

The Azerbaijani Language in Azerbaijan After the Political Independence: The Governmental Support of Mother Tongue and Multilingualism

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Abstract: This article is about ongoing language policy and language planning in the Republic of Azerbaijan after the political independence from the ex-Soviet Union in 1991. The intensive policy of Russification through education, especially during the Soviet period created a sizeable Russian-speaking segment in society. With regard to Russian, Azerbaijani displays typical signs of survival of a metropolitan language in a post-colonial context. It puts a certain pressure on the role of Azerbaijani, the language of the majority. It is a matter of significant public interest and subject of ongoing discussions in society. Despite the independence from the former Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian language enjoys its high prestige in the country. There exists an ongoing debate among scholars about the growth of the Russian language in Azerbaijan. The aim of this article is an analysis of government bodies responsible for the government to carry out the implementation of the Azerbaijani language- the officially sole state language in Azerbaijan after the political independence from the ex-Soviet Union. For this reason, the article covers responsible bodies for the implementation of the Azerbaijani language in post-Soviet Azerbaijan and the re-establishment of Azerbaijani in society. With this regard, the post-independence period is interpreted and analyzed. Together with the analysis of this period, some possible changes are put forward that may improve the implementation of the Azerbaijani language. The existing gap in the country is a need for analysis of the following questions: What has been done in the development of the Azerbaijani language after the political independence from the ex-Soviet Union? How does government support and advocate the importance of learning in the Azerbaijani language? And to what extent does this support work in society? The study attempts to examine the role of top policy in the “language building” which took place from 1991, as well as the changes in legislation brought about by independence. This research will contribute to the study of language-building in post-Soviet space. It will shed light on how Azerbaijani society, which has been considered the first independent country from the former USSR managed to guard and improve the inherited multilingualism and mother tongue policy. It will further explore the new phase of transition that started after independence. Also, it will discuss the existing gap between policy-makers and academia which makes the formulation of new policies and strategies incomplete.

Keywords: The Azerbaijani Language, Azerbaijan, Multilingualism, Government Bodies, Language Policy and Planning

1. Introduction

The collapse of the USSR marked a significant transformation in the language policy of the ex-Soviet countries. The majority of the remaining states, among which Azerbaijan, are still struggling with achieving the ameliorable solution for the language policy and planning issues in the country. Subsequently, the Azerbaijani language

was disregarded under USSR language policy practically and when Azerbaijan achieved its independence in 1991, it remained a major problem. It will be interesting to see what has been done by the government in the field of the mother tongue policy (Azerbaijani) in Azerbaijan. Another big issue in Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as relations with Russia and the relative influence of Russia in the political life of the country, affect many aspects including the language policy.

The post-Soviet countries, as well as Azerbaijan, entered into a long process of state-building with “nation-building, language planning and mother tongue revival” outbreaks. The post-Soviet “development” also started with new public figures who were busy with the policy-making process to fix the lacking that the Soviet regime had left behind. Government -issued agencies and institutions responsible for language revival and education policy issues were at the center. Outside of the country international agencies and institutions manifested their interest in cooperation with post-Soviet states. Close ties with European and US institutions established. Azerbaijan became a country where international companies launched money and many contracts signed with West, especially on oil-related commerce. International contracts and institutions present in the country drew into the new development process with the prestige of English in society. For the past 15 years, English schools launched in the country as a sign of the increasing interest in English [19, 34, 24]. However, the Russian language remains the most prestigious language with state-funded 400 public schools in Baku [1]. The 2013 population data puts ethnic Azerbaijanians to be 91.6 percent of and the rest of the population composed of ethnic minorities settled in the country with 8,4 percent [2]. It is worth mentioning that the government issued numerous orders to improve the language policy in the country. Moreover, the expectations of the top policy that there will be a smooth transition to Azerbaijani and the society will be unified under the mother tongue did not come into reality. Russian use is increasing especially, in the capital city, Baku. Accordingly, in multiethnic countries like Azerbaijan, language policy and planning (LPP) represent a crucial aspect of public policy. As noted by reference [3] granting a formal status to a language and elaborating its corpus planning is not enough. One needs to address acquisition planning in a manner that helps to enhance societal coherence. However, this transition as mentioned earlier is never smooth.

2. Methods

This article is motivated by the following research questions: (1) How does the government support and advocate the importance of learning in the Azerbaijani language after the independence from ex-Soviet Union? (2) To what extent does this support reflect in society? To answer the above-mentioned research questions, the explanatory case study qualitative research design will be employed. The qualitative research tools for this research will encompass content analysis of documents, government bodies, in-depth analysis of literature, phone interview and direct observations. The relevant literature for Azerbaijan and the role of government in language politics will be studied. The literature review will help to identify existing experience and government involvement in language policy activities, as well as in language transition. Later on, an analysis of the Azerbaijani language will be held to make clear what happened after independence from the former USSR. The

government strategy will be analyzed too. Also, the document analysis of the country language policy documents will help to identify the key strategies of language policy support toward national and international languages in Azerbaijan. The content analysis of these documents will result in designing my conclusion and future research area.

3. Result

3.1. High Prestige of Russian

According to reference [4], language planning and language policy have both commonalities and differences. Both are top-down activities aimed at solving language problems. The main difference between these concepts is that language planning is “a macro-sociological activity at a governmental and national level,” while language policy denotes both “macro or micro- sociological activity at a governmental, national or at an institutional level” [4]. Reference [3] proposed a new direction of language planning, language acquisition planning, which encompasses education aspects of language planning under a single category, where “the planning of language instruction accounts for the lion’s share” [3]. In the literature corpus and status planning policies are mentioned successful if applied jointly together along several dimensions at once [5]. Reference [6] confirms status and corpus planning dimensions effective jointly. To declare a language a state language and not to offer an opportunity for it to be a school language or standardized grammar for it will not achieve the state goal [5]. In other words, not to providing opportunity or incentive for the language to be learned and have a cross-regional communicative purpose will also not go far to achieve a goal in language implementation [5]. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, both corpus and status planning policies uprisings emerged in Azerbaijan. In the meantime, a close relationship with Turkey and the allocation of time to Turkish movies and programs in media was considered a return to Turkic origin and de-Russification [1]. In such a way, close political and economic relations with Turkey played a crucial role in the aspects of language planning, especially nation and corpus related aspects [1]. However, this does not mean that the Russophone people are discouraged to study in Russian [7]. There has been a long discussion in academia about the unresolved tensions between national and international languages in the field of language-building of ex-Soviet societies. The majority of authors believe that although most of the policy back up transitions to a sole state language of recent years have been done peacefully, it is still believed that the dominance of Russian is high in ex-Soviet countries [8-10]. Furthermore, in Azerbaijan, they claim that Russian is preferred and, in some cases, highly preferred language [11-15, 25]. Russian and English languages are playing an important role in education and intercultural communication in Azerbaijan [16]. Also, the high prestige of Russian in Azerbaijan, especially in the capital city, Baku creates societal incoherence [17]. The use of the Russian

language in Azerbaijan is observed by rises and falls during the independence period [16]. Also, reference [12] study maintains Russian to reassert itself in the late 1990s. In 10 years' time, the number of students enrolled in Russian schools has marked a steady increase ever since in the country [12]. Accordingly, the high prestige of Russian is favored by parents [17-20]. As a result, it led to a decrease in the number of first enrollment in the education of the Azerbaijani sector, and on the contrary, relative growth in the Russian sectors in Azerbaijan [21]. Unlike the authors discussed above, other scholars believe in just the opposite, arguing that the dominance of the Russian language in Azerbaijan has already completed in society and participation of Russian in education and daily life do not directly lead to polarization since in certain cases a strong society must be open to multilingual languages [22, 23, 56]. Up to now, there is a lack of comparative study to assess the quality of education in Azerbaijani and Russian schools. Opponents of Russian schools criticize that graduates of Russian schools do not possess the state language (Azerbaijani) at an appropriate level; are prone to external influence; develop cultural values different from the rest of population, all of which lead to 'cultural bifurcation of the nation' [18]. Based on the 2018 study in the capital city of Baku participants between 25-60 ages were asked a question of which language do you prefer your child to receive an education. Surprisingly 45% of participants preferred Russian, 17% Azerbaijani, 28% Turkish, 10% both Russian and Turkish [20]. The reason for low Azerbaijani preferences was the quality of education in Azerbaijani schools according to participants. Another data from 2017/2018 schoolyear maintains the Azerbaijani

language to play a higher role than Russian in educational settings in Azerbaijan. The data reports that 91.5% of students studied Azerbaijani as their mother tongue, 8.11% Russian, 0.27% English, 0.04% Turkish and 0.01% French [56]. The data given by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers [26] the number of schoolchildren in Russian schools of three former Soviet states (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia) acknowledges the important role of Russian in Azerbaijan compared to other countries in Table 1.

Table 1. *The number of schoolchildren studying in Russian in South Caucasus Republics in 1990/1991, 2000/2001, and 2010/2011; thousand persons.*

Country	1990/1991	2000/2001	2010/2011
Azerbaijan	250.0	107.5	94.7
Armenia	92.0	9.2	1.5
Georgia	207.0	38.1	8.5

The Soviet policy led to linguistic 'bi-sectoral' subsets in the education system. Russian and Azerbaijani are two languages of instruction – accordingly the notions of the "Azerbaijani sector" and "Russian sector" at public schools [18]. Table 1 indicates that while the number of schoolchildren in Russian schools in Georgia and Armenia in 2010/2011 schoolyear demonstrates a significant decrease compared to 2000/2001 and 1990/1991 schoolyear, a drop off for Azerbaijan is meager [26]. The role of Russian in Azerbaijan is influential. Accordingly, the 2013 data reports (see Table 2), 72% of Azerbaijanis to have known Russian [26]. 28% of Azerbaijanis to have an intermediate level of Russian, 37% beginner, and 7% of the population to have an advanced level of Russian in Azerbaijan [26]. 24% report to have no basic knowledge in Russian and 1% don't know Russian [26].

Table 2. *Knowledge of languages in Azerbaijan (%) in 2013.*

Language of knowledge	Advanced	Intermediate	Beginner	No basic knowledge	Don't know
Russian	7	28	37	27	1
English	1	7	16	74	1
Another language	2	4	5	88	2

According to the data in Table 2, 7% of people report to have intermediate, 16% beginner, 74% no basic knowledge in English, and 1% don't know English in Azerbaijan [26].

Also, reference [17] emphasizes the dominance of Russian sectors in Azerbaijani schools. Russian in Azerbaijani context according to scholars, is preferred and in some cases highly preferred language [28, 17, 29]. Moreover, reference [22] interprets the level of Russian to become poorer as time goes by. On the other hand, reference [28] claims the status of Russian in Azerbaijan to have a more secure status than any other republic in the Caucasus.

Reference [31] emphasizes the unresolved tensions between national and international languages in the light of the collapse of the Soviet Union. The author points out Russian to remain one of the prestigious languages in ex-union countries. Reference [32] questions what is a 'success' and what is a "failure" in ex-Soviet countries, pointing out success for one group may become a failure for another. Reference [33] mentions every language to be under the influence of Russification during Soviet times.

Reference [13] analyzing the language landscape of three ex-Soviet countries (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia) maintains the Azerbaijani language improvement in Azerbaijan and Russian decrease in the country [13]. The author considers the Azerbaijani government's policy as cooperation with the West and Russia at the same time [13]. However, compared to Armenia and Georgia, Russophone people are more in number in Azerbaijan [13].

Reference [11] mentions the opening of the new Russian information cultural center in Azerbaijan in 2011 by the joint initiation of Russian and Azerbaijani governments [11]. The author maintains Azerbaijan as the sole country of the South Caucasus where the Russian language has the role of the main language of education at schools and universities. Accordingly, the branch of Moscow State University named after M. V. Lomonosov started functioning in the Russian language as of 2009 in Azerbaijan [11].

The rector of the National Institute of the Russian Language named after A. S. Pushkin, Margarita Rucskaya considers the language policy of Azerbaijan as a sample for other ex-Soviet

countries [36]. The rector maintains that schools in Azerbaijan offer all conditions for the study of the Russian language. Not only old people, but also the growing young generation speaks Russian in Azerbaijan. The rector suggests this model of language policy of Azerbaijan be an example for other ex-Soviet countries [36].

Russian is not only decreased in Azerbaijan, but it also was able to stabilize as the main language of education despite Russian has not official status in the country [11].

In the interview with the Foreign Minister of Russia, Mr. Lavrov maintains that though Russians are minority in Azerbaijan with almost 2%, but the Russian language has the status of the second language in Azerbaijan [37]. Accordingly, the Russian government is satisfied with the remaining Russian schools in the country.

3.2. Agencies and Institutions Carrying out Implementation for Azerbaijani

The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan [27] is the supreme law of the country. Chapter 2 of the Constitution, the basis of the state, is composed of executive power – the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, legislative power-Milli Majlis of the Azerbaijan Republic, and the judicial power- law courts of the Azerbaijan Republic. Article 8 “The Head of the Azerbaijani state” of the Constitution declares the president of the Republic of Azerbaijan as the Head of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the head of the executive branch [27].

Milli Majlis- literally the National Assembly, is the legislative power in the country with 125 deputies. The body is responsible for accepting, rejecting, abolishing, laws and orders in the country. The National Assembly has 15 working committees. The Science and Education Committee is responsible for the formation and implementation of the government’s policy in science and education. The Committee is responsible for proposing and evaluating the projects and orders in the implementation and planning of the language, science, education, mass media, and religion.

The Cabinet of Ministers is the executive power of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Cabinet of Ministers directly reports to the President. It controls the work of ministries and promotes to the implementation of social and economic issues.

The State Language Commission [30-35] is responsible for successful implementation of the Azerbaijani language within country, its control and establishment of the correct Azerbaijani usage on TV, radio, in the dubbed movies, translated books as well as the control and improvement of the speech of journalists. The Commission is also responsible for working on improvement plans of the Azerbaijani language in the mass media. Commission members interviewed by journalists acknowledged the current problems with regard to the Azerbaijani language in media and society [30-35].

The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan is the Chairman of the State Language Commission. The First Vice-President, the head of Administration of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the head of the Azerbaijan National Academy of

Sciences, and a Chairman of Azerbaijan Writers Union are the deputy Chairman of the Commission. Apart from this, the Commission has 33 working members.

The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan is functioning the main body in the country concerning all the matters to education [54]. The Ministry works together with the Ministry of Finance in financing different in state and abroad educational programs. This body is responsible for the implementation of the issued orders of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Moreover, to some degree, the role of the Ministry of Education is diminished in the implementation and preservation of the Azerbaijani language.

The issued orders by the President mention the role of the Ministry of Education in the implementation of Azerbaijani respectively. For example, the order about the mass editions in the Latin alphabet in the Azerbaijani language signed in January 2004 N 56, states that the Ministry of Education is responsible together with other government bodies to prepare and submit to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan a list of works reprinted in Latin [38]. The order N2236, May 23, 2012, signed by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev about “the State Program on the use of the Azerbaijani language in the context of globalization and the development of linguistics in the country” [39] states that the Ministry of Education together with other responsible bodies have to prepare a draft State Program on the use of the Azerbaijani language in the context of globalization and the development of linguistics in the country and submit it to the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The order 2837 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on "Approval of the State Program on the Use of Azerbaijani in accordance with Time Requirements in the Globalization Conditions and Linguistic Development in the Country", April 9, 2013 [40] the Ministry of Education has duties with other government bodies and agencies in expanding the teaching, usage and in creating a common database in the Azerbaijani language. The body is also responsible for the editions of dictionaries and the implementation of Azerbaijani in mass media in Azerbaijani together with other bodies. [40].

The order N 346 signed by the President on July 17, 2018, on “a number of measures to ensure greater use of the Azerbaijani language in electronic space.” The Ministry of Education participates in the implementation of the Azerbaijani language together with other bodies [41].

All the above-mentioned orders maintain the Ministry of Education to be a governmental body to participate in the implementation and preservation of the Azerbaijani language. However, as mentioned earlier, the actual and practical role of the Ministry is left behind in society. The fact that the Ministry of Education together with the Ministry of Finance take care of the state-funded 400 Russian schools in the country reflects the “carte blanche” policy towards Russian [1]. Furthermore, the usage of the Russian language becomes highly appreciative in education settings.

Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS) [42-43] is responsible for the organization and implementation of

scientific research in the protection of Azerbaijani culture and traditions. The body analyzes the work of other institutions, laboratories of ministries, private institutions, and gives a recommendation for further improvement. The academy organizes and implements the main scientific research in the protection of the culture and traditions of the Azerbaijani language. ANAS is the central body of universities, educational institutions, research centers in the country. The body has the role of recommending, evaluating, directing and suggesting proposals for the work of the institutions in the country and giving suggestions with regard to the status planning of the Azerbaijani language, educational and scientific issues to the government.

To conclude, ANAS is an influential educational and scientific body in the Republic of Azerbaijan in the development of science and languages, including the Azerbaijani language.

After the independence, the State Agency for Standardization, Metrology and Patent of the Republic of Azerbaijan was established by Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev dated December 27, 2001, No. 623. [44] as the main body in the status planning policy activities. Moreover, in the year of 2018, this body was abolished by the President [46].

The main responsibility of this body was to implement state policy in the field of standardization, metrology, certification, to implement state policy, provide implementations of target programs, and also control over the imported and exported goods about the requirement of standards, metrological rule, and norms. In forming the basic directions of a state policy, and providing the implementation of target programs, the state policy in the field of standardization, metrology, certification and protection of objects of the industrial property; [44-45]. As mentioned above, this body was abolished and in lieu, the State Agency was established.

The State Agency for the Control of Antimonopoly and Consumption Market of the Republic of Azerbaijan was established by the order of the President on 20th April 2018 [46]. The Agency is the part of the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in the State Service for Antimonopoly Policy and Consumer Rights protection [47] is responsible for many issues including the standardization of the Azerbaijani language.

Within the State Service for Antimonopoly Policy and Consumer Rights Protection, the department of Anti-Monopoly and Advertising Legislation controls the unfair competition and advertising legislation [47]. The State Agency carries out public control over the advertising activity of the advertiser, the ad creator, the advertising agent, takes an action to prevent the advertising that does not meet the requirements of the advertising law, and prosecutes those who have violated the law in accordance with the advertising law.

In the meantime, the Agency obtains advertisement materials from advertisers, creators, producers, publishers and agencies, warns them of infringement of the law, issues mandatory instructions (decisions) on the execution of advertising repudiation, and other violations [48].

Subsequently, the Monitoring Center established by the order of the President in 2018, is one of the executive bodies in the implementation and standardization of Azerbaijani [49]. The newly formed center is expected to control the usage of the Azerbaijani language in the country, prepare proposals for the improvement of Azerbaijani. The Monitoring Center is a legal entity under the State Language Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan which controls the use of the state language of the Republic of Azerbaijan, ensures the protection of literary language norms in mass media, internet resources and advertisers. The Monitoring Center under the State Language Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan together with the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Azerbaijan has to develop and approve the Action Plan on preserving the purity of the Azerbaijani language and improving the use of the state language. The Monitoring Center is responsible to prepare and submit to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan proposals on changes in legislative acts to prevent violations of literary language norms in mass media, internet resources and advertisements [49].

The State Advertising Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan was established by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated June 20, 2017 № 1472 as a public-legal entity. It is a body that monitors and controls the placement of advertisers in the open space, the preparation and distribution of advertising on them. The principles of development of the advertising ecosystem of the country, entrepreneurial satisfaction, transparency, responsibility, and courtesy are the basis of its activities [51].

The State Advertising Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (hereinafter - the Agency) is located in the field of highways, cities, settlements, villages and other settlements (except the territory of the Icheri Sheher State Historical-Architectural and Gala State Historical and Ethnographic Reserves). The Agency is a legal entity that monitors and controls the placement of advertising carriers, the production and distribution of advertising [51]. The body ensures compliance with the laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan regarding the state language and state symbols of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the relevant field [51].

3.3. Legislative Repertoire for Azerbaijani After the Political Independence

The article 21 of the Constitution “Official language”, article 42 “Right for education”, and article 45 “Right to use mother tongue” [27] and Law of the State Language regulate language usage and language planning in the country.

Article 21 about the official language declares Azerbaijani the official language of the country. Thus, the government ensures the development of the Azerbaijani language as the sole official language. The second part of article 21 states the free use and development of other languages spoken by the people which refers to minority and foreign languages present in the territory.

Article 21. Official language

I. Azerbaijani language is the official language of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Republic of Azerbaijan provides

the development of the Azerbaijani language.

II. The Republic of Azerbaijan ensures free use and development of other languages spoken by the people [27].

Article 42 “Right for education” guarantees to every citizen the right for education. Through this article, the state makes secondary education obligatory and free for all citizens. The article maintains the education system to be under state control. In the meantime, talented people are supported in their further education by the government. Apart from this, the minimum standards are set by the state with regard to education under Article 42 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Article 42. Right for education

I. Every citizen has the right to education.

II. The state guarantees free obligatory secondary education.

III. The system of education is under state control.

IV. The state guarantees continuation of education for most gifted persons irrespective of their financial position.

V. The state establishes minimum educational standards.

Article 45 “Right to use mother tongue”, supports the multinational language policy of the state. The article ensures the right of everyone to use his/her mother tongue.

Article 45. Right to use mother tongue

I. Everyone has the right to use his/her mother tongue. Everyone has the right to be educated, carry out a creative activity in any language, as desired.

II. Nobody may be deprived of the right to use his/her mother tongue.

The first part of Article 45 ensures everyone a right to receive an education in any language of their desire.

Law of the State Language of the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted on the 30th of September, 2002, number 365-IIQ constitutes of 3 parts and 20 articles about the State Language of Azerbaijan [61].

Article 5. State language education in the field of education

5.1. Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan is carried out in the state language.

5.2. Activities of educational institutions in other languages of the Republic of Azerbaijan shall be carried out in accordance with the legislation. Teaching the state language in these institutions is compulsory.

5.3. During the admission to the higher and secondary vocational education institutions of the Republic of Azerbaijan, an examination of the Azerbaijani language subject is required.

The law ensures education in Azerbaijani. The law maintains activities in other languages to be carried according to the legislation. This law makes the delivery of the Azerbaijani language classes in non-Azerbaijani institutions compulsory. To this end, in all exams to higher institutions, the Azerbaijani language exam is obligatory.

Education Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan was adopted on 19th June 2009. The Education Law composes of 47 articles [53]. Article 7 of the Law on Education is telling in this regard:

Article 7. Language of study

7.1. The language of instruction in educational institutions of the Azerbaijan Republic is the state language – the Azerbaijani language.

7.2. In exceptional cases (international treaties, or based on the agreement with a respective executive authority), at the request of citizens and founders of educational institutions, the instruction can be delivered in other languages under respective state standards of education on condition that the Azerbaijani language, literature, history, and geography will be instructed, as well.

7.3. Preparatory classes and courses are organized for the learners who have poor mastery of Azerbaijani in accordance with the rules set by the respective executive authority and the educational programs.

Article 7 of the Education Law states the Azerbaijani language instruction compulsory in educational institutions of Azerbaijan. In exceptional cases, based on the international treaties or at the request of citizens and founders, other languages can be delivered as the medium of instruction. However, the delivery of the Azerbaijani language, history, literature, and geography remains compulsory in all cases [53-54].

Specifically, under this article, the existent Russian schools, private English and French schools function in the country. This article ensures the right to every parent to decide the language of study for their children.

Derived from this law, generally, schools are divided into three categories in the country: (1) public schools with Azerbaijani and Russian sectors at the same school building, (2) private schools- English and French (Baku Oxford School, British school, Baku French Lyceum); (3) private schools that offers Azerbaijani, Russian and English sectors (Dunya school, Era school (Azerbaijani and Russian sectors), European Azerbaijan School (Azerbaijani and English sectors).

The choice of parents also depends on their economic status [55]. Notwithstanding, whether the allocated Azerbaijani classes at non-Azerbaijani schools is sufficient or not to master Azerbaijani, this issue must be overlooked relatively by the responsible bodies and the Ministry of Education. Accordingly, parents believe that education in the Russian sector is better than the Azerbaijani sector [14-20].

Although education in a non-Azerbaijani language was envisaged as an exception from the rule in the mentioned documents, it has become a rule. The number of students enrolled in Russian schools has marked a steady increase ever since [12]. Thus, the engagement of the Ministry of Education is necessary for the planning of the Azerbaijani language. To offer foreign languages at schools is highly appreciative, as knowledge of other languages contributes to intercultural communication in the globalized world. However, the concept of an ongoing multilingual policy does not disregard the mother tongue knowledge. On the contrary, the main goal is to improve Azerbaijani and to increase multilingual skills in other languages. In these terms, the number of Azerbaijani classes in non-Azerbaijani sectors and its quality is an expected prerequisite taken by the Ministry of Education.

To this end, any policy implementation is a process of

interaction between the setting of goals and actions taken to achieve them [57]. The question raised regarding the language planning policies is whether the policies manifested in the documents in the form of law or government bodies are meant to be implemented in practice or they just serve as evidence of action. Successful implementation requires compliance with goals and achievements.

4. Discussion

The Azerbaijani language has a sole official and judicial status in the country. The dissolution of the Soviet Union resulted in the acceptance of numerous orders and laws in the enhancement of the Azerbaijani language. In the aftermath period, the role of the government as the executive body in language planning policies became evident. The structure of government bodies in the implementation of the Azerbaijani language is composed of the President, the Cabinet of Ministry, Milli Majlis, The State Language Commission, the State Agency, The Ministry of Education, ANAS, and the newly formed Monitoring Center.

The government represents to have a strong will in the planning of Azerbaijani by mentioned bodies. As evident, the implementation of the Azerbaijani language and the improvement of multilingualism are formally under state control. However, present government bodies do not guarantee a successful implementation of language policy. On the one hand, formally, the planning of the Azerbaijani language in the country is advancing, the government gives its ongoing support with issued laws and orders. On the other hand, by abolishing certain bodies and by creating new ones, the top acknowledges the need for a better model.

Although the government repeatedly accepts new orders and proposals to implement the usage and improvement of the Azerbaijani language, remaining Russian sectors and the choice of parents reflect the degree of success in this phase. Hence, society is also a reflection of whether the creation of these government bodies was efficient or not.

Also, mastering the Russian language is not considered a granted modernism in Azerbaijan. Reference [21] maintains societal incoherence as a result of Russian in society. The people with less advanced Russian pronunciation and syntax are not accepted by elites. The people who mastered Russian as a second language are called “cushka” among the people who mastered Russian as a first language. The jargon “cushka” means someone easily deceived, naïve, but in general, someone who is undeveloped, far behind modernism who attempts to reach a model of modern person but fails to do so. The jargon is in use by elites to the people from regions who come to the city and attempts to assimilate in city life, but fails to do so. The etymology of the word is believed to come from Russian, but there also exist claims that it is a Turkic word that literally means bitter.

The speech of artists on TV, radio, and media in Azerbaijani deserves consideration, too. The conference held in 2018 October on the results of the monitoring on “obeying the literary norms of the Azerbaijani language with singers” in the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Azerbaijan [59],

confirms the musicians' performances sometimes to fall outside the norms of the Azerbaijani language. With this in mind, musicians should be more sensitive to literary language norms [59].

Furthermore, in his speech, Mr. President also emphasizes of considering to improve correct Azerbaijani usage among artists and musicians at the opening ceremony of Mugham Center in Agdam rayon [60].

A press conference on the theme “Language view of web sites” organized by the Institute of Linguistics named after Nasimi of ANAS reports TV and music performers to have been monitored on the violation of literary language norms [58].

Subsequently, the leading researcher of the Institute of Linguistics named after Nasimi Shahlar Mammadov [58] mentions serious processes affecting the development of the language on websites. S. Mammadov further notes that today there are serious mistakes in phonetical spelling on websites and spelling in the Azerbaijani language [58].

Based on the phone interview with the head of the Monitoring Department of the same Institute, Prof. Sevinj Aliyeva, she mentioned the new proposals ready for the successful implementation of the Azerbaijani language in society and those proposals according to her was given to the Cabinet of Ministers about the Monitoring Committee, its structure, budget and some proposals with regard to the successful implementation of the Azerbaijani language. As for example, advertisement norms, changes in the state language law, some fines will be implemented on the wrong use of the Azerbaijani language with TV directors. Also, the delivery of the Azerbaijani language classes to Azerbaijanis living abroad especially, for the embassies and missions of Azerbaijan is among those proposals. Apparently, the society is still waiting for the changes that those proposals will bring.

5. Conclusion

The Azerbaijani language is very important for Azerbaijanis and it is one of the topics where the government and domestic opposition agree [7]. It is a fact that the majority of the political elite prefers Russian. Also, it affects the choice of other middle-class parents in considering the quality of education high in the Russian sectors. Thus, the policy is also affected by the high attitude of elite figures to Russian. Subsequently, Azerbaijani is officially superior to other languages, but the Azerbaijani language remains largely untouched by political elites [7]. The usage of the Russian language is high in the capital city Baku, in daily life, meetings, public places, and education settings. The issued bodies are very important according to their substance. Moreover, there exists an unrealistic situation for those bodies to be successful in the Azerbaijani society. The Russian language has a high de facto place in the country. The government's policy of funding optional public schools in Russian strengthens the Russian language in society. Consequently, it affects parents' choices for sending their children to free Russian schools funded by the state as noted earlier, with the perception that the quality of education is

superior in Russian sectors [15-23-20]. The very same policy of the government is seen as a “tolerance-oriented” approach towards the Russian language and Russophone people in the country [52]. The newly formed Monitoring Center has a responsibility to make proposals to the President about the necessary actions to be fixed in legislation for the successful language planning of Azerbaijani. It will be interesting to see what changes the Monitoring Center will bring in the future. To conclude, there is a gap between the issued government bodies, their duties and the language of preference with regards to Azerbaijani. Reference [50] considers that a concrete theory of successful policy implementation is lacking in the literature. That makes the implementation itself difficult. However, it is always connected with social values, will, norms and practices. As the article shows that the government policy is not unequivocal in language planning of the Azerbaijani language. On the one hand, it could be a “tolerance-oriented” approach towards other languages in the country leading to multilingualism. On the other hand, this policy lessens the planning of Azerbaijani. Last but not least, The Ministry of Education might act as a responsible body to implement Azerbaijani successfully. The body is partly responsible for these issues, as recent discussion in this article reflects that the power and competitiveness of this body need to progress. This would be far more effective in improving the planning of the Azerbaijani language in Azerbaijan. Whether the Azerbaijani people are ready to accept those changes in society or not is another topic for future research. Also, a comparative study on the quality of education between Azerbaijani and Russian schools is a requisite in the future since the reason for the growth of schoolchildren in Russian schools is enforced by this factor.

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