

# **The Sociolinguistic Situation of the Khinalug in Azerbaijan**

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## Abstract

This paper presents the results of sociolinguistic research conducted in August 2000 among the Khinalug people in northeastern Azerbaijan, the majority of whom live in the villages of Xınalıq and Gülüstan. The goals of the research were to investigate patterns of language use, bilingualism, and language attitudes with regard to the Khinalug, Azerbaijani, and Russian languages in the Khinalug community. Of particular interest is the stable diglossia that has developed between Khinalug and Azerbaijani. Interviews, observations, and questionnaires were employed. An important part of the interviews dealt with perceived benefits of the various languages.\*

## 1. Background

The Khinalug people have lived for many centuries in one village situated high in the mountains of Azerbaijan, near the Şahdağ peak in the Quba district. Xınalıq<sup>1</sup> village is located seventy km by road southwest of Quba town. It is the highest populated location in Azerbaijan, reaching an elevation of 2,300 m above sea level. Houses in the village are constructed of stone, with traditional flat earth-and-timber roofs which form terraces reached by wooden ladders from below or from the connecting streets above.

Khinalug people are currently found not only in Xınalıq village, but also in other areas in and around Quba town and in the Xaçmaz, Qəbələ, and Qazıməmməd districts. No sources have been found to indicate how scattered or compact the settlement of Khinalug people may be in these other areas where they form a small minority.

The most recent census figure is 2,500 in the 1976 census. Over the years, figures for the Khinalug people have varied from 2,315 in 1886 to 100 in 1926, 1,000 in 1968, and 1,754 in Xınalıq village itself according to the 1970 census. In the 1959 census, and in censuses since 1976, the Khinalug people were not counted as a separate ethnic group (Gardanova 1962, Desheriyev 1968, Kibrik 1972, Isaev 1978, Cavadov and Huseinov 1993). The fluctuations in the population figures may be due to actual shifts in population, to seasonal migration, or to the policies of government organs responsible for the census.

Xınalıq village is famous for its unique language, which is native to no other location. The Khinalug language has been tentatively classified by previous researchers as a member of the Lezgian family of the Dagestani branch of Northeast Caucasian languages. Khinalug shows enough similarity to the nearby languages of Budukh<sup>2</sup> and Kryz<sup>3</sup> that some analysts have posited a distant genetic relationship between them (Desheriyev 1968). Most analysts, however, now consider that while the relationship

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<sup>1</sup> While we are using the generally accepted spelling of Khinalug for the name of the language, we are using the current Latin-based Azerbaijani orthography and spelling for place names and personal names. Thus, Khinalug is the name of the language and people group, but Xınalıq is the name of the village.

<sup>2</sup> Budukh is spoken in Budukh village, located about 30 km away from Khinalug village, and various lowland villages of the Quba and Xaçmaz districts.

<sup>3</sup> Kryz is spoken in the villages of Qrıız, Cek, Əlık, and Hapıt, located 15 km from Khinalug village. The dialects of these four villages are different enough that some analysts have described them as separate languages (Desheriyev 1968).

between Budukh and Kryz is genetic, the relationship between Khinalug and the other two languages is geographic, not genetic.

It has long been noted that residents of Xınalıq village have a high level of proficiency in Azerbaijani, and that the younger generations tend to use more Azerbaijani than older people do (Desheriyev 1968, Gardanova 1962). Furthermore, it has been reported that among those who move away from the village, the use of Khinalug tends to decrease and the use of Azerbaijani tends to increase (Qübatov 1986, Desheriyev 1968, Gardanova 1962). Some of these previous studies predicted that for this reason, use of the Khinalug language was likely to decline over time, eventually giving way to Azerbaijani (Isaev 1978).

Kibrik (1994) notes that the oldest generation of Khinalug people have little or no knowledge of Russian, but middle-aged and younger people in the village do have some proficiency in Russian.

This paper discusses sociolinguistic research investigating current language use among speakers of Khinalug in Azerbaijan. The primary goals of this research were:

- a. To verify the locations and overall ethnic makeup of villages where Khinalug speakers live.
- b. To investigate multilingualism and language use patterns for Khinalug, Azerbaijani, and Russian in Khinalug communities.
- c. To probe speakers' attitudes toward Khinalug, Azerbaijani, and Russian.

## 2. Methodology

The primary method of investigation involved direct interviews with individuals and groups in Xınalıq village on 28–29 August 2000. One teacher in the village provided information on children's language proficiency upon entering and completing school, on the medium of instruction, and on Khinalug-language teaching. The doctor and the head mullah were asked about language use in their respective jobs. In addition, groups of residents were interviewed about domains of language use and levels of proficiency in each language among older, middle-aged, and young people in their villages. These groups were also asked about their opinions concerning the importance of each language in a variety of communicative situations. The groups that were interviewed consisted of one gathering of about fifty men of various ages in the village square during a wedding celebration, and another group of about twenty women inside one home at the same celebration. Some of the elderly women in this latter group had lived in the village for most of their lives, but had moved into the homes of their sons in Quba town several years before. They had come back to the village for the wedding.

These interviews were supplemented with information provided by the Quba District Executive Authority, Education Department, and Statistical Bureau regarding population figures, demographic trends, education programs, and various language-use patterns. The Xaçmaz District Statistical Bureau supplied additional population data.

Finally, a 139-word list of basic Khinalug vocabulary was collected in Xınalıq village.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Khinalug Locations

#### 3.1.1 Village inventory

District officials and village residents listed various other locations where they knew Khinalug speakers to be living. The inventory of Khinalug locations compiled from previous literature was confirmed and expanded through interviews with government officials and village residents. These locations are listed in table 1.

**Table 1: Locations of Khinalug Speakers<sup>†</sup>**

Quba District	Xaçmaz District	Qazıməmməd District
Xınalıq	Xaçmaz town	Pırsaat Station
Gülüstan	various villages	Other Locations
? Bostankeç	Qəbələ District	Gəncə town
Quba town	Vəndam	Baku
Atuc		various Russian towns
Qaraçay		
Alekseyevka		
Dağlı		

<sup>†</sup> A question mark (?) denotes locations not yet pinpointed on a map of Azerbaijan.

The majority of Khinalug speakers live in the two villages of Xınalıq and Gülüstan (also known as Vladimirovka) in Quba district. There are about 250 homes in Xınalıq, with a total population of about 1,700, and there are about 100 homes in Gülüstan. Overall, there are up to 3,000 Khinalug speakers in Quba district, 100 in Xaçmaz district, and several families in Qəbələ district. Pırsaat Station, in Qazıməmməd district, is a seasonal residence used from October through May.

### 3.1.2 Population and ethnic mix

The population figures cited by officials and other individuals suggest that the current Khinalug population of Azerbaijan is probably between 2,000 and 3,000. Everyone currently living in Xınalıq village is ethnically Khinalug, except for a few women who have married in from nearby villages. It was not reported that Khinalug people form a majority of the ethnic mix in any locations other than Xınalıq village and Bostankeç.

The Quba District Statistical Bureau reports a population of 1,749 for Xınalıq village, although residents claim that only about 1,400 people are currently living there full time. Of the 250 homes in the village, some contain more than one nuclear family unit. Some families in the village maintain a second home in the lowland areas in or around Quba town, where they live for part of the year. These families retain a home in the village as well, and pasture their livestock in the mountains, so they are still considered village residents. Others in the village, especially elderly people, may go to stay with relatives in the lowlands for extended periods of time to avoid the difficult winter weather. Some families have moved away entirely, creating a slow decline in the population of the village.

## 3.2 Cultural Factors

### 3.2.1 Economic activity

Most of the people in Xınalıq are shepherds. Even individuals who have other work, such as the teachers and the doctor, own sheep which are pastured for them by others. Some people own as many as 300 sheep. Buyers from Quba town come to the village to purchase animals for about 1 shirvan<sup>4</sup> per kilogram of meat, or 10 to 15 shirvan for one sheep. These buyers then take them to the district center, where they are resold to purchasers from Baku. The distinctive white honey produced in Xınalıq is also sold for a substantial price at the bazaar in Quba.

In Soviet times, there was a state collective farm to which Xınalıq village belonged. This collective also included the villages of Buduq, Qrız, Qalay Xudat, Cek, Əlık, and Hapıt. The farm cultivated land and pastured large flocks of sheep in the fields around these villages. Most of the men and a few of the women from Xınalıq worked full time in the collective. At planting time, however, everyone from the village, both men and women, helped with the work.

<sup>4</sup> A shirvan is 10,000 Azerbaijani manat. In August 2000, a shirvan was worth approximately US\$2.40.

The collective has since been dissolved, and its property has been divided up among the various villages. One resident mentioned that the amount of land available is insufficient to meet the needs of the population of Xinalıq. This shortage is one factor that motivates people to leave the village.

Some individuals and families have gone to find work in Quba town, or in various other towns in Azerbaijan and Russia. Although some people who move away permanently return to the village once per year to attend weddings in the village, most rarely come back to visit.

Transport to Xinalıq is difficult and expensive. This discourages visitors from coming and hinders village residents from getting out. The standard price for a one-way trip to Xinalıq in four-wheel-drive jeep is 15 shirvan. It costs two shirvan per person to go to Quba town. Most people cannot afford to make the trip often. Pensioners, for example, receive pensions of only 5 shirvan per month. The cost of transport also raises the price of staple foods and other supplies which must be brought from Quba town. These economic factors provide more reasons for village residents to move down to the lowlands.

### *3.2.2 Marriage patterns*

Families in Xinalıq village exchange brides with families in Cek and Qrız, and other nearby villages. There are many girls who marry out of Xinalıq village, but only a few who marry in from other places.

In Azerbaijan, girls are legally allowed to marry at age 16, and boys at age 17. Girls from Xinalıq village usually do marry at about age 16, but men may marry as late as 30. Boys sometimes marry young because their families have economic difficulties and need help around the house. The average family size in Xinalıq is now two or three children. Formerly, the average family used to have about nine children; one family had eighteen children.

### *3.2.3 Education*

There is one school in Xinalıq village, with grades 1 through 11, plus a preparatory class to help children learn Azerbaijani before entering school. There is no kindergarten in the village. Currently, there are between 350 and 400 students and fifteen or sixteen teachers at the school. All of the teachers are from Xinalıq village and speak Khinalug as their first language. Most of them have higher education. Some students come from other villages such as Bostankeç to attend the school in Xinalıq.

The school building is located in the lower part of the village, near the stadium. It was built in 1987, to replace the old, smaller school building in the center of town.

There were thirty graduates from the school in Xinalıq in 2000. Ten of them were girls and twenty were boys. Six or seven students went away from the village to study in 2000. Some of those students had graduated in previous years. From the most recent graduating class, three boys and one girl were accepted for higher education. The teacher said that girl was exceptionally intelligent and studious and was the first female student from Xinalıq to pursue higher education.

The girls in Xinalıq do graduate from the eleventh grade, but they attend school less frequently after grade 7 or 8. Their parents keep them at home more during these latter years, so that the girls usually come to school only two or three days out of a six-day school week. One teacher said that the parents consider it less important for girls to study than for boys. Girls always stop going to school entirely when they get married, but boys who marry before they finish school continue to attend until they graduate.

### *3.2.4 Religious activity*

The people of Xinalıq village are Sunni Muslim. The residents said that Islam plays an important role in the life of the village. There is one working mosque, located at the

highest point in the village, which was built hundreds of years ago. Formerly there were several other mosques in operation, but they are all currently closed.

Forty or more men attend prayers at the mosque on Fridays. These prayers are said in Arabic, with an explanation given in Khinalug. Prayers are also read five times each day. There are no other ceremonies that take place in the mosque. Women do not go to the mosque, but rather pray at home. Someone in nearly every home is able to read prayers, and thus is considered to be a mullah. People in the village prayed secretly during the Soviet era, but now they can pray openly.

The *effendeh*, or head mullah, has a variety of roles in the village. He participates in the arrangement of marriages, weddings, and funerals. At these events, he reads the Koran in Arabic and leads the religious vows in the Khinalug language. Sometimes people come to him for advice, and he speaks to them in Khinalug. He also meets with fifteen children at his home each week to teach them Arabic and the Koran. When he teaches, he speaks Khinalug to the children.

There is some religious literature available in the village which is written in Azerbaijani or in Arabic. To obtain further religious education, people must go to Baku to study. Two people from Xinalıq are currently involved in religious study in Baku. There is no one who comes to the village to give religious instruction or for other religious purposes.

### 3.2.5 *Medical facilities*

There is an outpatient clinic with one doctor that serves Xinalıq village. Patients either come to the doctor's house for treatment, or he visits them in their homes.

A hospital was under construction during Soviet times, but it was never completed. Babies are usually born at home. For operations or serious illnesses, people go to Quba town. There used to be an ambulance, but it is no longer in operation. Formerly, there were several additional medical practitioners in the village, but they moved away to work elsewhere. The current doctor was raised in the village, studied medicine in Baku, and returned to Xinalıq in 1955 to work.

## 3.3 **Domains of Language Use**

Village residents reported that they usually speak Khinalug among themselves for informal activities within the village. They use Azerbaijani when speaking to non-Khinalug people, for official or educational purposes within the village, and for many situations outside the village.

When Khinalug people converse among themselves outside the village, they are still likely to speak Khinalug to one another. For example, at the so-called Xinalıq station of the bus stop near the bazaar in Quba town, many of the drivers are first-language Khinalug speakers. When they talk to one another they often speak Khinalug, even though other people in the vicinity may not be able to understand.

### 3.3.1 *Physical and functional domains*

Khinalug speakers in Xinalıq report using only Khinalug in some domains. In other domains they use Khinalug and Azerbaijani, only Azerbaijani, or Russian and Azerbaijani. The domains in which each of these combinations are used are listed in table 2.

### 3.3.2 *Economic activity*

People from Xinalıq would speak Khinalug with one another while they were working on the collective. The workers from other villages could not speak Khinalug, however, so Azerbaijani was used as the language of wider communication between residents of the various villages. Many people from these other villages were also second-language speakers of Azerbaijani.

**Table 2: Physical and Functional Domains of Language Use**

	Physical Domains	Functional Domains
Khinalug only	home village streets village teahouse village store village mill village mosque village weddings & funerals	work in village unofficial occasions (outside home & work) arguing cursing
Khinalug / Azerbaijani	village clinic (with local doctor) village post office village house of culture <sup>†</sup> village school (outside of class)	counting things
Azerbaijani only	village school (in class) weddings & funerals outside village	work outside village official occasions (outside home & work) speaking to non-Khinalug guests in the village reading writing letters writing official papers singing telling stories to children
Russian / Azerbaijani	none	listening to radio watching television <sup>‡</sup>

<sup>†</sup> Young people speak Azerbaijani in the house of culture; older people speak Khinalug.

<sup>‡</sup> None of the women claimed to know Russian well enough to fully understand news broadcasts in Russian. Instead, they said that when they listen to Russian-language programming, someone who understands Russian explains to them what is said.

### 3.3.3 Marriage patterns

Women who marry into Xinalıq village learn to speak Khinalug within one year or so, and they usually speak Khinalug at home in the village. If girls from Xinalıq marry away to other villages or towns where Khinalug is not spoken, then their children usually learn only Azerbaijani and not Khinalug.

The group of men and the group of women in Xinalıq village agreed that mothers in the village should speak Khinalug with their children. However, the women indicated that children should learn Azerbaijani before Khinalug, while the men said that children should first learn to speak Khinalug.

### 3.3.4 Education

The medium of instruction at the school has always been Azerbaijani. It is a strict policy that students and teachers speak only Azerbaijani during school hours, though they do sometimes speak Khinalug among themselves between and after classes. Residents indicated that they usually speak Azerbaijani to the local teachers, although those people are first-language speakers of Khinalug.

Most students at the school have difficulty with Azerbaijani when they first begin, but they learn to speak it freely by the time they have attended for one year. For some students, it takes two or three years to really become fluent. One teacher attributed this difference to the amount of Azerbaijani the children might hear at home. This teacher said that the use of Azerbaijani at home in Xinalıq village correlates with economic wealth. The families who have more economic resources are more likely to teach their children Azerbaijani at home than are those families who are very poor. Children in Xinalıq can also learn some Azerbaijani from television and radio broadcasts.



Khinalug language lessons were offered in the first four grades from 1993 until 1999. Textbooks for these courses were developed by Rahim Alxas, who adapted the Cyrillic-based Lezgi orthography for use in writing Khinalug. At first the classes were offered for two hours per week, then for one hour per week, and then they were discontinued entirely. One teacher indicated that the lessons were discontinued due to limited interest in Khinalug literacy among the parents of the students. The parents were more concerned that their children learn to read and write well in Azerbaijani than that they become literate in Khinalug. The switch to a Latin-based orthography for Azerbaijani has made it more difficult for children in Xinalıq village to learn to read Cyrillic-based alphabets such as the one used to write Khinalug.

When asked directly, several groups of adults in the village indicated that reading in Khinalug was a good idea. They said that it would be good to have more books in Khinalug, in addition to the textbooks and translated volumes of poetry. However, these adults also believed that reading and writing in Azerbaijani and Russian was important.

Khinalug lessons are not offered by schools in any of the other locations where Khinalug people live, because they form a minority of the population in those villages or towns.

Russian-language lessons are taught for two hours per week at the school in Xinalıq. English-language lessons were also offered for a while, but they were discontinued when the English teacher moved away.

### *3.3.5 Medical facilities*

Village residents said that when they meet with the doctor for treatment, they usually speak Azerbaijani with him. The doctor, however, reported that he speaks both Khinalug and Azerbaijani with his patients. He said that some of the elderly patients cannot speak Azerbaijani well, and therefore he must speak Khinalug when he treats them.

## **3.4 Language Proficiency**

Groups of men and groups of women were asked to evaluate language proficiency in Khinalug, Azerbaijani, and Russian among people living in Xinalıq village. The interviewees reported the ability levels in four domains (comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing) for various age groups. These age categories consisted of preschool children (ages 2–6), young people (ages 7–29); middle-aged people (ages 30–44), and older people (ages 45 and over).<sup>5</sup>

### *3.4.1 Khinalug language proficiency*

Spoken proficiency in Khinalug was reported to be very high among people of all age groups living in Xinalıq village. Both men and women master it at native-speaker level. Children often speak only Khinalug before they attend school. Even brides who marry into the village from other locations as young adults learn to speak Khinalug and regularly use it at home. The group of women specifically stated that everyone living in the village knows the Khinalug language.<sup>6</sup>

Village residents reported that Khinalug families who move away from the village often continue to speak Khinalug at home. It was reported that children born outside the village, however, may learn to speak Azerbaijani better than they speak Khinalug, due to extensive contact with the surrounding Azerbaijani-speaking community.

Although Khinalug language lessons were offered at the school in Xinalıq village for several years, literacy levels remain quite low. Few adults are able to read the Khinalug orthography, and even some teachers at the school find it difficult. The children who took

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<sup>5</sup> For a comprehensive display of all the responses, see the appendix.

<sup>6</sup> The men also reported a high level of spoken proficiency for all age groups in the village, but it was not noted whether or not they knew of any exceptions to this generalization for any of the age groups.

the Khinalug literacy classes attained only a limited level of proficiency before the classes were discontinued.

### 3.4.2 Azerbaijani language proficiency

The responses regarding proficiency in Azerbaijani among residents of Xinalıq village are summarized in table 3. For some groups, proficiency was reported as mixed, so a range is indicated.

**Table 3: Reported Azerbaijani Language Proficiency**

		Oral	Written
M	Older (45+)	high	
	Middle (30–44)		
	Younger (7–29)	low to high	
F	Older (45+)	medium	low
	Middle (30–44)	low to high	
	Younger (7–29)		
	Child (2–6)	none	

In one area there was a lack of consistency between the comments of the group of women and the group of men. While there was general agreement in both the groups that men speak Azerbaijani slightly better than women, the men reported that younger men's proficiency in Azerbaijani was medium, while the women reported that the younger women's proficiency was high.

The women said that the men have more contact with people outside the village, and therefore they learn more vocabulary and attain fuller fluency in Azerbaijani than the women. The middle-aged and older men have a higher proficiency in Azerbaijani than the young men do because their language abilities have increased over time through work and social contacts with Azerbaijani speakers.

The women tend to learn Azerbaijani through school and passive input from television or radio, rather than through extended contacts with Azerbaijani speakers. Older women generally had less formal education than younger and middle-aged women, and therefore have a lower level of Azerbaijani proficiency than the younger women.

Most children do not begin actively learning Azerbaijani at all before attending school, although some children might acquire passive comprehension through watching Azerbaijani-language television.

### 3.4.3 Russian language proficiency

The responses regarding proficiency in Russian among residents of Xinalıq village are summarized in table 4.

**Table 4: Reported Russian Language Proficiency**

		Oral	Written
M	Male (7+)	low	
F	Middle & Older (30+)	none	
	Younger (7–29)	C: low S: none	low
	Child (2–6)	none	

For many people living in Xınalıq, Russian proficiency is limited to what they learned in school and through passive listening to television and radio. Therefore, most people living in Xınalıq were reported to have little or no proficiency in Russian.

Most men of school age or older have a low level of both speaking and writing skills in Russian. In general, men have better Russian language skills than women do, because they are more likely to have contact with Russian speakers through work or time in the army. However, the men indicated that their contacts with Russian speakers are much less frequent than their contacts with Azerbaijani speakers, and thus their proficiency is lower in Russian than in Azerbaijani.

Young women attain some ability to comprehend, read, and write in Russian-language classes in school, but in general they are unable to actually speak Russian. The women said that girls have a lower proficiency level in Russian than boys do because the girls attend school less frequently than the boys do in the higher grades. Young women's Russian ability tends to decline rapidly after they finish school, because they do not use it in daily life. Older women have had less formal education than younger women, and thus had little opportunity to learn Russian at all.

Children learn no Russian before school and usually have no contact with Russian speakers outside the classroom.

#### 3.4.4 Summary profile of language proficiency

Men's reported oral proficiency in all three languages is summarized in Table 5.

**Table 5: Men's Reported Spoken Language Proficiency**

	Khinalug	Azerbaijani	Russian
Older (45+)	high	high	low
Middle (30–44)			
Younger (7–29)		medium	
Child (2–6)		none	none

All men have a high proficiency in Khinalug, and all men over the age of 30 have a high proficiency in both Khinalug and Azerbaijani. Boys have no proficiency in either Azerbaijani or Russian. Proficiency in Russian is lower than proficiency in either Khinalug or Azerbaijani for all age groups.

Women's reported oral proficiency in all three languages is summarized in table 6.

**Table 6: Women's Reported Spoken Language Proficiency**

	Khinalug	Azerbaijani	Russian
Older (45+)	high	C: medium S: low to high	none
Middle (30–44)		high	
Younger (7–29)		C: low S: none	
Child (2–6)		none	none

All women have a high proficiency in Khinalug, and all women between the ages of 7 and 44 have a high proficiency in both Khinalug and Azerbaijani. Girls have no proficiency in either Azerbaijani or Russian. Proficiency in Russian is lower than proficiency in either Khinalug or Azerbaijani for all age groups.

Men's reported written proficiency in all three languages is summarized in table 7.

**Table 7: Men's Reported Written Language Proficiency**

	Khinalug	Azerbaijani	Russian
Older (45+)	none <sup>†</sup>	high	low
Middle (30–44)		medium	
Younger (7–29)		none	none
Child (2–6)		none	none

<sup>†</sup> Individuals age 7–16 have studied some Khinalug in school. Individuals over age 16 have not.

Men of all ages have the highest level of proficiency in written Azerbaijani and basically no proficiency in written Khinalug.

Women's reported written proficiency in all three languages is summarized in table 8.

**Table 8: Women's Reported Written Language Proficiency**

	Khinalug	Azerbaijani	Russian
Older (45+)	none <sup>†</sup>	low	none
Middle (30–44)			low
Younger (7–29)		none	none
Child (2–6)		none	none

<sup>†</sup> Individuals age 7–16 have studied some Khinalug in school. Individuals over age 16 have not.

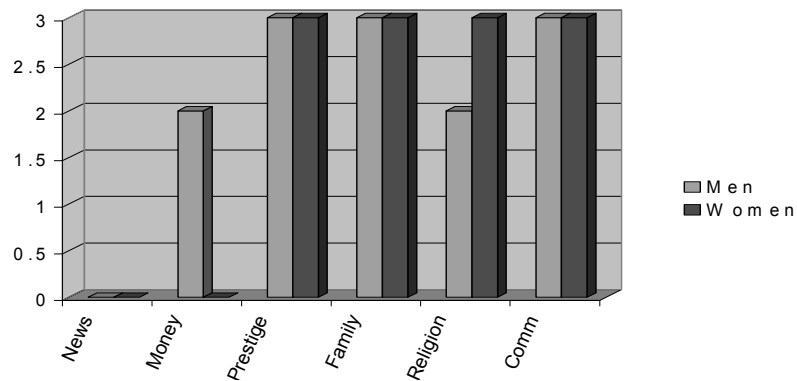
Women have overall low levels of proficiency in literacy in any language, although women have some proficiency in written Azerbaijani, and younger women also have some proficiency in written Russian.

Overall, men and women have comparable levels of proficiency in Khinalug, but men are reported to have slightly higher proficiency than women do in Azerbaijani and Russian.

### 3.5 Language Attitudes

Groups of residents in Xinalıq village were asked about the importance of Khinalug, Azerbaijani, and Russian for various purposes. These purposes included obtaining news about national and world events, earning income, gaining respect or prestige in the village, relating to extended family, participating in religious activities, and communicating with people in the village.<sup>7</sup> A complete record of their responses is given in table B in the appendix.

The responses for Khinalug are summarized in figure 1.<sup>8</sup>



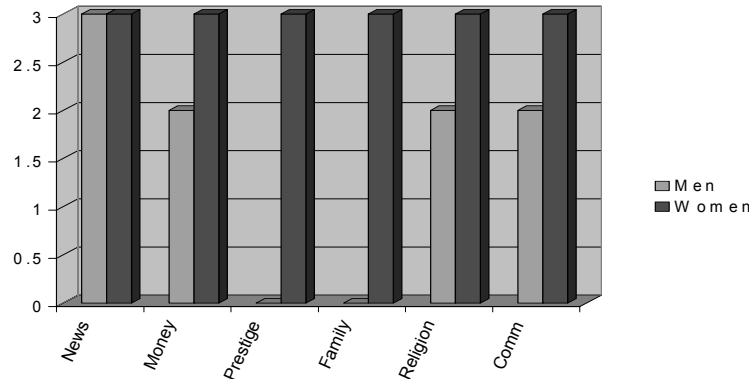
**Figure 1: Perceived Benefits of Khinalug**

For Khinalug, the most important purposes were family life, communication within the village, and gaining prestige among others in the village. A secondary purpose for Khinalug, especially among women, was religious activity. Men also felt Khinalug was important for making money. Khinalug was not considered to be at all important for obtaining news.

<sup>7</sup> This set of questions was adapted from the questions proposed in Stalder and Karan's (1997) perceived benefit model of language choice.

<sup>8</sup> In all the summaries of perceived benefit, 3=high importance, 2=medium importance, 1=low importance, and 0=no importance.

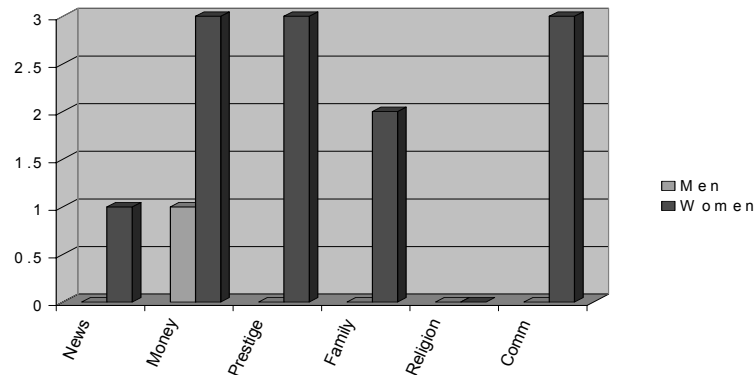
The responses for Azerbaijani are summarized in figure 2.



**Figure 2: Perceived Benefits of Azerbaijani**

Women thought that Azerbaijani was very important in all domains. Among men, Azerbaijani was considered most important for obtaining news about world events. Other significant domains for Azerbaijani included making money, communicating with people, and participating in religious activities. Men did not think that knowing Azerbaijani was necessary at all for family life or for gaining prestige.

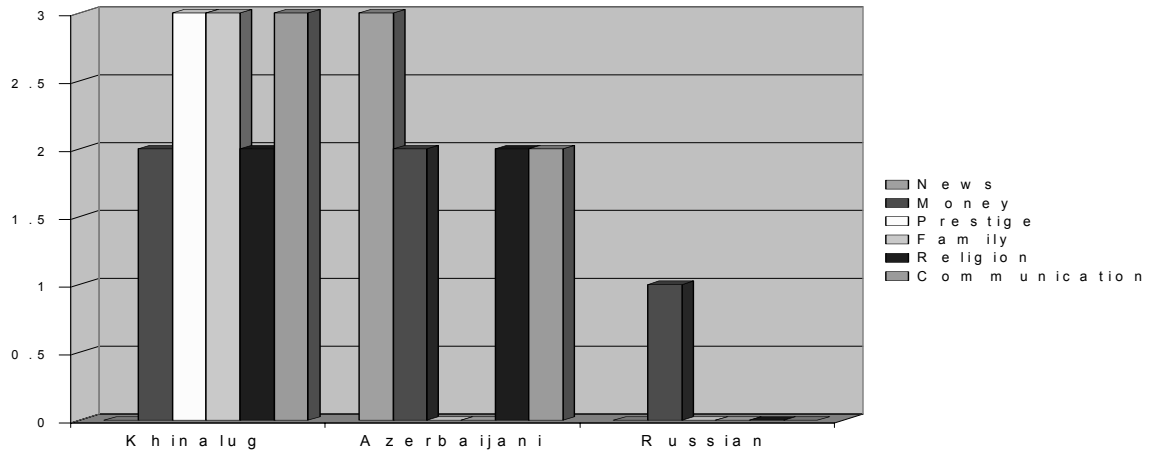
The responses for Russian are summarized in figure 3.



**Figure 3: Perceived Benefits of Russian**

In general, women placed a higher value on Russian than men did. Men indicated that Russian was slightly important for making money and not necessary at all in any other domains. Women thought that Russian was very important for earning money, gaining prestige and communicating with others, important for relating within the family, and somewhat important for obtaining news. Men and women agreed that Russian was not necessary at all for religious activities in the village.

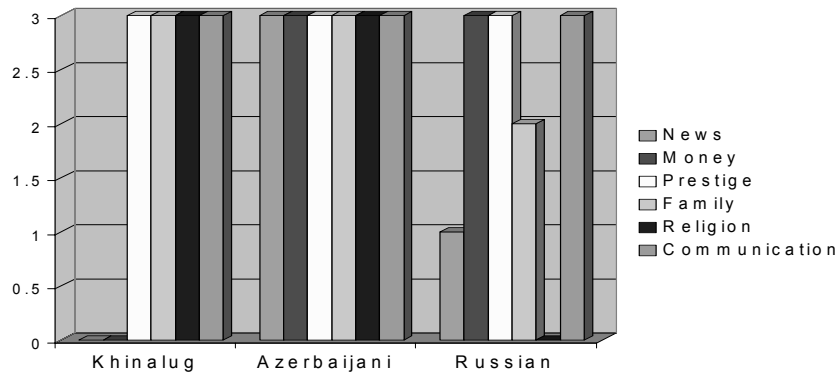
The responses from men are summarized in figure 4.



**Figure 4: Men's Opinions**

Men generally perceive Khinalug as much more important than either Azerbaijani or Russian. The difference is particularly striking in the domains of prestige and family, where Khinalug is very important and both Azerbaijani and Russian are perceived of as having no importance. Overall, Russian is perceived as having no importance in any domain other than making money.

The responses from women are summarized in figure 5.



**Figure 5: Women's Opinions**

Women perceived Azerbaijani as the only language which was very important for all purposes. They also indicated that Khinalug, Azerbaijani, and Russian were also important for prestige and family life. The reported motivation for using Russian in the family was so that children would learn to speak it. The women clearly stated that this is not currently done, though it was considered desirable. From this comment, it appears that women's perceptions of language are heavily influenced by a general feeling that Azerbaijani and Russian are important for life outside the village.

Several people mentioned that Arabic was the most important language for religious activity and that some of the children in the village were currently learning to read Arabic.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Khinalug and Azerbaijani within Xinalıq Village

The present study suggests that contrary to the predictions of previous research, the use of the Khinalug language in Xinalıq village has not declined under the influence of the Azerbaijani language.

The language-use patterns for Xinalıq village show that Khinalug is the language of the home and the village, while Azerbaijani is the language of education and outside contact. Both are necessary in daily life, and both are valued for specific purposes.

Because Xinalıq is a single village surrounded by other villages where Khinalug is not spoken, its residents have ample motivation and opportunity to learn Azerbaijani well in order to communicate with people in the surrounding villages. The strong economic ties between Xinalıq village and the regional center reinforce this motivation. The requirement to use Azerbaijani in school ensures that children begin learning it while they are still young and have ample opportunity to master it well.

At the same time, the residents of Xinalıq village have a positive attitude toward Khinalug and desire to continue using it in the home and the village. Although parents want their children to learn Azerbaijani well for school and for the demands of adult life, they also want the children to learn to speak Khinalug. Many adults in the village said that mothers should speak Khinalug to their children, so that the children learn Khinalug before any other languages. The current generation of young children are reported to show good mastery of Khinalug and use it actively within the home and the village.

Thus the residents of Xinalıq village have both the opportunity and the motivation to learn and use both Khinalug and Azerbaijani in daily life. This has apparently resulted in a situation of stable diglossia, where the two languages co-exist in the community.

### 4.2 Khinalug and Azerbaijani outside Xinalıq Village

The findings of the present study do bear out previous claims that among those who move away from the village, the use of Khinalug tends to decrease and the use of Azerbaijani to increase. It was reported that among families who move to the regional center, the adults continue to speak Khinalug at home, but the children gain only limited proficiency in Khinalug and speak more Azerbaijani instead. Those Khinalug people living in Azerbaijani-speaking communities have more opportunity and motivation to learn Azerbaijani well and less motivation and opportunity to speak Khinalug outside the home. There are, however, still situations within Azerbaijani-speaking communities where Khinalug people speak Khinalug among themselves, as is the case with the drivers at the Xinalıq station in Quba town. Thus it seems that even outside the village, some level of diglossia is maintained among some Khinalug people. This diglossia is likely to be less stable over time than that which occurs in Xinalıq village, due to the stronger influence of Azerbaijani on young people living in the regional center as compared with those living in the village.

### 4.3 Russian within Xinalıq Village

The present findings suggest that the role of Russian among Khinalug speakers remains largely peripheral. Men in the village reported that they have low levels of proficiency in Russian, and women claimed that they have very little or no Russian proficiency. Young people have limited opportunity to master Russian while living in the village because the emphasis on Russian-language teaching has declined since Azerbaijan gained independence in 1991. Some men from the village learn Russian while working in Russia, but women from the village have very little contact with Russian speakers. Thus there is not adequate opportunity for most people living in Xinalıq village to gain a high level of proficiency in Russian.

Women in the village stated that it would be very good to know Russian and to teach it to their children at home, but they currently were not able to do so. They considered



Russian to be more important for a wider variety of purposes than the men did. It seems that women in Xinalıq have some motivation to learn Russian, but little opportunity to do so. The men have more contacts with Russian speakers than the women, and thus have some opportunity to learn it, but they indicated little motivation to learn Russian. In both cases, either the lack of motivation or the lack of opportunity prevents acquisition of a high level of proficiency in Russian.

## 5. Conclusion

The language use and proficiency patterns in Xinalıq village reveal a state of stable diglossia, where both the Azerbaijani and Khinalug languages are fully mastered, frequently used and valued in different domains. Both men and women of all ages use Khinalug at home, but also learn Azerbaijani well for interaction with outsiders. Children still learn Khinalug first, although they begin learning Azerbaijani at an early age.

The diglossic situation for Khinalug families who have moved away from the village may be less stable, as children in these families reportedly learn Azerbaijani better than they learn Khinalug. Thus the migration of families from the village to lowland areas could affect the balance of language use for the group as a whole.

Although our research did not include visits to areas where Khinalug constitute a small minority, such study could either shed light on another case of diglossia, or on the processes of language shift. It is possible that in communities such as Quba, Khinalugs have moved into the same neighborhoods, and therefore may continue to use the vernacular for at least another generation. The continued use of Khinalug among the drivers at the Xinalıq station in Quba may be evidence of this.

Overall, the patterns observed suggest that the Khinalug and Azerbaijani languages could continue to co-exist in the Xinalıq community for the foreseeable future.

The role of Russian in Xinalıq village is very limited. Russian is believed to have some value for various purposes, but most village residents either have little contact with Russian speakers or little motivation to learn Russian, and therefore proficiency in Russian is very low.

## Appendix: Comprehensive Tables

**Table A: Reported Language Proficiency<sup>†</sup>**

		Khinalug		Azerbaijani		Russian	
		Oral	Writ	Oral	Writ	Oral	Writ
Older (45+)	M	3	0 <sup>‡</sup>	3		1	
Older	F			C: 2 S: 2 <sup>††</sup>	1	0	
Middle (30–44)	M			3	3	1	
Middle	F				1	0	
Younger (7–29)	M			2 <sup>‡‡</sup>		1	1
Younger	F			3 <sup>‡‡</sup>	1	C: 1 S: 0	
Child	M			0		0	
Child	F			0		0	

<sup>†</sup> 0 = no proficiency, 1 = low proficiency, 2 = medium proficiency, 3 = high proficiency

<sup>‡</sup> Individuals age 7–16 have studied some Khinalug in school. Individuals over age 16 have not.

<sup>††</sup> Individual speakers' abilities ranged from 1 to 3.

<sup>‡‡</sup> Men reported a level 2 for Younger Men's ability in Azerbaijani, and women reported a level 3 for Younger Women's speaking ability in Azerbaijani. However, the women said that the men speak Azerbaijani better than the women do at all age levels. Thus the ranking of the two groups here conflicts with the relative comparison of their abilities given by the women.

**Table B: Perceived Benefit Responses**

	Khinalug		Azerbaijani		Russian	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Getting News	0	0	3	3	0	1
Making Money	2	0	2	3	1	3
Prestige	3	3	0	3	0	3
Family Life	3	3	0	3	0	2*
Religion	2	3	2	3	0	0
Communication	3	3	2	3	0	3

0 = no importance, 1 = low importance, 2 = medium importance, 3 = high importance

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