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Janasozdik: codifying an inclusive Kazakh slang

Abstract. *This article performs an interdisciplinary analysis of the contemporary issues of the Kazakh language, a Turkic language whose history extends to the ancient Turkic era. There are many factors affecting language development, among them socio-cultural, political, and economic ones. Today, however, social networks are of great importance as a medium of communication – as well as, of course, of language development and change.*

This paper seeks to illuminate the greater significance of the janasozdik Instagram page in its quest to both codify and create a body of Kazakh slang that reflects the bilingual reality of most of the country's citizens. Rather than casting blame on those who mix Russian and Kazakh (and perhaps English) within a single Kazakh utterance, janasozdik encourages its followers – who are also its primary contributors – to do so. In this way, the page challenges notions of Kazakh linguistic purity and encourages greater participation in processes of Kazakhization, which have historically marginalized Russophones. Notably, I introduce the concepts of translanguaging and heteroglossia at the end of the article in order to posit that janasozdik occupies an important space in a bilingual country, i.e. providing vocabulary that its citizens do not yet have, but need both of the languages present in their daily lives to describe. In this work, I will take a decidedly multidisciplinary approach to my analysis of janasozdik: rather than examining it as a purely sociological or linguistic phenomenon, I will place the Instagram page in the context of Kazakhstan's political situation, linguo-historical development, and uniquely Kazakh cultural context. Hopefully, this diverse analysis will shed greater light than a traditional single-subject analysis, allowing for a more nuanced discussion of janasozdik's influence on Kazakhstan, Kazakhs, and Kazakh-speaking society.

Keywords: *language; slang; Kazakh language; Russian language; social media; Kazakhstan; bilingualism; language policy; translanguaging; heteroglossia.*

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Introduction

When I first began learning Kazakh, my friends and colleagues often mentioned how “clean” and “pure” my Kazakh was. I could not

understand what they meant until I compared their syntax and vocabulary with my own. When I said *kyskasy*, the “dictionary-Kazakh” word for “in short,” they nearly universally said *koroche*, the synonymous Russian discourse marker.

When I said *ademi qyz*, the Kazakh expression for “beautiful girl,” they often said *krasavitsa*, its Russian equivalent. My acquaintances rarely used these Russian words in formal contexts, however: in formal writing, they used the actual Kazakh word – but in conversation (both in person and over text), they preferred to use the Russian one, which had, in essence, become a part of their Kazakh speech. My friends’ patterns of Russian word usage in informal or slang Kazakh extended beyond words themselves, however: they often imposed Kazakh words onto a Russian grammatical construction. The Russian expression “*ia v kurse*” (“I’m in the know” or “I’m aware”), for example, often became “*men kurstamyn*,” which was its literal translation into Kazakh, with the Russian word *kurs* preserved.

In 2016, however, Tina Bainakova, a Kazakh-speaking Kazakhstani expat in Prague, began to translate English slang terms from the English-language slang site Urban Dictionary into Kazakh on her Facebook page [1]. Seeing how popular these translations had become, she and Zhalghas Ertai, another expat, began to develop the idea of *janasozdik*, a “modern dictionary of Kazakh slang... which gives names to things that exist in reality but have no name in Kazakh” [1].¹ Since its official online founding in 2017, the project has gained over eighteen thousand Instagram followers, created a Telegram channel/community of roughly five hundred, and made a website modeled after Urban Dictionary. It is easy, then, to dismiss *janasozdik* as little more than its Kazakh-language equivalent – but the implications of creating such a platform in the Kazakh language (and specifically for Kazakh slang) are far weightier than, say, in the English language.

The Kazakhstani Instagram page *janasozdik* (lit. “new dictionary”) is seeking to create a brand of Kazakh slang that goes beyond just using Russian words in Kazakh sentences, instead mixing together Russian, Kazakh, and English words to create new ones. Notable examples include the words *sandidat*, composed of the Kazakh word *san* (style/appearance)

¹ I will not capitalize this proper noun, as it is not capitalized on Instagram (where its primary audience is).

and the Russian/English word “candidate” to mean a political candidate who runs for show, and *imanitet*, composed of the Kazakh word *iman* (faith) and the Russian word *immunitet* (immunity) to mean someone’s belief that faith will protect them. These words are compiled into an online “modern dictionary of Kazakh slang and Kazakh terms, based on Urban Dictionary” [2]. The goal of the project is “to create words that would describe the reality, the events or the phenomena in our lives that don’t have a specific name in the Kazakh language,” as well as to “accumulate the slang that already exists in the Kazakh language,” although the latter only represents 5% of the project’s scope thus far [2]. While the group’s administrators invent many of the terms that describe Kazakh reality, users and followers are also encouraged to submit their own contributions to *janasozdik*’s ever-growing base of Kazakh slang.

This crowdsourcing contributes to the linguistically inclusive environment that *janasozdik*’s founders initially set out to create, i.e. one that acknowledges the multilingualism – usually bilingualism, but sometimes trilingualism – inherent to Kazakhstani society: “in Kazakhstan... there are two languages: one is the state language [Kazakh], and the other is the official language [Russian]. And all Kazakhs know both the state and the official language, but a certain part of the population, non-Kazakhs, for instance... know only the official language, which means... that they are not completely integrated into our society,” suggesting just how fundamental bilingualism is to full membership in Kazakhstani society [2].² This sentence loses its potency in English. According to the 1997 Law on Language of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Russian is considered the *ofitsial’nyi iazyk* (official language) while the Kazakh language is considered the *gosudarstvennyi iazyk* (state language). The state language “is the language of government administration, legislation, legal proceedings, and office work [business],

² Trilingualism has become increasingly prevalent following the government’s policy of trilingualism that encourages proficiency in Kazakh, Russian, and English, although being trilingual is not necessarily common.

present in all areas of social communication on the territory of the country" [3]. Russian, on the other hand, is described as follows: "in state organizations and local government bodies Russian is *officially* [emphasis mine] used on the same level as Kazakh" [3]. Indeed, the page seeks to create a dictionary of Kazakh slang which is, in fact, a collection of portmanteau words relying on Kazakh, English, and Russian alike, in effect linguistically codifying and acknowledging multilingualism within the Kazakh language and present in Kazakhstani society, encouraging the integration of Kazakhstani Russian (and even English) speakers into an increasingly Kazakh-speaking milieu.

Research methods

In the spirit of *janasozdik*, this paper takes a multidisciplinary approach to analyzing its impact on Kazakhstani, Kazakh, and Kazakh-speaking society. In order to understand the relevance of this collection of Kazakh slang, one must understand the history of Kazakhstan's linguistic development and its current demographics and politics (which include, of course, language policy), in addition to the sociological ideas of translanguaging and heteroglossia which are so relevant to Kazakhstani society. As *janasozdik* itself relies on all of these factors to create a social media page and community that have resonated with such a large audience, it is my hope that illuminating them for the reader will lead to greater understanding of the page's significance.

Discussion

Background on the Kazakh language and Kazakhstani demographics

The territory of contemporary Kazakhstan was incorporated into the USSR in 1920, first as an Autonomous Republic within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and then as a Union Republic [4], although the Russian Empire had established a military presence in the area long before then. Indeed, in 1897, Slavs (i.e. Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians) constituted 12.8% of Kazakhstan's population,

while Kazakhs made up the vast majority [4]. This changing demographic pattern, however, laid the foundation for what was to come: in the early twentieth century, over 1.5 million Kazakhs were killed through the USSR's policies of *dekulakization*, which took a devastating toll on the then-seminomadic Kazakh people [4]. Soon after, the Soviet leadership, believing certain ethnic groups (namely Volga Germans, Koreans, and certain Caucasian ethnic groups) to be collaborating with the Axis Powers during WWII, deported them to Kazakhstan, further changing the newly established republic's already tenuous ethnic balance. Nikita Khrushchev's Virgin Lands Campaign encouraged thousands of Russian speakers (mostly Slavs) to come to Kazakhstan to cultivate the steppe. As a result, Kazakhs consistently represented an ethnic minority in their own titular republic, representing only 30% of the population by 1959 [4, 5].

After the dissolution of the USSR, however, Kazakhstan's demography began to change once again: Russians emigrated en masse to Russia after the breakup of the USSR; many Jews emigrated to Israel; and Germans emigrated to Germany [6]. After more than a century, Kazakhs have once again become the ethnic majority in their own country largely thanks to their higher fertility rates and the emigration of non-Kazakh ethnic groups [7]. Today, Kazakhs constitute 68% of the population, and Russians 19.3% [8].

Nevertheless, centuries of Russian/Soviet rule and forced (arguably genocidal) demographic change have led, in turn, to linguistic shifts in Kazakhstan.³ Policies of Russification beginning in the late 1930s repressed the development and everyday usage of the Kazakh language: "in 1938, the teaching of Russian at all non-Russian schools became obligatory... in 1941, benefits for specialists with a knowledge of Kazakh were terminated... and the Kazakh State Terminology Committee was abolished... A number of Kazakh schools, mostly in cities, Kazakh departments at

³ I would like to acknowledge that some scholars consider this murder of so many Kazakh lives genocidal, but I do not wish to delve into the historical debate surrounding this classification. Likely the most well-known book on the subject is Sarah Cameron's *The Hungry Steppe*.

universities, Kazakh newspapers and magazines were closed" [4, 308 p.]. Russians became the majority ethnic group in fifteen of seventeen urban oblast centers [9], creating Russophonous cities with few Kazakh-medium schools. Indeed, "in the 1989 census, less than 1 percent of urban Kazakhs claimed fluency in the Kazakh language" [9, 101 p.] – while, that same year, 64.2% of the general Kazakh population claimed to be fluent in Russian, and between 80 and 90% of the Kazakh urban population, at the least, was literate in Russian [9, 102 p.]. As time went on, more and more Kazakhs claimed fluency in Russian, but the number of non-Kazakhs claiming fluency in Kazakh stayed around one percent [5], while many, if not most, urban Kazakhs did not know the language at all [9]. Russians, on the other hand, "were not just a demographic majority, they were also a dominant group politically, economically and culturally... in 1955-1972, native occupancy of Kazakhs in all leading jobs was 46.6%, native occupancy in administrative positions was 6.7%. Russians also controlled intellectual life: the share of non-Russian scientific workers in 1960 was 21.4%, and in 1973 this figure was 29.8%... Ethnic stratification of the labor force had its consequences in terms of the relative prestige of particular ethnic groups and social values of Kazakh and Russian. Since Russian-speaking newcomers were employed in better paid and more prestigious economic sectors, while Kazakhs worked on the land, the prestige of ethnic Kazakhs and their language dropped," which, in turn, led to the linguistic and cultural Russification of urban Kazakhs, as well as the pervasive influence of the Russian language and culture across the entire country [5, 444-445 p.].

Kazakhization: language, policy, and demographics

After the breakup of the USSR, many of Kazakhstan's urban centers remained (and *remain*) Russophonous. I have, for example, anecdotally encountered the idea, among Kazakhs and Russians alike, that few people in Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city and former

capital, speak Kazakh. I must note that I find this claim incorrect. Over the years that I have spent in Kazakhstan, I have observed that while nearly all Almaty residents understand Russian, it is not the first or even the preferred language for many. Nevertheless, Almaty's Russophonia is, in some part, due to there having been only one Kazakh-medium school for urban children in Almaty from 1968 until the end of the 1970s [5]. If true, this is changing: for one, increasing numbers of Kazakhstani school and university students are being educated in Kazakh – such that they are now a clear majority [4, 9, 10]. This growth in Kazakh-language education is closely tied to the government's policies of Kazakhization, whose goal is "to upgrade the status of the Kazakh language" [5, 449 p.]. This has meant the "incorporation and legitimization of Kazakh in the major state institutions such as government bodies, education, and mass media, as well as in the names of geographic locations, streets, roads and organizations" [5, 449 p.], as well as the official creation of new Kazakh terms in order to support the developing language's vocabulary in the modern era [5, 11].

It is, however, difficult to quantify the attendant growth in Kazakh language proficiency, with Dave writing that some Kazakh scholars believe that 40% of Kazakhs do not speak the language, with others believing that it is only 28% [12]. Smagulova finds that 82.7% of Kazakhs self-report their oral proficiency in Kazakh as fluent – but only 58.4% say the same for Russian (although 17.1% of all Kazakh respondents chose not to answer the question) [5]. Sharipova writes that only 59% of *Kazakhstanis* – not Kazakhs – said that they speak Kazakh fluently, while 71% claimed to speak Russian fluently [13]; the 2021 statistics for Kazakhs alone may be (and likely are) higher, but I have been unable to find them. In any case, 59% is far below the percentage of Kazakhs in the population. These discrepancies can, at least in part, be attributed to the problematic phrasing of questions regarding one's "native language" (*rodnoi iazyk or ana tili*), which, despite being considered one's first or most fluent language in English, refers to the language of one's nationality or ethnic group in Russian and Kazakh alike [14,

15, 16]. Regardless, the number of Kazakhstanis proficient in Kazakh – as well as the number of Kazakh proficient in Kazakh – has certainly grown since the Soviet era.

Policies of Kazakhization, however, do not mean that Russian is no longer in the picture, even for young people who are being educated in Kazakh: Kuzhabekova writes that “outside the classroom settings and beyond communication with immediate family members, even students receiving education in Kazakh tend to use Russian as an alternate or the main language of communication” [10, 10 p.]. Note, however, that Kuzhabekova’s study specifically concerned urban students in mixed-language schools, i.e. schools that have both Russian and Kazakh-medium “tracks.” Rural students’ use of Russian is likely much lower. According to Kuzhabekova, this is especially true of Kazakh-medium-class students’ consumption of media (such as, for instance, janasozdik’s competing pages on Instagram). Further, Russian media content is still dominant on television, even if legislation has mandated more broadcasting of Kazakh-language content [4, 9, 16, 17, 18] which is often of poor quality [17, 18]. Russian is, then, very much a fixture of Kazakhstani life – and not just in *urban* areas. Dave writes that even Kazakh-speakers like Almas, an aitys participant who refuses to speak in Russian and “believes that internationalism is a negation of ethnic identity,” “habitually watched American movies or Russian soap operas on the television [with his family],” suggesting that even nationally minded, Kazakh-dominant Kazakhs routinely consume Russian content [12, 66 p.].⁴

The “Shala-Kazakh Language” and Inclusivity: The Idea Behind Janasozdik

Despite Russian’s prevalence and the increasing use of Kazakh in Kazakhstani life, the country’s two linguistic communities remain segregated: “most of the media, including print, radio, and television broadcasting, are sharply bifurcated along the Russian/Kazakh language divide. Kazakh and Russian language newspapers,

⁴ Aitys is a Kazakh form of poetic “battles.”

magazines, radio stations, and local television networks not only use different languages, but they usually orient their programming to what they perceive to be different kinds of audiences, address different topics of interest, and are written and produced by different journalists” [19, 122-123 p.].

This societal division is decreasing, however, as increasing numbers of Russophone Kazakh parents send their children to Kazakh-medium schools [7, 20]. Interestingly, however, in an interview, Bainakova noted that language-based schools, classes, and curricula have led to societal (and ethnic) segregation [21].

This media segregation works in tandem with the societal division between *shala-Kazakhs* (lit. “half-Kazakhs”) and *naghyz-Kazakhs* (lit. “real Kazakhs”), Russified Kazakhs who speak Kazakh poorly/mix it with Russian and Kazakhs who speak Kazakh well and are close to Kazakh traditions and culture, respectively. There also exists the separate term *mankurt*, which Dave describes as “a term of disapproval that nationalists and pure Kazakh-speakers frequently employ against their urban brethren, chastising them for allegedly abandoning their native language and ancestral knowledge to imbibe Russian language and culture” [12, 52 p.]. For the purposes of this article, I will take *mankurt* to be a synonym of the word *shala-Kazakh*, even though their origins are different (as well as their possible connotations), in order to preserve the clarity of the contrast between *naghyz* and *shala-Kazakhs*, which I will demonstrate as being fundamental to understanding the contribution of janasozdik to the Kazakh language and society.

In his book exploring the phenomenon of *shala-Kazakhs*, Zhakupov outlines the primary characteristics of *shala-Kazakhs* as the following: logic-based consciousness, cultural Russification, and aspirations toward higher standards of consumption [11], tying the emergence of *shala-Kazakhs* to Western neoliberalism. Nevertheless, he stresses that despite cultural Russification, “any given *shala-Kazakh*, perhaps, will not be able to say a single sentence in his native language [here meaning Kazakh], does not show any marked interest in national [Kazakh] culture, and

knows the history of his people poorly. In him, however, sits a deep understanding of the fact that he is a Kazakh" [11, 14 p.].

Foster, however, offers a different definition: "Shala-Kazakh arose as a term used to describe these Kazakhs who are trying to 'relearn' their native language and the language mixing that supposedly results from their efforts," which offers a less political definition of the social group in her analysis of the "Shala-Kazakh Language Lessons" skit on the Kazakhstani comedic show *Nasha KZasha* [22, p. v]. She does acknowledge, however, the stigma attached to the term, i.e. that those who "speak shala-Kazakh" or who are shala-Kazakhs are often considered detached from their own culture. These skits feature the kind of language mixing (i.e. "code-switching" or "code-mixing," as used above) inherent to "young, urban, Russified Kazakhs" [22, 2 p.]. She goes on to determine that "parodying this idea of a pure Kazakh language... casts doubt onto the existence of a monolingual language at all," which Jankowski explicitly mentions later in this paper [22]. In her work, Foster introduced a helpful term: the Shala-Kazakh language, which she describes as follows: "[a] heteroglossic language, or language that draws on many different sources at once in each utterance [here Russian and Kazakh both]... the Shala-Kazakh language links characteristics of both Russian and Kazakh speakers to Shala-Kazakh speakers" [22, 3 p.]. Indeed, she also writes that "often, any nonstandard version of Kazakh is labeled 'Shala-Kazakh'" [22, 8 p.]. The "shala-Kazakh language," as it were, has even been labeled as such in scholarly works on linguistics, such as Smagulova (2017).

In this paper, I will use Foster's definition of *naghyz-Kazakhs* and *shala-Kazakhs*, as I believe it to be more appropriate to the scope of this paper, given its focus on language, as well as more sensitive to the realities of shala-Kazakh-ness, as it were [22]. The assumption that I find flawed with regard to Zhakupov's classification is that he implies that *naghyz-Kazakhs* are traditional and conservative, while *shala-Kazakhs* are liberal and Westernized. While this may be rooted in truth – there are, after all, comparatively fewer

Russian speakers than Kazakh speakers in rural areas – it is simplistic. As Tina, the founder of Janasozdik said: "Kazakh-speaking people don't necessarily have to be from an *aul* [village], don't necessarily have to be uneducated... this stigma isn't true. A Kazakh-speaking person can have liberal views, can be a vegan, can be a feminist... This person can be any kind of individual. Their speaking Kazakh isn't a flaw" [23]. Further, this paper is focusing on language, rather than ideas of Western neoliberalism.

While this bifurcation illustrates the social contrast (and conflict) in Kazakh society, it is simplistic: after centuries of Russian and Soviet domination and influence, the Kazakh language itself has become full of calques from Russian: nearly any Kazakh will include Russian/Russified discourse markers, words, constructions, or calques in her speech. Jankowski has noted that mixing of Russian and Kazakh together within Kazakh speech (which he calls code-switching and code-mixing, to be discussed below) is common – dating back even to the 18th and 19th centuries [24]. He writes that: "a specialist in Turkic languages... is astonished that instead of genuine Kazakh words he read in these [traditional Kazakh] texts he hears Russian words and phrases in almost every utterance. Naturally there also exists a high standard variety of Kazakh, free of codemixing and code-switching, but in most cases it functions in strictly limited situations," suggesting the extent to which the Russian language has influenced Kazakh speech [24, 25 p.].

Muhamedowa also mentions using both Russian and Kazakh within Kazakh speech as "a part of Kazakhstan's language reality among bilingual Kazakhs in cities" [25, 332 p.], although the presence of Russian extends well beyond cities, given the dominance of the language in the media sphere. Foster writes that "often speakers described as speaking monolingual Kazakh use many Russian borrowings which only further blurs the boundaries between languages based on linguistic features" [22, 27 p.], suggesting that the shala-Kazakh label is, at least in part, rooted in ideology and social perceptions of "valu[ing] linguistic purity and disparaging mixed varieties

of languages as *shala Qazaq* [sic] (“incomplete or clumsy Kazakh” in translation from Kazakh)” [26, 44 p.].

Notably, Genina writes that among Mongolian Kazakhs, who are widely believed to have preserved a “purer,” pre-Soviet version of the Kazakh language and culture, “criticized Kazakhstani Kazakhs’ lack of hospitality, loss of nomadic customs, linguistic Russification, and absence of religious knowledge and practice. For many of them, Kazakhstani Kazakhs are first and foremost *shala kazaks* [sic]... with, as a few have pointed out... Kazakh faces and Russian souls” [19, 81 p.]. In this way, Kazakhstani Kazakhs, having been subject to Russian/Soviet dominance and Russification, culturally and linguistically, cannot possibly be “pure” *naghyz Kazakhs* in bilingual Kazakhstani society. It is in this way that the Kazakh language bears the results of decades of cultural and linguistic Russification. Genina, for example, refers to Dave (2007) when she notes that “in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, it is common to hear discussions of the Kazakh language as ‘artificially stunted in its natural development by the spread of Russian of Russian. Not allowed to develop [during the Soviet era], it lacks ‘modern’ vocabulary and concepts and is therefore impossible to use for business or science” [19, 92 p.].

Slang, too, bears the imprint of Russification: Kazakh slang is often discussed in terms of Russian words (or English words, given Kazakhstan’s level of globalization), with many Kazakh slang terms simply defined as Russian terms inserted into Kazakh or Kazakh words imposed on a Russian structure, as discussed in the introduction [27, 28, 29, 30]. Not all Kazakh slang terms, of course, come from Russian. In scholarly discussions, however, much of it is often described as Russian words inserted into Kazakh speech or as Kazakh and Russian words imposed on a Russified structure. This means that being a *naghyz-Kazakh* is harder than ever before – and that being a *shala-Kazakh* or speaking *shala-Kazakh* is ever more common, even if its speakers deny it.

The policies and movement of Kazakhization have necessitated a dedication to the purity of the language, as well as to the social ideologies

deeming language mixing impure: “the pervasive and persisting nature of Russian in Kazakhstan’s language ecology is... constructed as an impure, foreign influence... awareness of this threatening discourse has led to a slew of language and educational policies and initiatives... which seek to erode the status of Russian as part of Kazakhstan’s linguistic and ideological landscape” [31, 42-43 p.]. For example, Zhakupov quotes Tairov (2005) as saying that the “the Kazakh terminological commission has been creating new words in the Kazakh language at record-breaking speeds for over ten years. Many words, including international terms, that have come into the Kazakh language over the last 70+ years, are being translated into the Kazakh language. And when translating these international terms, their fundamental meaning changes,” creating mistranslations of existing Kazakh words, as well as translations of words introduced to Kazakh via Russian now being translated back into Kazakh, e.g., *airport* – which is *aeroport* in Russian – becoming *auvezhai* in Kazakh, rarely used in informal conversation [11, 22-23 p.]⁵

Indeed, the effort to “Kazakhify” the Kazakh language has created terms that even much of the *naghyz-Kazakh* population would prefer to keep in Russian – signifying the level to which even *naghyz-Kazakhs* speak the “*shala-Kazakh* language.” Tairov (2005) writes that “I grew up in an aul, graduated from a Kazakh[-medium] school, always got top grades on my Kazakh language and literature exams, and read Kazakh literature. But words like *gharysh* [better known in Russian as *kosmos*, i.e. space], *paiyz* [better known in Russian as *protsent*, i.e. percent]... I have never encountered in my life” [11, 23 p.]. Zhuravel’ et al. have also written about the frustration that these words brought forth in the broader population, some members of whom have called them “incomprehensible and MADE UP [emphasis author’s]” [32, 22 p.]. It seems that Zhakupov had good reason to say that “the development of the

⁵ By “mistranslated,” I mean using already existing Kazakh words to mean something else. For example, *adilet* means “fairness,” but is used in contemporary Kazakh to mean justice (i.e. legally, as in the Ministry of Justice).

Kazakh language is too important an endeavor to entrust it to linguists" [11, 23 p.].

Janasozdik finds itself, then, at a curious juncture: it is an unequivocal voice for the popularization of the Kazakh language that has created a platform to motivate native and non-native speakers alike both to learn and contribute to the Kazakh language. And like the Kazakh terminology commission contemporary to it, janasozdik has created dozens of new (slang) words – some of which have even come into popular usage. But while governmental agencies provoke the ire of the masses by creating Kazakh words that already exist and are generally used in Russian, janasozdik chooses instead to fill the gaps in the Kazakh language by creating words for phenomena inherent to Kazakhstani reality in a language authentic to its bilingual society. It is likely for this reason that the page does not incur the wrath of the population: rather than creating inauthentic words to replace those which already exist and are in public usage, janasozdik adds to the already existing Kazakh vocabulary – and codifies it for future generations. This is not to say, however, that the group has not encountered ideologies of linguistic purism among its Kazakh-speaking followers whose "attitude toward the language is like an attitude toward a pretty book that you put on a shelf and dust, afraid to ruin it" [1]. The group rejects the idea that the Kazakh language is something holy or immutable: "the Kazakh language is not only the language of Abay and other classics; it belongs to those who use it here and now" [1].

And those who use the language "here and now" are hardly all linguists: the page is run by Kazakh-speaking "enthusiasts" personally invested in the development of their language. "In order to establish [more terms in Kazakh], we need more education, we need more knowledge in Kazakh... and this isn't what needs support from the government. It also depends on enthusiasts," like the members of janasozdik who first met in Prague to translate Urban Dictionary into Kazakh [2]. As a result, they are largely freed of the official ideological burden of linguistic purity, facing instead only their own societally ingrained biases. The founders of janasozdik, though, have

tried to move away from them by creating the platform as a space for both inclusivity and play with language: "community is very important when you are learning a language, and that's why... we founded an online community... the janasozdik chat... please come if you know at least some basic Kazakh and some other languages, since we like to mix and play with languages. So go join the chat and be creative [*go kreativit'* – itself a Russian expression using English words imposed on a Russian construction]" [32]. By opening the janasozdik movement to non-fluent Kazakh speakers and speakers of other languages, this movement in Kazakh vocabulary and slang creation and language popularization is blurring the lines between *shala-Kazakh* and *naghыз-Kazakh*, including them in one space and blending their vocabularies into one language, albeit a slang one. Foster refers to Sherzer and Webster (2015) when writing that "speakers constantly combine different linguistic elements and social influences together in their everyday speech, especially in a multilingual environment, making play fundamental to all language use... this ability to play with language and the attention it brings to particular features also leads to language change" [32, 19 p.]. This linguistic "play" here is indeed bringing language change and, with it, meaningful societal change: it is creating a body of Kazakh slang that rejects the separation of *naghыз* and *shala-Kazakhs*.

According to Bainakova, the idea behind the platform is to create a more inclusive society: "for any language to grow, we need to become inclusive and liberal," largely in a reference to *shala-Kazakhs* [21]. In interviews, individual members of the group have strongly suggested that they are personally against this categorization: "you can [be a Kazakh], if you consider yourself one... I used to think that without [knowing] the Kazakh language, you aren't a Kazakh. But now I think otherwise," says Maqsat Malik, one of the group's contributors [21]. Being a *naghыз-Kazakh*, then, enters the realm of self-identification, independent of one's linguistic competence. And the creation of a slang page that is built on the premises of playing with language and including community members in the creation of slang,

must, by definition, threaten the purity of the Kazakh language, both by the people who speak it natively and those who are afraid of learning it for fear of stigma from their ethnic compatriots. In this case, then, it seems that the creators of *Janasozdik* operate very much in line with the theories of heteroglossia and translanguaging, both of which stand in opposition to linguistic purism, whether it be within the language itself or in the delineations of code-mixing and code-switching used to identify individual speakers' patterns.

Janasozdik as an acknowledgement of translanguaging and heteroglossia

Bakhtin began to write about the "internal stratification present in every language at any given moment of its historical existence" [33, 263 p.], which he defines as heteroglossia (*raznorechiie*), in contrast to the idea of a unitary language. Indeed, Bakhtin writes that linguistic "disciplines" (linguistics, philology, etc.) "know only two poles in the life of language, between which are located all the linguistic and stylistic phenomena they know: on the one hand, the system of a unitary language, and on the other hand, the individual speaking in his own language," which can here be translated to the Kazakh terminological commission seeking to create a unitary, pure version of the language on one pole and the "shala-Kazakh language" on the other [33, 269 p.]. *Janasozdik*, then, finds itself a consummately heteroglossic place between these two "poles": it is a codified reflection of the spoken Kazakh language, which nonetheless draws heavily on Russian. In other words, it is a unitary representation of the heteroglossia inherent to Kazakhstani society, the constant mixing of Russian, Kazakh, and now English. Yet it is precisely this "orientation towards unity," in Bakhtin's words, "that has compelled scholars to ignore all the verbal genres [quotidian, rhetorical...] that were the carriers of the decentralizing tendencies in the life of language, or that were in any case too fundamentally implicated in heteroglossia" [33, 274 p.]. While scholars such as Smagulova and

Foster have devoted considerable research to the "life" of the "shala-Kazakh language," it is worth considering it as both a phenomenon that abides by the rules of "unitary language" while simultaneously acknowledging heteroglossia in the society around it [22, 26].

This Kazakhstani "state of heteroglossia" works in tandem with the idea of translanguaging, as explained by Garcia to be the "act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential. It is an approach to bilingualism that is centered, not on languages as has often been the case, but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable in order to make sense of their multilingual worlds" [34, 140 p.].

Indeed, Garcia writes that the most commonly used current models of bilingualism, the additive and dynamic models, begin and end with monolingualism, suggesting that it is the linguistic norm [33, 140 p.]. In much of the world – and in Kazakhstan – it is not, however. Much, if not most, of its population is bilingual, often accessing different languages in order to make meaning of the world as effectively as possible.

Wei writes that such a view of languages challenges more traditionally held views of code-switching and code-mixing: "translanguaging aims to present a new transdisciplinary perspective that goes beyond the artificial divides between linguistics, psychology, sociology, etc., treating languages as discrete and complete systems to how language users orchestrate their diverse and multiple meaning- and sense-making resources in their everyday social life" [35, 28 p.], whereas "code-mixing and code-switching ... [which] assume the existence of different languages as structural and cognitive entities and focus on structural configurations of the form.... [and are] unable to fully capture the creative and critical dimensions of these expressions" [35, 13 p.]. The two terms are usually used in this context to refer to the use of different languages in different contexts, e.g., Russian for business and Kazakh for home life (as is often the case for urban Kazakh-speakers), while translanguaging considers the

notion that multilinguals use more than one language in order to best express themselves and their reality. Wei also stresses that multilinguals “do not think monolingually... even when they are in a ‘monolingual mode’ and producing one nameable language only for a specific stretch of speech or text,” somewhat reminiscent of the example of Almas, the Kazakh speaker who refused to speak Russian but consumed Russian content, above [35, 18 p.]. Janasozdik, then, makes full use of Kazakhstan’s wealth of languages and of language uses, blending them into one word of slang at a time (which, in effect, makes code-switching or code-mixing nearly impossible). It also reflects the reality of most Kazakhstanis’ lives, i.e. that they use both Russian and Kazakh to communicate most effectively and describe the world around them. And in creating slang that relies on translanguaging within heteroglossia, janasozdik is effectively communicating the moments of everyday Kazakhstani existence that Kazakh or Russian (or English) alone would not be able to encapsulate.

By the same token, however, janasozdik is a project born of Kazakhization and seeks to make the Kazakh language more accessible and more relatable to Kazakh-speakers of all levels across the country. The inclusion of Russian and English words in this new crop of Kazakh slang – codifying them, in effect, in this dictionary of Kazakh slang – removes the two languages as a “threat” that some perceive to the vitality of Kazakh, especially in the realm of terminology [36]. The translanguaging that is janasozdik’s asset in creating authenticity and expressiveness is also its asset in ensuring the development of the Kazakh language: by acknowledging and codifying it, janasozdik is creating a Kazakh language – and a Kazakh slang – to which Kazakh speakers can relate and contribute, regardless of their own proficiency.

Results

Janasozdik is an audacious move in a society with strong ideological tendencies and governmental policies toward linguistic purism, and its creation of a codified body of Kazakh

slang that relies on Russian, Kazakh, and English within it has manifold purposes. For one, it normalizes the “shala-Kazakh language” that already relies on the use of Russian and Kazakh within speech, often within the same word. In doing so, it reduces the stigma of mixing languages within Kazakh, as so many Kazakhs do, consequently blurring the entire concept of a “shala-Kazakh,” the societal group ostracized for decades as not being “real Kazakhs” or as being Russified Kazakhs. The creation of janasozdik’s “unitary Kazakh slang,” in Bakhtin’s words, invites all of its followers to speak a version of “shala-Kazakh.” This, then, allows them to self-identify within the range of Kazakh-ness, i.e. *naghyz* or *shala*, as the linguistic playing field is levelled. Janasozdik is fundamentally a linguistically liberal (and liberalizing) and inclusive space, in contrast to traditional Kazakh societal patterns.

The page also, however, does aim to popularize the Kazakh language through the creation of this inclusive space and its content, which is both authentic and relatable to the whole spectrum Kazakh speakers. It is a project of Kazakhization, but not to the point of exclusion: rather than creating terms, as the Kazakh terminology commission does, that exclude already widely used words in Kazakh, it relies on the population’s existing *multilingual* knowledge to label new concepts to which it can relate. Consequently, janasozdik also makes full use of the heteroglossia and translanguaging endemic to these contexts in order to create the authenticity that has resonated with the page’s many followers and ultimately led to its success.

Conclusion

As a result, the page has created a codified body of Kazakh slang that relies on the inclusion of Russian and English syllables or words within it as a challenge to the notion of a codified, “pure” version of Kazakh (as promulgated by the government), even if the Kazakh that it creates is slang (which, by definition, is difficult to standardize). More broadly, it challenges ideas of linguistic purity dictated both by the

government and by society – and, in doing so, helps to dismantle the attendant ideas of *naghyz* and *shala-Kazakh*, which are destructive to the unification of Kazakh and Kazakhstani society. Janasozdik, then, is not only a “modern Kazakh slang dictionary” – it is a modern Kazakh dictionary for a new, more unified Kazakh (and Kazakhstani) people and language.

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Janasozdik: инклюзивті қазақ сленгтерін кодификациялау

Аңдатпа. Мақала қазақ тілінің өзекті мәселелерін пәнаралық талдауға арналған. Қазақ тілі – тарихы ежелгі түркі дәуірінен бастау алатын түркі тілі. Тілдің дамуына көптеген факторлар әсер етеді – әлеуметтік-мәдени, саяси, экономикалық. Ал қазіргі кезде әлеуметтік желілер коммуникация құралы ретінде де, тілді дамытушы, өзгертуші құрал ретінде де үлкен маңызға ие.

Бұл мақала инстаграмдағы Janasozdik парағының ел азаматтары көпшілігінің екі тілді шындығын көрсететін қазақ сленгтерін жүйелеп, корпус құруға ұмтылуындағы маңыздылығын көрсетуге тырысады.

Қазақша сөйлегенде орыс және қазақ тілдерін (мүмкін ағылшын тілін) араластыратындарды кінәлаудан гөрі, Жанасөздік өзінің негізгі жазылушыларын өзі осылай жасауға шақырады. Осылайша, парақ қазақ тілінің тазалығы туралы түсініктерге қарсы тұра отырып, тарихи тұрғыдан орыс тілділерді шетке шығарған қазақыландыру процестеріне белсене қатысуға шақырады. Атап айтқанда, мен транслингвизм және көптілділік ұғымдарын мақаланың соңында Жанасөздік екі тілді елде маңызды орын алатындығын атап көрсету үшін келтірдім, яғни сөздік қазақстандықтар әлі қолданбайтын, бірақ күнделікті қолданылатын екі тілді де білуді қажет ететін сөздерді ойлап табады. Бұл жұмыста мен жанасөздікке талдау жасау барысында таза пәнаралық тәсілді ұстанатын боламын: оны тек социологиялық немесе лингвистикалық құбылыс ретінде қарастырудың орнына, Instagram парағын Қазақстандағы саяси жағдай шеңберінде, елдің лингво-тарихи дамуы және қазақстандық мәдени контекст аясында зерделеймін. Бұл көп қырлы талдау дәстүрлі (бір тақырыптық) талдауға қарағанда, жаңа сөздіктің Қазақстанға, қазақ халқына және қазақ тілді қоғамға ықпалын егжей-тегжейлі талқылауға мүмкіндік береді деп үміттенеміз.

Түйін сөздер: тіл; сленг; қазақ тілі; орыс тілі; әлеуметтік желілер; Қазақстан; екітілділік; тіл саясаты; транслингвизм; көптілділік.

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Janasozdik: кодификация инклюзивного казахского сленга

Аннотация. Статья посвящена междисциплинарному анализу актуальных проблем казахского языка – тюркского языка, история которого уходит глубоко в древнетюркскую эпоху. На развитие языка влияет множество факторов, среди которых социально-культурные, политические и экономические. Однако сегодня значительно возросла роль социальных сетей как средства коммуникаций, что, несомненно, оказывает влияние на развитие и изменение языков.

В этой статье делается попытка осветить значимость Инстаграм-страницы Janasozdik в ее стремлении систематизировать и создать корпус казахского сленга, который отражает двуязычную реальность большинства граждан страны. Вместо того, чтобы обвинять тех, кто смешивает русский и казахский (и, возможно, английский) языки в одном казахском высказывании, Janasozdik поощряет своих подписчиков, которые также являются его основными участниками, именно так и делать. Таким образом, страница оспаривает представления о чистоте казахского языка и поощряет более активное участие в процессах казахизации, которые исторически маргинализировали русскоязычных. В частности, мной представлены концепции трансызычия и многоязычия в конце статьи, чтобы подчеркнуть, что Janasozdik занимает важное место в двуязычной стране, т.е. придумывает нужные слова, которых у казахстанцев еще нет, но которые также требуют знания обоих языков, употребляемых на повседневной основе. В этой работе я буду придерживаться сугубо междисциплинарного подхода в своем анализе Janasozdik: вместо того, чтобы рассматривать его как чисто социологический или лингвистический феномен, я рассмотрю страницу в Instagram на фоне политической ситуации в Казахстане, лингвоисторического развития страны и казахского культурного контекста. Будем надеяться, что этот разноплановый анализ позволит более детально, по сравнению с традиционным (однопредметным) анализом, обсудить влияние Janasozdik на Казахстан, казахов и казахоязычное общество.

Ключевые слова: язык; сленг; казахский язык; русский язык; социальные сети; Казахстан; двуязычие; языковая политика; трансызычие; многоязычие.

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