Changing the Script: Language and Nation Building in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my aunt

Metanet Aliyeva 1972-2024

Abstract

This study examines the language policy of independent Azerbaijan in relation to national identity and postcolonial/post-Soviet consolidation. Azerbaijan is an independent multi-ethnic republic and has implemented its own language policy since 1991, a policy that was targeted to advance the national language as well as give equal recognition to other foreign languages in the country. Azerbaijan adopted a unique Latin alphabet, shifting away from Cyrillic immediately after the country regained independence.

This research adopted an interdisciplinary approach and a mixed method research design that included quantitative survey and qualitative interview. Between July 2021 and April 2022, online fieldwork was conducted with 190 Azerbaijani individuals and 20 Azerbaijani experts who were directly related to the study of linguistics, politics, and education in Azerbaijan.

This thesis contributes to Soviet/post-Soviet language studies, specifically the study of the links between language policies and nationality. It focuses on the last 30 years, a period when national interests have increasingly been connected to language policy. This research revealed that after the script change was introduced, together with new language regulations in the early 1990s, post-Soviet Azerbaijan experienced different phases of nation-building. The national identity of Azerbaijan has acquired unique characteristics compared to that of other Turkic post-Soviet nations. Thus, unlike other post-Soviet states, the de-Russification process could go further in Azerbaijan, due to the successful introduction of the Latin alphabet. The presence of a comparatively small Russian-speaking minority in the country was a contributing factor in this transition.

This research compared the use of the Azerbaijani and Russian languages and the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets to measure how successful the Azerbaijani language policy has

been in supporting the nation-building process. Fieldwork confirmed that the Russian speaking population (and other ethnic minorities) was able to use the Azerbaijani language and the Latin script in everyday situations. It can be concluded that the language policy Azerbaijan implemented after regaining independence achieved its targets.

This dissertation also describes recent political developments, including the aftermath of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, which brought a new phase to the language policy and nation-building process in Azerbaijan. Recently, the national language, and Azerbaijanism and Turkism, were promoted to unify all Azerbaijanis. A study of the implementation and consequences of the script change in post-Soviet Azerbaijan is thus warranted and timely.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for award of any other degree or diploma, except where due reference is made in the text of thesis. To the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of thesis.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Post-Soviet Azerbaijan is a multicultural and multilingual country where the national language, Azerbaijani, is spoken by most of its population, while foreign languages, predominantly Russian, still retain popularity. As a result of centuries of Russian imperial rule and 69 years of Soviet control, Russian influence became dominant in the region in almost all walks of life, particularly in cultural, political, and linguistic aspects. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, one of the priorities for newly independent Azerbaijan was to adopt a new language policy that may better serve to strengthen the role of the national language and reshape a new national identity for people of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. This thesis investigates Azerbaijan's language policy more than 30 years after the Soviet Union's demise.

1.1 Background and Purpose of this Study

The process of strengthening the Azerbaijani national identity and promoting the national language in all walks of life is ongoing. In today's Azerbaijan, Russian is still widely spoken, and education is delivered both in the Azerbaijani and Russian languages.

To better understand the current language and national identity of Azerbaijan, it is essential to review the history of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan is accustomed to alphabet shifts; this was the fourth time in the past century. Bayatly (1997) states that before the Russo-Persian wars of 1804–1813 and 1826–1828 led to the Russian conquest of the South Caucasus, Azerbaijan was a Turkic–Persian society, greatly impacted by centuries of Turkish and Iranian rule. Several of Azerbaijan's classical writers wrote in Persian and Azerbaijani-Turkic dialects, demonstrating the literary language's continued symbolic and cultural

significance (Bayatly, 1997). Azerbaijanis had been using the Arabic alphabet for over a millennium by the turn of the 20th century.

The establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) in May 1918, following the dissolution of the Russian Empire, was a crucial event regarding the establishment of an ethnic Azerbaijani identity and the promotion of national Azerbaijani language. It is a successful model of governance for today's independent Azerbaijan. It was the first nation state in the form of a parliamentary republic to be established in the Muslim east. Mammad Amin Rasulzade, one of the founders of the Republic, identified the new state as the first democratic, Turkic, Muslim Republic. The declaration of the Azerbaijani language as the republic's official language, the establishment of Baku State university, the formation of the national army and other security institutions, and the emergence of independent Azerbaijani political and economic institutions were some main achievements of the ADR (Khan, 2018).

Despite a long history of use, the Azerbaijani intellectuals of ADR argued that the Arabic alphabet was not a perfect fit for the Azerbaijani language. Mirza Fatali Akhundov (1812-1878) was the first Azerbaijani intellectual to promote reforming the Arabic script for the Azerbaijani language. Discussions that centred on Azerbaijan's switch to the Latin alphabet were similarly occurring in Turkey. It was suggested that the society would not be enlightened, that the problem of illiteracy would not be resolved without alphabet change, and that relationships with other Turkish communities would be strengthened if the Latin alphabet was used instead of the Arabic one. But the ADR government lasted for only a short time—just 23 months—and it was unable to address the problems regarding the alphabet change. After seizing power in Azerbaijan in 1920, the Bolsheviks promoted Latin and Arabic.

Luscombe and Kazdal (2014) refer to the 1926 First Congress on Turkology, which was held in Baku, and was considered an important step towards Latinisation. Scholars from all over the world participated. At this conference, the conclusion was reached that, given the sound patterns in the Turkic languages, Latin was the optimal alphabet to express these sounds. Ataturk began a successful alphabet reform in Turkey in 1928, replacing Arabic with a modified Latin script which is still in use today (Luscombe and Kazdal, 2014). But by the late 1930s, Stalin realised that linguistic unification of these Turkic-speaking states could create threat for the Soviet Union. He reversed the Latin alphabet policy and ensured that all Turkic-speaking peoples of the Soviet Union switched to a different alphabet: Cyrillic.

Renewed attempts to reintroduce the Latin alphabet around the time of the Soviet Union's collapse met with strong opposition because many believed that Azerbaijan would become more dependent on Turkey and the West under the new alphabet. Besides, some claimed that the Arabic script should be restored because it is the alphabet of Islam. Therefore, the final script change from Cyrillic to Latin in Azerbaijan led to long-term debates and met some challenges, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

Due to all political and linguistic changes in Azerbaijan, the role of both the national and the foreign languages changed considerably since the Soviet period. Nowadays, as relations are getting closer with Turkey, the tendency to study in Turkey and the popularity of Turkish media, promote the role of Turkish in Azerbaijan. As in many post-Soviet states, attempts to Westernise are also implemented, which is one of the main reasons for the growing importance of the English language. English is now the language of instruction in international educational institutions in central areas of the country like Baku and Ganja. There is still a demand for Russian track schools, but the popularity of English schools among the upper class of the population is increasing in the cities. The main reason parents

are interested in sending their children to Russian or English schools is to forge better education and career opportunities in a globalised society where knowledge of international languages is a necessity.

The language policy is thus a key aspect of Azerbaijan's linguistic decolonisation. Much of the analysis in this work examines the relationship between language and the national identity of Azerbaijani and Russian language speakers (and other linguistic minorities) after the script change in the country. In particular, this study addresses differences across two periods (pre- and post-1991) in linguistical, cultural, political, and social terms. The primary goal of this thesis is to determine the extent to which the Azerbaijani language policy, specifically the alphabet change from Cyrillic to Latin, has been successful in promoting the national language in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. This research also aimed to explore the changing attitudes towards the Azerbaijani and Russian languages since the discontinuation of Soviet rule.

Contact between multilingual communities from various social, economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds often results in linguistic conflicts in society (Darquennes, 2015). Language conflict in Azerbaijan is to be detected in recent discussions regarding the closure of Russian track classes in order to promote Azerbaijan's national identity, highlighting the importance of language in current national-building processes of Azerbaijan (Aliyeva, 2018). Nation-building is a global phenomenon, and my thesis does not address all of its aspects. Instead, this research sheds insight into the function of language, notably the alphabet change, in the establishment of Azerbaijani national identity.

The justification for nationalism in most post-Soviet countries was considerably different from that of Western states, and nationalism was seen as a reaction against Russian 'colonialism' (Amirejibi, 2011). It was the famous Azerbaijani intellectual of the last

century, Ali bey Huseynzade, who in "his popular poem 'Turan' defined what an Azerbaijani is: 'Turklashntirmak, Islamilashtimak, Avrupalashtirmak', which means Turkify, Islamicize, Europeanize" (as cited in Moreno, 2005, p. 5).

This summation not only applies to Azerbaijan in terms of identity, but also holds true for most of the post-Soviet and predominantly Islamic Central Asian and Caucasus countries. The countries of these regions are constantly at the crossroads of similar competitive yet complementary tendencies. The combination of these three elements results in a balancing of Turkism, Islamism, and Westernisation (or Europeanisation) in many aspects of life in these nations. This balancing involves cultural communication, and choice of language, vocabulary, and script.

The Soviet era saw a majority of the predominantly Islamic and Turkic language family states—Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan—being pushed away from their pan-ethnic Turkic and Islamic identity via several policies around religious institutions, cultural expression, trade opportunities, and borders (Nedea et al, 2012). Hence, the post-independence era is important, as it not only presents an opportunity for some of these ethno-religious movements—Pan-Turkism and Political Islam—to resurrect and re-exert their sphere of influence and soft power in the region, but also as it poses challenges to the respective governments and their policies, internally and externally (Bedford, 2016).[1]

After a long period of Russian control, not only on the political but also on the cultural and linguistic levels, the former Soviet countries began to seek ways to reinforce their independence and national identities by facilitating de-Russification policies in all

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[1] Soft power has been referred to as a form of national power that is based on ideational and cultural attractiveness, which is intentionally or unintentionally utilised by actors in international relations to achieve strategic imperatives. See Nye, J. S. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. Public Affairs.

spheres of life. The breakup of the Soviet Union symbolised the end of colonial repression

and the cultural hegemony of Russia in the region (Laitin, 1998). Brubaker (1996) states that

because of the Soviet Union's political dominance, knowledge of Russian became a social

status indicator. Interest in learning national languages began only with the fall of the Soviet

Union and because of new language regulations imposed to re-establish national identity.

After recovering independence and elevating the national language to the status of official

language, the growing popularity of local languages was seen as a threat to the future of the

Russian language in those states. Azerbaijan is a classic example in this context, where

changing to the Latin script led to stronger ties and people-to-people connection with

Turkey, but also opened the country to a Turkish version of Islam and political narratives,

secular by many standards, yet posing challenges in terms of religious and socio-cultural

politicisation (Kotecha, 2006).

Following the restoration of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1991, the country's

ongoing process of identity building was maintained. After independence, the process of

nation-building in Azerbaijan can be split into two phases, each led by a different head of

state and influenced by a different set of ideals. When a nationalist political party headed by

Abulfez Elchibey came to power in 1991, Turkism became a state ideology, and most of the

attributes of the ADR were restored. Turkey was considered the closest country to

Azerbaijan because of cultural and linguistic ties. However, in 1993 President Heydar Aliyev

replaced Elchibey. Aliyev was a strong advocate of Azerbaijanism. With the Azerbaijani

Constitution (1995), Azerbaijani became the official name for the national identity,

citizenship and language, and the Azerbaijani language was announced as the sole official

language. Ilham Aliyev, who came to power in 2003, further embraced the notion of

Azerbaijanism, with even more promotion of multiculturalism and secularism. One of the

most important points of this study is to determine whether there has been a change in the way that languages and alphabets are used in Azerbaijan following the implementation of new language regulations, and to study the impact that language policies have on people's perceptions of national identity. As a result, the State's language strategy may be considered successful if participants demonstrate their proficiency in both the Latin alphabet and the Azerbaijani language in real-world contexts.

This topic is relatively untouched in applied linguistics, and despite a relatively large body of research on the script change in Azerbaijan (Bayatly, 1997; Cornell, 2011; Ergun, 2010a; Garibova, 2009; Hacther, 2008; Karaman, 2010; J. I. Mammadov, 2020), it remains to be seen how Ataturk's script reform of the 1920s was adopted as a model for Azerbaijan in the 1990s, and how the Latinisation of the script changed the nation-building process.

One of the most important aspects of this research is to also reveal the beneficial aspects of the Soviet Union period in relation to the language and national identity of contemporary Azerbaijan. The period of the *Korenizatsiia* policy of the Soviet Union in the 1920s, which refers to the indigenisation process, is particularly considered an essential milestone for the improvement of national language, levels of literacy, and the establishment of Azerbaijani national identity. Therefore, current language and nation-building processes can be seen as a return: a return to 1920s Azerbaijan. This study adopts an interdisciplinary approach that combines political and linguistic perspectives and methods.

In addition, in 2020, the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War and significant military and diplomatic support from Turkey, affected linguistic and political views in Azerbaijan. During the war for 'territorial integrity', the Azerbaijani language and Azerbaijanism as an ideology became vehicles for the consolidation of national identity.

At the same time, this research contributes to research that goes beyond the outcomes of the alphabet change in Azerbaijan; it also emphasises the function of language in the context of worldwide post-colonialism. Some countries are still attempting to strengthen national and cultural values through the usage of local languages after periods of colonial domination. There is a scholarly gap when addressing the consequences of the script change that was enacted in the 1990s and the language policy of contemporary Azerbaijan and their role in the nation-building process. By addressing this gap, this research delves into how one aspect of language policy, the alphabet, interacts with the other features of this post-Soviet state. This experience is relevant for nearby nations that are yet to embark on their journey of script change (i.e., Kazakhstan).

To understand the outcomes of the Latinisation of the script and the link between the language and the national identity in modern Azerbaijan, language policies adopted throughout the Soviet period and now have been compared, allowing me to illustrate how people's attitudes towards language have changed as a result of various policies. A comparison of these two periods is required to determine the key driving factors of nation-building processes in Azerbaijan that have developed over time.

During the Soviet period, although the national language remained as the state language in Azerbaijan, as the result of Russification process, the role of Russian grew significantly in all spheres of life. The growth of urbanisation, migration, and mass industrialisation were major factors in spreading the Russian language and facilitating the Russification process in most former Soviet states. However, language policy has always been on the agenda after regaining independence to weaken the influence of the Russian language and to ensure the recognition of a unique Azerbaijani identity. Consequently, the

Azerbaijani language was encouraged as a language of education, administration, and professional employment.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, all former republics have adopted new language policies, mostly to retain the national identity and encourage the use of native languages. As part of the Russification process, there were restrictions of the use of indigenous languages, and speaking Russian represented prestige in all aspects of society in the Union republics. Motyl and Krawchenko (1996) address new language policies that have generated concern in some cases, demonstrating that language policy is essential for establishing political loyalties and forming a sense of nationhood (Motyl & Krawchenko, 1996).

After independence, the dominant language in school switched from Russian to Azerbaijani, affecting people's preferences for communication languages. This thesis will investigate language policy as an essential component of the nation-building process. Unlike some other former Soviet republics, where Russian remained as the official language even after independence, in the Republic of Azerbaijan a new language policy was implemented in 1991. It declared the Azerbaijani language as the only official language in all official domains of language use. The alphabet reform of 1991 was considered a milestone of the language policy, which aimed to promote the de-Russification process and re-establishment of the Azerbaijani identity.

As a result of the new language policy that was implemented in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, English has also significantly grown in popularity as an international language and has surpassed Russian as the most frequently demanded foreign language. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian education shifted from mandatory to being elective in educational institutions. However, given that learning Russian is free in Azerbaijan, particularly throughout urban areas, and Russia's current political role in the

region, a significant section of the population still believes that learning this language is essential for improving one's education and employment prospects.

1.2 Research Context

Following an overview of the pre-modern period in terms of language policy and national identification, this study focuses on the language policy of Azerbaijan as carried out by the Soviet authorities. To make the findings more credible, public debates on the alphabet change were appraised, and the linguistic and ethnic policies in modern Azerbaijan were examined.

Language is widely considered globally an integral element of national identification. There are many countries still struggling to establish national identity based on common history and cultural values, and language has been used as a driving factor in most nation-building processes. When newly established states adopt a new language policy, they are not only concerned with language as the means of communication, but also with the way language shapes national identities and symbolises cultural values. Thus, it should be stated that language policies carry out non-linguistic functions as much as linguistic ones. With all the political and cultural changes from the Soviet era to the present, language policy and planning have been challenging for the newly independent Soviet republics. According to J. I. Mammadova (2013), language has been on the agenda as an essential factor in reshaping Azerbaijani national identity since the early years of independence.

This thesis elaborates pre-Soviet history to reveal all historic elements contributed to shape the national identity and the Azerbaijani language. In the seventh century, Islam was introduced by Arab conquerors and the Arabic alphabet became the standard script in the region. At the same time, some cultural development and a Muslim Renaissance was

observed in Azerbaijan. That is why, despite the opposition pitting different religious groups, the Arabic alphabet was accepted in Azerbaijani culture for many centuries. Its Muslim heritage added an important component to the cultural and linguistic development in Azerbaijan. The Arabic written language was the language of the holy book, and the idea to substitute the Arabic alphabet was not conceived for a long time. Therefore, the period of Arab control and influence are also investigated thoroughly in this study.

If the case of Azerbaijan is examined in terms of the role of language and language policy in the nation-building process, it is easy to see how the national language is closely linked to the country's history and culture. In turn, the Azerbaijani language is regarded as a marker of linguistic and cultural values, while language policy reflects all political and cultural changes in society, as the independence period caused Azerbaijan to follow an independent language policy.

After independence in 1991, the nation-building process relied on the script change and the implementation of a new language policy. At the time, the main concern was whether religious groups would have the potential to threaten a secular, Western-oriented regime (Bashirov, 2018). Related to the policy implemented by the former dominating power, religion did not become a unifying factor in the nation-building process. However, discussions around the script change divided people into three groups in newly independent Azerbaijan: supporters of Latinisation emphasised commonality with the Turkic world; religious groups promoted the Arabic script and saw it as a way to return to the country's religious roots; while the Russian minority and other Russian-speaking people in the country wanted to keep Cyrillic to avoid illiteracy as well as to maintain Russian influence. The Latin alphabet was eventually announced as the official alphabet in the country. However, the Cyrillic script still plays an important role.

This study aims to reveal the language policy and national identity in Azerbaijan following the transition from Cyrillic to the Latin script in the modern period compared with nearly 70 years of Soviet control. It analyses the language policy of Azerbaijan to shed light on the ties between the language and national identity by examining Azerbaijan across two different periods. Consequently, it evaluates the government's language policy to strengthen the de-Russification process and build a common national identity for the whole population.

The search for a new common alphabet in the Turkic world, which began at the end of the 19th century and was undertaken by intellectuals and educators, was split into two branches: the Turkish alphabet, which was based on Arabic and Latin graphics. It should also be noted that this movement in the Turkic world and Azerbaijan started with the reform of the alphabet by Mirza Fatali Akhunzadeh, a prominent intellectual. Discussions and debates about the alphabet continued for a long time. All efforts, such as the first Turkic Congress in Baku in 1926, aimed at transitioning from the Arabic to the Latin script.

In October 1990 the Common Alphabet of Turkic Nations conference was held in Ankara to adopt the Latin alphabet in Turkic states after long period dominance of the Cyrillic alphabet. It was stated that only the Latin alphabet can adequately express the features of the Turkic languages, and that there is hope for the cultural integration of peoples living in a large geographical area. The Latinisation of the alphabet in 1920s Turkey was related to the principles of the newly established Republic. Attention was focused on the construction of a secular democratic republic as a break with the dominant role of Islam in the Ottoman Empire. Turkey became an important model during the script change process in Azerbaijan, and the Latin alphabet was assumed as essential to accessing the Western world. In particular, during the first years of independence, there was a strong

tendency to bring elements from the Turkish language into Azerbaijani as the script change was seen as a unifying factor in the nation-building process. The Latinisation of the alphabet was aimed to emphasise the Turkic origin back and reduce Russian influence. Therefore, the consequences of the script change in Azerbaijan are considered within this study.

This study delves into the language policy Azerbaijan followed in education after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Azerbaijan, primary school, secondary school, and senior secondary school are the three stages of the educational system, followed by vocational training or university study. Azerbaijani is given priority as the primary language of instruction, with Russian and English being taught as second languages. Free public education is funded by the government both in the Azerbaijani and Russian languages. The Azerbaijan Republic's Ministry of Science and Education is in charge of managing and controlling the country's educational system. Every year, it places a limit on the number of languages, mostly Russian, that public schools are required to teach. The number of pupils who can enrol in public schools that offer Russian teaching is determined by this decision. The number of qualified teachers, the demand, and the availability of resources, all play an integral role in the decision. As a result, more children are enrolled in public schools in the Azerbaijani sector. Furthermore, the Azerbaijani language is also added as a significant subject to the curriculum of the Russian sector. The topic 'Azerbaijani history' is taught in the state language in the Russian sector of secondary general education institutions in Azerbaijan, due to the growth in students enrolled in the Russian sector beginning with the 2022–2023 academic year (Abdurahmanova, 2023).

As Azerbaijani serves as the main language of instruction in the most of educational institutions, Moskvitcheva and Abdullaev (2021) describe that approximately 93% of secondary school pupils receive instruction in Azerbaijani. The Azerbaijani language is also a

compulsory subject in all non-Azerbaijani language schools. All secondary schools begin

teaching foreign languages in the first grade; the parents' preferences determine the

language to be taught. In the educational framework, the Russian language has a unique

position. It is the only foreign language recognised by law in the educational system. But its

uses are far more varied (Moskvitcheva and Abdullaev, 2021).

Lastly, this study also focuses on historically different ethnic groups living side by

side in Azerbaijan. Although the majority of the population is comprised by ethnic

Azerbaijanis (91,6%), other ethnic groups include Lezgis, Russians, Talyshs, Avars, Armenians

Tsakhurs, Kurds, Jews, Udins, and Khinalugs. Therefore, it is essential to review the linguistic

changes and cultural adjustment these ethnic minorities are facing. In Azerbaijan, there has

long been a long history of tolerance towards ethnic minorities. Since the declaration of the

Azerbaijan Democratic Republic on May 28, 1918, all citizens in the ADR's borders were

granted civil rights under the country's proclamation of independence, regardless of their

nationality, religion, and social status. Abbasova (2017) states that the 1918 law on the right

of national minorities to receive an education in their mother tongue was also passed by the

Azerbaijani government, recognising the right of minorities residing in the country to receive

an education in their mother tongue. After the invasion of Azerbaijan in 1920, and accession

to the USSR, early policies were generally in favour of ethnic identity and diversity in culture.

The majority of ethnic communities in the USSR had their own schools in the 1920s, and

many published newspapers and periodicals in their native tongues. Yet, the Soviet ethnic

and nationality policies underwent significant modifications during the 1930s; afterwards,

the ethnic minorities faced severe restrictions on the promotion of their languages and

national identities (Abbasova, 2017). After regaining independence, tolerance towards the

ethnic minorities was restored. The Constitution, and citizenship legislation reveal that

Azerbaijan's nation-building policies have been, indeed, consistently 'civic' and not 'ethnic' in character. In 2005, a law was passed which allowed public broadcasting in minority languages. Today the Government of Azerbaijan sponsors radio broadcasts in Lezghian, Talish, Georgian and Russian. Ethnic communities in Azerbaijan publish approximately 15 newspapers in their languages, and 30 in Russian (Abbasova, 2017).

1.3 Research Problem and Questions

Azerbaijan presents a good case study for examining how political and cultural developments influence linguistic differences. To comprehend the relationship between language and the nation-building process in modern Azerbaijan, it is necessary to examine historical circumstances since a modern view of language policy and Azerbaijan's national identity are the consequence of all prior periods. Thus, before using any other strategy in this research, the historical approach is required to consider all political, cultural, and linguistic changes in Azerbaijan. The analysis of the historical background of identity construction offered in this work explains how this process changed significantly after regaining independence.

Previous studies have focused on the language policy of post-Soviet countries (Giger & Sloboda, 2008; Pavlenko 2008). Some have advanced a postcolonial paradigm (Annus, 2018). These studies show how trade and economic factors, besides the presence of Russian-speaking communities and their relative size, affected the language policies of all former Soviet republics (Liu et al, 2017). However, the comparative investigation of the various language policies after the dissolution of the Soviet Union has remained relatively unexplored.

Some studies centre on a historical overview of the alphabet changes in Azerbaijan from the Arabic script to Latin, then to Cyrillic, and then back to Latin, and how these changes shaped the cohesion of an Azerbaijani identity (Ergun, 2010a; Hacther, 2008). Bayatly (1997) presents the script transitions and describes discussions around the script reform after independence. Bahadori (1993) emphasises the political motives that prompted Azerbaijan to alter its official script. Other studies delve into the process of the script change in Azerbaijan, the current language policies, and Azerbaijan's attitude to the national and Russian languages (Garibova, 2009; Marquardt, 2011). The language use in Azerbaijan after gaining independence, the language policy of governments, and new regulations implemented to promote the Latin script have also been the focus of previous studies (Shibliyev, 2014; Novruzlu, 2015).

One original aspect of this study is to investigate the script change in Azerbaijan and its consequences in the context of Ataturk's script change as a model, and to show how the policy of the Bolsheviks, particularly between the 1920s and 1930s, promoted the development of the Azerbaijani language and the establishment of national identity in independent Azerbaijan. Furthermore, some critical events, such as the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War which promoted Azerbaijanism and the Azerbaijani national language and affected ongoing nation-building processes, are another central focus of this research.

This research aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How successful has the Azerbaijani language policy been in promoting Azerbaijani language spread after regaining independence?

2. How did the script change from the Cyrillic alphabet to Latin enacted in the early 1990s affect national identity in Azerbaijan?

3. Have attitudes towards the Azerbaijani language and other foreign languages changed during the post-Soviet period?

To answer these research questions, the developments in the language use and attitudes were analysed, based on relevant scholarly literature on the topic, and on a language survey and numerous interviews.

1.4 Hypothesis

The general research hypothesis for this study is that the script change that was implemented after regaining independence promoted the Azerbaijani language and identity as well as strengthened the de-Russification process in Azerbaijan. Therefore, populations from different backgrounds are now using the Azerbaijani language and the Latin script in everyday communications.

The hypothesis seeks to assess the success of the Azerbaijan government's language policy and script reform in promoting Azerbaijani as the country's official language and as a symbol of Azerbaijani identity. Acceptance and support by both Azerbaijani and ethnic minority people for this policy and reform would increase the political importance of the Azerbaijani language and identity as part of the country's nation-building processes. Shevel (2002, p. 405) concludes that 'shifts in language use in educational or political settings suggest acceptance of rules of engagement set by the state'.

To test this hypothesis, various types of data were collected through surveys. The aims of the surveys were to firstly find out how people self-reported their first language and nationality; secondly, how they self-reported the alphabet they use predominately; and thirdly, how they measured their performance of languages proficiency.

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1.5 Significance of this Study

By focusing on language politics, this study focuses on a neglected area of study. Analysing the language policy of independent Azerbaijan in comparison with the Soviet period and exposing the challenging and positive outcomes of the script change in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, will contribute to the existing knowledge in this field.

After independence, newly independent Azerbaijan had limited knowledge regarding the potential outcomes of the Latinisation process, while now this experience is considered essential for Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to make an informed decision around the potential benefits of script change. In October 2017, Kazakh president Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a decree to replace the Cyrillic script with the Latin alphabet, like former Soviet counterparts Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, and fully adjusting everything in the country to the new alphabet by 2025 (Almaty, 2019).

In hindsight, one may recall similar situations in other newly independent post-Soviet republics at the end of the twentieth century; fortifying or redefining a local culture in order to extricate themselves from Moscow's influence (Clement, 2008). Hence, the findings of this study will provide information regarding the outcomes of the script change in post-Soviet Azerbaijan and, relatedly, regarding the shaping of a unique Azerbaijani national identity. This process can be seen as an example for other post-colonial Soviet states like Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

1.6 Structure and Chapter Outline

This study consists of seven chapters. Following this Introduction, Chapter 2 discusses the methods employed to conduct this study. It elaborates on the interdisciplinary approach,

merging methods, and the mixed methods design it adopts, summarising information on participants, procedure, materials, analysis, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 3 focuses on a discussion of national identity, nationalism, and nation-building in the context of post-colonial countries. These concepts are repeated throughout the thesis and serve as the foundation for the quantitative and qualitative analyses presented in Chapter 6. Chapter 3 also points out differences between language policy and language planning, and studies comparatively, the language policies implemented by a variety of post-colonial states.

Chapter 4 provides the background information related to the history of Azerbaijan, particularly the Soviet period, from the aspects of colonial subjection and language policy. It highlights language policy and planning in Azerbaijan before independence and identifies key components of the Azerbaijani national identity. This chapter also discusses the nation-building process in Turkey and its script policy, which became the main role-model for Azerbaijan while implementing new language policy after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Using an historical approach, this chapter explores language as a fundamental question for nationalism in Azerbaijan and the other former Soviet states.

Chapter 5 examines the current views on language and national identity after changing the script from Cyrillic to Latin. The first stage of the Soviet Union (between the 1920s and 1930s) is particularly highlighted in terms of its effects on the establishment of the current language and national identity in Azerbaijan. Chapter 5 also reviews the current language policy settings in Azerbaijan and the wider context of the nation-building process, outlining the role of the Turkish alphabet in the transit of the alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin (and how changing the alphabet affected political, economic, and cultural connections with Turkey). This chapter describes how nationalist groups have utilised language to construct a

common national identity. It focuses on the case of Azerbaijan and explains how, since the late 1980s, the Azerbaijani language has been a unifying element for national identity and a marker of sovereignty.

Chapter 6 elaborates on the outcomes of the fieldwork of the survey and interview. This chapter seeks to explain the role of language policy, and in particular the script change, in the process of nation-building, drawing on data obtained from an online survey and interview with prominent individuals in the education and media sectors.

Finally, the Conclusion summarises the outcomes of this research project. It addresses the theoretical and methodological grounds of the dissertation and discusses the need for interdisciplinarity in the examination of the consequences of the alphabet change in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. The Conclusion reflects on this research's limitations, notes the need for further research, and highlights the original contribution to knowledge of this study. Finally, it observes to what extent the alphabet change of 1991, and the new language policy of Azerbaijan, have been successful from the perspective of the national identity.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

The primary research questions in this study, as noted in the preceding chapter, are concerned with the re-establishment of national identity in Azerbaijan following the implementation of new language policies, particularly the transition of the script from Cyrillic to Latin. Language and national identity issues have remained controversial in the post-colonial Soviet republics; thus, the methodology used in this study to answer the research questions is critical in order to obtain the most reliable and valid data, while taking into account all potential limitations. This chapter describes the research design and the data collection and analysis techniques, as well as the justification for their use.

This chapter discusses the merging methods (survey and interview) and discourse analysis employed to collect data for this research project. It covers the data collection process and then explains the procedure. The research data collection consists of two steps: the analysis of quantitative survey and qualitative interview. In this chapter, the benefits and disadvantages of employing the mixed methodology are discussed. Following that, the study's research design, including information regarding research participants, numerous techniques used, and analytic procedures for the quantitative and qualitative data are outlined. Finally, ethics and the limitations of the research methodology are addressed. The following chapter will present a general review of the main themes and ideas that are most important to this topic to provide a clear and thorough theoretical basis for this research.

2.2 Research Paradigm and Research Design

To address the research questions, a mixed qualitative and quantitative method was considered appropriate for this study as it provides triangulation to decrease bias and increase the credibility and validity of the research findings. 'Triangulation refers to the intentional use of multiple methods, with offsetting or counteracting biases, in investigations of the same phenomenon to strengthen the validity of inquiry results' (Greene, 2007, p. 42). I pursued this approach by conducting online semi-structured interviews and collecting supporting data from surveys.

In addition to triangulation, data from several sources (surveys and interviews) are also gathered. The two types of methods are connected in the following way: QUAL + QUAN, which signifies that largely qualitative techniques are used, with some quantitative data collected (Dörnyei, 2007). The justification for using the qualitative method as the primary method is that it will allow an exploration of different experiences and attitudes about the language and national identity problem in Azerbaijan from a variety of social and ethnic groups, while supporting numerical data from the quantitative survey will validate findings. The mixed method, using both numerical and narrative data, enables a comprehensive analysis of the main themes.

Merging existing knowledge from different disciplines can bring new perspectives to the study of specific issues. Thus, researchers in politics and linguistics have been studying how the script change affected the national identity as well as the political and linguistical circumstances of newly independent Azerbaijan (Akyildiz, 2019; Ergun, 2010a; Garibova, 2018; Hatcher, 2008; Marquardt, 2010). The integration of various disciplines can reveal new knowledge about the implementation and outcomes of the script change.

As mentioned, this study relies on a mixed-method approach that integrates a quantitative survey and targeted qualitative interviews. In a first research stage, 190 Azerbaijani citizens from different areas of the country as well as Azerbaijani residing in the diaspora were recruited for an online survey. In a second research stage, semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with targeted individuals, including politicians and teachers, to obtain a better understanding of the ways the script change had been implemented to address the national identity problem. The interviews also enabled a cross check of information.

Many researchers find the mixed method research design suitable for investigating their questions, as it combines qualitative and quantitative techniques for data collection. According to Gorard (2004, p. 7), 'combined methods research, and the combination of data derived through the use of different methods, has been identified by authorities as a key element in the improvement of social science, including education research', with research strengthened using a variety of data collection methods. This research design thus includes both quantitative and qualitative data collection, combining the two forms of data collection through various research techniques.

Regarding participant selection, I focused on two age groups: 18-30, and 31 and over. Participants within these age groups are both Azerbaijani and Russian speakers. Also, as the language popularity has always been different in cities and rural settings, the two groups of participants have been recruited to ensure representation from both urban and rural areas. This is essential since this thesis aims to explain how the new language regulations, and in particular the alphabet change, affected the country from the national identity aspect.

As detailed earlier, the main research questions of this study are, "What are the outcomes of script change in Azerbaijan?" and "Have attitudes towards the Azerbaijani language and other foreign languages (Russian, Turkish, English) changed during the post-Soviet period?" Because of these research problems, an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm was considered the most appropriate. Interpretivist/constructivist approaches suggest that 'reality is socially constructed', and that meanings are also constructed by individuals as they engage with the world they are interpreting (Mertens, 2005, pp. 11-12). According to Creswell (2003, p. 8), the interpretivist/constructivist researcher tends to 'rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied'. Therefore, an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm provides the researcher with more opportunities to get meaningful data regarding their research problem.

Most language and national identity studies in Azerbaijan have been conducted with qualitative methods (e.g., Garibova, 2009; Mirzoev, 2018). However, a mixed method approach can strengthen the study findings by covering a much broader and in-depth investigation of the research themes (see Creswell, 2009). Therefore, a mixed method approach is considered the best to achieve the purpose of this study.

The first stage of data collection consisted of a quantitative survey among Azerbaijanis. The second stage consisted of a series of open-ended interviews with targeted Azerbaijanis from the education and politics sectors. The qualitative interviews and the quantitative survey substantiate and validate the findings of this research.

2.3 Data Collection

The scholarly literature confirms that the script change implemented in the 1990s affected the language circumstances and, relatedly, national identity in post-Soviet Azerbaijan.

Therefore, I decided to study the language circumstances of Azerbaijan 30 years after regaining its independence. Because the notion of national identity is often based on language, I decided to conduct a quantitative survey from different groups and to conduct interviews to better understand current language uses in Azerbaijan. Another essential point was to see how the use of different scripts and languages affected representations of national identity in Azerbaijan.

An online survey was constructed and distributed mostly through Facebook and other social media apps to reach as many Azerbaijanis as possible from all locations, ages, and ethnic groups. Of course, the Azerbaijani community on Facebook is not indicative of Azerbaijani society as a whole. The online survey was created with Qualtrix.com and was disseminated on Facebook between July 15th and December 22nd, 2021. Over 300 participants took part, with 190 answering all the questions. The analysis only included data from survey respondents who completed the survey.

During the first data collection stage, a quantitative comparative survey method was considered the most suitable for this study. As Bachman and Schutt (2008) state, due to their versatility, efficiency, and generalisability, surveys are one of the most used tools in the social sciences. Quantitative surveys enable a researcher to collect a considerable amount of data and compare them. Different groups from various ethnic, social, and linguistic backgrounds were chosen for this survey.

To avoid bias, triangulation was employed to ensure credibility of the findings. Denzin (2017) suggests:

Four basic types of triangulation are *data*, with these types; (1) time, (2)

space, (3) person; *investigator* (multiple vs. single observers of same object);

theory (multiple vs. single perspectives in relation to the same set of

objects); and *methodological* (within-method triangulation and between-method triangulation). (p. 301)

For data collection, I adopted two types of triangulations: data and methodological. Considering some contradictory data in the Soviet literature and in the sources emanating from post-Soviet states, I adopted data triangulation to answer my research question by relying on the most reliable data. Therefore, during the literature review stage, regarding the language policy of Azerbaijan from the context of national identity during the Soviet Union and after regaining independence, the literature of modern Azerbaijan and post-Soviet Russia, as well as the Western scholarly literature, were analysed. Regarding methodology, both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed to validate the findings. Therefore, the survey questions were designed according to interview questions to collect the most reliable and valid data.

During the second stage, data collection relied on semi-structured qualitative interviews. Interviews are generally considered an appropriate method to inquire into 'people's experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge' (Patton, 2002, p. 4). Thus, this study targeted individuals in Azerbaijan and in the diaspora who were involved in linguistics, politics, and education. Interview prompts were based around similar questions as those asked in the survey. The interviews were conducted online via Zoom (See Appendix A). The purpose was to get a deeper understanding of language and national identity in Azerbaijan and to validate the findings from the survey. The semi-structured interview method was considered significant for this study because it allows the researcher to have more in-depth discussions and a better understanding of the participants' perspectives (Scott & Morrison, 2006).

During the second stage, twenty academic staff from linguistics, politics, and the education sectors were asked in an email to participate to the study and whether they would be interested in receiving further information about it, including the consent form and interview questions, prior to the interview. All interviewees are re-identifiable. The interviews were completed over a four-month period. The interview data reflected all participants' perceptions of the outcomes of the new language regulations, including the alphabet change and the re-establishment of the national identity in Azerbaijan.

The participants were chosen for the interviews using a purposive sampling method, enabling me to interview people who met all requirements. Their professional backgrounds (as the main requirement) ensured that relevant information would be gathered for this study, and I was able to collect the maximum data possible in a relatively short period of time. During the period of data collection, both for the survey and the interviews, I was primarily concerned with gathering as much data as possible concerning the way the national identity perceptions of people differ due to their language and script preference across different age groups and area settings.

Participation in both the survey and interview were entirely voluntary, and the participants' confidentiality and anonymity (including their names and addresses) were protected in the survey. In the interview, the participants' identities were kept re-identifiable, based on their consent prior to the interview (Mackey & Gass, 2015).

The process of collecting data for this study lasted nine months, and the survey and the interview were conducted online because of travel restrictions during the COVID-19 period. The initial five months were devoted to remote data collection from the online quantitative survey. In the following four months, interview data from twenty academic staff from the fields of education, linguistics, and politics were collected. As the current

political issues have significantly changed in post-Soviet Azerbaijan and affected the language policy, some questions to the survey were added regarding the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War to see how people's attitude changed after the outbreak of that conflict in the region.

Participants were usually competent in communicating in English. Nonetheless, the interviewees were provided with the option of completing the interview in Azerbaijani, Russian, or Turkish, though there were numerous code-switching and trans-language moments during the interviews.

Following the stage of data collection, the process of data analysis began. Creswell (2007) states:

> Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data (i.e., text data as in transcripts) for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion (p. 180).

Various sources were used for data collection, which was also considered an important factor in increasing the reliability and accuracy of findings. I then double-checked my data interpretation with the respondents to ensure that my interpretation of the interview data accurately reflected their opinions. The data obtained from the survey and the interview show that while the role of the Russian language is still important in Azerbaijan, people think that to strengthen Azerbaijani national identity, the national language must be the only official language in the country and that it needs to be promoted in all aspects of life. It also clarifies that the language policy and the script change after independence significantly affected the prestige of the Azerbaijani language and people's attitude towards the national

and most popular foreign languages (Russian, Turkish, and English). I discuss this situation and present the results of the data analysis from both the surveys and the interviews in Chapter 6.

2.4 Participants

Participant recruitment for the survey was conducted via personal contacts, social media platforms, and snowballing method. Initially, I surveyed my personal contacts that met the criteria for this survey: a) identifying as Azerbaijani nationality, and b) belonging to one of the given age groups (18–30, and over 30). While I had some connections for my survey, I used social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Odnaklasniki (as they are the most popular in Azerbaijan) to reach diverse participants and to strengthen the reliability of the survey. A total of 190 respondents were recruited across the two main groups (those who were born pre- and post-independence).

Additionally, recruitment of participants from social media and personal contacts, and snowballing were adopted for the survey. Thus, each research participant who volunteered to contribute to the research was asked via email if they were able to suggest one or more additional individuals who met the required characteristics and might be willing to participate to the study. As a result of this snowballing method, I was able to recruit seven interviewees for my research project. I emailed the research consent form and the interview questions to prospective participants after they confirmed their participation (see Appendix A).

In the questionnaire, I used the direct approach strategy, in which participants were given questions regarding their perspectives on the languages/script and were asked to

identify their language/script choice, so openly showing their attitude towards the languages and the social phenomena around them (Garrett, 2010, p. 39).

Furthermore, I targeted individuals with specific knowledge of the history and processes regarding language policy and national identity in independent Azerbaijan. The interviewees were 20 prominent figures in academia, politics, and the education sectors of Azerbaijan.

2.5 Unit of Analysis and Sampling Method

The unit of analysis of this study was Azerbaijani and Russian speakers over and under 30 years old (i.e., those born before and those born after independence in 1991), their living areas (in the city of Baku, or in rural areas, whether in the country or in the diaspora), and their ethnicity (whether belonging to the ethnic Azerbaijani majority or other national minorities). Furthermore, more data was collected from some Azerbaijani public figures who are associated with the language policies and politics in Azerbaijan.

This study considered 190 Azerbaijani individuals for data collection via the survey method. The random sampling method was adopted for data collection via the survey. Participants were recruited online on different social media platforms. While analysing the data collected via the questionnaire, I used a data reduction process involving summarising, coding, and selecting themes and clusters (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 21). Additionally, 20 public figures in Azerbaijan were interviewed during the second phase of data collection. They were recruited through personal contacts and snowballing method.

2.6 Data Analysis

Depending on the country's language policy, one language is generally preferred over others as the standard language in educational and administrative settings. The qualitative interviews conducted for this study reflect people's attitudes toward the national and foreign languages, as well as the language policy that exists in Azerbaijan today. Furthermore, the online language survey of the participants' fluency in Azerbaijani and foreign languages (Russian, English, and Turkish) would disclose if there has been any influence in developing Azerbaijani language competence across the population of various nationalities, ages, and social backgrounds.

This section examines Azerbaijani and other foreign language use within the Republic of Azerbaijan 30 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The aim of this research is to examine levels of Azerbaijani proficiency and usage of the Latin script amongst the Russian and Azerbaijani speaking populations to see how successful the language policy has been. The focus of this research is to examine if there has been a shift in language and alphabet use and the effects of people's language preferences on their attitude towards national identity. Therefore, if participants show that they can use the Azerbaijani language and the Latin script and that they use it in everyday situations, then the language policy could be deemed as successful.

Additionally, another important aspect touched on by this study is how attitudes about language can be influenced by the degree of proficiency that the speaker possesses in that language. The Azerbaijani language as the national language, and Russian, English, and Turkish as the most popular foreign languages, are the dominant languages in Azerbaijan, while due to age, social, ethnic, and territorial conditions not all people have the same of level proficiency in those languages.

The purpose of this survey was to evaluate attitudes of Azerbaijanis, including two generations (pre- and post-1991), towards two different scripts (Latin and Cyrillic) and the role of existing foreign languages, such as Russian, Turkish, and English, in Azerbaijan, with particular stress on the importance of the Azerbaijani language in representations of national identity.

While preparing the survey regarding the language and national identity problem in Azerbaijan, special attention was given to the wording of the items to avoid ambiguity and vagueness. The survey used closed-ended questions, offering two to six pre-determined responses. Besides, there was the chance for participants to elaborate if they wanted to. The survey consisted of 24 questions (see Appendix B) structured around five different topics: language proficiency, the features of the Azerbaijani national identity, the use of the Cyrillic and Latin scripts, the role of foreign languages in Azerbaijan (i.e., Russian, Turkish, and English), and the ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan.

All questions were based on the literature review, and the literature indicated that after the script change enacted in 1995, the national identity process and language policy were directed in considerably different ways. I could identify the relation of language and national identity between two different language and script users and two generations (pre- and post-independence). Therefore, I asked each participant about the language they use for education, the language they use at work and home, and whether they find using a particular language is important for being Azerbaijani.

The link for the survey was posted on different social media groups and emailed to some participants, and 300 prospective participants responded. After eliminating responses with missing data and outlier cases, the final sample for this study consisted of 190 respondents. The rest were incomplete and therefore were excluded. The participants

received instructions for the survey and data processing in the initial part of the survey. They were asked to understand the main requirements and select the answer for each question that expressed their own opinions. It is worth noting that there is some missing data, since the participants were allowed to skip the questions if they felt uncomfortable to answer.

In the first section, some general data regarding the respondent's personal details were collected, such as age, living area, citizenship status, nationality, and their first language. The idea was to involve both pre- and post-independence generations in the survey. After the fall of the Soviet Union and regaining independence, the government's language policy changed, and the role of the national language has since been promoted. The younger generation (after 1991) were encouraged to use the Azerbaijani language and the Latin script, while the older generation (post-1991) were predominately using the most prestigious Russian language and the Cyrillic script during the Soviet era. Therefore, the participation of both generations in the survey would contribute to gaining meaningful data.

Out of 190 respondents, 121 were identified as 18–30 years old and 69 participants were 31 or older. Today's debates around the language and national identity in Azerbaijan highlight that the attitude towards the use of the Latin and Cyrillic scripts as well as using different languages are different among two generations. After regaining independence, due to its long history as a part of the Soviet Union, even after changing the alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin, people found it easier to read and write in Cyrillic. Only after 2001, some new regulations regarding the implementation of the new alphabet made Latin mandatory. Therefore, despite some groups still being able to read and write only in Cyrillic, among the young generation the number of people who can use Cyrillic is gradually dropping. Although

both age groups included males and females, the responses were not segregated according to gender.

During the Soviet Union era, end even if Russian became the dominant language, the role of Russian was not the same in all parts of the country. Due to the level of literacy and education, the Russian language was predominately spoken in urban areas, while it was not prevalent in the rural settings. This circumstance remained unchanged after the fall of the Soviet Union. The Russian speaking community are operating in the cities, while in rural settings education is based almost exclusively on the Azerbaijani language. According to a report by Yazar (2017), 17% of people study in Russian sector classes in Azerbaijan, and these classes are mostly operating in the central areas. This is why respondents were also categorised according to residence: 146 participants were identified as residing in urban areas, while 44 were living in rural areas. Also, 77 of the respondents have foreign country experience as a visitor or resident.

Regarding citizenship status, the respondents are predominately Azerbaijani: 185 participants are Azerbaijani citizens, and five participants hold other citizenship. The survey reveals that out of 190 respondents, 94% identified their nationality as Azerbaijani while one respondent indicated his/her nationality as Russian, and one participant as Turkish. The rest belonged to other national minorities in the country. The last question of the general introduction part of the survey was about the first language of participants, and the survey shows that around 93% of participants use Azerbaijani as the first language, 3.2% use Russian, 1.1 % use Turkish, and the remaining considered other foreign or minority languages as their first language.

The second section of the survey examined the participants' self-reported language use and their proficiency in other languages. In this section, participants were asked to

assess the role of Azerbaijani and other foreign languages, such as Russian, English, and Turkish, in their daily lives in areas like work, home, and study.

In the following section, questions were asked regarding the Azerbaijani national identity by highlighting the importance of language and the history of Azerbaijan in the consolidation of the national identity. The importance of the Azerbaijani language, the history of Azerbaijan, and living in its territory to be considered truly Azerbaijani were addressed in the survey.

The fourth section comprised questions addressing the respondents' script preference, and whether they believe there is need to republish all materials in the new script enforced after independence. The last two sections inquired about the participants' attitude towards the role of foreign languages in the country, their attitudes towards ethnic minorities, and the extent of the rights they should be given in the country.

The questionnaire data was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27). The results of the quantitative survey and qualitative interview analysis were presented using descriptive statistics. Cross-generational comparisons (between pre- and post- generations in Azerbaijan) were the main area of emphasis in this research.

Employing the interview technique in this research enabled me to gain a better understanding of language policy and language management in Azerbaijan since 1991. While conducting an interview, as Johnson and Christensen (2008) state, interviewers have the option of using prompts to obtain clarification and further information. Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were used to cross check the data gathered through the survey about the language and national identity. The interview consisted of five parts and 17 questions. The first part was about the history of script change in Azerbaijan, and as all participants were chosen were over 30, they would be able to remember the debates

around the script change after independence. The second part covered some questions about the consequences of the script change, while the third part was about the current language circumstances of Azerbaijan. The last two parts were about the importance of foreign languages in Azerbaijan and the language policy of Azerbaijan compared to those of other post-Soviet states.

Each interview lasted around 25 minutes. The interview questions and information regarding the interview process were sent to each interviewee once they expressed interest to participate in this study. The participants were also given the option to conduct the interview in Azerbaijani, Turkish, English, or Russian and they were allowed to freely mix languages during the interview, if they felt this enabled better expression of their points. They were notified that all personal information regarding the participant would be re-identifiable. Thematic analysis was used for the interviews, which Block (2010) defined as one of three separate approaches to dealing with narratives, along with structural analysis and dialogic/performative analysis.

Twenty in-depth interviews were undertaken to conduct qualitative testing of the suggested conceptual framework. The cases have been classified with regard to several constructs, allowing for comparison, discussion, and interpretation (Patton, 1990). The interview method gave me access to more reliable and variable data. The interviews enabled me to conduct in-depth analyses of my study themes, which would have been difficult using only the quantitative survey method. Another advantage of the interview process was direct interaction with potential respondents. Before beginning the interviews, I made sure that the interviewees could be reached and agreed to participate (Denscombe, 2014).

Due to the importance of each interview to this research project, the participants were not chosen using a random sample method. Participants in semi-structured interviews have more freedom in terms of question sequence. Questions were adjusted based on the responses of the interviewees using Thomas' (2013) interview scheduling model. I would not bring up certain questions again if people had no intention to discuss them.

Once all interviews were transcribed, they were returned to each respondent for confirmation of all submitted data, allowing them to verify accuracy and make any necessary changes. The process began with an online survey, which was followed by Zoom interviews. Following that, several themes were identified, and all transcripts were reviewed to see if any additional themes needed to be included. Finally, the qualitative and quantitative analytical findings were combined and compared.

After being informed that all responses would be kept anonymous and confidential, the interviewees were asked to consent to being audio-recorded during the interview. In the first session, I did as Dörnyei (2007) suggested and 'broke the ice' by developing rapport and trust through small talk. I described why the study was being conducted and discussed the potential benefits of the participants' involvement.

To conduct an efficient interview, one must have a set of conversational skills in order to ask the appropriate questions. According to Kvale (1999, p. 50), 'an interview is literally an *inter view*, an inter change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest'. To explore differences between sets of educated people's perspectives regarding language and national identity, a multiple-case method is employed as a variety of cases would enable a researcher to compare similar and contrasting results.

Unlike the survey, all interview participants held tertiary qualifications or more, and had to be available to meet for the interview. All interviews were audio-recorded and

transcribed. The interview questions were feasible in two languages (Azerbaijani and English), but during the interview participants were allowed to use Russian or Turkish as well. A large portion of the recordings were in Azerbaijani. It was necessary to translate many of these sections into English, and primary translation was conducted by the researcher using her own knowledge of the Azerbaijani language.

The participants were provided the post-interview transcript and confirmed their responses. I made an effort to limit interruptions during the interviews in order not to distract participants. Instead, I took notes and asked if anything was unclear or needed further clarification. After the interview, each recording was played back numerous times in order to prepare the transcript for the interviewee and for the data analysis process.

In the first stage of the data analysis, all 20 interviews were transcribed. The interview data were analysed using NVivo (Version 12). All data were read several times and codes were created that summarise the answers to the main questions. The transcripts were reviewed and data pertaining to the main variable (e.g., historical and political elements) were coded selectively to determine the primary variable that incorporates all of the data about the language and national identity problem in Azerbaijan. In terms of their language profile, all participants could speak in the national language, Azerbaijani. Additionally, 90% of the participants spoke Turkish, 60% spoke Russian, and 30% spoke English. All the participants identify as Azerbaijani and are prominent public figures in different fields, particularly in education and politics:

Interviewee 1 – Associate Professor (School of Public and International Affairs) at ADA University (Azerbaijan, Baku). Language competency: Azerbaijani, Turkish, Russian, and English.

Interviewee 2 – Professor and Chair of the Department of General Linguistics at Azerbaijan University of Languages. Language competency: Azerbaijani, Russian, Turkish, and English.

Interviewee 3 – Professor of Sociolinguistics at Azerbaijan University of Languages. Language competency: Azerbaijani, Turkish, Russian, and English.

Interviewee 4 – Lecturer (English translation) at Azerbaijan University of Languages. Language competency: Azerbaijani, Russian, Turkish, and English.

Interviewee 5 – English teacher at British Council Azerbaijan. Language competency: Azerbaijani, Turkish, and English.

Interviewee 6 – English Language Teacher at Azerbaijan University of Languages. Language competency: Azerbaijani, Turkish, Russian, and English.

Interviewee 7 – Executive Director at French-Azerbaijani University. Language competency: Azerbaijani, Turkish, French, English, and Russian.

Interviewee 8– Leading researcher, Associate Professor at the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences. Language competency: Azerbaijani, Turkish, and Russian.

Interviewee 9 – Associate Professor (English Lexicology and Stylistics) at Azerbaijan University of Azerbaijan. Language competency: Azerbaijani, Russian, Turkish, and English.

Interviewee 10 – Associate Professor (Literature of the Foreign Countries) at Azerbaijan University of Languages. Language competency: Azerbaijani, Turkish, Russian, and English.

Interviewee 11 – Co-director at Impulse Research Center. Language competency: Azerbaijani, Turkish, Russian, and English.

Interviewee 12 – Director of Turkic Languages Department in the Azerbaijan National Academy of Science Institute of Linguistics named after Nasimi. Language competency: Azerbaijani and Turkish.

Interviewee 13 – Azerbaijani Language Teacher at Baku Slavic University. Language competency: Azerbaijani, Turkish, Russian, and German.

Interviewee 14 – Senior Instructor at the Department of Innovations in Teaching (Azerbaijan University of Languages). Language competency: Azerbaijani, Russian, Turkish, and English.

Interviewee 15 – Lecturer at Western Caspian University. Language competency: Azerbaijani, Russian, Turkish, and English.

Interviewee 16 – Azerbaijani Teacher at a school, PhD student at Baku State University. Language competency: Azerbaijani, Turkish, and Russian.

Interviewee 17 – Lecturer at Baku Engineering University for the Social Sciences and Humanities. Language competency: Azerbaijani, Turkish, Russian, English, and German.

Interviewee 18 – English Language Teacher at a public school. Language competency: Azerbaijani, Turkish, and English.

Interviewee 19 – English Language Teacher at a school. Language competency: Azerbaijani, English, and Turkish.

Interviewee 20 – Azerbaijani History Teacher at a school. Language competency: Azerbaijani, Turkish, and Russian.

Coding was used to identify concepts, similarities, and conceptual reoccurrences in the data (Chun Tie et al, 2019). It serves as a tool in grounded theory to dissect data, such as transcripts, into parts that are given names and categories (Bryman, 2004).

Strauss and Corbin (1990) note the grounded theory is 'derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process' (p. 12), while Punch (2013, p. 132) defines grounded theory as theory that is 'generated on the basis of data', 'grounded in data' and 'developed inductively from data'. It is an exploratory process. Nowell & et al (2017) states that in the first stages of the coding process, the names and categories are mainly descriptive key words. In later stages of the coding process, these descriptive categories and names are paradigmatically linked to theories from the scholarly literature. Theorising about the patterns' importance, as well as their broader implications and meanings, is a goal of researcher. The classifications consequently become more analytical (Nowell & et al, 2017). These categories help to give theoretical significance from the scholarly works to the social contexts being examined in this study.

Each section of each interview that corresponded to a particular code was then cut and pasted into another word document and labelled as a category. Each response from the interviewees was labelled, so that it could be identified. Furthermore, the researcher kept going back to listen to the interviews to ensure that no content had been taken out of context. Then analytical coding of each of these categories took place by combining the codes with the theories from the literature. The themes that emerged from the coding process were a) language policy and challenges of the alphabet change; b) spheres of language use, with particular reference to communication, education, external influence, and the generational gap; and c) the geographic distribution of national and foreign languages within the Republic of Azerbaijan.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the conceptual and methodological aspects employed in this research project. It summarised information on participants, methodology, data analysis and ethical considerations. For this research project a mixed method research design, quantitative survey, and qualitative semi-structured interview, was employed, which enabled the language and national identity problem of independent Azerbaijan to be viewed from multiple perspectives in order to reach reliable data.

The data was firstly collected using a survey (see Appendix B), which was distributed amongst 190 respondents who belonged to two age brackets (18–30, or over 30), a specific language group (Azerbaijani or Russian), and were living in different parts of Azerbaijan (urban or rural), or in the foreign diaspora. In the second stage of the data collection process, 20 prominent individuals were interviewed (see Appendix A). Findings emerging from the survey and the interview will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Given the complex and changing language situation, which resulted from various social and historical influences, the following chapter discusses national-identity, nationalism, and nation-building in postcolonial countries to shed light on the language landscape of post-Soviet Azerbaijan.

Chapter 3: Language Colonialism and National Identity in the Post-Colonial World

3.1 Introduction

This chapter delves into the scholarly literature addressing language, identity, and power in the post-colonial world. This chapter will analyse the special role of titular languages in the post-colonial era, and the role of ethnic and national identity after the establishment of independent states. These experiences are relevant to framing Azerbaijan's language policies after regaining independence.

The focus of this research is on the language policy of post-Soviet Azerbaijan. Therefore, the experiences of identity construction in comparable post-colonial states are also relevant. It is crucial to begin by defining what a 'decolonising culture' is. Decolonising culture largely refers to liberating colonised communities' languages, identities, and intellectual constellations from the colonial experience, which is believed to have suppressed and subordinated cultural identities (Wa Thiong'o, 1986).

In a way, decolonising culture is a process that captures the journey from conception to execution for nation building and establishing national identity through state sovereignty in a post-colonial context, undoing to a large extent the colonial legacy and footprint on the society, culture and language of the colonising metropole.

National identity and state sovereignty are found to be closely linked. With both acting as a cause and consequence to one another in the overall process of nation building. Of particular note, however, is the fact that with constant regime changes and resultant political transitions in post-colonial scenarios, national identity is often challenged and redefined in numerous ways. This chapter outlines the existing literature on identity formation in the postcolonial world, with an emphasis on nation building and national

identity formation. These experiences can help a comparative approach to the post-Soviet experiences.

3.2 Nation-Building and National Identity

This section examines the national identity and national-building process and discusses these two terms. The process of nation-building can be viewed as a state-led effort to establish national identity, and to foster societal cohesion and state unity. Most frequently, this is done to strengthen the capability, legitimacy, and constancy of state institutions. Moreover, the goal of nation-building is considered to establish sustainable development through the cohesion of the nation's peoples, so that it can maintain long-term political stability and viability in its territory. By fostering national identity, nation-building has conceptually enabled many nations to coalesce on a social and cultural level.

According to Stinson (2009), national identity is a form of collective mobilisation that requires a fundamental sense of collective identity, and this may imply that an established political territorial entity, such as a state, pre-existed any established social ethno-cultural country because nation building initiatives are known to be state-initiated processes. In all these situations, nation-building has become a process of re-defining national identity rather than its creation or invention. Hipler (2005) emphasises three crucial components to these processes: a) a unifying, persuading ideology; b) societal integration; and c) a working governmental apparatus.

Olu-Adeyemi (2017, p. 27) refers to nation-building in Europe, when isolated communities within a traditional and pre-modern society, with parochial cultures at the 'bottom' and an aloof elite at the 'top', largely content with collecting taxes and keeping order, coalesce together. This system was driven by internal dynamics rather than being

affected or driven by external forces. Gambari (2008) thus argues that nation-building is not a product of a historical chance; rather, it is a consequence of vision and resolve.

Other accounts understand national identity as a politico-economic community. In. this social theory perspective, these communities are deemed as 'a community of people obeying the same laws and institutions within a given territory' (A. D. Smith, 1991, p. 9). On a similar note, Leach (2017) refers to Guiberneau's classification of five dimensions of national identity:

> These comprise a psychological dimension, a cultural dimension; a territorial dimension; and an historical dimension, which defines nationhood as the necessary expression of a pre-existing unity […] a final dimension of national identity is the *political* and, consists of two elements. The first refers to the strategic efforts of a state to 'generate a culturally and linguistically homogenous citizenry' (Leach, 2017, p. 9).

Post-soviet Azerbaijan faced indeed these problems – and the construction of a linguistically homogenous citizenship was only partially achieved, as Russian still continues to be used, particularly at some institutional levels.

Norman (2006) states that national identities may need to be readjusted as part of nation-building programs by being adapted to 'national' values and morality rather than language. There is at times the need to 'de-sentimentalize' some elements within the consciousness of the nation (p. 41). Post-soviet Azerbaijan is on this path, where asserting the importance of the Azerbaijani language to recreate a national identity, has not yet mandated legally forbidding Russian. This was a balancing act and demonstrates that values and morality are the glue for a nation, and that a single common language alone is not the only factor.

In addition to morality, values, and a common language, Gellner presents (1994) another perspective on nationalism as a consequence of industrial social organization, where cultural homogeneity occurs due to social and economic pressures. In these instances, the integration of modern industrial society into a high culture is ensured by a state-led, standardized education (Gellner, 1994). The experience of Azerbaijan in this is also mixed, where a conscious attempt by the state to maintain both Russian and Azerbaijani languages to meet the socio-industrial aspirations of the population, is challenged by the growing importance of Turkish and English in private schools. The country still has aspirations to move beyond the region and its Soviet past. The identity of the nation is built around language and values, but sections of the society are not immune from global influences.

Discussing language resurgence, morality and values, and the global aspirations of society, allows Leach (2017) to state that nation-building is rather the process of creating a cohesive national 'political' community, irrespective of religious, economic or other social factors. According to Benedict Anderson's seminal definition (1983), for a group of people to be considered a nation, history and heritage have much more influence in shaping national identity than ethnicity and language (cited in Leach, 2017, pp. 4-5).

This theoretical framework is well suited to comprehend the process of national formation in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. For Azerbaijanis, undoubtedly language holds significance, since they view it as the foundation of their identity. However, Azerbaijan witnessed four script changes in a century, with the latest script being from Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet, proving that even if language holds significance in defining national identity, it is still only symbolic. This will be further discussed in Chapter 5, and community attitudes will be analysed in Chapter 6.

For a society comprising more than one ethnic group, Grotenhuis (2016) defines that nation-building is spearheaded by coming to terms with a shared identity and generating an emotional sense of belonging. In other words, where minorities are involved, the outcome can never be simply that a dominant group imposes its identity (Grotenhuis, 2016). In Azerbaijan, the Azerbaijani language has been mandated throughout the nation, across all minorities, to serve as the foundation for creating a national identity. By designating the language as Azerbaijani and not 'Azeri', representing the ethnic majority, the government authorities have sought to maintain unity, although symbolically, without alienating other ethnic groups.

Ozcan (2005) notes that newly independent nation-states generally pursue policies that assimilate or integrate minorities – and this is certainly the case in Azerbaijan. However, many would argue that imposing the majority's language frequently results in intergroup conflict, diminishing the chances of the emergence of a culture of peace. Korostelina (2013) argues that whilst multiculturalism has the potential to bridge social gaps, it also has the propensity to create and sustain conflicts between majority and minorities. That is, inter-society conflict is not a function of majoritarianism or multiculturalism; rather, it should be attributed to the breakdown of civic order or 'civic concept', which typically decreases tensions and the prospect of violence among different identity groups (Korostelina, 2013, p. 154).

In post-soviet Azerbaijan, the aforementioned decision of denoting the language as 'Azerbaijani' can be seen as a part of the larger strategy of Azerbaijanisation, (i.e., creating a civic concept – pillars of which are Turkification, Islamization, and Modernization). This will further be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, where it will be noted that even these three pillars are moderated to an extent, so that neither one of them dominates the other and the

country does not mimic a modern Turkey, nor Iran, and neither completely stays within the Russian influence. To an extent, a fourth pillar – 'revivalism' – can be attributed to this balancing act of moderation.

Revivalism and its facets such as the revival of national history, national language, and national pride, arguably stand to guard the national identity from being run over by foreign cultural and religious influence. Akçalı (2003) explains that revivalism is of utmost importance for the process of developing a nation, not only rejuvenating its heritage, but also keeping it protected in the wake of modern external influences. In the case of Azerbaijan, the national language and its revival has not only been a unifying factor in the nation-building process, but also is arguably effective in controlling the soft power influences of both Turkey and Russia.

In different settings, nation-building can take various forms. In general, according to Ubiria (2015), there are three forms of nation-building: nation-making, nation-maintaining, and nation-reshaping. Nation-making refers to top-down strategies used by intellectual and political elites to integrate previously unrelated social groups and ethnic/regional communities into a single, cohesive national community. In other words, nation, nationhood, national identity, and national consciousness are not everlasting natural phenomena, but rather depend on nation-maintaining policies and their ongoing implementation. The third type of nation-building, nation-reshaping, takes place during significant social and political changes when, for instance, national ideology, symbols, and myths must be remade and modified to make them relevant to new circumstances (Ubiria, 2015, p. 16–17).

In independent Azerbaijan, language and symbolism play a crucial part in nation-reshaping processes, which led to readopting the flag of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic

(1918-1920; its colours symbolized Turkification, Islamization, and Modernization). In other words, the Azerbaijani 'civic' nationalism differs from what is normally defined as ethnic nationalism. Nationalism is recognised as being instrumental in the formation of nations and identities (see Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990). Ethnic nationalism is seen as hinging on cultural elements and variables such as place of birth or residence, citizenship, ancestry, and cultural affinity. Whereas civic nationalism relies on more ambiguous political pointers, such as respect for laws and institutions – and in case of Azerbaijan a calculated approach to the three pillars discussed above (Bornman, 2006, p. 386).

3.3 Nationalism and National Identity in the Post-colonial World

Whereas 'national identity' is a fundamental collective identity shaped by the state, to legitimise its governance (Peters, 2002), nationalism is generally viewed not only as a force that opposed colonialism, but also as an important force in advancing progress (Gellner, 2006). Although different, the essential commonality between the two lies in the fact that, in some cases, a desire to achieve progress via nationalism or establish a common national identity by institutionalising a common language and cultural symbolism may come at the expense of an individual's actual identity or identities, an attack against minorities in a multiethnic or multi-cultural state.

This has been well exemplified through-out the 20th century, with the advent of nationalism to uproot the Dutch, British & French colonial powers in many multi-ethnic states, such as Indonesia, India, and many other southeast Asian countries (Ndlovu Gastsheni, 2009). These policies have then further proceeded to establish a common national identity, albeit with concessions to regional, ethno-linguistic, religious, and cultural minorities.

The Azerbaijani experience is comparable to these examples, where cutting across lines of ethno-linguistic divide, for both nationalism and national identity creation, the country has to an extent succeeded in decolonialising its identity, fortifying in by mandating a common language, with provisions for minorities to still have the opportunity to learn their native languages. It is to this end, that this section will examine the processes that newly formed postcolonial states. It should be highlighted that a crucial feature of all these postcolonial experiences is language. The choice of language equates with the choice of identity.

In Azerbaijan, nationalism as a vehicle for decolonisation was evident. However, despite all regulations taken after independence to strengthen de-Russification, Russian history and cultural values inevitably affected the process of national identity reshaping, particularly in the education sector, where the role of Russian remains important. In other words, it would not be incorrect to assert that in this case, nationalism as a force to undo the colonial legacy, has taken a hit to accommodate and define a national identity fit for a multiethnic state. Additionally, with Azerbaijan's territorial conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia since the early years of independence, all the country's ethnic groups united under Azerbaijani symbolism, and the Azerbaijani language as a common vector to create a national identity. This again reinforces that although the language may have been an essential element of nationalism, monolingualism was relaxed for practical purposes.

A. D. Smith (2009) refers to John Hutchinson's definition of nationalism and discusses two types of nationalism: cultural nationalism and political nationalism. His comparative study demonstrates that political nationalists sought to secure the nation's independence, sovereignty, and territorial state. 'In contrast to these mainly political activities', he argues, 'cultural nationalists sought the moral regeneration of the community, in order to create a

self-sustaining and solidarity nation' (A. D. Smith, 2009, p. 66). Although post-colonial states achieved political nationalism and maintained independence, cultural nationalism required more time and efforts after the fall of the colonial power, as gaining independence is not enough to remove all cultural and linguistic effects of the colonial past. Therefore, in most cases, the post-colonial states employed multicultural policies due to the assimilation of the population to the previous cultural values to achieve stability in society. In the post-Soviet cases, almost all former Soviet states adopted multiculturalism as multi-ethnic and multi-cultural population reside in their territories and Russian cultural values played a crucial role in culture, lifestyle, education, and even in religion.

However, according to Williams's study (1999), because language is an essential component of the nation-building process, multicultural governments frequently discriminate against minority cultures within their borders by denying them the opportunity to use their mother tongue for official purposes (1999). As Wimmer (2012) further opines, nationalism and the formation of nation-states has rather been the main reason behind war, resulting in the often-violent formation of new governments. Ethno-nationalist civil wars over control of the newly formed states haunted many of the new states after independence (Wimmer, 2012, p. 110), with Bangladesh as the key example, gaining its independence from Pakistan due to the imposition of Urdu as the national language.

In Azerbaijan, however, language is used to discriminate; rather, it is seen as the unifying factor in nation-building and assimilation of ethnic minorities, with relaxations and concessions made to Russian in the education sector, for example, for practical purposes, and still teaching in other languages in the regions where required. In addition to competency in Azerbaijani as being the main requirement in all state settings, the minorities in Azerbaijan have the opportunity to also learn and speak their native languages. It is a

balancing act between the identity required by the Azerbaijani language and assuring that the state respects its multiethnic identity.

Hobsbawm (1996) states that institutionalising one official language per country defines the process of nation-state building, even if special arrangements are being made for minorities who insist on retaining their language rights (p. 1071). This practice explains the reason why after World War II, when colonies gained independence, national language became typically the foundation of national education and culture: Urdu in Pakistan, Hindi in India, Arabic in Algeria, and the titular languages of the Soviet republics.

In a similar sense, although rigid in approach, small nationalities who define themselves ethnically and linguistically still strive for homogeneity via a common language. That is, Latvia is just for Lettish-speakers, Moldavia is only for Romanian speakers, and so on. And yet, when Moldova was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940, over half of its population was made up of Ukrainians, Russians, Bulgarians, Turks, Jews, and a variety of other nationalities, rather than Romanians (see Hobsbawm, 1996).

Thus, in the context of a multiethnic state, opting for a common national language is considered a vehicle for connecting the past to the present and future, imparting authority and legitimacy as a result of a shared history, rather than expression of an ethnic majority's dominance (see Suleiman 2019).

In furtherance to the above point, Joseph (2004) discusses that for centuries the linguistic pattern of the British Isles, was a patchwork of local dialects of Germanic or Celtic origin. Only recently have individuals, motivated by various patriotic objectives, set about establishing languages for the nations of England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, as well as Cornwall and other smaller regions (Joseph, 2004). In other words, mandating English did

not ban the patriotic movements to revive other languages in the country. If anything, it perhaps may have paved the way for formalising some of these languages instead.

That said, Breuilly (1993) approaches nationalism from a very different angle and highlights the role of economics in shaping modern nationalism, rather than just viewing the issue from the prism of cultural & ethno-linguistic expression. He contends that it is difficult to link the degree of economic exploitation or backwardness to the strength or intensity of nationalism:

> Nationalist movements have often developed fastest in areas of the colonial world that were the least exploited or backward. Conversely, where the most naked form of exploitation took place, or where modern economic and other developments were least advanced, nationalism was frequently of little importance. (Breuilly, 1993, p. 413)

This is hardly true in case of India, where the aftermath of the Bengal famine and the economic exploitation by the British, added impetus to the nationalist fervour for independence. In the same setting, some of the least exploited princely states, with their 'Maharajas' who had accepted the British suzerainty, aided the crown to quell the nationalist movements that were largely farmer or peasant driven in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Class is important in this context. Nelson Mandela in South Africa, Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, and in the Arab world, Gamal Abdel Nasser, were all born to the exploited and economically unprivileged sections of society and successfully led their nationalist independence struggles against the British and the French. Unquestionably, there are leaders and movements around the world that may well have been led by the elite and the

least exploited, such as Fidel Castro and Mahatma Gandhi, who were born to relatively affluent families. Yet, it still is true that their successful campaigns required the support and participation of the exploited and discriminated masses. Breuilly's (1993) narrative, thus, is contested, and in the case of the Soviet Union, the nationalist movements they did not necessarily from the most exploited classes of society.

That is, while there were instances where marginalized or oppressed groups within Soviet society participated in nationalist movements, the dynamics were predominantly influenced by various factors, including historical, cultural, and political contexts and not just economic ones. In the Soviet Union, smaller groups, like the Udmurts and Evenki, for instance, were classified as 'peoples', while much larger and more developed communities like Georgians and the Uzbeks were regarded as 'nations' with their own sovereign territorial Republics, administrations, party organisations, languages, and cultures. By identifying these communities as nations, the cultural and territorial foundations of ethnicity were kept intact and constitutionally safeguarded, while political and economic decision-making was transferred to the centre (see A. D. Smith, 1991, pp. 146-148).

Thus, in the Soviet Union, nationalism cannot be purely seen from the lens of class. With Marxism being a common denominator, it can be rightly asserted that the economic status of a person did not necessarily dictate their nationalist or decolonial credentials.

Nationalistic movements among ethnic minority groups within the Soviet Union often arose as a response to cultural suppression, discrimination, and Russification policies. To this end, the role played by the intellectuals and dissident movements for political freedoms, human rights, and national self-determination has been pivotal. Furthermore, particularly those who faced persecution under Soviet rule, could also become focal points

for nationalist movements. For example, the Orthodox Church played an important role in fostering national identity and resistance against Soviet control.

Even in the post-Soviet settings, each of the fifteen newly independent nation-states engaged in its own process of nation-building, which includes the promotion of the national language as the symbol of identity and unity, despite other aspects being substantially different in terms of the intended language shift and in the de-Russification project. In this regard, Brubaker (2014) states that two aspects of the Soviet legacy that contributed to the prevalence of nationalist discourse and policies in the post-Soviet states are the distinctive Soviet system of institutionalized multi-nationality, and the manner in which centralized rule and state-wide economic integration had led to linguistic and demographic Russification.

In the case of Azerbaijan, since its independence in 1991, this holds largely true as the benchmark was set out for Azerbaijani to replace Russian, albeit keeping the latter still in use until the goal may well be achieved organically at some point. In other post-Soviet scenarios, similar experiences and parallels can be drawn. Almost all former states adopted multiculturalism, as the populations were multi-ethnic and multi-cultural.

3.4 Language Policy and Language Planning

Language policy was mainly initiated in newly independent post-colonial states in order to facilitate the resolution of language problems. The language policy and planning field was formed in the early 1960s by language scholars interested in solving the language problems of new, developing, and/or post-colonial nations (Goundar, 2017).

Therefore, it is essential to discuss language policy and language planning separately before looking into the linguistic changes resulting from new language implementations in Azerbaijan after regaining independence. This section, thus, provides a framework for

language policy and language planning as well as an outline of its essential components. Before reviewing language policy/language planning in post-colonial states, to get better understanding it is essential to discuss some defining key terms. Language is often a central question in postcolonialism, as in the colonial world it is common to impose or encourage the dominance of the language of the colonizer.

Language serves as a reflection of cultural identity, capturing the shared values, traditions, and beliefs of a particular group. Joseph (2004) defines language as a structured system of communication. Its primary purposes are either communication with others, it is impossible for human beings to live in isolation, or representation of the world, to categorize using the words our language provides us with (p.15). The relationship between language and identity is as follows: a language is a system employed by a specific community, primarily a nation, whose identity it both expresses and is a part of. Speaking the same language is a crucial part of a set of features commonly referred to as ethnicity or ethnic identity, which also includes perceptions of common descent, history, religion, and way of life with other members of the same ethnic group. Language came to play a particularly significant role in the transition to away from colonialism, as the constructions and ideologies of local and colonial languages and multilingualism were placed into the service of modernisation, socialism, and nationalism.

The concept of post-colonialism addresses the effects of colonisation on cultures and societies. While a colonial country may have achieved political freedom, colonial values do not disappear at a country's independence. Thus, the term 'Post-colonialism' marks the end of colonialism by giving the indigenous people the necessary authority and political and cultural freedom to take their place and gain independence by overcoming political and

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cultural imperialism (Sawant, 2012). Darian-Smith (1996) states that since language had to spread swiftly to establish unity inside the state's borders, postcolonial states have focused national language development on efficiency. Some scholars view postcolonialism as symbolic of a liberating emancipation for new nations, despite these new states' participation in the trappings of Western modernity by institutionalizing such things as citizenship, nationalism, legal codes, and cooperation with international bodies (Darian-Smith, 1996).

Djite (1994) defines language policy as 'the deliberate choice(s) made by governments or any other authority with regard to the relationships between language and social life' (p. 64). Abdelhay et al. (2020) argue that language policy is not homogenous, and differs on the basis of its context, levels of intervention, purpose, participants and institutions involved, underlying language ideologies, and power dynamics. With such heterogeneity, the birth of language policy as an institutional field, occurs in concurrence with the emergence of sociolinguistics (see Abdelhay et al., 2020).

On the other hand, according to Rubin and Jernudd (1971),

Language planning is deliberate language change; that is, changes in the system of language code or speaking or both that are planned by organizations that are established for such purposes or given a mandate to fulfill such purposes [...] for solving language problems to find the best (or optimal, most efficient) decision (p. xiv).

The process of language planning involves assessing language resources, assigning preferences and functions to language(s), as well as developing their use according to previously determined objectives.

Spolsky and Lambert (2006) think language policy as encompassing the commonly regarded choices of language items or language varieties, along with the beliefs or ideologies associated with those choices. It can be evidenced in language practices and beliefs, or in formal policy frameworks such as laws, constitutions, or regulations. In contrast, language planning or management is regarded as a top-down approach:

> Language management, planning, engineering, cultivation, and treatment are actions taken by formal authorities, such as governments or other agencies or people who believe that they have authority, such as parents, teachers, or academies, to modify and regulate the language choices made by those they claim to have under their control. Language management has three components: the development of explicit language plans and policies, their implementation (by rules or laws or resource allocation), and the evaluation of results and effects (Spolsky & Lambert, 2006, p. 561).

According to Haugen (as cited in Goundar, 2017), language policy and planning are categorised into three types or levels: status planning, corpus planning, and acquisition planning. Nkopuruk (2018) states that status planning refers to the allocation of new functions to a language; corpus planning is concerned with the internal structure of a language, which involves making changes to the linguistic code and the creation of grammars and dictionaries; and acquisition planning, which entails various actions designed to spread and promote the learning of a language.

Cooper (1989) introduced the notion of acquisition planning as planning that 'is directed toward increasing the number of users – speakers, writers, listeners, or readers' (p.

33). Where opportunities for language learning are created (or limited), in schools or other institutions, for example, acquisition planning is inadvertently undertaken (Cooper, 1989).

Depending on the country or organisation, language planning's objectives can vary, but they almost always involve making planning decisions and possibly adjustments that will improve communication. Although it can be utilised by non-governmental organisations, acquisition planning is more frequently related to government planning. In this approach, acquisition planning is frequently employed to support linguistic purism or language revitalisation, which can alter a language's status, or stop a language shift.

Due to the frequent use of 'language planning' and language policy' as synonyms, it can be challenging to distinguish between the two. According to Tollefson and Pérez-Milans (2018), some people believe that language policy comes first and then comes planning, whilst others believe that policy is the result of the planning process. Though it more frequently refers to the goals of language planning, language policy is also used as a synonym for language planning (Tollefson & Pérez-Milans, 2018). Stemper and King (2017) refer to Spolsky's argument that 'language policy is the broader term, encompassing all three aspects (practices, beliefs, and efforts), with language planning, particularly focusing on the third component' (p. 655).

We may thus consider that language policy refers to more general views, factors, and ideologies linked to the direction of decision-making organisations like governments and educational institutions. As a result, the expression 'language planning' is more specifically used to describe the decisions made by these decision makers (Bolton, 2011).

Chimbutane (2012) explains that after regaining independence, language policy and planning in post-colonial states focused on the linguistic problems of newly independent nations. A first phase included standardization and modernization of indigenous languages

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and the lingua franca by linguists working with a broadly structuralist paradigm and definition of the domains and functions of the competing languages.

Among Western sociolinguists in this period, the opinion was that linguistic diversity presented obstacles for national development, while linguistic homogeneity was associated with modernization and Westernization. This view justified the adoption of former colonial languages, such as English, French or Portuguese, as official languages, or the elevation of major local languages as national languages.

In a following phase characterized by an acknowledgment of the failure and negative effects of these Western models of modernization and development, as newly independent states found themselves in some way more dependent on their former colonial powers than before, local languages were at times promoted to establish unique identity (Chimbutane, 2012).

Dascomb (2019) categorizes the language policies followed by post-colonial states into 3 groups: (1) keep the colonial language as the medium of instruction, (2) reverse this policy completely and promote a national or mother tongue, or (3) implement a middle ground solution, such as maintenance or transitional bilingualism. In the case of post-colonial Azerbaijan, even though the majority of Azerbaijanis still can speak Russian and find Russian essential for education and employment, formerly monolingual Russian speakers and individuals of other ethnic groups have progressively become bilingual or multilingual, with Azerbaijani becoming one of their most often spoken language.

The fact that people speak their mother tongue and use it most often privately should be seen as a sign of successful language policy and management in Azerbaijan after 30 years of post-Soviet history. Azerbaijan declared its independence on 18 October 1991 and according to Constitution adopted on 12 November 1995, Azerbaijani language is

specified as the language of the state. For the newly formed state, the national language and the national legal system were important formal apparatuses for unifying Azerbaijan. The government adopted a multilingualism policy, and this system was treated as part of the nation building project and promoted as being in accordance with the character of the Azerbaijani people. Language planning for Azerbaijan was an attempt to influence language usage.

Projects of nation-building and the construction of subjectivities were impacted by language planning and policy as theory and practise. Hao (2018) argues that language education has a significant impact on how language planning and policy are implemented. In Azerbaijan, like in most of the post-Soviet states, both the titulars and the ethnic minorities possess significant levels of proficiency in Azerbaijani, while Russian continues to serve as the most widely used second language. Secondary education is offered in Azerbaijani, and in Russian. Azerbaijan is one of the few post-Soviet countries that did not dramatically cut back on the number of Russian-language schools after independence, whilst also promoting and preserving regional languages.

3.5 Language Policy in the Post-colonial World

The language policy of governments in post-colonial states is arguably related to some factors, such as ethnolinguistic complexity, diversity of populations, and the policy implemented by the former colonising power as well as dependency on the former colonizing power – culturally, politically or economically. Every colonising power unquestionably left a permanent mark on the subject nation. This section will look at the post-colonial language policy of the nation state.

Starting with the post-colonial former British colonies, the new governments, predominantly, adopted bilingualism or multilingualism. However, the premise of the language policy was to promote local languages as an integral part of the nation-building process. That said, English continues to be in use as official languages by many post-colonial states for a host of reasons, ranging from globalisation, diffusion, and other cultural reasons.

For instance, in India after independence, due to the ethnolinguistic complexity and diversity of populations, the Soviet model of 'indigenisation' regarding language policy, which emphasised the self-determination of all nations, was adopted. This policy necessitated providing the same opportunities for the improvement of all the national languages (Saba, 2011, p. 88). Despite this, English remained and remains the official language in a majority of the states, whilst Hindi has not been able to achieve the status of national language yet.

This is because, unlike in the post-Soviet states, where Russian was the dominant language across all ethnicities and sections of society, Hindi had not as much coverage across all sections of the Indian society, owing to the presence of strong regional languages and the multiethnic nature of the state with no clear cut single majority. Besides, in the post-independence scenario, Hindi did not have the legacy apparatus left by the English to fill in as the substitute national language across the country, as English was predominantly used by the elite and upper middle classes who served the British.

Thus, the Soviet model was eventually considered redundant for Indian circumstances. As a result, Hindi, along with English and some states' languages, were declared official languages. In other words, multilingualism has become the cornerstone of the language policy in India and remains unchallenged, despite Hindi being widely spoken and being regarded as the sole national language (Mehrotra, 1998).

In Pakistan, however, Urdu has been successfully implemented as the national language, despite English being in official use, something which Hindi has not been able to achieve in India. This is because, despite English's lack of coverage across all sections of society and its being the elites' language, Urdu was rigorously and to an extent forcefully imposed, even at the expense of the nation being further divided from Bangladesh.

That said, in Pakistan, despite Urdu being the national language, it has still not been able to outdo the official status held by English. This is because, as Ahmad (2017) states, the Pakistani elite supported the use of English in all aspects of life, due to the role of England and British Pakistanis in Pakistani politics and the economy post-independence. In other words, even though Urdu acts as an integral part of national identity, English has been promoted to maintain Pakistan's global links with the UK and the Anglosphere at large. Thus, officially, after independence, the new Pakistan identity has been closely bound to English as the official language, and Urdu as the national language (Ahmad, 2017).

On the other hand, in South Africa, post-colonial democracy triggered a discontinuation of the rigid policy of Afrikaans-English bilingualism that existed during the apartheid years, as local languages were considered important markers of the new South African identity. According to the post-apartheid constitution, many of the indigenous languages of the South African peoples were officially recognised, and new regulations were implemented to elevate their status (Skovsholm, 2000). Consequently, the promotion of new language policies—linguistic pluralism—prompted the government to undertake steps in terms of constructing a common, non-racial South African identity, independent of a common language, rather than one based on historical and multicultural lines – much like in India.

However, in Tanzania after independence, Pan-Africanism and Afro-socialism became a central part of government policy, and the Swahili language was promoted in all walks of life, assigning it a mark of national pride and liberation, whilst the role of English was reduced, as it was believed it to symbolise oppression and neo-colonialism. To this end, new regulations were implemented to decrease the use of English in this post-colonial country (Rwengabo, 2016). This was a policy quite distinct from the earlier discussed examples of India and South Africa, and a step further than Pakistan.

Similarly, Malaysia initiated a new policy of replacing the language of the colonial rulers and unifying the nation via reinforcing its national language – Malay. However, in the 1990s, globalisation made a profound impact on different aspects of life in Malaysia, and therefore English continues to play an important role in the society. Tsui and Tollefson (2007) refer to first prime minister of Malaysia Mahathir Mohamad's speech to summarise the language policy of Malaysia:

> Learning the English language will reinforce the spirit of nationalism when it is used to bring about development and progress for the country […]. True nationalism means doing everything possible for the country, even if it means learning the English language (as cited in Tsui & Tollefson, 2007, p. 12).

In other words, where English has been regarded as a sign of oppression by nations such as Tanzania, a language of the elite in Pakistan, a lingua franca in India and South Africa, in Malaysia, it was seen as a tool for development and progress through globalisation.

In nations formerly colonised by France, the one language, one state policy has been promoted as an integral part of nation-state ideology. New regulations were adopted to make French the main communication language in these independent countries. This policy was predominately reflected in the education sector as teaching in indigenous languages was very limited. The policy ensured the hegemony of French over local languages. As a result, the French language enjoys high prestige, even after the re-establishment of independence in the post-colonial states and is effectively utilised by the elite. The influence of the French language in post-colonial nations was, without any doubt, directly linked to ongoing political and economic dependence on the former colonial power, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. There were exceptions. After independence, Algeria and Indochina initiated new strategies to restore their local culture and languages (see Spolsky, 2018a, p. 234). Nonetheless, it does not mean that the French language was completely eliminated in North Africa, despite Arabisation; the colonial language although no longer official, still held onto its significance through continued usage by significant parts of the population.

In the other African colonies, French remained the dominant elite language of education and administration, but in Asia it was replaced by indigenous languages (Spolsky, 2018a). Furthermore, because of globalisation processes, English has been added and caused the French language to lose its hegemony in many African post-colonial states. Apart from Asia and North Africa, the rest of the former French colonies preferred the metropolitan language as a unifying factor in their newly independent countries.

Ennaji and Sadiqi (2008) state that post-colonial Morocco, adopted a new Arabic language policy aimed at facilitating the process of state-building by replacing French with Arabic in all spheres of life (Ennaji & Sadiqi, 2008). As a result of the French colonial language policy, the French language apparatus could well and truly be inherited by Arabic

in all sectors, such as government, education, and the media, an aspect that makes this instance similar to Azerbaijan, where the role of Russian, although limited, has been inherited to an extent by Azerbaijani.

Fellman (1973) states that Lebanon is somewhat different from the rest of the Arab states, as it is constitutionally established as a bicultural Christian and Islamic state: 'biculturalism and hence bilingualism are part, then, of the very definition of Lebanon, with French as the language of the Maronite Christians, and Arabic as the language of the Moslems' (p. 247). That is, the French language is not seen as a sign of colonialism, rather a tool to fortify a common identity.

Compared with other colonising languages, such as English and French, post-independence, the Dutch language became less important in international communication in post-colonial states. For instance, in post-colonial Indonesia, a sense of nationalism has prompted radical changes in the linguistical composition of the country. Paauw (2009) notes that even after independence, the colonial language, Dutch, was most pervasive among the educated elite of Indonesia, while Javanese was considered as the language of the largest ethnic group, and Malay as lingua franca of the archipelago.

Accordingly, as per the country's new language law, Indonesian—a standardised variety of Malay—became the titular language of newly independent Indonesia (Paauw, 2009, pp. 1-2). In contrast to other post-colonial states like Malaysia and the Philippines, where English as still enjoys high status in society and serves as lingua franca, Indonesia has been very successful in the implementation of its language policy, and its official language has largely replaced the colonial language, a move that Azerbaijan has not been able to emulate.

This sits in absolute contrast with the language policy of South American countries. They did not witness significant differences with the past in the early period of independence. Vernacular languages did not have a high status in these states, whereas Spanish and Portuguese played an important role in creole nation-building processes. Spanish was the official language of the new elites, and it was needed for nation-building, as it provided for their hegemony in the society. Spanish thus came to be a crucial tool of unification, and a marker of citizenship (see Mar-Molinero, 2002).

Similarly, in the South American, Asian, and African colonies of Portugal, as the colonising language was still dominating the indigenous cultures after independence, the main goal was replacing the indigenous languages with Portuguese. The use of local languages was limited, and Portuguese was promoted in all walks of life (see Spolsky, 2018b). Therefore, even after independence, Portuguese retained a high status and became the national and official language.

To sum up, the language policy in the post-colonial states, is more a function of the circumstances and ambitions of the post-colonial states to unify, democratise, globalise, extend the rule of the majority, maintain the status quo in terms of ethnicity, or meeting other practical obligations. Language policy was much more than simply an expression of the desire to negate the colonial past and its legacy completely.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the experiences of language policy and planning of postcolonial states to compare and contrast them with the experiences of post-Soviet countries and Azerbaijan in particular. Post-colonial language planning and policy have to deal with diverse identities and ideology, and there is a great variety of approaches.

This chapter also examined the terms 'nation', 'nationalism', 'ethnicity', 'nationality', and 'nation-building'. These terms are used in language planning and policy, in formerly colonised nations, and in post-Soviet countries. They are also used throughout this thesis and form the basis for the quantitative and qualitative analyses presented in Chapter 6.

Overall, this chapter also discussed national identity as a form of collective identity that provides individuals with a sense of belonging and an understanding of their surroundings, and language policy as a potent instrument for unification, governance, and cohesion in a post-independence scenario. With a particular reference to post-Soviet Azerbaijan, this chapter examined how the colonial apparatus and the Russian language, when compared with its counterpart British and French experiences, were far more effective in allowing post-colonial Azerbaijan to adopt the Azerbaijani language. Many post-colonial states around the world did not have this choice.

Lastly, regardless of what national language the new post-colonial nations have opted for, this chapter explored the role that the former colonial languages – Russian, English, French, Dutch, and Portuguese, still play in the day-to-day affairs of the newly independent nation states. Either in the capacity of an official language, used partially by some institutions, or widely by the masses, the colonial language remains as legacy.

Chapter 4: History and Language Colonialism in Azerbaijan during the Soviet Era, 1919–

1991

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on one of the primary theoretical concepts used in this study, language

policy, and its potential consequences on Azerbaijan's nation-building process. Due to their

shared cultural values and historical links, Turkey and Russia have an impact on the

Azerbaijani identity, and this must be considered to fully understand the multifaceted and

multidimensional nature of Azerbaijani national identity. Azerbaijan officially became a

Soviet Republic in December 1922, when the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist

Republic (SFSR) became part of the newly established Soviet Union. Yaman (2011) describes

how the Soviet Union aimed to 'make a "Soviet man": someone who speaks Russian and is

atheist' (p. 183). This ambition was implemented in all areas of the USSR.

One of the most significant linguistic shifts of the Soviet period was the introduction

of the Cyrillic script to most post-Soviet states, which not only laid the groundwork for

establishing a distinct Soviet identity, but also amounted to a break with the ages-old silk

routes of information and cultural exchanges with Turkey, Iran, and the Islamic world. Under

the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan and some other republics of the Soviet Union experienced the

alphabet change twice: first from Arabic to Latin in 1929, and then from Latin to Cyrillic in

1939.

This chapter provides a historical survey of Azerbaijan and overviews the historical

processes that have influenced the country's language and national identity. Moreover, the

special role of the titular language in Azerbaijani ethnic and national identity is analysed.

Before examining the relationship between language and national identity in the specific

Azerbaijan context, I will problematise each of these concepts.

This chapter also overviews one of this thesis findings: the foundational importance

of the first stage of the Soviet period (1920s and 1930s) in the consolidation and spread of

the national language in Azerbaijan and in the establishment of the current unique

Azerbaijani national identity. When former Soviet territories were annexed, one of the

biggest challenges the Bolsheviks faced was unifying poorly developed nations under the

Soviet Union. So, in the early years of the Soviet Union, linguistic and cultural policies aimed

to achieve developments in the linguistic standards of each region, enforcing new

regulations to improve the level of literacy, standardise indigenous languages, and improve

the predominant writing system in the local languages.

The Russification policy of the Soviet Union only emerged after the 1930s. The Soviet

policy of the 1920s contributed to the development and consolidation of modern Azerbaijan

in all walks of life. It is noteworthy that Azerbaijan followed similar policy after regaining

independence in 1991, like Soviet Azerbaijan did in the 1920s, in order to provide similar

development of society at the linguistic and cultural levels.

As the current linguistic system of Azerbaijan will be investigated in contrast with the

Soviet period to see the real outcomes of the new language regulations, this chapter also

summarizes Soviet language colonialism and the national identity problem. This discussion

will then enable the analysis of the language and national identity of independent

Azerbaijan that is presented in Chapter 5. This chapter also discusses the language and

national identity nexus in the post-Soviet states to find out distinguishing and similar

features of Soviet language colonialism in Azerbaijan. The language policy of the Soviet

Union as well as its effects on the construction of Soviet identity are the main focus of this chapter.

Finally, one of the aims of this chapter is to explore whether the experience of post-imperial, secular Turkey in terms of its language reforms and its reshaping of the national identity was a model for Azerbaijan. This chapter finally outlines how Turkey's role has changed in the region after Azerbaijan has adopted the Latin alphabet based on the Turkish version.

4.2 A Brief History of Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan is a South Caucasus country bounded by the Caspian Sea to the east, Russia to the north, Iran to the south, Armenia to the west, and Georgia to the northwest. Modern Azerbaijan is a synthesis of old Turkic traditions and post-colonial features.

Zerdabli (2004) describes that according to archaeological findings from the Azokh Cave, the first evidence of human occupation in Azerbaijan dates to the late Stone Age. According to some accounts, Azerbaijan is a blend of two ancient civilizations: the 11th century Seljuk Turks, and the ancient Persians. The name of this country is derived from a Persian expression meaning 'land of fire', which refers to its natural resources, as well as one of the Zoroastrian faith's key locations (Zerdabli, 2004).

According to a study by Ismayilov (2017), this region was ruled by Iranian Medes until the original settlers and Caucasian Albanians formed the first kingdom around the 4th century BC; later it became part of the Achaemenid and Macedonian empires. This territory was occupied by the last pre-Islamic Persian empire, the Sassanid empire, after the establishment of feudal relationships during the period between the 3rd and 5th centuries.

In the 7th century, ancient Azerbaijan was unified into the Arab empire, and the Islamic faith was then introduced (Ismayilov, 2017).

After the ninth century, Azerbaijan was officially governed by separate states: Shirvanshakhs, Saji, Salari, Ravvadi, and Shaddadis. This period is regarded as the time when the ancient traditions of Azerbaijani statehood were established. The formation of the Azerbaijani Turkish people culminated in the 11th century during the Seljuk conquest of this region. After that, the Oguz-Turkish tribes rose to status as the region's dominant ethnic and political force. During the 13th and 14th centuries, Azerbaijan was part of the Mongol and Hulagu empires. Subsequently, Azerbaijan was ruled by autonomous states, Agkoyunlu, Karakoyunlu, and Safavid, between the 15th and the 18th centuries, while the Azerbaijani language was first proclaimed the official language during the Safavid empire. Azerbaijan was split into semi-independent khanates in the 18th century (Ismayilov, 2017).

In the early 19th century, Azerbaijan was involved in the conflict between Iran and Russia. Shukuorov (2006) notes that in keeping with the Gulistan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828) treaties, Azerbaijan was split between these two powers.[2] This was the beginning of Russia's colonial control. Later, some groups of Armenians were resettled from Iran and the Ottoman Empire in this region. This was the policy of the Russian empire (Shukuorov, 2006).

Alasgarov (2011) describes that in 1817–1818, the Russian Tsar brought German groups to Azerbaijan, and in 1819 the new settlers founded the first German colony,

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[2] The Treaty of Gulistan was a peace treaty concluded between the Russian Empire and Iran on 24 October 1813 in the village of Gulistan (now in the Goranboy Rayon of Azerbaijan) as a result of the first full-scale Russo-Persian War (1804 to 1813). Imasheva, M. M., Imamutdinova, A. M. & Nazmieva, E. I. (2019).The Treaty of Turkmenchay was an agreement between Qajar Iran and the Russian Empire, which concluded the Russo-Persian War (1826–28). It was signed on 10 February 1828 in Torkamanchay, Iran. The treaty made Persia cede to Russia the control of several areas in the South Caucasus. The boundary between Russia and Persia was set at the Araz River. Imasheva, M. M., Imamutdinova, A. M. & Nazmieva, E.I. (2019).

Yelendorf. Other settlements, Annenfeld, Georgfeld, Grunfeld, Aigenfeld, and Traubenfeld, were also established (Alasgarov, 2011).

Suleymanov (2016) describes that in the second part of the nineteenth century there was rapid growth of cities, and the substitution of feudal socio-economic relations with capitalist relations in modernised Azerbaijani society. The capital of Azerbaijan, Baku, became a multicultural city as the oil boom of the 1880s triggered rapid economic growth and the migration of non-Azerbaijanis. By 1897, ethnic Russians already comprised 33% of the city's population. (pp. 29–30). Baku became a destination for immigrants thanks to the economic boom that accompanied the industrialisation of oil production. Consequently, non-Muslim immigrants such as Armenians, Jews, and Germans came to inhabit the country. These communities aligned linguistically with the Russian-speaking community.

The early years of the 20th century were particularly significant in Azerbaijan's history, as the world's first secular democratic Muslim-majority state. The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) was briefly established after the fall of tsarist Russia. Gurbanov (2017) states that the Republic declared the Azerbaijani language the official language, that it formed a national army, and that everyone from different social classes were given equal rights. The ADR was to solve the national identity problem by declaring its citizens 'Azerbaijanis' and its official language 'Azerbaijani' (Gurbanov, 2017). In 1920, after only 23 months of existence, the ADR was invaded by the Red Army of Soviet Russia, and after a rapid military operation it was integrated into the Soviet state. The region was thereafter incorporated with the Soviet Union as the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan.

The period between 1870 and 1920 was crucial to the consolidation of Azerbaijan's national and ethno-linguistic identity. Imperial Russian records refer to the inhabitants of Azerbaijan as 'Tatars', and at the same time distinguish them from the Tatars by calling

them 'Caucasian Tatars', and 'Azerbaijan Tatars' (Shafiyev, 2015, p. 10). This was a period of intense debate regarding the existence of an Azerbaijani identity, or whether it was a local Turkic, or Persian identity. Yilmaz (2013) states that the ADR's leaders objected to the Russian colonial designation of 'Tatar' and refused to identify themselves as such. They identified as Turkic and Muslim populations of the south-east Caucasus (Yilmaz, 2013).

During this period, there have been various approaches to defining the population and reshaping national identity. The prominent writers and publicists Mirza Fatali Akhunzade and Hasan Bay Zardabi played an integral role in this process. They articulated a Turkish identity. This ideology was promoted by Huseynzade, who in his popular poem 'Turan' identified being Azerbaijani as: 'Turklashntirmak, Islamilashtimak, Avrupalashtirmak', which means Turkify, Islamicize, Europeanize (cited in Moreno, 2005, p. 5). He identified that the Turkic population in Azerbaijan came from the same origin of the Ottoman Turks. On the other hand, Jalil Mammad Quluzada (1886-1932), and his periodical *Molla Nasr al-Din*, endorsed Azerbaijan's specific identity and proclaimed the need to establish an identity separate from the Turkish one (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 514). In addition, the Iranian Azerbaijanis have taken an active part in the establishment of the national identity. They have promoted a Persian identity.

Almost 70 years of history under the Soviet Union, beginning with the Red Army's invasion of Azerbaijan in April 1920, brought changes in all aspects of life and it is undeniable that today's national identity and language policy of Azerbaijan have been inherited from its Soviet past as much as its Turkic origin. The Russian language became dominant in all the Soviet republics, even though, as it was stated in the Constitution, the Azerbaijani language was declared the only official language in the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan.

According to Garagozov (2012), the Soviet authorities struggled with 'pan-Turkism', and 'pan-Islamism' and attempted to construct a Soviet Azerbaijani identity.[3] They did so in conscious contradistinction to these ideologies (p. 141). The target was to unify Azerbaijanis under a new identity that would facilitate the integration process of Azerbaijan into the Soviet Union.

Up until 1937, the Turkic ethno-linguistic identity was used to define the titular nation in the early Soviet Union. In 1937 the Soviet Union changed its policies to isolate its Muslim citizens from the influence of the Turkic and Islamic worlds. To counteract any Turkish influence in Azerbaijan, the Stalinist government attempted to create an Azerbaijani national identity in the 1930s. The Soviet authorities erected national borders, assigned new ethnic identities, encouraged local intellectuals, printed books and newspapers in the titular languages, and established schools for the titular language. On July 11, 1939, however, the Latin script was modified to the Cyrillic script, while 'according to Stalin's decree, the title name of the country became Azerbaijan and the language was changed to Azerbaijani' (Garibova, 2009, p. 3). The main purpose of the script change was to disconnect Azerbaijan from Turkey and from the wider Islamic world and to facilitate Russification processes.

Das (2011) describes that

late in 1927, the Central Committee of the Communist Party in various Republics

drew attention to what they conceived as the danger of 'petty bourgeois

nationalism'. In 1930, Stalin directed his most blistering attack against deviation

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[3] Pan-Turkism is the political movements that emerged during the 1880s among the Turkic intellectuals of the Russian Baku Governorate (now Azerbaijan) and the Ottoman Empire (modern day Turkey). It sought to achieve the cultural and political unity of all Turkic peoples (see Landau 1995). Pan-Islamism is a political ideology advocating the unity of Muslims under one Islamic state (see Calabro 2018).

towards local nationalism, including the exaggerated respect of national languages.

In line with this shift of emphasis towards 'centralism', large numbers of creative

intelligentsia, who had encouraged the study of national languages, was expelled

from the party and many were 'eliminated' (Das, 2011, p. 44).

The biggest disadvantage for national languages, however, was not the promotion of

Russian, but the physical annihilation of the native intelligentsia during the Stalin purges.

Writers, linguists, and literary academics were particularly susceptible to the allegation of

bourgeois nationalism.

Kreindler (1995) states that after Khrushchev came to power in 1958, the Russian

language was further enhanced as the main instrument of unity in the Soviet Union. The

Russian language promotion campaign that Khrushchev began, continued to accelerate

under Brezhnev (1964-1982). The Soviet Union was supposed to have 'solved its

nationalities problem' and to have achieved 'an unprecedented unity of peoples' with

Russian as its 'language of inter-nationality communication'. All this was soon to be

encapsulated in the new formula of the Soviet nationality policy: 'the Soviet people: a new

historical community'. The Russian language was one of its basic hallmarks (See Kreindler,

1995, p.195).

According to Das (2011), Soviet authorities made significant concessions during the

Second World War in response to the growing concern of separatism, but 'centralist'

propaganda about Soviet patriotism persisted. The case of Soviet patriotism was promoted

in the Russian language. At first, Khrushchev opposed the programme of eradicating

nationalist elites from Republican Party organisations. He also initially opposed the

widespread Russification that has been carried out since the end of World War II. But

Khrushchev changed his stance on nationalities not long after he secured political power.

He did, however, somewhat soften the Party's assimilationist tone. He added that rapprochement was taking place on the basis of free will and democracy for all nations in the Soviet Union. Russian continued to function officially as the language of interethnic communication, and to play an increasingly significant role in the development of nationality relations (Das, 2011).

Shcherbak (2015) shows that there were three fundamental components of the Soviet nationalities policy after Stalin's era: anti-Stalinism, 'Nativization', and slow-paced Russification. The USSR's ethnic institutions developed most fully during the years of Khrushchev and Brezhnev, especially during the Brezhnev era. There were numerous career options for national intellectuals in the fields of education, science, and culture. The intelligentsia gained new employment opportunities as a result of the establishment of new universities and academic institutes.

Slow-paced assimilation was the third component of the late Soviet nationalities policy. The number of native-language schools in Union states decreased as a result of new language and education reforms introduced by the Soviet authorities in the late 1950s. In May 1979, the Uzbek SSR's capital city of Tashkent played host to an all-Union conference: 'Russian Language: The Language of Friendship and Cooperation of the Peoples of the USSR'. The conference decided to enhance Russian language instruction at all levels of the Soviet school system, all the way up to full bilingualism throughout the whole of the USSR. Following this conference, the Soviet authorities expanded the teaching of Russian in all republics (see Shcherbak, 2015).

After Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985, he initiated a new political reform that considerably changed the balance between Moscow and regions, which would ensure the progress of each nationality and ethnic group. In almost all republics, nationalists came

to power after the 1990 elections. Everywhere they adopted a similar political program, demanding political and economic autonomy and advocating ethnic cultural revivals. In 1985, the policies of glasnost and perestroika led the growth of nationalism in Azerbaijan, with enormous implications for the future development of the region. In the years that followed, the growing conflict with Armenians over Nagorno-Karabakh infused Azerbaijani nationalism with strong anti-Armenian sentiments. As a part of language policy, Gorbachev also encouraged Russian as the common language of the country. While acknowledging the need for literature in nationality languages, he also maintained that Russian was the common language of all Soviet citizens.

The Soviet Union, which was comprised after World War II of 15 republics, was formally dissolved on 25 December 1991, when each republic declared its independence. Wasserman (1995) recounts that 'the Popular Front of Azerbaijan which became the main political force in Azerbaijan after the fall of the pro-communist regime in May 1992 and the election in June of the Front's leader Abulfaz Elchibey, as President' (p. 143). The Popular Front of Azerbaijan adopted a new government program which was considered one of the most progressive programs in the former Soviet states in order to reduce colonial influence and strengthen independence of Azerbaijan. The Popular Front aimed to establish an advanced country based on a Western model, and the enforcement of international human rights was a principal component of its policy (Wasserman, 1995).

Despite establishing one of the most democratic programs in the former USSR, the Popular Front was unable to achieve its goals. Several reasons contributed to this failure. Wasserman (1995) states that one of the most important reasons was the dispute over the mountainous Karabakh region between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and Armenia's occupation of other areas of Azerbaijan (Wasserman, 1995).

Soviet policies could not manage a longstanding territorial dispute between two Soviet republics: Azerbaijan and Armenia. Rasizade 's (2011) study shows that the First Nagorno-Karabakh War began in 1988 and peaked at the beginning of the 1990s. By May 1994, because of that war, Armenia had captured Nagorno-Karabakh and seven neighbouring districts. Eventually, in 1994, negotiations ended up with a ceasefire between the two South Caucasian countries (Rasizade, 2011).

Another challenging issue was related to the stance of the Popular Front Azerbaijan (PFA) against minorities in Azerbaijan. Taheri (1989) describes how during the 1930s, all nationalities were encouraged to communicate and study in their native languages as the part of nativisation policy. Besides, government supported them to publish books and newspapers in local languages. However, after Stalin came to power, this policy was replaced with Russification which promoted the use of Russian in all walks of life. This policy particularly limited the rights of ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan, as they were referred to in documents simply as Azerbaijanis (Taheri, 1989).

Following the election of a new government, there was a substantial surge in demand for the preservation of ethnic minorities' cultural and linguistic rights. Minorities were allowed to use their languages and promote their cultural heritage during the rule of the Popular Front in order to avoid potential tensions and to establish democracy. However, the PFA limited the use of Russian and again referred to the local language as 'Turkish' in order to eliminate Russian influence and to make the country's Turkic roots stand out (Wasserman, 1995, p. 151). This led to the departure of a number of Russian-speaking citizens from the country, a development that negatively affected the quality of education provision in the country. Thus, all these factors caused animosity towards the Popular Front and very soon their authority waned.

After Heydar Aliyev, formerly the first secretary of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan and a former general of the KGB, became president, Azerbaijan turned into a major gas and oil producer. After Heydar Aliyev was elected president, the new Constitution of Independent Azerbaijan was proclaimed on November 12, 1995, and, as a result, Azerbaijani was formally declared the state language, while the use and promotion of other languages were permitted (Pashayeva, 2010). The Constitution of Azerbaijan conformed to international standards, and until the end of his presidency in 2003, Aliyev aimed to build a modern, democratic state.

In 1994 'Azerbaijan signed a 30-year production-sharing agreement (Contract of the Century) with ten of the world's major oil companies' (S. Sultanova, 2014, p. 18). This has improved the country's income and promoted its profile and international recognition. In contrast with the policy of the People's Front, which implemented new rules based on the Turkish model, and tried to isolate Russian-speaking citizens by restricting the Russian language, Aliyev was well aware of the importance of Russia in the region. Due to the high percentage of Russian-speakers in the educated part of the population, it would make great sense to grant them equal rights to use their language.

The current President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, was elected on 15 October 2003. Ilham Aliyev continued the country's successful energy policy. Hence, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Georgia agreed to build the export pipeline Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) in 2004, and the natural gas pipeline projects Baku-Tbilisi-Arzurum in 2005 (Abbasov, 2015, p. 91).

In addition, Garibov and Huseyn (2017) discuss that

certain state programs such as the 'State Program on Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2008-2015', the 'National Action Plan for the Promotion of Open Government in 2012-2015',

and the 'National Action Plan on Combating Corruption in 2012-2015' have

been introduced to improve living standards in the region (p. 101).

A central part of the foreign policy of independent Azerbaijan is its membership in various

international organisations.

Due to shared cultural and linguistic values between Azerbaijan and other Turkic

states, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan's integration process with the

Turkic world significantly increased. Mammadov (2017) states that in order to establish the

Turkish Council, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan convened in Nakhichevan in

2009. The Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States (or CCTS) includes countries that

are also members of other economic and military political alliances. For example, Turkey is a

NATO member and part of the European customs space, while Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

are members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Eurasian Economic

Union (EAEU), and the Customs Union (see Mammadov, 2017).

In April 2016, the military conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia resumed.

Mammadova (2016) notes that in April 2016, the 'four-day war' in Karabakh ended with the

Azerbaijani military taking control of some territories. On 5 April, a ceasefire was reached

between the chiefs of the Azerbaijani and Armenian armed forces in Moscow (Mammadova,

2016, p. 12). Military conflict escalated again between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020,

from 27 September to 10 November. Huseynov (2020) observes how Azerbaijan, Armenia,

and Russia, who was acting as a peacekeeper, all signed a new cease-fire agreement. This

agreement stipulates that Armenia will withdraw its military from some conflict territories

by December 1, 2020. They would be replaced by Russian peacekeepers and the latter

should stay in this territory at least five years to monitor the peace and facilitate the return

of refugees. This commitment became especially significant after the outbreak of war in

Ukraine in early 2022. Sporadic outbreaks of hostility occurred throughout 2022, but rapid ceasefire agreements were negotiated. The capital of the Nagorno-Karabakh remained under Armenian control (Huseynov, 2020).

4.3 Russian Influence During the Soviet Era

The strategy of the Bolshevik leadership was clearly expressed in Stalin's speech at the plenum on 8 November 1921. Stalin revealed Moscow's stance on Azerbaijan's independence:

> There is an independent Azerbaijan that has voluntarily become part of Russia. You are surrounded by bourgeois states that allege: It is profitable for us to demonstrate the independence of Azerbaijan. However, a Communist cannot be independent from a Communist. It is essential to demonstrate the independence of Azerbaijan, but one should know that there is a close alliance with Russia (cited in Hasanli, 2018, p. 69).

For the Bolsheviks, Azerbaijan was a stepping-stone towards the Near and Middle East. As the Soviet Union made unsuccessful attempts to disseminate Soviet ideas in Europe, turning towards the East became the only option.

Hasanli (2018) refers to Azerbaijan socialist Samad agha Aghamalyoghlu to describe the relationship linking Azerbaijan and Russia during this period:

> The fate of Azerbaijan will be sealed by its bowels, not by its surface. While there is oil, it, not we, will reign above us. We will have just a little kerosene to light a lamp in the office. Life in Russia is built on our oil. It is an unhappy coincidence, but this black mud has caused the loss of the country!

Therefore, there is not a territorial problem for us; there is just a problem of

oil (p. 73).

This demonstrates that the reason the Soviet Union put Baku at the centre of attention

was related to this 'black mud'.

As the reconstruction of the economy and the unification of non-Russian

nationalities were major challenges, a policy of indigenisation was initiated in 1923. This

policy envisaged the promotion of indigenous languages in all spheres, such as in education

and publishing, at work and in government, the promotion of national cultures, and the

recruitment of indigenous cadres (Hajda et al., 2020).

Identifying, categorising, limiting, and occasionally even inventing ethnic groups to

allocate them to their own administrative divisions was part of the Soviet indigenisation

policy (see Blitstein, 2006). The concept was that if Soviet power was locally represented

by speakers of their own tongue, non-Russians would be more likely to accept it.

The Soviet Union paid close attention to its religious policy during the 1920s and

1930s, believing that Turkey may have an influence on Azerbaijan. The Soviet Union thus

promoted atheism. The Soviet era saw a majority of the predominantly Islamic and Turkic

language family states, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan,

being pushed away from their pan-ethnic and religious identity via a number of policies

around religious institutions, cultural disposition, trade opportunities, and borders (Nedea

et al., 2012).

Literature in the titular languages was used to promote atheism in the Soviet

republics, including Azerbaijan:

The Soviet Union emphasised how outstanding authors and poets, ranging

from Nizami Ganjavi to Mirze Fatali Axundov, embraced atheism and

opposed Islam. Both the Soviet Union and these literary figures had the

same values and sought equal rights for women. It is not surprising that

many books on atheism were published during the Soviet period. Lenin

mentioned this key concept in his *About Religion*: 'We have to struggle

against religion', he had concluded (cited in Yaman, 2011, p. 184)

In the early years of the Soviet period, the position of the indigenous nationalities was at

the centre of attention. An important part of this policy was to bring people together,

irrespective of different nationalities, and to keep all Republics under the control of the

Soviet Union. This strategy was introduced by giving full rights to the improvement of

culture and language in the various regions of the Union. However, these improvements

were not limited to the acknowledgement of local language as an official language, but also

to the development of a written language where it had not yet existed and to the

improvement of literacy in general.

This Soviet strategy provoked controversial territorial issues. Cornell (2011) states

that both Azerbaijan and Armenia claimed Nakhichevan, Mountain Karabakh, and

Zangezur. This resulted in long-term instability. The Soviet Union officially supported

Armenia, as evidenced by the strategy of relocating more Armenians to these territories.

Eventually, Armenia took control of Zangezur, while the remaining two territories were

granted autonomy within the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan (see Cornell, 2011).

In Ukraine, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, nominal independence was

retained, and the indigenous languages were declared titular languages. Ubiria (2015)

refers to Stalin's speech of November 1920 to explain his 'Autonomization Plan':

'Autonomy means no separation, but union' (p. 94). Instead, the policy of indigenisation was introduced by granting equal rights to all autonomous Soviet republics. Unlike Lenin and other Bolsheviks, Stalin did not believe that giving more autonomy could lead to nationalism. However, by 1930, centralisation became the dominant policy of nation-building processes in the Soviet Union.

The early soft phase of the Soviet nationality policy changed dramatically immediately before and during World War II. Those years – Stalin's repression period – affected the foundation of intellectual life. In Azerbaijan, Altstadt (1992) has listed three phases of Russian terror. The first process began in the early 1920s and concentrated primarily on religious leaders and kulaks who were opposed to Soviet rule. Between the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, the second wave of terror was aimed at the disappearance of 'ethnic communists', especially Musavat party members, who were actively supporting Azerbaijan's national identity. The last and most fierce phase occurred in the late 1930s. The repressions were intended to remove the Republic's elites and their works, as well as target old Bolshevik leaders (Altstadt, 1992, as cited in Cornell 2011, pp. 37-38). The Stalinist repression impacted every aspect of life in the Soviet republics, including Azerbaijan.

Between 1936 and 1938 the situation worsened. The Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Republic, which existed between 1922 and 1936, and was made up of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, and had been intentionally created to control these nationalities, was dissolved (Cornell, 2011, p. 38). Repression significantly reduced the number of intellectuals, and another important move was to shift the script from Latin to Cyrillic, even though they had abandoned the Arabic script for the Latin one only in 1926. Ostensibly, the shift in the script made the people of these Republics more illiterate, since

it would take time to get used to the new script and use it properly. As well as isolating

each national community, the script shift was also an integral part of a strategy to isolate

these countries from other countries.

It was not surprising that owing to national roots and religion, Azerbaijan and other

Turkic states were considered a special case. The USSR made a special effort to cut off all

relationships between Azerbaijan and Iran and Turkey. Changing the alphabet was a very

successful policy, which led to further disconnection from Turkey. In order to eliminate its

Turkic roots, the USSR decided to alter the name of the local population and call them

Azerbaijanis (they had been 'Turks' since 1926). However, in Georgia and Armenia, the

situation was different, as native language school systems were established, which

significantly contributed to the spread of local languages and the level of literacy. These

republics were allowed to maintain their alphabets even during the Soviet period, which

helped preservation of their national identity.

Hayward (2000) describes that when the Nazis attacked the Soviet Union, all Union

republics fought against Germany, and without any doubt, they contributed greatly to

victory. Baku and its oil were one of the main reasons guiding Hitler's decision to invade

the Caucasus region. The Soviet Union retained it and gained further advantage (Hayward,

2000).

The next decade was the peak period of Russification, which means that the Soviet

regime began a campaign against nationalist 'deviations', and that the Russian language

was encouraged in all Republics. Even some precious national works of literature were

forbidden, such as *The Book of Dede Korkut*, which covers essential information about

Turkic nationalities and traditions (see Kinzer, 1997). The Russification process lasted

roughly until the death of Stalin in 1953. The new leader, Nikita Khrushchev, modified the policy, and enabled the improvement of local languages.

Territorial conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Mount Karabakh and surrounding areas started a new phase. Armenia declared that Mount Karabakh was its ancestral territory and called for the abolition of its autonomous status within Azerbaijan and the consolidation of Mount Karabakh into Armenia. Ganiyev (2019) recounts that to achieve its target, Armenia set up a Karabakh Committee in 1945 and asked the Soviet Union to rule in its favour. The USSR could expect that confirmation would lead to a rise in tensions in the Caucasus, and for this reason it delayed. On 23 December 1947, Armenians residing in foreign countries were permitted to migrate to the Union Republic, and this led to another attempt to force local Azerbaijani to leave their territory. Under a new agreement, 100,000 locals were to relocate on a voluntary basis to establish more free areas for Armenians. This process lasted until 1953 (see Ganiyev, 2019, pp. 412-416).

In 1969 Brezhnev appointed Heydar Aliyev the first secretary of the Azerbaijani Communist Party (see Brennan 2003). Between 1969 and 1987, there were undeniable shifts in the economy of the country and in its politics. In 1978, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan enacted a new constitution, which could bring some advantages in terms of the protection of national identity, in particular for the Azerbaijani language, which could maintain its titular status in the country. The production of gas and oil had the best record in the 1980s and, as a result, the well-being of the population improved significantly (Brennan, 2003). Education and other cultural aspects of life were not neglected: despite the Russification policy of the Soviet Union, Heydar Aliyev ensured that the country's Turkish roots would not be forgotten.

At the end of the 1980s, Armenia again attempted to transfer Karabakh to its territory. It was clear that the leader of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev, favoured Armenia. Cornell (2011) recounts how local people left their homes as a result of this policy, and in 1988 the first refugees arrived at Baku and surrounding areas. Conflict was increasing day by day and at the end it caused a popular movement in Azerbaijan. In 1988, a group of people protested on Baku's Lenin Square, to force the government of Azerbaijan to deal with the Karabakh flashpoint, the issue of refugees from Armenia, and other problems. The government could only monitor demonstrations, offer guarantees, and intimidate (Cornell, 2011, p. 50).

The increasing strength of the People's Front was a major threat to Azerbaijan's Communist Party. Therefore, the Soviet Union was trying to keep it under control, but a massive uprising eventually demanded independence. 'Black January' followed. On 20 January, 1990 Moscow dispatched troops to Baku without warning and more than 150 people were killed, a large number of people were injured, historic monuments were destroyed, and numerous members of the Popular Front were detained. The aim was to intimidate protesters. However, this massacre, if anything, further catalysed the fight for self-determination of Azerbaijanis. This repression was an important component of the breakup of the Soviet Union in these territories.

Continuous economic crisis, and the rise of nationalism in the Union republics were a clear indicator of the coming breakup of the Soviet Union. This process was sparked by the war in Afghanistan, and the strained relationship between the US and the Soviet Union in the 1980s (Bailey, 2018, p. 53). The key point of the growth of nationalism in Azerbaijan was directly linked to Mountainous Karabakh, the Armenian policy of expansion, and the

realisation of the value of a return to national culture, language, and identity. Local

intellectuals had been resenting the drastic effects of the Russification policy in the region.

4.4 Ataturk's Script Reform in Post-Ottoman Turkey

After World War I and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Republic was

established by Gazi Mustafa Kemal, as the 'Pure Turkish' movement became an integral part

of government policy in the newly established republic. The main point of this strategy was

to return Turkey to its original national identity. As a result, 'the committee to Romanize the

writing system was set up in June of 1928 […] On July 12, 1932, right after the First Turkish

Historical Congress, Ataturk personally encouraged the formation of the Society for Turkish

Language Research' (Perry, 1985, p. 299). The aim of the Society was to adapt the Turkish

language to a new alphabet; to investigate Turkish vocabulary; and to substitute Arabic and

Persian loan words with Turkish terms.

The shift to the Latin script had been on the agenda already in the 19th century, due

to contradiction between Turkish phonetics and the Arabic script. Gallagher (1971) points

out an important aspect of Latin script for Turkic-speaking peoples, and notes that the

Soviet Union had changed the script of the Turkic-speaking former Soviet republics to the

Latin script even before the Turkish script reform, even though in the 1940s the Latin script

was replaced with Cyrillic to disconnect Azerbaijan and Central Asian states from Turkey. For

some Turks, the change to the Latin alphabet seemed to be a way to preserve relations with

their linguistic relatives from Azerbaijan to Central Asia (Gallagher, 1971).

More generally, Turkey's script change was part of a modernising effort that involved

the whole of society. Cevik-Compiegne (2014) discusses how 'the Ottoman elite often

qualified their society as "backward", and the condition of women was also pointed at as an

element of backwardness' (p. 104). The prospect of giving women 'access to education and knowledge in order to be able to give appropriate education to their children' (p. 104) was part of this effort, and the script change would enable a new start (Cevik-Compiegne, 2014). It was deemed necessary for Ataturk's regime to modernise Turkey and eradicate old Islamic practices. His alphabet reform should serve this function as well, as an increase in the level of literacy of the whole population would result from abandoning the complexity of the Arabic lettering.

The status of Islam as the official state religion was removed from the constitution in April 1928 to complete the legal secularisation process in Turkey (see Dogan, 2016). Most Kemalist scholars argue that the rationale for this reform was educational and not ideological (see Dogan, 2016), as it was widely believed that the high level of illiteracy in Turkey was linked to the difficulties of the Arabic script for Turkish speakers. However, Ataturk's language policy was met with opposition, which led to long-term discussions in the 1920s.

Supporters of Kemalist's ideology emphasised the importance of access to the Western world for a newly established republic. Bingol (2009) states that for the purpose of establishing a new Turkish identity, two Western concepts were promoted: secularisation and nationalisation. In order to get access to the Western world, the Latinisation of the script should also be followed by the replacements of foreign words with Turkish words. On the other hand, others argued that these language measures would damage the Islamic and Ottoman heritage in the country. They thought that Turkey, as the Ottoman Empire's successor, should never cut ties with the Islamic world because Islam has always been a crucial part of Turkish national identity (Bingol, 2009). Islamists resisted the change to the Latin alphabet, as the Arabic script was the script of the Holy Koran. They claimed that the

Latinisation of the alphabet will not only open the door to Western civilisation, but to Christianity as well.

In addition, at the beginning of the reform, the script change caused some problems in the publishing world. The number of newspaper readers dropped drastically. Turkish journalist Fikret Adil Kamertan (1901–1973) clearly expresses how the alphabet change from Arabic to Latin negatively affected the publishing sector: 'The crisis that suddenly emerged because of the adoption of the new alphabet had torn us apart' (cited in Mignon, 2010, p. 21). Besides, Ataturk's language reform was not only aimed at facilitating linguistic developments in the new republic, but also to push cultural arrangements in the society (Gurchaglar, 2008). Therefore, for the people of Turkey, the alphabet shift and the resulting purist movement resulted in a unique national identity. This identity was expected to connect Turkey to the Western world and to contrast the Ottoman and Arabic heritages.

The second step of language reform involved cleansing the language of all foreign words and phrases, predominately Arabic and Persian borrowings. To do this, a language commission was established. According to Çolak (2004), in 1932, the Türk Dili Tedkik Cemiyeti (the Society for Research on the Turkish Language) was formally established and this organisation, which now goes by the name of Türk Dil Kurumu, is still active today (i.e., the Turkish Language Society). This group was tasked with creating a 'New Turkish Standard Dictionary' and to purge Turkish of its Arabic and Persian loanwords. The society's objectives included organising scientific conferences, codifying the Turkish language in accordance with its historical development and current usage, and acquiring all the necessary resources for the study of the Turkish language (see Çolak, 2004).

Changing the Arabic script to the Latin one was premised on other considerations as well. The Latin alphabet was used by European countries, including France, which was a

model for the new Turkish republic. Furthermore, the newly established Republic was recognised by the European countries. Staunton and Decottignies (2010) cite a *Times of London* approving editorial from 1928:

> By this step the Turks, who for centuries were regarded as a strange and isolated people by Europe, have drawn closer than ever to the West. It is a great reform, worthy of the remarkable chief to whom the Turkish people has entrusted its destinies (Staunton and Decottignies, 2010).

The introduction of the Latin alphabet in the new Turkish republic provoked significant changes in terms of national identity. As the Latin script cut off links with Turkey's Islamic and Ottoman background, a unique national identity that included more Western and secular features consolidated. The script reform of the 1920s thus facilitated the strengthening of the national identity. Yüce (2019) states:

> A striking aspect of the representation of this reform is labelling the new alphabet the 'Turkish Alphabet', instead of the 'Latin Alphabet' […]. The essential function of the language reform was legitimizing Westernization and the nationalist shift from the Ottoman Millet System to an ethnic-based identity. (pp. 106, 110)

Thus, a new national identity was shaped on the base of secularism, language, and history (Aydingun & Aydingun, 2004). Secularism as the main aspect of new nationalist ideology could keep religious perspectives at bay. Obviously, one of the biggest results of this language reform was to diminish the importance of religion in the new society.

Additionally, Tokluoglu (2000) discusses Turkish nationalism and its two unique features:

First, it is distinct from classical (Western) forms of nationalism due to the tension between the 'West' and the 'traditional' ways of life'. Second, it is distinct from other non-European Islamic nationalisms through the rejection of Islam as the universal basis of legitimation (p. 111).

On the other hand, it is noteworthy to mention the 'Outside Turks', as they contributed significantly to shape Turkish nationalism. Mango (1993) defines the Outside Turks as 'refugees of Turkic or presumed Turkish origin and their descendants' who were resettled 'inside the borders of the Republic of Turkey'; they 'are dispersed all over its territory and have been to a large extent absorbed into a homogenized modern Turkish nation' (Mango, 1993, p. 345).

Husrev (2016) discusses that communities of Outside Turks have historically received assistance in their struggles for ethnic rights or have been provided safety from oppressive states. During the Kemalist era, relations with the Outside Turks symbolised Turkey's desire to convert religiously oriented Turkish-speaking Ottoman remnant communities into ethnic Turkish communities that behaved like a nation. As a result, these communities were asked to accept their national and ethnic identities on a personal and a collective level. Building an ethnic nation from the ashes of a multiethnic and multireligious Islamic empire was another endeavour undertaken by the Kemalist regime. Conversely, the post-Kemalist position was to imagine the Turkish nation and the Outside Turks along cultural and religious lines, rather than in a purely ethnic sense (Husrev, 2016).

Mango (1982) refers to Kushner's point that the 'interest in these "outside Turks" [i.e., the Turkic peoples of Asia] persisted, and like Islam, constituted a strong

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ideological force of potential political value' (Mango, 1982, p. 200). The most influential intellectual to influence Turkish nationalism was the Tatar historian Yusuf Akçura (1878-1935). Akçura argued that Pan-Turkism was the best strategy for the Ottoman Empire. He disapproved of Pan-Islamism because it alienated non-Muslim groups within the Ottoman Empire and of Ottomanism because it diminished the rights of Turks. In such a context, Turkism seems to be the only realistic option. He further argued that all Turkic groups—that is, all Turks who speak Fin-Magyar or Ural-Altay—should unite into one union. The centre of that political system should be Turkey (see Kibris, 2005).

Another prominent Turkish intellectual Ziya Gokalp (1876-1924) stated that Turks should not aim for anything more than cultural unity among neighbouring peoples (see Burris, 2007). He viewed language as the defining characteristic of nationality and believes that linguistic independence is a requirement for political independence. In the process of achieving unification, Gökalp described Islam as having a practical side. His 1918 collection of articles, *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak*, asserts that Islamic religious convictions can serve as a common bond uniting various Turkish communities living in different areas (see Kibris, 2005).

The national language thus symbolised the unification of the whole country in accordance with Ataturk's nation-building policies. For the Kemalist Western-oriented government, the Arabic script represented backwardness and, like other old Ottoman traditions, such as old-style clothing, language had to be reformed. As Western civilisation was considered the most developed, using its common script would take Turkey closer to the developed world and contribute to the re-establishment of a new modern culture in the

region. Shayan (2020) states that within the nation, undoubtedly, the most critical organs responsible for enforcing this new Kemalist and nationalist ideal were the *Millet Mektepleri* (the National Schools). The aim of these schools was to promote the new identity of the modern secular nation in education through the effective implementation of the Latin script (Shayan, 2020). Thus, the Turkish language became the greatest unifying element of the Turkish nation identity in the newly established republic.

The high level of illiteracy in the country was an impediment to the modernisation, and Kemalist's policy predominantly focused on the progress of education. The Latin alphabet was perceived as a big step towards improvement in the education sector, as there was a close link between the alphabet reform and literacy. Compared to the Arabic alphabet, it would be closer to the structure of the Turkish language. Wood (1929) compares Ataturk's language reform with that of King Amanullah of Afghanistan, and states that in Turkey the ground was prepared properly before the alphabet change was implemented. The government employed the media to inform more people about the upcoming transition: public speakers spoke about the Latinisation process, and the schools were informed in advance to be ready for the new alphabet. So, it was not as unexpected as King Amanullah's reform had been (see Wood, 1929).

The script change responded to a demand for language purification in Turkey, and that was the reason for the lack of significant opposition. Since the alphabet and education were so closely linked, it was expected that after the Latinisation of the script, the country's literacy level would increase. Tachau (1964) recounts that a meeting was held in February 1929 to discuss the preparation of a state-sanctioned dictionary, and in 1930 a book on language reform was published, with a foreword written by Mustafa Kemal (Tachau, 1964). Kemal concluded: 'The Turkish nation which knew how to defend its country and noble

independence must also liberate its language from the yoke of foreign tongues' (cited in Tachau, 1964, pp. 195-196).

Another factor of the success of the alphabet reform in Turkey was linked to the government's measures to reduce the negative effects of the script change. Accordingly, publishing houses were supported financially, as it was obvious that they would initially lose a significant number of readers. On the other hand, new regulations were imposed to enhance the number of people who could read and write using the new script. In the long run, it can be said that the language reform became one of Ataturk's most progressive reforms. In today's Turkey, people with extremist Islamists ideology, endeavour to remove the Kemalist legacy but have adjusted the Turkish version of Latin alphabet (Aytürk, 2010).

4.5 Soviet Language Colonialism

The colonial history of imperial Russia in Azerbaijan started with the Gulustan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828) treaties between Iran and Russia, which allocated control of the northern part of Azerbaijan to Russia. Russia started to colonise this territory by settling it with people from different origins, language, culture, and level of development.

Sociolinguistic scholars have questioned whether a post-colonial approach is appropriate for the understanding of the former Soviet Union. Although some scholars claim that this definition is applicable, others argue that the Soviet Union was a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic state, not entirely federal or imperial, while the idea of 'federal colonialism' or that of 'an empire of nations' has also been proposed (Pavlenko, 2008, p. 303).

Edward W. Said compared colonialism and imperialism in *Culture and Imperialism* by defining main differences: For him 'the term "imperialism" means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory;

"colonialism," which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implementing of

settlements on distant territory' (Said, 1994, p. 9). Morozov (2015) considers that:

> Moscow continues to engage in imperial pursuits in its 'near abroad',
>
> explicitly relying on the Soviet legacy to secure and expand its 'spheres of
>
> influence […]. On the one hand, since its emergence as a sovereign polity in
>
> the fifteenth century, Russia has never been colonised by anyone (pp. 9. 12).

Compared with Western European models, Russian colonialism stands out, and the main

difference is related to the form of population resettlements. Russians did not emigrate, but

instead occupied the possessions of regions nearby, which were claimed by their emperor,

and these new occupants settled mostly in the vicinity (see Bukhrashvili, 2010, p. 357).

Examining Soviet history through the lens of language and national identity confirms

that national background is the primary basis for different perspectives. In Central Asia, a

significant debate has taken place regarding the possibility that the Soviet Union may be

considered in the context of a colonial paradigm. Moritz (2017) argues that the most

distinguishing feature of colonial rule does not lie in a tendency to perpetuate disparities,

but rather in its foreignness. Under colonialism, a foreign minority makes and imposes

fundamental decisions regarding the lives of an indigenous majority (Moritz, 2017, pp. 828).

However, most Russian scholars today do not accept that the Soviet Union was a

colonising power; they deem 'voluntary' unification a more fitting description for the Soviet

Union. Elena Zubkova's (2008) description of the Soviet Union—the 'regime established in

the Union republics was not an occupation, but the Soviet version of a communist regime

which was non-colonial' (p. 351)—is the typical attitude of many Russian scholars (Zubkova,

2008). On the other hand, the Soviet Union implemented a colonial system based on

military conquest followed by population transfers and the exploitation of natural

resources. Soviet Union colonialism also included attempts to force cultural and

psychological changes in the local communities.

Leprêtre (2019) notes that in the 1920s the indigenisation policy was implemented in

all Soviet states, which aimed at providing equal rights in Union countries and to foster

development in all spheres of life. In the 1920s, to catch up with Western Europe, the USSR

primarily concentrated on the rehabilitation of society and the eradication of illiteracy. A

broad system of local educational institutions was thus established (see Leprêtre, 2019). The

Soviet Union thus dramatically increased literacy rates in all Union states during its first two

decades of existence.

As a post-imperial state, especially when compared to some European models, the

Soviet Union advocated unification and modernisation, rather than the colonial

implementation of cultural and ethnic discrimination. In contrast to racial segregation, the

Soviet Union often sought to facilitate marriages across ethnic lines (Edgar, 2007).

In the 1930s, it was clear that the previous policy had failed to assimilate people

from different national backgrounds into a new socialist as well as industrialised union. As a

result, the indigenisation policy was replaced with Russification. During this phase, the

Russian language became again an obligatory school subject. Shelestyuk (2014) states that

according to a 1935 decree, the Soviet Union mandated that the Latin alphabet had to be

substituted with the Cyrillic script in all Union republics. In 1938, a school reform based on

the *Study of the Russian Language at Schools of National Republics and Regions* was

enacted. According to that decree, the learning of the Russian language at schools in the

USSR was to start in the first year of study, and in other Soviet republics, temporarily, from

the second year or from the third year of school (Shelestyuk, 2014, pp. 246-247). Thus, the

Russification policy quickly elevated the prestige of the Russian language with a centralised curriculum and made Russian a mandatory subject in all educational institutions across the Union Republics.

The Soviet Union was considered a multi-lingual and multi-cultural state. Social and political factors as well as linguistics played significant roles in defining language boundaries within its territory. Since the early years of the Soviet Union, language policy has been an integral part of state policy. Language was one of the key points in terms of the recognition of national groups (however, the Soviet authorities failed to recognise certain ethnic minorities as distinct groups within the Soviet states).

As part of the Russification policy, the culture of the Soviet Union was expanded in direct and indirect ways: the direct transition involved the export of literature, while the indirect way emerged from local literature (Fătu-Tutoveanu, 2012, p. 88). As the first step, writers were trained to persuade and educate others to assimilate to the Soviet ideology. Russian writers such as Gorki, Sholokhov, Simonov, and Ehrenburg have been massively translated into Union republics languages to reinforce the communist and Marxist-Leninist ethics.

Grabowicz (1995) notes that some Soviet government decrees restricted some indigenous languages and literature, such as Ukrainian and Lithuanian. While the policy of indigenisation was never formally terminated, it was eventually replaced in practice in the 1930s by a more overtly centralising and openly Russifying programme. Weeks (2010) shows that the aim of Sovietisation was to establish 'a non-ethnic identity: a new Soviet human being. This new and superior being would be progressive, intelligent, and scientific, and would, of course, speak Russian, either as a native tongue or a second language' (Weeks, 2010, p. 3).

The Baltic states joined later and had much more developed economies compared to those of other Soviet republics, and it was inevitable that these countries stood out with high literacy rates. Annus (2012) notes that Stalinist repressions would bring severe disruption, followed by the influx of Russian settlers and the removal of cultural values as a way of assimilating the Baltic Republics. The proportion of 'ethnic Estonians dropped from 94% in 1945 to 65% in 1989' (Annus, 2012, p. 25). However, by the mid-1950s, the Baltic community saw cooperation with the new administration as its best option because the new regime was likely to continue in power for the foreseeable future (Annus, 2012).

Ubaidulloev (2015) shows that before the Soviet accession, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan were divided into two provinces and two protectorates (Bukhara and Khiva). The Soviet authorities established the new Central Asian Soviet republics based on language and ethnicity, with only Persian-speaking Tajikistan being disregarded until 1929 when the Tajik SSR was founded as a separate republic. In Russian and Soviet literature, the colonial conquest of the Central Asian countries was related to their willingness to be part of great Russia (Ubaidulloev, 2015, pp. 84–85).

In the Central Asian Republics, the colonial policy of the Soviet Union brought economic, cultural, and social advantages and disadvantages. Rakhimov (2017) states that one of the more positive aspects of Soviet policy in Central Asia was industrialisation and an increase in the level of literacy among Central Asian republics. On the other hand, the greatest transformation was observed in the language policy as it was necessarily important in the colonisation policy of USSR. The Cyrillic alphabet, which was intended to transform national identity and secure the unification of those countries, was implemented according to a 1940 decree, together with some further steps, such as the elevation of Russian to the official language and the restriction of indigenous languages (Rakhimov, 2017).

The Soviet Union's policies, particularly the resettlement process, substantially altered the ethnic composition of the region. Zharkynbekova et al. (2015) note that this programme included the forcible relocation of entire nations from the 1930s through to the 1950s, as well as the labour migration of Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. For example, according to the

> 1926 census, Kazakhs constituted approximately half of Kazakhstan's total population (58.2%) […]. By 1959, this number of Kazakhs had decreased to nearly 30% of the total population, most of whom were rural residents [... and] Kazakhs constituted only 20% of the urban population. By contrast, Slavic groups prevailed in urban areas (Zharkynbekova et al, 2015, p. 291).

This policy affected adversely the use of national languages. As a consequence, even three decades after the breakup of the Soviet Union, the reason for the popularity of the Russian language in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan is directly related to the number of resident Russians. The most significant feature of Soviet colonialism was related to cultural dominance: 'In order to dominate the Central Asian states, the Soviet Union aimed to demolish their cultural values and assimilate them into the new communist society' (Adams, 2008, p. 4).

During and after the Soviet era, the problems with language and national identity were a major theme in Azerbaijani literature. In all his works, renowned Azerbaijani poet Bahdiyar Vahabzade (1925–2003) consistently emphasised the key themes relating to national spirit. In *My Mother's Book*, Vahabzade describes how the Azerbaijani national language was not given the same weight as Russian.

In its early years, the Soviet regime took some steps to foster cultural nationalism in the republics of the Union. An opera house was built in Tashkent, in Uzbekistan (see Tarling, 2017). As part of this language policy, which provided equal opportunities to all local languages as the part of Russification policy, Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Georgian were all declared official languages, while Russian was promoted as a lingua-franca in all Soviet countries. Later, the 1939 script change became an important step in the Russification process. Fierman (2005) states that as the result of all these measures, 'in Central Asian countries like Kazakhstan, where people in the cities gradually became Russian monolinguals' (cited in Clifton, 2013, p. 202).

The fundamental reason for the script shift in the 1940s was related to policies such as the struggle against nationalist ideologies, while 'from 1938, Russian became an obligatory subject in the schools of all national republics' (Hogan-Brun & Melnyk, 2012, p. 593). All these measures strengthened the role of the Russian language in all Soviet republics. Resulting from such an implementation of Russification, learning Russian became an essential requirement for involvement in public life in all the Soviet republics. The outcomes of the Russification policy were different in each republic. In Belarus and Ukraine, Russian could reach the level of national languages, while in the Caucasus, regardless of some linguistic and cultural changes, the local languages could maintain their ascendancy.

In addition, the struggle against religion was another significant feature of Soviet colonisation in terms of the assimilation of the colonised people, and atheism was promoted in all Union republics to establish the Soviet ideology. As a result of the prohibition of religious instruction in schools, no funds were allocated to the Church. Many atheist organisations and museums were founded, and religious places were often turned into public offices (see Sakwa, 1999). In the 1920s and 1930s, to promote a Marxist

perspective of history, a number of Museums of Atheism were constructed in the Soviet Union territories, in public buildings, former churches, and mosques (Paine, 2010).

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many successor republics hosted considerable Russian-speaking populations. As such, the dissolution did not end the influence of the Russian language in those communities. It resulted, however, in a new 'postcolonial' dispensation, a circumstance similar to those surveyed in Chapter 3. Compared to the Russian empire, the Soviet Union had a more successful policy in the cultural assimilation of Union republics, which was specially strengthened with resettlement strategies. As the proportion of the Russian-speaking population was increasing steadily, the role of Russian had become essential in all Soviet states.

The collapse of the Soviet Union did not affect the prestige of Russian language drastically in many post-Soviet republics. Based on the number of Russian-speaking communities and political, economic, and cultural links of former Union states with Russia, different language measures have been taken after regaining of independence. Zabrodskaja and Ehala (2015) note that in the Lithuania and Estonia the Russian language could not retain its prestigious status, while in Latvia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Turkmenistan, Russian was recognised as a language of inter-ethnic communication. In the Caucasus republics, Russian remained an important language but did not constitute a threat to the titular languages. Russian has been recognised as the language of inter-ethnic communication in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan (Zabrodskaja & Ehala, 2015).

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the language policies implemented in the newly independent states differed widely. Comai and Venturi (2015) describe that some post-Soviet countries like Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Moldova were not proactive, and the use of the Russian language was not restricted, while in the Baltic states new regulations

were enacted to discriminate against those who did not speak the language of the titular

nationality, including even negating citizenship (Comai & Venturi, 2015).

However, compared to other former colonising languages, such as English and

French, Russian is less spoken as a second mother tongue in post-Soviet states than in other

post-colonies. After independence in all the post-Soviet republics, de-Russification policies

were implemented in all aspects of life. According to Smith (1998), 'de-Sovietisation

concerns the removal of all Soviet symbols of power and their replacement with new

political institutions and new national symbols such as national flags, monuments, language,

and culture' (p. 13). Building a unique national identity demanded the promotion of local

languages. And yet, despite giving official status to national languages and establishing

national language policy, due to political and economic links with Russia, Russian remained

important in most former Soviet states. This is why 'post-colonial' policies were placed on

the agenda. Compared to Ukraine and Belarus, which had a strong cultural connection with

Russia, in Azerbaijan the de-Russification policies were much more successful. However, it is

Russia's considerable political power in the South Caucasus that keeps the Russian language

an essential language of communication (Duncan & Mavisakalyan, 2015).

In Azerbaijan today, Russian is still a lingua franca and people have a chance to

pursue their education in Russian as well as in the Azerbaijani language, but like in other

former Soviet states, a decline is observed in the use of Russian in communication and

education. One of the most pivotal points of this decline is the availability of more sources

and potential professional opportunities that follow from proficiency in other European

languages.

Furthermore, the Azerbaijani elites were far more familiar with European

conceptions of nationalism in the early twentieth century than their Central Asian

counterparts (Fierman, 2012). More people prefer to learn Russian in Central Asian countries, while a small proportion of ethnic Azerbaijani families, particularly those living in Baku, who speak Russian as their first language, select a Russian medium education for their children. After independence, Azerbaijan developed closer ties with Turkey and the wider Islamic world, and this affected language policy considerably. Lebedeva et al (2018) state that although the 1978 Constitution declared Azerbaijani as the official language, the Russian language dominated, particularly in the capital Baku. But since the independence of Azerbaijan, Russian has been replaced by the Azerbaijani language as the language of education and administration. Within Azerbaijani medium schools, the role of foreign languages has changed considerably, as English has become a compulsory foreign language, while Russian has been relegated to optional (Lebedeva et al, 2018).

4.6 The First Phase of Latinisation in the 1920s as an Example for Newly Independent Azerbaijan

This section will review the Latinisation process of the Azerbaijani script, which was implemented in the 1920s, and the potential effects on the decision to implement the Latin script one more time after regaining independence. The Russification policy of the Soviet Union, which limited the use and improvement of indigenous languages in the Union republics, is evident in most Soviet literatures. However, in the early years of the Soviet Union the Korenizatsiia policy was implemented to promote the use of the local languages privately and publicly and to improve the level of literacy. The indigenisation of the people was a preoccupation of Soviet cultural policies. The term *Korenizatsiia* refers to the indigenisation process that encompassed linguistic innovations, such as the literacy campaign, the standardisation of the indigenous languages, and of the writing systems for

the languages that did not have yet a written form. This policy was viewed as a way of undoing the consequences of prior tyranny and discrimination by the tsarist regime and winning the trust of the rural populations. The years between 1920 and 1930 have been remarkable in the history of the Azerbaijani language and in the of the shaping national identity of Azerbaijan.

Discussions regarding Latinisation of the alphabet started before establishment of the Soviet Union. Many prominent Azerbaijani intellectuals of the early 20th century considered the Arabic script as a representation of underdevelopment and backwardness while the move to the Latin script was deemed essential for the improvement in all walks of life. Ergun (2010b) refers to Mirza Fethali Akhunzade (1812-1878), one of the most prominent figures who had a key role in the process of Latinisation, who stated the importance of Latinisation in Azerbaijan:

Railways are required, but the alphabet change is more required. Telegrams are required but changing of the old alphabet is more required. Because the most important thing among everything else is knowledge. Knowledge is dependent on the simplicity of the alphabet. Due to the difficulty of our script, we became deprived of science, and we are unable to acquire education and knowledge. In the countries where there are a high number of literate people, the number of intellectuals would increase. In places where there are higher number of intellectuals, people would advance day by day in all spheres of social life. (p.35)

Following the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan, the nationalist movement was shifting from being a cultural current to being in charge, beginning a period

of national revival (Nesibli, 2001). Kazimi (2021) states that during the time of the ADR, the commission was created to deal with the reform of the Arabic alphabet, and soon several projects on alphabet reform were presented to the administration. Among these projects, Abdullah bey Afendizade's version was approved and chosen as the foundation for the new alphabet. Afendizade also published *The Last Turkish Alphabet* in Baku in 1919, which was dedicated to alphabet reform, particularly the need to move to the Latin alphabet (see Kazimi, 2021). The alphabet reform started by the ADR could not be completed due to the annexation to the Soviet Union and the establishment of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic after a brief period of union with Georgia and Armenia. The establishment of the ADR in 1918 was a milestone in the development of the local language and the formation of national identity in Azerbaijan. Despite its short existence, all the achievements during this period have been a model for newly independent Azerbaijan after 1991 – in terms of establishing a democratic society by giving equal rights to everyone, and of using Turkism as the main component of state and national building process (M. Ismayilov, 2008).

The history of the current Azerbaijani flag is also connected to the ADR era (see Nesibli, 2001, p. 143). Initially a flag was adopted on June 21, 1918, with an eight-pointed white star and a white crescent on a red background inspired by the Ottoman flag, which has a five-pointed star. However, due to the nation's background and the establishment of its statehood, the decision was made to change the ADR's flag to the one representing Islamism, Turkism, and a desire for progress. On December 7, 1918, a new national flag was raised over the Parliament building. In his speech M.A. Rasulzadeh noted: 'this tricolour flag symbolizing the independent Azerbaijan, raised by the National Council and meaning Turk freedom, Islamic culture and modernity, will always wave over us' (cited in Ahmadov, 2018, p. 80).

Following the Soviet occupation in April 1920, and the establishment of a Soviet administration in Azerbaijan, all the symbols of statehood and independence were eradicated and substituted with Soviet symbols. The national liberation movement of the late 1980s demanded that the ADR tricolour be restored as the national flag of autonomy. In 1995 the first Constitution of independent Azerbaijan was adopted, and the tricolour restored. November 9 of each year since 2009 is celebrated as 'Day of State Flag' in Azerbaijan (Ahmedov, 2018).

For the development and systematization of national identity in the context of the political liberalization of Azerbaijanis during the 1918-1920 period, Mammad Amin Rasulzade's role is especially important. However, like Huseynzade, he was a proponent of Turkism, and he supported an identity for Azerbaijani Turks independent from that of Ottoman and other Turkic peoples. For Rasulzadeh, the formation of the Republic of Azerbaijan was the final stage of the Azerbaijani people in transition from the Umma period to a Nation-State. Announcing the Declaration on 28 May 1918, the Azerbaijan National Council determined the political existence of the Azerbaijani nation. The word 'Azerbaijan' thus developed from a geographical, ethnographic, and linguistic term to a political one. Rasulzadeh explained the main principles of the newly established state. The Republic of Azerbaijan as a state owes its existence to the nationality principles that are inextricably linked with its history. The movement that declared Azerbaijan's independence in the early 1990s was, above all, a democracy and freedom movement. In Azerbaijan, nationalism was tied with a demand for democracy (Ahmadov, 2023).

Rasulzadeh did not support the idea of the unity of Muslims and Turks of the Russian Empire, nor aimed to merge with the Ottoman Empire, which had close historical and cultural ties with Azerbaijan. Instead, he supported the concept of creating Azerbaijan as a

separate independent state. Rasulzadeh explained that Azerbaijanism means the struggle for independence, the process that leads towards the establishment of a state, which is the most prominent institution in history. For him, Azerbaijanism is a noble struggle for the liberation of a nation of the 'great' Turkic race (Ahmadov, 2023).

Due to the difficulties of learning the Arabic alphabet and its phonetic system, which is incompatible with the Azerbaijani language, the issue of alphabet reform, which remained incomplete during the ADR period, was brought back to the agenda in the early 1920s. The aim of Latinisation was the same as during the ADR period: mainly to remove backwardness, as the use of the Arabic alphabet was considered the main reason for illiteracy, and to modernise the society. In the early twentieth century, the Soviet Union adopted a new strategy, different from that of tsarist Russia, to unite all states from various backgrounds. People were allowed to use their native language in all areas of communication as a first step, and no single official language was declared for the Soviet republics.

To distance their rule from that of the tsarist past, the Bolshevik leaders granted all nationalities the right to speak their native language and preserve their cultural values. As part of this policy, the alphabet change from Arabic to Latin was then implemented. It was obvious that there would be some who supported and those who opposed the move from the Arabic to the Latin script. The Reformists (Islahatçlar) and the Pro-Latinists (Latinciler) were the two major groups of intellectuals during that time (Balim-Harding, 2009). However, not everyone felt that the Latin alphabet would aid in the development and modernisation of society. A group of intellectuals argued that adopting a new alphabet would cause Azerbaijan to lose all academic and cultural heritage, as well as worsen the country's literacy rate, and that all factors pointed to the preservation of the Arabic alphabet. According to Tofiq Bagırov (as cited in Ergun, 2010b), 'the main aim of

Romanisation is to distance us from our holy book, the Quran, our religion and to assimilate us' (p. 40). Latinisation proponents believed it to be grammatically simpler to learn than Arabic and envisioned its adoption as a way to encourage mass literacy. As a result, arguments in favour of Latinisation emphasised that all Turkic languages needed to drop the Arabic scripts in order to lose their Islamic roots.

Another reason for introducing the Latin script in the Soviet republics was that Latin is used in Western countries, allowing underdeveloped states to gain access to Western technology and culture. In 1924 Navshrimanov (1924, as cited in Grenoble, 2003) explained:

> As far as Soviet ideology was concerned, it was considered to be a form of 'internationalization': Latin characters are not only signs of science and technology; they are those of the common written culture of all civilised nationalities. By adopting the Latin alphabet, we shall be able to make use of the fruits of international culture as we approach a proletarian-peasant international (p. 50).

The shift from the Arabic script to Latin played a pivotal part in directing people to new cultural orientations.

According to Smith (1998), the Russian Communist Party's Central Committee had to choose between the pan-Turkist and Pan-Islamic movement of Kazan, which promoted the Arabic script, and the pan-Turkist and anti-Islamist movement of Baku, which promoted Romanisation (Smith, 1998). The decision was self-evident.

Thus, in the 1920s, the Soviet Union had to make crucial decisions about the alphabet. Alpatov (2017) discusses how there were four logical possibilities for the Turkic language and many other Muslim languages in the nation: 1) the traditional Arabic script,

which was familiar to many; 2) the reformed Arabic script; 3) the Latin script; and 4) the

Cyrillic script. As the old Arabic script symbolised the old Muslim culture and using this

alphabet would prevent the growth of literacy levels in the country, intellectuals found it

unacceptable. The Cyrillic alphabet was also not ideal, as it was linked with tsarism. On the

other hand, the reformed Arabic script was only used in the Soviet territories, and its use

would isolate the Muslim nations of the Soviet Union from the people of the rest of the

Soviet Union and other countries. The Latin alphabet was thus deemed the best option, as it

had no negative associations and was regarded the most international writing system

(Alpatov, 2017). Furthermore, many intellectuals claimed that, in terms of linguistic

features, the Latin alphabet was more compatible with the Azerbaijani language and would

enrich it. They also supported the Latinisation of the Azerbaijani script because it signified

growth and scientific advancement. On the other hand, some Azerbaijani intellectuals

supported the introduction of the Latin alphabet to the Turkic Soviet republics, because

they understood that Turkism and Azerbaijanism were quite powerful, and that a possible

switch to the Cyrillic script would increase local peoples' hatred and resistance to the Soviet

Union.

According to Smith (1998), the Soviet government believed that language had a

central place in Soviet nation-building because 'it was a traditional and accepted component

of nationhood' (p. 3). Smith (1998) also asserts that 'language, especially the nomenclature

of Marxism-Leninism, was their fundamental tool of political power, economic production,

and social management'. (p. 7). Therefore, the Soviet government encouraged the

introduction of the Latin script for the Turkic languages of Central Asia and Azerbaijan

during the early phases of its establishment. This decision was made for a number of

reasons, but one of the key reasons was the idea that using the Latin script instead of the

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Arabic script would help reduce linkages with the Islamic world. Additionally, widespread

Latinisation complemented the Bolsheviks' vision of a global proletarian revolution.

The Soviet Union's language policy can thus be classified into three phases between

1920 and 1930. Gurbanova and Rangsikul (2018) discusses that the first stage lasted a

decade and was largely focused with the development of local languages and boosting

literacy levels. During the second stage, the centralisation of language planning measures

and the switch to the Latin alphabet stood out, all of which were to help to the formation of

a socialist society. In 1934, the Soviet Union's third period of language policy began, with

the nativization policy being replaced by Russification, and the diffusion of the Russian

language in all aspects of life. The national languages also shifted to Cyrillic (p. 419).

Kazimi (2021) describes how the Latin alphabet was adopted in Azerbaijan in 1921,

while the All-Union Central Committee of the New Turkish Alphabet was formed during the

first Turkological congress in Baku in 1926. This body approved the draft unification of the

Turkic people's 34-letter alphabet. The Central Executive Committee of the USSR then

issued a decree entitled 'New Latinized alphabet of the Arabic-writing peoples of the USSR'

on August 8, 1929, and all printing houses, publishing houses, and educational institutions

were to formally convert to the Latin alphabet (Kazimi, 2021).

Liber (1991) describes that in the first stage the Korenizatsiia policy promoted

people's equal rights to use and preserve their local languages and cultures on Soviet Union

territory. The government's goal at this point was to address illiteracy, economic and

cultural underdevelopment, to promote the involvement of the local population in

administrative activities, and to manage a tense relationship between Russified cities and

non-Russian countryside. It also expanded elementary, secondary, and high school

education to include indigenous language instruction (Liber, 1991, pp. 16–18). It is

noteworthy that the introduction of universal alphabets to the Soviet states and the development of writing systems for all nations were significant developments.

One of the most significant challenges the Bolsheviks faced during that time was the low level of literacy among the local people. According to the 1926 census, Azerbaijan had an overall literacy rate of 25.2%, Kazakhstan had a rate of 22.8%, Kyrgyzstan had a rate of 15.1%, Turkmenistan had a rate of 12.5%, Uzbekistan had a rate of 10.6%, and Tajikistan had a rate of 3.7% (Altapov, 2000). Besides, it was challenging for the Bolsheviks to rule over such an ethnically varied polity. The leaders knew about the enormous gaps between the centre and the rural areas. Some indigenous languages still needed to be standardised and writing systems developed to increase literacy rates and modernise society. Grenoble (2003) emphasises that while some areas of the Soviet Union, such as Georgia and the Turkic languages of Central Asia, already had long-standing literary traditions, others, such as the Siberian languages, lacked written forms (p. 45).

Faller (2011) describes that to standardise the languages of the Union states, Soviet language planning initiatives initially engaged brigades of linguists and ethnographers. Resources were used to establish national educational institutions; encourage the production of national-language journals, newspapers, theatres, and operas; and create distinctive national dances, costumes, and other cultural objects (Faller, 2011). Literacy campaigns and the development of local languages were critical components of indigenisation policy, and the Soviet Union pursued the translation of world literature as well as local historical and cultural legacy to achieve these goals. Shelestyuk (2019) states that development in writing systems necessitated massive financial investment, writing developers, linguists, philologists, and folklorists. Hundreds of writing systems emerged in

the 1920s and 1930s, with many languages used in office work, journalism, and legislative-areas for the first time ever (Shelestyuk, 2019).

Since May 1, 1925, the new alphabet was required to be used for media and administrative settings, and it has also begun to be taught in all institutions (Suleymanlı, 2006). The Baku Turkology Congress was held in 1926, and it was instrumental in disseminating the new alphabet among the Turkic-speaking peoples of the Soviet Union. It offered an excellent opportunity for representatives from all Turkic republics to discuss problems concerning the Turkic languages and cultural values. As a result of the Latinisation process, after Latinization, the number of books written in Azerbaijani increased from 95 in 1913 to 525 in 1928 (Allworth, 1971, p. 10).

It should be emphasised that the low literacy rate of the population during the early stages of nation-building contributed to the relatively quick adoption of the Latin alphabet. The launch of the new script was timed to coincide with the nationwide effort in the USSR to end illiteracy among children and adults. Because it was successful in resolving one of the most pressing societal concerns at the time, this campaign represented a significant success for the Soviet Union.

According to Winner (1952), 1928 was a milestone in Soviet Azerbaijan language reform as most mass media began using the Latin alphabet. During the third meeting of the Committee, held the following year to review progress, it was revealed that all the Turkic-speaking republics were now working on a unified program:

The new alphabet had been introduced into almost all municipal schools in
Central Asian republics and Azerbaijan, and that a new body of teachers had
arisen who, having learned to read and write in short-term intensive

courses, were imparting the NTA in rural areas (cited in Winner, 1952, p.

142).

In comparison to the Arabic script, the Turkic languages now acquired a better lettering system that met the characteristics of their phonetic. Late in the 1920s, Azerbaijan completed the transition to the Latin alphabet, which had been incomplete since the ADR period.

The last change in Azerbaijan's language from Cyrillic to Latin was made to restore the Azerbaijani-Turkish identity. As a result, in order to end the previous Russian-dominated regime's political authority and control, the intelligentsia advocated for a return to the Latin alphabet. This change was a political decision disguised as a linguistic debate. All the above discussions show that the policy of language de-Russification pursued in post-independence Azerbaijan resembles the indigenisation policy pursued under early Bolshevik rule in the 1920s.

4.7 Language Policy in the Post-Soviet States after 1930s

The early language policy of the Soviet Union, which was implemented by Lenin, aimed to support and develop national ethnic languages on the assumption that the new regime would be best understood and accepted by minority groups if it functioned in their own languages. The Korenizatsiia policy of the 1920s involved systematic efforts to ensure that local administrations, educational institutions function in local languages, to translate world literature into local languages, to standardize a variety of languages, to support the development of new literary languages, to create alphabets for languages that did not yet have literacy. In the 1930s, Stalin started to elevate the Russian language and created a new regard for it as the language of collectivization, industrialisation, and state consolidation.

But moving in the direction of more Russian usage did not mean that the nativization policies were abandoned entirely. Literacy in the national languages grew even during the years of the Stalinist regime, when linguists, writers, actors, and teachers of the native language were being swept away in the purges, while the languages were subjected to a crude Russification, and when there was a virtual freeze on creative language development in the national languages.

Pavlenko (2008) states that two strategies were used in the 1930s: acquisition planning (in Russian) and corpus planning (in the local languages). A 1938 decree in the field of acquisition planning mandated that Russian be taught as a second language in non-Russian schools. Even though the majority of schools already taught in Russian, the decree centralised the curriculum, created a set of universal standards, increased the amount of time spent learning the language, and gave textbook publishing and teacher preparation top priority. By doing this, the policy brought attention to the significance of Russian as the country's de facto official language and as a requirement for becoming a legitimate citizen of the Soviet Union (Pavlenko, 2008). The largest step in corpus planning was the switch from Latin to Cyrillic in all post-Soviet states. This was followed by attempts to ensure that Russian was the only or primary source of neologisms and to build local language grammars on the basis of Russian grammar. As a result, many Russian terminologies entered local languages, especially in fields related to science, technology, socialism, and communism. The centralisation of government and administration, with all roads leading to Moscow, also made Russian more important since people who wanted to work in administration or any other profession that involved travelling outside of one's own region increasingly saw language proficiency as necessary.

Kreindler (1989) discusses that it was in the 1953-64 period, the era of Khrushchev, when the fundamental shift in favour of Russian officially took place. Throughout the Lenin-Stalin period, the national languages were the prime targets of both corpus and status planning, with Russian, overall, in the background. After 1953, however, the Russian language takes centre stage as most official efforts were devoted to expanding its role as the language of the 'new' historical community – the Soviet people', while at the same time preserving its norms and firmly guarding against the rise of any new national varieties. The non-Russian languages, though never directly attacked, were downgraded (Kreindler, 1989, pp. 46-47). Khrushchev's period marks a turning point in Soviet language planning. In the 1950s Russian began to be called the 'second mother tongue' of all the non-Russian speakers of the USSR.

Following World War II, an international form of Russification emerged in the republics. In the 1950s Khrushchev put an end to ethnic group deportations. The Union republics and autonomous republics enacted educational reform laws in 1959, granting parents the freedom to send their kids to school in the language of their choice. Parents who chose to send their kids to Russian schools also had the freedom to decide whether or not they wanted their kids to be taught the republic's autochthonous language. The challenge faced by minority schools was that they had to cope with the excessive load of teaching Russian. As Russian enjoyed higher status than local languages, this resulted in an overall gradual shift to Russian as the medium of education. During Brezhnev's (1964–1982) period, the drive for Russian greatly accelerated and was accompanied by an extravagant glorification of the Russian people and their language. It was suggested in 1979 at a special all-Union meeting in Tashkent under the title 'The Russian Language: The Language of Friendship and Cooperation Among the Nations of the USSR' that Russian instruction be

taught in preschools beginning at age five. The proposals extended to higher education institutions as well as secondary and vocational schools. A Politburo meeting of the Communist Party in 1983 and other top-secret protocols confirmed this stance. In Soviet language planning, one-sided national-Russian bilingualism became the default option (Rannut, 2012).

Azerbaijan's local government started offering more Azerbaijani-medium instruction in secondary schools and higher education institutions, and more scholarly publications in the language were published, so there was a noticeable improvement in the late 1960s in terms of the local language as well. A clause directing the government to encourage the use and advancement of the Azerbaijani language was included to the 1978 Azerbaijan SSR Constitution. This demonstrates the implicit intention of the local government to shift the focus from Russian to Azerbaijani in important domains:

Russification as a policy was terminated during the fifth period, Gorbachev's perestroika (1985–91), due to the weakness of central power. Perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost(openness) are the two most important elements of Mikhail Gorbachev's domestic policy during the first two years of his leadership of the Soviet Union. However, the policy's impact continued in the form of Russianization of third nations among non-Russian immigrants in national territories (Rannut, 2012). Gorbachev's policies of glasnost and perestroika permitted and even encouraged citizens to express their views in a more open fashion. One of their primary goals was to raise the status of the titular languages of the republic. As from the mid-1980s onward, debates on fundamental issues of language status reappeared, both in the case of language corpus and status. These debates took on particular importance after independence in 1991. Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, the newly re-established republics faced significant difficulties when deciding to

reshape their unique national identities, as Russian had become the language of government and the media, and several educational and cultural institutions were meeting the needs of a Russian-speaking population.

In the Baltic States, since independence, the titular languages have been threatened by commonly spoken foreign languages like English and Russian. Järve (2003) states that in general, the early years of the Baltic States' language policies after 1991 can be assessed as an effort to balance linguistic diversity. Later, some language laws were used to contribute to the 'ethnic containment' of non-titular groups. In particular, in Estonia and Latvia citizenship was not given automatically to all Soviet-era settlers, and language tests about language proficiency were introduced (Järve, 2003, p. 82). These policies supported and protected the cultural identity of the local nations and their languages.

Although Russian continued to play a special role as a means of inter-ethnic communication in post-Soviet Central Asian states, after independence, attention was focused on fostering national languages to reshape the national identity. It is noticeable that the consequences of nation-building processes in Central Asian states were varied. The official status of the Russian language and the relative size of the Russian-speaking resident minorities were crucial factors. Accordingly, in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, Russian was still officially supported, while in Turkmenistan some restrictions were implemented. After regaining self-rule, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan changed their script from Cyrillic to Latin, which promoted local nationalism. Some steps were also taken in these countries in terms of the reduction of Russian in the media. Many of the Russian-speaking residents of those states have left the country. Russian proficiency has dropped drastically in Turkmenistan as the result of above-mentioned measures.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and regaining independence, long-term debates started regarding nation-building in Ukraine, and the promotion of the Ukrainian language has been a vital part of the nation-building project in this post-Soviet state. The situation was quite complicated, due to the high number of ethnic Russians and other Russophones living in Ukraine. During the early years of independence, to avoid ethnic and political conflicts, language and ethnic origin became unimportant for receiving Ukrainian citizenship. However, in following years new regulations were implemented and the tendency to Ukrainise was reinforced. According to Polese (2011), the

> Ukrainian language was also promoted to state language status by a law
> requiring all official documents to be written in Ukrainian and a law on
> education in 1998, after which schools were increasingly pressured to use
> Ukrainian as their language of instruction (p. 42).

Since regaining independence, the Ukrainian language was promoted in all walks of life, predominately in education and the media. There was pressure to use the Ukrainian language even if the whole country could understand Russian fluently. Polese (2011) describes that the Ukrainian language was considered a mark of a national identity, an identity that was to be different from the Soviet one.

In today's Ukraine, after 2014, the use of the Ukrainian language does not only symbolise linguistic or cultural values, but also the political independence of the country against Russia. The national language, as one of the main markers of the unique national identity in Ukraine, draws a line between the Ukrainians and the Russians.

In Belarus a different situation was observed in terms of the nation-building process. After independence, new paradoxes appeared in the country. Titarenko (2007) notes that in

the early years of independence, Belarusian was declared the only official language, and a Belarusification policy was promoted in all aspects of life, particularly in education and media. But this policy did not last very long and economic problems pushed Belarus towards renewed Russo-centrism, which aimed to establish the unity of Slavic states like Russia and Ukraine (Titarenko, 2007). The Russification policies of the past had changed language proficiency of the population dramatically. The necessity of using Russian in all spheres of life had made Belarusians adopt Russian more and more, and it became less essential to learn Belarusian. As a result of this policy, the Russian language was accepted as the language of everyday communication, even after independence.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the history of Azerbaijan, and in particular the Soviet era, as well as language and national identity formation in the post-Soviet world, and in Turkey. From a historical standpoint, today's Azerbaijan developed in many spheres of life under both Turkic ideology and Russian influence. This chapter outlined how during the Soviet era, the promotion of the Russian language, literature, media, atheism, and the script change from Latin to Cyrillic were used as tools of Russification process in the region.

This chapter has also mentioned how successful the Soviet language and nationality policies were in the early years of the Soviet period (1920 and 1930) in terms of promoting local languages and strengthening national identities, which also significantly affected reshaping today's Azerbaijan. It also was successful in improving literacy rates amongst the whole population. Russian, beside local languages was promoted in the region, and it became the recognised language of communication that helped in the process of industrialising the country and advancing its technology.

This chapter showed how in different parts of its territory, the Soviet Union adopted various policies. Thus, Georgia and Armenia have maintained their alphabets even during the Soviet period and this contributed to the spread of local languages and the level of literacy, while in Azerbaijan and Central Asia the situation was not the same, and the script change processes negatively affected literacy heritage and development of local languages in the region. This chapter also examined the de-Russification processes that began at the end of the Soviet period as many ethnic groups living in the former Soviet republics started to push for self-determination and mobilisation.

This chapter has also presented the process and discussions around changing the alphabet from Arabic to Latin in 1920s Turkey. The script change in Turkey was related to the parallel and previous Latinisation of the alphabet in Azerbaijan in the 1920s. In turn, the role of the Turkish alphabet for the alphabet changes in Azerbaijan after regaining independence in 1991 was also emphasised.

The Arabic script was considered an obstacle for Turkey to connect to Western civilization, while it was a significant connection to the Islamic world and its Ottoman past. This is why, from the initial period of the new Turkish Republic, some secular measures such as the alphabet reform were implemented. However, for Azerbaijan, the script change was meant to promote the de-Russification process and a break away from the Soviet past. As it had been in Turkey, Latinisation was to contribute to the modernisation of the society.

Chapter 5: Language and National Identity in Independent Azerbaijan since 1991

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on language settings in Azerbaijan after regaining independence and after new language regulations were implemented to promote the official language and national identity. It appraises the current use of foreign languages (Russian, Turkish, and English) in the country, and discusses the current language policy of Azerbaijan. Due to the close connection linking Azerbaijan with Turkey throughout history, and the cultural similarities between these Turkic states, after the fall of the Soviet Union, Turkey was accepted as the main role-model to establish a unique identity and modernise society.

However, the alphabet reforms in Azerbaijan and Turkey were enacted in very different periods. While Azerbaijan was the first Muslim nation to formally adopt the Latin alphabet in 1923, Turkey adopted the Latin alphabet only a few years later, in 1928. This further clarifies that Azerbaijan's first shift to the Latin alphabet was a sign of its orientation towards the West rather than to Turkey, and that Russia was crucial in helping Azerbaijan gain access to the West. Thus, this chapter covers language policies and how they contributed differently to the development of Turkism in Azerbaijan and Turkey.

This chapter also explains the Soviet Union's integral role for Azerbaijanis' access to Western culture. After the establishment of the Soviet Union, the government was aware that they would not be able to develop any serious industry without making the entire population literate. Therefore, new reforms were implemented to bring Soviet states to the standard of the advanced world. The Soviet government enabled intellectuals to benefit from access to European culture, and they developed new ideas adapting them to the Azerbaijan environment. These intellectuals did not limit their creativity to national

traditions, but also sought ways to rise to the level of modern world culture. During this period, steps were taken to modernize education and integrate it into the world education system, and the joint education of boys and girls began. Emphasizing the equal activities of women and men in the field of education, Latinization became the crowning achievement of Soviet Azerbaijan, in its battle against the religious conservatives. Alphabet change helped to break the hold of traditional teaching, using religious text-based instruction, shattering religious claims to a monopoly over knowledge.

Much later, in the last days of the Soviet Union, Western ideas were openly promoted in almost all republics, particularly in Russia. Brown (2013) classifies the former Soviet Union states in different categories:

> countries with early-twentieth-century histories of independence (e.g.,
> Azerbaijan, the Baltic states, Georgia, and Ukraine), others with only 20
> years of post-Soviet state-building experience, some that are politically and
> culturally aligned with Russia (e.g., Belarus), others that are part of the
> European Union (e.g., Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), and many have
> culturally and ethnically bifurcated populations in certain regions (e.g.,
> Ukraine, Estonia), several regions (e.g., the Chuvash Republic within the
> Russian Federation) and states (e.g., Kazakhstan) that were highly Russified,
> and many others where the national language dominates (p. 240).

Russian as the language of the former dominant power, is still important in both the linguistic and political life of these states. Nation-building became one of the major issues in all post-Soviet states after regaining independence. However, few could do away entirely with the Russian language and its influence. Bergne (2003) states that in some Central Asian

states such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, due to large number of Russian communities and the economic role of Russia, the Russian language has kept the high prestige in all walks of life. In these two countries Russian remains an official language (Bergne, 2003).

The new language regulations introduced drastic changes in the education system of the former Soviet states. During the Soviet era, studying in Russian was promoted as the part of government policy, and due to education and career advantages there were incentives to send children to learn in Russian medium classes. Moreover, due to the alphabet change in 1990s Azerbaijan, the level of literacy was negatively affected. This chapter analyses the consequences of the alphabet change in the education system.

Mammadov (2009) states that today officially 'monolingual Azerbaijan is a member of the Council of Europe and fosters the development of plurilingualism and in terms of plurilingual competencies', while 'Russian and English have a necessarily significant role in Azerbaijan' (p. 68). Despite not having any special status, Russian still enjoys a high status due to traditional and political ties with Russia, particularly in educational settings as Russian is an educational language in most secondary and higher education institutes in Azerbaijan. The position of English, however, is growing due to the country's current orientation towards Western life. This negatively affects the use of Russian in the country.

As stated by Isgandarov (2000), according to statistics, in 1990-1991, 14 to 15 percent of the country's 1,322,416 students were on non-Azerbaijani tracks, including Russian, Armenian, and Georgian, but today the number has fallen to 6 percent (pp. 68-69). In contemporary Azerbaijan, the figure shifts in favour of the Azerbaijani speaking track. This process naturally occurs, as people start to realise that national language plays an important role in life, and this is an essential way of maintaining and sustaining the unity of the country.

This chapter also reflects on the conflict pitting Azerbaijan and Armenia, and the impact of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War (2020) on language policies. This war had significant effects on the language policy of independent Azerbaijan, even though government officials did not explicitly make any drastic changes to the policy. Azerbaijanis became more inclined to promote Azerbaijani identity and all symbols of Azerbaijanism; and as the Azerbaijani language is inevitably an integral part of Azerbaijanism, this led to people taking more pride in speaking in the national language. The attitude toward the national and the foreign languages in Azerbaijan was clearly affected. Since the conflict with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh territory began in the early 20th century, this was a crucial catalyst of Azerbaijanism. However, the Nagorno-Karabakh War did not significantly lessen Russian influence in Azerbaijan, especially in the field of education. Some argue that reducing the use of Russian as part of Azerbaijan's post-Karabakh policy is unnecessary because Russian not only offers greater career and educational opportunities, but it also plays a vital role in the region as a language of 'peacekeeper' Russia. This argument will be further analysed in Chapter 6.

Examining the various historical eras that had a major impact on the remaking of Azerbaijan's language and identity is crucial to understanding the country's current language policy and national identity. The second half of the nineteenth century needs to be mentioned as an integral phase in the establishment of the Azerbaijani national identity. While the country had embraced secular principles at the time, religion remained important, and national identity could only be re-established within this Muslim context.

Due to the growth in the economic and cultural sectors, the nation-building process in Azerbaijan was substantially promoted during the second half of the 19th century. Balayev et al (2017) point out that the focus of national identity at one point shifted from

Islam to Turkism. Ali bey Huseynzadeh (1864–1940), one of the most prominent figures of this period, was specifically involved in this debate. He sought to establish a common Turkic nation and argued that it is not religion that should play an integral role in national identity, but ethnicity. On the contrary, another prominent trend was led by the journal *Molla Nasreddin*, which opposed the idea of common Turkic nation and stressed the use of the Azerbaijani language to make the press accessible and clear to all readers (see Balayev et al, 2017). After territorial conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia and the Black January events of 1990, Azerbaijanism and the Azerbaijani language became again vehicles for the consolidation of national identity. Due to a common religious, national, and linguistic background, Turkey was considered the best model for Azerbaijan for the re-establishment of national identity and the promotion of local language. Pan-Turkist views became a fundamental point of foreign policy during the rule by the Popular Front, and as a result of this policy, 'the name of Azerbaijani language was changed to Turkish, the nationality inscriptions on the identification cards were written as Turkish instead of Azerbaijani' (Ibrahimov, 2013, p. 59). During Heydar Aliyev's presidency, however, maintaining balanced relationships with both the former colonising power, Russia, and the Turkic world became a priority.

After independence, one of the most contentious issues has been the status of the Azerbaijani language, and the discussions were around whether a new language policy should focus on the Turkic common core or on the unique identity of Azerbaijan. Commenting on the role of the Azerbaijani language according to the new constitution of Azerbaijan of 1995, Heydar Aliyev (1997) stated:

Our language has been named as Azerbaijan language from 1936 until today.

[…] In the Constitution of 1978, it was stated that the Azerbaijani language is

the state language. Today we all say that our language is Azerbaijan

language. […] In our territory, within the borders accepted by the United

Nations, those who live in the Azerbaijan Republic are all Azerbaijanis. […]

The state language of the independent Azerbaijan Republic is Azerbaijan

language (pp. 462-63).

Ozturk (2013) describes the policy of the PFA as such: 'The cultural policy of the PFA

government can be summed up in one phrase: the Turkeyisation of Azerbaijan' (p. 9).

However, during Heydar Aliyev's presidency, establishing balanced relationships with other

countries became an integral part of foreign policy. At the same time, Azerbaijan and Turkey

reciprocally supported each other in the international arena. This policy is still pursued by

Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Although the influence of the Russian language remained resilient in the early years

of newly independent Azerbaijan, later, due to political changes in the country, differences

emerged in the functional balance of language power. Thus, English as an international

language started weakening the role of the Russian language in the region. Besides, the

influence of the Turkish language in Azerbaijan became noticeable. Shibliyev (2014) states

that the

1998 language law, which aimed to regulate language management in

topography was one of the most important language acts implemented after

independence. According to this act, all toponyms must be written in the

official language, and if they are also written in a foreign language, the

foreign language text must come after the Azerbaijani text (p. 210).

All these factors were noticeable in Azerbaijan: returning to Turkic roots, facilitating the de-Russification process, and linguistic globalisation (Shibliyev, 2014).

And yet, even after changing the alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin, both scripts were used interchangeably in Azerbaijan, and only in the 2000s were new regulations enforced to promote the use of the Latin script. Marquardt (2011) states that according to a 2001 decree, all state and private institutions should use the Azerbaijani language. Furthermore, in 2006 new legislation was implemented banning foreign broadcasting. Due to these restrictions, international programmes were to be dubbed into Azerbaijani. However, even translating from the Turkish language caused some discussion, as some politicians argued that it might be unnecessary, due to the similarities between Azerbaijani and Turkish (see Marquardt, 2011). In 2007, for the purpose of reinforcing the use of the Latin alphabet, the massive translation of prominent works of world literature was implemented (see Presidential Library of the Office of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2007).

Shibliyev (2014) states that one of the most important documents regarding language policy in Azerbaijan is the *State Program on the use of the Azerbaijani language in the Epoch of Globalization*, which was enforced between 2013 and 2020. The task was to intensify the comparative study of Turkish phonology, vocabulary, and grammar, launching joint projects to prepare a common alphabet, terminology and literary language, as well as providing transliteration from the Azerbaijani alphabet to other alphabets based on the national transliteration standards (p. 211)

Moreover, Mammadova (2020) remarks on a Monitoring Centre established in 2018:

It 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 (p. 28).

This centre monitors the use of Azerbaijani in the country and advises on

regulations to promote Azerbaijani in all areas of the country.

After regaining independence, Azerbaijan was taking new measures to demonstrate

its independence from Russia, and its language policy played an integral role in this process.

Unlike other former Soviet states, such as Kazakhstan, the Russian language was not given

special status and the main emphasis was to spread the use of the Azerbaijani language to

reshape a unique Azerbaijani national identity. Despite all attempts to make Russian equal

to other foreign languages in Azerbaijan, the attitude of Baku's elite towards Russian was to

preserve Russian as a lingua franca and as a source of cultural influence (Garibova, 2009, p.

26).

Moreover, as noted in Tokluoglu's (2005) study, following the dissolution of the

Soviet Union, there were undisputable ethnic majorities in the former Caucasian Soviet

Republics. Thus, by the end of the Soviet era, Georgians were nearly 70 per cent of the

population in Georgia, Azerbaijanis nearly 80 per cent in Azerbaijan, and Armenians about

90 per cent in Armenia (see Tokluoglu, 2005, p. 753; see also Suny, 1993).

Azerbaijan is a multi-ethnic country where people from different national

backgrounds live together. Avadir (2017) describes that the minority groups mainly resided

in the north-eastern part of Azerbaijan, as well as on the eastern slopes of the Greater

Caucasus range: 'According to statistics Azerbaijan is believed to be the homeland of various

nations speaking languages of diverse family groups. Lezgis 2.2%, Russians 1.8 %, Talish 1.0%, Avars 0.6%, Tats 0.13%, Georgians 0.2%, Kurds 0.2%, Jews 0.1%, Udins 0.005% and other minority groups of nationalities can be given as examples' (Avadir, 2017, p. 115). The minority national groups living in Azerbaijan are allowed to communicate and study in their own languages. However, they predominantly use Azerbaijani or Russian as the means of communication.

During the Soviet Union era, these ethnic minorities were not entitled to preserve and improve their languages, and they were officially identified as 'Azerbaijanis'. After independence, the ethnic minorities were given more rights in terms of using and protecting their local languages. Gerber (2007) observes that according to a 1992 decree, the state took responsibility for minority language growth, for example, by funding minority-language newspapers and creating opportunities for minority-language education. However, as Gerber outlines, 'In 2002, the Parliament passed a Law on the State Language. According to that law, the total amount of programs in non-Azerbaijani languages in electronic media has not to exceed 1/6 of on-air broadcasting time' (p. 23). As a result, it became quite hard for minorities to create local TV and radio stations broadcasting in their own languages.

Heydar Aliyev and his successor, Ilham Aliyev, pursued the same minority policy, acknowledging the value of ethnic identity but suppressing demands for political autonomy. Aside from the national language, Russian has a comprehensive education system in Azerbaijan, and people are entitled to free education in either Azerbaijani or Russian. Therefore, nowadays, the linguistic supremacy of Azerbaijani in the public domain has been embraced by a large part of the minorities population and these ethnic minorities are mostly integrated with ethnic Azerbaijanis. English is taught as a foreign language and Russian is used extensively as a lingua franca. The people who lack Russian language skills

are still considered less modern (Karimova, 2017b). We should also consider that the

number of Azerbaijanis in Russia has been increasing considerably since the 1990s, and that

the role of the Azerbaijani diaspora in Russia is quite essential.

5.2 Turkey's Example and the Latinisation of the Script in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan

For newly independent Azerbaijan, switching from the Cyrillic to the Latin script was a

complicated task that required a significant effort, not only on a linguistic level, but also on a

political, economic, and cultural level. One of the most challenging aspects of the

Latinisation process in Azerbaijan after independence was related to the sizeable Russian-

speaking community residing in the country. Some external factors played a very important

role in the decision to enact the script change. Turkey was the most important power

encouraging the Azerbaijan leadership to take serious steps towards alphabet change.

During the 1990s, right after regaining independence, several academic conferences were

held in Turkey where calls for the newly independent Turkic states to adopt the Latin script

based on the Turkish version were issued (Landau, 2010). Turkey was a Westernised

republic that had also completed the script reform successfully despite having used Arabic

in the past. It became a model for post-soviet Turkic-speaking states.

Azerbaijan had adopted the Latin alphabet within the Soviet Union in the 1920s.

Following the establishment of Soviet Azerbaijan, Azerbaijani intellectuals recognised that

the transition from the Arabic to the Latin script was the first step towards modernisation

and growth in the country. At the time, the shift of Soviet Azerbaijan to the Latin script

served as a model for Turkey's alphabet reform. Kilich (2019) describes that the decision to

adopt the Latin alphabet for all Turks was made at the 1st Turkology Congress in Baku,

which was held between 26 February and 6 March in 1926. Overall, 131 representatives

participated from all Union republics, and from European countries and Turkey. The main issues discussed during the Congress were the alphabet, orthography, terminology, language teaching and its methodology, relations among languages, problems of literary language, and theories of language and history of the Turkic languages. A New Turkish Alphabet was adopted, and all the Union republics were to be responsible for the teaching and spreading of the Roman-based New Turkish Alphabet in their own countries. The new alphabet was called the Unified Turkish Alphabet and it consisted of 33 letters (Ergun, 2010b). As the centre of the agenda was creating a common alphabet for all Turkic nations, the Latin alphabet was considered the best option to contribute to cultural development and enhance the level of literacy in all Turkic states. Generally, the Latin alphabet symbolised change, advancement, civilisation, and scientific development in lands that had experienced a long history of using the Arabic script. The adoption of the Latin alphabet by Azerbaijan and other Central Asian Turkish communities encouraged Turkish intellectuals to think about the alphabet change for their country too (Kilich, 2019).

However, there were opposing views regarding the idea of a Common Turkic Alphabet among all Turkic states. During the Congress, there were some representatives, such as Kazakh representative Ahmet Baytursun and Tatar representative Alimcan Serif, who argued for the preservation of the Arabic alphabet. Alimcan Serif contended that the Arabic alphabet facilitated cooperation among people through cultural unity due to its prevalent use among all Turkic-speaking peoples. In his view, unity should not be disrupted by making possible to use two different alphabets among groups who also had geographical contiguity and economic relations. He also underlined the fact that Latinisation could interrupt communication between generations (Ergun, 2010b).

Hunt and Tokluoglu (2002) state that after the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the Turkish state-builders engaged in a radical cultural and ideological project. The introduction of the Latin alphabet was another crucial part of this project, which was directly related to an identification with modernization initiatives and engagement with the pervasive illiteracy that was thought to be caused by the usage of the Arabic script (Hunt and Tokluoglu, 2002, p. 623).

In addition to Latinisation, the Baku Conference resulted in some other significant linguistic changes in the region. Lummus (2021) describes that one of its primary objectives was to enhance Turkic values, and that language was the first to be addressed. A decision was made to remove foreign words from those countries' lexicons and, preferably, replace these words with Turkic counterparts. All the aforementioned regulations were intended to serve the purpose of establishing 'pure' Turkic languages in order to re-establish new national identities free of their past colonial history (Lummus, 2021).

Peuch (2001a) refers to a prominent public Azerbaijani figure, Mamed Amin Rasulzade. Rasulzade highlighted the adoption of the Latin script by Azerbaijan for Turkish alphabet reform:

Azerbaijan was the first [Muslim] country to invent and switch to Latin

Turkish. Ataturk was not the first. Ataturk just followed in Azerbaijan's steps.

[In 1918] Azerbaijan was the first republic of the Muslim world. It was also

the first Muslim country to look toward Europe. So, one could say that

Azerbaijan is trying to go back to its original tradition (cited in Peuch, 2001a).

However, during the Soviet period, the Turkic speaking republics were disconnected from Turkey because the alphabet was changed again from Latin to Cyrillic in the 1940s. After the

dissolution of the Soviet Union, Turkey's interest in Central Asian states and Azerbaijan increased significantly. Due to its geographical position, Azerbaijan was especially significant.

As the Caucasus and Central Asia have played a significant role in Turkey's foreign policy since the end of the Soviet era, Azerbaijan and Turkey developed close ties in many areas of life, particularly in the sphere of energy, making Azerbaijan the most significant country in the region for Turkey (Mikail et al, 2019). All ongoing political issues in the 1990s, including the Nagorno-Karabakh War, raised Turkey's interest in the South Caucasus. That is why, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkish-Azerbaijani close relations and collaboration in nearly every field developed and had long-term development dynamics. It should be noted that growing Turkish influence in the region opened a way to a Turkish version of Islam in the post-Soviet Turkic states. Several regional actors, including Iran and Turkey, used language and religion to strengthen their role.

Turkey as a neighbouring country prioritises its connections with Azerbaijan and this was the main reason why Azerbaijan's independence after 1991 was firstly recognised by Turkey. Besides, after regaining independence, Turkey was the first country to provide military aid during the 1990s, and assistance for Azerbaijani refugees (see Cornell, 1998). After Elchibey seized power and adopted a Turkish-informed state development model, the foreign policy of Azerbaijan was predominantly oriented towards the West. Mahmudlu (2017) states that Elchibey's political approach was ethno-nationalist, and he embraced the Turkic origin of Azerbaijanis. For this reason, Elchibey renamed the national language from Azerbaijani to Turkic (p. 138).

Azerbaijan was the first post-Soviet Turkic state to adopt the Latin script due to its close ties with Turkey. The similarity between the Azerbaijani and Turkish languages made

people-to-people connections in these countries especially easy. Whether Turkish and Azerbaijani can be considered two dialects of the same language was also discussed. Elchibey aimed to shape Azerbaijan's national identity in accordance with pan-Turkic ideas. The Popular Front of Azerbaijan also attempted to re-establish the state based on Turkish state standards rather than Azerbaijani (see Ozturk, 2013). The Popular Front of Azerbaijan (PFA) government's cultural policy was broadcasting Turkish TV programs, changing the alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin, and introducing Turkish vocabulary into the Azerbaijani language.

Pavlenko (2009) notes that the government policy of Azerbaijan after regaining independence aimed to separate the country from its Soviet past and to transition it to a new economy. In the area of language, the focus was on de-Russification and a shift toward English as a new lingua franca (Pavlenko, 2009). Additionally, the language policy and, by extension, the nation-building process, were based on two ideologies in the early post-Soviet period: Azerbaijanism and Turkism.

Until Heydar Aliyev's presidency, when Azerbaijanism was highlighted as the main part of nation-building processes, and Turkism downgraded, the PFA articulated the nationalist discourse in terms of Turkism (Ergun, 2021). Thus, after independence, national identity was formed in the coexistence and tension between Azerbaijanism and Turkism, and as a result the alphabet was changed from Cyrillic to Latin, based on the Turkish model. The government thereafter encouraged the use of the Latin alphabet among all ethnic groups as well as the spread of Azerbaijani language.

In the early years of independence, the idea that Cyrillic was adopted by the Soviet Union to Russify Turkic-speakers linguistically and to disconnect them with their Turkic origin was discussed extensively (Faller, 2011, p. 46). Obviously, the transit from Cyrillic to

Latin was to accomplish political as well as linguistical objectives. However, Peuch (2001a) states that supporters also argued that Latin letters are more suited to Azerbaijani phonetics. Karaman (2010) notes that some supporters of the Latin alphabet suggested to adopt the Turkish version in its entirety, while others demanded to make some changes on alphabet. The letters ə, q, and x were especially focused on (see Karaman, 2010, p. 141).

Garibova (2018) states that after independence the Turkish language was considered as the most natural source for both nationalisation and internationalisation, which was related to the linguistic and cultural proximity between the two countries. As a result, the Turkish language was used for some technical purposes, including the development of terminology and vocabulary-building (see Garibova, 2018). The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the de-Russification policy in post-Soviet Azerbaijan triggered the replacement of Russian words, while the Turkish vocabulary was considered the most appropriate. Ergun (2010b) recounts:

> In July 1989, one of the very prominent figures of the Azerbaijani Academy
> of Sciences, a well-known historian, Ziya Bunyatov, called for a return to the
> Latin alphabet, and in May 1990 the Republic's Supreme Soviet established a
> commission to work on Latinization (pp. 43-44).

According to Hacaloğlu (1991) the supporters of Cyrillic alphabet were considered to be Russian oriented and anti-Turk, as they did not want to improve ties with Turkey.

In the 1990s, several conferences regarding the Turkic alphabet were held in Turkey. Bahadori (1993) describes how in October 1990 a conference called The Common Alphabet of Turkic Nations was held in Ankara. It was changed with considering the future language policy of Turkic states. As the name suggests, the goal of the Conference was to create a

Common Turkic alphabet to unite the Turkic states. Following this meeting, Azerbaijan took measures towards Latinisation, and a special commission was formed to oversee the project. Eventually, after the breakup of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan switched from Cyrillic to Latin in 1991 (see Bahadori, 1993). The main point was to make it look like Turkish. More prosaically, adopting the Latin alphabet also enabled using foreign typewriters.

Kara (2009) states that 'the delegates who attended the symposium organized by Marmara University Turkic Studies Institute in 1991 signed up to accept thirty-four letters common Latin alphabet' (p. 1302), which was considered the most compatible alphabet for all Turkic languages. Due to the linguistic features of the Turkish language, it was necessary to adapt this alphabet to Turkish phonemes, so five more characters were added to the Latin-based alphabet (Kara, 2009). The Latin alphabet was presumably proposed to Turks to distance them from the Soviet historical and cultural past.

As Azerbaijan's relationship with Turkey became stronger after the Popular Front took power in 1992, Robins (1993) states that the alphabet reform became an important part of the Turkic republic's long-term orientation towards Turkey. Turkey made extensive use of the media to familiarise Azerbaijanis with the Latin script. The Avrasia Channel began broadcasting 1992. TRT-1, the main Turkish state broadcasting channel was also available (see Robins, 1993).

Following this controversial debate, the *Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Renewal of the Azerbaijani Alphabet with Latin Graphic* was signed in 1991 by President Ayaz Mutalibov. It proclaimed the restoration of the Azerbaijani alphabet inclusive of 32 letters, which had been used in Azerbaijan until 1940 (Ergun, 2010b, p. 44). After this move, however, the shift to the Latin script had to be implemented. The following section

addresses the multiple challenges that enforcing this policy encountered in post-

independence Azerbaijan.

5.3 Challenges Regarding the Language Policy of Azerbaijan after Independence

The fall of the Soviet Union created the ground for new approaches to be taken in several

aspects of life in the post-Soviet states. A strong inclination towards Turkey has emerged in

Turkic-speaking post-Soviet republics. Admittedly, one of the most significant aspects of

public policy in post-Soviet states was closely connected to the promotion of native

languages to solve language problems and reconstruct national identities. Nonetheless,

efforts to establish new language legislation and raise the status of the indigenous

languages have met with certain setbacks.

As language is the main factor to identify national belonging and Russian had been

the dominant language in all walks of life for a long time, after regaining independence the

Azerbaijani language struggled to compete with Russian. According to Pashayeva (2010),

due to the cultural and linguistic condition during the Soviet period, individuals who could

not speak Russian had faced extra challenges to obtain a good position in state and party

institutions (p. 136).

Another challenge after independence was related to the status of the Azerbaijani

and Russian languages. Despite the popularity of Russian in the region, the new government

of Azerbaijan recognized the Azerbaijani language as the sole official state language in the

first post-Soviet Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Pashayeva, 2018, p. 138).

Nevertheless, questions regarding governmental support for Russian-language education, or

the importance of retaining Russian as a medium of instruction in Azerbaijan, are still

encountered in the media (Garibova, 2019b, p. 57).

For Garibova (2019c), language policies are influenced by processes of state formation and identity creation, as well as de-Sovietization and de-Russification, globalisation, and ethnic and regional relations (p. 228). During the Soviet period, the South Caucasian republics were given the right to preserve their native languages as official languages. As a result, in comparison with other post-Soviet languages, the Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Georgian languages were less vulnerable during the Soviet period than other languages in the Soviet Union. After regaining independence, the new language regulations were not expected to be strict. However, at this time various policies were enacted to elevate the status of the indigenous languages in those states. Although this policy was intended to promote the national language, the prominence of other foreign languages, particularly Russian, was not to be diminished.

On the other hand, for practical purposes, many were hesitant to consider the script change after independence. Although children have been taught Azerbaijani in the Latin script since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijanis over the age of 30 have been trained in Cyrillic and can only read their native language when it appears in Russian letters. Critics of the move claim that Russian speakers will be oppressed, leaving them and the older generation isolated. Many newspaper editors said that the switch-over was taking place too quickly and would result in a sharp drop in circulation. Gabil Abbasoglu, the deputy editor of *Yeni Musavat*, noted: 'We anticipate substantial losses. We already reduced our printing run at the beginning of this year by 4,500 in expectation of the change' (Azerbaijan - Aug. 1 - Alphabet Change, 2001). Furthermore, some people even thought that the alphabet replacement was done to limit political discussions by making reading newspapers difficult. Sultanova (2001) described the general view regarding the script change in Azerbaijan in the British *Daily Sun*:

On Wednesday, the whole of Azerbaijan is switching to the alphabet you're looking

at—its third change of script in the past century. Russian speakers fear that they are

facing discrimination. They say the switch will make it harder for them to understand

written Azerbaijani, and the requirement that the language be used in official

documents will make it hard for them to get jobs.

Opposing views regarding the orientation to be adopted to reshape the national identity

caused another disagreement in the society. Azerbaijan's ethnic and religious background

was mainly seen as a defining characteristic for the adoption of a new language policy and

the reconstruction of Azerbaijani identity. Therefore, some people were inclined to change

the alphabet back to Arabic in order to emphasise the Islamic component of national

identity and preserve Islamic heritage because of the large number of Muslims in the

country. They supported to replace Russian borrowings with Arabic neologisms.

On the other hand, opposing viewpoints favoured the Latin alphabet and made an

effort to elevate Turkism above Islam as a uniting element in Azerbaijan's goal to become a

secular nation with a Western orientation. Thus, the new alphabet would not be simply

about lettering, but also about the way language and cultural values are perceived.

According to Ergun and Chitak (2020), after independence, the greatest concern about the

nation-building process was that Islam would become the main defining factor of national

identity.

The following period witnessed varying levels of progress in the national language.

Ergun (2021) points out that nationalism—especially Turkism—was utilised to construct a

state and formulate a state ideology under the Popular Front of Azerbaijan. The national

language was thus greatly impacted by the Turkish language, and more Turkish borrowings were adopted during this time and some considered that Azerbaijani was a dialect of the Turkish language. However, with Aliyev's election to power in 1993, the focus shifted to Azerbaijani nationalism and stability to preserve statehood (Ergun, 2021). Thus, during Heydar Aliyev's presidency the concept of Azerbaijani identity was protected by the Constitution, which referred to the Azerbaijan people as 'Azerbaijanis' and their language as 'Azerbaijani'. The development of the Azerbaijani language was promoted in all walks of life.

All former Soviet Union republics faced difficulties after achieving independence. According to Altstadt (1992), to address these issues and to improve the country in all areas, Azerbaijan needed to establish strong international ties. In this situation, Azerbaijan's ties with former Turkic states and Western countries seemed more logical (Altstadt,1992). Changing the alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin was a significant step towards the Western world.

5.4 Script Change as an Issue of National Identity in Independent Azerbaijan

The purpose of this section is to investigate nation-building processes in Azerbaijan following the alphabet switch. Norton (1997) argues that identity can be framed in many ways: 'social identity, sociocultural identity, voice, cultural identity, and ethnic identity' (Norton, 1997, p. 409). Each of these terms has been examined in a variety of ways to show the connection between language and identity. The importance of language in the construction of national identity caused long-term discussions in sociolinguistics. While some have claimed that the national language is the primary element for the formation of a nationalist ideology, others argue that national languages are constructed as part of the ideological work of nation-building (see Joseph, 2004).

Language is crucial not only in the formation of ideology but also in the framing of the ideological consciousness of every nation. Billig (1995) refers to Mikhail Bakhtin statement in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, where he argued that 'objective psychology must be grounded in the study of ideology, and that forms of consciousness were constituted through language' (p. 17). Sufi (2020) emphasises French historian Ernest Renan's theory that the past is critical for understanding nationalism in the modern sense. Although, nations define themselves on ethnic, religious, or ideological grounds, one common point is necessary for each case that they all have a shared past (p. 28).

As my focus is predominantly on Azerbaijan after the colonial years of the Soviet Union, the language policy and, relatedly, the problem of national identity are framed in the context of multiple influences. Azerbaijan's invasions by the Russian Empire during the nineteenth century and its existence as a Union Republic within the Soviet Union in the twentieth century, as well as the influence of the Persian Empire in previous eras, have impacted the national identity of today's independent Azerbaijan.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union the rise of Islamic aspects in the country changed some aspects of the nation-building process. Turkey became an important referent in Azerbaijan in terms of the formation of national identity. Bashirov (2018) states that despite the increasing status of Islam in independent Azerbaijan, 'Muslim identity tends to be based on culture and ethnicity rather than religion' (p. 32). In the initial years of independence, there were concerns that Islam would be a threat to secularism and to a Western-oriented Azerbaijan (Bashirov, 2018). The dissolution of the Soviet Union, which was followed by new language regulations and, of course, the introduction of the Latin alphabet based on the Turkish version, was a fundamental process that ultimately changed the scene of Azerbaijan's nation-building process. People began to question their national

identity and wanted independence from their colonial past. During the decision-making process of choosing the primary lettering system between the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets, their potential impacts on Azerbaijanis' national identity were also considered. The Cyrillic alphabet symbolised Soviet cultural ideals and heritage, whereas the Latin script represented Western and Turkic civilisation.

In Azerbaijan, certain sub-processes of de-Sovietisation stood out, particularly in terms of language and national identity. According to Garibova (2019a), they are as follows: a) restoration of nationhood, b) establishing roots, c) global integration, and d) modernisation. Most notably, the revival of nationhood took the form of rewriting national history; revisiting the connection with religion; a stronger emphasis on traditional art, music, and language, including the shift to the Latin alphabet and vocabulary; and intervention through the replacement of foreign words with those with Turkic roots (Garibova, 2019a). Then again, despite all these changes in the country after regaining independence, the Soviet era had also been crucial in establishing the current Azerbaijani national identity, and the Azerbaijani elites, who are the key players in nation-formation, had firmly internalised Soviet conceptions of nationalism and ethnicity (Tokluoglu, 2005 p. 749).

The question of national identity is the most prominent concern and can be considered the most critical because of crisis in most post-colonial states, as we saw in Chapter 3 (see also Dizayi, 2015). Surprisingly, in Muslim states after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, religion was not considered an important a unifying factor, and the reason was a remarkably high level of literacy and the legacies of the Soviet Union's atheist policies. A concentrated effort was made in most former Soviet states on alphabet reform which aimed at de-Sovietisation of nationalities. Landau (2010) states that in Muslim states it was

'remarkable that the financial argument was little used in the public debate on alphabet change, which was mainly political, with cultural arguments as well often being voiced' (p. 26). The Latinisation of the alphabet was quite successful in Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, which is directly related to the relatively small size of the Russophone minorities in these countries (Landau, 2010).

The Latin alphabet first was adopted by the Soviet authorities in Azerbaijan in 1924, with significant public support and long-term planning. Newspapers and journals in the capital of Azerbaijan therefore printed at least one-quarter of their pages in the Latin script. Books with only the Latin alphabet were uncommon until the 1930s. The move to Cyrillic, by contrast, was implemented with only a few months' preparation. The hesitancy of the 1920s was repeated in the 1990s. The Latin script was formally adopted during the presidency of Abulfaz Elchibey (1991-92), but implementation was postponed for some time. Most of the population could not read the Latin script. In comparison with the 1920s, a high proportion of the population was literate; an abrupt transition would have made millions functionally illiterate.

The debates around the status of national languages in the territory of the Soviet Union had been an object of protests in the 1980s. As a result, new language laws were adopted by the Union republics. Estonia initiated this process and very soon other former Soviet republics implemented similar language regulations. Azerbaijan, like other Caucasian states, did not need to be concerned about the status of the national language as the Azerbaijani language was already the official language during the Soviet period. However, Azerbaijani intellectuals claimed that to preserve the unique Azerbaijani identity, the national language should be actively promoted. Zabrodskaja and Ehala (2015) note that following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the national symbols of Azerbaijan, and

primarily national language, were promoted to strengthen Azerbaijani national identity, whereas ethnic minorities, primarily Russian speakers, created non-ethnic Russian linguistic identities that were closely linked with Soviet cultural values. 'These identities', they note, 'while largely linguistic and cultural, are not tied to ethnicity or even to nationality, but represent a hybrid supra-national identity' (Zabrodskaja and Ehala, 2015, p. 166).

During the late 1980s, intellectuals started to challenge the extent to which the Cyrillic script or the Russian language could reflect the Azerbaijani language and national identity. The Cyrillic alphabet, which until recently had been considered a sign of Russification, was now associated with Soviet oppression and as a weapon to undermine the national identity that made Azerbaijan's access to the world outside the Soviet Union more difficult. A variety of articles appeared sharing opposing views on the topic. Ergun (2010b) states that the Latin alphabet's supporters claimed that it would be a key to society's modernisation and advancements in all fields, especially technology. Those who advocated for the preservation of the Cyrillic alphabet claimed that switching from Cyrillic to Latin would cause people to lose their literacy and create a large gap between old and new generations. They pointed to neighbouring states Armenia and Georgia, which have their own alphabets, but are still able to integrate with the outside world (see Ergun, 2010b).

Even before the fall of the Soviet Union, debates about the alphabet started in Azerbaijan, with public figures arguing that the current Cyrillic script was incompatible with Azerbaijani national and cultural values, while historians argue that it primarily serves to distance Azerbaijan from its Turkic origins. Those in favour of Latinisation cited the first attempt at alphabet reform during the ADR and the first alphabet reform enacted in 1923, when people voluntarily accepted and assimilated to the new alphabet. They contended that the Latin script was better suited to Azerbaijan in all respects. Akyildiz (2019) notes that

Azerbaijani intellectuals and policy makers believed that to preserve independence, the Soviet history had to be denied. In parallel, the social, political, and economic growth of Azerbaijan was to be accompanied by Western values, while 'the Latin script means commonality with the Turkic world' (Akyildiz, 2019, p. 38).

As a result of nation formation in Azerbaijan in the 1980s, not only on a social but also on a political level, the Russian language gradually began to lose its influence. Hasimova (2019) states that at the beginning of the nation-building process, religious identification was an integral part of collective identity, while after independence, not religion but the script became a unifying factor in the country. Thus, modern Azerbaijan can be considered as an example of civic nationalism (Hasimova, 2019).

Towards the end of the Soviet period, the Turkic connection was strengthening considerably, and conferences were held regarding language and national identity. Murinson (2010) states that one of these important conferences took place in Ankara in 1990, on the 'Common Alphabet of the Turkic Nations'. At the conference, the idea of a lingua franca for all Turkic-speaking peoples was raised. In order to institutionalise this view, the conference organisers formed the Turkish Language History Organization (see Murinson, 2010). The Turkish alphabet reform was shown as a model for all Turkic-speaking republics. Several topics were addressed at these conferences, including the writing systems in Turkic states, the political and economic consequences of changing the script, and the details of the proposed common alphabet for Turkic nations. As a result of these conferences, Turkification became an integral part of government policy in the early 1990s.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and a decision to the break away from the old Soviet identity, the creation of a new unique Azerbaijani identity became an urgent challenge, as in most of the former Soviet republics. The identity of independent Azerbaijan,

which is still changing, is fundamentally different from that of Soviet Azerbaijan. Its Turkish

identity, which has been buried for many years, is gaining definition. Language is a powerful

element of self-identification, and according to Diuk's study (2012), when compared to

other post-Soviet states like Ukraine, the sense of belonging has changed considerably over

the last few decades. Azerbaijanis have moved closer to being a mono-national population

through reidentification (Diuk, 2012).

The conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh territories,

Russia's assistance for Armenia, and the loss of some territories increased hostility for the

former colonial power and facilitated the de-Russification process. The newly formed

government in independent Azerbaijan, the Popular Front of Azerbaijan, aimed to minimise

Russian influence and build a new identity based on Turkism. Under the presidency of

Elchibey (1992–93), the Popular Front Government of Azerbaijan sought to replace the

name of the national identity from Azerbaijani to Turkish as a major priority for the

recognition of Turkish origins. Abulfez Elchibey, one of the nationalist leaders, implemented

an ethno-nationalistic policy which aimed to construct national identity on a primordial

basis. Given Russia's position in the region and the Russian language's role as the lingua

franca among former Soviet states, this policy could not succeed.

However, during Heydar Aliyev's presidency, the position of Russia was more

effectively evaluated. Aliyev adopted a new nation-building formula based on Azerbaijanism

and the policy of multiculturalism. In Aliyev's conception of nation, territory was the central

focus, and this strengthened his policy by increasing the utility of the state language. The

nation's name was formally changed to 'Azerbaijanis', and the language's name was

officially changed from 'Turk' to 'Azerbaijan'. The use of Azerbaijani does not deny the

Turkish origins of the majority's ethnic identity, yet it does not particularly highlight it either.

The continuum was secured under the presidency of Ilham Aliyev with a new touch: that is, the promotion of multiculturalism with reference to peaceful cohabitation of all ethnic and religious groups acknowledging diversity in heterogeneous Azerbaijan.

Garibova (2019b) describes that 'one of the highlights of the post-constitutional period, and in particular of the post-2000 years, is the focus on multiculturalism, which has positively impacted the minority languages, including Russian' (p. 56). Kadirova (2018) describes that in 1992 an Alphabet Congress was organized in Turkey with the participation of the five other independent Turkic nations: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and as the result of this meeting, all these Turkic states agreed to transfer the script to a standard 34-character Latin alphabet based on Turkey's script. But only few of them could take steps regarding the script change in the region (Kadirova 2018). However, the unification of the alphabets is also projected by some to be a threat to the distinguishing features separating different Turkic peoples (see Devlet, 1992, p. 33). The collective decision to replace one common Soviet identity with a shared Turkic one remains (see Altug 2014, p. 21).

The Turkish language was considered the best source for language policy in newly independent Azerbaijan because of linguistical as well as cultural commonalities between the two countries. De-Russification was an essential part of the national-building process, and the language policy was crucial. The Turkish influence was particularly obvious in the early years of independence as the Azerbaijani government took some measures to promote Turkism. Garibova (2018) concludes that the 1990s regulations regarding the shift from Cyrillic to Latin confirmed a Turkish orientation. In 1995, the new Constitution of Azerbaijan officially adopted the name of the state, while proposals to bring the Azerbaijani

language and Azerbaijani Turkish closer had been on the agenda for a long time (Garibova, 2018).

In the 1990s the whole nation was involved in debates around the script change and the main concern was to decide whether Cyrillic, Latin, or Arabic as the language of the Kuran could bring more advantages to newly independent Azerbaijan. Lester (1997) notes that some religious groups encouraged the adoption of Arabic as this would let Azerbaijan go back to its religious roots and ease the de-Russification process in the country. Supporters of the Latin alphabet emphasised the importance of the Latin alphabet to get access to Turkey and Western civilisation. Turkey was the main external supporter of Azerbaijan, promising financial assistance for the publication of new textbooks and training, as well as increasing Azerbaijan's ties with Turkey and Western states (Lester, 1997). On the other hand, the Russian-speaking populations argued that rejection of the Cyrillic alphabet would lead to illiteracy in the country. Debates around the script change caused controversy as some argued the shift to the Latin alphabet would increase dominance of other nations in the country, especially Turkey. Some even predicted that Azerbaijani would be absorbed into Turkish and eventually vanish (Bayatly, 1997).

Although Azerbaijan and Turkey had special places in each other's histories because of their nineteenth century national identity formation and shared language, reformers in Baku and Istanbul pursued a modernization agenda captured by the slogan 'Turkify, Islamize, and Modernize' (see Altstadt, 2017), after regaining independence there was a significant number of Azerbaijanis who refused to take Turkey as a model. The idea that the adoption of the Latin alphabet similar to the Turkish version would strengthen the integration of Azerbaijan and Turkey and ease access to Turkish literature and media was

considered a threat to the continued development of the local Azerbaijani language. It was also feared that this would lead to Azerbaijan's dependency on Turkey.

The government of Azerbaijan has taken some steps to support the implementation of the Latin script in all aspects of life and as a result it was ordered on 1 August 2001 that only the Latin script can be used for advertisements, road signs and printed literature (Peuch, 2001b). Although the Latin alphabet started to be widely used in all aspects of life, particularly in education, the majority of accessible sources were in Cyrillic, which required significant financial investment to republish in the new alphabet. According to Marquardt (2010), the government of independent Azerbaijan was attempting to minimise any linguistic problems in society, which is why, while the Azerbaijani language was declared as the only official language, people were also allowed to use other languages in all types of communication.

5.5 The Language Policy of Independent Azerbaijan in the Education System

Following independence, linguistic issues such as the titular language, the role of the Russian language in various aspects of life, and minority languages became a major part of Azerbaijan's domestic policy. Due to the Soviet Union's Russification agenda, which attempted to expand the role of Russian in all aspects of life, Azerbaijani could not compete with Russian, particularly in the education sector, because Russian was seen as prestigious. However, after independence, the main goal was to strengthen independence and national identity through a variety of linguistic programmes. The Azerbaijani language was announced as the official language in the country, and other languages were allowed in all walks of life, including education.

The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan is the main decision-making authority in charge of education policy. The Ministry of Education has primary responsibility for the implementation of education policies. Mammadova (2020) notes that for the past two decades, the number of English schools considerably increased in the country, which is an obvious indicator of growing popularity of English as the foreign language. However, the Russian language remains the most prestigious language with 400 state-funded public schools in Baku (Mammadova 2020, p. 25). Besides, 'the branch of Moscow State University named after M. V. Lomonosov started functioning in the Russian language as of 2009 in Azerbaijan' (Mammadova, 2020, p. 26). According to Pearce and Rice (2014), English is more accessible as a school subject in urban areas rather than rural settings (p. 2837).

During the Soviet period, the Caucasus was unique in terms of the status of national languages. They were kept as official languages, and they were used beside Russian in all walks of life (Pavlenko, 2008). Prior to the Soviet era, the education system was largely based on religious training, but substantial reforms were conducted in this area during the Soviet era. As a result, literacy and educational access grew dramatically.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a tendency to seek access to the Western world in all spheres of life and the education system was one of the most important sectors in this context. The new regulations were put in place to Westernise the education system and raise literacy levels. Samadova (2016) states that following independence, new regulations were implemented, such as the transition from Cyrillic to Latin alphabet, the preparation of new textbooks, learning and reading materials, and the retraining of teachers (p. 62). Isgandarov (2000) notes that during the Soviet period, a two-track education system—Azerbaijani and Russian—became widespread in the country.

According to the 1978 Constitution, the Azerbaijani language was officially declared as a state language, but this was only on paper (Isgandarov, 2000).

Member of the Milli Mejlis (the National Assembly of Azerbaijan), writer and member of the Writers' Union of Azerbaijan Elmira Akhundova, states that reducing the Russian sector in Azerbaijan is a vital problem as it has split the nation into two. However, she also advocates for teaching of the Russian language in Azerbaijan schools as a foreign language (Akhundova, 2007). Abdinov (1996) notes that following the breakup of the Soviet Union, Marxism was gradually phased out as the primary conceptual foundation for the humanities and social sciences (p. 17). Because the governmental policy was to reinforce the process of de-Russification, the dominant ideology in the education system was re-evaluated (Abdinov, 1996). During the Soviet Union's nearly 70-year existence, all instructors and academics were educated with Soviet ideology. This was one of the most problematic aspects of Azerbaijan's educational system. All academic staff needed to be retrained.

The transition from Cyrillic to the Latin script was most difficult when it came to textbooks. According to research conducted by the Asian Development Bank (2004), the transition from Cyrillic to the Latin script entailed budget for teacher training and production of new textbooks (p. 12). These new regulations that were implemented between 1992 and 2001 were aimed to enforce the use of the new alphabet (Asian Development Bank, 2004).

The Education Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan was adopted in June 2009. The Education Law is comprised of 47 articles. The law allows activities in other languages but makes the delivery of the Azerbaijani language classes in non-Azerbaijani institutions compulsory. Article 7 of the Education Law states that the Azerbaijani language instruction

is compulsory in educational institutions, but 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 (see Mammadova, 2020).

As of September 2020, there are 15 full-cycle schools in the Republic of Azerbaijan with teaching entirely in Russian. There are also Russian sectors along with Azerbaijani in 314 schools. Until 1998, the Russian language was compulsory in all schools in Azerbaijan. In 1998, it entered the foreign language category, remaining mandatory, and since 2002, it has become optional (Moskvitcheva and Abdullaev, 2021).

One of the most important education policies of Azerbaijan was to get access to the Western world, and studying abroad programmes were aimed to foster this policy. According to Ergun and Kondakci (2021), the popularity of studying in Turkey is gradually increasing in Azerbaijan, a practice that was initiated by a group of students who were sent to Turkey in 1991. Historian Altay Geyushev, a former professor at Baku State University, states that in the early 1990s, the influence of Turkish culture 'helped many to move away from Soviet patterns, to start thinking in a different way. And the young people who left to study in Turkish universities returned not only with a good education, but also with progressive thinking' (Musavi, 2018).

Hogan-Brun and Melnyk (2012) state that although education policies were considerably different in post-Soviet states, the main aim was predominately '(1) teach the official state language as a compulsory subject; (2) maintain other (minority) languages and cultures' (p. 602). On the other hand, there has been a noticeable increase in the propensity of Azerbaijani parents to enrol their children in Russian-language schools. This is primarily linked to better opportunities in Russian educational standards. The rising role of Russian in

education causes public debates in Azerbaijan. Rahimov (2018) states that Russian is popular among the population in predominantly central locations due to higher living standards and more educational and career prospects, and as a result, Russian is in high demand as a language of education there. According to the State Examination Centre's statistics, schools in Baku and other urban areas do far better than schools in rural areas (Rahimov, 2018). The fact that education in Azerbaijan is funded by the government in both Azerbaijani and Russian is a key factor as to why parents prefer their children to attend classes with Russian instruction. Therefore, learning a foreign language in Russian schools is free, whereas studying in English or Turkish is expensive and not accessible to everyone.

Debates regarding the need to close the Russian sector in educational institutes continue, and some argue that it is necessary to de-fund the Russian sector and make it eligible as the language of instruction only in private education like other foreign languages such as English, French. On the other hand, no steps from the state have been officially taken to limit the role of Russian in education. Obviously, compared to the Soviet era, the number of people studying in Russian has considerably reduced, which is related to smaller number of ethnic Russian in Azerbaijan, the shortage of qualified teachers and new language regulations.

According to Mammadova (2013), between 2000 and 2010 the number of students attending public and private Russian schools in Azerbaijan declined: 'In 2000-2001, there were 108,240 students, and in 2005-2006, there were 108,737 students; but, beginning in 2006-2007, the number drops to 108,257 students, and in 2009-2010, the figure is 95,567 students' (J. I. Mammadova, 2013, p. 71). Shiriyev (2019) states:

The other reason why the Russian language lost its privileged place was that only a small number of ethnic Russians had lived in Azerbaijan in Soviet

times; few of them remained in the country after the collapse of the Soviet

Union. Their number fell from 392,300 in 1989 to 119,300 in 2009 (p. 24).

Russian is becoming less common in the country, even if many non-Russian people

use it as their first language. Aliyeva (2018) describes that 38 percent of Azerbaijanis

claimed to speak Russian proficiently in 1994; however, in more recent surveys, that

percentage dropped to less than 10 percent. According to Russian official data, the

number of students enrolled in Russian-language schools fell from 250,000 during

the 1990–91 school year to less than 100,000 two decades later (Aliyeva, 2018).

One further issue facing the Russian education institutions is the lack of qualified

teachers capable of teaching science, math, and literature in Russian. Following

independence, the popularity of studying in Russia has been replaced by Western countries

and Turkey. As a result, it affects Russian instructors' training as well. As a temporary

solution, some Azerbaijani sector teachers were assigned to teach some subjects in the

Russian sector, which lead to another challenge due to the poor level of the Russian they

speak. This has an immediate impact on parents' decision to send their children to schools in

Azerbaijani schools. After independence important steps were taken towards

multiculturalism in Azerbaijan. Multiculturalism in Azerbaijan expanded after the

establishment of the service of the Department of Humanitarian Policy, Diaspora,

Multiculturalism and Religious Issues. Following this, the Baku International Multicultural

Centre was established with the goals of advancing the so-called Azerbaijani model of

multiculturalism and guaranteeing the preservation of linguistic, cultural, and religious

variety. This led to 2016 being declared the 'Year of Multiculturalism' in Azerbaijan (Asadov,

2023).

Gerber (2007) observes how following independence, Azerbaijan adopted new legislation governing minorities' educational rights. As a result, minorities are permitted to study their mother tongue in school. Georgian students in western Azerbaijan attend Georgian medium schools where the entire curriculum is taught in Georgian (p. 40). Lezgins, Udis, Armenians and Talyshs (other ethnic minorities of Azerbaijan) students have two lessons in their native tongue (Gerber, 2007, p. 31). Various factors, however, lead to reduced interest in these languages. Despite all these regulations implemented for the preservation of the ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan, there is an evident reduction in the usage of ethnic minorities' languages. A shortage of qualified teachers and textbooks in minority languages prevent the development of education in minority languages.

Isayev (2002) shows that schools in minority areas are conducted in the state language, Azerbaijani, with only an hour per week of classes in the minority language. In most minority communities, minority language instruction ends after the fourth grade, though in Lezgin schools it continues through the 10th grade. A lack of teachers, the result of a lack of university programs aimed at producing minority-language teachers, is also an obstacle for minority groups (Isayev, 2002). Nowadays, no big changes have been observed in terms of teacher training; minority languages other than Russian and Georgian cannot currently be studied at the university level.

Some, however, place more responsibility on the authorities. For example, a long declaration outlining the state of the Talysh language was released in 2020 by the Public Council of Azerbaijani Talysh, a group dedicated to defending the rights of the Talysh minority. It criticized the authorities because the most recent textbooks in Talysh were published only in 2006, and that there have been no replacements since then (Isayev, 2022).

In recent years, because of increasing globalization and nationalization in Azerbaijan, the ethnic minorities' languages have seen a decrease. This trend was also political, and in 2002 the parliament passed a new Law on the State Language, which mandates that all policies and practices in government and non-governmental organisations be either translated into Azerbaijani or offered in that language (Gerber, 2007).

Isayev (2002) interviews a 71-year-old member of Azerbaijan's Gryz ethnic minority, who grew up speaking Gryz, a Caucasian language unrelated to the Turkic Azerbaijani. But as he looks at the younger generations of his people, he sees fewer fluent speakers. He is not optimistic that the language can survive: 'To preserve a language, it, first and foremost, must be spoken', he told Eurasianet in an interview at his home in the northeastern Azerbaijani city of Khachmaz. 'When the next generation comes up, the Gryz language will find its place among the dead languages, as it's not spoken often' (cited in Isayev, 2002). The current reality is that a large part of the minority population has accepted the linguistic dominance of Azerbaijani in the public sphere. The knowledge of the state language is seen as important and valuable for participating in society. When asked about the reasons of sending their children to Azerbaijani-medium schools, parents usually stated that Azerbaijani is the state language and therefore has priority. Another reason often mentioned was the necessity to know Azerbaijani to find a job in Azerbaijan.

Recent political changes in the region significantly affected economic, political, cultural, and linguistic aspects of life in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. Admittedly, the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War was a game-changer event in the South Caucasian region. Considering the importance of this war on the language policy of Azerbaijan, the next section assesses the consequences of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War on language policy and national ideology.

5.6 Language Policy in Azerbaijan after the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a territorial crisis between Azerbaijan and Armenia that accompanied the collapse of the Soviet Union. This territorial conflict between two Caucasian states dates to the years following their original independence in 1917 as the result of the downfall of the Russian Empire. Abilov (2018) describes that the OSCE Minsk Organization, chaired by Russia, France, and the United States, is the major international group attempting to resolve the war in the South Caucasus (p. 143).

The Nagorno-Karabakh issue has prompted a national awakening among Azerbaijanis. After independence, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the nation's unification against a common enemy played a crucial role in the development of Azerbaijan's national identity. While all national and cultural values were regarded as the symbols of Azerbaijanism, Azerbaijanis have been battling for the integrity of their state. The Karabakh conflict served as a unifying force that helped Azerbaijanis develop a sense of national identity.

Welt and Bowen (2021) explain that up until 1991, the Nagorno-Karabakh region was officially recognised as an autonomous part of Soviet Azerbaijan (p. 2). However, claims by both sides over this district exacerbated the conflict in 1988 and led to open war between 1992 and 1994. Armenia was able to take control of most of Nagorno-Karabakh and several surrounding territories. Eventually, with the assistance of Russia, who served as a mediator, a cease-fire agreement was signed between these two countries in 1994 (Welt & Bowen, 2021, p. 3). However, a 44-day war in 2020 between Azerbaijan and Armenia for the control over Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent territories changed the dynamics of the territorial conflict in the region.

Although after more than a decade of relative peace, violence flared occasionally, including a four-day war in 2016, the general condition of affairs was one of stability for over twenty-five years (Ruys & Silvestre, 2021). For Azerbaijan, a four-day war in 2016 brought some initial political and military gains, as it regained a small amount of its territory (Schmidt, 2016, p. 115). However, the four-day war has deepened tension between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and it was seen as a sign that there would be future escalation.

The six-week-long Second Nagorno-Karabakh War between Armenia and Azerbaijan was a milestone in military affairs in the region. The conflict between Azerbaijani and Armenian troops resumed in the Nagorno-Karabakh region on 27 September 2020 and came to an end trough the Moscow agreement signed by the two sides on 10 November 2020 (see Omidi, 2022). On 10 November 2020, as the result of the six-week war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, a complete ceasefire and termination of violations were announced by both parties. As a result of the war between two South Caucasian countries, Azerbaijan restored its territorial integrity and regained control of about one third of the Soviet-era Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast and most of seven adjacent districts (see International Crisis Group, 2020).

Russia and Turkey were the most important external actors in the conflict. They both saw in the new war between two South Caucasian countries an opportunity to strengthen their political and military position. Askerov (2021) states that Russia was planning to acquire new corridors for better access to the Near East and slow down the integration of Azerbaijan and Armenia with the West, while keeping both within the sphere of its own influence (p. 14). As part of the ceasefire agreement on November 9, 2020, Russian troops have been deployed along the contact line in Karabakh and the Lachin corridor, and the Russian role as the peacekeeper significantly elevated Russian influence in the region and

the dependence of Azerbaijan and Armenia on Russia (Askerov, 2021, p.18). As the result of a six-week war, Azerbaijan relations with the west have been weakened.

Admittedly, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia lost some of its influence in the South Caucasus. However, due to its economic-political connection with both Azerbaijan and Armenia, Russia has played a key role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict from its earliest stage. Marquez (2021) notes that the clearest example of Russian influence in the development of the conflict is that the three ceasefire agreements signed in 1994, 2016, and 2020 have all been reached with the mediation of Russia.

Russia gained strategical advantages at the end of the Nagorno-Karabakh war. Modebadze (2021) concludes that according to the ceasefire agreement on November 9, Russia's role in the South Caucasus region has considerably increased. As part of its implementation, Russia established a permanent military presence in disputed territory by sending peacekeeping forces to Nagorno-Karabakh. Most importantly, Russia took control of the Lachin corridor, which is critical in connecting Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh (Modebadze, 2021). Consequently, after the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, the regional balance of power shifted, and Azerbaijan gained political and military dominance in the region.

These developments affected language policy greatly in Azerbaijan. After regaining independence, the use of Russian language in post-Soviet Azerbaijan increased and decreased in different fields. Russian is predominately important for the education sector in Azerbaijan as more sources are available in the Russian language than in Azerbaijani. In a 2018 study in the capital city of Baku, participants were asked which language they prefer their child to study in and 45% of participants preferred Russian, 17% Azerbaijani, 28% Turkish, 10% both Russian and Turkish (see Garibova, 2018, p. 22). However, Russians are a

minority in Azerbaijan, consisting of only 2% of the whole population, and as the result of

the language policy implemented after independence, which aimed to strengthen de-

Russification in the country, the importance of the Russian language is decreasing.

Tokluoglu (2011) uses Smith's (2004) theory of 'shared memories' (p. 1224) as a

nation-building tool to explain how the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and

Armenia played a role in shaping the unique national identity of the Azerbaijanis.

Additionally, she argues that Azerbaijan's claim over Karabakh and the surrounding areas,

along with the history of 'Armenian betrayals against the Ottoman government' (p. 1225),

instigated collaboration between these two Turkic states against a common enemy and is

justified because Azerbaijanis think that Armenian aggression is directed not only at

Azerbaijan but also at Turkic and Muslim entities. However, Turkish attempts to improve

relations and discussions of opening its borders with Armenia in 2009 led to mistrust among

Azerbaijanis (Tokluoglu, 2011). Subsequent political events and Turkey's support during the

Second Karabakh War significantly repaired these ties.

In 2020, the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War and the significant victory also changed

linguistic views in Azerbaijan. While the Russian language enjoyed high status in the country

before, during what local media referred to as the war for territorial integrity, the

Azerbaijani language became vehicle for the consolidation of national identity. Additionally,

the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020 increased the influence of Turkey as

Azerbaijan's most important strategic partner in the region. Turkey had closed the border

with Armenia in 1993 after Armenia occupied Azerbaijani territories (Gragozov, 2010). Thus,

Turkey's foreign policy in the South Caucasus aimed to strengthen its role and to resolve

conflict in favour of Azerbaijan. Iskandaryan (2020) notes that Turkey's direct support in the

planning of military operations and in arms supplies were significant. All this led to the

November 9, 2020, ceasefire agreement brokered by Russia, which was the only way to stop armed hostilities and prevent the ethnic cleansing of the remaining Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh (Iskandaryan, 2020).

The Shusha Declaration, signed by Azerbaijan and Turkey on June 15, 2021, is one of the most important agreements regarding this conflict. The aim of signing this agreement after the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War was to formalise the existing solidarity between the two countries and concretise the concept of one nation, two states (Unal, 2021).

A noteworthy development following the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War is related to the new Military Trophies Park in Azerbaijan. The Military Trophies Park in Baku symbolise Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020, displaying tanks and weapons captured from the Armenian army. All signs of the Military Trophies Park are in Azerbaijani and in the Latin script, and in English. This demonstrates something about the current language of Azerbaijan, which is aimed to keep Azerbaijani as an only official language and to promote English as the international language in the country.

5.7 Linguistic and Cultural Differences Between Generations after Changing the Alphabet.
After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, former Soviet states followed similar strategies to strengthen their independence and facilitate de-Russification process in all spheres of life. Language policy was not exceptional but aimed to promote indigenous languages and reduce the use of the Russian language in the region. As a result of new language policy, a linguistic and cultural generational gap became obvious. In other words, after regaining independence, two different generations (pre- and post-1991) started using different alphabets (Cyrillic and Latin), and the shift was also observed in the dominant language (from Russian to the national language). Shuster states:

In the early years of the Soviet era, Azerbaijani was widely spoken among

elite and government circles. But as Stalin solidified his position in the late

1920s and early 1930s, sweeping away Azerbaijan's native intelligentsia

through exile and execution, the Russian language came to dominate

politics, meetings, offices, and education (2010).

However, after regaining independence, the Azerbaijani language has replaced Russian as

the required language of administration and education. Russian as a subject has been

changed from a mandatory subject to an elective in educational institutions, and English has

also replaced the Russian language as the more in demand foreign language (see Luscombe

& Kazdal, 2014).

The use of the national language had been restricted during the Soviet Union, and

therefore, once Azerbaijan gained independence, the language problem has been brought

to the agenda again. New language acts were implemented successively, and in 1991

Azerbaijan restored the Latin-based Azerbaijani alphabet. The transition from Cyrillic to

Latin was seen as a symbol of independence, de- Russification, and shift in orientation

towards the West.

The post-Soviet period is characterised by implementing new language acts and

relatively re-forming new national identities in the former Soviet republics. Bushina and

Ryabichenko (2018) argue that the titular majority elites were the most active groups in re-

establishing national identities and in pursuing language reforms in the newly independent

post-Soviet states. In Azerbaijan, the post-Soviet era was defined as a process of distancing

away from its Soviet past and reshaping its national identity. Due to geographical proximity

and shared cultural values, Azerbaijan has strengthened ties with Turkey and Islamic nations during this period. Overall, the time leading up to the collapse of the Soviet Union was an important turning point in the formation of a new national identity (Bushina & Ryabichenko, 2018).

The adoption of the new alphabet after regaining independence was not only related to linguistic factors; political, cultural, and economic considerations were involved. Following the tragedy of Black January events of 1990, when the Soviet army massacred many in Baku, and the subsequent fall of the Soviet Union as well as the territorial conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia, the decline of the Russian language ensued. Many considered the Russian language as the main tool of Russification and numerous parents moved their children from the Russian track classes to the Azerbaijani classes. Some did it out of patriotism, while others did it because it appeared that the future of the Russian language in the country was in doubt.

Since independence, new agencies and institutions were established to provide development of the national language and keep the role of other languages in balance. Mammadova (2020) emphasises the role of the State Language Commission, which was established after regaining independence:

> It 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 (p. 27).

The use of two different alphabets led to linguistic and cultural gaps between the pre- and post-1991 generations in Azerbaijan. As a result of new language policy, the young generation can read and write only in Latin and therefore they are more willing to use Western and Turkish media, while the older generation finds it hard to learn the new alphabet and still uses Cyrillic, which makes them more dependent on Russian sources and culture.

Nowadays, one of the generational gaps in the society is related to the fact that young Azerbaijanis were born into the newly independent state, while the older generation used to hold Soviet citizenship. After the fall of the Soviet Union, it was not only demanded that they change citizenship, but also the ways of thinking. During the Soviet period, Russian culture and lifestyle were dominant and it was fashionable to speak in Russian. Many parents sent their children to Russian language schools as they believed that a decent education and career required proficiency in Russian. Generally, speaking Russian was deemed as the marker of high prestige and Russian was one of the most important requirements, both in the public and the private sectors. People were also more inclined to study at universities in Moscow; now it is more popular to speak English as the second language and study in Western countries.

On the one hand, all these language regulations still cause some challenges and linguistic and cultural differences in the country. There are still some people who grew up during the Soviet period and are used to reading only Cyrillic, and now they feel isolated. As a result, these individuals use more Russian sources, consume Russian culture, and embrace a Russian lifestyle. On the other hand, the Soviet Union's breakup in the 1990s caused a fall in book printing in Azerbaijan. After the shift from Cyrillic to the Latin script, it was not possible to republish all materials from Cyrillic to Latin due to the high cost. As a result, a

new generation that was already reading books in the Latin script was unable to read literature written in Cyrillic in Azerbaijan.

Mammadov (2009) states that the post-independence changes in patterns of monolingualism, bilingualism and plurilingualism emerged as a response to the nationalisation promoted by the government's language policy, as well as to the incentives of global integration and market economy (pp. 68-69). Resulting from the Russification policy during the Soviet period, Russian monolingualism was very common among Russians, among Azerbaijanis in urban settings, and among minorities who spoke Russian. However, even among Russians in Azerbaijan, Russian monolingualism is currently uncommon. It is being replaced by Azerbaijani monolingualism.

After regaining independence, the Azerbaijan government's policy was to replace Russian with Azerbaijani in all spheres of life, especially education, and all of this added to the growth of the Azerbaijani language as a language of literacy and administration. The post-independence education programme in Azerbaijan is first and foremost the reason for the gradual weakening of Russian from linguistic repertoires. Fewer and fewer students were choosing Russian as their foreign language of study in schools and universities as English was prioritised and Russian was no longer taught as a mandatory subject.

Azerbaijani-English bilingualism has increased significantly among the young generation in Azerbaijan; a few decades earlier, this trend was towards Azerbaijani-Russian bilingualism. According to Garibova (2017), during the Soviet era Azerbaijani speakers who lived in cities could learn Russian as a second language, whereas today a significant number of Azerbaijani-English bilinguals live in rural areas. However, Azerbaijani-English speakers consider Russian to be important for their development and attempt to learn it after finishing their studies. The high prestige of Russian in Azerbaijan, as well as its position as

the lingua franca in other former Soviet states, keeps Russian essential to learn in society. Furthermore, it is still quite common to see Russian-speaking groups of people who firmly identify with Russian cultural values, primarily among the upper classes (Garibova, 2017).

The attitude towards foreign languages has changed as a consequence of linguistic changes and of the promotion of the national language in Azerbaijan. People are less pressured to learn and speak in Russian than they were during the Soviet era. However, the popularity of the English and Turkish languages is gradually increasing in society. English as an international language is widely used, and it has impact on multilingualism and plurilingualism. As part of the Russification policy, learning the English language was not encouraged in Soviet society, therefore the breakup of the Soviet Union and the replacement of Cyrillic with Latin led to a high demand for English language teaching.

Since 1991 the Azerbaijani government has promoted English as the language of international communication in both public and private educational environments, with the goal of internationalising the education system (Mammadov & Mammadova, 2022). After these regulations were enacted, there was a dramatic increase in the number of English speakers. According to a survey conducted among students from two well-known Azerbaijan universities, Khazar University and Qafqaz University, Karimova (2017a) reveals that 97% of the surveyed students are aware of the necessity of learning a foreign language, with 90% of them prioritizing English over other international languages (p. 124).

In conclusion, in terms of language policy, the end of 70 years of Soviet history opened a new chapter for post-Soviet states. As a multicultural country where Russians and other minorities live alongside Azerbaijanis, language policy and necessary linguistic changes have been on the agenda. Following independence, the Azerbaijani language was declared the country's sole official language, and people were encouraged to use it in all aspects of

life. After the fall of the Soviet Union, new regulations were put into effect to promote the growth of the national language. Russian is still the native language for several minorities in Azerbaijan as well as for some Russified Azerbaijanis in the country. It is also one of the most learned foreign languages, and one of the most common languages in broadcast entertainment and print in independent Azerbaijan. Besides, the role of English in the country has dramatically changed due to globalisation processes. Overall, in today's Azerbaijan, the Russian and English languages play an important part in education and communication. Though not a language of instruction, Turkish is close to Azerbaijani, and many acquire it through television broadcasts and ties to Turkey.

All the above-mentioned discussions show that the linguistic landscape of Azerbaijan has significantly changed after the fall of the Soviet Union. As a consequence of state policy, younger generations are mainly proficient in the national language, and as a second language English is more prioritised. Consequently, Azerbaijan is much affected by the culture of Turkey and Western world.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the language regulations Azerbaijan implemented after independence, the role of the script change in nation-building processes, as well as the challenges that followed the adoption of the Latin alphabet. It also discussed the languages of instruction in educational institutions, and the effects of the latest developments, such as the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War. Despite all the challenges to re-establishing Azerbaijani national identity, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was one of the driving forces behind unification for people of different backgrounds.

During the Soviet era, the Russian language became dominant and symbolised high status in the region. After regaining its independence, the goal was to gradually strengthen Azerbaijani and change public attitudes. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, all post-Soviet republics implemented de-Sovietisation policies. In general, the reintroduction of the Latin alphabet after the 1990s was aimed not only at effecting linguistic changes, but also at preserving Azerbaijan's political independence. Although this choice jeopardised the next generations' access to Azerbaijan's academic legacy, the Latinisation of the alphabet underlined the new government's break with the Soviet past.

This chapter also reviewed the effects of the alphabet change from Cyrillic to Latin, and the way this script shift changed the role of Russian and Turkish in newly independent Azerbaijan. Considering all the preceding discussions, this chapter emphasised that the transition from the Cyrillic script to Latin had a symbolic value for Azerbaijanis which represented a break from the colonial past and access to the Western and Turkish world.

Finally, the Chapter noted that Russian still retains an important role. Russia promotes its language to maintain ties with the post-Soviet countries. Even though English and Turkish are becoming more popular in the region, many are still interested in learning Russian in order to gain a better education and career opportunities, particularly in urban areas. The demand for foreign language medium education is significantly high in Azerbaijan because people can learn foreign languages effectively and receive a better education. Today, due to similarities, Turkish is not regarded as a completely foreign language in Azerbaijan, and education fees in English schools are quite costly, so people are more inclined to get free education in government-funded Russian schools.

Chapter 6: Perspectives on Azerbaijan's Language Policy

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews as the main data collection methods employed for this research project. The aim is to examine current attitudes towards national and foreign languages. The main themes included the language policy enforced after the independence of Azerbaijan, the alphabet change, language use in different spheres of life (with a focus on the family, education, and employment), the generational gap in the society, and how the language situation differs in rural and central Azerbaijan. This study aims to measure how successful the Azerbaijani government's language policy and the 1991 alphabet change have been in the promotion of Azerbaijani as the official language of the country and as a symbol of Azerbaijani national identity.

This chapter summarises the main findings of the survey data and the interviews. The presentation of the findings is thematic, as the Chapter discusses the participants' language preference in different spheres of life and their attitude regarding the script change and the reasons, they find behind the alphabet reform after independence. The results from the participants' opinions regarding the outcomes of the script change, particularly its effects on national identity in Azerbaijan after regaining independence, are presented here. The following sections illustrate various perspectives on the country's language policy and reflect on how the language policy of Azerbaijan changed the political and cultural connection of Azerbaijan with Russia and Turkey, and how the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War affected the linguistic situation of the country. The chapter also compares the language policy and nation-building process of Azerbaijan with those of other post-Soviet

states. The conclusion of this chapter discusses whether the Azerbaijani language policy has been successful. Finally, this chapter also aims to determine the extent language can be considered a marker of national identity in post-Soviet Azerbaijan.

6.2 Language in Different Spheres of Communication After Regaining Independence

Comparing current linguistic patterns in Azerbaijan with those of the Soviet period indicates that the use of both national and foreign languages among different ethnic groups in Azerbaijan has changed drastically. New language regulations implemented after 1991 contributed to the promotion of the national language and stabilised the role of foreign languages in the country.

Admittedly, the script change from Cyrillic to Latin affected political, social, and cultural aspects of life, as well as linguistical ones. With the adoption of the Latin script, the importance of the Turkish language increased significantly, and this led to people-to-people connection between Azerbaijan and Turkey. Resulting from Latinisation, people enjoyed access to Turkish media and literature due to using similar versions of the Latin alphabet. One of the most important aspects of adopting the Latin script was to access Western culture and technology. Consequently, the popularity of European languages, and particularly of English, increased after regaining independence. On the other hand, as a result of the new language regulations after independence, the influence of the Russian language was negatively affected but did not disappear. All these linguistic regulations and political changes showed its effects on the use of national and foreign languages. While during the Soviet period speaking or at least understanding Russian was a necessity, particularly in urban areas, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and attempts made to

strengthen nationalism in the country, the role of the national language and of foreign languages such as Russian, Turkish, and English, changed significantly.

Regarding language dominance, the survey participants from two different age groups and living in urban or rural settings were firstly asked which language(s) they are most fluent in and find easier to express their opinions. They were given the following options: Azerbaijani, Russia, Turkish, or English. Table 1 shows statistics regarding the most used languages among the respondents. The group that speaks Azerbaijani, Russian, Turkish, and English (21.1%) is comparatively higher than others and mostly participants over 30 years old (35% of all participants) and living in urban settings (80% of participants) indicate their competency in all four languages. This was related to historic fact that people over 30 years old particularly in urban areas were required to speak in Russian and as the local language they had competency in the Azerbaijani language during the Soviet period.

Among the under 30 age group in urban settings the highest result (around 10%) was for Azerbaijan, Turkish and English, which indicates that the number of Russian speakers is in decline compared to age group over 30. However, in rural settings both under 30 and over 30 age groups have similarity as their fluency either in only Azerbaijani (7.5%) or Azerbaijani and Turkish (2%). The lowest result was for Azerbaijani and English, and Azerbaijani and Russian speakers, each with 1.1%. Consequently, this result indicates that language fluency among two different age groups in rural and urban settings are different, as in rural settings regardless age group they belong to, speaking in Russian is not common and reasons will be further discussed in section 6.12. Totally, 13.2 % of survey respondents are fluent only in national language, which shows the importance of foreign languages as the number of foreign languages speakers, beside the national language, is higher than

monolingual Azerbaijani speakers. This variety in language use can be explained as a result

of the multi-language policy of Azerbaijan enforced since 2014.

Table 1

Use of Languages Among the Survey Participants

Languages	Frequency	Percent
Azerbaijani	22	13.2%
Azerbaijani, English	2	1.1%
Azerbaijani, Russian	2	1.1%
Azerbaijani, Russian, English	8	4.3%
Azerbaijani, Russian, Turkish	4	2.2%
Azerbaijani, Russian, Turkish, English	42	21.1%
Azerbaijani, Turkish	7	3.7%
Azerbaijani, Turkish, English	25	13.2%
English	25	13.2%
Azerbaijani, Turkish	15	7.9%
Azerbaijani, Turkish, English	35	17.4%
Total	190	100%

Following the implementation of the de-Russification policy enforced by the newly

independent Azerbaijan government, the use of Russian decreased considerably; however,

there are still some fields where Russian is considered essential, as it was during the Soviet

period. The results from the online survey reveal the linguistic preferences of both

Azerbaijani and Russian-speaking participants in Azerbaijan at home, at work, and in

educational institutions. They are important spheres, particularly the home, because the

language acquisition begins at home and language behaviour is determined there.

Data also reveal the language that participants prefer to use on a daily basis, such as at home and work. The result of this survey indicates that 82.6% use Azerbaijani, followed by English, which is 9.5%, and Russian with 4.2%. Only 1.6 % of participants use Turkish as the preferred language, and 1% use other languages. These results confirm again that Azerbaijani is becoming more and more used, even among ethnic minorities who have increased their use of the national language after the implementation of the alphabet change and other language acts. However, these figures are different in education as studying in Russian is still in high demand. On the other hand, although 82.6% of survey respondents indicated that they feel more comfortable to use the Azerbaijani language on a daily basis, around 95% declared Azerbaijan as their mother tongue. This reveals that due to the language policy implemented in Azerbaijan after regaining independence, among both Azerbaijani and non-Azerbaijani speakers, the state language is predominately accepted as a mother tongue. For instance, Survey 123 participant studied in Russian and speaks at home and work in Russian but still considers not Russian but Azerbaijani as a mother tongue.

This study covers also political aspects of the script change. Therefore, the respondents were asked during the interview if, in their opinion, the Latin alphabet reduced the influence of Russian and paved the way for Turkish soft power and how all these changes affected use of these languages in Azerbaijan. Some participants think that changing the alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin significantly contributed to the de-Russification process and increased the significance of Turkey and Turkish language in the region. The influence of Russia and the role of Russian were much more important during the Soviet era. But even after independence, the Russian language is still spoken by enough people. However, after changing the alphabet, the influence of Turkish increased significantly. Turkish media and TV channels became popular in Azerbaijan. According to Interviewee 16,

It is obvious that after using the same alphabet the connection between

Azerbaijan and Turkey became closer as we could read Turkish literature.

Besides, I think that the change from Cyrillic to Latin also affected the

Russian role in Azerbaijan and it mostly weakened the role of the Russian

language and Russian influence in all walks of life.

Another group of participants, however, did not agree that the adoption of Latin reduced

the influence of Russian, or they did not find it related to the script change but to other

political issues. According to Azerbaijani language teacher Interviewee 13, the alphabet

change was not the reason of Russian losing influence in Azerbaijan. It can be considered

instead one of the consequences of the political crises affecting Azerbaijan and Russia:

It is true that after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian influence decreased

considerably. However, I don't think it is related to alphabet change. It was the result

of the Russian attitude towards the Azerbaijan-Armenia war, Black January, refugees

from Karabakh territory. All caused to make more attempts of de-Russification in the

country. I can say that changing the alphabet was a result of these processes.

Interview results were validated by the survey, as 76.70% participants think that English as a

foreign language needs to be promoted in Azerbaijan, followed by 15.91% Turkish, and

7.39% Russian. On the other hand, due to the difference in literacy levels in urban and rural

settings, as Russian was not spoken widely in rural areas, participants from these areas did

not find it important to promote Russian. However, regardless of the living area both participants in rural and urban areas find English important. This result overlaps with the discussion in the previous chapter of the long colonial history of the country, which caused hostility among Azerbaijanis towards the Russian language. Besides, the role of English as the foremost international language needs to be considered.

However, while analysing the language of education, these figures are considerably different, as 50 % of respondents preferred to study in Azerbaijani and the remaining in English and Russian, with only %2 in Turkish. These numbers indicate that while Azerbaijani is used by 82.6 % of participants as the everyday communication language, in education it drops to 50%. According to survey, 84% of respondents agree that English needs to be a mandatory subject in schools. The reason why Russian is still highly demanded in the education sector is related to more available sources in Russian and more qualified staff.

Most of the interviewees also argued that Russian as the language of education is still important in independent Azerbaijan, due to lack of reliable sources in Azerbaijani and the better quality of education. Azerbaijani language teacher Interviewee 13 states the following reasons for the popularity of Russian in the education system after the fall of the Soviet Union:

Today there is a big trend to send kids to Russian track classes. This trend has increased during the last decade. I think it is related to some factors. Firstly, people believe that the quality of education is higher in Russian schools rather than in Azerbaijani schools. Then, they can get more sources in Russian both textbooks and online sources. If we improve the quality of education in Azerbaijani sector, the tendency to Russian education can be reduced in the country.

As discussed in Chapter 4, more sources are available in foreign languages, therefore studying in foreign languages is still quite popular in Azerbaijan. In the following section, language will be discussed as an essential feature of Azerbaijani national identity.

6.3 Being a 'True Azerbaijani'

After the fall of the Soviet Union, promoting an Azerbaijani identity and removing the legacies of the Soviet past was the most challenging and necessary task for newly independent Azerbaijan. All political changes and newly implemented language policies were aimed to foster this process. The ideology of government changed from creating a 'Soviet man' who speaks Russian and supports the communist ideology to creating the 'True Azerbaijani' who speaks in the Azerbaijani language and returns to Turkic origins (as well as embraces the Western world).

In today's Azerbaijan, even after changing the alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin, still some people prefer to study and communicate in Russian at home or work. There are ongoing discussions regarding the importance of speaking Azerbaijani to promote the Azerbaijani national identity. Some even find speaking in the national language the most important aspect of belonging to Azerbaijani nationality.

Language is considered as an integral part of the national identity, nevertheless it should be noted that the features of the national identity are not limited to language. Regarding the national identity features and to reveal the elements of Azerbaijani national identity, the first question in the survey was about the importance of being born in the territory of Azerbaijan for being considered Azerbaijani. The results show that 36 % find it 'very important', 31 % 'important', and 32 % find it 'not important'. As the numbers are

quite close to each other, it can be stated that being born in Azerbaijan is not predominately

considered as the main requirement for being defined as Azerbaijani. These figures are

quite important when taking into consideration the statistical number of Azerbaijanis living

in foreign countries, predominately in Russia and other post-Soviet states. These results

suggest that the place you were born or the territory you are living in cannot be the

essential factor to define your national identity. The results obtained from the participants

in terms of the role of being resident of Azerbaijan for having rights to be considered

Azerbaijani are as follows: 54 % consider it 'not important', 23% 'very important', and 22%

'important'. It was mainly participants living in foreign diaspora or at least having overseas

experience around 43% participants consider being resident of Azerbaijan not important.

According to results, they consider speaking in the native language as the main factor rather

than living within its borders. Therefore, more than 50% of respondents do not find being a

resident of Azerbaijan as important as speaking in Azerbaijani for national identification.

If we refer to A. D. Smith (2009) discussion about cultural and political nationalism,

in the case of Azerbaijan, based on survey results, it can be concluded that language is

essential both for political nationalism, which contributes to secure Azerbaijan's

independence and territorial integrity, and cultural nationalism.

To have a better understanding of elements of national identity, the survey

participants were also asked how proud they feel of the history of Azerbaijan and the

country's achievements. The survey shows that more than 60 % of respondents feel 'very

proud' of the achievements of Azerbaijan, 27 % feel 'proud', and 9% feel 'not proud'.

Patriotism is quite high in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, which pushed people to fight for their

independence and national identity. Besides, patriotism is one of the reasons behind the

policy of promoting the Azerbaijani language and the de-Russification process. Survey

results show that among all ethnic backgrounds, feeling proud of belonging to the Azerbaijani identity and all its elements are noteworthy.

As discussed in previous chapters, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, most of the post-Soviet states followed different language policies to reshape their national identity and promote the national language. The strictest rules were implemented in the Baltic states where a language test is required to acquire citizenship. However, in Azerbaijan, a multicultural policy was enforced. Therefore, the participants were asked if language should be one of the requirements to get citizenship in Azerbaijan as a means of promoting national identity. The results show that most respondents (more than 80%) agreed, while only 17% did not find it advisable.

Nowadays language issues are still debateable, as the main concern regarding the national identity is whether the role of Russian in different walks of life, particularly in education, prevents promotion of the Azerbaijani national identity or not. Therefore, participants were asked to evaluate the role of the Azerbaijani language for being considered Azerbaijani. According to the responses, most participants (50 %) think that it is 'very important', and 33% 'important'. However, 17% of respondents find that speaking Azerbaijani is 'not important'. This is an important indicator in terms of the role of the national language for being identified as Azerbaijani. However, these 17% respondents that consider Azerbaijani language not as the main feature of being true Azerbaijani are mainly individuals who either use Russian as their first language (3% of respondents), or individuals who speak Russian fluently beside Azerbaijani in rural settings. It can be concluded that among Russian monolingual or bilingual speakers, speaking in Azerbaijani is not considered crucial to their belonging to the Azerbaijani national identity.

The interviewees also emphasised that speaking Azerbaijani is quite essential in Azerbaijan for being considered as belonging to the national community. However, whereas most of the respondents think that speaking Azerbaijani is quite important, the participants' opinions are divided into two groups. Academic Interviewee 14, for example, noted:

Yes, I think it is very important to speak Azerbaijani. The role of Azerbaijani has increased due to some new regulations after independence and people realised more and more how important the Azerbaijani language is to keep our national identity.

Another group consider that speaking Azerbaijani is important but remarked that being a true Azerbaijani should not be related to the language people prefer to speak. Professor of Public International Law Interviewee 11 gives an example that there are Russian speakers or other ethnic minorities that are proud of their Azerbaijani identity and consider themselves true Azerbaijani, no matter the language they speak:

It depends. I mean there are some Russian-speaking populations in Azerbaijan that for them speaking the Russian language doesn't change anything about the national identity and they find themselves true Azerbaijani. However, Azerbaijani-speaking groups mostly consider that being true Azerbaijani is closely connected to speaking Azerbaijani.

If we discuss the importance of the Azerbaijani language for maintaining Azerbaijani national identity, the presence of ethnic minorities and their language rights need also to be given some attention. The minorities are a considerable part of Azerbaijan and during the Soviet Union their rights were limited. After independence, a multicultural policy was adopted, and the minorities were given more rights to study and speak in their languages. However, there are still some debates regarding the rights of the minorities in the country. To better describe the language policy of independent Azerbaijan it is thus important to consider the language rights of the ethnic minorities.

In multicultural Azerbaijan, the rights of ethnic minorities have always been on the agenda. During the Soviet Union their unique identities were not recognised, and after 1991 the ethnic minorities were given the rights to keep their cultural and linguistic identities. Regarding the rights of ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan, 83 % think different nationalities should maintain their language, traditions, and culture, and 13% think they should assimilate to the majority of the country. According to survey results, 80 % consider that ethnic minorities should be given assistance to preserve their languages, while 6 % disagree. The remaining respondents preferred to leave this question unanswered. All participants studied in Russian and other foreign languages (around 50%) support the rights of the ethnic minorities and believe they must be given opportunities to preserve their cultural values and promote their languages. For instance, participant 92 belonging to the over 30 age group and who studied in Russian, believes that ethnic minorities are entitled to maintain their cultural and language rights. Mostly people in rural areas, over 30 years old and Azerbaijani monolingual support the assimilation of ethnic minorities.

In this regard, Interviewee 15 states that:

I agree that speaking in Azerbaijani is quite essential for being considered
Azerbaijani. No other language can reflect the legacy of Azerbaijan either from
history or literature points better than the native Azerbaijani language. However,
speaking or studying in other foreign languages don't give us any rights to consider
someone less or more Azerbaijani in this regard. On the other hand, Azerbaijan is a
multicultural state where the ethnic minorities have been living with the local
population over the centuries. Therefore, the rights of the ethnic minorities have
been preserved and using their own languages has been tolerated since the
beginning of the independence.

Based on this fieldwork, it can be concluded that Azerbaijanis place a high value on language
as a strong indicator of Azerbaijani national identity. Most of the participants found the
Azerbaijani language as the key sign of their national identity and felt that they could not
sustain their identity and cultural values unless their national language was preserved. The
freedom of language preference and the ethnic minorities' language rights are supported by
most of the participants. The following section discusses the findings on the role of the
alphabet change and of the language policy in the cultural and political spheres.

6.4 Script Change and the De-Russification Policy of Azerbaijan

Participants' opinions regarding the language policy implemented in the 1990s and,
relatedly, its effects on cultural and political aspects of life in post-Soviet Azerbaijan remain

divided. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the language policy declared that the Azerbaijani language is the only official languages of the Republic. The alphabet was changed from Cyrillic to Latin once more after public discussion. This study primarily examined people's opinions towards language policy in independent Azerbaijan as well as how successfully new language regulations were implemented in the country. According to Shevel (2002), citizens were a crucial component in nation-building negotiations because a policy could only be considered successful if citizens adopted it. To consider the alphabet change successful in Azerbaijan after regaining independence, it is essential to investigate the use of both the new and the old alphabets among different groups.

To get insights on the role of the Latin and Cyrillic scripts, the survey participants were asked whether they can use both or one of these alphabets and which one they find more comfortable to use. Around 90% of the respondents indicated that they were able to use both Latin and Cyrillic, but in terms of efficiency, 110 participants declared that they mostly use Latin, and 2 respondents prefer to use Cyrillic. According to this data, 9 % (of under 30 years old) of respondents can read and write only in the Latin script. These results explain, as discussed in previous chapters, that predominantly the older generation over 30 years old in rural settings and the Russian speaking population are able to use Cyrillic in Azerbaijan. Besides, the latest alphabet reform can be considered successful based on the survey results, which show that Latin is the main script people of both age groups use in both rural and urban areas.

During the interview discussion, another question was investigated: What made Azerbaijan take the initiative regarding script change after independence? As discussed in previous chapters, the extent of the de-Russification process varied in the post-Soviet states depending on new state policy implemented after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The

policy of some Baltic states obviously stands out as they took big steps towards reshaping

national identity in all walks of life and limited the use of Russian, while other states such as

Belarus were not so willing to remove the influence of the Russian language. For newly

independent Azerbaijan, reducing the Russian influence and promoting the national identity

has been on the agenda since the early years of the independence. As the language plays an

integral role in nation-building processes, Azerbaijan enforced a new language policy which

aimed to strengthen the national language in all spheres of life. Meanwhile, the adoption of

the Latin script was considered an integral part of this policy.

In the first part of the interview, the respondents were queried regarding the history

of the script change and the factors that prompted this process. To clarify their points with

some examples, they were encouraged to speak about their memories of those years.

According to the results, the participants predominately think that the reason behind the

Latinisation of the alphabet was related to the intention of going back to Turkic origins and

having access to the Western world. They think that as the Cyrillic alphabet symbolised the

Soviet past, and because it was promoted during the Soviet era, the new language

regulations, and in particular the shift from Cyrillic to Latin, were enforced to contribute to

the re-establishment of the Azerbaijani national identity and strengthen the de-Russification

process. As a result, the alphabet shift had symbolic significance because it considerably

contributed to the reinforcement of national values.

Professor of Sociolinguistics Interviewee 3 highlighted the reason behind the script

change after independence and stated that it was not a random decision as the Latin

alphabet was first adopted in Azerbaijan in the 1920s as the part of the Soviet indigenisation

policy. After independence, going back to Latin was quite understandable:

Changing the alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin was considered a rejection of the Soviet heritage as people found it as part of Soviet language policy which was aimed to promote the Russification process in the region. Latinisation was a historic step back as in Azerbaijan in the 1920s the Latin alphabet was already adopted. Latinisation was meant modernisation, Westernisation, close connection with Turkey, and most importantly de-Sovietisation.

English teacher Interviewee 5 states that the Latin script has never been alien to the Azerbaijani language, as the project of Latinisation has been on the agenda, even during the 19th century and as the Latin alphabet was officially adopted in the 1920s.

Admittedly, adopting the Latin alphabet was like turning Azerbaijan back to its origin. As you know Arabic was the main script in the 1920s and then the Latin alphabet was employed during the Soviet Union and in the 1940s the script was changed to Cyrillic. Finally, after regaining independence Latin became the script of the Azerbaijani language. Historically, it was our prominent writer Mirze Fatali Akhunzade (1812–1878) who worked on the script change project which was aimed to transit to Latin. Although his project was not implemented his ideas became quite useful while changing the script in 1991.

According to this view, previous alphabet changes were an injustice. On the other hand, Turkic Languages scholar Interviewee 12 gave another important reason for Latinisation, and stated that the political issues in the country, and especially the Nagorno-Karabakh

conflict between two Caucasian countries, encouraged people to resent Russian influences. For him, the alphabet shift was one of the steps taken to weaken the Russian influence:

> Due to Stalin's repression, war around Karabakh and other territories with Armenia made hatred against the Russian past widespread. Thus, after independence, the focus was to remove Russian influence in the country as much as possible. The alphabet change was the result of this policy in Azerbaijan that people wanted to remove the Soviet past and take Azerbaijan close to its Turkic origin.

It is essential to highlight that all the participants' beliefs were directly tied to common perspectives about the importance and significance of the script shift in Azerbaijan after regaining independence and the kind of political and cultural changes the Latinisation process was supposed to bring. Therefore, the general reasoning about the Latinisation of the alphabet was regarding the modernisation of society via getting access to the Western world. Besides, as the Latin alphabet is now predominately used in the country, including by the older generation, the Latinisation process in Azerbaijan can be considered successful. The following section will touch on all challenges the newly independent country has gone through during the very early years of the alphabet change.

6.5 Challenges of Latinisation in Azerbaijan

The adoption of the Latin script was a big step which also brought challenges—losing high levels of literacy, for example. While much of the population supported the adoption of the Latin alphabet, the number of Cyrillic alphabet supporters was significant due to what they believed were the challenges of Latinisation. As the Cyrillic script has been used in

Azerbaijan since the 1940s and all textbooks and academic materials were published in Cyrillic, the shift to Latin not only affected the level of literacy in the country, but it also brought extra financial challenges, as all these materials needed to be republished in the new script. People who were used to reading and writing in Cyrillic, particularly the older generation, found it hard to learn the Latin alphabet. Therefore, for a long time, the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets were both used simultaneously, and only after the decree of the President of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev dated June 18, 2001, was the Latin alphabet fully adopted throughout the territory of Azerbaijan. Making the use of Latin script mandatory in all aspects of life was considered a big step towards strengthening the new script in the country. Similar issues have been encountered in Central-Asian states where newspapers are published in two different scripts, and where some street signs are in Cyrillic while others in Latin.

After implementing Latin in independent Azerbaijan, one of the main challenges was related to the difficulties in reading old books and therefore new strategies were adopted to republish Cyrillic books in Latin. According to survey results, most respondents (77%) support that those Cyrillic textbooks and other materials from the Soviet era should be republished in the Latin script, while around 22% think that people can read them in Cyrillic, as most of population are trained to use both alphabets.

To obtain a better picture of the process and validate the results of the survey, the interviewees were also encouraged to speak about the challenges the people went through after the implementation of the new script. Most of the participants admitted that the script change process brought challenges and affected the level of literacy and the quality of education in the country. They also shared their memories. English teacher Interviewee 5 stated that the biggest challenge in the 1990s was learning the Latin script after for a long-

time use of the Cyrillic alphabet. It was also noted that the lack of materials in the Latin script, and lack of funds allocated to republication, made this process harder:

> I believe the biggest challenge was teaching the new script to people, especially the old generation. I remember that I was in the 3rd grade when this alphabet change was implemented. We were obliged to study the new alphabet. But I can say that even after the script change, for a long-time people used Cyrillic. There were newspapers in both scripts and some road signs were still in Cyrillic. The second challenge was related to the lack of textbooks. The textbooks were needed to be republished in Latin, which would confront some financial issues.

The transition from Cyrillic to Latin was not entirely approved. Some people were clearly opposed to the adoption of the Latin alphabet, citing the difficulties that older generations would face in adapting to the new script. It is worth noting, on the other hand, that due to a preference for European languages and technology, the younger generations eagerly began embracing the new script.

Leading researcher and associate professor in linguistics Interviewee 8 recalled that even after the adoption of the Latin script, Cyrillic was used for a long time. She also recalls that learning European languages was quite popular among young intellectuals, and for this group of people the adoption of Latin was quite easy:

> I remember that during my university years, we found it quite hard to get materials in Latin, and even when I started to work as a teacher in the 1990s, we were still using Cyrillic. On the other hand, transit was not so hard for Azerbaijan as most

intellectual people were learning European languages. Therefore, they knew the

Latin alphabet as well.

The following section discusses the role of Turkey as a model for the alphabet change in

Azerbaijan after regaining independence.

6.6 Turkey as the Model

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the newly independent states needed to have a model to

adopt new government policies and remove previous influences. For Azerbaijan, Turkey was

considered as the most reasonable model, due to sharing a similar language, culture, and,

most importantly, a common Turkic origin. In the early years after independence, the

government's alignment with Turkey was particularly strong. The name of the titular

language was shifted to 'Turkish', and the Latin alphabet was also adopted.

Turkey as the role-model for adopting the Latin alphabet in independent Azerbaijan

was also discussed with the participants. Most of the participants agree that after regaining

independence, Turkey was a model due to similar language and cultural elements, and

consequently Azerbaijan has followed Turkey regarding the adoption of new language

policy. Professor of Sociolinguistics Interviewee 3 stated:

Yes, it was so. This was an integral part of debates around the script change in the

1990s. Many suggested adopting the Turkish version as that would be easy to print

new textbooks. But the decision was made to make it like Turkish but also a unique

alphabet that has some different letters.

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However, due to some differences between these two versions of the Latin alphabet, as the Azerbaijani version of the Latin script has some special letters, there were a few respondents that did not consider Turkey the role model for Azerbaijan. Interviewee 12 noted that the Turkish version of the Latin script did not cover all the needs of the Azerbaijani language, and that therefore a unique version of the Latin script was developed:

> In November 1991 the Turkology commission was held at Marmara University. The aim of this commission was to create a common Turkic alphabet that consists of 34 letters. However, it led to some discussions in those counties and this new alphabet was not implemented. The Turkish version of Latin was considered a model for Azerbaijan after independence, but it didn't cover all needs of our language. As the result, Azerbaijan improved the Latin alphabet by adding some special letters.

On the other hand, Azerbaijani teacher Interviewee 16 believes that the Latinisation process of the Azerbaijani language in 1995 was only related to globalisation process in the world. Newly independent Azerbaijan was seeking ways to get the society modernised and integrate it to advanced world:

> I don't think the alphabet change was related to the Turkish model. As the Latin alphabet was accepted as an international alphabet in most of the countries in the world, the reason behind the script change after independence was related to the globalization process and getting access to the Western world.

The majority of the interviewees attributed the use and promotion of the Latin alphabet in independent Azerbaijan to its close connection with Turkey, as since the very early years of independence, Turkey has been accepted as the model for a newly established country in all aspects. Further discussion, however, reveals that the Latinisation of the alphabet was not based on the Turkish model. The primary motivator for the alphabet change was people's wish to return to the first usage of Latin in the early years of the twentieth century.

On the other hand, after changing the script and improving people-to-people connections with Turkey, the Turkish soft power considerably increased in the country. The Turkish language started being taught in some educational institutes, and people became more inclined to study in Turkey. Moreover, Turkey's role in the political, cultural, and economic spheres brought Azerbaijan closer to Turkey and the Turkic world. The Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, and Turkey's support, also strengthened these ties and opened a new page for the Azerbaijan relationship with Turkey. According to Interviewee 2, adopting the Latin alphabet was considered a big step in regard to close connections between Azerbaijan and Turkey:

> As the political situation changed and the Latin alphabet was adopted, people tended more to use Turkish borrowing in their daily conversations, interaction, and that sort of borrowings were the result of spread Turkish culture over the various spheres of life ranging from soap operas to football matches. Thus, all non-linguistics factors seriously influenced today how we interact – less Russian, more in Azerbaijani, and with certain elements of Turkish influence.

Another important point to uncover was the role of two contradicting ideologies: Turkism and Azerbaijanism. As discussed, in the early years of independence, Turkism as an ideology strengthened significantly in Azerbaijan, which was not only aimed to take Azerbaijan back to Turkic origin but also to unify Azerbaijan with other Turkic states, including Turkey, and to establish a unitary Turkestan state. However, during the presidency of Haydar Aliyev, Azerbaijanism as an ideology became state policy. The respondents were asked whether Azerbaijan should remain an independent state or whether it was preferable that all Turkic countries should form a single union. Nearly 80% support the idea that Azerbaijan should remain an independent state, but 20% of respondents see more benefits in the unification of Turkic states. So, regardless of the close connection between Azerbaijan and Turkey, and Turkey's increasing soft power, predominately, participants agree that Azerbaijan needs to protect its independence.

Despite adopting similar alphabets and the cultural similarity between Azerbaijan and Turkey, the current nationalist policy, which aims to strengthen Azerbaijanism, prevents the development of pan-nationalist tendencies. Despite cultural and political closeness, Azerbaijanis are not willing to unify with Turkey. They aim to maintain a unique identity.

6.7 The Latinisation and the Modernisation of Azerbaijani Society

Another important aspect of this study is to reveal the way the nation-building process was affected by the script change. In the 1990s, discussions around the Latinisation of the alphabet were targeted to promote an Azerbaijani national identity, which is a blend of Turkic, Islamic, and European features. The participants' opinions regarding the national identity problem were predominately supporting the idea that the script change helped

accessing the Western and Turkic worlds, and that it directly affected the country's modernisation.

The long history of Russian control also makes the Russian culture an inevitable part of Azerbaijan identity. During the Soviet Union great accomplishments were made in Azerbaijan, which directly affected the modernization process. The literacy policy of the Soviet Union in particular enabled Azerbaijan to integrate with the most developed societies. All steps taken towards educational reform and alphabet change from Arabic to Latin accelerated development too. Russian power shielded Azerbaijan from some religious influence. According to the Soviet authorities, it emancipated Muslim women by bringing them into the workforce and removing their veils. Employment and unveiling became undeniable evidence of Muslim women's emancipation under the Soviet state.

History Teacher Interviewee 20 discusses the role of Russia in the modernization process:

Despite all negative aspects of the Soviet period, it is inevitable that modernization of Azerbaijan society is closely connected with Russian history which first has started with nativization policy in the 1920s and as a result of first alphabet change from Arabic to Latin, Azerbaijan access to the Western countries has been considerably accelerated.

According to English Language Teacher Interviewee 6, the situation changed dramatically after the script reform and people became more inclined to use Turkish and to access Western culture and education:

Language is one of the most fundamental elements of establishing a national

identity. During and even after the collapse of the Soviet Union there was a big

tendency to send kids to Russian track schools. Obviously, studying Russian affected

the views of people. Russian culture, TV shows, and literature were quite famous.

However, after changing to the Latin alphabet, the situation has changed

significantly. People who study in the Azerbaijani sector and using the Latin script are

inclined more to Turkey and the Western world.

However, a considerable number of participants did not find that the script change

reshaped the Azerbaijani national identity. Senior University instructor Interviewee 14

believes that the alphabet change had no direct effect on rebuilding national identity:

I do not believe that the alphabet had a direct influence on national identity issues.

Even while using the Cyrillic alphabet, we had our own national identity. Surely, after

the script changes, it got some new features, but it did not bring any drastic changes.

Regarding the modernisation process, which at the time for Azerbaijan meant access to

European culture, education, and technology, as the result of the Latinisation of the

alphabet, 90% percent of the interview participants agreed that the script change

contributed to this process, as this language regulation enabled people to use same script of

the Western countries and consequently opened the door to more sources. English

Language Teacher Interviewee 6 states that as Azerbaijanis started to use the same script

with Turkey and the Western world, the modernisation of society followed:

Of course, it contributed a lot to modernising our society. While people were using the Cyrillic alphabet during the Soviet period, it was hard for them to read or write in English and Turkish and so it became hard for them to learn international languages. But nowadays, we use the same alphabet, and it became easier for us to learn English and other foreign languages. Without any doubt, speaking in those foreign languages give access to their culture, lifestyle.

There were also some participants who articulated the opposite opinion regarding the role of the script change in the modernisation process. According to Interviewee 11, even though the aim was to modernise society via the adoption of the Latin script, the process was not complete:

It could be, but the aim was not achieved yet. If we show some indicators of modernisation that would be clearer. For example, people are not speaking foreign languages well in Azerbaijan, only a part of the population who studied abroad do it better. Not enough textbooks and scientific works exist in our language, while we mostly use Russian textbooks and materials. Therefore, I think that we have not completed the modernisation process yet.

6.8 Returning to Turkic Origins

In the 1990s, a group of intellectuals suggested the adoption of the Latin alphabet, and Latin alphabet supporters aimed to achieve a more modernised, Westernised, and pro-Turkic society. As the pro-Turkic aspect was quite essential, the participants were asked to evaluate the role of the script change in ensuring close ties between Azerbaijan and the

wider Turkic world. Nearly all participants acknowledge that the new alphabet was expected to develop connections and take Azerbaijan closer to Turkey and other Turkic states. The common alphabet has always been on the agenda of Turkic states since the fall of the Soviet Union. Thus, using the Latin alphabet based on the Turkish version was supposed to enable Azerbaijan to come closer to the Turkic world. Professor Interviewee 2 added:

> Yes. I think so. As the matter of fact, Tukey was considered as the bridge to the Turkic and Western world for Azerbaijan. So Latin script was a symbol of Westernisation. For Azerbaijan, Westernisation was accepted as modernisation. So, the Latin alphabet promoted all these attempts, movements towards more modernised society, a westernised society, and a pro-Turkic society. Latin plays a very important role in all these three directions.

However, University Lecturer Interviewee 15 argues that the script change was considered an important step to take Azerbaijan close to Turkey, but we cannot tell the same about other post-Soviet Turkic states, as they were still using the Cyrillic alphabet even after the independence:

> I wouldn't say the script change in the 1990s took Azerbaijan closer to Turkic countries, it was mainly Turkey. During the Soviet Union, the Turkic language family states were using the Cyrillic alphabet. But after independence I can say that it was Azerbaijan that implemented this script change process successfully, unlike Central Asian states and it took us closer to Turkey.

University lecturer Interviewee 17 also agrees that the Latinisation process took Azerbaijan closer to Turkey rather than other Turkic states: 'I can't say the alphabet change brought Azerbaijan closer to its Turkic origin, but to the Turkish society and helped to some extend to decrease Russian influence'.

Survey results also state that out of 110 participants who mainly use Latin or can only use Latin prefer to promote Turkish language (15.91%) or English (76.70). It can be concluded that the adoption of the Latin alphabet provided broader access of Azerbaijanis to Turkish and English literatures or media, which considerably affected people's attitude towards these languages.

6.9 The Generational Gap

To gain a better understanding of Azerbaijan's linguistic and cultural changes as a result of regaining independence, it is necessary to examine the generational gap in society. As a result, a distinct thematic category was dedicated to investigating generational differences in language behaviour and attitudes.

In Azerbaijan, generational differences are first and foremost determined by educational background. During the Soviet Union, the primary objective was to reinforce Soviet ideology, and the Russian language was regarded as an essential tool. However, after independence the new generation observed an increase in the popularity of national language learning in schools. On the other hand, even though Russian was the dominant language in the region prior to 1991, it retains a high level of prestige in today's Azerbaijan. According to the survey results, predominately the over 30 age group participants speak Russian fluently or studied in the Russian sector. Comparatively, among the under 30 age

group, Russian fluency unless they study in Russian is in decline, which is related to the

change of linguistic requirements between two periods.

After independence, the alphabet became a key concern in Azerbaijan. The older

generation (those born before 1991) was used to writing and reading in Cyrillic, and it was

harder for them to learn the new alphabet, while the younger generation was taught in

Latin and had no competency in Cyrillic. The language situation was considerably changed

when the proportion of Russian speakers decreased after regaining independence and new

regulations were adopted to promote the use of the new alphabet. Based on the survey

results, it can be concluded that except for 2%, all respondents were trained to use the Latin

script. This was one result of the government regulations that made the Latin script

mandatory in all walks of life.

Talking about gap between generations due to the script change, university

instructor Interviewee 14 compared the role of Russian during the Soviet period and today.

She described the linguistic situation for people during the Soviet Union and explains that

people were then obliged to speak in Russian as it was quite common to communicate in

Russian in daily life, and speaking in Russian was considered prestigious. Comparatively, she

states that due to all language regulations implemented after the fall of the Soviet Union,

speaking in Russian became less desirable in all spheres of life:

> Before, the role of Russian was higher than our national language. For example, I am
>
> 54 and live in Baku. I remember that during the Soviet time, everyone could speak
>
> Russian, at least use simple sentences and it was quite popular to communicate in
>
> Russian. You could witness lots of people speak in Russian in all public areas. It was
>
> considered shameful if you couldn't speak in Russian. However, nowadays, it is not

the case, people voluntarily and proudly speak in Azerbaijani, and it is quite normal if you don't speak Russian.

Interviewee 15 describes how using different scripts between two generations resulted in cultural issues:

As we changed our alphabet in 1991, it was quite hard for the old generation to learn to read and write in Latin. They were obliged to learn Latin but there are still some people that can use only the Cyrillic alphabet. The young generation due to using Latin tends more to Turkish and European culture and there are lots of Turkish borrowing are used on daily basis.

University lecturer Interviewee 17 also confirms that Russian tendency is more obvious among older generations in all walks of life while the younger generation, due to linguistic similarities, are more inclined to Western and Turkish culture:

Those who were born and educated before 1991 mainly prefer to read and speak in Russian, mainly in urban society. However, the young generation born after 1991 mainly prefer English rather than Russian if they have a chance to learn any other languages and see Europe as the main destination for migration in general and for education in particular.

6.10 The Effects of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War

The script change was not only related to linguistic but also to political matters. In 2020, the Second Nagorno Karabakh War invested Azerbaijan, and the language and national identity were involved. After more than 30 years of territorial conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Azerbaijan's victory strengthened the pride of having an Azerbaijani identity and, relatedly, its national language. Although all participants highlighted the importance of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War for the identity and language issues in the country, they also think that the effects will be more evident in the following years. They also acknowledge the role of Turkey and its contribution in this victory as the main supporter of Azerbaijan. According to English language teacher Interviewee 6,

> Regarding the national identity problem, I can say that after the Second Nagorno Karabakh War there was a rise in patriotism, and of Azerbaijanism ideas. Plus, it brought Azerbaijan close to Turkey as Turkey was the main power that helped us during this territorial conflict. But with regards to language changes, I think it is quite early to speak of any effects on language.

On the other hand, as Azerbaijanism strengthened in the country and all symbols of the Azerbaijani identity, including the Azerbaijani language, were promoted, it was expected that the demand for the Russian track classes would dop significantly. However, English teacher Interviewee 5 mentioned that, surprisingly, Russian is still considered important in the education sector particularly, and people are not willing to give up Russian:

According to my observation, there is no big change after the Second Karabakh war from the linguistical point of view in the country. I thought like others that people would stop sending their kids to Russian schools to promote Azerbaijani nationalism after the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War. However, it didn't happen. On the other hand, from the national identity perspective, I can say that patriotism increased significantly in Azerbaijan as a result of this war.

Participants agree that as Azerbaijan received support from Turkey, both Azerbijanism and Turkism were promoted during the war. Azerbaijan's victory and getting back some historical territories encouraged people to promote national symbols, including the Azerbaijani language. As a result of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, speaking in Azerbaijani became more significant and it also pushed debates about decreasing the use of Russian, predominately in educational settings, as victory over Armenia promoted a unique Azerbaijani identity. After this war the main aim was to further this trend.

The interviewees agreed that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict should be considered important in terms of identity, as national consciousness is essential for distinguishing Azerbaijanis from other national groups and making them feel like they belong to a specific group. As a result of recovering independence from colonial powers and political disputes in the region, Azerbaijan's national identity has been called into question once more, and attempts have been made to promote its ethnic heritage, including Turkism and Islam.

6.11 The Declining Influence of the Russian Language After Independence

Participants were asked about the role of Russian in the education sector and the reason why Azerbaijani has not yet become the sole language of education. The results show that the respondents predominately think the main reason Azerbaijani could not be the sole language in education is related to the ongoing power of the Russian language in the region. Participants admit that even after dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russian did not lose its power, particularly in educational settings, and it is still considered a lingua franca in most post-Soviet states. But this led to another important question: How does sending children to Russian classes affect the national identity of independent Azerbaijan? Nowadays, this question provokes serious debates in Azerbaijan. However, the participants predominately think that the reason why Russian still enjoys high prestige in the country, and particularly in the education sector, is related to the fact that Russian, for post-Soviet era participants in this study, was perceived as a vital language for people's self-development and access to educational resources. According to academic Interviewee 1, the idea of sending children to Russian track classes is not due to the hegemony of a Russian ideology but to the availability of better education in Russian language:

> It is the biggest challenge for Azerbaijan as the education system due to less variety of sources in the Azerbaijani language. The system is not completely ready for being in the sole Azerbaijani language. My intention behind sending my kids to a Russian school was that education in the Azerbaijani sector isn't quite satisfactory, but if they can study in Russian, they get a chance to learn the second language and get access

to different literature and materials in Russian. The only reason is the quality of education, it is not related to an idea of becoming Russian or Pro-Russian.

Academic Interviewee 2 thinks that popularity of Russian in the education sector is directly related to some Russian minorities in the country, but Russian is not considered a threat for Azerbaijani national identity:

> There is a community of Azerbaijani who considers Russian as a part of national identity since the Soviet period. So, Russian is one the most important elements of their daily life. They can also use the Azerbaijani language. Code-switching is quite common among Russian speakers. Some people consider Russian as a high prestige. In general, our country is a tolerant and multicultural county. The government lets people choose what language they want to study: Azerbaijani, Russian, or English. People don't consider Russian as a threat and I would say they enjoy using this language, unlike other post-colonial states.

The above remark suggests that Russian is still important, not because of spiritual values but because of economics. There are still a significant number of parents who believe that speaking in Russian will give their children more opportunities to engage with others.

Second, practically all interviewees acknowledged the high prestige of Russian in modern Azerbaijan and the importance of maintaining the role of the Russian language. Even more than three decades after the Soviet Union's disintegration, Russian is still widely

spoken in the former Soviet republics, and in some countries, such as Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgizstan, it is officially recognised as one of the titular languages. Participants also claimed that unlike during the Soviet era, knowledge of Russian is not one of the most significant prerequisites for employment in the public sector, although knowledge of Russian, like knowledge of English, can provide better prospects in private job settings. As a result, all participants agreed that Russian is the lingua franca in post-Soviet republics, and that despite the growing popularity of English and Turkish, Russian is still advantageous from an employment standpoint.

During the Soviet era, the national language was allowed to be taught in educational institutions with certain restrictions, but it could not be used to encourage nationalism (see Connor, 1984). Therefore, only the Azerbaijani language was taught, but not the history or culture of Azerbaijan. However, after regaining independence, new acts were enforced to promote Azerbaijani as the main language of instruction in educational settings.

Another intriguing point is related to the closure of Russian medium educational settings for school and university. In Azerbaijan, public education is available only in Azerbaijani and Russian, while Turkish, English, and French are the language of instruction in private educational institutes. While most of the participants think that speaking the national language is an essential indicator for being Azerbaijani, they do not agree that the closure of the Russian track classes will bring advantages, considering the variety of sources in Russian, and the role of Russian as the lingua franca of all post-Soviet states.

Although all interviewees recognised the significance of using the Azerbaijani language as a marker of national identity, they were also aware of the limited use of Azerbaijani in the global arena. Because the government provides free education in both Azerbaijani and Russian, studying in Azerbaijani would only allow them to learn Turkish due

to the similarities between these two languages; however, knowing Russian would help to gain a better education and economic advancement in other post-Soviet states as well.

Highlighting the close connection with Russia, and the role of the Russian language in the world, linguist academic Interviewee 9 thinks that the closure of Russian classes will not be the right decision for future generations:

I have studied in the Russian sector as well. Speaking Russian is a big advantage in our country. However, a group of people thinks that it affects our Azerbaijani national identity negatively and these Russian schools should be closed. I can't agree with that. As there are lots of Russian minorities are living in the country and we have close economic, political, cultural connections with Russia, the role of Russia will be important in the future as well.

Interviewee 12 approaches the topic from a different perspective and explains that hostility, due to political issues, should not affect the role of Russian in the country, which will not be fair for ethnic minorities and for the Russian speaking population. However, he argues that free education should be available in the national language only, as Russian is only one of the foreign languages in Azerbaijan:

There is a certain group of people due to political issues who have hatred of Russia and the Russian language. I think that language and politics should be treated separately. Closing the Russian sector will not give us any advantages. Our country is

multicultural and there are many Russian and other minorities living in Azerbaijan. I believe that studying in the Russian sector can't change our national identity. But I also agree that studying in Russian shouldn't be funded by the government.

During the Soviet period, Russian was a crucial requirement to get a job in the public sector. This was the reason parents were more inclined to send their children to Russian track classes to get them to speak Russian as their first language, which was also promoted at home. Compared with the Soviet period, it is evident that the shift has been in the role of Russian in the private and public employment settings.

Regarding the role of Russian in public and private employment, most of the participants agreed that it is still demanded in the private sector but not anymore in the public sector. They also highlight that Russian is gradually being replaced by English in employment. Interviewee 5 states that 'around 10-15 years ago I would say both in private and public sectors Russian was very important. But now not too much in public, but demand for Russian is quite high in the private sector'. English teacher Interviewee 18 also stresses current language requirement in both public and private employment in Azerbaijan:

Of course, during pre-independence period, the role of Russian was much more important in both sectors. Compared to the Soviet period, nowadays in Azerbaijan in public employment sectors having great communication skills only in Azerbaijani is a state requirement. However, still, the Russian language is considered a great asset to get employed in private and public sectors in Azerbaijan. But in private sector mostly Russian and English are desirable besides Azerbaijani.

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The interview data indicated that all participants believed that the chance to prosper and enjoy better careers was associated with knowledge of Russian. However, they also stress that there is an obvious shift away from the Soviet past. Russian still keeps its power in private employment, but thanks to the promotion of the Azerbaijani language in the public sector, knowing the Azerbaijani language is becoming more important. Better opportunities to learn English and other international languages also decrease the importance of Russian.

Overall, participants accepted the Russian language's importance as the country's dominant foreign language, perceiving it as one of the options for professional advancement. The employment of the Russian language in all other post-Soviet states greatly contributes to Russia's popularity in independent Azerbaijan. They all agreed that Russian has not remained the same as it was in the Soviet period.

6.12 Russian in Urban and Rural Settings

This section is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on language use in various Azerbaijani territorial locations. The second focuses on language use in these areas as a result of post-independence trends, such as Russification, globalisation, and urbanisation. The majority of Russian speakers in Azerbaijan live in central districts, particularly in Baku. Historically, as part of the Soviet government's policy, people from Russia were primarily relocated to central territories, which were regarded as more culturally diverse and had faster growth in education, technology, and economic life throughout the Soviet period. As a result, rather than in rural settings, Russian became the language of prestige in cities. Despite the high status of the Russian language during the Soviet Union and after independence, it is important to note that the role of Russian has not been the same in all

parts of the country. Soviet history shows that due to low levels of literacy in rural setting, Russian has never been popular in those areas.

The results of the interviews show that the popularity of Russian in urban areas is related to the urbanisation process, the level of education, and the number of Russian speakers residing in the cities. However, participants also noted that compared to Soviet times, nowadays, the role of Russian has decreased. According to academic Interviewee 10,

Traditionally Russian has been spoken by the upper class. It is considered an elite language. It is obvious that mainly the city population speak Russian and people from rural settings who move to the city have difficulties as they are not used to speak in Russian. Before independence, many Russian people lived here especially in Baku so Russian was spoken in everyday communication in Baku. However, in rural places, they didn't have many Russian people living among them.

Interviewee 13 and Interviewee 2 point to the fact that resulting from urbanisation processes in Azerbaijan, Russian is popular in central areas and that the situation is similar in other post-Soviet states. Azerbaijani language teacher Interviewee 13 stated:

Yes, it is true. It is related to the urbanisation process. I think it is not only in Azerbaijan but the same in most of the post-Soviet states. Even I remember that during the Soviet Union, I went to Ukraine, and I have visited both cities and rural

areas. In cities, it was hard to see people speaking in Ukrainian while in rural areas people were speaking predominately in the national language.

Linguistics Professor Interviewee 2 added:

Yes. In rural settings, Russian has never been popular. I remember that my grandma lived in a rural area and although she was born and lived most part of her life during the Soviet Union, she couldn't speak Russian very well. So, I think that during the Soviet time in urban areas it was mandatory to speak in Russian. But in Azerbaijan after independence situation dramatically changed. However, people still use Russian in urban areas.

6.13 The Growing Influence of Foreign Languages: The Case of the English Language

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, while new regulations were adopted to strengthen the de-Russification process, the use of European languages, particularly English, increased significantly. Gradually English is replacing the role of Russian in the country. The attitudes of participants towards the role of foreign languages were evaluated by asking a few questions regarding the importance of these languages. Regardless of the multicultural policy implemented in Azerbaijan, and of a widespread desire to strengthen the foreign languages, around 50% of respondents (mainly monolingual Azerbaijani speakers) think that foreign languages should not be given official language status. Sixteen per cent of respondents think it would not matter, and 26%, who speak more than the national

language, consider it is a good idea. Based on these results, it can be concluded that compared to the monolingual participants, bilingual or multilingual participants are more tolerant of foreign languages.

In today's Azerbaijan, the most prominent foreign languages are as follows: Russian, as the former dominant language, English as a prominent international language, and Turkish, the language of the closest Turkic neighbour. The survey reveals that 76% of participants think that English should be promoted in Azerbaijan due to its increasing role in the world, 7% think Russian should, and 15 % opt for Turkish.

While more than 90% think that the foreign language classes should be promoted in Azerbaijan, only 6% disagree and think that only the national language should be the language of instruction. According to this survey, more than 80 % think that English should be a mandatory subject at school, and only 15% do not find it important for education. As media is an integral part of life, the participants were also asked whether the preferences should be given to Azerbaijani films and programmes or to foreign ones. Eighty per cent of respondents think that television broadcasts in Azerbaijan should give preference to Azerbaijani films and programmes to promote the national language; 20 % have chosen the foreign option.

However, according to interview results, the opinions regarding the role of these foreign languages in Azerbaijan are controversial. One group of respondents think that English has already replaced Russian and are more willing to learn English as a foreign language than Russian, while another group, due to a close connection with Russian, considers that the Russian language is still essential in the region. They also highlight a possible future trilingualism that includes English.

Academic Interviewee 1 thinks that speaking in English is important, but nowadays in Azerbaijan only very few can afford to study in English medium schools. However, due to the long history with Russia and a close connection, Russian is available to all classes in Azerbaijan as public education is provided both in Azerbaijani and Russian. Interviewee 1 remarked:

> I don't believe that English will replace Russian in Azerbaijan, because we do not have that infrastructure in the education system to teach English. English is spoken by people who can get private English classes, but Russian can be spoken easily as we have access to Russian media and TV.

Besides, Interviewee 15 forecasted that Russian will not be replaced by any other foreign language soon. The reason is close cultural, political, and economic connections and a long history of connection with Russia: 'we have a close relationship with Russia as the neighbouring country. I don't think that in the future English will completely replace Russian. I think we will still use Russian as the foreign language'. There were some participants, Interviewee 5, for example, who believe that as Azerbaijan got its independence only a few decades ago, it will take '30 more years' to see the replacement of Russian with English.

6.14 The Language Policy of Azerbaijan and that of Other Post-Soviet States

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, former union states implemented different policies. Some countries, particularly the Baltic states, implemented strict regulations to weaken Russian influence as the European influence has always been dominant in those states. Countries like Belarus and Kazakhstan declared Russian as one of the official languages. Among the Caucasian countries, Azerbaijan has experienced a unique language situation. Unlike Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia never changed the script during the Soviet period. Consequently, using their own alphabet for a long-time affected literacy and the status of the local languages significantly.

During the interview, participants were asked to compare the alphabet experience of Azerbaijan with that of other Caucasian countries from the context of the national identity, and to identify how successful the script reform has been in Azerbaijan. Several participants noted that as the script has been changed several times in Azerbaijan, whereas Armenia and Georgia kept their own alphabet throughout the Soviet period, literacy was affected negatively and so were the national language and the nation-building process. According to University Lecturer in Azerbaijani language Interviewee 15:

> Our case is completely different from that of Armenia and Georgia. During the Soviet period, some factors such as being a Muslim country, close connection with Turkey, and a big group of Azerbaijanis living in Iran. These factors made the Soviet Union adopt different policies for Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. Sure, their literature legacy hasn't been affected as much as Azerbaijan. Each time the script change made the country republish all books and other materials in the new alphabet.

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This interviewee agrees with Altstadt's (2016) point that the main purpose of language legislation was to unite the Slavic peoples in the western part of the country, while the Soviet Union introduced language policies in its eastern parts to disconnect Turkic nations. Thus, the alphabet change in the Turkic states was aimed to achieve the same goal.

On the other hand, academic Interviewee 12 argues that making alphabet changes in Turkic states unlike in Georgia and Armenia was aimed to weaken connection with Turkey. However, he does not find these changes essential for nation-building in the country:

Obviously, Russia implemented a different policy to Azerbaijan to disconnect the country from Turkey. Therefore, Armenia and Georgia were allowed to keep the alphabet. However, I don't think that it brought huge differences in terms of national identity.

The participants also compared Azerbaijan with the Central Asian states and predominately found that the Azerbaijani experience was relatively more successful. In Central Asian states, mainly due to a considerable Russian speaking population, Russian has been quite important in all aspects of life, even after regaining independence. This was the reason why the Russian language was retained as an official language there. In Azerbaijan, the situation is better where Russian is more accepted as the foreign language.

Interviewee 12 comparatively analyses the language issues in those states and concludes that in terms of the language issues, Azerbaijan is to be considered some steps ahead of Central Asian countries:

Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have the same issues now that we had in the early

years of independence. You can see some signs in Latin and some in Cyrillic. I think

this is mostly connected to the high number of Russian populations in those central

Asian states. Russian group of people tries to use Cyrillic, while Turkish oriented

population is more willing to use Latin.

Azerbaijan's experience with the alphabet change is also considered a good lesson for

Kazakhstan where the script change is ongoing. Among post-Soviet states, the Baltic states

stand out as they are considered the most successful in the implementation of their own

language policy. This was related to a decreased proportion of resident ethnic minorities and

the European orientation of these newly independent states. Lastly, the language and

national identity problems in the post-Soviet states were discussed comparatively.

Like Interviewee 6, most of the participants think that Baltic states could go further in

the promotion of local languages because they did not have close political and economic ties

with Russia. In the rest of post-Soviet states these connections were a major factor. Another

important point is related to the strong Russian cultural influence in Azerbaijan whereas in

the Baltic states the European influence was always dominant. Given the high levels of

literacy in the Baltic states, even before the Soviet era, it was inevitable that de-Russification

processes would be more successful. For English language teacher Interviewee 6,

The Baltic countries are different from other post-Soviet states. Azerbaijan still has a

strong connection with Russia at the political, cultural, economic levels. There are

lots of Azerbaijani people who moved to live in Russia for work or for education. But

Baltic states politically have some problems with Russia. I think that their national

identity is quite different from other post-Soviet states as they are mostly under

influence of European culture.

Professor Interviewee 3 relates more Russian influence in Azerbaijan compared to the Baltic

states due to the multicultural policy of Azerbaijan:

It is related to multiculturalism, tolerance of other languages in Azerbaijan. While the

policy of the Baltic states towards Russian speakers was not considered the most

democratic and tolerant. Besides, Baltic states joined the Soviet Union very late. In

Azerbaijan people also accept Russian as part of their identity, which in the Baltic

states this isn't the case.

Likewise, Interviewee 12 concluded:

In the Baltic states European culture has been always dominant. Therefore, after

independence, they have implemented new language regulations promoting national

languages and reducing the role of Russian. They have been developed countries and

the level of literacy has been high even before the Soviet Union. Azerbaijan can be

considered 20-30 years behind the Baltic states in terms of these issues.

All these comments confirm that nowadays the role of the Russian language in the post-

Soviet states differs widely, which is predominately due to government policy and cultural

background.

6.15 Conclusion

An inductive view of the relationship between the hypotheses arising from the literature study and the themes emerging from the survey and interviews was used to investigate how participants in independent Azerbaijan saw the Azerbaijani language, and the Latin script. This chapter examined how people envisaged the Azerbaijani language should be used. The themes that emerged from the interviews included the specific medium of communication and education, and the challenges of the alphabet change, the generation gap, how national and foreign languages are distributed geographically within the Republic of Azerbaijan, and other sociological and political issues. The attitudes towards the use of the national language and the Latin script seem to have changed significantly during the post-Soviet period, while Russian as the foreign language has retained a role in the country.

This analysis highlighted the symbolic importance attributed to the Azerbaijani language. The Azerbaijani language signifies a shared Azerbaijani identity. National languages are used in all areas related to culture and heritage. This may be the reason why respondents found that the Azerbaijani language is advantageous and necessary. Post-Soviet nation-building processes necessitated the strengthening of an Azerbaijani collective identity through the promotion of the national language. Accessing the Western and Turkish worlds via the Latin script was also a priority in this context.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

My curiosity about the shift between the old and the new alphabets in Azerbaijan motivated my research. What interests me most when observing interactions between two generations and two different language users (Azerbaijani and Russian speakers), is witnessing how language preferences affect cultural and national views. In other words, the language people use shapes their national ideologies. I wanted to understand the motivations for such differences, beyond observing that Russian is still important in the country after 30 years of independence and that there is still a demand for Russian medium classes as parents want their children to attend these schools and be successful contributors to a globalised world.

In this concluding chapter, I reiterate the purpose of my research study, summarise how the findings address the research questions, and highlight the importance of this research and its contribution to knowledge. This chapter reflects on the theoretical implications of the findings and their consistency with the available scholarly literature and presents methodological considerations in interdisciplinary research design. Finally, I discuss the limits of this research study and suggest some future research directions.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the main aim of this thesis was to find out how successful the Azerbaijani language policy, and in particular the alphabet change, has been as a nation-building process in promoting the Azerbaijani language in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. Have attitudes towards the Azerbaijani language changed since the collapse of the Soviet Union?

The research for this thesis addressed politics, identity, nation-building, attitudes, and functional language use in multi-ethnic post-Soviet Azerbaijan. The research assumed that the success of a specific language policy is determined by the citizens and whether they

accept or reject the policy. This research has contributed to scholarship on post-Soviet

nation-building processes and has shown that citizens supported the language regulations

that were implemented after regaining independence. Investigating the link between the

linguistic, political, and cultural aspects of language in the national identity context was the

overall objective of the current project. This dissertation contributed to the study of

linguistics and nationalism by focusing on how the Azerbaijani language was transformed

during the Soviet period and after regaining independence.

Another original aspect of this research project was to delve into the language-

national identity nexus. The script change in Azerbaijan was compared with the same

process that was implemented in Azerbaijan during first stage of the Soviet Union in the

early 1920s and similarly in Turkey during the late 1920s. This dissertation, I hope, will

contribute to the study of linguistic nationalism by focusing on how Azerbaijan, after gaining

independence, adopted policy similar to the 1920s policy, and how Turkic languages

underwent similar reforms in different periods. It was modernising ideologies, especially

nationalism, that prompted these shifts.

The research intended to answer the research questions addressed in the next

sections. The empirical study was conducted with a mixed-methods methodology.

7.1 How Successful Has the Azerbaijani language Policy Been After Regaining

Independence?

Former Soviet countries have begun nation-building and established new language policies

to support the formation of national identity during the last decade of the Soviet era.

Consequently, right after regaining independence, new language policies were implemented

in all post-Soviet states to strengthen the de-Russification processes.

From the linguistic point of view, based on results from the survey and interview described in Chapter 6, the implementation of the Azerbaijani language policy and the script change could be considered successful, particularly with respect to Azerbaijani nation-building strategies, as almost all participants could write and read in the Latin script, which is used in governmental and non-governmental institutions.

The new language regulations enacted after 1991 were considered a big step, not only to resolve the linguistic crisis in the country after the fall of the Soviet Union but also to implement changes in the cultural and political spheres. Azerbaijan, like other post-colonial states, was attempting to assert its independence and establish its unique identity. Distancing from a history of subordination was the most important task after regaining independence.

However, political conflicts in the region also accelerated this process. During the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Karabakh and surrounding territory, Russian backing for Armenia, and as a result, Azerbaijan's loss of historical regions increased hostility towards the former colonialist power. All these processes contributed to Azerbaijan's closer connection to Turkey and promotion of its Turkic identity.

In the 1990s, intellectuals were discussing new regulations in different spheres of life to reduce Russian influence, which was triggered by the hostility people felt for Russia. Although replacing the Cyrillic alphabet with the Latin one came with the threat of losing the country's literacy levels, the new alphabet would take newly independent Azerbaijan close to Turkey and to other European countries. As the adoption of the Cyrillic alphabet was aimed during the Soviet period to disconnect the Turkic states, giving up Cyrillic would function in the same way between Azerbaijan and Russia. In today's Azerbaijan, Russian, as

a lingua franca, still has prestige, but the difference with the Soviet period is apparent. This shows that language policy in Azerbaijan can be considered successful.

Since the early years of independence, the closure of Russian track classes in educational institutions has been on the agenda. Some nationalists think that the closure of Russian track classes would promote the role of the Azerbaijani language, which will eventually strengthen the Azerbaijani national identity. They argue that studying in Russian and using it for communication keeps Azerbaijan under the influence of Russia. This idea caused several discussions in the country as the Russian speaking population and the Russian minority in Azerbaijan find it unacceptable and believe that studying or speaking in Russian does not affect national belonging.

Based on the literature review and the interview results, the alphabet change from Cyrillic to Latin and other language regulations implemented after regaining independence have succeeded in reducing the use of the Russian language. Due to the increasing popularity of English, the new language policy implemented in the 1990s, and the growing influence of the Turkish language, the role of Russian changed from that of dominant language to that of important foreign language. Russian monolingualism has gradually been replaced by Azerbaijani monolingualism, or Azerbaijani-Russian bilingualism.

Following its independence, Azerbaijan sought an ideological framework on which to unite people of many ethnic groups under one state. The elite's perspectives were crucial in forming this foundation for newly independent Azerbaijan. During the first decade of independence, Turkism was prevalent, and Turkey's model was promoted in every aspect of society. However, in succeeding years, Azerbaijanism was pitted against Turkism. Azerbaijanism is still official policy.

The alphabet change from Cyrillic to the Latin script also affected Turkish power in Azerbaijan, and unlike Russian, the status of the Turkish language is increasing. The early years of the twentieth century are remarkable as the establishment of Turkism in Azerbaijan occurred in these decades. Azerbaijani intellectuals aimed to create an identity based on Turkification, Islamisation, and modernisation, which were even featured on the flag of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan (1918–1920), with blue representing Turkishness, green representing Islam, and red representing modernisation.

Azerbaijanis could describe their identity as Turk and their language as a Turkic during the early years of Soviet rule, but after the mid-1930s the country's Turkish identity was suppressed and replaced by an Azerbaijani identity to disconnect Azerbaijan from Turkey. The adoption of the Cyrillic script fulfilled the same objective for Russia as it did for Turkey. The latter began using the Latin script during the same period. Turkism was notably crushed under Stalin's leadership, and as a result, the alphabet was changed from the Latin script to Cyrillic to prevent the unification of the Union's Turkic peoples.

As a result of territorial and political conflicts in the country near the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the anti-Russification policy was significantly enhanced while equally boosting Turkic ethnicity to promote the national identity. During Elchibey's presidency, Turkism was accepted as the key leading strategy of the government's policy. As a result, people were named Turks and the state language as Turkish. This created discontent among non-Turkish ethnic groups. Heydar Aliyev, who came to power after Elchibey, instead chose Azerbaijanism, attempting to unite all ethnic groups in Azerbaijan. In today's Azerbaijan, the ideology of Azerbaijanism is still promoted in all walks of life and Azerbaijan experiences a different phase of Azerbaijanism. Multiculturalism was even adopted as official state policy.

It is necessary to view the spread of Turkish not only in terms of instrumental purposes but also in terms of ideology. The New Turkish Alphabet has been analysed by scholars as a tool to separate the new Turkish state from Islam, as a force for social cohesion and identity, and as a reform aimed at distancing the country from its colonial past. By adopting a Turkish national identity, the Kemalists believed that the new nation would be propelled towards contemporary civilisation, and that this would bring rapid modernisation in all sectors of life, including the technological, economic, legal, educational, and social spheres. Similarly, Azerbaijan expected to modernise society by implementing new language regulations.

The alphabet revolution was a pivotal event in the formation of the Turkish nation-state and for the propagation of nationalism throughout the country. Language reform was an essential component of this process in both Turkey and the Republic of Azerbaijan. The 1928 and 1991 alphabet reforms form part of a larger statist project of nation-building and modernisation in Turkey and Azerbaijan.

During the years immediately following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the language policies of newly independent Azerbaijan were centred around linguistic nationalism, and several laws were passed with the intention of regulating language use in official settings. On the one hand, there was the need to protect the national language and to revitalise the national identity of Azerbaijan. On the other hand, there was a demand for internationalisation. English is regarded as a necessity. Language in Azerbaijan is closely associated with national independence and identity.

7.2 How did the Script Change Affect National Identity in Azerbaijan?

After a long debate, the Arabic alphabet, which represented illiteracy in the country, was replaced with Latin at the beginning of the 1920s. During Stalin's reign, Azerbaijan experienced a second script shift as part of the Russification policy, which sought to isolate Azerbaijan from the Turkic and Islamic worlds. However, the creation of a single Turkic alphabet has been always on the agenda and was suggested at the Baku Congress in 1926 to increase relations and build unity among Turkic countries. Nevertheless, the Cyrillic alphabet was not open to public discussions yet was adopted despite opposition from many Azerbaijani intellectuals. The accusation was of being Pan-Turkish 'deviationists'. Participants in the interview also addressed this issue, noting that many prominent Azerbaijani figures were exiled at the time due to opposition to the transit to Cyrillic. As a result, the Cyrillic alphabet signified Russian predominance in the region, and Azerbaijan introduced a new alphabet shortly after achieving independence. Besides, the Latin alphabet, which was regarded advantageous on political and cultural levels, was reintroduced to allow access to the West and Turkey.

However, the transition from Cyrillic to Latin was not accepted without criticism. While younger generations supported the new script due to the prevalence of European languages and Western values in the country, older generations and the Russian minority opposed it due to the difficulty of learning the new alphabet and the possibility of losing literacy legacy. The participants whose average age was around 35 claimed that Latinisation did not bring any challenges to their personal or academic lives. They additionally stated that the alphabet switch aided their scholarly work by allowing them to read literature in both Turkish and English. Their parents, on the other hand, encountered some difficulties.

Furthermore, as the country changed its alphabet three times in a century, many academic sources became unavailable. All these shifts negatively affected literacy.

Another important point about the alphabet changes in the country, unlike its neighbours in the South Caucasus, was that Azerbaijan changed its alphabet three times in a century to due to clashing ideologies. Georgia and Armenia had their unique alphabets, which were crucial in preserving their identities and their alphabets never changed. Azerbaijan was at a disadvantage.

Each alphabet of Azerbaijan symbolises belonging. The Arabic alphabet signifies belonging to the Islamic world, the first version of the Latin alphabet symbolises the desire for modernisation, the Cyrillic alphabet stands for belonging to the Russian world, and lastly, the Latin alphabet adopted after independence symbolises the desire not only to get closer to the West and Turkey, but also to discontinue the Soviet heritage. As the language plays an integral role in establishment of the national identity, the regulations that were introduced after the fall of the Soviet Union were aimed at the promotion of the national language and the reduction of the role of the Russian language's influence in the country.

Based on my research, the results from the literature review and the fieldwork (the survey and the interview) show that the new language regulations, and particularly the Latinisation of the alphabet, which was enacted in the 1990s, significantly contributed to the nation-building process even if they caused generational gaps between pre- and post-1991 generations in Azerbaijan. During debates regarding the alphabet reform in the country after regaining independence, the main point in terms of adopting the Latin script was the intention to give people easy access to Western countries and Turkey. Using a similar alphabet was supposed to transform the cultural and political settings. Language is considered one of the symbols of the Azerbaijani identity. Recent political crises, such as the

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Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, highlighted this link once again. In today's Azerbaijan, unlike in other Turkic post-Soviet states, such us Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan where the Cyrillic script is still used alongside the Latin script and where Cyrillic can still be seen in street signs, the alphabet implementation can be considered successful.

Another important aspect to consider are the effects of the language policy on national identity. Although Russian is still important, the role of English is strengthening dramatically, and due to easy access to Turkish media and literature, the influence of the Turkish language and culture is also increasing. To conclude, as it was stated in Chapter 1, if Azerbaijanism was meant to Turkify, Islamicize, and Europeanise society, the language policy adopted after the dissolution of the Soviet Union was successful.

7.3 Have Attitudes Towards the Azerbaijani language and Other Foreign Languages Changed?

As far as attitudes were concerned, in post-Soviet Azerbaijan there appeared to be a clear distinction between the attitudes towards the Azerbaijani and other languages as the language was expressed as a feature of identity during the Soviet period and after independence. The results presented in Chapter 6 revealed that the importance of the Azerbaijani language was significantly increased after 1991, as it is considered a prominent feature of being Azerbaijani. On the other hand, the role of English has increased since Azerbaijan achieved independence, based on globalisation policies and because English was the language of international communication.

To get a better understanding of the status of Russian language and people's attitude in current Azerbaijan, it is necessary to compare its current influence with that of the Soviet period. This is one of the original aspects of this research. Based on the research

findings, during the Soviet period, even though the Azerbaijani language was the official language, speaking in Russian was considered more prestigious in society and Russian gave better opportunities, both in education and career settings. Russian competency was one of the most important requirements in the public and private employment sectors. Considering all these reasons, parents were more inclined to send their children to Russian medium schools to secure a better future for them. However, this was not the case in rural settings, where, due to the low level of literacy in those areas, Russian has never been as popular as it was in the cities, and particularly in Baku.

An interesting point is that none of the interviewees were against learning Russian, regardless of their age. Almost all the participants knew the Russian language. Some interviewees received their education in the Azerbaijani language whereas others received their education in the Russian language. This is because they still see the Russian language as necessary.

Changing the name of the state language and the alphabet should be evaluated in a broader context. Additionally, the symbolic meanings of these changes should not be ignored. The Cyrillic alphabet stands for proximity to Russia, while the Latin alphabet symbolises being close to Turkey and the West.

Considering the above discussions, the significant demand for Russian medium schools, even in recent years, provides important clues about the issue of language in Azerbaijan. The main reason for the high demand for Russian medium schools is Russia's policy for the dissemination of the Russian language. In Azerbaijan, political connections with Russia are quite important and the economies of both countries are integrated. The other reason is the belief that Russian medium schools provide a better education compared to Azerbaijani schools. The participants also believe that even though their own

children are receiving their education in the Russian language, this will not damage their national identity since they also speak Azerbaijani in their homes and identify as Azerbaijani. Again, most of the participants emphasised that education in the mother tongue is very important for the protection of national identity and national values. However, no one found it wrong to speak in Russian as one of the foreign languages.

Compared with the Soviet period, the inclination towards the Turkish language and culture is evident in all parts of life in contemporary Azerbaijan. During the interviews, most of the participants also confirmed that one of the aims of changing the alphabet was related to the re-establishment of a new country in close connection with the Turkic world. It was inevitable that political and economic connections between these two countries strengthened the Turkish factor considerably. Consequently, the alphabet change, and the adoption of a similar version of the Latin script gave access to Turkish literature and media. Nowadays, speaking a similar language and using the same alphabet makes people more willing to read Turkish materials and watch Turkish TV broadcasts. Among young generations, studying in Turkey became more and more popular. The number of Turkish medium educational institutes is increasing.

7.4 Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. They must be considered both in the interpretation of the results and when considering future research. First, data from the interviews should be appraised with caution because of the relatively small number of participants.

This dissertation demonstrates that language is crucial to shaping national identity. The language-identity nexus must therefore be examined through an interdisciplinary approach that merges two disciplines: linguistics and politics. Mixed methods should be

used when examining this dynamic construct—language policy and national identity—due to the complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, and political aspects. When reviewing the emotional aspects of people's experiences, more interdisciplinary studies are necessary to shed further light and to uncover the challenges that both the Azerbaijani and the other communities face.

Further limitations of the present study include bias. Unlike the interviews, which were transcribed in both English and Azerbaijani, the survey was written only in English, thus automatically excluding respondents with no proficiency in the latter language. It would be reasonable to assume that attitudes towards a specific language would depend on the level of proficiency in it. This factor must be considered. Moreover, the Azerbaijani population in the country is diverse and what is true of one group may not necessarily be true of another. And yet, even though this study has several limitations, it can nevertheless be considered to have provided a broad picture of language uses and attitudes. It may serve as a useful basis or starting point for further studies.

The outcomes of the alphabet change from Cyrillic to Latin in the 1990s were discussed, and a framework for analysing and interpreting the research data was provided. I have explored language policy in the context of national identity. Furthermore, the aim of this research was not only to identify how successfully the alphabet shift had been, but also to reveal how the alphabet change and the new language policy affected nation-building processes after regaining independence.

I have argued that language policy plays an integral role in nation-building processes and that post-Soviet Azerbaijan is no exception. I have shown that, like other-post Soviet states, the new language regulations promoted de-Russification and supported the consolidation of a unique identity. After the fall of the Soviet Union, every step towards the

language issues was aimed to modernise society and acquire access to the Western world and to Turkey, a move that would lead Azerbaijan to develop culturally, economically, and politically. Even though, Russian is still used in Azerbaijan, the script change and other language regulations affected the popularity of the Russian language. In today's Azerbaijan, speaking in Azerbaijani is necessary in every sphere of life and is related to patriotism and the assertion of an Azerbaijani identity.

The popularity of the Turkish and English languages is increasing, and growing connections between Azerbaijan and Turkey are further impacting language use. However, regardless of people-to-people connections with Tukey, the ideology of Turkism does not overtake Azerbaijanism, as it did in the early years of independence.

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Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interviews

First of all, I would like to ask some questions about history of script change in Azerbaijan

1.	What made Azerbaijan take the initiative regarding script change after independence? What challenges followed the implementation of the script change?

2.	Was Turkey's script change considered as a model when implementing a similar shift in Azerbaijan?

Now few questions about the consequences of the script change

3.	Has changing the script reduced Russian influence and paved the way for increasing Turkish influence in Azerbaijan?

4.	How did the Latinisation of the Azerbaijani script affect the national identity of independent Azerbaijan?

5.	The script change project was implemented to modernise the Azerbaijani society; do you think that the policy and its implementation contributed to modernisation?

6.	Do you believe that the Latinisation of the script brought Azerbaijan closer to its Turkic origin?

Some questions about the current language circumstances of Azerbaijan

7.	What language differences can be observed between those who were born before 1991 and those who were born in independent Azerbaijan?

8.   Is speaking Azerbaijani considered essential for being a 'true Azerbaijani'?

9.   Today there are ongoing debates around the closure of Russian track classes to promote 'national identity'; what is your opinion regarding this topic?

10.   How did the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War affect current language and identity problem in Azerbaijan?

Now I would like to ask few questions about the role of foreign languages in Azerbaijan

11.   Thirty years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Russian language and the Cyrillic script continue to dominate sections of the education infrastructure in Azerbaijan; what is your opinion about the role of Russian in our education system? Why has the Azerbaijani language not become the sole language in education?

12.   It is widely held that Russian is spoken more in central and urban areas than in rural settings; is this just a popular myth? If it is not, why is it so even thirty years after the script change and independence?

13.   What position does the Russian language hold in the private and public employment sectors in Azerbaijan? Was there a significant shift from the Soviet past?

14.   English as an international language is becoming more and more common in Azerbaijan. Do you think that English has replaced or will replace Russian?

Finally, some questions about the language policy of Azerbaijan compared to other post-Soviet states

15.   In the Caucasus, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Georgia and Armenia implemented their own alphabets, while Azerbaijan switched to the Latin

alphabet based on the Turkish model; what impact did this change bring in terms of national identity in those countries?

16.   Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have also switched to the Latin alphabet, while Kazakhstan is planning to complete this process in by 2025. How successful were they when compared to the Azerbaijani experience?

17.   Russian still enjoys status in Azerbaijan, especially when compared to its status in other former Soviet republics (i.e., the Baltic countries); why has this been the case?

Online Survey

Please tick one option only

Firstly, I would like to ask few questions for introduction

1.   How old are you?

 Over 30   Under 30

2.   Do you live in an urban or rural area?

 Urban area   Rural area

3.   Have you ever lived abroad? If yes, how long have you lived there?

 No   Yes   Duration:

4.   What is your citizenship status?

 Azerbaijani   Russian   Turkish   Other

5.   What is your nationality?

 Azerbaijani   Russian   Other

6.   What is your mother tongue?

 Azerbaijani   Russian   Turkish   Other

_____

Now some questions about language proficiency

7.   What other foreign languages do you speak fluently?

Azerbaijani   Russian   Turkish   English

None

8. What language do you speak at home/work?

Azerbaijani   Russian   Turkish   English

Other

9. What language did/do you study in?

Azerbaijani   Russian   Turkish   English

Now I would like to ask few questions about some features of Azerbaijani national identity

10. How important is to be born in Azerbaijan for being Azerbaijani?

Very important Important   Not important

11. What is the importance of being able to speak the Azerbaijani language for

being truly Azerbaijani?

Very important Important   Not important

12. Is living in Azerbaijan important for being truly Azerbaijai?

Very important Important   Not important

13. Are you proud of the history of Azerbaijan and the country's achievements?

Very proud   Proud   Not particularly proud

14. Language should be one of the main requirements for Azerbaijani citizenship.

Do you agree or disagree?

Yes   No

15.   Which of these statements do you identify with: 1) Azerbaijan should remain

an independent state; 2) All Turkic countries should form a single Union; and

Turkestan and Azerbaijan should be a part of this Union.

1   2

Few questions about the use of Latin and Cyrillic scripts in Azerbaijan

16.   Can you read both the Cyrillic and the Latin script? If yes, which one do you

use mostly?

Yes   No

Latin   Cyrillic   Both

17.   Cyrillic textbooks and other materials from the Soviet era should be

republished in Latin script. Do you agree?

Yes   No

Some questions about the role of foreign languages in Azerbaijan.

18.   What do you think of giving official language status to other foreign

languages like Russian or English?

This is a good idea   It would not matter   Absolutely no

19.   Which international language should be promoted in Azerbaijan?

Russian   English   Turkish

20.   Foreign language classes should be promoted in schools. Do you agree or

disagree?

Yes   No

21.   Should English be a mandatory subject at school?

 Yes   No

22.Television in Azerbaijan should give preference to Azerbaijani films and programmes.

Do you agree or disagree?

 Yes   No

Now some questions about ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan.

23.Do you think different nationalities should maintain their language, traditions and

culture, or should they assimilate?

 They should keep their unique identity   They should assimilate

24.Ethnic minorities should be given assistance to preserve their languages. Do you

agree with this statement?

 Yes   No

Appendix C

Ethics Approval

Dear Nigar,

Ref: 20214339-6809

Your ethics application has been approved. Please see the attachment for details of the approval.

Please contact the Swinburne Research Ethics Office if you have any queries.

Regards,

Ms Leah Barham

Research Ethics Office

Swinburne University of Technology

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