

Sociolinguistic Situation of the Tat and Mountain Jews in Azerbaijan

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of sociolinguistic research conducted in 2000 among the Tat and Mountain Jewish people living in northeastern Azerbaijan. These two groups are of particular interest since although the speech varieties are reported to be very close, the people see themselves as entirely distinct groups. The goals of the research were to investigate patterns of language use, bilingualism, and language attitudes in these two communities. Of particular interest is the relationship between perceived differences, actual differences, and geographic location. Interviews, observations, questionnaires, and Azerbaijani and Russian Sentence Repetition Tests were employed. An important part of the interviews dealt with perceived benefits of the various languages.*

1. Background

The Tat language is a member of the Southwestern group of the Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family (Grimes 2000). Talysh and Kürdîsh are related languages spoken in Azerbaijan, though these are classified as Northwestern Iranian languages (Grimes 2000).

According to the 1989 Soviet census, 30,000 Tats lived in the Soviet Union, and of those, an estimated 10,000 were in Azerbaijan (Hacıyev 1995). Many sources, however, in speaking of this people group, point out that these figures are probably low due to the fact that most Azerbaijani Tats are fluent in Azerbaijani. Grjunberg (1982:231) claims that “an overwhelming majority of Tats who live in Azerbaijan consider themselves Azerbaijanis,¹ and the Azerbaijani language, equally with Tat, as their mother tongue” (translated from the Russian).

Most scholars divide Tat into two general varieties: Jewish and Muslim, with religious differences correlating with linguistic differences (Grjunberg 1963, Grimes 2000). Grjunberg and Davidova (1982) refer to the Jewish variety as “northern,” and the Muslim variety as “southern.” Grimes (2000) also notes the possible existence of a Christian Tat variety, although Grjunberg and Davidova (1982) claim that no linguistic differences can be traced to the distinction between Christian and Muslim communities.

Grjunberg (1963) divides the Muslim Tat spoken in Azerbaijan into three main dialects, in which the religious distinctions between Sunni and Shi’a play a role:

- 1) Northern (Sunni), spoken in the Quba and Dəvəçi districts, the Qonaqkənd region, and the Xızı district;
- 2) Central (Shi’a), spoken in the region around Ərîskuş and Dağ Quşçu (now part of the Siyəzən district); and
- 3) Southern (Shi’a), spoken in the Siyəzən district.

Grjunberg and Davidova (1982) agree that the religious distinctions of Sunni and Shi’a correlate with linguistic differences.

Magsud Hacıyev (1995) generally agrees with Grjunberg’s categorization of the Northern and Southern varieties of Tat, but considers the Siyəzən variety part of the Northern variety. For Hacıyev, the Southern variety includes Lahıc, the Şamaxı district, and the Apsheron peninsula. Gülsüm Hüseynova (personal communication) agrees that the Tat spoken in the Lahıc area belongs to the Southern variety. Despite the differences

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¹ It is unclear whether this sentiment refers to an ethnic identification or one of citizenship.

among dialects, Hacıyev (personal communication) claims that Tats in Azerbaijan understand each other easily. They do, however, have more problems understanding the Jewish variety.

While most scholars correlate linguistic varieties with religious differences, Miller (1929) argues that linguistic differences correspond to geographic location, not to the religious distinctions of Jewish, Christian, Sunni Muslim, and Shi'a Muslim. As opposed to Hacıyev's claim that all Muslim Tat understand each other easily, Miller claims that (Muslim) Apsheron Tats consider both (Muslim) Tat and Jewish Tats in Quba "to be different but understandable" (p.6, trans.), but that the (Muslim) Tat variety spoken in Lahıc is very different and difficult to understand. Miller also argues that the (Jewish) Tat variety spoken in Derbent, Russia, is different enough from that spoken in Quba, Azerbaijan, that they should be considered two distinct varieties.

Regardless of who is correct regarding the possible correlation between religious and linguistic differences, religious identity is an important component of speakers' self-designations. The Jewish community does not refer to themselves as Tats at all. Instead, they refer to themselves as Mountain Jews, and to their speech variety as Mountain Jewish. The use of 'Tat' as a self designation is limited to the Muslim community. (The term 'Muslim Tat' is not used as a self designation by any community.) Furthermore, Tat speakers around the village of Lahıc simply refer to their speech variety as Lahıc. In this paper, we will use the self designations. Mountain Jewish will be used for the varieties spoken within the Jewish community. Tat will generally be used for all the varieties spoken within the Muslim communities (including Lahıc), while Lahıc will refer to the specific Muslim communities located in the vicinity of the village of Lahıc. In addition, we will use 'Tat' to refer to the entire group. Where confusion could arise from this dual use of the term 'Tat', we will use Muslim Tat to refer to the subgroup.

Only Mountain Jewish has a history of literacy. According to Grjunberg (1982), it was written using a Hebrew cursive script until 1928, after which an official Latin alphabet was established in Dagestan. In 1938, this script was changed to a Cyrillic one. Since then a variety of books, newspapers, textbooks, and other materials have been published in Dagestan and Nalchik. In the 1930s, some books in the Quba variety of Mountain Jewish were published in Baku. Since, however, Mountain Jewish was only taught in Mountain Jewish schools in Dagestan, not in Azerbaijan, literacy in this language among Quba Jews was weaker than in Dagestan.

According to Akiner (1986), Tat was not written until 1935, though he does not specify what the first efforts at literacy were, nor where they took place. Hacıyev (personal communication) on the other hand, claims that the first book printed in Tat was Duta Birar (Hacıyev 1993). Since then, primers, books of poetry, and stories have also been published. Most of them use the Azerbaijani Cyrillic alphabet. Since 1996, the Azerbaijani government has provided money for the development of minority languages, including Tat. Hacıyev (personal communication) reports that Tat classes have been started in several schools in the Quba region using an alphabet based on the current Azerbaijani Latin alphabet.

Most of the research outlined above has concentrated on the linguistic differentiation of the subgroups that make up the Tat and Mountain Jew speech communities. Little if any research has focused on issues such as actual language use, attitudes towards the various languages used in the Tat and Mountain Jew communities. In this paper we present the findings of our research which attempts to focus on some of these other issues. The primary goals of this survey were:

- a) To verify the locations of Tat villages and make physical descriptions of the communities visited.
- b) To gain a better picture of perceived dialect differences between Tat and Mountain Jewish.
- c) To obtain general information regarding language-use patterns for Tat, Azerbaijani, and Russian, including Tat language proficiency, levels of

multilingualism in Azerbaijani and Russian, and levels of literacy in all three languages.

- d) To investigate speakers' attitudes toward Tat, Azerbaijani and Russian.
- e) Stemming from the points above, to determine the viability of the Tat language as a whole, as well as the types of communities in which the vernacular is viable.

2. Methodology

Research was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, ten communities were visited throughout the Tat-speaking region. Each of these visits was one or two days in length. In the second stage, five communities were visited for longer periods of time.

2.1 Stage One Research

During the course of two survey trips conducted in the spring and summer of 2000, we visited ten communities: three mountain communities (Lahıc, Dağ Quşçu, and Qonaqkənd), four foothill communities (Məlhəm, Sə'dan, Zəyvə, and Rustov), and three plains communities (Gəndov, Giləzi, and Qırmızı Qəsəbə²). Basic demographic information about these communities is given in table 1.

Table 1: Research Communities

Location	District	Geographic description	Speech variety
Qonaqkənd	Quba	mountain	Northern
Rustov	Quba	foothill	Northern
Zəyvə	Dəvəçi	foothill	Northern
Gəndov	Dəvəçi	plain	Northern
Giləzi	Xızı	plain	Northern
Dağ Quşçu	Siyəzən	mountain	Central
Sə'dan	Siyəzən	foothill	Northern or Southern
Lahıc	Ismayılı	mountain	Southern Tat
Məlhəm	Şamaxı	foothill	Southern Tat
Qırmızı Qəsəbə	Quba	plain	Jewish

We were also able to conduct an interview with one of the teachers of the Namazgah primary school.

The primary method of investigation involved direct interviews with individuals and groups in the villages visited. In each regional center and village, appointed officials were interviewed about demographic figures, population trends, and various language use patterns. In some villages we also spoke with the elected officials to gain additional demographic information about the village. School and kindergarten directors as well as teachers provided information on children's language proficiency upon entering and completing the educational system and on the medium of instruction. In various villages medical personnel and religious leaders were asked about language use in their respective professions.

In addition, groups of residents, both men and women, were interviewed in each location. These interviews covered a number of topics. One set of questions dealt with perceived levels of proficiency in each language among older, middle-aged, and young people in their villages. A second set dealt with domains of language use. A third set asked for opinions concerning the importance of each language for a variety of communicative situations. A fourth set aimed at fleshing out which dialects a group of individuals perceived to be the most different from their own, as well as which were the most similar. The answers to these questions could then be compared to linguists' assessments of dialect divisions.

² During Soviet times (and therefore in the Russian-language sources), Qırmızı Qəsəbə was called Krasnaya Sloboda. This is also the name by which many people currently refer to this settlement.

2.2 Stage Two Research

On the basis of information from these initial research trips, we decided to make follow-up trips to five communities during the months of September and October 2000. The purpose of these follow-up trips was to gather further information about language use patterns and proficiency in Azerbaijani and Russian.

Information regarding language use patterns was gathered by asking individuals questions about their personal language use patterns. Information regarding proficiency in Azerbaijani and Russian 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).

The five communities we visited were Dağ Quşçu, Zəyvə, Lahıc, Ərakit, and Qırmızı Qəsəbə. The first four communities are Tat villages. Based on our initial trips, we decided that Dağ Quşçu represented the average mountain village, while Zəyvə represented a foothill location with high use of the vernacular among the population.

Our preliminary research indicated that the situation in Lahıc was quite different from that in other mountain villages. It is also different from other mountain villages in that it attracts a large number of tourists. Therefore, we included both Lahıc and the adjacent village of Ərakit to determine if significant differences existed in the sociolinguistic situations of these two villages. The fifth location, Qırmızı Qəsəbə, is the only Mountain Jew location outside the capital Baku.

In each of the language communities, a random sample of the population was selected. Basic demographic information was collected on each of the individuals selected. In addition, one group of the individuals was asked questions about their language use patterns, and one group was asked to take either the Azerbaijani SRT or the Russian SRT. These two groups of individuals were overlapping; that is, some individuals both answered questions about their language use patterns and took an SRT, while others either answered questions or took an SRT. Only the Azerbaijani SRT was administered in the four Tat communities. Since preliminary research in Qırmızı Qəsəbə, the main Mountain Jewish settlement in the country, indicated a greater use of Russian than in the Tat villages, both the Azerbaijani and Russian SRTs were administered there, although no single individual took both SRTs.

2.2.1 Sampling in Tat villages

In each of the Tat villages visited, a sample of homes was selected from the official book of households. This book lists each of the households in the village, along with the names, years of birth, educational level, and other demographic information for the individuals belonging to the household. The list of households was arranged alphabetically by the name of the head of the household. Some of the information was incorrect; all individuals in some listed households had moved, and some newly-established households were not included in the list. The lists did, however, contain most of the households in each village.

In general, we tried to select a sample of approximately thirty-five households in each village. We divided the total number of households by thirty-five to obtain a ratio of how many houses we would include in the sample. For example, if there were 140 households in a given village, we would include one out of every four households in our sample. Working from the list, we would then choose every fourth house in the list of households.

Once we had our list of households, we eliminated the households in which the occupants had moved out or were away. We were able to collect basic demographic information (names, gender, year of birth) for the individuals in the selected households. The list of selected households was then randomized to set the order of visits. In this way,

if we were unable to visit all the households, we would not systematically exclude a certain geographic section of the village.

2.2.1.1 Dağ Quşçu

Of the thirty-nine households that were initially selected in Dağ Quşçu, nine were eliminated immediately. We did not have time to visit the last three households on the list. In addition, no one was available at two of the selected households. Thus, we visited 25 homes. A number of household members were unavailable in these households; the demographics for them are shown in table 2.

Table 2: Dağ Quşçu Nonresponse

	<30	30–60	60+
M	5	4	—
W	3	3	—

In the twenty-five households visited, we were able to interview fifty-seven individuals regarding language use patterns and were able to administer the Azerbaijani SRT to forty-seven individuals. The demographics for these individuals are given in tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: Dağ Quşçu Interviews

	<30	30–60	60+
M	5	11	5
W	12	17	7

Table 4: Dağ Quşçu SRT's

	<30	30–60	60+
M	3	10	4
W	10	14	6

2.2.1.2 Zəyvə

Of the thirty-five households that were initially selected in Zəyvə, four were eliminated immediately. Of the remaining thirty-one households, no one was available at two. Thus, we visited twenty-nine households. Several individuals in these homes were not interviewed; the demographics for them are shown in table 5.

Table 5: Zəyvə Nonresponse

	<30	30–60	60+
M	12	7	3
W	1	5	1

In the twenty-nine households visited, we were able to interview fifty-six individuals regarding language use patterns, and were able to administer the Azerbaijani SRT to forty-six individuals. The demographics for these individuals are given in tables 6 and 7.

Table 6: Zəyvə Interviews

	<30	30–60	60+
M	4	8	12
W	11	11	10

Table 7: Zəyvə SRTs

	<30	30–60	60+
M	3	8	11
W	7	10	7

2.2.1.3 Lahıc

Because of time constraints, the samples in Lahıc and Ərakit were smaller. We initially selected twenty-nine households in Lahıc. Of these, six were eliminated immediately. We did not have time to visit the last five households on our randomized list. The demographics of these households are shown in table 8.

Table 8: Lahıc Homes Not Visited

	<30	30–60	60+
M	3	2	1
W	3	3	3

Of the eighteen households that we visited, no one was available at two of the households. The individuals of these two homes were two elderly women, and one middle-aged woman. Thus, we obtained information at sixteen households. We were unable to interview some individuals even in these households; their demographics are shown in table 9.

Table 9: Lahıc Nonresponse

	<30	30–60	60+
M	4	2	—
W	1	—	—

In the sixteen households visited, we were able to interview thirty-eight individuals regarding language use patterns, and were able to administer the Azerbaijani SRT to thirty-three individuals. The demographics for these individuals are given in tables 10 and 11.

Table 10: Lahıc Interviews

	<30	30–60	60+
M	3	8	2
W	10	10	5

Table 11: Lahıc SRTs

	<30	30–60	60+
M	4	5	1
W	10	10	3

2.2.1.4 Ərakit

Of the twenty-five households that were initially selected in Ərakit, three were eliminated immediately. Of the twenty-two remaining households, no one was available at three. In the nineteen households we visited, we were unable to interview a number of individuals. The demographics for these individuals are shown in table 12.

Table 12: Ərakit Nonresponse

	<30	30–60	60+
M	4	2	1
W	2	—	1

We were able to interview thirty-nine individuals regarding language use patterns, and were able to administer the Azerbaijani SRT to twenty-eight individuals in the nineteen households that we visited. The demographics for these individuals are given in tables 13 and 14.

Table 13: Ərəkit Interviews

	<30	30–60	60+
M	4	7	3
W	10	11	4

Table 14 Ərəkit SRTs

	<30	30–60	60+
M	4	6	1
W	5	11	1

2.2.2 Sampling in the Mountain Jewish town of Qırmızı Qəsəbə

The mayor of Qırmızı Qəsəbə estimated that there were 800 homes in the town. Because this settlement is a town and not a village, it does not have a household book. The other comparable list, the list of voters, was unavailable. Therefore, we decided to count the houses along the streets and select every 17th house for the sample. On this basis, we selected 51 houses to visit, planning to administer the Russian SRT at half of the households, and the Azerbaijani SRT at the other half of the households. Unfortunately, either no one was at home or no one was willing to participate at 28 of the 51 houses we selected. The families in an additional six houses were not Mountain Jews.

In the 17 households visited, we were able to interview 27 individuals regarding language use patterns, were able to administer the Azerbaijani SRT to 7 individuals, and were able to administer the Russian SRT to 9 individuals. The demographics for these individuals are given in tables 15, 16 and 17.

Table 15: Qırmızı Qəsəbə Interviews

	<30	30–60	60+
M	1	2	4
W	7	8	5

Table 16: Qırmızı Qəsəbə Azerbaijani SRTs

	<30	30–60	60+
M	—	1	2
W	3	1	—

Table 17: Qırmızı Qəsəbə Russian SRTs

	<30	30–60	60+
M	1	2	—
W	3	2	1

3. Results

3.1 Tat Communities

3.1.1 Village inventory

Many regional officials had difficulty giving accurate figures for the number of Tats living in their regions. Some indicated the reason for this is that there has been no official count of the various ethnic groups since 1989. In some districts, such as Siyəzən, officials said there has been considerable intermarriage between Tats and Azerbaijanis, so that it is difficult to distinguish between the two groups. All regional officials, however, were able to name villages in which a majority of the population is Tat.

Table 18 is a compilation of Tat settlements by region, as gathered from literature and confirmed by regional and village officials, local leaders, and specialists.³ Within each region, villages are categorized under one of four geographic location types: coastal, plains, foothill, and mountain. Communities which could not be found on any map are categorized as “undetermined.” A “?” indicates the geographic categorization is uncertain.

Table 18: Tat Settlements

Dəvəçi District			
Plains			
Dəvəçi	21,038 (30–40%)	Gəndov	2,116
Foothill			
? Çinarlar	27	? Taxtalar	518
Dağbilici	572	? Zağlı	53
Düzbilici	185	Zəyvə	1,057
? Mumlu	119		
Mountain			
Çuxurəzəmi	110	Qərıblık	76
Dəhnə	29	Qızıl Qazma	18
Undetermined			
Covurar	25	Lecedi	104
Siyəzən District			
Plains			
Siyəzən	21,300 (mix) ⁴	Zarat ⁵	1,312
Foothill			
Sə'dan	601		
Mountain			
Dağ Quşçu	541	Əriskuş	35
Quba District			
Plains			
İdris Qışlaq	239	? Talabi Qışlaq	1,490
? Xaröşə	649	Talabi kənd	372
Foothill			
Afurca	658	Qam-Qam	1,167
Bad	415	? Mejdə Hacə	350
? Bağ Əli	574	Püstə-Qasim	934
? Cədəri	437	Rustov	812
Çiçi	767	Səbətlər	1,057
? Sir-çiçi	151	? Sövkənd	211
? Güdar	155	Şuduq	418
? Güney Məhələ	239	Təngəaltı	627 (<50%)
? Hacı Qalar	694	Xanageh	620
? Kələbağ	620	? Yektar	150

³ Unless otherwise indicated, the settlements listed are ones with a majority of Tats. Not all the villages, towns, and cities where Tats live are listed. Those listed under “Undetermined” were not found on a map of the country.

⁴ Officials were unable to give an estimate on the percentage of Tats in the regional center.

⁵ There is some disagreement about whether this village is Tat or not. Several district officials said that it was not, while residents of several other villages, including Sə'dan, said it was a Tat village.

Table 18 (continued)

? Qalaqya Mountain	126	Zərqava	1,068
Atuc	10	Nütəh	145
Dəhnə	632	Ördüc	246
Cimi	1,012	Puçuq	80
Firiq	118	Rəngdar	113
Güləzi	816	Ruçuq	30
? Kunxırt	287	Utuq	290
Qonaqkənd	1,469 (mix)	Xaltan	555
Qömür	161	Xaşı	164
Muçu	409	Xırt	125
Undetermined			
İsnov	330	Zıxır	113
Növdün	308		
Xızı District ⁶			
Plains			
Gıləzi			
Foothill			
Altağac	? Kars	Xızı	
Baxışlı	Tıxlı	? Xalanc	
? Bələhmədyurd	Tudar	Yarımca	
? Fındığan			
Undetermined			
Ağdərə	Dizavar	Günəvşa	
Ambizlyar	Kacumkənd	Vergax	
İsmayılı Districts ⁷			
Foothill			
İsmayılı			
Mountain			
Bağ Əli	Haftasö	Namazğah	
Burovdal	Kənə	Nanıç	
Daxar	Lahıc*	Pirəğanım	
Dvoryun	Müdrəsə	Ximirun	
Əhən	Mulux	Zərnava	
Ərəkit	? Muşkəmur	Zarat	
Gəndov			
Undetermined			
Deribabu			
Şamaxı District ⁸			
Foothill			
Məlhəm	Qonaqkənd	Şamaxı	
Mountain			
Dəmirçi	? Zarat		
Undetermined			
Babazara	Roydağ	Xeybet	

⁶ Regional officials in Xızı said that many of the villages have mixed Tat and Azerbaijani population, but they estimated that 5-6,000 Tats total live in this region.

⁷ The only population figures obtained for İsmayılı district are: Bağ Əli 26, Lahıc 882, Namazğah 134, Kənə 1 family, and İsmayılı city 13,500 people (of which 200+ homes are Tat).

⁸ The only figures obtained for the Şamaxı district are: Məlhəm 1,500, and Şamaxı city 38,000 (mix—approx. 40-50 Tat families).

Table 18 (continued)

Abşeron Area		
Coastal		
Balaxanı	Maştağa	Suraxanı
Bülbülə	Novxanı	Şuvələn
Əmircan	Qala	Zirə

Of the villages for which we have population figures are categorized as under 500, 500–1,000, or over 1,000, it appears that most of the Tat communities are mountain or foothill villages under 500 people. Of the communities for which we have population figures, the greatest percentage of Tats, however, live in plains villages over 1,000, followed by foothill villages between 500 and 1,000 people. Unfortunately, population figures were not obtained on the Tats in the Apsheron peninsula; it is possible that a significant percentage of Tats live there.

Table 19 gives information we were given by Simeon Ixiilov, the Chairman of the Board of the Community of Mountain Jews in Baku, regarding communities and numbers of Mountain Jew communities.

Table 19: Communities of Mountain Jews

Location	Population
Qırmızı Qəsəbə (Quba District)	about 4,000
Baku	30,000
Oğuz Gəncə Şamaxı İsmayılı	about 2,000 Mt. Jews in all
Prışip and Privolna (Lənkəran District)	100–150 Mt. Jews

According to these figures, there are an estimated 37,000 Mountain Jews in Azerbaijan. The major concentrated settlement of Mountain Jews is Qırmızı Qəsəbə (Quba District), although there are actually more Mountain Jews in Baku than anywhere else in the country. There are also some small numbers of Mountain Jews scattered throughout Azerbaijan not indicated in table 19.

According to several sources, including Elliot (1999:152), there are no longer any Christian Tats living in Azerbaijan. Regional officials in Shamaxi and Dəvəçi confirmed this claim.

3.1.2 Village descriptions

In this section we will describe in more detail the ten Tat and Mountain Jewish communities that we visited.

3.1.2.1 Lahıc

Lahıc is located in the İsmayılı District, on the southern side of the Caucasus mountain range. This village can be accessed by a road that turns off of the Baku-İsmayılı road about 15 km southeast of İsmayılı town. The road to Lahıc climbs north through the foothills and travels along the banks of a river before reaching the town, 19 km after the turn off. Lahıc is the administrative center of four other villages: Ərakit, Namazgah, Kənə, and Bağ Əli. The population of Lahıc is 882, while the population of the entire administrative group (including Lahıc) is 1,926. Lahıc is immediately adjacent to Ərakit; a wooden bridge over a river divide the two. The school and government offices for Lahıc are located in Ərakit, whereas the post office is found on the main street which runs through Lahıc and continues on to Ərakit. There are also a cultural center, two mosques, a hospital, and a library in the village.

One school (grades 1–11) serves Lahıc and Ərakit, though a handful of students come from other villages. The student population is growing; in the 1999–2000 school year it

numbered 408. Approximately 45% of the students are girls, and 55% are boys. The school, built in the 1930s, employs thirty-eight teachers, most of them local.

There used to be a collective farm; the process of privatization has been completed, each person having received 0.3 hectares of land.⁹ Reportedly, only a small amount of the land is farmable, but some of the produce grown is sold in İsmayılı town. The village is known for its metalworks and handmade carpets. The carpet factory is located next to the main square, while the smiths shops line the main cobblestone street of the village. During the Soviet period, local crafts attracted visitors from all over the Soviet block; now the tourists come from all over the world. Despite this, the mayor reported that there is a high rate of unemployment among the population.

Namazgah, a settlement of 134 people, is located on the Lahıc road, roughly 5 km before Lahıc. The village has one school (grades 1–4) with sixteen students.

3.1.2.2 Məlhəm

Məlhəm lies 6 km north of Şamaxı town on the A12 road. An estimated 1,500 residents live in Məlhəm, a number higher than five years ago. The increase in population is primarily due to an increase in birth rate. According to the mayor, while approximately 10–15% of residents go to Baku to study or work, most return. Ethnically, the village is made up entirely of Tats, with the exception of a handful of ethnic-Azerbaijani brides.

The history of the village goes back many centuries. The famous poet Xagani is said to have come from Məlhəm. The village name means ‘medicine’; it acquired the name because many people traveled there for medical treatment.

Məlhəm used to be part of another administrative group of villages whose center was Çuxuryurd, but for two years Məlhəm has been administratively independent. As a result of this change, a number of facilities are now being built in Məlhəm itself; residents of Məlhəm receive certain services in Çuxuryurd and others in Məlhəm. For example, they still use the post office in Çuxuryurd, but a hospital is now being built in Məlhəm.

At present there is no mosque in the village, though residents have expressed a desire to have one built in Məlhəm.

The collective farm, located in Çuxuryurd, was closed last year. The land has been distributed to the residents of Məlhəm, with each person receiving 0.7 hectares in the mountains and 0.18 hectares in the village. Currently, there is one enterprise named “Sema” which provides six or seven Məlhəm residents with employment related to farming and sheep herding. The general population of the village also keeps sheep and goats of their own, and farmers sell their produce in Şamaxı.

The current school became a full middle school (grades 1–11) in 1932, and now 276 students attend it. All of the twenty-four teachers are local.

3.1.2.3 Giləzi

The village of Giləzi is located on the Baku-Russia highway, at the crossroads with the A6 road, which leads to the district center, Xızı. Giləzi is the largest settlement in the district, even larger than Xızı town. Currently, the population is approximately 3,200, with roughly 2,900 of those being Tats. The mayor reports that in the past people were leaving the village, but now they are returning from cities such as Sumgayit and Baku. Giləzi is one of two villages in its administrative group of villages; the other village is ethnically Azerbaijani.

The main forms of employment are farming (on private plots) and the railroad industry. There used to be a cannery, but it is now closed. The mayor reports that there is high unemployment. Among the facilities available in Giləzi are a library, cultural center, mosque, hospital, kindergarten, and middle school. About 280 children attend this school, where a majority of the thirty teachers are local.

⁹ Some of the land in the center of the village was not divided.

3.1.2.4 *Dağ Quşçu*

Located in the easternmost part of the Caucasus Mountains in Azerbaijan, Dağ Quşçu is roughly 20 km from Siyəzən town by road. A bus runs daily between the village and the district center, leaving Dağ Quşçu in the morning and returning in the afternoon. The population is 541, which is slightly more than there were five and ten years ago. While the overall population is increasing, this is due to a high birth rate. There are more people moving out of the village than moving into it. The majority of the population is Tat, with a few non-Tat brides living among them.

The land belonging to the collective farm has been divided up, with each person receiving 2.0 hectares. Animal husbandry (sheep, goats, and cows) is the main form of employment. The post office in Dağ Quşçu serves other villages in the area as well. Facilities in the village include a library, a first aid post, and a mosque. A new mosque is being built. The middle school, established in 1936, has 106 students, a number that has stayed fairly stable over the past decade. Twenty years ago, however, the student population was much larger. The difference in population figures, according to the school director, is because many young people now are leaving the village. The school employs ten teachers, some of whom come from Siyəzən town to teach.

3.1.2.5 *Sə'dan*

The village of Sə'dan is located in the Siyəzən District, only about 7 km west of Siyəzən town. The current population is 601 people. Although ten years ago more people were leaving than returning, the trend now is the opposite: local people are returning to farm.

Two collective farms used to be run cooperatively with two other villages, but the land that belonged to these has been privatized, with each person receiving 1.0 hectare. Unfortunately, this land is not farmed due to the lack of tractors and water. (There used to be springs, but they have dried up.) The main source of employment, therefore, is the oil business.

Sə'dan has first aid post, though there is no special building for it; a nurse works out of her home. Other facilities in the village include a new mosque, a village library, and a middle school. This school has 123 students, roughly 150 fewer students than a decade ago. It was established in the 1930s, although the present building was erected in 1963. Seven of the ten teachers are local. Because the village has no post office of its own, residents use the post office in a neighboring village. There is a bus that goes to the district center three times a day.

3.1.2.6 *Gəndov*

The town of Gəndov, in the Dəvəçi District, is located at the fork in the Baku-Russia road, where the north branch leads to Xaçmaz, then to Russia, and the northwest one to Quba. The population of the village is 2,116 people, the majority of whom are Tat. While there are more residents now than there were five and ten years ago (partly due to the immigration of Mesxeti Turk refugees), a few residents have moved to Dəvəçi town.

Gəndov is the center of a five-village administrative group, and houses the post office servicing all five villages. Among the facilities available are a kindergarten, a middle school, a mosque, and a first aid post employing two doctors and four nurses. The middle school currently has 523 students, a higher enrollment than five or ten years ago. While it was established in 1929, the current building was built in 1976.

Grapes are one of the main crops of this agricultural town; there is one factory that produces wine from local grapes. The area is also rich in minerals. During the Soviet period, there was a collective farm, but its land has since been divided, with each person receiving 0.75 hectares.

3.1.2.7 *Zəyvə*

Zəyvə is located in the fertile foothills of the Dəvəçi district, roughly 25 km from Dəvəçi town. According to the latest figures, 1,057 people live in Zəyvə, which is more

than there were five or ten years ago. The elected mayor¹⁰ reports that in the past, many residents left the village to look for work in the cities, but now that the land from the collective farm has been divided, some are returning to the village.

Zəyvə is part of the Pirebedil administrative group of villages. Within this group, the elected mayor for Zəyvə is also responsible for the neighboring village of Kilvar.

The post office in Zəyvə provides services for both Zəyvə and Kilvar. Other facilities present in Zəyvə include a cultural center, a library, four mills, a first aid post, a mosque, and a middle school. The school director reported that 182 students attend the school, which employs eighteen local teachers.¹¹

A nearby oil plant employs about ten people. In addition, many men, especially young men, have gone to Russia to work. The elected mayor reports that while there is a high level of unemployment, residents are self-sufficient.

3.1.2.8 Rustov

Rustov, the center of an administrative group of sixteen villages, is located approximately 17 km southeast of Quba, just off the Quba-Qonaqkənd road. The village itself has a population of 812, while the administrative group of villages includes approximately 8,000 people. All the villages in the administrative group are Tat. The population is greater now than it was five or ten years ago. According to the mayor, some residents who had left for Baku are returning now, but there is no major immigration or emigration from Rustov.

With regard to the economic situation, the mayor estimates that 10% of residents travel back and forth to Russia for work, mainly selling dried fruit and livestock. The old collective farms have been privatized. Those who live in Rustov work the land and raise livestock.

The facilities serving Rustov include a middle school, kindergarten, cultural center, library, mosque, hospital, and a central post office for the administrative group. According to the school director, 541 students attend the middle school, while forty local teachers work there. Some of the students come from the neighboring villages of Günəy Məhələ and Cədəri.

3.1.2.9 Qonaqkənd

The town of Qonaqkənd is located at the end of the A3 road, roughly 40 km south of Quba town. The population of Qonaqkənd is approximately 2,500 people, while five years ago there were about 4,000 residents. This sharp decrease is due to a pattern of emigration from the town to other urban areas of the republic such as Quba, Xaçmaz, and Sumgayit. This pattern is continuing. Furthermore, the mayor also reports that Tat people in neighboring villages are also moving to other urban areas.

The town itself is situated on both sides of the Cimi River; the west side being a residential area and the east side the administrative center of the town. The banks are connected by only one single footbridge; vehicles must ford the river.

From 1930 to 1959, Qonaqkənd was the center of the Qonaqkənd District; in 1959, it was incorporated into the Quba District. At present Qonaqkənd is the center of an administrative group of seven villages. Among the facilities available are a middle school, two libraries, a hospital, a kindergarten, and a post office, and a mosque is being built. The kindergarten and post office serve the entire administrative group.

¹⁰ Villages have two mayors, one who is appointed by the national government and one who is elected by the village residents.

¹¹ The neighboring village of Kilvar used to be a Christian Tat settlement, but all its residents have left (some to Gorkii, Russia). The people living there now are refugees.

The change in status of the town has undoubtedly affected it in a number of ways. For example, while the majority of residents are now Tat, at one time large numbers of Budukh speakers lived in Qonaqkənd.

When Qonaqkənd was a district center, about 700 students attended the middle school. These students came from the surrounding villages as well as from Qonaqkənd. Currently, there are 235 students at the school; all of these are from Qonaqkənd. The school staff includes twenty-two teachers, all of whom are from Qonaqkənd.

The main economic activities consist of private farming (especially potatoes) and animal husbandry. There is also a carpet factory, although due to financial difficulties, it only employs thirty-two women. During Soviet times it employed 500 to 700 women.

3.1.2.10 Qırmızı Qəsəbə

Qırmızı Qəsəbə, the major compact settlement of Mountain Jews in Azerbaijan, is located adjacent to Quba town, on the Quba-Qusar road. The population is approximately 4,000 people. The mayor cited only three families in the town who are not Jewish. Five years ago the population was closer to 5,000, but many families have moved away, mainly to Russia, Israel, and the United States. Qırmızı Qəsəbə is the administrative center of an administrative group which also includes the village of Dağlı. Government facilities include a post office, library, synagogue, hospital, a separate maternity ward, and kindergarten.

There are three schools in the town, plus another in Dağlı. The largest one, a middle school, has an enrollment of about 414 (1999–2000 school year), 216 of whom are Mountain Jews; the rest come from other villages and from Quba town. The elementary school (grades 1–9) has 219 students, all from Qırmızı Qəsəbə. The third school is a voluntary religious school, which currently has an attendance of about 80. Staff of both the elementary and middle school reported that most girls do not go on to higher education. In fact, many girls marry after finishing grade 9 and do not complete the higher grades.

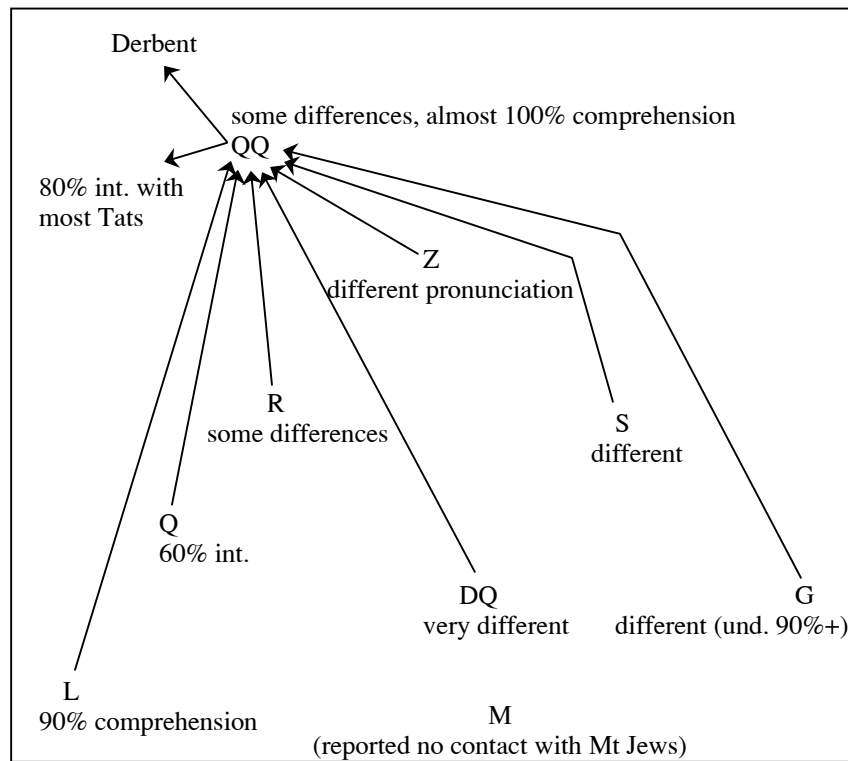
With regard to economic activity, only one of the canneries open during the Soviet period is still working. At one point there was a collective farm managed jointly with the town of Vladimirovka. In 1958 this collective was merged with several other collective farms. Privatization of this collective farm has been completed since independence. However, because Qırmızı Qəsəbə is surrounded by other settlements, its residents did not receive any farmland, only the land on which houses stand. It was noted that many of the jobs filled by women were performed by women from nearby Quba, rather than by women from Qırmızı Qəsəbə.

3.2 Perceived Dialect Differences

When asked about other varieties of Tat, residents of the communities visited often reported that each village has its own recognizable accent. In some places, such as Məlham, they said that this difference in accents is evident even when Tats speak Azerbaijani. The following figures show what speakers in the various communities we visited reported regarding the intelligibility of other speech varieties, including Mountain Jewish.

Figure 1 shows the reported intelligibility of Mountain Jewish from the point of view of other communities (QQ←), as well as the reported intelligibility of other speech varieties from the viewpoint of Mountain Jews in Qırmızı Qəsəbə (QQ→). Communities are arranged in relative geographical position; initials represent the various villages (ex. G=Giləzi, and Q=Qonaqkənd).

Figure 1: Intelligibility Mountain Jewish

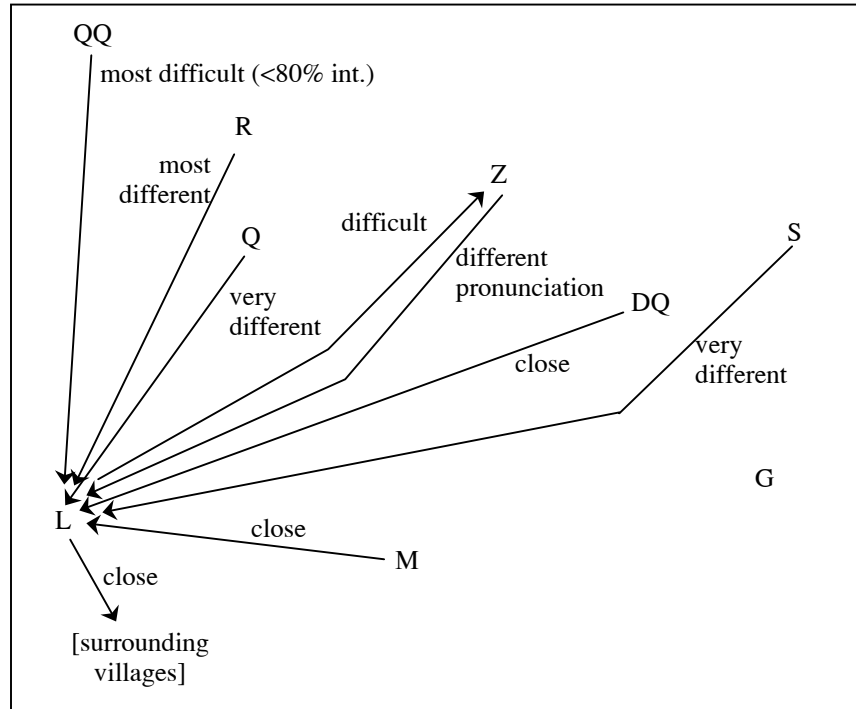


People in all communities report at least some differences between their own dialect and that of the Mountain Jews. In those villages furthest away from Qırmızı Qəsəbə (Dağ Quşcu, Sə'dan, and Giləzi), residents report significant differences, mostly in terms of pronunciation and lexicon. Other communities also report differences in these two areas. No location reported that they could not understand Mountain Jewish. Some, such as Qonaqkənd and Lahıc, gave specific estimates for the percentage of Mountain Jewish they could understand.

Residents of Qırmızı Qəsəbə reported that they could understand about 80% of the varieties of Tat, but that the Lahıc variety was more difficult to understand. They said that with Lahıc speakers they would need to listen carefully and ask questions in order to fully understand what was being said. With regard to the variety of Mountain Jewish spoken in Derbent, some people in Qırmızı Qəsəbə reported that there were differences between the two varieties, while others said they could understand that variety fully.

Figure 2 shows what speakers from various villages reported regarding the intelligibility of the Lahıc variety.

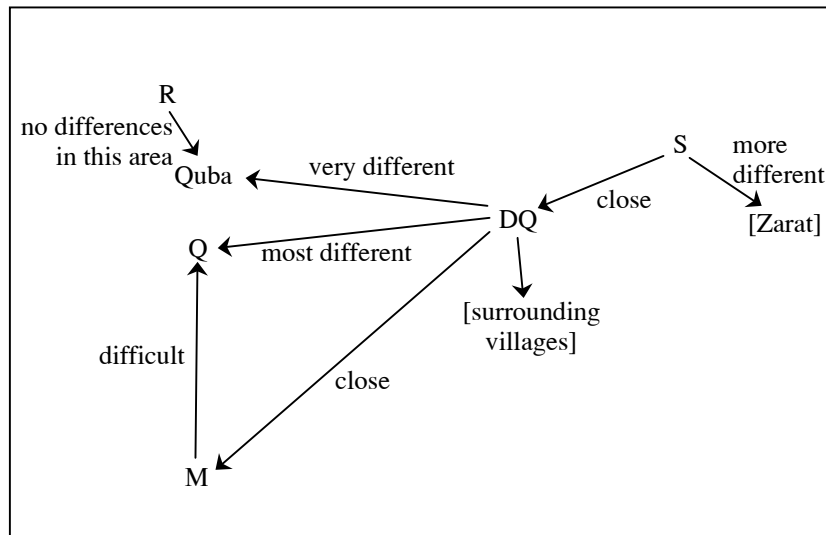
Figure 2: Intelligibility of the Lahıc Variety of Tat



With the exception of Məlhəm and Dağ Quşçu, speakers in all communities indicated that the Lahıc speech variety was different from their own; in most cases very different. It is interesting to note that residents of Lahıc also perceive their variety to be different from most other varieties. In several cases they referred to the variety in Lahıc and the surrounding villages as the “Lahıc language,” rather than the Tat language. When pressed to explain what the differences between the two were, however, they were unable to give a clear answer. One man did say that children from Lahıc could understand children who spoke Tat.

Figure 3 shows what speakers reported regarding the intelligibility of most communities other than Qırmızı Qəsəbə and Lahıc.

Figure 3: Intelligibility of Other Tat Varieties



Communities outside of Quba District reported that the variety of Tat spoken in Rustov and Quba was different or very different from their own. The residents of Gəndov also reported that the variety spoken in Quba District was the variety “most different” from their own. Interestingly, although Sə’dan residents reported that the Dağ Quşçu variety was close to their own, their reports on the Lahıc variety differed from the reports that Dağ Quşçu residents gave (see figure 2).

It is also noteworthy that when asked about the Apsheron speech varieties, residents of both Lahıc and Sə’dan mentioned that Balaxanı speech was not as easy as other varieties spoken on the Absheron peninsula. At the same time, Lahıc residents indicated that in general the Apsheron variety was not difficult for them, especially in places where those from Lahıc have moved.

3.3 Patterns of Language Use

During our initial research trips we were able to form a basic picture of language use on the basis of group interviews. The adults in most of the mountain and foothill communities reported they use Tat as their main language of interaction. They speak Tat with each other, but speak Azerbaijani with their children so that they will learn the language before beginning school. If the wife in the family is non-Tat speaking, however, the family is most likely to use Azerbaijani in the home. In the villages of Lahıc and Zəyvə, women who marry in are reported to learn Tat. In other communities, however, women who marry in often attain a passive comprehension of the language, but cannot speak it fluently.

The language situations in Sə’dan, Rustov, and Qonaqkənd, however, are different. The foothill villages of Sə’dan and Rustov reported mixed language use. In these communities, the older generation uses Tat, while middle-aged adults use the language in which they are most comfortable. Azerbaijani is the main language used when speaking with children. In the mountain town Qonaqkənd, Azerbaijani is the main language of interaction for all except the older men and women, though a few of the middle-aged adults do know how to speak Tat.

As in Qonaqkənd, people in two of the plains communities, Gəndov and Giləzi, reported that Azerbaijani is the main language of interaction among adults and children, though some of the older men and women do interact among themselves in Tat. In Qırmızı Qəsəbə the main language of interaction for all age groups is Mountain Jewish.

Azerbaijani is the main language for most educational institutions and for formal domains, though Russian is also a main language in these domains in Qırmızı Qəsəbə. The language used in other institutions, such as hospitals and libraries, frequently depends on the first language of the person in charge. The vernacular can also be important in some situations such as religious ceremonies.

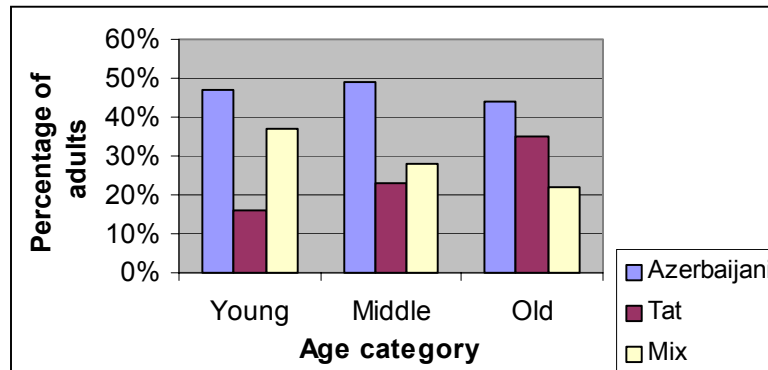
During the second stage of research, we interviewed individuals regarding their personal language use patterns. The results of these interviews are reported in the following sections. The patterns observed in Tat communities was very different from those observed in the Mountain Jewish community of Qırmızı Qəsəbə. Therefore, the results will be discussed separately. Language use in the Tat communities is the focus of section 3.3.1, while language use in Qırmızı Qəsəbə is the focus of section 3.3.2.

3.3.1 Language use among Tats

3.3.1.1 Languages used with children

While Tats reported that adults now use Azerbaijani with children, in order for them to learn the language well, actual language patterns seem to be more mixed. The bar graph in figure 4 summarizes the percentage of young, middle-aged, and old adults who use Azerbaijani only, Tat only, or a mixture of the two with school-aged children.

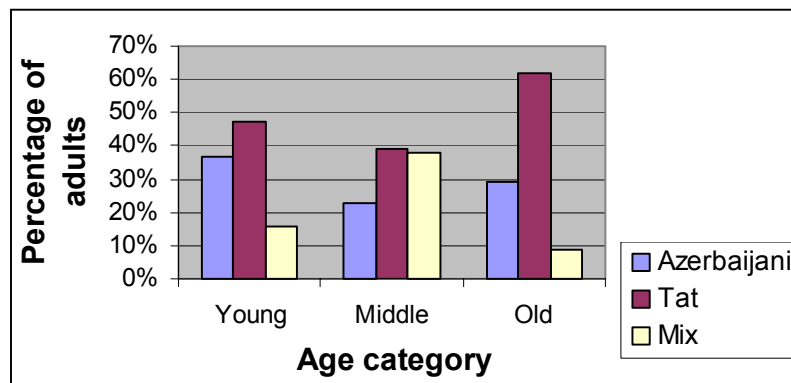
Figure 4: Languages Used with School-Aged Children



According to figure 4, approximately 43–49% of adults in the different age categories speak only Azerbaijani with children who attend school. What is surprising, however, is that approximately 15 to 35% of adults use only Tat with school-aged children. The graph also suggests that young adults are more likely to use a mixture and less likely to use Tat only, while the pattern is reversed for older adults.

The bar graph in figure 5 summarizes the percentage of young, middle-aged, and old adults who use Azerbaijani only, Tat only, or a mixture of the two with preschool-aged children.

Figure 5: Languages Used with Preschoolers



As shown in figure 5, most adults interviewed use either only Tat or a mixture of the two languages when speaking to preschool-aged children. This suggests that in many families adults speak to their children in Tat before they start school, but switch to Azerbaijani once the children reach school age.

3.3.1.2 Adult language use in physical and functional domains

We asked the interviewees what language they used in the following physical or functional domains: home language, language spoken on the street, language for watching television, first language learned, second language learned, and language spoken most fluently. The differences in reported language use were not significant between interviewees in the villages of Lahıc, Ərəkıt and Zəyvə. The differences between Dağ Quşçu and the other three Tat villages, however, were significant in all domains.¹² Table 20 summarizes the percentage of individuals in Dağ Quşçu and the Lahıc/Ərəkıt/Zəyvə grouping that use Tat as the main language in the home and on the street. It also shows the percentages of individuals who claimed to have learned Tat as their first language and the percentage that learned it as their second language.

¹² All significances were calculated using T-tests. Because the results from Lahıc, Ərəkıt, and Zəyvə were not significantly different, they were grouped together. For Dağ Quşçu N=68 and for Lahıc/Ərəkıt/Zəyvə N=129. Differences in all domains had a significance of less than 0.001.

Table 20: Tat Use in Domains Queried

	Home Language	First Language Learned	Second Language Learned	Most Fluent	On Street
Dağ Quşçu	45%	50%	46%	41%	42%
L/Ə/Z	83%	81%	17%	71%	85%

As can be seen, the use of Tat is much lower in Dağ Quşçu than in the other three villages. In addition, a much higher number of interviewees in Dağ Quşçu learned Tat as a second language rather than as a first language.

The domain of television was the only domain in which significant numbers of Tat speakers reported that Russian was a major language of use. Most residents of Zəyvə do not watch television, as their village is too geographically isolated for them to get reception. In Dağ Quşçu, Lahıç, and Ərəkit, however, approximately 76% of interviewees reported that Azerbaijani is the main language in which they watch television, while 22.5% reported Russian is the main language in which they watch television.¹³

Overall, interviewees in the four Tat communities exhibited a statistically significant positive correlation between age and the use of Tat.¹⁴ In general, the older a Tat individual is, the more likely they are to use Tat in physical and functional domains. This is particularly the case in the reports from Dağ Quşçu.¹⁵ This is shown in table 21 where the use of Tat by those under 25 is compared with that of those over 25 years of age.¹⁶

Table 21: Tat Use in Physical and Functional Domains in Dağ Quşçu¹⁷

	Under 25	Over 25
Home Language	18%	53%
First Language Learned	6%	64%
Most Fluent	6%	52%
Street Language	6%	55%

3.3.1.3 Language use in interpersonal domains¹⁸

Vernacular language use in the interpersonal domains is related to age. That is, with the exception of school-aged children, the older individuals are, the more likely it is that other adults will use Tat with them. Table 22 shows the percentage of individuals who reported they use Tat with various age groups.

Table 22: Use of Tat as Main Language in Interpersonal Domains

Use Tat w/	0–6	7–15	16–29	30–55	55+
Percentage of adults	55%	34%	65%	75%	83.5%

¹³ One individual in Dağ Quşçu reported watching television primarily in Tat.

¹⁴ The correlations between age and the use of Tat for each domain are as follows: home (0.320), first language learned (0.362), second language learned (-0.349), most fluent (0.318), and street language (0.272). The correlations are significant in all domains at a level of less than 0.001.

¹⁵ The correlations between age and the use of Tat for each domain are as follows: home (0.375), first language learned (0.528), second language learned (-0.536), most fluent (0.386), and street language (0.272). The correlations are significant in almost all domains at a level of at least 0.01.

¹⁶ There were fifty-two individuals over 25 in Dağ Quşçu and sixteen under.

¹⁷ In the domains of first language learned and use of language in the street, the differences between the group under the age of 25 and the group over the age of 25 are significant at a level of 0.001. In the domain of the home, the difference between the two groups is significant at a level of 0.013, while the difference in the domain of fluency is significant at a level of 0.001.

¹⁸ “Interpersonal domains” is defined as interpersonal communication with other members of the community, with each age group representing a domain (eg., language used with 7–15 year-olds is one domain).

The data in table 22 shows clearly that the exception to the linear progression is the school-aged group. If that group were excluded, it could be said that the older individuals are, the more likely it is that others will use Tat with them.

Once again, language use patterns in Dağ Quşçu differed significantly from those in other villages. Table 23 compares the use of Tat in Dağ Quşçu with that in the other three villages.

Table 23: Use of Tat in Interpersonal Domains by Location

Use w/	0–6	7–15	16–29	30–55	55+
Dağ Quşçu	29%	20.5%	40%	40%	57%
L/Ə/Z	65%	38.5%	79%	88.5%	92.5%

While the general observations regarding age and use of vernacular in interpersonal communication apply in all the communities, the percentages for Dağ Quşçu are much lower than those for the other three Tat villages. Regardless of age group, fewer Tats in Dağ Quşçu use the vernacular with each other than do Tats in other villages.

3.3.2 Patterns of language use among Mountain Jews

3.3.2.1 Physical and functional domains

Of the adults interviewed in Qırmızı Qəsəbə, 89% use Mountain Jewish as the main (and often only) language in the home domain and identified it as the first language they had learned. Only 59%, however, felt they were most fluent in Mountain Jewish. The responses of twenty-seven interviewees regarding language of greatest fluency are given in table 24.

Table 24: Language of Most Fluency

Mountain Jewish	Azerbaijani	Russian	Mountain Jewish and Azerbaijani	All three
59%	7%	11%	7%	11%

If, however, we combine the first, fourth, and fifth columns, we find that 77% consider Mountain Jewish to be at least one of the languages in which they are most fluent.

3.3.2.2 Interpersonal domains

Responses from the interviewees indicate that the use of the vernacular is high with all age groups. Table 25 summarizes the percentage of the twenty-seven interviewees who use only Mountain Jewish with various age groups.

Table 25: Percentage of Adults Who Use the Vernacular with Each Age Group

Preschool	Schoolage	Adults <30	Adults 30–55	Grandparents
100%	81%	93%	93%	100%

Approximately 12% of adults said they used a mixture of Mountain Jewish and Russian when speaking to school-aged children, while only 8% used either only Russian or only Azerbaijani with this age group, depending on the sector in which the school-aged children study.¹⁹

3.4 Language Proficiency

3.4.1 Language in the schools

In all but one location the current language of instruction is Azerbaijani. In Gəndov, the main language in the school was Russian until 1992, when it was changed to Azerbaijani. In all other communities Azerbaijani has been the language of instruction

¹⁹ One young adult reported use of a mixture of Tat and Russian with peers, and another reported to use Russian with middle-aged adults.

since the foundation of the current schools.²⁰ All schools offer Russian lessons, usually two hours per week.

The one exception is Qırmızı Qəsəbə, where there is schooling both in Russian and in Azerbaijani. The middle school (grades 1–11) has two tracks, or sectors. Azerbaijani is the language of instruction in one sector, while Russian is the language of instruction in the other sector. This is a recent change: before 1986 both Azerbaijani and Russian sectors were available only in grades 10 and 11. All Jewish students study in the Russian sector.

At the elementary school in Qırmızı Qəsəbə, both Russian and Azerbaijani sectors were available before 1985. Since 1985, however, the school has been transitioning into Russian-only education. Beginning with the 2002–2003 school year, all instruction in all grades is in Russian.

A third school in Qırmızı Qəsəbə offers religious education on a voluntary basis. Hebrew is the language of instruction, but many of the books are in Russian. The ages of the students range from 16 to 36. According to one of the teachers there, about 1% of the students from other schools in the town attend this school.

The middle school in Qırmızı Qəsəbə currently offers Hebrew classes in grades 1–4. The elementary school used to offer Hebrew classes, but in the 2000–2001 school year there was no teacher available to teach the subject.

Neither Mountain Jewish nor Tat is taught as a subject in any of the schools in the region. Mountain Jewish was used as a language of instruction in Qırmızı Qəsəbə until 1937. According to the mayor, it was discontinued after that because no higher education was available in Mountain Jewish.

Tat classes were taught in the schools in Rustov and Qonaqkənd for one or two years in the late 1990s, but they are no longer being offered. School officials in Lahıc, Məlhəm, and Zəyvə reported that Tat classes were offered in the schools for a number of years in the 1930s, but since then they were discontinued.

The schools in Lahıc, Məlhəm, Rustov, and Qırmızı Qəsəbə²¹ offer a preparatory class for students. This class prepares them for first grade, particularly helping them adapt to the language of instruction. The preparatory class teacher in Lahıc reported that a few children (maybe one out of sixteen) have trouble with Azerbaijani when they begin, but that after one or two months they have no more problems. She also said that the children who have difficulties are the ones who speak more Tat than Azerbaijani at home, but that this is becoming increasingly rare.

There is a kindergarten in Gəndov, Giləzi, Rustov, Qonaqkənd, and Qırmızı Qəsəbə. The language of instruction in all is Azerbaijani. In Gəndov and Giləzi the kindergarten officials reported that children already speak Azerbaijani when they begin. According to the director in Qırmızı Qəsəbə, the children don't know Azerbaijani when they begin, but when they finish they know it well. There used to be a kindergarten in Lahıc, but it has been closed, and in Məlhəm the children used to go to a neighboring village to attend kindergarten, but they do not go there currently.

3.4.2 Tat language proficiency

We found a range of proficiencies in Tat. The level of proficiency varied by the age of the speaker and by the location.

²⁰ In Rustov, school officials reported that a Russian-Tatar school was established in 1906, but it is unclear if this was the same school as the present one.

²¹ The middle and elementary schools in Qırmızı Qəsəbə offer a preparatory class for students entering Russian sector.

3.4.2.1 Reported Tat language proficiency among adults

Table 26 summarizes the reported proficiency in Tat among adults in the mountain and foothill villages.

Table 26: Oral Tat Proficiency in Mountain and Plains Villages

Village	Lahıc, Məlhəm, Zəyvə, Rustov ²²	Dağ Quşçu, Sə'dan	Qonaqkənd ¹⁴
Proficiency	high	high (brides-low)	medium, high for 45+yrs. old

In all of the mountain and foothill villages other than Qonaqkənd, adults are reported to have a uniformly high oral proficiency in Tat. The only people reported to not speak Tat in these villages are non-Tat brides who marry into some of the communities.

Reported proficiency is lower in the ethnically mixed, mountain town of Qonaqkənd. In fact, it was reported that a number of middle-aged adults in the town cannot speak Tat at all. Overall, while men over 45 are reported to have a high proficiency in Tat, those under 45 are reported to have only a medium oral proficiency in Tat.

Although we did not conduct formal interviews in the villages surrounding Qonaqkənd, the interviews in Qonaqkənd indicated that Tats in surrounding villages can and do use Tat much more than do those in Qonaqkənd itself.

Table 27 summarizes the reported oral Tat proficiency of adults in the plains villages.

Table 27: Oral Proficiency in Tat in Plains Villages

	Village		
Age ²³	Gəndov	Giləzi	Qırmızı Qəsəbə
Young	medium	low	high
Middle-aged	medium	medium	high
Old	high	high	high

While residents of all ages in Qırmızı Qəsəbə are reported to have a high proficiency in Mountain Jewish, in Gəndov and Giləzi reported proficiency seems to correlate with the age of the speaker. The older generation is said to speak Tat the best of all ages and is said to use Tat more than other ages for daily communication. Middle-aged adults in both villages and young adults in Gəndov are reported to have only medium proficiency. Young adults in Giləzi are reported to have only a low oral proficiency in Tat. In general, then, oral proficiency is reported to correlate positively with age: older adults speak the language more fluently, and younger adults speak the language less fluently.

3.4.2.2 Reported Tat language proficiency among children

Table 28 summarizes the reported oral proficiency in Tat among children. (Women and men disagreed in their assessments in Dağ Quşçu, so both assessments are indicated.)

²² Men's interview responses only.

²³ The approximate ages corresponding to these categories are: under 30, 30 to 60, and over 60.

Table 28: Oral Proficiency in Tat among Children

Lahıc, Məlhəm, Zəyvə, Qırmızı Qəsəbə	high
Dağ Quşçu ²⁴	C: high S: low (women) high (men)
Sə'dan	C: high S: high-medium
Rustov	medium
Gəndov, Giləzi	C: medium S: very low
Qonaqkənd	low

Key: C: Comprehension
S: Speaking

Residents of Lahıc, Məlhəm, Zəyvə, and Qırmızı Qəsəbə reported that children have a high level of oral proficiency in Tat and Mountain Jewish. Children in other villages were reported to show a range of proficiencies, from high comprehension to low overall oral ability. The adults in Rustov also reported that while children in general know Tat, they chose to speak Azerbaijani in most communicative situations.

Parents in all Tat communities reported that they use Azerbaijani with their children rather than Tat, so that the children will have fewer difficulties when they enter school. In addition, in some communities adults indicated that children learn Tat not by being addressed in Tat, but from hearing others use it among themselves in the home and in the community.

3.4.2.3 Tat literacy

In general, literacy in either Tat or Mountain Jewish is reported to be minimal. In several communities, such as Dağ Quşçu, Sə'dan, and Giləzi, a number of individuals did say that they had either heard of or seen a few books in the language. More commonly, however, most people in all the Tat communities claimed that there were no books in Tat. In general, Tat people in the communities we visited do not read or write Tat and said it was due to the fact the Tat has no alphabet and that there are no books in Tat.

In the Mountain Jewish town of Qırmızı Qəsəbə, specialists knew of books and other literature in Mountain Jewish. One teacher at the religious school said that while many materials have been produced in Derbent, it is difficult to obtain such material in Qırmızı Qəsəbə. At this same school we observed signs on the walls written in both Mountain Jewish and Hebrew. Similarly, the mayor mentioned that there used to be a Mountain Jewish page in the regional newspaper, but that after the 1930s it was discontinued. At the same time, the group of men we interviewed in Qırmızı Qəsəbə claimed that no one in the town was literate in Mountain Jewish because there were no books in Mountain Jewish.

3.4.3 Azerbaijani language proficiency

3.4.3.1 Reported Azerbaijani proficiency among adults

In general, adults are reported to have a high level of oral proficiency in Azerbaijani and most, with the exception of the older generation, also are highly literate in the language. Table 29 summarizes reported levels of proficiency in both oral and written Azerbaijani among adults under 60 years of age in Tat communities.

²⁴ In the women's interview in Dağ Quşçu several of the respondents were non-Tat women who had married into the community. The answers recorded here may not necessarily reflect the perspectives of other Tat women in the village.

Table 29: Azerbaijani Proficiency in Tat Communities

	M	F
Lahıc, Məlhəm, Dağ Quşçu, Sə'dan, Zəyvə, Giləzi	high	high*
Gəndov	at least medium	at least medium
Qonaqkənd, Rustov	high	at least medium

* Reading proficiency among women in Dağ Quşçu is low

Overall, adults under 60 in the communities we visited are reported to have a high level of proficiency in Azerbaijani. The one exception was in Dağ Quşçu, where women's reading level was said to be low. The level of proficiency in Gəndov was not specified, although Azerbaijani is reported to be the main language of communication among middle-aged and young adults. In Qonaqkənd, the women indicated that Azerbaijani was the main language of communication in the village.

More variation was reported in proficiency in Azerbaijani by adults under 60 in the town of Qırmızı Qəsəbə. Table 30 summarizes reported oral proficiency in Azerbaijani among men and women in Qırmızı Qəsəbə.

Table 30: Oral Azerbaijani Proficiency in Qırmızı Qəsəbə

Age	Men	Women ²⁵
<30	high/low*	medium
30–45	high	medium
45–60	C: high; S: low	medium

*depends on school sector of study (i.e., high if they studied in Azerbaijani, low if they studied in Russian).

With two exceptions, men are reported to have a high level of proficiency in Azerbaijani. One exception is that young men who study in Russian have a low level of proficiency in Azerbaijani. The second exception is that while older men have a high level of proficiency in comprehension, their level of proficiency in speaking is low. All women were reported to have a medium oral ability in Azerbaijani.

Table 31 summarizes the reported levels of proficiency in literacy in Azerbaijani among men and women up to age 60 in Qırmızı Qəsəbə.

Table 31: Levels of Proficiency in Azerbaijani Literacy in Qırmızı Qəsəbə.

Age	Men	Women ²⁶
<30	high/low*	low
30–60	high	low

*depends on school sector of study (i.e., high if they studied in Azerbaijani, low if they studied in Russian).

Women were reported to have low levels of proficiency in Azerbaijani literacy, regardless of age. The men, on the other hand, reported that the language of education determines the level of proficiency in Azerbaijani literacy for men under 30. Those who study in Azerbaijani have a high level of literacy, while those who study in Russian only attain a low level of literacy in Azerbaijani. All men between the ages of 30 and 60 have a high level of literacy in Azerbaijani.

In general, levels of proficiency in oral Azerbaijani and in Azerbaijani literacy showed the greatest amount of variation among those over the age of 60 showed. Table 32 compares levels of proficiency in oral Azerbaijani for this age group.

²⁵ Based on a private interview with one woman.

²⁶ Based on a private interview with one woman.

Table 32: Oral Proficiency in Azerbaijani among Older Adults

	M	F
Lahıc, Məlhəm	high	high
Dağ Quşçu	high	low
Qonaqkənd, Rustov	high	n.a.
Sə'dan	low	medium*
Zəyvə	low	medium*
Gəndov	at least medium	at least medium
Giləzi	low	high
Qırmızı Qəsəbə	low	low

*average of high for comprehension and low for speaking

In five of the villages (Lahıc, Məlhəm, Dağ Quşçu, Qonaqkənd, and Rustov), it was reported that older men have the same high level of oral proficiency in Azerbaijani that all other men have. Older women in the villages of Lahıc, Məlhəm, and Giləzi are also reported to have a high level of oral proficiency in Azerbaijani. This means that in Dağ Quşçu, Qonaqkənd, and Rustov the men are reported to have a higher reported oral proficiency than the women, while in Giləzi it is the other way around. Only in Lahıc and Məlhəm were all adults over 60 said to have a high oral proficiency in Azerbaijani. Overall, then, more older men than older women are reported to have a high level of oral proficiency in Azerbaijani. It is also possible to say generally that adults under 60 have a higher oral proficiency in Azerbaijani than do adults over 60.

Table 33 summarizes the proficiency in Azerbaijani literacy among men and women over 60.

Table 33: Proficiency in Azerbaijani Literacy among Older Adults

	M	F
Lahıc, Sə'dan	low	none
Məlhəm, Dağ Quşçu	high	low
Qonaqkənd	low	n.a.
Zəyvə	low	very low
Rustov	high	at least medium
Gəndov	at least medium	at least medium
Giləzi	low	high
Qırmızı Qəsəbə	medium*	low ²⁷

* average of high for reading and low for writing

Overall, the proficiency in Azerbaijani literacy of adults over 60 is lower than their oral proficiency in Azerbaijani. Older men were reported to have a high level of proficiency in Azerbaijani literacy in only Məlhəm, Dağ Quşçu, and Rustov. The levels for older women are even lower than those for older men: only in Giləzi are older women said to have a high level of proficiency in Azerbaijani literacy.

3.4.3.2 Reported Azerbaijani language proficiency among children

In general, children are reported to have a high level of oral proficiency in Azerbaijani. The following table summarizes what various sources reported regarding children's oral ability in Azerbaijani. The information collected from interviews with adults is summarized in the second column, while the difficulties noted in interviews with the school staff members is summarized in the third column.

²⁷ Based on a private interview with one woman.

Table 34: Children's Oral Ability in Azerbaijani

Location	Group interviews	School staff
Lahıc, Məlhəm	b.s.: low/s.:high	occasional difficulties
Dağ Quşçu	b.s.: low/s.:high	no difficulties
Zəyvə	high	some difficulties
Giləzi	high	occasional difficulties
Sə'dan, Gəndov, Rustov, Qonaqkənd	high	no difficulties
Qırmızı Qəsəbə	low to high	no difficulties

Key: b.s.: before school
s.: in school

In Lahıc, Məlhəm, and Dağ Quşçu the adults reported that children do not attain a high level of oral proficiency in Azerbaijani until after they enter school. In Sə'dan, Gəndov, and Giləzi, children are reported to have a high level of proficiency in Azerbaijani because it is the main language of communication for children. Adults in Zəyvə, Rustov, and Qonaqkənd also reported high levels of proficiency among children. In Qırmızı Qəsəbə adults reported that the children who study in Azerbaijani do attain a high level of proficiency in the language, but that those who study in Russian have a medium to low level in Azerbaijani.

In six of the ten communities we visited, the school staff reported that children had no difficulties with Azerbaijani when they entered school. In Lahıc, Məlhəm, and Giləzi, however, school staff reported that a small percentage of the students sometimes have trouble with Azerbaijani, while the staff in Zəyvə indicated the difficulties were somewhat more widespread. Because of these problems in understanding Azerbaijani, the teachers in Lahıc, Məlhəm, and Zəyvə will explain difficult concepts in Tat in the first couple of months of first grade. After this, the children are reported to have no difficulties with Azerbaijani. One teacher in Giləzi said that although Azerbaijani is the main language of communication among children, they still have difficulties with Azerbaijani when they enter school because they interact with their grandparents in Tat.

There were conflicting reports in Qırmızı Qəsəbə. The school director at the middle school said that students know Azerbaijani when they enter school. The kindergarten director, however, reported that the children don't know this language when they begin kindergarten, but that they learn it quickly. In addition, the school director at the elementary school said that all graduates speak Azerbaijani very well.

In addition to the ten communities visited, we were also able to interview a schoolteacher at the Namazgah elementary school (grades 1–4). She reported that the children know Azerbaijani when they enter grade 1, but that they mix it quite often with Tat. About one month into the school year, however, they no longer mix languages.

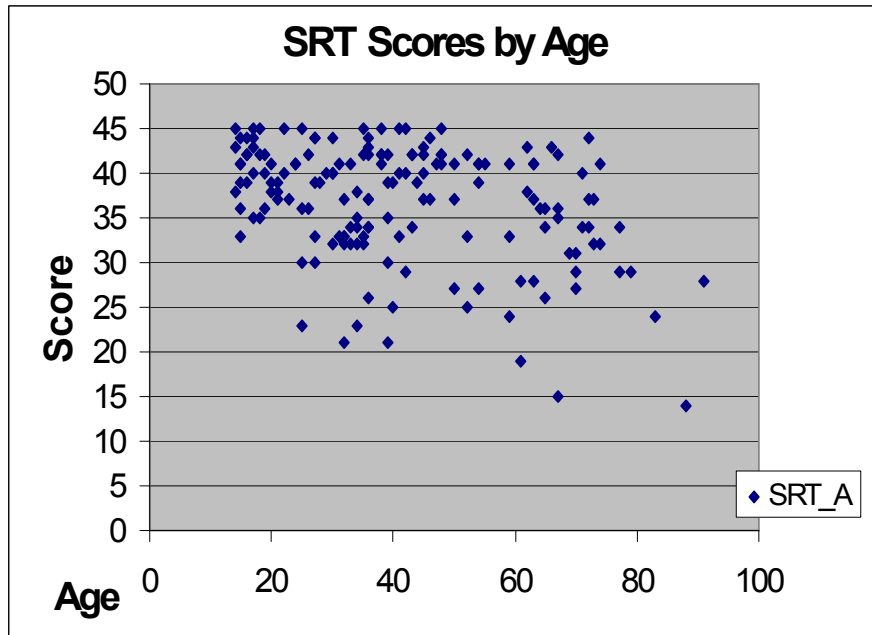
It is important to note that in all communities where Tats live, parents use Azerbaijani with their children so that they will not have difficulties with the language once they start school. In Gəndov and Giləzi, Azerbaijani is also the main language of communication for parents, so they naturally use it with their preschool children.

In all communities except Qırmızı Qəsəbə, school-aged children are said to achieve a high level of literacy in this language.

3.4.3.3 Azerbaijani proficiency as measured by the SRT

In order to obtain a more objective assessment of overall levels of proficiency in Azerbaijani, we interviewed a number of interviewees during our second stage of research to take the Azerbaijani Sentence Repetition Test. Interviewees were asked to listen to fifteen sentences recorded on cassette tape and then repeat them. The scores ranged from 14 to 45 out of a possible 45. The following graph shows the scores in relation to age.

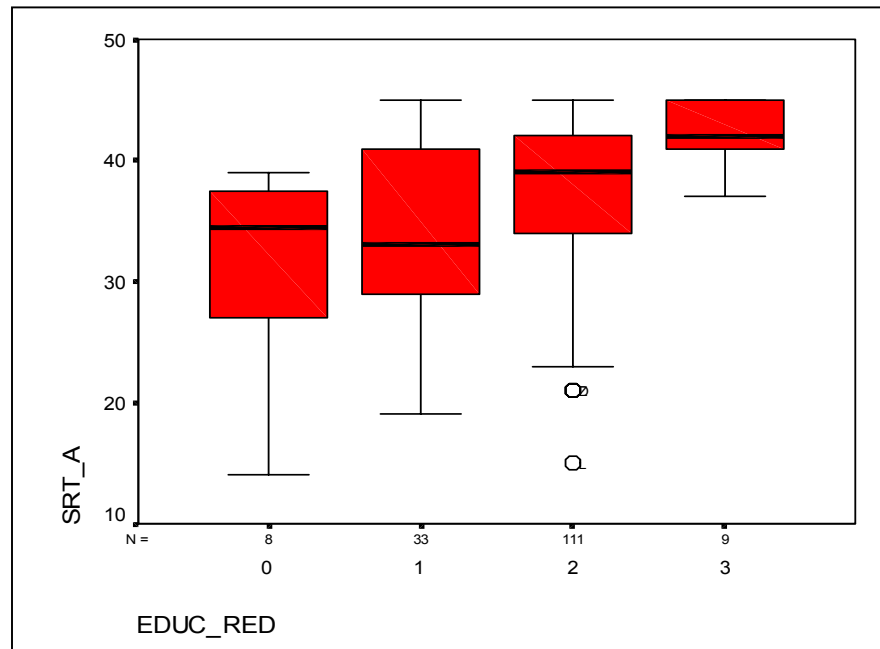
Figure 6: SRT Scores by Age



A visual analysis of figure 6 indicates that age and proficiency are inversely correlated, that is, younger speakers have a higher level of proficiency in Azerbaijani. This is confirmed by the fact that the Pearson Correlation between the ages of the interviewees and their SRT scores of -0.368 is significant at a level of less than 0.001 .

As would be expected, there is a positive correlation between SRT scores and educational level. The box plot in figure 7 illustrates the range of SRT scores for four different educational levels: none (0), elementary school through grade 8 (1), high school and/or technical school (2), and higher education or university (3).

Figure 7: SRT Scores and Educational Levels

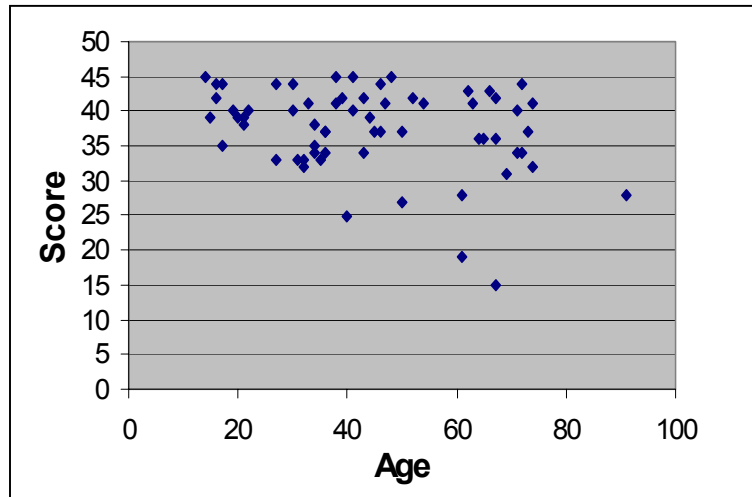


In general, the box plot in figure 7 indicates that among the individuals interviewed, more educated individuals are more likely to have a higher proficiency in Azerbaijani. Statistically, this is a Pearson Correlation of 0.348 between education and SRT score, with a significance of less than 0.001.

In light of the correlations between age and SRT scores and between educational level and SRT scores, the question then arises as to whether or not the higher proficiency among younger subjects is due to a higher educational level. That is, did older subjects score lower because they would tend to be the ones with a lower educational level? In testing for a partial correlation between age and SRT scores, controlling for educational level, we found that the correlation is still statistically significant.²⁸ Conversely, while controlling for age, there is also a partial correlation between educational level and SRT scores.²⁹ These results show that, for our data set, age and educational level are *both* significant factors in an individual's Azerbaijani proficiency. Furthermore, we cannot wholly attribute the correlation between age and SRT scores to differences in educational level.

The pattern of SRT scores decreasing as age increases is also observed when looking at men and women's scores separately in figures 8 and 9.

Figure 8: Graph of SRT Scores among Men

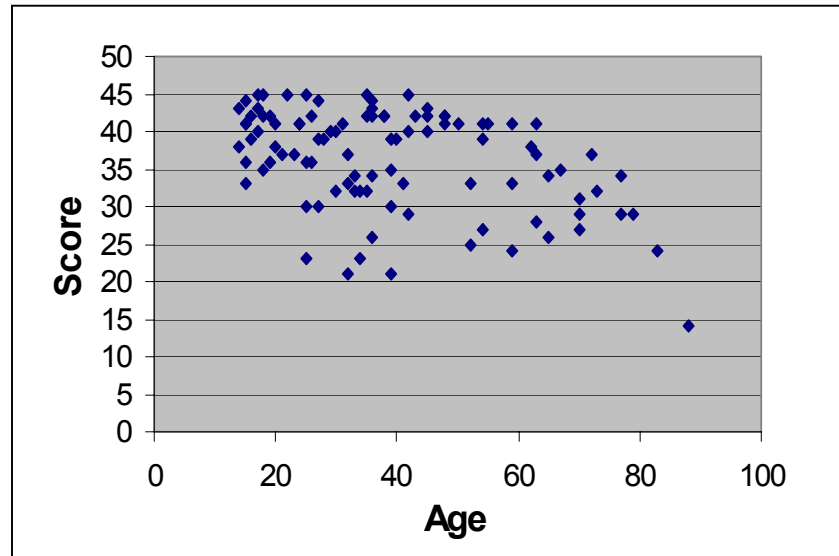


As shown in figure 8, the high scores remain in the 40s for all ages of men. The lower scores, however, become steadily lower as age increases. That is, there is greater variability in the scores of older men than in the scores of younger men.

²⁸ The correlation is -0.2500 with a significance level of 0.001.

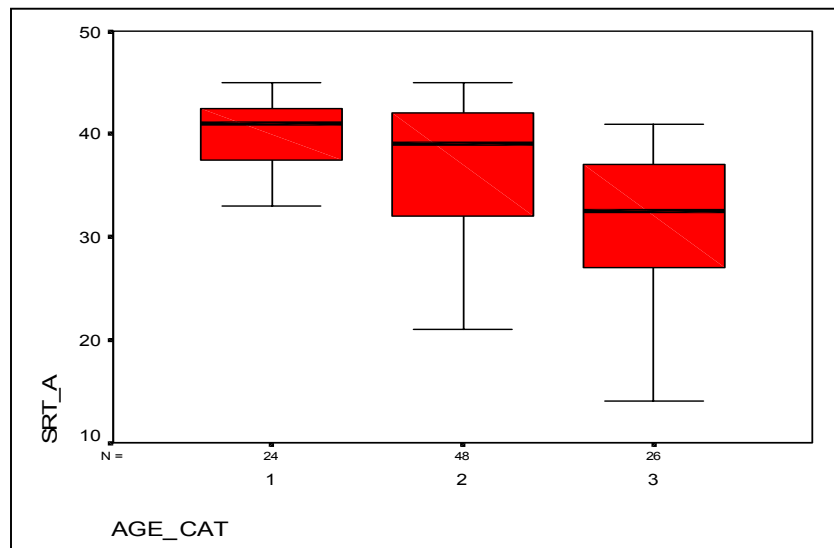
²⁹ The correlation is 0.2173 with a significance level of 0.006.

Figure 9: Graph of SRT Scores among Women



While the lower scores for men showed a gradual decline, the scores for women show a sharp drop at age 25. This is shown in the box plot for three age groups in figure 10 where the groups are under 25 (1), 25–60 (2), and over 60 (3).

Figure 10: Box Plot of Women's SRT Scores



For women older than 24, there is a sharp widening of the range of scores. The range of Azerbaijani proficiencies is much tighter for young women (under 25), than are the ranges for middle-aged and old women. The difference between the averages for young and middle-aged women is weakly significant (0.02): young women scored an average of 40, while middle-aged women scored 36.³⁰ The difference between the averages for old and middle-aged women is significant at a level of 0.004. Old women on average scored 32.

³⁰ The standard deviation for young women's scores is 3.35; that of middle-aged women is 6.65.

SRT scores also showed considerable variation according to village. Figure 11 shows the averages of men's and women's scores according to village.³¹

Figure 11: Average SRT Scores by Village



As can be observed, none of the average scores were below 34. This indicates that the overall level of Azerbaijani proficiency for men and women in the communities visited was high. From village to village, however, the averages did show variation, with the communities of Lahıc and Ərakit scoring higher than those of Dağ Quşçu and Zəyvə.

We found no significant correlation between the SRT scores and profession or occupation.³²

3.4.4 Russian language proficiency

3.4.4.1 Reported Russian language proficiency among adults

Overall, adults in the communities we visited have a lower level of proficiency in Russian than they do in Azerbaijani. Table 35 shows the oral proficiencies in Russian among men in all the communities we visited except Gəndov.

Table 35: Oral Proficiency in Russian among Men

↓ Villages	Ages →		
	<30	60+	30–60
Lahıc, Sə'dan, Giləzi	low	low	high
Məlhəm	low	high	high
Dağ Quşçu	none	low	low
Zəyvə	low	none	low
Rustov	none	low	high (45–60) / low (30–45)
Qonaqkənd	low	low	low
Qırmızı Qəsəbə	high/low*	high	high

*depends on school sector of study (i.e., high if they studied in Azerbaijani, low if they studied in Russian).

For the most part, men have a lower oral proficiency in Russian than they do in Azerbaijani. Of all age groups, the middle-aged men have the highest oral proficiency in Russian, followed by the older generation, Young men have the lowest reported proficiency. Only in Qırmızı Qəsəbə were any of the men under 30 reported to have a

³¹ The scores from Qırmızı Qəsəbə are excluded because of low response.

³² The categories used were: 0-none, or unemployed, 1-homemaker, 2-student, 3-artisan, 4-worker, 5-professional, 6-pensioner. While all categories were represented for occupation, only three categories were relevant for profession: 0, 4, and 5.

high level of oral proficiency in Russian. Of all the communities visited, Qırmızı Qəsəbə had the highest overall level of oral proficiency in Russian, while Qonaqkənd and Dağ Quşçu have the lowest reported oral proficiencies.

Villages of a similar geographical description do not necessarily have a similar language profile. Məlhəm and Zəyvə, for example, are both foothill communities, but based on reported proficiencies, levels in Məlhəm are much higher than those in Zəyvə. Similarly, Lahıc, Sə'dan, and Giləzi all have the same profile for oral ability in Russian among men, but the first is a mountain village, the second a foothill village, and the third a plains village.

The main factor cited contributing to a higher level of proficiency for men was that they served in the Soviet army. Furthermore, the men in Gəndov said that Russian still plays an important role in their work, since they interact with Russians and Lezgis. It is also interesting to note that in many communities, interviewees indicated that young men often go to Russia to work for a period of time from a few months to several years.

Table 36 summarizes the reported levels of literacy in Russian among men.

Table 36: Russian Literacy among Men

Ages → ↓ Villages	60+	30–60	<30
Lahıc	Low	low (45–60) / high (30–45)	low
Məlhəm#	High	high	medium
Rustov	Low	high (45–60) / low(30–45)	none
Dağ Quşçu, Qonaqkənd	Low	low	None
Sə'dan	Low	low	low
Zəyvə, Giləzi	None	low	low
Qırmızı Qəsəbə	medium**	high	high/low*

Key:# reading; level for writing not specified

* depends on language of education (i.e. high if they studied in Russian, low if they studied in Azerbaijani)

** average of 2 for reading and 1 for writing

Overall, men are reported to have lower levels of proficiency in literacy than in oral skills in Russian. As with oral proficiency, men under 30 have the lowest level of literacy of any age group, while the middle-aged men have the highest level. In five of the villages, Dağ Quşçu, Qonaqkənd, Sə'dan, Zəyvə, and Giləzi, none of the men are said to have a high level of literacy in Russian. Of all the villages, Məlhəm and Qırmızı Qəsəbə have the highest reported level of literacy in Russian.

In general, the women have a lower reported proficiency in Russian than do the men. Table 37 summarizes the levels of oral proficiency in Russian for women.

Table 37: Russian Oral Proficiency among Women

Ages →	under 60	60 and over
↓ Villages		
Lahıc	low	high/none
Məlhəm	low/none	none
Dağ Quşçu	low	none
Sə'dan, Gəndov	low/none	none
Zəyvə	none	low
Giləzi	low	high
Qırmızı Qəsəbə	low (high: <30)	low

Key: where two levels are given, the first indicates comprehension and the second indicates speaking

Compared to the men, women in the communities we visited report less variation in ability tied to age. Only in Giləzi and Qırmızı Qəsəbə was it reported that a significant group of women understand *and* speak Russian well. In all other communities, women are reported to have poor or no oral proficiency in Russian.

Table 38 summarizes the reported levels of literacy in Russian for women.

Table 38: Russian Literacy among Women

	under 60	60 and over
Lahıc	low	low/none
Məlhəm, Dağ Quşçu, Sə'dan, Gəndov	low	none
Zəyvə	none	none
Giləzi	at least medium	high
Qırmızı Qəsəbə	medium (high: <30)	low

Key: where two numbers are given, the first indicates reading and the second indicates writing

Overall, women are reported to have low to no literacy in Russian. Only the women over 60 in Giləzi, and those under 30 in Qırmızı Qəsəbə are said to reach a high level of ability in this area.

3.4.4.2 Reported Russian language proficiency among children

Children in the communities we visited were generally reported to have low to no proficiency in Russian (both oral proficiency and literacy). In some communities the adults said that the children who study Russian well in school are able to attain a high level of proficiency in this language, but this is the exception rather than the rule.

Table 39 lists the communities in which we collected information regarding Russian proficiency among children.

Table 39: Children's Russian Proficiency

Location	Level of proficiency
Lahıc	passive understanding
Giləzi	passive understanding
Gəndov	medium level (lower than Azerbaijani proficiency)
Qırmızı Qəsəbə	b.s.: none; s: high if in Russian sector, low if in Azerbaijani sector.

Key: b.s.: before school
s: in school

As the table indicates, the only location where adults reported that children achieved a high level of Russian was in Qırmızı Qəsəbə. Even here the school director of the middle

school reported that teachers in the early grades sometimes give explanations in Mountain Jewish when children don't understand the Russian explanation. As of grade 4, however, students are reported to have no difficulties with Russian.

The staff at the elementary school also reported that sometimes the students don't understand the Russian explanations, and so the teachers (who are mainly Azerbaijanis) use Azerbaijani instead. These same teachers also use a mixture of Russian and Azerbaijani with their students outside of class. The staff also commented that not all students who finish grade 9 know Russian well.

3.4.4.3 Russian proficiency as measured by the SRT

Due to the low number of Russian SRTs that were administered in Qırmızı Qəsəbə, none of the results are statistically significant. The SRTs that were administered do, however, seem to indicate that the overall level of proficiency in Russian is not close to native speaker ability. Out of the ten SRTs that were administered, scores ranged from 13 to 21 out of a possible 45. Scores of 13 to 19 represent a “good, general proficiency.”

3.4.5 Summary profile of language proficiency—Tat, Azerbaijani, and Russian

In the Tat communities, both adults and children are generally reported to attain a high level of proficiency in oral Azerbaijani and in Azerbaijani literacy, though some of the older men and women may have difficulties speaking or writing the language. Some of the children and young adults in Qırmızı Qəsəbə, however, reportedly do not attain a high level of Azerbaijani.

Proficiency in Russian is generally reported to be much lower than proficiency in Azerbaijani. Those who served in the army and those who have had or currently have contact with Russian speakers have a higher oral proficiency than those who did not, but in the majority of communities there is little contact with Russian speakers. Literacy in Russian is attained through school, though it is generally much lower than proficiency in Azerbaijani literacy and in many cases is low even after an individual has finished school.

Literacy in Tat is basically nonexistent. In fact, most people in the communities we visited were not even aware that any books were available in Tat.

3.5 Language Attitudes

We adapted the Perceived Benefit Model from Stalder and Karan (1997) to investigate attitudes towards Tat,³³ Azerbaijani, and Russian among members of the Tat and Mountain Jewish communities. The Perceived Benefit Model seeks to discover how important each language is for various purposes. In our research, we wanted to study attitudes for the following six purposes: making money, getting news and information about the world, being a good member of one's family, being a good religious person, gaining respect, and communicating with others in the village.

The findings reported in this section are based on information gathered in group interviews during the first stage of research. In these interviews, the group was asked how important each language was for each purpose. Possible responses were “very important,” “important,” “somewhat important,” and “not important.” Theoretically, all answers should be independent of each other. That is, a group could say that all languages were equally important for any given purpose, or they could say that one language was very important and that some other language was not important.

Interviews regarding perceived benefits were conducted among the men in all communities except Gəndov, but they were conducted among the women only in the

³³ In this section, Tat is used as a cover term for both Tat and Mountain Jewish.

villages of Lahıc, Məlhəm, and Sə'dan. The responses are summarized in table 40.³⁴ (A detailed table of responses is given in appendix C.)

Table 40: Summary of Responses Regarding Perceived Benefits

	Azerbaijani	Tat	Russian
Income	3.0	1.7	1.5
News	2.9	0.0	1.5
Family	2.4	3.0	0.1
Religion	1.8	1.6	0.0
Prestige	2.7	2.3	0.6
Communication	2.4	2.9	0.5

Key: 3: very important 2: important
1: somewhat important 0: not important

Several generalizations about the perceived importance of these three languages can be drawn from table 40. Azerbaijani was considered very important for all categories except religion, for which it was considered somewhat important. Tat was considered very important for family life, and also for interpersonal communication. In most other categories it was said to be important. The only category in which it was considered not important was news. Finally, Russian was considered to have some importance for income and news, but for all other categories it was minimally or not at all important.

Considerable variation was shown within some of the categories. Table 41 shows the perceived benefits of Tat for earning money, given by location.

Table 41: Perceived Benefit of Tat for Income by Location

Dağ Quşçu, Zəyvə, Qonaqkənd	Qırmızı Qəsəbə	Lahıc, Sə'dan, Giləzi	Məlhəm	Rustov
3.0	2.5	1.0	0.5	0.0

Key: 3: very important 2: important
1: somewhat important 0: not important

Two of the mountain communities (DQ, Q) and one of the foothill communities (Z) said Tat was very important for income. The only other location where the local language was considered important for earning money was the plains town Qırmızı Qəsəbə. In all other communities (L, S, G, M, R) Tat was said to be either somewhat important or not important for this purpose.

The importance of Russian for income varied significantly according to gender. Table 42 shows responses given in the communities where both interviews were obtained.

Table 42: Perceived Benefit of Russian for Income by Gender

	Men	Women
Lahıc	1	3
Məlhəm	0	2
Sə'dan	0	2

Men in these three communities said Russian was somewhat or not important for earning money. The women, on the other hand, indicated Russian was important or very important for earning money.

³⁴ When calculating the averages for each language in a particular domain, the average in each community was calculated first (that is, men's and women's responses were averaged), then the averages from all communities were averaged.

Russian was generally perceived as more beneficial in Qırmızı Qəsəbə, the Mountain Jewish location visited, than in other communities. In Table 43, the evaluations made in Qırmızı Qəsəbə are compared to the overall evaluations.

Table 43: Perceived Benefit of Russian in Qırmızı Qəsəbə

	Qırmızı Qəsəbə	Average
Income	3	1.6
News	3	1.6
Family	3/2*	.1
Religion	0	0
Prestige	3	.7
Communication	2	.7

Key: 3: very important 2: important
 1: somewhat important 0: not important
 *depends on language of children's education

In all categories except religion, respondents in Qırmızı Qəsəbə said that Russian was important or very important. For family life the importance of Russian depended on which language the parents decided their children should study in, though they also said most people choose Russian for schooling. In all other communities, however, Russian was considered somewhat or minimally important.

The perceived importance of Azerbaijani for various purposes varied depending on the geographic location. Table 44 summarizes the responses for Azerbaijani according to location type.

Table 44: Perceived Benefit of Azerbaijani by Location Type

	mountain	foothill	plain ³⁵
Income	3.0	3.0	3.0
News	3.0	2.9	3.0
Family	3.0	2.3	3.0*
Religion	1.5	2.3	3.0 (Gil) / 0.0 (QQ)
Prestige	2.8	2.4	3.0
Communication	1.7	2.6	3.0

Key: 3: very important 2: important
 1: somewhat important 0: not important
 *depends on language of children's education in Qırmızı Qəsəbə

Azerbaijani was considered important for income and news in all location types. Respondents in the foothill communities gave it a slightly lower rating than elsewhere for family life. For religion and interpersonal communication, Azerbaijani is perceived as being increasingly important moving from mountain to foothill to plains communities. Azerbaijani's importance for prestige was rated slightly lower in the foothill communities than in other communities.

The fact that respondents in the Tat community perceived Azerbaijani to be important or very important was paralleled by another observation. Several times residents of the communities we visited indicated that there were no differences between Tats and Azerbaijanis; they consider the two to be the same, ethnically speaking.

To conclude, Azerbaijani was considered by most people to be at least somewhat important for all categories, though responses varied according to the geographic type of the location. In all communities, respondents regarded Tat as important or very important for family life and interpersonal communication within the village, and not important for

³⁵ Includes Giləzi and Qırmızı Qəsəbə, but not Gəndov.

news. Overall, Russian was generally regarded as being somewhat important for income and news, it was regarded as minimally important for other functions. There was, however, a major split between the Tat and Mountain Jewish communities with regard to the importance of Russian. The Mountain Jewish community consistently rated Russian as much more important than did the Tat communities.

4. Discussion

4.1 Perceived Dialect Differences

While a detailed linguistic analysis of the dialects within the Tat language was not the main goal of this research, information collected on perceived intelligibility and on attitudes Tat speakers have towards other varieties can be seen as a useful adjunct to other dialect studies.

The division most scholars make between the Muslim and Jewish varieties is not reflected in the level of mutual intelligibility perceived by speakers themselves. Our research indicates that while there are definitely perceived differences between these two varieties, similar differences occur within the Muslim varieties themselves. For example, residents of Sə'dan and Rustov reported that they understood Mountain Jewish better than the Lahıc variety. Similarly, residents of Giləzi said that the Quba variety of Tat was also different from their own, but that they could understand 90–100% of Mountain Jewish. Mountain Jews, on the other hand, reported that Tat varieties are 80% intelligible, maybe less so than Derbent Mountain Jewish.

If the perceptions of mutual intelligibility are correct, there do not seem to be linguistic grounds to justify a distinction between Mountain Jewish and Tat. There are, however, sociological factors for making such a distinction. That Mountain Jews grouped all the Tat varieties together when making a comparison indicates a perceived linguistic distinction between the two groups. Another indication of this distinction is the fact that Mountain Jews refer to their language as Mountain Jewish rather than Tat. Much of the perceived differences in dialect may actually be due to differences in culture and religion.

The history of literacy also serves to reinforce the perceived differences. As indicated above, Mountain Jewish as spoken in Dagestan has a long history of literacy. Literacy in any of the languages of Azerbaijan (other than Azerbaijani) is fairly recent. But since Mountain Jews in Azerbaijan see themselves as a single group with the Mountain Jews in Dagestan, they treat the Dagestani Mountain Jewish literature as their own. The Tats, on the other hand, never associated themselves with the Mountain Jewish literature from Dagestan.

The perceived differences could be seen in comments by some speakers that Mountain Jews and Tats were two entirely different groups who happened to speak very similar languages that were mutually intelligible. The division, then, of the Tat and Jewish speech varieties into two separate dialects seems justified, though perhaps more on sociolinguistic grounds than on purely linguistic ones.

The distinction between the northern variety and the central and southern varieties of Tat does seem to be corroborated by the perceived dialect differences. Speakers in the communities outside Quba District report that the varieties spoken there are different from their own, and in some cases is difficult to understand. On the basis of these reports, it appears the Quba, Qonaqkənd, and Dəvəçi varieties could be classified as Northern Tat. On the other hand, the classification of the Xızı variety as Northern is not confirmed by residents of the Xızı village of Giləzi, who claim the Quba speech variety is one of the most different from their own. It could be, then, that the variety spoken in Xızı might be better placed in another grouping of Tat.

The perceived distinctness of the Lahıc variety is evident in a number of reports. Speakers in all communities but Məlhəm and Dağ Quşçu cited significant differences between their own variety and the form of Tat spoken in Lahıc. Another thing that sets Lahıc apart from other varieties is the attitudes held by residents of this village towards their own language and identity. As mentioned above, Lahıc is well known for its

metalworks and cultural identity. The appellation of this variety as 'Lahıc' rather than 'Tat' indicates a pride in their own particular way of speaking. It is clear that many other Tats perceive the Lahıc variety as distinct and that residents from Lahıc view themselves as different from other Tats.

Based on the above observations, Miller's (1929) assessment of the dialect differences might be linguistically more accurate than that of Grjunberg and Davidova (1982). In other words, differences have more to do with geographical location than religious distinctions, since in some cases the differences within Tat are reportedly more marked than the differences between some varieties of Tat and Mountain Jewish. On the other hand, Grjunberg and Davidova's division of the language according to religious differences is accurate in that speakers perceive the Muslim and Jewish varieties as being very distinct. This, however, probably has more to do with attitudes than with purely linguistic differences.

4.2 Language Use and Proficiency

The patterns of language use and language proficiency appear to be related. Therefore, we will discuss both together in the following sections.

4.2.1 Tat language use and proficiency

At least two major factors explain the high level of proficiency in Tat among adults in mountain and foothill communities, as opposed to the plains. One is the relative remoteness of the villages in the mountains and the foothills. The other is that the fact that substantial numbers of non-Tat speakers live in many of the plains villages.

The one exception is the mountain village of Qonaqkənd. While it is one of the most remote communities visited, its history explains why the adults have a lower level of proficiency in Tat, and why a number of middle-aged adults there do not speak the language at all. Because it was a regional center, and because of the migration of Budukh people to this location, it appears that Tat was no longer considered useful as the main language of interaction within the town. It follows, then, that because Azerbaijani was the common language of the various ethnic groups, parents decided that teaching their children Azerbaijani would be more useful than teaching them Tat.

The level of proficiency in Tat in the plains villages is very different from that of the Mountain Jews in the plains town of Qırmızı Qəsəbə. In both Gəndov and Giləzi, reported proficiency is lower among younger speakers than among older speakers. Furthermore, most adults in these villages now use Azerbaijani instead of Tat in their day-to-day communication in the village. Thus, the trend in Tat plains communities seems to be that Tat is being used less within the community, and the younger generation is losing the language.

The pattern is very different among the Mountain Jews. All ages are said to speak Mountain Jewish well, in spite of the fact that there is considerable contact with speakers of other languages. One reason for the continued vitality of this language is the community's religious and cultural uniqueness. While Mountain Jews recognize the importance of Azerbaijani and Russian for such functions as work and education, their language holds an important place in the community and in the home. Although Tats speak Azerbaijani with their children so they will do well in school, the vast majority of Mountain Jews do not speak Russian with their children. It appears, then, that for Mountain Jews the need for their children to learn Mountain Jewish is more important than for them to know the language of education before they start school.

The reported levels of proficiency in Tat among children can be explained by two main factors: isolation and economic viability. This can be seen in table 28, reprinted here for convenience.

Table 28: Oral Proficiency in Tat among Children

Lahıc, Məlhəm, Zəyvə, Qırmızı Qəsəbə	high
Dağ Quşçu	C: high S: low (women) high (men)
Sə'dan	C: high S: high-medium
Rustov	medium
Gəndov, Giləzi	C: medium S: very low
Qonaqkənd	low

Key: C: Comprehension
S: Speaking

Though the physical remoteness of a given location does not necessarily correlate with a high level of proficiency in Tat (as seen in the case of Qonaqkənd), it does generally play a role. With the exception of Qonaqkənd, the lowest levels of proficiency among children are the easily accessible plains villages of Gəndov and Giləzi. There are signs that Tat is being lost in these last two villages: children do not speak Tat well and mainly use Azerbaijani for daily communication.

The influence of economic viability can be seen in a comparison of the situation in Lahıc, Məlhəm, and Zəyvə and that in Dağ Quşçu and Sə'dan. Higher levels of proficiency are reported in the former group of villages than in the latter group. It is very possible that in the smaller villages of Dağ Quşçu and Sə'dan, with fewer resources and less opportunities for economic survival, residents would be more likely to look outside the village for work. Indeed, migration patterns seem to indicate this: the officials in Dağ Quşçu report that more people are moving out of than into the village. In Sə'dan, the trend of emigration from the village, which was the case ten years ago, is now reversed; those residents who moved away are moving back in hopes of farming the now privatized land. The lack of water and farm machinery, however, has prevented farming. If the residents of these smaller villages see little hope for economic improvement by staying in the village, they would have a greater motivation to make sure their children speak Azerbaijani so they can leave and improve their economic situation.

The situation seems to be especially serious in Dağ Quşçu. Just over half of those interviewed individually in Dağ Quşçu use Tat in the home and in the street, while only 64% said they had learned this language first. Furthermore, these percentages decrease sharply for individuals under the age of 25. It appears that the vernacular will not survive much longer in this community.

On the other hand, the medium-sized villages of Zəyvə and Məlhəm have greater resources to sustain the population. In Zəyvə the mayor reported that people are moving back to the village from the city and that the current population is quite self-sufficient. In Məlhəm the officials said the population is stable, with few people moving in or out. This relative economic stability may also provide an environment favorable to the survival of the local language. Thus, while both these villages report that adults speak Azerbaijani with their children, the favorable economics may mean less pressure for children to speak only Azerbaijani. Similarly, in Lahıc, where the village's unique culture and handcrafts are a major source of income, the motivation might be high to remain in the village and preserve their present way of life, including their language. Information gathered during individual interviews supports the claim that language use remains high at least in domains such as the home and community. Interviewees reported that they use a high level of Tat with all groups except school-aged children. It is especially noteworthy that 65% of the adults use only Tat with children who have not started school.

The factors of isolation and economic viability may be in conflict in the case of Rustov. It is similar in size to Lahıc, and the officials report a growing population, with only very minimal migration back to Rustov from Baku. These indicators would lead one

to expect an economic environment favorable to the viability of the local language. Levels of proficiency in Tat among children are reported to be only medium, however. The lack of isolation may be the cause of this lower level. As noted above, Rustov lies on the main Quba-Qonaqkənd road, and Qonaqkənd used to be a district center. Therefore, we can expect that residents of Rustov have had more contact with non-Tat speakers. Such contact might be motivation for parents to teach their children Azerbaijani from infancy. If this analysis is correct, it shows that both the factors of isolation and economic viability must be considered when examining the reported proficiencies and the language use patterns of any particular location.

The claims made during group interviews that parents are using Azerbaijani with their children to help them do well in school, regardless of degree of isolation or economic viability of the location, indicates an overwhelming perception that it is important for children to learn Azerbaijani well. Interviews with individuals, however, indicated the situation was more complex than group interviews suggested. While over 40% of adults interviewed use only Azerbaijani with school-aged children, 15–35% of them reported using only Tat. It appears that while the general trend is to use Azerbaijani with children, some adults still use the vernacular in this domain. Furthermore, individuals reported using Tat more regularly with preschool-aged children than with school-aged children. That is, while parents generally try to use Azerbaijani with school-aged children, this is less the case with children who have not yet entered school. It is also possible that while most adults may use Azerbaijani with their *own* school-aged children, they may be more inclined to use either the vernacular or a mixture when speaking to *other* children. Overall, then, it may well be the case that children in most, but not all, communities are still exposed to Tat on a regular basis.

Rustov and Sə'dan may be communities in which children are not being exposed to Tat on a regular basis. This may be leading to children not learning Tat as well as their parents did, and therefore not using it for daily communication. In villages such as Məlhəm, adults said children would learn Tat from hearing it around them and therefore learned both languages. While the prospects for the viability of Tat in Zəyvə, Məlhəm, and Lahic seem positive, it remains to be seen if this trend will lead to a situation of stable diglossia, or if it will affect future patterns of language use. If children learn Azerbaijani first and do not learn to speak Tat well, when they are adults they may be more comfortable using Azerbaijani for daily communication. The result of this would be that they do not teach their own children Tat, and the language will be lost in the next generation. Such a process appears to be happening in Sə'dan: the adults reported a mixed language situation, with some preferring to use Azerbaijani, and others Tat. Consequently, the main language of communication for children is Azerbaijani, though they are able to understand and speak Tat at a medium to high level. In Gəndov and Giləzi, on the other hand, adults agree that children are losing Tat. Whether or not a similar process could occur in the foothill and mountain villages is an open question.

Another trend adding to the decline in the use of Tat that surfaced in the individual interviews is that younger adults are less likely to use only Tat with school-aged children. This suggests that use of the vernacular in this domain is decreasing and is likely to continue decreasing. A related trend regarding the use of Tat is that the younger individuals are, the less likely others are to use Tat with them. If these trends continue, the viability of the language would be increasingly threatened.

The close ties many Tats feel to Azerbaijanis may also lead to less of a desire to preserve their own language. If they see no major cultural or ethnic differences between the two groups, they may see no difference in using one language or the other within their families and communities. This could also contribute to the loss of the Tat language.

Turning to the Mountain Jewish community, it is clear that the vernacular is highly viable. It is the main language of interpersonal communication and of the home domain. The vast majority of Mountain Jews use Mountain Jewish with each other, regardless of age. Unlike Tats, a high percentage of Mountain Jews speak Mountain Jewish with school-aged children, and *all* those interviewed reported speaking it with children who

have not started school. In other words, children are growing up in a very favorable environment for the preservation of their language. Most likely because of their unique cultural identity, Mountain Jews are highly motivated to continue using the vernacular with each other. We can safely conclude that Mountain Jewish is very viable.

Given the high use of Mountain Jewish within the community it seems surprising that in individual interviews, 11% of the interviewees indicated they felt most fluent in Russian, and another 7% said they felt most fluent in Azerbaijani (see table 24). The shift to Russian in the educational domain might explain why some felt they were most fluent in Russian. At the same time, results of the Russian SRT indicated most speakers do not seem to have native-speaker abilities in Russian. The situation appears to be similar to that reported in Clifton, Clifton, Kirk, and Ljøkjell (2002) in which members of another language group, who are educated in Russian but have no regular contact with native speakers of Russian, feel they are more fluent in the language than they actually are. In the case of Azerbaijani, middle-aged and older adults are more likely to have been educated in Azerbaijani. This, together with the contact with native Azerbaijani speakers, might explain why some interviewees said they were most fluent in Azerbaijani.

4.2.2 Azerbaijani language use and proficiency

The reported levels of proficiency in Azerbaijani do not seem to be as tied to economics or accessibility as levels of proficiency in Tat. In group interviews in most of the communities, adults under 60 as well as school-aged children were generally reported to have a high level of proficiency in Azerbaijani.

Overall, the results of the Azerbaijani SRT support the perception that adults have a high level of Azerbaijani proficiency. The SRT scores can be correlated with age and with educational level: older adults score lower, and those with higher levels of education score higher. Furthermore, the age-SRT correlation cannot be wholly attributed to education; neither can the education-SRT correlation be attributed to age.

While effects of economics and isolation are not as dramatic for Azerbaijani as they are for Tat, they still do seem to play a role. The average SRT scores of the various Tat villages coincide with observations gathered during the initial research trips. The averages for Lahıc and Ərakit are the highest of these four villages. Given that one of the main industries in Lahıc is tourism, the high degree of contact with outsiders would explain higher levels of proficiency among residents. Furthermore, since Ərakit is immediately adjacent to Lahıc, the two populations mix, with members of Ərakit also working in Lahıc. Ərakit, then, is also affected by outside contact.

The relatively lower SRT scores for Zəyvə and Dağ Quşçu may also be related to contact patterns; these two villages were among the most isolated visited. It is interesting that although a large number of parents in Dağ Quşçu claimed to speak Azerbaijani with their children and a number of individuals cited Azerbaijani as the first language they learned, the average SRT scores there were among the lowest of any location. It appears that while Azerbaijani is an important language in the community, on average residents do not attain a high level of fluency in standard Azerbaijani.

Qırmızı Qəsəbə is the one location in which responses in the group interview indicated that the level of Azerbaijani was not generally high. Unfortunately, we could not confirm these reports through the Azerbaijani SRT. It is, of course, possible that people in Qırmızı Qəsəbə actually speak Azerbaijani better than the respondents indicated. In either case, patterns of education might explain the situation. Respondents tied proficiency in Azerbaijani among young adults to their language of education. Those who study in Russian are reported to have a lower level of proficiency in Azerbaijani than those who study in Azerbaijani. If we combine this with the fact that the elementary school has been transitioning into Russian-language education, and that all Jewish children presently study in Russian, it seems reasonable to conclude that a higher percentage of young adults have studied in Russian. This would lead to an overall lower level of Azerbaijani among young adults than among middle-aged adults. On the other hand, it could be that even students who study in Russian still attain a high level of

proficiency in Azerbaijani through their interaction with Azerbaijani speakers in neighboring villages. If this is the case, the perception that their level of Azerbaijani is low could be due to comparing it with the proficiency of native speakers.

Education could also be a major factor accounting for the fact that women under the age of 60 in Qırmızı Qəsəbə are reported to have lower levels of proficiency in Azerbaijani than do men. As noted in the village descriptions, girls generally do not stay in school past grade 9. In addition, it appears that most women do not work outside the home. Thus, if women generally do not pursue higher education or outside employment, and if they mostly use the vernacular in the home (as implied by group interviews), then the opportunities to use Azerbaijani are more limited for them than for men. This might also explain why their levels of proficiency in literacy were also reported to be low.

We have no definite explanation for the fact that men in Qırmızı Qəsəbə between the ages of 45 and 60 are also reported to have only a medium level of oral proficiency in Azerbaijani. This may be related to preferences in language of education, or to patterns of contact during the time when that generation was growing up. More research is needed before a more precise explanation can be offered.

We also have no definite explanation for the differences noted above with regard to the levels of proficiency in Azerbaijani reported for speakers over the age of 60. According to tables 32 and 33, older adults were reported to have high levels of proficiency in some villages, and low levels of proficiency in others. In addition, older women were reported to have higher levels of proficiency than older men in some, but not all, communities. The general differences between villages cannot be accounted for in terms of the information we collected on the educational and contact patterns of this generation. For example, it was reported that older men in the mountain villages had higher levels of proficiency than did those in most foothill and plains villages. While the fact that Qonaqkənd was a district center for several decades could explain the high levels of proficiency there, we have no explanation for the high levels reported in Dağ Quşçu and Lahıc.

The fact that older women had higher reported levels of proficiency than older men in some (but not all) communities is especially suspicious, since we found no factors that would account for such differences. It is likely that the differences are a product of our research design in which men reported on men's levels of proficiency, and women reported on women's levels of proficiency. Thus, information on the men's and women's levels of proficiency are not directly comparable.

While some of the variability in the reported levels of proficiency among older adults may be due to research design, analysis of the SRT responses shows that there is, indeed, much more variability in the proficiencies of older adults. It could be that among older adults, education is more of a determining factor in Azerbaijani proficiency than it is among young and middle-aged adults. Young and middle-aged adults may have had greater contact with Azerbaijani speakers through travel outside the village, occupation, and marriage patterns. This would account for a more uniformly high level of proficiency in Azerbaijani. One other factor worth considering is the influence of television. In all the villages visited, a large number of televisions were observed. If, in addition to the exposure to Azerbaijani through school, young adults have been exposed to the standard Azerbaijani through television, it would be difficult for their proficiency to remain at a low level.

A comparison of tables 28 and 34 indicates that communities where children were reported to have a high level of proficiency in Tat are also the communities where children were reported either to have a low level of proficiency in Azerbaijani before school, or to have difficulties when entering school. Among these communities are Lahıc, Məlhəm, Zəyvə, and Qırmızı Qəsəbə. Dağ Quşçu and Sə'dan also reported comparatively high proficiencies for children in Tat, but only in Dağ Quşçu were preschool-aged children said to have a low ability in Azerbaijani. That no children in Sə'dan were reported to have difficulties with Azerbaijani supports the claim by the adults that most children use Azerbaijani. In Giləzi, reported difficulties were not related to the child not

knowing Azerbaijani, but rather from having learned it from grandparents who do not speak it well.

The trend of parents using Azerbaijani with school-aged children could account for some of the patterns in the SRT scores for young and middle-aged women. The first quartile for both these groups is the same, that is, at least 25% of each group scored between 45 and 43 on the SRT. The distribution of scores in the third and fourth quartiles, however, is quite different. While middle-aged women scored as low as 21, none of the young women scored lower than 33. If the trend of parents using Azerbaijani with school children is recent, this could account for the lack of low SRT scores among young women.

4.2.3 Russian language use and proficiency

The overall lower levels of proficiency in Russian as compared to Azerbaijani are understandable considering that people in most communities would have more contact with native Azerbaijani speakers than with native Russian speakers. In addition, education is and has been in Azerbaijani rather than in Russian in most villages, so both proficiency in oral Russian and Russian literacy can be expected to be lower than in Azerbaijani.

The fact that young men were reported to have lower levels of Russian than do middle-aged and some older men can be attributed to the fact that men over 30 served in the Soviet Army, whereas those younger than 30 have served in the Azerbaijani Army. It is also possible that the younger generation may have fewer opportunities than did the older generations to go to Russia and interact with native Russian speakers. While it was reported in many villages that men often go to Russia to work for short periods, it is unclear how many are younger men. It is also possible that the young men who are currently in Russia were not included in evaluations of Russian proficiency. If this scenario, the middle-aged men who were evaluated would have included both those who spent time in Russia and those who did not, while the young men who were evaluated would have included only those who had not spent time in Russia. Assuming that these young men who are currently in Russia return to the village, the overall level of Russian proficiency will rise among men of their generation.

The high level of Russian proficiency reported for men in Qırmızı Qəsəbə can be partially explained by the history of Russian education in the community.³⁶ Qırmızı Qəsəbə is also closer to the Russian border than many of the other communities visited, and the large number of Mountain Jews in Dagestan would provide a tie to Russian-speaking territory. All of these reasons would contribute to a higher level of proficiency in Russian. Although the results of the Russian SRT indicated that the overall level of proficiency in Russian were not as high as indicated in the group interviews, they were still higher than in many other communities. In addition, the residents of a large percentage of the homes selected were away for the season, most of them to Moscow. Most likely those individuals would score higher on the SRT. If this is true, it could be that while those who stay in the town do not achieve a high proficiency in Russian, the overall level of proficiency is considerably higher.

Women's reported levels of proficiency in Russian are generally lower than men's (tables 35 through 38). This difference can be explained by the fact that men, but not women, generally served in the Soviet Army, and that many men work for some period of time in Russia. The two communities where any women are reported to have a high level of proficiency in Russian are Giləzi and Qırmızı Qəsəbə. In Giləzi the women indicated that the older women used to have more contact with Russian speakers, and so know it better than any of the other women do. In Qırmızı Qəsəbə the women under 30, many of whom have studied in Russian, have high levels of proficiency in oral Russian and Russian literacy.

³⁶ Unfortunately, we were unable to obtain sufficient information in Gəndov to assess how much Russian-language education contributed to levels of proficiency in a Tat village.

Russian is essentially a foreign language for children in most of the communities we visited. They study it in school as such, and rarely have the opportunity or the necessity to speak it. It is therefore not surprising that very few children reach a high level of proficiency in Russian. What is perhaps more surprising is that children who study only in Russian in Qırmızı Qəsəbə do not necessarily reach a high level of proficiency in the language. This may indicate that students rarely have to speak Russian outside of school. Even the Russian-language teachers at the elementary school in Qırmızı Qəsəbə are Azerbaijani speakers and are said to speak a mixture of Russian and Azerbaijani with their students outside of class. In addition, the language of the home and the community is said to be Mountain Jewish, so that it is likely that school is the only sphere in which children use Russian.

4.3 Language Attitudes

In examining the data from the Perceived Benefit Model questions, the high importance of Azerbaijani in most areas indicates the value residents give to the national language. Tat and Mountain Jewish, on the other hand, seem to be most important in family and community environments, while Russian appears to have a low overall perceived benefit in most communities.

The perceived importance of the vernacular for income does not appear to correspond to geographical location or reported proficiencies in this language. In general, the fact that Tat was rated lower than Azerbaijani in this category may be the result of a general perception that most money-making jobs require knowledge of Azerbaijani. Some of the difficulty in determining which languages people consider important for income lies in the way the question is asked. One interpretation is, ‘how important is language x for someone if they want to earn money *in* this village?’ while another interpretation is, ‘how important is language x for someone *from* this village if they want to earn money (elsewhere)?’ Respondents who answer according to the first interpretation are more likely to attach a high value to the local language, while respondents who answer according to the second interpretation are more likely to attach a high value to Russian or Azerbaijani. The fact is that more work is available in the village, but higher paying jobs are available outside the village.

These two interpretations might also explain why women frequently rated Russian as more important in the area of income, while men were more likely to rate Tat as more important. One possible explanation is that men have decided that they are unlikely to get the higher paying jobs requiring Russian, and so Russian is not very useful. At the same time, the women might feel that if the men could speak Russian better they might be able to obtain one of the higher paying jobs.

Respondents in group interviews in Qırmızı Qəsəbə not only reported higher proficiencies in Russian than did those in other villages, they considered Russian more important than did respondents in other villages. The proximity of Qırmızı Qəsəbə to the Russian border, and the tie to other Mountain Jews in Dagestan, may explain why Russian is felt to be important or very important for most functions. Indeed, the transition of education from Azerbaijani into Russian is an indicator of Russian language preference in such fields as education and employment.

In the domain of religion, Azerbaijani is rated higher in plains communities than in foothill communities, and higher in foothill communities than in mountain communities. This can be explained in light of comments made in several villages that Tat was used alongside Azerbaijani for religious ceremonies; this is especially likely in mountain and foothill communities. In Lahıc, Dağ Quşçu, and Zəyvə, Tat is the main language in this domain. It appears, then, that the high use of Tat in some of the more remote communities seems to correlate with a lower reported importance of Azerbaijani for religious functions.

A similar pattern with regard to the relative importance of Azerbaijani in plains, foothill, and mountain communities is seen in the area of interpersonal communication. This can be explained by the fact that villages like Dağ Quşçu and Lahıc are farther away

from Azerbaijani towns than are most of the other Tat communities visited. Azerbaijani would therefore be expected to be less useful in the area of interpersonal communication. The one mountain village in which the generalization does not hold is Qonaqkənd, where respondents rated Azerbaijani as very important for interpersonal communication. This is understandable since many non-Tat speakers live in the town, and therefore, Azerbaijani is the main language of the community.

It is significant that respondents in all the communities cited Tat as important or very important for interpersonal communication and family. In light of this, the question arises as to why parents are choosing to speak Azerbaijani with their children rather than Tat. One possibility is that the desire for their children to succeed in school, and perhaps then in the work world, is stronger than their desire to see their children learn Tat. Another possibility is that parents take the vitality of Tat for granted, and expect that their children will learn Tat even if they don't explicitly use it with them. This attitude can be seen in comments made by some adults that children will learn Tat from hearing it used in the home with other family members, as well as in the community. The fact that language use patterns have not changed in communities in which children are no longer learning the language outside the home indicates that the desire to see the children succeed in school is the strongest motivating factor.

At the same time, it is clear that a high level of proficiency and use of Tat in any given village does not seem to be preventing the children from learning to speak Azerbaijani well. Even children who have difficulties with Azerbaijani when entering school are reported to speak it well in a short period of time.

4.4 The Overall Language Situation

If we compare the information obtained, and the observations drawn from this information, it is possible to gain an overall picture of the language situation among the Tat and Mountain Jewish people. In this section, we will examine these two communities separately.

Our survey of Tat communities indicated that most of the Tat communities are mountain and foothill villages of less than 500 people. While we did not visit any villages that met these criteria, the information gathered in Dağ Quşçu and Sə'dan could help in determining the patterns of language use and levels of proficiency in the small villages. Although the majority of people in Dağ Quşçu do know and use Tat, the economic situation may play an important role in the viability of the language. In foothill villages such as Sə'dan, it appears that Tat is being replaced by Azerbaijani. Indeed, the vast majority of people in the villages we visited can speak Azerbaijani well. While it is possible that in the smaller mountain villages the older generation may have difficulties with Azerbaijani, parents seem to be teaching their children Azerbaijani, and adults under 60 have high levels of proficiency in it. Russian, on the other hand, does not seem to play an important role in most Tat communities.

While most Tat communities are mountain and foothill villages of less than 5,000 people, the greatest number of Tats (outside the Apsheron Peninsula) live in plains villages of over 1,000 people. Azerbaijani seems to be displacing Tat for a large portion of Tats living in these communities. The situation in Gəndov and Giləzi, in which the young adults and children are no longer learning to speak Tat, and Azerbaijani has become the main language of communication for most families, seems to be typical. A similar situation exists in foothill villages of 500 to 1,000 people. In Sə'dan, for example, some of the children do know Tat well; but others do not, and many use Azerbaijani for daily communication. In Rustov, too, it was reported that although most children at least understand Tat, they choose to speak Azerbaijani.

While Tat is being displaced by Azerbaijani in many communities, this is not universal. Residents of the larger foothill communities of Məlhəm and Zəyvə and the mountainous Lahic show signs of preserving Tat. As indicated above, the economic vitality of the two foothill communities may contribute to the maintenance of Tat. Lahic also has economic vitality, in contrast with Dağ Quşçu, another medium-sized mountain

village. It may be, though, that Lahıc is atypical of a village of its size and location because of its unique history and cultural heritage. In communities like these three villages where Tat appears to be viable, the population as a whole also exhibits a high level of proficiency in Azerbaijani. Thus a stable bilingualism might be achieved, though it remains to be seen if the pattern of parents using Azerbaijani with their school-aged children will upset this equilibrium.

Since the main Mountain Jewish settlement outside of Baku is Qırmızı Qəsəbə, the information gathered there is representative of a significant portion of Mountain Jews. Among those in Qırmızı Qəsəbə, the information indicates that the community is preserving their language. At the same time the majority of the population achieves at least a medium proficiency in Azerbaijani, and many young adults and children are reported to know Russian well. It would also be worthwhile to conduct research on patterns among Mountain Jews in Baku. Initial research indicates that Russian is also an important language for education among Mountain Jews in Baku. We have not even begun to investigate, however, whether stable multilingualism is developing among Mountain Jews in Baku.

5. Conclusion

Dialect differences within Tat seem to be dependent more on geographical location than religious distinctions, an assessment close to Miller's assertions. While (Muslim) Tat and Mountain Jewish are perceived as being very distinct, this seems to have more to do with sociological differences than linguistic ones. Within Tat, the Tat spoken in the Lahıc area is generally perceived as being very different from that of other villages. Similarly, there is a distinct perceived difference between the Tat of the Quba-Qonaqkənd and Dəvəçi areas, and the Tat spoken in other parts of the country.

Our research indicates there is a range of sociolinguistic situations among the Tat and Mountain Jews of Azerbaijan. As regards the Tat communities, the viability of the vernacular seems to be tied to the economic viability of a given community, and secondly to the remoteness of the village. Large foothill communities with resources, as well as mountain villages of relative economic stability may be areas where the Tat language will survive, whereas strapped mountain and foothill villages are showing evidence of Azerbaijani becoming the main language of the family and the community. The fact that parents in all communities tend to speak Azerbaijani with their school-aged children could lead to a continued decline in the use of Tat. This seems to have already happened in the plains communities where the main language for most adults and children is Azerbaijani. It is possible, however, that the use of Tat by a significant number of parents with children who have not started school will result in the maintenance of stable bilingualism in some communities.

In all Tat communities, levels of proficiency in Azerbaijani are generally high, though actual levels are influenced by both age and educational level. Azerbaijani is the language of education in all the Tat communities. In addition, residents of villages that are more isolated geographically, economically, or socially have lower levels of proficiency. In a few villages, mainly the mountainous Lahıc and foothill communities where the vernacular is viable, children are reported to occasionally have difficulties with Azerbaijani upon entering school, but within a couple months are comfortable in this language. For the majority of Tat communities, Russian plays a secondary role to Azerbaijani; only a small portion of the population can speak this language well.

The information gathered in Qırmızı Qəsəbə, the main Mountain Jewish settlement outside Baku, indicates that the local language is viable, since it is the main language of the family and the community. This includes the use of the language with children. At the same time the population as a whole is also learning and using Azerbaijani and Russian. While Russian plays an especially important role, there is some evidence that actual levels of proficiency are higher in Azerbaijani than in Russian.

With regard to language attitudes, in most communities Azerbaijani was considered important or very important for the majority of domains. Russian, on the other hand, was said to be minimally

important in most communities, with the exception of Qırmızı Qəsəbə, where residents considered Russian important or very important for all categories except religion. In addition, the local language was generally said to be very important for family life and interpersonal communication.

Appendix A: Azerbaijani Proficiency

		Lahic	Dəğ Quşçu	Qonaq.	Məlhem	Sə'dan	Zəyvə	Rustov	Gəndov	Giləzi	Qır. Qəs ¹
60+	M	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	+	1	1
		1	2	1	2	1	1	2	+	0	2 R / 1 W
	F	2	1	#	2	2 C / 1 S	1.5	#	+	2	1
		0	1	#	1	0	1	#	+	2	0
45–60	M	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	+	2	2 C / 1 S
		2	2	2	2	2	2	2	+	2	2
	F	2	2	#	2	2	2	+	+	2	1.5
		2	1 R / 2 W	#	2	2	2	+	+	2	1
30–45	M	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	+	2	2
		2	2	2	2	2	2	2	+	2	2
	F	2	2	#	2	2	2	+	+	2	1.5
		2	1 R / 2 W	#	2	2	2	+	+	2	1
<30	M	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	+	2	*
		2	2	2	2	2	2	2	+	2	*
	F	2	2	#	2	2	2	+	+	2	1.5
		2	1 R / 2 W	#	2	2	2	+	+	2	1

Key: 0: no ability 1: low ability 2: high ability +: some ability, unspecified #: insufficient information
 *: depends on language of education; 2 if in Azerbaijani, 1 if in Russian

¹ The women's proficiencies were obtained from a private interview with one woman.

Appendix B: Russian Proficiencies

		Lahic	Dağ Quşçu	Qonaq.	Məlhem	Sə'dan	Zəyvə	Rustov	Gəndov	Giləzi	Qır. Qəs.
60+	M	C/S	1	1	2	1	0	1	#	1	2
		R/W	1	1	2R/+W	1	0	1	#	0	2R/1W
	F	C/S	0	#	0	0	1	#	1	2	1
		R/W	0	#	0	0	0	#	0	2	1
45– 60	M	C/S	1	1	2	2	1	2	#	2	2
		R/W	1	1	2R/+W	1	1	2	#	1	2
	F	C/S	1	#	1C/0S	1	0	#	1C/0S	1	1
		R/W	1	#	1	IR/#W	0	#	1	+	1.5
30– 45	M	C/S	1	1	2	2	1	1	#	2	2
		R/W	1	1	2R/+W	1	1	1	#	1	2
	F	C/S	1	#	1C/0S	1C/0S	0	#	1C/0S	1	1
		R/W	1	#	1	IR/#W	0	#	1	+	1.5
<30	M	C/S	1	1	1	1	1	0	#	1	2/1*
		R/W	1	#	1.5R/+W	1	1	0	#	1	2/1*
	F	C/S	1	#	1C/0S	1C/0S	0	#	1C/0S	1	2
		R/W	1	#	1	IR/#W	0	#	1	+	1.5

Key: 0: no ability 1: low ability 2: high ability +: some ability, unspecified #: insufficient information
 *: depends on language of education; 2 if in Azerbaijani, 1 if in Russian

Appendix C: Perceived Benefit

		Lahıc	Dağ Quşçu	Qonaqkənd	Məlhem	Sə'dan	Zəyvə	Rustov	Giləzi	Qır. Qəs.
Income	Tat	1	3	3	1,0	2,0	3	0	1	2.5
	Az	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Ru	1,3	0	1	0,2	0,2	1	3	1	3
Information	Tat	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Az	3	3	3	3	3,2	3	3	3	3
	Ru	1	1	3	1	1,2	1	1	2	3
Family	Tat	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Az	3	2	3	2,0	3	2	3	3	*
	Ru	0,1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	*
Religion	Tat	1	0	3	0	2,1	3	2	1	3
	Az	3,0	0	3	1,3	3	1	3	3	0
	Ru	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Respect	Tat	1,3	2	3	#,3	2	3	2	2	2
	Az	2,3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3
	Ru	2,0	0	1	#,0	0	0	0	1	3
Communication	Tat	3	3	3	3,2	3	3	3	2	3
	Az	1	1	3	3	2,3	2	3	3	3
	Ru	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	2

Key: 3: very important

2: important

1: a little important

0: not important

#: language not important for prestige

*: depends on language of children's education (3 for school language)

When there are two numbers, the first is the men's assessment, the second the women's.

Appendix D: Data on Interpersonal Domains for Tats

Table A: Language Use Patterns among 14–17 year-olds (N=20)

They use ↓ with →	Preschool	School- aged	Adults <30	Adults 30– 55	Grandparents
Azerbaijani	14	14	12	10	4
Tat	6	1	2	7	11
Mix	0	5	6	3	5

Table B: Language Use Patterns among 18–29 year-olds (N=38)

They use ↓ with →	Preschool	School- aged	Adults <30	Adults 30– 55	Grandparents
Azerbaijani	14	18	6	6	2
Tat	18	6	19	25	25
Mix	6	14	13	7	11

Table C: Language Use Patterns among 30–55 year-olds (N=79)

They use ↓ with →	Preschool	School- aged	Adults <30	Adults 30– 55	Grandparents
Azerbaijani	18	39	10	6	3
Tat	31	18	53	57	59
Mix	30	22	16	16	17

Table D: Language Use Patterns among Adults over 55 (N=55)

They use ↓ with →	Preschool	School- aged	Adults <30	Adults 30– 55	Grandparents
Azerbaijani	16	24	11	3	3
Tat	34	19	30	40	46
Mix	5	12	14	12	6

Appendix E: Data on Interpersonal Domains for Mountain Jews

They use ↓ with →	Preschool	School-aged	Adults <30	Adults 30–55	Grandparents
Azerbaijani	0	0	0	0	0
Mountain Jewish	27	22	25	25	27
Mountain Jewish / Russian	0	3	1	0	0
Russian	0	0	0	1	0
Mountain Jewish / Azerbaijani	0	0	1	1	0
Azerbaijani/Russian (depending of language of education)	0	2	0	0	0

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