

# **Language Vitality and Development among the Wakhi People of Tajikistan**

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### **Abstract**

The Wakhi homeland spans four countries: Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, and Tajikistan. The research presented in this paper deals with the results of sociolinguistic research conducted in 2003 and 2004. This research was carried out in two stages. Our goal in the first stage was to assess language vitality of different Wakhi communities. In the second stage of research, we concentrated on levels of proficiency in Tajik and access to Tajik. We tried to identify different levels of Tajik proficiency throughout the community and factors that influence levels of proficiency in Tajik.

Wakhi is found to be a highly vital and strong language in most of the communities in which it is spoken. The only communities in which the use of Wakhi is declining are those in which ethnic Wakhi are a minority. Currently, this is the case in only three out of twenty-three communities. In the other twenty communities, Wakhi is the language of the community and those who come to live in these communities learn it.

Tajik is respected as the national language but in Wakhi-dominant or homogenous Wakhi communities Tajik plays only a minor role in the daily life of the people. Though most speakers of Wakhi between the ages of 31 and 55 have attained professional or full proficiency in Tajik, these levels have not been passed on to the younger ones.

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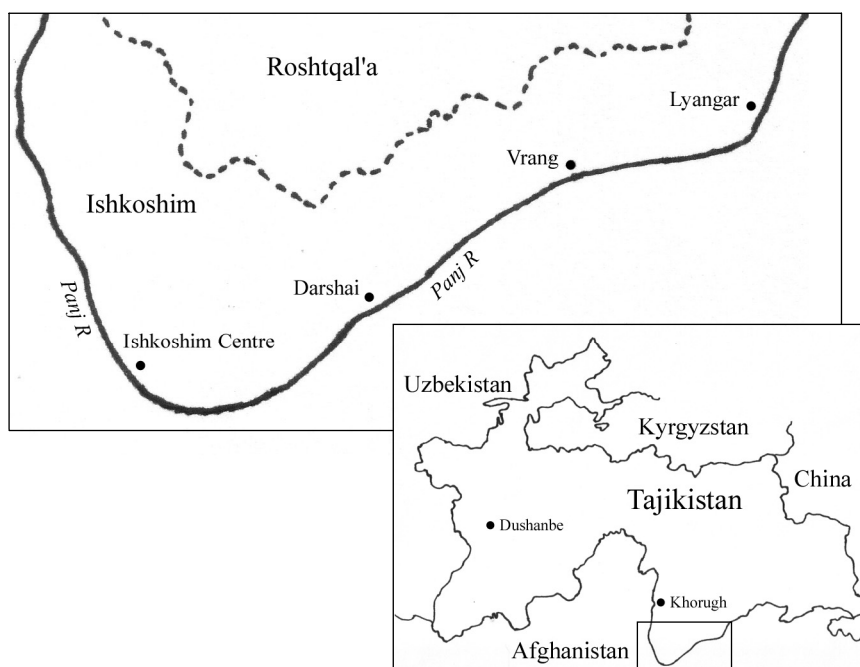
## 1. Introduction

The Wakhi people are perhaps best known by their proximity to the Wakhan Corridor, which played a major role in eighteenth century politics between Russia and Great Britain. Today the Wakhi live in four countries: Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, and Tajikistan. Between 7,500 and 10,000 Wakhi live in the Goyal, Ishkoman, Chitral, and Yasin regions of Northern Pakistan, while approximately 7,000 Wakhi live along the Wakhandaryo, or Wakhan River, in Afghanistan. An unknown number of the approximately 26,000 ‘Tajiks’ in China, are actually Wakhi (Backstrom 1992). Finally, between 17,000 and 18,000 Wakhi live in the Ishkoshim administrative region<sup>1</sup> of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province (GBAP) of Tajikistan (Dodykhudoeva 1997).

Wakhi is a non-written language used mainly in the home. As such, Wakhi is highly influenced by the languages of wider communication (LWC) and the national languages of the countries in which Wakhi speakers live. Thus, Wakhi is influenced by Dari in Afghanistan, by Urdu and English in Pakistan, and by Russian and Tajik in Tajikistan. In this paper we examine the present language situation among the Wakhi of Tajikistan.

Twenty-seven mostly Wakhi-speaking villages are situated east of Ishkoshim Centre on the right bank of the Panj River. This region is shown in .

Figure 1: Map of the Wakhi Area of Tajikistan



Ishkoshim Centre, at the north bend of the Panj River, marks the division of the district into the Wakhi-speaking east valley and the Tajik-speaking north bend of the Panj River. Life is hard in the Wakhan valley; the main source of income is farming in a hostile environment. For this reason the Wakhi and Tajiks have moved into each other's homelands. Wakhi are now found in Ishkoshim Centre, while Tajiks are found in mixed villages in the Middle Wakhan Valley, in two homogenous Tajik villages in the Lower Valley, and in one homogenous village in the Upper Valley. The Wakhi belong to the Ismaili branch of Shi'a Islam but have incorporated some much older traditions into their faith.

The Wakhi people are very proud of their own language, as well as of their ability to master several other languages. They are reported to be bilingual in Tajik and have a good knowledge of Russian (Dodykhudoeva 1997), although Russian has become less important as an LWC since the break-up of the Soviet Union. Tajik, the national language, was the language of inter-ethnic communication and the language of education even during the Soviet period.

The oldest source mentioning the Wakhi as a separate people is from Buddhist monks in the seventh century (Pakhalina 1987). Shaw and Tomashek researched the language in the late nineteenth century. Researchers of the twentieth century include Morgenstierne, Lorimer, Sokolova, Pakhalina, and Steblin-Karminski.

<sup>1</sup> The political unit to which we refer as an administrative region is a *nohia* in Tajik, or *rajon* in Russian.

Both Gordon (2005) and Pakhalina (1987) categorize Wakhi as a member of the Pamiri group of Eastern Iranian languages, while Grjunberg and Steblin-Kaminskij (1976) state that the relationship to the other Pamiri languages has yet to be proved. Gordon (2005) lists three dialects in Tajikistan: Western, Central, and Eastern Wakhi, and indicates that the Wakhi in China use the Eastern dialect. Backstrom (1992) presents an analysis of the dialects spoken in five different locations in Northern Pakistan.

Most previous research into Wakhi as spoken in Tajikistan deals with linguistic data such as wordlists from various dialects, texts, and grammatical analysis. The research presented in this paper deals with the results of sociolinguistic research conducted in 2003 and 2004. This research was carried out in two stages. Our goal in the first stage was to assess language vitality of different Wakhi communities using the eight factors presented by Landweer (2000). These factors are as follows.

- 1) Relative position on the urban-rural continuum
- 2) Domains in which the language is used
- 3) Frequency and types of code switching
- 4) Distribution of speakers within their own social networks
- 5) Population and group dynamics
- 6) Social outlook regarding and within the speech community
- 7) Language prestige
- 8) Access to a stable and acceptable economic base

In the second stage of research, we concentrated on levels of proficiency in Tajik and access to Tajik. Our goal in this stage was to identify different levels of Tajik proficiency throughout the community and factors that influence levels of proficiency in Tajik.

In section 2 of this paper we outline our methodology. Then in section 3 we present the results of our research. In section 4 we discuss the results in light of the goals of the research. In section 5, we conclude with prospects for the development of Wakhi.

## **2. Methodology**

We were not able to visit all twenty-seven Wakhi-speaking communities. Therefore, in section 2.1 we will present the rationale behind the choice of communities we visited. Then, in section 2.2 we will discuss the questionnaires we used to gather data. Finally, in section 2.3 we outline the sampling procedures we followed in each community.

### **2.1 Communities**

The history of Ishkoshim administrative region shows that different waves of migration changed the composition of the valley as whole and of some communities in particular. At the end of the nineteenth century, Wakhi, Tajik and Ishkashimi people, fleeing from war and unrest in Afghanistan, moved into communities on the right side of the Panj River. Tajiks moved mainly into the Goron area north of Ishkoshim Centre and villages around Ishkoshim Centre. They also founded the villages of Yamg and Udid in the upper Panj Valley. A generation later a few Tajik families moved from Yamg into the villages of Darshai and Shitkharv. More recently, there has been a constant flow of Wakhi speakers from the upper valley into Ishkoshim Centre since it became the regional centre in the late 1940s. A comparison of various sources indicates that up to 30 percent of the population of Ishkoshim Centre today are ethnically Wakhi.

As a result of this movement, we expected four types of communities to exist in the Wakhan area of the Ishkoshim administrative region: homogeneous Tajik, Tajik-dominant, Wakhi-dominant, and homogeneous Wakhi. Statistics obtained in Ishkoshim Centre confirmed this. The list of communities with indication of ethnic composition is provided in Appendix A.

Since we were interested in the Wakhi language, we did not visit a homogeneous Tajik community. We were interested in including communities of different sizes and communities with different levels of importance to the Wakhi language group as a whole. Finally, we tried to include the different parts of the valley. Based on these considerations, we chose Lyangar to represent homogeneous Wakhi communities, Darshai to represent Wakhi-dominant communities, and Ishkoshim Centre to represent Tajik-dominant communities. Table 1 summarizes some features of these three communities.

Table 1: Wakhi Locations Visited

	<b>Lyangar</b>	<b>Darshai</b>	<b>Ishkoshim Centre</b>
Location Type	Homogenous Wakhi	Dominant Wakhi	Dominant Tajik
Geographic position	Upper valley	Middle valley	Lower valley
Population/ Homes	1670/224	454/56	3072/480
Comment	Cultural centre; belongs to Zong District	Belongs to Shitkharv District	Regional centre
# / % Wakhi	1670 / 100%	~400 / 88.4%	~1000 / 32.5%

In the first stage of our research we visited all three communities, while in the second stage we revisited Darshai and Lyangar in order to gain more specific information. Of the three communities, we spent the greatest amount of time in Lyangar since the majority of Wakhi live in homogenous Wakhi communities.

## 2.2 Questionnaires

We used a number of different questionnaires in our research: community questionnaires, language use and language attitude questionnaires, language access questionnaires, and language proficiency questionnaires. We will discuss each of these in turn.

Some of the community questionnaires were specifically designed to use with community administrators. Others were used with directors of schools, kindergartens, and hospitals. In some cases these forms were used with people who worked at these institutions. The main focus of these questionnaires was to gather both basic demographic data on the community or institution and information about language use in the various institutions.

Other community questionnaires were used with individuals and groups to broaden our picture of the community. These questionnaires included questions about services such as libraries, cultural centres, transportation connections, and postal services. In addition, they included questions about marriage patterns of the community.

Language use questionnaires included specific questions about language use in various social and functional domains of life. Social domains included the home, friendships, neighbourhoods, and the workplace. Functional domains included counting, singing and arguing, TV, radio and other media.

Language attitude questionnaires included questions about the perceived benefits of Wakhi, Tajik and Russian in three areas: earning money, gaining respect, and getting news. The benefits of Wakhi and Tajik were also considered in an additional three areas: the community, family communication, and religion. It also included questions about the language of children.

The language access questionnaire was designed to elicit places and times of access to or contact with different languages. It included questions about places the respondent had lived, education, army service, travel (past, present, and desired), Tajik-speaking guests, and frequency of Tajik use.

We used two types of language proficiency questionnaires. The questionnaires used in the first stage of research included questions asking individuals to compare their own level of proficiency or that of their family with that of other individuals or families. Respondents were asked to think of their own level of proficiency and then to compare someone else's to it. Five levels of comparison were given: a lot better, a little better, equal, a little worse, and a lot worse. Finally, respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of the community fitting into each of these categories.

In the second stage of research we used the Proficiency Storying Interview Form. This form consists of two parts. The first part contains questions dealing with childhood language use. The second part posed questions related to specific language skills. The questions began with basic skills and moved to higher-level skills. Examples of questions about basic skills are, "Have you ever had to argue with somebody in Tajik? Was it difficult to use Tajik for this? What was difficult?" Questions about medium-level skills included, "Have you ever told a joke in Tajik? Was it hard in Tajik?" Finally, questions about higher-level skills included "Do you sometimes feel more at home in Tajik than in Wakhi?" These questions were tied to the six Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) levels.<sup>2</sup> These six levels range from 0 (no knowledge) to 5 (native speaker proficiency). The answers to these questions

<sup>2</sup> This is a further development of the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) scale.

were used to obtain a picture of the respondent's language abilities. A limitation of the questionnaire was that it did not clearly distinguish between some levels or sublevels. For this reason we decided to reduce the levels to three levels: limited proficiency (levels 0 to 2+), working professional proficiency (levels 3 and 3+) and full professional proficiency (levels 4 and above).<sup>3</sup>

## 2.3 Sampling

All three communities displayed a unique social composition, so different sampling methods were used in each. We will look at all three communities in turn.

### 2.3.1 Lyangar

As indicated above, we visited the homogenous Wakhi community of Lyangar in 2003 and again in 2004. In 2003 we interviewed school and kindergarten administrators, groups, and individuals. Table 2 shows individuals and groups interviewed in Lyangar in 2003.

Table 2: Individuals and Groups Interviewed in Lyangar, 2003

ID	Number	Gender	Ethnicity	Interview*
Ly-Gr-01	5	F	W	LU, LA, LP, Ma
Ly-01	1	F	W	LU, LA, LP, Ma
Ly-Hos-01	1	F	W	LU, LA, LP, Ma
Ly-Kiga-01	1	F	W	LU, LA, LP, Ma
Ly-School-01 <sup>†</sup>	1	M	W	LU, Ma

\* LU: language use, LA: language attitudes, LP: language proficiency, Ma: marriage patterns

<sup>†</sup> data part of official interview on regional or professional matters

In 2003 data from nine individuals were obtained, mainly on language use and attitudes but also on language proficiency and marriage patterns. Data and observations on language proficiency led us to further research in 2004.

For our research in 2004 we chose individuals to interview using quota sampling. The sample incorporated three variables: gender, age and proficiency in Tajik. Table 3 shows eighteen types of individuals we were interested in.

Table 3: Categories for Quota Sampling in Lyangar, 2004

Gender	Age	Proficiency level*
Male	16–30	Full professional
		Professional
		Limited
	30–55	Full professional
		Professional
		Limited
	Over 55	Full professional
		Professional
		Limited
Female	16–30	Full professional
		Professional
		Limited
	30–55	Full professional
		Professional
		Limited
	Over 55	Full professional
		Professional
		Limited

\* As indicated in section 2.2, limited corresponds to ILR levels 0 to 2+, working professional corresponds to ILR levels 3 and 3+ and full professional corresponds to ILR levels 4 and above.

Our goal was to interview five to ten respondents in each category. Many of the individuals were chosen through referrals, some from individuals we had met in 2003. For example, we asked a young woman to compare her classmates' level of Tajik with her own and asked her then to invite various

<sup>3</sup> For more details on the Proficiency Storying Interview Form see Tiessen, Abbess, Müller and Tiessen (2005).

individuals for interviews on this basis. We also asked respondents to estimate what percentage of the overall population was represented by each of the eighteen categories.

There were limitations to our sampling. For example, it was difficult to find young and middle-aged men since most were at the summer pastures, and old women since most were bound to their houses. This had an influence on the sample size. As shown in table 4, the number of individuals in the various categories varies greatly.

Table 4: Numbers of Individuals Interviewed in Each Category in Lyangar

	Limited Proficiency			Professional Proficiency			Full Professional Proficiency		
	16–30	31–50	55+	16–30	31–50	55+	16–30	31–50	55+
Age	16–30	31–50	55+	16–30	31–50	55+	16–30	31–50	55+
Males	8	0	3	4	8	5	4	6	3
Females	10	0	10	9	7	3	5	7	0
Total	18	0	13	13	15	8	9	13	3

As can be seen, we did not reach our goal of five individuals in a number of categories. We could not find any individuals ages 31–55 with limited proficiency or women over 55 with full professional proficiency. According to local people we talked to, people who fit these categories are rare or nonexistent. It was also difficult to find women over 55 with professional proficiency. A number of individuals we were told fit this category actually turned out to have limited proficiency. This explains the high number of respondents in the category women over 55 with limited proficiency. Finally, as indicated above, men were less available for interviews since most were at the summer pastures.

### 2.3.2 Darshai

In the Wakhi-dominant community of Darshai we focused first on the ethnic Wakhi population and later on the ethnic Tajik population. The school director and her deputy proved to be of great help as they not only invited different people to the school but also helped us to visit various homes. On our second visit in 2004 we were introduced to the home of one of the ethnic Tajik families who then in turn invited their relatives to meet with us.

Table 5 summarizes the interviews conducted in Darshai in 2003 and 2004. We interviewed people in groups (indicated by ‘Gr’ in the ID; ‘number’ indicates number of individuals in the group) and individually. The ethnic Tajik respondents are indicated by ‘T’ in the ID. Respondents above the double line were interviewed in 2003; respondents below the double line were interviewed in 2004. The ID for respondents in 2004 include two numbers: the first refers to the family unit, the second to the interview number.

Table 5: Individuals and Groups Interviewed in Darshai

ID	Number	Gender	Ethnicity	Questionnaires*
Da-Gr-01	5	M	W	LU, LA, LP, Ma
Da-Gr-02	4	F	W	LU, LA, Ma
Da-Hos-01†	1	F	T	LU, Ma
Da-M-01	1	M	W	LU
Da-Rel-01	1	M	W	LU, LA, LP, Ma
Da-School-01	1	M	W	LU, LA, LP, Ma
Da-T-01-Gr-01	2	M	T	LU
Da-T-01-Gr-02	3	F	T	LU, Ma
Da-T-01-01	1	F	W, T	LU, Ma
Da-T-01-02	1	M	W	LU, Ma
Da-T-01-03	1	F	W	LU, Ma
Da-01-04	1	M	W	LU, Ma
Da-01-05	1	F	T	LU, Ma

\* LU: language use, LA: language attitudes, LP: language proficiency, Ma: marriage patterns

† data part of official interview on regional or professional matters

Though we concentrated on the ethnic Tajik homes in 2004, we found that some ethnic Tajik, especially the younger generation, see themselves as Wakhi. We will have a closer look at this in section 3.

### 2.3.3 Ishkoshim

Ishkoshim Centre was the most urban location we visited. In addition, Wakhi are a minority in this Tajik-dominant community. Because of this, it was difficult to contact a broad cross-section of Wakhi individuals in Ishkoshim Centre. This led us to work primarily with the Wakhi family with whom we stayed. This family, composed of three generations living together, saw themselves as a typical Wakhi family in Ishkoshim Centre. Interviews with local administrators who are ethnic Wakhi agreed with this assessment. Table 6 gives information on the people interviewed in Ishkoshim Centre.

Table 6: Individuals Interviewed in Ishkoshim Centre

ID	Gender	Ethnicity	Questionnaires*
I-01-01	M	W	LU, LA, Ma
I-01-02	F	W	LU, LA, Ma
I-01-03	F	W	LU, LA, Ma
I-Hos-01 <sup>†</sup>	M	W	LU, LA, Ma
I-School-01 <sup>†</sup>	M	T <sup>‡</sup>	LU, Ma
I-DA-01 <sup>†</sup>	M	W	LU, LA, Ma

\* LU: language use, LA: language attitudes, Ma: marriage patterns

<sup>†</sup> data part of official interviews on regional or professional matters

<sup>‡</sup> spouse is Wakhi

We were able to spend time both in formal interviews and informal conversations with the members of the Wakhi family with whom we stayed (I-01-01, 02, 03). We used appropriate community questionnaires with the administrators at the hospital (I-Hos-01), school (I-School-01) and district administration (I-DA-01) to collect information about the overall situation in Ishkoshim Centre and the region. In addition, these three respondents answered questions about their own family and language. Even though we interviewed a limited number of individuals in Ishkoshim Centre, this should not unduly affect our research since our primary purpose was to study the Wakhi living in homogenous and Wakhi-dominant communities. The information we gathered in Ishkoshim Centre was meant primarily to round out the picture of the Wakhi people.

## 3. Results

In this section we present the results of our research by community.

### 3.1 Lyangar: A Homogenous Wakhi Community

Lyangar, together with Ratm, is the last village in the upper valley. It is primarily a farming community with only a few individuals working in education, administration and medical care. Resettlement to other parts of Tajikistan has been and still is offered to families who are not able support themselves from the land. Recently the community was offered the opportunity to take part in a tourist development program.

Our research in Lyangar in 2003 concentrated on patterns of language use and attitudes. As shown in table 7, Wakhi is used in many domains outside the traditional domains of family and community. In table 7, 'W' indicates Wakhi is used, 'T' indicates Tajik is used, and 'R' indicates Russian is used. A comma indicates that languages are used nearly equally, though the first language is slightly dominant. Brackets indicate rare use of a language in a certain domain.

Table 7: Language Use in Lyangar

	<b>Domain</b>	<b>Language Used</b>
Social/ Interpersonal domains	Home: family, children, guests	W
	Communication: friends, neighbours	W
Functional domains	Unofficial situations	W
	Most fluent language	W
	Arguing	W
	Counting	W
	Work within the community	W (T)
	Religion	W, T
	Information/ Media	R, T
	Education, literacy	T (W)
Official situations	T (W)	

Wakhi dominates almost all social and most functional domains in Lyangar. Wakhi is the only language of the home. A man married to a Tajik from Yang stated that the last time he used Tajik was two years ago when he visited his wife's relatives in Yang. He said his wife used Wakhi, not Tajik, with him or the children. Respondents who have grown up in Lyangar stated that in all domains other than school nearly all children and adults would use Wakhi with each other. There are a few exceptions, like an ethnic Tajik teacher who teaches Tajik in the local school and so uses Tajik outside school with her students. But even this teacher uses Wakhi most of the time with her neighbours.

We also asked respondents to indicate how important they felt both Wakhi and Tajik were for various functions. Possible responses included very important, important, somewhat important, and unimportant. These responses were assigned numerical values from 3 for 'very important' to 0 for 'unimportant,' and were then averaged. The average importance of each language for each function is given in Table 8.

Table 8: Importance of Wakhi and Tajik in Lyangar

	<b>Domain</b>	<b>Wakhi</b>	<b>Tajik</b>
Social/ Interperson- al domains	Family	Important (2.3)	Somewhat important (1.1)
	Communication	Very important (3.0)	Unimportant (0.3)
	Gaining respect	Somewhat important (0.9)	Somewhat important (1.4)
Functional domains	Earning money	Important (1.7)	Important (2.3)
	Religion	Somewhat important (0.7)	Somewhat important (1.0)
	News*	Unimportant (0.3)	Important (2.3)

\* Russian: Very important (3.0)

Given the patterns of language use reported in Table 7, it is not surprising that Wakhi is considered to be important within the family and very important for general communication. Though Wakhi is actually used more than Tajik for work within the community, Tajik is perceived as more important for earning money than Wakhi. Similarly, while both Wakhi and Tajik are perceived as somewhat important for gaining respect, Tajik has a higher average score. The perception that Tajik is important for news is likely correlated with the fact that Tajik is used for official situations and in education and literacy, is heard on radio and, since 2004, is received on television. Russian is seen as very important for receiving information about the world, but is not seen as important in any other domain.

The widespread use of Wakhi in homogeneous Wakhi communities such as Lyangar is reported to be typical of such communities. In the rest of this section we will present the results of the more detailed research we carried out in 2004. The purpose of this research was to determine the factors that correlate with high levels of proficiency in Tajik. The four major factors we examined are living in a Tajik community, education and occupation, travel and guests, and current use of Tajik. In section 3.1.1 we present the results for respondents over 55, followed in section 3.1.2 with the results for respondents 31–55 years of age, and in section 3.1.3 with the results for respondents 16–30 years of age. Finally, in section 3.1.4 we present other factors noted in our research.

### 3.1.1 The Older Generation: Over 55

In this section we present results from respondents over the age of 55. We interviewed twelve men and twelve women in this age group. Their proficiency levels in Tajik are summarized in table 9.

Table 9: Proficiency Levels of Men and Women: Older Generation

Gender	Limited	Professional	Full	Total
Male	3	6	3	12
Female	10	2	0	12

As noted in section 2.3, there are no women in this age group with full proficiency, and ten out of twelve women reported having only limited proficiency. Half of the men in this age group reported having professional proficiency, while a quarter reported having either limited or full proficiency.

Living among Tajik speakers is one of the most effective ways to improve the level of proficiency. More than one respondent mentioned Ishkoshim Centre or Dushanbe as Tajik communities where they spent parts of their life. Table 10 summarizes the time spent living in Tajik communities as reported by the respondents. The columns labelled TC (Tajik communities) indicate time spent living in a Tajik community; Army indicates time spent in the Soviet Army outside Tajikistan.

Table 10: Living in a Tajik Community: Older Generation

		TC	TC & Army	Army	None
Limited	Male	0	0	2	1
	Female	4	N/A	N/A	6
Professional	Male	1*	3	2	0
	Female	0	N/A	N/A	2
Full	Male	1	2	0	0
Total		6	5	4	9

\*No data regarding army service for this individual

Thirteen of the respondents never lived in a Tajik community; they had left the village only for short visits to relatives or to serve in the Soviet Army outside Tajikistan. Nine of these thirteen have limited proficiency in Tajik; none has full proficiency. Four women with low proficiency did spend time living in Ishkoshim Centre. One would think this should have given them a boost in speaking and using Tajik, but it is likely that at the time when they lived in Ishkoshim Centre women stayed inside the home. In this case, it is easily possible that they had little contact with Tajik speakers. Five of the men who served in the army in other parts of the Soviet Union said that the language used in the army was Russian. Time in the army, then, had little impact on their proficiency in Tajik. Six of the eight men with professional or full level of Tajik said they had actually lived among Tajik speakers.

The number of years spent living among Tajik speakers played a role as well. Table 11 gives this information for the eleven individuals who lived in Tajik communities.

Table 11: Time spent Living in Tajik Community: Older Generation

		< 1 year	1–4 years	≥ 5 years
Limited	Male	0	0	0
	Female	0	2	2
Professional	Male	2	2	0
	Female	0	0	0
Full	Male	0	0	3
Total		2	4	5

It is notable that two of the women with limited proficiency lived for five or more years in a Tajik-speaking environment. All the three men with full proficiency spend more than five years in Tajik-speaking environment.

The second factor we examine is education and occupation. Education definitely correlates with levels of proficiency in Tajik. Table 12 shows the educational levels completed by the respondents of this age group.

Table 12: Educational Levels: Older Generation

		<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 7</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>Technical</b>
Limited	Male	0	3	0	0
	Female	1	8	1	0
Professional	Male	0	0	3	2
	Female	0	2	1	0
Full	Male	0	0	3	0

The older generation had a much more limited access to education than we will see for younger generations. One woman completed only grade 4, while another thirteen respondents completed grade 7. Men with professional or full proficiency in Tajik completed at least middle school (grades 9, 10 or 11), while two of the women with a professional level had completed only grade 7.

For this age group occupation does not seem to correlate with proficiency. Sixteen respondents worked or still work as local farmers. Technical or pedagogical professions seem rare among this generation. Table 13 summarizes occupations of the respondents.

Table 13: Occupations: Older Generation

		<b>Farming</b>	<b>Technical</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Total</b>
Limited	Male	2	1	0	3
	Female	7	1	2	10
Professional	Male	4	0	2	6
	Female	1	1	0	2
Full	Male	2	1	0	3
Total		16	4	4	24

It is notable that two of the women with limited proficiency worked as teachers while two of the three men with full proficiency work or worked as local farmers.

The third factor is travel and guests. Most of the guests speak Wakhi and so make no contribution to the Tajik proficiency levels of this generation. Fifteen of the respondents stated that they do not travel anymore. Two respondents travel to Wakhi-speaking relatives in the Murgab administrative region, and five travel to Ishkoshim Centre. Those five reported they use mainly Wakhi in the homes of their relatives and only a little bit of Tajik. This generation has no expectation or desire to travel anymore.

The fourth factor in maintaining language proficiency is the current use of it. Table 14 shows the responses to the question of when Tajik was last used. The responses ranged from within the last six months to within the last ten years. A number of respondents could not remember the last time they used Tajik.

Table 14: Last Use of Tajik: Older Generation

		<b>≤ 6 month</b>	<b>≤ 1 year</b>	<b>≤ 10 year</b>	<b>No memory</b>	<b>No data</b>	<b>Total</b>
Limited	Male	1	0	1	0	1	3
	Female	1	4	0	4	1	10
Professional	Male	4	0	0	0	2	6
	Female	0	1	0	0	1	2
Full	Male	1	0	0	0	2	3
Total		7	5	1	4	7	24

Five of the women with limited proficiency used Tajik within the last year, one even within the last six months. But four of the women couldn't remember when the last time they used Tajik. We do not have sufficient data for respondents with higher levels of proficiency to determine the influence of using Tajik for this group. But one of the women with limited proficiency said, "I forgot a lot over the years not using Tajik."

### 3.1.2 The Middle Generation: 31–55

We interviewed fourteen men and fourteen women between the ages of 31 and 50. Table 15 summarizes how many individuals were interviewed in each proficiency category.

Table 15: Proficiency Levels of Men and Women: Middle Generation

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Limited</b>	<b>Professional</b>	<b>Full</b>	<b>Total</b>
Male	0	8	6	14
Female	0	7	7	14

None of these had limited proficiency. The consensus of all the individuals we asked was that there are no men or women between 31 and 55 with limited proficiency.

Once again, a major factor correlating with Tajik proficiency was living in a Tajik community. Table 16 shows how many individuals lived in Tajik communities (TC) and/or served in the army (for men) and how many did not leave the community.

Table 16: Living in a Tajik Community: Middle Generation

		<b>TC</b>	<b>TC &amp; Army</b>	<b>Army</b>	<b>None</b>
Professional	Male	1	5	1	1
	Female	2	N/A	N/A	5
Full	Male	2	4	0	0
	Female	4	N/A	N/A	3
Total		9	9	1	9

Eighteen respondents in our sample had lived in Tajik-speaking communities of Gorno-Badakhshan or other parts of Tajikistan. Fifteen spent time in Tajik communities such as Dushanbe while receiving education; all technical or higher education was done in cities in central Tajikistan. Time in the army again had only a limited influence; the one man who spent time in the army but not in Tajik-speaking communities had only professional proficiency in Tajik. It is also notable that eight of the nine respondents who had never left the community were women. Table 17 shows the educational levels of middle-aged adults in our sample.

Table 17: Educational Levels: Middle Generation

		<b>Middle</b>	<b>Technical</b>	<b>Higher</b>	<b>Total</b>
Professional	Male	5	3	0	8
	Female	7	0	0	7
Full	Male	0	1	5	6
	Female	3	2	2	7

Twelve individuals (five men and seven women) with a professional level of Tajik finished middle school, three men at this level finished a technical college education. Six respondents with full proficiency finished middle school or technical school while seven finished higher education, that is university. It is notable that all respondents who finished higher education had full proficiency in Tajik.

There is a definite correlation between educational level completed and proficiency levels, on one hand, and occupation, on the other hand, among respondents in this generation. The relationship between the three main work domains (farming, education, and other) and educational levels is shown in table 18.

Table 18: Occupation Correlated with Education and Proficiency Levels: Middle Generation

		<b>Education</b>	<b>Farming</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Other</b>
Professional	Middle	12	0	0	0
	Technical	3	0	0	0
Full	Middle	3	0	0	0
	Technical	1	2	0	0
	Higher	1	4	2	2

All fifteen respondents with a professional level of Tajik now work in farming on family land, regardless of whether they finished middle or technical school. Only five of thirteen respondents with full proficiency work in farming, including all three respondents with middle school education. All six respondents who work in education have full proficiency and have finished technical school or higher education. The two other respondents with full proficiency and higher education work with the police or in business.

Examining the factors of travel and guests, most respondents in this group had travelled at least once in the past to Dushanbe, in addition to having lived in various areas of Tajikistan. This travel occurred mainly before 1992 or after 2001. As reflected in patterns of present and desired future travel, travel is currently limited by finances. The most common destination is now Ishkoshim Centre. Only two respondents travel to Ishkoshim Centre on a weekly basis, but seven go at least once a month and ten go at least once a year. Only three travel to Ishkoshim Centre less than once a year.

Two individuals, both with full proficiency, travel to Dushanbe three to four times a year, while nine others would like to go but lack the means to do so. Eight people have Tajik-speaking relatives who visit about once in one to three years, and one has a Tajik-speaking friend from university who visits once a year. The primary purposes for travel are for business or to visit relatives.

Looking at the final factor of current use of Tajik, respondents in this age group try to use or do use Tajik regularly. Not forgetting the language seems to be a major issue. One respondent said he would speak Tajik with a friend in order not to forget it. Another stated that he is about to forget Tajik since he has not used it for a long time while working as farmer. Fourteen respondents had used Tajik at least in the past three months, five more during the past year, and one two years ago.

### 3.1.3 The Young Generation: 16–30

The largest group we interviewed were individuals between the ages of 16 and 30, though the majority (27 out of 40) was under the age of 24. Table 19 summarizes the distribution of the sample among the proficiency categories.

Table 19: Proficiency Levels of Men and Women: Young Generation

Gender	Limited	Professional	Full	Total
Men	8	4	4	16
Women	10	9	5	24

The number of respondents with limited proficiency, 18 of 40, seems high, especially in light of the fact that none of the respondents in the middle generation reported having limited proficiency. Half of the young men and nearly half the women interviewed reported having limited proficiency in Tajik. One of our goals, then, is to try to account for the relatively high number of respondents with limited proficiency.

Respondents in this age group had lived in Tajik-speaking areas for one of two reasons: as children with their families or for study and/or army service on their own. Table 20 shows the number of respondents aged 16 to 30 who have lived in Tajik-speaking communities. ‘TC’ stands again for Tajik-speaking community.

Table 20: Living in a Tajik Community: Young Generation\*

Proficiency	Gender	TC	None
Limited	Male	2	6
	Female	1	9
Professional	Male	1	3
	Female	3	5
Full	Male	2	0
	Female	3	1
Total*		12	24

\* No data for 4 respondents

It is significant that only a third of this age group had lived in a Tajik-speaking community. Only three of eighteen respondents with limited proficiency reported having lived in such a community, while five of nine respondents with full proficiency reported having lived among Tajik speakers. The group with professional proficiency falls between these other two groups. Having lived in a Tajik-speaking community, then, correlates highly with high levels of proficiency for this group.

Further data were obtained for eight of the twelve respondents who had lived in Tajik communities. There were two primary reasons for living in a Tajik-speaking community: living with family during school years and living there after school for higher education or while serving in the army. This data is presented in table 21.

Table 21: Reasons for Living in a Tajik Community\*

<b>Proficiency</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>During School</b>	<b>Higher Education/Army</b>
Limited	Male	1	1
	Female	1	0
Professional	Male	0	1
	Female	2	1
Full	Male	2	2
	Female	3	1
Total		9	6

\* Three of the respondents reported both

The two respondents with limited proficiency who lived in a Tajik community during school did so only in a very limited way, one in a predominantly Uzbek-speaking community, the other with relatives for medical treatment. Neither of those two used Tajik outside school during these stays. Three of the young men acquired professional or full proficiency while serving in the army for two years.

Next we examine the correlation between proficiency and education or occupation. Table 22 summarizes the educational levels of those between 16 and 30.

Table 22: Educational Levels: Young Generation

<b>Proficiency</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>Technical</b>	<b>Higher</b>
Limited	Male	8	0	0
	Female	10	0	0
Professional	Male	4	0	0
	Female	7*	2	0
Full	Male	3 <sup>†</sup>	0	1
	Female	2*	2	1
Total		34	4	2

\* Includes two respondents presently attending university

<sup>†</sup> Includes one respondent presently attending university

All of the respondents had finished or were about to finish at least middle school. None of the respondents with limited proficiency had gone further than middle school education, although nine of the thirteen reporting professional proficiency had also not gone further than middle school. Two women with professional proficiency had already completed technical school, while two others were currently attending university. Two respondents with full proficiency had finished university education, two had completed technical school, and three were currently attending university.

Occupation was still in a state of transition for respondents in this group; many had just finished school, were between various stages of education or were currently still involved in studies. From the data collected we can still extract some tendencies as shown in table 23.

Table 23: Occupations: Young Generation

<b>Proficiency</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Farming</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>Technical</b>
Limited	Male	7		1*	
	Female	8		2*	
Professional	Male	4			
	Female	5	1	2 <sup>†</sup>	1
Full	Male	3		1 <sup>†</sup>	
	Female	3		2 <sup>†</sup>	
Total		30	1	8	1

\* high school

<sup>†</sup> university

Thirty, or 75 percent, of the respondents work as farmers. As noted above, five of the respondents are currently attending university. The teacher attended college in Murgab, living with Wakhi-speaking relatives though receiving training in Tajik. The respondent with a technical profession is currently working in the cultural centre in the village.

In examining the role of travel and guests for this generation, present or future travel plays a much more important role than does past travel. Eighteen of the forty respondents reported travelling to Tajik

communities. The majority of those who have travelled indicated that they left the village for the first time after finishing middle school.

All of those who had travelled had been to Ishkoshim Centre; only two individuals had been to Dushanbe. As opposed to the middle generation, no regular travel patterns had yet been set. While all eighteen respondents who traveled did so to visit relatives, nine of them also traveled for work or education. Travelling for work or education was much less common for those respondents aged 16 to 24 than for those over the age of 24.

Six of the respondents who were still school-aged hoped to travel either after finishing middle school or when the next opportunity presented itself. With only one exception, those who had finished school in the past two years had been to Ishkoshim Centre, and two had started studying in Dushanbe.

The final factor to consider is the current use of Tajik. This is summarized in table 24.

Table 24: Situations in which Tajik is Used: Young Generation

Classroom	10
Guests/soldiers/merchants	7
Visiting a Tajik community	20
No data	5

Within the community of Lyangar, the use of Tajik is limited to the domains of school and contact with outsiders such as government officials, merchants, guests or soldiers. Nine of the respondents ages 16–24 said they use Tajik in the classroom; five said they used it with guests, merchants, or soldiers, and thirteen said they used it while visiting in Tajik community. One over the age of 24 uses Tajik in the classroom, two with outsiders and seven when visiting a Tajik community.

Only six of the respondents said they use Tajik daily, even though eight are either working or studying in school or university, and three of these are conversing on a daily basis with soldiers or merchants. Ten individuals had used Tajik within the last month, six more within the last year. Nearly half of the respondents had not used Tajik within the last year.

As Tajik is most commonly used in Tajik communities it is useful to look at the languages used by these respondents while visiting such communities. Three of the respondents use only Wakhi even in Tajik-speaking communities, while thirteen primarily use Wakhi although they do also use some Tajik. Only seven respondents reported using exclusively Tajik. It is worthwhile noting that all sixteen individuals who reported using Wakhi stayed with Wakhi-speaking relatives in the Tajik communities, while the other seven go mainly for professional or medical reasons.

### 3.1.4 Other Factors: Contributions to the Larger Picture

In this section we will present a few other factors that did not fit into the previous sections divided by age. These include the use of Tajik within the community of Lyangar, the role of Khorogh in Tajik exposure, and the use of Tajik with relatives.

The use of Tajik in Lyangar is very limited. Only four respondents reported having used Tajik outside school while growing up. Two of these were over 55; the other two were middle-aged. None of the young generation reported using Tajik outside school. Five individuals received schooling outside the community and so used Tajik outside school.

In principle, time spent in Khorogh, the capital of the GBAP, could act as a source of exposure to Tajik. As shown in table 25, people of all age groups reported having lived and studied in Khorogh.

Table 25: Time individuals lived in Khorogh

Age	Proficiency	≤ 2 years	3 years	≥ 5 years
16–30	Professional	3*	1	0
	Full	0	0	1
31–55	Professional	0	0	1
55+	Professional	3	0	0
	Full	0	0	2†

\* two studied in Russian/English

† both also lived in TC

While living in Khorogh has some potential for exposure to the Tajik language, in actuality this exposure is mostly limited to classroom experiences. Those who study there do so in Tajik, but the community language in Khorogh is Shughni (Müller, Abbess, Paul, Tiessen and Tiessen 2005).

Turning our attention to the use of Tajik with relatives, we see that most visiting occurs within the network of family and relatives. All families in Lyangar have relatives either in Ishkoshim Centre or in cities outside the GBAP. Relatives living outside the GBAP generally visit every two to three years; individuals from Lyangar seldom leave the GBAP to visit these relatives. Relatives in Ishkoshim Centre tend to visit more frequently, between once a month and once a year. Ten respondents reported that their relatives speak a mixture of Wakhi and Tajik and children of these relatives would grow up speaking Tajik, but in spite of this all visitors to Lyangar speak mainly Wakhi. Eight people reported to have relatives by blood and by marriage living in Ishkoshim Centre who are Tajik-speaking.

### 3.2 Darshai: A Wakhi-Dominant Community

Darshai, situated in the middle of the Wakhan valley, is the smallest of the communities we visited. The only facilities within the village are a middle school and a medical centre. Most people are farmers. Because of the fertile land around the village, two Tajik families from Yang (two brothers with their families) moved to Darshai three generations ago. In this section we will first present information about patterns of language use and attitudes among the Wakhi speakers, then about the Tajik speakers.

The Wakhi-speaking community in Darshai has very clear language use patterns. Table 26 summarizes language use in different social and functional domains. ‘W’ indicates Wakhi is used, ‘T’ indicates Tajik is used, and ‘R’ indicates Russian is used. A comma indicates that languages are used nearly equally, though the first language is slightly dominant. A lower case letter indicates secondary importance for the particular function.

Table 26: Language Use by Wakhi Speakers in Darshai

	<b>Domain</b>	<b>Language</b>
Social/ Interpersonal domains	Home: family, children, guests	W
	Communication: friends, neighbours	W t
Functional domains	Unofficial situations	W
	Arguing	W
	Counting	W
	Work within the community	W t
	Religion	T w
	Information / Media	R, T
	Education, literacy	T
	Official situations	T

Wakhi is dominant in social or interpersonal domains. Within the community Wakhi is the dominant language of work. Tajik has traditionally been used in religious events and for religious books, although Wakhi is sometimes used for explanations. Tajik is also the language of education and literacy and is seen as very important to learn. At the same time, 90% of the people we spoke to indicated a desire for their children to learn read and write in Wakhi, as well as in Tajik. In official situations Tajik is the only language used.

As in Lyangar, we also asked respondents to indicate how important they felt both Wakhi and Tajik were for various functions. Possible responses included very important, important, somewhat important, and unimportant. These responses were assigned numerical values from 3 for ‘very important’ to 0 for ‘unimportant,’ and were then averaged. The average importance of each language for each function is given in table 27.

Table 27: Importance of Wakhi and Tajik for Wakhi Speakers in Darshai

	<b>Domain</b>	<b>Wakhi</b>	<b>Tajik</b>
Social/ Interpersonal domains	Family	Very important (3.0)	Unimportant (0.5)
	Communication	Very important (2.75)	Somewhat important (0.7)
	Gaining respect	Important (1.5)	Somewhat important (1.0)
Functional domains	Earning money	Important (1.75)	Important (1.5)
	Religion	Somewhat important (1.0)	Very important (3.0)
	News*	Unimportant (0.5)	Very Important (2.5)

\* Russian: Very important (3.0)

Not only is Wakhi dominant in most social or interpersonal domains, it is seen as very important in most of these domains. The only exception is for gaining respect, in which Wakhi is seen as important and Tajik as somewhat important. This is likely tied to the fact that the Wakhi live with Tajik-speaking neighbours, resulting in a situation where respect is less dependent on knowing any particular language. Within the community, Wakhi is the language of work and so is somewhat more important than Tajik. If we had asked about the importance of Wakhi and Tajik outside the community of Darshai a different picture would have emerged; Tajik would likely have been very important. Tajik and Russian are very important in the sphere of information and media since newspapers and books are in those languages.

As indicated above, the Tajik-speaking community in Darshai traces its roots to two Tajik families who settled in the community about a century ago. Within those two families an obvious shift towards Wakhi is visible. For example, one ethnic Tajik community member reported speaking Tajik with grandparents but Wakhi with parents. This was a common pattern of language use among all three families we interviewed.

The evolution of language use begins with the migration of the original Tajik families from Yamg to this Wakhi-speaking village. Living in this environment, the Tajiks soon started to understand their Wakhi neighbours though they would initiate conversations in Tajik. Though they continued to take some brides from Yamg, intermarriage with the Wakhi also became common in the second generation; this increased in the third generation. The introduction of Wakhi wives resulted in the language of the home changing to Wakhi. Children would grow up with Wakhi as first language, although they would use Tajik with their Tajik grandparents. Once Wakhi became established as the language of the home, it remained so even when a later generation again took a bride from Yamg.

### 3.3 Ishkoshim Centre: A Tajik-Dominant Community

Ishkoshim Centre represents a Tajik-dominant community to which the Wakhi have immigrated over the past three generations. Ishkoshim Centre, located where the Panj River turns east, is a growing town with more than 3000 inhabitants. The town lies between the two main parts of the Ishkoshim administrative region: the Tajik-speaking Goron and the Wakhan. As administrative centre of the region, Ishkoshim Centre has administrative offices, various medical facilities including a hospital, and a bazaar. The nearby border patrol post, operated by the Russian Federation until the end of 2004 and now manned by the Tajik Army, also provides much-needed jobs, as well as customers for the local shops.

The big challenge for Wakhi families lies in the fact that Tajik is spoken not only in official situations, at work, and in kindergarten and school, but also on the street with neighbours and friends. Thus, the domains in which Wakhi is used are limited. The responses of several members of the family we interviewed in Ishkoshim Centre concerning normal patterns of use of Wakhi and Tajik are summarised in table 28. Once again, 'W' indicates Wakhi is used, 'T' indicates Tajik is used, and 'R' indicates Russian is used, and a comma indicates that languages are used nearly equally, though the first language is slightly dominant.

Table 28: Language Use by Wakhi Speakers in Ishkoshim Centre

	Domain	Language
Social/ Interpersonal domains	Home: family, children, guests	W, T
	Communication: friends, neighbours	T, W
Functional domains	Unofficial situations	W, T
	Most fluent language	W, T
	Arguing	W, T
	Counting	W, T
	Work within the community	T
	Religion	T
	Information/ Media	R, T
	Education, literacy	T
Official situations	T	

This family viewed themselves as a typical Wakhi family living in the town. There is no domain where this family uses only Wakhi; Tajik is present even in the home, brought from school and work by the younger generation and from work by the older. Though Wakhi is the first language choice in several

domains, Tajik is used nearly as much. Tajik is the sole language used in four domains, and is used with Russian in a fifth domain.

We also asked the family members to indicate how important they felt both Wakhi and Tajik were for various functions. As before, possible responses included very important, important, somewhat important, and unimportant. These responses were assigned numerical values from 3 for ‘very important’ to 0 for ‘unimportant,’ and were then averaged. The average importance of each language for each function is given in table 29.

Table 29: Importance of Wakhi and Tajik for Wakhi Speakers in Ishkoshim Centre

	<b>Domain</b>	<b>Wakhi</b>	<b>Tajik</b>
Social/ Interpersonal domains	Family	Important	Unimportant
	Communication	Somewhat important	Important
	Gaining respect	Important	Very important
Functional domains	Earning money	Important	Very important
	Religion	Unimportant	Very important
	News*	Unimportant	Very important

\* Perceived benefit of Russian- 3.0

Wakhi is seen as important for the home, for gaining respect and, surprisingly, for work within the community. The importance for work is due to the fact that Wakhi is used with ethnically Wakhi colleagues and friends even at work. Wakhi is seen as somewhat important for communication with neighbours and other people in the community and as unimportant for religion and gaining information.

As indicated above, Wakhi is not the only language used in the home. One of the factors determining patterns of language use in the home of the family we interviewed was the generation of the speakers. Three generations live together in this family. The first generation, now in their mid-fifties, emigrated from the upper valley to Ishkoshim Centre about 20 years ago to find work. The second generation, now in their late twenties, has grown up in a Tajik-speaking environment. The third generation entered kindergarten last year. The patterns of language use by each generation in the home is summarised in table 30. ‘W’ indicates Wakhi and ‘T’ indicates Tajik; capital letters indicate primary use, and lower case letters indicate secondary use.

Table 30: Generational language use in the home

	<b>First generation</b>	<b>Second generation</b>	<b>Third generation</b>
First generation	W	W, t	W, t
Second generation	W, t	T, w	T, w
Third generation	W, t	T, w	—

The first generation uses only Wakhi with each other and primarily Wakhi with the younger generations. The middle generation uses primarily Wakhi with the older generation, but more Tajik than Wakhi with each other and their children. Before beginning kindergarten, the young grandson used only Wakhi with his grandparents. His use of Tajik was for the most part limited to interactions with his mother, who is ethnic Tajik. After a year of kindergarten, he uses both Wakhi and Tajik with his grandparents and parents. His younger siblings have not established patterns of language use.

#### 4. Discussion

In this section we discuss the results of our research in light of the goals outlined in section 1. In section 4.1 we assess language vitality of the different Wakhi communities using the eight factors presented by Landweer (2000). Then, in section 4.2 we examine factors that influence levels of proficiency in Tajik.

##### 4.1 A Comparison of Communities

Landweer (2000) presents eight indicators of ethnolinguistic vitality of a community and suggests that the indicators do not carry the same weight in all situations. In this study, we will concentrate on differences between the three different types of Wakhi communities.

In the first community, Lyangar, Wakhi exhibits high vitality and little evidence of language shift. Therefore, we would hope that the indicators of language vitality should predict high language vitality. This is, in fact, the case. Lyangar is a homogenous language community. It is a relatively isolated community in the upper Wakhan Valley that has experienced no major immigration. Wakhi is the sole

language of the community; Tajik wives marrying into the community are expected to become actively bilingual, speaking the language of their new home. The use of Tajik is limited to official settings and outside the community. The situation in Lyangar is summarised in table 31.

Table 31: Indicators of Ethnolinguistic Vitality of Wakhi in Lyangar

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Lyangar</b>
Relative position on the urban-rural continuum	Rural: Located in upper valley several hours away from Ishkoshim Centre
Domains in which the language is used	Wakhi is sole language of the community
Frequency and types of code switching	Tajik used only in official settings
Distribution of speakers within their own social networks	All Wakhi
Population and group dynamics	Stable
Social outlook regarding and within the speech community	Wakhi is the language of the community
Language prestige	Accepted by outsiders as minority language
Access to a stable and acceptable economic base	Limited to substantial farming for most families

In the second community, Darshai, Wakhi also exhibits high vitality and little evidence of language shift. The indicators of language vitality are not as uniform in this community as in Lyangar, however. While the village of Darshai is rural, it is less isolated than Lyangar since it is located near the road to Ishkoshim Centre. While Wakhi is the dominant language, there is a Tajik-speaking minority. In the time since the two Tajik families representing this minority moved into the community a few generations ago, however, no further immigration has occurred. Wakhi is the language of the community, and everybody is expected to be at least passively bilingual. Only first-language Tajik speakers initiate the use of Tajik, and even then responses are frequently in Wakhi. Though the original Tajik immigrants are seen (and see themselves) as ethnic Tajik, some members of later generations see themselves as Wakhi, not Tajik. Wakhi is seen as the language of the community; within the community Wakhi is necessary for access to a stable economic base. Tajik remains the language for use beyond the community. The indicators for Wakhi in Darshai are summarised in table 32.

Table 32: Indicators of Ethnolinguistic Vitality of Wakhi in Darshai

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Darshai</b>
Relative position on the urban-rural continuum	Small village some hours drive from Ishksahim Centre
Domains in which the language is used	Wakhi throughout the community
Frequency and types of code switching	Tajik rarely used
Distribution of speakers within their own social networks	Vast majority Wakhi
Population and group dynamics	Immigration of Tajik families four generations ago into the community
Social outlook regarding and within the speech community	Wakhi is the language of the community
Language prestige	Accepted minority language
Access to a stable and acceptable economic base	Limited to substantial farming for most families

Finally, we examine the situation in Ishkoshim Centre, an example of a Tajik-dominant community. Ishkoshim Centre is a small regional town with a mainly Tajik population. Wakhi families immigrated to Ishkoshim Centre for economic reasons. Although Wakhi is an accepted minority language, its use is limited to the family or among ethnically Wakhi friends. Code switching is frequent since both ethnic groups live close together. The first migrant generation values its own language highly although it is actively bilingual. Later generations use Tajik more extensively as the main language of communication and professional advancement. Non-Wakhi spouses do not feel any pressure to learn Wakhi, and children in such homes grow up speaking Tajik as their first language. The indicators of language vitality for Wakhi in Ishkoshim Centre are summarised in table 33.

Table 33: Indicators of Ethnolinguistic Vitality of Wakhi in Ishkoshim Centre

Indicator	Ishkoshim Centre
Relative position on the urban-rural continuum	Small town with road access
Domains in which the language is used	Wakhi confined to the home
Frequency and types of code switching	High frequency between Wakhi and Tajik
Distribution of speakers within their own social networks	Limited; Tajik speaking neighbours and friends are common
Population and group dynamics	Immigration of Wakhi from the upper valley
Social outlook regarding and within the speech community	Strong within the first generation, then declining
Language prestige	Accepted minority language
Access to a stable and acceptable economic base	A variety of jobs are available in trading, government, and construction

A significant difference between the three communities is the role of immigration. Landweer (2000) notes that effects between a speech community and immigrants are bi-directional. On the one hand, a community is affected by the language characteristics of the immigrants. At the same time, a community affects the language characteristics of those immigrants. In the case of Wakhi we could expect that Tajik would displace the less widely-spoken languages since it is the national language as well as the LWC of the Ishkoshim administrative region of the GBAP. This, however, does not seem to be the case; it is the community that affects the immigrants more than vice versa. Though the region has seen waves of migration, the language communities appear to be stable.<sup>4</sup> Table 34 summarizes immigration activity and language maintenance and shift of communities and immigrants.

Table 34: Immigration and Language in Wakhi Communities

Community	Community Language	Immigrant Ethnicity	First Generation Language	Later Generation Language
Lyangar	Wakhi	Tajik (wives)	Tajik	Wakhi
Darshai	Wakhi	Tajik	Tajik	Wakhi
Ishkoshim Centre	Tajik	Wakhi	Wakhi	Tajik

In both homogeneous Wakhi communities like Lyangar and Wakhi-dominant communities like Darshai, the language vitality of Wakhi is high and stable. Immigrants in both types of communities, whether entire families or spouses, learn Wakhi, and later generations in both communities speak Wakhi as the primary language. Twenty of the twenty-three communities in which the Wakhi live are either homogenous Wakhi or Wakhi dominant. There are only three communities in which Wakhi faces declining use. These three were not originally Wakhi communities; Wakhi from the upper valley moved into them. The three homogenous Tajik communities in the valley do not seem to have any influence on the vitality of the Wakhi language.

#### 4.2 Factors Affecting Levels of Tajik Language Proficiency

Having established that Wakhi shows high levels of vitality, we now focus on factors that affect levels of proficiency in Tajik among Wakhi speakers. Approximately 33% of our respondents had only limited proficiency in Tajik, roughly 40% had a professional proficiency, and less than 30% reach full proficiency. All of the respondents with limited proficiency in Tajik were under the age of 31 or over the age of 55. The respondents between 16 and 30 seem to differ most widely, with 45% reporting limited proficiency and 22.5% full proficiency. In section 3 we presented a number of factors that could potentially affect levels of proficiency. In the rest of this section we examine the four factors of living in a Tajik-speaking community (section 4.2.1), education and occupation (section 4.2.2), travel and guests (section 4.2.3) and the present use of Tajik (section 4.2.4). Finally, in section 4.2.5 we mention two areas in which Tajik language proficiency is actually the condition for language access.

##### 4.2.1 Living in a Tajik-Speaking Community

Living in a Tajik-speaking community reduces the domains of use for Wakhi to the home or with Wakhi relatives. Tajik is the language of communication on the street with neighbours and friends and at work or school. This results in higher levels of Tajik proficiency. Of those who had lived in a

<sup>4</sup> See Müller, Abbess, Tiessen and Tiessen (2005) for documentation of a similar situation in the neighbouring language Ishkashimi.

Tajik-speaking community, 83% achieved professional or full proficiency in Tajik; only 17% displayed a limited proficiency in spite of living in a Tajik-speaking community. Among the respondents who had not lived in a Tajik-speaking community, on the other hand, 51% reported having only a limited proficiency, while 40% reported having professional proficiency and only 9% full proficiency.

As noted above, levels of proficiency are significantly lower among respondents under the age of 31 than among respondents between the ages of 31 and 55. This correlates strongly with opportunities to live in a Tajik-speaking community. Two thirds of respondents between the ages of 31 and 55 have lived in a Tajik-speaking community, while this is true for only about one third of those under the age of 31. Two reasons have thus far prevented the younger generation from living in a Tajik-speaking community: the civil war while they were growing up and limited financial means. At the current time limited financial means remains a major problem. While the younger generation still has time to travel and to live in a Tajik-speaking community, the possibilities are more limited for women once they marry.

#### **4.2.2 Education and Occupation**

While time spent in a Tajik-speaking community is important, it is not the only factor determining levels of proficiency. For example, while 37% of those who have lived in a Tajik-speaking community reported having professional proficiency, 40% of those who did not live in such a community also reported having professional proficiency. Other factors influencing proficiency in Tajik are education and occupation. Education is the primary access to Tajik for Wakhis in Lyangar. Tajik is introduced to children at the age of six in prep class; it then becomes the medium of instruction throughout the rest of school. Most people under the age of 55 have finished middle school. This seems to ensure at least a limited proficiency in Tajik. Those with lower levels of proficiency in Tajik are reported to come from families where the parents have “poor Tajik and do not study with their children.” Many of those parents are said to be subsistence farmers with little need for Tajik. Parents working as teachers or in administrative positions seem to encourage their children to achieve more in school and thus attain a higher level of proficiency in Tajik. Thus, parents’ level of proficiency and access to Tajik influence the next generation.

#### **4.2.3 Travel and Guests**

While travel could be a potential access to Tajik, it appears that this opportunity is not used much. The purpose of most travel is to visit Wakhi-speaking relatives in other communities. Wakhi is always used in these settings, even when the relatives live in a Tajik-speaking community. Similarly, nearly all guests are ethnic Wakhi relatives and as such are expected to use Wakhi as the language of communication.

#### **4.2.4 Present Use of Tajik**

Within the community Tajik does not play a major role; only with travelling merchants or soldiers is Tajik used at all. Only the middle generation seems to make a conscious effort to use Tajik in order to maintain its level of proficiency. The older generation apparently does not need to use Tajik on a regular basis; even interactions with merchants are handled by their children’s generation. Young people do not seem to use Tajik on a regular basis. Less than half the 40 respondents under the age of 30 reported having used Tajik once in the past five years; only six reported having used it during the last year. Only 16 report using Tajik once a month or more. Those who use Tajik on a daily basis are either studying in a Tajik-speaking community or are required to use Tajik in their job.

#### **4.2.5 Proficiency in Tajik Contributing to Access**

Two of the factors discussed above, higher education and certain occupations, play a more complex role. For example, admission to higher education requires a sufficient level of Tajik. Students who are admitted to higher education, however, gain access to still higher levels of Tajik. The same situation is true for certain professions such as being a teacher, administrator, or a travelling merchant.

#### **4.2.6 Summary**

Although Wakhi speakers recognise the importance of knowing Tajik, opportunities for access to the Tajik language differ among age groups. In table 35 the influence of each of the four factors discussed above are summarised by age group.

Table 35: Influence of Language Access Factors on Proficiency in Tajik in Lyangar

	<b>Living in Tajik Community</b>	<b>Education or Occupation</b>	<b>Travel and Guests</b>	<b>Present Use of Tajik</b>
55+	0	0	0	0
30–55	+	+	–	+
16–30	–	0	–	–

For all practical purposes, the older generation in Lyangar has no opportunities for access to Tajik. They do not move or travel anywhere, guests speak Wakhi with them, and they have no need to use Tajik within the community. We expect that their levels of Tajik will at best remain constant or, more likely, decline.

The middle generation has had the most opportunities to develop higher levels of proficiency in Tajik through living in Tajik communities, good levels of education, and the possibility of travel. Most of them make a conscious effort to maintain their levels of Tajik; some are required to use Tajik regularly as part of their occupation. In spite of this, there are people even in this generation who do not use the opportunities that present themselves. These people report their level of proficiency in Tajik is declining.

The younger generation has had fewer opportunities for exposure to Tajik due to the civil war. Most have not had the chance to live in Tajik-speaking communities, and now lack of finances limits the opportunity for most to seek higher education. In recent years a few have had the opportunity to study in Tajik-speaking areas, and they have attained professional or full proficiency in Tajik. For those who stay in the village, however, the fact that they do not use Tajik either in their home community or while travelling indicates there will be little improvement in levels of proficiency in Tajik in the near future.

## 5. Conclusion and Prospects of Development

Wakhi is a highly vital and strong language in most of the communities in which it is spoken. The only communities in which the use of Wakhi is declining are those in which ethnic Wakhi are a minority. Currently this is the case in only three out of twenty-three communities. In the other twenty communities, Wakhi is the language of the community, and those who come to live in these communities learn it.

Tajik is respected as the national language and the LWC of the Ishkoshim administrative region of the GBAP. In Tajik-dominant communities it may well replace Wakhi for ethnic Wakhi members of the community. But in Wakhi-dominant or homogenous Wakhi communities, Tajik plays only a minor role in the daily life of the people. Though most speakers of Wakhi between the ages of 31 and 55 have attained professional or full proficiency in Tajik, these levels have not been passed on to those under the age of 31. There might be a growing disparity between the relatively high levels of Tajik of those who can afford to travel and study and those who stay in the community.

## Appendix A

Villages of the Ishkoshim Administrative Region East of Ishkoshim Centre

Location	Ethnicity	Comments
Ishkoshim Centre	Tajik (Wakhi)	Regional centre
Ryn	Ishkashimi	
Dasht I/II	Tajik (Wakhi)	
Namadgut I/II	Tajik (Wakhi)	
Udit	Tajik	
Ramanit	Wakhi	
Tokakhona	Tajik	
Darshai	Wakhi (Tajik)	
Shitkharv	Wakhi (Tajik)	Administrative centre
Zamuj	Wakhi	
Yamchun	Wakhi	
Vichkut	Wakhi	
Turghoz	Wakhi	
Ptub	Wakhi	Administrative centre
Novobod	Wakhi	
Yang	Tajik	
Vnukut	Wakhi	
Vrang	Wakhi	Administrative centre
Inif	Wakhi	
Nizhgar	Wakhi	
Drizh	Wakhi	
Shirgin	Wakhi	
Zugvand	Wakhi	
Zong	Wakhi	Administrative centre
Hizor	Wakhi	
Lyangar	Wakhi	
Ratm	Wakhi	

## Appendix B

Proficiency Levels of Tajiks in the Different Age Groups

Age Group	Proficiency Level	Number	Percentage
16–30	Limited	18	45.0%
	Professional	13	32.5%
	Full	9	22.5%
31–55	Limited	0	0.0%
	Professional	15	53.6%
	Full	13	46.4%
55+	Limited	13	54.2%
	Professional	8	33.3%
	Full	3	12.5%
<i>Total</i>	<i>Limited</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>33.7%</i>
	<i>Professional</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>39.1%</i>
	<i>Full</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>27.2%</i>

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