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The effect of ethnicity on the linguistic landscape of three south Kazakhstani villages: Aksukent, Mankent and Karabulak

The visual language that is used in a city can be one of the most significant components of culture and society. In other words, as Pavlenko (2009) states, public signs and billboards are the first form of contact when one arrives in a new city or country, and they can deliver an important message about the instance of language choice(s), centrality and relevance of certain language(s). That is, linguistic items or signs serve to convey different information about the society, which is as Ben Rafael et.al (2006) highlights, functions as "...interesting way of uncovering social realities."

According to Vensel, Vandenbroucke and Blackwood (2016) and Albury (2018), considering social and cultural backgrounds of a region facilitates the meaning comprehension of signs. Inspired by these studies, it is pertinent to see if ethnicity affects the representation of linguistic landscape where presence or absence of signs in a particular language in the public sphere provides insights about the power of certain groups and their ethnolinguistic vitality.

This study focuses on the linguistic landscape of three Uzbek villages (Aksukent, Mankent and Karabulak) of Southern Kazakhstan. The study will analyze whether the language(s) found in the linguistic landscape in those villages reflect the language(s) that are spoken in those villages. Also, the study will focus the potential differences in the use of visual language and how these differences can serve to identify each village based on their similarities and differences of ethnic makeup. In order to carry out the study, central areas of these three villages are analyzed. In order to achieve this, photos will be taken from linguistic landscapes, such as signs, posters, notices, etc., that have written text on them in common places across all these three villages (e.g. pharmacy, café, educational centers, beauty salons, etc). The results will be coded according to which village they are found, whether it is monolingual, bilingual/multilingual (which languages are used), top-down or bottom-

up, and what types of signs they are. Finally, the data will be compared to investigate the similarities and differences in linguistic landscape of these villages that consist of the same (Uzbek) ethnic group as the major population. This research study will analyze the data in terms of both the presence and absence of languages (Uzbek, Kazakh, Russian, English) and then the frequency of the languages encountered. Then, findings will be examined in light of the research goals to see if the usage of certain languages in the linguistic landscape reflect the languages spoken in the region, and if there exists a direct correlation between the ethnicity and the representation of linguistic landscape in the region.

Keywords: Linguistic Landscape, Ethnicity, Language Vitality, Ethnolinguistics, Kazakhstan

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