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## How Much Language Is Important for Ethnic Identity of Young Kazakhstanis from Inter-Ethnic Families?

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**Abstract.** The article investigates ethnic identification of Kazakhstani youth from inter-ethnic Kazakh-Russian families. A survey of 212 respondents aged 18–21 shows diversity in ethnic self-determination of the individual. However, a larger part identifies with the father's ethnicity, perhaps due to the traditionally dominant role of the father in the Kazakh family. A slightly smaller number of respondents choose the ethnicity of the mother. Anthropological characteristics and language are important factors in choosing ethnic identity. Identity is mono-ethnic in 188/88.9 % of young people, bi-ethnic – in 11/5.2 %, marginal – in 13/6.1 %. For young people who are at the beginning of their professional career, the most significant parameter of linguistic identity is “language proficiency since childhood” – 100 %. Additional criteria are “the dominant language in society” and “language perspective in professional career”. Linguistic and ethnic identities are concordant in 185/87 % of respondents, discordant – in 27/13 % of respondents.

**Keywords:** ethnicity; young Kazakhstanis; ethno-differentiating factor; inter-ethnic family; Kazakh-Russian family; linguistic identity.

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## Насколько язык важен для этнической идентичности молодых казахстанцев из межэтнических семей?

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**Аннотация.** В статье исследуется этническая идентификация казахстанской молодежи из межэтнических казахско-русских семей. Опрос 212 респондентов в возрасте 18–21 года показывает многообразие этнического самоопределения личности. Однако большая часть идентифицирует себя с этнической принадлежностью отца, возможно, из-за традиционно доминирующей его роли в казахской семье. Чуть меньше респондентов выбирают этническую принадлежность матери. Антропологические характеристики и язык выступают важными факторами при выборе этнической идентичности. Идентичность является моноэтнической у 188/88,9 % молодых людей, биетнической – у 11/5,2 %, маргинальной – у 13/6,1 %. Для молодых людей, находящихся в начале своего профессионального пути, наиболее значим параметр языковой личности «владение языком с детства» – 100 %. Дополнительными критериями являются «доминирующий язык в обществе» и «языковая перспектива в профессиональной карьере». Языковая и этническая идентичности коррелируют у 185/87 % опрошенных, не совпадают – у 27/13 %.

**Ключевые слова:** этническая принадлежность; молодые казахстанцы; этнодифференцирующий фактор; межнациональная семья; казахско-русская семья; языковая идентичность.

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### Introduction

#### 1. The scientific investigation of ethnic identity

Ethnic identity, or ethnicity, is a socio-psychological phenomenon, which is based on the individual's sense of belonging to a community

(Matsumoto, 2002). A sense of ethnic identity is required for nations and ethnic groups to preserve their identity, their place in the history of human civilization. According to the definition of D. Horowitz, the concept of ethnicity is very

broad in content. It includes different types of descriptive group identity based on skin color, and physical appearance, language, religion, history, and other indicators of common origin or their combinations. The central element of ethnicity is the construction of the political unity of a large social group in a hierarchically organized society, since in large groups the stability of social ties is mainly ensured by an “imaginary” community rather than by direct communication of its members (Horowitz, 1985: 47). In our opinion, Horowitz says that large social hierarchically organized groups are united into a political unity, using ethnicity, even if this is an imaginary feature that is not supported by direct communication of members of a hierarchical society.

Ethnicity is a historically changeable category of stratification of human society, which largely influences social relations within society and the social behavior of an individual. This category manifests itself in the context of discursive practice, i.e. in social interactions, which are based on the

assessment and interpretation of their own and others' ethnic characteristics. Ethnic status most often remains unchanged throughout a person's life. Still, the formation of ethnic identity is a dynamic process that does not end in adolescence. External circumstances can push people of any age to rethink the role of ethnicity in their lives, leading to the transformation of ethnic identity. “... Inequality between ethnic groups does reinforce ethnic identity. However, we also find that the magnitude of its effect diminishes as inequality within ethnic groups increases. That is, people identify themselves most strongly with their ethnicity when ethnicity is exacerbated by economic inequality” (Higashijima, Houle, 2018).

The identification process is a system of attitudes that is triggered by a specific ethnic situation into which the individual is born and raised and that leads to certain stereotypical behaviors. Unlike personal identity, which is gradually realized in the process of individualization, ethnic identification is initially conscious and then becomes automated and taken-for-granted. Ethnic identification is the collection of acquired ethnic attractions, ethnic identity – the individual implementation of the ancestral ethnic archetype.

Thus, identity is a generic archetypal complex; identification is the result of the formation of a system of socially determined attitudes (South & Messner, 1986). In a stable situation, there is no need to update one's ethnic identity. The issue of ethnic tolerance, based on a positive ethnic identity and a positive group ethnic self-esteem, but without hostility toward outsiders, is currently being raised. Therefore, research on how people, and especially modern youth, perceive their own ethnic group, is especially important in a multi-ethnic society (Komaroff, 1994).

The state of inter-ethnic relations in Kazakhstan, which is traditionally considered a multinational state, has received much attention from social scientists, political scientists, psychologists, and linguists (Galiev, Babakumarov, et al., 1994; Akiner, 1994; Bremmer, 1995; Olcott, 2005, etc.). Many researchers speak about the Kazakh model of inter-ethnic integration, associating it with the concept of “supranational identity” (Malaieva, 2000; Malinin, 2007). Scientists note the interdependence of ethnic identification of Kazakhs and Russians with political processes in Kazakhstan (Eshment, 1999; Nurgalieva, 2012). W. Fierman (2005) investigated the role of the Kazakh language in the process of national identification of Kazakhs, and also outlined its prospects in the consolidation of the Kazakh state as an ethnic community.

Awareness of ethnicity can be based on different characteristics. Ethno-differentiating, that is, distinguishing one ethnos from others, can be such characteristics as anthropological features, language, values and norms, historical memory, religion, ideas about the native land, the myth of common ancestors, national character, folk and professional art. The importance and role of markers in the perception of ethnic members varies depending on the peculiarities of the historical situation, on the stage of ethnic consolidation, on the specifics of the ethnic environment. Ethno-differentiating features almost always reflect some objective reality, most often elements of spiritual culture. But reflection can be more or less adequate, more or less distorted, even false. Stable visual ethno-differentiating features include anthropological features such as skin color, typical facial features, eye color, hair color, etc. In addition, ethnicity has dynamic

cultural and ideational characteristics: language; traditional life ways; historical territory on which the ethnic community emerged; and ideas about a shared national origin.

## 2. *Language and ethnic identity*

Language is the most significant in the list of ethno-differentiating features. The aim of our study is to identify the relationship between language and ethnic identity, as well as the factors influencing the establishment of this relationship. The sociocultural identity of the individual is formed in interaction with the society around him. Communication in the culture, society, family, at school, at the university, at work, requiring a common language, is one of the key factors in the formation of an individual's linguistic ethnicity (see, for example, Koopmans, Veit, 2014).

Ethnos is a "constructed community" (Bart, 2006: 33). The language as a collective memory of ethnic groups transmits and interprets the socio-cultural experience of generations accumulated during history and contributes to its reproduction in the continuing process of reconstruction of ethno-cultural identity. Language is more conservative than culture, due to which it retains the historical and cultural heritage of ethnic groups for a long time (Khilkhanova D., Khilkhanova, E., 2021). It preserves the memory of practices which have drifted out of everyday life, but are enshrined in historical memory, ethnic stereotypes, traditions, rites, customs, and features of ethnic mentality. As a medium of communication between the past and the present, general and special, language is a formative factor in the continuity of the communicative space of the ethnic group, the institutional stability of society, and its ethno-cultural identity.

Depending on the specific historical situation, ethno-differentiating markers may gain or lose in significance (Novoselova, Chernova, Katakova, 2021). For example, before World War II language was a key ethnic marker for the Poles, but during the period of socialism religion took its place. The language is also a more symbolic marker of the ethnic community of people. Even in cases where the people no longer use their traditional language in everyday life and no longer have sufficient knowledge of it for use in communication, they may still consider it as

an important marker that distinguishes them from representatives of other ethnic groups. For example, the ethnic assignment of modern Kalmyks according to the criterion of use of the Russian language is completely unsatisfactory. The vast majority of ethnic Kalmyks (except a few in some corners of the republic) speak Russian in daily life, only sometimes inserting Kalmyk words. However, the concept of a native language continues to be an integral part of their self-consciousness (Ubushaieva, 2014: 39).

The relationship between language and ethnicity is not unidirectional, but mutual. Not only does the initial proficiency in a distinctive language or dialect encourages a person to consider himself as a member of the corresponding ethnic group, but identification with ethnic community can encourage the mastery or use of a language that is considered as an "ethnic marker". The same process that takes place at the socio-psychological level also drives the process of forming the nation as a political community. In the latter case, bilingualism can be outcome: one language symbolizes political community, and the second marks ethnic distinctions within the political community. An example of this is the bilingualism of ethnic Russians living in the Ukraine, in the Baltic countries, and in other states formed on the territory of the former USSR. A special issue "Post-Soviet Identities: Ethnic, National, Linguistic, and Imperial" of the journal "Sociolinguistic Studies" (2015) is devoted to the problem of the relationship between language and ethnic identity in post-Soviet countries. The second language in the structure of the ethnic identity of Russians living in the post-Soviet republics is, for example, Kazakh in Kazakhstan, Latvian in Latvia. It can have a special ethno-differentiating function of symbolizing political loyalty, designating the status of an individual as a member of an ethnic community with whom one can effectively and without conflict communicate in certain socio-political conditions.

In a multi-ethnic society, the link between language and ethnicity is far from unambiguous. Above all, language is an attribute of the ethnic group. Even when some members of the ethnic group depart from their ethnic language, it still retains its role of an ethnic marker and

supports the person's commitment to live up to the ethno-cultural norms laid down since childhood (Temirgazina, 2013a, 2013b). However, self-identification of the individual as a representative of a certain ethnic group does not automatically imply a clearly positive connection with the language that is symbolically associated with this ethnic community.

### Methods and material

The main method of data collection in our study is a survey of young people whose parents belong to two different ethnic groups: Kazakhs, and Russians. The survey was conducted among 212 students of the 1-st, 2-nd and 3-rd courses of the Buketov Karaganda University and the Karaganda Medical University (Kazakhstan). The age of respondents ranged from 18 to 21 years.

This age group was chosen because the process of ethnic identification in cognitive and emotional terms is more-less completed by this age. The process of forming an ethnic identity of a child develops from diffused to realized forms and takes place in several stages. Emotional-evaluative motives of belonging to an ethnic community emerge during adolescence. It is at this age that the individual reaches a realized ethnic identity. Thus, young people aged 18–21 have completed the process of ethnic identification, they have certain ideas about themselves as part of some ethnic group. "Children tend to be similar to their parents, both through cultural transmission in families and genetic inheritance. This similarity extends to personality traits and cognitive abilities that are important for people's functioning in society and that determine the 'culture' of a nation or group" (Meisenberg, Kaul, 2010: 151).

The demographic part of the questionnaire included questions about the age, gender characteristics of the respondent, ethnicity of the parents. The main content of the questionnaire included 4 multiple choice questions. Then, the quantitative data were analyzed, summarized in order to identify patterns and trends showing the role of language as an ethno-differentiating parameter in the ethnic identification of a young person who was born in an inter-ethnic family.

### Results and discussion

Traditionally, social scientists have measured social integration using residential segregation (Gordon, 1964; Peach, 2005). "However, a growing number of papers consider a different measure of social integration: interethnic marriage" (Furtado, Theodoropoulos, 2008: 2). Many studies have examined the impact of inter-ethnic marriage on the processes of inter-ethnic integration, economic consequences, the impact on the education of children, etc. (Merton, 1941; Brien, 1997; Duncan, Trejo, 2007; Meng, Meurs, 2006). S. C. Miles explores the psychological aspects of inter-ethnic marriage in terms of family relationships (Miles, 2018).

Inter-ethnic marriages and families in Kazakhstan became the object of research in the works of S. K. Ualieva (2013, 2016, 2017) and A. Injigolian (2014). Ualieva paid considerable attention to the ethnic self-determination of Kazakhstanis who grew up in multi-ethnic families. This problem is extremely important for Kazakhstan, where the percentage of inter-ethnic unions is high. "Over the past three years, more than 10 % of all newborn Kazakhstanis have appeared in inter-ethnic unions. In 2011, 39,252 people were recorded in state statistics, and a year later the number of mestizos increased by more than 1,000 in Kazakhstan (40,298 children). In 2000, the number of children born in inter-ethnic unions did not exceed 35,000. In 2011, 372,544 children were born in Kazakhstan, 11 per cent of whom were born in inter-ethnic unions; in 2012, the total birth rate in the country increased by 2 per cent to 380,948 children, while the share of mestizos among all newborns also increased by 3 per cent compared to a year earlier" (Kaliaskarova-Musirova, 2013).

The most common in Kazakhstan, and, particularly in the Karaganda region, are mixed marriages between Kazakhs and Russians. That is why young people from Kazakh-Russian families were chosen for the survey. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.

Next, we examined the ethnic identification of young people related to the ethnicity of the father, mother, or both. The respondents had to answer the question "What ethnicity do you consider yourself to be?" Answer options: A. Paternal ethnicity. B. Maternal ethnicity. C. Dual

Table 1. Respondents from inter-ethnic families

Respondents from Kazakh-Russian families	Number	Percent
Total number of respondents	212	100%
From families with a Kazakh father and a Russian mother	123	58%
From families with a Russian father and a Kazakh mother	89	42%

Table 2. Ethnic identity of youth from bi-ethnic families

Ethnicity chosen by young people from multi-ethnic families	Number	Percent
Ethnicity by father	111	52,4%
Ethnicity by mother	77	36,3%
Two ethnicities (father and mother)	11	5,2%
Those who have not fully decided on the ethnicity (give the name for your ethnic status)	13	6,1%

ethnicity by father and mother. D. I have not fully decided on my ethnicity. Question D also asked for a name for their ethnic status. Results are presented in Table 2.

As we see, the larger number of respondents determines their ethnicity by father. 63 people out of 111, i.e. 56.75 % belong to families with a Kazakh father; 48 respondents, i.e. 43.2 % of the father's identity are Russian. This is due to the traditional idea of the predominant role of the father in the family for Kazakhs, including the definition of clan affiliation – *ruy* (literally 'clan') and, accordingly, ethnicity. The Russian mentality is also largely characterized by the stereotype of the father-head of the family.

Still, a large proportion of young people from inter-ethnic families are guided by the mother's ethnicity when choosing their ethnic identity. Their choice does not depend on her specific ethnicity: 48 % of respondents have a Kazakh mother, 52 % have a Russian mother, i.e. the data differ slightly. The choice of the mother's identity by children is governed by more general laws. L. N. Gumiliov in the article "Ethnogenesis and Ethnosphere" (1970) wrote that newborn children are "non-national." He formulated the concept of "ethnic field," important from his point of view to understand the close psychological relationship between mother and child. "The ethnic field is not concentrated in the bodies of

the child or mother, but it is manifested between them. The child makes contact with the mother... enters its ethnic field, which is modified later due to communication with the father, relatives and other children and all the people. But the field at the beginning of life is weak, and if the child is placed in a different ethnic environment, it is the field that will be reconstructed, but not his temperament, abilities and capabilities. The personality of the child is formed during the first 3–5 years of life" (Gumiliov, 1970: 48–49).

Scientists distinguish several types of ethnic identity (Sultanbaieva, 2010): mono-ethnic, bi-ethnic, and marginal. Mono-ethnic identity occurs in two subtypes. The first occurs when both parents in a family belong to the same ethnic group or when the person identifies with the culture of one of the parents (if the parents are of different nationalities, but of the same race). Most people grow into mono-ethnic identity of the first subtype. The mono-ethnic identity of the second subtype is possible in cases where in a multi-ethnic society a foreign group is regarded as having a higher status than the majority population. In this case a mixed-parentage person may choose to identify with the foreign ethnic group. The final result of identification with a foreign group is complete assimilation.

Bi-ethnic identity is characteristic of people who realize their affinity for two groups and have

competence in two cultures. Marginal identity is manifested in those people who are teetering between two cultures, without properly mastering the norms and values of either of them. The identified types of ethnic identity in various ways affect the person's behavior and the determination of his place in society.

In our sample, young people from mixed families overwhelmingly (188/88.7 %) have a mono-ethnic identity, 11/5.2 % – have a bi-ethnic identity, 13/6.1 % – have a marginal identity. Students with a bi-ethnic identity chose two names for their ethnicity, for example: *Kazakh and Russian*, *Russian and Kazakh*, *half Kazakh – half Russian*, etc.

Young people with marginal identities cannot determine their belonging to either of the two groups, as if being “outside” them. For their ethnicity, they choose the term *mestis*, literally “mestizo”, which is a common designation for people of mixed origin in Kazakh society. Some researchers apply this word only to children from interracial families; but Kazakhstanis use it in a broader meaning, using it for children born in marriage between Kazakhs and Tatars, Ukrainians and Poles, i.e., representatives of the same race (Kaliaskarova-Musirova, 2013; Ualieva, 2013). Three of our respondents also mentioned the name *mix*, apparently adopted from the English words *to mix*, *mixed*, metaphorically denoting the mixing of nationalities (see: Bakhtikireeva, Sinyachkin, et al., 2017; Akosheva, Shakaman, et al., 2019).

M. A. Zhigunova and E. M. Koptiaeva, who conducted a study of identity in inter-ethnic families in Omsk (Russia), note that every year the number of people who find it difficult to determine their ethnicity clearly, i.e. have marginal

ethnicity, is growing. They write about their ethnicity: “I don't know, neither one nor another,” “it's hard to say, a lot of blood is mixed in us”; or point out the mixed and multiple identity: (“metis”, “hybrid”, “half-Russian”, “half-blooded”, “half Russian – half Tatar”, “Russian Kazakh”, “Russian Ukrainian”, “Russian, but by origin–Belarusian”, “I am German by passport, but I consider myself Russian”, etc.) (Zhigunova, Koptiaeva, 2016: 101–102).

The next question was: “What is the main reason for choosing your ethnicity?” We tried to find out which parameter most of all influences the choice of a particular ethnicity by the respondents. 5 answer options were offered. The results are shown in Table 3.

The most significant motive for the Kazakh youth in choosing ethnic identity is mastering the language – 65/30.7 %. Other factors of almost equal importance are, firstly, anthropological parameters – external similarities with the father or mother (56/26.4 %) and, secondly, emotional and psychological reasons (51/24.1 %), which most often sound like this: *I did not want to offend mom/dad; like the father/mother's relatives*.

The fourth most important factor influencing the ethnic identification of young people is culture (24/11.3 %), represented in behavior, traditions, customs, rites, history, and religion. From the viewpoint of young Kazakhstanis the least significant factor is living in a country with a dominant ethnos. Only 16/7.5 % chose this answer, which, perhaps, indicates the ethnic tolerance of Kazakhs as the dominant ethnic group. This conclusion is somewhat contradicted by the opinion of K. Geben, M. Ramonienè, who investigated the identity of Lithuanian Poles:

Table 3. Ethno-differentiating parameters of identification of youth from inter-ethnic families

Motives for the determination of ethnic identity by young people from mixed families	Number	Percent
Appearance (I look like Kazakh/Russian)	56	26,4%
Culture	24	11,3%
Language	65	30,7%
Living in a country with a dominant ethnicity	16	7,5%
Emotional and psychological reasons	51	24,1%

“The interview material reveals the importance of the interrelationship between ethnicity and citizenship as well as between identity and the place of residence” (2015: 243).

As mentioned above, ethnic and linguistic identities do not always coincide. One of the social spheres in which the two sometimes diverge and difficulties arise with the choice of linguistic identity is interethnic marriage. Children who grew up in such a marriage are forced to choose the language of the mother or father, or both.

Table 4 shows the results of the survey of Kazakhstani youth by language identity.

There are two opposing views on the relationship between language and ethnicity in science. Some scientists consider this connection obligatory, undeniable, and fixed by continuity between generations. The preservation of a true ethnic identity, in their opinion, is impossible without the traditional language associated with it. The second constructivist view holds that the loss of communication in the ethnic language does not always lead to the loss of ethnic identity (Kuznetsova, 2011: 104). As noted by E. I. Makarova, when some members of the ethnic group no longer use their ethnic language, it still retains the role of an ethnic symbol that reinforces person’s commitment to conform to the ethno-cultural norms laid down in him/her since childhood (Makarova, 2009: 187; see also: Rakhimzhanov, Akosheva, et al., 2020).

Almost equal numbers of participants in our survey indicated their language identity as their father’s – 66/31 % and their mother’s – 70/36 %. Primary speech interaction skills are formed in the child’s first or native language. This is usually the language of the mother or father, i.e., the language that is spoken in the family. It is the medium through which the primary socialization and culture of the person is carried out, as well as familiarization with the norms, values, traditions of the ethnic group. In mono-ethnic families, there is no conflict between ethnic and linguistic identities, but in multi-ethnic families, language identity tends towards the language of one of the parents. The parameters affecting this process are shown in Table 5. Note also that 76/34 % of respondents are bilinguals who have identified both the mother’s language and the father’s language as their native languages.

Bilingual linguistic identity, of course, most closely corresponds to the integral nature of the interethnic family, that is, the language performs an integrating function in this case. Language communication in multi-ethnic families is carried out using one or both languages. It is a complex system consisting of a number of communication networks that unite the family into a single whole. Table 5 summarizes the factors determining linguistic identification.

As a result of studies conducted in the early 2000s among Kazakh students, T. G. Ste-

Table 4. Linguistic identity of young Kazakhstanis from mixed families

Choice of Language Identity	Number	Percent
Father’s language	66	31%
Mother’s language	70	33%
Two languages (father and mother)	76	36%

Table 5. Factors determining the linguistic identification of young people from inter-ethnic families

Motives for linguistic identification of youth from inter-ethnic families	Number	Percent
Language proficiency since childhood	212	100%
Dominant language in the environment	80	38%
Perspective in terms of professional self-realization	77	36%
Emotional reasons (like/dislike)	8	3.7%

Table 6. Concordance between ethnic and linguistic identities of young people from inter-ethnic families

Match between ethnic and linguistic identity	Number	Percentage
Concordance	185	87%
Discorcondance	27	13%

fanenko came to the conclusion that the level of identity is determined primarily by the preference for the language rather than its actual use (2004). In other words, language identity is not directly related to the language practice of an individual, but depends on his preference for a particular language, on the cultural and symbolic role of the language. A person can be a bi- and polylingual, speak equally well in two or three or four languages, but consider one or two languages corresponding to his ethnicity as his native languages, that is the mother's language and/or the father's language in a mixed family situation.

An important source of linguistic identity is language proficiency since childhood, 100 % of our respondents indicated this motive. It reflects the natural, "painless" process of mastering the language, ethno-cultural norms and values embedded in it.

Social determinants of language identification include language status, number of speakers, and institutional support. Members of the ethnic community see language as an important dimension of this identity and perceive it as supporting their group's ethno-linguistic viability. The latter is required for the group to survive and succeed in a multi-ethnic society. Therefore, for young people at the beginning of a career who receive higher education, and professional development, "dominant language in the environment (80/38 %) and "perspective for professional self-realization" (77/36 %) are important parameters in linguistic identity. In Kazakhstan, which has a policy of multilingual education from primary school to university, it is necessary to know the Kazakh language as the official language and Russian as the language of inter-ethnic communication. Knowledge of English also provides a significant advantage in higher education and for professional purposes. At the state level, knowledge of Kazakh, Russian

and English is supported by the trilingualism program (Khamitova, Orazalinova, et al., 2015). In our opinion, the respondents' choice of rational motivations for linguistic identity is connected with these circumstances. Emotional reasons for linguistic identity were given by only 8/3.7 %. This indicates a predominantly rational understanding of the choice by these 18–21 years old people.

Table 6 presents the concordance between ethnic and linguistic identity, that is, whether they coincide or not in the self-identification of an individual from an interethnic family.

The high frequency of concordance shows how important language is for the ethnic identification of a young man or a girl in the difficult situation of an inter-ethnic family. If identities coincide, we can conclude that language identity plays an important role in the self-determination of a young person's ethnicity, and if there is a discrepancy, we can conclude that the language factor "did not work" in the identification process and other ethno-differentiating factors were more important for the individual.

The high rate of concordance between linguistic and ethnic identity, 185/87 %, shows, that language is the most important factor of ethnic identity in an inter-ethnic family. Discordant cases are only 27/13 %. In other words, for a minority of youth from inter-ethnic families, the awareness of themselves as Kazakhs or Russians is not connected with the language: identifying themselves as Kazakhs, they consider the Russian language to be their native language and vice versa. Language is not an absolute ethno-differentiating parameter, as a number of researchers have pointed out (Makarova, 2009; Kuznetsova, 2011). It can be argued that the connection between ethnic identity and the ethnic language is not totally rigid. It is dynamic, and the changes taking place are associated with changes in the social field and environment.

## Conclusion

A survey of Kazakhstani youth 18–21 years old, born in Kazakh–Russian inter-ethnic families, showed that a significant part of them (52.4 %) report a mono-ethnic identity by choosing the ethnicity of the father. This may be because of traditional views on the dominant role of the father in the family (111). 77 (36 %) choose the mother’s ethnicity in their ethnic identification, which is due, in the opinion of L. N. Gumiliov, to what he called the “ethnic field” attributed to the psychological connection between the mother and the child.

A small proportion of young people have bi-ethnic or marginal ethnicity. The first is characterized by the development of fundamentally new, peculiar hybrid forms, characteristic only of inter-ethnic families, the formation of a new sub-ethnic identity (Zhigunova, Remmler, 2015: 19). In other words, different ethnic cultures coexist peacefully, intertwine bizarrely. With marginal ethnicity, the individual’s consciousness combines the ethno-cultural characteristics of parents with a significant difference in culture, religion, and language; that is, the ethnic identity of the person is characterized by ambivalence (Zhigunova, Remmler, 2015: 19).

We also revealed that the linguistic identity of the vast majority of Kazakh youth coincides with their ethnic identity and is not in conflict

with it. This confirms the thesis of the significance of language as an ethno-differentiating parameter.

Interethnic marriages worldwide tend to grow; therefore there is growing interest of scientists in this phenomenon and its positive consequences ethnic tolerance, being one of them. Inter-ethnic families can be seen as an indicator of inter-ethnic relations, as well as an important channel for the exchange of ethno-cultural information and as an environment for the formation of new ethno-cultural traditions and new sub-ethnic identities. Such families develop a special microenvironment, creating favorable conditions for inter-ethnic communication and the formation of ethnic tolerance.

Our results are limited, since only students are the object of sociolinguistic research. The student stratum is distinguished not only by a high level of education, but also by a different system of values, a different psychology from other youth strata. For more general conclusions on the ethnic and linguistic identification of young people from interethnic families, it is necessary to study other social groups of young people. Nevertheless, the available results of this study can form the basis for the development of an effective ethnic and linguistic policy in the youth student environment, the purpose of which is to form a tolerant attitude towards ethnic and linguistic problems and conflicts.

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