1991).

Empirically, this article investigates the role of English in understudied multilingual communities. Theoretically, it contributes to the analysis of linguistic ownership as nationally branded discourse as will be demonstrated through participant narratives. Broadly, the focus on individual narratives fills a gap in the study of Central Asia's sociolinguistic context, in which the investigation of language attitudes has primarily foregrounded a top-down approach. This article also contributes to the application of the nation branding (Del Percio, 2016) to the empirical data by attending to the spatiotemporal and scalar configurations of discourse within the narratives. Next, I provide a review of scholarship about the central ideas covered in this article, including ideologies of English, linguistic ownership and nation branding. I then describe the sociolinguistic contexts of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan followed by the methodology and data analysis sections. I conclude with a discussion of the findings and future research and provide implications for application.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Ideologies of English, linguistic ownership and nation branding

The study of English and neoliberalism has become the focus of many studies in the new millennium. In examining ideologies of English, scholars have found that English is a source of greater symbolic and economic power in the minority communities of China (Sunuodula & Feng, 2011) and a cause of invisibility of minority languages in dancing communities of Australia (Schneider, 2010). Cisel (2003) has argued for the market-oriented (as opposed to imperialistic)

nature of English in Moldova and other post-communist societies. Selvi (2011) has discussed English as a threat to the Turkish language while also being a pathway to modernization in Turkey. These findings echo the neoliberal ideals associated with English as linguistic capital on the job market (Park, 2011), a language of internationalization in education (Piller & Cho, 2013), and an upward mobility (Bacon & Kim, 2018).

In examining the identity of multilingual speakers of English in the Expanding Circle, the concept of linguistic ownership has gained much attention. This concept highlights speakers' views of English, for example, not only as instrumental language, but also as part of their identity. Linguistic ownership has been discussed *vis-à-vis* the notions of legitimacy and linguistic (in)security to challenge the native/non-native dichotomy among various stakeholders across different geographical regions (Foo & Tan, 2018; Ke, 2010; Matsuda, 2003; Sifakis & Sougari, 2005). Some scholars have emphasized the frequency and spatial breadth of the use of English in claiming linguistic ownership (Foo & Tan, 2018; Phan, 2009) while others further linked a prevalent use of language to greater linguistic confidence (Nikula, 2007; Rampton, 1990). Additionally, scholars connected the perceived ownership of English to the sense of belonging learners expressed for imagined communities (Ryan, 2005; Seilhamer, 2015). Relatedly, Park (2011) claims that a greater sense of linguistic ownership is shaped by ideologies and policies in the given context. Similarly, Seilhamer (2015) argues for a new brand of linguistic insecurity created by the state rather than the speakers themselves. This is an undertheorized idea on Englishes of the Expanding Circle to which this article will contribute.

In order to account for the multiple processes that shape people's beliefs and identities, the notion of 'nation branding' becomes particularly useful. It is a strategic way to form a nation's identity as a branded commodity through discourses circulated by the state, entextualization of national image through the public and an investment in the historical present (Del Percio, 2016; Graan, 2016). This discursive phenomenon cultivates appreciation for the commodified nation (Nakassis, 2012) and is similar to the process of 'circulation' of ideas—a modern form of governmentality (Lee, 2001). Specifically, these notions come together by demonstrating how 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983) are formed through circulating tools when the voice of the individual is amalgamated with that of the state. For example, Graan (2016) utilized the nation-branding concept to look at how and to whom a national identity and belonging are performed in the context of Macedonia. Saunders (2008) has applied the concept to the context of Kazakhstan whereas Del Percio (2016)

has employed it to investigate branding policies of Switzerland. These scholars relied on printed policies and newspapers in examining the role of state in nation-branding. I apply nation branding to analyze audio-recorded data in order to account for the images of the state in learners' narratives. I explore the case of post-Soviet Central Asia, in which the neoliberal nation-building and globalization processes have created distinct attitudes toward English in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. I will demonstrate that an analysis of the narratives constructed by peoples themselves offers a gateway to the study of linguistic ownership as related to nation branding. Following Seilhamer (2015, p. 385) who says, 'ownership matters, because with it comes empowerment,' I discuss the key role of state-circulated discourses in developing learners' ownership of and confidence in English.

2.2 Chronotopes, scales and scaling

Scholars have applied chronotopes and scales in analyzing people's perceptions of language policy (Flowers, 2016), ethnolinguistic identity (Karimzad & Catedral, 2018), (non)nativeness (Djuraeva & Catedral, 2020), and globalization (Davidson, 2007). Bakhtin (1981) introduced the notion of chronotope as a discursive organization of language based on spatiotemporal categories. It has since been associated with personhood (Agha, 2006), moral behavioral scripts (Blommaert, 2018), historicity (Wirtz, 2016), ideologies of language and ethnicity (Catedral & Djuraeva, 2018) and orientations toward the future (Karimzad, 2016). The examination of chronotopes in participant narratives reveals participant attitudes to processes and practices that emerge with social change (Aydarova, 2016). In this study, chronotopes provide a helpful way to mediate between the citizen perspective and the nation perspective, as well as the (super) macro and micro factors. Scales are the vertical orderings of chronotopes (Blommaert, 2015)—a hierarchically ordered nature of time and space (Lemke, 2000). Narratives of lived experiences are constructed through invocations of certain times, spaces, and people, which can be discursively reconfigured at any given moment. This reconfiguration can be a matter of scaling, thus it can be ideologically oriented to higher scales of authority (Aydarova, 2016) or lower scales of real-life experiences (Djuraeva & Catedral, 2020). Blommaert (2007) discusses scalar jumping as a way to communicate what is accepted, normal, or desired in a certain timeframe and within a certain scale. Canagarajah and De Costa (2016) argue for the use of scaling to foreground speakers' agency, contexts and interests. I use scaling to refer to participants' discursive acts of scaling—the

way they link their associated attitudes toward English to global, national, and individual values. I use scales to describe and discuss these attitudes as related to their larger social context.

Overall, I look closely at the imagined community, a future-oriented chronotope that students invoke when talking about the value of their linguistic repertoires. These imagined communities consist of places, spaces, people and linguistic attributes that participants describe as they position themselves as English language learners *vis-à-vis* their larger social realms. In doing so, they scale these chronotopes at individual, local, national, post-Soviet, and global levels. The analysis below will demonstrate how learners exert linguistic ownership and/or (in)security in English and local languages by (re)scaling the chronotopes in their narratives.

3 THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONTEXTS

Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are understudied Expanding Circle countries with dense multilingual contexts. Both nation-states are post-Soviet countries, which gained independence in 1991, and where the national leaders have stressed the role of the titular languages continuously as a way to build their national unity following the Soviet Union's collapse (Djuraeva, 2015). These states have adopted a number of language policies and reforms to support the titular languages, along with English for local and global purposes (Fierman, 2009).

Uzbekistan is the most populous Central Asian state with a large number of ethnic and linguistic minorities. Its de-russification campaigns (Pavlenko, 2008) resulted in Uzbek being the only official language of the country, adoption of the Latin script, and the emergence of Uzbekness as a distinct identity. While Russian is not an official language of Uzbekistan, it is a language of interethnic communication whereas English is a compulsory foreign language in schools (Hasanova, 2007). Empirical research that explores people's accounts of their sociolinguistic and educational realms is scarce. The data come from surveys on people's perceived linguistic competence (Nazaryan, 2007) and the discussion of the current state and future of English education from teacher and student interviews (Hasanova, 2016).

Kazakhstan is the world's ninth largest (territory) country and is also ethnically and linguistically diverse. There are two dominant languages—Kazakh, the state language of Kazakhstan and Russian, the language for interethnic communication, and an official language (Smagulova, 2006). Kazakhstan's policy of keeping Russian as an official language stands in contrast to a number of post-Soviet states where titular languages are the only official languages.

Nevertheless, since 1991, language and education spheres have undergone major reforms to revitalize Kazakh and popularize English. The efforts toward revival of Kazakh use across all domains of social life have started with the new millennium (Dave & Sinnot, 2002). However, a trilingual policy, which stresses citizen's proficiency in Kazakh, Russian and English has gained much attention rather recently. Brought about by the global marketplace (Fierman, 2011), English in this policy serves as a pathway for Kazakhstan's successful economic and global presence (Vitchenko, 2017). Scholars who examined language attitudes (Avakova et al., 2014; Smagulova, 2008) and the role of the trilingual policy in Kazakhstan (Osman & Ahn, 2016; Zhetspisbaeva et al., 2019) have relied primarily on surveys or semi-structured interviews in the context of teaching and learning. More recent studies on English in Kazakhstan have utilized discursive and narrative data in examining students' and educators' local, global and language related ideologies (Fleming, 2019; Goodman & Tastanbek, 2020).

This study contributes to the above-mentioned literature in a number of ways. The most recent empirical data collected in Uzbekistan focus on the general state of English within the educational system. I, instead, focus on the identities and values of individual students with regard to English. I situate English learners in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan within their broader social context through the chronotopic and scalar analysis of micro, macro and super macro factors in learners' total sociolinguistic repertoire. Moreover, I focus on the linguistic ownership and (in)security of multilingual learners in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, which underexamined in these sociolinguistic contexts.

4 METHODOLOGY

This article draws from a larger longitudinal study on young adults' personal stories of becoming and being multilingual, which consists of over 80 hours of audio-recorded individual and focus group interviews and naturally occurring conversations, and field notes. In this article, I draw from 60 individual interviews conducted between 2015 and 2019 and my fieldwork observations in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The study participants were university-level students between the ages of 20 and 34, pursuing degrees in such fields as history, economics, translation, philology, inter-national relations and law. All of the participants reported knowledge of at least three languages and used multiple languages in their everyday lives. While the majority of the participants reported foreign language proficiency, English was the only foreign language used by all

participants to various degrees. The forthcoming analysis is based on 30 students in Kazakhstan and 30 students in Uzbekistan with whom I conducted over hour-long interviews and whom I observed during informal social gatherings. Due to space constraints, I will present my analysis of three excerpts that are representative of the findings from the larger research corpora. In analyzing these excerpts, I followed narrative and discourse traditions which underlie the participants' orientation to the story lines, positioning of self and other, voice and imagination (Andrews, 2014). Coming from Central Asia myself and sharing a relatively small age-gap with my participants, I was regarded as an insider who was familiar with local multilingualism. Participants in Uzbekistan positioned me as an exemplary learner of English who succeeded in pursuing education in the United States through the support of various fellowships. The interview protocol for the larger research project included themes, which would prompt the interviewees to retell their lived experiences of learning and using multiple languages. Because my participants talked at length, I found myself to be more of an active listener. Since I shared a number of languages with the study participants in both countries, my interviewees could choose the interview language and were welcome to translanguage.

5 ANALYSIS

5.1 English as a pathway to mobility and economic stability

The excerpt below illustrates that English is prioritized in students' daily linguistic repertoire in Uzbekistan, which I found to be irrespective of their ethnicity, university major, age and gender. 98% of the participants in Uzbekistan chose English as a language of interview and the excerpt below is in the original language of the narrative. The participants' increased level of investment in learning English was discussed in relation to mobility and economic stability, which was the most salient theme in the interviews and in my fieldnote observations.

(1) English is an international language and knowing it increases educational and professional opportunities, so for me right now it is a priority. It can open many doors. You know we have programs that give grants for study abroad like Erasmus and some grants through [the] American embassy. So, if I want to get one, I need to show good knowledge of English, because they test your proficiency. And so, I also use Russian, Uzbek, and Tajik every day, so of course, these languages are important as I grew up with them, but they don't open many doors. Everyone here knows them

. . . Well, in our country, everyone speaks Uzbek and Russian, and like in our city many people

also speak Tajik. This is good, because we can communicate with other Central Asian countries and post-Soviet countries. But I need to excel in English if I want to go abroad and study. For example, my relative lives in New York, and he works there and sends money home. I want to do that too. So yeah, that is why I am taking IELTS courses, so I can get at least 6. (Otabek, economics major, 23 years old)

When asked to reflect on the value of his linguistic repertoire, Otabek started with expressing his attitude toward English as a priority. For Otabek, English is ‘an international language,’ which can lead to his educational and career growth, because ‘it can open many doors.’ English is defined as both symbolic and material capital that can provide access to Otabek’s imagined community, which can be understood through time—a desired imagined future, and through horizontal and vertical scaling, because English does not only take one to places, but it also offers opportunities for growth. Otabek echoed a neoliberal discourse of English as a language of opportunities. To support his statement, Otabek brought examples of actual study abroad scholarships administered by designated organizations such as the US Embassy in Uzbekistan. He considered these organizations as a springboard for a desired future, in which greater proficiency of English determines the scale of the ‘jump.’ Otabek also discussed the value of English as different from the languages he grew up speaking. He viewed Russian, Tajik and Uzbek as tokens of the past ‘I grew up with them’ and present ‘I also use Russian, Uzbek, and Tajik everyday,’ but not the future ‘they don’t open many doors,’ because ‘everyone here knows them.’ Otabek invoked the chronotope of his immediate physical environment ‘here’ as multilingualism is common within this scale. This chronotope of his local multilingual repertoire is ordinary and ubiquitous whereas English offers an opportunity to be different. In this first part of the excerpt, Otabek invoked two main discourses when reflecting on English: a discourse of mobility and a discourse of difference. English is seen as a pathway to mobility in his future-oriented discourse of winning a study abroad grant and as a way to be different within the linguistic marketplace of his immediate physical environment.

When asked to elaborate on the resourcefulness of his languages in Uzbekistan and abroad, the discursive scale of Otabek’s narrative goes beyond the individual and through an orientation to the Central Asian and post-Soviet spaces. Otabek re-scaled his earlier remark on everyone speaking the abovementioned three languages through ascribing the use of Russian and Uzbek to the whole country and Tajik to his hometown. Because he chronotopically organized this

linguistic competence within the broader post-Soviet space, the knowledge of Uzbek, Russian and Tajik gained greater importance for him. Nevertheless, this role was diminished with the statement that followed 'But I need to excel in English if I want to go abroad and study' in which he returned to his individual goals and desires of becoming mobile through a strong linguistic competence in English. Otabek then invoked a desired image for himself that he sees in his relative who works and studies in New York and 'sends money to his family in Uzbekistan.' Thus, Otabek creates a chronotopic image of an imagined ideal life abroad where he works and studies while also supporting his family in Uzbekistan. He constructs this image to justify his enrollment in IELTS courses. This discourse of mobility to gain an economic stability by investing in English language learning is representative of the whole corpora from my fieldwork in Uzbekistan.

Otabek's ideologies of English are opportunistic and instrumental. English for Otabek holds greater value in accessing the desired future chronotope than the knowledge of locally spoken languages. In order to construct his attitude toward his linguistic repertoire, he differentiated between spaces 'here' vs. 'abroad,' times 'growing up' and 'right now,' and kinds of people 'everyone' vs. recipients of Erasmus or other fellowships. Such discursive invocations of mobility and economic stability were also present in the narratives of participants who majored in language studies such as Korean and Chinese. These participants called the knowledge of Korean and Chinese a 'nice addition' to English if they were to study abroad in South Korea or China. A number of participants noted that 'nowadays, knowing only English is not enough, because everyone is learning it,' thus indicating the value of learning other foreign languages in addition to English. All of the languages considered foreign by participants were viewed as a gateway to study abroad and material returns, with English topping their list.

Additionally, I observed a common thematic thread around participants' linguistic insecurity in the narratives. All of the participants in Uzbekistan defined their multilingualism as common and ordinary in the context of their daily life in which English provided a certain degree of uniqueness for some, and higher rate of success when combined with another foreign language for others. Furthermore, the majority of my interviewees opted to speak with me in English during the interviews and other interactions as a way to practice the language and to demonstrate the hard work they had put into learning it. Nevertheless, they did not project a linguistic confidence in relation to any of their languages by saying 'My languages are useful to live here' or 'Russian is helpful to communicate in post-Soviet countries, make friends, but not to have a successful career.'

Neither did they give credit to their knowledge of locally spoken languages, nor to English. They stated, 'I need to practice more to sound American' or 'I am not sure if my English is good enough to live abroad' although they seemed to interact rather comfortably. This insecurity may be explained through a pressure of competition in the study abroad scholarships, as well as economic anxieties participants may have about their future careers. They are well aware of the linguistic marketplace within the scale of their immediate environment where the popularity of English is measured through the number of learners taking IELTS courses rather than its day-to-day use in the country. This competition discursively disappears in their future-oriented chronotopes of an imagined community, which is outside of Uzbekistan, where they can be employed as students and support their families in their home country.

5.2 English as a constituent of civic identity

During my summer fieldwork in Kazakhstan in 2015, I observed that country's ethnic and linguistic diversity was a popular topic in conversations between teachers, administrators, students and their family members. Unlike their fellow students in Uzbekistan, students in Kazakhstan preferred to speak Russian during the interview, with a few opting for Kazakh and one choosing English. Another distinctive feature was that many students whom I interviewed had an experience of traveling abroad, which was not the case for students in Uzbekistan. The participants from Kazakhstan shared instrumental and opportunistic attitudes toward English by saying that it was a 'global language,' 'language for global communication,' 'international language when abroad,' 'better job prospects in Kazakhstan.' However, when doing so, they did not invoke discourses of competition and linguistic or economic insecurity with regard to English. For these students, English was one of the foreign languages they were learning 'to find a good job in Kazakhstan' and 'to communicate when traveling abroad' as opposed to students in Uzbekistan who saw greater material gain in English outside their country. While the students I spoke with in both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are from 'middle class families,' what being middle class means in these two contexts is different. This is in part due to the better economic situation in Kazakhstan, and in part due to the greater number of opportunities that the Kazakh government gives these students—both for furthering their learning and for obtaining future jobs.

Ideologies of English beyond individual goals was the major difference in these students' narratives. Consider the excerpt below by Nuriya to note this difference:

(2) I think people in Kazakhstan know Russian very well, you might have noticed that everyone understands you when you go somewhere and speak Russian, right? So, that is why I think we can take Russian off the official language list and put English instead. And instead we would have Kazakh and English languages as official, because Russian is not foreign to us, we have been exposed to it for 70 years, we all know it. So, by having Kazakh and English, the latter would help to be modernized and show in the international arena, and Kazakh is our birth language. (Nuriya, history major, 25 years old)

In this part of her narrative (translated from the original Kazakh version), Nuriya transitions from discussing the value of languages beyond her individual experiences toward discussing their sociopolitical value in Kazakhstan and for Kazakhstan. While not explicitly referring to the state's trilingual policy, Nuriya invokes discourses following the policy implementation that had been circulating among people during my visit in 2015. Her preference for English at the state level comes at the expense of Russian. Nuriya justified her argument through a chronotopic image of Kazakhstan where a foreigner such as myself can get by knowing only Russian and that Russian is the language everyone has been using for seven decades, alluding to Kazakhstan's Soviet past. She said, 'we all know it.' In contrast to my participants in Uzbekistan who noted the widespread knowledge of Uzbek and Russian along with other minority languages in the country, Nuriya assigns a greater sociolinguistic presence to Russian. For Nuriya, Russian was the language spoken by many and therefore removal of its official status would not negatively impact its presence in the medium term. Nuriya suggested to replace Russian with English by constructing a future-oriented chronotope of modernization and internationalization for Kazakhstan. In her opinion, English should be officially recognized next to Kazakh, 'our birth language.' This ideology was shared by participants who identified as ethnically Kazakh and chose Kazakh as their interview language. Elsewhere during her interview, Nuriya among others, expressed a concern toward impurity of their 'mother tongue,' Kazakh, due to code-switching with Russian and a belief that more work should be done to increase citizens' competency in Kazakh.

Through orienting to a higher scale of the nation-state throughout her interview, Nuriya invokes ideologies of Russian as the Soviet legacy, which had weakened the status and knowledge of her native language. Her vision of an imagined community ascribes English a role of a powerful alternative to Russian by positioning English as a language of modernity. English operates at a higher scale than Kazakh or Russian in this narrative, because for Nuriya it can substitute Russian

at the state level, it is not a threat to Kazakh while Russian is, and it can increase Kazakhstan's international visibility. However, most of the students interviewed in Kazakhstan were in support of sustaining societal bilingualism in Kazakhstan and adding English as a third language:

(3) You probably know that we have been implementing Nazarbaev's trilingual policy, right? So, that's why we have history and some other classes in English here. You know Kazakhstan is an international state. Here, there are many different minorities, specifically nationalities. Yes, Kazakh must be the main language, it goes without saying. And it already is. Even the word Kazakhstan already has 'Kazakh,' and '-stan,' we know what it means. No problem. But we can't equate Russian with the other languages, for instance, with English. It should be the other way around: English should come up to the level of the Russian. We want international goods, we don't want Kazakhstan to be in the shadow of the other CIS countries right?! We want it to be more at a global level. Even our state leader is trying: we are in the top 50, now we have to strive to be in the top 30. Why is it being done? For some type of a goal. But, it's not going to happen, if we keep saying 'no only our own language. Everything only our own.' There are many countries, very unsuccessful, when they promote only their own language . . . And that's why I think that even English has to be elevated up to the state level so that teachers could speak it, and even in the governmental offices, too. For instance, I witnessed this incident: a Korean man was driving a car and he was stopped by the road patrol as he didn't follow the rule. But the police officer didn't know English (laughs) and had to let him go. Because he (the Korean) said 'Sorry I don't understand you.' And he (the officer) was speaking to him in Russian, in Kazakh, but he (the Korean) didn't understand. Therefore, I think we should improve the knowledge of English, so that the officer could tell him what he did wrong. (Munisa, 24 years old, Turkology major)

Munisa (the excerpt is translated from the original Russian version) first talked about the instrumental role of English in her education. Then, she explicitly mentioned the former president's trilingual policy to further elaborate on the role and value of languages in Kazakhstan. Along with Nuriya, Munisa expressed her thoughts regarding the discourses around the policy. In doing so, she scaled Kazakhstan at a global level as a country of great diversity where the special role of Russian should not be diminished by English.

Unlike Nuriya, Munisa stressed the status of Kazakh as the state language and that the country was named after Kazakhs, thus implicitly orienting against the discourse of Kazakh being the only official language. She regarded that Russian 'can't be equated to other languages.' This may

be Munisa's attitude toward Russian as a language for interethnic communication, because earlier she noted Kazakhstan's diverse population. It may also be because of her self-identification as a Uyghur and Uzbek minority. According to Munisa, English should be elevated to the level of Russian, making Kazakhstan stand out globally among the rest of the CIS countries. Although Munisa argues for a different politico-linguistics from Nuriya, she, similar to Nuriya, invoked the chronotopic image of Kazakhstan by saying 'we (citizens of Kazakhstan) want it to be more at a global level,' thereby, positioning herself against the one nation-one language ideology. To support her statement, Munisa exemplified a number of countries, which faced unfortunate events due to their failure of recognizing their ethnolinguistic diversity. She then returned to her initial argument of elevating English to the level of Russian through making it a daily language of the government officials and public workers. Munisa not only scaled English at the nation-state level, but also supported her opinion with an anecdotal event she had witnessed on the road. Within her larger narrative, Munisa retold a story of a foreign resident of Kazakhstan who did not understand how he violated the road rules since the officer did not know English despite being bilingual in Kazakh and Russian. Through this example, Munisa adds to the desired international image for Kazakhstan by demonstrating its internationalized daily life, making English a necessary language for the citizens of this future chronotope. Interviews with students in Kazakhstan revealed that in addition to their utilitarian view of English, it was a path- way to modernization for their country. This is strikingly different from the attitudes of students in Uzbekistan. While students in Uzbekistan showed an awareness of the competition in Uzbekistan's linguistic marketplace, students in Kazakhstan re-scaled their marketplace to that of the globe and English is a key part of their trilingual policy. Additionally, participants' future chronotopes in relation to English differed in two states. For students from Uzbekistan, their imagined community was abroad whereas students in Kazakhstan imagined themselves as citizens of an internationalized Kazakhstan. For the former, English is the language that makes them different from their multilingual compatriots. For the latter, it is the language that makes Kazakhstan stand out at all scales if used by many on a daily basis. For students in Kazakhstan, English is not only a foreign language used when traveling, but also an imagined constituent of their civic identity. However, it is also viewed as a threat to the official status of Russian in Kazakhstan, which may be indicative of its rising power in the country whereas students from Uzbekistan did not regard English as a threat to any of their languages.

Only one participant from Kazakhstan preferred English as the interview language with

other students opting for Russian and Kazakh. A few of them talked about their insecurity in Kazakh, but not in English. This presents a rare case in research on world Englishes considering that Kazakhstan does not have a colonial history with the Inner Circle and that English is not a language for everyday communication in the country yet. Nevertheless, these students discursively embody the trilingual policy through future-oriented chronotope of trilingual Kazakhstan. In their narratives, they circulated the state's neoliberal discourses of English as an international language and saw themselves accessing all that English offers. Because of this ability to imagine themselves and others using English at every part of their daily life in Kazakhstan, my study participants, I argue, claim linguistic ownership of English.

In looking at the lived experiences in the two countries, the question arises —why does English fulfil such different roles in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan? The data analysis showed that multilingual students constructed their narratives by orienting to the sociolinguistic, political, and neoliberal values circulated in their daily lives. More often than not, these discourses embodied the nation-branding politics in the reproduction of a particular nation-state identity. For example, Uzbekistan has not branded the nation as plurilingual opting for a 'one nation-one language' policy. This approach to nation branding and possibly economic realities of Uzbekistan have contributed to shaping students' attitudes toward English—a foreign language that is resourceful for individual gains while abroad. Kazakhstan, instead, has chosen a pathway to embrace societal plurilingualism in its language reforms by, for instance, having two official languages and joining the Bologna process in 2010. Its nation-branding politics aims at a reproduction of civic identity grounded in being a part of the global community through English and trilingualism. It is this branding policy which equipped the participants in Kazakhstan with the necessary discourse to imagine themselves and their compatriots as competent in three languages including English.

6 CONCLUSION

In this article, I have responded to the call for additional research on the role of English in the multilingual practices of people in the Expanding Circle by focusing on multilingual post-Soviet communities. I have accounted for multilingual repertoires by examining students' ideologies of English in relation to their other languages in the under-theorized contexts of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Although both groups of students regarded English as opportunistic, for students in Uzbekistan, it serves as a pathway to mobility and economic stability whereas for students in

Kazakhstan, it is also a constituent of their civic identity.

In the Expanding Circle's Taiwan, participants could not claim the ownership of English despite their high linguistic confidence and due to the prescribed status of English (Seilhamer, 2015). I demonstrated that in contrast to Taiwanese students, my study participants in Kazakhstan exert both confidence and ownership over English. These students are able to situate their use of English along with Russian and Kazakh in their metalinguistic narrative of daily language practices. In doing so, they claim their belonging to the imagined community of the trilingual Kazakhstan in which they position themselves as legitimate speakers of English. This supports Norton's (1997) claim that legitimacy occurs prior to ownership. The fact that students often compared the role of English to that of Russian and that they also saw English to be a potential threat to the official status of Russian further demonstrates the established presence of English among these students. I supported this claim by comparing my findings from Kazakhstan to my research findings from Uzbekistan where students discussed the role of English through its instrumental affordances to their individual lives, replicating the findings of the studies on the Expanding Circle.

The concept of nation branding was helpful in understanding contrasting ownership of English in two states. In Uzbekistan, students' view of English as a gateway to study abroad and material return is reflective of its foreign language status. In Kazakhstan, students articulate the need for English beyond their individual goals and to support the national image—citizens' trilingualism in Kazakh, Russian and English. The construction of linguistic ownership is rather remarkable for Kazakhstan, which I explain through the adoption of Del Percio's (2016) definition of nation branding as creating 'uniqueness.' While he referred to the past, I refer to the national future. This finding contradicts Foo and Tan's (2018) findings that link greater linguistic security and ownership with the frequency of and confidence in the language use, because students in Kazakhstan did not use English daily nor did they choose it as a language of the interview. Instead, I argue that the nationally branded discourse of trilingualism serves as a key vehicle for my study participants' ownership of English, which supports the scholarly emphasis on the role of the state and top-down policies in cultivating a nation's linguistic (in)security.

The necessity of competence in multiple foreign languages including English has resulted from neoliberal ideals of global competitiveness (Djuraeva, 2018). Both groups of my study participants stress the need to learn a foreign language in order to stand out. While students in Uzbekistan articulate this difference with regard to the competition in the study abroad

programs, for students in Kazakhstan, this difference has to do with their global national image as a trilingual nation-state. This distinction in the future-oriented chronotopes may be interpreted as the lack of trilingual branding in Uzbekistan or through the higher economic capabilities of citizens in Kazakhstan. However, the latter interpretation must be supported by future studies which examine specifically individuals' economic status as an independent variable in examining linguistic (in)security. Future studies may also investigate further the relationship between imagination and ownership. With regard to the applied recommendations, the policy makers in Kazakhstan can create more opportunities for the use of English to strengthen and support young citizens' sense of linguistic ownership. In Uzbekistan, the state discourse that stresses people's multilingual capabilities as resources nationally and internationally is imperative for instilling a greater sense of linguistic confidence among its youth.

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