

The Fate of Lithuanian Identity and Language in Kazakhstan

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Introduction

Researchers in various countries have been studying diasporas through the prism of language and ethnic identity. In Lithuania, this question has also received considerable attention; however, Lithuanian researchers tend to focus mostly on Lithuanian communities in Western countries. The communities in Eastern countries receive less attention. This situation prompted the formation of an interdisciplinary group of researchers—the social anthropologist Vytis Čiubrinskas (Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas), the sociologists Jolanta Kuznecovienė (Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Kaunas), Irena Šutinienė (Genocide and Resistance Research Center of Lithuania, Vilnius) and the sociolinguist Loreta Vilkienė (Vilnius University)—to undertake the research project “Lithuanian Forced Migration Diasporas in the East and Their Identity: The Cases of Trans-Volga and Kazakhstan.” This project, which was funded by the Research Council of Lithuania, took place in 2020–22, with a focus on “the transmission of social memory and identity, particularly the Lithuanian language, across generations, and the

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outcome of such transmission.”¹ The aim was “to analyze and describe the resources and practices used to maintain the ethnicity of Lithuanian diasporas in Kazakhstan and Russia (the Trans-Volga region) through the lens of collective memory, linguistic self-awareness, and language practice.”² Specifically, we were interested in finding out typical characteristics for ethnic identity held by the diaspora of Lithuanian descent in Kazakhstan. In addition, we attempted to assess the value of the Lithuanian language in the formation of ethnic identity among the members of this group. The research questions were analyzed through the prism of social anthropology, sociology, and sociolinguistics. The Lithuanian diaspora in Kazakhstan had not been analyzed prior to this project. The results of the project were a monograph and several articles.³

The Concept of Ethnic Identity and Its Connection to Language

The essence of ethnic identity is everything associated with a particular cultural group. According to David Block and Ulrike Schmidt, ethnic identity encompass shared origins, history, and historical memory, as well as kinship ties, etc. Cultural practices include traditions, rituals, values, religion, the socio-cultural aspects of everyday communication, food culture, etc. They also include participation in ethnic networks.⁴ Rita Sanders emphasizes that ethnicity must have a cultural basis, i.e., a group must

¹ Vilkienė, Čiubrinskas, Kuznecovienė, and Šutinienė, *Lietuvių kilmės diasporos Rytuose ir jų tapatybė*, 313.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.; Kuznecovienė, “The Descendants of Lithuanian Immigrants in Kazakhstan”; Šutinienė, “Prievarinių migrantų palikuonių šeimų atmintis ir jų etninė tapatybė”; Vilkienė, “Kazachstano lietuvių kilmės diasporos saitai su lietuvių etnine tapatybe ir lietuvių kalba.”

⁴ Block, “Identity in Applied Linguistics”; Block, *Multilingual Identities in a Global City*; Schmidt, *Language Loss and the Ethnic Identity of Minorities*.

practice certain cultural patterns of behavior, etc.⁵ In the case of Kazakhstan, these components have been analyzed in more detail by Jolanta Kuznecovienė and Irena Šutinienė.⁶

Joshua Fishman argues that ethnicity is also related to individual attitudes, so one ethnic identity or another may simply be a matter of personal choice.⁷ In this case, the question may arise as to whether such a decision is merely declaratory or whether the group's values, cultural practices, etc., are also adopted.

Language and communication refer to knowledge of languages and dialects, language practice, and linguistic attitudes. Although language is emphasized separately as an important component of ethnicity, it should be noted that it can also be perceived as a component of heritage and cultural practices (e.g., through folklore, sociocultural and linguistic etiquette formulas, etc.). John Joseph believes that language is an essential factor in the formation of ethnic identity.⁸ This view of language is shared by a number of researchers, including Mary Bucholtz, Kira Hall, Jaakko Kølhi, and Algis Norvilas.⁹ It is also supported by Carmen Fought, who argues that language is not simply an expression of ethnic identity but a fundamental factor in its construction. Fought also notes that various sociolinguistic studies show that linguistic practice can shape or transform ethnicity.¹⁰ Already during the interviews with informants in Karaganda, it became clear that the theory of Instrumental Ethnicity is relevant to the study. From this per-

⁵ Sanders, *Staying at Home*, 8.

⁶ Kuznecovienė, "The Descendants of Lithuanian Immigrants in Kazakhstan"; Vilkienė et al., 2024, 43–92, 131–199; Šutinienė, "Prievartinių migrantų palikuonių šeimų atmintis ir jų etninė tapatybė"; Šutinienė, "Sovietinių represijų atmintis Kazachstano lietuvių diasporoje."

⁷ Fishman, "Sociolinguistics," xxvii.

⁸ Joseph, "Identity," 15.

⁹ Bucholtz and Hall, "Language and Identity"; Kølhi, "Language and Identity in Montenegro"; Norvilas, *Tauta, kalba ir tapatybė*.

¹⁰ Fought, "Language and Ethnicity," 238–239.

spective, ethnicity is understood not as something inherent and inherited, but as a means to achieve certain goals—political, economic, social, or symbolic. Representatives of this theory “describe ethnicity as a choice. They perceive ethnicity as a rational response to social influences. [...] The expression of ethnicity may vary depending on the situation at a given time and place, and the flexibility of ethnicity is recognized. [...] They explain that open expression of ethnic origin can bring both benefits (economic, prestige) and disadvantages (restriction of social contacts) to an individual or group.”¹¹ In this case, language can become a strategic resource, a political tool, symbolic capital, etc. In addition, language in the diaspora can also be a resource for community cohesion and preservation, as well as an emotional link to the country of origin. Thus, one ethnic identity or another may simply be a matter of personal choice. In this case, the question may arise as to whether such a choice is merely declarative or whether the group’s values, cultural practices, etc., are also adopted.

Already during the fieldwork, it became evident that the target group displays signs of Symbolic Ethnicity. The concept of Symbolic Ethnicity was introduced in 1979 by Herbert Gans, who claimed that Symbolic Ethnicity is typical of subsequent generations of emigrants.¹² This type of ethnicity is voluntary and optional, individualistic, low-commitment, and most often expressed through symbolic actions, such as retaining surnames, giving children names typical of the ethnic culture, celebrating holidays relevant to the culture of origin, and using individual phrases from the language on special occasions. However, ethnic cultural practices are not part of everyday life. If ethnic identity is symbolic, one of the characteristics of ethnicity—language proficiency—becomes irrelevant. Language loses its function as a means of communication and becomes merely a symbol (emblem), a part of cultural heritage. Ethnic identity is chosen in

¹¹ Kasatkina, “Etniškumo tyrimai,” 3.

¹² “Symbolic Ethnicity.”

terms of emotional relationship with one's roots. This article discusses how the target group's ethnic identity is instrumental, what indicates the presence of symbolic identity, and what role the Lithuanian language plays in each case.

Methodology

The research material consists of 26 qualitative semi-structured interviews collected by the project group during fieldwork in Karaganda, a major city in central Kazakhstan. Thus, the focus is on the Lithuanian diaspora in Karaganda. More specifically, it focuses on the part of the diaspora that is related to political prisoners, deportees who arrived in the country after World War II, and mid-twentieth-century migrant laborers. Thirteen interviews with informants from the second (aged 35–65) and thirteen from the third (aged 17–41) generations were analyzed: 15 with women and 11 with men. The average interview lasted about one hour. Only one criterion was applied when selecting the group of research participants: the Lithuanian origin of the informants. In other words, the research participant himself or herself, or at least one of his or her parents or grandparents, had to self-identify as Lithuanian. Informants were recruited using snowball sampling.

Before the interviews, the informants were told about the project, its objectives, and the conditions for using the results, and their agreement to participate in the study was obtained. All interviews analyzed in the article were conducted in Russian, as the informants did not speak Lithuanian or had a relatively poor command of the language. The project was an interdisciplinary study, and the interviews covered sociological, anthropological, and sociolinguistic questions. However, this article focuses only on the sociolinguistic analysis of the informants' statements about Lithuanian identity and the Lithuanian language. The interviews were transcribed, and qualitative thematic analysis was carried out.

A Brief History of Lithuanians in Kazakhstan

The participants in the study were people of Lithuanian descent who belong to the Lithuanian diaspora in Karaganda, the origins of which date to after World War II.¹³ Beginning in 1944, around 81,000 Lithuanians were sent to prison camps in Kazakhstan, mostly men, partisans, and their supporters. The typical term of imprisonment was ten years in a labor camp or prison, followed by another five years in exile. Only later did some of these forced migrants have the opportunity to return to Lithuania. However, others were not allowed to do so and remained in Kazakhstan. The Lithuanian diaspora in Kazakhstan was also shaped by the Soviet Union's labor migration policy, which was particularly active between 1953 and 1965. At that time, Lithuania, like other Soviet republics, was required to send a certain number of workers to Kazakhstan for agricultural work. Some of them later returned to Lithuania, but some remained in Kazakhstan. Not all labor migrants went to Kazakhstan on their own free will. During the project, evidence was gathered that people who had returned from German captivity after World War II were sent to Kazakhstan because they were considered unreliable by the Soviet authorities. Children from orphanages (who had no parents) could also face the same fate. There were also cases of deportation to perform agricultural work in Kazakhstan.

It should also be noted that during the Soviet era, Lithuanians in Kazakhstan did not form communities. On the contrary, the Soviet authorities made efforts to disperse Lithuanians across different locations. After 1990, when the Soviet Union collapsed and Kazakhstan, like Lithuania, regained its independence, some of the post-war forced migrants and their descendants returned to Lithuania. In 2003, the Lithuanian community Lituanica was established in Karaganda, followed by the Lithuanian community Aidas in Almaty. Currently, about 5,000

¹³ For more details, see Vilkienė et al., *Lietuvių kilmės diasporos Rytuose ir jų tapatybė*, 35–40.

people of Lithuanian origin live in Kazakhstan. Among them are migrants from later periods, but this article does not raise any specific research questions regarding them. The situation described in this article is characteristic of the diaspora living in Kazakhstan at the time of the study and it cannot be automatically applied to the diaspora that returned to Lithuania after Lithuania regained independence.

Reasons for Decisions Related to Identity and Language

After World War II, Kazakhstan was part of the totalitarian Soviet state, which promoted the construction of a *homo sovieticus* identity based on a single language—Russian.¹⁴ The Lithuanian diaspora in Kazakhstan was primarily made up of political prisoners and deportees, and later labor migrants. As already mentioned, not all political prisoners were allowed to return to Lithuania. Some of them remained in Kazakhstan. According to Danutė Gailienė, “even after the end of their deportation or imprisonment, they were forced to hide their past not only from those around them, but sometimes even from their own children.”¹⁵ (This idea applies to all those who experienced political punishment or exile, not only in the case of Kazakhstan.) In addition, “deception of the authorities and the system, secrecy, duplicity, passivity, and identity change were important survival strategies. In many cases, they helped people survive and satisfy their basic needs.”¹⁶ Thus, Lithuanian identity had become a dangerous identity. The need for security meant that even in Lithuanian families, people did not talk about their origins, deportation, or time spent in a prison or labor camp. The theory of Instrumental Ethnicity notes that the open expression of ethnic origin can be

¹⁴ Cf. Zabrodskaia and Ehala, “Language and Identity in the Late Soviet Union and Thereafter.”

¹⁵ Gailienė, “Trauma ir kultūra,” 19.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

disadvantageous to an individual or a group.¹⁷ Thus, in the case of Kazakhstan, Lithuanian identity adapted to a complicated situation. Most of the people deported to Kazakhstan after World War II were young men. Even though there were female political prisoners, their numbers were significantly smaller. The long stay in deportation meant that young people started families in Kazakhstan, marrying women or men of various nationalities—Russian, Belarusian, Greek, Mari, etc. Mixed families became a reason not to pass on Lithuanian ethnic identity and language and yet another factor that influenced decisions about one's identity and language. This caused conflicts with relatives in Lithuania, often resulting in the loss of ties with Lithuania.

Another particularly strong factor that encouraged certain behaviors, such as linguistic behavior, was the government's efforts to disperse Lithuanians living in Kazakhstan so that they would not form communities. Thus, on the one hand, there was no opportunity to actively use the language and nurture their Lithuanian identity. On the other hand, there was a desire to create economic prosperity in Kazakhstan (especially regarding labor migrants), which also required adaptation. The Soviet government's policy of Russification also played a role. All of these factors influenced the rethinking of one's identity.

Recurring Themes about Ethnic Identity among People of Lithuanian Descent in Kazakhstan

As already mentioned, when discussing the theory of Instrumental Ethnicity, the expression of ethnicity can vary across periods and situations. Ethnicity itself can become a rational response to social influences. It can be assumed that this is what happened in Kazakhstan. The memories of the informants show that in a totalitarian state, where political prisoners and deportees suffered, Lithuanian identity could even pose a threat. Many infor-

¹⁷ Kasatkina, "Etniškumo tyrimai," 3.

mants mentioned that families tried to avoid discussing their origins and why the family lived in Kazakhstan to avoid trouble. This is clearly illustrated by example 1:

1.

To tell the truth, Dad didn't like talking about it at all. We don't know much, because he always avoided this subject [...]. He had what I consider to be a golden rule: the more you keep quiet, the longer you live (G2, Vera).¹⁸

The strategy of Vera's father did not mean that he renounced his Lithuanian identity. It was simply a strategy of self-preservation. It is worth remembering Gailienė's idea that passivity and changing one's identity were survival strategies.¹⁹ The analysis of the interviews shows that the target group did not change their ethnic identity and that Lithuanian identity has been and remains preserved and passed down from generation to generation, even in mixed families. It was also declared in personal documents. However, it was not made public then.

With the changing policies of the Soviet Union, Lithuanian identity no longer posed a threat to individuals or families. Therefore, decisions about preserving, transmitting, and declaring ethnic identity could be made more freely. However, for younger generations, Lithuanian identity has become a Symbolic Ethnicity: it is (and was) voluntary and optional, more individualistic, and low-commitment.

The following informant is a man, who was born and raised in Kazakhstan and has lived there his entire life. He is married to a woman of Ukrainian descent. Algis has children and a grand-

¹⁸ Quotations from the interviews were translated into English by the author of this article. In the quotations, the letter R denotes the researcher and the letter I denotes the informant. The combination of letter and number at the end of each quotation indicates the informant's generation: G2 means second generation, and G3 means third generation. In addition, pseudonyms given to the informants by the project group are also provided. When choosing pseudonyms, consideration was given to whether the informant's real name was typical of Lithuanian culture or Russian culture.

¹⁹ Gailienė, "Trauma ir kultūra," 10.

son. He does not speak Lithuanian and does not maintain close ties with Lithuania; however, he claims to be Lithuanian:

2.

I: I have always considered myself Lithuanian.

R: Why is that?

I: Because [...] I have a Lithuanian surname, first name... my parents are Lithuanian, and my grandmother and grandfather are Lithuanian [...] and even... my children are Lithuanian (G2, Algis).

Shared origin, kinship ties, and linguistic labels—surname, first name—help him determine his ethnic identity. He passed on this understanding of ethnicity to his daughter and son and even gave his grandson a Lithuanian name. However, Algis has a reserved interest in Lithuania and its history. Lithuanian culture is not practiced at home. Lithuanian ethnic identity is an individual and non-binding decision for Algis. Such decisions are predominant among the target group in Karaganda. In another informant's case, the ethnic identity of the new generation becomes a free and individual choice, sometimes influenced by the situation:

3.

I am half Russian, half Lithuanian. Sometimes I just said Lithuanian. [...] That is, Kazakhs greatly value their ancestors and Kazakhs [...] love [...] their roots very much. [...] So, I wanted to find out [more about my roots] too (G3, Gennady).

Gennady understands that he is not a pure Lithuanian; however, in certain situations, he identifies himself as Lithuanian. He justifies his decision by saying that Kazakhs greatly respect their roots, and he wants to show that his roots are also important to him, that they are different and unique. Thus, he emphasizes that the Lithuanian part of his identity is not dominant in Kazakhstan. This is typical of instrumental identity: ethnicity is chosen depending on the situation. Ethnicity itself is flexible. In several cases, the decision of a person growing up in a mixed family regarding ethnicity was determined solely by respect for one of the parents:

4.

R: Who is your father according to his passport?

I: Lithuanian.

R: Your mother?

I: She is Mari [a Finno-Ugric people].

R: Who are you?

I: Lithuanian, according to my passport.

R: And in your heart?

I: And in my heart.

[...]

I: She [the informant's mother] said, "Be whatever you want to be." So, we said, "We are sons, we always support our dad, because we are closer to him." So, naturally, we have been saying from childhood that we are Lithuanians (G3, Piotr).

Piotr's father is a second-generation Lithuanian, born into a Lithuanian family. Although Piotr himself comes from a mixed family, he also considers himself Lithuanian: his Lithuanian ethnicity is indicated in his passport, and he identifies with Lithuanian ethnicity through emotions. (Kazakh passports indicate the passport holder's ethnicity.) When asked what influenced this decision, the informant explained that it was his father's authority. This is not an isolated case.

Since most political prisoners and deportees from Lithuania were young men, in most families, Lithuanian identity has been passed on through the grandfather or father. Several informants mentioned that their father's identity was adopted to maintain a strong connection with him. This strategy of adopting the father's identity is not unique to the Lithuanian diaspora in Kazakhstan. For example, Sanders's research shows that Germans in Kazakhstan also consider themselves German through their father's lineage.²⁰ Thus, in the Lithuanian case, it was not ties to Lithuania, but family roots and respect for family members that often led to the adoption of a Lithuanian identity. However, the decisions related to one's ethnic identity were not always straightforward:

²⁰ Sanders, *Staying at Home*, 99.

5.

R: They [the informant's parents] registered you as Russian, then changed it to... Lithuanian. Does that mean anything?

I: Of course. [...] I'm a Lithuanian. I want to be Lithuanian (G2, Nina).

As noted previously, Kazakh passports indicate the passport holder's ethnicity. We can only assume that Nina's parents, seeking to ensure a successful future for their daughter, registered her as belonging to the dominant ethnic group. However, the decision was reconsidered, and her identity was changed to Lithuanian. Perhaps the motive for this decision was more emotional. Nina herself said that she wants to be Lithuanian—that is her attitude. This fully corresponds to Fishman's idea that ethnicity is also related to individual attitudes and may simply be a matter of personal choice.²¹ However, when other informants were asked what defines ethnicity, they most often emphasized roots:

6.

T: And what determines ethnicity?

I: Well, probably roots, after all. Old roots, like a tree... (G2, Virginija).

Thus, the target group considers itself Lithuanian based on the criterion of roots.²² Even though roots are one of the most important proofs of Lithuanian identity, they are often not associated with the active practice of Lithuanian culture:

7.

I have roots, I don't have [Lithuanian] culture in me, like intuitively, inside me (G2, Jelena).

However, not all informants chose Lithuanian identity in their official documents:

²¹ Fishman, "Sociolinguistics: Language and Ethnic Identity in Context."

²² For more details, see Kuznecovienė, "The Descendants of Lithuanian Immigrants in Kazakhstan."

8.

R: And when you chose your nationality—Russian—did you just think about it, or maybe...

I: [...] I didn't think about it. And that's because everyone here... everyone here is Russian (G2, Jelena).

In some cases, simple solutions exist: the dominant ethnic group and language spoken in the country determine the decision on one's ethnic identity. However, Jelena attended the meeting with the project researchers and wanted to give an interview because she also identifies herself as Lithuanian. Therefore, there is a peculiar asymmetry between what is declared in the documents and what a person feels about their identity. Jelena's case is not unique.

Although the target group most often identifies itself as Lithuanian based on the criterion of roots, in families where there is even a minimal contact with Lithuania and Lithuanian culture is practiced at home, even if only sporadically, Lithuanian identity is also discovered through emotional ties:

9.

It is love for Lithuania that defines a Lithuanian... I would even say that a Lithuanian can be a Lithuanian without having Lithuanian roots or Lithuanian blood. If he loves Lithuania and likes Lithuanian culture, he is Lithuanian. Because... take a Lithuanian who, for example, speaks Lithuanian perfectly, has Lithuanian roots and a Lithuanian surname, but says, for example, that "Lithuania is bad and that it has given me nothing, and I want to leave Lithuania..." (G3, Marius).

Marius consciously constructs his identity as Lithuanian. He found his relatives in Lithuania, learned the Lithuanian language and continues to study it, and actively participates in community activities. However, in the target group, only a few people actively practice Lithuanian identity.

The study also revealed a tendency for a significant number of people to consciously search archives for documents that could prove they have Lithuanian roots. However, as Kuznecovienė

states, “for most of the informants, ‘roots’ are just a fact of origin, as shown in the practice of entering Lithuanian ethnicity on personal documents.”²³ Such people turn to their ethnic roots because proving their Lithuanian origin would allow them to obtain Lithuanian citizenship and emigrate. Thus, Lithuanian identity becomes a tool that would help to create economic prosperity in Lithuania. A certain commodification of Lithuanian identity is taking place: “Ethnicity, which is seen as in-rooted but also as culture-less, enables a whole spectrum of manipulations of ethnic identity. One such manipulation is the commodification of ethnic identity, attempting to profit from it. The use of Lithuanianness as a resource for gaining benefits in the form of Lithuanian citizenship and the right to be repatriated to Lithuania is probably the most frequent factor in “becoming Lithuanian.”²⁴ It can be argued that for a significant portion of the target group, Lithuanian ethnic identity serves as an instrument for achieving certain goals.

Surnames and First Names as Markers of Ethnic Identity

The analysis of the interviews showed that the Symbolic Ethnicity of the target group was and is most often expressed by retaining Lithuanian surnames and giving children names typical of Lithuanian culture. John Edwards argues that choosing names for children or passing on surnames is one of the language-related acts of identity.²⁵ It cannot be said that giving a child a Lithuanian first name and surname in Kazakhstan was a simple gesture, because in mixed families, both parents have their own opinions. The interviews with the target group showed that a Lithuanian surname was highly valued. In addition, wives of other nationalities often not only took their husbands’ surnames

²³ Ibid., 325.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Cf. Edwards, 2009, 34.

but also tended to choose them with the Lithuanian suffix *-ienė*, while daughters were given surnames with the typical Lithuanian suffixes *-aitė*, *-ytė*, and *-utė*.

10.

I: Well, I always knew that I had Lithuanian roots. [...] XXXaitė is my last name, after all... [...] my mother is XXXienė, my father is XXXa, and I am XXXaitė. I know that my Lithuanian surname is declined [...]. [...] My teachers often asked me about it, and other children, too. I always proudly replied, "I'm Lithuanian."

R: Where does this pride come from?

I: I don't know, I really like that it's unusual somehow, it sounds very beautiful, not like everyone else's, I don't know (G3, Jolita).

11.

I was registered under my father's surname, XXXius [a Lithuanian male surname]. He naturally came and said, "I have a girl, not a boy; you wrote it wrong." They changed it (G3, Vita).

12.

Here in Kazakhstan, of course [...] many people don't understand XXXas, XXXienė, XXXaitė [surnames with Lithuanian suffixes indicating husband, wife, and daughter]. Who are you? Are you relatives or not? So, they think only my son and I are relatives [...] (G2, Algis).

Example 10 shows that the family has retained Lithuanian surnames, which are also present in their passports. Other informants (see example 12) mentioned that maintaining the Lithuanian surname system poses difficulties, for example, at the border. Nevertheless, surnames are respectfully preserved and are a source of pride. Example 11 shows that preserving a Lithuanian surname requires some effort.

Some interviews also show that surnames can become instruments for achieving specific goals:

13.

I: My children also have my surname. I lost my husband five years ago and changed their surname to mine...

R: Oh, how interesting, why?

I: So that they could get to Lithuania, so that they could get to Lithuania, yes. My husband and I wanted that. He [...] wasn't a Lithuanian (G3, Karina).

An open declaration of Lithuanian origins through one's surname is expected to benefit Karina's family, allowing them to move to economically stronger Lithuania. This way, roots and the linguistic label associated with them—the surname—become part of cultural capital.

On the other hand, other informants have different experiences:

14.

At sixteen, I wanted to take my grandmother's surname XXX [Lithuanian surname] [...] But my mother said: you have a father, so you will take your father's surname, otherwise your father will be offended, he will be upset that his daughter has taken someone else's surname (G3, Maria).

In this case, the young woman wanted to take her grandmother's surname not because her Lithuanian identity was important to her, but because, as was noted in other interviews, a Lithuanian surname was different, interesting, and unusual:

15.

It's unusual, you stand out right away, names like that are unusual, they immediately catch your eye, and... they really catch your ear, you think... wow, that's something! Something interesting. [...] We have always been proud that we have such... such loud, sonorous names and surnames (G3, Lēja).

and

16.

I have always liked my surname; it is very unusual (G3, Jolita).

Thus, although the surnames are actively passed down from generation to generation and are desirable, they are not necessarily important because they are associated with Lithuanian identity. A number of third-generation informants placed great

er emphasis on the uniqueness of their surname rather than on the surname being a sign of Lithuanian identity.

The same can be said about the first names typical of Lithuanian culture. In Karaganda, we found the following Lithuanian names or names typical of Lithuanian culture: Algis, Arvydas, Bronislovas, Kazimieras, Romualdas, Vytas, Vytautas, Stasys, Aurelija, Birutė, Laima, Janina, Regina, Vida, Virginija, etc. These names are also a source of pride and are highly valued. In mixed families, naming a child was a matter of negotiation among family members:

17.

I: So, they [the informant's parents] wanted to name me Arvydas.

T: Arvydas?

I: Yes.

T: And why did your dad want that?

I: Mmm, my dad loves his roots. He respected his father, ah...

But my mom turned out to be more [strict]. [...] "You will raise him, and I'll name him" [words of the informant's mother to his father] (G3, Gennady).

Gennady's interview reveals that his parents disagreed at first about what name to give their son. His mother wanted to give him a name typical of Russian culture and leave his upbringing to his father. This was also linked to the transmission of ethnic identity.

As Watzlawik et al. state, identifying with a name, saying that you like it, shows the extent to which the name reflects a part of you.²⁶ The interviews conducted with the Lithuanian diaspora in Kazakhstan show that Lithuanian first and last names were often perceived by the informants as an integral part of their identity. Thus, first and last names become resources of Lithuanian identity, an initiation into it, a means of taking an interest in it, and bringing it out of oblivion. In addition, the Lithuanian names serve as a link to Western culture, and more

²⁶ Watzlawik et al., "First Names as Signs of Personal Identity," 1168.

specifically, European culture, in the minds of the respondents, who, as the analysis of the interviews reveals, see them as a sign of quality and prosperity.

Language as a Component of Ethnic Identity

This study also raised the question of how important the Lithuanian language is to informants as a language of ethnic identity.

The Lithuanian diaspora in Kazakhstan is essentially part of the Russian-speaking subnation.²⁷ In other words, the second, third, and subsequent generations consider Russian their native language. They speak it fluently and learn it in their families. However, most study participants confidently stated that they were Lithuanian, which was also indicated in their documents. This means that there is an asymmetry between Lithuanian ethnic identity and the native language—Russian—which is central to the informants' identity. The new generations have inherited an awareness of their ethnic identity, but not the language. The same situation was characteristic not only of the families of political prisoners and deportees, but also of the families of migrant laborers.

People who had been repressed continued to be monitored by the authorities. As there were no concentrated, well-organized Lithuanian communities in Kazakhstan during the Soviet era, there could be no Lithuanian Saturday schools where children could learn the language, become familiar with Lithuanian culture, and communicate with each other in Lithuanian. It was only after 2003, when the Lithuanian community *Lituanica* was established in Karaganda that more active Lithuanian activities began. However, the conditions for learning the Lithuanian language remained poor.

²⁷ Cf. Zharkynbekova et al., "The Role of Multilingual Education in the Process of Kazakhstani Identity Formation," 2018.

We should remember that most families in the target group are mixed. This suggests that it is difficult for children to learn the language of one of their parents. According to various researchers, such as Janet Holmes, mixed marriages may also encourage language change.²⁸ If multilingualism is not supported in society, mixed families are likely to switch to the dominant language of the country. This was the case in Kazakhstan during Soviet times, when the government policy was tied to a single language, Russian. If a mixed family was formed with a person of Russian nationality, the Russian language naturally became established at home. If a family was formed with a person from another ethnic group (non-Russian), the family's common language of communication also became Russian. In such cases, as the analysis of the interviews shows, the children did not inherit either parent's language. However, in the case of the Lithuanian diaspora in Kazakhstan, the Lithuanian language was rarely or never passed on to the second generation, and in Lithuanian families:

18.

I asked my dad, "Why don't you know much Lithuanian?" He said that it was simply because his grandparents, or rather his parents, spoke very little [...] they spoke Lithuanian, when they didn't want someone to know what they were talking about (G3, Piotr).

Example 18 shows that some of the first-generation migrants rarely used the Lithuanian language at home. They used the language of their ethnic identity more as a kind of secret language. Perhaps this strategy helped to ensure children's safety. Since the Lithuanian language was not actively used at home, the second generation usually only remembers certain phrases:

19.

From my mother, I know *labas rytas* [good morning], *laba diena* [good day], *labas vakaras* [good evening]... um... then I know...

²⁸ Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 62.

um... *Aš myliu tave* [I love you], [...] *ačiū* [thank you], *prašau* [please], [...] *labanak* [*sic*] [good night]... *labanakt?* Is there such a word? (G2, Algis).

and

20.

I know nothing except *Aš tave myliu* [I love you] (G2, Jelena).

It is evident that the second generation has retained only rudimentary knowledge of the Lithuanian language and is unable to communicate in Lithuanian. However, the interviews also reveal that at certain stages of their lives, for various reasons (often emotional), people felt the desire to learn Lithuanian:

21.

I: When I was a girl, um... I was already attending [...] school, and a young boy, well, let's say he liked me, and he was also Lithuanian, and my last name is Lithuanian [...]. He wrote *Aš tave myliu* [I love you] in Lithuanian, right? [...] I went to my dad and said, "What is this?" [...] He says, "I love you." And I remembered that. And I [...] wanted to learn the language, but my dad, probably because he had emotional trauma, didn't want to [teach] me [...] (G2, Sofia).

Sofia did not learn Lithuanian from her father. Only her surname indicated that she had Lithuanian roots. Contact with a Lithuanian boy and a note he wrote in Lithuanian sparked her interest in the Lithuanian language and awakened her desire to learn it. However, her father, who had severed ties with his relatives in Lithuania, because they disapproved of his mixed marriage, did not want to teach his daughter the language.

Because the Lithuanian language was not passed on to the second generation, there were no conditions for the third generation to adopt it. For these reasons, a significant part of the study group does not consider the Lithuanian language essential to their ethnic identity. More often than not, the language is seen as an addition to Lithuanian identity, which would be useful, but if it is not there, it changes nothing. In addition, for most

people Lithuanian identity is only symbolic. In this case, knowledge of the language is not necessary. This attitude is characteristic of most second- and third-generation informants:

22.

R: But here's my question: can a Lithuanian be Lithuanian without knowing the Lithuanian language?

I: I think, maybe, maybe [...] he can be Lithuanian even without knowing his language, but if he loves this country, and if he at least wants to know the language, the country, the traditions, if he strives for it, but he, well, maybe he just doesn't have the opportunity, of course, he [...] has a right to consider himself Lithuanian and be proud of his nationality (G3, Lėja).

Lėja's statement suggests that language is not considered the axis of identity. The young woman believes that ethnic identity can also be maintained through symbolic practices, such as loving one's country of origin and knowing its holidays and traditions. This kind of relationship with language and identity is typical of Symbolic Ethnicity.

However, when discussing the third wave, it should also be noted that some are turning to the Lithuanian language and seeking ways to connect with it. There are several reasons for this.

One of them is the desire to learn about one's Lithuanian roots and show respect for one's parents and grandparents. In such cases, the Lithuanian language is considered an important part of one's Lithuanian ethnic identity:

23.

Many people there asked me, "Are you a Lithuanian?" I said, "Yes." "Do you know Lithuanian?" "No." "Well, what kind of Lithuanian are you then? You're not a Lithuanian." [...] So, it was important for me... to talk, well, to know Lithuanian, to be able to say something in Lithuanian, because it's the language that my grandfather spoke, the language that my great-grandfather spoke (G3, Marius).

and

24.

R: Is it possible to be Lithuanian without knowing Lithuanian? What makes a person Lithuanian, in your opinion?

I: Well, I don't think so. [...] But you need to know the culture, there must be some [signs] that distinguish you from other nations, and what distinguishes us is our culture [...]. How can you call yourself Lithuanian if you don't know the language or the culture? (G3, Maria).

Both Marius and Maria are third generation young people of Lithuanian descent who have consciously turned to the Lithuanian language as an important part of their identity. They chose to restore their Lithuanian identity by taking an interest in Lithuania and its culture and learning the language. This is an instrumental approach to identity formation: I consciously decide that I am Lithuanian, so I need the Lithuanian language, which connects me to Lithuania. However, such people are not in the majority.

Another reason why one turns to the Lithuanian language is simply curiosity, the desire for personal improvement:

25.

R: Would you like to learn Lithuanian?

I: To be honest, yes.

R: Why, why?

I: Well, it's just interesting [laughs] (G3, Rita).

26.

R: So that... you could learn Lithuanian?

I: Well, generally speaking, I find learning languages very interesting, as I'm a humanities student... (G3, Maria).

and

27.

I am also interested in Lithuanian. It turns out I've been learning some words and pronunciations, but I haven't yet fully immersed myself in the language or set myself the goal of learning Lithuanian. [...] I opened it [an online course] several times and even saved some basic Lithuanian language courses. [...] I'm just interested in the pronunciation itself and how the language is structured. I've always had some kind of interest in it (G3, Piotr).

Rita, Marija, and Piotr do not emphasize that the Lithuanian language is an important component of their Lithuanian identity. For them, this language is simply interesting as a phenomenon. The group of people who think this way is larger than those who think that language is an important aspect of creating one's ethnic identity.

Another obvious reason for learning Lithuanian is as part of a plan to move to Lithuania. In this case, the Lithuanian language becomes a valuable part of cultural capital.²⁹ It is believed that learning Lithuanian can help the learner to become more economically prosperous in Lithuania:

28.

Since we have decided to have our future, as they say, in another country [in Lithuania], we need to learn. [...] They [the informant's children] will have to learn Lithuanian anyway. Let them learn it, because they will live there. [...] Whether they want to [...] learn Lithuanian or not, they will have to (G3, Aliona).

Thus, Lithuanian identity, reinforced by knowledge of the Lithuanian language, becomes a tool for establishing roots in the country.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

The Lithuanian diaspora in Kazakhstan has preserved its ethnic Lithuanian identity and passes it on from generation to generation, even in mixed families. The results of the study described in this article confirm Joshua Fishman's idea that ethnicity is related to human attitudes and that ethnic identity can simply be a matter of personal choice.³⁰ The people of Lithuanian descent in Kazakhstan simply decide that they are Lithuanians. However, for the second and subsequent generations, this is

²⁹ Cf. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 55.

³⁰ Fishman, "Sociolinguistics," xxvii.

more a Symbolic Ethnicity, freely chosen, with few obligations, with no cultural practices and knowledge of the language. It is often a declarative decision. Ethnic identity is also often a tool for obtaining Lithuanian citizenship and moving to Lithuania, where people hope to build a better life. The identity of one's roots is exploited for profit. Although Russian is the main and native language of the target group, some members of the group still have not forgotten their ethnic Lithuanian identity.³¹ The expression of the target group's ethnicity often depends on the situation and is flexible. Lithuanian identity, which was a disadvantage after World War II, is now becoming a benefit.³² Therefore, the identity of the target group is instrumental. For most participants in the study, the Lithuanian language is not perceived as a necessary component of ethnic identity, because ethnicity itself is only symbolic. Important linguistic markers of ethnicity are first and last names, which are sources of pride and are maintained even in mixed families. It is first and last names that encourage people to take an interest in their roots. They are considered an integral part of ethnic identity, a clear sign of it. However, there is also a group of third-generation people of Lithuanian origin who are very consciously restoring their Lithuanian identity and begin to learn the language as an important component of it. However, this is not the dominant trend. Essentially, the Lithuanian language in the target group is not a resource for community cohesion and preservation, nor an emotional link to Lithuania. The results of the study do not support the claims of Joseph, Bucholtz, Hall, Fought, Kölhi, and Norvilas that language is a decisive and essential factor in ethnic identity.³³ This view is not prevalent among the Lithuanian diaspora in Kazakhstan.

³¹ Cf. Fought, "Language and Ethnicity," 238–239.

³² Cf. Kasatkina, "Etniškumo tyrimai," 3.

³³ Joseph, "Identity"; Bucholtz and Hall, "Language and Identity"; Fought, "Language and Ethnicity"; Kölhi, "Language and Identity in Montenegro"; and Norvilas, *Tauta, kalba ir tapatybė*.

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