❑ Jala GARIBOVA,[1] Ildirim ZEYNALOV[2]

Geliş : 5 Aralık 2022
Revizyon : 03 Ocak 2023
Kabul : 31 Ocak 2023

LANGUAGE CHANGE, LANGUAGE ATTRITION AND ETHNOLINGUISTIC VITALITY OF KHINALUG IN AZERBAIJAN: IS THE QUIETLY APPROACHING THREAT REVERSIBLE?

DİL DEĞİŞİMİ, DİL YIPRANMASI VE AZERBAYCAN'DA HINALIK DİLİNİN ETNOLİNGUİSTİK CANLILIĞI: SESSİZCE YAKLAŞAN TEHLİKE GERİ DÖNDÜRÜLEBİLİR Mİ?

Abstract: In this paper we examine some major sociolinguistic factors endangering the sustained vitality of Khinalug, one of the indigenous languages of Azerbaijan. Khinalug is spoken by a small isolated community whose members are keen to preserve their language. The community's positive attitude towards the native language is definitely important in terms of promoting language maintenance. Nevertheless, certain factors in the linguistic ecology of the speech community may potentially trigger tendencies of language replacement, especially among young community members. In particular, economic and social benefits that the state language provides may encourage shifts from balanced to subtractive bilingualism with Azerbaijani dominating not only in formal but also in informal domains. Along with discussing such major factors endangering the vitality of Khinalug, this paper also proposes some measures for preventing shift to Azerbaijani, and, consequently, the potential irrevocable loss of the Khinalug language.

Keywords: language attrition, language vitality, borrowing, relexicalization, language behavior

Öz: Bu yazıda, Azerbaycan'ın yerli bir dili olan Hınalık dilinin sürekli canlılığını tehlikeye atan bazı önemli toplumdilbilimsel etkenleri inceliyoruz. Hınalık, üyeleri dillerini korumaya hevesli küçük, izole edilmiş bir topluluk tarafından konuşulmaktadır. Topluluğun ana diline karşı olumlu tutumu, dilin sürdürülmesini teşvik etmek açısından kesinlikle önemlidir. Öte yandan, belirli dil ekolojisi faktörleri, özellikle genç topluluk üyeleri arasında potansiyel olarak dil değişimi eğilimlerini tetikleyebilir. Özellikle, devlet dilinin sağladığı ekonomik ve sosyal faydalar, dengeli iki dillilikten Azerbaycan dilinin sadece resmî değil aynı zamanda gayriresmî alanlarda da hâkim olduğu eksiltici iki dilliliğe geçişleri teşvik edebilir. Bu makale, Hınalık dilinin sürdürülebilirliğini tehlikeye atan başlıca faktörleri tartışmanın yanı sıra, geri dönülmez dil kaybıyla neticelenebilecek dil yıpranmasını önlemek için bazı önlemler de önermektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: dil yıpranması, dil canlılığı, ödünçleme, yeniden sözcükleştirme, dil davranışı

[1] Azerbaijan University of Languages, Baku, Azerbaijan. ORCID: 0000-0002-8281-351X

[2] Khinalug Secondary School, Guba, Azerbaijan. ORCID: 0000-0001-8050-8565

1. Introduction

Khinalug: A village view

Language endangerment is caused by various factors which have long been established as serious causes of language shift (Fishman 1991; Crystal 2000; Skutnabb-Kangass 2011; Krauss 1992). In the case of small communities, these factors will lead to irreversible language loss through language shift and language death (see Schmid 2011: 3). Along with macro-level extralinguistic factors, including language (and education) policy and planning as well as language ecology, language vitality, in particular in the context of underprivileged languages, is also affected by micro-level intralinguistic processes such as language "contamination" due to the influx of foreign elements, in particular through borrowing. Micro-level intralinguistic processes, which are often caused by macro-level factors, bring to language devitalization potentially causing language attrition, which is defined as "the (total or partial) forgetting of a language by a healthy speaker" (Schmid 2011: 3). Indigenous languages all over the world are subject to both extralinguistic and intralinguistic factors triggering language endangerment. We consider both to be of sociolinguistic nature as any change in these languages, whether extralinguistic or intralinguistic, are hardly caused, directly or indirectly, by factors other than environmental. In many cases extralinguistic and intralinguistic sets of factors interact, mainly through language behavior of native speakers, and the existence of one brings about the other. Indeed, unfavorable language ecology or unsupportive language and education policy will negatively affect the speakers' motivation to use, protect and develop their native language. As a

result, there will be no efficient voice raised against the onslaught of alien elements which will gradually lead to language degeneration through language erosion. This will eventually cause decline in the prestige of the native language, affect the speakers' feeling of affiliation with it, and eventually change their language behavior pushing them towards replacing the native language by a more prestigious one. So, in the case of unprotected indigenous languages, this is always about losing ground to a more prestigious and a more powerful language.

In this article we discuss some results of our ethnographic study aimed at evaluating the situation of the Khinalug language in Azerbaijan. The main argument we propose here is that factors causing endangerment of Khinalug are complex, interacting, and capable of causing language loss. As such, subtractive bilingualism, accelerated by growing tendencies of code-switching and intensive borrowing from Azerbaijani, may lead to the first language attrition in individual repertoires – a huge threat for the vitality of Khinalug as increased cases of language attrition will bring to language shift and, eventually, to language death. On the other hand, intensive borrowing has been contributing to language eroding, which is also a serious factor causing language attrition. By illustrating specific language facts, which we have collected through observations and elicitations, we try to interpret sociolinguistic tendencies surrounding the Khinalug language and to predict potential risks that these tendencies could produce for its vitality. We try to shed light on these tendencies mainly through language behavior patterns of community members which are interpreted in the context of various environmental factors, such as language and education policy, socio-economic dynamics etc., generating them. We also examine some language development initiatives, which have a bearing on language attitudes and practices.

The data for this study are derived from spontaneous speech observations, recording of structured conversations, and interviews conducted during several fieldworks between 2016 and 2022. We observed naturally occurring conversations, as passive participants, within families, in small shops and other shopping places, in community gatherings, as well as in the process of children's game-playing activities. There were several such observation sessions we held during 2016 and 2022. Each session covered approximately 3 or 4 hours in a row, during which we took notes and sometimes recorded conversations with a prior permission of the people involved. We also visited eight families where we conducted structured observations of language use. The total number of participants of these conversations comprised 18, including four young adults between 12 and 18. We also conducted interviews among randomly selected 12 community members representing various age groups to reveal levels of comprehension of certain words which we had pre-determined as vanishing.[3]

[3] This paper presents a general framework for future more deatiled analysis of individual aspects of language endangerment in relation to Khinalug. Consequently, in this paper we do not focus on a specific (set of) language behavior model(s), or a specific language policy action, linked to language endangerment. Therefore, along with specific quantitative and qualitative data, we also provide generalized notes with relevant interpretations and – where necessary – suggestions and recommendations, based on the above mentioned data but also on our predictions, concerning the overall situation of Khinalug in Azerbaijan.

2. Background Information

A traditional mud brick house in Khinalug

Khinalug is one of Azerbaijan's oldest indigenous languages. A language of the North-Eastern Caucasian family, Khinalug is defined as 'severely endangered' by UNESCO [4] and 'endangered' by Ethnologue. [5] The villagers identify themselves as *Kəx̂îd* '(those) belonging to Khinalug', which apparently originates from the endonymic term *Kəx̂î* 'Khinalug' (see Schulze 2018: 65), and their language as *Kətşi miż/Kəx̂îd miż* 'the Khinalug language' (lit. 'language of the *Kəx̂î/Kəx̂îd*').

The village of Khinalug is situated 2300 ms above the sea level in the Guba region of Azerbaijan. It is one of the most isolated and highest mountain settlements in the country. According to Əliyev and Ağayev (2018: 34), the number of village residents is 1905, which in earlier sources varies from 1500 to 2500 (see Schulze 2008; Rind-Pawlowski and Daniel 2014). Also, the villagers claim that there are several thousands active speakers of Khinalug living outside the community, although "the number of Khinalug people who have settled around Quba, Baku, and even to parts of Russia ... has never been counted." (Rind-Pawlowski and Daniel 2014). According to the most recent 2019 statistics, Khinalug has a population of 3466 (Statistika Komitəsi 2022: 9).

The villagers hold a strong Sunni Islam belief; however, only some (particularly males) actively practice religion. Khinalug hosts an old Mosque dating from the 9th-10th century (Əliyev and Ağayev 2018: 40) and several ancient holy shrines, including a Zoroastrian fire temple. The villagers also believe that Khinalug was one of the most ancient inhabited places on earth and consider themselves "direct descendants of the biblical Noah".[6]

The basic activity in Khinalug is sheep breeding (Mustafayev 2010: 55). Producing and selling dairy is the major source of living. Another activity that is a potential source of economic benefit is carpet-weaving, as well as weaving woolen shawls and socks, the latter having recently made

[4] https://web.archive.org/web/20220531155026/http://www.unesco.org/tools/fileretrieve/43fdd320.pdf (Retrieved on 29 November 2022)

[5] https://www.ethnologue.com/size-and-vitality/kjj (Retrieved on 29 November 2022)

[6] https://www.advantour.com/azerbaijan/quba/khanalyg-village.htm (Retrieved on 29 November 2022)

its way into international ethno-marketing. The villagers also engage in collecting and selling herbs used for food-making and healthcare. The emerging ethno-/ecotourism activities based on the promotion of the local culture, products and artefacts have also been beneficial for the community's economic situation and socio-cultural profile. In 2007, Khinalug was declared a State preservation zone under a Presidential Decree.[7] Following this Decree, the road to Khinalug was reconstructed to make connection with lowland easier (Sultanova 2011: 5). A cultural center, an ethnography museum, and a carpet-weaving workshop were opened as well.

The living cultural heritage of Khinalug encourages the assumption that the language must have preserved essential ecological and cultural knowledge stemming from the community's lifestyle, beliefs and patterns of survival due to isolatedness, harsh climate and a low level of accessibility to mainstream resources. On the other hand, the growing local and international tourism and the community's involvement in a wide range of ecotourism activities challenge this assumption. While ecotourism brings socio-economic benefits to the community, it may also encourage tendencies of language replacement among young people who have to prioritize not only Azerbaijani as the state language, but also English as the language of socio-economic development. The changing language ecology therefore calls for specific language policy measures (such as encouragement of sustainable language transmission and development of a language corpus which will be less dependent on Azerbaijani) in order to predict major language shift.

3. Mapping Khinalug within the Current Sociolinguistic Situation

In Azerbaijan, which gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Azerbaijani is the sole state and official language under the Constitution, the status of which is further reconfirmed in relevant language legislation. Soviet Azerbaijan was among the only three Soviet states (the others being Georgia and Armenia), where the national languages had official statuses under the Constitution (Garibova and Asgarova 2009: 194). This naturally contributed to the *de facto* use of Azerbaijani in education, media and official spheres. On the other hand, while Azerbaijani was used in official domains, it was not free from the dominance of Russian, which was a must for career development, and a marker of social prestige in urban places (Pashayeva 2018: 137; Garibova 2009: 13). Russian was not accessible in remote areas, and therefore was not part of the linguistic repertoire of Azerbaijan's marginal populations, except for a small number of minorities living in proximity with Russia. Therefore, integration of remote communities in the mainstream life of the bilingual Baku was much harder during the Soviet times than today: the linguistic barrier was thus another factor predicting dispersion and contributing to the preservation of indigenous languages and cultures.

Soviet censuses did not specify Khinalug among ethnic groups and included it together with other small ethnicities into the category of 'Other Ethnicities'. This status quo was apparently sustained throughout many years after independence as the first official statistical information about Khinalug pertains only to the year of 2009, according to which the population of the Khinalug was 2200 (Demographic Indicators of Azerbaijan 2020: 58). The most recent statistics

[7] http://anl.az/rp_a22.html (Retrieved on 22 November 2022)

of 2019, as we stated above, specifies Khinalug as an individual ethnic group with a total population of of 3466.[8]

As a community mother tongue, Khinalug is taught at the Khinalug secondary school from the 1st to the 4th grades. No bilingual education model exists for Khinalug and many other minority languages in Azerbaijan. About 300 schoolchildren are enrolled in the only secondary school of Khinalug located in an accessible distance from the settlement. When needed, in particular if the children have low competence in Azerbaijani, the teaching is conducted in two languages, which means that the school informally accommodates for bilingual instruction. The informal 'bilingual instruction' usually continues for three or four years. Some teachers and community members think that this informal bilingual instruction makes the learning process in initial years much easier as children start school with no or limited competence in Azerbaijani. As they struggle with acquiring Azerbaijani during these years, they lag behind the program. They practically invest huge efforts producing adequate Azerbaijani and thus have to prioritize linguistic performance over learning the content. Teachers consider that this negatively affects children's overall learning capacity and hence their achievements.

There is no higher education institution in Azerbaijan (or elsewhere) training language teachers for Khinalug. All language teachers are self-trained. Certain steps have been taken to create electronic resources for the learning of the language.[9] Some other resources, including touristic booklets and small books about the community's history and culture, have been published on individual initiatives. The Ministry of Education has launched a project for developing new textbooks for the minority languages including Khinalug. This has boosted broad-scale corpus development activities for the Khinalug language which lacks elements for many modern concepts. The teaching staff of the Khinalug secondary school plays the central role in the corpus creation and textbook development. There are starting research initiatives undertaken by some community members, which include collecting archaic language materials, gathering old folk stories, games, fairy tales and legends, as well as recording elderly people's conversations. Following the development of the Khinalug alphabet, which was developed within the framework of an international partnership (see Rind-Pawlowski (this issue)) and approved by the Ministry of Education in 2018, several brochures and books for teaching the written form of Khinalug were issued. The publication of these resources was followed by literacy courses for young mothers and girls (as future mothers) who, as the main caretakers in the family, are directly involved in helping children in their studies. These courses were initiated by local teachers with the support of local and international NGOs. The courses also focused on the speaking aspect to improve oral communication and narration skills among young females.

4. Challenges to Language Maintenance within the Context of Bilingualism in Khinalug

It is important to consider the vitality of Khinalug in the context of bilingualism in Azerbaijan, especially given the country's post-Soviet language policy priorities. The status elevation of

[8] Unfortunately, we cannot confirm with full confidence that this statistics accurately reflects the number of the actual full-time residents of Khinalug: reportedly, people who are registered as, but *de facto* are not, permanent residents of the village were also counted during the last census taking.

[9] https://multikultural.az/az/xinaliqlar/541/ketis-xinaliq-dili-1-ci-ders/test (Retrieved on 29 November 2022)

Azerbaijani and its role as the sole official language has affected language attitudes among minority communities and caused shifts in language behavior patterns as well as L1 vs L2 prioritizing strategies. Although Azerbaijan has recently been promoting minority languages in the framework of its multiculturalism policy, minority languages have also become part of the discourse of the country's national identity strategy based on Azerbaijanism. This has made Azerbaijani, the state (and official) language, the most necessary component of language repertoires of minority communities. It is almost impossible to encounter monolingualism within any indigenous community, even among its old members, which was a common phenomenon during the Soviet times. As far as bilingualism is concerned, although the current situation can be characterized as a stable diglossia, younger generations' inclination towards the official language is increasing, and there are more cases of switch to Azerbaijani among younger people even in informal domains. It is therefore important to observe the dynamics of bilingualism in various spheres of language use to assess the degree of the risk of the shift from the existing additive bilingualism to a subtractive bilingualism in the near future.

4.1 Bilingualism of indigenous communities of Azerbaijan: general overview

As Garcia (2009) shows, recent contextual shifts in bilingual ecology have caused changes in perceptions of bilingualism so that scholars have become more aware (or more appreciative) of complex bilingual patterns – of the fact that bilingualism and bilingual language maintenance is not necessarily subject to one rule, or just to one set of rules (117). Garcia (2009) also mentions that "... even a single ethnolinguistic group's bilingualism is complex and not static, and, therefore, depending on personal and sociohistorical circumstances, bilingualism can take different directions at various times from that of simple shift, addition, or maintenance…" (118).

Indeed, different communities may have different traditional frameworks and tools for maintaining languages. Language maintenance *per se*, like language use in general, is dependent on many intra-community, intra-linguistic and external factors, all of which comprise various ingredients of an overall ecology surrounding a language. One recent direction in bilingualism/multilingualism research, a family language planning, for example, places a strong emphasis on parents as agents in influencing language ecology and ensuring children's competence in the minority language through sustained bilingualism (Curdt-Christiansen and Wang 2018). Other factors include the amount of minority language input, bilingual education programs, and immersion education programs in minority languages (see Smith-Christmas 2016; Garcia 2009).

Bilingualism has always been a broad-scale phenomenon among minorities in Azerbaijan. Clifton (2013) reports that although the wide-spread use of the state language since independence has naturally led some researchers to the conclusion that a large-scale shift to Azerbaijani was occurring, what is in fact encountered within indigenous communities is stable diglossia rather than major language shift (198-200, 203-210). These findings are certainly positive and quite optimistic from the perspective of the current sociolinguistic situation surrounding Azerbaijan's minority languages. The good news is that families do attach a high value to their language and culture. This in itself is a strong factor because "if language is not given a fundamental place in community identity, LM [language maintenance] becomes irrelevant" (Canagarajah 2008: 173). Local communities, in particular those in the Northern part of Azerbaijan where the Guba region

is located, speak the native language at home and are eager to see their children speak it. The communities' attitude towards language transmission is positive and determined. They are proud of their languages and cultures and are articulate about how much they value speaking their mother tongues. Thus, an important amount of language input (see Smith-Christmas 2016: 3) that children receive due to sustainable language use within the family along with the use in neighborhoods within sustained socio-cultural frameworks have been key factors in the maintenance of these languages.

The other good news is that while, according to the dominating views in Sociolinguistics, immigrant communities shift to the majority language within no longer than three generations (Fishman 1991; Garcia 1997), or within a longer period (but probably not exceeding five generations) as claimed by some opponent scholars (see Edstrom 2010: 82; Ortman and Stevens 2008: 3), "in autochthonous communities,…, the factors underlying the shift to the majority language may have been in place for centuries…" (Smith-Christmas 2016: 8). So, in certain cases, due to many reasons including compact location and/or strong affiliation with the native language, bilingualism does not emerge as an immediate factor triggering language shift leading to complete language loss.

Nevertheless, these realities, although positive and not pessimistic today, may fail to guarantee endless stability. First of all, what Clifton (2013) also observed during his fieldwork were prevailing oral skills and varying minority language competence levels depending on diverse factors such as the degree of homogeneity within the community, the geographical location of the area, and the minority's socio-economic status (203-210). Thus, although not due to governmental pressure, there are other factors that may potentially lead to major language shifts. If we add to Clifton's findings tendencies of migration to central cities, the spread of tourism with no discrete maintenance-oriented language planning component, lack of bilingual education, insufficient years of language instruction, lack of sustainability in capacity building, as well as some controversies residing within the current corpus-building activity, the risk will even increase. Second, communities' centuries-long maintenance of their native language due to these or other additional factors does not mean that this situation will never be disturbed. Communities shift to majority languages for various reasons, and this process can be unpredictable (see Dorian 1981: 39, Crystal 2000; Haruna 2003: 201-206). Further, as Canagarajah states, "the family is not self-contained, closed off to other social institutions and economic conditions" (Canagarajah 2008: 173). So, even with the continuity of family language-use, language can be subject to attrition due to many factors including those cited above. On the other hand, this continuity itself, viewed as quantity of input, will be subject to the quality factor. As Smith-Christmas (2016) states, not only quantity of input but also quality of input matters for sustaining the language within the family. To what Smith-Christmas (2016) defines under the quality input, i.e., sociolinguistic and interactional aspects of input such as refraining from code-switching or using registers that would encourage children's use of the native language (4), we would also add such intra-linguistic factors as an elaborated corpus or the revival of archaisms, which will make code-switching unnecessary.

4.2 Bilingualism in Khinalug: stable diglossia or risks of language shift?

Bilingualism is common also in Khinalug. It is widely spread among both women and men: due to compulsory education sustained throughout many years in Azerbaijan, monolingualism is a

A traditional mud brick house in Khinalug

rare phenomenon except among pre-school children and possibly among few old-aged people who never received formal education. The observation of language practices within families, as well as elicitation of language attitudes, reveal tendencies of maintaining the native language along with ensuring adequate competence in Azerbaijani. Therefore, at this point, bilingualism in Khinalug does not render itself as an immediate danger causing a swift language shift potentially resulting in language loss. However, bilingualism in itself is not a stable pattern with each of the languages strictly restricted to a special niche in speakers' language repertoire with no or little mutual interference. Bilingualism produces code-switching, which could be considered, under certain circumstances, a way gradually taking to language attrition (Myers-Scotton 1993; Pavlenko 2003; Kim and Starks 2008; Du Bois 2009).

Code-switching, although mostly observable in certain circumstances encouraging switch to L2, has become a frequent case between Azerbaijani and Khinalug due to the role Azerbaijani has recently been taking in the life of the villagers. As observed, men switch between the two languages more frequently than women do. Women are the main caretakes of the family/house, and their communication usually occurs inside the home with their family members, or in the process of collective chores with other women in the neighborhood. Instead, men are much more exposed to work outside, to local commercial activities, as well as to communicating with visitors, tourists and guests. Switch to Azerbaijani among men appears to be also typical of workplaces and informal male gatherings. Men's more frequent code-switching may also be due to the character of contexts in which conversations occur. Places like *chaykhana* ('teahouse'),

where men mostly gather, encourage frequent topic switching from politics to everyday life, from sports to school problems etc., which is an important factor promoting code-switching. This can also be due to the recognized style of conversation among males who allegedly change topics more than females do (Esdahl 2003: 81). Code-switching rarely occurs in situations which are part of everyday life in Khinalug. Such situations include family talk, shopping interactions in stores or market places, as well as interaction among men during traditional agricultural activities such as haymaking and sheepherding. The observation of several spontaneous conversations, involving groups of people in a local market, demonstrated that the entire conversations were carried out in the native language and that people switched to Azerbaijani only when they used numbers, monetary units (*manat*), measure units (*kilo* etc.) volume or weight measurement (e.g., Az. *səkkiz kiloluq* 'eight-kilo') etc.

Within migrating families, however, women switch to Azerbaijani as frequently as (if not more frequently than) men do. A number of women who have moved to downtown Guba or other cities in Azerbaijan, and who visit their families in Khinalug during summer times, have mentioned that they prefer using Azerbaijani with their pre-school children. They justify this linguistic behavior by a high demand in Azerbaijani in their sociolinguistic environment. It should be noted that while frequent and more balanced code-switching among men is not so much of a potential risk for language maintenance, the switch among women, as the main caretakers, directly influences the language behavior of children. Moreover, while code-switching in the context of a stable speech community will hardly trigger further language shift in many situations, and while, according to some scholars, the connection between code-switching and language attrition still remains controversial (see Ecke 2004: 338-339), in the case of migrating families, code-switching, especially the one that is more frequent and more balanced in terms of the weight of each language, could be seen as a danger to language maintenance. Reportedly, there are starting tendencies of replacing Khinalug with Azerbaijani in many more domains or stabilizing code-switching between these two languages within migrating groups. This was also revealed during our observations of a few families which have migrated to Baku. These tendencies should be seen as a potential ground where foundations for language attrition is laid as balance between the languages involved in the switch will hardly remain equal within migrating families, and the balanced code-switching will soon give its place to the one where the dominant language is more salient. Such code-switching will probably produce a certain intergenerational attitude change in favor of the majority language, negatively affect native language production, and cause subtracted bilingualism with further tendencies of language shift, which, in the case of migrant families, occurs more swiftly. If migration tendencies increase, and, consequently, children are exposed to the dominant language at an earlier age, then language shift will take speed. As Köpke and Schmid (2004) state, referring also to several other authors, "the findings of empirical research so far strongly suggest that it takes a certain number of years for the L1 to be completely established in the human mind/brain, and that before this moment L1 can be easily replaced by another language..." (19). Literacy skills in L2 that children in migrating families acquire outside the native community and that facilitate the fixing of the L2 system in their brain, would be another factor endangering the retention of L1 especially if it coincides with the age at which a " very severe attrition process can set in for" (Köpke and Schmid 2004: 19). As stated above, while frequent and more balanced code-switching among men is not so much of a potential risk for language maintenance, the switch

among women, as the main caretakers, directly influences the language behavior of children. Therefore, although these patterns are not frequent or overwhelming, and are reversible today, it is important to note that for a community as small as Khinalug, even individual language attrition should be considered a serious factor threatening language vitality. From this perspective, whether the community's stable bilingualism will gradually translate itself into language shift is an important question to consider.

Mixed marriages is another factor emerging as a threat to language maintenance because in mixed families children do not receive any native language input. Tendencies of replacing Khinalug with Azerbaijani in many mixed families are strong and increasing. In several mixed families that we have observed, children do not speak or understand Khinalug because both parents give preference to Azerbaijani.

There are other conditions, such as education-based migrations of the youth, fostering an Azerbaijani-dominant language environment. According to the Khinalug secondary school administration, who we interviewed in October of 2022, the number of Khinalug school graduates enrolled in Universities in Baku has increased by 53% during the last 10 years. Among 15 school graduates enrolled in Universities in 2022, four are girls. A few graduates of the Khinalug secondary school have been admitted to Universities outside Azerbaijan, and there is a high probability that they will not return to the village. As well, increasing local and international interest towards the Khinalug language and culture has encouraged research-based mobility among community members. The growing involvement of local people in research and other activities to support the Khinalug language and culture encourages moving to, and pursuing a professional career in, the center. While this is a positive and important factor in itself, it is also the one capable of causing intergenerational disruption in language use and maintenance. However, although involvement in research and other high-profile activities outside the community may involve risks of language shift in intergenerational perspective, a higher academic profile of returning community members seems to play a positive role in language maintenance. It appears that community members' professional achievements enhance the community's senses of belonging more when these people with professional success stay within their own community: the co-villagers view these people as their "ideological leaders" who encourage loyalty towards the native language and culture. Thus, the role of education in language maintenance is not unequivocal, and the level of education in certain instances emerges as a positive factor for language maintenance. We have also observed sufficiently strong and positive attitudes of educated community members towards speaking Khinalug.

Children's language behavior reveals a much more nuanced picture of the dynamics of bilingualism within the community. In Khinalug, bilingualism grows with schooling. The immersion in Azerbaijani begins when children start elementary school. Most of them become fully fluent only when they reach the 3rd or 4th grade or even later. This was observed in almost each of the eight families we visited. Parents in these families say they have to invest huge efforts to assist children with homework, especially in initial years. To help children acquire the Azerbaijani language as quickly as possible, parents start using Azerbaijani more often at home as soon as their children begin attending elementary school. Pre-school children have very little or no competence in Azerbaijani. We observed children's language behavior both within the said families and in other situations outside home. Many pre-school children we started interacting

with were not even able to answer simple questions such as "What is your name?" or "How old are you?" Parents state that children are often shy to speak. Indeed, as we observed, not all children produced answers when the questions were repeated in the native language. So, in fact, the observation of linguistic competences of pre-school children through their performances was to some extent obscured due to varying reactions on children's side and multiple explanations the parents provided regarding their children's behavior (see Garibova 2017: 137). However, once children begin school, they start developing bilingualism with skills in Azerbaijani growing faster and their L2 competence becoming more versatile and more comprehensive due to the higher functionality of Azerbaijani. In two of the families we visited, we observed teenagers already finding it difficult to interact in the native Khinalug language. There is also an observable new tendency of speaking Azerbaijani, not Khinalug, to pre-school children within a few families. Although this tendency is not overwhelming, we have observed preferences, by some young parents, to immerse their children in Azerbaijani as soon as they start developing speech.

Identity discourse within the community also reveals that identity and affiliation is taking a different shape shifting towards a more encompassing and more multi-layered paradigm. While it is true that "bicultural and hybrid identities may provide the psychologically healthiest response to cultural duality" (Gregg 2007: 322), which may at times cause ambivalence and frustration, and while bicultural maturity may emerge as a strong protection against acculturation, in the case of small indigenous communities (and without adequate language and culture preservation policies), such discourses could be a harbinger of potential shift from Khinalug to Azerbaijani. During informal conversations we observed that while older people had a stronger emphasis on their self-identification as Khinalug (or *Kəčč* as they call themselves), younger respondents' emphasis on the sense of belonging to Khinalug was not as salient. Certainly, people of Khinalug take pride in their native language and culture. While they consider the knowledge of Azerbaijani essential for professional achievements and socio-political integration, they also express strong determination in transmitting the native language to future generations. However, the community's self-identification with Khinalug is not the same thing as that with Azerbaijan(i), the first representing ethnic affiliation, and the second – the citizenship (or national) identity. As Garibova (2017) indicates, "when the respondents were ... asked to explain the difference between the two identities, the answers were generally as follows: 'We say we belong to Khinalug because this is what our ethnic roots are. But first of all, we belong to Azerbaijan because we are citizens of this state, and this is our motherland'." (109). The national vs. ethnic affiliation will probably also be strengthened given various attractive opportunities (education mobility, research fellowships etc.), which the youth explores first of all as citizens of Azerbaijan rather than representatives of an indigenous community benefiting from special (i.e. inclusion etc.) programs. This, in turn, may change attitudes towards language transmission in the future due to growing attractiveness of Azerbaijani, especially because exposure to the Azerbaijani language, through which citizenship identity is reinforced, starts at a very early age. Potentially, this may lead to parents' refusing to support the teaching of the native language at school. In fact, our observations have already revealed growing tendencies of some community members to motivate their children to speak more Azerbaijani. Therefore, while not denying benefits of Azerbaijani as the state language for the integration of the Khinalug community in the mainstream life, we also recognize that citizenship affiliation encouraged within Azerbaijan's

national policy should be supplemented, within effective language related prestige policy, by positive community awareness of the value of the native language and culture. In fact, accommodating for the culture and language of an indigenous population could be an additional tool for encouraging their citizenship affiliation, not a risk as some think.

5. From Language Depletion to Language Attrition?

Language attrition, which is cited among reasons of the shift from monolingualism in one language to monolingualism in the second language (Ortman and Stevens 2008: 4), and which, according to Mühlhäusler (1996), linguists are not sufficiently prepared to tackle (281), can also be conditioned by language degeneration, i.e., the depletion of native linguistic elements. Such depletion, in turn, is capable of producing structural consequences eroding the language. Although the impact of borrowings, in particular the lexical ones, on the 'healthy language structure' is debatable, at least from the perspective of the nativist (or Chomskiyan) framework (see Schmid 2002: 34), as Köpke and Schmid (2004) put it, "the earliest frameworks which played a role in language attrition studies were not so much linguistic as cognitive-psychological in nature" (15) and "the search for underlying linguistic principles to explain the phenomena witnessed in language attrition must... be described as inconsistent and lacking coherence - even though there are individual studies that have adapted specific frameworks successfully to their data" (15). So the role of purely linguistic factors in language attrition is probably yet to be discovered in full potential. Moreover, the intensity and frequency of borrowing will still most probably contribute to erosion since, as Ecke states through reference to Myers-Scotton (1998), "sentence production is primarily lexically driven." (Ecke 2004: 338). On the other hand, lexical items should not be considered *per se*, in separation from the entire language structure, because, as reported by Bolonyai (1998), lexical items represent an abstract complex lexical structure comprising the lexical-conceptual structure, predicate-argument structure and morphological realization patterns. So, it will mainly be "the syntactic frames of lexical forms, frequently borrowed from the dominating L2," that "would erode the phrasal structure of the L1..." (Ecke 2004: 338). On the other hand, because lexical items are borrowed as abstract lexical entries, they also influence the morphemic organization in the mental structure of L1 speakers thus causing mangled L1 language production. (Bolonyai 2000). The entire process of language degeneration due to structural erosion could be seen as functioning in the same way as forgetting (parts of) a language, which Ecke successfully links with language attrition and language decay (Ecke 2004). In fact, due to this identical mechanism at work, a borrowing-based corpus development initiative for Khinalug, which does not sufficiently prioritize the protection of indigenous elements, could well be characterised as forced language forgetting. If lexical borrowing from L2 is an evidence of L1 attrition "in cases where an exact L1 equivalent exists but is no longer available to the speaker in either production or comprehension" (Pavlenko 2004: 50), then under such borrowing-based corpus development, lexical borrowing from L2 will actually become a cause, not only an evidence, of L1 attrition thus resulting in a situation where L1 equivalents will gradually become unavailable to speakers first in production and then in comprehension.

Besides, the borrowing of not only lexical items but also of functional words, morphological elements and syntactic and morpho-syntactic patterns have increased (see Rind-Pawlowski (this issue)), which is also true about other North-East Caucasian languages in Azerbaijan (see, e.g.,

Authier 2010). Although not the subject of the present paper, we can say that structural borrowing represents a systemic intervention, which is a potential serious threat to the structural integrity of the Khinalug language. This risk, not immediate though for Khinalug at the present stage, is thoroughly explained through the Matrix Language Turnover hypothesis developed by Myers-Scotton (1998), elucidating the role of L2 as a morphosyntactic frame builder facilitating structural transformation of L1. According to Myers-Scotton (1998), such structural transformation is "a step leading to language attrition and language death" (289).

5.1 Borrowing, words at the verge of extinction and intergenerational language behavior

Naturally, borrowing is not a recent phenomenon in Khinalug. Throughout the history of cross-cultural communication and socio-economic transformations, concepts and their linguistic expressions made their way from or through Azerbaijani into Khinalug thus filling gaps in conveying novel phenomena (see Schulze 2018).

Among categories where the Khinalug language has retained its dominance are those expressing fauna and flora. Many rare mountain herbs have maintained their names in Khinalug probably due to the "because they use it, they name it; and, because they name it, they use it" principle. Among such names are *laha* ('mint'), *mıċ* ('nettle'), *inŝel* ('rumex'). Local animals are also named in Khinalug: *pişlə* ('fox'), *pısı* ('bear'), *k̇izə* ('rabbit'), *gra* ('wolf'), *k̇az* ('snake'), *ċəh̀* ('crow'), *żimir* ('sparrow') etc. The concepts that are not characteristic of Khinalug within these categories are expressed via loan words from Azerbaijani, or from Persian, Russian or Arabic that were borrowed during earlier times (see Rind-Pawlowski (this issue)). Similar tendencies are observed within certain socio-cultural categories. The window, for example, is not part of the house-building tradition in Khinalug, and consequently the vocabulary does not contain a corresponding word. As, assumingly, the house-building traditions changed, the language borrowed the Azerbaijani equivalent of the word 'window' - *pəncərə* - to be used in relevant situations. Reportedly, there is also a Russian loanword *ağaşgə* (Rus. 'окошко'), most probably borrowed through Azerbaijani, that older speakers of Khinalug use as an equivalent of the word 'window'.

However, while lacking concepts seem to be the basic reason for borrowing, it is still possible to come across Azerbaijani elements for those concepts which are still part of the traditional Khinalug lifestyle and the village environment. For example, the Khinalug language possesses words to describe natural phenomena such as rain, snow, summer, hail etc. However, the equivalent of the word 'wind' is a loan element from Azerbaijani, although wind is a frequent phenomenon in Khinalug. As well, reportedly, there are no native equivalents for the words 'dew' and 'frost dew', which are inseparable elements of any mountainous nature. Further research is needed to establish whether these lacking words ever existed in Khinalug. Besides, while there are local words for many dairy products, the Khinalug language lacks a native name for milk cream, a most popular local dairy product, for which the Azerbaijani word *qaymaq* is used. Furthermore, thyme, the most popular mountain herb, does not have a local name either, and villagers use the Azerbaijani word *kəklikotu* for this concept. The native equivalents for plants and products have probably long been lost and replaced by their Azerbaijani equivalents due to the important place they occupy in the community's local and outside-the-village trade activities where the Azerbaijani language is used. As far as *qaymaq* – cream skimmed from

boiled milk - is concerned, the product itself could have been adopted from the Azerbaijani food culture together with its name. Reportedly, Khinalug people have a similar product called *xanto*, a word of an unknown origin, which implies cream skimmed from raw milk.

As older community members state, the number of lexical elements that become obsolete increases with every new generation of native speakers. There are indeed some disappearing Khinalug words, such as *kob* ('namaz'), *izə* ('fasting'), *ċitə* ('zodiac'), *cağ* ('after', 'following') etc. that only old members of the community remember. Many words can almost only be encountered as fossilized linguistic relics in old stories, fairy tales and traditional games. Older speakers of Khinalug often express concern about possible future disappearance of near-extinct words due to the age of their last users: children and adolescents do not use such old elements, nor do they understand many of them.

In fact, the fieldwork results have also revealed an intergenerational difference in the comprehension of some native words, which have gradually been squeezed out by Azerbaijani equivalents. We held an oral interview with 12 people representing various age groups from 14 to 70 in order to check the comprehension level of 21 old indigenous words and expressions, selected randomly, which are becoming archaic due to the parallel use of their Azerbaijani equivalents. The results revealed the following. The respondents over 55 (3 people) manifested a very high level of comprehension: they immediately understood each item and provided interpretations of various connotations and context-dependent semantic features of these elements. The respondents between 35 and 45 (2 people) also had a high level of comprehension although they hesitated while interpreting the meaning of two or three elements and did not have a full command of various connotations of these elements. One respondent of 25 years old did not understand three words and hesitated in interpreting four other elements from the list. The younger generation manifested the lowest degree of comprehension of the elements on the list: the number of unknown elements ranged between four and thirteen among seven participants representing the age group 14-17. The range of the words that the representatives of this group hesitated about ranged between one and seven.

Some of the native elements become obsolete because the concepts they denote are no longer part of the lifestyle in Khinalug. Agriculture tools are modified, patterns of house construction become modernized, and human-nature relationships evolve. Hence, younger generations are not exposed to the phenomena or concepts expressed through many native words. For example, we could observe during informal conversations that children and even many adolescents do not know many words related to agriculture, such as *ınqa̋* ('field); *bını* ('pasture'); *q̇aq̇a* ('threshing board') etc. As well, many children do not understand words expressing phenomena that are obsolete, e.g., *gıva* ('hearth built inside a house used as heating and for cooking); *t̂unor* ('tandoor'); *nəşk̇irdu* ('driver (in a general sense)', 'a person who drives a car, a cart, a horse'); *nəşk̇irji* ('something (car, cart, horse etc.) which is driven (in a general sense) by someone'); *k̇uri* ('a large bowl for serving large portions of meal') etc.

Words expressing phenomena that have survived and are part of the community's active lifestyle are more stable in children's language repertoire. Children, for example, understand and use the word *qafın* ('cheese'), while many of them do not recognize the expressions *k̇anık̇ qafın* ('cheese with no or little fat') and *ijig qafın* ('full fat cheese'). This kind of examples justify an

obvious link between the archaization of phenomena and the weakening or loss of connotative competence.

Instances when children tend to use Azerbaijani words for non-obsolete phenomena are also frequent and tend to grow. In some cases native words expressing still-alive concepts or phenomena become squeezed out by their Azerbaijani equivalents in children's language repertoire. For example, the word *k̇abal* ('flock') used in sheep breeding is often replaced by its Azerbaijani equivalent *dəstə* especially in children's speech. Informants report that in our days one would more frequently hear *sa dəstə halam* rather than *sa k̇abal halam* (both phrases mean 'a flock of sheep'). Furthermore, the word *k̇indir* ('stairs') is almost exclusively used by old people while younger generations prefer using its Azerbaijani equivalent *pilləkən*. Also, very few children understand the word *x̂ıriżdə* ('money'), which is gradually being squeezed out by its Azerbaijani equivalent *pul*.

The linguistic behavior of younger generations reveals tendencies of language substitution also at the level of idiomatic expressions. Certain idioms have almost exclusively survived only in the repertoire of old people. For example, the phrase *Ğuŝari baxıştamışkəliş* ('May God forgive') is often replaced by younger speakers with its Azerbaijani equivalent *Allah bağışlasın.*

Children also manifest tendencies of syncretization, which also causes extinction of native linguistic elements. For example, the Khinalug vocabulary contains words denoting several types of stone: *rıżın* ('stone (in general)'), *k̇aċın* ('stone used in construction'), and *dahar* ('a big piece of rock torn off a mountain or brought by flood'). It has become evident during observations that younger generations tend to syncretize words with close semantics, and their speech is not as nuanced as that of older people. They use, for example, *k̇aċın* as a generic word both for 'stone (in general)' and 'stone in construction', while older people still use the relevant word for each of these contexts.

Turkish appears to be another factor accelerating language eroding: this is mainly channeled through influences of the Turkish TV, which is widespread and quite popular among schoolchildren. However, unlike Azerbaijani, which supplies lexicon for the formal language (mostly for absent terms and professional vocabulary), Turkish elements are often borrowed just for style in non-formal domains. The highest tendency of Turkification, an obvious influence of the Turkish popular culture, including soap operas, is observed among the youth, in particular among young girls. Examples of Turkish linguistic elements are: *kardeş* ('brother/sister'); *Nasılsın?* ('How are you?') *Ver bakalım* ('Give (smth.) to me' (lit. 'Give and let me see')) *İyiyim* ('I am well'); *Özür dilerim (, annecim)* ('I am sorry (, mom)') etc.

Lexical borrowing has triggered an intensive structural borrowing both at the morphological, syntactic and semantic levels. This article does not particularly deal with instances of structural borrowing which will be dealt with in future research articles. However, it is worthy of note that the scale of the transfer of structural elements from Azerbaijani is huge, and it is a significant factor contributing to the degeneration of the Khinalug language.

5.2 Increasing communicative functionality: revitalization versus borrowing

An interior of a traditional glass balcony

Sometimes lexical borrowing takes place "to emphasize particular conceptual distinctions" (Pavlenko 2004: 49). The native speakers report that some words in Khinalug do not express as broad semantics as do their Azerbaijani equivalents. In such cases, they borrow the word's equivalent from Azerbaijani. For example, the semantic capacity of the word *ĵoşbuża* ('lift', 'lifting') is not sufficiently broad to express the meaning of lifting in the context of sports, e.g., the lifting of a ball during a volleyball or a basketball game. While the Azerbaijani equivalent *qaldır* is used for this purpose, it also becomes more frequent gradually replacing the native word *ĵoşbuża.*

The review of the functional distributions between the Azerabaijani and Khinalug equivalents of certain concepts indeed indicate that preference to use Azerbaijani linguistic elements is often called for by the motivation to secure effective communication or conveyance of delicate nuances. From this perspective, the concept of money renders itself as an interesting case. The equivalent of the word 'money' in Khinalug is *xırıżdə*. As reported by native speakers, this word is used mostly in a metaphoric sense with the purpose of joking and sometimes making fun. For example, *Vave xırıżdə bankır vaqqınə* ('If you have money, save it in a bank' (said in a joking way)); *Hini hine rişi xırıżdə ixer aʧi çinəğu ləzḳuidəmə* ('He married his daughter to a rich man' (said for making fun). However, when used in a more realistic context, the Azerbaijani equivalent *pul* is used. *Hini viş pul ləḳirmə hə çikar.* ('He will give you money. Please bring it to

me'); *Dalıg kiri çəxşi ġilli pul kajk̇a*. ('(You should) start collecting money from the day you start working').

We should note that the simultaneous use of both the native and the semantically broader Azerbaijani word carries a significant risk for the vitality of native words: when speakers become exposed to elements from a more prestigious language, which they find more functional and semantically richer, they hurry to bring these words into their language repertoires, which in turn quickly replace the relevant native equivalents. There are also certain risks imposed by loan words, the transfer of which to the native language is accompanied by semantic extension. While semantic extension through borrowing may trigger broader linguistic functionality, borrowed words in themselves may bring to conceptual restructuring due to different semantic structures inherent in them. On the other hand, since indigenous vocabulary is a great reservoir for socio-cultural behavior patterns and fossilized ecological knowledge, restructured and reoriented conceptualization through borrowing will certainly affect many aspects of the link between the native language and community lifestyle and culture thus also eroding language attitudes of native speakers.

Using the language's rich internal potential, instead of borrowing, in order to accommodate for emerging concepts can be illustrated through the following linguistic maneuver that the Khinalug language displays. Due to specific construction traditions, Khinalug does not possess separate words for a house and a room: the word *zoa* is used to define both. The language however uses the word *zoa* in combination with other words to define the type or the location of a room: *aĉĉibri zoa* ('bedroom'); *həyəli zoa* ('children's room'); *çixi zoa* ('large room'); *ĥəldə zoa* ('the room on the right side') etc.

New elements, whether lexical or functional, can be formed through relexicalization, which is defined as "using old, native words in new ways or with new meanings." (Berge and Kaplan 2005: 293). Berge and Kaplan rightly state that "relexicalization is commonly found in cases where native terms were restricted in use, … or became obsolete as a result of modernization or technological changes" (Berge and Kaplan 2005: 296). Relexicalization may both be a conscious strategy resulting from a language policy and planning, and subconscious language adjustment defined by Golovko as "'folk' linguistic engineering" (see Muysken 2007: 328). Clearly, the fact that a concept does not have a lexical representation in a language does not mean that the language lacks this concept or that its speakers are not able to conceptualize it. Words are often borrowed from foreign languages when certain concepts are not expressed lexically, i.e., "in a word form", but certainly have other forms of expression. Relexicalization should therefore be seen as a tool to resort to, instead of borrowing, in order to preserve the energy of an indigenous language and to prevent its conceptual restructuring as mentioned above.

In some other sources we see the term relexicalization used for those instances when a change occurs in the lexical meaning of a morpheme whether or not the phonemic structure of the morpheme changes. For example, Besnier (2000) speaks about relexicalized causative verbs in a Polynesian language Tuvaluan (e.g., *matala* 'to open' (intransitive)) formed by adding the prefix *faka-* to non-causative roots (*fakamatala* 'to open' (transitive)), which, when became causative, acquired an additional lexical meaning, i.e., were relexicalized (456). Relexicalization with semantic expansion following grammatical restructuring could be seen as a potential tool for

internal resources-based language development in Khinalug especially given the fact that Khinalug does not have sufficient means for expressing certain grammatical meanings.

In this respect, the experience of lexical expansion in Maori should be interesting to look at. Following the 1987 Maori Language Act, numerous initiatives were taken to prevent the total loss of Maori and to guarantee its continued survival (Harlow 1993). Some of these initiatives had to focus on lexical expansion in order to ensure the functional vitality of Maori in diverse domains, i.e. education system, public institutions, cultural and tourism activities etc., into which Maori was formally introduced. The directions the lexical expansion project took are quite interesting and informative in understanding how internal resources of a language may be utilized to preserve its character and to make it less dependent on foreign languages. For example, Harlow notes that avoiding English was among the principles for new word formation. Instead, the corpus planners resorted to circumlocution, calquing, analogous compounds, specialization of existing Maori words, derivation by reduplication, derivation by affixation, shortening, and Maorification of borrowings (Harlow 1993: 100-101). Specialization of existing Maori words is of particular interest as it allows revitalization of indigenous words through relexicalization. Harlow (1993) provides the following illustrations in this regard: "There are many Maori words, which are used to be current and are found in the Classical literature, but which are not part of modern colloquial speech. Some of them are revived with some specialized meaning, e.g., types of kit or basket: *kōnae* 'file (paper or computer)'; *pūkoro* 'pocket, condom (pūkoro ure)', *pūtera* 'fund, budget'" (100-101).

While it is not always easy to interfere with folk language engineering (as is the above illustrated case of the semantic diversification between Az. *pul* and Khin. *x̂ıriżdə*), which sometimes tends towards borrowing from a language with which the native language is in close contact, preservation-oriented language policy could take steps to encourage and validate the utilization of native language elements for corpus development. Certainly, as Zuckermann and Walsh (2011) state, some language components are more revivable than others, and that one should be realistic rather than puristic when engaging in indigenous language revitalization (113). However, although corpus development should not be guided by unconditional purism tendencies, native language elements should be propounded where possible in order to give them a new life and to prevent the archaization of still-alive words potentially leading to the irrevocable loss of the essential indigenous vocabulary.

5.3 Corpus development: the process of borrowing at a new stage

With the initiatives to produce language materials, in particular textbooks, the development of new content has become a pressing issue. This has intensified corpus development in Khinalug. A significant part of the new corpus is created based on the Azerbaijani lexical elements as Khinalug does not have linguistic means for expressing many modern concepts. Words borrowed from Azerbaijani are mostly related to education, political-administrative processes such as voting, official procedures and documentation, political and national ideology, military matters etc. Examples of Azerbaijani words borrowed for new concepts in the draft textbook are: *şəhadətnamə* ('certificate'), *dərs* ('lesson'), *fərman* ('decree'), *məktəb* ('school'), *şagird* ('schoolboy/schoolgirl'), *bilik* ('knowledge'), *hökumət* ('government'), *pulsuz* ('free (with no

payment)'), *vətən* ('motherland'), *torpaq* ('land'), *işğal* ('occupation'), *qəsbkar* ('aggressor, occupant'), *əsgər* ('soldier') etc.

Borrowed elements appear less (but still appear) in the traditional domains. However, there are obvious gaps in corpus development steps which at times emerge as a hastened and expedited process to meet deadlines, which may sometimes be unrealistic. Therefore, text developers often resort to Azerbaijani elements instead of their native equivalents. For example, while the word *gra* ('wolf') is still available and not yet obsolete, its Azerbaijani equivalent *canavar* appears in the draft textbooks in many cases. Texts in the draft textbooks reveal a significant number of such instances. Word formation, as well as the formation of new grammatical or functional meanings do not often benefit from internal resources of the Khinalug language; instead, corpus planners immediately resort to Azerbaijani to respond to urgent needs to shape forms for emerging concepts. It should also be noted that for many of the new borrowings, consistent spelling has not been established yet. On the other hand, initiatives for the revitalization of native elements are sometimes met with opposition by some corpus development team members. The opposition is grounded on the alleged difficulties of memorizing archaic elements, the Azerbaijani equivalents of which are known to almost everyone. In fact, some old native words appear to be confusing and native speakers sometimes argue around their semantics.

Certainly, the corpus creation initiative is not void of positive steps, often resulting from the persistence of individual members of the corpus development team. For example, the traditional words for the names of the week days are also becoming obsolete and have almost completely been replaced by their Azerbaijani equivalents in the oral speech of not only children but also adults. They are nevertheless included in the draft school textbooks, which is one of the positive initiatives within the corpus development project. The native names of the week days are the following, and the element *q̇ə* in these word combinations means 'day': *kəx q̇ə* ('Monday'), *k̇uşkəx q̇ə* ('Tuesday'), *lıḵa q̇andə q̇ə* ('Wednesday'), *inəl ksan* ('Thursday'), *inad q̇ə* ('Friday'), *c̈indi* ('Saturday'), and *zuli* ('Sunday').[10]

[10] We should note that except for the name of Wednesday, i.e., *lıḵa q̇andə q̇ə*, which literally means 'the day when meat is eaten', even old people do not know how to decipher the meanings of the week days. But even in the case of Wednesday, the community members could not even trace its name to any tradition: the only assumption was that Wednesday was probably the day when meat was delivered to people (e.g., each week cattle was slaughtered by one family and then delivered to other homes). At the beginning, our questions were met with surprise because the respondents did not understand how the name of a week day could be interpreted otherwise. Questions like "What does each element in '*kəx q̇ə'* mean?" were answered as "You cannot translate each word in the expression; the entire expression means 'Monday'." However, after some interaction, the community members themselves became curious and tried to establish an etymology for these words by building hypotheses based on folk logic or linking, through speculations, some of the names to forgotten words, beliefs and some cultural practices. All of the interpretations can certainly be said to be based on folk etymology, at least at this stage. For example, the word *kəx*, contained in the name of Monday, means 'to get something to a point', 'to reach (get to) a point' in combination with the light verb *q̇i* (*kəx q̇i*), and 'to approach/to come/to arrive', used also about time, in combination with the element *-il* (probably derived from Khin. *il* 'here') and the light verb *q̇i* (*kəxilq̇i*), e.g., *vaxt kəxilq̇i* 'time has come/time has arrived'. Taking this as a basis, some people made an assumption that Monday may mean the day when a new week 'arrives', i.e., starts. Also, many believe that the name of Sunday (*zuli*) is somehow related to the word *zulu*, a part of the word combination *zulu aba* ('great grandfather'). Analyzing the word combination, the speakers thought that if *aba* means grandfather, then *zulu* means 'great' and implies greatness, highness, oldness (a huge distance in time) and hence importance, and that this semantics may have become the basis of the perception of Sunday, which was

Likewise, the draft textbooks have included native cardinal numbers, which are also being replaced by Azerbaijani elements in oral speech, especially in the speech of younger generations.

Indeed some community members involved in language development are enthusiastic about preserving the Khinalug language and protecting its purity as much as possible. During the discussion of the text entitled *Biligi Q̇ə* 'Knowledge Day' in the draft Khinalug language textbook for the 2nd grade, one of our informants, who is also a corpus development team member, stated that instead of the expression in which the first word (*biligi (bilig*GEN 'knowledge') is of the Azerbaijani origin, the authors could have opted for an expression which would consist of only native words. The informant agreed that Khinalug may not have ready words for all of the new concepts; however he also underlined the importance of creating words out of the native material. For example, he suggested that instead of using the word *bilig*, which is a loan from Azerbaijani (Az. *bilik*), a new word, i.e., *muxuk̂ui* derived from the Khinalug verb stem *muxu-* ('to) know') could be used. Whether or not each such initiative would enjoy immediate community support and would finally be accepted is questionable. However, language policy, in particular its corpus development aspect, should find ways to promote such tendencies and build new initiatives on emerging community trends of language preservation.

---

probably considered an important day of the week concluding (or starting?) the entire week period or standing between two weeks. As far as the word *c̣indi* ('Saturday') is concerned, even old community members were not able to explain its meaning. However, some linked it to the same word *c̣indi* encountered in a counting-out rhyme used by children as a preliminary to games: *əmzə tikan*, *əmir güney*, *c̣indi qırağ, latşır qırağ*. In many games, this rhyme is used repeatedly to eliminate the person on whom the last word or syllable falls each time. The Azerbaijani loan *qırağ* used in this rhyme means 'edge' or 'outside', and the expression *latşır qırağ* means 'go out'. Based on this, some community members made an assumption that the word may have meant 'last' in earlier times, and that this meaning may have been transferred to the perception of Saturday, the last day before Sunday, or the last day (before the day) closing up a weekly cycle. Saturday may have had a particular cultural significance for the Khinalug people, and this may even be linked to a pre-Islamic tradition. We make this assumption based on the fact that in Khinalug, until recently, Friday used to be the day when people performed major housework, including cleaning, washing etc. in homes. It was also the day when people took a bath and baked bread. The daily activity of carpet-weaving was ceased on Fridays for full-day house-cleaning. All this reminds us of the preparation day before Sabbath, although this is only a preliminary hypothesis at this stage. There was another interesting folk logic based speculation provided for the word *k̇uşkəx q̇ə* 'Tuesday', which precedes Wednesday when, as its name (*lıkˆa q̇andə q̇ə*) in Khinalug reveals, meat is eaten. The element *k̇uş* in the word *k̇uşkəx* in combination with the light verb *q̇i* (*k̇uş q̇i*) means 'liquid that blocks, or gets stuck in, the throat', e.g., *İ buğazır nəḣnə k̇uş q̇işəmə* 'I choked (with (my) saliva), or, more literally '(My) saliva got stuck in my throat'. As in Azerbaijani traditional belief (and perhaps in some other folk belief systems), there is a choking related superstition also in Khinalug: a choking person is expected to receive a gift or present (in particular, a food/meal gift) soon. Azerbaijanis slap on the back of the choking person and say 'all is yours', 'it is halal for you/let it be halal to you', or '(it is) your own portion' probably making an implicit reference to the expected gift. This traditional belief also exists in Khinalug. Based on this, many respondents assume that the name of Tuesday, which precedes the day when meat is delivered, probably reflects the state of expecting the delivery. Interestingly, there is another verb *ziq̇işəmə* which describes the state of being choked with liquid but does not have the semantics of expecting a gift, or a portion of food to be delivered. *İ buğazır nəḣnə/ x̂u ziq̇inşəmə* 'I choked with (my) saliva/water'. According to some community members, it is only phrases with the verb *k̇uş q̇i* that are used when giving back blows to a choking person. Certainly, these are only assumptions and speculations made by community members on the basis of some traditional knowledge; further extensive and multi-aspect research is needed for establishing, if ever possible, the etymology of the words and expressions denoting week days in Khinalug.

6. Conclusion: Potential for Early Reversal

Inside a traditional Khinalug house

It is well known that a community's linguistic and conceptual repertoire can also be enriched through revitalization of native elements (see, e.g., Zuckermann 2003). Khinalug, like many indigenous languages, has rich internal potential for functional expansion. The above examples of a few corpus development initiatives are good illustrations of how a language's internal resources can be utilized. As many examples of language revitalization prove, maximum utilization of a language's internal possibilities is the best guarantee of its vitality and sustainable use. In fact, language attrition does not only occur due to its speakers' linguistic behavior. A language may become unattractive also if its internal linguistic-communicative potential is not sufficiently utilized. It is essential to prevent, as early as possible, extinction of linguistic elements that have survived in the repertoire of old people. Observations show that people, especially representatives of younger generations, sometimes argue about the meaning or the existence of this or another word. From this point of view, documentation activities, including speech recording and elicitation interviews with older members of the community, which would make it possible to capture and fix elements on the verge of extinction, is of vital importance. Preservation activities should also integrate digitization which is essential for language maintenance in these days. A high level technology and digitization support should be provided for documenting oral speech, local knowledge and culture, as well as oral traditions and practices. Digital archiving is key to creating a sustainable resource of language materials.

Collecting endangered language elements and using them in the regenerated corpus is important for the attractiveness of the language. Textbooks, therefore, should include as many native elements as possible so that these words are learned through formal education. There is also lack of some grammatical categories, e.g., ordinal numbers, for the development of which internal resources of the Khinalug language should be utilized to the maximum. Sufficient energy and resources should be invested, including in the framework of a language preservation policy, to the formation of new linguistic elements using the internal means of the Khinalug language. New elements, whether lexical or functional, can be formed by using internal resources of the language including, as illustrated above, through relexicalization.

Sociolinguistic and language contact research should be initiated and funded to involve local and international researchers in diverse activities including the documentation, conservation and revitalization of linguistic elements. It is essential that research activities be supplemented by initiatives benefiting community members. Therefore, the language and education policy should envisage strong and sustainable local capacity-building in efficient sociolinguistic fieldwork. Investments should be directed towards encouraging research activities which would enhance local capacity in studying, documenting and preserving indigenous languages and cultures.

Within the language and education policy, a transitional bilingual education program could be considered although it is hard to believe that instruction in Khinalug would find a huge support within the community. All of the 12 parents interviewed in 2022 said they would prefer their children to have Azerbaijani as the language of instruction and study the Khinalug language only as the mother tongue at school. They want to ensure that the lack of competence in Azerbaijani, which might be the case if the instruction is carried out in the mother tongue, does not become a barrier on their children's pathway to higher education. Implementing the bilingual education model would indeed carry certain risks, at least at the present stage, due to the lack of sustainability in the preparation of specialists who would be able to teach various subjects in indigenous languages. None of the Universities prepare specialists in teaching indigenous languages let alone teaching of various subjects in these languages. For this purpose, establishing University programs for training instructors in teaching minority languages, including Khinalug, is essential. On the other hand, no teaching/learning resources exist, and the establishment of such resources would require huge investments. At this stage, to prevent further loss of interest in learning the mother tongue, extended length of the language teaching (e.g., throughout the entire secondary school years) supplemented with the development of quality language learning resources should be considered. A transitional bilingual education program (at least its early exit form) should also be considered to ensure the children's smooth shift to the instruction in the state language. This would be a useful strategy for preventing language shift because families will not rush to immerse their children in Azerbaijani, at the cost of the mother tongue, at a very early age in order to guarantee these children's learning achievements at school.

Community-driven social and cultural practices are important factors stimulating increased use of the local language. Therefore, a sustainable cultural milieu where traditional activities (such as carpet-weaving) are revitalized (and leveraged towards the community's economic well-being) would encourage language maintenance and transmission. Cultural initiatives should be followed with well-organized implementation plans. Any problems with implementation and

follow-up negatively affect the continuity of the traditional way of life, which, in turn, restricts the domains where languages naturally thrive. Focusing on the language component within naturally growing eco-touristic and other local economic activities is of great importance and would support active and sustainable language use. The famous case of New Zealand's sustainable tourism strategy based on the Maori language component is a good example to look at (see Mühlhäusler 1996: 117-121; Mead 2003).

The quality of education also has a bearing on the vitality of the language and culture as it is directly linked to the motivation of young parents to stay in the village. Teachers sent from Baku may leave in the middle of the school year, due to the harsh climate or for other reasons, and thus there may be a shortage of teaching staff. This also calls for the improvement of working conditions at school to prevent such cases, as well as to predict instances of drop-out among children due to the unsupportive infrastructure. In fact, there is a shortage of teaching staff for this or another subject from time to time. This causes despair among children and their parents affecting their affiliation with, and desire to stay in, the village: many seek opportunities to move to Guba or other places where schooling conditions are better. Since this may reoccur, necessary measures, including enhancing infrastructure for online teaching as a reserve option, should be taken to ensure continuity of the teaching process. Besides guaranteeing, in the first place, that children fully enjoy the rights to education, the continuity of teaching will also be a strong factor enhancing consolidated community life, which will in turn ensure the sustainable vitality of the native language and culture.

Finally, elevating the prestige of the Khinalug language by involving community members as active participants of language maintenance is vital. As noted by Fishman, "not all members of endangered ethnocultural entity can be united vis-à-vis the desirability of reversing language shift" and "some may actually deny the need for pro-RLS [reversing language shift] effort..." (Fishman 1991: 11). Besides, even linguists often see the decline of small languages as a natural process, which they consider useless to interfere with. (Edwards 2012:80). Therefore, building prestige for the Khinalug language will certainly need an efficient promotion- and implementation-oriented language policy which will also help institutionalize social culture paradigms where minority languages are genuinely embraced by the entire society.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Khinalug community for welcoming us warmly during site visits, sharing their knowledge with us, and giving us the permission to use the data collected during fieldwork. We particularly thank Ulkar Huseynova and Islam Huseynov, community members, for facilitating visits to families, as well as for providing insightful feedback on the use of certain linguistic elements. We also owe a deep gratitude to Tapdig Baghirov, another community member, for his valuable information and insightful comments about linguistic elements of the Khinalug language, which have fallen out of use or are becoming obsolete.

References

Authier, Gilles (2010). Azeri Morphology in Kryz. *Turkic Languages* 14: 14-42.

Berge, Anna & Lawrence Kaplan (2005). Contact-induced lexical development in Yupik and Inuit languages. *Études inuit. Inuit studies* 29(1-2): 285-305. DOI: 10.7202/013946ar

Besnier, Niko (2000). *Tuvaluan. A Polynesian Language of the Central Pacific*. London: Routlegde.

Bolonyai, Agnes (1998). In-between languages: Language shift/maintenance in childhood bilingualism. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 2(1): 21-43.

Bolonyai, Agnes (2000). "Elective affinities": Language contact in the abstract lexicon and its structural consequences: 'Affinities really become interesting only when they bring about separations' (Goethe: Elective affinities). *International Journal of Bilingualism* 4(1): 81-106.

Canagarajah, Suresh A. (2008). Language shift and the family: Questions from the Sri-Lankan Tamil diaspora. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 12(2): 143-176.

Clifton, John M. (2013). Colonialism, nationalism and language vitality in Azerbaijan. In Elena Mihas, Bernard Perley, Gabriel Rei-Doval & Kathleen Wheatley (eds.), *Responses to language endangerment: In honor of Mickey Noonan. New directions in language documentation and language revitalization,* 197-220. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamin's Publishing Company.

Crystal, David (2000). *Language death*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Curdt-Christiansen, Xiao Lan & Weihong Wang (2018). Parents as agents of multilingual education: Family language planning in China. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 31(3): 235-254.

Demographic Indicators of Azerbaijan (2020). *Statistical Yearbook of Azerbaijan,* 58-59. Baku: State Statistical Committee.

Dorian, Nancy C. (1981). *Language death. The life cycle of a Scottish Gaelic dialect*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Du Bois, Inke (2009). Language attrition and code-switching among US Americans in Germany. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics PLUS* 39: 1-16.

Ecke, Peter (2004). Language attrition and theories of forgetting: A cross-disciplinary review. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 8(3): 321-354.

Edstrom, Anne (2010). Tracing language, culture and identity through three generations: The experience of a Spanish-Italian family in the United States. *Issues in Applied Linguistics* 18(1): 81-97.

Esdahl, Trine (2003). Language choice as a power resource in bilingual adolescents' conversations in the Danish Folkeskole. In Norman J. Jørgensen (ed.), *Bilingualism and social relations. Turkish speakers in North Western Europe,* 76-89. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Fishman, Joshua A (1991). *Reversing language shift*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Garcia, Ofelia (2009). *Bilingual education in the 21st century. A global perspective*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Garcia, Ofelia (1997). New York's multilingualism: World languages and their role in a U.S. city. In O. Garcia et al. (eds.), *The multilingual apple: Languages in New York City,* 3-50. New York, NY: Mouton de Gruyter.

Garibova, Jala (2017). Linguistic landscape in Azerbaijan: Policy, attitudes and choices. In Ludmilla A'Beckett & Theodorus du Plessis (eds.), *In pursuit of societal harmony. Reviewing the experiences and approaches in officially monolingual and officially multilingual countries. Conference proceedings,* 107-146. Bloemfontein, South Africa: SUN MeDIA.

Garibova, Jala (2009). Language policy in post-Soviet Azerbaijan: Political aspects. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 198: 7-32.

Garibova, Jala & Matanat Asgarova (2009). Language policy and legislation in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. *Language Problems and Language Planning* 33(3): 191-217.

Gregg, Gary S. (2007). *Culture and identity in a Muslim society*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Harlow, Ray (1993). Lexical Expansion in Maori. *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 102(1): 99-107.

Haruna, Andrew (2003). An endangered language. The Gùrdùd language of the Southern Bauchi area, Nigeria. In Mark Janse & Sijmen Tol (eds.), *Language death and language maintenance: theoretical, practical and descriptive approaches,* 189-213. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Kim, Sun Hee Ok & Donna Starks (2008). The role of emotions in L1 attrition: The case of Korean-English late bilinguals in New Zealand. *The International Journal of Bilingualism* 12(4): 303-319.

Krauss, Michael E (1992). The World Languages in Crisis. *Language* 68(1): 4-10.

Köpke, Barbara & Monika S. Schmid (2004). Language attrition: The next phase. In Monika S. Schmid, Barbara Köpke, Merel Keijzer & Lina Weilemar (eds.), *First language attrition. Interdisciplinary perspectives on methodological issues*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 1-43.

Mead, Hirini Moko (2003). *Tikanga Māori: Living by Maori values*. Wellington, New Zealand: Huia Publishers.

Mustafayev, Arif (2010). Khinalug – a relic of Azerbaijan's ethnic history. *İRS Heritage* 3: 52-57.

Muysken, Pieter (2007). Mixed Codes. In Peter Auer & Li Wei (eds.), *Handbook of multilingualism and multilingual communication*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 315-340.

Mühlhäusler, Peter (1996). *Linguistic ecology. Language change and linguistic imperialism in the Pacific Region*. London, England: Routledge.

Myers-Scotton, Carol (1993). *Social Motivations for code-switching: Evidence from Africa*. Oxford, England: Clarendon Press.

Myers-Scotton, Carol (1998). A way to dusty death: The Matrix language turnover hypothesis. In Lenore A. Grenoble & Lindsay J. Whaley (eds.), *Endangered languages: Language loss and community response*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press. 289-316.

Ortman, Jennifer M. & Gillian Stevens (2008). *Shift happens, but when? Inter- and intra-generational language shift among Hispanic Americans.* https://paa2008.populationassociation.org/papers/80685 (Retrieved on 04 February 2023)

Pashayeva, Gulshan (2018). Language as a soft power resource. *Language Problems and Language Planning* 42(2): 132-143.

Pavlenko, Aneta (2004). L2 influence and L1 attrition in adult bilingualism. In Monika S. Schmid, Barbara Köpke, Merel Keijzer & Lina Weilemar (eds.), *First language attrition. Interdisciplinary perspectives on methodological issues,* 48-59. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Pavlenko, Aneta (2003). "I feel clumsy speaking Russian": Second language influence on first language in narratives of Russian second language users of English. In Vivian Cook (ed.), *Effects of the second language on the first, 32-61*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Rind-Pawlowski, Monika & Michael Daniel (2014). A Survey of Khinalug Preverbs. An elaborated version of the talk given at the workshop "*East Caucasian preverbs and the compounding: derivation - inflection continuum*" adjacent to SWL6, 8.-11.09.2014, Pavia. https://www.academia.edu/8964489/A_Survey_of_Khinalug_preverbs

Rind-Pawlowski, Monika (in press, this issue). Some Observations on the Influence of Azerbaijani on Khinalug. *Tehlikedeki Diller Dergisi/Journal of Endangered Languages*: 22 (13).

Schulze, Wolfgang (2008). "Towards a History of Khinalug". In: Brigitte Huber, Marianne Volkart und Paul Widmer. *Chomolangma, Demavend und Kasbek. Festschrift für Roland Bielmeier zu seinem* 65. Geburstag. vol. 2: 703-744.

Schulze, Wolfgang (2018). Khinalug in its Genetic Context: Some Methodological Considerations. Part 1: The Problem, Loans and Cognates. *Iran and the Caucasus* 22: 61-79.

Smith-Christmas, Cassie (2016). *Family language policy: Maintaining an endangered language in the home*. London, England: Palgrave Pivot.

Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove. 2011. Language Ecology. In Jan-Ola Östman & Jef Verschueren (eds.) *Pragmatics in Practice*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 177-198.

Schmid, Monika S. (2002). *First language attrition, use and maintenance. The case of German Jews in Anglophone countries*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Schmid, Monika S. (2011). *Language Attrition. (Key Topics in Sociolinguistics)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Statistika Komitəsi (2022). Azərbaycan Respublikasında Əhalinin Siyahıyaalınması. *Statistik Məcmuə 2019-cu il*, 21-ci Cild [The Republic of Azerbaijan Census: *Statistical Digest 2019*, Vol.21]. Bakı: Azərbaycan Respublikasının Dövlət Statistika Komitəsi.

Sultanova, Pərvanə (2011). Xınalıq – ilkinliyini və gözəlliyini qoruyub saxlayan tarixi abidələr xəzinəsi. *525-ci qəzet*. May 17: 6.

Zuckermann, Ghil'ad (2003). *Language contact and lexical enrichment in Israeli Hebrew*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Zuckermann, Ghil'ad & Michael Walsh (2011). Stop, Revive, Survive: Lessons from the Hebrew Revival Applicable to the Reclamation, Maintenance and Empowerment of Aboriginal Languages and Cultures'. *Australian Journal of Linguistics* 31(1): 111-127.

Əliyev, İdris & Həsən Ağayev (2018). *Xınalıq*. Baku, Azerbaijan: National Academy of Sciences.