

***Oral or written?<sup>1</sup>***

***Language attitudes in three Inghiloi villages in Azerbaijan***

***Устный или письменный?***

***Языковая ситуация в трех ингилойских деревнях в  
Азербайджане***

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This paper describes a qualitative study on language attitudes among the Inghiloi people in three villages of northwestern Azerbaijan in 2014. The main emphasis was on studying people's attitudes towards their own spoken language, Inghiloi. There were also questions on the development of Inghiloi as a written language, especially regarding the possibility of teaching Inghiloi as a subject or using it as the language of instruction at school. The paper demonstrates the multicultural and multilingual situation of the Inghiloi. Although the study focuses on the personal opinions of a fairly small group of interviewees, these attitudes may be common to the language community in general, and even to other language communities in similar situations.

Keywords: Inghiloi, languages of Azerbaijan, language attitudes, non-dominant languages, mother tongue, language of instruction at school

Статья посвящена исследованию отношения ингилойцев к своему этническому языку, которое проводилось в трех деревнях на северо-западе Азербайджана в 2014 г. Основной акцент был сделан на изучение языковой лояльности людей по отношению к их родному разговорному идиому. Были также заданы вопросы о развитии ингилойского в качестве письменного языка, в особенности в отношении возможности преподавания как предмета или

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<sup>1</sup> The original longer version of this article can be obtained from the author upon request.

использовании его в качестве языка обучения в школе. В статье показана мультикультурная и многоязычная ситуации в среде носителей ингилойского идиома. Хотя исследование фокусируется на личных мнениях относительно немногочисленной группы респондентов, высказанная точка зрения, как представляется, является общей не только для языкового сообщества в целом, но и для других языковых сообществ со схожей языковой ситуацией.

Ключевые слова: ингилойский язык, языки Азербайджана, языковая лояльность, недоминирующие языки, родной язык, языки школьного образования

## 1. Introduction

The main goal of this research is to study one minority language group, Inghiloi, living in northwestern Azerbaijan, and to find out their attitudes towards their own language. The Inghiloi language is only used orally, and is considered by many linguists to be a dialect of Georgian [Clifton et al. 2005: 3]. In this study, I employ the term “language” for Inghiloi, although even they themselves refer to their spoken language either as a language or as a dialect of Georgian. In the area, Azerbaijani is the official national language; Georgian and Russian are other literary languages used there. There are Inghiloi speakers on the Georgian side, too, so it is a cross-border language. Three Inghiloi villages on the Azerbaijani side — Ititala, Mosul and Qax Inghiloi — were chosen to represent the Inghiloi-speaking group in the area. There are some plans by SIL International to possibly start a mother tongue literacy programme together with the Inghiloi people, so the results of this research may give help in evaluating the possibilities for that. The general research question was divided into three main areas, which were decided before the field research was conducted (see section 5):

- a) the sociolinguistic situation in the three Inghiloi villages;
- b) attitudes towards one’s mother tongue and other languages in general;
- c) attitudes towards mother tongue education.

*The Sociolinguistic Situation of the Inghiloi of Azerbaijan* survey report by Clifton et al. [2005] gives a general picture of language use among the Inghiloi language community. In the present research, my aim was to study a smaller number of people and their language attitudes, but in greater depth. The approach is qualitative. There was no specific problem stated beforehand; the idea was to get a better general picture of the present state of the language, so some new themes were found during the study [Horvat 2013; loc. 374/3604 Kindle-edition].

## **2. Language situation in Azerbaijan**

### **2.1. Azerbaijan**

Azerbaijan is a country located in the South Caucasus, with a total population close to 9 million. Its official language, a member of the Turkic language family, is called Azerbaijani (or Azeri). According to Lewis et al. [2014] there are 17 non-dominant languages in Azerbaijan, belonging to the Indo-European, Turkic, Caucasian and Kartvelian language families. Most of the non-dominant language groups, especially the smaller ones, live in mountainous areas and close to the borders of Russia, Iran or Georgia.

### **2.2. Language situation in Soviet Azerbaijan**

During the Soviet era, the official language in Azerbaijan was Azerbaijani (as were Armenian and Georgian in their respective republics). This meant that Azerbaijani could be used as the language of instruction in schools, so the communities could choose which language would be used in schools. There were so-called sectors at schools: Russian, Azerbaijani, and also Georgian sectors in communities close to Georgian border. Higher education was available in Azerbaijani, a different policy than that applied in the Central Asian republics. However, Russian was the de facto language of government, and Russian classes in schools were better equipped and supported than Azerbaijani ones; also, in prestigious universities the language of instruction

was Russian. This resulted in a Russian-speaking, although often bilingual, elite in positions of government, education and science [Clifton 2013: 201; Garibova 2009: 13; Garibova & Asgarova 2009: 195]. Garibova [2009: 15] states that “Azerbaijani survived and flourished mainly through its expansive usage in folklore and poetry, rather than in science, medicine, or business.”

In principle, the Soviet education policy was to offer primary education to all in their heritage languages. In Azerbaijan this did not happen, the formal reason being that there was room for only two languages in the curriculum, and since Azerbaijani and Russian had to be included, minority languages were left out. Although minority languages were not recognised as official languages, the fact that there were language communities whose first language was not Azerbaijani was a reason for Soviet officials to promote Russian as the *lingua franca*. The change to the Cyrillic alphabet in 1935-39 was yet another form of russification [Hatcher 2008; Clifton 2013: 201].

According to Clifton [2013: 202], Russian never became a language of wider communication in rural areas. Instead speakers of non-dominant languages used Azerbaijani, and many of them were highly competent in it. This led earlier researchers to conclude that there was a language shift happening from minority languages to Azerbaijani. Clifton argues on the basis of wide field research [1998–2002] that actually a widespread situation of broad diglossia was occurring. Azerbaijani was needed for education and was used as language of wider communication, but the mother tongue was used in the home and local community [Clifton 2013: 198, 213].

### **2.3. Post-Soviet Azerbaijan and languages**

The constitution of the republic of Azerbaijan [Ch. 1, Article 20] states:

- The Azerbaijani language is the official language of the Azerbaijan Republic. The Republic of Azerbaijan provides for the development of the Azerbaijani language.

- The Republic of Azerbaijan ensures the free use and development of other languages spoken by the people.

### **2.3.1. Official languages after independence**

One of the nation-building and uniting tasks of the new government of Azerbaijan after the dissolution of the USSR was to promote the use of Azerbaijani as the official language and as a symbol of national identity. There were two ways to achieve this: first, by legislation and administration, and second, by actual communicative use. The new Constitution of 1995, the Presidential Degree of 2001 “On the Official Use of Azerbaijani” and the Language Law of 2003 raised the status of Azerbaijani as the official language. There were requirements to use Azerbaijani in public speeches, and in interpreting during official meetings, in academic writing, etc. In addition to that, language issues were communicated in media, in discussions, and also praised through poetry and artistic performances, creating positive attitudes towards the government’s language policy and broader policies in general [Garibova 2009: 17, 20–21].

Although Azerbaijani gained several domains of language use from Russian, derussification was not very aggressively pursued. For example, none of the Russian sector schools were closed down at first, but some Azeri sector classes were added within them. Later on, many of the Russian schools were closed. It seems that Azerbaijani speakers have moved toward a higher cultural and educational level, and simultaneously Russian speakers are aiming for a higher competence in Azerbaijani. The status of Russian has been stable; it is still the best known foreign language in the country and considered to be a prestige language [Garibova 2009: 17; Pavlenko 2008: 292–294].

### **2.3.2. Non-dominant languages**

According to the 2009 Census, about eight percent of Azerbaijan’s population belong to non-dominant language groups.

Both the percentages and actual numbers have somewhat decreased since independence in 1991, one reason being that many ethnic Russians and Armenians left the country because of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. However, the trend of decrease is seen also in most minority groups.

[<http://www.stat.gov.az/search/indexen.php?q=languages&submit> 1.11. accessed Oct 2014]

In post-Soviet Azerbaijan the use and development of minority languages has been a low priority, although Azerbaijan has signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages [Treaty 148, 1992] and Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities [Treaty 157, 1995] as a member of the Council of Europe. The strengthening of the smaller languages may have been seen as a distraction from the goal of strengthening the unity of the nation. There have also been separatist movements among the Lezgis and the Talysh, so some minorities are seen as a threat to national unity, and there are also international political concerns, as these groups are cross-border languages to Russia and Iran, respectively [Garibova & Asgarova 2009: 201, 204, 208; Pavlenko 2008: 293].

Nevertheless, linguistic diversity is officially acknowledged and the maintenance of it is encouraged. The 1992 Presidential Decree on Protection of the Rights and Liberties and the Development of Languages and Cultures of Ethnic Minorities Living in the Territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan grants equal rights to both major and minor language speakers to use their language in many ways, e. g. in education, employment, administration and culture. The Decree gives instructions on how to support minority languages, e. g. in education the minority languages should be in curricula in relevant areas, and the State Committee of Media and Press has a task to produce school materials for them. Also, universities are given directions to promote study on the ethnography, history and culture of minorities [Garibova & Asgarova 2009: 204].

The status of minority languages has been raised by the Presidential Decree, but the practical implementation has been

slow. The 2012 school curriculum states that minority languages should be taught as a subject in primary schools in the four first grades. The Lezgi language is to be taught during all eleven years of schooling in northern areas. However, there are hardly any school materials for primary school use, and what materials exist are often old, dating from the Soviet period. Most of the non-dominant languages are lacking other reading materials [Garibova & Asgarova 2009: 204–205].

Garibova & Asgarova [2009: 205] conclude that the lack of sufficient support for minority languages by the government is a potential factor for language shift. But Clifton [2013: 215–216] draws attention to a non-government organization that has worked with local communities to develop orthographies and school materials for some non-dominant languages. The key to success in these efforts has been the local partners, who want to see their language develop and are willing to work for it together with the authorities.

Besides the school curriculum, there are other means to support minority languages at official levels. In 2012 a document published by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism together with the National Library gave advice to libraries on how to advocate for minority cultures. There is a citation by Heydar Aliyev in it: “The wealth of Azerbaijan is not in its cotton or in underground or rural resources; it is the people living in the country” [Azərbaycan Milli Kitabxanası 2012: 24, translation by ES].

### **3. The Inghiloi people and their language**

#### **3.1. History and statistics**

The Inghiloi people are one of the oldest peoples living in the so-called Sainglo area, in the Balakan, Zaqatala and Qax districts in the northwest of the Azerbaijan Republic, bordering in the southwest with Georgia. The speech variety called Inghiloi is considered to be a dialect of Georgian, closely related to the

Kakhetian and Kiziqian dialects. The history of the Inghiloi goes back to Christian Caucasian Albania, so the Inghiloi are one of the oldest ethnic groups living in the area; and there is evidence supporting the fact that they have been part of Georgia since the fourth or fifth century [Mgeladze 1994: 149–150]. In the Middle Ages there were seven schools working in the Sainglo area, preparing literacy materials and spreading the Georgian alphabet and Christian literature to surrounding areas. Georgia, including the Sainglo area, was for a long time in the interests of both Persian and Ottoman rulers. In the eighteenth century the struggle for the Sainglo area ended with its seizure by the northern mountain peoples, Avars and Tsakhurs. From 1803 Sainglo became a part of the Russian Empire and administratively a part of Georgia. Only after the Russian Revolution in 1920 did the Zaqatala region [Sainglo] become a part of Azerbaijan [Mgeladze 1994: 149–150].

There are two subdialects in present day Inghiloi, northern and southern. The northern subdialect is spoken in the Zaqatala and Balakan districts. Usually the speakers of the northern subdialect refer to themselves as Inghilois. They are Muslims, having converted to Islam in the seventeenth century. According to Clifton et al. [2005: 3] most of the speakers of southern subdialect, in the Qax area, prefer to call themselves and their language Yereti-Inghiloi, and they are mostly Georgian Orthodox. Nonetheless both groups think that the language they speak is one and the same [Clifton et al. 2005: 3].

In the statistics officially published by the government of Azerbaijan, Inghiloi is not mentioned, only Georgian. In the Guide for libraries, the Inghiloi group is mentioned, as well as in two books about the Inghiloi people [Azərbaycan Milli Kitabxanası 2012]. According to the official statistics in 1999 [<http://www.stat.gov.az/search/indexen.php?q=languages&submit>, 1.11. accessed in October 2014], the number of Georgian speakers is stated to be 20,000, but in 2009 only 10,000. In the census interview every person defined his/her own language and nationality. The drop



in numbers may be explained by the Inghiloi people's preference to state their nationality as Azerbaijani rather than Georgian, as Inghiloi was not an option.

### 3.2. Language use in Inghiloi villages

According to Clifton et al. [2005: 4–5] the core areas where the Inghiloi language is most actively used are three villages: Əliabad, İtitala and Mosul (the English spelling of the first two is henceforth given as Aliabad, Ititala). The population numbers in these villages are about the same now as at the time of Clifton's survey: about 10,000 in Aliabad, among them 7,500 Inghiloi speakers, and about 2,500 in both Mosul and Ititala. Clifton's survey did not touch upon the Yereti-Inghiloi group, whose main village is Qax Inghiloi with a population of 2,000.

In the villages of Aliabad and Qax Inghiloi the languages of instruction at schools are Azerbaijani, Georgian and Russian. In Mosul and Ititala villages there are only two languages of instruction available, Azerbaijani and Georgian. Earlier, between 1945 and 1958, Georgian was the only language at schools in all these villages, and Azerbaijani sectors were gradually added between 1958 and 1976 [Clifton et al. 2005: 6].

Clifton et al. [2005: 14] notes that most of the villagers in Aliabad, Mosul and Ititala were bilingual and often multilingual. This is inevitable, because the language of instruction at school is different from that at home. Inghiloi was used at home by all generations, parents were speaking it to their children, and it was used everywhere in the village. Azerbaijani, Georgian and Russian were used at school and in official matters. Clifton et al. [2005] also thought that having several languages as languages of instruction may help to maintain multilingualism. This also helps the home language to remain vital. Clifton [2013: 212, 216–217] describes this in terms of language ecology: different languages were filling different niches.

## **4. Research methods**

### **4.1. The research design**

The method chosen for this research is qualitative semi-structured interviews, also called the interview guide approach [Cohen et al. 2007: 353]. The choice to use a semi-structured interview is partly practical: to interview people in their homes and use a small dictation machine for recording resembles a usual conversation situation, so it should not cause any unnecessary shift of attention. My hope was that by using open-ended questions, I would get not only to longer answers but also answers with more insight.

### **4.2. Purposeful sampling**

In this research it was determined that the most appropriate sampling method would be a purposeful sample, also known as a non-probability sample. The reason for selecting purposeful sampling was to get in-depth knowledge on the attitudes of a small group of Inghiloi speakers [Cohen et al. 2007: 110].

Patton [1990: 169–186] defines 15 different strategies “for purposefully selecting information-rich cases.” In this research, mainly two of them are used, namely ‘snowball or chain sampling’ and ‘opportunity sampling’. These are also culturally appropriate, since they place great importance on relationships between people. There should be a friendly atmosphere between the interviewer and interviewee, possibly there should be a common friend mediating, or at least somebody they both know. The main criterion for selecting interviewees is that they speak the Inghiloi language or at least have used it in their childhood.

### **4.3. Snowball chain sampling and opportunity sampling**

For the snowball chain sampling, a local colleague had done some preliminary research in Inghiloi-speaking areas. She had identified people who are considered to know a lot about their

language and who in turn had given names of other possible contacts. As there were limitations on how often I could visit the area, it was good to use the opportunities that were opening up during visits for interviewing. For example, in April 2014 seven people gathered to write stories in their language for two days and some of the participants were willing to be interviewed.

#### 4.4. The participants

Table 1 below shows the interviewees who participated in this research. The idea in this study was to collect a wide variety of views from people of different ages and home areas. In theory, one can stop interviewing new people when all the opinions are collected, and no more new ideas are coming up, i.e. the need for information is saturated [Cohen et al. 2007: 116, 177]. In this research the scope was not very wide, so I suppose that the saturation point was almost reached.

*Table 1. The Interviewees (The initials in **bold** mark the interviewees who were most active in cases where there was more than one person present.)*

Interview number and date	Interviewees, gender, age	Location [Inghiloi villages]	Language of instruction at school (G = Georgian, A = Azeri)
1. 23.1.2014	<b>R</b> , m, 55; N, m, 50	Mosul	G
2. 24.1.2014	<b>T</b> , f, 40; <b>O</b> , f, 52; 2f, 31, 35	Ititala	A, A, ?
3. 24.1. 2014	<b>Is</b> , m, 64	Qax Inghiloi	G
4. 24.1. 2014	<b>IL</b> , m, 65; <b>L</b> , f, 42; Ar, f, 62	Qax Inghiloi	G, G, G
5. 24.1. 2014	<b>Na</b> , f, 54	Qax Inghiloi	G
6. 24.1. 2014	<b>B</b> , f, 62	Zeyem, Qax region	A

7. 12.4. 2014	<b>Kh</b> , f, 47	Mosul [born in Ititala]	A
8. 12.4. 2014	<b>Ra</b> ,f, 27; <b>Sa</b> , f, 20	Mosul	A, G
9. 13.4. 2014	<b>Mu</b> , m, 25	Mosul	G
10. 13.4. 2014	<b>Di</b> , f, 15	Mosul	A

12.4. 2014 <sup>2</sup>	<b>R</b> , m, 55; <b>ISL</b> , m, 40, <b>Z</b> , m, 45 [3 f, 20-47] Group discussion	Mosul	G, G, G
29.5.2014	Short interviews: ME, m, 45; F, m, 38; FS, m, 14; Li, f, 46	Ititala	G

#### Meeting after the actual analysis, in June 2015

16.6.2015	<b>IL</b> , m,66; <b>L</b> ,f, 43 [L's husband present]	Qax Inghiloi	G, G
17.6.2015	<b>R</b> , m, 56; <b>Kh</b> , f, 48; <b>Ra</b> ,f, 28; <b>Sa</b> , f, 21,	Mosul	G, A, A, G
18.6.2015	<b>Is</b> , m, 65 [wife present]	Qax Inghiloi	G

#### 4.5. Questionnaire

The main research tool for recording the oral interviews for further transcription and analysis was a questionnaire. In addition

<sup>2</sup> The unnumbered interviews are additional data. The first one was a group discussion on different script options (Latin, Cyrillic, Arabic, Georgian, old Albanian). The last ones were short, with only a few questions on Inghiloi, Azeri and Georgian language use asked. Since these were not as complete as the other interviews, they were left without a number.

to that, language use was observed, and there were some written texts, too, mainly used to look at the practiced script.

The interview questionnaire was divided into two parts according to the two themes. In the first part there were general questions about language use, giving a picture about the contemporary sociolinguistic situation of the minority language. At the end were the perhaps most interesting questions, opinions about the future of the language, and how people think they can have an impact on that. The questions in this part are modified from *A Guide to Planning the Future of Your Language* [SIL International 2013]. The second part is specifically about learning and teaching of the mother tongue. At the end a new concept (new in this context) was introduced: the Inghiloi mother tongue as a language of instruction. These questions are my own design.

According to Garrett [2010: 23–25], attitudes can be described in three terms: cognition, affect and behaviour. These all are interrelated but the relationship is not linear; one can express a belief, but not actually act according to it. It may be that feelings play a bigger part in decision-making on behaviour than beliefs. Behaviour can also call forth emotions. In order to study these areas, in the questionnaire there are questions on behaviour (1.1 and 1.2), beliefs (1.3 and 1.4; 2.3 and 2.4) and emotions (2.1 and 2.2). The approach is somewhat indirect, trying to find out the different sectors of attitudes in all the answers given.

## 5. Interviews and analysis

### 5.1. Interview locations

The interviews took place in three villages in the northwestern Azerbaijan: Ititala (population 2,500), Mosul (2,500) and Qax Inghiloi (2,000) during three visits to the area in January-May, 2014. The villages of Mosul and Ititala were selected because it was generally known, including from earlier research [Clifton et

al. 2005], that the language is vital there and is used by most of the population. Qax Inghiloi village was recommended by my local contact person. In Ititala and Mosul the northern dialect variant is spoken and people are mainly Muslims by religion. In Qax Inghiloi the dialect variant is called southern or Yereti-Inghiloi and people usually belong to the Orthodox Church. It would have been good to include people from Aliabad village in the survey, but this was not possible. Additionally, one interview was conducted in Zeyem village, where Inghiloi had been used earlier but is no longer in use.

Map 1 below presents the language situation in northwestern Azerbaijan [www.ethnologue.com/map/AZ accessed 26.05.2015], showing that the Inghiloi, there referred to as Georgians, are scattered among speakers of other languages, primarily Azerbaijani and Tsakhur speakers. Map 2 shows the locations of the villages where the interviews for this research were conducted. Those villages belong in three administrative areas: Balakan, Zaqaatala and Qax regions.

*Map 1. Languages of Northwestern Azerbaijan*



*Map 2. The locations of villages where the interviews were conducted*



## 5.2. Pilot interviews

There were two pilot interviews conducted: the first pilot interview was in English, the main reason being to try out the questions in order to see whether they were relevant. After that, the questions were translated into Azerbaijani and the essential pilot interview about the Inghiloi language situation was conducted in Azerbaijani.

Both pilot interviewees expressed their worry about language speakers declining in number, one reason for that being the difficulty for young people to find work in the area.

Both also expressed their appreciation of their own language, it being an old, ancient language and also a possible tool for learning. In my original questionnaire there were questions about reading and writing using the mother tongue. Since it became clear in the second interview that there is neither an alphabet nor any books in Inghiloi, those questions were left out.

### 5.3. The interviews

My plan was to use selective sampling to get at least five primary school teachers among the interviewees, in order to find out their views about the language abilities of children starting school in the area. Another requirement for interviewees was that they should be speakers of the Inghiloi language. It turned out that I could not get official permission to interview teachers, so I had to use snowball sampling as my fallback option. I went to the Inghiloi area with a local colleague, and the interviewees were either people she knew or people that had been recommended to her. On one occasion, we used opportunity sampling and went to the Cultural Centre of Ititala village, where we found a group of ladies who agreed to talk to us about their language.

The interviews took place in January and April 2014. In each of six interviews (3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10) there was only one interviewee present. In another four interviews (1, 2, 4, 8) there were 2–4 interviewees together, usually one of them taking a leading role and others adding their opinions alongside. In two interviews (4, 8) there were two persons who were both equally active. A local contact person was present in four interviews (1, 2, 3, 6) and she was somewhat active in clarifying the questions and sometimes expressed her own opinion after the interviewee's answer. The average length of an interview was about 30 minutes, but the shortest time taken was 15 minutes, and the longest was two hours. All the interviews were recorded (with the permission of the interviewees).

I had a set of questions I asked each interviewee, and I asked additional follow-up questions depending on the answers. Two people were very fond of the history of the language, and they kept returning to that topic no matter what the question was, so I had to guide them to the questions about the present and future of the language. There was also one group discussion about the language in April involving six people, with three of them doing the majority of the speaking. There were also four shorter recordings in May, with most of the questions on present Inghiloi language use and opinions about the possible teaching of/in Inghiloi.



I was with my local colleague, and when we asked permission for an interview, people agreed to participate without much hesitation.

## **6. Analysis**

### **6.1. The analyser's point of view**

One of the goals of this survey was to see whether the Inghiloi people are interested in developing their language into a written form. My own perspective is that of a teacher who thinks children should learn to read and write in their first language and after that learn other languages, so I am in favour of Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE). Most of the interviewees were selected by my local colleague, and since her view about the importance of the mother tongue is similar to mine, she may have tried to find people whom she thought to be in favour of developing the language. When the interviewees expressed opinions supporting MTB MLE I was delighted, but tried to be objective, not leading the discussion in the direction I wanted.

### **6.2. Analysis in practice**

After the interviews were recorded, I listened to them and transcribed them in Azerbaijani. After that I translated them into English, and made a combined collection of the answers to each question. Sometimes the answers were not directly given to a single question, the relevant information being spread out over several answers. So I usually had to go through the whole set of answers in order to get the whole picture for each topic. When reading through the answers time and time again, I started noticing some repeated expressions and themes that were not so obvious in the first reading.

### **6.3. The themes**

The answers can be divided into three main themes, which were defined beforehand by the question themes: the use of languages

in the area, attitudes towards the Inghiloi language and attitudes towards the teaching of/in the mother tongue (meaning Inghiloi).

When asked about language use, people always first gave an answer about the group use; the language was seen as ‘our language’, not ‘my language’.

### **6.3.1. Mother Tongue?**

The first question of the interview was: “What is your mother tongue?” Most of the people said Inghiloi, but not all. Two people said Georgian, because it is taught at school as mother tongue. Two people stated Azerbaijani as their mother tongue for the same reason. So the ‘Mother tongue’ for those four people was really the language that was used at school as the language of instruction (LI) and stated to be mother tongue in the school curriculum. At school there are Azerbaijani and Georgian sectors according to the language of instruction. People kept saying that they do not use that language at home. There was definitely some confusion about the terms; one and the same person could use the term mother tongue for both Azerbaijani and Inghiloi, or Georgian and Inghiloi. When asked which language they have learned first or which language they use at home, then the answer was Inghiloi. It is difficult to know whether people are using only Inghiloi at home, since adults are very fluent in Azerbaijani and it was easy for them to switch totally to Azerbaijani when non-Inghiloi speakers were present. In later interviews I started using ‘home language’ in the first question. Two persons also introduced their own term, *ara dili*, meaning ‘mutual language’ or ‘language in-between’, that being Inghiloi.

*“My home language is Inghiloi, it is my first language. My mother tongue is Azerbaijani, as I go to school in the Azerbaijani sector.” (Di)*

*“The school language and home language are not the same. But at school they say that our mother tongue is Georgian.” (L)*

### 6.3.2. The languages used in the villages of Mosul, Ititala, and Qax Inghiloi

There are three main languages used in all three of these villages: Azerbaijani, Georgian and Inghiloi. Some interviewees called Inghiloi a dialect of Georgian, others spoke about it as a separate language. One and the same person could use both terms. I decided here to speak of Inghiloi as a language, as that was the status most interviewees were giving to it.

Azerbaijani is mentioned as the national, official language, so all the official documents are written in it. At school, children use the language of instruction (Azerbaijani or Georgian) inside the school building, but even in the schoolyard they speak Inghiloi. Azerbaijani is seen as the language of wider communication (LWC) with other minority groups, at the market and shops in the nearby towns of Zaqatala or Qax, and in the capital; army service was also mentioned. So, outside the village, Azerbaijani is used with non-Inghiloi speakers, and also with visitors who only know Azerbaijani. One person mentioned that he uses Azerbaijani in his work when working outside the home area. The level of Azerbaijani is high among all the adults, even among those who studied at school in Georgian and even went for further studies in Georgia, probably because Azerbaijani is necessary for communication and official purposes. My observation is that the people who studied in Azerbaijani at school are not usually fluent in Georgian.

*“In the village, Azerbaijani is only used at school. Later young people go to study in Azerbaijani. Visiting the district centre and Baku, Azerbaijani is used. And people who decide to stay in Baku, there they have to use Azerbaijani. And of course in the army.” (T)*

*“[Azerbaijani is used] also with other minority groups, at the market, in shops.”(Ar)*

*“If guests come speaking Azerbaijani, we honour them by speaking Azerbaijani.” (Is)*

The use of Georgian is more restricted than the use of Azerbaijani. It is used at school as the language of instruction, and after finishing school the Georgian sector pupils often go to study in Tbilisi, Georgia. One interviewee was working at the Georgian sector of the school, so her work language is Georgian, but her Azerbaijani was still strong. Another mentioned that there are Georgian books and Georgian is a literary language. The shop signs and posters in the shops were written only in Georgian script in Ititala. In the homes where children go to the Georgian sector at school, people usually watch Georgian programmes on TV.

*“At school the children are using Georgian. But outside school they speak Inghiloi to each other. Also at break time during school days.” (IL)*

*“We speak Georgian only at school, only there.” (Ra)*

Inghiloi is defined by the interviewees as an oral language, spoken by everyone: children, young people adults and old people. In these villages people speak it everywhere, at home, in the shops, on the streets. They speak Inghiloi with relatives and neighbours. One person mentioned that he can use Inghiloi also at work, since he is working at a construction site with other Inghiloi men. At Ititala village my local colleague and I noted that children were speaking Inghiloi when they left school. When asked whether the people who move to the village learn Inghiloi, the answer was positive at Ititala and Qax Inghiloi. It was mentioned that especially wives who move to the village from outside are learning Inghiloi. Two people mentioned spontaneously that children under school-age usually speak only Inghiloi, and starting school with another language is difficult.

*“Here everyone, also children speak in our language, Inghiloi. At our village, also in the shops, everyone speaks Inghiloi language.” (Ra, Sa)*

*“All people who move into the village learn Inghiloi. After one or two years, all of them learn Inghiloi, even if they speak another language at home.” (T)*

Two interviewees mentioned that they speak Russian, but others did not mention that language at all, although there were men who have been in Soviet army, and have learned Russian there.

### **6.3.2.1. Diglossia and bilingualism**

Three languages are used by the members of these communities: Azerbaijani, Georgian and Inghiloi. All of these languages have their own functions. Inghiloi is only a spoken language, and is used at home and everywhere in the village. Georgian is used at school and in Georgia either for studying or when visiting. Azerbaijani is another option for the school language but is also the official language of the country and used outside the village as the LWC in Azerbaijan.

Between Inghiloi and Georgian the situation can be described as diglossia, according to Fishman [2003], Inghiloi being the L[ow], spoken language, Georgian its H[igh], literary counterpart. There is hardly anything written in Inghiloi; only one poet was mentioned who has written poems both in Inghiloi and in Georgian. This resembles similar situations in other languages [Ferguson 2003: 348]. According to the interviewees, spoken Georgian in the village is restricted to the school classrooms. People appreciate Georgian as the literary language, but they also value Inghiloi, it being an old, ancient language. Two people in particular reasoned that an older language, as they see Inghiloi, is more important than a newer language, Georgian, even if Georgian is a literary language. The value of the language for them depends on its age and that the people speaking it have stayed in the same place for

a long time and they think that the language has stayed the same for a long time, thousands of years.

*“This Inghiloi language is an old language, it’s been used here a long time.”(L)*

*“Inghiloi is an old language, older than Georgian.” (R)*

The use of Azerbaijani makes the situation bilingual. All the adults over 20 years old that I have met in these villages are fluent speakers of Azerbaijani, even if they went to school in a Georgian sector school and had university training in Georgia. They also read Azerbaijani, which is written in Latin script, but use the Georgian script for writing. The people who went to school in an Azerbaijani sector do not usually know the Georgian script and not many of them speak Georgian.

The domains of language use are basically the same between the villages of Ititala, Mosul, and Qax Inghiloi. The only small differences are:

- In Ititala and Mosul, Inghiloi is used in the religious domain (with Arabic), whereas in Qax Inghiloi, Georgian is used, reflecting the village’s Christian heritage.
- In Qax Inghiloi there is also a Russian sector at school with Azerbaijani and Georgian, whereas in Ititala and Mosul there are only Azerbaijani and Georgian sectors.

Table 2 shows the sociolinguistic situation in the villages of Ititala, Mosul and Qax Inghiloi, where Inghiloi is still spoken. One of the interviews was done in Zeyem village, where there are no Inghiloi speakers anymore.

*Table 2. Sociolinguistic situation as perceived by interviewees in Inghiloi villages*

(**I** = Ititala village, **M** = Mosul village,  
**Q** = Qax Inghiloi village)

	Communication [speaking, writing]	Economic, work, market	Official, government	Solidarity Tradition	School lang. of instruction [reading]	Prestige Academic	Religion
Inghiloi	<i>at home in village</i> <b>I, M, Q</b>	<i>in village</i> <b>I, M, Q</b>		<i>in village</i> <b>I, M, Q</b>			<i>in village</i> <b>I, M</b>
Azerbaijani	<i>in village with outsiders</i> <b>I, M, Q</b>	<i>outside village, in market</i> <b>I, M, Q</b>	<i>everywhere in country, army</i> <b>I, M, Q</b>		<i>in village</i> <b>I, M, Q</b>	<i>in capital</i> <b>I, M, Q</b>	
Georgian	<i>in Georgia</i> <b>I, M, Q</b>				<i>in village</i> <b>I, M, Q</b>	<i>in Georgia</i> <b>I, M, Q</b>	<i>in village</i> <b>Q</b>
Russian	<i>Army in Soviet time</i> <b>I, M, Q</b>		<i>Army in Soviet time</i> <b>I, M, Q</b>		<i>in village</i> <b>Q</b>		

An interesting point is that Russian was not mentioned in any other context except in relation to the Soviet army. Middle-aged people had studied Russian at school, but obviously Russian was not important in their daily life in this sample.

#### **6.4. Attitudes towards the Inghiloi language**

According to Garrett, attitudes in general consist of three interrelated categories: beliefs, emotions and behaviour [Garrett 2010: 23]. The questions about these areas were indirect and people's attitudes became apparent in many different topics.

### 6.4.1. Beliefs

Most of the interviewees (with two exceptions) stated that Inghiloi is used as a means of communication in the village and in homes, and that it was the language they learned to speak first. Three people said that Inghiloi is a very ancient language, one person said that it is older than the Azerbaijani language, another that it is older than Georgian. The idea was that Inghiloi people have lived in the same place for a very long time, thousands of years, whereas other people have come to live in the area later. Two people went into many details about the history of the language and the Inghiloi people, also emphasizing that there are people from Inghiloi origin living in many other countries.

As mentioned earlier, there was some vagueness in the exact definition of Inghiloi. One and the same person could speak about it as a dialect of Georgian and as a separate language. Here we also meet the question of what “mother tongue” means, with some saying that literary Georgian, a perfect language, is their mother tongue.

*“(As a child) I spoke in the family in this dialect, the Inghiloi language, the Inghiloi dialect. ... we had learned to speak our own language, and at school we were learning the perfect language, the literary language.” (Is)*

### 6.4.2. Emotions

When speaking about their emotions, most people stated that they love and like Inghiloi, and this happened in relation to the future of the language, when they also said that they do not want their language to die. This even led some to ridicule children who attempted to speak Georgian at home (see following section). There are some other attributes given to Inghiloi: it is easy/peaceful (*rahat* in Azerbaijani); also it is said to be the language closest to the speaker, and easy to speak and understand.



Worry about the future of the language was seen in many of the answers, mainly in Qax Inghiloi. The answers in Ititala and Mosul were more positive.

*“We love the Inghiloi language. Why does a person love her own mother? There are no words. It is not possible to describe this feeling. We want to keep this language alive, certainly. There is no other way.”* (T)

*“If I speak Azerbaijani, or Georgian, or Russian or Lezgi, there are always some difficulties. When I speak Inghiloi, it is easy, peaceful... I’ll speak with my own children in Inghiloi.”* (Mu)

*“I love the Inghiloi language, because I speak this language, I understand it, I have learned all things in this language.”* (Di)

### 6.4.3. Behaviour

People said they love the Inghiloi language, but how does this show in their behaviour? People said that in the villages of Mosul and Ititala everyone is speaking Inghiloi, at home, on the streets, in the shops, children during their school breaks and after school. Also, it was said that young people are speaking Inghiloi to each other and so are parents to their children. I could observe that happening during my visits in Ititala and Mosul.

*“In this village everyone speaks our own separate language, also children. It’s our custom, there are no people who are against it.”* (R)

One person said that parents did not want their children to speak the school language, Georgian, at home. If they did so, they were ridiculed by their parents. According to Ferguson [2003: 348], that is typical behaviour in a diglossic situation.

*“I think children will continue to speak Inghiloi. If the children speak Georgian, the book language, outside school, their parents say: ‘You are a pig head, you are an egotist, do you forget your own language? What have you done to your own language?’ So people separate these two languages.”* (Na)

In January 2014, during our first visit, we heard people expressing their wish to have books in their language and also wanting to write in it. We asked whether they would like to have a small writers’ workshop for 1–2 days in their village (Mosul, Ititala). In Ititala the answer was reluctant, because there needs to be permission from a higher district official. In Mosul our contact person immediately said that he can arrange it, to invite people to come to his home. So in April 2014 we had a group of seven people experimenting in writing in their own language for the very first time in their life.

*“We would like to have a workshop to write and read our language. I can organise it.”* (R)

Although there are neither books in Inghiloi nor a separate alphabet, younger and middle-aged people told me that they write text messages in their own language using mostly Latin letters, but also Cyrillic or (since this is available in some cell phones) Georgian script.

*“We can write (text messages) our own language in Russian letters. Also we can write in Latin letters.”* (ISL)

The attitudes in all three villages were similar. There was more worry expressed in Qax Inghiloi than in other areas, especially about young people moving out and losing the language, and also about families not speaking Inghiloi together. One person in Qax stated that the Inghiloi language is strongest in Mosul, Ititala and Aliabad.

*Table 3. Attitudes towards Inghiloi in Ititala, Mosul, and Qax*

	Positive	Negative
<b>Beliefs</b>	Language person learned first, spoken language, ancient language, useful socially, can be used everywhere in the village	Small language, not LWC, amount of speakers decreasing
<b>Emotions</b>	Love, peace, easiness	Apprehension about losing the language
<b>Behaviour</b>	Spoken everywhere in the village. Parents transmit the language to children. Used in text messages. A writers' workshop [2014] People moving in are learning the language [Ititala, Qax]	Parents ridiculing children if Inghiloi not used at home. Not used outside the village. There are families where Inghiloi is not spoken [Qax]. [Young] people moving out are losing the language. [Qax]

### 6.5. Language change, as estimated by the respondents

Most of the interviewees thought that the Inghiloi language itself has not changed much during the last 20 years. One person (from Ititala) mentioned that the pupils who go to the Azerbaijani sector at school are adding Azerbaijani words into their language and the same applies to the Georgian sector pupils. Another person (from Qax Inghiloi) said that the Azerbaijani language is used more among the Inghiloi people, and people are also adding more and more Azerbaijani words to their own language.

*“I think that 20 years ago the language and its use were similar as now.”* (Kh)

*“The situation with the language was very similar 20 years ago as it is now. Young people who have been taught at school in modern Azerbaijani are adding Azerbaijani words to their language. So also the ones learning in Georgian use more Georgian words, but the basic language stays the same.”* (T)

In Mosul and Ititala villages the respondents estimated that the number of Inghiloi speakers now is the same as it was 20 years ago, whereas the people in Qax Inghiloi village say that there were more Inghiloi speakers back then. One person compared the economic situation at present and 20 years ago and said the economic and educational situation in Mosul was better earlier. Another person, from Qax Inghiloi, saw the economic situation better now than earlier.

*Table 4. Inghiloi language 20 years ago and now (2014)*

20 years ago	Now
'Purer' language	More Georgian or Azerbaijani words added.
Greater number of speakers	Old people died. Young people moving out, for study and work.
Parents passing the language down to their children	Parents passing down the language to children in Mosul and Ititala. Not always so in Qax Inghiloi.

### **6.6. Language vitality estimated in 10 years' time**

When asked about the future of the language in 10 years, people had difficulty answering, but the common understanding was that the language will stay alive. Three respondents (two from Qax Inghiloi, one from Mosul) stated that people are moving out to Georgia; young people go to study there and stay further for work. IS, from Qax Inghiloi, compared the situation in his village and in Ititala, Mosul, Aliabad and Yengiyan, saying that in Qax Inghiloi people are losing their language, as the families don't speak Inghiloi together anymore. According to him, in those other villages people speak Inghiloi with each other now, so the language will stay alive there.

It is quite interesting that often the statements about the future vitality of the language were expressed with a negative grammatical construction (underlined below), like:

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*“We are not losing our language, it is our mother tongue, Inghiloi.” (R)*

One explanation why Inghiloi will keep its status as a spoken language is that there are different sectors at school.

*“We are not afraid that our language would die out. If our kids went to an Azerbaijani school, and there would not be a Georgian school, then everybody would speak in the same language. But since we have two options for school, they speak in different languages. But after school they speak in our language, so the root does not die out.” (T)*

The answers to the question about hopes for the future were very similar with everyone: they want the language to continue its existence as a spoken language. Three people mentioned that they hoped that there would be books in Inghiloi. Two people suggested that the very first schoolbooks could be in Inghiloi. One person suggested that there is a need for books to read in Inghiloi, since people are used to reading books at school in other languages. One person said vaguely that people should develop the language.

*“We hope that the language will not die. It should not die.” (IL)*

*“We need books. It’s easy [peaceful] to speak in our language. But there are no people who can read [and write] our language. Even if you finish the 11th grade at school, there is nothing to read in our language. Our language is only used at home. We speak it at home, in the village, between each other.” (Na)*

How then would the language stay alive? Several people answered that the main thing is to speak it at home and to children. It was also mentioned that young people should not move out of

the village. So the need for work for young people in the area was mentioned as well as some other practical needs, too: Athletic centre, Culture Centre, Cultural Society (in Mosul). An opinion was voiced that minority groups should take care of themselves, first of all by speaking their language. Another opinion was that people should gather and decide together what they want to do for the language, e.g. to form a local organization in order to take care of local matters. Two people expressed the need for government help in developing the language.

*“Since I have sons, the language will not die. They speak to their children in our language. In our village we love our language very much.” [O]*

*“The development of the language depends on ourselves, how we keep our language alive.” (T)*

*“We need help for our people. We need help from the government. But we don’t want to do anything against the law. Whatever the law says, we should work according to that. But in order to get some development to happen, we need help.” (R)*

These ideas are systematized in the following table.

*Table 5. Hopes for the future of the language*

<b>Goal</b>	<b>What is Needed</b>	<b>Whose Responsibility</b>	<b>How it should be done</b>
Language should stay alive	Speaking the language	Local people Parents to children	Local organisation, Material help Work opportunities
	Young people staying at the village	No answer	
	Reading materials for adults, schoolbooks	Local people Government	

## 6.7. Attitudes towards mother tongue education in Inghiloi

### 6.7.1. Experiences in learning when the language of instruction was not a person's mother tongue

Half of the interviewees had had Azeri as their language of instruction, the other half Georgian. The general opinion was that it was somewhat difficult to start school in Azerbaijani, the reason being that the home language was Inghiloi and the languages were different from each other. Opinions varied as to how difficult this was. One person said it was “hard work” (Sa), others said that the beginning was difficult and estimated one year to be the time needed to speak Azerbaijani sufficiently for school use. There was one person whose father was Azerbaijani, so she was already bilingual when starting school and found the language easy. Another person told us that she spoke only Inghiloi when she started school, but had heard so much Azeri around her that it was easy to begin. Older people (over 40 years of age) did not only speak about themselves but spontaneously talked about their children, too.

*“The teachers spoke only Azerbaijani at school. The teachers who came from our village spoke Inghiloi at home, but during lessons only Azerbaijani, they never spoke Inghiloi at school.” (Kh)*

*“When the child goes to school, he/she does not know the Azerbaijani language, does not understand it. The teacher speaks completely in Azerbaijani, not in our language, although the child does not want it. The child tries to explain: - I don't understand anything, I want to say this.” (T)*

For Georgian the picture is different. Most people said that it was easy to learn Georgian since it is similar to Inghiloi. No

one said it was the same as the home language, so Georgian also had to be learned at school. One person said that she found learning Georgian difficult, and also her children, as the language was new.

*“When I went to school, the teaching was in Georgian. It was not difficult, since Georgian is very similar to our language. It’s easy to learn in Georgian.”* (R)

*“It is a bit difficult for our children, because we speak our local language at home, the Inghiloi language, but books at school are in the Georgian language of Georgia.”* (Na)

### **6.7.2. Attitudes towards mother tongue education**

When asked generally about whether there is a need to read and write in Inghiloi, it was a new thought for most interviewees, although people said they send text messages in Inghiloi by using Latin, Cyrillic or Georgian letters. There were somewhat positive answers, but there were also doubts expressed, like Inghiloi being a small language. The lack of an alphabet was also brought up as a reason not to write.

*“To write in this language? We don’t think much of it, no. Because if we read and write in this language, it is just for our village. It’s not for outside the village.”* (T)

The teaching of Inghiloi language at school was also a new theoretical idea, but it brought positive answers from everyone. The reasons given can be classified according to Garrett [2010] either as emotional — *“it would be good, easy, comfortable/peaceful”* — or as beliefs — *“it would be good, because we speak in this language”* (Na, Mu), *“so that our language would not die out”* (R). Behavioural aspects were also mentioned.



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*“It would be good to teach small children in Inghiloi, it’s the time when their language skills are developing. But it would be a bit difficult, because this language is not known in other parts of the world.” (Di)*

The behavioural aspect came out also, at least in theory, when interviewees were asked how the teaching of Inghiloi could happen in schools. See Table 6 below. Opinions varied about the desired quantity of instructional time, from 1–2 hrs a week to 8 hrs. Two people stated that the first schoolbooks could be in Inghiloi. Also, four people said that the first school year could be taught in Inghiloi, but they also realised that there would be a need for children to learn another language well, so Azerbaijani was mentioned as the language of instruction for higher grades. Two persons mentioned that teachers would not like teaching in Inghiloi, since they are trained to teach in Azerbaijani or Georgian.

*“If the school started in our local language, it would be easy.” (Na)*

*“I hope that my children could study at school in our language. But as we live in Azerbaijan, we have to learn the Azerbaijani language.” (R)*

Another behavioural aspect was: How could the teaching of Inghiloi be implemented? There were some needs mentioned: an alphabet, books, educated people with a university diploma, help from the government, maybe help from other outside sources. One person thought that designing and implementing a new alphabet would be costly. One suggestion was to form a society in order to discuss language matters and then seek help from the government.

*“We should find educated men in each village in order to have a discussion group meeting. We should clearly study what is needed, and then we can go to the*

*government. At each village, we can make suggestions to the government. Let's start this here. ... But we don't want to do anything against the law. What the law says, we should work according to that. ... We should not be shy to ask for our lawful rights.” (R)*

*Table 6. Attitudes towards teaching [in] Inghiloi at school*

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Generally [emotions]</b>	easy, peaceful, comfortable, closest for pupils	
<b>Teaching at school [beliefs]</b>	good to teach to small children at the time when their language skills are developing, would keep the language alive	teachers are not ready, small language, only useful at the village
<b>Teaching at school [behaviour]</b>	1-8 hrs a week, first two years of school	Not everyone is interested
<b>How?</b>	Language of instruction, first school books	
<b>What needs to be done? [behaviour]</b>	people should form a society, to discuss and decide, make suggestions to government	
<b>What is needed?</b>	Alphabet, schoolbooks	money needed, help needed [government, outside organisations]

## **6.8. Other topics**

There were two topics that came out especially often in the interviewees' statements: the alphabet and the relationship between Inghiloi and Georgian.

### **6.8.1. Alphabet and script**

In April 2014 there was a spontaneous discussion in Mosul during a writers' workshop about the possible alphabet

to be used in Inghiloi. In that discussion five options for an alphabet were given: Arabic, Georgian, Caucasian Albanian, Cyrillic Azeri and Latin Azeri, so all different scripts. The person leading the discussion was very fond of history, so he was in favour of the old Albanian script, in order to revive that heritage. His opinion was that choosing a historical script not used anywhere now would strengthen the identity of the Inghiloi people, making them distinctive among the nations. The rationale for using the Georgian script was that its letters correspond well to the Inghiloi sounds, so it would be easy to write. The person in favour of the Arabic script said that it would be easy to write, too, as it had been in use in other languages of the area one hundred years ago. For the Cyrillic script the argument was that older people know it quite well, and for the Azeri Latin that it is used for Azerbaijani and is the official script of the country. Practical matters like typing or printing did not come up much in the discussion. I tried to intervene and ask about typing, and the answers were short: “Yes, it is possible to type in Arabic” etc. The person in favour of the Albanian script said it can be developed to be used in typing. But the discussion went quickly back to history and ideology. There were six people in the discussion and no consensus was reached.

In the writers’ workshop, five of six people were writing in the Georgian script, and only one person used the Latin script.

The question of scripts shows the different relationships and connections people have in the area: the Caucasian Albanian script to the Caucasian Albanian Christian state, the Arabic script to the Islamic world, the Georgian script to the long history of the area having been part of Georgia, the Cyrillic script to the Russian Empire and Soviet times (Russian still being the LWC and a prestige language in the former Soviet Union), and the Azeri Latin script to the present country and government. The discussion also shows that history is very much present and important for the people.

### 6.8.2. Language and dialects?

Everyone had an opinion as to whether Georgian and Inghiloi are similar or different, but everyone admitted that they are related. One person explained that the Inghiloi people in Azerbaijan have incorporated more Turkish and Persian words, whereas Georgians have had more Armenian influence. Two people said that Georgians understand Inghiloi, but one of them said that if she is speaking Inghiloi in Georgia, people will laugh at her. One person who had gone to school in Georgian and studied in Georgia said that now, after nearly 40 years, he has difficulty in understanding and speaking Georgian, since his work language has been Azerbaijani. Still, he considered his Inghiloi to be strong. In the writers' workshop in Mosul in April 2015, people stated that there are five sounds in Inghiloi that are not used in Georgian. On the other hand, people in Qax Inghiloi (June 2015) had the opinion that all the Inghiloi sounds can be written in Georgian script.

The dialect issues between northern Inghiloi and southern Yereti-Inghiloi did not come up in the discussion much, maybe because there was no question about it in the questionnaire. Some people mentioned that there are dialect differences among Inghiloi speakers, and one person concluded that dialect differences went alongside with religious differences. Three people mentioned the word Yereti-Inghiloi as a variant of Qax Inghiloi, and three people mentioned that it is called Qutxu[r]. Two people mentioned that there are differences in language between the villages of Mosul and Aliabad.

These questions are beyond my study, but phonological research is ongoing in Inghiloi, in order to develop an orthography. There is also a study in process on intelligibility between Georgian and Inghiloi, as well as one on Inghiloi dialects. (Mika Saarinen is working on this, with nothing yet published as of January 2017.)

## 7. Evaluation

The number of interviewees in this study was small. Also, the sampling was done by the opportunity and snow-ball methods. Still, there is some representativeness of different ages and genders among the interviewees. At least for some answers, it looks like the saturation point of opinions was reached, since there were several similar answers.

The interview situations went fairly well according to my evaluation. The atmosphere was usually relaxed and people were happy to talk about their language. One reason for the good atmosphere could have been the power structure: since the level of Azerbaijani of the interviewee was higher than mine (except in one or two cases), I was lower in the power scale and did not pose a threat.

## 8. Conclusions

On the basis of the above interviews and observations, I posit that the status of the Inghiloi language in Mosul and Ititala villages is 6a according to the EGIDS scale, meaning a spoken language that is actively transmitted from parents to children [Lewis and Simons 2010]. It seems that the situation has not changed in this since the sociolinguistic survey by Clifton et al. [2005]. In Qax Inghiloi, people were more worried about the future of the language, as they saw young people moving out. According to the answers there, the language is being transmitted intergenerationally, but not in all families.

Attitudes towards the Inghiloi language were positive among all the interviewees, but there were some worries expressed about the future of the language. Everyone also expressed their hope that the language would stay alive as an oral language.

When asked about Inghiloi becoming a written language and even a school language — shifting from 6a to 5 in EGIDS — answers were quite positive, although some doubts of its practicality

were expressed. Some people started to think how this could be accomplished. There were opinions that people should gather together and discuss what they want to do with their language. People agreed that the first need would be an alphabet and script. In Azerbaijan, the government would probably be in favour of a Latin-based alphabet, since this would provide a good transfer either from Azerbaijani script to Inghiloi or vice versa.

Together in Mosul and Ititala there are about 5,000 people, and nearly all of them are Inghiloi speakers who are motivated to keep their language alive. In this study we could not reach the people from the biggest Inghiloi village, Aliabad, so that would be a good place for further study.

In my opinion, it would be worth developing an alphabet and literature in this language, also school materials. But this is very dependent on people's own interest and motivation. Mosul could possibly be considered as the first place to start a pilot mother tongue literacy programme: some village inhabitants have already expressed an interest and may be willing to support such an initiative.

On the basis of this limited study, I can see that the identity of Inghilois as a separate language group is fairly strong. Also, there are positive responses among people to the thought of developing the language in a written form. How that will happen remains to be seen. Since I finished the article at the end of 2015, the Azerbaijan government's practical policy towards minority languages has changed: there are several primers in minority languages in process, design work is being done by local teachers with the help of Ministry of Education.

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