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MULTILINGUALISM IN DAGHESTAN

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This study deals with the phenomenon of multilingualism common in the areas of a high level of language density. The research was carried out in Daghestan in one of the many spots where languages from several different groups of the East Caucasian family are spoken. Through retrospective interviews (Dobrushina 2013), we investigate whether the ability to speak the language of the neighbours has changed over the last one hundred years.

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1. Introduction

Language contacts are one among the central issues discussed in sociolinguistics. Due to convergence processes channelled by interethnic contacts, languages of different affiliation acquire common features. As stated in [Thomason 2001], the amount of features thus acquired depends on how intensive and widespread the multilingualism is in the speech community. Usually, the higher language density there is, the higher the level of multilingualism.

According to [Nichols 1992], language density is a fundamental factor for distinguishing two kinds of language areas: spread zones and residual (accretion) zones. Spread zones are defined as the areas of low language density where one language family is spread, whereas residual zones are areas of high language density, often mountainous, where more than one language family is present.

The Caucasus region shows a high level of language diversity, with five language families represented here (West Caucasian, East Caucasian, South Caucasian, Turkic, and two branches of Indo-European, including Armenian and Iranian). The co-existence of a multitude of languages on a relatively small territory leads to numerous language contacts, which are conducive to high-level multilingualism amid indigenous peoples. The languages spoken in the Caucasian mountain valleys have more than 50 idioms [Catford 1977], some of them spoken in one settlement only.

Daghestan, one of the Caucasian republics of the Russian Federation, is a clear case of Nichols' residual zone. High language density is primarily due to its landscape. The mountain chains and fast rivers that separate settlements from each other are formidable obstacles preventing easy access to neighbours. In most Daghestani villages endogamy is a strict tradition [Comrie 2008], or has been until lately. Selecting a bride is restricted to the native community or at least to the neighbouring villages sharing the same first language (L1). This favours language maintenance in the community and thus contributes to preserving the language diversity in the area. On market days and for occasional shopping and to settle other arrangements, on the other hand, villagers visit their neighbours. During such events speakers of all other languages are bound to use the 'market' language.

Although East Caucasian (Nakh Daghestanian) languages attract a great deal of attention on behalf of linguists involved in language documentation ([Kibrik 1977, 1991, 1999, 2001], [Haspelmath 1993], [van den Berg 2001], and many others), the language situation and local patterns of multilingualism have not yet been described. Some important observations were

made in the work of Chirikba [2008]. The following paper is an attempt to show how the interview method helps to advance this research.

This paper is a part of a larger project of investigating language contact in Daghestan [Dobrushina 2011, 2013]. It describes the results of a trip to the three villages of Gunib district (Obokh, Mehweb, Shangoda) and two villages of Lak district (Mukar, Uri)[4] of Daghestan in 2013. All villages are connected socially, economically, and to a certain extent, ethnically. We try to reconstruct the evolution of multilingualism in the area during the last century.

2. Methods

This paper aims to capture the dynamics of the changing language situation in the area, in order to reconstruct the traditional pattern of multilingualism and to account for the linguistic after-effects of Sovietisation and collectivization in the 1930s and World War II. The interview method was introduced in Dobrushina [2011]. This is a method of collecting personal data by means of individual interviews that include a questionnaire not only about the respondent herself, but also about their elder relatives (hence the name of the method - retrospective family interviewing). Daghestani families are usually able to preserve the personal memories of their relatives very well, and consultants are able to reconstruct the multilingual experience of their relatives.

This information may however be grounded not on actual memories of the respondent, but rather on the local stereotypes about multilingualism. This undermines the reliability of the collected data. During the interviews, consultants may present evidence that later proves false or at least controversial. Where possible, ambiguities were checked though cross-validation, as Daghestani villages are characterized by a dense network of family relations.

The interview can be described as an informal talk with a consultant during which the researcher fills in a questionnaire. The questionnaire itself includes the following:

1. Name;
2. Sex;
3. Family relation (in case the consultant was asked about his or her relative, e.g. *ego's mother*, where ego is the respondent);
4. Date (year) of birth;
5. Date (year) of death (in case the consultant was asked about his or her late relative);

6. Education, job, time spent away from the village;
7. Does the consultant read (read and understand) the Quran?
8. Second language competence (L2);
9. Third language competence (L3);
10. Russian language competence;
11. Fourth language competence (occasional competence in a language not represented in the area);
12. Writing skills in any of L1, L2, etc.
13. Data obtained directly (about the respondent herself) vs. indirectly (about her relative).

Answering question 7, respondents usually understood it as relating to the Arabic script, not necessarily as having a command of the Arabic language. It was quite widespread that people knew Arabic letters, but could not understand the meaning of what they were reading.

One respondent may provide information about several of his relatives, usually from four to eight, all of whom are separate entries in the database. A fragment of the database is shown below (Table 1). All the entries were recorded from one respondent (*Patimat*).

To make the analysis of the change more meaningful, we decided to divide the data into three time periods in correlation with major historical events that influenced the linguistic situation in the region. The first period starts in the 1840s (the earliest year of birth in our database) and ends in 1920, the year when the Soviet authorities established their power in the Caucasus. The next period (1920 – 1940) can be characterized as the time when Soviet influence started gradually increasing. On the eve of World War II, the expansion of Russian language was already very significant. From the 1940s on, more and more Daghestanis started to get higher education – something which was impossible before. This last period can be described as the completion of the process of Russification in the area

Table 1. Database fragment

Name	Sex	Village	Family relations	Birth	Death	Education	Koran	Avar	Lak	Other	Literacy	Russian	Personal
Khalid	m	Shangoda	Salimat's husband	1950	-	11 years at school, then Pedagogical University in Makhachkala. Now working as a teacher	reads aloud and understands	native	no	no	yes	yes	no
Majsarat	f	Shangoda	Patimat's sister	1953	-	10 years at school; moved to Bukhty after marriage	no	native	no	no	yes	yes	no
Kavsarat	f	Shangoda	Patimat's sister	1956	-	10 years at school, moved to Makhachkala after marriage	no	native	yes	no	yes	yes	yes

Salimat	f	Shangoda	Patimat's sister	1957	-	11 years at school at Shangoda	no	native	no	no	yes	yes	no
Patimat	f	Shangoda	consultant	1959	-	10 years at school, then married to a Lak man	no	native	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
Omar	m	Shangoda	Patimat's brother	1967	2007	10 years at school, then worked as a tractor driver	no	native	understands	no	yes	yes	no

3. Language situation in the region

Our field research took place in five neighbouring villages of Gunib and Lak districts in May 2013: Mehweb, Obokh, Shangoda[5], Mukar and Uri[6]. The languages spoken in these villages belong to different language groups of the East Caucasian family: the Mehwebs speak Mehweb (Dargwa branch [Koryakov, Sumbatova 2007]); the Obokhs and Shangodas speak Avar (Avar-Andic branch); and Mukar and Uri residents speak Lak (Lak branch). Mehweb, Avar and Lak are not mutually understandable.

All villages are old settlements situated within walking distance from one another (not more than two hours between any two villages). We thus presume that they have a long history of contacts.

The population of all villages decreases. Combined with Russification processes, this has contributed to the decrease of multilingualism in the area. Table 2 shows population statistics for the five villages under examination according to the 2010 census.

Table 2. 2010 Population in examined villages

	Population by 2010	**Men by 2010**	**Women by 2010**
Mehweb	700	335	365
Obokh	359	179	180
Shangoda	538	257	281
Uri	373	188	185
Mukar	176	79	97

Source: Перепись 2010

3.1. Mehweb

Presently, Mehweb has about 700 residents. The villagers speak Mehweb and this language is spoken exclusively in this village (the so-called *one-village language*). Mehweb belongs to the Dargwa group of East Caucasian. Mehwebs are separated from other Dargwa languages, their village being surrounded by Avars and Laks. Mehwebs are confident that originally they come from Mugi, a large village in Akusha district. Some say their ancestors were ostracized from Mugi as a punishment for a murder (a practice that used to be common in Daghestan). Another version is that the ancestors of the present Mehwebs lived in a separate settlement, which was part of Mugi, and fled the army of Timur at the end of the 14th century. The idea of Mehweb

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[5] Also referred to as Shamgoda in some sources.
[6] In the Avar settlements, the village Uri is called "Urib" because of the class marker in the position of the prefix that indicates the local meaning of the form ('in Uri') in the Avar language.

people coming from Mugi is supported by the residents of Mugi. Nowadays, Mehweb and Mugi people practice visiting each others' villages on special occasions like the 'day of the village'. The languages of Mehweb and Mugi, though both belonging to the Dargwa group, are reported not to be mutually intelligible, and maybe are not especially close as compared to the other idioms of the branch. The Mehwebs and the Mugis mainly communicate in Russian.

Mehweb has no literacy tradition. Mehweb people are literate in Avar or Russian, and we did not find any evidence, in the present or in the past, of Mehweb in Arabic or Cyrillic script.

Since Mehweb is located in a district dominated by the Avars, Mehwebs are in some respects treated as Avars by the local administration and the central state. They are taught Avar at school as their assumed mother tongue. Most of them were also identified as Avars in their passports before the 1990s, not necessarily against their will, but some indicated Dargwa. After the 1990s, the entry indicating the ethnicity (Russian *национальность*) in passports is only optionally filled.

Information about 151 residents was obtained during the field research, 49 of them were spoken to personally. In the data collected, the oldest resident was born in 1865 and the youngest in 1998. The first person who received higher education was born in 1935. Table 3 represents the level of multilingualism over the examined periods of time. Native language competence is not indicated here, as there is full competence in the primary language of the village.

Table 3. Correlation between language competence and the year of birth in Mehweb

Year of birth	Total	Lak	Avar	Russian	Mehweb
1840-1919	44	97,6%	95,4%	20,9%	**100%**
1920-1939	39	52,6%	97,4%	84,6%	**100%**
1940 and after	68	8,8%	80,8%	95,6%	**100%**

The multilingualism has been continually decreasing. Russian is the only language for which competence grows over time.

Apart from the languages on the table, seven respondents reported knowledge of Kumyk (4,63% of all the respondents), one respondent reported knowledge of Georgian (0,66% of all the respondents) and two respondents reported knowledge of Azerbaijani (1,32% of all the respondents).

3.2. Obokh

Obokh is the village closest to Mehweb, with a population of about 300 residents and Avar as a native language. Obokh people speak a dialect of Avar. According to them, this variety differs from the dialects of other Avar villages in the district. At school, however, the standard Avar is taught, as elsewhere in the Gunib district. At the beginning of the 20th century the population of Obokh was twice as big as it is now. Migration from the village continues to be more intensive in Obokh than in Mehweb.

From the economic point of view, the situation was very similar to that of Mehweb. The main occupation of the Obokh people was breeding livestock and growing crops. The difference between the two villages that might have been crucial some time ago is that the Obokhs have more land. At present, this does not influence the comparative life standards in a very direct way, and there is no evidence that the Obokhs are richer than the Mehwebs. Seasonal occupations outside the village are uncommon in both villages.

There is a senior school in Obokh today, but before 2004 Obokh older children had to go to one of the other villages of the district. Sometimes they went to Mehweb, where the senior school started in 1967, and thus obtained some knowledge of Mehweb.

Data were collected from 15 respondents of Obokh, resulting in 62 records in the database. The oldest person was born in 1859 and the youngest in 1999. The first person to get higher education was born in 1959. Table 4 shows the correlation between the level of multilingualism in Obokh and time period:

Table 4. Correlation between language competence and year of birth in Obokh

Date of birth	Total	Mehweb	Lak	Russian
1840-1919	16	6,3%	31,3%	25%
1920-1939	17	0%	5,9%	64,7%
1940 and after	29	13,8%	3,5%	100%

In addition to the languages shown on Table 4, there is evidence that some people had competence in Kumyk (5 cases of 66) and in Dargwa (3 cases of 66). In the responses that we got, Lezgian, Chechen, German, and English were also mentioned, one time each.

3.3. Shangoda

According to its residents, Shangoda was founded in the 5th and 6th century. Shangoda belonged to the Kazikumukh khanat (where the Laks played a central role), was connected by a path to its capital Kumukh, and had regular economic relations with the Laks. There is evidence that Shangoda used to be a village with a strong tradition of Arabic literacy. There was a madrasah, but it closed in the 1930s. A secondary school opened in 1934.

Residents of Shangoda had two channels of communication with the Lak speech community. The first channel was the large marketplace in Kumukh, the cultural and economic centre of the Lak district. Residents of Shangoda were bound to gain some command of Lak in order to purchase and sell goods there. The second channel is a rather close connection between the settlements and close relationships between their residents. As the villages are situated close to each other (about 30-minute walk from Shangoda to either of the two Lak villages considered), there was cooperation with Laks. Though exo-ethnic marriages were not widespread, after 1950 they gradually became more frequent. Shangoda was situated at the district boundary (between Gunib district and Lak district) and at the boundary of two major languages (Avar and Lak), which is why it has always been a bilingual settlement.

Today the vast majority of Shangoda residents speak Russian. Since the 1920s, Russian has been spreading as an all-Daghestani *lingua franca*. Avar and Lak speakers are now more willing to use Russian instead of Avar or Lak to overcome the language barrier. Obviously, this has brought about a gradual decrease in the level of multilingualism.

In Shangoda, we collected data from 28 respondents and have 71 entries in the database. The oldest resident for whom we have data was born in 1855 and the youngest was born in 2001. The first person to get higher education was born in 1936. Table 5 represents the change of multilingualism over periods. The competence in all languages, but the native, decreases combined with a notable increase in the use of Russian language.

Table 5. Correlation between language competence and year of birth in Shangoda

Date of birth	Total	Lak	Mehweb	Russian	Avar
1840-1919	15	93,7%	6,2%	50%	**100%**
1920-1939	21	63,6%	4,8%	72,7%	**100%**
1940	45	30,4%	2,2%	93,3%	**100%**

Apart from languages on Table 5, respondents mentioned knowledge of Dargwa (3 cases of 81), Kumyk (9 cases of 81), and Azerbaijani (3 cases of 81). Moreover, the respondents mentioned Chechen, Georgian, and English as a third language (learned at school or somewhere outside the native village).

3.4. Mukar

Today Mukar (Lak) is a small village situated close to the boundary of the Lak district. The population of Mukar is about 150 people all of whom have Lak as L1. Children start to learn Russian at school. This is why almost every respondent indicates Russian as L2. In the early 1930s, an elementary school was built in Mukar. This school is still working now. Apart from the elementary school, there are no other educational institutions in Mukar. Children usually go to Uri, a neighbouring Lak village, for the secondary school and then to Kumukh or to Shangoda to continue their studies.

For Mukar, we have 11 respondents resulting in 74 database entries. Table 6 shows how the level of multilingualism depends on the time period. Again, Russian language competence is increasing. The least expected tendency is the competence in Avar: we see a noticeable increase. This can be explained by the following factor: Mukar children had to go to the Shangoda school in order to get senior schooling after 1930. The situation with Avar also evidences the importance of the fact that Mukar is situated close to the border of the Gunib district.

Table 6. Correlation between language competence and year of birth in Mukar

Date of birth	Total	Avar	Lak	Russian
1840-1919	13	46,1%	**100%**	46,1%
1920-1939	19	21%	**100%**	75%
1940	42	23,9%	**100%**	98%

Apart from the languages on Table 6, our respondents mentioned Chechen (7 cases of 74), Dargwa (5 of 74), and Azerbaijani, Ukrainian and English were mentioned once.

3.4. Uri

Uri is a Lak village situated on the border of the Lak and Charoda districts. Residents of Uri have lasting cultural and economic contacts with the neighbouring Avar villages (Shangoda). We thus expect a high level of Lak-Avar bilingualism.

We have data for 43 residents of Uri from nine respondents. Five of the residents did not have any schooling at all. The oldest person was born in 1900 and the youngest in 1999. The figures for the Avar language have decreased through the years (see Table 7).

Table 7. Correlation between language competence and year of birth in Uri

Date of birth	Total	Arabic	Avar	Russian	Lak
1840-1919	7	71,4%	57,1%	42,9%	**100%**
1920-1939	6	0%	50%	100%	**100%**
1940	26	0%	46,1%	100%	**100%**

In addition to the languages presented in Table 7, our respondents mentioned Mehweb, Dargwa, Ukrainian, Kumyk, and English.

4. Language competence and level of education in the area

4.1. Traditional education systems

During the first period (1840 to 1919), the most widespread type of literacy was in Arabic, acquired at a madrasah. Talking about their elder relatives, the respondents stressed that quite a lot of people went to a madrasah, but did not receive formal schooling. Studying at a madrasah was prestigious, probably because it provided an opportunity to learn Arabic. There are two ways of 'knowing' Arabic. First, one may be able both to read the letters and to understand the meaning of the words. Second, one may only be capable of using the graphic system of Arabic – first of all, to read the Quran aloud.

The data for Arabic show how the attitude towards Islam has changed over time[7]. Before the 1920s (before the Bolsheviks took over in the region), Islam was widespread in Daghestan. The period preceding World War II shows a gradual abolition of religious freedoms and a significant decrease in the knowledge of Arabic (for example, from 47% to 6% in Obokh). Today we can observe a growing interest towards Islam, primarily among the youth, which is reflected in the growth of the knowledge of Arabic among (male) villagers.

The next period (1920 to 1939) combined a recession of Arabic literacy with the increase in non-Arabic writing and reading skills. Our interviews show that Daghestanis who were born or grew up in this period were able to write their name even if they did not get any regular

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[7] It is significant to mention that in the present paper Arabic competence is associated with the religion of Islam and the changes in the figures of the Arabic language are usually linked with the attitude to the religion at the examined period.

schooling, due to the Soviet literacy campaign in the 1930s (*ликбез* – elimination of illiteracy). There was also a short period when some of the Daghestani languages acquired Latin alphabets and their speakers were taught Latin script. However, it was quickly replaced by Cyrillic.

The third period is when literacy in Cyrillic script gradually became ubiquitous.

Table 8 shows the difference in the literacy rate with the people born before 1920. All major changes in this respect were brought about by Sovietisation.

However, a quick look at Table 8 shows that the information we have is hardly sufficient. The richest data was obtained for Mehweb. For Uri, we only have five database records for the earliest period, so no sound generalizations can be made. However, we observe that none of them were illiterate.

It was mentioned above that religious institutions (madrasah or mosques) had their own courses during which the visitors could learn Arabic writing and try to learn the language. A madrasah existed in Shangoda and Obokh. About 7-8 years ago, the culture of Islam came back into fashion, and the knowledge of Arabic is now considered prestigious.

Nevertheless, providing formal schooling seems to be a long and phased process, because the very first schools in the region were no more than 10 classes. Let us take as an example from the situation in the Lak district. By the beginning of the 1980s, Mukar was the only school which only provided primary schooling (1st to 4th class). Then, if parents wanted their children to go on with their education, they went to Uri, where they have a secondary school (4th to 8th class). After that, if the children wanted to have senior schooling, they had to go elsewhere, e.g. to the school in Bukhty (9th to 10th class, now 9th to 11th).

The main literacy difference between the villages is associated with the period before 1920. Arabic literacy was concentrated in Shangoda and Obokh – the settlements that had their own madrasah. Comparing the level of literacy across the villages, we do not take into account the highest percentage in Uri, because there are only five records for this period. Except Uri, Shangoda and Mukar show the highest literacy rate (46%). Table 8 shows some consequences of the education available in the villages at that time: literacy rate is high in this column.

Table 8. The level of literacy in the region (residents born before 1920)

Place of birth	Total	Literate		Ability to write a name	Illiterate	No information
		Local language (Cyrillic alphabet)	Arabic alphabet			
Mehweb	44	17 (39%)	3 (7%)	5 (11%)	17 (38%)	2 (5%)
Obokh	17	6 (35%)	2 (12%)	4 (23%)	4 (26%)	1 (4%)
Shangoda	15	7 (46%)	1 (9%)	1 (7%)	5 (31%)	1 (7%)
Mukar	13	6 (46%)	-	1 (8%)	3 (23%)	3 (23%)
Uri	5	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	-	-

Talking about literacy in these years, we do not mean the educational system established right after 1920. Although launched in the 1920s, changes have been rather gradual. It is possible that the children born at the time of changes could feel both the influence of the Soviet system being established and the aftermath of the receding Islamic education. Perhaps, the data on the table may be interpreted in this dualistic approach.

Columns 'Literate' and 'Illiterate' show the progress of the education system that was being introduced by the Soviet administration. The Soviet schooling was taking over and the rate of residents capable of using Latin or Arabic script was falling. The causes obviously correlate with the Soviet ideology. The regime sought to exclude any manifestations of Islamic confessional loyalty and outward cosmopolitanism associated with the latter.

4.2. Language contacts

Over time, the influence of Russian literacy and competence strengthened. This language was spreading around together with Soviet schooling. The data presented on Table 9 shows the growing amount of speakers of Russian among the residents of the examined villages. Russian was also growing 'older' in the sense that it was becoming a means of inter-ethnic communication between elderly members of different speech communities. Today it serves as a *lingua franca* throughout Daghestan.

Our respondents employed a descriptive phrase '(s)he was able to say *for bread*' (*на хлеб*) to designate the situation when someone was able to use Russian for very basic communicative needs. This phrase can be found in many questionnaires especially in the first period observed (1840 to 1919). This time can be characterized as a period of a relatively low competence in

Russian. For the purposes of this research, we code such weak Russian competence ('for bread') as an absence of competence, since the use of language here is very limited.

Table 9. Language skills: Russian

Date of birth	Total	Acquired	No
1840-1919	90	31,1%	68,9%
1920-1939	95	74,7%	25,3%
1940	187	100%	0%

Diagram 1 below shows the spread of Russian over the examined periods of time.

Diagram 1. Language skills in the region

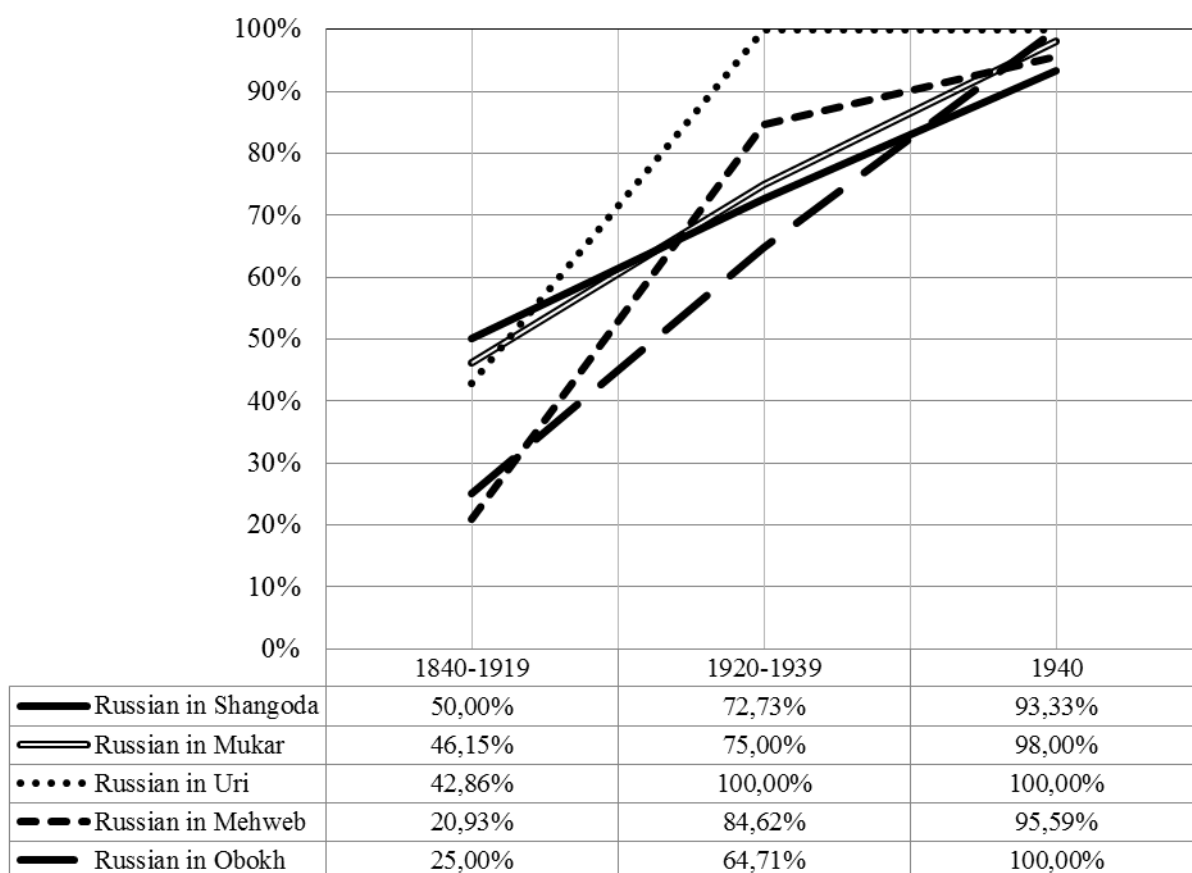|	1840-1919	1920-1939	1940
Russian in Shangoda	50,00%	72,73%	93,33%
Russian in Mukar	46,15%	75,00%	98,00%
Russian in Uri	42,86%	100,00%	100,00%
Russian in Mehweb	20,93%	84,62%	95,59%
Russian in Obokh	25,00%	64,71%	100,00%

Table 10 contains information about the knowledge of local languages other than L1. Native languages vary across the villages: Avar in Obokh and Shangoda, Lak in Uri and Mukar, and Mehweb in Mehweb. Non-L1 languages vary accordingly. The table thus shows: Lak for Mehweb, Shangoda and Obokh; Mehweb for Shangoda and Obokh; Avar for Mehweb, Uri and Mukar.

There is no doubt that Russian language has been widely spread within the examined cluster. The strong Soviet ministries obliged the residents to use this language and make it the
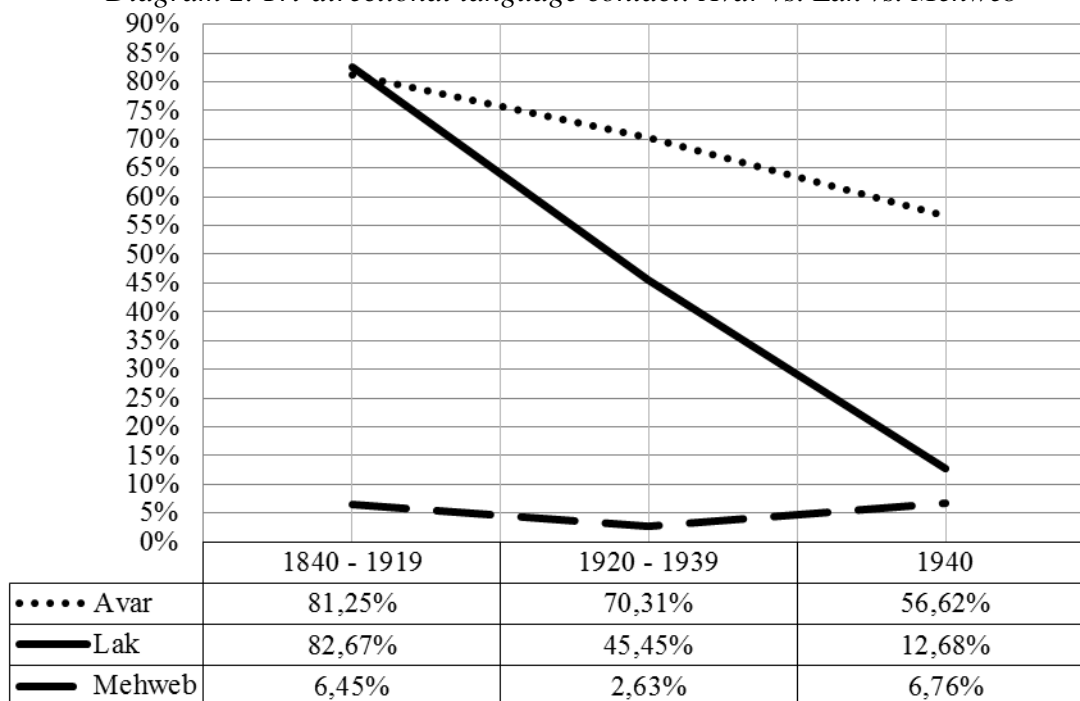
main language for any contact in order to unite the whole country. Diagram 1 show the monotone growth of Russian language skills on the example of people born in the period from 1840 to 2013.

Table 10. Non-L1 competence in the region

Date of birth	Total	Avar (for Mehweb, Uri and Mukar)	Total	Lak (for Mehweb, Shangoda, and Obokh)	Total	Mehweb (for Shangoda and Obokh)
1840-1919	64	81,2%	75	82,7%	31	6,4%
1920-1939	64	70,3%	77	45,4%	38	2,6%
1940-pres.	136	56,6%	142	12,7%	74	6,8%

Apart from the languages presented in Table 10, there were several other languages mentioned by our respondents. In all villages (with an exception of Mukar) Kumyk was reported to be present and not to be lower than 4,5% of our database entries. Understanding of Kumyk was important for shepherds who travelled far with their herds. Azerbaijani is the language which was the most popular after the Kumyk (in fact, it was not always clear if our respondents distinguished these two languages, since they are very close). Azerbaijani was reported in all the villages and was as high as 4,5%.

Diagram 2. Tri-directional language contact: Avar vs. Lak vs. Mehweb

	1840 - 1919	1920 - 1939	1940
• • • • • Avar	81,25%	70,31%	56,62%
▬▬ Lak	82,67%	45,45%	12,68%
▬ ▬ Mehweb	6,45%	2,63%	6,76%

The Diagram 2 is a summary of Avar, Lak and Mehweb as L2 in the area. The situation with languages of neighbouring villages is practically opposite to the apprehension of Russian. The ability to speak the language of one settlement has become unnecessary for people born in the examined period. It became easier to use the language of clerical work and, furthermore, the language that everybody was bound to know due to the political regime. Thus, there was a strong decrease in Avar and Lak languages as L2. As for Mehweb, the language situation has not changed much. This fact may be explained by a low need to use Mehweb as L2, because even if children from neighbouring villages went to the Mehweb school, they were taught in Russian. Moreover, most of the Mehwebs were able to speak Avar and Lak, so there was no need to use Mehweb.

Diagrams 3-5 show the dynamics of non-first languages for each village of the region (Avar in Mehweb, Lak in Mehweb, Lak in Obokh, Mehweb in Obokh, Lak in Shangoda, Mehweb in Shangoda, Avar in Mukar and Avar in Uri). Mehweb in the Lak villages of Uri and Mukar is not shown, as competence in Mehweb here is insignificant even in the first time period.
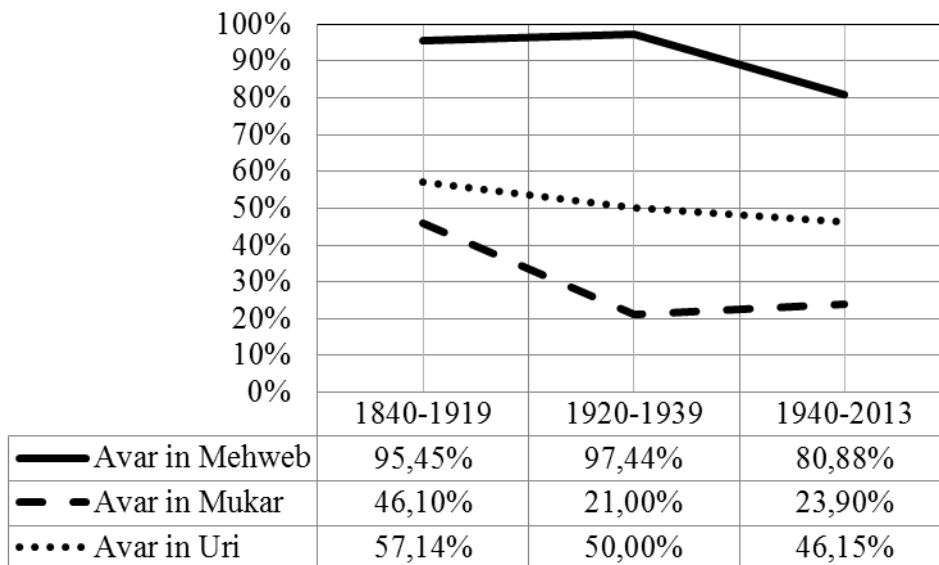
Diagram 3. Non-native Avar competence in the region

	1840-1919	1920-1939	1940-2013
Avar in Mehweb	95,45%	97,44%	80,88%
Avar in Mukar	46,10%	21,00%	23,90%
Avar in Uri	57,14%	50,00%	46,15%

Diagram 4. Non-native Lak competence in the region

	1840-1919	1920-1939	1940-2013
——— Lak in Mehweb	97,67%	52,63%	8,82%
— — Lak in Obokh	31,30%	5,90%	3,50%
• • • • • Lak in Shangoda	93,75%	63,64%	30,43%
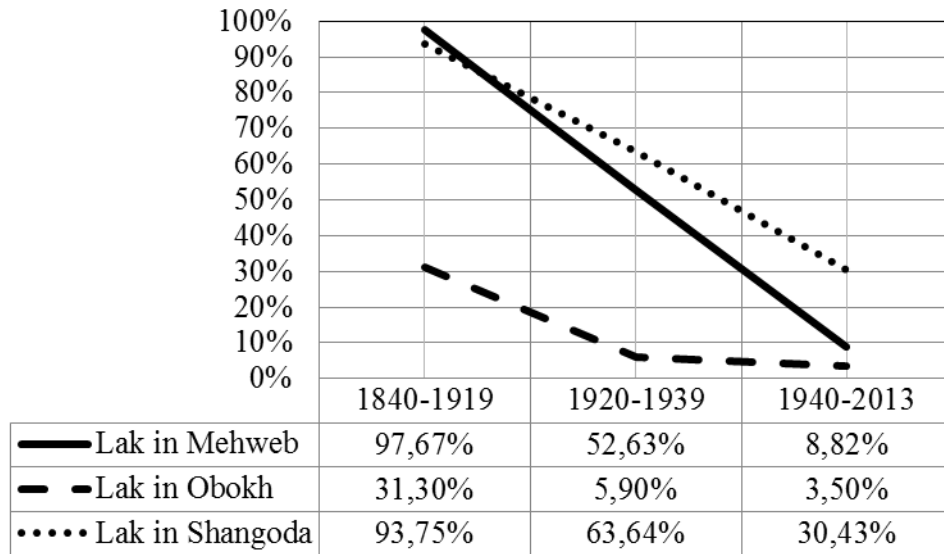
Diagram 5. Non-native Mehweb competence in the region

	1840-1919	1920-1939	1940-2013
——— Mehweb in Obokh	6,30%	0,00%	13,80%
— — Mehweb in Shangoda	6,25%	4,76%	2,17%
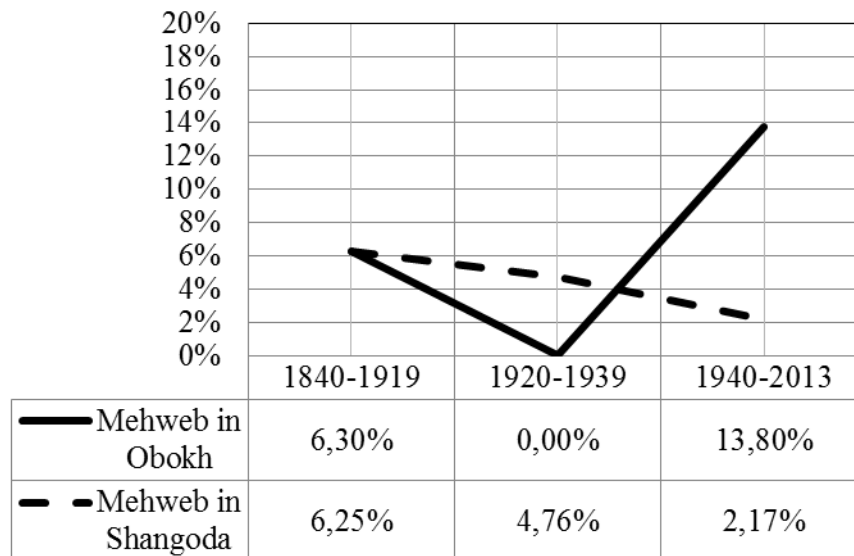
The charts in the diagram above can be divided into three groups. Some languages show a tendency towards a decrease in competence with non-native speakers; some languages show a tendency towards an increase; and some remain relatively stable. Moreover, it has to be mentioned that we decided to count the increase or decrease of the language contact intensity if the percentage dispersion was more than 7%. Thus, the slight growth in Avar competence in Mehweb in the second period and the lowering of the Mehweb competence in Obokh, even if the dispersion is 6,3%, turns out to be insignificant.

The first group includes Avar and Lak in Mehweb, Lak in Obokh and in Shangoda and Avar in Mukar. The cause of this decrease can be interpreted as an indicator of a general decrease in the local multilingualism. Now that the communication may be made in Russian,

Avar and Lak are less useful for communicative purposes. However, the knowledge of Avar by Mehwebs is still very high, due to the location of Mehweb so close to Obokh, and to the vast use of Avar at school. Nevertheless, a decrease in the Avar indices took place, but in the later periods and among the young residents, aged from 17 to 20. Lak in Obokh fell rapidly among the residents who were born from 1840 to 1939 and remained very low. This is, again, the trend of decrease in local multilingualism, and a major factor is that Obokh has no direct contact with the Lak areas. However, the remoteness should be associated with the low indices on the competence through all the time periods. Obokh in the first time period has the same level of Lak competence as Mehweb, but the decrease in the figures in Mehweb is not as abrupt as in the case of Obokh. The case of Lak in Shangoda has the same tendency, but expressed in a much more gradual form. Competence decreased by 30% in each time period, and today remains at a medium level of 30,4%. The higher knowledge of Lak in Shangoda (as compared with Obokh, the other Avar village) is explained by its direct and much more intense contacts with Uri and Mukar, being located right on the ethnic and administrative border with the Laks. As Mukar is situated further from the boarder of the Gunib district than Uri, it has lower figures of Avar competence in general. Avar competence in Mukar for the last time period remained stable, but the dispersion between the first period and the second (25,1%) speaks for the tendency of the decrease in local multilingualism.

The second group includes the case of Mehweb in Obokh. The respondents noted that earlier there was a tendency to attend Mehweb schools. Apparently, this was the reason for such high level of Mehweb language acquisition.

Most of the cases of Avar-Mehweb multilingualism were due to the fact that the Obokh consultants, four out of five who knew Mehweb, pointed out their competence used to go to the Mehweb school and thus acquire the local language. The only respondent who acquired the language without studying in Mehweb was involved in the exo-gamic marriage with a woman from there.

The third group includes Mehweb in Shangoda and Avar in Uri. In both cases we see a slight decrease in language competence, probably brought about by the Russification processes. But his decrease is in fact almost negligible, and we believe the reason is that Shangoda is very close to Mehweb, and Uri is close to Shangoda. To try and explain the difference between Avar in Mukar and Uri, one notes that Uri is a bigger village and situated closer to the border of the Gunib district than Mukar and, therefore, expectably more stable in linguistic terms than Mukar as the difference between them varies from 11% in the first time period to 22,2% in the last time period.

To sum up, the Mehwebs turned out to be the most multilingual in the area. This is conditioned by the narrow scope of the Mehweb language. Mehwebs has adapted linguistically to their neighbours because the Laks and Avars dominate in the area and speak major Daghestani languages, while Mehweb is only spoken in one village.

Another point that can be made deals with the notion of neighbourhood. It is evident that the language contacts based on the mutually close locations of the villages are steadier and more lasting. The level of multilingualism is based predominantly on territorial factors. The mountainous landscape is an important factor in constraining ethnic contacts to one's closest neighbours. The L2 that the highlanders acquired was first of all the language of their neighbours (if it was different from their own native language). There is no doubt that seasonal work made an important contribution to the level of multilingualism in distant languages, but such competence was bound to steadily become threatened under the influence of Russian.

5. Gender-based patterns and village 'partnerships'

As Tables 11-14 show that men were generally more multilingual than women. However, there are some figures that deviate from this general principle and have to be accounted for. The previous section mostly dealt with what may be defined as local multilingualism. Other multilingual experiences, associated with seasonal shepherding, for example, may be termed distant multilingualism. Local multilingualism includes languages that are spoken in the proximity of the native language of the respondent. For instance, a respondent from Shangoda, who has Avar as L1, also speaks Mehweb and Lak, this is the case of *local* multilingualism. *Distant* multilingualism includes his knowledge of e.g. Kumyk.

What the tables show is, however, that the distinction between local and distant multilingualism may not capture all-important distinctions. It might be that language contact with immediate neighbours (those with whom there is a common border of communal lands) or other close socioeconomic connection (such as shared schooling for two villages or co-inclusion in the same collective farm) may produce an especially close pattern of language contact where ethnically diverse villages formed a kind of linguistic 'partnership'. This pattern of multilingualism may be termed *neighbour* multilingualism.

Table 11. Correlation between language competence and sex in Mehweb

Date of birth	Sex	Total	Arabic	Avar	Lak	Russian	Mehweb (L1)
1840-1919	male	21	76,2%	92,2%	100%	30,4%	100%
	female	23	21,7%	95,6%	91,3%	9,5%	100%
1920-1939	male	22	9,1%	100,00%	31,8%	100%	100%
	female	17	0%	94,1%	76,5%	64,7%	100%
1940 and after	male	28	3,6%	75%	7,1%	96,4%	100%
	female	40	2,5%	85%	7,5%	95%	100%

Table 12. Correlation between language competence and sex in Obokh

Date of birth	Sex	Total	Arabic	Mehweb	Lak	Russian	Avar (L1)
1840-1919	male	6	83,3%	16,7%	50%	33,3%	100%
	female	10	20%	0%	20%	20%	100%
1920-1939	male	8	12,5%	0%	12,5%	100%	100%
	female	9	0%	0%	0%	33,3%	100%
1940 and after	male	21	14,3%	19,%	4,8%	100%	100%
	female	8	37,5%	0%	0%	100%	100%

Table 13. Correlation between language competence and sex in Shangoda

Date of birth	Sex	Total	Arabic	Lak	Mehweb	Russian	Avar (L1)
1840-1919	male	9	80%	90%	10%	62,5%	100%
	female	6	50%	100%	0%	33,3%	100%
1920-1939	male	12	0%	58,3%	9,1%	100%	100%
	female	9	30%	70%	0%	40%	100%
1940 and after	male	20	23,8%	23,8%	4,8%	95,2%	100%
	female	25	0%	36%	0%	91,7%	100%

Table 14. Correlation between language competence and sex in Mukar and Uri.

Date of birth	Sex	Total	Arabic	Avar	Russian	Lak (L1)
1840-1919	male	8	50%	62,5%	16,7%	100%
	female	11	0,5%	36,4%	0%	100%
1920-1939	male	15	0%	26,7%	13,9%	100%
	female	11	0%	27,3%	2,8%	100%
1940 and after	male	42	0%	28,6%	14,3%	100%
	female	26	1,2%	26,9%	8,3%	100%

In the case of distant multilingualism, the pattern is clearly gendered in the expected way: males speak more distant languages than females. This is the early situation of Russian (1840 – 1919) in all the villages. For local, but non-neighbour multilingualism the situation is still gendered in favour of men, but the gender differences are much less articulated. Finally, only for

neighbour multilingualism was the rate of L2 competence higher for women than for men, cf. the knowledge of Mehweb among the villagers of Shangoda through all the time periods.

The gendered difference may be explained by the life style and household management in the majority of Daghestani families: men were looking for opportunities to get a job outside their native villages to support their families, while women stayed at home rearing children and doing house-keeping. According to the figures of gendered neighbour multilingualism in Tables 11 through 14, we can draw 3 graphs (each for every time period distinguished) of 'partnerships' among neighbour villages. We drew the arrow from one point to another if the indices for female multilingualism are higher than the indices for male multilingualism.
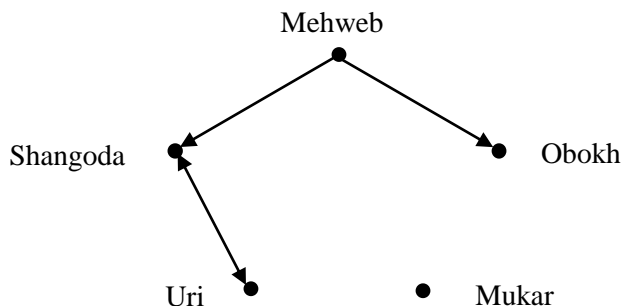
Graph 1. Neighbour contacts – 1840-1919
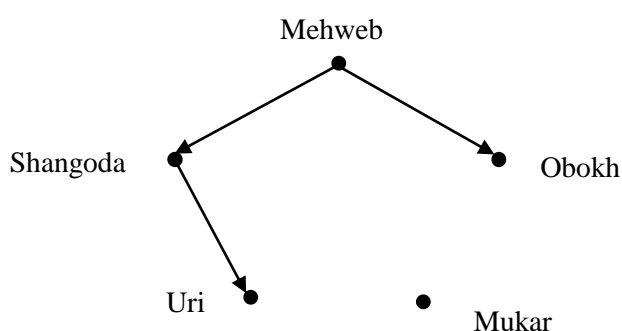
Graph 2. Neighbour contacts – 1929-1939
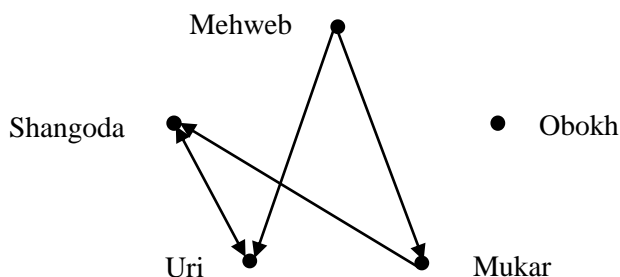
Graph 3. Neighbour contacts – 1940-2013

The generalized gender patterns presented on the three graphs prove that Mehwebs are the most multilingual community in the area. In addition, Mehweb female villagers show a higher level of multilingualism than that of male villagers. This is due to the seasonal distant jobs of their husbands. In other words, Mehwebs manifest a hitherto unknown gender pattern: women, who are expected to have a lower level of multilingualism, in this village represent a more multilingual gender.

All the graphs illustrate that Mehweb is a village with outward-bound contacts. Mehweb language, with its ethnically limited communicative scope, provides a ready explanation for such extroversion and cooperativeness. Mehwebs as the only Dargwa community in the region had to adapt themselves to the language situation by acquiring languages of the local communities: Avar in the first and third periods and Lak in the second period.

Another important issue concerning the graphs is Shangoda-Uri relations. These are first explained by a close location of the two villages. Second, by the presence of a school in Shangoda. And, third, by the exogamic marriages that were not traditionally widespread but started to spread after the 1950s. All these causes brought about a more symmetrical co-operation and partnership between Uri and Shangoda over the last two time periods.

6. Conclusions

The main tendency revealed in this study was that Russian language competence has risen tremendously, while the command of the neighbouring languages has become more limited. For the residents of the area born in the period from 1840 to the beginning of the 2000s, acquiring L2 was determined by the Sovietisation of Daghestan and the necessity to use Russian. Moreover, the data show that it was also important which language was spoken in the village closest to one's own village. The case of Mehweb in Shangoda demonstrates that it was important to be able to speak the language of the closest settlement even if this is the only village where this language is spoken.

The most interesting case is that of Mehweb. Although a one-village language, it was still known in Shangoda and Obokh, likely due to the fact that some children went to the Mehweb school. At the same time, Mehwebs themselves can be described as the most multilingual community in the area. In order to contact and communicate with their neighbours, they are bound to broaden their language competence. As the Lak and Avar languages dominate in this area of Daghestan, many Mehwebs speak one or both of these languages. The highest level of multilingualism is certainly present there.

One of the main factors of multilingualism is the distance between the settlements. For instance, it was not important to speak Mehweb for residents of Mukar as it is separated from Mukar by Uri and Shangoda territories. The same is true in Mehweb: there are less people who speak Lak (the language of Uri and Mukar) and more of those who speak Avar, because Mehweb itself is placed closer to Obokh and Shangoda than to Uri or Mukar. To generalize, there are close neighbours (e.g. Avar for Mehweb) and distant neighbours (e.g. Lak for Mehweb). It is evident that residents of village A would acquire the language of the closest neighbours more inevitably than the language of their more distant neighbours. The main idea is "the closer the other ethnic group is to me, the more active are interethnic contacts, the better I speak the language".

Gendered patterns in the data collected allow us to isolate three types of multilingualism: distant, local and neighbour. While distant and local multilingual strategies comply with the known tendency according to which males have richer multilingual expertise than females, the third type, neighbour multilingualism, indicates a possibility of an opposite distribution: the percentage of women speaking the language of the neighbouring village may be significantly higher than the same percentage for men. For the present situation of neighbour contact (residents born after 1940), however, the difference is not so clear. There is no significant gap between male or female knowledge of, for instance, Avar language in Mukar and Uri. But female language competence of Lak in Shangoda, or Avar in Mehweb, is still higher than for male villagers.

This new concept of neighbour multilingualism is put to a test by the case of Mehweb. The Mehweb speech community is surrounded by Avar and Lak settlements and is the only Dargwa speaking village in the area. The level of neighbour multilingualism is higher with female residents and lower with male residents – but, unexpectedly, this is true for both neighbour and the broader local multilingualism. Linguistically, multilingualism in Mehweb is more 'far-reaching' than in the Lak village of Uri, where Avar is the principal L2 and the knowledge of Mehweb is much lower than the knowledge of Lak in Mehweb. This is easily interpreted in terms of asymmetrical contact. It seems that in combination with the more conventional model of asymmetrical language contact, the model of a closer, immediate contact, or direct linguistic 'partnerships' between neighbouring villages, would produce a more flexible model of local multilingualisms.

This is a field for a further research, for which Daghestan provides an ideal playground.

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