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Special Issue Reprint

Role of Intercultural Communication in Multicultural or Culturally Diverse Societies

Edited by
Anastassia Zabrodskaja

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Guest Editor

Anastassia Zabrodskaja

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About the Editor

Anastassia Zabrodskaja

Anastassia Zabrodskaja (PhD, 2009) is Professor of Intercultural Communication and Head of the Communication Management Master's programme at Tallinn University Baltic Film, Media and Arts School (Tallinn, Estonia). She is Executive Director of the European Masters in Intercultural Communication programme. Her primary research interests are identity, language contacts and linguistic landscapes, and she teaches courses focusing on intercultural communication. Professor Anastassia Zabrodskaja serves as the Regional Representative for Europe on the Executive Committee of the International Association of Language and Social Psychology (IALSP), where she is also the President-Elect. Professor Zabrodskaja serves as a chair in the International and Intercultural Communication section of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA). She is an expert in the social psychology of language, and has been involved in research projects on the development of the Estonian linguistic environment, bilingual speech and aspects of ethnolinguistic vitality, where her roles as a (main) project investigator have included scientific research to analyse language dynamics and change in Estonia. Her research has focused on identity dynamics and declared language behaviour and language ideologies among both ethnolinguistically mixed and ethnolinguistically monolingual families in Estonia in order to understand intergenerational language transmission processes. She explores the acculturation experience of international students in Estonia, and is experienced in using qualitative methods in the field of sociolinguistics and intercultural communication.

Preface

This Special Issue (SI) aims to advance contemporary understandings of intercultural communication by foregrounding multilingualism, digital mediation, and sociocultural diversity across a range of global contexts. It brings together interdisciplinary studies that examine how individuals, families, institutions, and societies negotiate identity, language practices, and power relations in an increasingly interconnected, yet asymmetrically structured, world. A central objective of the SI is to de-Westernize the field by amplifying voices, contexts, and epistemologies from non-Western and Global South regions—particularly Kazakhstan, Jordan, China, and Latvia—thus challenging dominant knowledge hierarchies and frameworks in intercultural communication studies. By addressing topics such as family language policy, natural translation, social media discourse, youth identity, media representation, and institutional inclusion, the SI explores how intercultural communication is shaped by digital technologies, migration, education reforms, and geopolitical tensions. Through these varied lenses, the SI underscores the role of communication not only as an interactional process but also as a site of power, resistance, and community building. Ultimately, this SI contributes to broader scholarly and policy discussions on how intercultural competence, linguistic diversity, and inclusive knowledge production can support social cohesion, educational equity, and democratic participation in multicultural societies.

Anastassia Zabrodskaja
Guest Editor

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Editorial

De-Westernizing Intercultural Communication: Power, Language, Identity, and Digital Mediation Across Contexts

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1. Decentering Western Paradigms in Intercultural Communication

In an era marked by intensified globalization, migration, and rapid technological change, intercultural communication is no longer confined to isolated interactions across national or ethnic boundaries. It increasingly shapes the daily experiences of individuals, families, institutions, and communities negotiating multilingual, multicultural, and digitally mediated environments (Jackson, 2023). This Special Issue (SI) responds to these evolving dynamics by offering diverse theoretical and empirical perspectives that reimagine intercultural communication as a plural, contested, and power-laden process. Central to this volume is a commitment to decentering Western-centric paradigms that have long dominated the field. Historically, intercultural communication scholarship has privileged Western epistemologies and methodological frameworks, often overlooking the complexities of local realities shaped by colonial histories, Indigenous knowledge systems, and region-specific sociopolitical contexts. This de-Westernizing agenda builds on calls from scholars such as Dervin (2011), Nakayama and Halualani (2012), and Miike (2006) who have critiqued the field's epistemic asymmetries and advocated for a pluriversal reimagining of intercultural theory. By incorporating these critiques, this SI aligns with a growing body of work seeking to pluralize knowledge production and decenter the universalizing tendencies of Western frameworks. This SI challenges that dominance by foregrounding underrepresented perspectives, particularly from the Global South. This SI is structured around several interlocking themes—namely, multilingualism and language ideologies, digital mediation and platform politics, youth and generational identity formation, and decolonial knowledge practices. These themes unfold across micro (families, individuals), meso (educational and corporate institutions), and macro (media and policy) levels, illustrating how power, identity, and communicative agency are negotiated in context-specific and translocal ways.

The opening contribution by Yingchun Sun and Yi Shi sets the theoretical foundation for this shift. They argue that decolonizing intercultural communication requires more than critique; it demands the creation of new epistemic spaces where non-Western scholars can assert theoretical agency. Their concept of "knowledge strategies" proposes a triadic model of intercultural communication, where community building joins interaction and exchange as a central pillar. This model expands the field's focus from transactional communication to relational and emancipatory practices rooted in local ways of knowing. Subsequent articles apply this decolonial, multilingual, and multi-scalar lens across a range of contexts. At the micro level, several studies investigate how families and individuals negotiate multilingualism and identity. Yeshan Qian examines online forums where multilingual parents engage in informal language policymaking, revealing how digital platforms mediate ideological debates around child-rearing and linguistic choice. Similarly, Licari and Perotto explore how "natural translation" within family language policy in Germany and

Italy functions not as a communicative deficit but as a metalinguistic resource that shapes bilingual development.

Digital communication plays a critical role in the everyday intercultural practices of youth. Fan Cao and Vanessa Ruiling Yu analyze how international students use multilingual and multimodal strategies to cope with face-threatening conflicts on WeChat. Xiaotian Zhang's study of Sina Weibo introduces a gendered dimension, showing that women more frequently engage in intercultural appreciation and curiosity than their male counterparts. In Jordan, Abdallah et al. find that cultural norms around restraint influence how young adults express communication self-efficacy on social media, complicating conventional understandings of competence. Kazakhstan features prominently in this SI, highlighting the layered interplay of language, identity, and policy in post-Soviet contexts. Zharkynbekova et al. explore how youth engage with state-promoted trilingualism and digital media, blending Kazakh, Russian, and English to construct hybrid identities. Aimoldina and Akynova investigate corporate multilingualism, revealing the functional and symbolic roles of these languages in professional communication amidst an underdeveloped policy landscape. Another study by Zharkynbekova and colleagues considers the moral and cognitive dimensions of intercultural practice among students, providing insight into the tension between tradition and modernity in a multiethnic society.

The macro-level implications of intercultural communication are addressed through media analysis and institutional research. Burr's study of Latvian language reform protests shows how journalistic framing shapes public discourse on minority language rights, often flattening linguistic complexity. Qudah et al. examine how Arabic-language reporting by Deutsche Welle influences Syrian migrants' civic participation and identity formation in Germany, highlighting the media's role in diasporic engagement. The SI concludes with a study by Golubeva et al. at a Minority-Serving Institution in the United States. Investigating students' perceptions of intercultural competence, the authors propose co-curricular interventions that bridge structural policy and affective experience. Their findings underscore the need for intercultural education that is both inclusive and responsive, echoing broader themes across the volume.

Together, these contributions trace a coherent arc—from households and social media platforms to classrooms, boardrooms, and international media—showing how intercultural communication unfolds across interconnected yet asymmetrical spaces. Language, identity, and power are not static variables but rather relational forces that are constantly negotiated in and through everyday interaction. While the SI offers rich thematic and geographic diversity, it is not without limitations. Several studies rely on small-scale qualitative data or discourse analysis, limiting their generalizability. Moreover, certain regions—particularly Sub-Saharan Africa and Indigenous American contexts—remain underrepresented. The emphasis on youth and digital media, though vital, risks sidelining the experiences of older or digitally disconnected populations. Similarly, most institutional case studies are localized and would benefit from comparative or longitudinal designs. Finally, while the idea of "community building" as a third mode of intercultural communication is promising, it requires further conceptual elaboration and empirical validation. Addressing these limitations calls not only for broader geographic inclusion but also for methodological innovation. The authors of future studies should embrace mixed methods, transdisciplinary frameworks, and critical digital ethnography to more holistically capture the fluid, intersectional, and often invisible dynamics of intercultural engagement—particularly in underrepresented communities.

Looking forward, the authors of future studies should deepen and expand upon the multilingual, decolonial, and digital foundations laid in this SI. This includes prioritizing comparative and transregional studies, especially in underexplored areas such as Indige-

nous territories, small island nations, and rural communities. Methodologically, there is a pressing need for ethnographic, participatory, and longitudinal work that centers marginalized voices and traces communicative practices over time. Researchers must also critically interrogate the roles of AI, platform governance, and digital surveillance in shaping intercultural dialogue—especially in migrant and multilingual contexts. For instance, platform algorithms shape which intercultural voices are amplified or silenced; AI-driven translation tools mediate communication unevenly across languages and registers; and surveillance infrastructures disproportionately affect marginalized users. These technological filters introduce new asymmetries in global intercultural dialogue, demanding critical scrutiny. Conceptually, the field should move toward frameworks that explicitly link intercultural communication with social justice, sustainability, and global solidarity. Intercultural competence must be understood not merely as knowledge acquisition, but as a dynamic capacity for ethical coexistence—rooted in reflexivity, equity, and mutual transformation (i.e., Zhou & Pilcher, 2018). This SI ultimately expands the field's epistemological and methodological horizons, offering a compelling vision for more inclusive, decolonized, and globally relevant intercultural communication studies. It reminds us that communication across cultures is not just about understanding difference but about reimagining how we live together in a deeply interconnected yet unequal world. As the field moves forward, scholars, educators, and institutional leaders must take active steps to decolonize their practices—not only by diversifying perspectives but by reshaping the infrastructures of research, publication, and pedagogy to foster more just, dialogic, and pluriversal futures.

2. Articles in This Special Issue

Yingchun Sun and Yi Shi examine how non-Western scholars can reshape intercultural communication studies by challenging Western-centric knowledge hierarchies. Drawing on Michel Foucault's concept of power/knowledge, the authors argue that knowledge systems are inherently entwined with power dynamics and that the contemporary global landscape—a "dual structure" marked by simultaneous centralization/decentralization and homogenization/hybridization—creates both challenges and opportunities. To manage this landscape, they propose "knowledge strategies" that empower Indigenous scholars in non-Western contexts to produce and assert their own theories through global-level perspectives, not merely as local adaptations. Importantly, the authors introduce a third level of intercultural communication—community building—alongside the conventional daily interaction and cultural exchange, emphasizing the creation of shared spaces and collective identity as essential to decolonizing knowledge and achieving equitable dialogue between Western and Indigenous systems.

Yeshan Qian investigates how parents discuss raising bilingual or multilingual children across four active Facebook groups and an Internet forum. Analyzing 179 posts and comments from September 2022 to November 2023, the study authors first identify key discussion themes—such as sharing educational resources and strategies for language transmission—before applying a critical discourse and values analysis to unearth deeper language ideologies. The research reveals that parents overwhelmingly perceive bilingualism as beneficial, often citing cognitive, social, and professional advantages. Many advocate for structured methods such as the One Parent–One Language (OPOL) approach and emphasize the importance of maintaining minority or heritage languages at home. English tends to serve as the lingua franca across discussions; however, specific references to languages such as Chinese, Spanish, French, Korean, and Japanese highlight efforts to preserve cultural identity and heritage. Ultimately, the study illustrates how online plat-

forms reflect and shape parental beliefs and family language planning, offering valuable insights for educators and policymakers on supporting multilingual households.

Licari and Perotto explore how natural translation—informal, untrained translation performed in daily family communication—serves as a key mediating tool in Russian-speaking heritage children's bilingual development within distinct family language policy (FLP) frameworks in Germany and Italy. Through a semi-structured survey conducted in spring 2023 with 60 families, the researchers examined how FLP strategies, such as One Parent–One Language (OPOL) or mixed approaches, shape the frequency and context of translation activities. They found that in bi-ethnic Italian families, where OPOL predominates, natural translation is more frequent and valued as a communication aid. In contrast, in mono-ethnic German families, FLP tends to separate language use by context, leading to less reliance on translation—even though children report using it more than parents acknowledge. The preference for oral over written translation and the gap between parental and children's perceptions highlight translation not as a compensatory deficit but as a metalinguistic resource. The authors conclude that incorporating translation training—such as through parallel texts—could enhance bilingual awareness and yield more balanced bilingual development.

Rania Abdel-Qader Abdallah, Islam Habis Mohammad Hatamleh, Yousef Sami Nemer Abu Eid, and Mohammad Mahroum analyse how verbal and non-verbal communication abilities influence young adults' social media engagement in Jordan, while examining how cultural restraint—a reflection of societal norms limiting open expression—modulates this relationship. Drawing on Self-Efficacy and Social Capital theories, the researchers surveyed 415 Jordanian participants aged 18–25 and analyzed the data using Structural Equation Modeling with SmartPLS. Their findings reveal a strong positive link between communication skills and social media usage, but also show that cultural restraint significantly weakens this effect, suggesting that even those with strong communication abilities may limit their online participation due to cultural expectations. This finding highlights the importance of culturally sensitive strategies: boosting communication competence alone may not suffice in contexts where societal norms promote restraint.

Fan Cao and Vanessa Ruiling Yu investigate how impoliteness, or "face attacks," unfolds in multilingual, multimodal group chats among international students on WeChat at a Chinese university. Drawing on theories of face and impoliteness, the authors analyze a conflict over the use of dormitory washing machines, showing how students used a combination of text, images, emojis, and code-switching between English and Chinese to assert and respond to face-threatening acts. The study highlights that impoliteness in digital interactions is not limited to language alone but is enriched by visual and multimodal strategies, shaped by group dynamics and linguistic diversity. To sum up, the research reveals how digital communication enables complex expressions of conflict, emphasizing the need to consider multimodality and multilingualism in the study of online discourse.

Xiaotian Zhang discusses how Chinese users express intercultural attitudes through posts on the social media platform Sina Weibo. Analyzing 2421 posts from 2012 to 2022, the study authors investigate sentiment (positive, neutral, or negative), intercultural attitude dimensions (e.g., curiosity, ethnocentrism, and culture shock), and cultural themes, distinguishing between "Big C" culture (e.g., history and art) and "small c" culture (e.g., values and behaviors). Their findings demonstrate that women posted more frequently and positively than men, often expressing curiosity and appreciation for other cultures, while men tended to be more neutral or ethnocentric. Women's posts focused on tangible cultural aspects such as food and interpersonal relationships; in comparison, men were more interested in abstract topics such as belief systems and history. The study authors conclude that microblogging offers a valuable lens into everyday intercultural engagement

and highlight the need for gender-sensitive strategies in intercultural education, aiming to reduce ethnocentrism and support cultural adaptation.

Sholpan Zharkynbekova, Zukhra Shakhputova, Bakhyt Galiyeva, and Almasbek Absadyk investigate how cultural and ethnic diversity in Kazakhstan shapes the values of university students and affects their intercultural communication. Drawing on Rokeach's and Schwartz's theories of human values, the authors used a mixed-methods approach to examine how students adjust to traditional and modern influences in a multicultural context. The findings show that while global trends impact youth perspectives, traditional values—especially those centered on family—remain dominant, reflecting a life model rooted in harmony and stability. The study also reveals that language proficiency plays a key role in broadening students' social interactions and fostering tolerance, adaptability, and achievement-oriented attitudes. These insights are significant for developing educational, social, and legislative initiatives that promote intercultural dialogue and social cohesion in Kazakhstan's diverse society.

Aimoldina and Akynova investigate how multilingualism functions within Kazakhstan's corporate environment and its impact on intercultural business communication. Drawing on interviews with mid-level managers from international companies, the study highlights the dynamic interplay between Kazakh, Russian, and English in professional contexts. Russian dominates informal and regional interactions, Kazakh holds a growing role in official and managerial domains, while English is essential for international engagement. Code-switching is a common practice, particularly in tech sectors, where English terms blend into Kazakh and Russian discourse. Despite government-funded initiatives and corporate training programs, formal language education often fails to meet the practical needs of the business sector, and clear corporate language policies remain largely absent. The article also underscores the importance of cultural competence, as professionals cope with differing communication styles across global partners. Ultimately, the study authors argue that multilingualism is not only a practical necessity but also a reflection of national identity and global readiness, calling for more context-sensitive language strategies and culturally aware training to enhance Kazakhstan's international business communication.

Sholpan Zharkynbekova, Zukhra Shakhputova, Olga Anichshenko, and Zhazira Agabekova demonstrate how young people in Kazakhstan manage a multilingual environment shaped by state-promoted trilingualism (Kazakh, Russian, and English), globalization, and digital culture. Drawing on a dataset of 154 social media posts and interviews with 48 young individuals across various regions, the study findings reveal dynamic language practices, including frequent code-switching, hybrid word formation, and playful speech patterns. These linguistic choices reflect more than just communication preferences—they function as tools for identity construction, signaling both global connectivity and local belonging. The authors emphasize that the creative blending of languages, often influenced by digital communication norms such as emojis and internet slang, highlights the intercultural competence of Kazakhstani youth. Ultimately, the study provides valuable insights for language policy and education by illustrating how young people actively shape and negotiate their multilingual realities in a rapidly changing sociolinguistic landscape.

Solvita Burr illustrates how online news media depict written protest messages in response to Latvia's transition from minority-language (especially Russian) education to instruction solely in Latvian. Analyzing 77 online articles from Latvian, Russian, and European sources published between 2004 and 2024, the study authors explore how the media report on placards and slogans used during protests. The findings reveal that journalists often describe or quote slogans without specifying their original language or providing deeper contextual meaning. Media narratives tend to focus on the number and identity of protesters—particularly their age and political affiliations—while frequently

omitting linguistic nuances. Two dominant portrayals emerge: one framing the Russian-speaking community as unified in resisting language reforms, and another emphasizing the community's desire for the freedom to choose the language of instruction. The study authors identify four reporting styles and highlight a tendency among the Latvian media to maintain a neutral tone, while Russian outlets more explicitly advocate for the preservation of Russian-language education. Ultimately, the study underscores how the media selectively frames protest messages, shaping public understanding of language policy reforms in Latvia.

Mohammad Qudah, Husain A. Murad, Mohammed Habes, and Mokhtar Elareshi present the impact of Deutsche Welle's Arabic-language reporting on Syrian immigrants living in Germany. Through a survey of 207 participants, the study authors found that DW is widely trusted among this community, particularly by older and more educated individuals, and serves as a key source of balanced, comprehensive information about the Syrian crisis. Exposure to DW significantly enhanced participants' understanding of the conflict's historical, humanitarian, and geopolitical dimensions and also influenced their behavior, encouraging social media engagement and humanitarian support for Syria. Grounded in Uses and Gratifications Theory, the research highlights how media consumption fulfills informational and social needs, ultimately shaping perceptions and civic action. The study findings underscore the role of international media in diaspora engagement, with the authors acknowledging limitations such as its narrow focus on one outlet and one migrant group.

Irina Golubeva, David Di Maria, Adam Holden, Katherine Kohler, and Mary Ellen Wade reveal insights into a comprehensive survey conducted at a culturally diverse Minority-Serving Institution (MSI) in the United States. The study, involving 820 students across undergraduate, graduate, and non-degree programs, explores students' experiences of inclusiveness, intergroup relations, and the development of competences necessary for democratic culture and intercultural communication—framed through the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC). Most students perceived the campus as diverse and inclusive, particularly regarding gender and sexual orientation, though comfort levels varied by context, with residence halls showing lower inclusiveness, especially for ethnically diverse students. While many students reported forming friendships with peers of similar backgrounds (a phenomenon known as homophily), a significant portion still lacked close social connections. The study authors also found that while students highly valued competences such as empathy, critical thinking, and intercultural understanding, there was a noticeable gap between what they considered important and the opportunities the institution provided to develop these areas. These findings informed the creation of a targeted co-curricular program called InterEqual, aimed at strengthening intercultural communication and enhancing students' sense of belonging. Although the study is limited to a single institution and lacks qualitative narratives, it offers valuable, evidence-based insights for higher education leaders seeking to create more inclusive, culturally responsive campus environments.

3. Pedagogical and Practical Implications: Toward Inclusive and Decolonial Intercultural Communication

This SI offers critical pedagogical and practical insights for scholars, educators, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to advance more inclusive and decolonial approaches to intercultural communication. Drawing on contributions that span diverse geographies, linguistic contexts, and institutional settings, the articles underscore the need to fundamentally rethink how intercultural competence is taught, practiced, and institutionalized. Pedagogically, the contributions call for a reimagining of intercultural communication

education through pluriversal frameworks that actively decenter Western epistemologies. Curricula must engage with Indigenous knowledge systems, local communicative norms, and power-sensitive perspectives, particularly from the Global South. Intercultural competence should no longer be conceived merely as knowledge or skill acquisition but rather as an ethical and relational practice rooted in community building, reflexivity, and mutual transformation. This shift requires embedding multilingual literacy, critical digital literacy, and gender-sensitive pedagogy into teaching strategies. Furthermore, the methodological diversity showcased in the SI—including discourse analysis, digital ethnography, and mixed-methods approaches—offers valuable models for training students in context-responsive and critically engaged research.

Practically, the SI provides actionable insights for institutions and organizations operating in multilingual, multicultural, and digitally mediated environments. In educational and policy contexts, supporting family language planning, promoting inclusive language education, and developing responsive language policies are crucial steps. In corporate and media settings, fostering culturally competent communication and context-sensitive multilingualism can bridge gaps in professional and civic engagement. The emphasis on youth digital practices, workplace communication, and migrant media consumption further illustrates the need for cross-sectoral strategies that reflect lived intercultural realities. Institutions of higher education, in particular, are encouraged to implement co-curricular programs that cultivate democratic values, empathy, and intercultural understanding among diverse student populations. Together, these pedagogical and practical implications signal a shift toward a more equitable, participatory, and socially responsive vision of intercultural communication. As this SI argues, decolonizing the field is not merely an academic endeavor but a transformative process that demands engagement across educational, institutional, and community levels. By foregrounding underrepresented voices, embracing methodological innovation, and connecting intercultural communication to broader goals of social justice and global solidarity, the field can move closer to realizing its emancipatory potential.

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Review

"Knowledge Strategies" for Indigenous Studies on Intercultural Communication in Non-Western Countries in the Global Power Structure

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Abstract: According to Michel Foucault's power/knowledge theory, knowledge is not produced in a vacuum; the construction of any knowledge system implicitly contains power relations. The "knowledge strategies" for Indigenous studies on intercultural communication should evolve and improve in response to shifts in the global power structure. With the development of globalization and the evolution of communication technologies, this study interprets the current global power structure as a "dual structure" in which the international society and the world society coexist and develop together. This structure leads to a complex trend of simultaneous "centralization" and "decentralization", as well as "homogenization" and "hybridization" in the global cultural order. For scholars from non-Western countries, Indigenous studies on intercultural communication need to interpret the new global power structure, expanding their research perspectives and topics to a global dimension. This approach links Indigenous conceptual resources and methodologies with an open and diverse global cultural order. This study proposes "knowledge strategies" for Indigenous studies on intercultural communication in non-Western countries and introduces a third level of significance for intercultural communication beyond daily interaction and cultural interaction: community building. Regarding the research purpose, this study aims to provide a new perspective for the study of intercultural communication theory, promoting an equal dialogue between Western and non-Western knowledge systems of intercultural communication, and enhancing the inclusiveness and humanistic awareness of this discipline.

Keywords: intercultural communication; global power structure; world society; Indigenous studies

1. Introduction

As an essential component of human communication activities, intercultural communication is indispensable among individuals, groups, and nations. Intercultural communication helps maintain the balance within social structures and systems, fostering the development and evolution of human culture. Specifically, based on the nature of human cultural exchanges, intercultural communication refers to the information exchange activities among social members from different cultural backgrounds and involves the diffusion and transformation of various cultural elements globally. Therefore, existing research indicates that intercultural communication has two levels of significance: first, at the level of daily communication, it primarily refers to the misreading, adjustment, and adaptation of social members from different cultural backgrounds in daily interaction; second, at the level of human cultural exchanges, it mainly refers to the integration, interaction, and conflict among significantly different grand cultural systems (Sun 2015).

As an academic field, intercultural communication emerged in the United States in the 1940s. For over half a century, intercultural communication has primarily evolved in Western countries, developing into a discipline with a unique theoretical framework and research topics by integrating knowledge and practices from various humanities

disciplines. Intercultural communication is a discipline that studies communication across different cultures and social groups or how culture affects communication. It describes the wide range of communication processes and problems that naturally appear within an organization or social context made up of individuals from different religious, social, ethnic, and educational backgrounds. In this sense, it seeks to understand how people from different countries and cultures act, communicate, and perceive the world around them (Lauring 2011).

The development of intercultural communication research in the United States and Europe since the late 1940s was confronted with the political and cultural demands of spreading Western culture abroad. Its academic foundation is rooted in Western social conditions and cultural traditions, and it has sometimes, knowingly or unknowingly, served as a tool for colonial assimilation of Indigenous groups and sparking Western curiosity. Moreover, in the field of intercultural communication, the dominance of English presents certain limitations. Researchers may tend to use English literature and data for analysis and argumentation, overlooking research resources and perspectives from other languages and cultures (Guo and Beckett 2007; Ives 2009; Kaplan 1993). Consequently, the results of intercultural communication studies may be more inclined to reflect the cultural characteristics and values of English-speaking countries. This partiality can lead to research outcomes that fail to comprehensively and objectively reflect the diversity and complexity of global cultures.

As a result, some scholars proposed the approach of indigenization in their studies of intercultural communication. Indigenization refers to the process of making the discipline sensitive to cultural nuances and social reality. Specifically, it is a process of using the Western social science system as a reference and overcoming its limitations from an Indigenous perspective to adapt to local realities and solve local problems (Alatas 1993). The background of this approach was the structural dominance of the West in social sciences since modern times. Most of the theories and methodologies in social sciences were based on Western knowledge systems, which restricted the independent knowledge production and expression of non-Western countries. Boroujerdi (2002) pointed out that the indigenization movement of social sciences began to gain momentum in the late 1970s as a postcolonial phenomenon. Related studies by Kim (2010), Chang et al. (2006), and Miike (2006) have discussed the uniqueness of Asian cultures and the indigenization of intercultural communication studies in Asia.

The Indigenous studies discussed here are different from the indigenization of a discipline. Indigenization emphasizes the use of Western knowledge as a frame of reference and the modification of Western knowledge from an Indigenous perspective to fit the local situation. In contrast, Indigenous studies stem from the "self-consciousness" of local researchers in practicing academic subjectivity and emphasize that knowledge is historical, contextual, and strategic. Therefore, Indigenous studies can uncover "knowledge strategies" that continuously create new concepts and adapt to changing environments. This leads to a knowledge system that effectively expresses the uniqueness and human values of Indigenous cultures while reconstructing their cultural identity (Lamaison and Bourdieu 1986). Existing Indigenous studies on intercultural communication mainly focus on the cultural conflicts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the modernization process, the cultural shock and adaptation of Indigenous people, etc. (Liddicoat 2009; Alexander et al. 2014; Mendoza and Kinefuchi 2016). This paper holds the view that for the vast majority of non-Western countries, Indigenous studies on intercultural communication are not simply "localization". Their ultimate aim is to reconstruct paradigms, research topics, and practical implications of intercultural communication to form a knowledge system with both local specificity and global universality. Specifically, first, it is necessary to avoid Orientalism in reverse, which means overlooking other cultural perspectives and rejecting dialogue with the Other out of ultra-nationalist sentiments. Second, the "cultural others", long oppressed and marginalized, are gradually stepping out of the margins and making efforts for self-expression and self-interpretation. Indigenous studies on intercultural communication in

non-Western countries should adopt a "global perspective". This involves connecting local cultural characteristics, research topics, theories, and methodologies with broader concepts like "human destiny" and the "global situation" to foster international mindedness. By embracing universal humanism, non-Western knowledge communities can engage in equal dialogue and pursue common progress with Western academia.

If indigenization is a process of integrating knowledge, then Indigenous studies are a process of generating new knowledge. As Jandt and Tanno (2001) proposed, the existence of cultural others stems from the power of Western colonizers to observe and express, and the inequality in the knowledge field stems from power inequality. According to Michel Foucault's power/knowledge theory, knowledge is not produced out of thin air. The construction of any knowledge system inherently contains power relations. In other words, the birth and dissemination of certain knowledge require real power as support to grant it legitimacy. Some scholars from non-Western countries have realized that the dominance of Western academic discourses is based on the political, economic, and technological advantages established by Western countries during the period of globalization (Mlambo 2006; Kim and Hubbard 2007; Demeter 2019). The global power imbalance between Western and non-Western societies has created "center-periphery" dynamics in the field of knowledge production within intercultural communication. This paper argues that drawing inspiration from Foucault's power/knowledge theory, Indigenous studies on intercultural communication should adapt to the changes in the global power structure, seize opportunities to improve and adjust, expand the production channels of Indigenous intercultural communication knowledge, and gradually get rid of the marginal status. Currently, the development of globalization and the evolution of communication technologies have resulted in a "dual structure" of global power where the international society and the world society coexist and develop together. In this framework, global and local contexts intersect through various media, shaping human interaction under the influence of cultural, political, economic, and other factors. This results in a complex trend where "centralization", "decentralization", "homogenization", and "hybridization" coexist within the global cultural landscape. Individuals, groups, organizations, and nations can reconstruct their identities through intercultural communication, expanding the space for exchanges between Western and non-Western knowledge systems. Given this reality, this paper proposes "knowledge strategies" for Indigenous studies on intercultural communication in non-Western countries. It also suggests expanding the significance of intercultural communication beyond everyday interactions and cultural exchanges to include community building as a crucial third dimension. This paper aims to introduce a fresh perspective to Indigenous studies on intercultural communication in non-Western countries. It seeks to foster equal dialogue between Western and non-Western knowledge systems in intercultural communication, enhancing inclusiveness and promoting humanistic awareness within the discipline.

2. The Dual Structure of Global Power: International Society and World Society

How non-Western countries conduct Indigenous studies on intercultural communication is a matter of how knowledge generates its influence. Traditionally, knowledge production and dissemination are considered to interact with power in three ways: knowledge is a means of acquiring power; power is a tool to hinder the pursuit of knowledge; knowledge is a means to resist power (Shiner 1982; Bevir 1999). However, Foucault presents an alternative view from these three perspectives, which considers knowledge as an autonomous entity. Foucault argues for a state of perpetual contingency, including within knowledge itself. Knowledge constantly flows in history, and the development of all branches of knowledge in the humanities is closely related to the exercise of power. From the perspective of power, power necessitates the creation of knowledge to legitimize itself and influence individuals' thoughts and actions. Otherwise, it cannot effectively discipline individuals. From the perspective of knowledge, the structure of knowledge must conform to specific power relations by assimilating and revising pertinent content. Otherwise, the

knowledge risks losing its ability to convincingly explain reality, may not endure or be transmitted, and could become "marginalized" (Foucault 1995; Driver 1985; Miller 1990).

Thus, within the framework of the power/knowledge theory, knowledge is neither absolute nor independent. Any knowledge could be obscured, distorted, or eliminated by other knowledge, or it could be accepted as "truth" by the public. The key is to examine the power struggles behind the contestation of knowledge and the specific power structures of different periods. In other words, researchers from non-Western countries should always study the production of knowledge under the context of specific global power structures. Global power structures refer to the distribution of political, economic, and military influence among nations on a global scale. It involves understanding which countries possess dominant positions while considering factors like alliances, economic strength, and military capabilities (Caporaso 1978; Barnett and Duvall 2005). Existing research has highlighted the link between Western dominance in knowledge production and global power structures. The connection validates the power/knowledge theory and illustrates the competition between knowledge systems of different countries. For example, Engerman (2007), an international history scholar, explores how the production of knowledge contributed to the expansion of US global interests. He argues that many American disciplines and research areas, such as political science, sociology, and area studies, served to bolster America's global power. The desire to win the Cold War stimulated the development of several disciplines. Additionally, Engerman points out that three concepts—the calorie, the demographic transition, and gross national product (GNP)—had far-reaching but almost hidden impacts. It was through the relentless promotion of these concepts by Americans that the US indoctrinated the modern world with American values. This indoctrination influenced the development philosophies of developing countries, leading them to gradually abandon their local characteristics in favor of American-style ideas and submit to the US-led power order.

The rise of intercultural communication in the United States was a result of post-WWII global power shifts and Western countries' global expansion. After the war, the U.S. established overseas bases in many regions and urgently needed to understand the cultural conditions of various countries. In 1946, the U.S. Congress passed the Foreign Service Act, establishing the Foreign Service Institute under the Department of State to provide language and cultural training for American diplomats. Some scholars believe this marked the formal beginning of intercultural communication studies (Leeds-Hurwitz 1990; Moon 1996; Baldwin 2017). For a long time, intercultural communication knowledge served the expansionist needs of Western countries. From the perspective of the power/knowledge theory, from the end of WWII to the era of globalization, Western countries' structural advantage in global power structures positioned them at the "center" of the field of intercultural communication, constructing the "authority" of Western intercultural communication discourse (Sorrells 2010; Jordan 2009). It must be noted that this "authority" often came at the cost of suppressing the cultural experiences and theoretical traditions of non-Western countries. Constrained by this power inequality, intellectual elites in non-Western countries were long suppressed and rendered voiceless, unable to articulate their own cultural characteristics. This led to the exclusion of research rooted in local academic traditions from their own perspectives.

The legitimacy of the "authority" of Western intercultural communication knowledge is supported by the traditional global power structure, where Western countries occupy the center while non-Western countries are marginalized. With the end of the Cold War and global economic integration, some non-Western countries have modernized and begun to emerge in global technology, trade, and finance. Meanwhile, traditional Western powers continue to consolidate their authority in various ways, and interdependence between countries has become increasingly evident. Western and non-Western countries are no longer the oppressors and the oppressed. They participate in multifaceted communication, cooperation, and confrontation in political, economic, and cultural fields (Muzaffar et al. 2017; Cooper and Flemes 2013). Therefore, the current global power structure cannot be

simplistically described as "center-periphery". Increasingly close interactions among multiple actors lead to a new global power structure. Drawing on discussions in international relations, this paper identifies the current global power structure as a "dual structure" of international society and world society.

In the international society, states are the primary actors with a relatively centralized authority as traditional great powers use international norms to allocate benefits and provide a hierarchical order from the top down (Watson 1987). Interactions in the international society are primarily "superficial", based on the maximization of self-interests, combining knowledge systems like evolutionism, racism, and colonialism with transnational capital expansion to create unidirectional and unequal relations. As a result, Western culture has dominated global cultural homogenization as a "universal" force (Linklater 2010; Rosow 1990).

The world society, as a result of globalization and the expansion of modernity, features more diverse actors who continuously reconstruct global economic, political, and cultural orders through frequent interactions and interdependence, forming an egalitarian order from the bottom up (Buzan 2018). To some extent, the world society represents the ideal development model of the international society, where various actors share more common cultural elements, oppose exclusive cultural boundaries, and reject fixed cultural identities. Interactions in the world society are "deep", and characterized by coexistence and mutual engagement. The global flow of people, capital, services, and popular culture, along with the emergence of multicultural organizations, enterprises, and labor forces, drives the development of globality and leads to the "deterritorialization", "reterritorialization", and "glocalization" of human interaction (Weinert 2020).

Especially in the cultural realm, the continuous development of digital communication technologies allows individuals to engage in virtual tourism, and the interactions between groups, organizations, and nations blur the difference between presence and absence, significantly transcending geopolitical, ethnic, and religious boundaries, promoting the democratization and popularization of global cultural power, and energizing various marginalized "subjects" within non-Western cultures and Western cultures. This fosters a super-diversity of interaction in the world society. For instance, French sociologist Frédéric Martel (2018) believes that the current cultural ecology of cyberspace exhibits characteristics of territorialization: "There are many globalized platforms but not as much globalized content . . . Far from a globalism without borders, the digital transition is not homogenization. Cultural and linguistic standardization must not be dreaded. On the contrary, the digital revolution appears as a territorialization and a fragmentation: the Internet is a 'territory'". This means that although American Internet giants like Google, Amazon, and Facebook provide monopolistic digital platforms for global cultural exchanges, the convergence of communication media does not lead to the Americanization of the cultural ecology in cyberspace. Instead, it creates multiple cultural domains within the digital realm, where people gather into diverse cultural communities based on languages, interests, opinions, and emotional connections. They produce, consume, and share cultural content they like. Local cultures, subcultures, and various other cultural expressions have emerged as significant forces. Furthermore, as more countries accelerate their digitalization processes and local digital platforms rise, offering information services and communication climates with more national cultural characteristics, the development of cultural and creative industries in different countries is stimulated, creating a pattern of "multidirectional flow" of global culture. Many scholars point out that the shifts in communication power relations caused by technological development allow non-Western cultures to achieve large-scale production and global consumption of local cultural symbols, challenging and potentially replacing Western influence (Jin 2017; Elkins 2019; Aguiar and Waldfogel 2021; Bourreau et al. 2022).

Therefore, it is essential to recognize that factors such as trade, capital flows, population migration, and the development of communication technologies have led to new forms of communities and the growth of global culture, collectively driving shifts in the global power structure. This transformation marks the progression from an international society

toward a world society. Intercultural communication will exist within this "dual structure", characterized by multidimensional interaction. New cultural forms that transcend national boundaries will continually emerge, bringing to light previously suppressed and obscured local cultures and subcultures through various information channels, resulting in unprecedented cultural diversity. From the perspective of power/knowledge theory, the "dual structure" implies that the local cultural experiences of non-Western countries have the potential to gradually move away from their marginalized positions, gaining ethical and academic value. The inability of Western intercultural communication academic discourse to objectively and comprehensively represent the Indigenous cultural experiences of non-Western countries creates a new knowledge vacuum. This presents an opportunity for researchers in non-Western countries. Indigenous studies on intercultural communication must generate new knowledge to adapt to the new global power structure. Researchers should expand their perspectives and scholarly attention to a global dimension, linking Indigenous conceptual resources and methodologies with a more open and diversified global cultural order. By doing so, they can fill the new knowledge vacuum and engage in equal dialogue with Western knowledge systems.

3. "Knowledge Strategies" for Indigenous Intercultural Communication Studies

Although Foucault's theory of power/knowledge explains the inseparable connection between knowledge production and power structures, he generally maintains a critical stance toward the interdependence of power and knowledge. Foucault posits that power is everywhere and can constrain subjects in various forms. As he states in his book: "In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production" (Foucault 1995, p. 194). In light of this, it is important to reflect on the fact that individuals, particularly intellectuals, possess agency. Any transformation in the power structure can alter existing power relations, creating space for the discovery, production, and dissemination of new knowledge and ideas. Understanding this concept can help non-Western countries expand the scope of Indigenous studies on intercultural communication. The "knowledge strategies" discussed in this paper refer to the techniques of knowledge production that researchers employ to adapt to the new global power structure. These strategies underscore the academic agency that researchers wield in advocating their academic positions and upholding human ethics. They encompass both strategies for knowledge production and the mindset of the researcher.

In the global power structure, the development of the world society has made intercultural communication a widespread cultural practice in human interaction. Individuals, groups, organizations, and nations can use intercultural communication to reconstruct new identities, redefine relationships between themselves and others, and expand the space for sharing different types of knowledge (Çöteli 2019; Belamghari 2020; Salazar 2021). In other words, the development of the world society allows the cultural experiences and knowledge of non-Western countries to influence the West through extensive human interaction. This process gradually enables the integration of different cultures, overcoming their isolation. Within the human cultural system, Indigenous knowledge that indicates cultural differences coexists with universal morality and truth. Therefore, "knowledge strategies" for Indigenous studies should explore how to release the diverse and inherent value of Indigenous knowledge, as well as promote the integration and mutual conversion between Indigenous knowledge and the global knowledge system. From the perspective of the effects of knowledge, intercultural communication, as a discipline aiming to answer what kind of future human interaction will lead to, focuses on the "practicality, rationality, and nationality" of communication outcomes and information choices (Kuo and Chew 2010). Thus, the effectiveness of "knowledge strategies" for Indigenous studies in non-Western countries ultimately reflects in their ability to create relevant knowledge discourses that resist hegemonic discourses in the global power structure. Effective "knowledge strategies" will help form a "discourse power" that embodies academic autonomy and

cultural subjectivity, thereby contributing to public ethics of humankind, promoting the continuous development of the world society, and helping non-Western countries escape the fate of being represented and observed. In this context, the ability of non-Western academia to achieve "interconnections between Indigenous specificities" is the fundamental prerequisite for establishing equal dialogue with Western knowledge. Specifically, Indigenous studies on intercultural communication in non-Western countries should adopt the following approaches.

3.1. Developing Indigenous Theories Aligned with Public Ethics of Humankind

The dual structure of the global power landscape indicates the complex interactions among different countries, ethnicities, and organizations. Despite the growing global cultural exchanges, many actors struggle to transcend self-serving and profit-oriented mindsets, particularly in the realms of political and economic competition. Long-standing biases driven by power struggles, cultural differences, ideological conflicts, populism, and racism persist. Various global risks, such as pandemics, wars, and trade conflicts, continually undermine existing international norms, urgently necessitating the exploration of public solutions. Specifically, global risks challenge the integrity and coherence of traditional identities, requiring individuals and groups to clarify the boundaries between collective human interests and individual interests. This necessitates addressing differences in a holistic rather than fragmented manner, thereby facilitating cooperative coexistence.

Culture provides a crucial spiritual prescription for humanity to address these global risks. From a cultural perspective, there is an urgent need for public ethics to rebuild moral order, exert non-coercive control over hegemonic and irrational behaviors, and offer moral grounds for conflict containment and arbitration (Jonsen and Butler 1975). The development of public ethics of humankind stems from a collective vision of a better life. While Western culture's rationalist approach has contributed significantly to human modernization, it has also led to issues such as hegemony, alienation, and estrangement. In addition to Western culture, humanity also needs the Indigenous knowledge of non-Western countries, which has been marginalized over generations. Good elements of Indigenous knowledge that are conducive to understanding, friendship, inclusiveness, and psychological healing can contribute to the construction of the public ethics of humankind. The goal is to develop universal knowledge that describes the uniqueness of Indigenous cultures and their commonalities with other cultures. Ultimately, this will lead to Indigenous theories that are beneficial to the future of humanity and aligned with the public ethics of humankind. For example, the Confucian concept of "the Doctrine of the Mean" advocates for harmonious development between humans and nature, and among people. It emphasizes avoiding extremes to achieve inner equilibrium and maintaining moderation and balance in handling affairs. In the realm of ethics, this means that in policy-making and addressing social issues, one should fully consider and balance the interests of all parties to promote mutual benefit and avoid unilateralism (Tu 1996; Cheung et al. 2003; Qin 2024). In today's increasingly globalized world, this Indigenous Chinese thought is significant for fostering mutual understanding among different cultures, countries, and ethnic groups. It may provide valuable insights for the development of Indigenous theories in intercultural communication.

3.2. Studying the Indigenous Knowledge from Other Non-Western Countries

The dual structure of the global power landscape facilitates the bidirectional examination of knowledge systems from different countries. Existing literature from postcolonial and linguistic research fields (Akena 2012; Canagarajah 2002) indicates that the long-standing dominance of Western knowledge has led to a tendency for non-Western scholars to adopt Western theories, paradigms, and evaluation standards. This imitation often results in neglecting the Indigenous knowledge of other non-Western countries, causing non-Western knowledge systems to remain isolated and disconnected from each other. Over time, this isolation stifles the vitality of non-Western knowledge, hindering its evo-

lution and progress, and leading to further marginalization. Therefore, researchers in intercultural communication from non-Western countries must not overlook the Indigenous knowledge from other non-Western countries. They should focus on the historical and contemporary impacts of Western influence on these countries, examine the suppressed cultural autonomy of other non-Western nations, and consider the shared destinies of non-Western cultures as a critical issue. The production of knowledge will help foster communication and understanding among non-Western knowledge systems.

This approach aligns with the concept of "cultural self-awareness" proposed by Chinese sociologist Xiaotong Fei (2016). It underscores the importance of understanding one's own culture while also appreciating and respecting the diverse cultures encountered, including recognizing the historical and contemporary contributions of the non-western humanities. This approach helps individuals establish their position in a multicultural world. In essence, true global recognition of non-Western intellectual resources can only come through their comprehensive and diverse revitalization, which offers meaningful contributions of scientific, universal, and imaginative knowledge. From a practical standpoint, non-Western countries' understanding of each other's Indigenous knowledge relies on various forms of grassroots cultural exchange. Art groups, academic organizations, and NGOs can organize events such as art performances, academic exchanges, and volunteer services, providing opportunities for people from different countries to connect and learn about each other. For instance, in academic exchanges, it is crucial to establish an "academic community" for intercultural communication research among non-Western countries. Hosting international seminars and lectures and inviting experts from non-Western countries to explore specific topics in detail helps build mutual understanding and advance research on each other's Indigenous knowledge within the non-Western academic community.

3.3. Guarding Against Self-Centered Academic Attitudes

Researchers should recognize that every culture is a component of world culture. Non-Western intercultural communication researchers must carefully manage the relationship between the Self and the Other, guarding against self-centered research attitudes and avoiding an "Asiacentric" or "local-centric" stance. Both Western and non-Western societies have demonstrated that self-centeredness in academic research can result in biased outcomes that may exacerbate conflict and division in practice (Furumizo 2005).

To have the appropriate research mindset, researchers must first cultivate self-reflection. This involves continuously examining the characteristics and limitations of their Indigenous cultural experiences. The prerequisite for this is a collective reflection on the cultural experiences and intercultural communication practices of their own country and ethnicity to identify problems within the context of the global power structure. This helps non-Western researchers clarify the connection between national capability and the legitimacy of knowledge, offering insights into the optimal scenario for intercultural communication studies in non-Western countries. Moreover, intercultural communication studies are intrinsically interdisciplinary. The foundational framework of intercultural communication is built on the academic achievements of various disciplines. Therefore, non-Western intercultural communication scholars need to engage further in dialogue with other disciplines, constantly updating their knowledge structures. This approach will deepen their understanding of intercultural communication issues and help them avoid making premature or overly confident theoretical assertions. For instance, fields such as linguistics and translation studies can help identify cognitive biases and misunderstandings in intercultural communication, often caused by overlooking or misinterpreting linguistic and cultural differences. By examining how language relates to cognition, intercultural communication research can reveal the cognitive traits and needs of different cultural groups. This perspective helps avoid cultural stereotypes and promotes a more nuanced and rational approach to understanding intercultural differences.

4. The "Three Levels" of Intercultural Communication

According to the power/knowledge theory, knowledge is a product of specific periods and historical contexts. The transformation of macro power structures is highly complex, involving the interplay of different interest groups and factors such as the invention and application of new technologies. Consequently, changes in power structures inevitably lead to new political, economic, and cultural patterns, the emergence of new social relationships, and even the gradual formation of new social and demographic structures. These transformations create new knowledge vacuums that urgently need to be filled by researchers with new knowledge. The continuous development of any discipline is partly driven by the renewal and supplementation of research topics. To date, academic discussions about the definition of intercultural communication have primarily focused on the historical development of the international society. Intercultural communication and research topics are limited to two interrelated levels: daily communication and cultural interaction. However, the dual structure discussed in this paper offers a third level of intercultural communication: community building. This level encompasses the flow and integration of global cultural elements, where increasingly diverse intercultural communication actors not only engage in extensive and frequent daily communication and cultural interaction but also potentially overcome cultural boundaries to construct a shared global cultural community. The "knowledge strategies" of Indigenous studies in non-Western countries, when integrated with the three levels mentioned above, help to expand the problem awareness in intercultural communication and develop more pathways for sharing Indigenous cultural experiences and values. This, in turn, promotes mutual understanding between Western and non-Western cultures.

4.1. Daily Interaction

Daily interaction reflects the most authentic characteristics of a culture, showcasing the customs and worldviews of different cultural entities. As a discipline that initially served diplomatic affairs, the traditional topics of intercultural communication have primarily focused on daily interaction, such as translation, commerce, tourism, advertising, education, and psychotherapy. It also encompasses the major theories developed over the years in Western intercultural communication research, including cultural shock and adaptation, identity negotiation, communication networks, and intercultural competence (van der Zee and van Oudenhoven 2013; Toomey 2005).

In the dual structure, the ongoing advancement of digital communication technologies has bridged the gap between different cultures, infusing daily interaction of intercultural communication with more complex cultural conflicts. Researchers can draw on Indigenous studies in anthropology and employ relatively detailed technical analysis methods at the micro-level. By engaging with various online platforms, they can read and experience the emotions expressed in daily interactions across different cultures. A highly valuable topic is how daily interaction among individuals and groups reconstructs an Indigenous culture in the digital communication era. This involves examining how everyday bricolage redefines and enriches Indigenous culture with new meanings, and how Indigenous culture evolves toward creolization or hybridization in response to external influences and environmental changes. This process involves both the resistance of Indigenous specificities to external influences and the integration of Indigenous universality with external perspectives. At the same time, the continuously evolving digital communication technologies provide a platform for exporting the Indigenous cultural experiences of non-Western countries. Ordinary people or media organizations can use short videos to share local cultural customs in the form of everyday entertainment or storytelling, subtly promoting Indigenous cultural experiences.

4.2. Cultural Interaction

Intercultural communication at the level of cultural interaction involves the collision of different cultural systems, encompassing the history of Western colonialism and the

resistance of colonized countries (R'boul 2020). It reflects the historical process of humanity transitioning from an international society to a world society. Topics at this level are vast and complex, involving the spread of Western culture, particularly consumer culture, and the protection of non-Western cultural diversity. It also includes the impact of global racism and populism on nation-building and cultural security, the effects of global cultural homogenization on non-Western cultures and global cultural order, the reconstruction of Western culture through the rebellious and diverse nature of postmodern culture, and the expansion or contraction of the "middle ground" between the center and periphery in the global cultural landscape. The human interaction at this level, along with the underlying power dynamics, attracts the attention of numerous fields, including humanities, social sciences, and political science.

Within the dual structure, the cultural hegemony of the international society persists. Meanwhile, the cultural pluralism of the world society provides a theoretical foundation for deconstructing cultural hegemony. However, it also leads to an unprecedentedly complex cultural ecology in a country, with the emergence of various subcultures challenging national and ethnic cultural traditions (Clarke et al. 2017). For non-Western countries, efforts in Indigenous studies on intercultural communication at this level must focus not only on the traditional topic of cultural conflicts but also on the major issue of preserving and perpetuating national and ethnic cultural traditions. This requires an in-depth exploration of the continuation and transmission of cultural heritage, safeguarding the public's admiration for, emotional connection to, and identification with their Indigenous culture. At the cultural exchange level, non-Western countries can promote their Indigenous cultural experiences by developing clear strategies of cultural diplomacy. This can involve organizing cultural festivals, art exhibitions, film screenings, academic lectures, and other cultural exchange activities. The goal is to preserve and highlight the uniqueness and value of their own cultures, avoiding cultural homogenization. By showcasing the appeal of their Indigenous cultures, they can attract attention and gain recognition from the international community.

4.3. Community Building

With the development of multidirectional global cultural communication models, the humanistic essence of non-Western countries can gradually achieve global dissemination. The gradual integration of Western and non-Western cultures allows different cultural entities to achieve emotional resonance through intercultural communication. The concept of community building implies altering the global cultural order from being Western-dominated and exclusive to one where diverse cultural entities can coexist (Parekh 2001; Reus-Smit 2017). The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre argued that the concepts of the Self and the Other, when considered in isolation, lack significance. This means that the Self cannot exist independently and that subjectivity cannot awaken without the presence of the Other. Emphasizing subjectivity while isolating the Self from the Other also creates a binary opposition. The existence of the world society in the dual structure can be understood as the concurrent progress of Indigenous subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

Therefore, for non-Western intercultural communication scholars, a key task in Indigenous studies is to grasp the complexity and interconnectedness of human interaction. This involves curbing the divisiveness and conflicts caused by various forms of self-centeredness, promoting the establishment of a reciprocal order of communication between entities, and guiding the global cultural landscape toward balance and sustainability. To establish a reciprocal order of communication between entities, researchers must explore and cultivate certain common beliefs, such as the public ethics of humankind, from the perspective of human civilization. These common beliefs should be developed into beneficial universal knowledge, broadening the commonality and publicness of humanity as a whole. Non-Western countries can enhance their support for cultural innovation by improving cultural policies and promoting the development of cultural industries. By encouraging artists and institutions to create more innovative and influential cultural products, these efforts can

showcase the modernity and vitality of Indigenous cultures. Such products can spread universal values like peace, development, cooperation, and mutual benefit, contributing to the construction and internalization of the public ethics of humankind.

5. Conclusions

Based on Foucault's power/knowledge theory, this paper connects the production of intercultural communication knowledge with the shifts in the global power structure, providing potential pathways for Indigenous studies on intercultural communication in non-Western countries. The aim is to stimulate new discussions and unleash the Indigenous academia's capacity for innovation. The paper proposes that, within the dual structure of international society and world society, "knowledge strategies" for Indigenous studies on intercultural communication in non-Western countries should include actively developing Indigenous theories that contribute positively to the future of humanity and align with public ethics. Additionally, it advocates comprehensive studies of other non-Western cultures to prevent cultural isolation among them, while promoting an inclusive academic mindset that avoids self-centeredness and respects the knowledge of the Other. Additionally, the paper suggests that under the dual structure, the levels of intercultural communication should include not only daily interaction and cultural interaction but also community building. Each level requires scholars to identify new topics, linking local issues with global situations to expand the scope of intercultural communication. As an academic field that seeks to address how different cultures interact and what kind of future humanity is heading toward, the essence or "core" of intercultural communication studies, as Larry Samovar has stated, lies in its "pragmatic, philosophical, and ethical" approach, focusing on communication effects and information selection. Utilizing this understanding to explore the effectiveness of "knowledge strategies" in Indigenous studies is not merely about revealing the exclusive boundaries, imbalances, and power relations in human interactions. Ultimately, it must manifest in whether it can uncover a "countervailing force" strong enough to resist external hegemony and dominant discourses, addressing the relationship between local specificity and the universality of Western and global cultures.

The paper reflects on Foucault's denial of individual agency, arguing that intellectuals possess subjective agency within the changing global power structure. By creating and documenting knowledge and employing appropriate "knowledge strategies", they can fill the knowledge vacuum created by shifts in the global power structure. In the context of Indigenous studies on intercultural communication in non-Western countries, the "knowledge strategies" should embody the unique will, demands, and creativity of non-Western cultures. These strategies must transcend self-centeredness to produce knowledge that enhances global order and serves common human interests. They should also offer practical diagnoses and action plans for all levels of intercultural communication. Furthermore, there is a need to transform Indigenous knowledge, originally rooted in self-interest, into universal knowledge, and to integrate and disseminate this knowledge effectively within the global knowledge system. Given the complexity and uncertainty of global situations, non-Western intercultural communication researchers must conduct thorough investigations to explore overlooked variables and potential factors. This approach aims to reveal authentic aspects of Indigenous, the Other's, and global cultures, thereby generating new intellectual resources and theoretical tools for Indigenous studies.

Although not detailed in this paper, a very important issue is the methodology of intercultural communication studies. The development of social science theories has always been closely related to breakthroughs and transformations in methodology or research paradigms. For example, Western intercultural communication scholar Geert Hofstede used survey methods to gather the views of IBM employees to assess value differences across cultures. From a methodological perspective, his approach is Western-centric, with questionnaire designs primarily based on Western values and samples limited to IBM employees, which may have contributed to the Western-centered nature of his theory. There is significant room for innovation in methodology among researchers from non-

Western countries. For instance, adopting a multicultural perspective in research can help, which means considering the uniqueness and diversity of different cultures throughout the research process. By incorporating multiple cultural samples and cases, researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the complexity and diversity of intercultural communication. Additionally, critical approaches, such as critical discourse analysis, are also valuable. These approaches require researchers to continuously reflect on their own cultural positions, biases, and assumptions to ensure the objectivity and fairness of their studies.

Amid the complex power struggles between international, regional, and organizational entities and the uncertainties brought about by various global risks, public ethics of humankind can provide hope of reciprocity and compossibility for more entities. Public ethics of humankind can also facilitate mutual understanding and expectations to stabilize and balance, thereby reinforcing shared expectations rooted in interests and costs. It also establishes a practical, impartial framework for fostering human cooperation and coexistence. In practical terms, the public ethics of humankind can help maintain balance among major actors. When dealing with conflicts where the cost of compromise is too high (such as nuclear deterrence or arms races), it aids in developing non-violent strategies and keeping actions within ethical boundaries, thereby limiting hegemonic or coercive behaviors and preventing "free-riding" that undermines cooperation and order. On a symbolic level, the public ethics of humankind can strengthen the expectation of "organic unity" among diverse actors, enhance their sense of connection, and build the cohesion and mutual trust needed to address global crises and avoid disorder. Therefore, this paper argues that in the future, researchers of Indigenous studies on intercultural communication should focus on how to construct public ethics of humankind through intercultural communication. This research topic also underscores the community-building level advocated in this paper. It emphasizes how non-Western countries can leverage intercultural communication to disseminate Indigenous cultural experiences and values, foster ongoing mutual understanding between Western and non-Western cultures, and utilize diverse media channels to enhance universal human aspirations for peace and unity. This approach aims to promote the development and widespread adoption of the public ethics of humankind.

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Article

Critical Discourse Analysis on Parental Language Ideologies of Bilingual and Multilingual Child-Rearing and Language Education Using Facebook and Internet Forums

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Abstract: This study examines the computer-mediated discussion topics of parents who raise bilingual and multilingual children in four active Facebook and Internet forums, and investigates how the language ideologies embedded in the multiple languages being used in these forums are expressed. In this study, 179 data points, including users' posts and thread comments, were collected to identify the most frequently discussed topics as part of my description of the database, in order to identify parental ideologies by using values analysis. The five most-discussed topics were selected to make a critical discourse analysis on the narratives to understand the language ideologies regarding the use of multiple languages, and regarding what users of the groups are saying specifically about the languages when analyzing metalinguistic discourses. This study found the most recurrent language ideologies that parents expressed on these online forums were supporting bilingualism/multilingualism, and claim that bilingualism/multilingualism is advantageous. Parents also demonstrate language ideologies supporting keeping languages separate, such as following the one parent one language (OPOL) method, using the minority language at home, and so on. A detailed values analysis with illustrative sample messages from the online posts and comments also more specifically shows the recurrent language ideologies identified, and parents' views underlying their narratives on their posts and thread comments.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis; language ideologies; Facebook and Internet forums; bilingual and multilingual child-rearing and language education

1. Introduction

Raising children in a bilingual and multilingual family could be challenging. Online forums provide a new platform for parents to seek support and suggestions and share experiences and resources with other members who are experiencing similar situations along their multilingual child upbringing journey. A previous study focused on characterizing these forums' users' demographics and identified the most frequent themes (Daussà and Qian 2022). The current study aims to research four Facebook and Internet forums that are active in 2023. Firstly, the study aims at examining the overall characteristics of the data. The overall characteristics of the data in this study can be defined as the following: on the online sites themselves, and in users' posts and comments on the four sites, what are the language uses, which languages are discussed and emphasized, and what language elements are presented? More specifically, for example, what language speakers are the participants in these online forums? Which languages are parents writing about? Are there particular languages being discussed? Secondly, the study wants to understand what parents raising bilingual and multilingual children are discussing on the Facebook and Internet forums, in other words, to figure out the major topics that the users are posting and discussing in these forums for bilingual/multilingual upbringing. Thirdly, and central to this study's goal, I will probe into the users' language ideologies by studying the discourse of the forums' user posts and comments. Thus, a third main objective of this

study is to analyze what the users are specifically saying about languages. Therefore, I will examine and understand the overall language ideologies of the multiple languages that are being used in these groups by finding out the recurrent parental language ideologies. For example, is there any evidence presented via the original posts and comments that some users prefer a model of subtractive bilingualism? Is the idea of keeping languages separate, such as the one parent one language policy (OPOL), something that comes up in the contents of the sites or in the posts and comments? What are the users' ideologies about bilingualism/multilingualism, especially in the cases when multiple languages cause children's speech delay? The following sections will outline the relevant literature of the study regarding language attitudes and language ideologies, and the digital-mediated communications and genres of computer-mediated communication (CMC).

2. Literature Review

My rationale for studying the discussion topics and language ideologies of the bilingual and multilingual parents who use Facebook and Internet forums is based on what the previous literature has analyzed, and the necessity of further probing into the frequently discussed topics in these online forums. A discussion topic, in the current study, refers to a subject or concentration in a discourse or a section of a discourse, which is parents' posts and comments on the Facebook and Internet forums. More importantly, the study of online parental discussion topics provided me with a focus to analyze the language ideologies of parents' written discourses manifested through their posts and comments on these forums.

With the development of new technologies and electronic media, communication on the web has become a productive field for studying and understanding language choice and the use of non-standard varieties of languages among multilingual users (Cru 2018; Iorio 2016; Lee 2016; Leppänen and Peuronen 2012).

As Bakhtin (1986) states, the difference between primary and secondary (ideological) genres is very great and fundamental, but this is precisely why the nature of the utterance should be revealed and defined via the analysis of both types (Bakhtin 1986). The very interrelations between primary and ideological genres and the process of the historical formation of the latter shed light on the nature of the utterance, and above all on the complex problem of the interrelations among language, ideology, and world view (Bakhtin 1986). Bilingual and multilingual families are facing situations such as, for immigrant families, local schools and institutions that focus on the dominant language instead of their minority and heritage language. As language ideology bridges between linguistic practice and its users in sociocultural practices (Gal 1992), a Bakhtinian analysis of the parental utterances will be important to understand the language ideologies of bilingual/multilingual families using Facebook and Internet forums. It can also help us to understand the bilingual/multilingual families' language attitudes towards bilingualism/multilingualism and various languages, family language policies, and expectations particularly for their children, which may help the potential social changes in families' language transmission, maintenance, and education.

2.1. Language Attitudes and Language Ideologies

King (1999) stated that, generally speaking, an attitude is directed toward a certain object (King 1999), and it can be defined as a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980; Baker 1992). Language ideologies, in contrast, refer to a broader system of beliefs, norms, or values (King 1999). Rumsey somewhat more broadly views language ideologies as the "shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world" (Rumsey 1990, p. 346). Language ideologies can be more specifically regarded as the social constructs that reflect a particular language's historical roles, economic values, political power, and social functions (Curdt-Christiansen 2016; Blommaert 2006). According to these statements, while a language attitude is usually considered as a specific response to specific perspectives of a particular language, language ideology is an integrated system of beliefs regarding

a language, or possibly language in general (King 1999). As King (1999) claimed, it is essential to include the analysis of language ideology in the inquiry into the gap between language attitudes and language behaviors (King 1999).

2.1.1. Language Attitudes and Ideologies in Real-Life Contexts

Previous studies have studied language ideologies in various settings, both in real-life contexts and in digital settings. For instance, Curdt-Christiansen (2016) explored how language ideologies as underlying forces could impact and determine parental decisions on which language to maintain and practice in homes in Singaporean multilingual families. Language ideologies in this research are defined as language users' evaluative perceptions and conceptions of language and language practices according to users' beliefs regarding the social utility, power, and value of a language in a given society (Curdt-Christiansen 2016). Three sets of data are elicited to examine family language policy, including a family language audit, interview with parents, and participant observation with recorded social interactions by employing ethnographic tools of inquiry through regular home visits to the participants. Focusing on three families, a Chinese, a Malay, and an Indian family, representing the main ethno-linguistic make-up of Singapore, this research specifically examined what these families do and do not do, and what they claim to do and not to do, which are closely linked to language ideologies and linguistic practices in day-to-day interactions. Language ideologies are identified through carefully examining the conversations and interactions of the interviews with participants (Curdt-Christiansen 2016). This study shows the importance of studying language ideologies to gain a better understanding of multilingual and multicultural families' family language policy and language education; my study aims to find this in online parental forums. Additionally, more recent research by Emerick and Goldberg (2023) specifically examined two language ideologies, namely standard language ideologies (SLI) and monoglossic language ideology (MLI), in the policy context of college and career readiness in Pennsylvania. Employing a sequential mixed-methods design informed by transformative epistemology, that is, centering on the role of power in the process of knowledge creation and in mediating discourses of emergent bilingual students (EBs), their study claimed that although career and technical education (CTE) educators generally had a positive attitude towards EBs, they were affected by the SLI and MLI. Such language ideologies with other institutional factors resulted in educators implementing restrictive language policies in their classrooms for the underserved EBs regardless of their general positive attitudes towards EBs. For example, teachers rationalize restricting students' language due to practical reasons, such as holding that because industry certification exams are generally only administered in English, introductions must be in English (Schissel 2018). This leads to the creation of classroom-level policies based on teachers' personal beliefs and reproduced deficit ideologies such as MLIs in this case that are not ideal for educating EBs (Emerick and Goldberg 2023). Thus, understanding language ideologies is essential in understanding the gap between educators' positive attitudes and their deficit classroom policies on EBs, as King (1999) had claimed.

2.1.2. Language Attitudes and Ideologies in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

With regard to previous studies regarding language attitudes and ideologies in CMC particularly, Nascimento (2018), for example, analyzed how the cultural manifestation of contemporary rap is located in a broader project of reinvention and reconstitution of languages and linguistic practices and language ideologies by analyzing online video clips produced by Brô MC (Nascimento 2018; Makoni and Pennycook 2007). This research interpreted that the production of Kaiowá rap implies the continuity, strengthening, and updating of some aspects of the indigenous culture and identity such as their communicative practices through the affiliation to hip-hop culture (Nascimento 2018). The study claimed that the biased ideology supporting the 'labeling' of the rap produced by Brazilian natives as 'foreign' is expressive of the Governor's racial attitude instead of merely expressions

of his musical taste regarding rap music or impassioned nationalism (Nascimento 2018). Nascimento's study also presented that it is also expressive of the governor's negative view of the indigenous populations as obstacles to national economic development (Nascimento 2018). Thus, the analysis of the linguistic attitudes and ideologies provides profound interpretations regarding an ethnographic perspective of the music genres.

In addition, Vessey (2016) also studied language ideologies on the social media platform Twitter. The study investigated the case of Pastagate by drawing on a corpus of Tweets containing PASTAGATE, and used corpus-assisted discourse analysis to analyze language ideologies in English and French Tweets. This work revealed divergent language ideologies and representations of the Pastagate affair, and suggested that language ideological debates in the online world may have some implications for minority languages in the offline setting of the nation-states (Vessey 2016). Vessey's work also provides me with the inspiration and support that the analyses of parental language ideologies in bilingual and multilingual child-rearing and language education are relevant to and reflective of real-life child-rearing contexts.

2.1.3. Language Attitudes and Ideologies among Parents on Social Media

In terms of the specific research conducted about parental attitudes and ideologies on social media, Kostoulas and Motsiou (2022) used a data corpus containing a large quantity of words generated by drawing data from two online parental communities that focus on families where Modern Greek was one of the family languages. Their study used thematic analysis of the online parental discourses to examine the parents' stated attitudes, beliefs, and practices about language, family, and education as they correlated with plurilingualism and linguistic development. Their work found strong positive views about fostering plurilingualism and some concerns about balancing different aspects of children's developing linguistic repertoire. They also reported that established language development and management practices (e.g., OPOL, minority language at home) were supplemented with more flexible ones, which indicates adjustment to emerging multilingual norms (Kostoulas and Motsiou 2022).

Very few research works have shed light on the language attitudes and language ideologies of parents on social media or those doing online parenting. Even less is known specifically regarding the language ideologies and attitudes expressed in the online discourses of bilingual and multilingual families' children upbringing and language education by using digital forums.

Nevertheless, there exists a theoretical, practical, and methodological significance of my study. Firstly, in terms of the theoretical significance of the current study, it can be clearly found from the literature review in Section 2 that social media and online forums offer a new source of data to study bilingual and multilingual education and child-rearing. While language ideologies about multilingual families' language policy and strategies are studied in real-world settings, few studies have studied them in online forums. Additionally, there have been studies, as stated in the literature review, studying language ideologies regarding other topics on social media and online contexts. In sum, the current study can potentially contribute to this theoretical gap by figuring out parents' language ideologies regarding multiple language use, language planning, and strategies in the context of these online forums.

Secondly, when it comes to the practical significance of the study, if we manage to find out how parents' language ideologies impact their family language planning and policy, and their attitudes towards multilingual education and children upbringing, we can understand their unique condition. In this way, we can implement more tailored strategies regarding the curriculum in an educational setting, in a counseling setting, etc. in terms of bilingual and multilingual families' and children's social belonging and well-being.

Thirdly, as for the methodological significance, this study uses and presents vibrant data produced through those Facebook groups and Internet forums with parents' proactive motivations to share their experiences. Also, the use of critical discourse analysis on this

database can provide us with a new understanding of the effectiveness of researching online parenting discourses in social media and internet Forums.

Based on the above-elaborated reasoning, I argue it is necessary to probe into the language ideologies regarding the use of multiple languages on Facebook and the Internet for bilingual/multilingual upbringing and language education, as well as what users of the groups are saying specifically about the languages when analyzing metalinguistic discourses. For example, it is important to examine whether there are discourses in the sites' posts and comments about what happens when children reach school age and are exposed to monolingual ideologies in the local school that favor the dominant language (e.g., English).

2.2. Digital-Mediated Communications, and Genres on CMC

Since my study focuses on computer-mediated communication on Facebook and Internet forums for bilingual/multilingual children's child-rearing and language education, it is also necessary to understand the development of digital-mediated communication, and the genres of social media and CMC.

Nearly all of us engage in some form of online community, or at the very least, digital communication. From niche subreddits to our family's Facebook posts to self-help webinars, the human experience exists in a blended duality: while still physical, it is increasingly digital. While traditional ethnography is limited to the present moment of the ethnographer's experience, trace ethnography of existing internet logs, text data, and social media posts can also provide fruitful resources for study (Hampton 2017).

Previous research reported that the information technology revolution has brought about an increasing number of CMC opportunities, giving rise to the new configuration of global social organization that Castells (2000) calls 'network society'. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and ad hoc discussion forums such as YouTube, TikTok, and the genre of blogs and vlogs, constitute new spheres of online sociability that contain new social practices of self-presentation and reflexive construction of identity (Androutsopoulos 2015; Daussà and Qian 2022).

Recent studies also have found the interrelations between the individuals' online language practices and language ideologies and their offline environment (Hillewaert 2022), as also portrayed in Vessey's (2016) study described in the literature review section. As Varis and van Nuenen (2017) and Hillewaert (2022) stated, "individuals never act within an ideological vacuum, and that online and offline environments are thus never fully detached from each other" (Varis and van Nuenen 2017, p. 7; Hillewaert 2022). In spite of the possibility of being shaped by a sense of freedom in online contexts from standard language practices, linguistic and orthographic decisions in an online context are closely related to individuals' norms, and are often largely based on their direct response or intentional deviation from the standards (Bahri 2022). Based on this literature, discourses occurring on social media or more broadly CMC appear to be inter-connected with the offline environments of the users, but may differ in terms of the distinct contexts and dynamics created such as for audiences and built in these digital platforms and computer-mediated discussions.

2.3. Theoretical Orientations

2.3.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

The current study draws on the discourse reframed for computer-mediated communication (CMC), and employs the critical discourse analysis methodology in terms of data interpretations. Discourse, as Androutsopoulos (2013) stated, is a language in use or naturally occurring spoken language in diverse social contexts, and juxtaposed either to text or to a structuralist approach to language that stops at the sentence level (Androutsopoulos 2013). Based on these illustrations, computer-mediated discourse (CMD) refers particularly to the naturally occurring written language in human-to-human communications

through computer networks (Androutsopoulos 2013; Herring 2001, 2004), such as those on Facebook, social media platforms, and online forums.

Viewing CMD from a discourse-as-social-practice perspective thus focuses on how discourse in the new media, such as on social media like Facebook and Twitter, shapes the production of knowledge and the negotiations of power relations (Androutsopoulos 2013), as well as the language ideologies embedded and underlying certain language practices and uses. According to Gee, discourses are "ways of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity" (Gee 2005, p. 21).

Critical discourse analysis, as one of the forms of discourse analysis, more specifically, defines discourses as socially situated and institutionally regulated language practices with a reality-constructing capacity (Fairclough and Wodak 1997; van Dijk 2008). As van Dijk (1993) claimed, in order to be able to relate power and discourse in an explicit way, we need the 'cognitive interface' of models, knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies, and other social representations of the social mind, which also connects the individual with the social, and relates the micro- and macro-levels of social structure (van Dijk 1993). Critical discourse analysis aims to understand what structures, strategies, or other properties of text, talk, verbal interaction, or communicative events play a part in these modes of reproduction (van Dijk 1993). Critical discourse analysis provides a theoretical framework that relates textual features with the contexts in which those textual features are produced, reproducing or reinforcing social power dynamics and ideologies (van Leeuwen 2008). With a focus on the specific genres in the data collected specifically from those Facebook and Internet forums whose main users are parents who are raising bilingual and multilingual children, this study will mainly use values analysis when analyzing parental language ideologies, as illustrated in more detail in Section 2.3.2: Values Analysis.

2.3.2. Values Analysis

Based on Daiute (2014), individual expressions in narrative research are always related to diverse values that are in relation to diverse people and activities that narrators are interacting with. Narrative is thus more than communicating personal experiences, and is also a means of social relations and social change, through the interactions with diverse values that organize meaning (Daiute 2014). Thus, considering diverse values and the social values of powers is important to understand the meaning of the narratives. Values analysis examines the guiding influences of narratives by participants in diverse roles—stakeholders/actors who have diverse interests, goals, and activities across a social system, as expressed via cultural products such as documents, mission statements, news reports, curricula, and personal narratives (Daiute 2014) such as users' posts and sharing on social media platforms. All the illustrative messages from the four forums' posts/comments are in italics.

Research Questions:

Through a literature review of the previous relevant studies, I put forward several research questions along with appropriate supporting sources from the literature. The research questions are summarized as follows:

1. What are the overall characteristics of the data in terms of the online sites themselves, users' posts, and comments on the four sites?
2. What are the major topics that the posts and comments of the bilingual/multilingual Facebook groups and Internet forums are discussing? That is, what are the users who are raising bilingual and multilingual children using these Facebook groups to help them with? What are the particular questions and concerns regarding the use of multiple languages and bilingual/multilingual upbringing?
3. Among the most frequently discussed topics of parents on the Facebook groups and Internet forums, what are the parents' language ideologies regarding the use of multiple languages, and what are users of the groups saying specifically about the languages when analyzing metalinguistic discourses?

3. Method

3.1. Data Collection

3.1.1. Data Collection Sites

The data collection sites are three Facebook web groups and an Internet forum about bilingual/multilingual families' children's language learning and education. Groups and forums are selected through purposive criterion sampling (Palys 2008). The main criteria used for data elicitation of the Facebook groups and the Internet forum are the following:

1. Explicitly referred to as bilingualism and multilingualism in its description
2. Explicit reference to more than one language in the family
3. Public access of the groups and forum
4. Posts and comments on the groups tend to stay on topic

3.1.2. Data Collection Method

Data were collected with systematic observation of the online activities of the four online forums. Data were collected from the posts and posts' thread comments from the four selected Facebook groups and Internet forum as listed below. The posts' thread comments were added because those user-generated comments under the original posts also present some meaningful information. Also, given the accessible individual user's reactions to the posts' content presented, as well as the feedback welcome characteristic of the Facebook platforms (Daussà and Qian 2022), the original posts together with the thread comments (Hilliard 2023) provide new ways to understand the language practices, and language ideologies of the bilingual/multilingual users of these online Facebook groups.

The Facebook and Internet forums for this study have been observed for about two months before systematic data collection. I collected the posts and their thread comments posted from September 2022 to November 2023 in each of the four Facebook groups and Internet forum. The systematic data collection period is from early November 2023 to the end of November 2023. 200 data including posts and their thread comments were collected initially from the four Facebook and Internet forums. After deleting obvious duplicates and comments with no textual information such as emojis because the study mainly analyzed the discourses, there were 179 data in total, including original posts and thread comments. Specifically, the data were presented as follows:

Facebook group 1 (N = 97)
Facebook group 2 (N = 10)
Facebook group 3 (N = 33)
Internet forum 4 (N = 39)

The data were collected without interacting with participants. To protect users' privacy and confidentiality, all the data collected for analysis in this study do not contain any users' names and identifiable information, but only contain the contents of the posts and comments themselves that are merely for the study's analyses. The specific names of the four Facebook groups and Internet forum were not presented to protect the users' and online sites' privacy and confidentiality. The four online sites are represented by using Facebook group 1, Facebook group 2, Facebook group 3, and Internet forum 4, respectively.

Facebook group 3 primarily attracts members who are non-native speakers raising multilingual Chinese children. The other three forums do not have an obvious focus on their members, while we found users share about Spanish more than other languages.

4. Data Analysis

The current study uses a mixed methods analysis with a brief quantitative analysis and a detailed qualitative critical discourse analysis, illustrated in detail in the following sections.

4.1. Overall Characteristics of the Data on the Four Online Sites

After examining and interpreting throughout the posts and comments on the four Facebook and Internet forums, this study finds that the major language used in these online

sites' posts and comments are in English as a communication language, and this may be due to users' belief that English is more understandable for other bilingual and multilingual users, regardless of their supporting bilingualism/multilingualism language ideologies.

In the Facebook group *Non-native speakers raising bilingual/multilingual (Chinese) children*, Chinese pronunciation (Pinyin), and Chinese written language are always accompanying the English posts. Additionally, in this group, there are more illustrations about the elements representing Chinese heritage and culture (e.g., animals that have special meaning in Chinese, traditional holidays, emojis such as the national flag, etc.). Thus, on this site, while the majority language used in posts and comments is still English, Mandarin, including its orthographies, and heritage are being discussed more importantly and frequently when looking into the other three sites, because the parents in this Facebook group are mainly non-native Chinese speakers who are raising bilingual and multilingual Chinese children.

Across the four online forums, there are also French (such as languages used in greetings), Spanish, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, and some other languages besides English. Spanish is more frequently discussed in the users' posts.

Therefore, English is the most frequently used as the platform's communication language, and other languages are also used depending on the site's features and the users' demographics, such as the languages they are using. Though the language used in the posts and comments is mainly in English, language ideologies are obviously conveyed from parents' narratives as supporting multiple languages, including Spanish, Chinese, French, and so on.

4.2. Topics of the Posts and Comments

In terms of the methods of analysis that I use, firstly I studied the major topics of the textual discourses, images, and videos in the four Facebook and Internet forums' posts and comments; it is helpful to know what the users are using these Facebook groups and internet forum for and what they are discussing nowadays. This is also relevant to the language ideologies that the study will analyze. Ten major categories of the topics that the groups are discussing have been identified, as shown in Table 1, with the number of cases and their percentages of the total data of each category.

Table 1. Major discussion topics in the four online forums, with the number of cases and percentages, respectively.

	Discussion Topics Categories	**Frequencies**	**Percentages**
1	Sharing Resources (books, papers, online lectures, language courses, etc.)	59	32.96%
2	Language Transmission Strategies	44	24.58%
3	Miscellaneous/Advertisements (inquiry to fill a research survey, research participants recruitment advertisements, other miscellaneous posts)	35	19.55%
4	Seek/Sharing Opinions from the Environment	16	8.94%
5	Schooling	7	3.91%
6	Language Preference by the Child	6	3.35%
7	Language Development Milestones (babbling)	3	1.68%
8	Speech Delays	3	1.68%
9	Language Mixing	3	1.68%
10	Proficiency in Multiple Languages	3	1.68%

As we can see from Table 1, the most frequently discussed topics in these online forums are sharing resources, including books, language courses, and storytelling workshops,

which account for 32.96% of the total cases. The second frequently discussed topic is sharing or asking for language transmission strategies regarding teaching multiple languages for children (24.58%), followed by a miscellaneous/advertisements category which takes up 19.55%. Additionally, seeking or sharing personal opinions and thoughts about bilingual and multilingual upbringing and questions and concerns account for 8.94% of the total cases. This is followed by a topic of language preference by the child (account for 3.35%) which mainly talks about children's choice of using certain languages in certain contexts, for example, during child–caregiver character playing, or responses to the caregiver. Some other relatively less frequently discussed topics in these four online forums include language development milestones such as the onset of babbling (1.68%), speech delays (1.68%), language mixing (1.68%), and proficiency in multiple languages (1.68%). This section of analysis on the most frequently discussed topics by parents is mainly used to help us find out what the most frequently discussed topics in the four online forums are, because the subsequent qualitative analysis on language ideologies only focuses on the posts and comments that come from the most discussed five topics found in this section.

4.3. Language Ideologies Expressed in the Language Uses

4.3.1. Recurrent Language Ideologies

As described above in Section 4.2, the top five topics categories are included to count and find the recurrent language ideologies. The most frequently discussed five topic categories (except miscellaneous, which does not contain meaningful information for critical discourse analysis on language ideologies) are sharing resources, language transmission strategies, seeking/sharing opinions from the environment, schooling, and language preference by the child. The number of posts and comments from these five topics accounted for 132 pertinent data points (posts and comments), which were selected to uncover the language ideologies expressed in the narratives of these users' posts and comments.

Cru (2018) used a qualitative analysis aiming at examining the recurring themes of the comments and the debates that the YouTube video clips have prompted among the videos' audience (Cru 2018). Based on this work, firstly I identified the main recurrent language ideological themes that prevail in the users' posts and comments regarding their most interested topics when using these online groups, also referring to Lee and Su's (2019) research methodology on studying recurrent language ideologies. Each post or comment may contain more than one language ideology. Additionally, only cases of language ideologies with more than one occurrence were included as recurrent language ideologies in the current study.

With these analyses, the occurrences of each main recurrent ideological theme are outlined in Table 2, as follows:

Table 2. The occurrences of each recurrent ideological theme.

	Language Ideologies	**Number of Cases**
1.	Keeping languages separate (e.g., OPOL; Using different strategies when teaching different languages, such as using only one language for a while to see if that changes anything, then undergoing a six-month trial; Using the minority language at home approach; One language at home and a different one elsewhere; The time and place strategy; Developing a child's different languages at different time points, e.g., their ml * needs to be strong before they get older and spend more and more time with their friends and at school)	25
2.	Pro-monolingual ideologies (e.g., When children reach school age and are exposed to monolingual ideologies that favor the dominant language (i.e., English))	8
3.	Supporting bilingualism/multilingualism	46

Table 2. *Cont.*

	Language Ideologies	Number of Cases
4.	Being bilingual is advantageous (e.g., Bilingualism is advantageous for cognitive ability; language is related to safety and identity—personal values)	17
5.	Teaching multiple languages together (e.g., Dual language immersion; reading in one language helps the process of learning to read in the other language)	10
6.	Maintaining heritage language and culture	25
7.	Subscribing to a model of subtractive bilingualism	3

* minority language.

4.3.2. Critical Discourse Analysis on Language Ideologies (Some Illustrative Posts and Comments)

This part is most central to critical discourse theory; ideologies in the Bakhtinian sense and dynamic narrative inquiry with values analysis indicate what is important to diverse expression as they are expressed in diverse genres, which is central to the rationale of the literature review section.

I focused on a qualitative critical discourse analysis (Daiute 2014) on the sample textual messages to probe into how the language ideologies are expressed in the users' languages in the posts and comments to tackle some specific questions, as stated in the introduction and research questions. I mainly used the values analysis on these illustrative textual messages, as described in the theoretical orientations section. I have focused on the plain textual analysis of the posts and their comments and do not consider the multisemiotic nature of the forums in this analysis part, so as to focus on the language ideologies expressed through language uses and practices (Cru 2018).

Identify values:

Value 1: Being bilingual is advantageous.

Discourse 1: "Hi all! Have you ever heard people say that being bilingual makes you smarter?".

This illustration demonstrates that the parent thinks being bilingual is beneficial and can make people smarter. This suggests the parent's supportive attitudes and language ideology towards bilingualism.

Discourse 2: "I'm a mom of 2 and a French teacher/business owner. We're Italian, but I went to Francophone schools all my life and believe that the more languages you speak, the more opportunities you will have in life! I'm happy and excited to be part of this multilingual family group and to contribute to it!".

Discourse 2 shows the parent believes that being multilingual plays a positive role in children's professional development, as they may have more opportunities on account of being multilingual. This illustration suggests the mom's language ideology of additive bilingualism and supporting bilingualism/multilingualism.

Value 2: Bilingualism/multilingualism can cause problems in children's language development.

Discourse 3: "My baby is 8 months old and he's not babbling yet. When we mentioned that to our nurse at the 8–9 month check-up, she was surprised but said it could be due to the fact that we speak different languages at home".

This message shows that the nurse who was consulted about the child's language milestone (babbling) blamed the speech delay on the family speaking different languages at home. Such demonstrations indicated a negative attitude towards multiple languages, and a pro-monolingual language ideology that favors sticking to one language to enable children to have an earlier onset of babbling. It also demonstrates the nurse's subscription to subtractive bilingualism because the nurse thinks bilingualism is not beneficial to the

child's language development, but rather has caused speech delays and important language development milestone problems.

Discourse 4: "From what I have read, there is a persistent stereotype among nurses, teachers, anyone whose field of training is not multiple language development, where they repeat pro-monolingual theories that were disproven decades ago...".

Similarly, the above example also shows that some nurses and teachers have negative language ideologies regarding multilingualism. Thus, it is the user's framing of the nurse's comment that reveals her own ideologies about language acquisition and bilingualism. The user wants to express her opposing views to such pro-monolingual comments, which suggests the user's preference for multilingualism.

Value 3: Keeping languages separate strategies are effective.

Discourse 5: "Kids are amazing! I am also using the OPOL method (Italian mother and Spanish daddy living in UK) and it works great! My lo is almost 3.5 and can now speak a very good Italian. She use to mix up a lot (mainly Italian and english) but now he is doing great...the trick?".

Similarly, this illustration shows the parent's idea of keeping languages separate when raising multilingual children. The parent indicated that using a strategy of keeping multiple languages separate, such as using the OPOL method, was very helpful to teach their kid multiple languages. The parent expressed that the child not only speaks Italian very well following the OPOL method, but also does not show language mixing now. These illustrations indicate the parent's language ideologies that keeping language separate, such as using OPOL, is an effective method for multilingual upbringing and language education. The parent's interpretation of the child's successful language learning pattern by following the OPOL method shows the parental ideology that multiple languages need to be kept and taught separately to achieve a successful learning outcome. Also, the OPOL method may take some time to work, indicated in the parent's expressions *"she used to mix up a lot, but now he is doing great…"*. This again supports a parental ideology of believing the effectiveness of keeping languages separate.

Value 4: It is important to notice when children start school.

When children reach school age, some parents convey local schools' pro-monolingual ideologies, such as favoring children speaking English, while not supporting multilingual family's minority and home languages. For example, the following narrative indicates this:

Discourse 6: "I want her to be able to read in ml as well but I wasn't sure if I should wait for reading skills to be established in her ML before attempting to add ml. Our home ml is not supported in school so it will be down to me to build a foundation for her".

Discourse 7: "It was a stressful process, unnecessarily. I'm glad they are out of the program. If there were other bilingual kids (peers) in the program with them or it was a real bilingual class, I would have loved it!".

The above discourses suggest the parent's language ideologies to support bilingualism and oppose monolingualism when the child starts school, and they experienced the school's favor for monolingualism and use of the official language only.

Value 5: It is important to keep languages separate when teaching multiple languages.

Discourse 8: "My point is that every child is different. It depends on what they want: children who're only interested in communicating with their parents, like my daughter, will only speak their parents' language until they want to communicate with someone else. Children who are only interested in communicating with kids their age, will speak whatever language those friends speak, etc…".

This discourse expresses the parent's ideologies that it is important to keep languages separate when raising multilingual children. The parent indicates that kids communicate by using different languages when they are speaking with different interlocutors. For example, children use their heritage language when talking with their parents, while they

may use other languages when communicating with their peers depending on the peers' languages being spoken.

The following discourse shows the same parental language ideology that what languages are used depends on whom the children are speaking with and spending time with:

> *Discourse 9: "I should really learn French. Ideally, she would speak French with her siblings and the au pair until she starts school. Then she will speak French at school as well. What you say makes sense. My son had many friends that favoured speaking French, so this benefited him in that he would often play in French with them. They now speak English as well depending who they are playing with".*

> *Discourse 10: "It all depends on what you want to achieve: if you want your daughter to speak only English to you, then all English is the way to go. If you think she won't have enough French exposure, then allowing some extra French with you may help. The beauty of all this is that you can always make a change and start doing things differently, and your kids will adapt to this change too".*

Then, this discourse illustrates that the parents hold the language ideologies that parental expectation and intervention play a role in how children develop their language competence, such as English only or bilingual English and French. Additionally, this parent believes the kids' abilities to adjust to the parents' requirements when they make transitions, such as from English only to bilingual English and French.

Value 6: Teach multiple languages together when raising multilingual children.

> *Discourse 11: "My younger son (age 7) is currently learning to read in both languages at the same time. I even mix our lessons, doing a few activities in ml and then a few activities in ML".*

Reading in one language helps the other languages:

> *Discourse 12: "Reading in one language truly helped her when learning how to read in both German and English. Her teacher tells me that she's above her reading level in English, and I can tell you that's not because we do English reading at home. She's transferring skills from one language to another, so teaching/learning reading in the mls has definitely been a great idea".*

These discourses suggest that the parents think it is helpful to teach and develop children learning to read in multiple languages at the same time. They also believe that reading in one language helps reading in other languages as children can transfer the skills from one language to another, and thus teaching and learning to read in the minority languages will not diminish the dominant language, but will instead facilitate it.

Value 7: Making Transitions to Majority Language.

The following discourses convey parents' experiences that when children get older, they may need to make some adjustments and find more balance among multiple languages. These also suggest parents' language ideology of changing as subtractive bilingualism:

> *Discourse 13: ". . .. . . and her family are from South Africa, and their first language is Afrikaans. They speak it to each other whenever they are together, even at family nights and parties where there are people who don't understand it. They do make an effort to switch to English when non Afrikaans speakers are around".*

Discourse 13 shows that children want to switch to English when non-heritage language speakers are around them, rather than ask others to understand their native language. This suggests the users' transition to a subtractive bilingualism model and using English as the more official language that all can understand and communicate with.

> *Discourse 14: "As they get older, they spend more and more time with their friends. Their minority language needs to be strong before then. The majority language will get there eventually. But having them struggle a bit more with the majority language means working harder at school, so you have to find a balance".*

The above discourse also similarly expressed that the parents reckon that their minority language needs to be developed more proficiently before their children get older and

when they will spend more and more time with their peers and also in schools where the majority language such as English really needs to be proficient and competent so that children can develop better at school. Such narratives suggest multilingual parents' transitional language ideologies to a subtractive bilingualism mode and support developing children's competent majority language (such as English) when children reach school age and when they spend an increasing amount of time with their peers, as an answer to research question 3.

5. Conclusions and Discussions

The current study analyzes the discussion topics on the four active Facebook and Internet forums regarding bilingual/multilingual upbringing and multiple language education. According to the study's analysis, nowadays, the most frequently discussed topics on these four forums are sharing resources, including sharing books, storytelling workshop information, and language courses pertaining to language education for bilingual and multilingual families. Another main discussion topic is sharing or asking for language transmission strategies for teaching multiple languages.

Additionally, the study identifies several recurrent language ideologies on these online sites and in users' posts/comments, including supporting bilingualism/multilingualism ideology, keeping languages separate, being bilingual/multilingual as advantageous, and maintaining heritage language and culture as outlined in Section 4.3.1. The supporting bilingualism/multilingualism ideology is the most frequently identified language ideology, such as maintaining bilingualism and multilingualism are beneficial to cognitive development, professional development, relationships and connections with others, which is consistent with Kostoulas and Motsiou's (2022) study that found parents' positive views about developing plurilingualism as expressed in online parental communities (Kostoulas and Motsiou 2022). The current study also finds that parents expressed keeping languages separate, such as following the OPOL method or using the minority language at home approach, while also finding that it is sometimes helpful to teach multiple languages together because learning to read in one language may support another language's reading. These findings are also consistent with previous research that reported diverse language development and management practices for mixed-language families, such as using OPOL combined with other more flexible strategies (Kostoulas and Motsiou 2022).

Moreover, meticulous critical discourse analysis, which utilizes a fully interdisciplinary approach for studying texts (the posts and comments) within their contexts (van Leeuwen 2008), was used for an analysis on parental language ideologies when raising bilingual and multilingual children. Accompanying specific illustrative sample messages (discourses) from the online posts and comments, the study specifically demonstrates the recurrent language ideologies identified, and parents' views underlying their narratives on their posts and comments as shown in the values analysis of language ideologies section in this paper. For instance, the analysis of parents' online narratives portrays that some parents conveyed their language ideologies as supporting bilingualism/multilingualism as advantageous to their child's cognitive and professional development and connections with others. Some parents hold the language ideologies of supportive for maintaining heritage language and culture, and some are maintaining and practicing multiple languages by encouraging their child's use of different languages when speaking with different persons (e.g., encouraging their child to use a minority language with parents, and using a majority language like English with their peers and at school), while some parents are examined to have experienced some transitions from teaching multiple languages to focusing on developing their child's majority language such as English. Additionally, the latter phenomena are especially typical when those bilingual or multilingual children reach school age and attend schools that favor monolingualism, when children's minority languages have been developed in the earlier developmental phase, or when children have to use majority language such as English to communicate with their peers when they get older and spend more time with their friends, or to develop better in school settings.

The current study demonstrates the online forums' roles and potential in providing bilingual and multilingual parents with platforms for social interactions and information sharing, and their roles in analyzing the underpinning parental language ideologies expressed in the genre of the users' computer-mediated narratives. The study has implications for bilingual and multilingual families' teaching and practicing multiple languages with their bilingual and multilingual children in various contexts, such as along the migration journey and living in a multilingual and multicultural society and family. The language ideologies analyses contribute to our understanding of family language strategies and family language planning including heritage language and minority and home language maintenance and education, and the development of the majority language like English to better connect with peers and perform better in schools for the next generations.

The limitations of this study are that the study is mainly based on the interpretation of the parents' messages on the posts and comments, without interacting with the participants themselves to gain a better understanding of their ideologies in terms of multilingual child-rearing and language education. Moreover, the selections of the illustrative narratives for values analyses are based on the author's own selective criteria, and may have some personal biases on the inclusion of the messages for data analysis. In addition, the selection of open-access Facebook groups and Internet forums in this study did not take into consideration that some groups are small and rife with administrators sharing resources. This will cause the counts of the topic categories to be biased, and further leads to the messages analyzed for language ideologies centering on posts and comments coming from certain forums.

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Article

The Relevance of Family Language Policy in Germany and Italy in the Development of Child Bilingualism: The Role of Natural Translation

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to analyse the role of natural translation in heritage speakers' bilingual communication in relation to the family language policies (FLP) adopted to maintain heritage language in Italian and German multilingual families. In order to investigate this, in spring 2023, a semi-structured questionnaire was administered to both parents and children. The sample consists of 60 Russian-speaking bilingual HS living in Italy and Germany, where they have access to regular primary education and attend, in some cases, private Russian courses or schools. The informants do not receive specific translation training from or into the Russian language (they only practice translation at school from or into Italian/German), and they translate, in most cases, as an occasional activity, closer to the function of mediation or brokering. The role of translation in relation to FLP seems particularly relevant when comparing the two samples, considering different family compositions: mostly bi-ethnic in Italy and mono-ethnic in Germany. The survey showed that in daily life, both parents and children use translation, often as a specific kind of bilingual communication. In the Italian part of the sample, the strategy called OPOL prevails, and translation is a frequent activity in the domestic sphere. In the German one, instead, the separation of language use contexts is widespread, and all family members speak both Russian and German, making translation activity less relevant.

Keywords: multilingual societies; family language policy; natural translation; bilingual education; Russian language; Italian language; German language

1. Introduction

In multilingual and multicultural societies, bilingual parents resort to various strategies in everyday family communication to ensure that their children maintain a good level of heritage language alongside the dominant language in society. An area of research that is becoming increasingly central to the analysis of bilingual development is what is known as family language policy (FLP) (Schwartz 2010; Lomeu Gomes 2018).

The concept of language policy was originally intended to define top-down language strategies adopted at societal and national levels. The study included family policies and gained more and more scholarly authority as J. Fishman emphasised the importance of intergenerational transmission of language (Fishman 1991, 2001) and B. Spolsky defined three important components of family strategies: "language practices, language beliefs or ideology, and language intervention, planning, or management" (Spolsky 2004, p. 5). FLP is now commonly defined as "explicit and overt planning for language use in the home among family members" (King et al. 2008, p. 907).

In most studies, FLP refers to parental decisions, but children's attitudes and choices seem to be equally important. As Andritsou and Chatzidimou (2022, p. 105) note, "parents' language strategies promote the development of bilingualism, although bilingual children also make their own language choices".

If parents share the same mother tongue, a minority language in the society in which they live, with children, they can adopt an immersive approach called "mL@H" (minority language at home). If the parents' languages are different (one is a minority language, the other the dominant language in the community), one of the most popular strategies is called "OPOL" (one person, one language). In this case, the parents may use the dominant language among themselves if the minority language is not known to both of them. On the other hand, they can shift from the first language to the dominant one and adopt a mixed strategy if the context or interlocutor requires it.

More specifically, S. Barron-Hauwaert (2004, pp. 163–78) highlighted seven types of family language use, as follows:

1. OPOL-ML (one parent, one language—majority language);
2. OPOL-mL (one parent, one language—minority language);
3. Minority language at home (mL@H);
4. Trilingual or multilingual strategy;
5. Mixed strategy;
6. Time and place strategy;
7. Artificial or non-native strategy.

In this study, we analyse only three of the seven strategies outlined as the most popular ones chosen by parents in our samples, namely OPOL, minority language at home (mL@H), and mixed strategy. These strategies will be related to the use of translation in the family sphere and out of it.

Among the strategies considered in family communication, translation can also be a valuable aid because, for bilinguals, it is one of the main and most natural types of cognitive activity. Sometimes resorting to translation at home can be a convenient and quick aid in communication, although the role of translation can change in relation to the strategies adopted in the family. In this sphere, translation is mostly understood as a natural form of linguistic mediation between members of the family or family circle, but in bilinguals, a conscious use of translation could lead to the development of linguistic and cultural awareness.

As Malakoff and Hakuta (1991) pointed out, adult bilinguals possess a wider range of strategies at their disposal due to their advanced linguistic skills and heightened metalinguistic awareness. Instead, young bilinguals are not always aware of phenomena such as switching from one language to the other, translanguaging, that is, "new language practices that make visible the complexity of language exchanges among people with different histories" (García and Wei 2014, p. 21), or simple translation used for everyday communication purposes. Such translation is quite often carried out by the speaker without any specific training, hence why it is called 'natural' by scholars.

Natural translation in early bilinguals was defined by B. Harris and B. Sherwood as "the translating done in everyday circumstances by people who have had no special training for it" (Harris and Sherwood 1978, p. 155). Although these same authors have identified this ability as innate in bilinguals, declaring that all bilinguals are able to translate within the limits of their mastery of the two languages (Harris and Sherwood 1978), Malakoff and Hakuta (1991) admitted that translation is not a skill typically associated with every bilingual individual and particularly not with minority-language children.

Among the leading specialists in the study of bilingualism, F. Grosjean dispelled the myth of bilinguals' innate competence in translation, stating that bilingualism is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the development of translation skills. Although the bilingual speaker may have a natural instinct for translation, without specific training, translation remains at the purely oral, informal level of mediation and brokering (Grosjean 2010). Naiditch says about 'language brokering': "immigrant children who translate for their families are today called language brokers" (Naiditch 2015, p. 138). This is not to be confused with the role of interpreter, because to fulfil this task, "interpreter training is very demanding and requires additional years of study" (Grosjean 2010, p. 151), while language

brokers, "unlike formal translators, mediate rather than merely transmit information among the parties involved" (McQuillan and Tse 1995, p. 195).

Other scholars have stated that natural translation is not only used to convey the denotative content of the source text but is mainly needed to establish an interaction between the sender of the message and its receiver (Ovchinnikova and Pavlova 2016), which is a form of interlinguistic and intercultural communication.

In recent years, there has been a growing body of work on the special role of translation in first and second language acquisition in bilinguals (Goletiani 2015; Naiditch 2015; Protassova et al. 2015; McQuillan and Tse 1995), and the importance of translation in the process of acquiring bilingualism as well as a pedagogical tool has been put forward.

The idea for this research arose in connection with the participation of bilingual HS in the international competition "Cultural Bridge" (*Kul'turnyj most*, https://www.papmambook.ru/; https://www.papmambook.ru/contests/, accessed on 5 April 2024), a project specifically developed to support families and Russian school teachers in the challenging task of promoting bilingual education of young HS. In this context, many Russian-speaking HS from all over the world translated short contemporary literary texts for children. The material from the competition sections held in Europe and the USA has been processed on the Sketch Engine platform (https://www.sketchengine.eu/, accessed on 5 April 2024) to create parallel corpora (Russian-Italian, Russian-English, Russian-Spanish, and Russian-French) and to study the translation strategies of bilingual speakers (Perotto 2020, 2022). From this experience, we realised that HS who translate without proper training show difficulties of various kinds, already indicated by other scholars, such as "omission, addition, semantic generalisation and substitution, syntactical reformulation, and modification" (Goletiani 2015, p. 37). Not surprisingly, T. Galinskaya states that the so-called "translation bilingualism" (*perevodcheskij bilingvizm*) is obtained through the teaching of translation, which implies a high level of reflection on cognitive operations, developing metalinguistic competence (Galinskaya 2009; Ovchinnikova and Pavlova 2016). To this purpose, parallel corpora, used in specific translation lessons for bilingual speakers, as indicated in Perotto 2023, could be a valuable tool for developing real translation strategies.

In order to explore the role of translation in bilingual communication, through a survey, we tried to investigate when, how, and why Russian-speaking heritage speakers resort to translation in domestic communication and beyond.

2. Materials and Methods

The survey was carried out thanks to the cooperation of the associations of Russian *sootechestvenniki* (compatriots) in Italy and Germany, with a sample of 60 informants in total. A double, semi-structured questionnaire in Russian was administered to these Russian-speaking informants (parents and children) to check language use in the family, social domains, and the use of natural translation. Considerable help was also given by the Russian schools, since a large proportion of the informants attend them. Some of the young informants participated in the "Cultural Bridge" translation contest, describing it as a pleasant experience ("I enjoyed it very much, and my sister and I are waiting for the next time")[1].

With regard to the survey carried out in Italy, it should be noted that the presence of ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking people in this country is rather limited. ISTAT data show the presence of 36,982 Russian and 225,307 Ukrainian citizens as of 1 January 2022 (before the start of the conflict in Ukraine) (see http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCIS_POPSTRCIT1&Lang=it, accessed on 5 April 2024). Various studies and surveys on the Russian-speaking community living in Italy (Perotto 2009, 2013; Nikolaeva 2011; Goletiani 2015) confirm that Russian-speaking HS mostly live in bi-ethnic families, with Russian mothers and Italian fathers. Families from Ukraine, on the other hand, are often mono-ethnic, but they did not take part in this sample because they mainly speak Ukrainian.

The Italian sample includes 31 double questionnaires in Russian (parents and children). Children's ages ranged from 7 to 25 years old; all were born in Italy except two (Russia and Kazakhstan). Most of them (24) live in bi-ethnic families and are early bilingual speakers.

The German sample includes 29 double questionnaires in Russian (parents and children). Children's ages ranged from 8 to 26 years old; 23 of them were born in Germany, 4 in Russia, and 2 in Kazakhstan. Most of them (22) live in mono-ethnic families.

Germany's case is peculiar because the country hosts the largest Russian community in Europe, and the Russians here are the second largest group after the Turks. Post-Soviet migrants and their descendants form the largest immigration group in Germany; in 2022, there were around 4 million people. Around 3.2 million of them migrated themselves and mainly have ties to the Russian Federation (around 33%), Kazakhstan (around 31%), and Ukraine (around 17%) (see https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/_inhalt.html, accessed on 5 April 2024).

As reported by J. Panagiotidis (2021), two groups are central:

- Russian-German (late) repatriates (*russkie nemtsy* or *Russlanddeutsche*) and their family members;
- Jewish contingent refugees and their family members.

According to the results of the 2022 latest microcensus, published by the Federal Statistical Office in April 2023 (https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/_inhalt.html, accessed on 5 April 2024), around 2.8 million Russian-German repatriates were registered in Germany by the end of 2022, while since the 1990s, around 220,000 Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union have been granted refugee status. Most of them came to Germany by 2004 (Tolts 2015). Of these 4 million people (including around 3.2 million adults), an estimated 2.2 million speak Russian fluently, or Russian is their first language. In addition, there are an unknown number of underage children and young people who speak Russian.

The calculation is based on findings from the representative study conducted by the Boris Nemtsov Foundation in 2016 (https://nemtsovfund.org/cp/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Russians-in-Germany-v.9a_deu.pdf#page=3, accessed on 5 April 2024): 61% of adults with a post-Soviet migration background speak Russian as their first language, while a further 27% can speak it fluently. Eleven percent of respondents have limited knowledge of Russian.

The researchers actually claim that it cannot be taken for granted that the descendants of post-Soviet migrants born in Germany also speak Russian. For some of them, Russian is a second language, but some others do not learn the language from their parents (Lokshin 2020). In any case, all informants in our sample are Russian-speaking bilinguals.

By comparing the situations of two countries with such different scenarios, it is possible to draw a broader picture that transcends single-country policies, highlighting the connection between family choices and their reflection in the bilingual communication enacted by children.

3. Results

Since translation is a natural activity practiced mainly in the family sphere, we investigated first the domains of different (Russian, Italian, and German) language use, then the FLP adopted by Italian and German families, and finally the use of translation in communication, analysing the preferences of both parents and children and comparing their answers.

3.1. Domains of Language Use (Parents' and Children's Answers)

FLP is always connected to the language policy of the country. In Italy, Russian is not a protected historical minority language, as is German in Alto Adige or Occitan in Piemonte, so the maintenance of Russian depends on the language policy at home and at the Russian schools. The same can be said of Germany. Here, Russians are the second-largest group after Turks, and that is the reason why there are dense networks of cultural, social, and

commercial organisations and institutions that act as a reference point for Russian-speaking communities in Germany: newspapers, radio programmes, dedicated websites and portals, access to the Russian media. In sum, in Germany, an attempt is made to offer migrants the possibility of maintaining a link with their country; however, even here, Russian is not a protected minority language. Considering the data mentioned above, we can observe that the concentration of Russian-speaking migrants in Germany, which is far higher than in Italy, has given a significant impulse to the development of services and infrastructure supporting the Russian-speaking community. Although this aspect was not specifically investigated in our research (in the answers to our questionnaire, the mass media were very rarely mentioned by the informants), it can be hypothesised that easy access to media and information in Russian plays a role in the choice of FLP, also in relation to the use of translation, stimulating intercultural communication within the family.

Before discussing the relation between FLP and translation, it is considered essential to provide an overview of the language use preferences of our informants and the domains of Russian use in their daily lives. That was one of the focuses of our questionnaire.

First, the children's language use preferences were investigated, both from their own subjective point of view and from the parents' external perspective. To the question, "In which language do you/your children prefer to speak?" the informants could select one of the following options: "in Russian", "in German/Italian" or "in the interlocutor language", but also add in the end some personal observations.

Below are a table and a figure (Table 1 and Figure 1) showing their answers, previously matched with the FLP adopted in their family, in order to visually display more clearly the relationship between the latter and language preferences.

To the question, "In which language do your children/do you prefer to speak?" (Table 1), both parents' and children's answers showed that often, regardless of the language policy adopted by parents in the family, children prefer to speak the majority language or the interlocutor language (respectively, 24 and 22, i.e., a total of 46 out of 60). One informant declared, "With people whose native language is Italian I prefer to speak in Italian even if they know Russian". Only 14 informants prefer to speak Russian whenever possible. However, a FLP that distinguishes the domains of language use seems to facilitate children's ability to adapt to the interlocutor language, causing a significant percentage of them to have no particular preference in language choice (see the entry "mL@H" in Table 1).

Parents were then asked when their children spoke Russian. Their answers were categorised and analysed jointly with the FLP adopted.

Table 1. In which language do your children/you prefer to speak?

	Russian-Italian HS		**Russian-German HS**		
			Parents' answers		
	OPOL	**MS**	**OPOL**	**MS**	**mL@H**
In Russian	5	5	-	4	1
In Majority language	12	4	-	7	1
In the interlocutor language	4	1	6	1	9
			Children's answers		
In Russian	5	3	1	3	2
In Majority language	8	4	1	8	3
In the interlocutor language	8	3	4	1	6

Based on the answers (Figure 1) of the Italian sample concerning the domains of Russian use regardless of FLP, there is a predominance of the home/family and school domains: informants adopting the mixed strategy declared that they speak Russian mostly at home (41%), and/or more generally with relatives (33%); the same applies to those adopting the OPOL strategy (with relatives 34%, at home 30%). In the case of the latter,

however, there is an equally significant percentage relating to the use of Russian in Russian schools (28%). A similar picture is found in the part of the German sample that adopts the same strategies, except for the voice "at Russian school" which, in the German sample, reports a significantly lower percentage (ranging from 6% to 10%) than in the Italian sample. In fact, as will be shown later German informants generally, on average, attend Russian schools less than Italian informants.

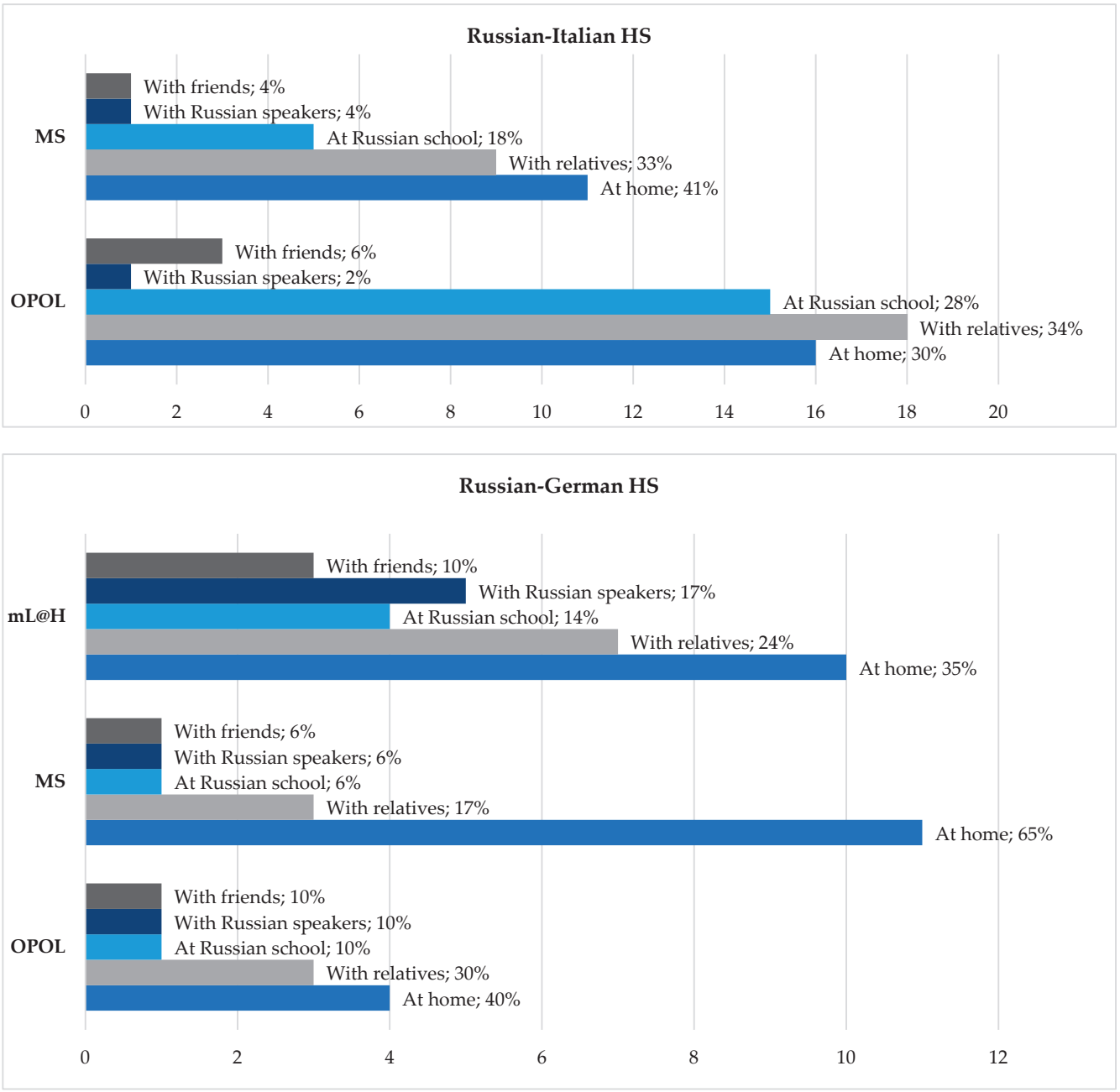

Figure 1. When do your children speak Russian?

It is also remarkable that, in both cases, the informants appear not to have many Russian-speaking friends or acquaintances, as the answers "with friends" and "with Russian speakers" have quite low percentages corresponding to them. Outside the sphere of home or study in Russian schools, it is rather difficult to find children socialising in Russian. The dominant language is usually the preferred one in communication with friends. Family friends, if they are Russian, may be an exception, but they are rare.

Only the part of the German sample that adopts the mL@H strategy shows a more distributed use of Russian in the various domains of daily life, including the social sphere (10% "with friends" and 17% "with Russian speakers"), although it is always the domestic one that prevails (35% "at home" and 24% "with relatives"). In relation to this, it is considered significant to point out that in the German part of the sample, most families are mono-ethnic, while in the Italian part, they are bi-ethnic. Relating this data to the presence of Russians in the two target countries (Italy and Germany), it seems reasonable to think that in Germany, as there is a real Russian-speaking community distributed throughout the country, children more easily find opportunities to socialise with other Russian-speakers.

3.2. FLP Adopted (Only Parents' Answers)

As mentioned earlier, language practices refer to patterns of language use within the family, through which family members realise, negotiate, and modify their FLP in face-to-face communication. The linguistic input produced by parental interactions determines children's language production to a significant extent.

To the question, "Which strategy do you apply as FLP?" parents' answers from the Italian part of the sample show that 68% of families prefer the OPOL strategy, while the remaining 32% reported adopting the mixed strategy. In the German part, the OPOL strategy (applied in 21%) is not consistent with the composition of most families (which are mono-ethnic), and thus the mixed strategy (41%) or the separation of usage domains (mL@H) (38%) prevail, holding the view that almost all the mono-ethnic families in the sample state that all family members are able to understand and speak both languages.

3.3. The Use of Translation (Parents' and Children's Answers)

Analysing translation as a natural activity practiced in the family, as we can see in Table 2, according to parents' answers, German HS globally translate less than Italian and only when at home mixed strategy prevails. In the case of Italian parents' opinion, it happens if they choose the OPOL strategy. However, by comparing these data with children's answers, which are much more complete, it appears that German HS actually declare that they translate almost as much as the Italians, who use translation mainly at home with relatives or if somebody does not understand. On the other hand, it can also be noted that only German HS mentioned the translation of audiovisual media. This could confirm the fact that the aforementioned easy access to Russian media fosters ties to the ethnic community of origin and keeps motivation for language maintenance higher.

Table 2. When do you translate?

	Russian-Italian HS		**Russian-German HS**		
	Parents' answers				
	OPOL	**MS**	**OPOL**	**MS**	**mL@H**
It depends on the situation	3	1	-	2	1
From R into ML (P to C)	4	3	2	4	-
From ML into R (C to P)	1	1	-	2	1
Into ML to relatives	1	-	-	-	-
Into R to relatives	1	1	-	-	1
	Children's answers				
If somebody does not understand	4	2	2	3	4
To relatives from/into R/ML	8	1	-	1	-
To my parents	2	2	-	1	2
At school (from/into other languages)	4	2	2	2	6
To friends	1	-	2	1	-
Video, Games, Film	-	-	-	2	-
When travelling	-	1	-	-	-

In order to support the data shown in Table 2, to the question *Talking to your children, do you translate single words or phrases, if necessary?* (Table 3), parents who gave negative answers are the majority in both samples (21 in the Italian sample, 18 in the German one). They rarely admit using translation because they claim that it is not necessary, as their children's bilingualism, in their opinion, is sufficiently balanced, while the children recognise translation as a valuable aid in communication. A Russian mother living in Italy states about her children: "they answer in the language in which they are addressed; they rarely resort to translation into Italian". Another one living in Germany declares, "For my daughter there is no difference in using Russian and German and in communicating with native speakers of these languages".

Table 3. Talking to your children, do you translate single words or phrases, if necessary? (to parents).

	Russian-Italian HS		**Russian-German HS**		
	OPOL	**MS**	**OPOL**	**MS**	**mL@H**
Never	5	1	2	-	6
Rarely	10	5	1	5	4
Sometimes	1	-	1	1	-
Often	4	4	2	4	-
Always	-	-	-	2	-
Yes	1	-	-	-	1

Among parents, there are also those who admit, instead, to resorting to translation: "yes, sometimes I have to explain words in Italian, mostly for my middle daughter, she is a teenager and Russian is going into a more passive phase".

Also, to the question about translation as brokering (Table 4, *Do you sometimes translate for your children in the presence of strangers, or do they translate for you?*), parents mostly gave negative answers. Some of them, however, admit that their children play the role of brokers. In the Italian sample, a Russian mother states, "it happens, but rarely. As a rule, I ask my children to translate from Italian to Russian for me, in different situations, when I am not sure, I understand correctly; they usually don't ask much. Kids adapt and usually don't ask in the presence of strangers. Somehow, they figure out the meaning themselves". In the German sample another one admits: "since my daughter knows German better than we do, we occasionally ask her to translate into Russian if we don't understand something". It is, however, noteworthy that the number of positive answers is higher in the Italian part of the sample.

Table 4. Do you sometimes translate for your children in the presence of strangers, or do they translate for you? (to parents).

	Russian-Italian HS		**Russian-German HS**		
	OPOL	**MS**	**OPOL**	**MS**	**mL@H**
Often	1	1	-	3	1
Sometimes	8	4	-	-	-
Rarely	1	1	3	6	2
No	11	4	3	3	8

To sum up, comparing the answers of parents and children, it seems that the former are more reluctant to admit the use of translation in family communication because this would mean admitting low levels of bilingualism.

In the next table (Table 5), we still show parents' answers. From the data, we see that more Italian than German informants attend Russian schools, where, anyway, translation is not a typical teaching activity (at Russian schools only 3 Russian-Italian HS and 3 Russian-German HS practice translation). If a similar question (*Do you usually translate at the Russian school?*) is posed to children, they confirm the fact that they do not translate at the Russian

school (25 Russian-Italian HS and 27 Russian-German HS); in Italian or German schools, they only formally practice translation in other foreign languages (Table 6). Speaking about the kind of translation, from the answers given, both Italian and German informants prefer oral translation to written, which may remind them of some kind of school homework (see Table 7). In some cases, translation can become an instrument of solidarity between schoolmates: "In the Italian fifth grade, for six months I translated into Russian for a Russian-speaking classmate who came to Italy and did not know Italian".

Table 5. Do your children go to a Russian school? (to parents).

	Russian-Italian HS	Russian-German HS
Yes	20	12
No	8	12
Private lessons	3	5

Table 6. Do you usually translate at the Italian/German school? (to children).

	Russian-Italian HS	Russian-German HS
Yes, but not into R	22	18
No	8	9
Rarely	1	-
Into R	-	2

Table 7. Do you prefer oral or written translation? (to children).

	Russian-Italian HS	Russian-German HS
Oral	10	8
Written	7	6
Both	3	2
No answer	-	13

About translation, the young informants also say, "I like translation, interpreting, translating, writing"; "Yes, I like it, but more from English songs, blogs and movies"; "I am not a professional translator, but I am pleased that I understand almost everything in Russian"; "Yes, I like it. I translate orally and in writing. Sometimes I help my mom to write messages in Italian".

If we consider the answers given by the HS to the most general question (*Do you usually translate?*) about translation activity in the family, we notice that they acknowledge using translation, and in particular, Italian HS seem to translate more than German HS (20 Italian HS, but only 9 German HS answered "yes"). This could again be explained by the fact that Italian informants live in mixed, multilingual families, and translation can be a way of facilitating domestic communication. An Italian Russian-speaking informant, who is 25 years old, admits: "when I was a little girl, I often translated some expressions".

4. Discussion

The picture obtained from the two samples is very different because, in the Italian case, the informants live mostly in bi-ethnic families and therefore resort more frequently to translation, while in the German case we are dealing with many mono-ethnic families in which Russian tends to be used at home by all members of the family.

Despite this, regardless of FLP, the language preferred by almost all HS (the one in which they speak and read most willingly and report having the least difficulty) is still the majority language. Questions posed to parents and children sometimes gave different answers, but in the case of the answer "I speak ML with everyone", this was similar in number in both samples. Especially as they grow older, bilingual HS tend to leave Russian school attendance and increasingly socialise with non-Russian-speaking peers.

This phenomenon is particularly evident in the Italian context, where the Russian-speaking community is not close-knit but dispersed in the various regions of the country.

The data analysis showed that the mixed strategy deployed by about one-third (22) of the total number of interviewed families actually produces a kind of isolation of the minority language, which is relegated almost exclusively to domestic and family use (50% at home, 27% with relatives, 14% at the Russian school, 5% with Russian-speakers, 4% with friends), both in the Italian and German cases. Even in families adopting the OPOL strategy (27), the domestic use of Russian prevails (33% at home, 35% with relatives, 26% at the Russian school, 3% with Russian speakers, and 3% with friends). Despite the fact that this strategy has often been recommended as a necessary condition for raising bilingual children, in reality, as De Houwer (2007) also argues, it is at least not sufficient.

Our study shows that the optimal condition for the most balanced development of both languages is a clear separation of domains of use: at home, the minority language, and outside the home, the majority language. In the case of the 11 German families who report adopting this strategy, the use of Russian appears to be more distributed in the various domains of children's lives (36% at home, 21% with relatives, 14% at the Russian school, 18% with Russian speakers, and 11% with friends).

Translation is an activity practiced in the family sphere, but not in Russian schools. It is practiced most often by Italian informants, and oral translation is preferred over written translation. Sometimes the written one is imposed as a school exercise in other languages, but not in Russian. This could be the reason why most of the informants do not like written translation, although some of them in both samples took part in the CB competition.

5. Conclusions

From the results of our study, we can conclude that FLP is one of the factors contributing to the development and maintenance of heritage languages, but, by itself, it is not sufficient since children's preferences and choices sometimes differ from those of their parents.

However, if the family is aware of the need to choose a proper strategy, by separating the domains of language use, children seem to adapt more to the language of the interlocutor and have a more flexible and balanced bilingualism. Otherwise, they speak almost only the majority language, as in the case of the mixed strategy, which exposes children to the majority language even at home, creating an imbalance of input received in favour of the latter.

Comparing parents' and children's answers revealed discrepancies: while in many cases, children openly reported using translation as a bilingual communication strategy, parents more often reported the opposite. In fact, the latter showed a greater reluctance to evaluate translation positively, more often associating it with an act of compensation, evidence of inadequate language skills. Moreover, in the case of families adopting a mixed strategy, it is possible that this biased attitude towards translation is mixed with a lack of awareness on the part of the parents themselves, who may translate without being aware of it.

Children, on the contrary, seem to appreciate translation as a valid communicative strategy and not just a compensatory one, but, practicing translation mainly in the family sphere, their competence level in this field can only be defined as natural translation or brokering.

According to Malakoff and Hakuta (1991), children who develop a certain sense of metalinguistic awareness should also develop better language skills in general; therefore, it would be highly recommended for bilingual children to be introduced to translation as a metalinguistic and metacultural reflection, and the teaching of Russian in in schools for HS should include this matter. As pointed out in another paper about natural translation in HSs (Perotto 2020), bilingual children who attend Russian schools and receive formal instruction in their mother tongue show a higher level of translation awareness and do not resort exclusively to calques or word-by-word translation.

It is reasonable to assume that translation could stimulate the bilingual speaker's awareness of the two linguistic systems, especially when the use of the majority language prevails. As suggested in Goletiani (2015) and Protassova et al. (2015), more specific translation training from the earliest stages of bilingual education will lead to the acquisition of a greater metalinguistic consciousness and the development of a more balanced bilingualism. The use of parallel corpora and other didactic tools, as mentioned in Perotto (2023), could be a valuable aid in developing translation strategies. The result of such training for HS may be the improvement of their translation skills, which could be a professional resource for them in the future.

These hypotheses could be the subject of further, more extensive research (with a larger sample), which would also consider the possibility of verifying them by direct observation of HS behaviour, dispelling the doubts linked to the discrepancies previously mentioned.

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Notes

1 All the translations from Italian and Russian informants' quotations are made by the authors.

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Article

The Speech Behaviour of Kazakhstani Youth in the Context of Interethnic Communication

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Abstract: This article explores the features of speech practices of young people in Kazakhstan in the conditions of interaction between Kazakh, Russian, and English, taking into account the influence of the digital environment and modern socio-cultural factors. The relevance of this study is determined by the rapid transformation of the language situation in Kazakhstan, where traditional bilingualism is evolving under the influence of globalisation and digital factors, contributing to the formation of new models of language interaction in the youth environment. The aim of this research is to study the mechanisms of language functioning in different communicative contexts, including digital communication. As a methodological basis, the methods of sociolinguistic and discourse analysis were applied, including the collection and interpretation of young people's written texts, as well as interviewing respondents to identify their language preferences and communication strategies. The empirical analysis allowed us to identify new models of young people's linguistic behaviour in various communicative environments, including online space. The leading factors influencing the choice of language code were identified, and the characteristic mechanisms of integrating elements of Kazakh, Russian, and English into a single speech act were recorded. Special attention is paid to the specifics of language interaction in digital environments, where hybrid forms of communication are observed due to technological and globalisation processes. This study considers the speech of young people not only as a linguistic phenomenon, but also as an instrument of intercultural communication, reflecting trends in the development of polylingualism. The findings of this study can be used to improve language policy and to develop educational programmes that take into account modern trends in youth communication.

Keywords: bilingual practice; code-switching; intercultural adaptation; intercultural communication; language mixing; multicultural space of Kazakhstan; speech behaviour of Kazakhstani youth

1. Introduction

In the context of globalisation, the evolution of information and communication technologies, and the intensification of migration, intercultural communication has become a natural necessity. As a process of exchanging ideas and cultural values, intercultural communication promotes mutual understanding, peaceful coexistence, and co-operation between different ethnicities. The harmonious interaction with representatives of different

cultures, characterised by distinctive language, values, and behaviour, is based on intercultural dialogue, which is especially relevant for multiethnic societies. The present study is of particular pertinence due to the fact that modern Kazakh society has become an active participant in the process of economic, political, cultural, and scientific interaction with the global community.

In this regard, the speech behaviour of young people in a multiethnic environment is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon shaped by many factors, including cultural, social, and economic aspects. A multicultural environment undoubtedly influences the speech behaviour of young people, which in turn contributes to the development of intercultural communication.

From this perspective, Kazakhstan is a unique case study in terms of its multilingual society, where young people speak several languages, resulting in the emergence of intriguing patterns of speech behaviour. The transformation of speech behaviour due to the national and cultural diversity of Kazakhstan and the shift in generations give rise to specific communicative strategies that combine elements of traditional culture and modern language interaction. These strategies have a significant impact on the processes of intercultural communication, contributing to the development of unique spaces of effective interaction.

The current linguistic situation in Kazakhstan differs from the previously studied periods in a number of fundamental ways. Firstly, the contemporary generation of youth represents the first cohort to have been raised in an independent Kazakhstan under the policy of trilingualism (Kazakh, Russian, English). This generation of Kazakh youth, emerging as a new formation, is characterised by a creative mood, ambition, and a fresh outlook on the present and future, including the recognition of linguistic competence as economic capital. This creates a unique sociolinguistic context that necessitates a more profound scientific comprehension. Secondly, digitalisation and the development of social networks have engendered a fundamentally new communicative environment where young people's language practices are shaped by global trends and local cultural specificities. This facet of language interaction demands further scientific exploration within the framework of Kazakhstan's sociolinguistic space.

This paper employs an anthropocentric approach to the study of language, which considers this linguistic phenomenon in its relationship with the personality of the native speaker and culture as the environment of society. It is an investigation into the speech behaviour of Kazakhstani youth, with a particular emphasis on the identification of trends in speech behaviour that are attributable to both linguistic and extralinguistic factors. The investigation of this phenomenon from the perspective of intercultural communication, as viewed through the unique worldview of Kazakh and Russian speakers at the sociolinguistic, linguocultural, and functional-pragmatic levels, is of particular interest. In order to achieve this goal, the authors of this article posed the following questions:

(1) What extralinguistic factors influence the speech behaviour of young people in Kazakhstan?
(2) What are the peculiarities of the speech behaviour of Kazakhstani youth in the conditions of intercultural communication?
(3) What are the linguistic, socio-cultural, and pragmatic features of the speech behaviour of young people in Kazakhstan?

The results obtained can be used to improve language policy and develop educational programmes taking into account modern trends in the development of youth communication.

2. Intercultural Communication in a Multiethnic Society

The multiethnic environment, representing diverse cultural traditions and promoting understanding of different values and behaviours, facilitates intercultural communication

(Ilie, 2019). The dynamic communicative space of a multiethnic community (Aleksandrova et al., 2024), in which each ethnic group contributes to a common cultural and linguistic context (Wirentake, 2022), has a significant impact on young people's speech behaviour (Ilie, 2019). This phenomenon is attributed to the adaptation of language and communication style to different cultural contexts, enabling language learners to navigate the diversity of communicative styles (Song, 2024). Consequently, this results in the development of patterns of communication and social interaction with individuals from various cultures (Ilie, 2019). The efficacy of intercultural communication, as evidenced by numerous studies, is contingent not only on linguistic competence, but also on an understanding of cultural nuances and perspectives (Evurulobi et al., 2024).

Intercultural communication functions at three interconnected levels: everyday communication, cultural interaction, and community building (Sun & Shi, 2024). At the third level, representing the integration of global cultural elements, communicators "not only engage in extensive and frequent everyday communication and cultural interaction, but also potentially cross cultural boundaries to create a shared global cultural community" (Sun & Shi, 2024, p. 1065).

Sun and Shi (2024) propose that intercultural competence, which they define as intercultural sensitivity (respecting and recognising cultural diversity), intercultural awareness (understanding cultural differences and recognising the uniqueness of one's own culture), and intercultural mastery (developing one's own communication and social skills) (Ilie, 2019), is a prerequisite for successful intercultural communication. The formation and development of intercultural competence is facilitated by educational strategies that integrate intercultural competence into language learning (Ilie, 2019). Inclusive English language teaching utilises a range of multimedia resources and interactive tasks that reflect ethnocultural aspects and cultivate intercultural communication skills (Nurgalynova, 2024). Language programmes that incorporate intercultural communication training engender inclusive spaces, thereby preparing young people for a globalised world (Wirentake, 2022).

In the context of Kazakhstan, the phenomenon of intercultural communication is influenced by the country's heterogeneous cultural landscape and government policies that promote multilingualism, with a particular emphasis on Kazakh, Russian, and English. The adoption of a multilingual ideology has been facilitated by the comprehensive promotion of English, which is linked to the Kazakhstani government's ambitions to make the state competitive in the regional and global economy (Tlepbergen et al., 2022, p. 3). The effective integration of multiculturalism into the higher education system has been identified as a key factor in promoting interethnic harmony and solidarity, which are considered essential conditions for effectively managing interethnic tensions and conflicts. Tolerance is considered to be a pivotal component of effective intercultural communication, which in turn promotes social cohesion and mutual understanding (Nakipbayeva & Sadvokassova, 2023).

The specificity of intercultural communication in the Kazakhstani context is characterised by the interaction and interpenetration of both national and universal components. Such dynamics allows different ethnic groups living on the territory of the country to preserve their unique identity and ethnocultural heritage. In modern science, such a phenomenon is defined by the term multiculturalism. As a policy of peaceful coexistence of different cultures, multiculturalism aims to create favourable conditions for interaction and mutual understanding of ethnic groups and their complementarity (Byazrova & Tedeeva, 2022). At the same time, this ideology is not aimed at constructing a single identity (Byazrova & Tedeeva, 2022). The processes of integration in the modern world make different cultures interact and influence each other, which can lead to a deepening of intercultural understanding and co-operation. As a result, the rich combination of tradi-

tions, languages, and religions contributes to active interethnic dialogue (Kulzhanova & Sheryazdanova, 2022).

Thus, intercultural communication involves both language interaction and understanding of cultural traditions and mentality of the contacting ethnic groups. Intercultural interaction in the multiethnic landscape of Kazakhstan is based on bilingualism/multilingualism, the tradition of tolerance to other cultures, promotion of cultural diversity, development and promotion of international co-operation.

2.1. The Sociolinguistic Context of Kazakhstan

The contemporary linguistic situation in Kazakhstan is defined by the intricate interplay of historical, social, and political factors that have contributed to the formation of this country's modern linguistic profile. According to foreign and Kazakhstani scholars, Kazakhstan's linguistic landscape is one of the most striking examples of multilingualism in the post-Soviet space (Dave, 2007; Landau & Kellner-Heinkele, 2001; Fierman, 2006; Schatz, 2000; Smagulova, 2008; Suleimenova & Smagulova, 2005; S. K. Zharkynbekova, 2012). Their analyses of the historical context provided a description of the significant changes that Kazakhstan's language policy has undergone since independence in 1991.

The formation of the Kazakh language situation was influenced by a number of key factors: firstly, the historical connection with the Soviet Union, and the subsequent imposition of a language policy for many years. Secondly, the diverse ethnic composition of the country, which has its own socio-political character (Suleimenova & Smagulova, 2005). The predominance of the Russian language has become a significant issue, necessitating specific state-level solutions to mitigate ethnic tensions while promoting the Kazakh language.

As a multinational country, Kazakhstan faces challenges related to the preservation of the linguistic and cultural heritage of various ethnic groups (Jin, 2020; Borisova & Panov, 2022). The necessity to develop effective mechanisms for regulating language policy has arisen in order to ensure a balance between different language groups and to prevent possible conflicts (Moldabayeva & Zeynelgabdin, 2024; Jin, 2020; Abdrakhmanov & Shaibakova, 2024). The implementation of the tasks of language policy has already demonstrated its results: there is a process of redistribution of the spheres of communicative practices, where there is an expansion of the spheres of activity of some languages and the displacement of others. The proportion of languages in their functioning and learning is changing, with obvious shifts having occurred in the functioning of the Russian language in Kazakhstan (Suleimenova, 2011; S. K. Zharkynbekova, 2012; Sabitova & Alishariyeva, 2015). This, in turn, becomes the object of various discussions, generating a polarisation of opinions related to the position of the Russian language in Kazakhstan. For instance, it has repeatedly been stated in various publications that Kazakhstan is beginning a stage-by-stage implementation of the idea of building a mononational state, which presupposes the displacement of Russian culture and the Russian language from spheres of communication and education, and consequently from the country's cultural and information space (Igumnova & Vetlitsyna, 2005, p. 38).

It is imperative to consider the impact of globalisation on a nation's linguistic landscape and the necessity to align language policy with contemporary realities. Kazakhstan, for instance, has witnessed linguistic convergence, which also represents a pivotal component for the analysis. The media is distinguished by its extensive utilisation of borrowed vocabulary, notably from the English language, which underscores the repercussions of globalisation and the imperative to adapt to modern circumstances (Balabekova & Khan, 2022). This phenomenon can result in alterations to the linguistic environment, potentially leading to the decline and eventual extinction of certain traditional linguistic forms. This

issue has evoked concern among experts in the fields of linguistics and cultural studies (Balabekova & Khan, 2022).

Since gaining independence, the country has pursued a trilingual language policy, with a particular emphasis on the preservation and development of the state language, ethnic languages, Russian as a medium of interethnic communication, and English for professional and intercultural communication (Mukhamediuly, 2013). Strategic goals encompass a wide range of spheres, yet the implementation of reforms that impact numerous aspects of society can have unintended consequences. On the one hand, these reforms can enhance global competitiveness. However, they can also lead to significant discord in the establishment of national and ethnolinguistic identities. As Suleimenova and Smagulova (2005) observe, the implementation of language planning in Kazakhstan underwent a series of stages. These stages began with the conceptualisations of national patriots concerning the rapid radical introduction of the Kazakh language. These were followed by a period of disappointment with the modest results achieved, leading to the realisation that changes could not be decreed and implemented within strictly specified timeframes. Special attention and increased demands were rightly directed at Russian-speaking Kazakhs (Suleimenova & Smagulova, 2005).

The preceding discussion indicates that the ongoing processes necessitate the description of new linguistic conditions, as well as consideration of the role and significance of a particular language in the current geopolitical conditions. The functioning of language in intercultural communication is a very complex and multifaceted process, involving the interaction of a whole range of both linguistic and extralinguistic factors. The analysis of linguistic material in Kazakhstan enables the evaluation of extralinguistic factors, such as the interaction between two languages (Kazakh and Russian), which is characterised by factors including the scale of functioning and frequency of use. Additionally, the influence of English, as a global language that enhances intercultural communication and integration, is considered, given its use in the educational, professional, and digital environments.

2.2. The Speech Behaviour of Modern Youth in Intercultural Communication

In modern sociolinguistics, novel theoretical approaches have emerged for the investigation of youth speech. A number of studies have underscored the impact of the Internet on young people's linguistic practices (see Blommaert, 2018; Deumert, 2014; Herring, 2013). The concept of 'superdiversity', initially introduced by Vertovec (2007) and subsequently employed by Blommaert (2010) in the domain of sociolinguistics, has been employed by Varis and Blommaert (2015) to elucidate the intricate nature of contemporary language practices among young people in the context of globalisation. García and Wei (2014) have noted that contemporary youth speech is characterised by the active use of translinguistic practices, i.e., the flexible switching between languages depending on the communicative context. In particular, Androutsopoulos (2015) has highlighted the innovative nature of young people's linguistic expression in the digital domain, emphasising the fluidity and adaptability in their use of translingual practices. Furthermore, Leppänen and Peuronen (2012) have underscored the high degree of multimodality in contemporary youth communication, noting that their speech is frequently accompanied by images, videos, emojis, and stickers. Spilioti and Tagg (2017) demonstrate how young people utilise language to construct identity in the digital space, with the selection of linguistic means being influenced by group affiliation, leading to the development of novel forms of self-expression.

A particular focus has been placed on the study of global patterns of youth communication in multicultural settings. In these environments, communicative practices are universalised, transnational speech communities emerge, and global language trends manifest. Researchers have expressed interest in how youth in multicultural societies utilise

social media to create new forms of communication (Danet & Herring, 2007; Deumert, 2014; Thurlow & Mroczek, 2011). Speech behaviour in such multicultural environments is thus a reflection of the interaction between cultural phenomena and linguistic characteristics, shaped by multilingualism, cultural identity, and social dynamics. Code-mixing, code-switching, and language adaptation are not merely tools for effective communication, but also markers of identity and cultural belonging (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014). Language as a marker of belonging allows individuals to assert their cultural roots (Lee & Barton, 2011). In addition, cultural traditions shape pragmatic communication systems by influencing the performance and interpretation of speech acts. For example, in business discourse, speech acts characteristic of business correspondence are perceived differently by both native and non-native speakers of English, which emphasises the importance of cultural specificity in communication (S. Zharkynbekova & Aimoldina, 2023). In cross-cultural interactions, people may modify their speech strategically to fit the group they are communicating with.

According to the research conducted by Musin (1990), approximately 50 social factors and reasons have been identified as influencing the choice of language of bilingual individuals. These factors encompass the form of national-state structure, culture, and language traditions of the ethnos, changes in the social situation, social differentiation of the functioning of the two languages and the distribution of subject spheres of communication between them, as well as the purpose of the communicative act, the environment, time and place of the speech act, demographic factor, parents' social status in society, place of residence, etc. (Musin, 1990). It is evident that, over time, there is a further differentiation and detailing of socio-cultural conditions affecting the manifestations of bilingualism.

A number of Kazakh scholars have obtained interesting results in terms of the projection of borrowings, language interference in Kazakh-Russian and Russian-Kazakh speech of Kazakh people (see Mirzoyeva & Akhmetzhanova, 2019; Saina, 2000; Zhukenova, 2010; Zikeeva, 2011; Tezekbayev, 1987).

In the context of our research, the studies conducted by Sujunova (1995) are of particular interest, notably with regard to her analysis of code-switching in the speech of Kazakh bilinguals, which she correlates with the specific type of bilingualism, and by extension, the level of language proficiency. The level of proficiency is therefore a crucial factor, with lower levels resulting in more frequent code-switching as the bilingual individuals seek to transition to a language they possess a higher degree of fluency in, thus seeking to alleviate any lingering linguistic discomfort. Conversely, as the level of language proficiency rises, this rationale becomes less significant, with other factors, including situational, social, and demographic elements, assuming greater prominence. The factors associated with code-switching are linked to the socio-demographic characteristics of the communicators and the situational characteristics (Sujunova, 1995). Code-switching can be defined as a linguistic phenomenon guided by grammatical rules in both languages and fluently managed by bilinguals without breaking syntactic norms (Poplack, 1980).

In the works of S. K. Zharkynbekova and Chernyavskaya (2022a, 2022b), language mixing in speech is theorised as a pivotal concept, providing a conduit for elucidating two closely interrelated facets: the linguistic and the social. The social reality is reproduced in communicative interaction and includes a wide range of components, including discourse subjects, individual or collective, individual and collective experience, ideological attitudes, and culturally specific norms and conventions.

The speech behaviour of young people in intercultural communication is frequently distinguished by creativity, adaptability, and a propensity for informal and mixed language use. As digital natives, they have the opportunity to become familiar with a variety of languages and cultural phenomena, which contributes to the development of their linguistic flexibility. The younger generation conceptualises language as a tool for self-expression,

meaning negotiation and interaction, and therefore frequently employs slang, neologisms, and multilingual elements (S. K. Zharkynbekova & Chernyavskaya, 2022b). A distinctive feature of youth discourse is the fluid alternation between two or more languages during conversation, a practice that serves to convey nuances of meaning or to establish contact with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds (S. K. Zharkynbekova & Chernyavskaya, 2022a). Talanov (2023) has observed that student slang, which is replete with foreign language borrowings, serves as a marker of group affiliation and hierarchy within the university environment, reflecting the quotidian reality of student life. The influence of the Internet on the youth speech culture, as reflected in their communication styles, literacy, and language behaviour, should be understood as an evolving aspect of language in the digital age (Gabbasova et al., 2023).

Concurrently, studies demonstrate that in English-dominated environments, young immigrants often adapt their speech to align with prevailing linguistic norms, frequently at the expense of their native languages (Gast et al., 2017). This adaptation can be regarded as a pragmatic response to social pressures and financial constraints in educational and public institutions (Gast et al., 2017). Conversely, the nexus between language and identity is accentuated in youth subcultures characterised by multilingual practices. A case in point is provided by the active use of multilingualism in hip-hop culture, where young people utilise different languages and registers to express their identity and navigate social dynamics (Williams, 2016). This phenomenon underscores the notion that young individuals employ language as a means of constructing identity, frequently resorting to code-switching and other linguistic strategies to assert their cultural affiliation (Canagarajah, 2013). These practices are not confined to specific geographical contexts; they can be observed in a variety of multiethnic settings where youth negotiate their identities through language.

Despite the prior research conducted within the framework of the problem under consideration, the modern language situation in the youth environment of Kazakhstan represents a novel, dynamically evolving phenomenon that necessitates a new scientific understanding, taking into account the important socio-cultural and technological factors.

3. Materials and Methods

The research material under scrutiny comprises the facts of speech behaviour exhibited by Kazakhstani youth, encompassing vocabulary that reflects mutual influence of languages and cultures, in addition to characteristic formulas of speech communication that are conditioned by linguistic and extra-linguistic factors. The methodological basis of this study was the research in the field of socio- and psycholinguistics, intercultural communication (Suleimenova, 2007, 2011; Smagulova, 2008; S. K. Zharkynbekova, 2012, etc.), as well as works devoted to pragmatic studies of speech communication among Kazakh youth (Kopylenko, 1988; Saina, 2000; S. K. Zharkynbekova & Chernyavskaya, 2022a, 2022b; Anishchenko, 2011, 2016; etc.).

This research combines sociolinguistic and discursive methods, including the observation of speech practices in social networks. The sources of the collected factual material comprise data from Internet sites, as well as live speech communication of Kazakhstani youth (vocational college students, university students, working youth). The texts were recorded in their original form, without changes, with all linguistic features preserved. It is noteworthy that written texts in social networks offer a more precise documentation of linguistic phenomena and the potential for their multiple checking. During the collection of factual material, the authors of the article adhered to the following criteria for text selection: (1) the text must have been created by young individuals on multilingual online platforms where linguistic convergence is a prevalent phenomenon; (2) the integration of varied linguistic codes within a single text (i.e., code-mixing, code-switching, and borrowings)

is mandatory; (3) the text should exemplify distinctive communicative strategies that are hallmarks of youth discourse, such as irony, Internet memes, use of non-standard spelling and punctuation. The minimum length for a fragment was set at 100 words, with the mandatory condition being the presence of language code-switching. A selection of the data collected (154 text fragments) is presented as illustrative material in the 'Results' section, representing posts and comments that were published on social networks. An important methodological principle was the observance of ethical norms when working with the material: only public posts and comments were used, all personal data were anonymised. When quoting material, original spelling and punctuation were preserved to reflect authentic features of young people's written speech.

This article utilised materials from the Vk social network, encompassing prominent groups in Kazakhstan such as 'Under the Sky of Kazakhstan', 'Youth of Kazakhstan', 'Typical Kazakh', 'We are from Kazakhstan', among others, posted from 2014 to 2024. Each text fragment was accompanied by exhaustive meta-information, including a unique identification code, the date of creation, the publication platform, demographic data of the author (where available), and the context of text creation. It should be noted that the specifics of the study of speech behaviour in social networks impose certain methodological limitations on the possibility of accurate socio-demographic characterisation of communication participants. Unlike traditional sociolinguistic studies, where direct contact with informants and collection of accurate demographic data are possible, the digital environment is characterised by anonymity and limited access to users' personal data.

In addressing these communities, we focused on such characteristics as their thematic relevance to youth issues (discussion of studies, youth trends, etc.), belonging to online youth communities, use of speech genres characteristic of youth communication, as well as contextual markers of youth speech (slang) and stylistics. Furthermore, linguistic features indicative of proficiency in Kazakh and Russian, including manifestations of bilingualism in speech, were also considered. The implementation of these criteria enabled the identification of a representative corpus of data, which reflects contemporary trends in the speech behaviour of young individuals in a multilingual environment.

Taking into consideration that the lack of complete socio-demographic characteristics of the communication participants is a certain limitation of this study, it is crucial to underscore that the article focus is to examine general trends in the youth speech behaviour in the digital environment. In this context, the specific demographic composition becomes secondary to the exploration of authentic language practices in their natural manifestation. It is also noteworthy that the analysis of social media data has emerged as a robust and extensively utilised approach in contemporary linguistics (Karpov et al., 2022; Durham, 2022; Sun et al., 2021; Vorderer et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2013). In alignment with the assertions of researchers Mukhin and Lozovskaya (2019), who contend that "existing associations of users into groups by interests, occupation, etc. are often correlated with the age of members of these communities; it is evident that the age parameter systemically impacts and strengthens the possibilities of its correlation with user speech content" (p. 39). It is an irrefutable fact that social networks provide extensive data sets reflecting real language practices and tendencies in natural conditions of communication.

Within the framework of this method, observational techniques were also employed to document the characteristics of live speech communication in natural settings (i.e., on the street, in educational institutions, and on social networks). The analysis of speech acts was conducted on the basis of data obtained from 48 participants representing diverse nationalities and geographical locations within Kazakhstan. The sample included 23 female and 25 male participants. The following tables contain the detailed information regarding

the participants of the study. Table 1 presents such characteristics as the gender, quantity and status of the participants.

Table 1. Main characteristics of the study participants.

Gender	Quantity	Status		
		Vocational College Students	University Students	Working Youth
female	22	5	9	8
male	26	5	11	10
Total	48			

Table 2 provides a representation of the ethnicity of the study participants.

Table 2. Ethnicity of participants.

Ethnicity	Number of Participants
Kazakhs	20
Russians	15
Koreans	3
Tatars	3
Turks	1
Ukrainians	2
Uzbeks	2
People of mixed descent	2

The study involved participants from various regions of Kazakhstan (see Table 3 for details).

Table 3. Geographical distribution of participants.

City/Region	Number of Participants
Astana/Akmola region	7
Almaty/Almaty region	6
Shymkent/South Kazakhstan region	6
Karagandy/Karagandy region	5
Kokshetau/Kokshetau region	6
Pavlodar/Pavlodar region	5
Taraz/Zhambyl region	4
Taldykorgan/Taldykorgan region	4
Semey/East Kazakhstan region	5

Audio recording of speech acts was conducted in natural conditions of communication in order to provide the most accurate representation of youth speech in everyday life. Various speech situations were used for analysis, including conversations, discussions, interviews, and other forms of communication. This approach allowed the identification of key aspects of intercultural communication among young people in Kazakhstan. All audio recordings were transcribed using standard transcription methods. In the transcription

process, the distinctive features of pronunciation, intonation, accent, and pauses were meticulously recorded to ensure the accurate representation of the participants' speech. Subsequent to transcription, the texts were processed and analysed.

Quantitative analysis involved counting the frequency of use of certain lexical and grammatical constructions. Qualitative analysis entailed an examination of the context in which words, phrases, and expressions were employed. The research methodology, including the use of audio recordings and transcription to accurately analyse speech acts, allowed for an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of youth speech in Kazakhstan from the perspective of intercultural communication.

The empirical material collected was quantitatively processed in order to determine the frequency of use of certain linguistic means, as well as to identify the most typical communicative strategies. The material was also distributed into thematic groups and levels of analysis (lexical, pragmatic, socio-cultural). The systematisation of the data made it possible to order them according to the identified trends. The lexical-semantic analysis identified lexical units that are characteristic of youth speech, including slang, loanwords, as well as bilingual and multilingual elements such as code-switching and code-mixing. Morphological and syntactic analysis revealed a tendency towards simplification of syntactic constructions and reduction in linguistic means. Discourse analysis enabled the consideration of stylistic and functional features of youth speech, including speech strategies employed in various communicative situations and features of narrative in social networks.

In order to consider the functions of speech formulas in different communicative situations, the functional-pragmatic approach was used, which allows for bilingual communication to be considered as a dynamic system, where the choice of language code is determined by specific communicative tasks and the context of communication. The research was focused on analysing the functional load of each language (Kazakh, Russian, and English) in different communicative situations, studying the pragmatic factors influencing the language choice, and researching the communicative strategies of speech participants in the digital environment and live communication.

Functional-pragmatic analysis complemented the sociolinguistic and discursive methods used in the study, emphasizing speech strategies, communicative intentions, and pragmatic functions of language mixing.

The sociolinguistic analysis conducted enabled the study of the interrelation of youth speech behaviour with the language situation in Kazakhstan, as well as consideration of the influence of bilingualism (Kazakh and Russian) on the formation of lexical and phraseological composition of youth speech, languages of mass media, Internet, etc. Furthermore, given that the study of speech behaviour entails the examination of this linguistic phenomenon in its interrelation with the personality of the native speaker and culture as the environment of existence of the society, the authors of the article considered the elements of national identity in speech, and analysed the integration of cultural borrowings into the youth's lexicon.

4. Results

In order to elucidate multicultural and multilingual practices in contemporary Kazakhstan, it is imperative to emphasise the dynamic interplay and reciprocal impact of two languages (Kazakh and Russian) in spoken interaction, thereby facilitating comprehension within a specific communicative situation (S. K. Zharkynbekova & Chernyavskaya, 2022b). This approach refutes the notion of 'linguistic discomfort', 'language proportions', or 'language vitality', and instead demonstrates a comprehension of the mixed language code as a special semiotic resource chosen by the individual to express interaction and

mutual understanding in a particular communicative situation (S. K. Zharkynbekova & Chernyavskaya, 2022b, p. 477).

In the context of Kazakhstan, the trilingual environment, the influence of globalisation, and the advent of digital technologies have collectively engendered a linguistic milieu characterised by a diverse array of behavioural strategies employed by young individuals in intercultural communication. The meticulous analysis of the collated material has enabled the identification of several key strategies employed by these young people in their interactions with representatives of diverse cultural backgrounds.

1. The first of these strategies pertains to dynamic switching between Kazakh, Russian, and English within a single utterance or discourse. This linguistic phenomenon was observed in 48 out of the 154 texts analysed, constituting 40% of the sample. The analysis of these linguistic practices reveals that language mixing is not random, but is structured by specific communicative situations where Kazakh elements fulfil particular pragmatic functions, such as enhancing emotional expressiveness or emphasizing local belonging. For instance, a member of the social networking group 'Under the Sky of Kazakhstan' shared a note expressing admiration for the well-known boxer Gennady Golovkin in both Russian and Kazakh languages:

> *"Velichajshij bokser v istorii kazakhstanskogo boksa i sovremennosti, gordost' vsego naroda i strany!!! Ya schastliv, chto zhivu v to vremya, kogda nash sootechestvennik svoimi dostizheniyami podnimaet prestizh nashej strany…!!!!!! On poistine blagosloven, za ego plechami bolee 30 boev, zakonchivshikhsya neosporimymi pobedami. On kak tank, probivayushchijsya skvoz' vsekh i vsya na puti!!!!. Ego nel'zya sravnivat' s Tajsonom ili legendarnym Ali, on nash unikal'nyj i neprevzojdennyj Golovkin. Rakha, brat, ya rad, chto ty pokazyvaesh' prostym pacanam iz aulov, kakikh vysot mozhno dostich' upornym trudom, bez podderzhki agashek i tateshek/vliyatel'nykh dyadek i autov. Vy dokazali, chto nash boks zhiv. "Menің anam orys, menің akem karys, al men QAZAQPYN!!!! GENNADIJ GOLOVKIN", zhasasyn kazagym, zhasasyn Kazakhstan!!! ("The greatest boxer in the history of Kazakh boxing and modernity, the pride of the whole nation and country!!! I'm happy to live in the time, when our compatriot elevates the prestige of our country with his achievements…!!!!!! He is truly blessed, with over 30 fights, ending in undeniable victories. He is like a panzer plowing through everyone and everything on the way!!!! He cannot be compared to Tyson or the legendary Ali, he is our unique and unrivaled Golovkin. Rakha, bro, I'm pleased that you're showing ordinary boys from auls (villages) what heights can be reached through hard work, without the backing of agashkas and tateshkas (influential uncles and aut)s. You've proven that our boxing is alive. "My mom is Russian, my dad is Korean, and I am Kazakh. GENNADY GOLOVKIN", long live my Kazakh people, long live Kazakhstan!!!)".* (Under the Sky of Kazakhstan, 2022)

Another Russian-speaking user posted the following story on his page in the social network *"Vkontakte": "Sejchas ya uchus' na tret'em kurse KaRGU. Snimayu kvartiru vmeste so svoim drugom Armanom. Odnazhdy ya vernulsya iz universiteta i ochen' progolodalsya, poehtomu reshil sdelat' sebe buterbrod. Ya dostal iz kholodil'nika kolbasu, syr i majonez, a kogda zakryl kholodil'nik, to zametil na nem tarelku s myasom. Arman skazal mne, chto ehto myaso nazyvaetsya kazy, no ya nikogda ran'she ego ne proboval. Ya otkusil kusochek myasa, a potom basym ajnalyp ketti, osy kezde men omirdin myanin tusindim—ol menің omirimde ehn bakhytty kezen ("I am currently in the third year of my studies at KarGU. I rent a flat with my friend Arman. One day, I returned from university and was really hungry, so I decided to make a sandwich for myself. I retrieved sausage, cheese and mayonnaise from the fridge. Upon closing the fridge, I noticed a plate with meat on it. Arman had told me that the meat was called kazy, and I had never tasted it before. I took a bite of the meat and then my head started spinning, and I understood the meaning of life—it was the happiest moment in my life"* (Under the Sky of Kazakhstan, 2022).

In this particular instance, the Russian text has been enriched by the inclusion of Kazakh expressions, which serve to convey the author's emotional response to the experience of consuming Kazakh cuisine.

In the domain of social networks, it is prevalent to encounter humorous expressions that exhibit a combination of Russian and Kazakh linguistic elements. For instance, a poetic salutation observed within the 'Youth of Kazakhstan' group exemplifies this fusion, incorporating features of both Russian and Kazakh languages: *"Dorogim moim dostar byt' vsegda lish' super-star! Dastarkhanda kop tamak, v kholodil'nike—kajmak. Schast'ya vashim balalar! V sumke mnogo akshalar! Chtoby s vami byl bakyt. I na vse khvatal uakyt. I voobshche vy keremet! I za to sud'be rakhmet!"* (*My dearest dostar/friends, you are always super-star! There is kop tamak/plenty of food on the dastarkhan/table, and there is some kajmak/sour cream in the fridge. May your balalar/children be blessed with good fortune! And may you have lots of aqshalar/money in your pockets! May you have baqyt/happiness), and plenty of uaqyt/time for everything. And in general, you are keremet/amazing. Fot that, raqmet/thanks to fate!)* (Youth of Kazakhstan, n.d.).

New conditions of intercultural communication caused the change in contacts. Creation of new words on the basis of the Russian and Kazakh languages is a trend, an objective linguistic phenomenon reflecting the mentality of Kazakh youth, their desire for dialogue of languages and cultures.

In the context of wedding celebrations, the well-known expression "*prishel, uvidel, pobedil*" ("I came, I saw, I won") is often employed in a playful manner, articulated as "*prishel, uvidel, kudalyk"* (I came, I saw**,** qudalyq/matchmaking). This practice gives rise to a rich tradition of rhymes, including "*anau-mynau, siyr-buzau*" (this and that), "*yashchik-zhyashchik*" (this and that; so-so), and "*zhizn' bol', kogda aksha nol'*" (life is pain when there is no money), etc. Also, quatrains emerge: "*Ya poekhal v Kokshetau, // my veselilis' do utra, // anau-mynau, siyr-buzau, // ehto konec aksha"*(*I went to Kokshetau, // we partied until the morning, // anau-mynau, siyr-buzau, // that's the end of aqsha*); *"Tro-lo-lo-lo, gde-to daleko, // gde-to daleko ona zhdet menya; // ya lyublyu tebya, // ya kuplyu mersedes // mersedes—kymbat (expensive), // ya—tvoj makhabbat (love)* "Tro-lo-lo-lo, somewhere far away, // somewhere far away she is waiting for me; // I love you, // I'll buy a Mercedes // Mercedes is qymbat (expensive), // I am your mahabbat (love)").

Jokes in Kazakh continue in rhyme in Russian: "*Et—etke, sorpa—betke, ostal'noe—paketke"* (*Et—etke, sorpa—betke, the rest is into the packet* (irony is conveyed over the Kazakh custom of taking food home from a *toi*/feast).

The younger generation of Kazakhstan is raised at the crossroads of different cultures, and, realising the importance of cultural dialogue and multilingual education, assimilates the national culture of different peoples through the prism of their native language, as reflected in their oral speech and in the texts published in social networks.

Young people often ask a question that ends with "kerek pa" (Is it necessary?), for example: "*Special'noe priglashenie* ***kerek pa****?" (A special invitation* ***kerek pa***?/Do you need a special invitation?).

The colloquial expressions employed by the youth are characterised by their jocular nature, as evidenced by the phrase "***magan*** *po barabanu*" (a play on words combining the Kazakh word '***magan***', which means 'to me', with the Russian colloquialism '***po barabanu***' (on the drum), signifying 'I don't care' or 'I don't give a damn'). The same is also exemplified by the phrase "***Mesh luchshe tiispe***" that is a play on words combining the Kazakh word 'mesh' (me), with the Russian lexeme 'luchshe' (better), and a Kazakh expression 'tiispe' (don't touch)—"you'd better not touch me". The next phrase "***shatyr edet***" (Kazakh 'shatyr'/roof + Russian 'edet'/is moving) that conveys the meaning "I'm going crazy" is equivalent to the famous Russian expression *"krysha edet"* (the roof is moving).

2. The subsequent strategy pertains to linguistic hybridisation, manifesting in the generation of novel language forms.. As the results of this study have shown, this purposeful mixing of codes results in the creation of specific lexemes in the speech communication of contemporary Kazakh youth, leading to the formation of novel lexical, grammatical, and phonetic constructions based on the integration of Kazakh, Russian, and English. During the course of the analysis, we have identified the following methods of generating hybrid lexical units. The number of texts exhibiting these linguistic phenomena was 40 (26%), including specific ways of morphological word-formation, as a result of which new words in phonetic and morphological respect arise, are also identified. This method is used mainly to achieve expressiveness and unusualness of the youth sociolect, with suffixation being a widely represented and popular method in youth word creation:

(1) Russian suffixes "-shk-", "-k-" or "-kkh-" are added to the roots of Kazakh words to create specific words: *aga**shk**a* (elder brother, uncle), *zhenge**shk**a* (zhenge—wife of an older brother), *zhezdyu**kh**a* (zhezde—husband of an elder sister), *quda**shk**a* (quda—matchmaker), *bala**shk**a* (bala—child/boy), *qapqara**shk**a* (generated from Kazakh words "qap"/'very' and "qara"/'black' and the Russian suffix "-shk-" means a person with very dark skin. The use of the suffixes "-sk-" and "-ski" is also prevalent among young people. For instance, the word "zhai**sk**y" (kaz. "zhai"—simple) defines 'simply', 'in simple way'; "bai**sk**y" (*bai*/rich)—richly.

It is noteworthy that in the process of creating new lexemes, Kazakh words combined with Russian affixes frequently transition from one part of speech to another, e.g., "kishkentai**chik**"—'baby' (the Kazakh adjective "kishkentai" which defines 'small' underwent a transformation into a noun after the addition of the Russian suffix "-chik"). Concurrently, these words can also undergo semantic changes ("qoayn**chik**"—'bunny') or intensify the original meaning of a word (the popular term of enderarment among the youth "zhan**chik**": zhan/soul + the Russian suffix "chik").

(2) Russian literary or slang words are joined by affixes from the Kazakh language (cf.: "ugaraymyz"—'my shutim'/'we joke' is derived from the Russian verb "ugorat"/'to laugh' reinterpreted in the youth environment + Kazakh affix of the deuteronomy -y, the 1st person plural indicator -myz; "Nishtyak pa?"/'Is everything well?' from the Russian slang word "nishtyak"/'awesome', 'great' + the Kazakh question particle "pa", which is attached to the word according to the model of the Kazakh language, etc.). It is evident that this particle has become a productive element in the speech practice of the younger generation. It functions as an intensifying particle in the Kazakh language, serving to reinforce the affirmative evaluation of objects and phenomena. For instance, the particle "goy" is employed in the formation of such phrase as "prikol goi", which means "it's fun" (Anishchenko, 2016, p. 78).

(3) The Latin affix "-ization" has also been adopted by young people, as evidenced by the use of "rakhmet**ization**" for "positive communication", derived from the Kazakh word "rakhmet" meaning 'thank you'. A similar development is seen in the use of "mahabbat**ization**", derived from the Kazakh word "mahabbat" meaning 'love', which is used to refer to the relationship between lovers. The following example illustrates the utilisation of the "mahabbat" lexeme and its lexical and word-formation variants (*mahabbatization*, *mahabbatki*) in social networks: "*Proekt "Makhabbatizaciya—najdi svoyu lyubov'!", razrabotannyj v Innovacionnom Evrazijskom universitete, predostavil odinokim studentam voz-mozhnost' najti svoyu vtoruyu polovinku. V nachale proekta v zdaniyakh universiteta studentami pervogo kursa i chlenami studencheskogo samoupravleniya razdavalis' makhabbatky (makhabbatskie kartochki). Razdacha kazhdoj makhabbatki soprovozhdalas' svoim poryadkovym nomerom, kotoryj neobkhodimo bylo zaregistrirovat'. Posle registracii v zdaniyakh universiteta vyveshivalsya spisok uchastnikov, po kotoromu studenty muzhskogo i zhenskogo pola mogli najti makhabbatku s tem zhe*

serijnym nomerom, chto i u nikh" ("The project entitled 'Makhabbatisation—Find Your Love!', which was developed at Innovative Eurasian University, provided single students with an opportunity to find their soul mate. At the commencement of the project, makhabbatky (mahabbat cards) were distributed in the university buildings by first-year students and members of student self-governance. The distribution of each mahabbatka (mahabbat card) was accompanied by its own serial number, which had to be registered. Following registration, a list of participants was displayed in the university buildings, enabling male and female students to locate a makhabbatka with the same serial number as their own) (Torgayeva, 2012).

3. Contamination is an association of two words 'generating a third one—occasionalism', and is a 'game' type of slang word formation (Zemskaya, 2005, p. 191). The contamination of words is evident in the formation of new terms. Table 4 presents a number of examples of contamination.

The contamination as "word play" realisation enables the capture of the emotional and evaluative meanings of the words in contact, thereby facilitating the comprehension of the specific patterns of thinking of young individuals. In the context of the language game, it is noteworthy that the combination of words from Kazakh and Russian in a single phrase, e.g., "***Qalaysyn-normalaysyn***" (Kazakh phrase "Qalaysyn?"/'How are you?' + the Russian adverb 'normal' transformed under the influence of Kazakh). The following expressions have been identified as particularly prevalent, as evidenced by the authors' observations: "***zvezda bolmashy***" (don't imagine yourself a star); "***tupit etpeshi***" (don't make yourself stupid); "***gruzit etpeshi***" (don't tell me anything), "***bazar zhok***" (no doubt, no problem), and others.

Why do young people so actively combine the vocabulary of two languages and resort to occasional new forms? What is the purpose of this language game? The answer to these questions was given by one of the philology students, an active user of social networks: 'The point is that language follows mankind. There were periods when borrowings from other languages (mainly English) came in large layers into the vocabulary of young people, when groups like hippies, rockers, stylogues, etc. began to emerge. And, subject to the time, social and political transformations, young people played, changed and widely used other-language vocabulary to understand the culture of other people and because at that time it was prestigious to know English. Nowadays, living in the territory of modern Kazakhstan, it is necessary to know the Kazakh language. And not only language, but also everyday life, mentality, customs and traditions of Kazakh people. And the changes that are taking place in the language are a consequence of the fact that Russian-speaking young people are trying to learn the culture of the titular nation through the language' (A., a 20-year-old student, Tatar).

4. Semantic reinterpretation can be defined as a subjective evaluation of the object of nomination, ranging from the humorous and ironic to the rude and familial. This concept is employed in a variety of ways. The following are the various ways in which semantic reinterpretation is employed: firstly, word transfers caused by similarity (metaphorical); secondly, word transfers caused by contiguity (metonymic); and thirdly, word transfers caused by functional identity (functional). To illustrate this, the word "***shanyrak***", which is derived from 'vault of yurt' is interpreted as 'strong ties, patronage; protection' in Kazakh.

The phenomenon of metaphorical reinterpretation of the names of inner-city buildings on the basis of external similarity is a salient example of the urban landscape's capacity for metaphorical expression. A notable illustration of this phenomenon is the multitude of 'youth' informal names assigned to residential buildings in Astana: Examples include "**Titanik**", "**dollar**", "**svechka**", "**zazhigalka**", "**chetyre kitajtsa**", "**kukuruza**", "**Krasnaya**

shapochka", "**Pentagon**" ('Titanic', 'dollar', 'candle', 'lighter', 'four Chinese', 'corn', 'Little Red Riding Hood', and 'Pentagon').

Table 4. Examples of contamination.

New Formation	Source Components	Contamination Type	Meaning
zhandyrgalka	the Kazakh verb 'zhandyru' (to burn) + the Russian noun 'zazhigalka' (lighter)	Kazakh-Russian morphological contamination	The lighter is an ignition device.
toktatanovis	the Kazakh imperative verb 'Tokta' (stop) + the Russian verb 'ostanovis' (stop)	Kazakh-Russian verb contamination	It is employed in a humorous manner to denote the action of 'stop'.
zhaksybis	the Kazakh adverb 'zhaksy' (good) + the slang Russian slang word 'zashibitsya'	Kazakh-Russian lexical contamination	The term is synonymous with 'great', 'excellent'; however, its meaning is more expressive and reinforced.
Zhas Star	The Kazakh adjective 'zhas' (young) + the English word 'star'	Kazakh-English lexical contamination	The title of the youth magazine "Young Star", reflecting youth culture and the desire for success
zhayphone	The Kazakh adjective 'zhai' (simple, ordinary) + the English noun 'phone'	Kazakh-English lexical contamination	It denotes an ordinary phone
zhayD	The Kazakh adjective 'zhai' (simple, ordinary) + the English abbreviation 'D' (3D, HD, 4D)	Kazakh-English abbreviation contamination	cinema without 3D, HD, 4D, etc., support
Online, aynalaiyn!	The English word 'online' + Kazakh 'aynalaiyn' (dear)	English-Kazakh phrase contamination	a jocular appellation employed by internet users шутливое обращение в интернете

Unofficial toponyms are employed to denote objects that play a significant role in the lives of young individuals. Such toponyms may include educational institutions, popular recreational locations or commercial establishments. These terms serve as vehicles for expression, conveying strong sentiments that reflect the attitude of the younger demographic. They also embody the 'local' rationale that underpins the nomination process.

In Almaty, for instance, the term "***Kompot***" (Compote) denotes the eastern part of the city, extending from the beginning of the Malaya Almatinka River. The district derives its name from the numerous streets located in the dacha area, namely Yablochnaya (Apple), Vishnevaya (Cherry), and Grushevaya (Pear) Streets. The term "***Gemini***" is employed to denote a particular location on Almaty's Arbat, proximate to two high-rise buildings that bear a striking resemblance to the components of the popular game 'Jenga' (In Almaty, 2021).

One of the consequences of semantic transfer is the utilisation of precedent texts in the speech of young people. The creation of stable expressions with new components involves the integration of Kazakh words into established Russian word combinations while preserving the fundamental meaning. The examples are represented in Table 5.

Table 5. Examples of stable combinations with new components.

Original Phrase in Russian	Analogue in Kazakh-Russian	Transliteration	Translation into English	Meaning
god za godom	*zhyl za zhylom* (Kazakh word 'zhyl')	zhyl za zhylom	year after year	An expression denoting recurring events
veshat' lapshu na ushi	*veshat' lagman na ushi* (*lagman* is a national dish)	veshat' lagman na ushi	to pull the wool over someone's eyes (literally: to hang noodles on ears)	It means 'to deceive' or 'to tell lies'
Ne veshai lapshu na ushi!	Ne kroshi mne baursaki na ushi! (baursak is traditional Kazakh fried dough pieces)	Ne kroshi mne baursaki na ushi	'Don't try to pull the wool over my eyes' (literally: Don't crumble baursaks on my ears)	'Don't try to pull the wool over my eyes' or 'Don't fool me'
rasprostranyat' spletni	*rasprostranyat' khabar* (khabar—news in Kazakh	rasprostranyat' khabar	to spread gossip	to spread gossip about somebody or something
Golova ne varit	Kazan ne varit (kazan is a traditional Kazakh cookware)	Kazan ne varit	My brain isn't working (Kazan isn't cooking)	'My head isn't working' or I can't think straight'
Vot takie pirogi	Vot takie baursaki	Vot takie baursaki	'That's how it goes'; 'That's the way the cookie crumbles'	'That's the way it is' or 'That's the way things are'.
Da budet svet, skazal electrik, obrezaya provoda	Da budet svet, skazal Aset, obrezaya provoda (Aset—a Kazakh male name)	Da budet svet, skazal Aset, obrezaya provoda	Let there be light, said Aset, cutting the wires	A humorous adaptation of the Russian expression 'Let there be light, said the electrician, cutting the wires'

Precedent phenomea, as a realisation of secondary nomination, create a special type of expressiveness, evaluation, and imagery that is essential for youth communication. Being in a foreign-language environment, a speaker of a particular language begins to see the world not only from the perspective prompted by their native language but also assimilates the conceptualisation of the world characteristic of the surrounding culture (Rakhimzhanova, 2004).

5. Unconventional pronunciation of common words and expressions. The following discourse pertains to the specific and unusual pronunciation of Kazakh words. It is noteworthy that young people frequently employ the expression "***salam*** (***salem***)" from Kazakh "***sәlem"*** (a specific sound in the first syllable) as a greeting, as well as the expressions: "***derzhi salam***" (hold salam), "***lovi salam***" (catch salam).

An interview with a student from Shymkent revealed the following expressions used by locals: "When we communicate, we often use such words as *baurym*, *dosym*, *daragoy*, *rAadnoy*, *bracho*, *dAragoy*, z*Alatoi*, *brO* that are addressed to the best friends or those who are excessively respected" (Saidov, 2019).

The following observations are derived from the commentary provided by young people and the video entitled '7 popular slang words in Kazakhstan. Ch. 2' (spelling and punctuation preserved): The young people's comments included the next statements: "***Zhajskij, bazarnyjzhok, anau-mynau, syyr buzau—nu, ehto chisto nashe***" (It's simple, no doubt, this and that, well, that's totally our thing) and "***Davaj kAroche v sleduyushchem vypuske CHIJSTA Kazakhstanskie slengi es'zhe!!! A tAk bazar zhoқ na!")Krasaucheg!***" (Come on, guy, in the next episode let's speak PURE Kazakh slang, yeah!!! And anyway, no doubt, you are the man!"); «***Est' slovo «deJ» ili «deseJ» ehto kazakhskij sinonim slova shutka"*** (There is a word "dei" or "desei" that is a Kazakh synonym for 'joke')**; «*Tol'ko v Kazakhstane u kazhdogo slova est' sledom idushchij "krivoj braT". Anau-mynau, tyrym-pyrym, koshak-poshak, shaj-paj i t.d.***" (Only in Kazakhstan does every word have its "crooked sibling" that follows it. This and that, so—so, etc.); "***Eh bazaru net, rakhmetski, che tam brat, ezhzhe, deh. Che tam brat, che tam?***" (Yeh, no doubt, thanks, man, what's up, bro, there is, yeh); "***Moi kazakhstancy svoi. Po svojski goj braT***" (We, Kazakhs are our own people. We follow our own way, bro); "***U nas vsegda govoryat po braaatttsskkiii v KazakhstanE***" (In Kazakhstan we always speak like brothers; It's always bro-style in Kazakhstan); "***Kazakhstan teeema goJ***" (Kazakhstan is cool, for sure) (Yakupoff, n.d.).

The addresses accepted in the youth circle include "bauyrym" and "dosym" from the Kazakh language, translated into Russian as 'brother' and 'friend', and "BRO" (from the English word 'brother') used informally as 'friend' or 'comrade'. It is important to note that the written record reflects the pronunciation of youth lexemes, including the lengthening of vowels and consonants (*raadnoy, po braaatttsskkii, teeema, ezhzhe*), 'specific' for the young generation, placement of the place of accent (*dAragoi, zAlatoy, kAroche*), additions, replacement or rearrangement of sounds (*CHIISTA, Krasaucheg*).

The lexical items listed by the student from Shymkent can be regarded as words belonging to the same synonymic series, distinguished by different intonation shades. It is evident that young people tend to express their emotions in speech, employing emotionally charged words and intonation patterns that convey nuance and feeling.

Of particular interest in the commentary on the video are rhyming joking new forms used as ligatures in conversation ("to da se"/'this and that', "o tom, o syom"/'about this and that'; "chai i to, chto k chau" or "shai—pai", literally meaning 'tea and what's for tea'). The functions of youth designations include language play, expression, and the use of humour in speech. By playing with words, young people convey their attitudes, bringing additional expressive and semantic shades.

6. The influence of borrowings from English on the formation of lexical and phraseological composition of youth speech communication. It is important to note that, in addition to the specific expressions used by Kazakh youth, vocabulary popular among Russian youth is also being used. This includes names of persons ("***zumer***"—'a representative of Generation Z, born at the very end of the 20th century or at the beginning of the 21st, who makes excellent use of modern technologies'; "***boomer***"—'a representative of the baby boom generation, who lives according to the old ways and does not keep up with the development of

modern trends', "***toxic***"—'a conflictual person', etc.).); names of actions denoting various recreation ("***chilit***"/chill, "***flexit***"/flex, "***tusit***"/hang out); denotations of abstract notions ("***vibe***"—'something positive (mood, emotion, feeling), "***hype***"—'action aimed at attracting attention', "***zashkvar***"—'something unpopular, out of fashio', "***cringe***"—'something that causes a feeling of shame for others', "***pruf***"—'proof', "***rofl***"—'joke; laughter'; "***bullying***"—'systematic bullying of someone'; "***respekt***" = "***uvazhukha***" (often young people add to the borrowed word from English the slang derivative of Russian origin "*uvazhuha"* (from the word '*uvazhat'/to respect*), etc.).

7. Influence of advanced communication technologies (use of emoji, abbreviations, emoticons, etc.). In the context of contemporary Kazakhstan, the youth demographic is characterised by a pervasive utilisation of advanced communication technologies and digital platforms, including instant messaging services, social networking sites, and video-sharing platforms. Consequently, emoticons, emojis, abbreviations, and hashtags have become integral components of their communication. The utilisation of Internet resources enables young individuals to expand their horizons, engage in the process of creating their own vocabulary, and reflect their personal linguistic experience. These technologies afford young people more opportunities for self-determination and the development of their abilities and creativity. This phenomenon is particularly evident within the domain of subcultures, where young individuals have the opportunity to express themselves creatively, establish connections with like-minded peers, and engage in the process of creating and sharing their own vocabulary. Notable examples of such innovations, as cited in the article "Vaib, krinj and rofl: what language Kazakhstani youth speak", include the use of novel words and expressions from popular digital platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, as well as from computer games and anime. These elements are rapidly assimilated into the young population's everyday speech.

5. Discussion

The analysis of texts and social networks has demonstrated that the mixing of Kazakh and Russian in the speech of Kazakh youth is a stable phenomenon reflecting the processes of intercultural interaction and mutual influence. The mutually influential nature of the Kazakh and Russian languages, operating within a single state, is manifested in the speech behaviour of contemporary young people in Kazakhstan. The utilisation of Kazakh lexical elements in Russian-language texts and oral speech functions not only as a means of communication but also as a marker of cultural and social identity, emphasizing affiliation with the Kazakhstani society. Code-switching can thus be conceptualised as a distinctive semiotic resource that facilitates enhanced mutual comprehension and the use of a common language. Code-switching in bilingual communication is not merely an error or limited vocabulary, but rather a deliberate utilisation of language to facilitate mutual understanding. This approach enables the speaker to select linguistic means depending on the situation, thereby contributing to harmonious communication (S. K. Zharkynbekova & Chernyavskaya, 2022a, 2022b).

Russian-speaking youth demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the national connotations of Kazakh vocabulary, adapting and incorporating it into the Russian linguistic system. Such linguistic markers, or indices, are important because, as Molodychenko and Chernyavskaya (2022) point out, "it is precisely through the actualisation of numerous indices during the development of discourse that so-called contextualization occurs, and the utterance/discourse acquires its meaning" (Molodychenko & Chernyavskaya, 2022, p. 112). This approach to language use enables the speaker to select language means depending on the situation, thereby contributing to harmonious communication. It can thus be concluded that the youth narrative is not an isolated phenomenon, but rather is influenced

by the socio-cultural environment in which it is situated. A narrative is reflective of the discursive reality of the society in which it is formed, correlating with other discourses and developing and supplementing social reality with new meanings.

It is evident that the English language exerts a notable influence on the speech behaviour of young individuals, particularly in the context of Anglicisms, which are not merely adopted but ingeniously repurposed. This phenomenon can be observed across both Kazakhstan and Russia.

In contrast to the more rigid categorisation observed in Russian youth slang, the linguistic repertoire of Kazakh youth slang demonstrates a greater degree of variation (Gizdatov, 2015). In addition, Bekzhanova (2018) holds a similar opinion. By examining the distinctive characteristics of youth discourse, such as the rejection of formal language, playful behaviour of communicants, carnivalisation of speech, and expressiveness, and by comparing Kazakh, Russian, English, and American youth TV shows, she uncovers nationally distinctive features. She contends that Kazakh reality shows maintain communicative taboos, and that the use of foul language and confrontational behaviour among participants is uncommon (Bekzhanova, 2018, p. 224).

A functional-pragmatic analysis of the texts collected revealed that young people deliberately alternate language codes depending on the pragmatic purpose. For instance, code-switching is employed to demonstrate group identity and to establish an informal atmosphere, while contaminated words (e.g., *zhandyrgalka*—'lighter', *zhaksybis*—'excellent') function as elements of language play, allowing irony, affiliation to a certain social group, and anglicisms and Kazakh–Russian hybrid constructions in digital discourse to fulfil the strategic function of prestige, emphasizing the speaker's inclusion in global culture.

The deliberate use of colloquial language by young people can be regarded as a conscious stylistic device in communication, reflecting the desire to communicate with peers.

6. Conclusions

The findings presented in this article have made it possible to clarify several important points outlined above.

The sociolinguistic analysis conducted enabled an investigation into the relationship between youth speech behaviour and the linguistic landscape in Kazakhstan. Furthermore, it facilitated an examination of the impact of bilingualism (Kazakh and Russian) on the formation of lexical and phraseological composition of youth speech, the languages of media and the Internet. The study of speech behaviour is predicated on the consideration of this linguistic phenomenon in its relationship with the personality of the native speaker and culture as the environment of society (Blommaert, 2018; Deumert, 2014; Herring, 2013; Varis & Blommaert, 2015; García & Wei, 2014; Androutsopoulos, 2015). Speech behaviour in such multicultural environments is indicative of the interaction between cultural phenomena and linguistic characteristics, and is shaped by multilingualism, cultural identity, and social dynamics (Danet & Herring, 2007; Deumert, 2014; Thurlow & Mroczek, 2011).

The results of this study demonstrate that the distinctive characteristics of young people's speech behaviour in a multicultural environment such as Kazakhstan manifest through both the selection of vocabulary and the employment of diverse communication styles, thus underscoring the significance of cultural competence in intercultural communication.

Linguistic analysis has demonstrated that slang, loanwords, and bilingual and multilingual elements such as code-switching and code-mixing, which are characteristic of youth speech, reflect the influence of Kazakh, Russian, English and other languages on the speech practices of young people. This indicates a high degree of linguistic hybridity in the context of multilingualism. Discourse analysis enabled the consideration of stylistic and func-

tional features of youth speech, incorporating speech strategies in diverse communicative scenarios and characteristics of narrative in social networks.

The socio-cultural factor as an extra-linguistic factor was analysed through the prism of the influence of ethnicity and social environment on the formation of young people's linguistic identity. In particular, the interaction between Russian- and Kazakh-speaking youth, as well as the transformation of language under the influence of globalisation and the digital environment, was noted. The use of Kazakh words in Russian-speaking speech not only demonstrates the bilinguality of speakers, but also serves as a marker of their belonging to the unique cultural space of Kazakhstan. This phenomenon goes beyond mere language mixing (code-switching or code-mixing). It reflects the aspiration of young people to express their social and cultural identity. The incorporation of Kazakh elements into Russian discourse underscores the connection with the Kazakh reality, where Kazakh is the state language and Russian functions as a lingua franca for inter-ethnic communication. Consequently, the utilisation of Kazakh vocabulary in Russian-language texts and oral discourse serves as a means of asserting affiliation with specific social groups, namely young individuals who self-identify with Kazakh culture and the multicultural society.

The speech behaviour of Kazakhstani youth is indicative of their mentality, values, and unique word creation, the study of which facilitates the presentation of a sociolinguistic portrait of the young generation. The analysis demonstrates the emergence of a novel cultural type among contemporary youth in Kazakh society, one that significantly deviates from the characteristics of previous generations. This new cultural type is characterised by a distinct set of guidelines and values, representing a significant departure from the norms of previous generations (Shadinova, 2015, p. 1392).

At this stage of the research, the emphasis is placed on the analysis of examples of Kazakh–Russian language mixing. This allows for the identification of the basic mechanisms of intercultural interaction in the speech of young people. However, it is planned that the analysis will be expanded in the future to include such parameters as nationality, gender, and regional differences. This will make it possible to understand more deeply how these factors influence the choice of linguistic means and the formation of identity in a multicultural society.

Consequently, studies of the speech behaviour of Kazakhstani youth not only reveal the peculiarities of interaction within this group, but also contribute to a deeper understanding of the processes of intercultural communication, thereby facilitating harmonious coexistence in a multilingual and multicultural society. The findings of this study are of particular significance in the development of effective communication strategies, as they furnish practical recommendations for enhancing communication between individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This study captures and elucidates the distinctive characteristics of speech behaviour, which reflect the identity of native speakers. This contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage and its integration into the global context. The comprehension of trends and factors influencing speech behaviour facilitates the mitigation of potential conflicts caused by misunderstandings or stereotypes.

The results of this study may have an important practical significance for understanding the trends in the development of the language situation in Kazakhstan and developing an effective language policy. The results of this study will also contribute to the inclusion of the language of the youth of Kazakhstan in the range of linguistic objects necessary for further comparative, descriptive, and scientific research by a wide range of specialists. Prospects for the development of the methodology include expanding the research field to include analysis of oral communication, expanding the geography of the study, increasing the sample size and introducing new methods of data analysis, taking into account the factors of nationality, gender, and regional peculiarities.

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Article

Value Priorities of Student Youth in the Multi-Ethnic Space of Kazakhstan and Their Influence on Intercultural Communications

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Abstract: This article aims to describe the value priorities of Kazakhstani student youth and explore their relationship with traditions, the culture of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan, state ideological attitudes, and the influence of external cultures. This paper addresses the impact of the multinational environment and globalization on the formation of values among students in Kazakhstan. This article analyzes empirical data collected through a mixed-methods questionnaire, developed in accordance with the well-known value measurement methodologies of M. Rokeach and Sh. Schwartz. The results show that although traditional values remain significant, the growing exposure of young people to global influences and socio-political changes indicates a dynamic evolution of their value system, reflecting both continuity and changes in the cultural landscape of Kazakhstan. The key value for Kazakhstani students is family, which suggests sufficient harmony in the life models chosen by these students. The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the establishment of a system of relations in which different cultures can engage in dialogue, preserve their historical trajectories, and maintain mutual respect among representatives of diverse ethnicities and social groups. This study also holds implications for the development of legislative mechanisms aimed at respecting Kazakhstan's national interests in international communication.

Keywords: intercultural communication; multi-ethnic space of Kazakhstan; value priorities of student youth; socio-cultural identity; intercultural adaptation

1. Introduction

In the context of global transformations, understanding the formation of value orientations among young people is increasingly relevant. Young people's attitudes towards the environment, their life goals, and shifts in their worldview provide insights that can aid in predicting their responses to social changes and potentially in shaping the future of society itself. Value orientations serve as a critical social mechanism, influencing life strategies and guiding young people's choices about their personal and professional paths. Developing mechanisms to reinforce fundamental human values among young people is essential for fostering harmonious inter-ethnic relations and for preserving the language and culture of each ethnic group. Consequently, this issue is strategically important as a socio-political objective, with significant implications as a scientific problem—particularly for multinational, multilingual countries. In this regard, the ethnic diversity of Kazakhstan,

home to 124 ethnic groups, offers a unique context for research on ethnic, linguistic, social, and cultural dynamics.

This study addresses the complexity and urgency of understanding youth and their values, a topic that has garnered substantial interest in recent scholarly discourse. Previous research on youth issues (e.g., Suleimenova & Sinyachkin, 2019; Ahmad et al., 2013; Biyekenova et al., 2016; Greenfield, 2018; Karipbayev, 2021; Maylykutova, 2023; Kropiewnicka-Mielko, 2023; Freires et al., 2024) has provided valuable insights into the dynamic processes shaping youth environments. Although these studies cover a broad range of questions, some areas remain underexplored, limiting a comprehensive understanding of this complex field. While there is growing interest in youth value systems, few studies address variations in values across ethnic groups. For example, the ways different ethnic communities in a polyethnic society interpret concepts such as family, religion, or success remain under-examined. These areas warrant deeper investigation to capture the full cultural diversity of society. Additionally, the influence of digitalization on the value priorities of young people is an especially pressing area of study today.

This article represents a segment of a larger research project that investigates the formation of various identities among Kazakhstani youth, drawing on contemporary linguistic, sociolinguistic, and psycholinguistic data. The primary aim of this study is to identify, compare, and analyze the value priorities of Kazakhstani students within the country's multi-ethnic environment and to examine how these values influence intercultural communication.

To achieve this aim, the authors of the article put forward the following queries:

(1) What value priorities prevail among student youth in the multi-ethnic environment of Kazakhstan?
(2) What impact do differences in the value orientations of Kazakhstani youth have on their participation in intercultural communication?
(3) Does ethnicity affect the perception of fundamental human values and the strategies employed in interactions with individuals from other cultural groups?

As a hypothesis, the authors posit a correlation between the degree of linguistic proficiency, value orientations and the dynamics of intercultural communication among Kazakhstani students studying in a multicultural and polylingual environment. It is hypothesized that the higher the level of language competence, the broader the individual's social contacts and adaptive capabilities, which contributes to the formation of tolerance, a greater sense of orientation to personal achievements and more harmonious relations between ethnic groups.

A thorough examination of these issues will enhance our understanding of societal changes in Kazakhstan and support the development of more effective social, educational, and cultural programmes.

2. The Key Factors Influencing the Formation of Value Orientations Among Modern Youth

In the context of globalization, digital innovation, and ethno-cultural diversity, studying the values and preferences of young people has become increasingly relevant. As active participants in contemporary social phenomena, young people act as a unifying force that will influence the norms and development trajectories of tomorrow's society (Sikevich & Skvortsov, 2020, p. 278). According to Paltore et al. (2023), young people experience dual processes: on one hand, "socializing under conditions of intercultural encounter and the uncertainty caused by it, they simultaneously internalize various patterns intertwined in their consciousness"; on the other, through active engagement with cultural challenges, they expand their spiritual needs and interests (p. 117). Thus, understanding the worldview

and value priorities of young people, especially in a multicultural setting, offers insights into the future directions of multi-ethnic societies.

Modern research emphasizes the dynamic and flexible nature of identity in response to globalization and social change, underscoring the central role of values in the formation and expression of identity. In culturally diverse settings, individuals and groups engage in various forms of self-identification and self-presentation, shaping identity both individually and collectively (Sh. K. Zharkynbekova & Chernyavskaya, 2022a, p. 785). Throughout life, identity evolves in alignment with value priorities, which act as essential guides.

Values are understood as a set of positive qualities with varying significance (Schwartz, 1992; McDonald et al., 2015; Anspoka, 2020) and serve as internal guides for behaviour and its justification (Fraj & Martinez, 2006). These values underlie social and cultural norms, directing behaviour and decision-making as the foundation of "normal" behaviour within society (Blackwell et al., 2007; McDonald et al., 2015). Initially formed within the family and further influenced by relationships, experiences, and lifestyle, values are shaped by the broader socio-cultural environment (Wu et al., 2020; Anspoka, 2020; Sihombing, 2014). Freires et al. (2024) stress the importance of the school years in shaping an individual's value system, while Suleimenova and Sinyachkin (2019, p. 32) highlight the social conditioning of values, encompassing both personal (subjective) and collective significance. The ideal values are represented by a triad of truth, ethics, and esthetics (Suleimenova & Sinyachkin, 2019).

The value system, combining individual and social experiences, is characterized by its dual nature, which supports its dual functionality. On one hand, values establish the basis for forming attitudes within an individual's consciousness, influencing their assessment of situations, conditions, and events, as well as their expression of personal viewpoints. On the other hand, as values transform, they become motivators for action and behaviour (Erenchinova et al., 2019). Schwartz (2012) describes values as "critical motivators of behaviour and attitudes" (p. 17).

Wu et al. (2020) emphasize the increasing importance of fostering a sense of belonging and identity in young people within a rapidly changing environment, identifying this as one of the most pressing social needs. Sociocultural identity is understood as the alignment of an individual's core culture with the broader society's norms, values, and traditions (Yakovlev, 2024, p. 57). At the foundation of all social identities is an individual's basic value system (Ozerina & Ulyanina, 2023), which includes universal values (such as love, prestige, respect, security, nationality, freedom, and health), intra-group values (political, religious), individual (personal) values (Tkacheva & Baymukhametova, 2016, p. 134), and culture-specific values, such as collectivism in Eastern cultures and individualism in Western cultures.

The formation of sociocultural identity is an ongoing process (Freires et al., 2024, p. 3), influenced by diverse factors as it bridges personal and public realms and evolves within particular cultural and political discourses (Hall, 1996). Language, acquired through sociocultural practise, plays a key role in identity formation (Sh. K. Zharkynbekova & Chernyavskaya, 2022b, p. 474). For young people, identity formation occurs "within the context of existing old and newly forming social relations" (Tkacheva & Baymukhametova, 2016, p. 134). Giddens (1991) argues that modern identity is reflexive, continuously reinterpreted in response to shifting social and cultural contexts, while Bauman (2000) highlights the need for constant rethinking and adaptation of one's identifications and values in an era marked by volatility and uncertainty. Sihombing (2014) underscores the significance of understanding changes in values, stating that "a shift in values means a shift in one culture or nation." Such shifts, as explained by Sihombing (2014), lead to the

emergence of new values, reordering of value hierarchies, and the disappearance of older values, following the Windhorst model.

In the 21st century, global migration, advances in digital technology, and the effects of multiculturalism and cultural blending are driving significant transformations in the world's value landscape. The Internet and digital communications are especially influential in shaping value hierarchies and civic identity among youth (Nusubalieva et al., 2023), enabling the formation of new social and cultural identities and allowing individuals to experiment with different aspects of their personalities (Castells, 2010). However, as Turkle (2011) cautions, while virtual spaces offer opportunities to craft and manage online identities, they can also complicate social interactions and self-understanding.

In the context of global migration and strengthening transnational ties, migrants and their families, actively interacting across borders, create transnational social spaces that shape their multilayered social identities (Glick Schiller et al., 1995; Nedelcu et al., 2023). Freires et al. (2024) explore the value dimensions of European youth identities, identifying three meta-values: structural, fundamental, and procedural. While they emphasize the importance of procedural values, such as human rights, freedom, equality, and solidarity, they conclude that contemporary European youth approach values in a pluralistic manner (Freires et al., 2024).

The pluralization of self-realization patterns is similarly reflected among Kazakhstani youth, whose value orientations are influenced by diverse factors, including Westernization, market psychology, state ideology, and the revival of spiritual and cultural traditions (Tkacheva & Baymukhametova, 2016, p. 138). According to Tkacheva and Baymukhametova (2016), Kazakhstani youth exhibit contradictions in their value orientations, balancing traditional values such as family and respect for elders with an emerging trend toward extreme individualism. A growing emphasis on pragmatism, material wealth, paternalism, and social infantilism is observed, though success and high social status are often perceived as detached from individual work ethic (Tkacheva & Baymukhametova, 2016, p. 136). Biyekenova et al. (2016) further indicate that young people prioritize personal well-being and private life over civic and patriotic values, which are relegated to a peripheral position in the value hierarchy.

Pragmatic motives—such as high income potential, employment prospects, and the prestige of specific professions—significantly impact young people's career choices. Career decisions are shaped not only by personal aspirations but also by the educational and professional models within their social environments, particularly those of relatives (Shnarbekova & Abdiraiymova, 2016, p. 177). Sadyrova (2016) observes that material well-being has gained precedence over freedom, with financial compensation now prioritized over fulfilling work. This shift toward consumer-oriented values has profoundly influenced the life strategies of youth. Traditional negative phenomena such as opportunism, indifference, lack of principles, and consumerism are increasingly met with acceptance (Sadyrova, 2016, p. 186), reflecting a move from collectivist to individualistic life orientations (as cited in Sadyrova, 2016).

Kazakhstani youth demonstrate a blend of global and traditional influences, showing an outward orientation, rationality, and tolerance while maintaining a conventional perspective on marriage (Kaldybayeva & Kaldybayev, 2018). The contradictory impact of globalization on Kazakhstani youth is further evidenced by their attraction to global values like individualism, innovation, and freedom of choice, alongside the growth of neo-traditionalist attitudes that underscore ethno-cultural and religious values (Karipbayev, 2021). Consequently, values exist as models within individual consciousness and as components of public, supra-personal consciousness, highlighting the complexity and multifaceted nature of socio-cultural identity (Molodychenko, 2015). This intricate value system, shaped by

socio-political contexts and the dynamic exchange between local and global cultures, underscores the importance of examining sociocultural identity through values, particularly in the realm of intercultural communication.

The value orientations of Kazakhstani youth, including global (with an emphasis on personal interests, freedom, and integration) and local (with a traditional view of family and religion) approaches, as highlighted by the aforementioned researchers, are also confirmed by our findings. However, our study makes a significant contribution to this aspect by addressing similarities and differences in the value priorities of different linguistic groups of Kazakhstani youth: (a) Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs, (c) Russian-speaking Kazakhs, (d) Russians, and (e) other ethnicities. The value orientations of each linguistic group are shaped by a complex interplay of cultural, historical, social, and religious contexts, which may in turn influence the communication styles of these groups. This may affect the dynamics within the group and the nature of relations with other ethnic groups, including the preservation of identity, the degree of tolerance, and the readiness for integration. These factors may ultimately influence the patterns of interaction with other cultures and approaches to the resolution of intercultural differences and the prevention of conflicts.

2.1. The Role of Value Priorities Among Student Youth in Intercultural Communication

In contemporary contexts, where cultural boundaries shift toward a more integrative, communicative networked identity, the value dimension of intercultural communication has become increasingly significant. This dimension is shaped by individuals' evolving perceptions of the self, encompassing both independent (a unique personality with personal feelings, cognitions, and motivations) and interdependent aspects (emphasizing in-group obligations and connectedness) (Ting-Toomey, 2010, p. 16).

Values are foundational in shaping how individuals perceive, interpret, and engage with social norms, expectations, and behaviours in interactions, playing a pivotal role in intercultural communication. When individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds interact, they bring distinct sets of values, which can foster understanding or, conversely, lead to conflict. Hofstede's (1980, 2001) research on cultural values and their influence on behaviours and organizational structures reveals that cultures differ along dimensions such as power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence (Hofstede, 2001). Similarly, Schwartz's (1992) theory of core values identifies ten universally recognized values, which, while universally present, vary in motivational priorities across cultures. His research highlights that these values, though universally shared, are prioritized and hierarchized differently, affecting behaviours, interpersonal interactions, and intercultural communication (Schwartz, 2012). Inconsistencies in value-based cultural behaviors, however, can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts in intercultural communication (Goodenough & Murdock, 2000; Lidell & Williams, 2019). Jackson (2020) underscores the importance of emotional intelligence in navigating these differences, noting that emotional awareness of cultural variations is essential in conflict management and building successful intercultural relationships.

Voinea (2012), on the other hand, emphasizes the role of societal characteristics in shaping an individual's perception of their value system, suggesting that intercultural education—conceived as "education in the spirit of values"—is vital for fostering this system (Voinea, 2012). Torkos and Egerău (2022) expand on this, describing intercultural education as an approach that views the educational process through the lens of cultural diversity, focusing on the phenomenon of cultural interaction (p. 103). This multicultural educational framework, which advocates mutual respect and intercultural dialogue (Kostyukova et al., 2017), helps young people in multicultural contexts embrace a broader spectrum of values (Kropiewnicka-Mielko, 2023). In the European context of intercul-

tural education, values such as tolerance, freedom, openness, acceptance of differences, appreciation of diversity, pluralism, and cooperation are particularly emphasized as key components (Torkos & Egerău, 2022, p. 90).

Intercultural communication issues arising from value differences extend beyond distinct communication contexts and varying perceptions of time and emotion; they also encompass stereotypes, prejudices, and cultural conflicts (S. Zharkynbekova & Aimoldina, 2023). Stereotypes and prejudices can create preconceived expectations that foster misunderstandings or even negative perceptions of other traditions and norms, serving as obstacles to effective communication (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013). Additionally, a mismatch in cross-cultural values—such as a conflict between ancestral values and those of a new, dominant culture—can complicate young people's adaptation to new social environments, potentially impacting their sense of belonging and identity (Greenfield, 2018). Thus, understanding an ethnic group's core values, sociocultural preferences, and behavioural responses is essential for fostering intercultural communication (Artykbayeva et al., 2024).

Equally important are understanding, accommodation, respect, and integration, which lay the groundwork for harmonious interethnic relations and successful intercultural dialogue (Ahmad et al., 2013). The interaction between cultures facilitates the formation of shared values, a critical factor for peaceful coexistence and positive intercultural communication (Gadakchyan et al., 2020). Today's youth, particularly in urban multicultural settings, are fostering inclusive forms of belonging, developing hybrid identities, and promoting more inclusive societies, making them key to the future of multiculturalism (Harris, 2012).

In this context, studying the value priorities of student youth is particularly valuable. The student environment is instrumental in shaping future leaders, making it crucial for students to cultivate respect for other cultures and an understanding of diverse traditions and perspectives. While traditional values remain significant, Kazakhstan's youth are increasingly exposed to global influences and socio-political changes, leading to an evolving value system that reflects both continuity and change within Kazakhstan's multicultural landscape. Many young Kazakhstanis recognize ethnicity and religiosity as intrinsic values, yet also see the importance of preserving inter-ethnic peace and harmony in the country (Karipbayev, 2021).

Considering intercultural communication within the diverse student environment of multi-ethnic Kazakhstan is vital for fostering a harmonious society, reinforcing national identity, and preparing students to thrive in a globalized world. These competencies contribute not only to the personal and professional development of young people but also to the sustainable development of Kazakhstan's multiethnic society as a whole.

Value orientations, which form the basis of intercultural communication, are of paramount importance in understanding the nature of interpersonal and intergroup relations. The presence of disparate priorities among representatives of different ethnic groups can influence their social and educational strategies. In the context of student populations, where cultural diversity becomes a significant factor, these differences necessitate the development of intercultural competence that fosters mutual understanding and tolerance. Consequently, intercultural communication becomes a crucial skill that enables students to interact effectively, integrating diverse value systems and thus enriching their collective experience.

2.2. Kazakhstan's Model of Multi-Ethnicity and Multilingualism

The Republic of Kazakhstan is a multi-ethnic home to representatives from 124 ethnic groups. According to the 2021 Population Census, the ethnic composition of Kazakhstan is as follows: Kazakhs (70.4%), Russians (15.5%), Uzbeks (3.2%), Ukrainians (2.0%), Uyghurs

(1.5%), Tatars (1.1%), Germans (1.2%), Koreans (0.6%), Turks (0.5%), Azerbaijanis (0.8%), Belarusians (0.4%), Dungans (0.4%), Kurds (0.3%), Tajiks (0.3%), Poles (0.2%), Chechens (0.2%), Kyrgyz (0.2%), and others (1.4%). Kazakhs and Russians are the largest groups, with populations of 13.5 million and 3 million, respectively (The Results of the National Population Census of 2021, 2021).

Since gaining independence, Kazakhstan has experienced significant internal and external migration, which has profoundly shaped its demographic landscape. Between 1999 and 2021, the number of Russians decreased by 33.4%, Ukrainians by 29.2%, Germans by 36%, Tatars by 12.2%, Belarusians by 31.6%, Koreans by 88.1%, and Poles by 25.4%. These declines reflect external migration trends, particularly the outflow of the Russian-speaking population following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

In contrast, the population of Turkic-speaking ethnic groups has seen considerable growth. The number of Kyrgyz increased by 214%, Tajiks and Dungans by 94% and 114%, respectively, Azerbaijanis by 86%, Uzbeks by 65.6%, Uyghurs by 38%, Turks by 12.5%, and other ethnic groups by 28% (see Table 1).

Table 1. Statistical data on the demographic situation of select Turkic, Slavic, and other ethnic groups in Kazakhstan.

Ethnic Groups/Years	1999	2009	2021
	Thousands (%)	Thousands (%)	Thousands (%)
Total	14,953.1	16,009.6	19,186
1. Kazakhs	7985.0 (53.4%)	10,096.8 (63.1%)	13,497.9 (70.4%)
2. Russians	4480.6 (30.0%)	3793.8 (23.7%)	2981.9 (15.5%)
3. Uzbeks	370.8 (2.5%)	457.0 (2.9%)	614.0 (3.2%)
4. Ukrainians	547.1 (3.7%)	333.0 (2.1%)	387.3 (2.0)
5. Uighurs	210.4 (1.4%)	224.7 (1,4%)	290.3 (1.5%)
6. Tatars	249.1 (1.7%)	204.2 (1.1%)	218.7 (1.3%)
7. Germans	353.5 (2.4%)	178.4 (1.1%)	226.1 (1.2%)
8. Koreans	999.4 (0.7%)	100.4 (0.6%)	118.5 (0.6%)
9. Turks	76.0 (0.5%)	97.0 (0.6%)	85.5 (0.5%)
10. Azerbaijanis	78.3 (0.5%)	85.3 (0.5%)	145.6 (0.8%)
11. Belarusians	111.9 (0.7%)	66.5 (0.4%)	76.5 (0.4%)
12. Dungan	36.9 (0.2%)	52.0 (0.3%)	78.8 (0.4%)
13. Kurds	32.8 (0.2%)	38.3 (0.2%)	47.9 (0.3%)
14. Tajiks	25.7 (0.2%)	36.3 (0.2%)	49.8 (0.3%)
15. Poles	47.3 (0.3%)	34.1 (0.2%)	35.3 (0.2%)
16. Chechens	31.8 (0.2%)	31.4 (0.2%)	33.6 (0.2%)
17. Kyrgyz people	10.9 (0.1%)	23.3 (0.2%)	34.2 (0.2%)
18. Other ethnic groups	206.9 (1.4%)	157.2 (1.1%)	264.1 (1.4%)

As shown in the table, Kazakhs, who represented just over half of the population two decades ago, now form the majority at 70.4%. In 1999, Kazakhstan's population stood at 15 million, with approximately 8 million Kazakhs and 4.5 million Russians. By the 2021 census, the population had grown to 19.2 million, with Kazakhs numbering 13.5 million and Russians 3 million (The Results of the National Population Census of 2021, 2021).

Kazakhstan is a multilingual country. In addition to the official Kazakh language, Russian holds the status of a language for inter-ethnic communication, as stipulated in the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan" (11 July 1997). This policy facilitates communication among representatives of different ethnic groups while allowing them to maintain their cultural and linguistic identities.

The language situation in Kazakhstan has been significantly shaped by historical migration patterns and government policies. Extensive data collected by Kazakh scholars over recent decades, including large-scale sociolinguistic surveys, has provided valuable insights into the current trends in linguistic change within the country. These findings have enabled a comprehensive assessment of the state of language development and the prospects for future language interaction in Kazakhstan.

1. Soviet Russification and Its Aftermath: During the Soviet era, the targeted policy of Russification disrupted the balance between languages. As a result, Russian gradually became dominant across various spheres of communication within Kazakh society (Suleimenova, 2011, p. 117). The decline in the functional use of the Kazakh language led many members of the indigenous population to lose motivation for speaking their native language. However, following Kazakhstan's attainment of independence, the situation has evolved. Kazakh is now the state language, and its use has expanded significantly. Today, Kazakhstan's communicative landscape includes a variety of linguistic identities. An analysis of linguistic competence and behaviour in different communication contexts has revealed the following linguistic profiles in Kazakhstani society: (1) Monolingual Kazakhs who speak only Kazakh, predominantly from rural areas or as repatriates from Turkic-speaking countries; (2) Bilingual Kazakhs with Kazakh as the dominant language; (3) Bilingual Kazakhs with Russian as the dominant language; (4) Russian-speaking monolinguals; (5) Russian-speaking Kazakhs; and (6) Representatives of other ethnic groups residing in Kazakhstan (Suleimenova, 2010).

2. Impact of Globalization and English Language Proficiency: The global rise of English as a "lingua franca" has influenced attitudes toward the language, which is now seen as essential for enhancing personal competitiveness. Surveys conducted between 2014 and 2016 revealed that approximately 83% of Kazakhstanis believe their children should be fluent in English. Among younger respondents, 91.8% associate professional development with English proficiency, considering it a key factor for career advancement (Zharkynbekova, 2012). The demand for proficiency in multiple foreign languages, including English, is driven by neoliberal ideals of global competitiveness (cited by Djuraeva, 2022).

3. Effects of Language Policy Reforms: Recent language policy measures aimed at preserving the state language have produced notable results in various communication domains, including education, media, and business. For example, reforms introducing trilingual education to promote linguistic competence in a globalized context have had significant impacts. In 2023, 68.2% of first graders chose education in Kazakh, up from 64% in 2021 (https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/edu/press/news/details/602530?lang=ru, accessed on 29 June 2024).

The multilingual education model that has been developed in Kazakhstan is the result of a considered approach that has taken into account both the historical factors that have shaped the country's linguistic landscape and the strategic goals that have been set for it. The model of education is defined as innovative, forming a modern, competitive personality with high linguistic competence in the conditions of globalization, informatization and integration. It is designed to provide training of qualified personnel in demand in the professional sphere and social society. Higher education in Kazakhstan is structured in a manner that allows for the concurrent study of Kazakh/Russian and English languages. To illustrate this, during the 2022–2023 academic year, 60.3% (377,467 students) of the total

number of university students (626,208) studied Kazakh, 24.7% (155,016 students) Russian, and 7.2% (45,380 students) English (Concept for the Development of Language Policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023–2029, accessed on 20 June 2024). Furthermore, there is a trend among bilingual Kazakhs to prioritize English alongside Kazakh. A new type of linguistic identity is emerging: the polyglot, fluent in three or more languages, primarily Kazakh, Russian, and English. According to Djuraeva (2022), the status of English is evident in the way Kazakhstani students position English alongside Russian and Kazakh in their meta-linguistic narratives of everyday language practises. These students view all of their languages, including English, as integral to the realization of a trilingual identity at local, national, and global levels (Djuraeva, 2022).

4. Migration Processes: Kazakhstan experiences significant migration flows both in and out of the country. Since 1991, the government has actively promoted the repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs from neighbouring and distant countries. Over the years, 1,137,100 ethnic Kazakhs have resettled in Kazakhstan (https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/enbek/press/news/details/813142?lang=ru, accessed on 10 July 2024). The transformation of Kazakhstan's linguistic landscape is also linked to ethnolinguistic shifts among immigrants, particularly repatriate Kazakhs.

As Suleimenova (2009) notes, ethno-demographic processes have contributed to an increase in Kazakh language use while maintaining Russian linguistic competence, fostering the development of multilingualism in the country.

3. Materials and Methods

The study utilized a diverse range of sources, including official statistical data from state bodies of the Republic of Kazakhstan, such as the Results of the National Population Census of 2021 (https://stat.gov.kz/ru/national/2021/, accessed on 29 June 2024); normative and legal acts, including the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan, on Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan (1997) (https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z970000151_ accessed on 20 June 2024), and the Concept for the Development of Language Policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023–2029 (2023) (https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/sko-sayasat/documents/details/481125?lang=ru, accessed on 20 June 2024); periodicals reflecting the current state of affairs; and online resources, including the websites of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Additionally, the study incorporated findings from recent research conducted by both domestic and international scholars.

To identify the dominant values shaping the contemporary value system of society, a field study was conducted using Rokeach's Value Orientations methodology. The study took place in 2023 and involved 140 participants from various universities in Kazakhstan, including L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Toraigyrov University (Pavlodar), and Mukhtar Auezov South Kazakhstan University (Shymkent). Participants, aged 18 to 23 years, were selected to ensure a representative sample.

The majority of respondents were Kazakhs (80%, or 112 individuals), followed by Russians (11.4%, or 16 individuals). The remaining 8.6% comprised Uzbeks, Uighurs, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Poles, Chechens, Armenians, and Ingush. The participants' educational backgrounds were varied, encompassing fields such as architecture and construction, veterinary medicine, journalism, engineering, information technology, mathematics, mechanics, pedagogy, psychology, tourism, physics, Kazakh, Russian, and foreign philology, as well as economics. The geographic distribution of the participants spanned across all regions of Kazakhstan: Astana and the Akmola region (27%), Taraz, Shymkent, and

Turkestan region (24%), Almaty city and Almaty region (11%), Kyzylorda region (6%), Pavlodar and North Kazakhstan region (14%), Aktobe (6%), and Semey, Ust-Kamenogorsk, and East Kazakhstan region (12%).

The demographic composition of the sample closely mirrors the ethnic distribution of the country, indicating the representativeness of the sample. To overcome the limitations that may be associated with the representativeness of the sample, the number of respondents, and geographical constraints, the authors of the study have conducted extensive preliminary work to ascertain the general population of students in Kazakhstan. They have also obtained the approval of the management of leading Kazakhstani universities to conduct questionnaires and interviews across various regions within the country.

To analyze the values prioritized by the respondents and to test the study's working hypothesis, the empirical data were categorized based on the subjects' linguistic competence, as determined by their nationality and language of instruction.

All respondents were categorized into four distinct groups based on their language proficiency. The findings of our study revealed that the primary characteristic of the speech activity of students who participated in the survey was the nature of their speech acts, as manifested in their language proficiency:

- **Kazakh-speaking group:** Kazakh students who chose Kazakh as the language of instruction belong to this group. They also possess varying degrees of proficiency in Russian and English.
- **Russian-speaking group:** Kazakh students who opted for Russian as the language of instruction are part of this group. They typically have some proficiency in Kazakh and English.
- **Russian monolingual group:** Russian students, who are mostly monolingual in Russian, speak Kazakh and English to a limited extent.
- **Multi-ethnic group:** Students from other ethnic backgrounds (Armenians, Belarusians, Ingush, Chechens, Poles, Uzbeks, Uyghurs, Ukrainians) generally speak multiple languages, including their native language, Kazakh, and Russian, with varying degrees of proficiency in English. Their speech development meets most social standards.

The study formulated the working hypothesis that young people from different ethnic groups living in the multi-ethnic environment of Kazakhstan may display both similarities and differences in their value priorities.

To empirically study the value preferences of Kazakhstani students, our research group designed a comprehensive mixed-methods questionnaire, which was divided into two primary content blocks: Block 1: Social Characteristics and Block 2: Value Priorities. The methodology for measuring values, developed by M. Rokeach (1973), served as the foundation for creating our own approach to studying students' value systems. Our combined questionnaire includes both a standardized test and a series of open-ended reflective questions.

3.1. Block 1: Social Characteristics

This block consisted of socio-demographic questions that aimed to capture the respondents' objective characteristics, such as gender, age, nationality, mother tongue, and language of instruction. The collected data were analyzed and presented in the section titled **'Ethnic Indicators'**.

3.2. Block 2: Value Priorities

This was the main component of the questionnaire and was divided into three sections:

1. **Open-ended question:** "What values, in your opinion, are the most important in your life?"

2. **Standardized test:** "Evaluate each of the proposed value options on the scale given in the table".
3. **Standardized test:** "Determine the degree of importance (value) of various business and personal qualities in a person's life".

Following Rokeach's methodology (1973), the measured values were classified into two categories:

- **Terminal values:** These values are related to goals, such as family well-being, health, self-development, self-realization, interesting work, education, and independence.
- **Instrumental values:** These are values related to the means of achieving goals, including personal qualities such as education, professionalism, self-confidence, kindness, benevolence, willingness to help others, creativity, risk-taking, entrepreneurship, responsibility, and a sense of duty.

Students were asked to select the values that were most significant to them from the list and rate them on a five-point scale, from "very valuable" to "not valuable at all".

The data from the questionnaires were processed using Excel software, which provided results in the form of percentage distributions. Additionally, standardized open-access content analysis programmes (e.g., miratext.ru) and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 27.0) were used to conduct advanced statistical analyses. These tools enabled comprehensive analysis and allowed for a deeper exploration of the findings.

To explore the relationship between value priorities and the factors influencing their selection, informal interviews were also conducted. The interview questions included the following: "What values in life do you consider the most important? What traditions of national culture do you honor? What role does your family play in your life? What qualities do you value most in others? What goals do you set for yourself? What is more important to you in your relationships with others? What matters more to you—material goods or spiritual well-being? Are there representatives of other ethnic groups in your environment (friends, acquaintances)? What values are determinant for the ethnic group you represent? What would you like to change in the current situation in Kazakhstan?"

A total of 35 students, both Bachelor's and Master's level, participated in the interviews. The majority of participants were Kazakhs (25 students, or 71.4%); 14.3% of respondents were Russians (5 students), and the remaining 14.3% included students from various ethnic backgrounds: Tatars (1), Uzbeks (1), Poles (1), Germans (1), and Ossetians (1). The interview texts were processed manually.

4. Results

4.1. Generalized Results of the Questionnaire on Kazakhstani Students' Value Preferences

In response to the open-ended question, *"What values, in your opinion, are the most important in your life? Formulate your answer in one or two words"*, a total of 1442 words were gathered from 140 respondents, with an average of 10–11 words per participant. Analysis indicates that the most prominent values for Kazakhstani student youth include family, health, material well-being, professionalism and development, education, freedom, and others.

Table 2 presents the most statistically significant values reported by students, ranked in descending order based on frequency.

The table includes values occurring with a frequency of at least 0.5%. Universal values with lower frequencies—such as humanity, tolerance (0.47% each), discipline, patience, and loyalty (0.39% each)—along with gratitude, benevolence, caring, sincerity, and justice (0.31% each), and values like beauty, morality, and decency (0.23% each) have been excluded.

Additionally, values including accuracy, literacy, intelligence, reason, wisdom, optimism, helpfulness, and modesty (0.16% each) were not included in the table.

Table 2. The most significant values and their frequency.

№	Value	Frequency of Use, %
1	Family	7.36
2	Health	7.28
3	Education (knowledge, education, study, etc.)	4.70
4	Freedom, independence	3.60
5	Material well-being (money, finance, wealth, prosperity, material values, etc.)	3.60
6	Professionalism, work, career, growth, development, self-development, self-realization	3.60
7	Love	2.33
8	Honesty	2.33
9	Kindness	2.02
10	Communication, relationships, connections, communication	1.86
11	Mutual understanding	1.10
12	Respect	1.55
13	Happinness	1.48
14	Labour, hard work	1.25
15	Responsibility	0.85
16	Personal, personal life	0.78
17	Rest	0.78
18	Success	0.78
19	Faith, religion, God	0.70
20	Comfort	0.70
21	Creativity	0.70
22	Future	0.62
23	Friendship	0.62
24	Spiritual values	0.62
25	Hobby	0.55
26	Patriotism, country, state, society	0.55

Unique values mentioned only once, such as “altruism”, “politeness”, “good manners”, “unselfishness”, “dignity”, “culture”, “leadership”, “reliability”, “conscience”, and “empathy”, were also recorded but are not listed in Table 2.

According to Table 2, *family* is the predominant value among Kazakhstani students, reflecting its central role in students’ lives. This is closely followed by *health*, valued for its fundamental importance in building a future family, succeeding academically, and achieving professional aspirations.

Material well-being ranks third, illustrating its importance for a fulfilling life and realizing one’s potential. Additionally, values associated with *personal comfort*, such as freedom, independence, love, personal life, recreation, and hobbies, highlight the emphasis

placed on individual well-being. *Education* ranks fourth, underscoring its role in personal and professional growth, while *health* remains a cornerstone, also ranking highly among students' priorities.

The lower emphasis on values like *patriotism*, *country*, and *society* (noted at a frequency of 0.55%) reflects the modern, globally connected environment that influences Kazakhstani youth. Factors like open borders, academic mobility, and exposure to diverse cultural perspectives foster a more cosmopolitan worldview among students. However, many Kazakh students still identify strongly as citizens, aspiring to contribute to their country's progress. Some students shared that *"In the future, I want to develop IT technologies in Kazakhstan"*, *"I want to create a company that positively impacts the national economy"*, and that *"My digital identity merges learning, creativity, and interaction, helping me grow and contribute to both my country and the global community"*.

An assessment of students' values based on importance levels (see Figure 1) reveals a strong emphasis on *health, family well-being, personal freedom, education*, and *opportunities for development*, mirroring findings from the open-ended responses. Less significant for students are values associated with public life, high social status, or engagement in the literature and the arts.

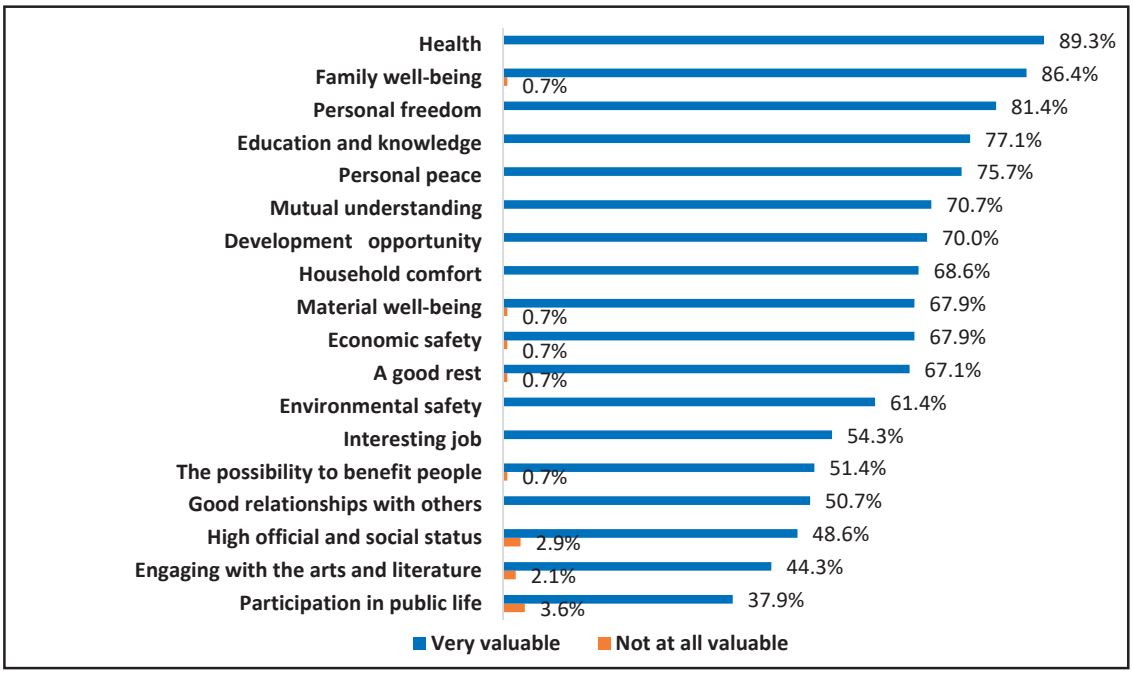

Figure 1. A list of values depending on the degree of their importance to Kazakhstani students.

Responses to questions on interpersonal relationships—"What is more important in your relationships: trust, respect, or something else? What qualities do you value most in others?"—show that, regardless of ethnicity, age, gender, or background, students appreciate qualities such as humanity, honesty, sincerity, openness, and reliability. These personal traits are valued across diverse demographics: "The most important thing for me between people is respect. Respect is the basis of all relationships, without knowing the elementary basics of respect, it will be impossible to build correct and constructive relationships between people" (Kazakh, male, 20 years old); "I consider the following qualities to be the most important in people. Humanity—understanding and compassion in a person. Ability to feel the feelings of the neighbour. Respect for the rights and dignity of everyone, regardless of their status, gender, earnings" (Kazakh, female, 22 years old); "I value in people openness, ability to help, friendliness and respect for another person, as I believe these are basic qualities for human survival in society" (Russian, female, 23 years

old); "What I value most of all in people is sincerity, kindness and responsibility. Sincerity is important to me because it creates trust and allows me to build honest relationships without falsity. Kindness is what makes the world a better place and I like people who show care and consideration for others. Responsibility is valuable because it shows that a person can keep their word and is willing to bear the consequences for their actions. These qualities help to build strong and reliable relationships based on respect and mutual understanding" (Uzbek, female, 21 years old); "I value kindness, sincerity, justice. I love optimists, positive people who can love, believe, dream, go to the goal" (Russian, female, 19 years old).

The responses provided by students can be considered illustrative of this viewpoint: *"There are many values in my life that I consider important. The first of them are family, friendship, support and love of close people. The second value is education, it helps me to develop in life and acquire new skills. Health is very important—the key to physical and psychological well-being. And also such values as responsibility, respect"* (Russian, female, 21 years old); *"I consider my greatest value to be close relations with my family and friends, as emotional ties with people are very important to me, so the opportunity to have people close in blood or spirit is a necessity for me. The second most important value I consider the possibility of self-realisation. I believe that every person should find his/her place in life"* (Polish, female, 19 years old).

Interview responses uniformly reflect the high importance of *family*, with students citing it as a foundational value rooted in their national traditions.

4.2. Results of Data by Groups of Respondents

To further explore value preferences by ethnicity, responses from four groups—*Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs*, *Russian-speaking Kazakhs*, *Russians*, and *other ethnicities*—were analyzed. Values were ranked based on frequency using the "Full Semantic Text Analysis" programme (https://miratext.ru/seo_analiz_text/, accessed on 28 July 2024), and values with a keyword density below 1 were excluded to enhance result reliability. The significant values for each group are listed in tables below.

4.2.1. Kazakh-Speaking Kazakhs

Among the 56 Kazakh-speaking respondents, a total of 596 value-based responses were recorded, with an average of 10–11 values per respondent. Table 3 presents the most significant values for Kazakh-speaking students studying in the Kazakh language.

Table 3. The most significant values for Kazakh respondents studying Kazakh.

№	Word	Density (Frequency of Word Usage), %
1	Family	8.72
2	Health	7.88
3	Education, knowledge	6.88
4	Kindness	2.85
5	Love	2.51
6	Honesty, loyalty	2.34
7	Freedom	2.01
8	Happiness	1.85
9	Man (his self-development, self-realization)	1.67
10	Industriousness	1.67
11	Friendship	1.67
12	Friendship	1.17

The top three values for Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs—*family*, *health*, and *education*—align with the values of the broader student sample. Additionally, Kazakh-speaking students prioritize *kindness*, *love*, *honesty*, *freedom*, *happiness*, *humanity*, *diligence*, *friendship*, and *responsibility*. Notably, 10 out of the 12 values listed are abstract concepts representing spiritual and moral qualities, while the concrete terms *family* and *person* embody complex socio-psychological aspects rooted in cultural and spiritual traditions.

Family emerged as the principal life priority among Kazakh-speaking respondents, who regard it as a core source of socio-cultural strength and guidance. In interviews, respondents highlighted family's significance with statements like *"My family is my wealth"*, *"Family is the most important thing for me"*, and *"Family is my support"*. Young Kazakh-speaking students view family as a central pillar that embodies core values and offers both material and spiritual sustenance: *"I love my close relatives very much and cannot imagine my life without them. My family is the main source of emotional and physical support. Only in the circle of my family I can feel completely free and loved. Family plays a major role in my life. I recognise the experience of older relatives and also feel responsible for my younger siblings and nephews"* (Kazakh, female, 22 years old).

The importance of the value of intergenerational relationships is clear from their response to the question of what national traditions they honour: *"One of the main traditions I honour or adhere to is respect for elders. I value the experience and wisdom of adults. I like to receive the gratitude and support of my parents, the older generation"* (Kazakh, female, 20 years old); *"There is something sacred in the fact that people, by creating a family, create their own cell in society, in history, in the world. Family gives me a certain incentive to live, to be happy, to develop and to achieve goals. I take care of my parents. I try to be a support for them just as they have always been for me. As a sister, I try to be the best example for my siblings. I support them and help them develop and achieve their goals. We are a united team that can always rely on each other"* (Kazakh, female, 23 years old).

Respect for elders, a hallmark of traditional Kazakh culture, is integral to these values. Students, particularly those raised in the context of folk pedagogy, value parental blessing as essential for a fulfilled life: *"My main task is not to let my parents down and fulfil their expectations. This is my destiny and my goal"* (Kazakh, male, 21 years old); *"My main goal is to achieve professional success in a field that I am passionate about, i.e., politics, and to be the pride of my parents"* (Kazakh, male, 19 years old).

In Kazakh culture, the eldest child is often perceived as having certain obligations, forming a distinctive character. Kazakh proverbs also underscore the role of the eldest sibling, who is seen as a source of strength and responsibility within the family: *"He who has an older brother has support"*, and *"An older brother's house is a wide pasture"* (Syzdykova & Husain, 2002).

The values emphasized by Kazakh-speaking Kazakh students—*kindness*, *love*, *loyalty*, *freedom*, *happiness*, *responsibility*, and *friendship*—centre on relationships and emotional well-being. These values often manifest within family, kinship, and work relationships. The frequent mention of the term *human being* as a priority reflects a strong focus on interpersonal relationships and the value placed on individuals as members of a broader community.

Some students also highlighted the importance of faith and religion in their lives. Statements like *"For me, the most important thing in life is iman. Sincere faith protects people from bad deeds and thoughts"* reflect this sentiment. Islam plays a key role in shaping their spiritual and moral values, with religious observances like *Oraza-Ait*, *Kurban-Ait*, and *sundet toi* holding cultural significance. These religious traditions are cherished as essential elements of Kazakh culture, as confirmed in interviews with Kazakh-speaking respondents.

4.2.2. Russian-Speaking Kazakhs

A total of 56 Russian-speaking Kazakh respondents provided 507 responses, averaging nine responses per participant.

Table 4 reveals that Russian-speaking Kazakhs exhibit a slightly different prioritization of values compared to Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs, though there is substantial alignment in core preferences. Among Russian-speaking respondents, health ranks as the most important value, followed by family. Other significant values identified include freedom, honesty, friendship, love, education, respect, kindness, life, money, career, happiness, independence, and well-being.

Table 4. The most significant values for Russian-speaking Kazakh respondents studying the Russian language.

№	Word	Density (Frequency of Word Usage), %
1	Health	8.88
2	Family	8.28
3	Freedom, independence	7.10
4	Honesty	5.13
5	Friend, friendship	5.13
6	Love	5.13
7	Education	5.13
8	Respect	2.36
9	Kindness	2.36
10	Life	2.36
11	Money, prosperity	2.36
12	Career	2.36
13	Happiness	2.36
14	Socialisation	1.38
15	Tolerance	1.38
16	Self-development	1.38
17	Mind, intellect	1.38
18	Travelling	1.00

This list reflects both overlapping values (health, family, freedom, honesty, friendship, love, education, kindness, and happiness) and unique pragmatic values such as life, money, prosperity, career, socialization, self-development, intelligence, tolerance, and travel. In other words, while terminal spiritual values are important, this group also prioritizes pragmatic values, including financial independence and career-oriented well-being.

Unlike the Kazakh-speaking group, which emphasizes collective-oriented values, Russian-speaking Kazakhs focus more on individual development and personal well-being. This divergence may relate to language use, a key indicator of ethno-identity: Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs show stronger adherence to national traditions and cultural values, while Russian-speaking Kazakhs exhibit a more cosmopolitan outlook, often favouring values less traditionally associated with Kazakh culture. Accordingly, values such as "socialization", "self-development", and "travel" are prominent within this group. It is notable that "tolerance", a value of the multicultural world, appears exclusively in this

group's list, highlighting the impact of the multilingual, multicultural environments in which these students study and interact.

Familiarity with multiple languages (this group includes Kazakh students studying in Russian or multilingual settings) broadens communication opportunities, fosters adaptation to foreign-language environments, and promotes tolerance toward others. Many of these students are residents of urban centres like Astana, contrasting with the largely rural backgrounds of the first group, where individualistic values are less prominent. Urban culture tends to emphasize personal goals, achievements, and personal freedom, aligning more with Westernized perspectives.

An interesting dimension emerges when examining responses to the question, "What is more important to you: material benefits or spiritual well-being, and why?"

A minority of students (32%, or 18 respondents) strongly favour spiritual values, as reflected in their responses: *"Undoubtedly, both material well-being and spiritual values are important in the modern world. These two components can go hand in hand, but for me personally, spiritual well-being always comes first. Money and comfort make life more convenient, but they cannot bring true happiness. True joy lies in intangible things: love, support, understanding and fulfilment. These are the things that give life deep meaning, and in the long run are much more valuable than any material achievements"* (Kazakh, female, 21 years old).

In contrast, the majority expressed hesitation in choosing strictly between material and spiritual values: *"I cannot give an unambiguous answer, although I would prefer to answer that spiritual well-being is more important for me. But material well-being is too important, because thanks to it one can count on spiritual growth. It is difficult without it"* (Kazakh, female, 19 years old); *"Material goods and spiritual values are equally important for me. For a decent life for my family it is necessary to earn well and spend properly. But at the same time, you cannot work for money, you need to work to realise your plans, to educate your children, to take care of the health of your loved ones. Spiritual values are also important to instil in children: kindness, generosity, respect for elders"* (Kazakh, female, 22 years old); *"Firstly, it is a good job that will provide me with financial stability and a decent life. Secondly, it is success in my field of activity, recognition and respect from future colleagues. Thirdly, it is travelling—discovering new places, meeting new people and cultures. And fourthly, the opportunity to express myself"* (Kazakh, female, 24 years old).

The interview data further show that ambitious and pragmatic life goals are typical among many young Russian-speaking Kazakh respondents: *"In the context of globalisation, I tend to set practical, achievable goals. These include having my own space, working in a permanent role, developing my career and reaching the top of my profession"*; *"The most important goal in my life is to be proud of myself and to know that I am not living this life in vain. I want to feel that I do what I enjoy and that my actions benefit not only me but also others. I dream of realising my creative ideas, setting ambitious goals and achieving them without being afraid of difficulties"*.

4.2.3. Russians

Russian students, who made up 11.4% of respondents (16 people), gave 188 answers to the question about the most significant values for them, on average 11–12 words for each respondent.

The list of value priorities with density >1 in Russian-speaking students turned out to be impressive—18 words (the same as in Russian-speaking Kazakhs). The data in Table 5 indicate a certain similarity of values of this group of respondents with those of the first two groups. The recurrent values are, first of all, the dominant values of the whole sample of students: health, family, independence, education, love, kindness, respect. It is noteworthy that in detailed answers to questions about the most important thing in life, students of this group often speak about honouring traditions, love for the homeland, which usually

distinguishes traditionally brought up Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs: *"Naturally, I consider myself Russian, and I am comfortable with that identity. However, I reside in Kazakhstan, where my siblings and parents were born and raised. I believe that, regardless of nationality, when one resides in Kazakhstan, one acquires a Kazakh mentality. All of my colleagues are of Kazakh nationality. I am particularly fond of Kazakh cuisine. I am particularly fond of Toi, Nauryz and Kurban-Ait, which are deeply embedded in my cultural identity. Cultural exchange is for foreigners, but we are indigenous. We are Kazakhs, and despite our different religious affiliations, we share a common homeland"* (Russian, male, 20 years old).

Table 5. The most significant values for Russian respondents studying the Russian language.

№	Word	Density (Frequency of Word Usage), %
1	Health	6.38
2	Family	5.85
3	Education	4.79
4	Independence, freedom, personal freedom	3.19
5	Purpose, vision of purpose, clarity of purpose, goal setting	2.12
6	Spiritual development, harmony, harmonious development	1.60
7	Respect	1.60
8	Confidence, strength	1.60
9	Love	1.60
10	Kindness	1.06
11	Patience	1.06
12	Formation, self-development	1.06
13	Workability	1.06
14	Achievement, success	1.06
15	Rest	1.06
16	Responsibility	1.06
17	Well-being, material well-being	1.06
18	Self-discipline, self-control	1.06

Another representative of the Russian ethnos emphasizes the influence of national Kazakh traditions on the peculiarities of the national character of Kazakh Russians: *"If we compare Russians in Kazakhstan and Russians in Russia, since we live surrounded by Kazakhs, we are just as hospitable, we seat the guest in a place of honour, we do not refuse to help"* (Russian, female, 20 years old).

Thus, reflecting on the theme of fundamental values of life, respondents independently draw a conclusion about the intersectionality of value choices in a multi-ethnic society, about the influence of Kazakh state-forming culture on the culture of other ethnic groups.

However, the positions of Russian-speaking Kazakhs and Russians are closer in terms of semantic content of the named concepts. Thus, both demonstrate the values of individualism associated with personal freedom, personal development and growth, as well as comfort (personal freedom, self-development, confidence, strength, achievements, success, travel, recreation). The following opinion is characteristic of this group of respondents: "*In my life, the priority values are comfort and idyll in my own life and in my family. I consider material goods as a resource for achieving my goal. The stronger the material component, the more achievable your goals become"* (Russian, male, 19 years old).

In the group of students of Russian nationality, a value with a significant frequency of use was identified—goal, achievement. However, the goals of this category of respondents differ from the goals of the Kazakh respondents, in whom, as already noted, aspirations are often associated with the declared intention to serve the motherland. In the Russian audience, the goals are usually related to professional self-realization, self-development, aspirations for comfort and harmony: *"My main goal is to become a professional in my chosen field. I work hard at it. Professionalism is the way to success, to prosperity"* (Russian, male, 18 years old); *"My priority now is to study well in order to become a good teacher of Russian language and literature. I want to provide a decent old age for my parents, a nourishing life for myself and my future children. To bring benefit to the world by my professional activity"* (Russian, female, 20 years old).

The value of purpose among young Russian respondents is supported by such associatively close concepts as achievement, becoming, self-development. In addition to these, the list includes a number of words related to personal and professional development: education, spiritual development, efficiency, self-discipline, responsibility and, finally, rest as an opportunity to get away from business and recover strength for further work.

4.2.4. Results of Analyzing the Indicators of Representatives of Other Ethnic Groups

Representatives of non-Kazakh and non-Russian nationalities, making up 8.6 per cent of the total number of respondents (12 people: 2 Belarusians, 1 Pole, 1 Ukrainian, 1 Uzbek and 1 Chechen), indicated Armenian, Ingush, Uzbek, Uigur, Polish, Russian and Kazakh (Chechen) as their native languages. This group gave an average of 12-13 answers each, totalling 151 words.

Table 6 shows that the priority values of the described group of respondents do not differ from the values of other groups: they are family, health, material values, respect, friendship, education, freedom, and others. Family and health are unconditional dominants of the same degree of importance among the values that are the most significant for the informants-representatives of other nationalities.

Table 6. The most significant values for respondents of other nationalities studying the Russian language.

№	Word	Density (Frequency of Word Usage), %
1	Family	6.62
2	Health	5.96
3	Material values, money	3.97
4	Respect, respect for people	3.31
5	Friend, friends, friendship	2.64
6	Well-being	2.64
7	Development	1.99
8	Love	1.99
9	Freedom, independence	1.99
10	Education	1.99
11	Happiness	1.99
12	Creativity	1.99
13	Rest	1.32

The majority of respondents of this group either noted the equivalence of material and spiritual values, or named material well-being as predominant: *"Nowadays one can get a lot of things with the help of money, including health, well-being, large important purchases and small pleasures of life. Therefore, material well-being is very important to me"* (Uzbek, female, 20 years old).

It should be noted that interviewees often have reservations because the choice between material and spiritual values proves to be very difficult for them: *"However, sincerely devoted, close people and psychological stability cannot be bought for money"* (Uzbek, female, 19 years old); *"Spiritual well-being is important to me, because you can't build happiness on material goods. Material goods will never come before spiritual well-being. But ideally, of course, I prefer a balance between the two values"* (Polish, female, 19 years old); *"Without material goods we cannot live in principle, and the lack of spiritual well-being will make our existence unbearable, so it is necessary to keep a balance of these two aspects in life"* (Ossetian, female, 18 years old); *"For me, material and spiritual well-being are equal, because although they are opposites, they are equally necessary for a person to be successfully realised as a person. A person should try not to lose the balance between the spiritual and material components"* (German, female, 18 years old).

5. Discussion

In general, the results of our empirical study partially correlate with the data that are given in the sociological study 'Youth of Kazakhstan', which has been conducted annually, since 2013, by the Research Centre 'Youth' at the request of the Ministry of Information and Social Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan. As can be seen from the Table 7 below according to the analytical report 'Youth of Kazakhstan. 2022', the main values for Kazakhstani youth remain family (72.6%), friendship (32.3%), and health (26.9%) (Akhantaeva et al., 2023).

Table 7. The distribution of answers to the question 'What is the most valuable for you in life?' (%) for 2021–2023 (* Note: the sum is not equal to 100%, as respondents could choose several answers).

Response Options	2021	2022	2023
Family	82.3	83.3	72.6
Friendship	23.1	40.7	32.3
Health	45.6	64.2	26.9
Faith, religion	16.2	18.1	18.7
Peace of mind	8.8	15.3	17.5
Love	12	22.8	9.9
Helping people	3.3	10.3	7.5
Materially secure life	20.7	39.3	7.2
Career, high position in society	5.2	11	7.2
Knowledge, education	11.1	19.5	5.7
Creativity	1.5	3.3	5.1
Self-realisation, self-respect	7.8	17.7	4.8
Opportunity to enjoy, have fun	5.1	11.5	4.5
Power	2.8	5.1	4
Public recognition, fame, reputation	1.4	3.1	3.4
Interesting work, profession	9.1	19.6	2.9

The Spearman correlation coefficient was used to analyze the nature of the relationship between the most significant values for the studied groups. The obtained empirical values of the correlation analysis ranged from 0.615 to 0.998, $p < 0.001$. Thus, with regard to values such as health and family, there is a strong positive relationship ($r > 0.70 \leq 1.00$), and with regard to the values of education, material well-being and friendship, there is a moderate positive relationship ($r > 0.30 \leq 0.69$). The strength of the relationship between the variables has high statistical significance because the p-level of the correlation coefficient is less than the value of 0.001.

Correlation analysis allows us to conclude about the similarity of value priorities of Kazakhstani student youth regardless of their ethnicity and language of education. The top 5 values noted by the entire study sample included such nominations as health, family, education, freedom/independence (for all the studied categories of students without exception), material values/material well-being (for three groups: Russian-speaking Kazakhs, Russians and representatives of other ethnic groups), friendship/friends (for two groups: Russian-speaking Kazakhs and representatives of other ethnic groups).

It is evident that the utilization of language and the value orientations espoused play a pivotal role in the advancement of intercultural communication within a polylingual and multicultural student milieu. The closer the value systems of groups of young people are to each other in terms of their composition and structure, the higher the level of proficiency in the language of communication, the greater the mutual understanding and commonality between them. In other words, the level of quality observed in intercultural communication is higher when a significant degree of similarity in values is present and when a common language is used.

In the sphere of intergroup relations of Kazakhstani students we can state trusting relations based on the commonality of value attitudes. As has been demonstrated through the analysis of questionnaire responses and subsequent interviews with students, there is a greater degree of similarity in the values espoused by the multilingual groups of student youth in Kazakhstan, although each of the groups offers a distinctive interpretation of the values in question.

With respect to interethnic communication, Russian and Kazakh are the primary languages employed, whereas English is increasingly utilized among the younger generation. The active interaction of languages gives rise to the formation of specific Kazakh slang and distinctive speech constructions in the speech of students. To illustrate, the urban street-food chain 'Salam bro' has achieved considerable popularity in Kazakhstan. The term "salam" is a traditional greeting among Kazakhs, with its roots in Arab-Muslim culture. The term 'bro' is a neologism derived from the network jargon, which is a shortened form of the English word 'brother'. It is used to convey the meanings of 'brother', 'friend', and 'person'. The term is used to refer to both genders. The expression is employed as a greeting by students of all ethnic groups.

Students readily employ such phrases in their everyday discourse, including "Qudai zhazsa" (a Kazakh expression analogous to the Russian "If God gives"), "I will be there on Thursday", and "Oh my God, aitqandy uqpaisyn goi" (literally, "you don't understand words").

The utilization of a set of language means deemed appropriate in certain circumstances enables students to communicate successfully with each other. For young people in Kazakhstan, regardless of ethnicity, the ability to greet, say goodbye, express gratitude, and express sympathy in times of grief in ways that are accepted in traditional Kazakh culture is typical. These include expressions such as "Sәlem!/Salam!" (Hello!), "Sau bol!" (Be well!), "Rakhmet!" (Thank you!), and "Koep rakhmet" (Thank you very much!). In

the context of the loss of loved ones, mourners are told "Imandy bolsyn!" (May he rest in peace).

Based on the interviews, it is possible to identify the features of key values and qualities of representatives of different ethnic groups of Kazakhstan, conditioned by their traditions and culture. In order to identify such values, two questions were asked: "Are there representatives of other ethnic groups in your environment (friends, acquaintances)?", "What do you value in them?" and "What do you think are the defining values of the ethnic group you represent?". Formulated in this way allowed respondents to analyze their own value system both 'from the inside' and 'from the outside': *"For my ethnos, above all, preservation of honour, decent behaviour in society. respect for elders, parents and all those around me. love for the motherland, faith in God. Gratuitous help is also on the list of values of my ethnos"* (Ossetian, female, 18 years old); *"Germans are known for their punctuality and reasonable frugality. This is about me"* (German, female, 18 years old); *"As a representative of Polish ethnicity, I think that our main value is patriotism, because Poles are very proud to be Polish. Our Catholic faith is also a determining factor of our identity. And, of course, family"* (Polish, female, 19 years old); *"Fortunately, I have a lot of close friends and acquaintances of different nationalities. I appreciate them simply for what they are, they are all very open, respectful, wise and the qualities of a person never depend on the colour of their passport or nationality. . . I think it is very important for Kazakhs to respect their elders, to honour traditions and customs in order to preserve their identity"* (Kazakh, female, 19 years old); *"I am just amazed by the Kazakh culture, especially their hospitality. I really like the national cuisine of Kazakhs, their attitude to people"* (Kazakh, female, 20 years old); *"In my neighbourhood, the majority of people are of Kazakh nationality. I appreciate in them hospitality, ability to support with a kind word, to help in a difficult moment. Besides, there are representatives of Russian nationality in my neighbourhood. In them I appreciate straightforwardness, honesty. In Poles I appreciate humour and ability to cheer up and listen. The defining values of Uzbeks are hospitality, family and kinship ties, traditions and customs, respect for elders, following religion"* (Uzbek, female, 20 years old); *"I think Russians really appreciate openness in people, as well as the absence of hypocrisy or duplicity in communication. I read once the opinion of foreigners about Russians: they often mention that Russians are a bit rude because they say what they think—without polite wrapping, without smiling, straight and to the face. I think this is the case"* (Russian, female, 23 years old).

Thus, in their statements the respondents name the values inherent, according to their observations, to the representatives of certain ethnic groups. The perceptions of students of different ethnic groups about the national traits of people of their own and other people coincide in many respects. It seems to reflect, firstly, the unity and even stereotypicality of opinions about positive national qualities, and secondly, the fact that representatives of different ethnic groups live in the country as a single society. In interviews, almost all respondents noted that in Kazakhstan one can observe, in general, tactfulness in interethnic relations, respect for traditions, customs and values, despite the breadth of their spectrum.

In the collective monograph 'Eurasian World: Values, Constants, Self-Organisation (2011)' provides interesting information about the values of young representatives of different ethnic groups. For example, it is noted that only 37.4% of Russians find it important to live among people of their own ethnicity (whereas among Kazakhs the share of such people was 63.0%).

A noticeably smaller share of Russian respondents than Kazakh respondents consider it important to have their own business, to be interested in politics, to know English, which creates an impression of higher passionarity (strong aspiration for something, obsession) of Kazakhs compared to Russians. One can note the difference in the attitude of young Kazakhs and Russians to education and career goals. For Kazakh youth, education is a tool for career advancement and strengthening their position in society. Knowledge of

the Kazakh language helps them in this, as career goals are often linked to the desire to work in government structures. Young Russians are more often oriented towards career prospects related to technology and freelance work. Russian-speaking and polylingual youth more often choose directions that provide opportunities for work outside Kazakhstan (international relations, information technology, computer science, etc.).

In separate interviews, students pay attention to the qualities of personality, which, in their opinion, are actualised in the modern world: *"In modern society people who are able to acquire knowledge independently are valuable. And for this purpose it would not hurt to have information literacy, the new generation should be able to manage gadgets"* (Kazakh, male, 20 years old); *"I have always admired educated, erudite people. Operating a colossal amount of information is a whole art, a perfected technique and a major skill in the eleventh century. In my eyes, being highly educated is a superpower. I think it is a key factor of success not only in career but also in personal growth"* (Kazakh, female, 18 years old).

The attitudes of young Kazakhs and Russians towards ethno-identity and patriotism are also different. For young Kazakhs, patriotism is often associated with supporting national traditions and strengthening Kazakh culture and language. Russian youth in Kazakhstan understand patriotism as support for the stability and well-being of the country.

As for the attitude to intercultural tolerance, it is demonstrated by young representatives of different nationalities. A distinctive feature is that Kazakhs show a high degree of intercultural tolerance and openness to international experience, actively learning English and Russian (in addition to their native Kazakh), while striving to preserve their own cultural roots. The cosmopolitanism of Russian respondents is expressed in their openness to international trends, culture and education mainly through Russian-language media and internet platforms.

Thus, the way individuals and groups perceive and interpret reality, and on the basis of their interpretation interact with the world, is transmitted through value priorities. Studying the values of Kazakhstani student youth within the framework of concepts established in the field of intercultural communication (Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 1992, 2012; Ting-Toomey, 2010, etc.) has enabled the observation of the evolution of their value orientations. The results obtained serve to corroborate the veracity of the initial hypothesis. Despite the existence of certain discrepancies in the value priorities of representatives of different ethnic groups among Kazakhstani students, a correlation can be observed between the level of proficiency in several languages, value orientations (such as family, respect, tolerance and individualism) and the dynamics of intercultural communication. The multilingual and multi-ethnic environment of Kazakhstan, coupled with language policy reforms that have been directed towards expanding the scope of the state language, Kazakh, while simultaneously preserving Russian and promoting English, have facilitated the development of successful intercultural communication. This enables students to interact with individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds within the country and to integrate into the global cultural and professional space. Learning multiple languages enhances cognitive abilities, fosters tolerance and encourages the formation of a hybrid identity that combines elements of different cultures. Such conditions create a unique context for studying the influence of language and cultural environment on the value orientations and behavioural patterns of Kazakhstani youth.

6. Conclusions

The values of Kazakhstani student youth reflect a complex interaction of traditional cultural norms, modern influences and the socio-political context. Kazakh youth often adhere to traditional values, considering them necessary for success in life (Maylykutova, 2023). Factors such as urban and rural background and religiosity significantly influence

students' commitment to cultural values. Youth's values are influenced by a combination of global and local cultural elements, resulting in different views of identity and ethics (Maylykutova, 2023).

Recent socio-political events, such as the January protests, have raised awareness of Kazakhstani patriotism and the need for educational reforms that reflect national values. Youth participation in these events indicates a shift towards greater political participation and a reassessment of their value orientations (Konyrbaeva, 2022).

This study has shown that Kazakhstani student youth prioritize both moral qualities and socio-economic success. This multifaceted value system is shaped by historical events and the ongoing dialogue between local and global cultures.

A distinctive model of language policy has been devised in Kazakhstan with the objective of reinforcing tolerance and fostering effective intercultural communication. This model is founded upon the principles of polylingualism and multi-ethnicity, which enables the consideration of the historical, cultural and social idiosyncrasies of the country. The parallel development of Kazakh, Russian and English provides the foundation for the formation of polyglots, individuals capable of effective interaction in both local and global contexts. The implementation of educational reforms, such as the introduction of trilingual education, has the dual benefit of enhancing language proficiency and reinforcing the sense of collective identity within society.

In contrast to other post-Soviet countries, Kazakhstan has not experienced ethnic confrontations among its student population. This can be attributed, at least in part, to the country's language policy and its long-standing efforts to strengthen inter-ethnic dialogue. The increasing proficiency in the state language among individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds, the pervasive command of Russian, and the promotion of English as a language of global integration facilitate the creation of a harmonious environment for cultural exchange. This model demonstrates that the development of a multilingual identity and the consideration of the interests of all ethnic groups can be effective strategies for strengthening intercultural interaction and social harmony.

The findings of the study can serve as a basis for the development of effective social and cultural policies that foster mutual understanding, promote successful cultural dialogue, and strengthen ties between different ethnic groups and communities living in the same region and sharing common historical roots and cultural heritage. Future research potential lies in conducting extensive studies of a crucial phenomenon of the modern world—the transformation of human values, especially among young people. The results of such research will provide society with valuable insights into the significant processes occurring in this demographic group.

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Article

Professional Multilingualism in Intercultural Business Communication of Kazakhstan

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Abstract: This study examines the role of multilingualism in intercultural business communication among professionals in Kazakhstan, where business discourse reflects a unique combination of language planning, individual competencies, and integration of traditions with modern economic demands. Shaped by globalization, historical influences, and geopolitical factors, Kazakhstan's business communication is characterized by the use of Kazakh, Russian, and English, along with other foreign languages. Using semi-structured interviews with 19 business professionals from 13 companies, the study examines multilingual practices, language learning processes, and the impact of cultural factors on workplace interactions. Findings reveal that Kazakh, Russian, and English serve distinct functions in professional settings: Kazakh, as the state language, is gaining prominence in the business sphere, particularly in official documentation and government-mandated communication; Russian remains dominant in private and regional business interactions; and English is indispensable for international business. While proficiency in multiple languages facilitates overcoming intercultural barriers, differences in negotiation styles, non-verbal communication, and decision-making processes highlight the need for cultural flexibility in business settings. The study underscores the necessity of implementing well-structured and context-sensitive language policies while advocating for the integration of professional multilingual training into educational curricula to bridge the gap between academic preparation and workplace demands. This research contributes to a broader understanding of how multilingualism shapes professional identity, workforce mobility, and intercultural competence in Kazakhstan's increasingly globalized business landscape.

Keywords: multilingualism; professional multilingualism; business communication; intercultural communication; Kazakhstan; workplace discourse

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the study of multilingualism within professional environments and business communication. This is primarily because well-developed communicative competencies play a key role in enhancing competitiveness in the labor market and ensuring the effective management of business processes. Professional multilingualism has become the subject of numerous interdisciplinary studies, encompassing fields such as sociolinguistics (Barakos, 2020; Gritsenko & Alikina, 2020; Gunnarsson, 2013; Lønsmann & Kraft, 2018), business communication (Hussain, 2018; Kankaanranta et al., 2018; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012; Prokhorova, 2014), neuropsychological aspects of multilingual brain functioning (Di Pisa et al., 2021; Pavlenko,

2006), and the language practices of multilingual employees in workplace settings (Battilani, 2022; Dijkstra et al., 2021; Gong et al., 2021), among other areas. Research interest and contributions to the study of professional multilingualism continue to expand rapidly (Gunnarsson, 2014; Kraft & Flubacher, 2023; O'Rourke & Brennan, 2023; Van der Worp et al., 2017).

The functioning of languages in Kazakhstan's corporate environment is of particular importance due to the unique linguistic situation in both the business sector and the country as a whole (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023; Suleimenova & Burkitbayeva, 2009; Zharkynbekova & Aimoldina, 2016). According to the Bureau of National Statistics, the number of operating foreign companies in Kazakhstan increased by 30.5% over recent years, with registered foreign companies exceeding 50,000 as of 1 January 2024 (Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024). Consequently, the growing activity of joint ventures and foreign companies, along with the expansion of international cooperation, has created a significant demand in Kazakhstan for multilingual specialists with foreign language competencies for professional purposes.

Modern Kazakhstani business discourse evolves from a distinctive combination of business communication experiences and discursive practices shaped by language planning, individual language competencies, and the integration of established traditions with modern requirements for the sustainable development of the economy and business (Tlepbergen et al., 2024; Zharkynbekova & Aimoldina, 2023). The formation of Kazakhstan's business discourse, influenced by globalization and integration processes, as well as historical, cultural, geopolitical, and economic factors, is characterized by the use of at least three languages in oral and written business communication: Kazakh, Russian, and English, along with other foreign languages (Aimoldina & Zharkynbekova, 2016; Suleimenova & Burkitbayeva, 2009).

Given the multilingual nature of Kazakhstani business discourse, understanding its implications for professional multilingualism is essential. However, despite the increasing global interest in multilingualism in professional contexts, research on this phenomenon remains limited, leaving Central Asia, including Kazakhstan, underrepresented in the scholarly discourse (Bahry, 2016; Landau & Kellner-Heinkele, 2011). Compared to other post-Soviet states, Kazakhstan has actively promoted a multilingual policy, integrating Kazakh, Russian, and English within education (Fierman, 2021; Karabassova, 2020; Smagulova, 2016) and workplace settings (Aimoldina, 2025; Karibayeva & Kunanbayeva, 2018; Suleimenova & Burkitbayeva, 2009). This policy aims to enhance economic and cultural integration in global markets (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023), although its implementation varies across regions and industries (Karabassova, 2020; Kucherbayeva & Smagulova, 2023; Tlepbergen et al., 2024). However, while official policies encourage multilingualism, the extent to which these policies translate into widespread, effective multilingual practices in professional domains remains insufficiently explored. This gap in the literature necessitates a closer examination of Kazakhstan's experience, particularly as it navigates national identity preservation alongside globalization-driven linguistic adaptation (Djuraeva, 2022; Fierman, 2013; Smagulova, 2016). By investigating multilingualism in Kazakhstan's professional contexts, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how post-Soviet countries manage linguistic diversity in the workplace, offering insights into language policy, workforce mobility, and sociocultural integration in multilingual societies.

Given these complexities, a deeper examination of multilingualism in corporate settings is necessary, particularly in understanding its role in intercultural business communication. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the function of multilingualism in workplace

communication among professionals working in Kazakhstani companies. Specifically, it seeks to address the following research questions:

(i) How do business professionals in Kazakhstan apply their multilingual skills in workplace communication?
(ii) How do cultural factors influence multilingual workplace interactions in Kazakhstani companies?
(iii) What role does professional multilingualism play in intercultural business communication?

2. Materials and Methods

To answer these research questions, a qualitative data collection method involving semi-structured in-depth interviews was used. This method is considered particularly effective for gaining an in-depth understanding of multilingual contexts and language practices, and for addressing complex issues (Codó, 2008). The interviews collected basic socio-demographic information, focusing on perceptions of multilingualism, language practices, the role of cultural factors in corporate communication, and the language learning processes of Kazakhstani business professionals.

The study involved 19 business professionals in middle management positions from 13 international companies in Kazakhstan. A purposive sampling method was employed to recruit participants, focusing on companies with international partnerships that use at least three languages in their operations: Kazakh, Russian, English, and other foreign languages. Details regarding the economic sectors, company types, and participants' positions are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Detailed information about companies and participants.

Economic Sector	Company	Company Type	Position	Number of Participants
Services	Auditing services company	Foreign	Consultant in the audit department	2
	Consulting services company	Kazakhstani	Expert in the commercial department	1
	Consulting services company	Kazakhstani	Consultant in the audit department	2
	Auditing and consulting services company	Foreign	Expert in the audit department	1
Finance	International financial center	Kazakhstani	PR Manager	1
	Investment holding	Kazakhstani	Chief Manager	2
	International bank	Foreign	Lawyer	2
Transport and Logistics	Transport and logistics holding	Kazakhstani	Chief Manager	1
Technology and IT	IT company	Foreign	Product Manager	1
	IT company	Foreign	Sales Manager	2
Industry and Production	Metal trading company	Kazakhstani	Economist	1
	Mining company	Foreign	Economist	2
	Pipe manufacturing and distribution company	Kazakhstani	Commercialization Specialist	1

Since the main purpose of the study was to investigate the importance of multilingualism for professionals, companies were selected that met the following criteria: practicing multilingualism in their business activities and representing different industries. These companies use at least three languages—Kazakh, Russian, English, as well as other foreign languages. The companies belong to different sectors of the economy: services, finance, transport and logistics, technology and IT, industry, and manufacturing. Each of the selected companies was included in the study based on its importance in an industry where multilingualism is critical for business success.

The following inclusion criteria were established for the study: (1) business professionals with at least 1 year of work experience; (2) age 18 years or older; (3) participants should be in positions involving decision-making, negotiation, or regular communication with local and/or international partners; and (4) willingness to share their experience.

The interview guide was written in Kazakh and Russian. After pilot testing, some changes were made to clarify the wording of the questions, improve the structure of the interview, and ensure that it was in line with the research objectives. The guide included an introduction, main questions, and concluding remarks. For example, the questions were 'Which languages are primarily used for business communication in your company, and in what contexts?', 'Can you describe specific work situations where you use Kazakh, Russian, and English in your organization?', 'How do employees in your organisation feel about the use of more than one language in the company?'. Participants were also given the opportunity to discuss other topics that were important to them.

The interviews followed an open-ended questioning design, with opportunities for participants to discuss any topics that were important to them. Participants signed informed consent and were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. They were also informed of the right to withdraw at any stage. The interview questions covered various aspects: level of multilingualism, language requirements, cultural differences, language use, language policy, and education.

The interviews were conducted between January and July 2023, lasting between 40 and 105 min. Fourteen participants chose Russian and five chose Kazakh. Interviews continued until data saturation was reached on the 15th participant; however, four additional participants were interviewed for reliability. Interviews were conducted face-to-face with voice recordings and remotely with 11 business professionals via Zoom, as videoconferencing proved to be a more convenient way for them to conduct interviews. As Zhu Hua notes, interviews can also be conducted via videoconference ('virtual face-to-face') as the comfort level of interviewees 'may depend on factors such as age, education, and level of technology proficiency' (Zhu, 2016, p. 183). ATLAS.ti software version 24.1.0 was used to analyze the data. Data were supplemented with participant quotes and contextual descriptions to emphasize the analytical logic of the study. To ensure anonymity, each interview was assigned a unique code, and identifying information was anonymized during transcription.

Data were analyzed through a process involving the following steps: (1) preparation, (2) data immersion, (3) organization, and (4) category formation. Coding of the transcripts was conducted to identify distinct categories, which helped transform the data from descriptive to interpretive. Major categories and subcategories were formed through open coding and grouping.

Two main techniques were used to ensure the validity of the study: source triangulation and participant checking. Triangulation involved checking data from different offices and companies, and the content of the transcripts was verified by the participants. Additionally, peer checking was conducted and the COREQ checklist (Tong et al., 2007) was used for reporting. Peer checking was conducted by a professor from the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics at a national university. For reliability, the recorded

interviews were transcribed verbatim, as were the other data collected. In addition to these validity techniques, further data collection methods were employed to enhance the robustness of the study. This included an analysis of corporate documents, other forms of multilingual written communication, and observations of daily workplace interactions, including brief informal multilingual meetings. This mixed-methods approach aims to provide a balanced perspective on self-reported perceptions and real workplace practices.

Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of the participants. Nineteen business professionals participated in the study with a mean age of 30.79 years (SD = 6.72). Among them, 10 (52.63%) were female and 9 (47.37%) were male. Most of the participants have higher or postgraduate education. The average length of service of the participants is 8 years (SD = 5.99).

Table 2. Characteristics of participants.

Variable	Frequency (N = 19)
Age	Mean = 30.79 years (SD = 6.72)
Gender	
- Female	10
- Male	9
Company Sector	
- Services	6
- Finance	5
- Transport and Logistics	1
- Technology and IT	3
- Industry and Production	4
Education Level	
- Higher Education	11
- Postgraduate (Master's)	8
Work Experience	Mean = 8 years (SD = 5.99)
Interview Duration (min)	40–105

Four main themes were identified during the analysis (see Appendix A). Theme 1: 'Language Practices in Business Communication.' This theme explores the everyday use of languages in the workplace, including language choices based on context and audience, as well as preferences, norms in language communication, and language-related challenges. Theme 2: 'Language training and support for business professionals'. This theme reveals business professionals' personal experiences of language learning and what resources and opportunities are available to employees to learn and improve language skills. Theme 3: 'Cultural competence in a multinational business environment'. This theme covers the extent to which business professionals consider it important to understand and respect cultural differences in the work environment and their impact on communication and cooperation. Topic 4: 'Multilingualism and language policy in international and localized businesses'. This theme highlights the importance of English as a lingua franca, the need to learn additional languages to strengthen competitiveness, and the role of corporate language policy in supporting multilingualism and cultural and linguistic sensitivity in the business environment. All the themes highlighted can be correlated to the adapted model of professional multilingualism in the workplace (Gunnarsson, 2013; Van der Worp

et al., 2017), which includes aspects of: 'Multilingual professional', "Professional language repertoire", and "Social context".

3. Results

3.1. Language Practices in Business Communication

The interviewed Kazakhstani business professionals highlighted the features of language interaction in the workplace, including the choice of language depending on the context, audience, personal preferences, and communication norms. Most of them emphasized that they actively use multiple languages in their practice, including Kazakh, Russian, English, and other foreign languages.

> "Yes, we use three languages across all platforms. The company's website is fully available in Russian, Kazakh, and English. All press releases and articles are translated into Kazakh and English. On social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and YouTube, materials are also published in all three languages." (PR Manager)

> "I believe we tend to communicate with clients in Russian or Kazakh, while documentation in English is available in every department. Every employee in the company is proficient in three languages, regardless of their role." (Expert in the audit department)

In some companies, websites are presented in four languages, e.g., Kazakh, Russian, English, and Chinese. According to the interviewees, the defining characteristic of a modern professional working in a business company in Kazakhstan is their multilingualism. Business professionals note that they typically speak several foreign languages at varying levels of proficiency. In addition to Kazakh, Russian, and English, which they learned at school and university, many also study other foreign languages, often abroad or at language centers:

> "Some directors also speak other languages such as Chinese, French, Arabic, and others." (Sales Manager)

> "Some colleagues from our department also know Czech, Chinese, Korean, and other languages of countries where our citizens frequently pursue higher education." (Lawyer)

> "I speak Russian fluently. My English is at an average level. I am currently studying German at a B1 level, which is closer to Intermediate. I also speak Kazakh at an Intermediate level. I understand written text well and can respond in Kazakh, but when speaking, I sometimes don't have enough time to process the information." (General Manager)

At the same time, as business professionals note, regardless of their language proficiency, the extent to which these languages are used in their activities varies. According to them, Russian dominates in everyday business communication, Kazakh is used more for official purposes, and English plays an important role in international business.

> "...However, Kazakh is less used in day-to-day business, serving more as an official language to support state events such as Nauryz." (Audit Department Consultant)

> "Firstly, a lot depends on who the communication is with. If we talk about business communication within Kazakhstan, then, according to my observations, Russian is most often used. But all managers have a good level of Kazakh, and if communication in Kazakh is required, the conversation will be in Kazakh. It depends on the context." (Commercial Department Expert)

> "Most of the staff in our organization speak Russian fluently, except for some international specialists, such as the chairman and his deputy, who only speak English. Almost all lawyers in Astana have a high level of Russian, and most of the staff also possess strong English skills." (Lawyer)

In addition, the responses of business professionals suggest that language competence is a crucial element of professional requirements in Kazakhstani business companies. In Kazakhstan, proficiency in Kazakh and Russian is perceived as a basic requirement for mid-level positions, as bilingualism has been the norm since childhood. However, a high level of English proficiency is increasingly becoming a key prerequisite for a successful career, emphasizing its importance in international business communication:

> "Given that we are in an environment where Russian and Kazakh are equally spoken from childhood, it is more of a 'default' for a company to expect knowledge of these languages. The real requirement, of course, is a high level of English." (Consultant in the audit department)

However, as noted by business experts, the requirements for proficiency in Kazakh and English vary depending on the position within the company. Accordingly, the level of proficiency and the extent of actual use in daily work also differ from one role to another. A high level of Kazakh is typically required for managerial positions, especially in leadership roles, while English is more essential for positions involving international communication or trade.

> "It all depends on the position. For managerial roles, Kazakh is compulsory, as it is necessary for business communication and documentation." (Commercialisation specialist)

> "For example, directors have a high level of English and easily switch between Russian, Kazakh, and English. The manager of our center is fluent in all three languages and can give interviews in any of them, depending on the situation. If he is approached in Kazakh, he will effortlessly answer any financial questions in Kazakh and then switch to English to continue the conversation." (Economist)

Interviews with business professionals also revealed significant differences in English language proficiency among employees at different levels. While senior management, including CEOs and executives, demonstrate a high level of English proficiency that enables them to negotiate, write documents, and participate in video conferences with ease, professionals in certain occupations, such as photographers or line staff, may lack sufficient English skills.

> "However, some professionals, such as photographers or line staff, may not have adequate English proficiency." (PR manager)

> "Senior management, including CEOs and executives, possess a very high level of English, which allows them to communicate effectively, write, and participate in video conferences seamlessly." (Audit department consultant)

In addition, business experts note that despite efforts to promote the Kazakh language, the level of proficiency among mid-level professionals remains quite low. The actual use of Kazakh in business communication is significantly lower than that of Russian. However, knowledge of the Kazakh language is particularly important in divisions and departments where activities require conducting business communication and working with official documents in the state language.

> "In fact, the level of Kazakh language proficiency among most employees is low, with the exception of translators involved in adapting content and documentation into Kazakh." (Economist)

On the other hand, as business experts point out, the extent to which languages are used within organizations, particularly Kazakh and Russian, largely depends on regional characteristics. For example, in a quasi-state company with offices throughout Kazakhstan, the language situation and preferences for using one language over another vary significantly by region.

> "For example, in the southern and western regions of our country, Kazakh is more often used in business communication between employees. In Astana, where I work, the language situation is different: employees speak different languages depending on the region, but mostly Russian." (General Manager)

> "In everyday communication, people use the language they are comfortable with. Both Russian and Kazakh are well understood. Sometimes, mixed phrases or expressions are used, which are understood by both Russian-speaking and Kazakh-speaking employees. This creates a mixed language environment." (Expert in the audit department)

In addition, as business experts note, Kazakh–Russian language mixing is often encountered in everyday informal settings among colleagues. Such combinations as Kazakh–English or Russian–English, according to business experts, are frequently used to ensure accurate and quick communication, particularly for technical terms and professional jargon. The compactness and universality of English words in a professional context make them especially useful: "Пожалуйста, отправьте update по статусу проекта в конце дня, "Нам нужно провести risk assessment для этого проекта", "Этот тренинг фокусируется на развитии soft skills", "Этот процесс требует approval от руководства", "Проверьте данные отчета на completeness", "Можете сделать follow-up с клиентом по этому вопросу?", and "Нужно забукать рум на время митинга»".

Such language mixing is especially common in the IT field:

> "It happens often. Sometimes there's no stable translation, but more frequently, established Anglicisms are used, such as standup, build, deploy, connect, etc. Some of it is due to shorter terms like connect." (Sales Manager)

> "Yes, I use it, mostly among young colleagues. If a colleague is older, I avoid it because they might not understand. For example: back office, the boss has a meeting, a deadline on a project, etc." (Sales Manager)

According to business experts, the use of hybrid forms allows information to be conveyed quickly and accurately, particularly when discussing technical terms, specific concepts, or professional jargon. English terms are often more compact and universal in professional settings, simplifying and speeding up communication.

As the interview responses revealed, all mid-level employees speak Russian, though not all have sufficient proficiency in Kazakh. When asked about communication difficulties between employees due to a lack of proficiency in one language or another, business specialists noted that such issues are rare in their companies. In most cases, employees speak at least two languages—Kazakh and/or Russian—effectively preventing serious communication barriers. Individuals with higher education generally possess adequate language skills to interact successfully with one another.

However, some nuances may still arise. For instance, one participant highlighted that, when communicating with Kazakh-speaking professionals in southern regions, they occasionally encounter dialectal differences in spoken Kazakh. Nonetheless, challenges in written correspondence were addressed with the help of translators, and oral communication ultimately shifted to Russian, ensuring smooth and effective interactions. Overall, even when minor language difficulties occur, finding common ground is usually possible, particularly since most managers and staff are bilingual.

When discussing language requirements for employment in business companies, the majority of business professionals emphasized the mandatory knowledge of English. However, the need for foreign language certificates varies depending on the type of company. In international companies, certification is often mandatory, along with internal entrance language and professional testing. In contrast, national and quasi-national organizations tend to have more flexible requirements.

> "No special exams were required. At the interview stage with the HR department, half of the interview was conducted in English." (Consultant in the audit department)

> "When I applied for a job after university, a language test was not required as our organization is not a state institution but a quasi-state institution. For the managerial position I applied for, no language test was required. However, for promotions, tests may be necessary, though I haven't encountered this so far." (General Manager)

> "At the interview itself, my language skills, particularly English, were assessed, but this was not the main criterion. The main criterion was work experience. The interview was conducted in Russian." (Economist)

Proficiency in the Kazakh language was a mandatory requirement for employment in 6 of the 13 companies. In the remaining companies, it was regarded as an added advantage rather than a strict requirement.

> "Yes, I provided English language certificates. I was also asked about my Kazakh language skills, as it is important for my work. Now, documentation in the organization is strictly in two languages—Russian and Kazakh—and knowledge of Kazakh is mandatory, especially for business correspondence and official letters." (Expert in the audit department)

Knowledge of Russian is assumed and therefore is not explicitly mentioned as a requirement. Beyond language skills, professional expertise is cited as the most critical hiring criterion, and candidates are not employed solely for their linguistic abilities.

> "In my position, language testing was not required. However, we were tested on other subjects, such as knowledge of laws and the specifics of the department. That said, Kazakh and English language courses were tested upon entry. As far as I know, there is a mandatory Kazakh language test for managers, though I cannot confirm this for certain." (Sales Manager)

Thus, the analysis of interview responses reveals that multilingualism is a key characteristic of professionals in Kazakhstani business companies, reflecting the country's bilingual environment and growing emphasis on English proficiency. Employees typically use Kazakh, Russian, and English in varying capacities depending on the context, with Russian dominating everyday communication, Kazakh serving official purposes, and English playing a significant role in international interactions. Despite efforts to promote Kazakh, its proficiency among mid-level employees remains inconsistent, and its usage is often limited to specific roles or regional needs. Hybrid language practices, including Kazakh–English and Russian–English mixes, are common in professional settings, especially in technical fields, where English terms simplify communication. While language requirements for employment vary, English proficiency and certifications are prioritized in international companies, whereas knowledge of Kazakh is mandatory in some organizations for formal documentation. Ultimately, while language skills are important, professional expertise remains the primary criterion for employment, underscoring the functional multilingualism prevalent in Kazakhstan's business sector.

3.2. Language Training and Support for Business Professionals

Business professionals shared their experiences of language training in the context of their professional activities. In terms of English language proficiency, three main groups can be identified. The first group comprises professionals with a high level of language proficiency, often due to studying abroad. The second group includes those who studied English at school and university but whose knowledge remains at a basic or below-average level due to a lack of further development. The third group consists of professionals who also received school and university English training but continued to improve their skills through specialized courses after completing their university education.

Among the 19 interviewees, five specialists graduated from Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS), where education is conducted in three languages: Kazakh, Russian, and English. By the penultimate year, the curriculum shifts predominantly to English. Students enter NIS between Grades 6 and 7 after passing exams in mathematics, Russian, Kazakh, quantitative reasoning, science, and English (Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools, 2023).

> "In our company, approximately 60% of employees acquired foreign language skills at school and university, 20–30% studied abroad, and the smallest percentage consists of those who learned the language independently after graduation." (Expert from the commercial department)

However, business specialists who attended traditional public schools noted that their foreign language training was insufficient for full use in their current roles. Many reported needing to improve their language skills through additional language courses after finishing school. There is a general consensus that the education system in Kazakhstan does not adequately prepare students to use foreign languages for business communication.

One key criticism is the methodology of teaching foreign languages. For example, a general manager highlighted that the late start of English learning in schools negatively affects proficiency levels. They suggested revising school language programs to enhance their effectiveness:

> "...learning languages from school years plays an important role, but it doesn't always go smoothly. For example, I started learning English in 4th grade, while others started in 1st grade. It was a kind of experiment, but, in my opinion, unsuccessful, because we started later, which impacted our level of knowledge. I also learned German, which gave me a better understanding of how to learn a language from the beginning. Looking at the school program now, I think some things should be done differently." (Sales Manager)

When asked about company-supported language training initiatives, business professionals noted that their organizations provide opportunities for language development, including Kazakh and English courses, as well as chances to study abroad. Employees in large quasi-governmental companies can participate in government programs, such as Bolashak, with organizational support.

> "We had such an initiative. If I'm not mistaken, it was about six months ago. Our boss paid for language courses, various training sessions, and webinars. Personally, I didn't attend because I didn't need them." (Sales Manager)

> "In our company, employees can apply for various government programs and internships, including those abroad. Previously, there was an opportunity to send employees for training abroad at the company's expense for one or two years, including through the Bolashak program, which was connected to the company's financial centre. Employees could return and continue working in their positions. Now, as far as I know, this opportunity has been closed. However,

Kazakh language courses are still available for anyone who wishes to study." (PR Manager)

In addition, as noted by business specialists, the company offers structured language courses in Kazakh and English, providing employees with the necessary resources and creating conducive conditions for training. These include allocating working hours and utilizing specialized applications.

"Each employee has access to the Education First portal, where they can improve their knowledge of English and many other languages." (Chief Manager)

"Kazakh language classes are held offline twice a week for an hour and a half. Lessons take place during working hours, and employees are released from work to attend. The company provides educational materials, including textbooks, and classes are conducted in specially designated rooms where the teacher comes." (Commercialization Specialist)

In some business companies, employee requests to participate in language courses are collected at the beginning or end of the year. Following this, an application is submitted, and the company negotiates with third-party organizations to organize training. Testing is then carried out to determine language proficiency levels, and employees are divided into groups accordingly.

"We learn English through a special application. Employees complete tasks in the application daily and also participate in online lessons held once or twice a week, depending on the level of the group. These meetings help consolidate the material covered and address complex topics." (Lawyer)

"The training format depends on the level of language proficiency. For some groups, General English is provided, while more advanced groups receive a higher-level course. However, the course does not focus on specialized business English but rather on deepening overall knowledge and expanding topics appropriate for advanced levels." (Audit Department Consultant)

As noted by the interviewed professionals, employees across various age groups actively participate in these courses, demonstrating a high level of motivation and a strong commitment to lifelong learning. This contributes to their professional growth and the strengthening of their language competencies.

"Many employees actively participate in the courses, regardless of age. Even those who graduated from university a long time ago show interest in learning and make significant progress, which reflects high motivation and a desire for self-development. For example, employees over 50 years of age actively participate in classes and complete tasks, demonstrating excellent progress." (Economist)

Additionally, some business specialists believe that language training at schools and universities should be more practical and focused on real professional situations.

"For example, at university, we had several language courses, but not all of them were useful for practical work. I think that school and university programs should be more focused on real-life and work situations." (Chief Manager)

"When I studied English at school, the teacher was too strict about pronunciation. This gave me a fear of speaking, and to this day, I struggle with pronunciation." (Commercial Department Expert)

An auditor from an international company also noted that university programs are often outdated and need to be updated to better align with modern professional requirements.

They suggested placing greater emphasis on practical skills, such as writing business letters and participating in negotiations.

> "At university, everything is more complicated. For example, I know that the programs for students in different faculties vary, but they sometimes become outdated. For instance, we had a textbook that we studied from, and the whole group complained about its content. I think it is worth updating the teaching materials, especially to ensure they better meet modern professional realities." (Expert in the audit department)

> "Now students are already working or interning, and they need more practical knowledge. For example, in English classes, more attention could be paid to writing business letters, participating in negotiations, and similar skills." (Economist)

Business professionals emphasized the importance of close cooperation between universities and companies, highlighting examples of successful practices in their workplaces where students gained real-life experience that contributed to their subsequent employment.

> "Absolutely! This is a key point. For example, at my work, I personally organized internship programs for university students. We invited students, assigned them practical tasks, and many of them later found work in the same companies. This is a great example of how universities and companies can collaborate to prepare specialists who are immediately ready for professional work." (Chief Manager)

Hence, within the given theme this analysis highlights the diverse experiences and perspectives of Kazakhstani business professionals regarding language training and its role in professional development. Three main groups of English proficiency were identified, reflecting varying levels of exposure and dedication to language improvement. While some Kazakhstani professionals benefited from advanced schooling, such as Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools, or studied abroad, others relied on additional courses to bridge gaps left by insufficient school and university training. Many criticized the outdated methodologies in educational institutions, emphasizing the need for practical, real-life applications, such as writing business letters and participating in negotiations. Companies are stepping in to address these gaps by providing structured language courses in Kazakh and English, offering specialized applications, and accommodating working hours. Importantly, successful partnerships between universities and businesses—such as internship programs—demonstrate the value of real-life experience in preparing graduates for the workforce. Overall, the findings underscore the need for a more practical, collaborative approach to language education, bridging the gap between academic preparation and workplace demands.

3.3. Cultural Competence in a Multinational Business Environment

The interviewed business professionals, particularly those in the field of international export, emphasized the importance of understanding cultural differences in business communication. They noted that variations in mentality and work approaches across countries significantly influence business processes. For instance, the negotiating styles of Eastern and European colleagues illustrate how cultural features play a crucial role in successful international interactions.

> "Such differences sometimes create certain difficulties. For example, this may concern companies from the East, such as China and Japan, as well as representatives from Europe, South America, and Africa." (Product Manager)

The interviews provided specific examples of challenges related to cultural differences, such as variations in decision-making processes and punctuality between Chinese and European colleagues. It was also noted that cultural differences can complicate communication and decision-making:

> "These differences manifest themselves in various aspects of business communication, from decision-making to non-verbal signals, such as gestures and facial expressions. For example, Chinese colleagues may behave differently from their European counterparts in terms of punctuality and negotiating styles." (PR Manager)

These observations align with business communication patterns in Kazakhstan, where interactions often reflect a blend of post-Soviet business traditions, Kazakh cultural values, and international business influences. Compared to Western European firms, where negotiations tend to be direct and structured, Kazakhstani business culture often emphasizes personal relationships, hierarchical decision-making, and more flexibility with deadlines. This is particularly evident in public sector agreements, where establishing trust through extended discussions is often prioritized over strict adherence to timelines (Zharkynbekova & Aimoldina, 2023). At the same time, Kazakhstani professionals, particularly those working in international business settings, exhibit adaptability that aligns with high-context cultures such as China, where indirect communication and long-term relationship-building are highly valued.

Interestingly, several interviewees highlighted that while Kazakhstani business culture differs from European models, they find it more challenging to adapt to Eastern business styles than to European ones. According to them, this is largely because most top-level managers in Kazakhstan have received their education and professional training within European business frameworks, where direct communication, structured negotiations, and efficiency-driven decision-making are emphasized. As a result, adapting to European business environments tends to feel more intuitive.

> "Overall, the top management in our company is well acquainted with the European mentality and knows how to conduct a dialogue properly. European partners, in turn, are also aware of the specifics of Kazakhstan and Russia. Our approaches are generally quite similar, especially in terms of mentality, so there have been no major misunderstandings. I believe that people at this level have already developed the ability to adapt effectively and find common ground in business communication. However, the situation may change if someone travels on a business trip to a different cultural environment." (Economist)

One interviewee highlighted the case of a manager who, thanks to foreign education, was able to adapt to different mentalities and effectively establish a dialogue with international partners. This underscores the importance of cultural flexibility and the ability to navigate diverse cultural contexts.

> "I can talk about this because I used to work in a department where the manager had a foreign education. His approach to work was different from what is accepted here. I won't say that one approach is better than the other—they're just different. At that time, we had many meetings with foreign companies, and our manager was able to adapt to the difference in mentality, effectively establishing dialogue." (Sales Manager)

Experienced managers and specialists generally succeed in adapting to cultural differences, which facilitates effective business communication. For example, when organizing delegation visits, attention to the cultural characteristics of guests is a key factor in successful interactions.

As business experts noted, companies prepare for engagement with foreign partners by studying the specific culture and mentality of the target country before trips and visits. Such measures help minimize intercultural barriers and promote smoother interactions. Recognizing the significance of intercultural dialog for critical strategic issues, companies

also take steps to address language barriers. These efforts include providing translators and conducting specialized language training for employees, which is particularly important when employees face difficulties communicating in foreign languages.

> "In our company, for example, we provide translator services when necessary, and employees undergo additional language training. Thanks to this, most employees can successfully interact with international partners, despite language and cultural barriers." (Chief Manager)

> "Firstly, a lot depends on who the communication takes place with. If this interaction is with a foreign company, the conversation is conducted in English. Interpreters are always present, although the management team generally speaks English and can freely communicate and negotiate. However, the specifics of the work are not always the same, and each company has its own characteristics. In such cases, interpreters become indispensable for accurately conveying thoughts, especially when it comes to specific terms." (PR Manager)

Participants also observed how cultural differences between employees from different countries manifest in work styles. For example, employees of different cultural backgrounds are perceived as having a more relaxed approach to work, which contrasts with the tendency of Kazakh colleagues to respond quickly to tasks. Such differences can sometimes create challenges in task management and execution:

> "Well, this is, of course, a subjective opinion. If, for example, we take the Vietnamese or the Filipinos, we notice that they are more relaxed and less inclined toward fast and active work. Compared to our employees, who tend to quickly respond to tasks and complete them without delay, they may look for ways to postpone execution or make excuses." (Product Manager)

Business specialists have acknowledged that managing cultural differences requires flexibility. However, despite recognizing the importance of this aspect, companies often lack a clear or systematic approach to addressing these differences, highlighting the need for more structured adaptation strategies. This gap is particularly evident in the absence of formal language policies in hiring, training, and daily operations. Despite an increasing demand for multilingual professionals, most companies rely on ad hoc solutions (Tietze et al., 2016), such as informal language learning among employees, rather than structured professional development programs. According to employees interviewed, this lack of a systematic approach can lead to inefficiencies in business communication, misunderstandings in multinational collaborations, and missed opportunities in global markets. Given these challenges, future research should explore how structured multilingual policies—such as industry-wide language training initiatives or formalized cultural competency programs—could enhance corporate communication effectiveness and workforce adaptability.

Participants also highlighted the difficulties caused by language barriers. Even among Russian-speaking employees, switching to English can be challenging, particularly when it comes to understanding specific terminology. This underscores the need for more comprehensive language training and employee education to ensure effective communication.

> "For example, when Russian-speaking employees communicate with each other, they almost always understand each other. But as soon as it comes to English, some difficulties arise. It happens that terms or words are used that one of the employees may not know, or outdated terms are encountered that are no longer relevant." (Commercialization Specialist)

The responses also indicate that, despite the presence of intercultural and language barriers, companies do not always implement systematic measures to address these chal-

lenges. This lack of structure can hinder successful international cooperation and highlights the need for a more strategic approach to developing employees' intercultural competence.

In general, business specialists emphasized the importance of recognizing cultural and linguistic differences in a company's international operations, identifying existing challenges, and proposing potential solutions. Cultural competence and an understanding of intercultural differences are critical for successful business communication in international companies. While knowledge of English as a lingua franca is vital, it is not sufficient for effective global interactions. Companies that consider the cultural characteristics of their partners, conduct preparatory activities, and organize language training are more likely to achieve success in the international business environment.

3.4. Multilingualism and Language Policy in International and Localized Businesses

Most business professionals emphasized that English is an essential tool for international communication, particularly in companies focused on global markets. However, many also expressed the opinion that in today's world, knowledge of English alone is no longer sufficient. They encouraged learning additional foreign languages, such as Chinese, German, or French, depending on individual professional and personal interests.

The interviewed business professionals highlighted the importance of a corporate language policy aimed at fostering internationalization and enhancing employees' language skills. Such policies help maintain a high level of language proficiency for professional purposes while improving intercultural communication skills—an increasingly important aspect of business interaction in the context of globalization.

Several key conclusions can be drawn from the interview results. First, Kazakhstani business professionals place a high value on multilingualism, viewing it as crucial for successful communication and career advancement. Multilingualism is also seen as a significant factor in a company's success and competitiveness, as it allows businesses to expand market reach and improve teamwork. Many interviewees believe that language skills should be considered when evaluating promotions and salary increases, further underscoring their importance for career growth.

> "Professional multilingualism plays a very important role. For example, the level of education in English received here in Kazakhstan differs from that received by colleagues abroad. This is noticeable in communication skills. The interaction of different languages in everyday life also helps to maintain a high level of foreign language proficiency. The company's language policy, focused on internationalization, also plays an important role in supporting and developing these skills." (PR Manager)

At the same time, the interviewees rejected the idea that multilingualism hinders a company's development. Instead, they emphasized its importance, particularly in Kazakhstani business communication, where linguistic and cultural diversity is prevalent.

> "I believe that in our country, a person should be proficient in both Russian and Kazakh at the same level. This is important for mutual respect and successful communication between different groups." (Economist)

> "The competencies associated with knowledge of both languages will only increase, and knowledge will be better transferred. Knowledge of at least two of these languages is mandatory. As for English, I would like it to be considered the main language people should know. But I think that English alone is no longer enough. Everyone should choose another foreign language based on their interests." (Commercial Department Expert)

> "Our company does not have a mandatory requirement to know a second foreign language, but some people think it is worth learning Chinese, German, or French." (Chief Manager)

Business professionals emphasized the role of languages as tools for integration and professional success while recognizing the importance of expanding language repertoires to address modern challenges. However, they did not support the idea of adopting a single corporate language.

> "In a multilingual environment such as Kazakhstan, where Kazakh and Russian also play an important role in culture and business communication, the 'English only' policy is no longer so applicable. In any non-English speaking country, the English-only policy is unlikely to be applied 100%." (Economist)

While the use of English as a lingua franca is considered effective, interviewees noted its limitations. Business experts pointed out that knowledge of English alone is insufficient in international business, as in some countries, such as China or Japan, English may not be widely spoken. Furthermore, addressing partners in their native language is often more highly valued, making knowledge of additional foreign languages a distinct competitive advantage.

> "At this stage, it is impossible and unnecessary to apply this everywhere, since there are national companies and corporations that conduct their business exclusively with Russian partners, etc." (Economist)

An international consultant highlighted that relying solely on English can pose a threat to linguistic diversity. This underscores the importance of preserving and using various languages in business communication, particularly in international companies where people from diverse cultural backgrounds collaborate.

> "The company should promote or at least not hinder its employees from communicating in other foreign languages, as this positively affects their communication and mental state. The main language can be English, but interpersonal communication should be at the discretion of the employees." (Consultant in the Audit Department)

In Kazakhstan, where Kazakh and Russian play significant roles in both culture and business, an "English-only policy" cannot be fully implemented. Local languages remain essential for effective communication and for considering cultural nuances in business interactions. This is especially true in specific fields such as auditing, where knowledge of local languages and an understanding of regional characteristics are often required.

> "Officially, English is recognized in our country as the language of business communication, and this is certainly important. But if everything in the company were entirely in English, I would have a negative attitude toward it. We are located in Kazakhstan, and although the main language in financial centres is English, it is important to consider that these centres operate in a specific country, where they aim to attract local companies and businessmen. Including the national language is very important here." (Economist)

> "I believe that if everything were entirely in English, it would create difficulties. Not all employees can be required to work in English, especially line personnel for whom it is not mandatory. It would be challenging for them, and we might even need to hire expats. Additionally, it would be difficult for designers, marketers, or accountants to maintain all documentation solely in English. While many documents are based on English standards, they also include elements of Kazakhstani legislation, and this must be taken into account." (Commercialization Specialist)

Other specialists emphasized the importance of supporting and promoting the state language in the business sphere.

> "I think that the level of use of the Kazakh language needs to be increased. In my opinion, it receives less attention than it should. After all, we are in Kazakhstan, and it is essential for business centres and their employees to comply with local legislation and respect national traditions, including the use of the Kazakh language." (Chief Manager)

Thus, the analysis of business professionals' responses emphasizes the critical role of multilingualism in modern business communication in Kazakhstan, where linguistic and cultural diversity are deeply ingrained in both cultural and professional interactions. While English is widely recognized as an essential tool for international communication, Kazakhstani business professionals agree that it alone cannot address the complexities of global markets. In Kazakhstan, the coexistence of Kazakh and Russian alongside English is considered vital for fostering mutual respect, ensuring effective communication, and adhering to local cultural and legal norms. This perspective advocates for a balanced multilingual approach that preserves linguistic diversity while meeting the practical demands of both local and international business contexts. Overall, multilingualism is perceived not only as a competitive advantage but also as a cornerstone of successful integration and professional growth in the global business environment.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The findings highlight the multifaceted role of multilingualism, cultural competence, and targeted language training in Kazakhstan's professional landscape. The corporate language environment reflects the country's multilingual and multiethnic character, with Kazakh, Russian, and English serving distinct functions. Kazakh, as the state language, is gradually gaining prominence in the business sphere, supported by legislative efforts to increase its usage in official documentation and public administration. Russian continues to maintain a fairly strong position in the corporate environment, especially in the private sector and in companies with international participation, as well as in interactions with neighboring countries and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) partners, while English is indispensable for international communication, particularly in export-oriented and multinational companies.

While English is recognized as a vital tool for global communication, Kazakhstani professionals agree that it is insufficient on its own, advocating for the learning of additional languages and the preservation of linguistic diversity. The decision to move away from one corporate language policy in Kazakhstan's multilingual business environment further reinforces the need for a balanced approach that respects local languages while addressing global demands. Overall, multilingualism and cultural competence are viewed as indispensable for career growth, professional integration, and the long-term success of businesses in a globalized economy.

4.1. Application of Multilingual Skills in Professional Communication

This study underscores the dynamic and adaptive nature of multilingual practices among business professionals in Kazakhstan, emphasizing that while multilingualism is a functional necessity across industries, its application varies by sector, role, and communication context. Rather than adhering to rigid language policies, Kazakhstani professionals employ flexible language strategies to meet workplace demands. However, a key challenge identified in the study is the gap between formal language education and professional linguistic requirements. Outdated pedagogical approaches in schools and universities often fail to equip professionals with practical multilingual competencies, leading to a

reliance on corporate training programs. In response, businesses implement structured language courses, establish partnerships with universities, and promote cultural competence initiatives. These efforts reflect a broader recognition of the importance of intercultural communication in minimizing misunderstandings and fostering global collaboration.

Based on the interview results, workplace language policies in Kazakhstan vary by industry, reinforcing the need for tailored multilingual strategies (Thomas, 2008). Financial institutions enforce English proficiency as a hiring criterion due to international transactions, Russian for regional trade and legal compliance, and Kazakh for official documentation. IT companies often adopt an informal multilingual approach, where employees blend Kazakh, Russian, and English, depending on their team composition. In logistics and manufacturing, Russia remains dominant due to its established role in regional trade, particularly within the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

Moreover, in line with existing theoretical models (Cenoz et al., 2017; Gunnarsson, 2013, 2014; Van der Worp et al., 2017), the findings emphasize that multilingualism in the workplace goes beyond the ability to speak multiple languages; it also involves creating an inclusive, multicultural environment that enhances communication and collaboration. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the personality of a multilingual professional, their professional language repertoire, and the social context to analyze the role of languages in business communication (Van der Worp et al., 2017). For Kazakhstani business professionals, proficiency in multiple languages is a key aspect of professional identity, enabling them to navigate the complexities of local and international interactions. However, the study revealed discrepancies in language proficiency across professional roles—while senior managers demonstrate higher proficiency in Kazakh and English, mid-level specialists often encounter barriers when engaging with international partners. These findings confirm that multilingual proficiency influences career mobility (Gunnarsson, 2014; Itani et al., 2015; Vulchanov, 2020). Although Kazakhstan's multilingual policy promotes language diversity, its practical application varies by industry, requiring context-sensitive approaches to ensure that multilingualism serves as a strategic advantage rather than a compliance burden.

4.2. The Role of Cultural Competence in Business Success

Beyond language proficiency, cultural competence plays a pivotal role in shaping multilingual workplace interactions, influencing how professionals communicate, negotiate, and collaborate in Kazakhstani companies. Business professionals must navigate cultural differences in punctuality, communication styles, and problem-solving approaches, all of which affect language use and business strategies. For instance, while Western firms prioritize efficiency-driven, direct negotiations, Kazakhstani professionals increasingly recognize the importance of learning additional foreign languages, particularly those relevant to Eastern business cultures such as Chinese and Japanese. In these contexts, relationship-building and indirect communication are essential before transitioning to formal agreements. To succeed in cross-border business environments, many professionals actively develop linguistic competencies rather than relying solely on translator services, allowing them to engage more effectively in culturally nuanced negotiations.

This highlights an important shift in Kazakhstan's multilingual business culture: while traditionally hierarchical and relationship-driven, an increasing number of professionals—particularly those with international education or exposure—are integrating Western efficiency-driven communication models with local and Eastern business traditions. However, engaging with Eastern business partners requires even greater linguistic flexibility, as professionals must adjust both their language use and communication style to align with diverse cultural expectations. Despite this evolving multilingual landscape, many

companies still lack a systematic approach to managing cultural differences, often relying on ad hoc solutions instead of structured policies (Tietze et al., 2016), even as demand for multilingual professionals continues to grow. This gap results in communication inefficiencies, cross-cultural misunderstandings, and missed opportunities in global markets, reinforcing the need for formalized strategies in language training and cultural adaptation to ensure effective cross-border collaboration.

While proficiency in multiple languages helps overcome barriers in intercultural communication, differences in problem-solving approaches and behavioral patterns across cultures can still pose challenges. Several participants noted that such variations often influence the outcomes of negotiations and agreements. For example, Kazakhstani business professionals frequently encounter differences in punctuality and decision-making approaches when dealing with foreign partners. This necessitates a high degree of cultural flexibility and adaptability, reaffirming the importance of intercultural competence in achieving successful business outcomes.

4.3. Challenges and Language Policy Implementation Gaps

Although the results indicate that Kazakhstani business professionals generally have a positive perception of multilingualism in the workplace, they still believe that the Kazakh language should be used more extensively and actively maintained. Recent legislative initiatives, such as the Concept for the Development of Language Policy (2023–2029) (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023), aim to increase the use of Kazakh in official and corporate settings. These efforts reflect the state's commitment to integrating the Kazakh language into business practices while recognizing the indispensable roles of Russian and English in informal and international communication (Atameken, 2023). Moreover, the Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan for Civil Service Affairs proposed amendments in 2023 requiring mandatory Kazakh fluency for civil servants, including senior management (Orda.kz, 2023). Additionally, from 1 January 2024, new communicative requirements were introduced to enhance Kazakh language competence among civil servants (Gov.kz, 2023). For senior executives and managers, high proficiency in Kazakh is becoming a critical prerequisite for professional activity.

However, businesses face significant challenges in implementing these policies due to practical and structural constraints. One key obstacle is the limited availability of high-quality Kazakh-language materials for business and legal documentation, making it difficult for companies to ensure compliance while maintaining operational efficiency. Additionally, there is a shortage of professional translators and interpreters with sector-specific expertise, further complicating the integration of Kazakh into corporate communication. Another major barrier is the inconsistent enforcement of language policies across industries, where economic considerations often take precedence over linguistic regulations (Aimoldina, 2025). These factors create a fragmented approach to multilingualism, leaving many businesses uncertain about the feasibility of transitioning to Kazakh in their daily operations. Addressing these issues requires targeted measures, such as comprehensive employee training programs and improvements in language resources, to facilitate smoother policy implementation (Shayakhmet, 2024).

Furthermore, language preferences within different business sectors influence how companies navigate multilingual policies. Multinational corporations and export-oriented businesses often prioritize English for operational efficiency, while some local firms continue to rely on Russian due to workforce language habits. In customer-facing industries such as retail and hospitality, businesses struggle to adapt their language practices to the increasing number of Kazakh-speaking customers, leading to public dissatisfaction over language use (Prdrive.kz, 2024). This issue is rooted in historical workplace norms preferring

the Russian language (Suleimenova & Burkitbayeva, 2009), insufficient Kazakh-language training for frontline employees, and uncertainty over how to balance multilingual customer interactions. Without clear policy guidelines and economic incentives, businesses may hesitate to fully transition to Kazakh in daily interactions, despite growing demand.

4.4. Study Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study provides insights into multilingual workplace communication in Kazakhstan, it has several limitations. First, its urban-centric focus may not fully capture language practices in rural businesses or domestic-market-oriented companies, where Kazakh may be more dominant. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases, as participants may have overestimated their multilingual competencies or inclusivity within their workplaces. Since the findings are based on individual perceptions rather than statistical generalizations, they should be interpreted as indicative of key trends rather than definitive conclusions about the entire industry.

Another limitation is the lack of sector-specific analysis regarding language policies. While this study identified general trends in multilingual workplace communication, it did not extensively examine how different industries implement language policies or the extent to which corporate strategies align with state linguistic initiatives. Furthermore, the absence of longitudinal data limits the ability to assess how businesses adapt to evolving language policies over time. Without tracking changes in corporate language adoption, it is difficult to determine whether multilingual strategies become more structured or remain inconsistent across industries.

Despite these limitations, the findings highlight key areas for future research. Expanding studies to rural areas and small businesses would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how language policies function outside urban corporate settings. Additionally, incorporating longitudinal data on corporate language adoption could offer valuable insights into how businesses adjust to evolving state policies and economic demands. A mixed-methods approach, integrating surveys, observational studies, workplace ethnographies, and formal language proficiency assessments, would also enhance the depth of analysis and reduce biases inherent in self-reported data.

Furthermore, integrating business and educational discourses is essential to ensuring that language practices cultivated in universities align with corporate requirements. Future studies should examine how students perceive multilingualism and intercultural communication and assess their preparedness for working in multilingual business environments. Insights from such research could inform improvements in educational curricula and professional training programs, bridging the gap between academic language instruction and real-world corporate needs.

Overall, while state policies aim to promote Kazakh in professional settings, businesses continue to rely on Russian and English due to economic priorities and industry-specific demands. Future studies should explore how companies balance linguistic expectations with operational efficiency, ensuring that multilingualism is leveraged as a strategic asset rather than a regulatory challenge. By developing industry-specific language frameworks and aligning educational training with corporate needs, Kazakhstan can foster a more effective and sustainable multilingual business environment.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Themes, subthemes, and categories identified in interviews.

Theme	Subthemes	Categories
Language Practices in Business Communication	Multilingualism in Business Communication	Use of multiple languages in different contexts Impact of multilingualism on communication efficiency Influence of international standards on language use
	Language Preferences in Various Situations	Language choice depending on audience and situation Regional differences in language preferences Social status and language choice Language preferences in online communication
	Code-Switching Issues	Language mixing in everyday communication Use of Anglicisms and professional jargon Contextual factors in language use Advantages of hybrid language forms
Language Training and Support for Business Professionals	Language Learning Experience	Personal stories and strategies for language learning Self-study methods and personal initiatives Impact of early language learning Motivation for learning foreign languages
	Courses to Improve Language Skills	Access to training platforms for improving English and other languages Corporate language programs Impact of training levels on outcomes Employer support in learning
	Educational Programs and Platforms for Language Training	Ways to enhance language proficiency among business professionals Implementation of distance learning Special programs for specific positions Impact of international standards on educational programs

Table A1. *Cont.*

Theme	Subthemes	Categories
Cultural Competence in a Multinational Business Environment	Understanding and Respecting Cultural Differences	Impact of cultural background on workplace interactions Considering national characteristics in work Role of cultural values in business Intercultural conflicts and their resolution
	Adaptation to a Multinational Environment	Considering cultural specifics when working with partners Mentorship programs for new employees Creating multicultural teams Integration of national traditions into corporate culture
	Impact of Economy and Education on Cultural and Language Practices	Prevalence of Russian in business due to historical and educational reasons Role of the education system in linguistic diversity Economic factors and linguistic environment Connection between economic development and language policy
Multilingualism and Language Policy in International and Local Businesses	Importance of English in International Projects	Use of English for interaction with international partners and clients Impact of English proficiency on career growth Challenges in negotiations conducted in English Translation and adaptation of international documents
	Inclusion of National Languages in International Projects	Importance of Kazakh for local projects Adaptation of international products and services to local language requirements Role of national languages in marketing strategies Impact of language policy on international deals
	Language Policy and Its Impact on Corporate Culture	State support for the Kazakh language Impact of legislation on company language policies Implementation of multilingual programs in companies Role of the state in shaping language culture in companies

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Intercultural Attitudes Embedded in Microblogging: Sentiment and Content Analyses of Data from Sina Weibo

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Abstract: This study analyzed 2421 microblogs posted between the year 2012 to March 2022 reflecting the microbloggers' attitudes toward different cultures. Results indicated that (1) the number of microblog posts expressing the users' intercultural attitudes increased distinctly from 2019 to March 2022, with females users in general posting more microblogs than males; (2) females posted more microblogs encompassing *positive* emotions to show their interest and motivation to learn about foreign cultures, and the tendency to value and appreciate cultural differences, whereas males created more sentimentally *neutral* posts that revealed their recognition of the existence of cultural differences, and females and males posted a similar number of microblogs containing *negative* emotions; and (3) more posts involved "small c" culture were posted than those containing themes belonging to the "Big C" culture. Gender gap was further observed regarding the cultural themes concerned by the microbloggers. Implications were discussed in the context of intercultural education.

Keywords: intercultural attitudes; microblogging; sentiment analysis; content analysis

1. Introduction

Why do we need to be attitudinally prepared to embrace multiculturalism? When people and things around are greatly different from those in one's own native cultural milieu, insecure feelings may arise because one's internal belief system is hard to be fully affirmed (Furnham 2019). It is thus natural for a person to react with defense mechanism to protect the self from emotional conflicts or stress when faced with cultural differences (Lebedko 2014). Typical defensive reactions include, but are not limited to, denying the existence of cultural differences (Bennett and Hammer 2017), a tendency to judge using one's own culture as the benchmark (Tori and Bilmes 2002), and trying to make sense based on overgeneralized and secondhand beliefs (i.e., stereotypes) (Amoretti 2018). Unfortunately, these internal attitudes can be radiated via a person's speech, body language, and even tone of voice, which can further lead to a cycle of negative reaction and result in communication breakdown or conflict (Zhu and Bresnahan 2018).

Over the past decade, research on cultivating positive attitudes toward other cultures has proliferated in various fields. In healthcare, studies like Karasu et al. (2022) demonstrated the importance of cultural sensitivity in improving patient outcomes and reducing health disparities. In business, Moradi and Ghabanchi (2019) highlighted how cross-cultural understanding boosts international collaboration and market success. In tourism, Kirillova et al. (2015) showed that cultural appreciation enhances travelers' experiences and promotes sustainable tourism. In education, Tarchi and Surian (2022) emphasized the role of intercultural competence in fostering inclusive learning environments and improving student engagement. However, in the exploration of intercultural attitudes of individuals, quantitative approach relying on self-reported measures occupied a large portion of prior studies (e.g., Idris 2020; Liu et al. 2017). Beyond any doubt, self-reported measures are versatile and indispensable for capturing differentiated patterns of human attitudes (Hendrick et al. 2013), whereas they also bear drawbacks. Given the fact that self-report on survey items describing psychological processes is under respondents' control, a common

criticism against self-report measures has been their tendency to be susceptible to socially desirable responses (Holtgraves 2004). That is, the respondent might engage in faking behaviors intentionally and unintentionally to forge the ideal image of the self. This can be understood through Goffman's (1967) theories of impression management and facework. Individuals regularly engage in impression management, consciously or unconsciously adjusting their behaviors to project a favorable image. This includes unintentional actions driven by ingrained social mechanisms that help maintain a positive identity. Thus, both intentional and unintentional faking are part of broader social practices aimed at managing self-presentation, including in intercultural contexts. As such, scholars have issued calls on researchers to use more diverse approaches when investigating intercultural dispositions, such as behavioral observations, text mining, and implicit association tests, to obtain a more nuanced and accurate understanding of intercultural attitudes (Deardorff 2017). Such methodologies can provide deeper insights by minimizing the influence of impression management and capturing more genuine intercultural behaviors and dispositions (Leung et al. 2014).

Microblogging has been a valuable data source for researchers to understand individual attitudes and beliefs about a particular topic. For example, based on tweets or posts collected from social media sites where users share information, feelings, and perspectives (e.g., X [formerly Twitter], Facebook), studies were conducted to understand individual's attitudes toward MOOCs (massive open online courses) (Zhou 2022), vaccination (Tavoschi et al. 2020), global warming (Qiao and Jiang 2021), LGBTQ-related issues (Adamczyk and Liao 2019), among other topics. As Kumar (2021) pointed out, a strength of unstructured data such as microblogging is that it does not contain any predefined rules. Translated to the current context, unlike structured survey items assessing intercultural attitudes that preset intercultural situations (e.g., "*I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.*", Intercultural Sensitivity Scale, Chen and Starosta 2000), the revealed attitudes via microblogging derived from what a person saw and heard that formed his/her unique intercultural experiences (e.g., "*I asked the teachers if they wanted to try my cookies. The Chinese teachers were all like, 'No, no thanks, I'm good', but before I even finished my question, the foreign teacher's hand was already reaching for a cookie. It was so cute!*", an analysis item of this study).

Hence, the microblogging data are deemed to be more authentic regarding intercultural situations due to their real-time, personal nature, which captures spontaneous expressions of cultural behaviors, customs, values, and beliefs (Tufekci 2014). For example, posts about local festivals offer insights into how individuals celebrate their traditions and share their experiences with a global audience. Microbloggers might also express admiration or curiosity about other cultures, as seen in posts from individuals in the U.S. sharing their excitement about attending a traditional Japanese tea ceremony, or in users from India posting their reflections on attending a Thanksgiving dinner in the U.S. Additionally, discussions on cultural values provide perspectives on how people perceive and interact with different cultural norms. To the author's best knowledge, however, no study to date has employed microblogging data to investigate the attitudinal aspect of individuals' intercultural dispositions. As Armitage and Christian (2003) maintained, attitudes, when shaped in positive way, can influence behaviors to achieve a favorable outcome. Indeed, positive attitudes toward foreign cultures are the preconditions of voluntary cognitive skills enhancement, and effective behavioral and emotional regulation that would ultimately lead to successful intercultural interactions (Griffith et al. 2016). The purpose of this study was thus to explore Chinese microblogging users' attitudes toward foreign cultures/cultural differences and their utmost attention to certain themes of culture. The findings of this study will inform educators who aim to adopt purposeful and effective strategies to develop positive intercultural attitudes of learners.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Intercultural Attitudes

Individuals who wish to thrive in the multicultural but interconnected globe are expected to possess a decent level of intercultural competence (IC). Intercultural attitudes, as the attitudinal dimension of IC and the focus of this study, was defined as a collection of traits that drive individuals to evaluate intercultural situations as beneficial and remain engaged in or initiate intercultural interactions despite the innate uncertainty and ambiguity (Byram 2021; Deardorff 2006; Griffith et al. 2016). These IC experts further proposed a variety of elements of intercultural attitudes to operationalize the definition. Specifically, in possession of favorable intercultural attitudes, a person would respect and value cultural diversity; show open-mindedness to cultures of and people from other countries while withholding judgment; and show curiosity and discovery for intercultural learning and interactions. Opposite to these elements were ethnocentric beliefs, stereotypes and prejudices, low tolerance for ambiguity, and even dislike or rejection of foreign people and cultures, which constitute typical causes of intercultural tensions and breakdown (Spitzberg and Changnon 2009).

2.2. Types of Culture: 'Big C' and 'Small c' Culture

Culture is defined as "the learned and shared values, beliefs, and behaviors of a community of interacting people" (Bennett and Bennett 2004, p. 147). To further sort out different themes of culture, Paige et al. (2003) suggested two broad types of culture: "Big C" and "small c". "Big C" culture refers to a set of facts that can be easily observed and remembered, such as a country's history, economy, social system, education, festivals, and art. By contrast, "small c" consists of aspects that cannot be easily and immediately observed or understood, such as people's behavioral patterns, thinking patterns, values and beliefs, customs, language, and everyday living. These two culture types have been used by researchers to extract cultural content in various text materials.

For example, Kang-Young (2009) analyzed the texts and pictures in eleven high-school EFL conversation textbooks and found that most of the textbooks showed a strong preference for the teaching of "Big C" culture (e.g., education, holidays, food), yet paid little attention to "small c" culture (e.g., individualist beliefs, interpersonal relationships). Similarly, Labtic and Teo (2019) investigated the cultural information contained in six English textbooks and reported that "Big C" culture (e.g., literature, geography, and races) is more frequently presented than "small c" culture (e.g., everyday living, ritual behavior). A review of literature showed that the framework relying on "Big C" and "small c" cultures were more frequently adopted in the analyses of educational materials (e.g., Yue et al. 2020; Zakiyah and Rukmini 2022). Nonetheless, this framework is also believed to be valid for analyzing microblogging texts because when users posted specifically on intercultural topics, the notion of culture would be more tangible for them as such different cultural themes would be more explicitly presented in their postings.

2.3. Sentiment and Content Analysis of Microblogging Data

Sentiment analysis identifies subjectivity (neutral vs. emotionally loaded) and the polarity (positive vs. negative semantic orientation) of a text (Pawar et al. 2016). Appraisal theory posited that emotions can be elicited by evaluations of concrete situations that produce specific reactions on various individuals (Scherer et al. 2001). For example, happiness felt when a romantic relationship starts could be elicited by the appraisals that something desired has been obtained (Berscheid and Walster 1978). The appraisal theory lays the foundation for structured sentiment extraction that is based on appraisal expression (Bloom 2011). As platforms for users to express themselves, the prevalence of microblogs has aroused the research in the field of sentiment analysis. According to Korenek and Šimko (2014), the appraisal theory also has its strength in supporting the analysis of microblogers' attitudes toward any object/person/event (e.g., foreign cultures or people in

this study), because attitudes express a person's current mindset when writing a post that contains his/her affect, appreciation or judgment.

Qualitative content analysis is an analytical tool used to "systematically analyze texts by processing the material step by step with theory-based category systems developed on the material." (Mayring 2002, p. 114). The deductive content analysis is often used to test existing categories and concepts. In other words, the structure of analysis is operationalized on the basis of previous knowledge (Elo and Kyngäs 2008). For example, some studies analyzed the microblog posts based on existing categories of health-related messages (Pei et al. 2016), learning and teaching content (Fischer et al. 2019), and attitudes toward sports for women (Esmundo 2021). Given that the analytic targets of this study (i.e., dimensions of intercultural attitudes and culture) have already been maturely conceptualized and validated by both theoretical and empirical studies, the deductive approach was chosen to perform the content analysis of microblogging data.

2.4. Gender Differences in Intercultural Attitudes and Microblogging

The American Psychological Association (2011) defined gender as "the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex" (p. 1), implying that men and women differ psychologically in the way they perceive and act. Some past studies reported that women were more likely to (a) respect cultural diversity and be open-minded about cultural differences (Vreckova et al. 2020), (b) be interculturally empathetic (Solhaug and Kristensen 2020), (c) possess stronger foreign language proficiency (Wightman 2020), and (d) hold ethnorelative perspectives (Goldstein and Kim 2006) than their male counterparts. In contrast, some studies documented that men experienced a lower level of anxiety and had better control of their interactions with culturally different others (Moradi and Ghabanchi 2019). Concerning the posting behaviors on social media, compared to men, women were found to express more emotions on social media (Tifferet and Vilnai-Yavetz 2014) that were either distinctly positive or negative (Jalonen 2014). Moreover, researchers observed that women tend to post more topics related to everyday living such as family fun, holidays, and festivals, whereas men post more about topics such as deep thought, politics, and religion (Liu et al. 2018; Wang et al. 2013). All the evidence indicated the need to attend to gender differences in the sentiment and content of microbloggers' posts.

2.5. The Present Study

This study made the first attempt to generate a comprehensive picture of how Chinese people feel about foreign cultures and people, and more specifically, what themes of cultural content were concerned, and whether gender gap existed in these issues, by closely examining microblog posts on relevant topics from the launch year of the selected microblogging platform through 2022. The general objective of this study is to uncover how microbloggers' attitudes and thematic focus on foreign cultures have evolved over time and to determine the role that gender differences play in shaping these perspectives. Five research questions were proposed to guide this study:

(1) What was the overall microblog activity about users' attitudes toward foreign cultures and people during 2009 and 2022?
(2) What were the sentiment values of the eligible posts that reflected the microbloggers' attitudes toward foreign cultures and people?
(3) Were there any gender differences in microbloggers' attitudes toward foreign cultures and people?
(4) What themes of culture under the "Big C" and "small c" culture types were included in the eligible microblog posts?
(5) Were there any gender differences in the culture themes concerned by the microbloggers?

3. Methods

3.1. Data Source and Data Collection

Sina Weibo, the Chinese equivalent of X (formerly Twitter), was launched by Sina Corporation in August 2009. As reported by Thomala (2022, June 21), up to the first quarter of 2022, monthly active users of Sina Weibo have surpassed 582 million (252 million daily active users). It has been the most popular microblogging platform in China for users to share and receive information. Microblogging data were extracted using Houyi Crawler Version 4.0.1.0 (https://www.houyicaiji.com/, accessed on 7 May 2022), a free software developed based on an artificial intelligence algorithm to identify and collect information from websites. The search terms used for data collection were "外国文化" (foreign culture), "外国人"/"老外" (foreigner), "其他国家"/"别的国家" (other countries), "西方国家" (Western countries), "西方人" (Westerners), "东西文化差异" (cultural differences between Eastern and Western cultures), "中外文化差异" (cultural differences between China and foreign cultures), "和我们的文化相比" (compared to our culture), "和中国文化相比" (compared to Chinese culture), "和中国人相比" (compared to our Chinese), and "过洋节" (celebrate foreign festivals).

The timeframe of searching was set between August 2009 and March 2022. A total of 9464 microblogging posts were initially identified. The data were exported to and processed in Microsoft Excel. In the phase of data pre-processing, the dataset was cleaned by removing repeated posts by the same author (n = 45), political comments on international wars (n = 2839) or the pandemic (n = 2055), news (n = 63), advertisements (n = 284), and irrelevant posts (n = 1757). The final dataset for subsequent analyses included 2421 microblog posts by 2295 Sina Weibo users. The gender information was obtained from user profiles, with 1410 microblogs posted by females and 1011 microblogs posted by males.

3.2. Sentiment Values Analysis and Content Analysis

After the data pre-processing phase, each microblog was coded regarding its sentiment value (i.e., positive, neutral, or negative). Previous studies suggested that sentiment analysis of microblogging data could have been automated through using natural language processing techniques such as Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count tool (e.g., Onan 2018) and machine learning algorithms (e.g., Gupta et al. 2017). Nevertheless, this study chose to use manual coding as the effort required was acceptable. More importantly, according to Van-Atteveldt et al. (2021) and Boukes et al. (2020), human coding tends to produce higher accuracy as compared to automated coding. The appraisal dictionary suggested by Bloom (2011) was used to assist the coding of emotional quotients associated with the microblog posts. Specifically, posts that expressed obvious positive emotions or contained words such as "glad" and "interesting" were coded as *positive*; posts that revealed ambiguous or mixed emotion or included words such as "different" and "differences" were coded as *neutral*, and posts that expressed obvious negative emotions or used words such as "frustrated" or "afraid" were coded as *negative*. Example microblogs that were coded as *positive*, *neutral*, or *negative*, respectively, are presented in Table 1. All the translation was conducted by following Brislin's (1970) back-translation technique, which involves translating the text from the original language to the target language and then translating it back to the original language. This approach helps to identify and correct discrepancies in meaning, tone, or context, ensuring that the translated content retains its original intent and nuances. By using this method, the study aimed to minimize shifts in meaning that could affect the accuracy and fidelity of the emotional coding, thereby enhancing the reliability of the analysis of intercultural sentiments in microblogging data.

To further discover the dimensions of intercultural attitudes embedded in the microblog post and the associated themes of culture, deductive content analysis (Mayring 2015) was adopted to scrutinize the posts content. The codebook was composed of the theoretically and empirically differentiated categories of intercultural attitudes and culture (i.e., "Big C" and "small c"). To improve the reliability of coding, two PhD candidates in education were invited to perform the manual coding. The coders were paid 1.2 USD

for each microblog post. Before commencing the formal coding, the two coders spent two days familiarizing themselves with the codebook and worked independently to code 200 randomly selected microblog posts to examine the relevance of each code, and to establish inter-coder reliability. The sequence of assigning codes for each post was the (a) sentiment value, (b) dimension of intercultural attitudes, and (c) theme of culture. Figure 1 delineates the data analysis procedures.

Table 1. Example microblog posts with different sentiment values.

Original Posts	English Translation	Sentiment Values
“今年的我在冬奥遇到了很多朋友，不论是一起工作的大家，还是许许多多来自不同文化背景的外国朋友。我时常感到足够温暖与幸运。”	“This year, I made many friends at the Winter Olympics, including colleagues and people from various cultural backgrounds. I often feel warm and fortunate because of these experiences.”	Positive
“看了一晚上视频，外国人在中国生活，中国人在外国生活，文化差异很有趣。”	“Spent the whole evening watching videos about foreigners living in China and Chinese people living abroad. The cultural differences are really fascinating.”	
“环境的差别竟最终导致了如此巨大的东西方文化差异，以至于到了现在人们都还生活在不同的文化环境和政治制度中，这便使人有了差别。”	“The environmental differences have created significant cultural differences between the East and West. Even now, people live in different cultural contexts and political systems, which shapes their behaviors and perspectives.”	Neutral
“美国人和我们国家的人相比，他们吃的食物多数是高热量的，也就是肉食比较多，在宴会上，也会使用一次性手套来吃食物。”	“Compared to people in my country, Americans eat a lot more high-calorie foods, like meat, and they use disposable gloves at banquets.”	
“开始半个月的实习了被分到了一个全是外国人的组本社恐+语障已经快死了。”	“Started my internship for half a month and assigned to a group full of foreigners. I am dying as a sociophobic nerd with language barrier.”	Negative
“看一圈美食纪录片就知道，国外很多食材和做法根本没法和中国相比。”	“Watch some food documentaries then you will know that many foreign food ingredients and recipes are simply not comparable to those in China.”	

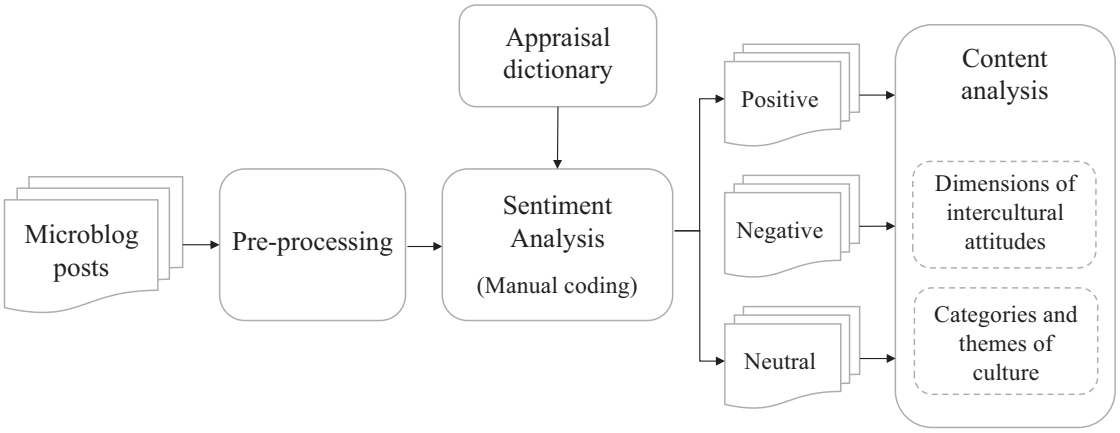

Figure 1. Flowchart of the data analysis procedures.

Inconsistencies were discussed after the coding, and the codebook was further refined. Then, the two coders applied the refined codebook (see Appendix A) to independently coded all microblog posts under analysis. The Krippendorff’s α for the coding of sentiment values ($\alpha = 0.90$), dimensions of intercultural attitudes ($\alpha = 0.87$), and themes of culture ($\alpha = 0.93$) were calculated in SPSS 26.0 (De Swert 2012).

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. The Overall Microblog Activity about Users' Intercultural Attitudes

As shown in Figure 2, during the period from 2012 to 2018, only a handful of microblogs were posted to express the users' attitudes toward foreign people and cultures. From 2019 to 2021, the number of microblog posts increased steadily, but from the end of 2021 to March 2022, the number of microblog posts expressing the users' intercultural attitudes dramatically increased. The turning points of growth in the number of relevant microblog posts were very likely related to the worldwide outbreak of the pandemic in 2019. Probably, during the lockdown period, many users spent increased time on active social media use to reduce boredom (Sun et al. 2022) such that through extensive viewing activities (e.g., news) on microblog platform, users were exposed to culturally different reactions to the epidemic (e.g., face masks issues), which stimulated their willingness to express their thoughts or opinions about people and cultures of other countries.

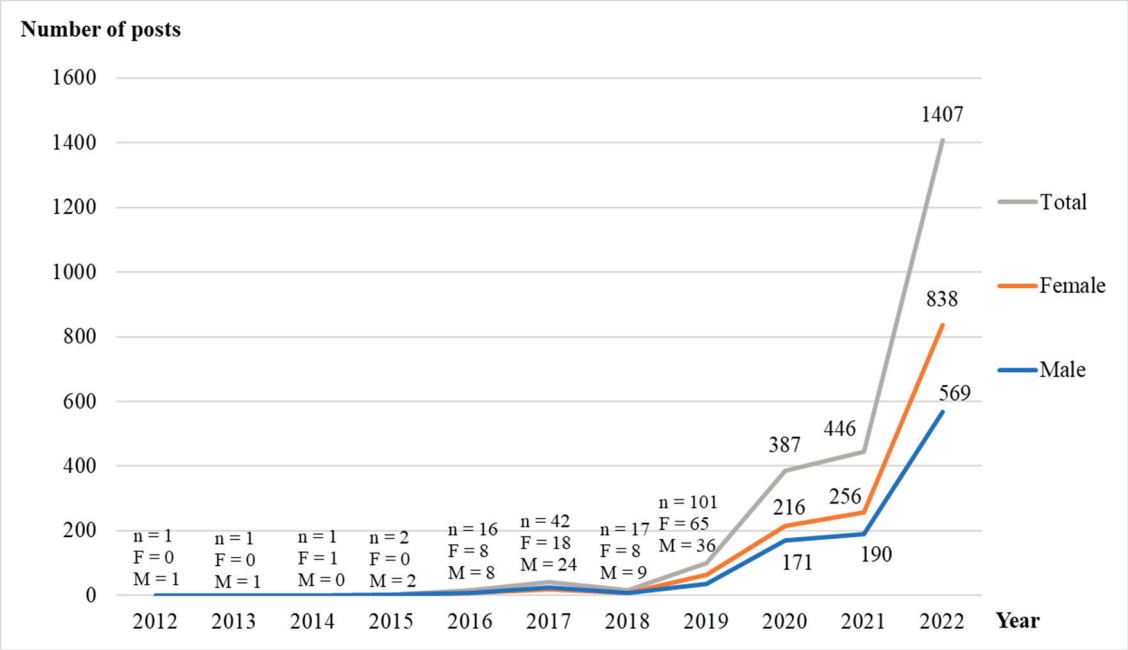

Figure 2. Total number of microblogs reflecting users' intercultural attitudes from 2012 to 2022.

The gender-based comparison indicated that from 2019 to March 2022, females (64.4%, 55.8%, 57.4%, 59.5%, respectively) posted more microblogs than males (35.6%, 44.2%, 42.6%, 40.5%, respectively) that revealed their intercultural attitudes. This corroborated the findings of previous studies that females had a greater tendency to engage in active social media use (i.e., posting) and self-disclosure (i.e., the process of revealing intimate information about oneself to others such attitudes, feelings, desires, experiences, and thoughts) than their male counterparts (Towner et al. 2022).

4.2. Sentiment Values and Dimensions of Chinese Microbloggers' Intercultural Attitudes: Gender-Based Comparison

The results of the sentiment analysis demonstrated that, in general, 53.9% (n = 1304) microblog posts contained obvious *positive* attitudes toward foreign people and cultures; 25.5% (n = 618) posts revealed ambiguous attitudes that were labeled as *neutral*; and 20.6% (n = 499) posts involved obvious *negative* attitudes toward foreign people and cultures. As shown in Figure 3, when the sentiment values of posts were compared across gender groups, females (73.8%, n = 962) were found to post high rate of sentimentally *positive* microblogs, nearly three times higher than that of males (26.2%, n = 342). In contrast, the rate of sentimentally *neutral* microblogs posted by males (69.9%, n = 432) was more than twice

as that posted by females (30.1%, n = 186). Moreover, the rates of sentimentally *negative* microblogs posted by females (52.5%, n = 262) and males (47.5%, n = 237) were of minor differences, with females having slightly higher rate than males.

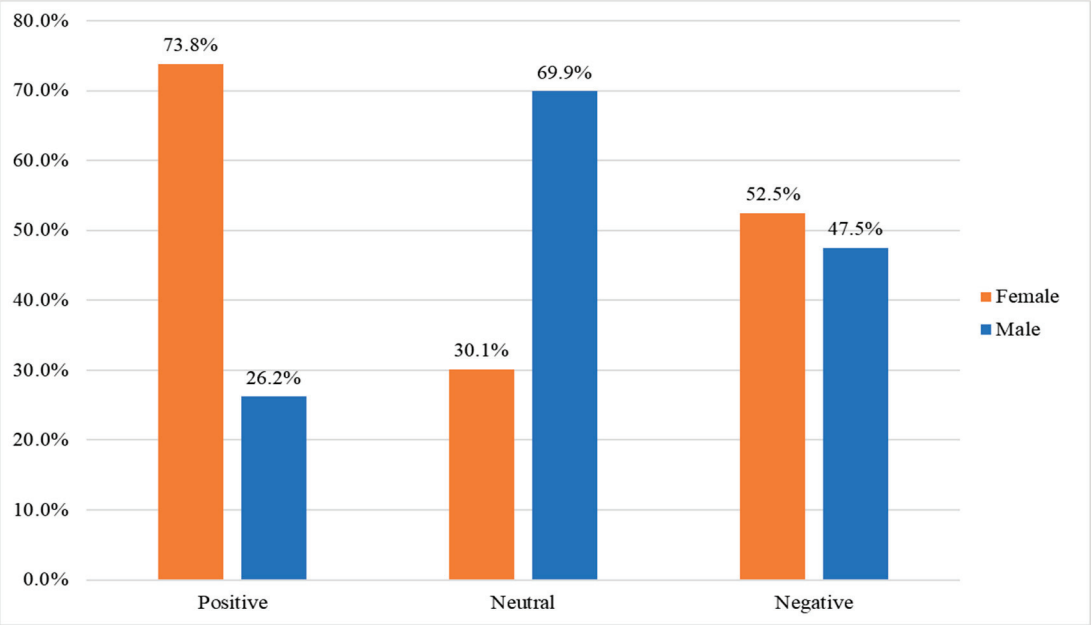

Figure 3. Comparison across gender in the sentiment values of microblog posts.

The finding that females in general exhibited more obvious emotion than males was congruent with Park et al.'s (2016) analytical results of 15.4 million posts created by 68,000 Facebook users. Their findings suggested that women use words more emotionally than men as reflected in women's predominant use of words describing emotions (e.g., excited, happy) and intensive adverbs (e.g., sooooo, ridiculously); and their tendency to use warmer and more positive words. Similarly, Rao et al.'s (2010) examination of X (formerly Twitter) users' language use reported that expressions such as "OMG" and "lol" were more frequently used by females, and the word "yeah" is predominantly used by men to affirm a fact.

A closer look was then taken to investigate the dimensions of intercultural attitudes as embedded in the sentimentally *positive*, *neutral* and *negative* microblog posts. As presented in Figure 4, sentimentally *positive* posts reflected the microbloggers' curiosity and discovery about and respect for foreign people and cultures. The results indicated that among these posts, more microblogs were posted by females to show their interest and motivation to learn about foreign cultures (females: 69.9%, n = 589; males: 30.1%, n = 254), and also the tendency to value and appreciate cultural differences (females: 80.9%, n = 373; males: 19.1%, n = 88), as compared to their male counterparts. This finding was consistent with previous empirical studies that compared to males, females are more likely to initiate intercultural contact and are more motivated to understand, appreciate, and interact with different cultures (Tompkins et al. 2017; Vreckova et al. 2020). Scholars have attempted to understand this gender gap based on the assumptions of social role theory. That is, men are expected to be highly agentic because of their assertive and competitive behaviors; women, on the other hand, are seen as communal for being more friendly and caring (Eagly and Wood 2012). Thus, when approaching foreign people/cultures, women are more likely to exhibit friendly and empathetic attitudes and evaluate the intercultural situations as favorable.

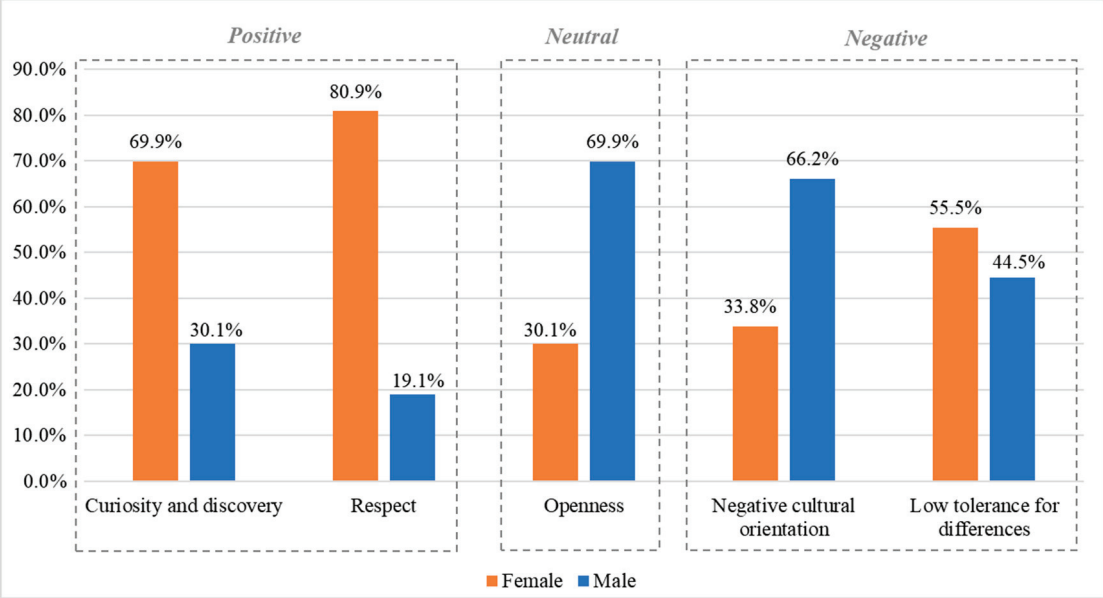

Figure 4. Dimensions of intercultural attitudes embedded in the microblog posts.

Sentimentally *neutral* posts displayed the microbloggers' openness toward cultural differences. That is, among these microblogs, compared to females, more males posted to express their recognition of the existence of cultural differences, without revealing obvious emotion (males: 69.9%, n = 432; females: 30.1%, n = 186). According to Epstein (2003), women and men relied on different systems (experiential versus rational) to interpret the world. The experiential system adopted by women is innate and adaptive; hence, women prefer to make sense of the world by learning from outcomes of affective experiences that stimulate positive emotions, for example, to recognize, understand, and appreciate cultural differences through engaging in authentic intercultural contacts. In comparison, men applied a rational system that operates based on evidence and is considered to be analytical. Therefore, men are apt to translate the reality into symbols or words that are transmitted culturally such as through education (Sladek et al. 2010), for instance, to indicate the acceptance of cultural differences by rationally summarizing the available evidence (e.g., history of cultural diversity).

However, mixed results were found regarding sentimentally *negative* microblogs. Comparison across gender groups suggested that more microblogs were posted by males that involved negative cultural orientation (males: 66.2%, n = 45; females: 33.8%, n = 23) whereas more posts were created by females that implied their low tolerance to differences (females: 55.5%, n = 239; males: 44.5%, n = 192). Specifically, more microblogs posted by males displayed the beliefs that their own culture is better than that of other countries (i.e., ethnocentric beliefs) and unwillingness to approach people/culture of other countries (i.e., inherent resistance). However, more posts created by females revealed their negative attitudes toward intercultural situations accompanied by feelings of confusion or anxiety (i.e., culture shock). Similar findings were documented in prior studies. For example, perhaps for generally being more assertive and less trusting, men were found to have higher level of ethnocentrism than women (Salisbury et al. 2010) and were less willing to communicate interculturally by viewing differences as a threat to one's identity and view of the world (Göncz 2018). On the other hand, women are usually more socially anxious and less psychologically secure than men (Vervoort et al. 2010). Thus, intercultural situations that are inherently stressful were more likely to cause anxiety for women, which may further stimulate their intention to avoid uncertainty (Broeder 2022).

4.3. Themes of Culture Concerned by Chinese Microbloggers: Gender-Based Comparison

Of the relevant microblog posts, 27.5% (n = 666) posts were about "Big C" culture; 50.9% (n = 1233) posts were about "small c" culture; 9.1% (n = 221) posts did not specify the types of culture, culture was only mentioned literally as "culture"' in these posts; 12.4% (n = 301) posts did not include any cultural content. Instead, they expressed the microbloggers' willingness to interact with culturally different people. Results of gender-based comparison of culture themes concerned by the microbloggers are shown in Figures 5 and 6.

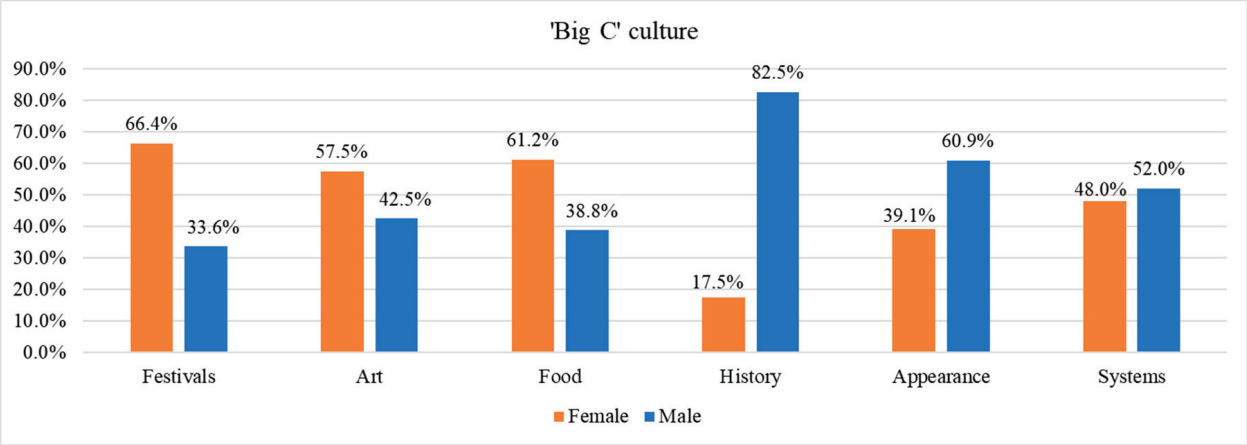

Figure 5. Gender gap in 'Big C' culture themes contained in the microblog posts.

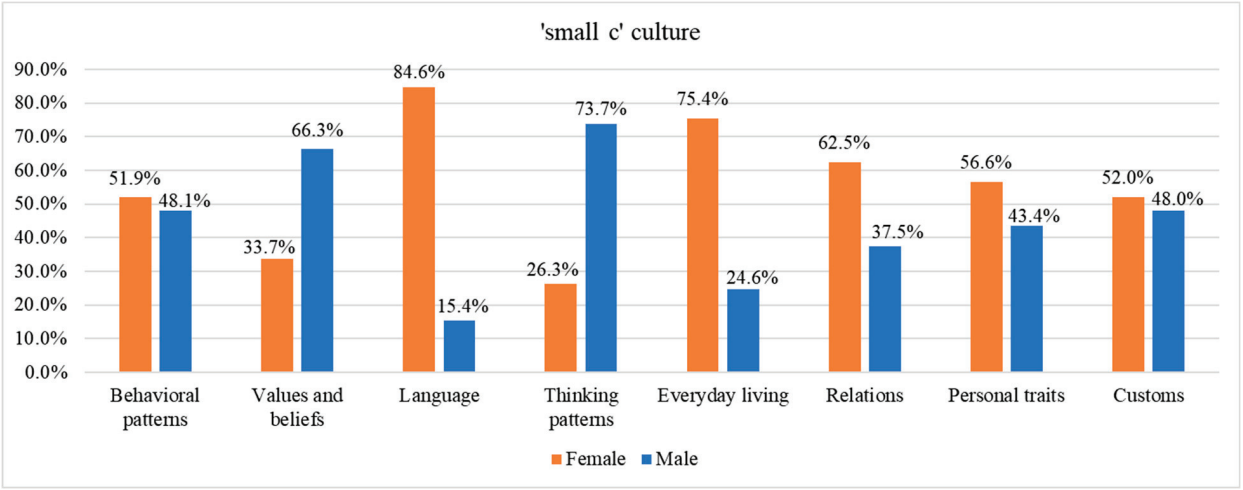

Figure 6. Gender gap in 'small c' culture themes contained in the microblog posts.

Regarding "Big C" culture, Figure 5 showed that more females are interested in different countries' festivals (females: 66.4%, n = 241; males: 33.6%, n = 122), art such as movies, literature, and music (females: 57.5%, n = 111; males: 42.5%, n = 82), and food (females: 61.2%, n = 41; males: 38.8%, n = 26); whereas males posted more about history (males: 82.5%, n = 52; females: 17.5%, n = 11), the physical appearance of people (males: 60.9%, n = 14; females: 39.1%, n = 9), and the social or education systems (males: 52.0%, n = 13; females: 48.0%, n = 12) of different countries.

As for "small c" culture, females posted more about foreign language learning (females: 84.6%, n = 170; males: 15.4%, n = 31), and culturally different people's behavioral patterns (females: 51.9%, n = 161; males: 48.1%, n = 149), everyday living (females: 75.4%, n = 52; males: 24.6%, n = 17), interpersonal or intimate relations (females: 62.5%, n = 35; males: 37.5%, n = 21), personal traits (females: 56.6%, n = 30; males: 43.4%, n = 23), and customs (females: 52.0%, n = 17; males: 48.0%, n = 12). On the other hand, males posted

more about values and beliefs (males: 66.3%, n = 183; females: 33.7%, n = 93), and thinking patterns (males: 73.7%, n = 129; females: 26.3%, n = 46) of people from different cultures.

These results, to a varying extent, corroborated findings of previous studies that uncovered gender differences in posting behaviors on social media. For example, in Liu et al. (2018) and Wang et al. (2013)'s studies that investigated topic preferences of Facebook users, females were found to post more on topics related to detailed aspects of their everyday life such as family fun, intimate and interpersonal relationships, festivals, and daily routines, whereas males post more about abstract concepts such as deep thoughts, ideology- and system-related topics. Notably, as reported above, more women displayed negative attitudes toward intercultural experiences due to the culture shock they have suffered. A scrutinization of relevant posts suggested that women' anxious feelings were mostly caused by their perceived difficulty in comprehending culturally different thinking patterns (e.g., logic of thinking) or values and beliefs (e.g., individualism, egoism, values of sex). A plausible explanation for these findings is that men and women possess different cognitive styles. Prior research (Smith et al. 2008) found that men are more disposed to abstract thinking to recognize patterns (e.g., thinking styles of Easterners and Westerners), analyze the essence of things (e.g., historical/religious roots of cultural differences), and synthesize the information to ultimately solve problems (e.g., make sense how certain values and beliefs shape the shared behavioral patterns in a cultural group). On the other hand, women tend to engage more in context-specific thinking, in aspects of concrete situations (e.g., festivals, food, and everyday living) and relationships (e.g., family relationships, friendships, and romantic relationships) in different cultures. Probably, women who were less skilled at higher-order thinking were more likely to experience culture shock related to abstract intercultural information processing.

5. Conclusions and Implications

This interdisciplinary study contributed to both fields of intercultural competence and microblogging. On the one hand, the current study made the first attempt to understand individuals' attitudes toward foreign people and cultures through the analyses of a large number of microblogging data. In particular, the findings unsealed the percentages of microblogs with different sentiment values and the corresponding theoretically defined aspects of intercultural attitudes. The gender-based comparison further improved our understanding of the gender gap in the attitudinal dispositions needed to embrace multiculturalism. On the other hand, our findings regarding gender differences in emotional disclosure and posting topics on social media added to relevant research realm, especially from the angle of microbloggers' demonstration of their intercultural attitudes and cultural themes of interests.

Practically, findings of this study were informative about the strengths and weaknesses, respectively, of females and males when responding to cultural differences. In general, the observed gender gaps in intercultural attitudes urge researchers and educational practitioners to take this issue into account when designing interventions to enhance individuals' intercultural competence, so as to maximize the intervention effectiveness by attending to potential gender differences. Specifically, the inspection of microblog posts with *negative* sentiment values alerted that males were more likely to hold the beliefs that their own cultural group is superior to others and were less willing to approach culturally dissimilar people or situations. According to prior intervention studies, web-based exploratory activities (e.g., group discussion on academic essays, news reports, personal blogs, and videos) that involved learners' own culture and a different culture (Stockwell 2016, 2018) and international online collaborations (i.e., students from two different cultures worked in teams to discuss and deliver PowerPoint presentation on similarities and differences on various aspects of their cultures) (Boehm et al. 2010) were effective in reducing individuals' ethnocentric beliefs and fostering more favorable and flexible attitudes toward different cultures.

Moreover, attention also needs to be paid to the negative attitudes of a crowd of women toward intercultural experiences, as can be seen in their microblog posts (i.e., anxiety and confusion about cultural differences in thinking patterns, and values and beliefs). As suggested by Carroll and Harris (2020), repetitive instructional intervention can be applied to improve learners' ability to establish connections between materials, thereby increasing learners' accuracy and confidence in interpreting complex issues. Translated into the current context, instead of requiring learners to memorize materials describing typical characteristics of a certain culture, educators can guide learners to repeatedly build connections between the abstract aspects (e.g., values and beliefs) and the concrete aspects (e.g., behavioral patterns, customs) of people in a culture—that is, to decipher the impact of a group of people's cultural values and beliefs on their shared cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses when functioning in their community. This would help improve learners' higher-order thinking skills to accurately dissect and understand different worldviews and minimize the risk of experiencing culture shock.

It is necessary to note that the findings of this study need to be interpreted with cautions. First, although microblogging content was less strictly structured than self-reported survey items, individual's self-disclosure on social media can also be biased. The Self-Affirmation Theory (Steele 1988) held that individuals had fundamental needs for positive self-regard. As such, individuals can be more inclined to display their positive images more often than negative ones on social networking platforms (Li 2019), and consequently information published on the platforms can often be overly positive rather than negative (Verduyn et al. 2021) to maintain their self-worth. Therefore, it is possible that some microblog users have fabricated their posts to downplay their confusion about cultural differences. Second, one notable limitation of this study is the potential for inaccuracies in gender information provided by users, as they may deliberately misrepresent their gender or select categories that do not align with their true identity. This discrepancy can significantly impact the accuracy of the gender-based analysis, leading to potential biases in the results. Similarly, the absence of age information for both creators and users further limits the study's comprehensiveness. Age can influence both the content created and the reception of that content, potentially interacting with gender in ways not captured by the current analysis. Future research should incorporate age demographics alongside gender to provide a more nuanced understanding of how these factors interact and affect content creation and user engagement. Third, the microblogging data used in this study only contained data from Sina Weibo (Chinese X [formerly Twitter]). The findings may be mitigated by involving data from other microblogging platforms. Last, the sample of this study only included Chinese microblog users, and the findings thus might not be able to be generalized to population of other cultures. It would be interesting for future studies to investigate this topic using a larger dataset that includes more culturally diverse samples.

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Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. Access to social media data is restricted due to privacy concerns and data protection regulations.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Appendix A

Example posts of corresponding codes in the codebook.

Categories	Codes	Original Posts	English Translation
Intercultural attitudes	Curiosity and discovery	“一早起床，开启了两天的中西文化差异课。听赵老师从中西方的历史发展过程入手，了解文化差异的构成和精神信仰的不同点。高考时选修的历史，完全都是为了考试，似乎也没有记住什么。现在抛开考场，反而可以更开阔的吸收和融汇。”	“Got up super early for a two-day course on Chinese vs. Western cultures. Mr. Zhao’s lectures are seriously eye-opening, diving into how history shapes cultural differences and beliefs. College history was all about exams and I barely remember anything. Now, I’m learning for the love of it and soaking up so much more.”
	Respect	“#如何看待中外街舞编舞师的差异化# 文化差异决定吧，国外编舞师感觉更注重音乐本身，节奏，国内编舞师更注重故事性，让音乐和故事结合，各有各的优点”	“#ChineseVsForeignHipHopChoreography# The differences are all about culture! Foreign choreographers focus more on the music and rhythm, while domestic ones emphasize storytelling and blending music with narrative. Both approaches have their own strengths.”
	Openness	“我不否认东西方文化差异挺大的”	“I won’t deny that there are big cultural differences between East and West.”
	Negative cultural orientation	“我们五千年的文化底蕴，外国人懂个屁！我都替他们遗憾”	“Five thousand years of cultural heritage, and foreigners don’t get it at all! I feel sorry for them.”
	Low tolerance for differences	“我真有点搞不懂，你在中国，你不说中国话，一直说你们国家的语言，你觉得我会搭理你吗？”	“Seriously, you’re in China, don’t speak Chinese, and just keep talking in your own language. Do you really think I’m going to engage with you?”
Culture—‘Big C’	History	“好像逐渐明白为什么那么多人崇尚甚至有点倾慕外国的文化了，听了一点点关于古罗马的历史，觉得相较起我们的历史，那就像入门的小学课程和博士的课程一样，实在是太简单了，所以能看得懂，所以容易有共鸣”	“Seems like I’m starting to get why so many people are into foreign cultures. After learning a bit about ancient Rome’s history, it feels like comparing elementary school to a PhD program. It’s so straightforward, and I can totally get into it and relate.”
	Systems	“和我们的中小学教育体系相比，很多国家都不行啊”	“Honestly, a lot of education systems in other countries don’t even come close to matching ours. Ours is way better.”
	Festivals	“春节是中国最重要的传统节日，就好像我们看老外过圣诞节一样，现在很多外国朋友也会过这个节日，而且他们也会买点年糕糖果什么的，文化交流真的全球化了。”	“Chinese New Year is like Christmas for us—super important and widely celebrated. Now, lots of my foreign friends are getting into it too! They’re picking up rice cakes and candy, and it’s awesome to see how global cultural exchange is these days.”
	Art	“就是说百年孤独看了快一半..人物关系复杂得堪比红楼梦，有一些小感悟，算是蛮喜欢这本书的”	“Just finished half of One Hundred Years of Solitude—the character relationships are as tangled as A Dream of Red Mansions! Got a lot of thoughts brewing. Really into this book so far.”
	Food	“我看美剧里面只要碰到节日或者酒会，都会端出来一只硕大无比色泽诱人的火鸡，火鸡可食用的肉比我们餐桌上的各种鸡都多，而且看起来很好吃”	“Noticed that in American TV shows, every time there’s a holiday or a party, there’s always a big, shiny roasted turkey! It’s packed with way more meat than any chicken we usually have, and it looks insanely delicious.”
	Appearance	“这些西方人为什么都长的这么壮啊 太吓人了 又高又壮是吃的不一样吗？”	“Why are Westerners so strong? It’s kinda intimidating. They’re tall and built! Do they eat differently or something?”

Categories	Codes	Original Posts	English Translation
Culture—'small c'	Behavioral patterns	"咖啡馆座位旁边各坐着一对金发西方人，其他都是日本人。两对西方人说话都好大声，二郎腿，身体几乎斜躺着在座位上，边说话边互相打着手势，不时发出哈哈哈哈的大笑声。完全目无旁人。旁边日本人声音都很小，坐姿小心。我想写东西，所以真希望金发们能说话小声点，但我知道他们正在享受他们的放松时刻"	"Just had a café experience where the two pairs of blond Westerners next to me were super loud—chatting, laughing, and totally laid back. Meanwhile, the Japanese folks around were all sitting quietly and upright. I'm here trying to write and wish the blondes would tone it down a bit, but hey, I get that they're just enjoying their time."
	Thinking patterns	"中国人强调整体思维，西方人强调分析思维。用通俗的话说，就是中国人容易看到一片森林，西方人容易看到一棵棵的树。中国人更容易看到整体、看到全局，看到所有的关联性和变化性。西方人则更容易看到每棵树的独特个性、与众不同的特点，甚至可以看到它的排他性。实际上，它们都是人们为了适应自己的生存环境而创造出来的最有意义和价值的文化，所以它们没有对错之分，也没有高下之分。"	"Chinese thinking tends to be more holistic—like seeing the whole forest—while Western thinking is more analytical, focusing on individual trees. So, Chinese folks might notice the big picture and how everything connects, while Westerners spot unique traits and details of each tree. Both perspectives are super valuable and shaped by their environments, so neither is better or worse, just different ways of understanding the world."
	Values and beliefs	"#中西文化差异#问小爱 如何找到男朋友 小爱说 成为更好的自己就能遇到更好的他问 Being 如何找到男朋友 Bing 说 be yourself and flirt 和 AI 的聊天还是有点愉快"	"#CultureClash Alert# I asked Mi AI (Xiaomi's AI) how to find a boyfriend, and it said, 'Be a better person, and you'll attract a better match.' But when I asked Bing (Microsoft's AI) the same thing, it said, 'Just be yourself and flirt!' It was a fun chat with the AI!"
	Customs	"连续看到三个诗人叫 John 外国人到底为啥这么喜欢重名?"	"Just noticed that I've come across three poets named John. Why do so many foreigners love that name?"
	Language	"今天雇主面试，感觉真的中外文化差异很大，以至于自己不敢说话，怕别人曲解自己的意思，又怕人家听不懂！所以学好一门语言也要了解更多别人的文化呀"	"Today's interview really highlighted the differences between Chinese and foreign cultures for me. I was hesitant to speak up because I was worried about being misunderstood! It's clear that learning a language goes hand in hand with understanding different cultures."
	Everyday living	"外国人怎么那么爱吃冰的，他们真的不喝热水吗"	"Why are foreigners so obsessed with ice? Do they really never drink warm water?"
	Relations	"东西方 dating 文化差异: 东方，我们先确定关系，再做该做的事，不合就分 西方，我们先做该做的事，再看要不要确定关系，中间随时可以换人"	"Dating differences between East and West: In the East, we usually define the relationship first, then see how it goes, and break up if it doesn't work out. In the West, it's more about dating first and figuring out the relationship status later—you can always change your mind before making it official."
	Personal traits	"西方人有一个共同的特点：傲慢"	"One thing I've noticed about Westerners is that they often come off as pretty arrogant."
Culture—NS/NA	Not specified	"我喜欢外国的文化"	"I like foreign cultures."
	Not applicable	"怎么那么多外国人啊我晕"	"Why are there so many foreigners OMG."

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Face Attack Online: Unpacking Conflicts in Multimodal Group Chats

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Abstract: This study focuses on analyzing face attacks in the conflict discourse of cross-linguistic online chats on the instant message application *WeChat* among a group of international students at a prestigious university in China. Drawing on the previous impoliteness theory of Leech and Culpeper, this article selectively combines these two theories and proposes that in face-attack studies, especially with respect to online discourses, impolite multimodal discourse should be considered and subsumed in the theoretical framework. It is found that a wide array of face attacks in conflict discourse manifest themselves both in verbal discourse as well as in multimodal counterparts. The present study might shed light on online impoliteness research that is beyond monolingual and single-mode contexts.

Keywords: impoliteness; face attack; Internet communication; conflict discourse; multimodality

1. Introduction

Goffman (1967) first proposes the definition of "face" in sociology, which later has been one of the main themes studied in pragmatics. Built on this notion, Brown and Levinson (1987) demarcate positive face and negative face, the former being the need for solidarity and the latter being the need for independence, as summarized by Yule (1996). The delineation of the face is closely bound up with politeness and impoliteness, the latter of which will spawn face attacks. Culpeper et al. (2003) define impoliteness as "the use of communicative strategies designed to attack face and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony". Culpeper (2005) further offers an understanding of impoliteness as in the situation when the speaker conducts face attack behavior and/or the hearer feels the face attack. Therefore, following this thread of understanding, impoliteness will lead to face attacks and then conflict between the speaker and the hearer.

Conflict related to face attacks and face has been studied by a multitude of researchers (see Ran and Yang 2011; Ran 2010a, 2010b; Ran and Zhao 2018; Zhao and Ran 2019). For example, Zhao and Ran (2019) suggest the role of *qingmian* threats in the interpersonal conflict in the culture-specific context of China and stress the understanding of moral order as the mediator between social practice and the evaluation of impoliteness. Also, their paper reveals the influence of face not only on the targeting person but also on the relationship of the two involved, or in the Chinese context, *qingmian* (literal meaning: affection-based face). This constructive exploration also confirms the cultural factor in the feeling of offense on the side of the recipients and the relationship between the interlocutors. Just as Brown (2017) summarizes, there is a wide range of work on politeness and impoliteness from different academic disciplines, methods, and theories. Still, she also poses the concern that naturally occurring languages "are hard to capture on video and have scarcely been studied" (p. 397). In the meantime, multimodality has long been incorporated and recognized within pragmatic studies (see, for example, Benson 2017; Yus 2019). Nevertheless, the impoliteness of online multimodal languages is underexplored. Therefore, the

main purpose of the present study is to discover the impoliteness and face attacks that international students in this prestigious Chinese university deploy during the negotiation process of conflict in their cross-linguistic online group chats, thereby contributing to studies of both conflict and impoliteness in naturally occurring interactions online instead of acted-out ones. This research pays specific attention to the group face attacks, that is, a constantly construed and situated process of impoliteness by their multimodal resources and verbal resources.

This online group is comprised of international students who live in the same residential hall, including both males and females. By investigating the impoliteness and face attacks by the multi-party group chat, this study aims to contribute insights to the field of impoliteness studies in contemporary communication, especially involving the advent of digital media and phone applications that enable messages encompassing not only texts but also emojis as well as other multimodal forms of communications.

The overall structure of this study takes the form of six parts. Section 1 gives a brief review of the main topic and the contextualization of the data. Section 2 identifies the main theory of impoliteness and face attack/conflict, which is followed by Section 3 the methodology part. Subsequently, Section 4 presents the data analysis and results. The last two sections deal with the discussion and conclusion, where major findings and limitations will be offered.

2. Face Attack and Impoliteness

As early as 1967, Goffman demarcates facework and aggressive facework. In his distinction, facework is unmarked and involves people's actions to prompt the smooth flow of the interaction, whereas aggressive facework is realized at the expense of others' face loss. Face attacks, regarded as marked and unusual, receive insufficient attention in Brown and Levinson (1987). Tracy and Tracy (1998) argue that face attacks are not the equivalent of a lack of politeness. Further, they propose that face attacks, both spontaneous and strategic, should be seen as social judgments that are predicated on layered yet loosely connected contexts. This stance aligns with an array of other studies (cf. Locher 2011; Han 2021) under the umbrella of situated impoliteness.

Face attacks and impoliteness are happening among conscious and socialized people, including the speaker, the addressee, and the co-presents. Leech (2014) deploys a notion, o*ther* (O), as a more inclusive concept that encompasses the addressees as well as the co-presents. In this study, the object will also be the other (O), as information/message is viewed by all members in the same group chat. In other words, it is not confined to the direct interlocutor but also the rest of the group members.

There is a body of literature oriented towards impoliteness. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1987) super-strategies for dealing with face-threatening acts (FTA), Culpeper (1996) proposes five strategies of impoliteness, which are as follows: (1) bald-on-record impoliteness; (2) positive impoliteness; (3) negative impoliteness; (4) sarcasm or mock politeness, and (5) withhold politeness (p. 356). Built on these five strategies, Leech (2014) subscribes to the general idea of this anatomy, but he maintains that sarcasm should be excluded, and the fifth point, *withhold politeness*, can be understood as under-politeness instead of impoliteness. He further puts forward the general strategy of impoliteness as opposed to that of politeness: "In pursuing the goal of impoliteness, S will express/imply evaluative meanings that are favorable to S and unfavorable to O" (p. 221). Based on this general strategy, he points out ten situations of violation of maxims corresponding to those of politeness; they are, respectively: (1) violation of the generosity maxim, (2) violation of the tact maxim, (3) violation of the approbation maxim, (4) violation of the modesty maxim, (5) violation of the obligation to O, (6) violation of the obligation to S, (7) violation of the agreement, (8) violation of opinion reticence, (9) violation of sympathy, and (10) violation of feeling reticence.

Moreover, Culpeper (2011) notes the scalar characteristics of impoliteness (p. 111) while Leech (2014) notices that less attention has been paid to impoliteness in compari-

son with that to politeness due to the characteristics of markedness of the former (p. 219). However, by noticing that the opposite of politeness is not necessarily impoliteness, Leech (2014) proposes that it can be non-politeness and others. He holds that impoliteness is only part of face attacks; the latter also includes rudeness, sarcasm/conversational irony, etc. According to Leech, sarcasm is "superficially interpretable as polite but is more indirectly or deeply interpreted as face attack as impolite" (ibid., p. 232). The summary of the theoretical framework can be seen in Figure 1.

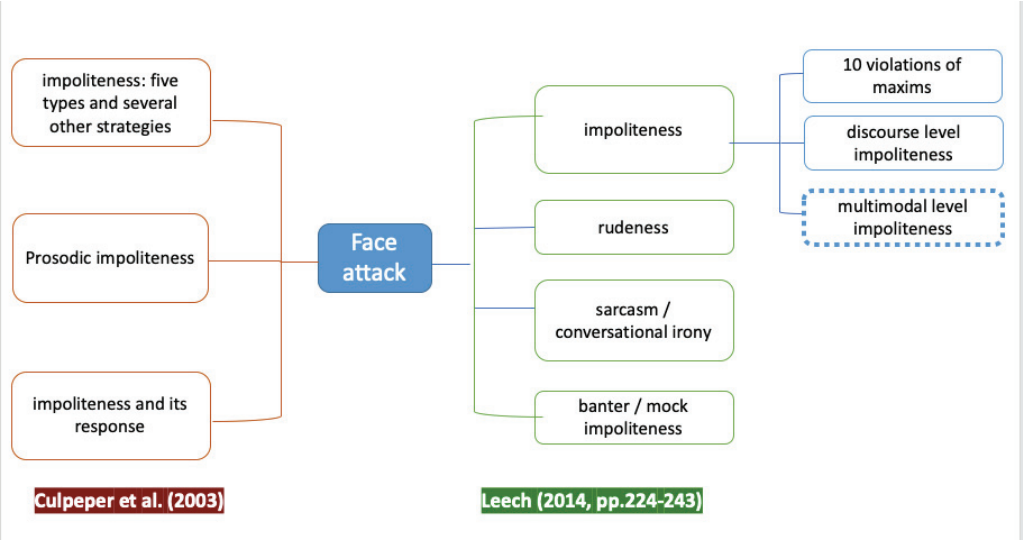


Figure 1. Summary of frameworks in Culpeper et al. (2003) and Leech (2014).

In their seminal paper *Impoliteness revisited: With special reference to dynamic and prosodic aspects*, Culpeper et al. (2003) notice that there are also offensive and defensive responses to the impoliteness and the prosodic features of offense. However, in the context of online communication, where instant messages in written forms are dominant, the prosodic analysis will be ignored in this study due to its infeasibility.

Brown (2017) notes that extant studies have paid attention to cross-cultural (im)politeness studies. Nevertheless, few studies notice the cross-linguistic parameters. This article explores strategies of impoliteness and response that are deployed in a multimodal and cross-linguistic online conflict situation. This study attempts to address face attacks by means of impoliteness strategies and the necessity of the role of multimodal impoliteness.

Based on the previous research gap, this study sets out to answer the following two research questions:

1. What are the strategies group members employ to engage in face attack during conflictual situations online?
2. What are the features of multimodal and cross-linguistic face attacks in a group chat online?

3. Methodology

In their foundational work on thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) differentiate between three concepts: data corpus, dataset, and data extract. The term "data corpus" refers to the entirety of available data that can be gathered, while "dataset" pertains to the subset of data currently under analysis. In contrast, "data extract" signifies the specific portions of data utilized for theme analysis. *WeChat*[1] is the most frequently used mobile application in China, from which the data corpus of the present study is formed. The dataset consists of messages from the online *WeChat* group that took place in April 2023, involving more than 25 students from more than 10 countries with the inclusion of both females and males. All of them have the capability of speaking and understanding Chinese and English,

though differing in aptitude and competence (therefore, there are Chinese vocabulary errors in some utterances). Students at that university live in the students' residential halls, which are normally single-gendered for male students or female students. The one for this group of students is different in that cross-gendered students live on different floors in the same building. There are dryers and washing machines on every floor and a fridge and kitchen in the building. Due to ethical concerns, all the students' names and aliases on *WeChat* will be anonymized and represented alphabetically (from A to Z, AA to ZZ). As it is a cross-linguistic dispute, the whole utterance will be translated into English by the author, but the language variety will be kept in the transcription. One author of this paper, as an international student, is a member of this chatting group and friends with several other hall residents, which enables the collection of this online data and the contextual information for the sake of the situatedness of the analysis. The focus of the conflict centers on whether students of one gender can go and use the washing and drying facilities on the floors of another gender. At the outset, A, a female student, set out to complain about an unusual event happening to her in English with abbreviations and slang. She lost half of her socks, and her laundry was wet even after the drying process, so she suspected that someone, notably one of the male students, had touched her laundry. B, as a male leader student of the floor[2], tries to comfort her and justify the reason for the wet clothes. A kept complaining and it attracted other group chat members to join the conflict talk. Later, the conflict topic extended to access to other public areas, such as the kitchen and study rooms, and even led to separate online chat groups within this community.

The reason why these key examples are selected from over 120 turns of online messages[3] to examine impoliteness and face attacks is that these extracts are chunks of messages that reflect the semantic flow of the conflict revolving around the usage of the facilities in the university residential hall. It is within these critical and intricate details that the conflict unfolds and develops.

Thematic analysis, defined as "a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun and Clarke 2006), will be employed for data analysis. This approach can immensely contribute to the themed analysis of the current dataset. Meanwhile, the study will also take into account both co-textual and contextual factors to ensure a thorough understanding of the recurrence of the themes, specifically face attack and conflict. Just as noted in the previous section, it embraces the general assumption in impoliteness studies as "situated impoliteness" (Locher 2011; Han 2021) so as to sensitize readers to the particular contexts of face-attack events, facilitating a deeper understanding of such occurrences.

4. Findings

Students employ various strategies in conducting and responding to face attacks in online group chats, which encompasses impoliteness by the violation of maxims and their response, discourse-level impoliteness, sarcasm, banter, and multimodal impoliteness. Additionally, it is found that these categories are not used exclusively; instead, speakers employ them in a flexible manner.

(1) Face attack by the violation of maxims

Various strategies have been identified, including violations of the obligation to O, violations of the maxim of approbation, violations of the maxim of generosity, and violations of the maxim of agreement. The following examples illustrate these points. In *Example 1*, A started the dialogue in the group chat in a very offensive way.

Example 1

1. [4]A: Can we just all agree to like send a text to the gc if the laundry is done (*because waiting two mins for the other person to take out their laundry is so hard*) bc like pls don't just throw other ppls shit into anywhere you please because i'm missing half my socks and id totally appreciate it if y'all started being the tiniest considerate😠
2. B: 是还没烘干完毕还是烘干完毕之后还是湿的？ [Is it still wet before or after drying?][5]

3. A: idk man but my clothes were sopping wet which is def unusual!
4. B: 你离开的时候确保你启动了吗？ [Are you sure you have turned it on when you leave?]
5. 因为烘干的过程中 门是打不开的 [Because the door cannot be opened during the drying process.]
6. 还有一种可能就是衣服太多了 也会出现 烘不干的情况 [Another possibility is that if there are too many clothes, it will not dry properly.]
7. A: 可以打开的呢 [It can be opened.]
8. 但是衣服量跟以前是一样的哦 [But the amount of clothes is the same as before.]

In this part of the dispute, the main interlocutors are A and B. The topic of discussion changed from the suspect of others moving the clothes to the possibility of opening the door of the dryer while it was working. In line 1, A was requesting other students not to move her laundry after it was done and instead, they should send a message to the group chat so as to get her notified. This utterance led to the face attack by violating the obligation to O (Other). The demand made by A would cause extra responsibility to the other members of the group chat. At the same time, she also violated the maxim of approbation by asking for O's being the tiniest considerate. In lines 4–8, students A and B both violated the maxims of approbation and agreement. First, they didn't reach an agreed conclusion on whether the dryer could be opened or not while it was working. While A insisted that she had successfully opened the dryer door, B held that it was impossible to open it. And A defied the statement that the laundry was wet as there were too many clothes inside, which is also an act of violating the agreement maxim.

Example 2

15. B: 过程中是打不开的 [It cannot be opened during the drying process]
16. A: 不试怎么能知道啊 [How will you know if you don't try?]
17. B: 所以你开过吗? [So did you open the dryer door during the drying process?]
18. 如果是的话 那很危险 [If yes, it is dangerous]
19. 得要通知前台来维修 [You have to notify the front desk for maintenance]

In the second example, A and B continued the dispute of whether the dryer could be opened during its operation. In line 15, a confirmative overtone was delivered as B used an assertive statement in telling A that it is a fact that the dryer cannot be opened at that specific time. As a response, A forcefully questioned this "fact" proposed by B, which violates the maxim of agreement. In line 18, there was a violation of the maxims of generosity and tact as B was warning of a possible threat to A, that it might be dangerous for her if she had opened the dryer while it was working. Since keeping it shut is normal for the working dryer, B was implying that A did something inappropriate in interrupting the operation of the machine. Line 19 further violates the maxim of obligation to O as A might not be cognizant that she had to get someone else noticed. And now she was obligated to do that.

Example 3

39. D: 一般就是机器实际上没启动成功，但是后台系统以为启动成功了 [Generally, the machine does not start successfully, but the background system thinks that the start is successful.]
40. A: 确实哦！难道这个就是个乱扔别人的衣服的理由么？
[Indeed! Is this an excuse to throw other people's clothes?]
41. D: 还有人乱扔别人衣服的吗 [Is there anyone who throws other people's clothes?]
42. 我一般都是放旁边篮子 [I usually put it in the basket nearby.]

The violations of maxims can be sequential and continual. In this example, D first tried to claim that it was the system error that caused the wet laundry but A didn't buy it. Here, A first agreed with B with the succinct adverb "indeed" in line 40; however, she then used a much longer rhetorical question that presupposed that even if the machine didn't work, *Others* could not throw away clothes that didn't belong to them, thereby violating

the maxim of approbation. In the same manner, D counter-questioned A and doubted the possibility of *Others*' discarding clothes haphazardly. Being an apparent violation of the maxim of agreement, the doubt and the disclaimer in lines 41 and 42 tried to persuade others that he could not be blamed. These two lines attacked A's face in challenging the veracity of her question. Involving several rounds of maxim violation, this extract creates sequential face attacks.

(2) Discourse-level impoliteness

Leech (2014) further elaborates on impoliteness on a higher level of structure, that is, impoliteness in turn-talking, floor-holding, and other aspects of discourse management.

Example 4

25. B: 我刚刚和前台问了问 [I just asked the front desk]
26. 过程中是打不开的 [The door of the dryer cannot be opened during the process.]
27. 只有结束和还没开启之前 [It can be opened only before it is working or finishes its working]
28. A: 6 [bravo]
29. B: 如果你的烘干机是可以打开的 [If the door of the dryer can be opened,]
30. A: 那我怎么打开的呢 [How did I open it?]
31. B: 那你可以问看看 [Then you should ask someone]
32. 洗衣机应该是大家都是通用的 只能让大家尽可能不要混着用 [The washing machine should be communal. All we need to do is try not to use the machines on other floors.]

From lines 29 to 31 in Example 4, B tried to persuade A that it was impossible to open the dryer when it was working, and then A interrupted B by saying line 30 before B finished his remark. Here, the interruption of A was impolite on the discourse level and at the same time challenged the statement of B, therefore also violating the maxim of agreement.

Example 5

9. B: 你试过吗？ [Have you tried (opening it)?]
10. 我们是弄不开的 [***We*** are unable to do that.]

B tried to challenge A's assumption that someone opened the dryer in Example 5. In line 10, by deploying the indexical "我们 (we)", B formed a virtual/imagined community excluding A in endorsing that the door of the dryer will be automatically locked. In so doing, he challenged A indirectly by indicating that all of the rest of the students were unable to open the dryer while it was in operation. This indexical also reinforces the violation of the agreement maxim. This sequential and reciprocal impoliteness caused face attacks on both parties. The exclusion brought about by the indexical expression "we" has to be understood from the discourse level, automatically implicating other group members.

Example 6

104. Z: 3 different groupchats for one building?
105. :#
106. Ope
107. B: 这个群主要是让同学们上报设备问题 [This group is mainly for students to report facility issues.
108. 如果我们在这里吹太多水 领班们会看不到消息 [If we chat too much here, the leaders won't see the messages.]
109. V:Omg guys…like seriously?
110. T:guys this isn't a war thing😭

As the conflict intensified, the focus of this dispute shifted from the separate use of facilities to creating new online chat groups. In the previous messages before Example 6, students proposed the creation of three separate WeChat groups so they could have privacy among their peers of the same gender. Z sent three consecutive messages, which included a question, an emoticon, and an internet slang term expressing embarrassment.

These messages expressed Z's resentment of the situation and conflictual development and violated the maxim of agreement and approbation. B took the floor to explain why students shouldn't communicate too much in this group, stating, "The leaders won't see the messages" regarding the facility issue. He began by using the upscaled phrase "同学们" (fellow students) and then referred to "我们" (we) in contrast to "领班们" (leaders) to clarify the purpose of this group chat and allow for the formation of the new groups. B's ostensibly objective explanation was also a violation of the maxim of approbation, as students who engaged in excessive talk (including this one) would feel ashamed to have interrupted "the leaders" in reading messages. Then, V and T attempted to defuse the situation in lines 109 and 110 by reminding the students this should not have been a war-like conflict. These two phrases, as violations of the maxim of agreement, both attacked the faces of B and the students who sent the QR code with the intention of creating "this war thing" and taking it "seriously". This example involved discourse-level impoliteness both in terms of floor-taking and also the interpretation of messages based on the previous discourse.

(3) Impoliteness and its response

According to Culpeper et al. (2003), in response to an offensive utterance, there are two possibilities of reply, offensive and defensive ones. In response to A's offense in line 1, B first defended himself as the student leader of the floor who had the responsibility of attending to and even working out problems regarding the facilities proposed by students. In Example 4, B started to take offensive stances instead of mere defensive ones. For instance, B used line 31 to be offensive before using line 32 to be defensive. B used the directive to advise A to ask for the reason why she could open the door of the dryer under conditions that were normally impossible with the implicature that A was either lying or irrational. B apparently knew "someone" didn't exist, and as a student leader of the floor, he seemed to try to end the whole argument by orienting towards the sharedness of the machines.

Example 7

69. H: Men shouldn't be around these areas
70. B: So, what's the point of sending that pic
71. H: The sign is clear
72. B: Yeah
73. so, it's clear

…

87. H: I should be able to walk freely to the shower room knowing that I won't bump into a man in the corridor
88. If other girls don't care about this issue, I care
89. The sign is clear
90. Z: What about study rooms and kitchens then?
91. B: Same

In Example 7, students H, B, and Z were negotiating whether male students could be present in the public areas of the floors of females. H expressed that men should not be around the shower room, in line 69. After B checked the purpose of sending a sign pertaining to the denial of entry of males, H's response had the implicature that no further confirmation was expected as people can read from the sign unless the person was silly or illiterate. This response violates the maxim of sympathy in that H refused to answer directly H's query but implied that the sign was clear enough to convey the message. Then, after Z asked about the demarcation of the study room and kitchen, B resentfully said these two areas should also be divided, which had the implicature that girls would suffer more than men if they insisted on their thoughts, which can be seen as a violation of approbation and also of generosity, as B and Z were threatening the female students implicitly. As such, H attacked B's face with line 71, while B offended back with the last line of the extract.

What is interesting in these responses is the repetition of the information "the sign is clear" in lines 71, 73, and 89. To H, this phrase suggests that no additional information

is necessary, as the sign conveys everything explicitly. As an objective and regulatory statement concerning the use of floor space, "the sign is clear" serves to prohibit male students from entering the female floor and should be regarded as the sole response to any inquiries about male access to that area.

(4) Sarcasm and banter

Sarcasm, conversational irony, banter, or mock impoliteness are also traceable in these online dialogues.

Example 8

60. B: 以后只要是男访客也不建议上楼了 [In the future, any male visitor is not recommended to go upstairs.]
61. K: 男师傅也不可以去修理你们的房间了 [The male mechanic is no longer able to fix the stuff in your room.]
62. B: 哈哈哈哈哈 [hahaha hahaha]
63. L: Points have been made.
64. A: At least they won't have gone through my laundry!

In the early stages of the focal conflict, A asked the favor of all her hall mates to "be the tiniest considerate" in line 1. This phrase was an understatement that can trigger conversational irony. Obviously, she implicated and charged that Os aren't even considerate to the least extent. Additionally, A also employed conversational irony in the italicized part, as this is a ostensible politeness expression, as she is being considerate to realize that waiting for two minutes is so hard; however, delving deeper, it is not hard to find that she was being very ironic to imply that other students were too impatient to notify the owner of the done laundry and take them out without the permission of the latter.

As the conflict intensified, the center of the group chat shifted from the automatic lock of the dryer to the issue of whether the opposite gender could be present on the floor. A proposed that this cannot be the case (in line 33) to ensure that laundry facilities on the female floor can only be used by themselves, whereby she received both proponents as well as opponents. In *Example 8*, male students B and K were mocking those female students who defied men's sharing machines with them by violating the maxim of generosity as they threatened their female counterparts by reminding them that there would be no mechanics able to help fix and that there would be no registered male visitors anymore. In the context of this university, mechanics are mostly male. After B's mention of male visitors, K specified a subgroup of this group of people, namely "男师傅 (male mechanics)". B and K were collaboratively making fun of the female students by pointing out that the broken facilities in their room would be left unattended if male visitors were banned on the female floor. These two turns of talk are sarcasm to the female students involved in this group chat string. Ensuing, the interjective "hahaha hahaha" of B is indicative of the ridicule. It is banter or mock impoliteness. L, as a male who opposed A's proposal, plainly presented his opinion on the whole conflict in line 63, violating the maxim of agreement. Faced with three face attackers, student A chose the banter impoliteness by indicating it was one of the male students here in this group who touched and moved her laundry and the male mechanics "at least" would only perform their duties and would not have something to do with her laundry.

(5) Multimodal impoliteness

This group chat dataset also features multimodal aspects of online impoliteness. These forms of face attacks are typical of online chat, including visual images, voices, emojis, and written forms. These developments of multimodal communication enable a faster speed and fuller range of information exchange and, at the same time, enrich forms of impoliteness. The following two examples will illustrate the face attack delivered by visual images.

Example 9

55. H:

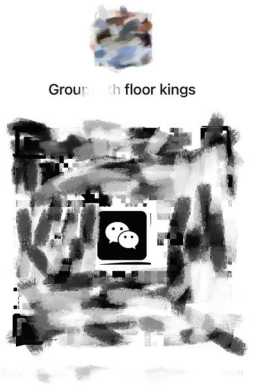
56. H:

(…)

With the argument going further, more students in the group got involved in the discussion/dispute and expressed their opinions. Here in this extract, student H first sent a picture message to the group and then the exact same one but edited with a highlighted mark in red by scribbling a rectangular shape surrounding "男士止步No males on this floor". This multimodal configuration, encompassing the picture, the scribbling, and the vibrant color used in the editing of the picture, showcased the emphasized violation of the obligation to O. In other words, the female student who highlighted the sign attempted to police their male counterparts by means of official resources in an exaggerated and aggravated way. In the meantime, the content of the second picture was the same as the first one, both indicating females only on that floor. However, with the scribble, H breaches the maxim of tact by suggesting that only someone inattentive would disregard the sign. Her action was "beneficial" in that she annotated the important information to ensure that those who overlooked it might take notice. All the male students who had ignored this sign would feel embarrassed and be notified that it was regulated that they were not allowed on the female students' floor, let alone use dryers and washing machines. The first picture showing "no males on this floor", mentioned in example 9, is a visual face attack on those male students who entered that floor, whereas the edited one with the red mark is an even more aggravated face attack on the same target group.

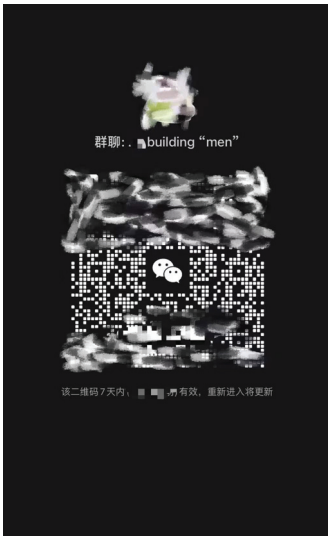
Example 10

96. AA:



[WeChat QR code 1 with the group name "* floor kings"]

97. B: Should build another group just for men?
98. Z: this is floor-ist. I demand entry as well.
99. B:



[WeChat group QR code 2 with the group name群聊 * building "men"(group chat * building "men")]

100. Feel free to join
101. BB: Good
102. Now I can leave this one
103. CC:

[WeChat group QR code 3 with group name *楼 for the girls, which means * building for the girls]

In this example, the conflict among students had escalated, illustrating the underlying tensions as they strived to establish their own exclusive online communities instead of maintaining a unified group (as indicated by line 102). Initially, AA initiated the fragmentation by sending a QR code to invite male students from his floor to join a group. Subsequently, B expanded this initiative by distributing a similar QR code to invite all male students in the building. In response to these, CC created a separate group for female students by sharing a dedicated QR code. These actions, accomplished through the pictures that were sent in the group chat, not only facilitate the formation of distinct groups but also represent a multimodal face attack, clearly delineating the division between male and female students. The establishment of separate groups signifies that if male students have their own space, then female students are entitled to their own as well. The move of CC is a sharp confrontation, serving to assert strength and "territorial claims" of female students within the social dynamics of this online community of the whole building.

In addition to pictures, there are also face-attacking emojis used in this conflictual discourse. In lines 1, 20, 33, and 46, different emojis were used, but they all carried a message that the speaker was impatient and unhappy about the existing request. These emojis often support and even reinforce the co-texts. For instance, at the end of line 1, student A employed the emoji "😤" to show speechlessness in a playful way to resonate with and thus aggravate the impoliteness of her text message before this emoji.

5. Discussion

This whole stretch of dispute is replete with face-attacking utterances, violating divergent maxims of politeness, demonstrating mock and sarcasm, and exhibiting impoliteness both in response and at the discourse level. The data showcases the general characteristics of the online language features, both in grammar and vocabulary, as well as errors and typos. This can be seen, for example, in the phrase "让后 (ranghou), in line 12, which doesn't make any sense in Chinese. It was a sign either showing a lack of proficiency or imprudence in typing the message of student C when she attempted to explain that the working condition of the dryer might influence its lock and unlock. Presumably, she intended to say "然后 (ranhou)" which means "then".

Despite the above-mentioned common features of Internet language, the impoliteness of Internet verbal language manifests itself in the following aspects, according to the data. On the one hand, for example, in line 1, there is a wide range of abbreviations and acronyms that presuppose the literacy of these phrases and the English variety in the group. Nevertheless, for people who happen to lack English Internet language fluency, this might be offensive in that the speaker was not intending to, or at least aspiring to, make himself/herself understood. On the other hand, there is an array of means of the internet language in carrying impoliteness and leading to face attack. This can be elucidated in the following three aspects:

First, cultural-specific internet language. In line 28, A said "6", which indicated "bravo" in Chinese, to manifest her sarcasm as B had asked the front desk about the working of the dryer, which was far beyond A's expectation.

Second, more than two interlocutors engage in the group face attack. Each group member has the opportunity to articulate their viewpoints both during and after each face attack. What is noteworthy is the fluidity of their ascribed identity (Blommaert 2005, pp. 205, 208). At times, they are the targets of face attacks, implicitly labeled as individuals who transgress certain norms. However, at other times, they also assert their opinions, thereby mitigating this ascribed impolite identity.

Third, face attacks in online group chats can be checkered, sporadic, and unordered. In face-to-face communication, and even in literary texts, face attacks often happen in relatively strict sequential order (for example, texts from a play analyzed in (Leech 2014). The online group chat shows a rather different picture due to the different times individuals get exposed to the message. For example, in line 70 of the data, student B violates the maxim of tact by bluntly questioning H of the meaning of sending the picture in lines 55 and 56. In line 76, O's violation of the maxim of the obligation of Others is shown in his proposal of an opposite sign needed for the male's floor in response to the message way before his utterance.

What is also noteworthy is that, in some lines, there are offenses in English to attack the faces of the recipients and responses in Chinese to fight back, or vice versa, which demonstrates the potential of cross-linguistic face attacks. In the confrontational exchange in lines 45 and 46, after student D contended that female and male students should use separate machines on their respective floors in reaction to the conflict in the group chat in Chinese, student E replied in English, stating that "all the other buildings share washing machines and it's alr(ight)". As mentioned earlier, in the Section 1 all the students are international students with varying degrees of proficiency in Chinese and English. The situation here demonstrates how multilingual individuals can engage in cross-linguistic face attacks, where they may violate maxims in one language and receive responses in another language. This phenomenon remains underexplored in impoliteness studies but intersects with language attitudes, identity, and second language acquisition research.

6. Conclusions

In this study, we examined how a group of international students at a university in China deploy divergent linguistic and multimodal resources to navigate conflicts revolving around the facilities of the same residential hall in their online chat group. By dint of analysis of these very detailed and intricate online dialogues, this article intends to reveal new aspects of face attacks in this globalized and digitalized world.

It is found that students employ a wide variety of strategies in engaging in these multi-party-involved conflictual situations; these include the violation of multiple maxims, such as the violation of approbation and agreement. Discourse-level impoliteness becomes apparent when students engage in either defensive or offensive responses to face-threatening acts. Both male and female students exhibit impoliteness through sarcasm and banter as a means of articulating their attitudes in group conflicts. Furthermore, multimodal impoliteness is discovered through the incorporation of images and emojis in the messages by the

students in the group chat. Meanwhile, at least three characteristics have been identified regarding face attacks in online group chats.

This research contributes new insights to impoliteness studies by highlighting multimodal and cross-linguistic ways of face attacks. Nevertheless, due to the complex nature of impoliteness studies in terms of diverse manifestations and situatedness in the analysis, this article sheds light on new perspectives in online face attacks, particularly within group chat settings. These perspectives warrant more scholarly investigation. Further research could also delve deeper into analyzing power dynamics in negotiation among group members and conducting sociolinguistic ethnographic studies on code-switching to gain richer insights.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A [6]

4. A: can we just all agree to like send a text to the gc if the laundry is done (because waiting two mins for the other person to take out their laundry is so hard) bc like pls don't just throw other ppls shit into anywhere you please because i'm missing half my socks and id totally appreciate it if y'all started being the tiniest considerate😤
5. B: 是还没烘干完毕还是烘干完毕之后还是湿的？ [Is it still wet before or after drying?][7]
6. A: idk man but my clothes were sopping wet which is def unusual!
7. B: 你离开的时候确保你启动了吗？ [Are you sure you have turned it on when you leave?]
8. 因为烘干的过程中 门是打不开的 [Because the door cannot be opened during the drying process]
9. 还有一种可能就是衣服太多了 也会出现 烘不干的情况 [Another possibility is that if there are too many clothes, it also will not dry properly.]
10. A: 可以打开的呢 [It can be opened.]
11. 但是衣服量跟以前是一样的哦 [But the amount of clothes is the same as before.]
12. B: 你试过吗？ [Have you tried (opening it)?]
13. 我们是弄不开的 [We are unable to do that.]
14. C: 可以试试把插头拔下来，然后再插上去 [Try unplugging it and plugging it in again.]
15. 我经常这样，让后[8]再插上去就能用了 [I often do this, let it be plugged in and then we can use it.]
16. B: 她的情况是她自己不知道启动没启动 [In her case, she didn't know whether the dryer was turned on or not.]
17. 如果还能打开 不是完毕就是还没有开启 [If it can still be opened, it is either completed or not turned on yet]
18. 过程中是打不开的 [It cannot be opened during the drying process]
19. A: 不试怎么能知道啊 [How will you know if you don't try?]
20. B: 所以你开过吗？ [So did you open the dryer door during the drying process?]
21. 如果是的话 那很危险 [If yes, it is dangerous]
22. 得要通知前台来维修 [You have to notify the front desk for maintenance.]
23. A: 自己的衣服肯定开过啊 [I definitely have opened it if the dried are my clothes.]

24. B: 不是 [Nope]
25. 我是指 过程中 [I mean during the drying process]
26. A: (reply to line 18)im the one in danger ur good!
27. (reply to line 22)我也是啊 [I mean the process too]
28. B: 我刚刚和前台问了问 [I just asked the front desk]
29. 过程中是打不开的 [The door of the dryer cannot be opened during the process.]
30. 只有结束和还没开启之前 [It can be opened only before it is working or finishes its working]
31. A: 6 [bravo]
32. B: 如果你的烘干机是可以打开的 [If the door of the dryer can be opened]
33. A: 那我怎么打开的呢 [How did I open it?]
34. B: 那你可以问看看 [Then you should ask someone.]
35. 洗衣机应该是大家都是通用的 只能让大家尽可能不要混着用 [The washing machine should be available to everyone, all we need to do is try not to use the machines on other floors]
36. A男生本应该不能上楼的，况且哪个住六楼以下的来十楼烘衣服啊 然后搁着碰别人的衣服你觉得合理吗 [Male students should not go upstairs to the female students' floor. And whoever lives below the sixth floor would come to the tenth floor to dry clothes? Do you think it is reasonable to touch other people's clothes?]
37. B说实话 女生也经常来我们的楼层洗衣服 [To be honest, girls often come to our floor to do laundry too.]
38. A那也是不对的哦！ 也没说她们是对的哦！ [That is also wrong! Didn't say they were right!]
39. B好的 那这个情况我们先记下来 之后我们试着去解决 [Okay, let's note down this first, and then we will try to solve it.]
40. D有时候确实提示烘干完成，过去发现根本没有烘干成功 [Sometimes when it indicates that the drying is complete, then you go and find the laundry is still wet.]
41. A主要是异性碰你的衣服你不觉得膈应吗？ [The main thing is that when the opposite gender touches your clothes (in the dryer), don't you feel disgusted?]
42. D一般就是机器实际上没启动成功，但是后台系统以为启动成功了 [Generally, the machine does not start successfully, but the background system thinks that the start is successful.]
43. A确实哦！难道这个就是个乱扔别人的衣服的理由么？
[Indeed! Is this an excuse to throw other people's clothes?]
44. D还有人乱扔别人衣服的吗 [Anyone else throw other people's clothes?]
45. 我一般都是放旁边篮子 [I usually put it in the side basket.]
46. E: lmao idt it's reasonable separating washing machines by gender now 😭 sometimes the men's floors will be all filled, or the women's will be all filled just when u need to wash clothes and the other is free
47. F: 10th floor dryer done, I've put in in the public basket
48. D:不过我同意男女各自使用自己楼层的洗衣/烘干机 [But I agree that men and women can use the washer/dryer on their own floor]
49. E: all the other buildings share washing machines and it's alr 🤡
50. B:+1
51. D: 因为上次在六楼烘干，打开烘干机发现一堆女性衣物还是非常震惊 [Because I was drying on the sixth floor last time, I was shocked to find a pile of women's clothes when I opened the dryer]
52. B:只能尽可能 但不能做到绝对 [We can all only do as much as possible but not absolutely]
53. 毕竟也是属于公共设备 [After all, it is also a public device]
54. 个人想法* [Personal Thoughts*]
55. G: 偶尔男女混也可以理解吧，别的楼也不分男女 [Occasionally, it is understandable that men and women are mixed, and other buildings do not distinguish between men and women.]

56. D: 我倒无所谓，就是被惊到了 [I don't care, I'm just surprised]
57. H: +1
58. 

59. 

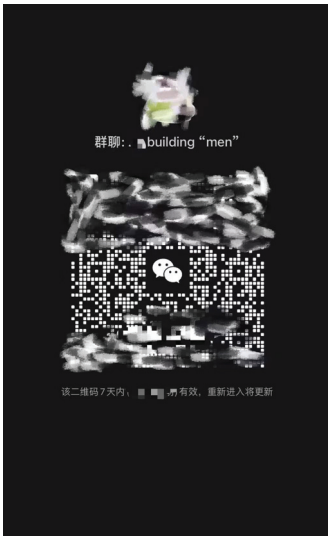
60. I: 这样我不建议女生晚上出现在男生楼层 [In this way, I don't recommend girls to appear on the boys' floor at night]
61. B: 我也这么认为 [I think so]
62. J: 别的楼因为是单人间 所以本身就无法避免这个问题 我们楼的男女楼层的分界很明晰 所以很好避免吧 不能因为别的楼层混用混洗所以我们楼层也可以吧 怎么变成了我们楼向下兼容无法避免的"低标准"了 [Because other floors are single rooms, this problem cannot be avoided. In our building, the division between male and female floors is very clear, so it is easy to avoid it. It can't be mixed with other floors, so our floor can also be used. How could it become our floor down? Compatible with unavoidable "low standards"]
63. B: 以后只要是男访客也不建议上楼了 [In the future, as long as it is a male visitor, it is not recommended to go upstairs.]
64. K:男师傅也不可以去修理你们的房间了 [The male mechanic is no longer able to fix the stuffs in your room.]
65. B: 哈哈哈哈哈 [hahahahahaha]
66. L: points have been made
67. A: at least they won't have gone through my laundry!
68. J: 这不对吧 那阿姨也可以不用打扫我们房间了 是这意思 [Isn't that right? Then the female cleaner doesn't have to clean our room. Right?]
69. B: 对 [yes]
70. K: 我并没有阻止阿姨来我的房间 当然我也没有支持男孩子去女生楼层洗衣 [I didn't stop the female cleaner from coming to my room, and of course I didn't support boys doing laundry on the girls' floor]
71. M: +1 no one goes to other floors to wash clothes if the washing machines in theirs is available 💀 limiting common resources like that will only make it harder for everyone to get their shi washed on time. Next thing you know you can only use kitchens on the girl floors Men should be doing laundry on their floor. Laundry rooms are close to female shower rooms.
72. H: Men shouldn't be around these areas
73. B: So what's the point of sending that pic
74. H: The sign is clear

75. B: Yeah
76. so it's clear
77. H: There are enough washing machines on each floor to accommodate requirements. If washing machines on a certain floor are all occupied find another one that is in a floor that matches your gender. /Men shouldn't be around our shower rooms under the pretext of using washing machines
78. N: hhh funny
79. O: 建议男生楼层也搞一个女士止步 [It is suggested that the male students' floor should also have a sign saying males only.]
80. P: I'm sorry, but there aren't. Most of the times they are all occupied, specially on weekends
81. B: 认同 [I agree]
82. I: +1
83. R: +2
84. S: Well, NGL there always a time that you won't have a dryer to use, they are all occupied, I have experienced that be4
85. A: then don't save ur clothes all for the weekend!
86. H: +1
87. A: be patient and wait for one!
88. H: I never went on a men's floor so I don't want men around on my floor either
89. A: +1!
90. H: I should be able to walk freely to the shower room knowing that I won't bump into a man in the corridor/
91. If other girls don't care about this issue, I care /
92. The sign is clear
93. Z: What about study rooms and kitchens then?
94. B: Same
95. Y: There's other things that we use on each others floors: kitchens and study rooms are also included. So now we are going to stop using them?!
96. M: 异性s arent aliens, there'll be times when people have to go to the other genders floors for one reason or the other [the other gender]
97. H: Study rooms aren't in the corridor leading to the shower room.
98. I: 所以既然这样 公共厨房的冰箱是不是也该分一分？为了不要向下兼容1-2层的食材放在2层 3和4 5和6 7和8 9和10以此兴推，那就请你们自觉拿走吧 [So if this is the case, should the refrigerators in public kitchens also be given a point? In order not to be backward compatible with the ingredients on the 1st-2nd floor, put them on the 2nd floor, 3 and 4, 5 and 6, 7 and 8, 9 and 10, so please take it away consciously.]
(some time later)
99. AA:[9]

[WeChat QR code 1 with the group name "* floor kings"][10]

…

100. B: Should build another group just for men?
101. Z: this is floor-ist. I demand entry as well.
102. B:



[WeChat group QR code 2 with the group name 群聊 * building “men” (groupchat * building “men”)]

103. Feel free to join
104. BB: Good
105. Now I can leave this one
106. CC:

[WeChat group QR code 3 with group name *楼 for the girls, which means * building for the girls]

…

107. Z: 3 different groupchats for one building?
108. :#
109. Ope

110. B: 这个群主要是让同学们上报设备问题 [This group is mainly for students to report equipment issues.
111. 如果我们在这里吹太多水 领班们会看不到消息 [If we chat too much here, the leaders won't see the messages.]
112. V: Omg guys..like seriously?
113. T: guys this isnt a war thing
114. T: its like
115. X: A battle resulting in division of territory
116. T: having a peaceful girl group where we can talk about more female oriented things
117. W: 我有个不成熟的想法 其实可以开个通知群和交流群，如果搞分化会有点点怪 [I have an immature idea: we could actually create a notification group and a discussion group. It might feel a bit strange to separate according to gender].
118. T: 可不可以不要 add oil to fire its not like that [can we not]
119. X: Bruv 加油 is literally a good thing in Chinese [add oil/come on]
120. T: NO
121. A: bruv it's english ?
122. T: its like
123. whats the proverb
124. 火上浇油 [adding fuel to the fire]
125. yee that one
126. i forgot it for a hot sec
127. heh
128. L: Isn't tomorrow Monday?

Notes

1 See survey by Statista released in 2024 https://www.statista.com/statistics/250546/leading-social-network-sites-in-china/ (accessed on 20 May 2024).

2 There is one leader student on each floor who is responsible for networking between the hall leader and students.

3 Full chat messages can be seen in the Appendix 6.

4 The utterance number corresponds to the timing of each message, as outlined in the Appendix 6.

5 All bracketed parts […] are translated by the author.

6 All the format such as errous spaces conform to the original messages.

7 All bracketed parts […] are translated by the author.

8 Here "让后 (ranghou)" is an error. The correct form in Chinese is "然后 (ranhou)".

9 All these three QR codes have been edited for ethical reasons.

10 People have to scan this QR code to join the group chat. See the *WeChat* website for more background information. https://help.wechat.com/cgi-bin/micromsg-bin/oshelpcenter?opcode=2&id=1508193qqjiv150819e7zjbm&lang=en&plat=ios&Channel=helpcenter#:~:text=(1)%20Select%20and%20enter%20a,QR%20Code%20to%20other%20users (accessed on 20 May 2024).

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Communication in the Digital Age: The Impact of Communication Skills and Cultural Restraint on the Use of Social Media Platforms in the Case of Jordan

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Abstract: The rapid proliferation of social media platforms has fundamentally transformed communication dynamics globally. This study investigates the impact of communication skills on social media usage, emphasizing the moderating role of cultural restraint within the context of Jordan. Employing a quantitative research design, data were collected from 415 young adult social media users through an online survey and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via SmartPLS 4 software. The findings suggest that individuals with strong communication skills are more effective at using social media, supporting the ideas of Self-Efficacy Theory and Social Capital Theory, which propose that better communication abilities lead to more proficient social media usage. However, this positive relationship is moderated by cultural restraint, with higher levels of cultural restraint weakening the impact of communication skills on social media engagement. These results highlight the necessity of culturally sensitive approaches when promoting social media engagement, as cultural norms and values significantly influence digital behaviors. This study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence from a non-Western context and underscores the complex interplay between individual abilities and cultural factors in shaping social media usage. Future research should explore additional moderating variables and consider longitudinal and cross-cultural studies to further elucidate these dynamics.

Keywords: social media usage; communication skills; cultural restraint; Jordan; digital communication

1. Introduction

Over the past ten years, there has been a drastic increase in the use of social media platforms in society. There is open access to social networks regardless of age and demographics (Hatamleh 2024). These tools have become essential in our everyday lives to share experiences or inform friends and relatives about a certain event, or even to follow world news (Denemark 2023). However, people's ability to use these social media platforms is normally affected greatly by their communication skills. Social media users with good communication skills present favorable communication patterns with their networks on social platforms. The participants can communicate their thoughts and ideas easily and accurately, comprehend the meanings and intentions of interlocutors, and extraordinarily focus on the context and details of verbal and non-verbal communication. For this reason, they are more familiar with relationship dynamics, including the various forms of online communication, and are capable of establishing real bonds with other people (Jurėnė and Krikščiūnienė 2020).

Additionally, such outgoing personalities help them in the promotion of their professional profiles, especially via social media sites (Wang et al. 2021). They can come up with persuasive and interesting statuses, as well as advertise themselves and share more about their career milestones and plans. Such abilities can enhance their visibility, help them forge new connections, and create new job opportunities available online (Jurėnė and Krikščiūnienė 2020).

But this is not restricted to how users employ these platforms or to how these skills may change the social media platforms' effects on users. This raises an important research question: How does an enhanced level of communication skills affect the utilization of social media? It is necessary to consider the detailed description of the factors that define the modern media context of communication and consider the application of such skills as an opportunity to expand or control the positive impact on users of such platforms. *What is the Impact of Communication Skills on the Use of Social Media Platforms?*

In light of the current global trends that are defining technology and culture across the globe, there is a need for knowledge that will help guide our interaction in these technological domains. Social media platforms, which are now widely used as major means of communication and idea-sharing, also represent and influence the various cultures involved in this process (Ramawela and Chukwuere 2020). While research highlights the importance of communication skills in determining how we use these platforms, another factor emerges as a crucial research focus. The following are examples of unsuccessful attempts to resist cultural influences of contemporary globalization: Regardless of the skills and knowledge people possess, the extent to which groups and individuals engage with dominant cultural forces can either enhance or diminish the impact of communication skills on the adoption of social media platforms (Hatamleh et al. 2023).

To be more specific, cultural restraint—as it is defined in common parlance—refers to how people and communities struggle against the existing paradigms of culture to define their roles and positions in that paradigm (Badaan and Choucair 2023). In the context of social media platforms, this translates into the critical use of these platforms, where individuals can express their views and create interaction spaces that differ from prevailing patterns (Silviani et al. 2022; Hatamleh et al. 2023).

One of the challenges that confronts humanity, now and in the past, is the degree to which small children are socialized. Without socialization, we do not become "human". This dimension is defined as the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses based on how they were raised. Relatively weak control is called "Indulgence", and relatively strong control is called "Restraint". Cultures can, therefore, be described as Indulgent or Restrained (Sun et al. 2019).

Jordan's relatively low score of 43 indicates that its culture is one of Restraint. Societies with a low score in this dimension tend to exhibit cynicism and pessimism. In contrast to Indulgent societies, Restrained societies do not put much emphasis on leisure time and control the gratification of their desires. People with this orientation perceive that their actions are, or should be, restrained by social norms and feel that indulging themselves is somewhat wrong (Aleqedat et al. 2022).

Despite Hofstede's assertion that Jordanian society is one with high cultural restraint, he applied this concept in the real world (Hatamleh et al. 2023). However, its impact in the virtual world remains ambiguous and will be key to addressing the research gap in previous studies. It appears that it will play a fundamental role in controlling the influence of social communication skills on the use of social media platforms.

Thus, an important research question arises: What is the role of cultural restraint as a moderating variable between communication skills and the use of social media platforms? Exploring this question requires an in-depth analysis of how cultural restraint can influence the relationship between how individuals use their communication skills and interact with these platforms. By examining these dynamics, we can gain a better understanding of how cultural and social identities are shaped in the digital age and how

individuals can use communication skills and cultural restraint to influence the course of their digital interactions.

In conclusion, understanding the complex interplay between communication skills and cultural restraint in the context of social media use is essential for grasping how these platforms shape and are shaped by the diverse cultures interacting within them. This understanding can help individuals and organizations navigate the digital landscape more effectively, leveraging these insights to foster more meaningful and impactful interactions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Media in Jordan: An Overview and Usage Statistics

Social media has profoundly shaped Jordanian society, influencing communication, politics, culture, and even everyday interactions. As of early 2023, around 6.61 million people in Jordan actively use social media, representing 58.4% of the population (DataReportal 2023). This widespread adoption underscores the country's increasing digital engagement and connectivity, with platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok playing a central role.

Facebook's ad reach alone covered 43.3% of Jordan's population in January 2023, reflecting its dominance, particularly among users aged 13 and above (DataReportal 2023). Similarly, YouTube has become a significant platform, matching Facebook's reach with 6.61 million users, which is about 58.4% of the population. Instagram and TikTok, although slightly less pervasive, still demonstrate strong engagement. Instagram's 2.85 million users account for 25.2% of the population, while TikTok has reached 4.43 million users, or 44.5% of the internet user base, specifically among those aged 18 and above (DataReportal 2023).

These statistics indicate more than just numbers; they highlight the pervasive role of social media in Jordanian life. The high engagement levels suggest that social media platforms are not only popular but are also essential tools for communication, content consumption, and information dissemination. The significant reach of platforms like Facebook and YouTube points to their influence over public opinion and their potential as powerful channels for marketing and political campaigns. Moreover, the data indicate a trend towards younger demographics becoming increasingly active online, which could have far-reaching implications for the future of digital media consumption and engagement in Jordan.

In summary, the widespread use of social media in Jordan reflects broader global trends of digitalization, while also presenting unique insights into how these platforms are integrated into the fabric of Jordanian society. These statistics are not merely figures but indicators of a society that is deeply connected online, with social media playing a pivotal role in shaping the social, political, and cultural landscape of the country.

2.2. The Culture of Jordan Based on Hofstede's Dimensions Theory: Indulgence vs. Restraint

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory provides a framework for understanding the impact of a society's culture on its members' values and behaviors. One of the key dimensions in this theory is Indulgence vs. Restraint, which describes the extent to which societies allow or control the gratification of desires and feelings (Hofstede 2011). Jordan, with its unique cultural and social fabric, exhibits characteristics of a restrained society.

2.3. Understanding Indulgence vs. Restraint

Indulgence refers to societies that allow relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun. In contrast, Restraint refers to societies that suppress gratification of needs and regulate it through strict social norms.

Jordan's Cultural Orientation: Restraint

Jordan scores low on the Indulgence dimension, indicating that it is a restrained society. This low score reflects the following aspects:

1. Control of Desires and Gratification: In Jordan, there is a significant emphasis on controlling one's desires and impulses. This is evident in both social and personal

contexts, where there are established norms and expectations regarding behavior, especially concerning modesty and propriety (Drozdowska et al. 2021; Hatamleh et al. 2023).

2. Social Norms and Religious Influence: Jordanian culture is heavily influenced by Islamic values, which advocate for moderation and self-discipline. Religious teachings emphasize the importance of self-restraint and the avoidance of excess, which permeate various aspects of daily life, from dress codes to dietary practices (Aleqedat et al. 2022).
3. Leisure and Happiness: In restrained societies like Jordan, leisure activities are not the primary focus. While there are opportunities for enjoyment and recreation, they are often secondary to work and familial responsibilities. Public expressions of joy and indulgence are typically moderated by cultural expectations (Al Hawamdeh and Al Qatamin 2021; Drozdowska et al. 2021; Aleqedat et al. 2022)
4. Pessimism and Cynicism: Restraint in Jordanian culture can also manifest in a more pessimistic outlook on life. People may feel that their actions are constrained by social norms, leading to a perception that indulgence in desires is somewhat wrong or inappropriate. This can contribute to a general sense of caution and conservatism in behavior and attitudes (Drozdowska et al. 2021; Hatamleh et al. 2023).

3. Hypothesis Development

Communication skills refer to the ability to convey information effectively and efficiently. They encompass both verbal and non-verbal communication, including writing, speaking, listening, and body language. Effective communication is a crucial component in personal and professional success and plays a significant role in the utilization of social media platforms.

3.1. Theoretical Background

Self-Efficacy Theory: Bandura's (1986) Self-Efficacy Theory asserts that an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform a specific task plays a crucial role in their willingness to engage in that task. This concept of self-efficacy is particularly relevant in the realm of social media, where effective communication is essential for meaningful interaction and content creation. Individuals with strong communication skills are likely to perceive themselves as competent and capable in social settings, both offline and online. This perception of competence fosters a higher sense of self-efficacy when it comes to using social media platforms.

The relationship between communication skills and self-efficacy suggests that those who are confident in their abilities to convey ideas, engage in conversations, and articulate thoughts are more inclined to utilize social media as a tool for these purposes. This confidence not only enhances their motivation to engage with social media but also reduces potential anxieties or barriers that might otherwise limit their usage. Consequently, individuals with advanced communication skills are more likely to explore and engage with various features of social media platforms, leading to increased usage.

Moreover, social media platforms are inherently designed to facilitate and amplify communication, making them attractive to individuals who excel in this area. The ability to craft compelling messages, engage with diverse audiences, and navigate complex social dynamics online further reinforces the positive feedback loop between communication skills and social media engagement. As these individuals experience success in their online interactions, their self-efficacy continues to grow, encouraging even greater use of these platforms (Schunk and DiBenedetto 2016). This theoretical framework underpins our hypothesis that communication skills positively impact social media usage.

Social Capital Theory, initially articulated by Bourdieu (1986) and later expanded by Putnam (2000), emphasizes the value derived from social networks, relationships, and trust within a community. According to this theory, social capital is a critical resource that individuals can draw upon to achieve various goals, including personal advancement,

community building, and professional success. In the digital age, social media platforms have become key facilitators of social capital by providing users with tools to connect, interact, and maintain relationships across vast networks.

Individuals with strong communication skills are particularly well-positioned to leverage social media for the accumulation of social capital. Effective communication enhances one's ability to form and nurture relationships, engage in meaningful exchanges, and build trust within online communities. As users interact more frequently and deeply on social media, they accumulate social capital, which in turn increases their influence and opportunities within their networks. This dynamic suggests that individuals with better communication skills are likely to use social media more frequently and effectively, as they can maximize the social capital gained from these interactions (Norbutas and Corten 2018).

However, the relationship between communication skills and social media usage does not exist in a vacuum; it is influenced by the broader cultural context in which individuals operate. Hofstede's (2011) concept of cultural restraint is particularly relevant here. Cultural restraint refers to the extent to which societal norms and values impose limitations on individual behavior, including communication and social interaction. In societies characterized by high levels of cultural restraint, individuals may face significant barriers when attempting to express themselves freely on social media, regardless of their communication skills.

In such cultures, social norms may discourage open communication, particularly on public platforms like social media, where messages are visible to a broad audience. These cultural norms can create an environment where individuals, even those with strong communication skills, feel constrained in their online interactions. For instance, in cultures that prioritize collective harmony over individual expression, there may be a reluctance to engage in discussions that could be seen as controversial or that challenge the status quo. This restraint can limit the degree to which individuals use social media to build and leverage social capital.

Moreover, cultural restraint can also affect the type of social capital that is valued and pursued within a community. In some cultures, social capital may be closely tied to in-group relationships, where trust and reciprocity are primarily extended to family members, close friends, or specific social circles. This focus on in-group dynamics can further constrain social media usage, as individuals may limit their online interactions to a small, trusted network, reducing opportunities for broader engagement and the accumulation of bridging social capital, which connects people across different groups (Putnam 2000).

Cultural context, therefore, plays a critical role in moderating the impact of communication skills on social media usage. In cultures with low cultural restraint, individuals are more likely to feel free to express themselves, engage with a wider audience, and utilize their communication skills to their fullest potential on social media. In contrast, in cultures with high cultural restraint, the positive relationship between communication skills and social media usage may be weakened, as societal norms impose limitations on how and when individuals can communicate online.

By considering both Social Capital Theory and cultural context, our study offers a nuanced understanding of the factors that influence social media usage. We propose that, while communication skills are a key driver of social media engagement, the extent to which these skills translate into higher usage is contingent upon the cultural environment. In particular, we hypothesize that cultural restraint can moderate the positive impact of communication skills on social media usage, with higher restraint potentially limiting this relationship.

By integrating Self-Efficacy Theory and Social Capital Theory, our study provides a comprehensive understanding of how communication skills influence social media usage and how cultural factors can modulate this relationship.

3.2. Empirical Evidence

1. Professional Usage: Research by Leonardi et al. (2013) indicates that professionals with strong communication skills are more adept at using social media for knowledge sharing and professional networking. This suggests a positive relationship between communication skills and social media usage in a professional context.
2. Personal Usage: A study by Marder et al. (2012) found that individuals with higher communication competence are more likely to engage in personal interactions on social media, such as maintaining friendships and sharing personal experiences.
3. Educational Context: In an educational setting, Junco (2012) found that students with better communication skills were more likely to use social media for academic purposes, such as participating in discussions and collaborating on projects.
4. Cross-Cultural Studies: Research by Chu and Choi (2010) found that cultural factors significantly influence social media adoption and usage patterns. In cultures that strongly resist Western influences, social media usage tends to be lower, even among individuals with strong communication skills.
5. Organizational Context: Leidner and Kayworth (2006) highlighted that cultural restraint within organizations can impede the adoption of information technologies. This suggests that even within professional settings, cultural restraint can moderate the impact of communication skills on social media usage.
6. Educational Context: A study by Straub et al. (2001) demonstrated that cultural factors play a crucial role in the acceptance of information technology in educational institutions. Cultural restraint can thus moderate how communication skills translate into the use of social media for academic purposes.

3.3. Hypothesis Statement

Based on the theoretical background and empirical evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: *Communication skills have a positive impact on social media usage.*

This hypothesis suggests that individuals with higher communication skills are more likely to use social media platforms effectively for various purposes, including personal interactions, professional networking, and educational activities. Effective communication enhances users' abilities to create, share, and engage with content on social media, thereby increasing their overall usage of these platforms.

H2: *Cultural restraint moderates the relationship between communication skills and the use of social media platforms.*

Cultural restraint refers to the opposition or reluctance of individuals or groups to adopt new practices, technologies, or behaviors due to cultural norms, values, and traditions. In the context of social media usage, cultural restraint can significantly impact how effectively communication skills translate into actual usage of social media platforms (refer to Figure 1).

4. Research Model

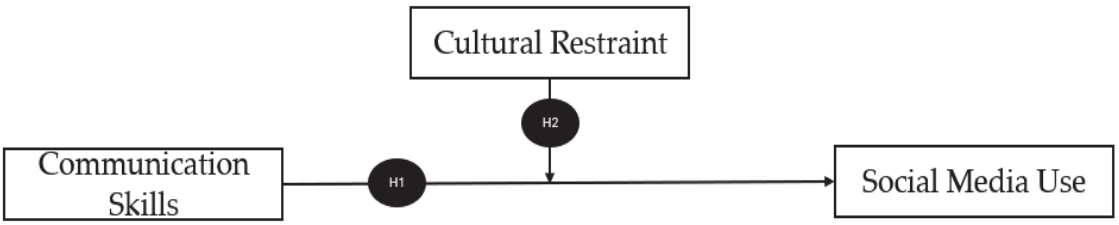

Figure 1. Research Model.

4.1. Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine the impact of communication skills and cultural restraint on the use of social media platforms in Jordan. This research utilizes a cross-sectional survey method to collect data from a representative sample of social media users.

4.2. Population and Sample

The target population for this study consisted of young adult social media users in Jordan aged 18 to 25. A convenience sampling technique was employed to select participants. The sample size, determined based on the guidelines provided by Morgan (1970), is 384, assuming a population size of approximately 1 million young adults. The questionnaire was distributed electronically using Google Forms, targeting a convenience sample. A total of 415 responses were collected for analysis. The survey link was shared through Facebook and email, resulting in a high and rapid response rate.

4.3. Data Collection

4.3.1. Data Analysis

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed using SmartPLS 4 software to test the hypothesized relationships between communication skills, cultural restraint, and social media usage. Furthermore, the moderating effect of cultural restraint on the relationship between communication skills and social media usage was examined using interaction terms within the SEM framework. SmartPLS was employed to estimate model parameters, including factor loadings, path coefficients, and interaction effects. To assess model fit and validity, criteria such as composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and R-squared values were utilized. The significance of path coefficients and interaction terms was evaluated to test the hypotheses.

4.3.2. Survey Instrument, Construct Reliability, and Validity

- Communication Skills Scale: Adopted from Ayar and Gürkan (2022), focusing on verbal and non-verbal communication skills.
- Cultural restraint Scale: Developed based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions and existing literature on cultural restraint (Hatamleh et al. 2023).
- Social Media Usage Scale: Adapted from Ellison et al. (2007), assessing frequency and intensity of social media use.
- The survey focuses solely on these scales, as demographic questions are not included in this correlational study (see Table 1).

Table 2 and Figures 2 and 3 present the reliability and validity metrics for the constructs of Communication Skills, Cultural restraint, and Social Media Usage, confirming the robustness of the measurement instruments. Cronbach's alpha values (ranging from 0.846 to 0.900) indicate high internal consistency, while composite reliability values (rho_a and rho_c, both above 0.848) further affirm the reliability of the constructs. Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, all above 0.685, demonstrate strong convergent validity, indicating that the constructs explain a significant portion of the variance in their

indicators. These metrics collectively ensure that the constructs are measured accurately and consistently, validating the study's findings (see Table 2 and Figure 2).

Table 3 shows the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) matrix for assessing discriminant validity among the constructs: Communication Skills, Cultural restraint, and Social Media Usage. Discriminant validity is achieved if HTMT values are below 0.85, indicating that the constructs are distinct from each other (Hair et al. 2017). The matrix shows that all HTMT values are below the 0.85 threshold: Communication Skills and Cultural restraint (0.235), Communication Skills and Social Media Usage (0.840), and Cultural restraint and Social Media Usage (0.249). Additionally, the interaction term Cultural restraint × Communication Skills shows acceptable discriminant validity, with values of 0.133, 0.395, and 0.116, respectively, against the three main constructs, confirming that the constructs are sufficiently distinct.

Table 1. Measurements scale.

Variable	Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	References
Communication Skills	CS1—"I wait for others to finish their words before I take the turn to speak".	0.877	(Ayar and Gürkan 2022)
	CS2—"I can express my thoughts clearly whenever I want".	0.872	
	CS3—"I can understand the emotions underlying what others are saying".	0.903	
	CS4—"I can easily start a conversation with other people".	0.855	
Cultural restraint	CR1—"I believe that emotions should not be shown openly on social media".	0.840	(Hatamleh et al. 2023)
	CR2—"I typically wait for the correct time to comment on certain issues on social media".	0.815	
	CR3—"I think that I should be able to enjoy my life using social media".	0.814	
	CR4—"I think that I should be able to enjoy my leisure time using social media".	0.840	
Social Media Usage	SMU1—"Social media is part of my everyday activity".	0.898	(Ellison et al. 2007)
	SMU2—"I am proud to tell people I'm on social media".	0.860	
	SMU3—"social media has become part of my daily routine".	0.866	
	SMU4—"I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto social media for a while"	0.868	

Table 2. Construct reliability and validity.

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Communication Skills	0.846	0.848	0.897	0.685
Cultural restraint	0.900	0.905	0.930	0.769
Social Media Usage	0.898	0.945	0.928	0.763

Table 3. Discriminant validity, Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) matrix.

	Communication Skills	Cultural Restraint	Social Media Usage
Communication Skills			
Cultural restraint	**0.235**		
Social Media Usage	0.840	**0.249**	
Cultural restraint × Communication Skills	0.133	0.395	**0.116**

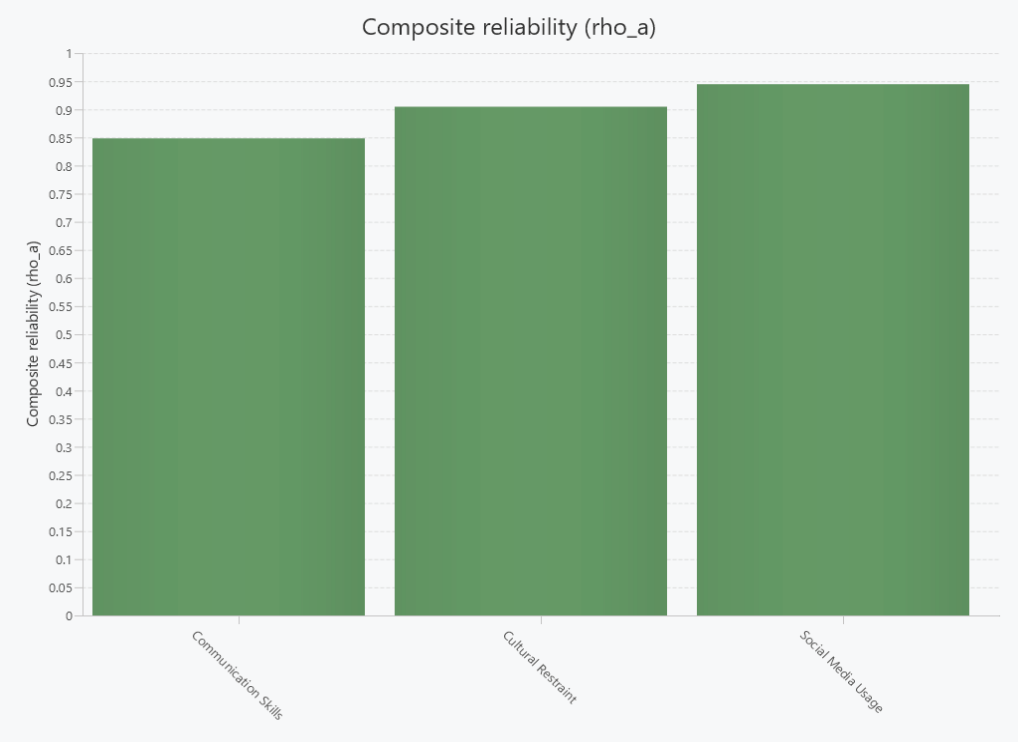

Figure 2. Composite reliability.

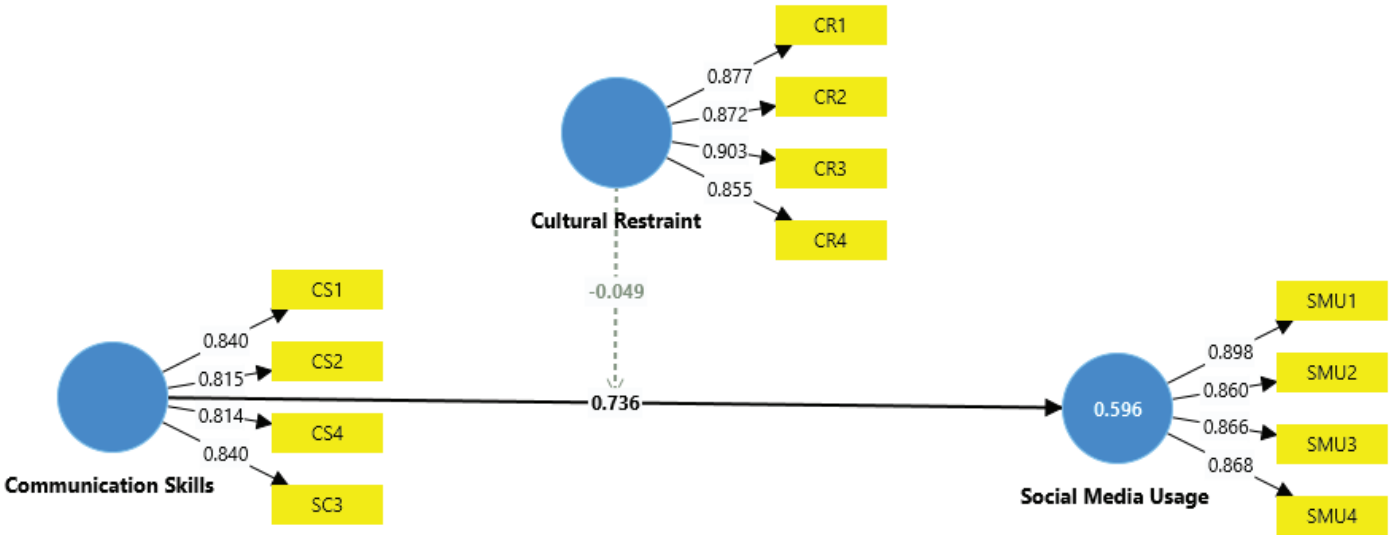

Figure 3. Structural model measurement.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Hypothesis Results

H1: *Communication Skills Have a Positive Impact on Social Media Usage.*

- Original Sample (O): 0.736
- Sample Mean (M): 0.742
- Standard Deviation (STDEV): 0.069
- T Statistics: 10.734
- *p* Values: 0.000
- Result: Accepted

The first hypothesis (H1) posits that communication skills positively impact social media usage. The statistical analysis supports this hypothesis, with an original sample path coefficient of 0.736. The T statistic of 10.734, which is significantly greater than the critical value (typically around 1.96 for a 95% confidence level), and the *p*-value of 0.000 (less than 0.05) indicate a highly significant positive relationship between communication skills and social media usage (refer to Table 4 and Figure 4).

Table 4. Hypothesis results and Mean, STDEV, T values, and *p* values.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	*p* Values	Result
H1. *Communication skills have a positive impact on social media usage.*	0.736	0.742	0.069	10.734	0.000	accepted
H2. *Cultural restraint moderates the relationship between communication skills and the use of social media platforms.*	−0.049	−0.049	0.020	2.487	0.013	accepted

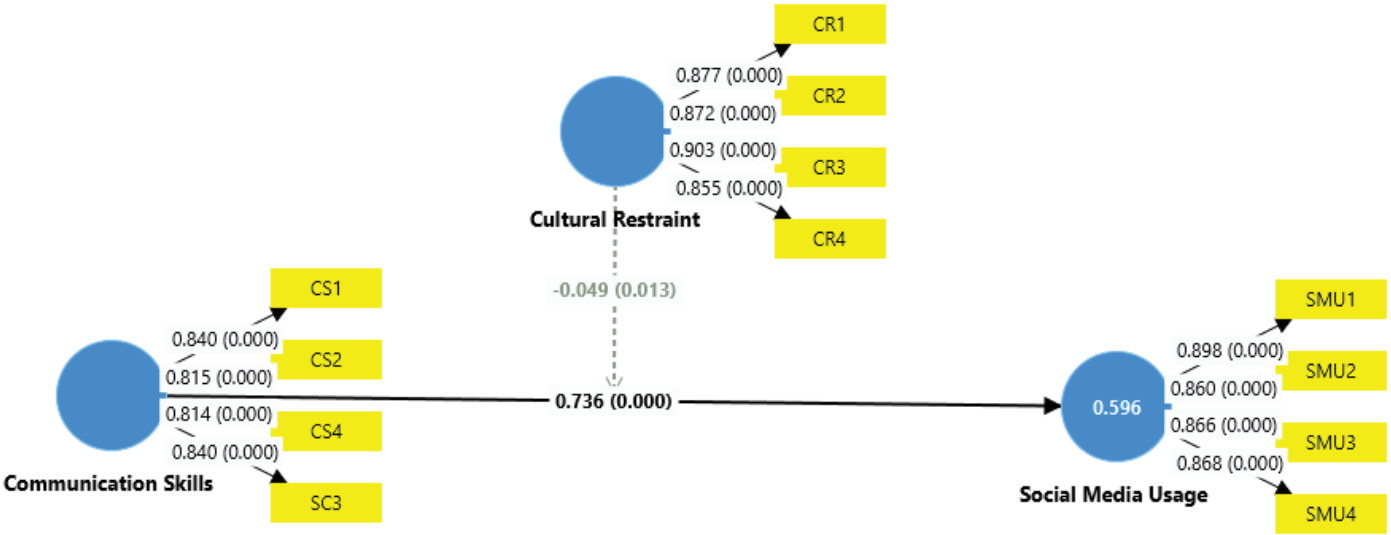

Figure 4. Structural model assessment.

H2: *Cultural Restraint Moderates the Relationship Between Communication Skills and Social Media Usage.*

- Original Sample (O): −0.049
- Sample Mean (M): −0.049
- Standard Deviation (STDEV): 0.020
- T Statistics: 2.487

- *p* Values: 0.013
- Result: Accepted

Figure 5 illustrates the simple slope analysis for the moderation effect of cultural restraint on the relationship between communication skills and social media usage. The graph shows three lines representing different levels of cultural restraint: one standard deviation below the mean (low cultural restraint), at the mean, and one standard deviation above the mean (high cultural restraint). The x-axis represents the range of communication skills, while the y-axis shows the predicted level of social media usage. The positive slopes of all three lines indicate that, as communication skills increase, social media usage also increases, supporting the hypothesis that communication skills positively impact social media usage.

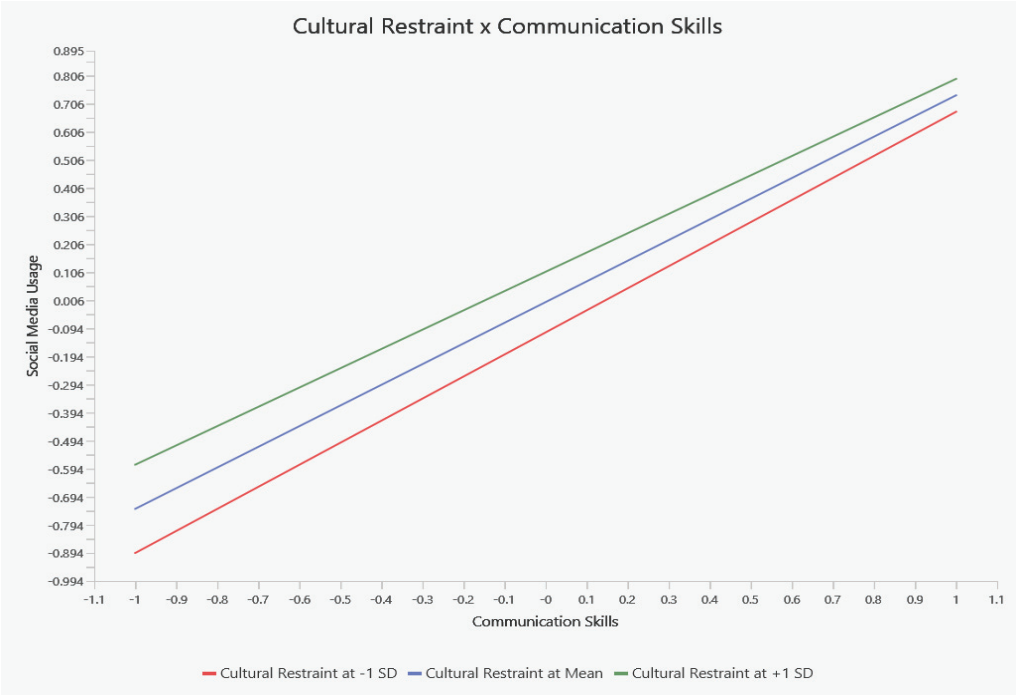

Figure 5. Simple slope analysis: moderation effect of cultural restraint.

The varying slopes of the lines demonstrate the moderating effect of cultural restraint. The red line, representing low cultural restraint, has the steepest slope, indicating that the positive impact of communication skills on social media usage is strongest in environments with low cultural restraint. In contrast, the green line, representing high cultural restraint, has the least steep slope, suggesting that in environments with high cultural restraint, the positive relationship between communication skills and social media usage is weaker. The blue line, which represents average cultural restraint, falls between the two, showing a moderate increase in social media usage with increasing communication skills.

5.2. Interpretation and Discussion

The positive impact of communication skills on social media usage (H1) found in this study aligns with recent research emphasizing the role of communication competence in digital engagement. For instance, Ayar and Gürkan (2022) highlighted that nursing students with higher communication skills are more adept at using social media for educational purposes. This finding supports the idea that individuals with strong communication abilities are better equipped to utilize social media effectively across various contexts, including personal, professional, and educational settings.

Furthermore, Schunk and DiBenedetto (2016) applied Self-Efficacy Theory to educational contexts, suggesting that students with higher communication self-efficacy are

more likely to engage in social media activities related to their studies. This aligns with the current study's findings that communication skills significantly enhance social media usage, as users feel more confident and capable in their interactions on these platforms.

This result underscores the importance of effective communication skills in the digital age. Users with strong verbal and non-verbal communication abilities are more proficient in navigating social media platforms, engaging with content, and interacting with other users. These skills facilitate better expression, comprehension, and interaction, leading to increased and more effective use of social media. The finding aligns with Self-Efficacy Theory and Social Capital Theory, which suggest that individuals confident in their communication abilities are more likely to engage actively in social media.

The second hypothesis (H2) proposes that cultural restraint moderates the relationship between communication skills and social media usage. The results show a significant moderating effect, with an original sample path coefficient of -0.049. The T statistic of 2.487 exceeds the critical value, and the p-value of 0.013 indicates statistical significance.

This negative coefficient suggests that higher levels of cultural restraint weaken the positive relationship between communication skills and social media usage. In culturally restrained societies like Jordan, social norms and traditional values exert a considerable influence on individuals' behavior, including their engagement with social media. Even individuals with strong communication skills may experience constraints in fully utilizing social media due to cultural expectations of restraint and modesty.

This finding highlights the complex interplay between individual abilities and cultural context in shaping digital behavior. It suggests that interventions aimed at enhancing social media engagement in such contexts need to consider cultural sensitivities and work towards creating an environment that balances cultural values with the benefits of effective communication.

The moderating role of cultural restraint in the relationship between communication skills and social media usage is supported by recent studies examining the impact of cultural factors on technology adoption (Hatamleh et al. 2023; Hu et al. 2017). Hatamleh et al. (2023) explored how cultural restraint influences the relationship between social media motivation and subjective happiness, finding that cultural norms significantly moderate digital behavior. This supports the current study's finding that cultural restraint weakens the positive impact of communication skills on social media usage.

Additionally, Sun et al. (2019) investigated the moderating role of cultural differences on the relationship between corporate social performance and financial performance, highlighting the significance of cultural context in moderating organizational behaviors. This perspective aligns with the current study's results, indicating that cultural restraint plays a crucial role in shaping how communication skills influence social media engagement.

In organizational settings, Silviani et al. (2022) found that cultural factors significantly affect crisis communication practices on social media, reinforcing the idea that cultural restraint can impede the effective use of social media platforms. This is consistent with the current study's findings that cultural restraint moderates the relationship between communication skills and social media usage. In addition, Figure 5 shows the importance of considering cultural context when examining digital behaviors. While communication skills generally enhance social media usage, this effect is significantly moderated by the level of cultural restraint. In high cultural restraint environments, individuals with strong communication skills may still face challenges in increasing their social media usage compared to those in low cultural restraint settings. This underscores the need for culturally sensitive approaches when designing interventions to promote social media engagement and highlights the complex interplay between individual abilities and cultural factors in shaping digital behaviors.

6. Research Conclusions

The findings of this study reveal that communication skills significantly enhance social media usage, confirming that individuals with better verbal and non-verbal communica-

tion abilities are more likely to engage effectively on these platforms. This relationship is moderated by cultural restraint, where higher levels of cultural restraint dampen the positive effect of communication skills on social media usage. These results highlight the importance of considering cultural contexts when examining digital behaviors. This study suggests that in environments with high cultural restraint, even individuals with strong communication skills may face challenges in leveraging social media. Consequently, interventions aimed at improving social media engagement should account for cultural sensitivities to be effective. Overall, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how individual abilities and cultural factors interact to shape social media usage, providing valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners in the field of digital communication.

7. Research Contributions, Limitations, and Future Studies

This study makes significant contributions to understanding the interplay between communication skills and cultural restraint in the context of social media usage. Firstly, it provides empirical evidence supporting the positive impact of communication skills on social media usage. This aligns with Self-Efficacy Theory and Social Capital Theory, suggesting that individuals with strong communication skills are more adept at navigating social media platforms. Secondly, this research highlights the moderating role of cultural restraint, illustrating how cultural contexts influence digital behavior. By demonstrating that high cultural restraint weakens the positive relationship between communication skills and social media usage, the study underscores the need for culturally sensitive approaches in digital engagement strategies. Lastly, this research enriches the literature on social media usage in non-Western contexts, particularly within Jordan, offering insights that can inform both academic discourse and practical applications in communication and technology adoption.

Future research should explore additional moderating factors that might influence the relationship between communication skills and social media usage, such as technological literacy, socioeconomic status, and access to digital resources. It would also be beneficial to conduct longitudinal studies to assess how these relationships evolve over time and in response to changing cultural dynamics. Expanding the study to include a diverse range of cultural contexts beyond Jordan and other Arab countries would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the global applicability of these findings. Additionally, qualitative studies could offer deeper insights into the specific cultural nuances that affect digital behavior, complementing the quantitative approach used in this study. By addressing these areas, future research can build on the foundational insights provided here, further enriching our understanding of digital communication in varying cultural landscapes.

Our study faces several limitations that warrant consideration. Firstly, the use of a convenience sampling technique introduces selection bias, potentially limiting the generalizability of our findings. Convenience samples often lack the diversity inherent in random samples, affecting the representativeness of the results (Bornstein et al. 2013). Secondly, this study was conducted exclusively in Jordan, a country with unique cultural, social, and economic contexts, which may influence the relationships between the variables studied. This geographic limitation suggests that the findings may not be directly applicable to other regions, particularly those with different cultural and societal norms (Henrich et al. 2010).

To address these limitations, future research should employ more rigorous sampling methods, such as random sampling, to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, replicating the study in various cultural settings will help determine whether the observed relationships hold true across different contexts, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Conducting longitudinal studies could also offer insights into how the relationships between communication skills, social media usage, and cultural restraint evolve over time, aiding in the identification of causal relationships and long-term effects. Furthermore, exploring additional moderating and mediating variables, such as socioeconomic status, education level, and individual

personality traits, can provide a more nuanced understanding of these relationships. By addressing these methodological limitations and pursuing these future research directions, we can achieve a more robust understanding of the interplay between communication skills, social media usage, and cultural restraint across diverse contexts.

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Article

"Hands off Russian Schools": How Do Online Media Portray the Linguistic Landscape of Protests Against Minority Education Reform in Latvia?

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Abstract: Latvia after the collapse of the Soviet Union regained its independence in 1991. Since then, many political and social reforms have been introduced, minority education among them. Latvia began gradually abandoning the use of minority languages as mediums of instruction and switching to teaching exclusively in Latvian as the sole state language. This caused protests by minority groups, especially by Russians—the largest minority group in Latvia. The article examines 77 online news articles by Latvian, Russian, and European media covering protests against minority education reform in Latvia between 2004 and 2024. Each news article used at least one photograph/video of placard(s) with written information from the protests. The aim of the article is to understand how different media represent the linguistic landscape of protests against minority education reform and what are the main discourses they create and maintain regarding to the linguistic landscape of such protests in Latvia. The description of the linguistic landscapes shows three main trends: (1) only journalists (most often anonymous) describe the written information expressed at the protests, (2) emphasis is on the number of placard holders at the protests, their age and affiliation with minority support organizations and political parties, (3) author(s) quote individual slogans, more often demonstrated from one protest to another, without disclosing in which language they were originally written and what problems (within and behind the language education) they highlight or conceal. The main narratives that are reinforced through the descriptions of the linguistic landscapes included in the articles are two: (1) the Russian community is united and persistent in the fight against the ethnolinguistically unjust education policy pursued by the government, and (2) students, parents, and the Russian community should have the right to choose which educational program to study at school.

Keywords: protests; linguistic landscape; minority education reform; the state language; the Russian language; Latvia

1. Introduction

In Latvia, education reform, along with citizenship policy and language policy, is one of three state policy sectors that, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the regaining independence in 1991, were directly aimed at regulating the conditions of ethnic/linguistic minorities and limiting their social and political opportunities (Boguševiča, 2009, p. 8). The introduced minority education reform meant gradual abondance of the use of minority languages as mediums of instruction (MOI) and switching to teaching exclusively in the Latvian language, legally defined as the only state ("official") language. The government justified its political course in education through national goal to increase the competitiveness of non-Latvian children by helping them obtain higher education and enter the

labor market. However, it was the education reform that provoked the most massive and intense protests in the history of independent Latvia (Boguševiča, 2009, p. 8; Burr et al., 2025, p. 435).

Although the Russian-speaking minority in the newly formed nation-state was characterized by lower political participation activity, less social capital, and weaker use of social networks, compared to Latvians (e.g., Linden, 2008), according to information compiled by Boguševiča (2009, p. 91), the first protests of the Russian-speaking minority against the education reform at different times and with different numbers of participants took place as early as 2001, with the largest number of participants gathering in 23 May 2003 (10,000 in total, although the scholar indicates that the number varies depending on news source).

The minority school reform in 2003 and 2004 was widely covered in Latvian traditional media and their digital counterparts. Maksimovtsova's (2019) about discourses in Post-Soviet Russian-language digital media in the Baltic states shows that the Russian-language version of the news website Delfi (ru.delfi.lv) in these two years hosted extremely heated discussion on the reform mainly sharing the arguments in favor of Russian. The most frequently spread argument against the reform was the argument of equality and protection of Russian-speakers' rights followed by the economic argument ('we pay taxes') and the argument of Latvia as a 'defective democracy'. Some arguments for the Latvian language were the argument of better economic opportunities, the argument of the 'existential' threat to Latvian, and the integration argument (Maksimovtsova, 2019, pp. 312, 314, 321–322).

Later the media portrayal of minority education reform has not been among the nationally widely studied research topics. For instance, the reform was not addressed in the studies "Language" in 2007 and 2008 by Baltic Institute of Social Sciences and regular language situation monitoring in 2011, 2016, and 2021 by Latvian Language Agency. Of particular note is the publication "Language Situation in Latvia, 2010–2015" (2016) which contains the chapter "Representation of the Most Significant Events in Language Policy in the Mass Media" (Liepa, 2016a) without touching on the minority education reform and the protests that took place during the period under review. Therefore, logically, written texts displayed in protests against minority education reform have similarly gone unnoticed by researchers. Yet these texts are essential elements of temporary linguistic landscapes in city and (re-)creators of public discourses both in physical and digital spaces.

The Linguistic landscape (LL) covers all written texts in public or semi-public spaces. LL research traditionally includes sociolinguistic analysis of such texts in the context of language policy, language vitality, language contacts, and ethnic composition; however, its rapid development shows great expansion of interdisciplinary approaches and themes (e.g., Gorter & Cenoz, 2023; Kallen, 2023). Printed and hand-made written texts (e.g., logos, slogans, statements, requests, and poems), oral announcements and audio (e.g., anthems, popular songs) in protests, strikes, demonstrations, and processions constitute the so-called mobile LLs. In contrast to stable, more permanent LLs, the mobile LL emphasizes the meeting of text authors and readers and their participation in public discourse. The importance of both discourse participant groups (i.e., authors and/or presenters and readers) is highlighted by Kallen: "What makes a text bearing object part of the LL (and not simply a piece of metal with words and images on it) is its role in discourse between a sign instigator and a sign viewer" (Kallen, 2023, p. 27). However, although LL texts in protests are ephemeral and non-fixed in nature they are typically photographed/filmed, then published and discussed in the online, thus becoming a part of wider discourses over social problems lightened by protests and the use of language in protests. Considering the inherently mobile nature of protest signs, Sebba (2010, pp. 73–75) calls them "discourses in transit".

Despite the tendency of protests to be perceived in light of psycho-emotional aspects and scandalousness, LL scholars have paid little attention to media coverage of protest signage as well (one known exception is Pošeiko, 2016b). Therefore, the article intends to examine online media articles that include both LL texts from protests and provide a description or analysis of such texts. The article aims to identify and characterize ways how national and international online media in Latvian, Russian, and English portray the LL of protests against minority education reform in Latvia and what are the main discourses they create and maintain regarding to the LL of the protests.

Following the introduction, the Section 2 presents a compressed literature review. The Section 3 is dedicated to the contexts of protest formation in Latvia. The Section 4 describes the research data and methodology. The Section 5 presents the results of the content analysis of excerpts from online news articles about protests and photographs with protest placards. In the Section 6, the results of the study are discussed in relation to the goal of the article.

2. Literature Review

In the LL research bibliography database (Gorter, 2013), which as of 24 January 2024, consisted of records of 1456 conference papers, individual articles, edited books, and teaching materials, 48 records contained the word *protest* in their title, abstract, and/or in keywords. A closer look reveals three important features. First, the study of protests is based on semiotic (especially geosemiotics and multimodality) analysis (e.g., Al-Naimat, 2020; Urribarrí, 2022). Second, one of the main focuses in the analysis of protests is participants' identity(ies) and the representation of belonging to a particular community (e.g., Ben-Said & Kasanga, 2016; Milani, 2015). Third, researchers' attention has been linked to protests against acute political and social problems, and the language of protest has been perceived as one of the forms of communication, one of the ways to discuss these problems and express opinions and attitudes towards them (e.g., Hanauer, 2015; Martín Rojo, 2014). Protests against the (non-)use of language(s) or changes in language policy have not received researchers' attention so far. The only known exception is an article on the use of the letter *k* in the Spanish LL and public objections related to this language conflict (Screti, 2015).

The most extensive study of the LLs in Latvia, Pošeiko's (2015) PhD thesis about the language situation in the Linguistic landscapes of the cities in the Baltic states, mentions ephemeral or temporary LLs and non-fixed or moving LL texts (e.g., stickers on cars and advertisements on trams) but does not analyze them. Another example is an article about "EuroPride 2015" in Riga, the capital of Latvia, that discusses the semiotic landscape (including LL texts) of the International Pride Parade in 2015 (Pošeiko, 2016a). Inspecting galleries of photos and videos published in national news portals, the author analyzes the form, content, and language of demonstration placards, clothing, and accessories.

In turn, research on minority education reform in Latvia has mentioned protests mainly because of their scale and intensity and the involvement of the Russians as the largest minority community, with almost no attention paid to the LL of the protests (e.g., Hogan-Brun, 2007; Lazdiņa & Marten, 2021; Silova, 2006). For instance, describing government's initiated social changes through education and its proposed idea about the teaching 60 per cent of all subjects in Latvian at the secondary school level (grades 10 to 12) (see more below Section 3.4.2), Vihalemm and Hogan-Brun (2013, p. 60) state that "the rigid and non-inclusive manner in which this change was handled produced large-scale mass protests that involved more than half of the minority secondary school pupils".

Since "language in the public space [. . .] can serve as a mechanism for resisting, protesting against and negotiating de facto language policies" Shohamy (2006, p. 129),

language conflicts at the social level are an important dimension of understanding the LL of protests. The term *language conflict* is mostly perceived as conflict resting on differences or oppositions of interests of people in relation to linguistic phenomena (language structural elements, language use, status, prestige, and attitudes), their awareness of the differences and, finally, actions regarding the differences or oppositions (Burr et al., 2025, p. 430). Building on Darquennes's (2015) and Wingender's (2021) models for studying language conflicts, Burr et al. (2025) develop a framework for studying interactions between language conflict and LL. According to it, LL can be involved in language conflicts in three ways, as (1) an object of, a stimulus for, conflict, (2) a tool or means by which conflict is conducted, or (3) an outcome of conflict (Burr et al., 2025, p. 438). The LL of protests against education reform in Latvia is seen as a tool by which conflict is articulated in the public space (Burr et al., 2025, p. 435).

We can conclude that protests concerning language-related issues and media coverage of such protests are unexplored research strands in LL studies. This article, with its focus on the representation of the LL of protests against language-in-education in news websites, seeks to partially fill this gap.

To better understand the organization, content, and language of protests in Latvia, the next section briefly introduces: (1) legal requirements for organizing protests, (2) ethnolinguistic and sociolinguistic context, (3) languages of instruction in general education, and (4) language policy, in general, and changes in language education policy, in particular.

3. The Legal and Sociolinguistic Contexts of Language Protests

3.1. LL in Protests

The law "On Meetings, Processions, and Pickets" (Likumi, 1997) defines two protest forms—a procession and a picket—to express individual's or group's ideas and opinions in a public space using posters, slogans, and banners. There are two differences between these forms: the first involves movement on the roads, streets, squares, pavements, or other territories designed for traffic and may include speeches and public addresses, while the second is a static gathering of people in a public space but during which no speeches or public addresses are made.

There are two things to consider when creating and demonstrating LL in protests in Latvia. First, in protests, it is forbidden: (1) to turn against independence of the Republic of Latvia and its territorial integrity, to make proposals on forcible change of the state structure of Latvia, and to encourage to disobey the laws, and (2) to propagate violence, hate, Nazism, or communism ideology (Likumi, 1997). Second, in protests, there is freedom of speech and linguistic freedom (Likumi, 1997). The latter means that, unlike static, more permanent LL texts, placards can be written in any language and/or script.

3.2. Ethnolinguistic and Sociolinguistic Context

Census data taken in the territory of Latvia at different times represent the diversity of the society. Along with Latvians, in varying proportions, Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Germans, Poles, Lithuanians, and other numerically less represented ethnic communities live here (Veģis, 2021, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c). Currently, the largest ethnic minority community is Russians (24.4% of the total population of the country), the next numerically largest minorities (Ukrainians and Belarusians) reach the 3% mark (PMLP, 2022).

The results of the last census in 2011 (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2016) show that the most frequently used languages at home are Latvian (56.26% of the total population of the country), Russian (33.75%), Lithuanian (0.1%), Polish and Ukrainian (both 0.08%), another language (0.33%, including Latgalian, a language spoken mainly in Eastern Latvia). Latvian as the state language covers all sociolinguistic domains (particularly, in

government, public service, and education) while Russian is mainly used in public informal communication (e.g., on the street or in a store) and in work with colleagues, customers, and cooperation partners (Kļava & Rozenvalode, 2021, p. 89).

Sixty-one percent of residents between 18 to 34 with a mother tongue other than Latvian rate their Latvian language skills as good or very good (Kļava & Kopoloveca, 2021, pp. 59–60). In turn, an in-depth analysis of the results of the centralized exams of 9th grade (between 14 and 16 years old) pupils in 2023 shows that pupils who studied the minority program in the previous school year (respectively 2022/2023) obtained almost 17% lower results in the Latvian language exam than those who studied in Latvian language programs (the average performance in Latvian was 60%) (VISC, 2023).

3.3. Languages of Instruction in General Education

Until the 1990s, there were two separate school systems in Latvia in terms of content, language of instruction, and duration of instruction. They were called "Latvian schools" and "Russian schools," which contributed to the societal segregation of ethnic Latvians and Russians (including other ethnic minorities who usually attended Russian schools). For instance, in 1989, there were 205 schools in Soviet Latvia with Russian as MOI (Apine & Volkovs, 2007, p. 51), in which Latvian was a compulsory subject, but teaching in this subject was formal and ineffective (Dorodnova, 2003, p. 16).

Since the 1990s, education reforms have therefore aimed to slowly integrate minority schools into the main education system. Minority schooling in Latvia is predominantly aimed at the Russian speaking population, and there are schools for Ukrainians, Poles, and other minorities, which are often supported from abroad (e.g., from Poland). (Martena et al., 2022, p. 16).

In 2000, there were 1074 general schools in Latvia. Out of 334,572 students, 203,012 students (61%) learned in Latvian, 93,799 students (28%) learned in Russian, and 36,427 students (11%) in Latvian and Russian (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2000).

In 2022, there were 678 general schools in Latvia, of which 527 were considered to be so-called Latvian schools (77%) providing instruction only in Latvian (140,161 students), 115 schools were mixed schools providing instruction in Latvian and Russian (57,823 students), 25 schools were seen as so-called Russian schools providing instruction in Russian (3917 students), and 11 provided instructions in other language, for instance, Polish, Ukrainian, German, and Belarusian (3206 students) (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2022).

Starting with the school year 2023/24, there is no longer general education institutions where the MOI is only Russian. However, out of 618 schools, there were 115 mixed schools with provided instruction in Latvian and Russian (55,820 students) (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2023).

3.4. Recent Changes in Latvian Language Policy

In modern Latvia, the goal of the language policy is to ensure the sustainability of Latvian, the state language of Latvia and the official language of the EU, its linguistic quality and competitiveness in the Latvian and world language market, as well as its influence in the cultural environment of Latvia. To achieve the goal of the state language policy, four directions of actions have been determined: (1) strengthening the legal status of the state language, (2) state language education policy, (3) scientific research and development of the state language, (4) ensuring public participation in the implementation of the state language policy, and (5) the development of the Latvian language (Druviete, 2021, p. 14).

The following subsections briefly touch on three above-mentioned directions: the first two (the legal status of the state language and the state language education policy) and the last strand (the assurance of public participation).

3.4.1. The Legal Status of the State Language

In 1999, the Official Language Law (Saeima, 1999) was adopted, stipulating that the only state ("official") language is the Latvian language. The law recognizes the Liv language as the language of the indigenous (autochthon) population. The Latgalian written language, spoken in the Eastern part of Latvia, is defined as a historic variant of the Latvian language. All other languages are foreign languages within the meaning of the law.

In connection with the language law and other regulations governing the use of language, several important events have taken place in the last decade. Since 2017, the Official Language Law has been amended several times to determine the extent (level and degree) of knowledge of the state language for professions whose representatives' activities affect legitimate public interests. In 2018, the Electronic Mass Media Law was amended to ensure the use of the state language in cross-border programs (e.g., at least in subtitles on TV broadcasts and documentaries). However, the most significant amendments at the level of legal acts adopted by the Saeima (Parliament) were made in the laws affecting the education system.

3.4.2. The Minority Education Reform

In Latvia, in 1989, the Education Law was adopted. Since then, a gradual transition to the Latvian language as the MOI has been implemented in all educational institutions and at all stages of education, also providing the opportunity to learn the language and culture of minorities. Thus, since 1989, learning Latvian as a school subject has been mandatory in all educational institutions. Since 1992, there is an attestation of the state language proficiency for pedagogues. Since 1995, two subjects have been taught in Latvian in primary school, three in secondary school.

In 1999, four free-of-choice bilingual education models were introduced. Then, in 2004, a ratio of 60–40% of MOIs (Latvian and minority languages, respectively) was introduced in secondary schools. Since 2008, all students take the same Latvian language exams. Then, since 2021, all general education subjects in secondary schools are taught in Latvian, minority languages are kept teaching subjects related to culture and history. A full transition of all class groups to learning exclusively in Latvian except for the subjects of mother tongue and cultural history is planned to be implemented by 1 September 2025 (see more in Druviete, 2021, pp. 22–25; Hogan-Brun, 2003, 2007; Lazdiņa & Marten, 2019).

As Hogan-Brun (2003) puts, the education reform is based on the idea of national cohesion and all inhabitants' full participation in the life of the nation through the national language (Hogan-Brun, 2003, p. 125). According to her (2007, p. 556), the educational transition in Latvia was more complex than in the two neighboring countries—Lithuania and Estonia—mostly because of its ethnolinguistic situation. In Latvia, the Latvian-ethnic population decreased by about 20% in the late 1980s due to the Soviets' successful shifting the ethnic balance and of the russification policy, and more than a third of the population (both people of Russian nationality and many members of other ethnic communities) claimed Russian as their first language. After independence, asymmetric bilingualism emerged in Latvia and a newly introduced language policy supported official monolingualism, with Latvian as the sole state language.

3.4.3. Public Participation in the Implementation of the State Language Policy

Active involvement of society in language policy and management can be seen in various ways, including social actions, campaigns, and protests. Here two examples that

shook language management in Latvia will be presented; both took place in 2011. The first was a signature collection campaign initiated by the nationalist-conservative party, or the National Alliance "All for Latvia!"–"For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK" (*Nacionālā apvienība "Visu Latvijai!"–"Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK"* in Latvian), for changes to the Constitution, stipulating that the state provides the opportunity to obtain free primary and secondary education only in the Latvian language. The required 10,000 signatures were obtained to propose to the Parliament such changes. This event was soon followed by the second event: the political party "United for Latvia" (*Vienoti Latvijai* in Latvian) and the society "Native Language" (*Dzimtā valoda* in Latvian) begun collecting signatures for the Russian language to be recognized as the second state language in Latvia. More than 12,000 signatures of supporters of the idea were obtained. An application with these signatures initiated a referendum on changes to the Constitution, providing the Russian language with the status of the second state language in Latvia. The referendum was held in 2012, and 70.37% of all eligible voters participated in it. The result of the referendum was as follows: 74.8% of the voters voted Against the Russian language as the second state language, and 24.88% voted For. Thus, the proposed changes in language policy were rejected (see more in Druviete & Ozolins, 2016; Liepa, 2016b, pp. 226–230).

Both social actions indicate the conflict between the titular group (Latvians) and the largest minority group (Russians) regarding the status, prestige, and use of Latvian and Russian in Latvia. Both initiatives ended up without desired outcomes for the initiators in the particular settings.

4. Materials and Methodology

4.1. Data Collection

Research sources are online news articles (hereinafter ONAs) about protests on minority education reform between 2004 and 2024. The period was selected taking into account the time coverage of previously conducted research (see Section 1), the year 2004 as a significant turning point in the implementation of minority education reform (see Section 3.4.2), and ONAs with visual illustrations of the LL in protests (photos/videos) found on the web.

ONAs were searched on Google using keywords in Latvian, Russian, and English related to the goal of the article, for instance: demonstration/protest/picket/rally against minority education reform; transition to teaching in Latvian; students protesting against the Latvian language in education; Hands off Russian schools (i.e., the main slogan by protest organizers, see below). The main criterion for the selection of ONAs was the inclusion of photo or video with at least one readable written text, LL sign, from the protest(s) discussed in the relevant article. Google was used to avoid on focusing exclusively on certain news portals and to include potentially different perspectives on the representation of the LL of protests in Latvia. In result, 29 websites were viewed (see Appendix A), and an article corpus was created with 77 ONAs: 26 in Latvian, 31 in Russian, and 20 in English. The selected ONAs mainly come from leading Latvian news portals (according to LASAP, 2024; Gemius, 2017), publishing articles in Latvian, Russian, and English (e.g., TvNet; Delfi; Apollo; Latvijas Sabiedriskie Mediji, or LSM; Diena), followed by Russian propaganda websites in Russian and English (e.g., TASS; Gazeta; Baltnews), and European news portals in English (e.g., BBC; The Baltic Times; Euractiv).

Next, fragments of ONAs mentioning written texts displayed in protest(s) (in other words, the LL of protest(s)) and photographs with LL texts of protests were subjected to data analysis. Additionally, I reviewed comments attached to the selected ONAs, but they are of secondary importance to this article since the focus of the article is on the representation of the LL of protests by news portals.

4.2. Data Analysis

The research mainly follows qualitative approach principles. ONA analysis began with a general description according to the following criteria: (1) year of publication, (2) language of the article, (3) number of photographs and/or videos, and (3) explicit mentions on the LL texts of protest(s) (included or not, respectively. In this sense, the total number of mentions could not be higher than the number of selected ONAs).

Further, additional attention was paid specifically to fragments of ONAs with included mentions on LL texts of protests. The length of description of LL texts was not considered when counting the mentions; it could be a short sentence about protesters holding banners or a long and detailed comment listing several slogans as quotes. Then five pre-formulated research questions were considered:

1. What do the photographs of LL texts from the protest(s) included in the selected articles show readers?
2. Who is the author of the ONA fragment (mention) regarding the LL texts of the protest(s)? For instance, have protesters, invited experts, politicians, or residents commented the LL texts?
3. What is the aim of mentioning the LL text(s)? Does the mention repeat what is already said in photos/videos; shown a translation of LL text(s) in the language of the article (if the language use is different); express opinion about language(s) used in protests; support one's own or someone else's claims or arguments, etc.?
4. How detailed is the mentioning of LL text(s) of protest(s)? Does it reference the LL text(s), quote and/or describe LL texts in relation to authors and/or demonstrators, compare with LL text(s) in previous protests or LL text(s) of similar protests in other countries, etc.?
5. What discourses about minority education reform, protest participants, the LL of protest(s), and protest culture in Latvia do the mentions create or reiterate?

To examine the photos/videos with LL texts included in the ONAs, a qualitative content analysis method was applied (Mayring, 2004). The method consists of a three-stage analysis: a sociolinguistic and textual analysis of the LL signs, a summarizing content analysis, and a thematic grouping of these summarized messages at a higher level of abstraction. LL texts analysis has been influenced by one of the discourse analysis approaches–Frame Analysis. It is based on the idea that discourses can be seen as *frames*, that is "structured understandings of the way aspects of the world function", as Fauconnier and Sweetser (1996, p. 5) argue, and can be thought of "as culturally or sub-culturally structured and structuring sense-making resources" in the words of Coupland and Garrett (2010, p. 15). Frame Analysis is a constructive approach to examine and conceptualize texts (in our case, LL signs) into "empirically operationalizable dimensions—syntactical, script, thematic, and rhetorical structures—" in a way that the "framing of issues" in the data may be uncovered (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 55). In other words, the set of LL signs of protests is a point of departure to categorize meanings, or simply, frames of meaning (Ben-Said & Kasanga, 2016, p. 74). McLeod and Hertog (1999) identify four key frames, or overarching narratives, in media coverage of protests: *riot*, *confrontation*, *spectacle*, and *debate*. The riot (violent, deviant disruptive behavior), confrontation (conflict with authorities, police, and opposition), and spectacle frames (sensational, dramatic and individualistic narratives) emphasize action or behavior. They tend to delegitimize the movement and negatively affect public opinion. In turn, the debate frame discusses the agendas or demands of the protest, and the inclusion of this frame in media coverage is an opportunity to engage audiences with the substance of the issues advocated by the movement (see also in Brown & Harlow, 2019).

Critical discourse analysis was used to the extent of revealing the interdiscursive and intertextual character of media discourses, exploring how certain ways of representing the

world, performing identity, and constructing social belonging are normalized in media spaces; questions of who gets to speak, what discourses are privileged, and what discourses are absent or foregrounded (Phelan, 2017).

5. Results

Table 1 provides a description of the selected ONAs (see the first paragraph of Section 4), showing (1) how many ONAs and in which languages were found in various years, (2) how many photos/videos were included in the selected ONAs, and (3) was LL texts mentioned in the selected ONAs, or not.

Table 1. Description of the selected online news articles, or ONAs.

Publishing Year	Quantifiable Parameters	Online News Articles (ONAs) Based on Their Language		
		In Latvian	*In Russian*	*In English*
2004	Number of ONAs	**3**	**2**	**2**
	Number of photos/videos with LL text(s)	3/-	6/-	3/-
	Number of mentions of LL text(s)	2	2	2
2005	Number of ONAs	**-**	**-**	**1**
	Number of photos/videos with LL text(s)	-	-	1/-
	Number of mentions of LL text(s)	-	-	-
2014	Number of ONAs	**1**	**1**	**2**
	Number of photos/videos with LL text(s)	1/-	1/1	2/1
	Number of mentions of LL text(s)	-	-	2
2017	Number of ONAs	**3**	**5**	**2**
	Number of photos/videos with LL text(s)	118/4	4/1	2/1
	Number of mentions of LL text(s)	3	3	2
2018	Number of ONAs	**8**	**14**	**9**
	Number of photos/videos with LL text(s)	127/1	15/3	11/1
	Number of mentions of LL text(s)	4	5	6
2019	Number of ONAs	**4**	**-**	**4**
	Number of photos/videos with LL text(s)	65/-	-	10/-
	Number of mentions of LL text(s)	4	-	4
2021	Number of ONAs	-	**1**	-
	Number of photos/videos with LL text(s)	-	6/1	-
	Number of mentions of LL text(s)	-	-	-
2022	Number of ONAs	**1**	**2**	-
	Number of photos/videos with LL text(s)	53/1	55/1	-
	Number of mentions of LL text(s)	1	1	-
2023	Number of ONAs	**3**	**2**	**-**
	Number of photos/videos with LL text(s)	93/-	2/-	-
	Number of mentions of LL text(s)	2	1	-
2024	Number of ONAs	**3**	**4**	**-**
	Number of photos/videos with LL text(s)	29/3	34/2	-
	Number of mentions of LL text(s)	3	1	-
	Total number of ONAs	**26**	**31**	**20**

Table 1 shows three important things. First, protests gained wide media attention in 2018, when the Latvian government adopted amendments to the Education Law of the Republic of Latvia and in the Law of General Education for a complete transition to Latvian as the sole language of instruction from 1st to 12th grade and when a wave of protests occurred in Riga. ONAs about the protests were actively published in both national

and international news. Therefore, the first three excerpts below are the most extensive, showing the broader context before and after the mention of the LL of the protest. They illustrate fragments of the coverage of the June 2 protest and inclusion of descriptions of the LL of the protest in news articles by Latvian, European, and Russian news media. According to the law "On Meetings, Processions, and Pickets" (see Section 3.1), it was the procession in which oral announcements alongside written placards were allowed.

The text prepared by the largest Latvian news agency *LETA* is used in the article "Protest in Old Riga Against Transition to Latvian-language Education, Few Young People Participate" on the website LA.lv. Excerpt 1 shows that the *LETA* journalist(s) conveyed the following messages to the reader through the article: (1) this protest was not the only protest against the education reform organized by the socially conservative political party "Latvian Russian Union" (*Latviešu Krievu savienība* in Latvian), (2) the number of students at the protest was small, (3) the protesters held national and pro-Russian party's symbols and placards in various languages, which expressed the protesters' desire to protect the children of the Russian minority, the solidarity of the Russian community in the fight against linguistic and political injustice, and the dependence of national loyalty on the respect for the rights of ethnic/linguistic minorities (some of these placards were prepared by the organizers), (4) the protest organizers orally promised the attendees to show the government their political power and influence so that Russian interests would be respected in the country.

Excerpt 1 (LA.lv, 2018; originally in Latvian[1])

> Today, approximately 500 people gathered at Riflemen's Square in Riga for another protest action organized by the "Latvian Russian Union" (LRU) against the gradual transition to education in the Latvian language, but after the later march to the Cabinet of Ministers building, the number of participants increased to approximately 1000. However, there were few school-age youth among the protesters.
>
> As observed by the LETA agency, before the rally, LRU leaders Tatjana Ždanoka and Miroslavs Mitrofanovs organized the distribution of small-sized, most likely children's drawings to the attendees, on which was written in various languages, mostly Russian, "Our children—our rights". Those present held both Russian and Latvian flags, as well as flags with LKS symbols and placards that read in various languages "The school year is over, the fight continues", "Russians do not give up", "Stop the language genocide!", "If there is no respect, there is no loyalty", "Learn Latvian-yes! Learn in Latvian-no!", "This is not reform, this is repression!", "Russian is the language of victory", "Rights in the morning, loyalty in the evening", "No to assimilation!", etc.
>
> Speakers from the stage occasionally encouraged the crowd to chant various slogans together. For example, deputy Jakovs Pliners "moved" the audience with such exclamations as "Reform—a nightmare! Reform—no!" and "United we are invincible!", while Ždanoka shouted "Let's protect the children!". Mitrofanovs promised the crowd that, despite the attempts at intimidation, the fight for Russian as the language of instruction in schools will continue and be won. "This country will be ours, and the power of this country will work according to our dictates!" the LRU co-chairman told the protest participants.

European news portal Euronews published the article "Children go native as Latvian schools say 'Nē' to Russian". Excerpt 2 shows that it contains the emotionally charged description of the procession with mention of one placard shown in the protest, the feelings of the Russian minority (especially parents), who are aware that their native language

is defined as a foreign language in Latvia (see Section 3.4.1), and emphasis on both the political fight and the language conflict in Latvian society exacerbated by the reform. Like the Latvian news agency, readers are reminded that protests against the reform are common in Riga.

> Excerpt 2 (Euronews, 2018; in English)
>
> Demonstrations over school reforms are nothing new to the picturesque Baltic metropolis of Riga. The Latvian capital witnessed the latest protest on this hot topic at the beginning of June. A march from the Latvian Riflemen Monument in the center of the city's old town to the seat of government numbered over four thousand as drums punctuated the battle cry of "hands off Russian schools!"
>
> Aleksandrs Bartaševičs, the mayor of Rēzekne—a town with a very high percentage of Russian speakers—called this reform "a crusade against Russian schools". Many parents agree. "I believe, when a language that is native for over a third of the country's population is treated as foreign, it's nonsense", says mother-of-three Eugenia Kriukova. "We are not foreigners, and we are not going to become them." (. . .)
>
> School reform can be seen as a political fight for both the authors of it and the movements resistant to it and let's not forget that elections are on the horizon in the autumn. Transferring education in all schools into Latvian was one of the key points in the manifesto of National Alliance "All for Latvia!"—"For Fatherland and Freedom"—a nationalist party that is now part of the ruling coalition in parliament. A fight against this reform will breathe new life into the "Latvian Russian Union", a party that has been silent for many years and has lost most of its voters to "Harmony", a center-left party supported by many Russian-speakers.

In contrast, Ekaterina Sislova (*Екатерина Суслова* in original), the author of the article "We Will not Give up": How to Save Russian Schools in Latvia" on the Russian news portal Gazeta, in contrast to the previously cited news fragments in Latvian and English, points to Russia's possible reaction to the next step in the minority education reform, its involvement in the political and social life of Latvia. The article also includes information about the poster hidden on other news sites, which did not meet the legal requirements for organizing a protest (see Section 3.1). More than articles on Latvian and European news portals, this ONA highlights concerns about minority children and the protection of their linguistic rights.

> Excerpt 3 (Gazeta, 2018; in Russian)
>
> A rally in defense of Russian schools was held in Riga, with almost four and a half thousand people taking part in the march. Similar protests began back in March in response to the start of an educational reform that would involve switching all schools in Latvia to the Latvian language by 2022. The actions of Latvia, where a large number of Russian speakers live, have provoked the indignation of Moscow—the State Duma even proposed introducing economic sanctions in response.
>
> On 2 June, the "March in Defense of Children" was held in Riga—a rally against the discriminatory policy of the Latvian authorities towards Russian-language schools. According to the organizers, almost four and a half thousand people joined today's march. The rally started at 12:00 local time (13:00 Moscow time) from the Latvian Riflemen's Square in the historical center of Riga. From there, the protesters headed to the Cabinet of Ministers building located on Freedom Boulevard, chanting the slogan: "Hands off Russian schools!" The protesters car-

> ried banners with slogans in Russian and Latvian: "Russians do not surrender!", "Our children are our right!". Even before the march began, a small incident occurred among the protesters—several activists brought a provocative poster about the occupation, which was taken away and trampled by other protesters. The police had to intervene—they took away the instigators of the scandal.
>
> The rally in defense of Russian schools in Latvia was led by Miroslavs Mitrofanovs, Member of the European Parliament, and the leader of the party "Latvian Russian Union" Tatjana Ždanoka.

As can be seen, all three news portals explicitly show the organizers of the protest and the march route, briefly describe the participants (although their number varies across news sites), and mention the LL of the protest. All ONAs address the discriminatory nature of the education policy from the point of view of representors of the Russian minority in the protest, the sentiment of the Russian minority in relation to language policy, and the role and importance of the Russian language in the country. The ONAs also indirectly raise national security issues (i.e., through the quoted public promise of Mitrofanovs and the removal of the provocative poster).

Second, Table 1 shows that photos with LL texts from protests are significantly more included in articles in Latvian; 489 photos in total are part of the 26 ONAs. The average number is 19 per article, compared to articles in Russian with the average of 4 photos and to articles in English with the average of 1 photo.

Third, the number of mentions of LL texts is more frequently included in articles in English (16 cases out of 20 articles), compared to articles in Latvian and Russian (19 out of 26 and 13 out of 31, respectively).

The following subsections answer the research questions defined above regarding (1) typical features of LL texts of the protests, (2) commentators on LL texts, (3) purposes of the mentioning LL texts, (4) the level of detail of the mentions, and (5) discourses about minority education reform, the protests, protest participants, LL of protests, and language of LL texts of the protests.

5.1. Common Features of LL Texts of the Protests

One of the typical features of the selected ONAs is the use of photo(s) with LL texts of the relevant protest as their cover images. Almost all the ONAs have a titular image showing LL text(s). The examination of them shows two things. First, the photographs either draw closer to a single placard with an eye-catching message or depict a broad mass scene with numerous, partially readable or unreadable LL texts (see Figure 1 as an example). The highlighted placards most often speak on behalf of minority communities (mainly Russian), thus expressing the opinion or position of all minority groups or one entire group, most likely the Russian community. Examples include "[We] won't forget and forgive, Russian schools—our choice, and Russians won't give up" (all originally in Russian). Significantly less often, the placards illustrate an individual position that, due to the generalization of the content, can be applied to a wider group—minority students or entire community, for instance, "I am Latvia" in Latvian and "I want to learn in native language" in Russian.

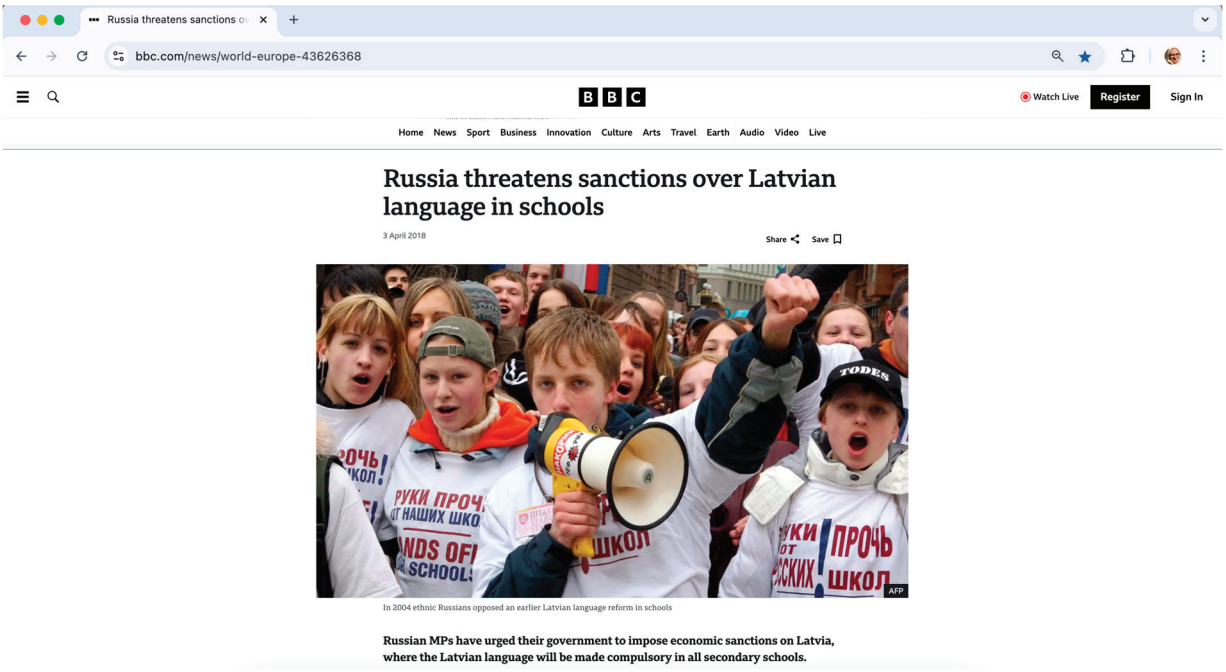

Figure 1. The titular image of BBC's article about a protest in 2018. (Screenshot from BBC.com on 2 February 2025).

Interestingly that two ONAs have re-used a photograph of an earlier protest: BBC article in English in 2018 and Baltnews article in Russian in 2021. Figure 1 shows the first case—the article has a photograph from a protest in 2004, and this fact is indicated under the image. However, the photograph can give misleading impression of the wide participation of students in the later protests too. Likewise, the central boy's loudspeaker and hand gesture illustrate the students' active agency: constant leadership and voice demanding to be heard.

Cover images, illustration of LL text(s) are frequently in Russian, thus indirectly placing a marker on the ethnic/linguistic profile of the participants involved in the protest(s).

The sociolinguistic analysis of the LL texts depicted in the photo/video galleries of ONAs shows that three languages—Latvian, Russian, English—are used in all examined protests. Combining the quantitative with the qualitative approach, we can see that each language has a slightly nuanced function in protests. Texts in Russian contain heavy criticism of the changes, the most categorical and emotionally charged statements, and more aggressive demands. A belonging with Latvia and support for knowledge of Latvian are more emphasized in texts in Latvian. English has been used to highlight the risk of discrimination, the values of a democratic society, and the public need for a unifying and loyal linguistic diversity (see examples throughout the article).

The use of identical slogans both in Latvian and Russian on one or two separate placards is the next typical feature of the LL texts of the protests. These are likely trying to reach readers from both major ethnic/linguistic communities. Figure 2 serves as one example. The article "Protest Action in Riga Against School Reform" in Russian on the website Euronews in 2017 is presented by the photograph with five LL texts. In the center of the image is an order "Enough!" in Latvian and Russian. Although the text is identical in both languages, the use of red color, italic font, and black shading highlight the text in Russian. The drawing of the former Minister of Education and Science, Kārlis Šadurskis, shows to whom the text is mainly addressed. This placard can be seen as an ideological clash if we assume that the text in Latvian shows Šadurskis's political stance and move (i.e., Enough is enough to offer the Russian language as the MOI in schools in Latvia) and the

text in Russian demonstrates the protesters' response (i.e., Enough, Šadurskis, of changes in Latvian education). To the right of the bilingual placard are three monolingual texts in Russian—"Hand off Russian Schools" (2x) and "Reform–Nightmare, No to Reform"—and one partially legible text in English (i.e., a part of the slogan "No discrimination!").

Figure 2. The LL texts of the protest in 2017. Central placard includes bilingual order "Enough!" in Latvian and Russian (Screenshot from ru.euronews.com on 4 March 2024).

5.2. Who Describes the LL Texts of the Protest(s)?

In all articles, journalists are those discussing on LL texts of the protests, and no expert or activist is invited to publicly express thoughts on language and/or content of LL texts in the protests and their (possible) impact on the development of minority education reform and/or public opinion.

A journalist name is indicated in 22 ONAs (out of 77), and, in five of these cases, the ONAs are co-publications by two authors (three articles in English, one article in Latvian, and one article in Russian). Three ONAs has a statement that a (non-specified) correspondent of relevant news portal or news agency prepared the article. In other ONAs, the authorship is attributable to the news portal or news agency from which the information for the article is taken. In turn, authors of photographs and videos are always indicated in ONAs.

In the comment section, ONAs' readers pay little attention to the LL texts of photos/videos. A few exceptions include comments on spelling mistakes in Russian and English texts and on the main slogan of the protesters ("Hands off Russian schools"). Two examples illustrate this. The first is the statement "Politikal Terror in Eirop/This is our Realiti" from the protest in 2004 that received the following comment: "I don't know why those stupid people thought to write that slogan in ENGLISH (the one on the photo), and it's also wrong!!!!:-) Well, isn't it ironic!:-))))" (TvNet, 2004b; in Latvian). The second is anonymous commentor's opinion: "If 'hands' means state funding, then definitely–"Hands off Russian schools!"" (Delfi, 2019; in Latvian). Here the public funding is seen as the main criterion for minority school (at least Russian) autonomy.

5.3. What Are Possible Aims of the Mentions?

Giving readers an idea of the atmosphere of the protests and sharing the most important messages from the protests, thus showing what protesters stand against/for and their main counterarguments to changes in minority education, can be considered the main goals of the mentions of the LL of the protests. To do this, authors of ONAs have chosen to provide all protest slogans in the language of the article.

An equally important goals of the mentions are the desire of the authors to (1) name protest organizers (mainly pro-Russian politicians Tatjana Ždanoka and Miroslavs Mitrofanovs, Latvian Russian Society, and the Latvian Association for the Support for Russian Language Schools), (2) highlight that people of the middle and older generations are the ones typically holding placards, (3) draw readers' attention to the fact that protest organizers distribute placards to be shown and lyrics for sing-alongs before or during the protest, (4) name the politicians (mainly ministers of Education and Science and prime ministers) who have been criticized by the protesters; (5) provide a brief overview of the development of the reform through the messages shown in the LL texts.

5.4. How Detail Are the Mentions About LL Text(s)?

Content analysis of ONAs shows that there are at least four approaches how LL of the protest(s) are mentioned: (1) referring to placards with written information alongside aurally shared information and semiotic attributes of the protest(s), (2) emphasizing the number of placards' holders, their belonging to a specific group (political, ethnic, linguistic) and age, (3) citing a few slogans as examples, and (4) comparing several protests and highlighting the fact that some slogans repeat from one protest to another.

LL texts are described briefly, mainly in 1–2 sentences and together with protestors' speeches, shouted phrases, and songs sung together. If there are any semiotic signs or elements visible in the protests, which author(s) of the relevant ONA found essential, they are also mentioned alongside the written information. Flags (Russian, Latvian, and protestors' organizations), the ribbon of Saint George (Russian military symbol), and the use of red color in the design of protest items (placards, balloons, ribbons) are the most typical examples (see, for instance, Excerpts 1–3).

Excerpt 4 shows not only the first three above-mentioned approaches in describing the LL of protest but also emotional assessment of the protest by anonymous author(s). The choice of lexical means (e.g., 'deafening volume' instead of 'volume', 'special placards' instead of just 'placards', and 'loudly shouted' instead of simply 'shouted', and the use of word pat 'even' in the last sentence) try to dramatize the event, highlighting the hooligan behavior and revolutionary tone of the activists.

Excerpt 4 (TvNet, 2004a; in Latvian)

> This morning, almost 1000 students from several Russian schools gathered at a picket in front of the Ministry of Education and Science, chanting slogans at a deafening volume: "No to reform!" and "Hands off Russian schools!". The teenagers have prepared special placards, and many are wearing uniform shirts that say: "For Russian schools". The young people occasionally shouted "No to reform" loudly, made obscene gestures at the ministry employees, who occasionally came to the ministry's windows. Some activists even tried to throw snowballs at the ministry.

Despite the large representation of students in the 2004 protests (~10,000), later years the core of the protesters were members of pro-Russian political parties and societies and Russian-speaking seniors. The age of the demonstrators is mentioned in almost every ONA (see, for instance, Excerpt 1 and 4) and ironically mocked by many of the articles'

commentators. The demonstrators who hold posters with the text from the position of students are especially harshly mocked, calling the holders of such texts "eternal students" and expressing regret that Russians must study in Latvian schools for so long. Similarly, if children with placards participate in the protests, this fact is always highlighted. For instance, the statement "I want to learn 100% in Russian" in Russian, held by small children in several protests since 2018, has widely covered on media.

Protest slogans are included both in ONAs' headlines and their main body. Four headlines of the ONAs have slogans from the describable protest. They are: "No to assimilation" in Latvian and "We won't give up"; "Hands of Russian schools!" and "We are not slaves. Slaves are mute" in Russian. The slogans mark the perseverance of activists and the perception of education reform as the authority's power to silence the voice of minorities. On the other hand, on average, three slogans as quotes from the protests are included in the main body of ONAs, thus representing the LL of the protest(s) a whole. 11 slogans are the highest number of quotes in one ONA in Latvian. Five ONAs retell the essence of the content of the LL texts instead of direct quoting them. Excerpts 5–7 illustrate this approach in describing the LL texts of the protest.

> Excerpt 5 (The Baltic Times, 2004; in English)
>
> Pupils held signs in Russian, English and Latvian excoriating educational reform, the human rights situation and Latvia itself. At another protest the following day in Esplanade Park one sign warned that the education reform could lead to a Baltic Kosovo disaster.
>
> Excerpt 6 (Delfi, 2017; in Russian)
>
> Protesters with placards and flashlights in their hands demanded to preserve education in Russian.
>
> Excerpt 7 (NRA, 2018; in Latvian)
>
> The main message of the posters was directed against the complete transition to teaching in the state language in secondary school, calling such a plan "violent assimilation".

Excerpt 5 shows that readers must know about (1) education reform, (2) activists' interpretation of human rights and their observance in Latvia, and (3) the case of Kosovo. The article does not directly state the opinions of the protesters about educational changes and their impact on the population of Latvia (or a large part of them). On the other hand, Examples 6 and 7 show the intentions of the protestors. The latter additionally provides activists' apprehension of the minority education reform.

A comparison with previous protests is another approach in portraying information about the LL texts of the protest(s). The latest protest (the focus of the relevant ONA) has most often been compared to one or two previous protests. It is done to highlight the similarities between them in terms of the number and age of participants and the main messages of the protests, which are related to the protestors' goal of preventing changes in minority education. Only one ONA in Russian additionally includes two photos from recent protests for comparison.

It is typical to repeat slogans quoted in previous ONAs, other news portals, or ONAs in another language. The most frequently repeated LL text is one of the main slogans of the protest campaign, "Hands off Russian schools!", which is included in 13 ONAs in all article languages and in one the article title (see above), therefore it has been picked for the title of this research article as well. Several ONAs describe the slogan as "already common," "widely chanted", and "more than ten years old". Since 2018, the slogan "Russian schools should be" in Russian has become prominent. Originally, it is quote by Catherine the Great at the end of the 18th century after the first Russian school opening on the territory of

Latvia, and this reference is mentioned in four ONAs in Russian and English prepared by the Russian news agency TASS.

Finally, it should be added that no ONA provides the link between the ONA and titular image of it and gives an indication of the photo/video gallery (if any) attached to the article. In other words, there is no guidance to look at the photo/visual materials for evidence of statements or additional information. Thus, the ONA and photo/visual information as attachments to the article can be considered two or three autonomous sources of information.

5.5. What Are the Main Discourses?

According to McLeod and Hertog's (1999) identified key frames in protests' coverage in news (i.e., riot, confrontation, spectacle, and debate), the presentation of Latvian protests against minority education reform on online news portals refers to a debate frame with certain spectacle frame features.

Content analysis of the coverage of the LL of protests in 77 ONAs shows that the ONAs mainly emphasize the position of the activists, showing those things that the protesters are targeting through the LL texts and which they publicly criticize (i.e., minority education reform, discrimination, assimilation, the destruction of Russian schools and of the Russian language). Only four ONAs show that activists advocate for the education of Russian minority children in their native language and the preservation of Russian schools. Three of these articles are prepared by Russian news agencies. And only one Latvian national news portal had the description of the LL texts in which first the slogans that illustrate the wishes of the protesters, following by the slogans that criticizes the minority education reform (LSM, 2019). In this vein, the LL texts of the protests function as a public way to object and criticize the opposition—the government—and its planned, adapted, or implemented changes in education.

5.5.1. The Main Narratives

The nature of the protests and their participants ground the dissemination and reinforcement of key themes, narratives, and discourses. However, the coverage of the LL of the protest(s) on the online media depicts a significantly narrower range of issues than the article's photo/video materials. The main narratives, or frames, that are reinforced through the descriptions of the LLs included in the articles are two: (1) the Russian community is united and persistent in the fight against the ethnolinguistically unjust education policy pursued by the government, and (2) students, parents, and the Russian community as a whole should have the right to choose which educational program to study at their schools.

The articles in Russian (especially by the Russian news media) repeatedly emphasize that the Russian community is united and persistent in its fight against linguistic/ethnic discrimination in Latvia. The LL texts of protests indicate that nationalization carried out by Latvians (mainly Latvian political forces) is fascism and ethnolinguistic totalitarianism at the expense of linguistic assimilation (also called linguistic genocide by protesters). The government's decisions related to minority education have been seen as a way of showing power to target the minority, mainly Russian community, and push the Russian language out of the practice of language use in Latvia.

The 2018 protests, which also included support groups from other Latvian cities where Russian-speakers constitute a large part of the population (e.g., Daugavpils and Rēzekne from Eastern Latvia), have been widely covered in the ONAs, considering the territorially wide area of support (see Excerpt 2). Such LL texts as "I am Latvia", "We [are] Latvia" in Latvian or Russian and "We, Latvians (!) are against full transition to education in Latvian" in Latvian show that the protesters try to emphasize the fact that they are also Latvians,

a part of Latvia, which is linguistically and ethnically different from the title nation and which cannot be ignored in the planning and implementation of language policy. The preservation of minority (mainly Russian) schools with minority languages as languages of instruction has been seen as one of the strategies to prevent ethnic and possibly military conflicts. The LL text "Russian Schools—Peace in Latvia" in Russian proves this.

However, photo/video materials provide more nuanced information, implicitly touching the topic of Latvian inhabitants' loyalty and patriotism. For instance, a photo with the visually simple poster on an A4 sheet of paper shown at a protest in 2018—"You Will not be Loved by Force and You Will not Build a Happy Country [by Force]!" in Latvian—shares the idea that social changes imposed by the authorities in minority communities will not cause positive emotions towards the oppressors and will not contribute to the well-being of all citizens of the country. The opportunity to get an education in the native languages of all Latvian residents is associated with mutual respect, which is the basis of the guarantor of loyalty to the country. The slogan "If there is no respect, there is no loyalty" in Latvian shown in another protest illustrates this.

The second message cultivated in ONAs highlights the need for autonomy of minority schools in language management and the right of parents (communities) to choose the language of instruction for their children (the next generation). The slogans cited in the articles from the LLs of the protests—"[We are] For free choice of language of education!" in Latvian and Russian, "Russian Speech in schools" in Russian, "Our children—our choice" in Russian, "Our children must have our schools" in Russian, "We shall defend our Russian schools" in English, and "[We] will not betray our children" in Russian—show this.

However, the articles barely mention the issue of education quality, which also slightly appears in the LL texts of the protests included in the photo galleries. Examples include "[We stand] For meaningful education, against meaningless reforms" in Russian, "Be punished for quality education in the native language, the Russian language" in Latvian, and "Better education in the native language" in Latvian. Bilingual LL texts in Latvian and Russian, shown at a protest in 2019, demonstrated prominent Latvian historical figures who studied in Russian schools (e.g., film director Sergej Eisenstein, professor and politician Ivan Jupatov, comedian and playwright Mihail Zadornov) and received international recognition. These public texts tried to function as examples of the effectiveness of minority programs and student excellence.

5.5.2. Acknowledging Multilingual LL of Protests

In the context of traditional LL studies, an important discourse in the media is the recognition of the multilingualism of the LLs of the protests. The description of the LL of the protest(s) in ONAs hardly includes any information about the use of languages; where such information is included, it is included rather carelessly. 11 ONAs out of 77 examinees mention language(s) used in LL texts. Although the photos/videos included in ONAs show the use of three languages—Latvian, Russian, and English—in all protests, they all are listed only in three ONAs. Two languages—Latvian and Russian—are named in four cases. Other ONAs mention one language, state that one language is mainly used, or utilizes words of uncertainty such as 'several', 'various', and 'different', without specifying any language (see, for instance, Excerpt 1).

Similarly, the real language situation is not shown by the quoted slogans, since they all are translated into the language of the article without any indication of their original language. Excerpts 8 and 9 are the only exceptions that at least partly names visible languages of the quoted LL texts.

> Excerpt 8 (Delfi, 2019; in Latvian)
>
> The gathered protestors wore shirts with pins that read "Russian schools forever!" **in English** on their overcoats and coats. Several placards were also prepared **in English**, for example, which in translation would read "Stop linguistic genocide!" and "Our language is our soul, our right!" The protest also featured posters **in Latvian**, such as "Learn Latvian—Yes! Learn in Latvian—No!" [emphasis by the author]

However, although the titular image of this ONA presents six placards in Russian, it is excluded of the description of the LL of the protest.

> Excerpt 9 (TvNet, 2024; in Latvian)
>
> One of the protesters is holding a large Latvian flag, while the man standing next to him is holding a placard with the inscription **in Russian** "We are Latvia." Another protester is holding a placard with the inscription "For free choice of language of instruction", and another is holding a placard with the inscription "To learn in the native language". [emphasis by the author]

Example 9 provides unclear information about the language used in the LL texts. Although all slogans originally are in Russian, the reader may get the impression that only the first slogan quoted is in Russian.

5.5.3. Perception of the State Language and the Russian Language

An equally important sociolinguistics-related discourse is protestors' perception of the role and value of the state language and minority language(s) in Latvian society. The mentions of the LLs of the protests show how activists perceive the Russian language and the state language. The Russian language is characterized as "my/our language", "our soul", "mother tongue", "our right", and "more than a language". The Latvian language, in turn, is described as "second language", which must be studied in schools as one of the subjects. In one case the symbolic meaning of the language is highlighted (implicitly also the cultural aspect), while in the other case the political criterion is essential in the description of the language. Language use, economic value, and the socio-pragmatic importance of languages in Latvia are not mentioned.

Surprisingly, provocative LL texts such as "Russian is the Language of Victory" and "A Strong Coffin for Every Russophobe", both originally in Russian, each included in two ONAs, but not discussed in any. The first can be perceived as an indirect reference to the sociolinguistic experience in Soviet Latvia (as a part of communism ideology, language policy and practices), while the second balances between freedom of speech, depicting the tension in ethnic relations in Latvia and the incitement of ethnic hatred; both are under question of legibility (see Section 3.1). Similarly, journalists have not paid attention to the posters in 2017 which show large images of an old homeless male person and a dead female body due to drug overdose and the text "Thank you. Now I speak Latvian" in Latvian, visually representing the possible consequences of the implementation of the education reform in an emotionally heightened way. Both multimodal placards represent spectacle frame, or dramatic and individualistic narrative (according to McLeod & Hertog, 1999).

It should be added that the media coverage of the protests does not inform readers about the approximate number of placards in the protests (e.g., Are there three or thirty placards?) and the typical features of the placards. Moreover, media do not speak about differences in placard content based on the language used in LL text(s). In other words, the linguistic and sociolinguistic description and texts analysis of the LL texts is missing.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

The goal of the paper was to identify and characterize ways in which 77 online news articles published on Latvian, Russian, and European news portals between 2004 and 2024 portrayed the LL of protests against minority education reform and to note the main discourses related to that LL.

In result of content analysis of ONAs, four typical approaches in portraying LL of the protest(s) were defined: (1) referring to placards with written information alongside aurally shared information and semiotic attributes of the protest(s), (2) emphasizing the number of placards' holders, their belonging to a specific group (political, ethnic, linguistic) and age, (3) citing a few slogans as examples, and (4) comparing several protests and highlighting the fact that some slogans repeat from one protest to another. News authors often use the strategy of quoting slogans already demonstrated in previous protests, which readers, most likely, already recognize and can form specific associations with the protest participants—representatives of the Russian community—and their main message—the Latvian government's decisions on language in education are unfair and discriminatory.

The examined ONAs allow photos with LL texts to speak for themselves, as there are no direct references to photo/video galleries in the articles and their description in the written part of the articles is very laconic, general, even in many cases superficial and careless; for instance, ignoring the emotional language, hate speech, potentially ethnic hatred-inciting texts, and dramatic visual images revealed by protest posters. The authors of the articles also pay almost no attention to the languages used in the protests, offering the quoted slogans in the languages of the article without indicating the original language.

When comparing the representation of the LL of protests on Latvian, Russian, and European news websites, no significant differences are visible in the approaches to including LL texts in the article and to describing them. Strategies for creating and cultivating other discourses and narratives related to the protests (e.g., the choice of protest dates and march routes, support from Russia and pro-Russian organizations, political fights (see examples 1–3), linguistic rights of minorities, and power) differ, but they are beyond the scope of this article. It should only be noted that neither the content of the LL texts in protests nor the description of protest signage on news websites has changed in connection with Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The second part of the article's aim was related to the main discourses revealed or concealed by descriptions of LL of protests on news websites. The result of content analysis of ONAs shows that there are two dominant narratives, or media repeatedly spread frames of the protests: (1) the Russian community is united and persistent in the fight against the ethnolinguistically unjust education policy pursued by the government, and (2) students, parents, and the Russian community as a whole should have the right to choose which educational program to study at their schools. As we can see, although the education reform affects all minority schools in Latvia, the activists represent the Russian community (at least some part of it) in the protests and speak about the authorities' unfair targeting of the Russian community in Latvia and the suppression of the Russian language from education. It is natural that online media, when describing the protests, focus their attention on the "issue" of the Russian minority community, which is referred to as the hot potato (Euronews, 2018; in English).

However, the first narrative should be viewed critically. The main participants of the protests are the organizers (political forces) and their supporters (individual pro-Russians), who in most cases are people of the older generation. Thus, the makeup of the participants indicates a lack of unity in the Russian community's opinion regarding the reform. Most people affected by the reforms barely participated in the protests after 2004 (with exceptions in some protests in 2018), perhaps because, they do not see benefits of protesting, or, as

shown by several surveys and studies, the number of parents, students, and teachers who accept the changes and/or see them in positive light is gradually increasing. Students see the transition to the state language more often without emotional aggravation, and they feel morally and linguistically more confident than even their teachers (Hogan-Brun, 2007; Vēbere, 2017; Lazdiņa & Marten, 2021; Anstrate, 2022; Pāvula, 2024). However, both authors of LL texts and journalists have not paid attention to students' desire and readiness to switch to studying exclusively in Latvian, citing, for example, survey data obtained by the protesters themselves or researchers. Similarly, the LL texts of the protests and their media coverage do not address the teachers' linguistic competence in Latvian and their professional readiness to continue working in schools. As some online news articles show (e.g., Dēvica, 2022; Ambote, 2023; Spriņģe, 2018), the so-called former minority schools lack teachers to teach various subjects (including Latvian).

Of course, it cannot be denied that protest participants are united in their views on the education reform as a move against the Russian minority and on the preservation of Russian schools in Latvia. They are also united in their verbal condemnation and actions in a situation where someone challenges their opinions. One such case has been recorded, during the 1 May 2018, protest, in which a Latvian nationalistic-minded man (later called *drosmīgais latvietis* 'the brave Latvian' on Latvian national news portals) held up a poster with the message "A guest, an idiot, or an occupier who imposes his/her own language cannot know the language of the country in which s/he lives!" in Latvian. Police intervened when many aggressive protestors started physically pushing the man and tore up the poster (Jauns, 2018; in Latvian). Other protests have passed without ethnic clashes and violence.

According to Nelde's (1987) assumption, in situations of language conflict, language is only a secondary symbol, since the real origins of conflict relate to other socioeconomic, political, religious, psychological, or historical issues. The protests against minority education reform and their coverage on news portals should be assessed in the broader context of language policy and integration policy (see Section 1), political power, economic influence, and the labor market. Individual placards with such strong labels of Latvia as fascistic and ethnolinguistically totalitarian should be viewed with caution, because these statements also speak of Kremlin propaganda, which maintains the narrative of the Russian minority as victims in post-Soviet countries. LL texts can be (and in many cases are) tools of Russian ideology to incite discontent among the Russian community and incite ethnic hatred. We cannot forget that the Russian language in Latvian education is not only a mean of acquiring school subjects but also a tool of spreading Russian-oriented ideology and narratives through educational materials, a mean to maintain linguistic presence in the nation-state, and a cultural symbol (and controlling tool) with which politicians can buy Russian-speakers' votes. However, the small impact of the protests on the changes in the educational reform initiated by the government, and laconic and general view of the protests by news portals raise questions about the effectiveness of protests (including LL) as a form of public debates in some sociopolitical settings (Burr et al., 2025, p. 439). The failure to involve experts in the evaluation of protest texts indirectly demonstrates insufficient number of research-based public discussions of language policy and sociolinguistics topics in the media. It seems absurd that protests, which have been taking place regularly with varying intensity for so long, have not been critically evaluated more broadly by trying to understand the role of textual information in the creation and dissemination of certain narratives in society, the thoughts of residents about the protests and the messages expressed in them. But as this paper shows, LL texts can synthesize broad topics such as minority rights, ethnic relations, power, and education accessibility/quality, and this synthesis should be addressed in the following studies as well.

By saying that, the author acknowledge that the article does not cover all possible discourses and does not provide in-depth analysis of the content of LL texts included in ONAs as attachments. The limitations of the article also go towards the methodology. Although 77 ONA is a significant number for the case study, the study most likely did not include all websites with descriptions of protests and illustrative materials (photos/videos with LL texts) from them. The study did not include websites in other languages, for example, other minority languages of Latvia, national languages of neighboring countries, German, French, etc. These and other, perhaps unacknowledged, limitations pave the way for further research. And it is my hope that the article will inspire other LL researchers to look at the representation of LL texts in the media in other sociopolitical contexts.

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Appendix A. Websites Included in the Study and Their Brief Description

Number	Portal	Language	Description
1.	TvNet.lv	Latvian	News portals of Latvia's largest online media group "TvNet"
2.	rus.TvNet.lv	Russian	
3.	Apollo.lv	Latvian	
4.	Delfi.lv	Latvian	News portals of the largest Internet mass media company in the Baltic State "Ekspress Grupp"
5.	rus.delfi.lv	Russian	
6.	Jauns.lv	Latvian	News portal by "Rīgas Viļņi", the second biggest Latvian publishing house
7.	Diena.lv	Latvian	News portal of "Diena", one of the largest daily newspapers in Latvia
8.	Nra.lv	Latvian	Digital daily news newspaper with nationalistic political orientation
9.	Leta.lv	Latvian	News portal by the main Latvian national news agency "Leta" owned by Estonian company "Postimees Group"
10.	Ir.lv	Latvian	News portal by independent media company "Cits medijs"
11.	LSM.lv	Latvian	Latvian Broadcasting Corporation's (Latvijas Sabiedriskie Mediji, or LSM, in Latvian) internet platforms
12.	eng.LSM.lv	English	
13.	rus.LSM.lv	Russian	
14.	la.lv	Latvian	News portal by "Latvijas Mediji", one of the largest periodical and book publishers in Latvia
15.	ziņas.tv3.lv	Latvian	News portal by the commercial media agency "All Media Latvia"
16.	Baltictimes.com	English	International online newspaper covering all the Baltic states
17.	Politico.eu	English	European news portal covering politics, policy, and personalities of EU
18.	Euronews.com	English	International news portal in the EU
19.	ru.euronews.com	Russian	

Number	Portal	Language	Description
20.	bbc.com	English	News portal by "BBC", or British Broadcasting Corporation, a public British broadcasting company that operates under a royal charter
21.	euractiv.com	English	European news portal, seen as one of the most influential EU sources
22.	rus.postimees.ee	Russian	Russian-language version of the portal "Postimees", the oldest news provider in Estonia
23.	russkije.lv	Russian	Informative non-commercial website about Russians living in Latvia
24.	news.ru	Russian	Russian independent online news portal generally critical of the Russian government; unactive
25.	dailystorm.ru	Russian	Russian news portal
26.	gazeta.ru	Russian	Russian news site based in Moscow
27.	lv.sputniknews.ru	Russian	News portal by Russian news agency "Sputnik" internationally criticized for spreading fake news, disinformation, and Russian propaganda
28.	lv.baltnews.com	Russian	News portal in the Baltic states published by the Russian news agency "Baltnews", considered to be a Kremlin-owned "mouthpiece of Russian propaganda" media
29.	tass.com	English	Website by Russian-state owned news agency, the largest Russian news agency and of the biggest international information agencies, cited as a source of disinformation

Notes

[1] All translations from Latvian and Russian into English are done by the author.

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Article

How Deutsche Welle Shapes Knowledge and Behaviour of Syrian Diaspora

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Abstract: This study explores the impact of DW's news coverage on the perceptions, knowledge, and behavioural changes of the Syrian diaspora in Germany regarding the Syrian crisis. Grounded in the Uses and Gratifications theory, data were collected from 207 Syrian immigrants residing in Germany between September and November 2023 using a convenience sampling approach. The findings reveal that DW is perceived as a credible and objective news source that provides comprehensive and balanced coverage of the Syrian crisis. Exposure to DW's reporting significantly enhanced respondents' understanding of the crisis, enabling them to engage in informed discussions. DW's coverage motivated behavioural changes, encouraging participation in social media discussions and humanitarian initiatives. This study highlights the critical role of trusted international media in shaping diaspora communities' perceptions, knowledge, and actions during crises. These findings also highlight DW's influence as a key information source for the Syrian diaspora, fostering both awareness and proactive engagement with the ongoing crisis.

Keywords: Deutsche Welle (DW); the Syrian crisis; news consumption; behavioural change; diaspora

1. Introduction

The 2011 Arab uprisings marked the onset of widespread social and political upheaval, with Syria experiencing one of the most devastating and prolonged conflicts (Balla, 2023; Kozman et al., 2021). The Syrian crisis, fuelled by years of civil war and human rights violations, has resulted in one of the largest displacement crises in recent history. Millions of Syrians flee conflict and persecution (Oliveira, 2023), with Europe facing both a moral imperative and a significant challenge in responding to the influx of refugees (Czymara & Klingeren, 2022; Deutsche Welle, 2024). Among the host countries, Germany has emerged as a primary destination for Syrian immigrants, with over a million Syrian refugees (Deutsche Welle, 2024). Such movement requires the necessity of reliable access to information and news about the conflict and its surroundings (back home and in the hosting countries). For example, refugees face significant challenges related to bureaucracy, legal status, housing, etc., where mainstream media outlets (e.g., Deutsche Welle channel) can play, especially those offering content in Arabic, a vital role in informing refugees about their rights and the bureaucratic processes as well as shaping their understanding of the conflicts/and the hosting country's roles. For example, Blach-Ørsten et al. (2023) highlight how digital news media serve as a key tool for disseminating updates and fostering public

awareness. Accurate and timely reporting during crises is essential to reduce uncertainty and guide public response. Kalogiannidis et al. (2023) emphasise that the media's role goes beyond mere information dissemination; it actively influences public confidence and crisis management strategies. Similarly, Reilly and Atanasova (2016) note that both traditional and social media platforms have become indispensable during emergencies, offering real-time updates and strengthening community resilience. Thus, the role of international news media, particularly Deutsche Welle (hereafter DW), which provides news in Arabic, becomes critical in shaping the perceptions, knowledge, and behaviours of the Syrian diaspora communities by providing content that helps refugees navigate their new world and understand local cultural norms (Green et al., 2021).

Media consumption during crises is not merely a means of acquiring information (Bailey et al., 2007; Czymara & Klingeren, 2022). It is a mechanism for coping with uncertainty and fostering a sense of connection to one's homeland. Diaspora communities often turn to trusted international news platforms to understand the multifaceted dimensions of conflicts (Georgiou, 2013; Karim & Al-Rawi, 2018; Miladi, 2006). However, because media coverage shapes how the public [immigrants] understand the crisis and its implications, the media works not only in conveying facts to the public but also in influencing the public's perceptions of the situation in the homeland. This is part of the framing that is used by most media outlets to frame and present news stories, where journalists selectively choose the topics to convey to their viewers and listeners (An & Gower, 2009; Elareshi et al., 2021). In doing so, consuming and framing a crisis directs viewers to the important details and often incorporates different aspects using such words and phrases, which affect viewers' perceptions and knowledge. However, K. Chen et al. (2023) confirm that viewers increasingly depend on news media to acquire information during war and crises.

Several studies have examined news consumption and the narratives of crises, highlighting the role of media outlets such as the BBC and CNN in covering international crises (Cooper et al., 2021; Riad et al., 2022; Thorbjørnsrud & Figenschou, 2022). However, to date, there is limited empirical research that investigates how the content produced by DW shapes the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural orientations of the Syrian diaspora in Germany. Our study addresses this gap by examining the interplay between DW's coverage and the perceptions, knowledge acquisition, and behavioural responses among Syrian immigrants (Al Husein & Wagner, 2023). Our main argument posits that DW, as a trusted and linguistically accessible media outlet, acts as both a source of transnational identity reinforcement and a catalyst for socio-political engagement.

Such narratives can fuel criticism of government actions or promote social solidarity and mutual assistance, as Hawdon et al. (2012) indicate. Understanding how DW's presenting news stories regarding Syrian immigrants in Germany helps to understand more about the media's role in conflict and diaspora integration (Balla, 2023; el-Nawawy & Elmasry, 2024). To examine this, this study considers Syrian immigrants or diasporic audiences in the EU as an exogenous shock that can lead to news consumption (Van Aelst et al., 2021). To explore this, we conducted a quantitative survey of 207 Syrian immigrants residing in Germany. Three key questions guide our study: how does DW's news coverage of the Syrian crisis affect Syrian immigrants' perceptions of the conflict, their knowledge, and their behavioural responses regarding the crisis?

2. Literature Review

2.1. News Media and Crisis Reporting

Crisis reporting serves as a vital source of information and news, particularly for communities affected directly or indirectly by conflict (Mushtaq et al., 2024; Perreault & Perreault, 2021). They also happen unexpectedly and disrupt normal routines in the

creation of news, fade norms, and affect policy formation. This requires balanced and ethical reporting practices that prioritise constructive engagement over sensationalism. In their study, Czymara and Klingeren (2022) also address audience behaviour in relation to news media by looking at how consumption patterns can differ between online and print media. They found that differences in media framing and content may lead to variations in audience perceptions and understanding.

For example, during the peak of Europe's 'Migration Crisis' in 2015, German media reported on key events such as large influxes of refugees and subsequent anti-immigrant sentiments. These narratives influenced the public's attitudes towards immigrants and refugees (Czymara & Klingeren, 2022). That said, this elevated need for information and news—often framed within the 'need for orientation' term—compels audiences to turn to trusted news sources that can provide immediate updates and expert opinions (Van Aelst et al., 2021). However, little scholarly attention has been paid to how DW's coverage is perceived by immigrants and refugees (Karim & Al-Rawi, 2018). We aim to fill this gap by hypothesising that (H1) DW's coverage of the Syrian crisis positively affected immigrants' perceptions.

2.2. Knowledge and News Media Exposure

The ability of news media to enhance public understanding of crises has been extensively studied. Widyastuti (2021) identifies media as a critical tool for disaster literacy, delivering educational content that promotes preparedness and informed responses. The relationship between knowledge and news exposure has been examined. Research has found that people who felt a higher concern about the impact of the crisis (e.g., COVID-19, conflict) and had a greater trust in news media exhibited increased news consumption (Bailey et al., 2007; Van Aelst et al., 2021). Hasibuan et al. (2022) extend this argument, showing how targeted reporting can improve awareness of disaster risks and foster community empathy. Similarly, Selvarajah and Fiorito (2023) examine the relationship between international law and media framing during the Russia–Ukraine conflict, demonstrating how news coverage can elevate public awareness of humanitarian issues and legal accountability. This means that knowledge facilitation through trusted news sources is essential during a crisis. However, the effectiveness of media in promoting knowledge depends on trust and credibility (A. Chen & Zhang, 2022; Lindgren, 2013; Reese, 2007). In fact, Czymara and Klingeren (2022) emphasise the importance of understanding what information people are exposed to through different media outlets. For example, they note that the patterns of news coverage can significantly affect public discourse through diverse frames and narratives in the news and can enhance or limit the public's knowledge about complex issues. As de Hoog and Verboon (2020) argue, audiences are more likely to retain and apply information when it comes from reliable sources. This highlights the importance of media outlets such as DW, which are perceived as credible providers of in-depth, unbiased reporting. Thus, the relationship between knowledge and news exposure acquisition is critical in navigating complex situations, especially in times of uncertainty like the Syrian crisis. Therefore, we hypothesised that (H2) DW's coverage of the Syrian crisis positively affected immigrants' knowledge.

2.3. News Media and Audience Behaviour

Exposure to crisis coverage often leads to measurable changes in audience behaviour. Studies, e.g., Eisele et al. (2022) and Mushtaq et al. (2024) indicate how emotionally charged reporting can provoke social engagement such as sharing news on social media or participating in discussions. In the context of humanitarian crises, Franks (2013) illustrates how compelling visual narratives such as photojournalism have historically mobilised

public support and humanitarian aid. However, media-induced behavioural change is not always positive. Abroms and Maibach (2008) caution that sensationalised reporting can distort public perceptions and lead to misinformed actions. We, therefore, hypothesised that (H3) DW's coverage of the Syrian crisis positively affected immigrants' behaviours.

2.4. Framing the Syrian Conflict in Global Media

The media coverage of the Syrian conflict has attracted considerable scholarly attention over the past decade (Chib & Ang, 2023; Green et al., 2021; Karim & Al-Rawi, 2018; Xu & Maitland, 2016). For example, Western media, particularly CNN, the BBC, and The New York Times, have frequently been critiqued for oscillating between humanitarian empathy and security-based framing. They often privilege elite sources while marginalising Syrian voices (see, e.g., Cooper et al., 2021; el-Nawawy & Elmasry, 2024). These representations have tended to construct refugees either as passive victims or as geopolitical burdens. In their study, el-Nawawy and Elmasry (2024) identified a consistent pattern in elite US newspapers of portraying Syrian refugees as 'less worthy' compared to Ukrainian refugees. This reflects orientations and racialised hierarchies of suffering.

Conversely, Arab media outlets such as Al Jazeera TV and Al Arabia TV have approached the conflict through varied lenses, as they are, of course, led by their state affiliations and sectarian politics. For example, Karim and Al-Rawi (2018) argue that Arab media diasporic audiences tend to select international media sources such as BBC Arabic, DW Arabic, or France 24 Arabic to navigate the polarised or propagandist nature of regional media. In this sense, DW occupies a unique yet underexplored position. Unlike CNN or Al Jazeera, DW is a Western media producing content in Arabic, explicitly tailored for Middle Eastern audiences. Existing studies have examined a similar topic. Al Husein and Wagner (2023) examined DW's coverage in the context of return migration discourses. Oliveira (2023) compared German media's coverage of the Syrian and Ukrainian wars, pointing to inconsistencies in tone and urgency. However, none of these studies offer a quantitative, audience-focused analysis of DW's Arabic-language content as perceived and internalised by Syrian diaspora populations in Germany.

Our study, therefore, makes a distinctive contribution to understanding media production and media reception, focusing on how DW's framing of the Syrian conflict informs the perceptions, knowledge, and behavioural orientations of the diaspora.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study employs the Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G) as its primary conceptual lens to analyse news consumption and how Syrian refugees in Germany interact with DW news content during the Syrian crisis (Green et al., 2021). Developed by Katz et al. (1973), the theory posits that individuals actively select media sources and messages, such as DW's news coverage, to fulfil specific psychological and social needs. These choices are influenced by personal interests, preferences, and the need for information during critical events (Karim & Al-Rawi, 2018). Our study examines how Syrian immigrants choose DW as a news source to satisfy their informational needs, whether for knowledge or habitual consumption. The theory also accounts for differences in media consumption behaviours, such as the preference for online vs. traditional media during crises. As Apuke and Omar (2020) Choi (2016) suggest, motivations for consuming news can vary widely depending on personal needs and the context of the crisis. This framework is particularly relevant for understanding how DW's representation of the Syrian crisis is constructed and received by the Syrian diaspora (Georgiou, 2013; Miladi, 2006).

The literature highlights the transformative potential of news media consumption in crisis contexts, from educating viewers to shaping their perceptions, knowledge, and

behaviours (Figure 1). However, the impact of media consumption varies across cultural and demographic groups, highlighting the need for context-sensitive analysis (Al-Jaber & Elareshi, 2014; Jie Chan et al., 2022). This study builds on these insights by investigating how DW's news coverage of the Syrian crisis influences the perceptions, knowledge, and behaviours of Syrian immigrants in Germany. For example, in informational gratification and knowledge acquisition, Syrian refugees engage with DW primarily to satisfy informational needs regarding the evolving crisis in their homeland. Accordingly, such media use is purposive and goal-directed—audiences turn to specific outlets as they perceive them as credible, relevant, and linguistically accessible (Choi, 2016; Green et al., 2021). For the cognitive and evaluative gratification through perception formation, beyond information-seeking, DW provides a cognitive lens through which audiences make evaluative judgements, which Katz et al. (1973, p. 513) called 'value reinforcement' and later Ruggiero (2007) called 'reality testing'. Regarding social gratification and behavioural activation, U&G also accounts for how media use fosters a sense of social belonging, especially in diasporic contexts where feelings of marginalisation are common. News consumption can catalyse real-world behaviour from online engagement to offline actions (Eisele et al., 2022; Miladi, 2006). In fact, the media acts as a bridge between personal emotions and collective action.

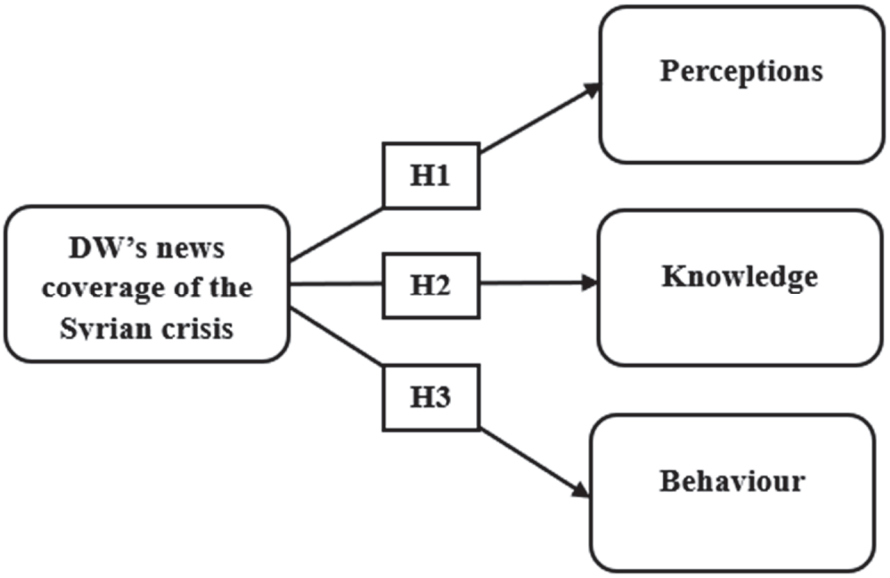

Figure 1. The research framework model.

4. Methodology

4.1. Study Design

This study employs a quantitative research design to collect and analyse data systematically. Quantitative approaches are well-suited for capturing generalisable insights and testing hypotheses about the relationship between media exposure and audience responses. This study focuses on Syrian immigrants residing in Germany who consume DW content about the Syrian crisis. A structured survey is used as the primary data collection tool, allowing for the standardisation of responses and ensuring participant reliability.

4.2. Data Collection

The questionnaire was developed based on validated scales from existing literature to measure the constructs of interest: perceptions of DW's coverage, the knowledge effect of exposure, and behavioural changes. The survey items were refined to align with the

study's objectives and translated into Arabic language to ensure clarity and accessibility for the target population.

4.3. Sampling and Respondent Recruitment

This study employed a convenience sampling approach, targeting Syrian immigrants through community centres, social media groups, and cultural events during the period from September to November 2023. While this method may limit the generalisability of findings, it provides access to a specific and relevant population segment. The focus remained on selecting individuals who watch German television. A total of 207 respondents participated in the survey, reflecting diverse demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education level, and length of stay in Germany. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan. Participants provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire and were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The research adhered to ethical guidelines, respecting participants' autonomy and privacy.

The demographic profile of the respondents provides a comprehensive understanding of the study population (Table 1). Among the 207 respondents, 61% were male, and 39% were female. The age distribution revealed that 34.8% were between 21 and 30 years old, while 11.6% were between 41 and 50 years old. Educational attainment varied, with 34.9% holding a high school diploma, followed by those holding a college degree (33.4%) and a bachelor's degree (31.9%). The occupational distribution was equally varied, with 45.9% working as freelancers, 27.5% unemployed, 17.4% receiving national aid, and 9.2% being university students. The respondents' length of stay in Germany ranged from 40.1% residing for 4–6 years to 19.8% for a year or less and 18.4% for 7–9 years. Only 8.7% had lived in Germany for over a decade, highlighting the relatively recent nature of their migration and DW's potential as a critical resource for connecting them to their homeland. This diversity also reflects the heterogeneous socio-economic profiles of Syrian immigrants in Germany.

Table 1. The sample's demographic profile.

Construct	Item	N	%
Gender	Male	127	61.4%
	Female	80	38.6%
Age	18–20	22	10.6%
	21–30	72	34.8%
	31–40	37	17.9%
	41–50	24	11.6%
	51 or above	52	25.1%
Educational Level	High school	72	34.9%
	College	69	33.4%
	Bachelor's degree or more	66	31.9%
Occupation	University student	19	9.2%
	Unemployed	57	27.5%
	Freelance	95	45.9%
	Receive national aid	36	17.4%

Table 1. *Cont.*

Construct	Item	N	%
Residing in Germany	1 year or less	41	19.8%
	2–3 years	27	13.0%
	4–6 years	83	40.1%
	7–9 years	38	18.4%
	10 years and more	18	8.7%

4.4. Data Analysis

This study uses Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to examine the relationship between the independent variable (exposure to DW's coverage) and the dependent variables (perceptions, knowledge, and behavioural changes). SEM was chosen for its ability to handle complex relationships and provide insights into both direct and indirect effects (AlHamad, 2020; Leong et al., 2019). Preliminary analysis included descriptive statistics and normality testing to ensure data suitability for advanced statistical techniques. For the normality test, we employed both Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests (Table 2) (Tsagris & Pandis, 2021). The significance values related to each variable are insignificant, exceeding the standard *p*-value of 0.05, suggesting that the data were not normally distributed. Consequently, this study was validated using parametric tests for the analysis.

Table 2. Data normality testing.

Construct	Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test		Shapiro–Wilk Test	
	Statistic	Sig.	Statistic	Sig.
DW's news coverage	0.639	0.143	0.388	0.301
Perceptions	0.633	0.124	0.112	0.108
Knowledge	0.509	0.491	0.353	0.637
Behavioural changes	0.635	0.191	0.346	0.425

5. Results

5.1. Media Consumption Patterns

The analysis revealed that DW remains the most trusted and dominant news source of information among the Syrian diaspora in Germany, with respondents often citing it as their most trusted platform for updates on the Syrian crisis. A striking 97% indicated that they consumed news from DW via traditional television, followed by DW's YouTube (69%) and Facebook platform (31%). A few respondents (10%) mentioned 'others', including websites and news channels. This distribution reflects both the cross-platform reach of DW's content and the strong demand for Arabic-language media accessible across different digital environments. According to Ardèvol-Abreu (2015), news media play a crucial role in raising awareness, disseminating public information, and contributing to crisis resolution.

Importantly, platform preference showed statistically significant variation by age and education. Younger respondents (aged 18–30) expressed higher engagement with DW's digital platforms, especially YouTube and Facebook, while older participants (40+) predominantly relied on TV. Similarly, respondents with higher education were more likely to engage with DW's content across multiple platforms. This could be due to higher media literacy and broader digital access (Green et al., 2021; Karim & Al-Rawi, 2018).

5.2. Perceptions of DW's Coverage

This study reveals overwhelmingly positive perceptions of DW's objectivity and credibility (Elareshi et al., 2020; Ziani et al., 2017). Respondents praised the depth of DW's analysis of the Syrian crisis, rating it superior. The majority of respondents (80%) described DW as 'credible', 'objective', and 'comprehensive'. These perceptions of DW's coverage were found to influence respondents' news consumption habits. Existing literature suggests that people with higher trust in media are more likely to increase their news consumption during crises, as noted by Van Aelst et al. (2021). Trust in media sources often leads to greater reliance on them for accurate and reliable information. Czymara and Klingeren (2022) further explain how perceptions of news are shaped by the type of media consumed. This means that perceptions of news are not merely reflections of reality but are constructed, indicating that media framing choices significantly influence how audiences interpret reality.

Additionally, German broadcasting services, particularly TV channels, have shown considerable interest in covering the Syrian crisis. This interest stems from factors such as Europe's geographic proximity to the Middle East and the direct impact of the Syrian crisis on European countries, especially Germany (von Nordheim et al., 2019), due to the influx of refugees. DW's framing of the crisis was perceived as balanced, fostering nuanced discussions among the diasporas.

That said, further analysis revealed variation across gender and length of residence, with female respondents being slightly more critical of DW's portrayal of humanitarian issues, especially concerning women and children. This suggests that a gendered lens is used through which media credibility is assessed. Respondents who had lived in Germany for 6 years or more expressed greater trust in DW content than new arrivals. This could reflect a process of media internalisation over time, where long-term residents become more embedded in German media.

Interestingly, the perceived credibility of DW was further significantly correlated with the degree of behavioural engagement (see Section 5.4). This also suggests a reinforcing relationship between trust and behavioural engagement.

5.3. Knowledge Enhancement

The analysis indicates that exposure to DW coverage had a positive effect on enhancing immigrants' understanding of the Syrian crisis. For example, respondents (87%) agreed that watching DW's news coverage has increased their awareness of key issues (e.g., historical context, humanitarian, and geopolitical dynamics of the conflict) and led to obtaining a deeper understanding of their homeland crisis. However, this knowledge gain was not evenly distributed. For example, respondents with higher education reported greater learning from DW, especially in terms of legal processes (e.g., asylum rights and international diplomacy) and humanitarian frameworks, compared to those with lower education who reported a higher reliance on DW for practical, day-to-day knowledge.

This knowledge effect was particularly pronounced among those with higher educational backgrounds, suggesting the existing relationship between media literacy and the integration of complex narratives. In this context, Happer and Philo (2013) indicate that news media content creation is significantly affected by different powerful groups, including social and political institutions, lobbyists, and the PR industry.

Interestingly, younger respondents (aged 21–30) reported a higher rate of what could be termed 'interactive learning'—their DW consumption often led them to search for additional information online, indicating a more dialogic relationship with media.

5.4. Behavioural Impacts

Data indicate an overall positive effect of DW's coverage on respondents' behaviours. In fact, it inspired them to engage actively with crisis-related content and discussion. In doing so, respondents mentioned sharing DW's news stories on their social media sites. Furthermore, DW's portrayal of the crisis motivated humanitarian efforts, with respondents expressing a heightened inclination to support aid initiatives for Syria. Notably, respondents who perceived DW as highly credible demonstrated greater levels of behavioural engagement, supporting the framing theory's assertion that effective framing can influence actions. Literature review reveals that news framing is crucial in shaping audience emotions, attitudes, and cognitive responses (Elareshi et al., 2021; Patrick, 2024). News media can shape public opinion, especially during crises, to increase public awareness and understanding (An & Gower, 2009).

5.5. SEM Analysis

Measurement Model Evaluation

As shown in Table 3, the measurement model was assessed for validity and reliability using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). For the internal consistency reliability, composite reliability (CR) values for all constructs ranged between 0.745 and 0.845, exceeding the threshold of 0.7. Cronbach's alpha (CA) values were similarly robust, ranging from 0.718 to 0.773, indicating strong internal consistency. Convergent validity was measured using average variance extracted (AVE) values for all constructs that exceeded the threshold of 0.5, confirming that the measured items adequately captured the intended constructs. Item loadings were significant ($p < 0.001$) and ranged from moderate (e.g., DW2 = 0.432) to strong (e.g., DW3 = 0.983).

Table 3. Measurement model evaluation.

Construct	Code	Item	Source	Loadings
DW's news coverage AVE = 0.528 CA = 0.727 CR = 0.812	DW1	I seek news about the Syrian crisis through the DW channel	(Bruine de Bruin et al., 2020)	0.610
	DW2	I follow news on the DW channel		0.432
	DW3	I perceive DW as my primary source		0.983
	DW4	I often watch news programmes to stay informed about global events		0.946
	DW5	DW provide more reliable information on the Syrian crisis		0.665
	DW6	I often turn to DW for comprehensive coverage of international conflicts		0.875
	DW7	I trust DW to deliver accurate and objective news on the Syrian crisis		0.726
Perceptions AVE = 0.524 CA = 0.773 CR = 0.845	PER1	DW provides an in-depth analysis of the Syrian crisis	(Anbin, 2021; Knudsen et al., 2023)	0.817
	PER2	DW provides objective coverage of the Syrian crisis		0.738
	PER3	DW's coverage of the Syrian crisis is unbiased		0.869
	PER4	DW provides credible coverage of the Syrian crisis		0.660
	PER5	DW's coverage of the Syrian crisis is superior		0.555

Table 3. *Cont.*

Construct	Code	Item	Source	Loadings
Knowledge AVE = 0.538 CA = 0.718 CR = 0.745	KNW1	Watching DW increases my awareness of key events in the Syrian crisis	(de Hoog & Verboon, 2020; Nanz & Matthes, 2020)	0.875
	KNW2	DW's reporting gives me a deeper understanding of the Syrian crisis		0.917
	KNW3	DW's coverage helps me understand the history of the Syrian crisis		0.845
	KNW4	I feel more knowledgeable about the humanitarian aspects of the Syrian crisis		0.864
	KNW5	DW improves my ability to discuss the Syrian crisis with others		0.845
Behavioural changes AVE = 0.581 CA = 0.742 CR = 0.814	BHR1	I often share DW's news coverage about the Syrian crisis on social media	(Möller et al., 2020; Mutono & Dagada, 2016)	0.808
	BHR2	Watching DW leads me to participate in discussions about the Syrian crisis		0.773
	BHR3	My opinions about the Syrian crisis have changed after watching DW		0.670
	BHR4	Watching DW motivates me to support humanitarian efforts for Syria		0.983
	BHR5	I prefer DW for news on other global issues because it covers the Syrian crisis		0.946

5.6. Structural Model Assessment

The goodness of fit was further tested to determine the suitability of the measurement model for the structural model assessment (Hair et al., 2019). The item with a lower loading value (e.g., DW2 = 0.432) was removed to determine the goodness of fit. Thus, the goodness of fit indices provide insight into the model's performance. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) (0.0024) is well below the 0.08 threshold, suggesting an excellent fit. The Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI) is 0.954, close to 1, indicating a strong fit. X^2 0.6556 reflects a good model fit when considered alongside other indices. Finally, the Norm Fit Index (NFI) is 0.836, slightly below 0.9, indicative of a reasonably good fit. Overall, the model exhibits a strong goodness of fit (Figure 2). These results supported our hypotheses and highlighted the role of DW in shaping the diaspora's media engagement.

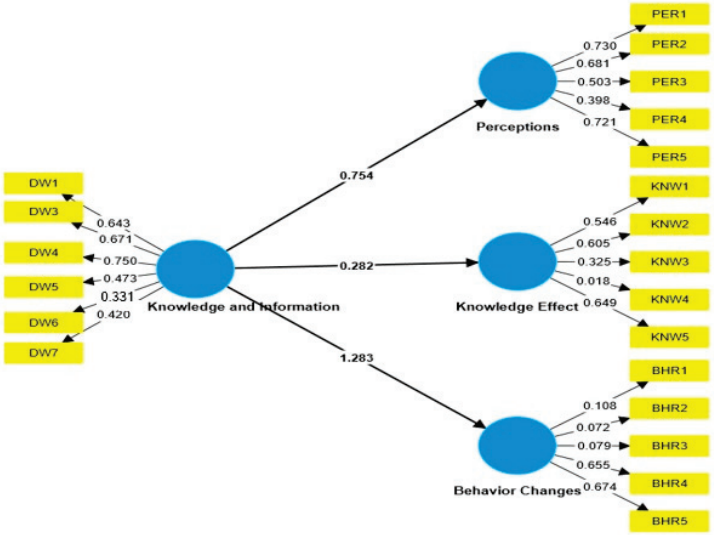

Figure 2. The measurement model.

Further, discriminant validity was tested using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio scale (Table 4). The Fornell–Larcker criterion (in bold) showed that the square root of each construct's AVE was greater than its correlations with other constructs, ensuring each construct measured a unique concept (Rönkkö & Cho, 2020). The Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio was below 0.85 for all construct pairs, further supporting discriminant validity.

Table 4. The discriminant validity test.

Construct	Fornell–Larcker Criterion				Hetreotrait–Monotrait Ratio Scale			
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
1. DW's news coverage	**0.655**							
2. Perceptions	0.581	**0.724**			0.081			
3. Knowledge	0.198	0.244	**0.325**		0.257	0.26		
4. Behavioural changes	0.288	0.189	0.383	**0.546**	0.205	0.498	0.489	

Table 5 outlines the coefficient of determination (R^2) values for the constructs within the SEM, alongside with effect size test (f^2). These R^2 values represent the proportion of variance in each dependent variable explained by the independent variable (e.g., exposure to DW's coverage). Higher R^2 values indicate that the model effectively accounts for variance in the dependent variables. For perceptions, the analysis indicates that DW's coverage explained 33.8% of the variance in the respondents' perceptions of the Syrian crisis (R^2 = 0.338). This moderated effect highlights the DW's significant role in shaping how Syrian immigrants perceive the crisis. The remaining variance may be attributed to factors such as personal experiences, exposure to other media sources, or cultural biases. Furthermore, the effect size (f^2) was run and indicated perceptions and knowledge. The analysis indicates a moderate effect, while behavioural changes suggest a large effect.

Table 5. Coefficient of determination R^2 and effect size f^2.

Construct	R^2	F^2
Perceptions	0.338	0.510
Knowledge	0.437	0.241
Behavioural changes	0.774	3.421

Finally, path analysis was conducted to test the proposed effects of DW's coverage on the perceptions of the Syrian crisis, knowledge, and behavioural changes using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) (Table 6 and Figure 3). The results indicated a significant positive effect of DW's coverage of perceptions (β = 0.754, p = 0.000), knowledge (β = 0.282, p = 0.000), and behavioural changes (β = 1.283, p = 0.000). These results suggest that all hypotheses are accepted, confirming significant effects.

Table 6. Hypothesis testing (path assessment).

Hypotheses	β	t-Value	p-Value	Decision
DW's coverage => Perceptions	0.754	10.999	0.000	Accept
DW's coverage => Knowledge	0.282	7.420	0.000	Accept
DW's coverage => Behavioural changes	1.283	15.206	0.000	Accept

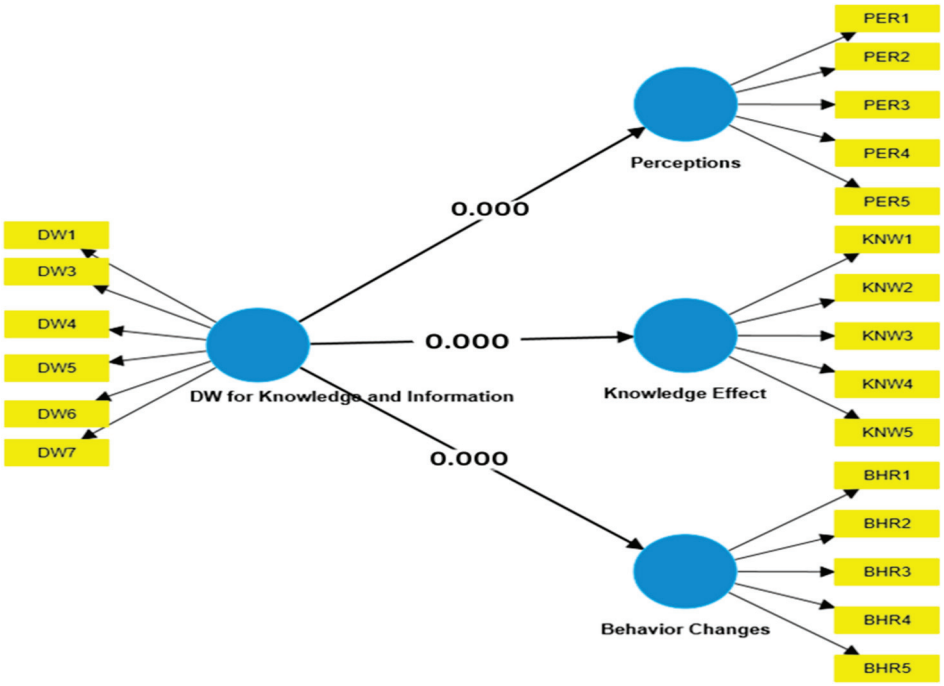

Figure 3. Final model indicating path analysis results.

6. Conclusions

This study highlights the crucial role of news media in increasing public awareness and understanding of the crisis. Although news media framing different social and political conflicts has received much criticism, the role of the media in public awareness cannot be denied. These news media platforms are crucial for sharing information, shaping perceptions, and promoting communities, particularly during conflict and uncertainty. Our study found that DW's news coverage of the Syrian crisis has a substantial positive influence on the perceptions, knowledge, and behavioural changes of Syrian immigrants in Germany. For example, the findings indicate that exposure to DW's content not only enhances understanding of the crisis but also motivates respondents to engage in humanitarian efforts and discuss crisis-related topics actively. Trust in DW as a credible source was particularly associated with higher levels of engagement.

It is worth saying that the findings regarding audience perceptions of DW reveal a complex and layered engagement with international media. While the dominant view was highly favourable—DW was widely trusted and appreciated for its depth—there existed a healthy degree of critical reflection among respondents. Overall, the study highlights the critical role of media consumption in shaping public response during crises and indicates DW's significance as a trusted information source for the Syrian diaspora (Karim & Al-Rawi, 2018).

6.1. Implications

The implications of this study are multifaceted: first, the findings highlight the crucial role of international news media and their media responsibility in shaping the understanding of crisis among diaspora communities. This responsibility includes providing balanced and accurate reporting that can positively influence perceptions and knowledge. Second, for organisations involved in crisis management and humanitarian aid, this study suggests that effective communication strategies need to be developed that resonate with the diaspora, utilising trusted media platforms to disseminate important information and foster engagement. Finally, the positive impact of DW's coverage on knowledge and behavioural

changes indicates potential strategies for NGOs and community organisations to leverage trusted media sources in mobilising support and encouraging informed discussions with diaspora communities. This shows that effective framing can encourage proactive audience behaviours, contributing to broader social engagement. News media professionals should recognise their potential to drive social impact through thoughtful and responsible framing, especially in contexts of geopolitical crises and humanitarian issues.

6.2. Limitations and Future Research

This study has some primary limitations that future investigations can address. First, this study was only conducted in the context of Syrian refugees in Germany. While this is important, the results cannot be generalised to other immigrants in different countries. Future studies can replicate this research design and acquire insights from other regions. Second, selecting DW as the only media outlet has its limits. Future studies can examine the same phenomenon related to different news media organisations in Germany. Finally, this study uses a single, quantitative design. Future studies can involve more methodologies, e.g., mixed methods (media practitioners, journalists, and editors), to obtain more in-depth insights.

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Article

Exploring Students' Perceptions of the Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations: Insights from a Campus-Wide Survey at a Minority-Serving University

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Abstract: Campus climate research has long been a focus of higher education scholarship; however, studies show that inequalities and a pervasive sense of not belonging continue to negatively affect students. This paper presents the results of a campus-wide survey conducted at a Minority-Serving Institution (MSI), with a sample of 820 undergraduate, master's, Ph.D., and non-degree students. The authors explore students' experiences on campus in relation to their identities as well as students' perceptions of campus climate. Specifically, the paper examines students' intergroup relations and how these influence their sense of belonging. The survey instrument developed in the frame of this project also included questions designed to assess opportunities students have to develop key values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding related to intercultural and democratic competences necessary for life and work in multicultural societies. This study identifies the areas students perceive as important for development, highlighting which values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding they have had the opportunity to cultivate during their time at the university and those they would like to develop further. The authors hope these findings will inform efforts to strengthen institutional support for more inclusive practices on culturally diverse university campuses and provide evidence-based guidance for designing effective pedagogical interventions.

Keywords: intercultural communication; culturally diverse campus climate; intergroup relations; students' perceptions; minority-serving institution

1. Introduction

In times marked by social polarization, inequalities, and divisive politics, when college and university campuses become the stage for protests and demonstrations, exploring means to improve campus climate is imperative. Campus climate has been of concern for higher education research for decades (Garvey et al., 2018; Hart & Fellabaum, 2008; Soria, 2018; Woodard & Sims, 2000). Historically, campus climate surveys have been conducted mainly by Institutional Research or Student Affairs and focused on the issues related to students' safety and well-being, campus infrastructure, institutional policies, and classroom practices (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hart & Fellabaum, 2008). While many studies have examined students' perceptions of campus climate—particularly in relation to race, ethnicity, and belonging—our research expands the literature by exploring what competences

students consider important (Golubeva, 2025b). Although students' perceptions can be subjective, they serve as an insightful indicator of campus climate (see Golubeva, 2025a).

The novelty of our approach lies in the fact that, in addition to measuring students' perceptions of campus climate, the survey we developed also gathered valuable insights into key areas—specifically values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding (VASK)—that are essential for enhancing intercultural communication and intergroup relations on campus.

Based on the literature reviewed and institutional priorities, our study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do students at a Minority-Serving Institution perceive the inclusiveness of their campus climate in relation to their identities?
2. Which VASK competences do students consider important, and which have they had opportunities to develop?
3. How do students' intergroup friendships and engagement in campus activities relate to their perceived sense of belonging?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Intergroup Relations and Campus Climate

Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory puts forward the idea that contact between culturally different groups can positively impact intergroup relations and reduce prejudicial attitudes, provided certain conditions are met. These conditions include (1) official institutional support, (2) equal status between minority and majority groups as they work together toward common goals, and (3) contact that fosters an understanding of shared interests across these groups (Allport, 1954). Conversely, contact that fails to meet one or more of these conditions may exacerbate negative attitudes and relations (Allport, 1954). For decades, campus climate research has shown that some institutions—even well-intentioned ones—do not meet these conditions consistently enough (Hurtado et al., 2008). As a result, students find it challenging to adjust to the new environment and make new friends on campus (Lopez et al., 2018). A growing body of studies shows that student friendships are not random (Zuckerman, 2024) and are usually formed with peers similar to them, for example, of the same ethno-racial background or gender (see Shrum et al., 1988; Tuma & Hallinan, 1979)—a phenomenon described by Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) as 'homophily'. Zuckerman (2024, p. 500) suggests that larger institutions have higher levels of homophily because "[t]he chances of finding good friendship matches in one's own group increase with school size."

This tendency toward homophily in student friendships underscores the challenges many students face in navigating a campus climate that may not fully support intergroup interaction. For students from minority backgrounds, a negative campus climate is often associated with an adverse impact on their academic achievement (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Vega, 2021). Most campus climate research studies racial dynamics (Cuellar & Johnson-Ahorlu, 2020; Gavino & Akinlade, 2021; Mills, 2021; Vega, 2021), frequently focusing on the negative student outcomes associated with a hostile campus climate (Hurtado et al., 2012). However, a more recent study by Gavino and Akinlade (2021) reported the effects of a positive campus climate on Latinx students. Ensuring a climate of respect and valuing cultural heterogeneity on campus was linked to enhancing these students' institutional affiliation (Gavino & Akinlade, 2021). According to Page et al. (2021), enhancing community belonging and developing shared values contributes to cultivating a culture of inclusion and reducing othering. When students perceive their campus as friendly, they are more likely to engage in the social activities of their college or university (Jean-Francois, 2019).

In contrast, when they perceive the climate as unwelcoming, they may choose to withdraw from campus activities (Jean-Francois, 2019).

The relationship between students' social integration and campus climate is further nuanced by the complexity of their intersecting identities. The current social and political realities in the United States and how they show up on campus continue to remind us that better understanding the climate on campus remains a relevant issue. In this regard, the existing scholarship on campus climate advocates for an intersectional approach (Lundy-Wagner & Winkle-Wagner, 2013; Maramba & Museus, 2011) and provides valuable insights and guidance on how to develop campus climate assessments and implement the subsequent educational interventions meant to make real-world improvements to campus inclusiveness (Hurtado et al., 2008, 2012). For instance, a recent study by Hudson et al. (2021) discusses worldview differences and their role in campus climate. By examining the relationship between college students' 'interworldview' friendships and pluralism orientation, Hudson et al. (2021) found that the number of interworldview friendships developed by students in their first year of college is positively associated with pluralism orientation.

Many climate assessment projects historically were reactive to high-profile campus incidents (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado et al., 2008, 2012). However, proactively auditing one's own campus climate and culture and using the findings to create intentional opportunities for intercultural engagement can have a positive impact on enhancing inclusiveness on campus (Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

Our motivation for advancing this campus climate project was clear. As a Minority-Serving Institution (MSI) with a vision of inclusive excellence, we proactively sought campus climate assessment as part of ongoing institutional efforts seeking to "create the conditions that maximize learning in diverse student environments, thereby preparing students for living and working in a society that is ever more complex" (Hurtado et al., 1999, p. 97). Hurtado et al. (2008) have called for research that connects specific educational interventions with key learning outcomes, noting that little campus climate research has focused on the competences necessary for personal and professional success in increasingly multicultural societies. Arguing that universities should adopt comprehensive learning outcomes that prepare students for citizenship in a culturally diverse society, they offered a framework that includes four sets: *cognitive; socio-cognitive; citizenship in a multicultural society*; and *values and attitudes* (see for details, Hurtado et al., 2008, p. 214). They expanded on a model that had been developed by the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) with the intention to further emphasize the competences that "frame personal and social responsibility in a multicultural society" (Milem et al., 2005, p. 215). Many of the outcomes listed by Hurtado et al. (2008) overlap with the 20 components of the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (RFCDC) model (Council of Europe, 2018), which we used for developing our survey and the subsequent co-curricular training initiative known as InterEqual (see detailed discussion of the RFCDC model in Section 2.2). Both frameworks outline the competences necessary to help students build a more inclusive campus by enhancing intergroup relations and intercultural communication while also preparing them for life and work in culturally diverse democratic societies. This shared interest is formally recognized by the two organizations' collaboration as part of the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility, and Democracy (2019).

2.2. Intercultural Communication and Competences for Democratic Culture

We define 'intercultural communication' as a dynamic and multifaceted exchange in which participants communicate across various intersecting differences, adjusting to one another's diverse cultural perspectives and identities—such as gender, race, socio-economic class, age, sexual orientation, disability, immigration status, (first) language, accent, eth-

nicity, national origin, and more. Successful intercultural communication requires a set of competences. Among the well-known intercultural competence models (e.g., Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2004; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006; Griffith et al., 2016; Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2015; UNESCO, 2013), we selected for our study the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (Council of Europe, 2018) because it integrates both intercultural and democratic competences, making it particularly relevant for addressing issues related to cultural heterogeneity. While other widely used models emphasize communication effectiveness, the RFCDC extends beyond to include a culture of democratic engagement and civic-mindedness—areas increasingly relevant in current times.

In developing the RFCDC, the Council of Europe identified and analyzed 101 relevant civic, democratic, and intercultural competence schemes before drawing from them 20 competences organized by sets of *values*, *attitudes*, *skills*, *knowledge and critical understanding* (Council of Europe, 2016; also see Figure 1). The rigor and transparency of the RFCDC's development process, including validation through descriptors and multi-country implementation, contributed to our decision to use the RFCDC as the primary model upon which our survey and co-curricular initiative are based.

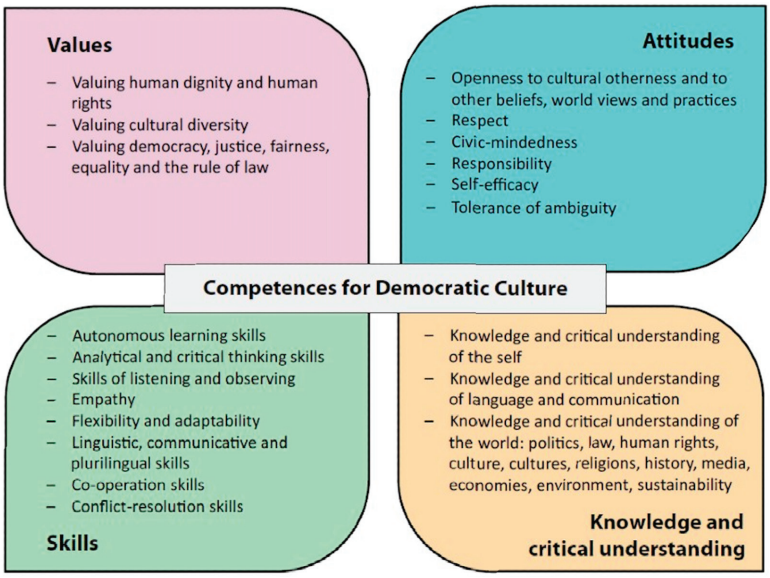

Figure 1. Competences for democratic culture: living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies. (From Council of Europe, 2016, p. 11. © Council of Europe, reproduced with permission.).

The RFCDC defines 'democratic competence' as "the ability to mobilise and deploy relevant psychological resources (i.e., values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and/or understanding) in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges, and opportunities presented by democratic situations" (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 23). For the term 'intercultural competence,' the RFCDC uses this same definition while adding intercultural situations in place of democratic situations. In the field of intercultural education, many follow a narrow definition of intercultural competence as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from other cultures (Deardorff, 2004). In using the RFCDC for this study, we take a broader approach to understanding intercultural competence as a combination of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding. Our approach to intercultural communication is not limited to communication with people from different cultural backgrounds but instead recognizes that various aspects of identity are equally important. These include gender, race, socioeconomic class, age, sexual orientation, disability, immigration status, accent, ethnicity, national origin, and so on.

As explained in Barrett and Golubeva (2022), the 20 competences are typically activated in clusters, depending on the context and specific situation. As situations evolve, individuals may need to mobilize and deploy a new subset of competences.

For each competence, related descriptors were developed and validated (see Council of Europe, Volume 2). Scaled at three levels—basic, intermediate, and advanced—the RFCDC descriptors can be utilized for formative, diagnostic, monitoring, or summative assessment (see Barrett et al., 2021, for a systematic review of assessment methods and practical examples). This makes the RFCDC model in particular suitable for educational purposes. Although the RFCDC was developed by the Council of Europe, its values—such as human dignity, human rights, cultural diversity, democracy, justice, fairness, equality, and the rule of law—are globally resonant and increasingly relevant not only in Europe but also beyond it. It has been successfully implemented in diverse educational settings in countries such as Andorra, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium (French-speaking community), Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Ukraine, and the United States. In our view, the RFCDC offers a promising foundation for fostering intercultural understanding and civic engagement in US higher education institutions, particularly those committed to inclusive excellence and social justice, such as our MSI.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Method

Data presented in this article are from a study conducted at a culturally diverse public university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States of America in Fall 2021. A total of 13,017 students were invited to participate in a survey on campus climate and intercultural development at their institution, with 820 students fully completing the survey. Survey questions were designed to understand student experiences on campus as they relate to aspects of their identities (see Appendix A). This included questions about campus spaces and experiences where students feel comfortable discussing topics related to their identities, worldviews, and beliefs. Additionally, participants were surveyed about their perceptions of the importance of developing values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding outlined in RFCDC (Council of Europe, 2018). They were asked which of 20 competencies they had had the opportunity to cultivate during their time at the university, as well as which ones they would like to develop further.

To ensure consistent interpretation of the abstract concepts within the RFCDC model (e.g., autonomous learning skills), the study participants were provided with brief explanations of each term directly in the survey instrument. These were adapted from Council of Europe (2018). Prior to launch, the survey was piloted with a group of 150 students to ensure its reliability and validity.

The survey was distributed online via the MSI's official student email system using Qualtrics and remained open for a period of three weeks. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

3.2. Variables

In total, 820 students completed the survey (see Table 1), in which 70.9% were bachelor's students, 15.9% were master's students, 10.2% were doctoral students, and 3% identified as 'other'. The median age of participants was 24.4. 35.5% of participants identified as White, 28.5% as Asian, 19.6% as Black/African, and 8.9% as Hispanic/Latino; the remaining participants did not specify their racial or ethnic identity. Moreover, 24.6% were first-generation students, defined as the first family member to attend a 4-year college or university in their immediate (closer) family. Importantly, 58.0% of participants identified

as female. Dependent variables for this study focused on perceptions of diversity and inclusion at the institution, spaces where students feel comfortable discussing topics related to their identities, and spaces where students feel comfortable discussing topics related to worldviews and beliefs. Additional dependent variables for this study focused on values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding statements, specifically, opportunities for experiencing VASK areas at the institution.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics: participant demographics (N = 820).

Variable	%	
Degree Type		
Bachelor's	70.9	
Master's	15.9	
Doctoral	10.2	
First-Generation Student	24.6	
Race/Ethnicity		
Asian	28.5	
Black/African American	19.6	
Hispanic/Latino	8.9	
Two or more races	5.4	
White	35.5	
Gender Identity		
Female	58.0	
Male	36.0	
Other	6.0	
College		
CAHSS	38.5	
CoEIT	32.3	
CNMS	29.3	
Aging studies	<1	
Public policy	3.4	
Social work	2.1	
Academic Level		
Freshman	20.7	
Sophomore	15.5	
Junior	17.7	
Senior	21.5	
Graduate	24.6	
Languages Spoken		
One	46.1	
Two	35.6	
Three	14.4	
Four or more languages	3.9	
	M	*SD*
Age	24.41	1.91

3.3. Intergroup Relations Variables

An additional set of demographic questions sought to understand student intergroup relations at their institution. Students were asked to think of their close friends (up to three) and describe them by selecting statements that were true for each friend (see Appendix A).

66.9% had close friends at the institution. 60.2% of their friends speak the same first (native) language as them. 54.3% identify with the same sexual orientation as them. 50.8% are from the same country as them. 36.9% have the same ethno-racial background as them, and 33.2% identify with the same religious or spiritual group/belief system as them.

Regarding campus involvement, 36.8% have not joined a student organization, club, or society at the institution; 19.9% have joined one organization; 32.9% have joined two to three organizations; and 10.3% have joined four or more organizations. The top three types of organizations students are a part of are academic/departmental (12.7%), hobbies and interests (10.3%), and cultural and ethnic (9.1%).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Perceptions and Experiences of Diversity and Inclusion at the Minority-Serving Institution

Students were asked to respond to a variety of questions on how they experience their institution as a community inclusive of the identities of ethno-racial identity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious/spiritual beliefs, and ideological worldviews on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = 'agree' to 4 = 'disagree' (see Appendix A).

In total, 75.98% of surveyed students perceived MSI as 'very diverse' and 22.44% as 'somewhat diverse,' followed by 61.34% of students perceiving MSI as 'very inclusive' and 33.41% as 'somewhat inclusive.' In relation to specific aspects of their identities, 97.20% and 97.19% of respondents, respectively, perceived MSI as 'very inclusive' or 'somewhat inclusive' of their gender identity and sexual orientation; 94.27% perceived it as inclusive of their ethno-racial identity; 92.32% of their religious/spiritual beliefs and 90.00% of their ideological/political worldviews.

Spearman's rank-order correlations were used to examine the relationship between demographic characteristics and survey elements related to students' identities, worldview/beliefs, and VASK areas. There was a strong positive correlation between first-generation status and experiencing their institution as a community inclusive of their ethno-racial identity ($r_s(820) = 0.079$, $p = 0.024$) and inclusive of their sexual orientation ($r_s(820) = 0.087$, $p = 0.013$) (see Table 2).

Table 2. Correlation of community inclusivity and demographic data statements (N = 820).

			I Experience ___ as a Community That Is Inclusive of My Ethno-Racial Identity.	I Experience ___ as a Community That Is Inclusive of My Gender Identity.	I Experience ___ as a Community That Is Inclusive of My Sexual Orientation.	I Experience ___ as a Community That Is Inclusive of My Religious/ Spiritual Beliefs.	I Experience ___ as a Community That Is Inclusive of My Ideological Worldviews.
Spearman's rho	Degree level	Correlation coefficient	−0.021	−0.079 *	−0.055	−0.013	−0.018
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.554	0.024	0.118	0.718	0.600
		N	820	820	820	820	820
	First in family to attend a 4-year college	Correlation coefficient	0.079 *	0.013	0.087 *	−0.040	0.017
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.024	0.702	0.013	0.248	0.617
		N	820	820	820	820	820
	Ethnicity	Correlation coefficient	−0.084 *	0.019	0.006	−0.104 **	−0.036
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.016	0.581	0.872	0.003	0.306
		N	818	818	818	818	818
	Age range	Correlation coefficient	0.017	−0.047	−0.041	0.010	0.017
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.623	0.175	0.241	0.775	0.623
		N	820	820	820	820	820
	Gender identity	Correlation coefficient	−0.007	0.055	0.057	−0.064	0.039
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.849	0.115	0.103	0.066	0.263
		N	820	820	820	820	820
	Languages spoken	Correlation coefficient	0.091 **	0.029	0.014	0.044	0.006
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.009	0.404	0.683	0.205	0.867
		N	820	820	820	820	820

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

The positive correlations for first-generation students in some areas highlight their unique experiences. This could inform policies to sustain and expand inclusivity efforts for this group. The negative correlation with ethno-racial inclusivity suggests that some ethnic groups may face challenges in feeling included. Targeted initiatives (e.g., cultural affinity spaces or intercultural training) could address these disparities.

4.2. Comfortable Spaces for Discussing Topics Related to Students' Identities

Students were asked to respond to a series of yes/no questions regarding spaces they felt comfortable discussing topics related to their identities. Results show that all demographic areas except gender identity had strong correlations with spaces, events, and individuals (see Table 3). Age range ($r_s(820) = 0.076$, $p = 0.029$) and ethnicity ($r_s(818) = 0.131$, $p \leq 0.001$) had strong positive correlations with faculty. Further, ethnicity and staff had a strong positive correlation ($r_s(820) = 0.090$, $p = 0.010$).

Table 3. Correlation of comfortable spaces for discussing DEI and demographic data statements (N = 820).

	Degree level			First generation			Ethnicity			Age range			Gender identity			Languages spoken		
	r	Sig (2−tailed)	N	r	Sig (2−tailed)	N	r	Sig (2−tailed)	N	r	Sig (2−tailed)	N	r	Sig (2−tailed)	N	r	Sig (2−tailed)	N
	Spearman's rho																	
Total Scores	−0.125 **	<0.001	820	−0.084 *	0.016	820	0.101 **	0.004	818	−0.136 **	<0.001	820	0.000	0.989	820	−0.030	0.396	820
None	0.082 *	0.019	820	0.067	0.056	820	−0.011	0.750	818	0.091 **	0.009	820	0.045	0.202	820	0.003	0.943	820
Other	0.117 **	<0.001	820	−0.092 **	0.009	820	0.048	0.173	818	0.117 **	<0.001	820	−0.006	0.868	820	−0.042	0.227	820
With staff	−0.027	0.442	820	−0.021	0.556	820	0.090 *	0.010	818	−0.014	0.683	820	−0.013	0.713	820	−0.030	0.384	820
With faculty	0.019	0.592	820	−0.012	0.724	820	0.131 **	<0.001	818	0.076 *	0.029	820	0.008	0.816	820	−0.038	0.279	820
With friends	−0.172 **	<0.001	820	−0.076 *	0.031	820	0.042	0.230	818	−0.222 **	<0.001	820	−0.065	0.063	820	−0.005	0.885	820
Campus celebrations/ festivals	−0.065	0.065	820	−0.067	0.056	820	−0.041	0.243	818	−0.104 **	0.003	820	−0.048	0.171	820	0.062	0.077	820
Student organizations	−0.160 **	<0.001	820	−0.039	0.260	820	0.020	0.561	818	−0.209 **	<0.001	820	0.023	0.516	820	−0.005	0.885	820
Residence halls	−0.219 **	<0.001	820	−0.118 **	<0.001	820	0.020	0.562	818	−0.289 **	<0.001	820	0.037	0.293	820	−0.021	0.547	820
Virtual classrooms	−0.007	0.832	820	−0.062	0.077	820	0.079 *	0.023	818	0.058	0.098	820	0.011	0.759	820	−0.039	0.261	820
Classrooms	−0.063	0.071	820	−0.020	0.565	820	0.120 **	<0.001	818	−0.072 *	0.039	820	0.066	0.057	820	−0.048	0.173	820

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Positive correlations, like those between students' ethnicity and feeling comfort when discussing topics related to their identities with faculty, show that students from diverse backgrounds feel supported by their professors. Faculty training on intercultural competence could further strengthen this positive trend, enhancing comfort and dialogue around topics related to various aspects of students' identities. Negative correlations between ethnicity and comfort in residence halls ($r_s = -0.219$, $p < 0.001$; $r_s = -0.219$, $p < 0.001$; $r_s = -0.219$, $p < 0.001$) suggest challenges in these living spaces, possibly due to cultural misunderstandings or lack of diverse programming. Introducing more inclusive activities and fostering intercultural communication in residence halls can address negative correlations with ethnicity. Negative correlations with degree level ($r_s = -0.160$, $p < 0.001$; $r_s = -0.160$, $p < 0.001$; $r_s = -0.160$, $p < 0.001$) suggest graduate students may engage less in these spaces, potentially due to time constraints or differing needs. Tailored DEI initiatives that align with graduate students' unique schedules and priorities can encourage participation in organizations and discussions.

4.3. Comfortable Spaces for Discussing Topics of Worldview and Beliefs

Students were asked to respond to a series of yes/no questions regarding spaces they felt comfortable discussing topics related to worldview and beliefs. All demographic areas except gender identity had multiple strong correlations with spaces, events, and individuals (see Table 4). Ethnicity had strong positive correlations with classrooms ($r_s(818) = 0.101$, $p = 0.004$), virtual classrooms ($r_s(818) = 0.082$, $p = 0.019$), residence halls ($r_s(818) = 0.102$, $p = 0.003$), faculty ($r_s(818) = 0.136$, $p \leq 0.001$), and staff ($r_s(818) = 0.091$, $p = 0.009$).

Table 4. Correlation of comfortable spaces for discussing worldview/beliefs and demographic data statements (N = 820).

	Degree level			First generation			Ethnicity			Age range			Gender identity			Languages spoken		
	r	Sig (2−tailed)	N	r	Sig (2−tailed)	N	r	Sig (2−tailed)	N	r	Sig (2−tailed)	N	r	Sig (2−tailed)	N	r	Sig (2−tailed)	N
	Spearman's rho																	
Total Scores	−0.076 *	0.029	820	−0.088 *	0.012	820	0.118 **	<0.001	818	−0.073 *	0.037	820	−0.007	0.852	820	−0.032	0.353	820
None	0.008	0.816	820	0.114 **	0.001	820	−0.053	0.133	818	0.021	0.552	820	0.053	0.127	820	0.003	0.925	820
Other	0.155 **	<0.001	820	−0.052	0.138	820	0.030	0.385	818	0.103 **	0.003	820	−0.033	0.350	820	−0.024	0.489	820
With staff	0.023	0.509	820	0.002	0.947	820	0.091 **	0.009	818	0.028	0.427	820	−0.014	0.698	820	−0.014	0.692	820
With faculty	0.022	0.525	820	−0.018	0.604	820	0.136 **	<0.001	818	0.060	0.086	820	0.014	0.684	820	−0.041	0.239	820
With friends	−0.146 **	<0.001	820	−0.088 *	0.012	820	0.064	0.068	818	−0.181 **	<0.001	820	−0.061	0.079	820	−0.040	0.254	820
Campus celebrations/ festivals	−0.035	0.316	820	−0.075 *	0.031	820	0.013	0.703	818	−0.108 **	0.002	820	−0.002	0.954	820	0.043	0.220	820
Student organizations	−0.167 **	<0.001	820	−0.078 *	0.026	820	0.029	0.413	818	−0.206 **	<0.001	820	0.006	0.875	820	−0.016	0.641	820
Residence halls	−0.186 **	<0.001	820	−0.135 **	<0.001	820	0.102 **	0.003	818	−0.226 **	<0.001	820	0.061	0.079	820	−0.064	0.069	820
Virtual classrooms	0.003	0.936	820	−0.036	0.307	820	0.082 *	0.019	818	0.111 *	0.002	820	−0.014	0.686	820	−0.020	0.560	820
Classrooms	−0.029	0.410	820	−0.037	0.285	820	0.101 **	0.004	818	0.006	0.861	820	0.087 *	0.013	820	−0.031	0.378	820

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Positive correlations between ethnicity and classroom comfort ($r_s = 0.101$, $p = 0.004$; $r_s = 0.101$, $p = 0.004$; $r_s = 0.101$, $p = 0.004$) and virtual classrooms ($r_s = 0.082$, $p = 0.019$; $r_s = 0.082$, $p = 0.019$; $r_s = 0.082$, $p = 0.019$) highlight the importance of inclusive teaching strategies. Professors should incorporate diverse perspectives into curricula to sustain and expand the positive classroom correlations for worldview discussions. Similar to discussions on topics related to students' identities and belonging, residence halls show a negative correlation ($r_s = -0.186$, $p < 0.001$; $r_s = -0.186$, $p < 0.001$; $r_s = -0.186$, $p < 0.001$) with ethnicity. This consistency emphasizes challenges for ethnically diverse students in this setting. Similar strategies, as mentioned above for DEI-related topics, can apply here, emphasizing cultural and religious inclusivity in residence hall activities. A negative correlation exists between degree level and comfort discussing worldview topics with friends ($r_s = -0.146$, $p < 0.001$; $r_s = -0.146$, $p < 0.001$; $r_s = -0.146$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that as students progress academically, they may find fewer peer-based opportunities for such discussions. Introducing mentorship or peer discussion groups focused on worldviews could fill the gap for advanced students.

4.4. Friendship Dynamics

The demographic data on campus friendships reveal some thought-provoking insights into the patterns of intergroup relations at MSI. The fact that 66.9% of students reported having close friends at the institution is a positive indicator of social connection and

contributes to enhancing students' sense of belonging. At the same time, it also points to a significant proportion of students (about a third) who may feel isolated and not connected to the campus community. This suggests that despite DEI efforts, many students still struggle to find a close social group where they feel they belong, which may negatively impact their overall campus experience.

The results also show a tendency for students to form connections with peers similar to them (i.e., a tendency for homophily) along aspects of identity such as first (native) language (60.2%), sexual orientation (54.3%), and national origin (50.8%). These statistics highlight that social networks on campus can reflect existing societal divides, with students likely feeling most comfortable and understood by peers who share similar aspects of identity. The fact that 36.9% of students have close friends of the same ethno-racial background and 33.2% share the same religious or spiritual beliefs reveals that greater heterogeneity exists in friendships regarding ethnic-racial identities and students' religious/spiritual beliefs.

While the tendency toward homophily is a natural and well-documented social phenomenon, it may limit opportunities for intercultural dialogue and engagement. Our intent is not to portray these preferences as negative, but rather to highlight how campuses can better facilitate more inclusive connections through intentional programming. The above-discussed friendship dynamics—where students tend to build closer ties with peers who share similar identities—indicate the need for more strategic efforts to foster intergroup dialogue and intercultural communication in campus social activities.

4.5. Student Involvement in Campus Social Activities

The data on campus involvement shows that one-third of students (36.8%) have not joined student organizations. This can be attributed to various factors, such as time constraints due to academic pressure or a lack of awareness or interest in campus activities. It also raises questions about the inclusivity of campus clubs and organizations, as students who do not engage in these activities may do so because they feel that they do not belong to these spaces. Moreover, the collected data shows that 63.2% of students have engaged with at least one organization, indicating that most of the students participate in some form of campus activities. The types of organizations that students are involved in suggest that they are finding outlets for their interests, though there is a tendency for certain types of organizations to dominate: academic/departmental (12.7%), hobbies and interests (10.3%), and cultural and ethnic (9.1%). These three categories suggest that while academic interests drive engagement, cultural and ethnic organizations still play a significant role in students' campus lives.

Overall, these findings suggest that students seek social communities that both share academic goals and affirm their cultural or ethnic identities. The moderate involvement in cultural and ethnic organizations may reflect broader campus dynamics, where students are not confined to socializing with peers of the same ethno-racial background and are open to forming more diverse friendships.

Consistent with the findings discussed in Section 4.4, the results in this section indicate the need for the institution to implement intercultural programming that intentionally encourages intergroup dialogue and fosters a more inclusive campus environment. Offering students additional opportunities to collaborate with peers outside their immediate social circles could enhance their sense of belonging and promote greater understanding across differences.

4.6. Institutional Opportunities for Experiencing the VASK Areas

The respondents were surveyed about their perceptions of the importance of 20 VASK areas (as listed in Figure 1), selecting from a 4-point scale ranging from 'very important,' to

'moderately important,' to 'slightly important,' and to 'not important at all.' The results presented in Figure 2 reflect which VASK areas students selected as 'very important' (with the highest percentage on the top).

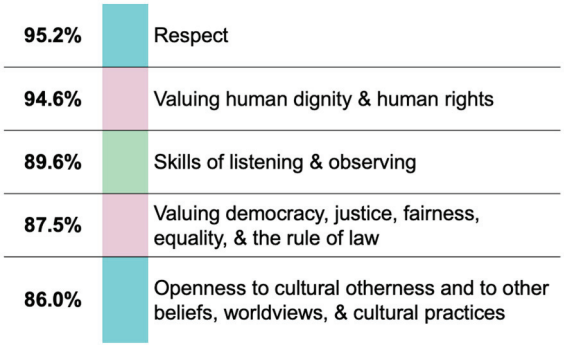

Figure 2. VASK areas most important to students.

The students were asked to select which of the 20 VASK areas they had had opportunities to develop while studying at MSI (see Figure 3).

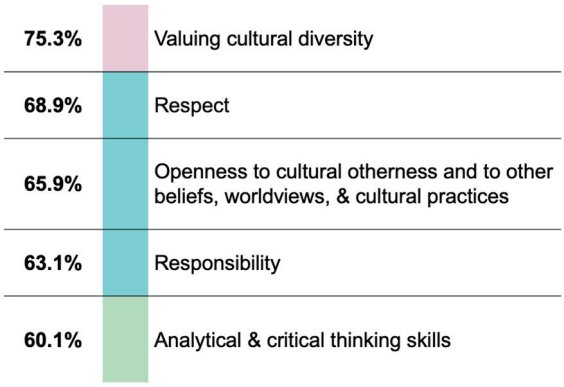

Figure 3. VASK areas that students have had opportunities to develop at MSI.

To better understand students' needs, we also asked them to indicate which of the 20 VASK areas they would like to develop while studying at MSI (see Figure 4).

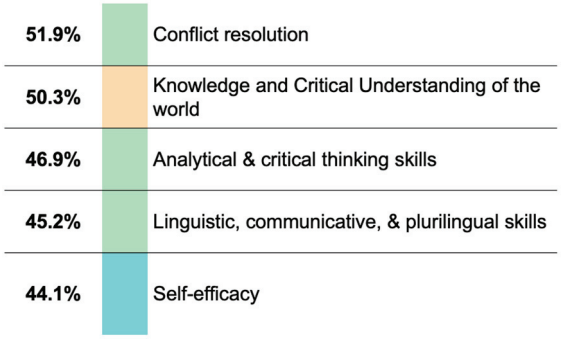

Figure 4. VASK areas that students would like to have opportunities to develop at MSI.

Findings presented in Figures 2–4 indicate the gap between what VASK students perceive as important, which ones they had opportunities to develop at MSI, and which ones they would like to develop further. This evidence served as guidance for developing research-informed intercultural training, the InterEqual modules.

While there were strong positive correlations between value statement areas, the only strong, positive correlation between demographic data and a value statement was

in the areas of ethnicity and opportunities for valuing cultural diversity ($r_s(820) = 0.096$, $p = 0.006$). Attitude statements had three areas of strong positive correlation. A strong positive correlation existed between ethnicity and openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, worldviews, and cultural practices ($r_s(820) = 0.123$, $p \leq 0.001$), ethnicity and civic-mindedness ($r_s(820) = 0.88$, $p = 0.012$), and ethnicity and self-efficacy ($r_s(820) = 0.78$, $p = 0.025$). Of the eight skill statements, there were four positive correlations. Strong positive correlations existed between ethnicity and the following skill areas: autonomous learning skills ($r_s(818) = 0.112$, $p = 0.001$), analytical and critical thinking skills ($r_s(818) = 0.126$, $p \leq 0.001$), flexibility and adaptability ($r_s(818) = 0.191$, $p = 0.009$), and conflict-resolution skills ($r_s(818) = 0.092$, $p = 0.009$). Knowledge statements had two areas of positive correlation: both between ethnicity and knowledge and critical understanding of the self ($r_s(818) = 0.087$, $p = 0.013$) and knowledge and critical understanding of the world ($r_s(818) = 0.145$, $p \leq 0.001$).

Thus, out of 20 VASK areas, 10 demonstrated strong positive correlations with students' ethnicity, suggesting that ethnic background and related lived experiences may play a significant role in shaping students' perceptions and understanding across various dimensions of democratic and intercultural competences. This indicates that culturally responsive pedagogy, tailored to the needs of a specific campus community, which acknowledges and values students' diverse backgrounds, is essential to promoting not just academic success but also enhancing the inclusiveness of campus and developing competences necessary for life and work in multicultural societies. Moreover, such findings not only inform the design of intercultural training programs like InterEqual but also point to the broader need for inclusive, culturally affirming learning environments that cater to the diverse backgrounds of all students.

5. Conclusions, Limitations, and Implications

This article summarized the results of a campus-wide survey conducted at a Minority-Serving Institution in the Mid-Atlantic of the United States focused on students' perceptions of campus climate and intergroup relations. Our purpose was to expand upon existing campus climate research with a specific focus on students' experiences with diversity, equity, and inclusion in relation to their identities, as well as explore which VASK areas they perceive to be important to be developed during their time at the university.

Despite rigorous research methodology and robust data from 820 students collected across a broad variety of university degrees at a culturally diverse campus, this study presents some limitations. The major one is that the data were obtained from the same campus, and, therefore, the findings cannot be generalized. Another limitation of our study is the absence of open-ended questions, which could have offered deeper insight into students' personal narratives and lived experiences. Additional research is needed to test the survey instrument in different contexts, for example, at institutions with culturally less diverse student bodies or more polarized communities. Last but not least, while the core structure of the RFCDC model is transferable across a plethora of educational contexts, certain elements—such as, for example, the language used and reference points for values—should be localized. We recommend retaining the model's integrity while adapting it in terms of cultural relevance to local practices.

The most significant implication of this study is that its results served as evidence-based guidance for designing the InterEqual training modules, aimed at synergizing intercultural communication education with efforts to enhance students' sense of belonging (for an overview, see Golubeva, 2025b). In particular, findings from the survey allowed us to identify VASK areas that our culturally diverse campus students needed the most. The survey we developed was intentionally structured to capture nuanced insights into

each component of the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (Council of Europe, 2018). For instance, in terms of *values*, students emphasized the importance of valuing human dignity and human rights. In the domain of *attitudes*, many respondents marked respect as 'very important' and also noted openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, worldviews, and cultural practices. When examining *skills*, the majority of students cited listening and observing. Finally, in terms of *knowledge and critical understanding*, responses pointed to a need for developing knowledge and critical understanding of the world.

These research findings informed the design of the InterEqual modules by helping us identify content areas that align with students' needs. By tailoring our pedagogical interventions to address the specific VASK gaps identified, we created learning experiences that are not only relevant but also transformative. Most importantly, the practical application of this approach led to a significant increase in students' perception of the campus as inclusive and an improved sense of belonging (Golubeva, 2025a).

Our hope is that Student Affairs professionals, DEI officers, faculty, and campus leaders at other universities will find our study useful and apply our approach to enhance their campus climate. We also believe the insights from our study can inspire thoughtful reflection and foster meaningful dialogue, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive campus environment.

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Data Availability Statement: The data are not publicly available due to privacy issues.

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Appendix A

The questions below were selected for analysis in this study from the survey instrument created as part of a campus-wide research project funded by the Hrabowski Innovation Fund:

Q1: In terms of diversity (referring to gender, race, socio-economic class, age, sexual orientation, disability, immigration status, accent, ethnicity, and national origin), I perceive my university community as follows:

- Very diverse (4)
- Somewhat diverse (3)

- Somewhat lacking diversity (2)
- Not diverse at all (1).

Q2: Please rate the level to which you perceive your university community as being inclusive (meaning that there is access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized).

- Very inclusive (4)
- Somewhat inclusive (3)
- Somewhat lacking inclusiveness (2)
- Not inclusive at all (1).

Q3: I experience my university campus as a community that is inclusive of my ethno-racial identity.

- Agree (4)
- Somewhat agree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Disagree (1).

Q4: I experience my university campus as a community that is inclusive of my gender identity.

- Agree (4)
- Somewhat agree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Disagree (1).

Q5: I experience my university campus as a community that is inclusive of my sexual orientation.

- Agree (4)
- Somewhat agree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Disagree (1)

Q6: I experience my university campus as a community that is inclusive of my religious/spiritual beliefs.

- Agree (4)
- Somewhat agree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Disagree (1)

Q7: I experience my university campus as a community that is inclusive of my ideological (e.g., political) worldviews.

- Agree (4)
- Somewhat agree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Disagree (1)

Q8: In which of the following spaces do you feel comfortable discussing topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion?

- Classrooms (face-to-face)
- Classrooms (virtual)
- Residence Halls
- Student organizations
- During on-campus celebrations, festivals

- With close friends
- With faculty
- With staff
- Other, please add:
- None.

Q9: In which of the following spaces do you feel comfortable discussing topics related to your worldviews and beliefs?

- Classrooms (face-to-face)
- Classrooms (virtual)
- Residence Halls
- Student organizations
- During on-campus celebrations, festivals
- With close friends
- With faculty
- With staff
- Other, please add:
- None.

Q10: Please rate your perceived level of importance of the following value statements, with values defined as general beliefs that motivate action and serve as guiding principles for deciding how to act.

	Very Important (4)	Moderately Important (3)	Slightly Important (2)	Not Important at All (1)
Valuing human dignity and human rights				
Valuing cultural diversity				
Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality, and the rule of law				

Q11: Please rate your perceived level of importance of the following attitude statements, with attitudes defined as the overall mental orientation that an individual adopts towards someone or something.

	Very Important (4)	Moderately Important (3)	Slightly Important (2)	Not Important at All (1)
Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, worldviews, and cultural practices				
Respect				
Civic-mindedness				
Responsibility				
Self-efficacy				
Tolerance of ambiguity				

Q12: Please rate your perceived level of importance of the following skill statements, with skills defined as the capacity for carrying out complex, well-organized patterns of either thinking or behavior.

	Very Important (4)	Moderately Important (3)	Slightly Important (2)	Not Important at All (1)
Autonomous learning skills (i.e., independent learning skills)				
Analytical and critical thinking skills				
Skills of listening and observing				
Empathy				
Flexibility and adaptability				
Linguistic, communicative, and plurilingual skills				
Cooperation skills				
Conflict-resolution skills				

Q13: Please rate your perceived level of importance of the following knowledge and critical understanding statements, with knowledge defined as the body of information that is possessed by a person and critical understanding defined as the comprehension and appreciation of meanings.

	Very Important (4)	Moderately Important (3)	Slightly Important (2)	Not Important at All (1)
Knowledge and critical understanding of the self				
Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication				
Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, human rights, culture in general, cultures, religions, history, media, economics, environment, and sustainability				

Q14: Which of the following values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge has your university provided you with opportunities to develop? (Please mark as many as apply.)

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Valuing cultural diversity
- Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality, and the rule of law
- Openness to cultural otherness, to other cultural beliefs, practices, and worldviews
- Respect
- Civic-mindedness
- Responsibility
- Self-efficacy
- Tolerance of ambiguity
- Autonomous learning skills
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Listening and observing skills
- Empathy
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Linguistic, communicative, and plurilingual skills
- Cooperation skills

- Conflict-resolution skills
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment, and sustainability
- None.

Q15: Before graduating from the university, which of the following values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge would you want to develop further? (Please mark as many as apply.)

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Valuing cultural diversity
- Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality, and the rule of law
- Openness to cultural otherness, to other cultural beliefs, practices, and worldviews
- Respect
- Civic-mindedness
- Responsibility
- Self-efficacy
- Tolerance of ambiguity
- Autonomous learning skills
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Listening and observing skills
- Empathy
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Linguistic, communicative, and plurilingual skills
- Cooperation skills
- Conflict-resolution skills
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment, sustainability
- None.

Q16: Think of your close friend or friends (up to 3) at your university and describe them below by clicking on the statements that are true for each friend. You can respond regarding 1, 2, or 3 friends.

	Friend 1	Friend 2	Friend 3
Speaks the same first (native) language as me			
Has the same ethno-racial background as myself			
Identifies with the same religious or spiritual group/belief system as I do			
Identifies with the same sexual orientation as I do			
Is from the same country as I am			

Q17: How many student organizations, clubs, or societies are you a member of at your university?

- One
- Two
- Three
- Four or more

- I have not joined a student organization, club, or society at my university.

Q18: I am involved in the following types of student organizations. (Please mark as many as apply.)

- Academic/Departmental
- Governance
- Honors and Recognition
- Service and Social Action
- Arts and Media
- Fraternity and Sorority
- Intellectual Sports
- Sports and Recreation
- Career and Professional
- Health and Wellness
- Politics
- For Graduate Students
- Cultural and Ethnic
- Hobbies and Interests
- Religion and Beliefs
- For Faculty and Staff
- Other, please specify:
- None.

Q19: In what college or school is your academic program?

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