Sociolinguistic Situation of the Talysh in Azerbaijan

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Contents

Abstract

This paper presents the results of sociolinguistic research conducted between August 1999 and October 2000 among the Talysh people living in southeastern Azerbaijan. The goals of the research were to investigate patterns of language use, bilingualism, and language attitudes with regard to the Talysh, Azerbaijani, and Russian languages in the Talysh community. Of particular interest are the correlations between patterns of language use and social isolation. Interviews, observations, questionnaires, and an Azerbaijani Sentence Repetition Test were employed.*

1. Background

The Talysh language is a member of the northwest group of Iranian languages. Historically, the language and its people are reported to have roots in the Medes. Talysh is one of at least sixteen languages and speech varieties in the Tati language group of northwestern Iran and southern Azerbaijan. Talysh refer to themselves and their language as 'Tolish'. The origin of the name 'Tolish' is not clear but is likely quite old, predating the migration of the Iranian peoples to the southwestern shores of the Caspian.

Northern Talysh is one of three major dialects of Talysh, distinguishing itself from Central and Southern Talysh not only geographically but also culturally and linguistically. While speakers of Northern Talysh are found almost exclusively in the Republic of Azerbaijan, some can also be found in the neighboring regions of Iran along the Caspian Sea in the Province of Gilan.

Most Talysh in the Republic of Azerbaijan live in a region that stretches from the western bank of the Vilaj River in the north to the Iranian border in the south and from the Caspian Sea in the east to the Iranian border in the west. This region covers the five political districts of Astara, Lənkəran, Lerik, Masallı, and Yardımlı. Within these five districts there are over 350 Talysh villages and towns. Talysh make up more than 95% of the rural population in the three most southerly districts of Lənkəran, Lerik, and Astara.[1] In recent years, Talysh have also settled in other parts of Azerbaijan. Pockets of Talysh can be found south of the Kür River in the Biləsuvar, Neftçala, and Cəlilabad districts. Large numbers of Talysh have also moved to the urban surroundings of the capital, Baku. In particular, the cities of Bina and Sumqayıt have seen an influx of Talysh. Rastorgueva (1991) reports there may be more than 100,000 Talysh in Azerbaijan.

Most previous scholarly works on the Northern Talysh are in Russian or Azerbaijani and are almost exclusively oriented towards linguistic description.[2] Four dialects are

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[1] The percentage of non-Talysh in the towns of Lənkəran and Astara is much higher. As much as 30–40% of the population in Lənkəran town is non-Talysh.

[2] The corpus of works in Northern Talysh (30+) are not included here as they can more accurately be described as vernacular publications rather than scholarly studies.

generally identified in these works on the basis of phonetic and lexical differences. These are labeled according to the four major districts in the Talysh region: Astara, Lənkəran, Lerik, and Masallı. It is probably more accurate to describe the groups as variants rather than dialects, however, since the differences between the varieties are minimal at both the phonetic level (Mammedov 1971) and the lexical level (Pireiko 1976, Rastorgueva 1979).

Mammedov (1971) suggests a more useful linguistic distinction is one between the varieties spoken in the mountains and those spoken in the plains.[3] This distinction is similar to Miller's (1953) delineation of the Talysh region into three cultural-geographic areas: coastal lowlands, low-mountain woodlands, and high mountains. Other researchers have simplified this to a two-way dichotomy between lowland and mountain (Pireiko 1976, Vahtre and Viikberg 1991). In this framework the central low-mountain woodlands area is more or less a transition between the two extremes.

The sociolinguistic situation of the Talysh can best be described as multilingual and, in many ways, multicultural. Miller (1953) reported low or even no proficiency in Azerbaijani in the more remote regions, especially among women and elderly individuals. Most researchers since Miller (1953), however, have reported high levels of bilingualism in Azerbaijani among the Talysh population as a whole (Pireiko 1976, Isaev 1979, Rastorgueva 1991). If both the reports by Miller and those by later researchers are accurate, it appears that a shift in language use is occurring in the Talysh region. None of these claims, are based on statistically valid measurements. No quantitative study has been conducted on the level of bilingualism among the Talysh.

At the same time, it would not be surprising if the level of bilingualism is high, since the history of the Talysh as a people group has been tied to the greater history of the region, a region in which Azerbaijani has been the dominant language for an extended period. The Talysh have been significantly influenced by Azerbaijani in education and the media. For at least the last century, education for the Talysh has been in Azerbaijani.[4] Television, radio, and printed media have also been primarily in Azerbaijani.

During the Soviet period (1920–1992), Russian language influence was felt in several ways. All young men were required to serve for 2–4 years in the Soviet armed forces where the common language was Russian. From an economic standpoint, the Talysh region was important for the Soviet Union since it provided large amounts of produce, including fruits, vegetables, tea, grains, and meat. Bordering on Iran, the military base in Lənkəran was one of the largest in the Caucasus.

In spite of this, however, Russian remained secondary to Azerbaijani as a language of wider communication in the Talysh region, especially in the areas of politics and economics. Much of this was due to the fact the Talysh region is physically isolated from Russia. In the census of 1989, less than 5% of the Talysh population reported that Russian was their first or second language. This trend seems to be continuing in spite of the fact that as many as 25% of men under the age of 35 from the Talysh region are currently working in Russia.

Development of literacy in Talysh occurred in two periods in the last century. The first was in the 1930s when the Soviets developed a large number of languages as literary languages. The second was in the 1990s after Azerbaijan became an independent country. A small body of literature is available in Talysh as a result of these two periods. The most significant development of the 1990s was the publication of two Talysh newspapers and a set of Talysh literacy books for grades 1–4.

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[3] Mammedov also notes that other speech communities in the Talysh region influence Talysh on a more local level. The Talysh spoken in the village of Şuvi, for example, is affected by contact with the Charozh, a group that lives in the neigboring villages of Sarak and Digadi. Both Miller (1926) and Mammedov suggest that the Charozh were originally a Central Talysh community.

[4] Isaev (1970) points out that Soviet scholars generally viewed the development of school materials in Talysh during the 1930s as an experiment that proved to be socially unhelpful. They felt education in a single language was important to promote cooperation and interaction throughout Azerbaijan.

As mentioned above, there are distinct differences within the Talysh community between the lowlands and mountain areas. First, the population of the mountain areas is Sunni Muslim while the population of the lowlands is mostly Shiite. Mammedov (1971) notes that religious divisions parallel geographic and linguistic divisions, and that the most pronounced linguistic differences are found between the lowlands and the mountains. Pireiko (1976) makes a similar assessment.

A second difference is that the economic situation in the lowlands area is much better than that of the mountains. Both economies are dependent on agriculure; the lowlands economy is based on the basic crops of rice and tea, while the mountains area is dependent on livestock and grains (Miller 1953, Vahtre and Viikberg 1991). The lowlands area, however, is more integrated into the overall transportation network, and so can distribute their goods more easily. Because of the better economic situation, the population density is higher in the lowlands than in the mountains.

Communities in the lowlands have a higher level of contact with outside communities, and easier access to social facilities. They are more multicultural due to intermarriage. As a result, individuals in lowland communities have greater contact with Russian and Azerbaijani and speakers of these languages than do those in mountain communities. Particularly high levels of contact are seen in urban areas.

While past research has identified general differences between lowland and mountain villages, three major changes have occurred since most previous research was conducted.

First, the Talysh region of Azerbaijan has seen rapid growth in population and urbanization in the last 30 years, particularly in the last decade. This growth has been felt significantly more in the lowlands than in the mountains. Many Talysh lowland communities that were once homogenous are becoming more and more ethnically mixed, especially in areas like Masallı that already had a mix of Talysh and non-Talysh villages. Even many communities that have maintained their homogeneity have seen a significant increase in social contact with non-Talysh individuals and communities. Particularly in the urban areas around Masallı and Lənkəran towns, commerce has developed with non-Talysh regions. With the elimination of travel restrictions to and from the Talysh region, the Astara-Baku highway has become a major economic connection, increasing commerce between Talysh and non-Talysh regions.

Second, Azerbaijani has gained even higher prominence as the language of wider communication in the Talysh region. It is generally perceived to be the key to future success in education, business, politics, and communication. While this perception has grown in the Talysh region since the end of World War II, it has grown even more significantly since independence. These changes in perception are not limited to the lowlands. However, individuals in lowland communities have a greater opportunity to develop proficiency in Azerbaijani due to the higher economic viability of the lowland villages and greater levels of social contact with Azerbaijani communities.

Third, economic hardships in the region have resulted in increased emigration, especially from the lowland communities. It is estimated that more than 25% of Talysh men between the ages of 18 and 40 are working in Russia, Ukraine, and other parts of the former Soviet Union. The Russian language is still perceived as important, if only for economic reasons, particularly in the lowlands. Although many of the individuals who spend significant amounts of time in Russian-speaking areas eventually return home, it is likely that the time away will affect language use patterns.

Because of these changes, and because of the general nature of previous analyses of the sociolinguistic situation in the Talysh communities, we felt it was necessary to conduct more comprehensive research into this topic. On the basis of the sociolinguistic context of the Talysh of Azerbaijan, we can expect that differences in language use patterns, language abilities, and language attitudes should exist between the lowlands and mountains communities. We expected the following patterns might be found.

1. Overall levels of proficiency in oral Talysh would be equal to or higher than those in Azerbaijani.

2. Since individuals in mountain communities have less contact with non-Talysh speakers than do those in the lowland communities, individuals in mountain communities would exhibit greater use of Talysh and those in lowland communities would exhibit greater use of Azerbaijani.
3. Individuals in ethnically homogeneous communities would be more likely to use Talysh in any given domain.
4. Use of Russian would be significantly lower than use of Talysh or Azerbaijani, particularly in the mountain communities.
5. Overall levels of proficiency in Azerbaijani would be high, especially among young people, and especially in the area of literacy.
6. Children who have not started school would have lower levels of proficiency in Azerbaijani than school children and adults. This would be particularly true for more isolated communities.
7. Highly uniform patterns of language use would be seen in domains such as education that are affected by national policies, while higher levels of variation would be seen in domains such as the home.
8. Language use patterns would vary both between and within communities. Factors influencing such patterns within communities would include age and gender; we assume older individuals and women are likely to have had less interaction with non-Talysh speakers, and are therefore more likely to use Talysh in a wider number of domains.
9. Individuals would be more likely to use Azerbaijani to a greater extent in communities that are closer to non-Talysh speaking communities or urban centers.

2. Methodology

The research presented in this report was conducted between August 1999 and October 2000. Four trips lasting from two to four weeks each were made to the Talysh region during this period. In addition, we interviewed key individuals in Baku.

The research trips were conducted in two stages. During the first stage, we visited thirteen villages. Each of these visits was one or two days in length. We also visited the administrative centers in Astara, Lənkəran, Masallı, Lerik, Neftçala, Yardımlı, Biləsuvar, and Cəlilabad districts. During the second stage, we conducted more extensive research in four of the villages visited during stage one.

2.1 Stage One Research

The villages chosen for the first stage of our research represented a range of village types with regard to mountain versus lowlands communities, degree of isolation,[5] homogenous versus ethnically mixed populations, and size. Basic demographic information about these villages is given in table 1.

[5] Degrees of isolation were determined in terms of physical and social isolation. Villages reported to have limited road access or to be far from a center are physically isolated. Those in which individuals were reported to have difficulty accessing basic services or to have minimal contact with other villages are socially isolated. Villages were categorized as follows: Low isolation: neither physically or socially isolated, Medium isolation: either physically or socially isolated, and High isolation: both physically and socially isolated.

Table 1: Research Communities and Typology

Village	District	Geography	Isolation	Ethnicity	Pop.
Şuvi	Astara	Mountain	Medium	Homogenous	1,040
Şahağac		Lowland	Low	Homogenous	4,200
Sarak		Mountain	Medium	Homogenous	1,650
Germətük	Lənkəran	Lowland	Low	Homogenous	3,926
Molaca		Mountain	High	Homogenous	463
Mahmudavar	Masallı	Lowland	Low	Homogenous	4,440
Hişgədərə		Lowland	Low	Homogenous	3,016
Çayrud	Lerik	Mountain	High	Homogenous	1,770
Pirəsora		Mountain	High	Homogenous	2,016
Şingədulan		Mountain	High	Homogenous	981
Lapati	Neftçala	Lowland	Low	Mixed (30%)	400
Allar	Yardımlı	Mountain	High	Mixed (35%)	1,494
Səmədabad	Biləsuvar	Lowland	Low	Mixed (15%)	900

Nine interview questionnaires were used during the first stage of research. Questionnaires were prepared for use with government representatives at the district and local levels, personnel in district statistics bureaus and Ministries of Education, educators in schools and kindergartens, medical workers in hospitals or clinics, religious leaders, and mixed groups of residents in the villages. These questionnaires served as the major focus of the research conducted. Additional information was obtained through interviews with other individuals in the district centers and villages, including cultural center directors, postmasters, librarians, local business people, and local personalities of sociolinguistic significance such as authors, singers, poets, and researchers.

On the basis of interviews with administrators at both the district and local levels, officials at statistics bureaus, and groups of village residents, we identified the areas in which Talysh speakers are living. For these areas, we also gathered information regarding basic demographics and overall ethnic composition. On the local level, we developed descriptions of the administrative structures, economic situation, social contact patterns, and availability of services for each of the villages in which research was conducted.

Two questionnaires, one for school directors and teachers and one for kindergarten directors and instructors, provided most of the information regarding education at the village level. Additional information was gathered at the district level from district officials, including representatives of the ministries of education. Information was gathered in five areas: demographics of the student population, demographics of teachers and administration, language of instruction, program structure, and study of Talysh.

Interviews with local health officials, including nurses, doctors, and, as appropriate, hospital directors, covered such topics as demographics of health professionals, demographics of patient population, facilities, funding, and training. The questionnaire used with religious leaders focused on the religious orientation of the village, attendance at religious functions, funding, religious schooling, and outside contact.

Questions regarding patterns of language use dealt with language use in three different types of use domains: physical domains, functional domains, and interpersonal domains. Information regarding which languages were used in various physical domains was collected from a number of sources. For example, district administrators were asked about language use in the district centers, and school personnel were asked about language use around the school. Other physical domains of interest included (but were not limited to) medical facilities, religious facilities, the home, the bazaar, tea houses, and the stores. The sources of information regarding language use in various physical domains are given in appendix A.

Information concerning use of language in various functional domains was gathered during the group interviews. We were particularly interested in reported language use in the following functional domains:

- Outside home/work – nonofficial occasions
- Outside home/work – official occasions
- First language learned
- Language spoken most fluently
- Language read most
- Language easiest to understand when read
- Language easiest to write in
- Language used to write letters
- Language used to write official papers
- Language listened to most on radio
- Language watched most on TV
- Language for arguing
- Language for cursing
- Language for counting
- Language for singing

In the area of language use in interpersonal domains, we were interested in the relationship between language use and the age and gender of the individuals involved. Information regarding language use in interpersonal domains was gathered in the group interviews.

We also collected information concerning levels of proficiency in Talysh, Azerbaijani, and Russian. The primary source of information regarding reported levels of proficiency was group interviews with village residents. In these interviews, we asked for perceptions of proficiency among various groups differentiated by age and gender. The age categories we used were preschool (0–6), school-aged (7–18), youth (19–30), young adults (30–45), middle-aged (45–60), and seniors (60+). In the case of Azerbaijani, these reports were supplemented by individual interviews with educators, health officials, and other individuals who had first-hand information. The specific questions we used to elicit information regarding proficiency in Azerbaijani are listed in appendix B.

2.2 Stage Two Research

The second stage of our research was more focused than was the first stage. This research had two major foci. The first was to gather more detailed information on the interaction between social contact and patterns of language use, while the second was to gather objective information about levels of proficiency in Azerbaijani.

Information regarding the interaction between social contact and patterns of language use was gathered by asking individuals questions about their personal language use patterns. Answers to these questions could then be compared with what we knew about typical social contact patterns for the village of which the respondent was a resident.

During these interviews, individuals were asked which language(s) they used in the following physical and functional domains:

- Home language
- First language learned
- Language spoken most fluently
- Language in which TV watched
- Language used on the street
- Language used in teahouse
- Language used for counting
- Language used for singing
- Language used for arguing

They were asked which languages they used with other individuals of the following age groups: 0–6, 7–29, 30–45, 46–60, 60+. These particular age groups represent individuals at key periods in life. Characteristics of these age groups are given in appendix C.

Objective information regarding proficiency in Azerbaijani was gathered by administering the Azerbaijani Sentence Repetition Test and the Russian Sentence Repetition Test. In a Sentence Repetition Test (SRT), an individual listens to a set of fifteen sentences of increasing complexity. After each sentence, the individual is asked to repeat the sentence. Each response is scored for accuracy on a scale of 1 to 3. Thus, a perfect score would be 45. A picture of overall levels of proficiency among various subgroups can be determined from these scores (Radloff 1991).

As indicated above, we included only four villages in this second stage: Germətük, Mahmudavar, Çayrud, and Şingədulan. These villages were chosen because they exhibited different levels of social contact. Germətük is representative of a lowland location with high urban contact, Mahmudavar is representative of a lowland location with low urban contact, Çayrud is representative of a mountain location with low isolation, and Şingədulan is representative of a mountain location with high isolation.

In each village a random selection of homes was chosen from the land registry. The process of random selection involved dividing the number of homes in the land registry by the desired sample size, arriving at a number *n*. Every n^{th} home on the land registry list was then chosen for the sample. We were not able to visit all the homes that were chosen. In a number of cases, all residents of the chosen home were outside the village. In other cases, individuals were unavailable due to work or health. Table 2 shows the number of homes that made up the sample group in each village and the number of homes that were actually visited.

Table 2: Random Selection of Homes

	Mahmudavar	Germətük	Çayrud	Şingədulan
Sample Size	30	30	34	21
Homes Visited	23	25	24	18

A total of 335 individuals resided in the 90 homes that we visited in the research process. Our goal was to interview and administer the Azerbaijani SRT to each of these individuals. This was not possible, however, for various reasons. In the majority of cases individuals were either not in the village or not in sufficient health to participate. Table 3 shows the number of individuals who were chosen in each location and the actual number of individuals who were interviewed and the number to whom we administered the SRT.

Table 3: Individuals Interviewed and Tested

	Mahmudavar	Germətük	Çayrud	Şingədulan
Number Selected	88	91	89	67
Number Interviewed	66	74	61	52
Number Tested	63	66	44	50

Tables 4 and 5 show the demographics of the 253 individuals we interviewed and the 223 individuals to whom we administered the SRT.

Table 4: Ages and Genders of Interviewed Individuals

		Mahmudavar	Germətük	Çayrud	Şingədulan
Women	Under 30	15	12	13	13
	30 to 60	21	19	11	9
	Over 60	6	13	10	9
Men	Under 30	6	10	8	10
	30 to 60	13	16	13	8
	Over 60	6	4	6	3

Table 5: Ages and Genders of Individuals Completing the SRT

		Mahmudavar	Germətük	Çayrud	Şingədulan
Women	14 to 25	13	11	5	11
	26 to 55	23	18	12	11
	Over 55	5	8	6	7
Men	14 to 25	5	9	5	9
	26 to 55	10	16	11	9
	Over 55	7	4	5	5

3. Findings[6]

3.1 General Descriptions

This section includes general descriptions of communities and social domains. These will form the backdrop to our discussion of language use patterns and levels of proficiency in later sections.

3.1.1 Location descriptions[7]

This section includes descriptions of the districts in which the majority of Talysh live, as well as more specific descriptions of the villages visited during the course of our research.

3.1.1.1 Lənkəran (Germətük, Molaca villages)

The district of Lənkəran is the largest of the Talysh districts in terms of population. The total population is 200,344, 90% of which is ethnically and linguistically Talysh. It includes the towns of Lənkəran and Liman as well as six other towns and eighty-five villages. It is a major center for trade and culture among the Talysh.

The economy of the district of Lənkəran consists of a number of elements. The lowlands have long been famous for the production of tea, subtropical fruits, and fresh vegetables. During the Soviet period, Lənkəran supplied a significant amount of produce for the USSR. Trade and business in Lənkəran are also a major source of income. Several major educational centers in the town of Lənkəran itself employ a significant number of people. The fishing industry, especially that related to sturgeon and caviar, is a major source of income in the coastal areas. The mountain villages are more dependent on livestock farming.

The village of Germətük is located four kilometers south of the town of Lənkəran directly off state highway M3 on the A30. There are approximately 400 homes in the village; the total population is 3,926. Germətük is the administrative center for four villages: Germətük, Veladi, Kosalan, and Balaşuruk. All of these are Talysh villages. Many from Germətük are employed in Lənkəran town or have work that connects them to the town. Farming is also a major source of income. The land from the former collective farm has been divided among the individuals in the village.

The village of Molaca is located northwest of the town of Lənkəran, 18 kilometers west of the village of Vilvan. It is in the Osakücə administrative group along with

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[6] The data below concerning the ethnically mixed communities may refer to one or more of three distinct groups within a community: (i) the general population of the community, (ii) the Talysh population in the community, and (iii) those who have some level of Talysh language ability in the community. All statements made concerning data gathered from the ethnically mixed communities will pertain to one of these groups and will be specifically stated as such.

[7] All statistical figures are taken from the 1999 census information provided at district statistics offices. Cəlilabad has been omitted from the descriptions below since there are no population centers in the district with a significant Talysh population. Government officials estimated that 5–10% of the population of Cəlilibad was Talysh.

Osakücə, Pambali, Tatobar, Sinogli, and Haftalyon. All of the villages in the administrative area are 99% Talysh. Most people support themselves by raising livestock or farming small gardens.

3.1.1.2 Astara (Şuvi, Sarak, Şahağac villages)

The district of Astara includes the town of Astara and ninety-three villages and towns. The total population of the district is approximately 82,000 of which 98% is Talysh. The district is the southernmost district of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Talysh region. It is the only Azerbaijani district that shares borders with sections of Iran in which Talysh live. It is a major trade center as all trade between Azerbaijan and Iran using ground transportation passes through the Astara border crossing. A majority of the rural economy is agriculturally based. In contrast to the densely populated lowlands, 80% of the district is mountainous and sparsely populated.

The villages of Şuvi and Sarak are located in the mountains west of the town of Ərçivan. Şuvi is the administrative center for the seven villages of Şuvi, Sarak, Degadi, Saliva, Nazneş, Siyatuk, and Sekaşan, and has a population of 1,040. It is 99% Talysh ethnically and linguistically. Extensive contact with the villages of Sarak and Degadi, which are 80% Charozh, has made the Şuvi dialect of Talysh unique (Mammedov 1991), although most Charozh consider their language to be a dialect of Talysh. The village of Sarak has a population of 1,650. Both Şuvi and Sarak are economically dependent on agriculture, mainly growing tea and raising livestock.

The village of Şahağac is located north of the town of Astara on the Caspian coast. A newly constructed coastal highway between Astara and Lənkəran runs through Şahağac. Şahağac used to be the administrative center for itself and Şiyakeran. Since Şiyakeran recently became a separate administrative group, Şahağac is now the only village in its administrative group. The population is 4,200, of which 80% are Talysh and 20% claim to be Halaj. All residents, however, speak Talysh. Şahağac is economically dependent on dairy and tea.

3.1.1.3 Lerik (Çayrud, Pirəsora, Şingədulan villages)

The district of Lerik includes the town of Lerik and 159 villages, with a total population of 63,300. Of these population centers, 145 are 99% Talysh, ethnically and linguistically. The villages of Çayrud, Pirəsora, and Şingədulan are all Talysh villages. As is the case in most of the Talysh villages in the district, 90% of the residents of these three villages have lived in the village all their lives. Those who marry into the village are generally from other Talysh villages. The history of these villages is not known, but Talysh has always been the first language in each of them.

Like the vast majority of people who live in the district, residents of all three villages depend on farming for their economic survival. People in Çayrud, and Pirəsora depend mostly on livestock farming. Herds of sheep, goats, cows, and horses are pastured in the high mountains above the village during the summer, and are either driven into the lowlands or fed hay during the winter months. People in Şingədulan raise both livestock and grains. The land that used to belong to collective farms in Çayrud and Şingədulan has recently been distributed among area residents. Approximately 5% of the population in each of the villages work in government-supported facilities including middle schools, kindergartens, hospitals, cultural centers, and libraries.

The residents of all three villages are Sunni Muslims. Mosques have been built in each of the villages and these are supported locally.

Due to the mountainous terrain of the district of Lerik, all three villages have harsh winter climates. Heavy snowfall is not uncommon. While year-around contact is maintained with nearby villages within local administrative groups, roads to the district center and beyond are often closed due to weather during the colder winter months. The main road to each of the villages is gravel and dirt, periodically maintained by the district government. Within the villages all roads are dirt and rock.

The village of Çayrud is located twenty-four kilometers east of the town of Lerik, across the Konca Vu River from state highway A30. The village contains approximately 200 households, spread out over a distance of two kilometers. The total population is 1,770. Çayrud is the administrative center for the six villages of Çayrud, Andurma, Picakuda, Rivarud, Anzolu, and Tikəbənd. All of these are 99% Talysh by ethnicity

The village of Pirəsora is located southwest of the town of Lerik, twenty-two kilometers west of state highway A30. The village contains approximately 177 homes, spread along both banks of the main northern tributary of the Konca Vu River. The Pirəsora administrative area used to include the villages of Pirəsora, Buzeyir, and Orand. Orand has since become its own administrative center. The population of Pirəsora is currently 2,016.

The village of Şingədulan is located thirty-two kilometers north of the town of Lerik, northwest of state highway A30. The road to Şingədulan follows the northern bank of the Alasha River into the heart of the district's northern agricultural zone. There are approximately 125 homes in the village; the total population is 991. The Şingədulan administrative area includes the villages of Şingədulan, Sorus, Laman, Zinoni, Ağçay, Kuman, Molalan, and Durgan. Seven of these are 99% ethnically and linguistically Talysh. The residents of Zinoni are Azerbaijani speaking and for the most part are not ethnically Talysh.

3.1.1.4 Masallı (Hişgədərə, Mahmudavar villages)

The district of Masallı includes 110 towns and villages with a total population of 175,715. Thirty-six of the villages are predominantly Talysh. Significant numbers of Talysh live in the larger urban centers of Ərkivan, Boradigah, and Masallı, but they are a minority in all these communities. The Talysh population centers in Masallı are all found south of state highway A29 and west of state highway A31.

Masallı's location on state highway M3 between Iran and Baku has made the city a significant trading center and business hub for the region. The relatively unpopulated mountainous areas of the district have become very popular for resorts. A large number of hotels and tourist spots have sprung up in the district, particularly along state highway A30, which climbs from the town of Masallı into the district of Yardımlı. As a whole, the lowland sections of district are heavily populated. The traditional fields of rice and grains which have been grown in the district in the past are fast giving way to a ballooning population and the need for space to build homes.

The village of Hişgədərə is located five kilometers west of the village of Boradigah. There are approximately 250 homes in the village. The total population is 3,016, 90% of whom are Talysh.

The village of Mahmudavar is located seven kilometers north of the Masallı-Lənkəran border on state highway A31. There are approximately 350 homes in the village, with a total population of 4,440. There are three villages in the Mahmudavar administrative group: Mahmudavar, Mololon, and Rudyakanar. All three villages are 99% Talysh.

Most of the residents of both Hişgədərə and Mahmudavar have lived in the villages all of their lives. Those who marry in are generally from other Talysh villages, but Russians and Azerbaijani speakers have also been known to marry into the village. Like most of the other villages in the region, both villages are economically dependent on trading and agriculture. Approximately 5% of the residents work in government-supported facilities.

3.1.1.5 Yardımlı (Allar village)

The district of Yardımlı is the remotest district in the Talysh region. The only major transport artery into the region, state highway A29 from Masallı, was built in the late 1950s. The district includes eighty-nine villages and the town of Yardımlı, with a total population of 50,279. Three villages in Yardımlı—Allar, Şixhusseinli, and Tilekend—have significant number of residents who are ethnically and linguistically Talysh. A little

over 2,000 people live in these three villages. The economy of Yardımlı is heavily dependent on raising livestock.

The village of Allar is located on the Yardımlı-Lerik border at the southern end of the Allar River. There are no major roads leading to Allar. Out of the total population of 1,494, about 35% are Talysh. Allar is the administrative center for itself and Şixhusseinli. As many as 50% of the residents of Şixhusseinli are reported to be Talysh.

3.1.1.6 Neftçala (Lapati village)

The district of Neftçala is a lowland district with no population centers in which Talysh constitute a majority. Since the Soviet period, however, a large section of land west of the Gizilagac Nature Reserve has been designated for use by residents of Lerik for winter pasturing. As a result, a significant number of Talysh live the villages of Lapati and Garamanli during the winter months. Economically, both of these villages are heavily dependent on raising livestock.

3.1.1.7 Biləsuvar (Səmədabad village)

The district of Biləsuvar has a total population of 76,000 living in twenty-five towns and villages. Of these, 20,000 live in the town of Biləsuvar. Government officials indicated that perhaps 10–15% of these residents are Talysh. Outside the town of Biləsuvar, there are significant Talysh populations in the villages Səmədabad, Xirmandali, and Əskərabad.

The Talysh population of Səmədabad is unique in that they were relocated to Səmədabad from the district of Lerik in the early 1950s. In fact, many of the Talysh in Səmədabad, as well as in the district of Biləsuvar as a whole, refer to themselves as *Lerikli*. Social changes have greatly affected the Talysh in Səmədabad. Contact with non-Talysh in surrounding villages, including intermarriage, have resulted in the present situation in which less than 10% of the population of Səmədabad will claim Talysh roots.

3.1.2 A description of key social domains

The use of language in education seems to be fairly uniform throughout the Talysh area. The medium of instruction is Azerbaijani in all of the schools we visited and has been so since the 1930s. While there are no Talysh language classes in ethnically mixed communities, a Talysh language program is being developed in homogenously Talysh communities. A program of Talysh study has already been designed for use in grades 1–4, and there are plans to expand this to include higher grades in the future. In the current program, all students in grades 1–4 study Talysh, using textbooks in Talysh, for 2–3 hours a week. Ministers of Education at the district level reported that Talysh language instruction is available in schools in all homogenous Talysh communities.

The overall health system, including on-going training and provision of health-related literature, is funded and administered by the government. The nature of health facilities in various communities depends on the population size and whether or not the location is an administrative center. Most doctors were trained in Baku or major Russian cities, while other medical personnel received their initial training in Lənkəran or Baku. Russian is still an important language in the domain of health since most of the senior staff received their training in Russian and most of the literature that they own is in Russian. On-going training courses, however, are provided in Azerbaijani and more and more literature is being produced in Azerbaijani.

Islam is the only religion practiced in the villages we visited. The majority of funding for religious activities comes from within the communities. In each of the villages at least one mosque exists, and at least one individual is recognized as a religious leader. These religious leaders perform a variety of functions ranging from leading prayers in the mosque to religious teaching in the community. Both formal and informal religious education is provided to students who have an interest in religious training. Those who wish to go further in their training generally continue their study in Lənkəran.

3.2 Patterns of Language Use

Patterns of language use in physical and functional domains will be examined together in section 3.2.1, while patterns of language use in interpersonal domains will be examined in section 3.2.2.

3.2.1 Patterns in physical and functional domains

Information regarding language use in physical and functional domains was collected during the first stage of research during group interviews. Further information was collected during the second stage of research during individual interviews. The advantage of the group interviews was that we were able to collect information on overall patterns in each village, while the advantage of individual interviews was that we were able to collect more finely differentiated information, although in a fewer number of villages. The information we collected will be presented in the next two sections.

3.2.1.1 Patterns reported in group interviews

Reported patterns of language use in various physical domains were relatively uniform in homogenous Talysh communities and are summarized in table 6. Where two languages are listed, the first is more prevalent.

Table 6: Reported Language Use in Physical Domains

Azerbaijani	District Center School: Teachers/ Students, outside class School: In Class Kindergarten: Teachers/ Students, outside class*
Azerbaijani/Talysh	Outside Village Kindergarten A: In Class* Mosque** Religious Ceremonies House of Culture**
Talysh/Azerbaijani	School: Students, outside class School: Teachers, outside class Kindergarten: Teachers, outside class* Kindergarten: Students* Tea House Post office** Hospital/Clinic Store Home
Talysh	Street Bazaar** Mill** Library

* Does not exist in Sarak.
** Does not exist in Molaca or Sarak.

In many domains in which two languages are used, the less prevalent language is only used when one of the individuals involved doesn't know the more prevalent. This is especially true in kindergarten and in public locations. In kindergarten, children often don't know Azerbaijani well and so teachers use Talysh to explain things. In public locations like the post office, store, hospital, mosque, and bazaar, Azerbaijani is used for the benefit of individuals who are not ethnic Talysh.

Several individuals, especially educators, essentially summarized the use of language in these domains as follows. Azerbaijani is used in formal situations where nonlocal people are present, while Talysh is used in informal situations when only local people are present. These two sets of conditions form ends of a continuum. Many situations fit between these two ends, having varying levels of formality or differing mixtures of

individuals present at different times or under different circumstances. A combination of languages is used in these situations. The only domain that does not fit into this account is the home. The situation in the home is informal, and all the participants speak Talysh. We would expect, then, that only Talysh would be used in the home. The explanation for the use of Azerbaijani in the home was that parents speak Azerbaijani with children to prepare them for school.

In the ethnically mixed communities, it was reported that only Azerbaijani is used in all locations except the home and the street. While Talysh-speaking individuals use Talysh in the home and on the street,[8] even they use Azerbaijani in these domains more frequently than do Talysh-speaking individuals in homogenous communities.

As was the case in physical domains of language use, reported patterns of language use in various functional domains were relatively uniform in homogenous Talysh communities. Among the ethnically mixed communities, common patterns were also reported. The reported patterns are summarized in table 7. Where two languages are used, the one that is less prevalent is indicated by a lower case 'x'.

Table 7: Reported Language Use in Functional Domains

Domains	Homogenous Communities			Mixed Communities		
	T	A	R	T	A	R
Outside Home/Work – Nonofficial	X			x	X	
First Learned	X	x		x	X	
Spoken Most Fluently	X	x		x	X	
Arguing	X	x		x	X	
Cursing	X	x		x	X	
Counting	X	x		x	X	
Outside Home/Work – Official		X			X	
Easiest to Understand When Read		X			X	
Read Most		X			X	
Write Letters		X			X	
Write Official Papers		X			X	
Easiest to Write in		X			X	
Singing		X			X	
Listened to Most on Radio		X	x		X	x
TV Most Watched		X	x		X	x

All of the functional domains were said to be relevant for all sections of the population with three exceptions. First, men are reported to listen to radio more than women and adult men more so than those under 30. Second, men are said to read slightly more than women. Third, women are said to be less likely to participate in formal occasions outside of work and the home. Similarly, adults are said to be more likely to participate in formal occasions than children.

3.2.1.2 Patterns reported in individual interviews

Analysis of information gathered during individual interviews during the second stage of research showed significant differences between lowland and mountain villages in the use of Talysh in over half of the physical and functional domains.[9] The percentages of individuals in each type of location who reported using Talysh in these domains are summarized in table 8.

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[8] Those who do not speak Talysh or speak it poorly, particularly individuals under 30 years of age, still understand Talysh. They reply in Azerbaijani when spoken to in Talysh.

[9] Single sample T-tests were run for the 112 individuals in the mountain communities and the 138 individuals in the lowland communities for whom information was obtained regarding all the domains. The differences were significant in all domains at a level of less than 0.001.

Table 8: Use of Talysh in Physical and Functional Domains

Domains	Germətük/Mahmudavar	Çayrud/Şingədulan
Home	57%	85%
Street	63%	88%
Teahouse	66%	94%
First Learned	62%	84%
Fluency	49%	63%
Arguing	55%	83%
Counting	29%	55%

None of the individuals we interviewed reported using Russian as the primary language in any of these domains. Therefore, the percentages of individuals who reported using Azerbaijani as the primary language in these domains are inverses of the percentages reported in table 8. This is shown in table 9.

Table 9: Use of Azerbaijani as the Primary Language in Various Domains

Domains	Germətük/Mahmudavar	Çayrud/Şingədulan
Home	43%	15%
Street	37%	12%
Teahouse	34%	6%
First Learned	38%	16%
Fluency	51%	37%
Arguing	45%	17%
Counting	71%	45%

There was no significant variation between villages with regard to language use in the domain of singing. Overall, 10.5% of individuals in all four villages reported using Talysh as the primary language for singing.

The only domain in which some people reported Russian was the primary language was watching television. Table 10 gives the percentages of individuals who claimed Russian or Azerbaijani was the primary language in which they watch television.

Table 10: Primary Languages for Watching Television

Villages	Azerbaijani	Russian
Germətük	77%	23%
Mahmudavar	87.5%	12.5%
Çayrud[10]	86%	9%
Şingədulan[11]	92%	6%

Two observations can be made regarding the figures in table 10. First, Russian is used much less than Azerbaijani overall. Second, there is a correlation between language use and isolation. Germətük, the village with the highest level of contact with Azerbaijani and Russian speakers, has the highest number of viewers who watch television in Russian. At the other extreme, Şingədulan, the most isolated location, has the lowest number of viewers who watch television in Russian.

Ignoring distinctions between villages, age was a significant factor in overall language use patterns. Positive correlations in most domains indicate that the older Talysh individuals are, the more likely they are to use Talysh in their daily life. Conversely, the younger individuals are, the more likely they are to use Azerbaijani in

[10] One individual in Çayrud reported watching television in Farsi; two individuals reported watching in Talysh.

[11] One individual in Şingədulan reported Talysh as the main language in which they watch television.

their daily life. The correlations for the domains are as follows: 0.302 for first language learned, 0.256 for street language, 0.217 for counting, 0.202 for arguing, 0.175 for most fluent, and 0.169 for home.[12] The highest correlation, in the domain of 'first language learned', indicates the steepest increase in Talysh use as age increases. The lowest increases, in the domains of 'home language' and 'fluency', indicate the least variance across age groups.

The correlation between age and Talysh use was most pronounced in Germətük. The correlations corresponding with the overall correlations given above are as follows: 0.465 for first language learned, 0.503 for street language, 0.307 for counting, 0.367 for arguing, 0.275 for most fluent, and 0.317 for home.[13] The same information is presented in a different format in tables 11 and 12 where the language use patterns of those under 30 and those over 30 are compared. Table 11 presents the percentage of each group who use Talysh in the various physical and functional domains.[14]

Table 11: Use of Talysh as the Primary Language in Physical and Functional Domains in Germətük

Domains	Under 30	Over 30
Home Language	20%	64%
First Language Learned	20%	80%
Most Fluent	8%	58%
Street Language	12.5%	74%
Language for Arguing	20%	68%
Language for Singing	0%	12%
Language for Counting	8%	46%

No significant numbers of individuals reported using any language other than Talysh or Azerbaijani in the given domains. Therefore, as seen in table 12, the percentage of each group that use Azerbaijani in each domain is an inverse of the percentage who use Talysh.

Table 12: Use of Azerbaijani as the Primary Language in Physical and Functional Domains in Germətük

	Under 30	Over 30
Home Language	80%	36%
First Language Learned	80%	20%
Most Fluent	92%	42%
Street Language	88.5%	26%
Language for Arguing	80%	32%
Language for Singing	100%	88%
Language for Counting	92%	54%

Tables 12 and 13 show that the use of Talysh is much higher among individuals over 30 than among individuals under 30.

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[12] A bivariate correlation test for the relationship between age and patterns of Talysh use was run on 197 individuals for whom information was available in all domains. Talysh language use was binary 'yes/no'. Calculations for Pearson's correlation coefficients resulted in a two-tailed significance of 0.01 or lower for all these correlations.

[13] A bivariate correlation test for the relationship between Talysh language use and age was run on sixty individuals in Germətük for whom information was available in all domains. Talysh language use was binary 'yes/no'. Calculations for Pearson's correlation coefficients resulted a two-tailed significance of 0.01 or lower for all these correlations.

[14] The differences between the two groups are significant at a level less than 0.001 in all domains. Significances were calculated using single sample T-tests on each of the groups. For the under 30 group N=22 and for the over 30 group N=52.

While the differences between men and women in reported language use were minimal in three villages, there were significant differences in Şingədulan. Three domains in particular revealed significant differences, the domains of the home, first language learned, and language of most fluency. Table 13 gives the percentages of men and women who reported using Talysh in these physical and functional domains in Şingədulan.[15]

Table 13: Talysh Use by Men and Women in Şingədulan

Domains	Men	Women
First learned	76%	87%
Home	67%	87%
Fluent	48%	74%

3.2.2 Interpersonal domains of language use

As in the case of information regarding language use in physical and functional domains, information regarding language use in interpersonal domains was collected during the first stage of research during group interviews. Further information was collected during the second stage of research during individual interviews. The information we collected will be presented in the next two sections.

3.2.1.1 Patterns reported in group interviews

Reported patterns of language use in interpersonal domains were less uniform than the patterns discussed thus far. It was possible, however, to make some generalizations. The most pronounced generalization is that gender was not reported to affect language use patterns. That is, while the choice of languages used differed on the basis of the ages of the individuals involved, no differences were reported which depended on the genders of the individuals. Another generalization is that there were no reports that Russian was used in any of the communities for interpersonal interaction.[16] Other generalizations include the following: (i) Azerbaijani, when used, is used mainly by school children or with school children, (ii) Talysh, when used, is used mostly by adults or with adults, and (iii) older individuals are the most likely to speak Talysh with everyone.

In general, patterns of language use varied in two areas. The first is the amount of Talysh reportedly used with and by preschool children. The second is the amount of Talysh used by school children (7–18) and young people (19–30) along with Azerbaijani. That is, individuals in these two age groups all use Azerbaijani; the variation is in how much they also use Talysh. Each of the villages can be classified as falling into one of four categories: (i) those which reported no Talysh use in either interpersonal domains, (ii) those which reported low levels of Talysh use in both domains, (iii) those which reported low levels of Talysh use in only the second domain, and (iv) those which reported high levels of Talysh use in both domains. Language use patterns are summarized in tables 14–17 on the basis of these categories.

Table 14 summarizes the reported patterns of use in Səmədabad and Allar, in which Talysh is not used in either interpersonal domain. The language in a given cell is used by the age group in the far left column with the age group in the top row. Where two languages are listed, the first is used more often.

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[15] Single sample T-tests were run on the thirty-one women and twenty-one men in Şingədulan. In all the tests the differences are significant at the 0.001 level.

[16] This excludes individuals who may have married into the community whose first language is Russian. Even among these, many communicate in Talysh or Azerbaijani.

Table 14: Language Use in Interpersonal Domains in Səmədabad and Allar

	0–6	7–18	19–30	30–45	45–60	60+
0–6	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri
7–18	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri
19–30	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri
30–45	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri
45–60	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri	Talysh/Azeri
60+	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri	Azeri	Talysh/Azeri	Talysh

The villages of Səmədabad and Allar are ethnically mixed villages in which the use of Talysh by individuals under 45 was reported to be generally low.

Table 15 summarizes the language patterns reported in Hişgədərə, Germətük, and Lapati, in which use of Talysh is reported to be low in both interpersonal domains.

Table 15: Language Use in Interpersonal Domains in Hişgədərə, Germətük, and Lapati

	0–6	7–18	19–30	30–45	45–60	60+
0–6	Az/Tal	Az/Tal	Az/Tal	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal/Az
7–18	Az/Tal	Az/Tal	Az/Tal	Az/Tal	Tal/Az	Tal/Az
19–30	Tal/Az	Az/Tal	Tal	Tal	Tal	Tal
30–45	Tal/Az	Az/Tal	Tal	Tal	Tal	Tal
45–60	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal	Tal	Tal	Tal
60+	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal	Tal	Tal	Tal

Table 16 summarizes the language patterns reported in Mahmudavar, Molaca, and Şahağac. In these villages, use of Talysh by individuals ages 7–30 is reported to be low, but use of Talysh by or with preschool children is not.

Table 16: Language Use in Interpersonal Domains in Mahmudavar, Molaca and Şahağac

	0–6	7–18	19–30	30–45	45–60	60+
0–6	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal	Tal
7–18	Az/Tal	Az/Tal	Az/Tal	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal
19–30	Tal/Az	Az/Tal	Tal	Tal	Tal	Tal
30–45	Tal/Az	Az/Tal	Tal	Tal	Tal	Tal
45–60	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal	Tal	Tal	Tal
60+	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal	Tal	Tal	Tal

Table 17 summarizes the language patterns reported in Çayrud, Pirəsora, Şingədulan, Şuvi, and Sarak, in which use of Talysh is high in all interpersonal domains.

Table 17: Language Use in Interpersonal Domains in Çayrud, Pirəsora, Şingədulan, Şuvi, and Sarak

	0–6	7–18	19–30	30–45	45–60	60+
0–6	Tal	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal	Tal
7–18	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal
19–30	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal	Tal	Tal	Tal
30–45	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal	Tal	Tal	Tal
45–60	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal	Tal	Tal	Tal
60+	Tal/Az	Tal/Az	Tal	Tal	Tal	Tal

3.2.1.1 Patterns reported in individual interviews

The data collected during individual interviews during the second stage of our research showed a consistent difference in patterns of language use between the lowland and mountain villages in interpersonal domains. Table 18 gives the percentages of

individuals who reported they primarily use Talysh in the interpersonal domains in lowland and mountain villages.[17]

Table 18: Talysh as Primary Language of Use in Interpersonal Domains

	With 0–6	With 7–29	With 30–45	With 46–60	With 60+
Lowland	21%	25%	53%	61.5%	68.5%
Mountains	64.5%	33%	82%	88%	92%

Since no one indicated they use Russian as a primary language of use, the percentages for use of Azerbaijani are inverses of the figures in table 18. We can make three generalizations on the basis of this information. First, use of Talysh is higher in every interpersonal domain in the mountain villages than in the lowland villages. Second, with the exception of the 0–6 age group in the mountain villages, the younger individuals are, the less likely they are to have Talysh used with them. Third, language use patterns differ least with the 7–29 age group, and most with the 0–6 age group.

The data reported in table 18 shows that Talysh is generally used more widely *with* individuals over 30 in mountain villages than in lowland villages. The data in table 19 shows that in both lowland and mountain villages Talysh is also used more widely *by* individuals over 30 when interacting with individuals over 30.

Table 19. Use of Talysh *with* Individuals over 30

	By individuals under 30	*By* individuals over 30
Lowland Villages	43%	68%
Mountain Villages	83%	91%

The data in table 19 shows that Talysh is used least with individuals over 30 by individuals under 30 in lowland villages, and it is used most by individuals over 30 in mountain villages.[18]

While patterns of language use with individuals over 30 were affected by location and age, patterns of language use with individuals under 30 are affected by location, age, and gender. We will first present the patterns found among men, then those found among women.

For men in general, significant differences in patterns of language use were found with individuals in the 7–29 age group and with those in the 0–6 age group. The reported language use patterns of men are summarized in table 20. [19]

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[17] Single sample T-tests were run on data reported in table 17. The sample included the 112 individuals in mountain villages and 138 individuals in lowland villages for whom data was gathered in all domains. The differences are significant at the 0.001 level.

[18] Single sample T-tests were run on these four groups. The sample included thirty-nine individuals under 30 and ninety-eight individuals over 30 in mountain villages and forty-three individuals under 30 and sixty-eight individuals over 30 in lowland villages. In all eight tests the differences are significant at the 0.001 level.

[19] Single sample T-tests were run on each of the groups represented. The sample included forty-eight men in mountain villages, sixteen men under 30 in lowland villages and thirty-nine men over 30 in lowland villages. In all the tests the differences are significant at the 0.001 level.

Table 20: Use of Talysh *by* Men *with* Individuals under 30

		By men under 30	*By* men over 30
Lowland Villages	*With* 0–6	8%	39%
	With 7–29	0%	26%
Mountain Villages	*With* 0–6	83%	
	With 7–29	40%	

Less than half of the men in the mountain villages, regardless of age, reported using Talysh with individuals in the 7–29 age group. This is in contrast to the fact that 83% of men in the mountain villages, regardless of age, reported using Talysh with individuals in the 0–6 age group.

Similar differences were found in the lowland villages. In addition, in the lowland villages men over 30 reported using Talysh much more with the 7–29 age group than did those under 30. In fact, no individuals under 30 in the lowland villages reported using Talysh with the 7–29 age group. Likewise, a significantly higher percentage of men over 30 in the lowland villages reported using Talysh with the 0–6 age group than did those under 30 in these villages.

Patterns of language use by women with individuals under 30 also exhibit significant differences depending on the age of the woman, the age of the person she is speaking with, and location. The reported use patterns of women under 30 are summarized in table 21.[20]

Table 21: Use of Talysh *by* Women *with* Individuals under 30

		By under 30	*By* 30–60	*By* over 60
Lowland	*With* 0–6	15%	18%	21%
	With 7–29	15%	30%	47%
Mountain	*With* 0–6	27%	60%	72%
	With 7–29	8%	40%	44%

A general tendency that can be seen is that the younger a woman is, the less likely she is to speak Talysh and the more likely she is to speak Azerbaijani with an individual under 30. Two additional tendencies are affected by location. First, women in mountain villages use more Talysh and less Azerbaijani with the 0–6 age group than with the 7–29 age group, while women in the lowland communities exhibit the opposite tendency. Second, age plays only a minor role in language use patterns for women in lowland villages with the 0–6 age group.

3.3 Language Proficiency

In the first stage of our research, we collected information through group interviews about perceived levels of language proficiency in Talysh, Azerbaijani, and Russian. Then, in the second stage we used the Azerbaijani Sentence Repetition Test (SRT) to objectively measure levels of proficiency in Azerbaijani in four representative villages. The data we collected will be presented in the following two sections.

3.3.1 Perceived language proficiencies

Adult men, ages 30–60 were the only individuals reported to have more than minimal Russian language proficiency in all of the villages. The reported levels of proficiency are summarized in table 22.

[20] Single sample T-tests were run on the six groups of women represented. In all the tests the differences are significant at the 0.001 level. In the mountain villages the sample included twenty-six women under 30, twenty women between the ages of 30 and 60, and eighteen women over 60. In the lowland villages the sample included twenty-six women under 30, forty women between the ages of 30 and 60, and nineteen women over 60.

Table 22: Reported Russian Proficiency for Men 30–60

Ages	Comprehension	Speaking	Reading	Writing
30–45	High	Average	Average	Low
45–60	High	Average	Average	High

In the villages of Germətük, Mahmudavar, Hişgədərə, and Səmədabad, it was also reported that young people from 7–30 had average levels of Russian language proficiency in comprehension and reading. A few women in these villages were also said to have basic Russian language skills, mostly able to comprehend but not speak Russian.

In the homogenous Talysh villages, everyone in the community was reported to have high levels of oral proficiency in Talysh. The age at which fluency in oral Talysh was reported to be reached, however, differed as follows.

Çayrud, Şingədulan, Şuvi, Sarak	4–6
Molaca, Pirəsora, Şahağac	6–8
Mahmudavar, Hişgədərə	10
Germətük	15

In the ethnically mixed villages, Talysh individuals 45 and older were reported to have average to high fluency in Talysh. Talysh individuals under 45 were reported to have low to average Talysh fluency in Lapati, and low to no Talysh fluency in Səmədabad and Allar. In all three villages, speaking ability among those under 45 was reported to be lower than comprehension ability.

It was reported that all individuals who speak Talysh could read and write Talysh, but most rarely do either. In the village of Şingədulan, however, young people, ages 7–30, were reported to actively read and write in Talysh.

Oral Azerbaijani language proficiency was reported to be uniformly high except for women over 60 in the homogenous Talysh villages. These women were reported to have average oral proficiency in Azerbaijani. As with Talysh, young people were reported to be fluent in oral Azerbaijani at different ages depending upon the village. The differences are as follows.

Səmədabad, Allar	3–4
Mahmudavar, Hişgədərə, Germətük, Lapati	5–6
Molaca, Pirəsora, Şahağac	6–7
Çayrud, Şingədulan, Şuvi, Sarak	10

Proficiency in reading and writing Azerbaijani was reported to be high in all of the villages, except in the case of Şingədulan where women over 45 were reported to have average or no proficiency in reading and writing Azerbaijani.

3.3.2 Measured Azerbaijani language proficiency

A total of 223 individuals in the four communities took the Azerbaijani SRT. On the basis of the SRT raw scores, we assigned a Peace Corps (PC) rating to each individual. A PC rating of 4+ indicates native speaker ability; a PC rating of 3 indicates good, general proficiency. The PC ratings in Şingədulan differed significantly from the overall PC ratings, as shown in table 23.[21]

Table 23: PC Ranges for Şingədulan versus Other Villages

	Number of SRTs	0–1+	2/2+	3/3+	4/4+
Şingədulan	50	4%	8%	28%	60%
Other	173	2%	2%	21%	75%

[21] A chi-square test revealed the differences were significant at the 0.001 level, regardless of which village was weighted for.

Overall, there was a statistically significant negative correlation between language ability and age of -0.337. That is, younger individuals show higher levels of proficiency. Once again, however, the situation in Şingədulan is significantly different from that in the other villages. This difference can be seen in the data in table 24.[22]

Table 24: Average PC Levels by Age Group

	14–25	26–55	55+
Şingədulan	4	4	3
Other	4+	4	3+

4. Discussion

In section 1, we presented nine hypotheses concerning expected patterns of language use in the Talysh communities. The following hypotheses (using the numbering from section 1) were confirmed by our research.

2. Since individuals in mountain communities have less contact with non-Talysh speakers than do those in the lowland communities, individuals in mountain communities would exhibit greater use of Talysh and those in lowland communities would exhibit greater use of Azerbaijani.
3. Individuals in ethnically homogeneous communities would be more likely to use Talysh in any given domain.
5. Overall levels of proficiency in Azerbaijani would be high, especially among young people, and especially in the area of literacy.
6. Children who have not started school would have lower levels of proficiency in Azerbaijani than school children and adults. This would be particularly true for more isolated communities.
9. Individuals would be more likely to use Azerbaijani to a greater extent in communities that are closer to non-Talysh speaking communities or urban centers.

The following hypthesis was confirmed even more strongly than we had expected.

4. Use of Russian would be significantly lower than use of Talysh or Azerbaijani, particularly in the mountain communities.
   - Active use of Russian was reported to be essentially nonexistent, in both lowland and mountain communities.

The following hyptheses were only partially confirmed by data from the first stage of our research.

7. Highly uniform patterns of language use would be seen in domains such as education that are affected by national policies, while higher levels of variation would be seen in domains such as the home.
8. Language use patterns would vary both between and within communities. Factors influencing such patterns within communities would include age and gender; we assume older individuals and women are likely to have had less interaction with non-Talysh speakers, and are therefore more likely to use Talysh in a wider number of domains.

Our initial research, however, was general in nature, investigating a relatively large number of variables through group interviews. In the second stage of our research, we

[22] Single sample T-tests were run on the SRT scores of individuals between the ages of 14 and 25 and of individuals over the age of 55. The differences in the 14–25 age bracket were significant at a level of 0.004, while the differences in the over 55 category were significant at a level of 0.037. The numbers of individuals from Şingədulan were: twenty ages 14–25, twenty ages 26–55, and ten over 55. The numbers of individuals from the other three villages were: forty-seven ages 14–25, ninety-one ages 26–55, and thirty-five over 55.

used fewer questions in interviews with individuals. As will be shown in sections 4.1 and 4.2, hypotheses 7 and 8 were confirmed in the second stage of our research.

Finally, the findings from stage one of our research supported the following hypothesis.

1. Overall levels of proficiency in oral Talysh would be equal to or higher than those in Azerbaijani.

Individual interviews in the second stage, however, showed a more nuanced situation.

4.1 Influence of Social Contact on Language Use Patterns

4.1.1 Use of Russian

The use of Russian was reported to be significant in only one domain, that of television, and even in that domain it was affected by degrees of social isolation. As shown in table 10, 23% of interviewees in Germətük, the most urban of the lowland communities, reported Russian was the main language for television, while only 6% in Şingədulan, the most isolated of the mountain communities, reported the same.

It is not surprising that Russian language use is lower in areas that are more isolated socially. What is surprising, however, is the fact that even in communities with high social contact Russian language use is extremely low. The only domain in which Russian is used is a passive domain. Even in this domain less than 25% of the interviewees in the most urban, lowland community we visited rely on Russian. While there has been significant Russian language influence in the region from economic and military sources, the geographic distance from Russia has resulted in minimal social interaction with Russian speakers, outside of the politico-economic sphere. Socially speaking, the Talysh region is isolated from Russian language contact.

4.1.2 Differences between the mountain and lowland communities

The hypotheses concerning differences in language use patterns between mountain and lowland communities were confirmed in most physical and functional domains. In all domains except singing and television, interviewees in mountain communities reported using more Talysh than did those in the lowland communities. The differences in reported Talysh use are given in table 25, using the data presented in table 8 with an additional column indicating the difference between the mountain and lowland communities.

Table 25: Differences in Talysh Use in Physical and Functional Domains

Domains	Difference	Lowland	Mountain
Home	28%	57%	85%
Arguing	28%	55%	83%
Teahouse	28%	66%	94%
Counting	26%	29%	55%
Street	25%	63%	88%
First Learned	22%	62%	84%
Fluency	14%	49%	63%
Singing	0%	10.5%	10.5%

The use of Talysh is noticeably lower in the domains of singing, counting, and fluency. In light of the generally high levels of Talysh language usage, particularly in the mountain communities, the fact that a relatively low number of interviewees reported they were most fluent in Talysh is perhaps the most surprising finding. It appears that while Talysh individuals use Talysh more than Azerbaijani in their lives, they do not necessarily consider Talysh to be the language in which they are most fluent. This will be discussed further in section 4.2.

The hypotheses concerning differences in language use patterns between mountain and lowland communities were also confirmed in interpersonal domains. In every interpersonal domain the reported use of Talysh is higher in mountain communities than in lowland communities, as shown in table 26. This table uses the data presented in table 18.

Table 26: Differences in Talysh Use in Interpersonal Domains

	With 0–6	With 7–29	With 30–45	With 46–60	With 60+
Difference	43.5%	8%	29%	26.5%	23.5%
Lowland	21%	25%	53%	61.5%	68.5%
Mountains	64.5%	33%	82%	88%	92%

Table 26 shows that, in general, the younger an individual is, the less likely they are to have Talysh used with them. The one exception is that in mountain communities, more Talysh is used with the 0–6 age group than with the 7–29 age group. This will be discussed more fully below.

Language use patterns with the three oldest groups are very similar in the mountains and lowlands. The differences grow larger as age descreases, but these changes are moderate. In both the mountains and the lowlands, however, there is a dramatic drop in the use of Talysh with the 7–29 age group as opposed to the 30–45 age group. The use of Talysh with the 0–6 age group returns to a relatively high level in mountain communities, while in the lowland communities there is a further moderate drop in use with the 0–6 age group.

As has been pointed out, the decreased use of Talysh with the 7–29 age group is directly related to education. In the mountain communities, the primary effect of education is felt on school-aged children. The low level of Talysh used with this group is an anomaly in the overall pattern of use in that Talysh is more widely used with groups on either side of this age group. In the lowland communities, on the other hand, the effects of education are seen on patterns of language use with both school-aged children and children who have not yet started school. The effects of education, then, seem to have more widespread influence on possible language shift in the lowland communities than in the mountain communities.

Age was shown to be a significant factor in determining language use in all physical and functional domains except singing and the teahouse. There was an overall positive correlation between age and the use of Talysh in the four communities we studied in the second stage of our research. The older individuals are, the more likely they are to speak Talysh in these domains.

The most pronounced correlation between age and Talysh language use was seen in Germətük. The differences in reported Talysh use in Germətük are given in table 27, using the data presented in table 12 with an additional column indicating the difference between the two age groups.

Table 27: Differences in Talysh Use between Age Groups in Germətük

Domains	Difference	Under 30	Over 30
Street Language	61.5%	12.5%	74%
First Language Learned	60%	20%	80%
Most Fluent	50%	8%	58%
Language for Arguing	48%	20%	68%
Home Language	44%	20%	64%
Language for Counting	38%	8%	46%
Language for Singing	12%	0%	12%

Table 27 supports the hypothesis that language shift is occurring at a rapid rate in communities with higher social contact.

As shown in table 26, interviewees in mountain communities reported higher use of Talysh with individuals over 30 than did those in lowland communities. In addition, interviewees over 30 in both mountain and lowland communities reported using Talysh more with individuals over 30 than did interviewees under 30. The differences are given in table 28, using data from table 19.

Table 28: Use of Talysh *with* Individuals over 30

	Difference	*By* Those under 30	*By* Those over 30
Differences	17%	40%	23%
Lowland Villages	25%	43%	68%
Mountain Villages	8%	83%	91%

Table 28 shows that individuals under 30 use less Talysh with individuals over 30 than do individuals over 30 with each other, and that the difference between the language use patterns of the two age groups is more pronounced in the lowland communities than in the mountain communities. These findings lend further support to the hypothesis that age affects language use patterns and that this effect is felt much more strongly in areas with higher levels of social contact.

4.1.3 Gender and patterns of language use

The hypothesis predicting a general correlation between gender and language use was not supported by our data. The only significant differences in physical and functional domains were seen in Şingədulan in the domains of 'first language learned', 'home language', and 'language of most fluency'. The differences are given in table 29, using data from table 13.

Table 29: Differences in Talysh Use by Men and Women in Şingədulan

Domains	Difference	Men	Women
First learned	11%	76%	87%
Home	20%	67%	87%
Fluent	26%	48%	74%

It seems that in the physical and functional domains, gender plays a significant role only in highly isolated communities. We hypothesize that in other communities, the difference in outside social contact experienced by men and women is less than in highly isolated communities, and that this has served to reduce gender-related distinctions in language use patterns in most physical and functional domains.

There are significant gender-related differences in certain interpersonal domains. These differences are especially interesting since they run counter to our hypotheses. As seen in tables 20–21, reproduced here as tables 30–31, it is not uncommon for women to actually use Talysh *less* than men when interacting with individuals under 30.

Table 30: Use of Talysh *by* Men *with* Individuals under 30

		By men under 30	*By* men over 30
Lowland Villages	*With* 0–6	8%	39%
	With 7–29	0%	26%
Mountain Villages	*With* 0–6	83%	
	With 7–29	40%	

Table 31: Use of Talysh *by* Women *with* Individuals under 30

		By under 30	*By* 30–60	*By* over 60
Lowland	*With* 0–6	15%	18%	21%
	With 7–29	15%	30%	47%
Mountain	*With* 0–6	27%	60%	72%
	With 7–29	8%	40%	44%

Especially in mountain communities, women generally use considerably less Talysh with individuals under 30 than do men. While 83% of the men report using mostly Talysh with children who have not started school, only 27% of women under 30, and only 60% of those between 30 and 60 report using Talysh with the same group. While the differences are not as great in lowlands communities, 39% of the men over 30 report using mostly Talysh with children who have not started school, while only 18% of the women between the ages of 30 and 60 report using Talysh with the same group.

We feel it is likely that education is the primary factor driving these differences. As we indicated above, there is a general emphasis on using Azerbaijani with school children and children before they start school. We hypothesize that women have much more day-to-day, meaningful contact with children and young people than do men. Furthermore, women are much more responsible for the raising of children and young people then men and thus feel pressure to help them increase their proficiency in Azerbaijani in order to help them succeed in school. As can be seen in table 31, this pressure is greater on younger women than on older women.

As indicated above, our data indicates that gender-related differences are minimal in most physical and functional domains. It appears, then, that women are selectively choosing to use Azerbaijani more with younger individuals, not overall in life.

4.2 Language Proficiency

4.2.1 Russian Language Proficiency

Our hypotheses were that overall proficiency in Russian would be lower than proficiency in Azerbaijani, and that proficiency in Russian would be affected by age, gender, and community isolation. These hypotheses were supported by our findings. All subgroups of women and most subgroups of men were reported to have lower proficiency in Russian than in Azerbaijani. The one exception was that men from the ages of 30 to 60 were reported to have high levels of comprehension in both Azerbaijani and Russian. Even in this case, proficiency in Russian was not reported to be higher than that in Azerbaijani.

Levels of proficiency in literacy were uniformly lower in Russian than in Azerbaijani. The only individuals who were reported to be able to read Russian at more than a basic level were men between the ages of 7 and 60. This group was said to have average reading skills in Russian, but high reading skills in Azerbaijani. Similarly, only men between the ages of 45 and 60 were said to have more than basic writing skills in Russian, while they were reported to have high writing skills in Azerbaijani.

Our findings indicate that gender is a definite factor in proficiency in Russian in that few women are reported to have more than basic proficiency the language. Age is an additional factor among men. Older men were reported to have higher levels of proficiency in Russian than younger men. As shown in table 22, men ages 45 to 60 were reported to have proficiency in Russian equal to or higher than that shown by men ages 30–45. Men ages 30 to 45, in turn, were reported to have proficiency in Russian equal to or higher than that shown by men under 30.

Finally, individuals in less isolated communities were generally reported to have higher proficiency in Russian than those in more isolated communities. Men between the ages of 7 and 30 in the communities of Germətük, Mahmudavar, Hişgədərə, and Səmədabad were reported to have average levels of proficiency in oral Russian

comprehension and in Russian reading ability. Levels of proficiency in these areas were reported to be minimal among men in the same age group in other communities. The fact that levels of proficiency in Russian were reported to be low in the two lowland communities of Şahağac and Lapati shows the important factor is social contact patterns, not merely geography. Şahağac is in Astara district, a district that is more isolated from social contact with Russian speakers than are the districts of Lənkəran, Masallı, Cəlilabad, and Neftçala. Most of the Talysh population of Lapati, on the other hand, either recently moved to Lapati from the district of Lerik, or spend the summer months in villages in Lerik. Thus, their levels of language proficiency are more similar to those found in the mountain communities of Lerik.

4.2.2 Azerbaijani language proficiency

Overall, the majority of individuals in all communities exhibited high measured levels of Azerbaijani proficiency (PC 3/3+). The only location to have a significant percentage of the population performed at a level below PC 3 was Şingədulan. There, 12% of the people who completed the Azerbaijani SRT performed this level.

Although we expected gender would be a significant factor in levels of proficiency in Azerbaijani, our findings did not support this expectation. While women over 60 were reported to have lower levels of proficiency, this was not supported by the SRT results.

As predicted, there was a significant correlation between age and proficiency. Even though the SRT results confirmed claims that overall proficiency in Azerbaijani was high, speakers performed better the younger they were.

Most children were reported to reach high levels of proficiency in both Azerbaijani and Talysh. Social contact, however, was a factor in the reported timing of children's acquisition of the two languages. Children in more isolated communities were reported to attain high levels of proficiency in Azerbaijani at later ages, while children in less isolated communities were reported to attain high levels of proficiency in Talysh at later ages. It is likely that this difference can be correlated with language use in the home.

Our findings suggest that the role of social contact may in fact be broader. Measured levels of proficiency were lower in the most isolated community of Şingədulan than in the other communities. While our findings were not statistically significant, this may be due to the fact that it is difficult for most tools, including the SRT, to differentiate between proficiency at the higher levels. A tool that could distinguish more accurately between the higher levels may well support a claim that the effects of social contact are broader than we have been able to demonstrate conclusively.

4.2.3 Talysh language proficiency

The hypothesis that oral Talysh proficiency levels would be equal to or higher than Azerbaijani levels was supported in group interviews, but only for adults in homogenous communities. The same was true for children in isolated communities. Children in less isolated communities, however, were reported to be more proficient in Azerbaijani than in Talysh. In mixed communities, Azerbaijani proficiency was higher than Talysh levels in general.

The findings from our second stage research, however, were not as clear-cut as the group interviews had suggested. As indicated above, a relatively large number of interviewees indicated that they were more fluent in Azerbaijani than in Talysh. This was especially true in less isolated communities.

One possible explanation for this is that fluency does not reflect language use patterns, that is, people in some communities do not use the language in which they are most fluent in certain informal domains (for example, the home). A more reasonable explanation, however, is that a significant number of people feel just as fluent in Azerbaijani as in Talysh and thus could have reported either language as the language in which they are most fluent. Many of these people may have reported they are most fluent

in Azerbaijani because it is the national language. If this hypothesis is correct, it indicates that a significant number of people are highly bilingual.

On the basis of prior research, we had assumed that Talysh literacy would be minimal. However, interviewees in the village of Şingədulan, the most isolated of the villages visited, reported young people between the ages of 7 and 30 actively read and write Talysh. It appears that in communities where the motivation to study Talysh is high, children are learning to read and write Talysh through the Talysh classes that are held in most schools.

5. Conclusion

Talysh and Azerbaijani are used significantly more than Russian, and the use of Talysh is higher in homogenously Talysh communities than in mixed communities. Age seems to be a significant factor in determining patterns of language use. The role of gender, on the other hand, is less pervasive. Overall, the use of Talysh seems to be higher in informal or personal domains such as the home and on the street, while the use of Azerbaijani seems to be higher in formal domains such as school and writing.

Patterns of language use are strongly affected by the level of social isolation for a particular community. In Şingədulan, the most isolated community, isolation has been accentuated by gender differences with women using Talysh more than men. While age was an overall factor in Talysh language use, it was more so in the less isolated communities, particularly Germətük.

In addition, patterns of language use are being affected by education. The desire to see children learn Azerbaijani well for school has resulted in extensive use of Azerbaijani with school-aged children. In less isolated communities, this effect also includes children before they begin school. There is also evidence that in some communities women use even more Azerbaijani with school-aged children than do men.

Levels of proficiency in Azerbaijani as measured by the SRT are high, with the exception of the most isolated community of Şingədulan. Perceived levels of proficiency in Azerbaijani were higher than measured levels, particularly in areas like Şingədulan where Azerbaijani levels were low. The perceived levels of proficiency in Russian were relatively low among everyone except adult men. Adult men were reported to have average to high oral proficiency in Russian. The perceived levels of proficiency in Talysh were high, particularly in mountain communities.

Appendix A: Sources of Information regarding Physical Domains

The sources of information regarding language use in various physical domains are given in the following table.

	Questionnaire	Domains
1	District Administrators	District Center
2	Local Administrators	Locally, Outside Village
3	School Directors and Teachers[23]	School: In Class School: Teachers, outside class School: Students, outside class School: Teachers/Students, outside class
4	Kindergarten Directors	Kindergarten: In Class Kindergarten: Teachers, outside class Kindergarten: Students, outside class Kindergarten: Teachers/Students, outside class
5	Hospital Directors, Doctors, Nurses	Hospital/Clinic
6	Religious Leaders	Mosque Religious Ceremonies
7	Group Interviews[24]	Home Street Bazaar
	Other Interviews[25]	Teahouse Post office Mill Library House of Culture Store

[23] Representatives of district Ministries of Education also provided information concerning vernacular language instruction.

[24] The group interview included information for most of the domains. Only the domains that are not specifically focused upon in other interviews are included here.

[25] These include interviews with people in charge of various other facilities.

Appendix B: Questions Concerning Azerbaijani Language Proficiency

The questions we used to collect information concerning reported levels of proficiency in Azerbaijani are listed in the following table.

Question	Asked of
Which languages are the students usually able to speak when they begin school here? Do the teachers in the beginning grades have to help the students learn Azerbaijani? How long does it take for most students to learn Azerbaijani well?	School Educators
Do all the teachers speak Azerbaijani fluently? When children begin kindergarten is it hard for them to understand Azerbaijani? How long does it take the children to speak Azerbaijani well? How well do the children master Azerbaijani by the time they finish kindergarten?	Kindergarten Staff
Do mothers or old people have difficulty communicating in Azerbaijani with medical personnel at regional centers? Do medical personnel ever have difficulty understanding Azerbaijani in continued training courses? Do the medical personnel ever have difficulty understanding Azerbaijani medical literature?	Hospital Staff
Do you encounter any difficulties understanding when you read Azerbaijani? What is it that you don't understand—separate words or the whole meaning? Do you understand radio programs in Azerbaijani? Do you understand television programs in Azerbaijani?	Individuals and Groups

Appendix C: Descriptions of Age Groups

Some of the behaviors that we studied are tied to age distinctions. We tried to make these distinctions correlate with key periods in life. Characteristics of each age group are given in the following table.

Age Range	Characteristics
0–6	These individuals have not started school.
7–29	These individuals have generally not started their own families. This group includes most individuals who are in school, in military service, studying at the university, or in an apprenticeship program for a particular profession.
30–45	These individuals generally have young families. They finished their grade school education in the Soviet period but have lived their postgrade school life in the independent country of Azerbaijan.
45–60	These individuals were generally born during or after WWII and received all of their education in the Soviet period. They have experienced the political changes of the last decade as adults with families and professions. Many of these individuals have grandchildren.
60+	Individuals in this age group were all born before WWII. They lived during the period of Soviet restructuring in Azerbaijan. Many of them received several years of elementary schooling in the Talysh language in the mid and late 1930s. They also experienced the drastic changes in language policy under Stalin during which extreme pressure was exerted on minorities and their use of language. Some women in this age group received minimal or no grade school education.

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