



## *Unraveling Language Degradation: A Case from Azerbaijan*

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### *Abstract*

*Language plays a pivotal role in shaping cultural identity, preserving heritage, and enabling social interaction. Globally, many languages are undergoing degradation due to factors such as globalization, migration, and the dominance of widely spoken languages, raising concerns about the preservation of minority languages and their cultural value. Increasingly, native languages are losing linguistic richness as they are overshadowed by dominant global languages. In the context of Azerbaijan, the widespread use of Russian, English, and Turkish has raised concerns regarding the purity and functional status of the Azerbaijani language. This paper seeks to examine the phenomenon of language degradation and its relevance to Azerbaijan by analyzing historical influences, the development of the modern Azerbaijani language, the impact of multiculturalism, and the linguistic landscape following independence.*

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## 1. Introduction

The deterioration of native languages has become a major factor influencing changes in cultural identity and linguistic diversity worldwide. This issue is also salient in Azerbaijan, where both social and political factors have played a significant role in shaping language practices. Language serves as a marker of cultural identity, yet local languages often face degradation as educational systems and mass communication increasingly adopt dominant languages (Nettle & Romaine, 2000). For example, bilingual individuals living in dominant-language environments frequently experience a decline in first-language proficiency over time (Karayayla & Schmid, 2017). This phenomenon is evident in Azerbaijan, where the use of the Azerbaijani language in society and education began to diminish due to Soviet-era Russification policies (Garagozov, 2012). Although there always exist efforts to preserve the language, many initiatives normally fail to address the deeper sociolinguistic factors contributing to language shift.

A critical question arises: how can Azerbaijan sustain the relevance of its national language, especially when influential domains such as education and media, key drivers of language dominance, remain underexamined? Further research is therefore required to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.

This review paper aims to define the concept of language degradation and explore its relevance to the Azerbaijani context. To achieve this aim, we examine historical events that have shaped the country's linguistic landscape, along with sociocultural and political factors that may inform our understanding of language degradation in Azerbaijan. The paper

begins with a definition of language degradation, followed by an analysis of key historical developments that influenced the formation of modern Azerbaijan. We then trace the evolution of the modern Azerbaijani language and assess the role of multiculturalism in shaping language practices. Finally, we analyze the current linguistic landscape in post-independent Azerbaijan.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- What is language degradation?
- How have historical events shaped the linguistic situation in Azerbaijan?
- What is the current state of the modern Azerbaijani language?
- How does Azerbaijani multilingualism affect the Azerbaijani language?
- How has the linguistic situation changed since Azerbaijan gained independence?

## Discussion of the Literature

### *Understanding Language Degradation: Causes and Consequences*

Bilingual individuals residing in environments where the second language is dominant to some extent, often experience attrition in their first language. This may result in reduced fluency, memory difficulties, and grammatical changes influenced by the dominant language (Karayayla & Schmid, 2017, p. 681). It is striking how readily first-language proficiency can decline once the second language takes precedence. This phenomenon highlights the extent to which language skills are shaped by daily linguistic context.

The research by Karayayla and Schmid (2017) indicates that the earlier an individual is exposed to a second language, especially in environments where their native language is rarely used, the more likely they are to experience first language attrition. While early second-language exposure can enhance overall linguistic abilities, it often leads to a decline in native language proficiency when regular use is lacking. In such cases, attrition is more likely to occur than retention. However, we should make it clear that the term “language attrition” and “language degradation” do not stand for the same meaning. **Language attrition** refers to the gradual loss or decline in a speaker’s ability to use a language, typically due to reduced exposure, lack of use, or dominance of another language. It can affect first (L1) or second languages (L2) and may impact vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, or fluency (Köpke & Schmid, 2004). **Language degradation** typically refers to a perceived decline in the quality, purity, or correctness of a language over time, often due to influences such as borrowing from other languages, misuse in media, or lack of formal instruction. Unlike language attrition, which is about individual language loss, degradation is often discussed at the societal or linguistic system level (Milroy & Milroy, 1999). While **language attrition** refers to an **individual-level** phenomenon, typically describing how a person gradually loses proficiency in a language due to disuse or interference from another language, **language degradation** is a more **generalized, societal-level** concept. It pertains to perceived declines in a language’s quality, purity, or structure across a **speech community or nation**, often influenced by external social, cultural, or political factors. Hence, in this paper we will be using a “language degradation” term to show the changes in the social language use.

The degree of language degradation and dominance is highly dependent on the immediate context in which each language is used and can shift rapidly in response to environmental changes (Köpke & Genevskaja-Hanke, 2018, p. 684). It is noteworthy how swiftly language dominance can change merely through a shift in environment, underscoring the significant role that context plays in language use and retention. A decline in the regular use of a language diminishes both productive and receptive language skills. This process is frequently influenced by factors such as migration, evolving cultural identity, and the absence of structured bilingual education (Lambert & Freed, 1982, p. 52). For instance, second-generation speakers in immigrant communities often retain only passive knowledge of their heritage language, facing difficulties with formal structures and active use (Lambert & Freed, 1982, p. 55). These patterns suggest that without consistent use, even a once-fluent language may fall out of active use. Cultural shifts and the lack of institutional or community support further complicate efforts to maintain heritage language proficiency.

Language also begins to lose its effectiveness in conveying cultural values when it becomes disconnected from its social and environmental context (Hill, 2002, p. 59). This is particularly true for minority languages. As societies increasingly prioritize dominant languages in education and media, minority languages gradually fade. Speakers often choose languages with greater economic or social utility over their native tongues, driven by pragmatic considerations (Nettle & Romaine, 2000, p. 28). When a language is no longer embedded in daily life and cultural practices, it inevitably loses depth and significance. While the shift to dominant languages may be understandable from a practical

perspective, it often results in the erosion of cultural identity.

In multilingual societies, “language policies that favor national or global languages while discouraging the use of minority languages in public domains can further accelerate language loss” (Nettle & Romaine, 2000, p.30). In post-Soviet regions, the legacy of Russian linguistic dominance and the complexities of multilingualism continue to impact efforts aimed at strengthening national languages. Striking a “balance between language revitalization and the protection of minority language rights remains an ongoing challenge” (Pavlenko, 2008, p.59). In the case of Azerbaijan, language serves as a powerful symbol of national identity and statehood. As such, the “Azerbaijani language has been privileged by both the government and the state as a unifying force for the titular nationality” (Marquardt, 2011, p.191). Conversely, Russian has been demoted to Russian-medium streams within predominantly Azerbaijani-medium schools and, in many instances, reduced to the status of an elective subject, while English has emerged as a compulsory foreign language (Luscombe & Kazdal, 2014; Mammadova, 2024). Language policies play a critical role in determining which languages flourish and which decline. Post-Soviet Azerbaijan offers a compelling example: since gaining independence, the country has pursued education policies aimed at re-establishing the “Azerbaijani language as the primary medium of instruction and official governance, effectively replacing Russian” (Mammadova, 2025, p.3). However, the enduring influence of Russian and the challenge of promoting national languages without marginalizing linguistic minorities continue to make this a complex and sensitive undertaking.

In addition to English and Russian, Turkish is also gaining importance in the linguistic landscape of Azerbaijan. This is largely due to the increased popularity of Turkish media, cultural exchanges, tourism, and education initiatives such as scholarships. Its soft power is particularly evident in the capital, Baku (Mammadova, 2025). The close linguistic relationship between Turkish and Azerbaijani contributes to this influence, making Turkish expressions and vocabulary common in everyday communication, especially among young people. Many students use Turkish in informal settings, sometimes as a way to “align with cultural trends or express a modern identity” (Mammadova, 2025, p.14). Although Turkish is not as dominant in the academic environment as English, its presence highlights the dynamic and multi-layered nature of language contact in Azerbaijan. This substantially affects the lexical and grammatical structure of the local Azerbaijani language that largely erodes its stance and development.

Cultural and environmental factors play a critical role in shaping “how languages evolve and degrade over time” (Maiwong, 2023, p. 290). Language is widely recognized as a core component of cultural identity (Cenoz et al., 2011, p.85). “Environmental degradation affects both the literal and symbolic dimensions of language, diminishing its capacity to express societal values and worldviews” (Maiwong, 2023, p.59). In this context, *practices* refer to everyday behaviors and patterns of social interaction, *products* to tangible and intangible cultural achievements, and *perspectives* to the values, meanings, and beliefs embedded in a culture. These interconnected elements underscore the strong relationship between cross-cultural understanding and education (Mammadova, 2021). For instance, idiomatic expressions rooted in environmental knowledge, reflecting

qualities such as skill, patience, and judgment, may disappear as natural ecosystems decline (Maiwong, 2023). This illustrates the deep interconnection between language and the environment: when one is compromised, the other is inevitably affected. As traditional ecological knowledge fades, so does the linguistic richness that conveys cultural heritage and identity.

Because language and culture are deeply intertwined, “environmental changes can have an immediate impact on linguistic usage and communication” (Maiwong, 2023, p.58). The relationship between culture and language is often described as two sides of the same coin, emphasizing that language instruction cannot be separated from cultural education (Mammadova, 2021). This interdependence is further reflected in the parallel decline of biodiversity and linguistic diversity (Maiwong, 2023, p. 58). “Indigenous languages, which frequently encode rich ecological knowledge, tend to mirror the complexity and richness of local species and habitats” (Maiwong, 2023, p.58). Consequently, the loss of indigenous languages signals not only linguistic erosion but also deeper cultural and environmental degradation.

### ***Recent Events of Modern Azerbaijan***

Literature is often regarded as an inseparable component of any language. Azerbaijani literature underwent profound transformations, particularly during the periods of Russian Soviet dominance and the subsequent years, which had a significant impact on nation-building processes (Dadashova, 2024). These changes are especially important as they reflect the struggle for national identity and the articulation of a distinct Azerbaijani cultural self-understanding (Dadashova, 2024). The resurgence of Azerbaijani literature can be seen as both a powerful

form of resistance to external domination and a broader cultural revival. For example, writers such as Kurban Said, who explored themes of independence and cultural survival, addressed universal aspirations for freedom (Dadashova, 2024). In summary, Azerbaijani literature experienced significant development both during and after the Russian Empire period. Similarly, Azerbaijan’s religious landscape underwent notable changes under Soviet rule, laying the groundwork for future national conflicts. “The history of Islam in Azerbaijan is deeply intertwined with the country’s political trajectory, particularly throughout the Soviet era” (Bedford et al., 2024, p.691). During this time, Islam and other religions across the Soviet Union were subject to stringent control and repression (Bedford et al., 2024). As Bedford et al. (2024, p. 691) observe, “Soviet anti-religious campaigns established a context in which traditional Islam became marginalized, leading to a state-led religious narrative that promoted a secular national identity.”

According to Ahmadoglu (2019, p.269), “Azerbaijani culture saw a resurgence with the usage of the Azerbaijani language in newspapers, magazines, and schools, which fostered a heightened sense of ethnic identity and pride among the population.” This cultural revival was particularly pronounced during the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) period (1918–1920), when efforts to promote the Azerbaijani language and national identity were actively pursued as part of the nation-building process. Consequently, questions of identity and belonging remained central to Azerbaijan’s social fabric, particularly in relation to language and culture.

Today, although the majority of students report Azerbaijani as their mother tongue, only 14% express a strong identification with Azerbaijani culture (Luscombe &

Kazdal, 2014). This comparatively weaker cultural identification can be attributed to Azerbaijan's complex political and historical context, particularly the longstanding influence of Russia. Russian-language education often serves as a gateway to the broader post-Soviet space and is typically associated with a more cosmopolitan or Russian-oriented identity. Furthermore, the increasing prominence of English in education reflects global trends, as English is widely perceived as an essential tool for accessing international opportunities and networks (Luscombe & Kazdal, 2014).

### *The Azerbaijani language today*

After gaining independence, Azerbaijan intensified efforts to revitalize the Azerbaijani language, which had been heavily influenced during the Soviet period (Garagozov, 2012). Nationalism played a significant role in this linguistic revival, "although debates over the language's Turkic roots persisted" (Garagozov, 2012, p.141). In the post-Soviet context, some advocated for closer alignment with Anatolian Turkish, whereas "others emphasized preserving the language's distinct identity" (Garibova, 2009, p.9). Reestablishing Azerbaijani as the primary language of administration and education emerged as a strategic political effort to counter the effects of Russification (Garibova, 2009). However, shifts in broadcasting and efforts to revive pre-Soviet cultural traditions also played a significant role. These changes involved replacing Russian with Azerbaijani in schools and actively promoting the revitalization of the national language (Garagozov, 2012; Luscombe & Kazdal, 2014). As a result, younger generations have increasingly come to identify with a "pan-Azerbaijani identity grounded in the national language" (Luscombe & Kazdal, 2014, p.1021). Nonetheless, despite the

Azerbaijani language's dominance in public and social life, Russian continues to maintain a strong presence in the education system, prompting ongoing debates about the role of bilingualism in education.

According to Luscombe and Kazdal (2014, p.1021), 93% of students in Azerbaijan currently attend Azerbaijani-medium schools. Nevertheless, over 100,000 students are enrolled in Russian immersion schools, raising concerns about "the benefits and drawbacks of bilingual education" (Abizada & Seyidova, 2024, p.482). Abizada and Seyidova (2024) note that although only 10% of students are educated in Russian, they occupy 20% of university placements, giving them a noticeable competitive advantage. Azerbaijani-speaking students often face initial challenges in Russian-medium institutions; however, most eventually adapt, which helps reduce the academic gap over time (Abizada & Seyidova, 2024, p.493). While bilingualism offers clear benefits, the unequal distribution of educational opportunities risks creating divisions and disproportionately favoring Russian-speaking students. Given that Azerbaijani is the official language, it appears inequitable for language proficiency alone to determine access to higher education.

In international and bilingual schools, students often attain fluency in multiple languages, particularly English. While this multilingualism offers certain advantages, it also poses the risk of eroding Azerbaijani language proficiency, contributing to a form of imbalanced bilingualism (Abizada & Seyidova, 2024; Alasgarova et al., 2024). Research indicates that students with stronger English skills tend to perform lower in Azerbaijani, and prolonged exposure to foreign languages can influence their sense of cultural identity (Abizada & Seyidova, 2024; Alasgarova et

al., 2024). Although fluency in foreign languages is undoubtedly beneficial, it should not come at the expense of one's connection to the native language. The observed decline in the use of Azerbaijani among young people points to deeper issues related to identity and belonging. As highlighted in studies by Abizada and Seyidova (2024) and Alasgarova et al. (2024), some participants reported a shift in cultural identification, with growing alignment toward international cultures, a subtle yet significant sign of linguistic and cultural loss. Furthermore, students' struggles to comprehend complex Azerbaijani texts discouraged regular use of the language, further diminishing their native language competence. Parents have also expressed concern that immersion in foreign languages may reduce students' learning motivation and weaken their national identity by undermining proficiency in the mother tongue (Abizada & Seyidova, 2024).

Understanding this linguistic transformation also necessitates examining the historical context, particularly the influence of Soviet rule on literature and identity. As Vatanabadi (1996, p. 494) explains, "during the Soviet era, strict state censorship controlled communication and limited the public use of Azerbaijani, which in turn shaped how language and identity were represented". Despite these constraints, "many Azerbaijani writers used literature as a means of resistance, subtly challenging official narratives and state ideologies" (Vatanabadi, 1996, p.494). In this context, historical novels emerged as a powerful vehicle for reimagining the nation's past and future, as well as for recovering suppressed narratives. Often employing allegory, these works bridged different historical periods and encouraged reflection on cultural resilience and national identity (Vatanabadi, 1996). Ultimately, the

development of the Azerbaijani language reflects a broader tension between preserving national identity and navigating global influences. Sustaining cultural tradition and national cohesion requires finding a balance between embracing bilingualism and fostering a deep, enduring connection to the Azerbaijani language.

### ***Multiculturalism in Azerbaijan***

Azerbaijan is a multilingual country where linguistic dynamics are shaped by political, cultural, and historical influences. President Ilham Aliyev formally declared Azerbaijani as the sole state language in the 1995 Constitution (Marquardt, 2011, p.184). Although various languages have played roles in different historical periods, Azerbaijani remains the official language and is spoken by the majority of the population (Mammadova, 2024, p.8). According to Mammadova (2024), Azerbaijani society can be broadly categorized into Azerbaijani speakers whose language use aligns closely with Turkish and Russian speakers, who tend to rely more on English for international communication. Additionally, there is strong enthusiasm for learning other foreign languages, including French, German, and Spanish, which are widely taught in schools. One of the most prominent indicators of Azerbaijan's multilingualism is its linguistic proximity to Turkish, a reflection of shared cultural and historical ties, a phenomenon commonly referred to as "Receptive Multilingualism."

*Receptive multilingualism* refers to "the ability of speakers of closely related languages to communicate using their respective native languages, without relying on a shared lingua franca" (ten Thije & Zeevaert, 2007, as cited in Salehi & Neysani, 2017, p.2). As previously discussed, this phenomenon is particularly evident between Turkish and Azerbaijani,

where linguistic similarities, shared cultural heritage, and geographic proximity contribute to a high degree of mutual intelligibility (Salehi & Neysani, 2017). One of the primary sources of exposure to Turkish is the widespread popularity of Turkish television programs, which are extensively viewed by Azerbaijanis both within the Republic of Azerbaijan and in northwestern Iran (Salehi & Neysani, 2017). Furthermore, although Turkish is not an official language of instruction, “it continues to serve as an important cultural and social language, often acquired informally through media consumption and familial ties” (Luscombe & Kazdal, 2014, p.1019). This pervasive exposure has also influenced contemporary Azerbaijani, with Turkish slang increasingly adopted, “particularly among younger generations” (Mammadova, 2024, p.8).

In Soviet-era Azerbaijan, Russian served as the primary language of education and state administration, fostering the emergence of a Russian-speaking elite with privileged access to various forms of capital (Luscombe & Kazdal, 2014, p.1017). During this period, Russian arguably attained the status of a “first language” for many Azerbaijanis, some of whom not only thought in Russian but also spoke it more fluently than Azerbaijani. However, following independence, Azerbaijan implemented language policies aimed at restoring the status of Azerbaijani by designating it as the official language for education and government functions (Luscombe & Kazdal, 2014, p.1019). As English gained prominence as the primary foreign language, Russian was gradually relegated to Russian-medium tracks within Azerbaijani schools or offered as an elective (Luscombe & Kazdal, 2014, p.1019). Despite this shift, President Aliyev has repeatedly emphasized the continued importance of Russian for many Azerbaijani citizens and has expressed

support for Russian-language education and media (Marquardt, 2011, p.184). Moreover, Azerbaijani has not yet become the dominant language for accessing academic knowledge or employment opportunities, as most high-quality educational resources remain in Russian or English. English, in particular, has emerged as the primary language for international communication and access to global education (Luscombe & Kazdal, 2014, p.1025). As Mammadov and Mammadova (2021, p.2) note, Azerbaijan continues to be a multicultural and multilingual society, with English gaining increasing popularity.

Moreover, Azerbaijan’s linguistic diversity is closely linked to the ethnic composition of its population, which includes Azeris, Russians, Lezgins, and other minority groups (Mammadova, 2024, p.3). While Azerbaijani is emphasized as the state language, the government supports minority communities by offering financial assistance and ensuring access to media in their native languages (Marquardt, 2011, p.189). At the same time, there is an expectation that minority groups integrate into the broader society through the acquisition of Azerbaijani (Marquardt, 2011, p.189). In sum, Azerbaijan’s language landscape is shaped by a combination of cultural heritage, historical developments, and educational policy, resulting in a multilingual society where various languages coexist alongside the official language.

### *Language of independent Azerbaijan*

Following Azerbaijan’s independence, English-Medium Instruction (EMI) policies began to play a significant role in shaping academic mobility. As Mammadova (2023a, p.1) notes, “the rapid implementation of EMI policy is primarily motivated by the pursuit of internationalization (Williams, 2023), participation in international projects

(Mammadova, 2020c), and international academic mobility (Mammadova, 2023b).” This shift has contributed to a growing trend of emigration among young graduates who seek to specialize abroad and pursue what is perceived as a “better life” (Mammadova, 2023a, p.1). In this context, “international academic mobility has emerged as a rapidly growing and dynamic phenomenon within the realm of higher education, expanding and evolving the concept of study abroad” (Mammadova & Allen, 2024, p.1). While this trend raises concerns about “brain drain,” it may also be viewed through the lens of transnationalism. If the links and networks between non-returnees and local populations are seen as forming transnational bridges, then the ongoing interactions, exchanges, and transactions between them can generate additional resources and cultivate new forms of social and cultural capital. These connections, in turn, may contribute to the social, cultural, political, and economic development of the home country, a phenomenon described as “brain bridging” (e.g., Mok & Xiao, 2016; Mammadova, 2023a, etc.).

Following these shifts in mindset, the majority of youth in post-independent Azerbaijan aspired to study outside their hometowns and even abroad; however, only a few managed to achieve this goal (Lepisto, 2010, p.445). The collapse of the Soviet Union created an urgent need for societal reform, including significant changes in the educational system. Academic mobility programs became a key mechanism for integrating Western academic models and moving away from the Soviet legacy (Mammadova, 2023a, p.9). The younger generation’s growing interest in foreign cultures not only contributed to their personal development but also challenged existing Soviet-era norms, particularly within education. Since its inception, the Erasmus program and

similar European student exchange initiatives have aimed to foster a sense of European identity among participating students (Papatsiba, 2006, as cited in Mammadova, 2024, p.11). According to Lepisto (2010, p.445), “most youth initially pursued professions requiring secondary education predominantly taught in Russian, followed by further studies at the college level.” Nevertheless, an increasing number of students from the younger generation have been opting for education in English. Given that language is a fundamental component of cultural identity (Cenoz et al., 2011, p. 85), the rising popularity of English among youth signals a potential shift in the dominant language and contributes to reshaping post-Soviet youth identities. This eagerness to pursue education in English also reflects their anticipation of broader governmental and economic changes such as the transition from communism to a market economy that were emerging at the time. Consequently, acquiring English-language education was seen as essential for maintaining competitiveness in the evolving job market.

Another significant feature of independent Azerbaijan’s development is its unique position of neutrality, avoiding alignment with either Russia or the West (Valiyev, 2009, p.275, as cited in Valiyev & Mamishova, 2019, p.274). Such an approach is further reflected in deeper cultural and educational engagement between Azerbaijan and Russia. For instance, Baku hosts branches of Lomonosov Moscow State University and I.M. Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University, and approximately 15,000 Azerbaijani citizens study in Russia, with ongoing cooperation between higher education institutions in both countries continuing to expand (Valiyev & Mamishova, 2019). Additionally, the prevalence of Russian-language schools in Azerbaijan provides a strategic advantage

in maintaining effective relations with Russia (Valiyev & Mamishova, 2019). However, a notable drawback of these educational ties is the potential perception that Azerbaijan's education system is overly dependent on Russian models, rather than developing an education framework that aligns with global standards while authentically reflecting Azerbaijani culture where the local language may be considerably fractured.

The prevalence of schools offering education in English and Russian can be attributed to several factors. For instance, one key reason is the country's ethnic composition, with Russians constituting the third-largest ethnic group in Azerbaijan (Abizada & Seyidova, 2021, p.481). As Abizada and Seyidova (2021) note, many Azerbaijani citizens perceive education in Russian as being of higher quality and believe it offers greater career opportunities for their children. This perception stems largely from the older generation, who grew up in the Soviet era and regard the Russian language as more prestigious and superior. However, some parents compel their Azerbaijani-speaking children to study in Russian, which can pose significant challenges for students whose families cannot afford supplementary academic support (Abizada & Seyidova, 2021, p. 494). The pressure to pursue education in Russian underscores the widespread belief that the language of instruction serves not only as a means of communication but also as a critical factor influencing future career prospects. Conversely, the perception of Azerbaijani-language education as inferior reflects a post-colonial language bias, revealing concerns about the quality and prestige of education delivered in the national language.

The impact of other languages on Azerbaijani is evident in several examples.

English has become the dominant language in higher education institutions, online courses, and international companies in Azerbaijan, leading many to view proficiency in English as essential for professional advancement. This reality has driven widespread English language learning and integration into everyday work life. Consequently, English terms such as "meeting," "project," "deadline," "submit," "save," and "update" have been adopted into daily professional communication, alongside casual expressions like "okay," "cool," "sorry," "maybe," and "good." Another language that has gained popularity in Azerbaijan due to media exposure is Turkish. Turkish television series and music, particularly popular drama series, have captured Azerbaijani audiences, resulting in the frequent use of Turkish expressions such as "işte," "aşkım," "şakamısın," "nasılsın," "çok iyi", "abi", etc. in informal conversations, sometimes replacing their Azerbaijani equivalents. This exposure to both Turkish and English has created a linguistic environment where the infusion of foreign elements into Azerbaijani is common and even fashionable. While this trend may appear harmless, it risks undermining the purity of the Azerbaijani language and its grammatical conventions.

In conclusion, this literature review demonstrates that Azerbaijan's independence opened new opportunities but also exposed significant challenges, including post-colonial language biases and an uneven educational structure, which have impacted the status and development of the Azerbaijani language. Addressing these issues is essential for fostering genuine progress in strengthening the Azerbaijani language and ensuring Azerbaijan's continued development as a fully sovereign nation. Despite various historical events and sociopolitical changes, Azerbaijani political and cultural

leaders have played a crucial role in **preserving the integrity and purity of the Azerbaijani language**. At the same time, the language has been naturally enriched through the integration of international vocabulary, **a common and healthy aspect of linguistic evolution and development** observed in many dynamic languages.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has examined the issue of language degradation, with a particular focus on Azerbaijan. It explores how dominant languages can weaken and gradually supplant a country's native tongue. Key factors contributing to this phenomenon include bilingualism, migration, political and sociological influences, and soft power dynamics. The study highlights how both internal and external forces affect the use, preservation, and status of the Azerbaijani language. By reviewing historical events, contemporary linguistic trends, multiculturalism, and the impact of independence, this paper demonstrates the complex challenges and ongoing efforts to protect the Azerbaijani language within a multicultural and rapidly modernizing society. Azerbaijan is just an example of multilingualism in the country where the world dominant languages affect the usage of the local language. The same situation is observed in most of the bilingual and multilingual countries that favor international languages over the local ones.

To address the issue of language degradation it is advisable to provide high-quality materials in the local language and actively promote the use of the native language across sectors where international languages dominate. Furthermore, government investment in producing engaging, high-quality local content could help mitigate the overwhelming influence of international media in the country. While multilingualism remains a strength of the

every nation, Azerbaijan being a role-model, preserving the linguistic integrity of the local language continues to be a significant challenge. This review has identified language degradation as a pressing concern in many countries, shaped by its multicultural context, educational dynamics, lingering post-Soviet or post-colonial influences, and the youth's growing interest in English and foreign cultures. Given the limitations in access to literature, time constraints, and the nature of this publication as a review rather than an empirical study, it was not possible to explore the topic as extensively as desired. Future research should aim to investigate this issue in greater depth to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the ongoing language degradation and its broader social and cultural implications in contemporary countries and strengthen the local language policies.

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