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## **Identities and Ideologies in Georgian Sociolinguistic Spaces**

Shabashvili, Giuli; Smakman, Dick

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Identities and Ideologies in Georgian Sociolinguistic Spaces



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# Identities and Ideologies in Georgian Sociolinguistic Spaces

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# Minority Language Policy in Georgia

## საქართველოს ენობრივი პოლიტიკა უმცირესობების მიმართ

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**Abstract.** There are four regions in Georgia where large groups of linguistic minorities reside: Abkhazians in Abkhazia, Ossetians in Shida Kartli, Azerbaijanis in Kvemo Kartli, and Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti and the Tsalka district of Kvemo Kartli. The Abkhazians live in the northwestern part of Georgia, along the Black Sea coast. In addition to these major groups, it is also important to mention several smaller linguistic communities, primarily settled in the mountainous areas of Eastern Georgia. These include the Pankisi Kists, Batsbs, and Udians. The uniqueness of these groups lies in their numbers: their languages are included in UNESCO's list of endangered languages. During the Soviet era, language policy was marked by increasing Russification. After the collapse of the USSR, the national government of Georgia assumed responsibility for preserving and developing the native languages of minority groups. Current state policy governs the use of these languages in relation to the official language. Georgian legislation is liberal in this regard and promotes an integration-oriented language policy, in contrast to the assimilationist and Russification-driven policies of the Soviet period. In recent years, minority communities have shown growing interest in learning the official language. One of the key contributing factors has been the state's effective language policy aimed at supporting both the preservation and development of native languages. In this context, the State Language Department, the Ministry of Education and Science, and international organizations play a crucial role in facilitating the integration of minority groups. A variety of programs and local projects are being implemented to promote multilingual education, with one of the primary goals being the protection and preservation of native languages.

**აბსტრაქტი.** საქართველოში ოთხი რეგიონია, სადაც ენობრივი უმცირესობების დიდი ჯგუფები ცხოვრობენ: აფხაზები - აფხაზეთში, ოსები - შიდა ქართლში, აზერბაიჯანელები - ქვემო ქართლში და სომხები - სამცხე-ჯავახეთსა და ქვემო ქართლიდან - წალკის რაიონში. აფხაზები ცხოვრობენ საქართველოს ჩრდილო-დასავლეთ ნაწილში, შავი ზღვის სანაპიროზე. მნიშვნელოვანია ასევე რამდენიმე მცირე ენობრივი თემის ხსენება, რომლებიც ძირითადად აღმოსავლეთ საქართველოს მთიან რაიონებში არიან განსახლებულნი. მათ შორის არიან პანკისელი ქისტები, ბატსბები და უდიები. ამ ჯგუფების უნიკალურობა მათ რაოდენობაშია: მათი ენები შეტანილია იუნესკოს გადაშენების პირას მყოფი ენების სიაში. საბჭოთა ენობრივი პოლიტიკა მკვეთრად ასიმილაციონისტური იყო. სსრკ-ის დაშლის შემდეგ საქართველოს ეროვნულმა მთავრობამ აიღო პასუხისმგებლობა უმცირესობათა ჯგუფების მშობლიური ენების შენარჩუნებასა და განვითარებაზე. ამჟამინდელი სახელმწიფო პოლიტიკა არეგულირებს ამ ენათა გამოყენებას ოფიციალურ ენასთან მიმართებით. საქართველოს კანონმდებლობა ამ მხრივ ლიბერალურია, ხელს უწყობს ინტეგრაციულ ორიენტირებულ ენობრივ პოლიტიკას, საბჭოთა პერიოდის ასიმილაციასა და რუსიფიკაციაზე ორიენტირებული პოლიტიკისგან განსხვავებით. ბოლო წლებში უმცირესობათა თემებმა სახელმწიფო ენის შესწავლისადმი მზარდი ინტერესი გამოხატეს. ერთ-ერთი მთავარი ხელშემწყობი ფაქტორი იყო სახელმწიფოს ეფექტური ენობრივი პოლიტიკა, რომელიც, სახელმწიფო ენის სწავლების ხელშემწყობასთან ერთად, მიზნად ისახავს მშობლიური ენების შენარჩუნებისა და განვითარების მხარდაჭერას.

**Keywords:** Sociolinguistics, language policy, state language, Minority languages, multilingual practices

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** სოციოლინგვისტიკა. ენობრივი პოლიტიკა, სახელმწიფო ენა, უმცირესობათა ენები, მრავალენოვნება

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to review the Contemporary language situation in Georgia, specifically in relation to the functioning of the state language. In our research, we rely on the results of field research conducted over the last 20 years, as well as on a sociological survey that we conducted in 2020. This was done in cooperation with the Carnegie Europe Foundation and it included sociolinguistic issues (CRRC, 2021), amongst other things. We processed reports of studies conducted by international or non-governmental organizations, as well as reports prepared by the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civil Equality (National Concept, 2015-2020), based on the analysis and generalization of which we came to important conclusions.

During the research, a theoretical framework was developed, which considers the following research issues:

1. What languages exist in Georgia, apart from the official language (Georgian)?
2. What is the sociolinguistic status of these languages?
3. What kind of language policy does Georgia have in relation to minority languages (in historical terms)?
4. To what extent and with what tools does the state protect the preservation/development of these languages?

## 2. The Languages of Georgia

According to the 2014 population census of Georgia (Census, 2014), groups of citizens living in Georgia were identified according to their mother tongue. The census data showed that the native language of 87.6% of the population of Georgia is Georgian. Other native languages according to the speakers were Azerbaijani (6.20%), Armenian (3.9%), and Russian (1.24%) Russian. All other languages together were the mother tongue of 1.1% of the population. The census data also showed that in some regions, the majority of the people did not have Georgian as their native tongue. About half of the inhabitants of the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti, which borders on Armenia, have Armenian as their native language. In two municipalities (Akhalkalaki, Ninotsminda) of the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti, the Armenian-speaking minority constitutes more than 90% of the population (the so-called 'minority in the majority'; see Tabatadze, 2010, p.4). In the Kvemo Kartli region, which borders on Armenia and on Azerbaijan, 42% of the inhabitants speak Azerbaijanian as their native language. In this region, other minority language groups (Armenians, Greeks) constitute 6% of the region's population. The Kakheti region, which borders on Azerbaijan and Russia is also distinguished by its language diversity. There are settlements where the speakers of the Azerbaijani, Vainakh and Dagestani languages, as well as the Ossetian population are represented (Census, 2014).

In addition to the state language (Georgian) and its language variations, many languages are spoken in Georgia; Some of them are Indo-European (Greek, Ossetian, Russian, Armenian, Kurdish, Ukrainian), some are representatives of the Alatai-Turkish languages family (Azerbaijani), Hungarian-Finnish (Estonian), some are representatives of the Semitic family (Aramaic-Syriac). Finally, there are the Iberian-Caucasian languages (Gabunia, 2014), in which four groups are distinguished: Kartvelian, Abkhaz-Adyghe, Nakhi and Dagestani.

There are 4 regions in Georgia, where we have large groups of language minorities: Abkhazians (Abkhazia), Ossetians (Shida Kartli), Azerbaijanis (Kvemo Kartli) and Armenians (Samtskhe-Javakheti and from Kvemo Kartli – Tsalka district). Abkhazians live in the northwestern part of Georgia, along the Black Sea. According to the 1989 census, the number of speakers was 100,000 (Population Census of Georgia, 1989). Today their number is almost halved as a result of hostilities and migration (Population Census of Georgia, 2014).

## 3. Language Policy in Georgia

Many modern states have strict language policies, and the Soviet Union was one of them. In the 1920s, the Soviet Union developed a language policy that had no analogues in the world. There was a compulsory official language, called 'State language'. Each region chose the language(s) that corresponded to the composition of the population of that region. In addition, it was necessary to ensure complete equality of languages in all public and political institutions (Stalin, 1951, p.70). The so-called 'minor languages' were not deemed ready to fulfill the functions of an official language. Most of these languages did not even have a literary language, but until the 1930s, the Soviet Union continued following its course nevertheless. In general, such a policy is interpreted as linguistic

pluralism (Crisp S. 1990; Alpatov, 2013). Since the 1930s, the Russian language has gradually become stronger. Its rise in status was linked to its prestige (Saville-Troike, 2012).

### 3.1 Contemporary Policies

Since the 1960s, the leadership of the Soviet Union has officially changed its policy towards linguistic minorities. Active Russification of small nations began. Georgia was one of the republics that constitutionally ensured the status of Georgian as the state (official) language back in the Soviet period. Despite this status, Georgian never became a prestigious language for the minorities living in Georgia. Russian developed into a tool of communication between nationalities. Although representatives of minorities could receive education in their mother tongue, most of them studied in Russian-language schools. It should be noted that a large part of Georgian elite families sent their children to Russian schools because of the prestige of the Russian language and employment prospects (Sikharulidze, 2008, p.63). Knowledge of Georgian (the official language) was mandatory only for the autochthonous population – ethnic Georgians, and the teaching of the state language was highly formal for the minorities living in Georgia.

Due to such a language policy, a rather difficult linguistic situation was created in the republics of the USSR (including Georgia). Theoretically, the inhabitants of the ‘autonomies’ (Abkhazians, Ossetians) should become multilingual and speak their mother tongue, the official language (Georgian), and Russian (the state language). Emphasis was placed on Russian proficiency (Sikharulidze, 2008). This language policy led to the existence of different types of bilingualism in multinational Georgia: Russian-Abkhazian in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia SSR, Russian-Ossetian in the Autonomous District of South Ossetia, and Russian-Armenian in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Finally, there was Russian-Azerbaijani which was spoken in Kvemo Kartli.

Since the 1990s, Georgia has firmly stood on the path of integration with the European Union. Therefore, it was necessary to put maximum emphasis on teaching and promoting the English language. The implicit aim was to replace Russian with English. However, it could not be implemented in a short period of time. While the Russian language has now lost much of its function as a tool of communication between nationalities, mastery of English is still too low for it to function as a proper lingua franca. This has presented unforeseen problems (Hogan-Brun & Ramonlene, 2004). In the post-Soviet period, the newly created republics implemented different types of language policies. Georgia chose a liberal path: after the collapse of the USSR, everyone who lived in Georgia automatically received Georgian citizenship, minorities were not required to know the country's official language or history. But this policy did not lead to loyalty to the state on the part of national minorities. Since ethnic minorities were granted citizenship without their consent (in fact, they had no other choice), they can now be qualified as ‘involuntary minorities’ (Svanidze, 2002). Today, representatives of different nationalities in Georgia are gradually moving to communication in the state language. The Russian language, as a tool for relations with minorities, has already lost most of its functions. It seems that this is an irreversible process and a continuation of the political strategic line taken by the Georgian state in the long term.

According to Article 38 of the Constitution, every citizen of Georgia has the right, in accordance with the generally recognized principles and norms of international law, to freely develop their culture, without any discrimination or interference, and to use their native language in their personal life and publicly.

### 3.2 Language Policy in Education

The implementation of the language policy in the education system in relation to minorities is of special importance. The Law on General Education (Articles 7 and 9) provides access to general education: the state guarantees the right of every student to receive general education in the state or native language as close as possible to the place of residence. According to Article 7, “the school shall protect, on the basis of equality, the individual and collective right of members of minorities to freely use their mother tongue, to preserve and express their cultural identity” (Law on General Education, 2005); The first paragraph of Article 9 of the law ensures the right of all students to receive primary and basic education in their mother tongue.

National minorities can create educational institutions in the form of a private legal entity, for which they must obtain a general, higher, primary and (or) secondary license for educational activities in accordance with the legislation of Georgia.

Teaching in Georgian higher education institutions is allowed only in the state language. For years, minority students faced problems in obtaining higher education due to their lack of knowledge of the Georgian language. In order to correct this gap, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia started implementing a “preferential policy” for applicants from ethnic minorities, although the forms, methods and approaches of this policy in 2005-2010 were subject to continuous change (Tabatadze, Gorgadze, 2014).

In accordance with the amendments to the Law on Higher Education adopted on November 19, 2009, representatives of minorities take only the general skills exam in the Azerbaijani / Armenian / Ossetian / Abkhazian languages at the unified national exams, after which the student will undergo a 1-year preparation program in the Georgian language and then choose any bachelor's degree of their choice. The program. Of the total number of students of a specific higher education institution, 5% can benefit from the preferential policy for Armenian-speaking and Azerbaijani-speaking students, and 1% for Ossetian-Abkhaz speaking students (Law of Georgia, 2005, Article 52.51).

Currently, there are 208 non-Georgian public schools in Georgia. In addition, there are 89 non-Georgian sectors in schools, where teaching is conducted in Russian, Armenian or Azerbaijani languages. A total of 52,000 students study in non-Georgian language schools and sectors of the country.

In order to protect minority languages, as well as to properly teach the state language, the Ministry of Education and Science developed a reform of multilingual education, which replaced the monolingual education model. This model of multilingual education implies the integration of language and subject content in subjects such as mathematics, science and social studies. Serious work on bilingual reform is currently underway in higher education institutions to train bilingual teachers, which is expected to solve problems accumulated over decades.

## 4. Multilingual Practices in Peripheral Areas

### 4.1 Abkhazian

The Abkhazian language belongs to the Abkhazian-Adyghe group of the Iberian-Caucasian languages family. According to the Constitution of Georgia, the Abkhazian language has been given the status of the state language in the territory of Abkhazia. However, after the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict in the 1990s, Abkhazian has the status of the state language in the region only formally, and the Russian language, which also has the status of an official language in the self-proclaimed republic, almost completely took over the function of conducting official relations (Tabatadze, 2018, 144-148).

In addition to Abkhazia, the Abkhazian language is represented in Adjara, where Abkhazians live compactly in villages near Batumi: Adliya, Angisa and Feria. Abkhazians settled in Adjara at the end of the 19th century. Abkhazians living in Adjara have preserved their customs, surname and name. However, the Abkhazian language is gradually being lost: even the older generation does not speak Abkhazian in the family, while the younger generation prefers to communicate in Georgian or, in some cases, in Russian (Report, 2015-2020).

Even in Abkhazia itself, Abkhazians are no longer fluent in Abkhazian, and the percentage of Abkhazian-speaking people is small compared to the monolingual Russian-speaking population. It should be noted that the older generations have practically forgotten Abkhazian and, therefore, cannot teach the language to young Abkhazians; consequently, a large part of the young generation practically no longer knows their native language and cannot use it in their daily life. It is true that there are Abkhazian language schools in the region; however, their number is extremely small and teaching in Abkhazian is conducted only at the primary level; grades 1 to 4 (Clogg, 2008; Chirikba, 2009; Tabatadze, 2018).

Before the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, the main language of interethnic communication in Abkhazia was Russian for both Georgians and Abkhazians. Georgian was also spoken by those Abkhazians who lived in the Ochamchir and Gali regions (Department of Statistics of the de facto Republic of Abkhazia, 2016). This situation changed radically after the conflict provoked by Russia, later in the 1990s, when the Georgian population was forced to leave Abkhazia. Today, the territory of Abkhazia, which borders on Russia, is occupied by Russia and Georgia's jurisdiction does not apply.

Currently the language situation in Abkhazian can be characterized as bilingualism (Abkhazian-Russian), including a primacy of the Russian language. Often the knowledge of the Abkhazian language is limited only to oral speech, which is due to the fact that Abkhazians have mostly received a completely Russian education. In Abkhazian, they may only have basic reading and writing skills. It is a fact that the range of use of the Abkhazian language is significantly reduced; The Abkhazian language has been included in the UNESCO list of "Languages in Danger" (UNESCO, 2009).

### 4.2 Ossetian

Ossetians live compactly in Shida Kartli – the northern part Georgia, bordering on Russia – as well as in several villages in southern Georgia and Kakheti. Quite a large part is scattered throughout the territory of Georgia. According to the 1989 census, their number reached 165,000. Today, the number of Ossetian-speaking population

is somewhat reduced: after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, the situation between Ossetians and Georgians in Georgia became tense, which resulted in a conflict provoked by Russia. As a result of the conflict, a certain part of Ossetians moved to the territory of the Russian Federation. Today, Georgia's jurisdiction does not extend to the territory of South Ossetia: the territory is occupied by Russia. According to the results of the 2002 population census, their number was 38 thousand.

As in the case of the Abkhazian language, we are dealing with bilingualism (Ossetian-Russian), with Ossetians living in the self-recognized territory of Shida Kartli (South Ossetia). Despite the fact that the territory borders North Ossetia, it is impossible to strengthen Ossetian-language schools: Ossetian is taught as a subject, and Russian is taught from the first grade (Gabunia, 2021).

Some of the Ossetians settled in the jurisdiction of Georgia believe that their native language is Ossetian, and some consider their native language to be Georgian, because they were brought up and educated in this language. Some consider their mother tongue to be both Ossetian and Georgian (Ethnicities in Georgia, 2008). Families speak the Ossetian-Georgian language, the elderly speak mainly Ossetian. Both in the territory of former South Ossetia and outside it (for example, in the Ossetian-speaking villages of the Lagodekhi district). There used to be Ossetian-language schools, in which Ossetians could receive education in their native language. Formally, there are currently Ossetian-language schools in the Tskhinvali region, but actually Ossetian is taught there as a subject. The language of instruction in these schools is Russian (Final assessment of the implementation of the state strategy, 2015-2020).

In the territory under the jurisdiction of Georgia, in the villages compactly inhabited by Ossetians, there are currently only Georgian-language schools – the Ossetian population studies in Georgian schools and receives education in the Georgian language. From the Soviet period until the end of the 20th century, there were Ossetian-language primary schools, which, unfortunately, no longer function today. As a result, the majority of Ossetians cannot read and write in Ossetian (Final assessment of the implementation of the state strategy, 2015-2020; Ethnicities in Georgia, 2008).

The issue of Abkhazians and Ossetians is exceptional (taking into account the political situation) and today it is very difficult to obtain accurate data about the linguistic situation in these two regions.

### 4.3 Azerbaijanian

Two more large groups of minority languages in Georgia are distinguished. They are compactly settled in the territory of Georgia and, at the same time, outnumber other ethnic groups (including the Georgian-speaking population) in the given regions. The first one is the Azerbaijanian-speaking minority, which is settled in several regions of Georgia. Most of them live in Kvemo Kartli. Today, they make up 45% of the entire population of Kvemo Kartli, although in four districts (out of six) included in the Kvemo Kartli region, they are in an absolute or relative majority: the Marneuli district (98,245; 83.1%), the Dmanisi district (18,716; 66.7%), the Bolnisi district (49,026; 66%), and the Gardabani district (49,993; 43.7%) (Ethnicities in Georgia, 2008). Apart from Kvemo Kartli, there are also settlements of Azerbaijanis in Kakheti. A small number of Azerbaijanians are settled in other regions of Georgia.

The majority of the population of Kvemo Kartli does not know the Georgian language. Due to the gaps in the education system (outdated language teaching methods), the local population cannot learn Georgian at a proper level and only speak Azerbaijani. Since the 2000s, the issue of learning the Georgian language has been the main task of the integration policy, although the steps taken by the state were modest and ineffective so far (Gabunia, 2021). Georgian-language media is inaccessible to the population due to a lack of knowledge of the state language. Georgian Public Broadcasting and Georgian-language mass media is inaccessible to the population, also due to a lack of knowledge of the Georgian language. Azerbaijanis of Kvemo Kartli are more focused on foreign (mainly Azerbaijani, Turkish) media.

Azerbaijani language schools operating in Georgia play an important role in preserving the identity and culture of Azerbaijanis; According to the Georgian Education Management Information System, there are 117 Azerbaijani-language schools and sectors in Georgia. Of these, 80 are schools, and 37 are in the Azerbaijani language sector (Gorgadze and Tabatadze, 2019).

Today the sociolinguistic status of the Azerbaijani-speaking population (ethnically Azerbaijanians) can be characterized as unbalanced bilingualism (Baker, 2010); it tends towards monolingualism. It should be noted that in this regard, the difference between the generations is quite large: the population of the older generation is practically monolingual (only a small number speak Russian and almost cannot speak Georgian). The young generation does not speak Russian at all (with a few exceptions, those who are educated in Russian-language schools), although the share of Azerbaijani-Georgian bilinguals is gradually increasing.

## 4.4 Armenian

Armenians live in different numbers in the cities and regions of the country, especially in Tbilisi, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Adjara and the autonomous republics of Abkhazia. Knowledge of the state language by Armenians is different in these regions and cities (Ethnicities in Georgia, 2008). The majority of the population of Javakheti does not know the Georgian language. This is due to the Soviet legacy and ineffective language policy in the education system over the years. The local population knows some Russian, which is due to several reasons. Until 2005, Russian military bases were allocated in Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki. In addition, a large part of the population regularly goes to Russia for temporary work. Unlike the Azerbaijani-speaking population, the Russian language has maintained serious functionality to this day (Gabunia, 2014). Unlike Samtskhe-Javakheti Armenians, Armenians living in Tbilisi know the Georgian language well, which is due to the fact that Armenians in Tbilisi communicate with the Georgian-speaking population on a daily, social and professional level (Gabunia & Amirejibi, 2021).

Inadequate knowledge of the Georgian language by the Armenian population is one of the main factors causing emigration. Armenians are aware of the prospect of finding work in Russia (Gabunia, Amirejib, 2021). Armenian and Russian TV channels are the main source of information for the Armenian population in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Several regional TV companies operate in the region, and several Armenian, Russian and Georgian TV channels also actively broadcast. However, the majority of interviewees do not watch Georgian TV channels, cannot read the Georgian-language press, and express dissatisfaction with the improper teaching of the state language (Gabunia, Amirejib, 2021).

Armenian-language schools play an important role in maintaining the ethnic and linguistic identity of Armenians living in Georgia (131 schools in total). However, the process of teaching the Georgian language is still ineffective, which hinders the integration process (report, 2015-2020).

From a sociolinguistic point of view, Armenians in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region are trilingual (Armenian, Russian and Georgian), although the difference in language proficiency is noticeable. The Russian language traditionally enjoys a "prestige" status and is superior to the state language, Georgian (Kachkachishvili, 2019; Gabunia, Gochitashvili, 2019). It is worth noting here a trend that has been observed in the last few years: the level of knowledge of Georgian among young people has increased significantly. This is related to the current reform in the education system.

## 4.5 'Small languages' in Georgia

In addition to the large settlement groups described above, it is extremely interesting to discuss several linguistic groups that are settled in small groups, mainly in the mountains of Eastern Georgia; In particular, these are: Pankis Kists, Batsbs and Udians. The specificity of these languages is due to their number: these languages are included in the UNESCO list of endangered languages (UNESCO, 2009).

In Georgia, groups of Kists speakers appeared on the foothills of the Kakheti valley at the turn of the 18th-19th centuries. Today, the Kists live in the Kakheti region, in the Akhmeto district. Their number is equal to 5697 (Census, 2014). Together with the Kist language, all Kists know the Georgian language. They are bilingual. The majority of Kists consider Kist their native language. Both Kist and Georgian are used approximately equally in the family. Kists communicate with each other in Georgian, since they have received education in Georgian (that is, they have developed reading and writing skills in Georgian, and Kist's skills are limited to oral speech). There are no Russian schools in the Pankisi valley. Russian is taught as a second foreign language in Georgian schools of Kist villages. Consequently, language skills in Russian have been less developed by children (Gabunia, 2014).

Tsova-Tushs or Batsbs identify themselves with ethnic Georgians, although their language belongs to the Vainakh subgroup of the Iberian-Caucasian languages. These people are bilingual and fluent in both spoken languages: Georgian and Batsbian. The question is what is the balance between the quality of Georgian knowledge on the one hand and Batsbian on the other. In other words, do Tsova-Tushs speak both languages equally well or does one of them occupy a dominant position? Georgian is the dominant language among middle-aged and young Tsova-Tushs: when starting a conversation in their native language, the speakers easily switch to Georgian. Quite often the sentence starts in Georgian and end in Georgian (Gigashvili, 2014). The language community is characterized by balanced bilingualism, which Batsbian creates interesting material for research on the basis of language interference and convergence (Gabunia, 2014).

The Udians are one of the smallest aboriginal ethnic groups in the Caucasus. They live in Georgia, in the village of Zinobiani, in the Kvareli district (Clifton et al., 2005). The Udi language belongs to the Lezgian subgroup of the Dagestan group of Iberian-Caucasian languages (Ethnicities in Georgia, 2008). Some scholars consider the Udi language to be the successor of the language of the Caucasian Albanians (Dirr, 1903, Dumézil, 1975, Shanidze, 1938, Aleksidze, 2003). These scholars believe that the Udi language is the key to the ancient

Albanian alphabet (Aleksidze, 2003, p.202). Udi is an unwritten language. In the 20s of the 20th century, the Latin alphabet was introduced for the Udi language. The majority of Udi people speak the Georgian language well. This is facilitated by daily interaction with Georgians high school, where studies are conducted in Georgian. The Udis who settled in Zinobiani knew Azerbaijani as well, but today few still understand the Azerbaijani language. The Udis in Vartashen, as a result of living together with Armenians, also knew Armenian. In addition to Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani, the Russian language was widely spread among the Udis. Today, the Russian language has given up positions here as well (Clifton et al. 2005). The young generation of Udi people living in Georgia study in Georgian-language schools, and most of them do not know Udi. Middle-aged and older residents are bilingual and use Udi along with Georgian in certain areas of communication. Since 2015, with the change in the Law on General Education adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science, the curriculum of the Udi language was created, which is taught as an optional subject in the Zinobian school.

Greek is the mother tongue of Greeks and Cypriots and belongs to the Greek group of Indo-European languages. The Greek language was first attested 3,500 years ago and is mainly spoken in the Balkan Peninsula, surrounding islands and partly in Bulgaria, Albania and Turkey (Mallory, 1997). A large part of the Greeks living in Georgia migrated from the eastern provinces of Turkey. Their first settlements appeared in Georgia in the 18th century. Greek dialects were spoken in some villages of Dmanisi, Tetrtskaro, in the Borjomi region. Greeks are also living in Abkhazia and Adjara. The majority of the Greek population living in the Tsalki district are Urums (Turkish-speaking Greeks), who, although they do not speak Greek, still identify with the Greek ethnos. Russian and Turkish are the languages of communication for Tsalka Greeks. The Greeks living here cannot speak Georgian, because, starting from the Soviet Union, the standards and motivation for teaching Georgian were quite low.

## 5. Conclusion

There are 4 regions in Georgia, where we have large groups of language minorities: Abkhazians (Abkhazia), Ossetians (Shida Kartli), Azerbaijanis (Kvemo Kartli) and Armenians (Samtskhe-Javakheti and from Kvemo Kartli – Tsalka district). Abkhazians live in the northwestern part of Georgia, along the Black

In addition to the large settlement groups described above, it is extremely interesting to discuss several linguistic groups that are settled in small groups, mainly in the mountains of Eastern Georgia; In particular, these are: Pankis Kists, Batsbs and Udians. The specificity of these languages is due to their number: these languages are included in the UNESCO list of endangered languages.

The language policy of the Soviet Union was characterized by an increasing degree of Russification. After the collapse of the USSR, the national government of Georgia took responsibility for the preservation and development of the native languages of minorities.

State policy regulates the functioning of these languages in relation to the official language. The legislation of Georgia is liberal in this respect and implements not assimilation, but an integration language policy, in contrast to the Soviet period, when the policy of Russification of “minor languages” was underway.

Over the past decade, the interest of minorities in the official language has increased. One of the determining factors for this is the correct language policy created by the state in terms of the preservation and development of native languages. In this regard, a special role is assigned to the State Language Department, the Ministry of Education and Science, as well as international organizations that support the process of integration of minorities. A number of programs and local projects are being implemented to introduce multilingual education, one of the main tasks of which is the protection and preservation of native languages.

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**Identity Formation and Language Policy.  
A Study of Ethnic Minorities in Soviet and Post-Soviet Georgia**  
იდენტობის ფორმირება და ენის პოლიტიკა. ეთნიკური  
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**Abstract.** This study investigates the formation of civic identity among ethnic minorities in multi-ethnic Georgia, emphasizing the critical role of language policy in the post-Soviet era. Drawing on theories of nationalism and identity, it explores shifts from ethnic to hybrid and civic identities, particularly among densely settled minority communities. The research highlights language proficiency as key to accessing state services and participating in political, economic, and cultural life—thereby facilitating civic integration. It examines four historical periods (Soviet era, post-Soviet transition, early 2000s, and the past decade), revealing how Soviet ethnolinguistic policies complicated integration. However, effective modern language policies, including bilingual education and state-supported programs, have promoted minority inclusion and strengthened civic attachment to Georgia. The findings suggest that civic identity has evolved significantly, with minorities increasingly viewing Georgia as their homeland. This shift, supported by non-assimilationist state policies and sustained educational reforms, underscores the importance of inclusive language planning in fostering state unity.

**აბსტრაქტი.** ნაშრომში შესწავლილია საქართველოში მცხოვრები ეროვნული უმცირესობების სამოქალაქო იდენტობის ფორმირების პროცესი და გაანალიზებულია ენობრივი პოლიტიკის მნიშვნელობა პოსტსაბჭოთა პერიოდში. კვლევა ეფუძნება ნაციონალიზმისა და იდენტობის თეორიებს, რის საფუძველზეც მოცემულია, თუ როგორ განვითარდა საქართველოში მცხოვრები სომეხი და აზერბაიჯანელი მოსახლეობის ჰიბრიდული და სამოქალაქო იდენტობა, განსაკუთრებით მჭიდროდ დასახლებულ უმცირესობათა თემებში. ნაშრომში საუბარია იმასე, რომ სახელმწიფო ენის ცოდნა საფუძველია საჯარო სერვისებზე წვდომისა და ქვეყნის პოლიტიკური, ეკონომიკური და კულტურული ცხოვრებაში სრული მონაწილეობისათვის, რაც, თავის მხრივ, ქმნის სამოქალაქო ინტეგრაციის საფუძველს. კვლევა მოიცავს ოთხ ისტორიულ პერიოდს (საბჭოთა ხანა, პოსტსაბჭოთა გარდამავალი პერიოდი, 2000-იანი წლების დასაწყისი და ბოლო ათწლეული) და აჩვენებს, როგორ უშლიდა ხელს საბჭოთა ეთნოლინგვისტური პოლიტიკა უმცირესობების ინტეგრაციას. ამასთან, თანამედროვე ენობრივი პოლიტიკა, მათ შორის ბილინგვური განათლება და სახელმწიფო პროგრამები, ხელს უწყობს უმცირესობების ჩართვას და სამოქალაქო კავშირის გაღრმავებას საქართველოსთან. მონაცემები ცხადყოფს, რომ სამოქალაქო იდენტობა მნიშვნელოვანად შეიცვალა — უმცირესობები სულ უფრო მეტად აღიქვამენ საქართველოს როგორც საკუთარ სამშობლოს. ეს გარდატეხა, რომელსაც ხელს უწყობს არასასიმილაციური სახელმწიფო პოლიტიკა და განათლების რეფორმები, კიდევ ერთხელ ადასტურებს ინკლუზიური ენობრივი დაგეგმარების მნიშვნელობას სახელმწიფოებრივი ერთიანობის გასამდიერებლად.

**Keywords:** Civil identity, ethnic identity, language policy, hybrid identity

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** სამოქალაქო იდენტობა, ეთნიკური იდენტობა, ენობრივი პოლიტიკა, ჰიბრიდული იდენტობა

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Post-Soviet National Identity Formation

In examining the formation of civic identity among ethnic minorities in multi-ethnic societies and their integration into the titular culture, several crucial factors warrant consideration. Foremost among these is the level of proficiency in the official language(s) and the efficacy of measures and programs implemented at both state and non-governmental levels. This necessitates not only a synchronic analysis but also a diachronic examination to trace changes over time and assess progress and remaining challenges.

Language proficiency is intrinsically linked to access to state services and full participation in political, economic, and cultural spheres. Moreover, it plays a pivotal role in shaping the civic identity of minorities, a crucial task for multi-ethnic states.

Post-Soviet countries present an intriguing and diverse landscape regarding language policy. Soviet era witnessed policies aimed at both Russification and the propagation of a unified Soviet identity declining the importance of the local languages, resulting in an intricate interplay between national and civic identities. As a result, Post-Soviet states encountered a myriad of challenges in the maintenance of language policies and the effective integration of ethnic minorities into the titular society.

Georgia, as a former Soviet state with a multi-ethnic composition, grapples with various complexities in promoting language proficiency among its ethnic minorities. The country's demographic landscape reflects this diversity. According to the 2014 census, ethnic Georgians constitute the majority at approximately 87% of the population, with the remaining 13 percent comprised of various ethnic groups. Among these groups, Azerbaijanis and Armenians stand out, representing 6.3% and 4.5% of the population, respectively. Additionally, approximately 80 smaller ethnic groups are accounting for about 3 percent of the population (Census Results, 2014).

These ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities are concentrated in specific regions across Georgia. For instance, Kvemo Kartli is predominantly inhabited by Azerbaijanis, comprising 6 percent of Georgia's population, while Javakheti in the southern part of the country is home to a significant Armenian population. In some municipalities, Armenians constitute the majority at the district level (Tabatadze, 2011).

The presence of large dense settlements of ethnic minorities, particularly Azerbaijanis in Kvemo Kartli and Armenians in Javakheti, underscores the diverse linguistic and cultural tapestry of Georgia. However, the enduring legacy of Soviet-era ethnolinguistic policies poses challenges to the full integration of minorities into a Georgian state and society. Moreover, the lack of proficiency in the Georgian language, the official language of the country, exacerbates these challenges and impacts the development of above mentioned national identity.

## 1.2 Theoretical Framework of the Study

The theoretical framework of the given paper delves into the multifaceted nature of national identity formation in multicultural settings, with a specific focus on ethnic minorities in Georgia. It encompasses concepts of nationalism, national identity, types of national identities, and the pivotal role of language policy.

Nationalism is presented as an ideology emphasizing allegiance to a distinct sovereign nation, distinguishing between civic and ethnic variants. National identity is defined as the reproduction and reinterpretation of values, symbols, and traditions that define a unique heritage, shaped by language, territory, religion, and history.

Four types of national identities are elucidated: ethnic, atomic, hybrid, and civic. Ethnic identity prioritizes group identity and can foster intolerance, while atomic identity exhibits negativity towards both in-groups and out-groups. Hybrid identity balances inclusive attitudes with strong in-group attachment, while civic identity lacks strong ethnic ties and promotes tolerance within the state.

The significance of language policy in shaping national identity is underscored, particularly in post-Soviet contexts like Georgia. Language policies influence education, public institutions, and language rights, profoundly impacting identity formation. Thoughtful language policies can harmonize ethnic identities and foster tolerance in multicultural societies.

The evolving theoretical landscape moves beyond dichotomous models, incorporating civic dimensions alongside ethnic considerations. Emerging paradigms seek to balance titular and minority groups, promoting inclusive civic identities while respecting ethnic diversity.

In the Georgian context, the correlation between language policy and national identity formation among ethnic minorities poses complex challenges, influenced by Soviet legacies and contemporary transformations. Consideration of Soviet language policies, strategies to address post-Soviet challenges, and the efficacy of

governmental and non-governmental initiatives are crucial in understanding the evolution of national identity among ethnic minorities. Proficiency in the official language emerges as a key indicator of linguistic integration and societal cohesion.

### 1.3 Research Questions

The research aims to investigate and compare the formation of national identity among the above mentioned ethnic minorities which are densely populated in Georgia. The term "densely populated" will be employed as a key concept throughout the study. The following research questions will be answered:

1. To what extent did national minorities in Soviet Georgia demonstrate a sense of national identity?
2. What is the current level of national identity among densely settled ethnic minorities in contemporary Georgia?
3. How has language policy influenced the formation and evolution of national identity among ethnic minorities?

## 2. Methodology

The research methodology adopted for this study involved a combination of (1) desk research, (2) theoretical framework development, and (3) analysis of existing research outcomes. Desk research was conducted to gather relevant literature and academic resources on the topic of civic identity formation among ethnic minorities, particularly in the context of multi-ethnic societies. The outcomes of various research studies on similar topics were analyzed to identify common patterns, trends, and gaps in the literature. This comparative analysis provided valuable insights into the factors contributing to the formation of civic identity among ethnic minorities and informed the selection of research methods and data collection strategies for the present study. Overall, the research methodology was designed to integrate theoretical insights with empirical evidence to advance the understanding of civic identity dynamics in Georgia's multi-ethnic context.

## 3. National Identity

### 3.1 Defining National Identity

Nationalism prioritizes allegiance to a sovereign nation, influenced by societal and historical experiences. Civic nationalism, grounded in loyalty to political institutions, contrasts with ethnic nationalism, rooted in shared origins and culture. Challenges in fostering a unified civic nation in multi-ethnic states highlight complexities in diverse political landscapes (Wendt & Behnken, 2013; Sharipova, Burkhanov, et al., 2017; Anderson, 2014). National identity involves associations based on specific markers, enduring throughout individuals' lives. Linked with nationalism, it encompasses values, symbols, and traditions defining a unique heritage. Key markers like language, territory, and history shape national identity, influenced by factors such as belonging to ethnic groups and attitudes towards external groups (Sidorov & Azarova, 2022; Smith, 2008; Hansen & Hesli, 2009; Christiansen & Hedetoft, 2004).

### 3.2 Types of National Identities

The literature describes four categories of national identity: ethnic, atomic, hybrid, and civic.

#### *Ethnic Identity*

Ethnic nationalism gives particular importance to history, culture, and the promotion of one's own group identity (Ignatieff 1993). Thus, representatives of this group may exhibit an intolerant attitude toward other groups (Hansen & Hesli, 2009, p. 3). Ethnicity can function at both the macro-community and social identity levels: ethnic identity can be both a catalyst and guiding symbol for group/community action, and thus it can also function as a collective identity (Bremmer, 1994). Another characteristic of ethnic identity is the following: the more

remote and peripherally settled an ethnic group is, the less likely its representatives are to integrate into the dominant society. As a result, their ethnic identity is strong (Bremmer, 1994).

#### *Atomic Identity*

Individuals with an atomic identity have negative attitudes toward both their ethnic groups and others as well. Such groups are more common in the post-Soviet space (Hansen & Hesli, 2009).

#### *Hybrid Identity*

Citizens with a hybrid identity exhibit inclusivity toward out-groups while maintaining strong attachment to their inner groups, demonstrating acceptance of societal heterogeneity and a commitment to protecting minority rights (Hansen & Hesli, 2009).

Individuals may be influenced by both national and supranational cultural affiliations, a phenomenon described as 'transculturalism'. This concept underscores the interplay of ethnic, racial, and national cultures, giving rise to diverse forms of national identity that transcend boundaries. Transculturalism encompasses shared cultural interests, values, and beliefs that bridge cultural and national divides, uniting people across nations and hemispheres (Christiansen & Hedetoft, 2004).

Hybrid national identity refers to individuals' interconnected belongings and their transnational and transcultural dimensions, shaping their understanding of national attachment. This term acknowledges the multiplicity of identity definitions and emphasizes the role of subaltern voices in challenging dominant narratives of nationalism (Christiansen & Hedetoft, 2004).

#### *Civic Identity*

Civic identity, characterized by inclusivity and lacking strong ethnic ties, fosters tolerance among diverse ethnic groups within a state (Shulman, 2002). It entails personal and moral values linked to a specific community, emphasizing responsibility (Viola, 2020). Individuals with civic identity see themselves as active contributors to society, reflecting citizenship attributes (Hart, Richardson, & Wilkenfeld, 2011). While crucial for state institutions, complete alignment with ethnic identities is rare (Shulman, 2002).

Different from national identity, civic identity stresses participation in the public sphere, encompassing membership, participation, and concern for rights (Hart, Richardson, & Wilkenfeld, 2011). It forms at institutional, community, and individual levels, shaping the citizen-state relationship and promoting civic solidarity (Petrovska, 2020).

Debates exist regarding the relationship between civic identity and social integration, with some viewing it as a precursor to engagement and others suggesting participation contributes to its formation (Dahlgren & Olsson, 2007). Understanding civic identity is crucial for fostering active citizenship and societal participation (Knefelkamp, 2008; Nasir & Hand, 2008).

In multicultural societies, theoretical frameworks for identity formation may not be straightforward. Models are evolving to incorporate both ethnic minority and civic dimensions, reflecting parallel approaches addressing various groups (Ventzsel, 2016).

## 4. Language Policy

### 4.1 Formation of National Identity

In understanding the formation of national identity, various determinants such as individual, social, and cultural factors play significant roles (Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Youniss, McLellan, and Yates, 1997). However, an essential aspect influencing this process is a well-balanced language policy (Sidorov & Avzalova, 2022).

Language policy encompasses multiple facets influencing language use, status, and promotion within specific contexts. These include language education, which shapes curriculum development and teacher training, and language use in public institutions, ensuring access to services in diverse languages. Additionally, language rights address individuals' and communities' rights to use and preserve their languages, including provisions for bilingual education and minority language rights.

The study of language policy remains pertinent in diverse societies due to recurrent challenges in language use and the status of ethnic minorities, often leading to political tensions (Sidorov & Azarova, 2022). Language

holds significant importance in ethnonational groups' existence, profoundly shaping identity policies (Brubaker, 2011).

Post-Soviet spaces face sensitive language issues contributing to nationalization processes distinct from Western civic arrangements (Brubaker, 2011). The learning and teaching of official languages are crucial in national and civic identity formation, influencing group status and individual identities. Language policies play a vital role in fostering tolerance and shaping identity establishment, requiring consideration of political, economic, and social factors (Ventzsel, 2016).

In multicultural nations, the adoption of official languages in public life symbolizes civic identity, closely tied to citizenship. Governmental policies and legislative measures significantly shape minority ethnic identities and perceptions of the majority populace, especially when harmonized with social initiatives (Ventzsel, 2016). Emerging paradigms in identity formation combine elements targeting both titular and minority groups, integrating civic dimensions with ethnic considerations (Ventzsel, 2016).

## 4.2 USSR Language Policy and Georgia

The language policy in the USSR can be delineated into two distinct stages; Language Equality Policy and Aggressive Russification. These are discussed below.

### *Language Equality Policy*

During the initial years of the Soviet Union's existence, specifically until the 1930s, there was a deliberate avoidance of assimilationist policies. This approach entailed several key elements: firstly, the absence of any mandatory state language, whether in legal matters or educational institutions. Instead, each region was granted the autonomy to select the language(s) that aligned with the demographic composition of its population. Furthermore, it was imperative to safeguard the principle of full linguistic equality across all public and political institutions (Stalin, 1951, p. 70).

### *Aggressive Russification*

Following the early period characterized by linguistic pluralism (Aplatov, 2013, pp. 22-23), the Soviet government shifted its language policy after 1930, leading to the gradual dominance of the Russian language as an unofficial state language. This transformation was primarily motivated by considerations of its perceived 'prestige' (Saville-Troike, 2012). The shift stemmed from the underdeveloped state of 'minority languages'.

This shift was not officially codified, but constituent republics progressively transitioned to Russian within state institutions and educational systems, with Russian-language schools gaining popularity (Aplatov, 2013). From the 1960s, the Soviet Union shifted towards aggressive Russification, witnessed in educational reforms granting parents the ability to choose the language of instruction (Aplatov, 2013). This contributed to the decline of national schools and the widespread adoption of Russian as the de facto official language, despite not being explicitly enshrined in the constitution. Ethnic groups within the USSR widely adopted Russian as their primary means of communication (ibid).

## 4.3 Soviet Language Policy and Identity of Smaller Nations

The language factor had a detrimental impact on the identity of smaller nations, leading to the erosion of ethnicity and the emergence of hybrid and atomized identities, particularly among ethnic groups in the Russian Federation (Aplatov, 2013).

### *Impact of Soviet Language Policy in Georgia*

Although Georgia used national languages to safeguard and assert their cultural identities, Russian, which was promoted extensively by the Kremlin through education and media (Sikharulidze, 2008), affected the prestige and usage of Georgian as an official language. This led to minorities in multi-ethnic Georgia largely disregarding the official language, impacting their self-perception as Georgian citizens, exemplified by the phrase "My address is the Soviet Union!" (Sikharulidze, 2008). The dominant language of communication for densely populated ethnic minorities shifted to Russian, alongside Azerbaijani or Armenian languages. The presence and prestige of Russian schools further facilitated this process. Consequently, there was little necessity for ethnic minorities to learn and utilize Georgian within the state, including official governmental institutions. Consequently, these communities remained closed and less integrated within the titular society of Georgia.

## 4.4 Language Policy in Post-Soviet Georgia

Language policy in post-soviet Georgia can be divided into three periods:

### *Transitional Period*

In 1991, Georgia regained its independence, marking a significant turning point for both the country and the minorities residing within its borders. This momentous event heralded the formation of a new, post-Soviet identity for these minority communities. The issue of minorities has become a problem for those post-Soviet countries, which, as a result of the long-term policy of the Kremlin, created a 'fifth column' in the form of minorities.

Different post-Soviet countries adopted varying approaches to address this significant issue. In the case of Georgia, a liberal path was chosen. Following the dissolution of the USSR and the immediate declaration of independence, Georgian citizenship was automatically granted to all residents in the country. To provide a comparative perspective, in the Baltic countries such as Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, obtaining citizenship still necessitates proficiency in the state language and passing an examination on the nation's history. However, this 'zero policy' approach alone proved insufficient in fostering loyalty to the state among ethnic minorities. Since ethnic minorities acquired citizenship without their explicit consent and had no alternative, they can be categorized as "inadvertent minorities" (Svanidze, 2002).

### *The Early 2000s*

Starting from the early 2000s, there was a notable improvement in the situation. The country underwent a period of stabilization, with state institutions gradually returning to normalcy. This transformation gained significant momentum, particularly after 2003, when the newly established 'National Movement' government introduced a series of comprehensive reforms. As a result, minorities began to show increasing interest in actively participating in the social, political, cultural, and economic life of the country. The Ministry of Education of Georgia launched a few projects to support raising the official language proficiency of ethnic minorities, including the development of textbooks and different trainings (Gabunia, Gochitashvili & Shabashvili, 2022). Experimental bilingual programs were launched as well (Tabatadze, Gorgadze & Gabunia, 2020; Grigule, 2009).

### *Language Policy in the Past Decade*

Alongside bilingual initiatives, regions where Georgian is not the primary language, particularly in Kvemo Kartli, saw the establishment of Georgian-language sectors. These sectors operated under a submersion education model, albeit one characterized by limitations (Tabatadze, 2010).

Moreover, The Ministry of Education of Georgia initiated an internal multilingual program, initially encompassing four schools and a preschool institution. Presently, the pilot project has expanded to include 25 schools. The Ministry is actively training Armenian and Azerbaijani language instructors, and competitive selection processes for teachers are underway. Additionally, teaching materials are being developed, with a primary focus on natural sciences for primary school students. Plans for the second phase involve the development of resources for social sciences, including history, geography, and civic education (Tabatadze, Gorgadze & Gabunia, 2020; Gabunia, Gochitashvili & Shabashvili, 2022). Moreover, there exists a dedicated government initiative known as the I+4 program, operating within Georgian universities, designed to provide rigorous training in the Georgian language for prospective students of a specific university (Gabunia, Gochitashvili & Shabashvili, 2022).

The section below addresses the topic of national identity among ethnic minorities in Georgia across various historical periods starting from the soviet era.

## 5. Types of National Identity of Ethnic Minorities in Georgia

Four periods relevant to the formation of national identities of ethnic minorities in Georgia are discussed next: the Soviet Period, a transitional period after the Soviet period, the early 2000s, and the past decade.

## 5.1 Soviet Period

The factors outlined during the Soviet governance in Georgia significantly influenced the tendency of minorities in multi-ethnic Georgia to overlook the official language. This, in turn, adversely affected their self-perception as Georgian citizens. Official language proficiency among ethnic minorities was generally low, and in some cases, they lacked proficiency entirely. Consequently, they did not perceive themselves as integral parts of Georgian society. This indicates a strong ethnic identity among these minority groups, contrasting with the situation of small nations in Russian republics, which are experiencing a loss of their ethnic identities under the strong process of Russification.

## 5.2 Transitional Period

Studies conducted during the 1990s to explore the civic identity of national minorities revealed that in regions densely populated by minorities, such as Azerbaijanis in Kvemo Kartli and Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti, these groups predominantly identified themselves with their historical homelands (Komakhia, 2008). It is noteworthy that during the 1990s, a significant portion of the Armenian-speaking population in Javakheti, in contrast to the Azerbaijani-speaking population, held both a Georgian and an Armenian passport concurrently (Amirejibi, Gabunia, 2021).

It must be mentioned that the concentrated settlements of these ethnic communities extended to the territories bordering their respective historical homelands. Kvemo Kartli, for instance, where the ethnic Azerbaijani population is predominant, shares its border with Azerbaijan. Similarly, Samtskhe-Javakheti, which is densely inhabited by Armenian-speaking residents directly borders Armenia. During the Soviet era, when formal borders existed between the USSR republics, and cross-border travel between neighboring states occurred without hindrance, many individuals in these regions considered themselves citizens of Azerbaijan or Armenia accordingly. During the transitional period, ethnic minorities still had poor proficiency in the official language, and their engagement in the country's social, political, and economic processes remained low due to a lack of access to proper information (Amirejibi, Gabunia, 2021). Accordingly, it might be concluded the target group of the study still represented strong ethnic identity during the given period.

## 5.3 The Early 2000s

84% of Azerbaijanis and 87% of Armenians responded "To live in one's homeland" when asked about the meaning of being a citizen of Georgia in a 2008 survey (Komakhia, 2008). However, when questioned about their active involvement in the country's public and political life, not a single Azerbaijani respondent gave a positive answer. While there was relatively higher involvement among the Armenian-speaking population, it was still considered insufficient. In a 2014 survey, 85% of Azerbaijanis and 93% of Armenians expressed strong pride in their ethnicity (CRRC, 2014). As evident from the analysis, during this timeframe, ethnic identity remains robust, yet there is a notable emergence of a sense of affiliation with Georgia as a country, fostering the development of civic identity. Consequently, this state of affairs can be interpreted as an initial phase of hybrid identity formation.

## 5.4 Past Decade

Between 2020 and 2021, a collaborative research effort took place between the CRRC and the Carnegie Endowment for Europe, focusing on minority identity and civic integration. This research holds multifaceted interest, as it delves into the perspectives of minorities regarding the nation in which they reside and for which they hold citizenship. Simultaneously, it examines the perspective of the majority population towards these minority groups (CRRC, 2021).

According to the CRRC research (2021), 67% of ethnic minorities in Georgia affirmed the greater importance of Georgian citizenship. An additional 15% accorded equal importance to both identities. Merely 16% of respondents indicated that their ethnic identity held more significance than their Georgian citizenship.

The results illuminate a nuanced outlook among ethnic minorities concerning their affiliation and citizenship within the nation. While a majority of respondents express a preference for their Georgian citizenship, a noteworthy segment also recognizes the significance of their ethnic identity. Consequently, a discernible shift from purely ethnic identity towards civic identity emerges. Despite the enduring strength of ethnic ties, it is evident that ethnic minorities in Georgia embody a strong hybrid identity, characterized by a sense of pride in their Georgian citizenship alongside allegiance to their nationality. This underscores the intricate interplay between ethnic and civic identities within the framework of civic integration.

## 6. Discussion

Based on the above mentioned it can be highlighted that the evolving perceptions of ethnic minorities in Georgia, who increasingly view the country as their homeland and express a sense of belonging to the idea of Georgian statehood. However, it is essential to note that despite this positive development, the engagement of minorities in public and political life remains limited.

The historical evolution of language policy in both the USSR and post-Soviet Georgia reflects complex socio-political dynamics and their impact on ethnic minorities. In the Soviet Union, initial language equality policies gave way to aggressive Russification, leading to the dominance of the Russian language and the erosion of ethnic identities. In contrast, in Georgia, the promotion of the Russian language influenced the usage and status of Georgian, affecting minority integration and identity. However, despite this linguistic shift, ethnic minorities in Georgia retained their strong ethnic identities, yet they tended to overlook their connection to Georgian statehood.

In contemporary Georgia, efforts to foster inclusion and integration, particularly through educational reforms and bilingual programs, have shown promise. Recent initiatives, such as multilingual programs and the establishment of Georgian-language sectors, demonstrate an ongoing commitment to addressing language barriers and promoting social cohesion.

The perceptions and attitudes of ethnic minorities, specifically Armenians and Azerbaijanis, have undergone significant changes over time. During the Soviet era, these groups displayed a strong sense of ethnic identity while maintaining a limited connection to Georgia as a state. However, in contemporary Georgia, there is a noticeable increase in civic awareness among ethnic minorities, leading to a hybrid national identity that combines ethnic pride with a sense of Georgian citizenship.

The transition from ethnic identity to civic identity is particularly evident in the membership and participation of ethnic minorities in Georgian society. The majority of Armenians and Azerbaijanis now identify as fully-fledged Georgian citizens (CRRC, 2021) marking a significant shift from previous attitudes. This shift underscores the multifaceted nature of national identity in post-Soviet countries and highlights the importance of ongoing efforts to promote social integration.

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the research sheds light on the intricate interplay between language policy, national identity formation, and civic integration among ethnic minorities in Georgia. The findings reveal a notable transition from strict ethnic identity towards a more hybrid identity, characterized by a simultaneous sense of ethnic belonging and civic attachment to Georgia. As it was mentioned in soviet period ethnic minorities living in Georgia demonstrated strong ethnic identity, they considered as a homeland their ethnic country, which restricted them to identify Georgia as their country.

Despite historical challenges, including aggressive Russification during the Soviet era and the promotion of the Russian language, ethnic minorities have maintained their ethnic identities while gradually embracing a sense of civic belonging. According to the investigations and data discussed in the paper it is visible the transition of the ethnic minorities' identity, nowadays, they acknowledge Georgia as their homeland which helps them to be involved in the country's political, social and cultural life. The shift is strongly supported by the effective state language policy.

The existence of diverse state educational programs underscores the importance of language proficiency in fostering civic integration. Efforts to enhance language skills, coupled with educational reforms and bilingual programs, have shown promise in promoting social cohesion and inclusivity. Furthermore, the evolving perceptions and attitudes of ethnic minorities toward Georgia as their homeland and the recognition of Georgian citizenship as fundamental principles reflect positive developments in civic identity formation.

Following the transition period, the rigorous implementation of the new language policy commenced, thereby fostering interest and motivation among national minorities to acquire proficiency in the state language. Consequently, they gained the ability to access state services exclusively provided in the state language and are actively involved in governmental and civic affairs. It is plausible to posit a direct correlation between the adaptation of language policy to accommodate minorities and the evolution and enhancement of their civic identity. On the other hand, their acceptance and openness was likely facilitated by the Georgian state's non-assimilationist policy, which actively promoted the preservation of their linguistic and cultural heritage. This aspect signifies a commendable attribute of the Georgian state's approach towards the identity of ethnic minorities.

Moving forward, it is imperative to continue addressing language barriers and promoting cultural acceptance among ethnic minorities. Sustainable measures, including specialized language programs, economic support initiatives, and intercultural projects, should be pursued to ensure the long-term viability of civic integration efforts. By fostering an inclusive environment and providing opportunities for active civic participation, Georgia can further strengthen its social fabric and promote unity among its diverse population.

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**The Sociolinguistics of Migration.**  
**The Dynamics of dialect contact in Georgia<sup>1</sup>**  
**მიგრაციების სოციოლინგვისტიკა.**  
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**Abstract.** This study explores the sociolinguistic impact of internal migration in Georgia, focusing on the transformation, reconstruction and replication of dialectal networks. Drawing on extensive field data, it examines how migration disrupts original linguistic communities and fosters new dialectal constellations. The paper introduces the concepts of sociolinguistic network deconstruction and replication to illustrate how dialects resist or adapt to linguistic assimilation. It discusses dialect 'self-assertion' in response to contact, and how even minimal lexical or phonetic features are preserved for identity maintenance. By analysing language islands within and outside Georgia, the paper highlights the parallels between forced and voluntary migration. The empirical evidence confirms that naive linguistic awareness plays a crucial role in shaping dialect boundaries and resisting assimilation, and that migration not only reshapes language use, but also redefines social identities and cultural memory in both areas of origin and destination.

**აბსტრაქტი.** წინამდებარე კვლევა ეხება შიდა მიგრაციის სოციოლინგვისტურ გავლენას საქართველოში. ნაშრომში შესწავლილია დიალექტების კონტაქტის პროცესში დიალექტების დაშლის, აღდგენისა და რეპლიკაციის ფორმები. ფართომასშტაბიანი სავსე მონაცემების საფუძველზე ნაჩვენებია, როგორ იშლება ტრადიციული დიალექტური ქსელები და როგორ იქმნება ახალი დიალექტური გარემო. წარმოდგენილია სოციოლინგვისტური ქსელების დეკონსტრუქციისა და რეპლიკაციის ცნებები და აღწერილია, როგორ ინარჩუნებენ დიალექტები თავიანთ თავისებურებებს ასიმილაციის პროცესის საპასუხოდ. ყურადღება გამახვილებულია დიალექტურ "თვითდამკვიდრებაზე" და ენობრივ ნიშნებზე, რომლებიც იდენტობის შენარჩუნებას ემსახურება. კვლევაში, ასევე, შედარებულია ენობრივი კუნძულები საქართველოში და მის ფარგლებს გარეთ. ორივე შემთხვევაში სავალდებულო და ნებაყოფლობითი მიგრაციის შედეგები ერთმანეთის პარალელურადაა განხილული. საბოლოოდ, ნაშრომში ნაჩვენებია, რომ ენობრივი ცნობიერება და ეგრეთ წოდებული "ნაივური ლინგვისტიკა" მნიშვნელოვან როლს თამაშობს დიალექტური საზღვრების შესწავლასა და კულტურული მეხსიერების ფორმირებაში.

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**Keywords:** sociolinguistic networks, internal migration, dialect contact, language islands, identity

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** სოციოლინგვისტური ქსელები, შიდა მიგრაცია, დიალექტური კონტაქტი, ენობრივი კუნძულები, იდენტობა

## 1. Terms Used

In this paper, the term ‘sociolinguistic network’ refers to a linguistically manifested network of social relationships between different people who have agency. It includes identity-forming (e.g., customs, traditions) and cultural (e.g., architecture, holidays, cuisine, costume) components. In the context of the present study, the following mechanisms play an essential role: (1) ‘Deconstruction of sociolinguistic networks’, which concerns the starting point of migration, describes the disassembly or even the dissolution of the original constitutive parts of a network through resettlement. (2) ‘Reconstruction of sociolinguistic networks’, which refers to the destination of migration, describes the efforts of actors in the relocated community to reconstruct constitutive parts of the network from the place of origin. The focus here is on questions of language contact and the influence of the dialectal environment at the place of arrival. Given the empirical material on which the study is based, the use of the term ‘replication of sociolinguistic networks’ seems justified. What we are dealing with here is the phenomenon of simulated authenticity, in which presumed or assumed parts of the presumed original network are replicated at the destination of migration. In the process, parts of the original networks are adopted unchanged and parts are adapted (accommodation). All three mechanisms are derived from the specific circumstances of internal migration in Georgia and are supported by concrete examples in the paper.

## 2. The Sociolinguistic Portrait after Internal Migration

Internal migration not only reshapes demographic landscapes - it also leaves profound traces on language use, especially on regional dialects. In sociolinguistic terms, the movement of speakers from one region to another initiates a complex process of dialectal contact, adaptation and sometimes preservation. The following paper examines how such internal migration within Georgia affects the linguistic profile of dialects and how spatial shifts produce new forms of linguistic organisation. In order to understand these changes, it is important first to situate them within the broader history and methodology of Georgian dialectology, and to distinguish the different spatial models of dialect existence that result from internal versus external migration.

Georgian dialectology has a 100-year history. It developed in the context of linguistic research and repeated the research pattern of traditional linguistics: describing the linguistic structure of a dialect at all accessible grammatical levels and comparing it with the structures of the standard language. The description of differences and similarities relative to the standard language served to outline an overall dialect continuum. The sociolinguistic aspects played a supporting role in explaining dialect change and dialect contact, as well as the mutual influence of dialect varieties and phenomena such as archaisation, standardisation and analogy.

Migration can be identified as one of the sociological factors that significantly influence the linguistic profile of a dialect. The spatial relationships shifted by migration play a crucial role. In the ideal ‘language world’ without migration, dialectal space can be visualised according to the principle of ‘water circles’: an undulating alternation of strong and weak linguistic features that define a dialectal continuum within a language. Migration appears to be a key sociological factor that corrects this ideal image of realistic language continua. With regard to the dialectal continuum of Georgian, three main models can be established:

- (1) The dialect exists within the historically evolved geographical boundaries.
- (2) The dialect is geographically outside the Georgian area and linguistically isolated in the vicinity of one or more unrelated contact languages (e.g. Fereydani Georgian, Ingilo Georgian, Turkey Georgian).
- (3) The dialect does not exist within the historically evolved geographical boundaries due to internal migration.

The first spatial model can be used to roughly describe all Georgian dialects within Georgia; with the exception of three dialects outside Georgia, all dialects have a connection to the historical area. Particularly in the highland dialects of Khevsurian and Tushish, where resettlement was almost complete, the individual families that remained in the mountains were able to mark the area linguistically and served as points of reference for returnees until recently. Within the framework of the second model, so-called Georgian language islands outside the

Georgian territory can be described: Fereydani Georgian in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ingilo Georgian in Azerbaijan, and the three varieties spoken in Turkey: Taoian, Shavshian and Klarjian (marginally also the varieties of Georgian Mujahir). The third model of spatial relationships between the Georgian dialects refers to some small language islands within the country that have arisen through internal migration. The number of such language islands grew at the end of the 20th Century due to environmental disasters and wars of occupation with the Russian Federation. The geographical distribution of such 'islands' shows the particular concentration in Kakheti and Samtskhe-Javakheti as destinations for internal migration. The internal migrants come from regions with little free arable land and other resources, such as the Imeretian Highlands, Khevsureti, Pshavi, Ratcha, Ajara, Mtiuleti, Gudamakhari, Lechkhumi, Svaneti. The consideration of the language areas created by internal migration as language islands enables the application of research concepts from classical language island research in this specific context.

### 3. Language Islands

The notion of 'language islands' occupies a unique position at the intersection of sociolinguistics, dialectology and migration studies. Traditionally understood as geographically or politically isolated linguistic communities, language islands offer valuable insights into how linguistic identity is preserved in adverse or assimilative environments. While most studies focus on islands created by international migration, this section examines whether internally migrated dialect communities in Georgia can also be described as language islands. It does so by first outlining the core characteristics of such linguistic formations and then applying these to internal Georgian contexts to assess similarities and differences.

A language island can generally be described as a language area that is geographically distant or politically isolated from its core area, which is why the term 'language island' is not a purely linguistic concept. It encompasses all aspects of the existence of an isolated community of speakers. Research into language islands therefore takes place at the interface of several disciplines and research programmes. According to Mattheier (1994), the essence of a language island lies in the closed community that is mobilised against assimilation. The constant 'vigilance' to preserve identity describes the sociological perspective of language island research and gives it its own position in dialectology. Can the language areas created by internal migration be described as language islands? The two forms of linguistic isolation have some significant overlaps.

The similarity between language islands outside and inside the mainland lies in the fact that the language areas created by internal migration are subject to the same linguistic laws as the classical language islands: they try to maintain the strong emotional ties with the place of origin of migration, to construct a special collective memory and to create a linguistic ecology at the destination as a replica of the place of origin. The main motivation is the same in both cases: Mobilisation against assimilation. The existence of language islands is often described as delayed or failed assimilation (Mattheier 1994), which makes the dissolution of a minority into the surrounding majority a matter of time. The Georgian language islands outside Georgia (Fereydani Georgian, Ingilo Georgian and Turkey Georgian) prove the opposite: they represent a successful isolation or the establishment of an exclusive group identity. They have successfully 'delayed' the abandonment of their own identity in the form of linguistic and cultural heritage for a good four hundred years, and have not been absorbed into the surrounding society as a whole over time. The Georgian language islands represent an uninterrupted effort to establish cognitive (mental awareness), emotional (feeling), sensual (values), and participatory (equal opportunities) ties with the mainland. This results in a weakening of assimilation with the surrounding cultural group(s).

The difference between the language islands outside and inside Georgia is that the 'internally migrated dialects' continue to have contact with the standard language despite their isolation. This possibility does not exist in the language islands outside the national territory, which represent a fundamental change in the language.

It can be assumed that one factor in the ethnolinguistic vitality of the language island is the type of migration: forced migration creates a more rigid framework for preserving the identity of the place of origin of the migration than voluntary migration. In some areas, 80 years since migration is sufficient for almost complete assimilation (migration from Samtskhe-Javakheti to Imereti), while in other areas not even 100 years is sufficient to abandon the dialect of the place of origin (Imeretians in Lagodekhi within the Kakheti region).

The population at the destination of the migration perceives the internal migrants on the basis of linguistic characteristics and adopts these 'foreign' characteristics when interacting with the new neighbours. A woman who was forcibly resettled from Samtskhe-Javakhetia to Guria returned to the place of origin of the migration after almost 40 years and introduced elements of the Gurian dialect into her language. Their former compatriots gave them a nickname - *reize*, a dialectal form of the Standard Georgian word *ratom*, 'why'. The story goes that the nickname was used so widely and intensively that when the person died, no one knew her real name and it was simply invented.

However strong the influence of the surrounding dialect, the link with the original core area remains strong. According to Jorbenadze (1989), Imeretian in the Kharagauli district would be expected to be linguistically closer to the Kartli dialect than the core area of Imeretian in the distant Terjola district. The Kharagauli district borders directly on the Kartli region, while there is no direct geographical transition to the core area in Terjola. Geographical proximity or distance cannot be directly translated into linguistic proximity or distance.

In summary, the Georgian experience shows that language islands — whether formed by internal or external migration — share common features of linguistic preservation, emotional attachment to place, and group identity formation. What distinguishes internal language islands is their sustained contact with the national standard language, which creates hybrid dynamics of both integration and differentiation. The resilience of dialectal features depends on the type of migration and the sociocultural setting at the destination. Even after decades or centuries, such communities often maintain distinct linguistic traits that act as symbolic markers of identity, reinforcing the idea that language islands are as much social constructs as they are linguistic phenomena.

## 4. The Sociolinguistics of Migration

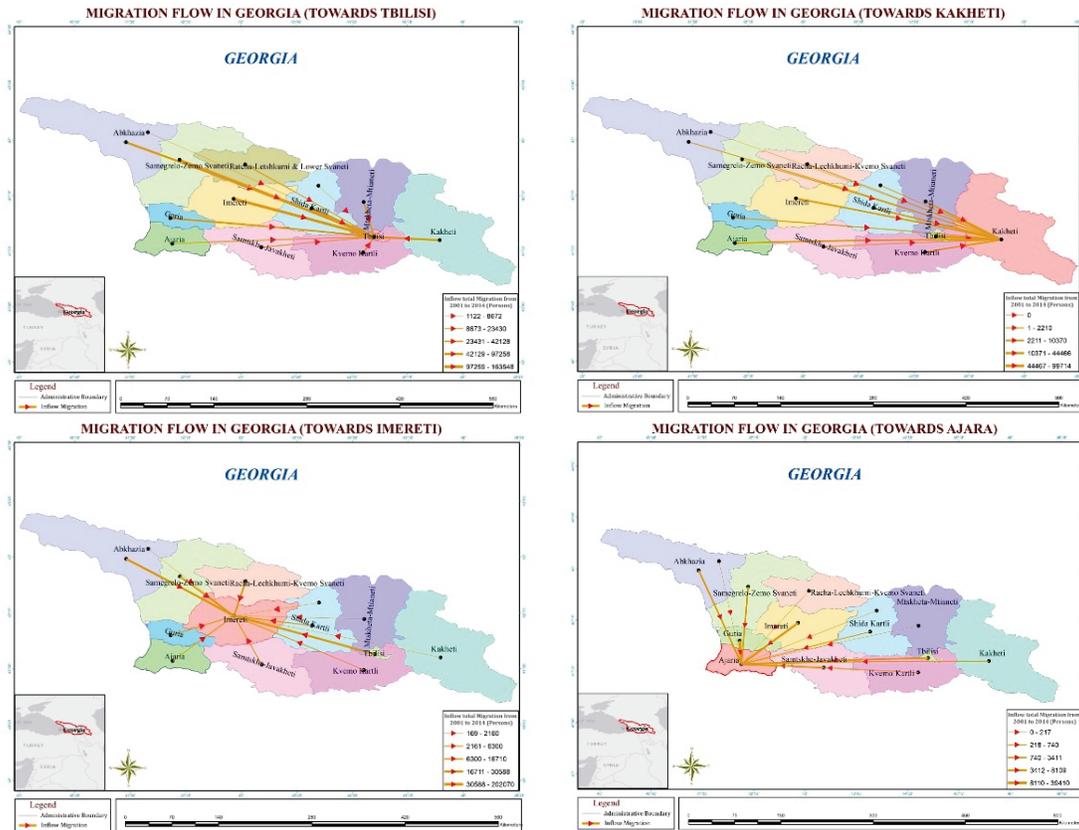
Migration is never a neutral process; it reshapes not only population structures but also languages, identities and cultural practices. In the Georgian context, migration has been a persistent historical phenomenon, driven by war, empire and state policy, often beyond voluntary choice. This chapter seeks to trace the deep interrelationship between demographic shifts and sociolinguistic consequences. In contrast to classical migration theories that emphasise economic motivation, this study shifts the focus to internal migration and its socio-cultural and geopolitical roots - particularly as they have affected language use and identity in Georgia over the centuries.

Migration is seen as an accompanying process in the dissonant interaction between demography and the economy. The demographic deficits of rich countries are compensated by immigration from poorer countries (Coleman 2004; 2006). Classical migration theories (Lee 1966; Harris & Todaro 1970), as well as more recent ones (Parnreiter 2005), emphasise economic background as the main cause of migration. The reference to migration theories is limited in this study as it deals with internal migration within a country on the one hand, and geopolitical and socio-cultural aspects take precedence over economic aspects.

Georgia has experienced massive demographic change over the last four hundred years or so. Historical processes that fall under the term ‘migration’ can be categorised into various forms, from the migration of prisoners of war to state-ordered ‘demographic annexation’. The wars of conquest waged by the Persian Shah Abbas I in the first two decades of the 17th Century and the constant invasions from the Ottoman Empire turned large parts of the Georgian kingdom into deserted areas. Shah Abbas continued his war policy in the form of demographic restructuring of Georgia. He resettled some 80,000 families, mainly from Kakheti (eastern Georgia) (Davrizhetsi 1969), in various places in Iran, and colonised the land thus freed with North Caucasian tribes of Muslim faith, hoping to achieve greater loyalty to the Persian Empire. With no less vehemence, the Ottoman Empire attempted to create waves of forced migration in Georgia in order to secure a more favourable demographic position in the struggle against the Persian Empire. The Ottoman response to the demographic restructuring of Shah Abbas (Pourtskhvanidze, Beridze, Bakuradze 2023) was the direct occupation of historical provinces and the forced Islamisation of the indigenous population in Adjara, Samtskhe-Javakhia. Their influence extended to the easternmost border of Georgia, Saingilo. This was the home of several generations of crypto-orthodox Christians. The strengthening of the Russian Empire from the 18th Century onwards and its increasing influence in the Caucasus, combined with the simultaneous weakening of the two former competing empires, created the conditions for a completely new and novel migration policy, the long-term consequences of which have had a decisive influence on the demographic, socio-linguistic and socio-cultural landscape of Georgia today.

The state’s planned and violent ‘demographic annexation’ of Georgia was a mixture of military force, imperialist education policies and repressive economic systems. Recent archival material shows how deliberate and motivated the ethnic foreign designations in Russian-language state documents were in order to create a new demographic identity through foreign assignments. The subsequent correction of earlier historical documents with the aim of giving historical weight to the ethnonyms initiated by the Russian state apparatus is also plausible. The successors to this policy of the Russian Empire were the rulers of the USSR. The long-term migrations were declared economically motivated by the Soviet rulers, while the real reasons for the depopulation of the Georgian mountains were clearly political. The last thirty years of the Third Independent Republic (1991-present) brought further waves of migration within Georgia; see Figure 1.

Internal migration between 1991 and 2015 was caused by the two ethnic conflicts in Abkhazia (1991-1994, 2008) and part of Inner Kartli (Tskhinvali region) (1993, 2008), which were fuelled and controlled by Russia. These conflicts resulted in almost half a million direct and indirect internally displaced persons (IDP) in a country with a total population of around four million.



**Figure 1.** Directions of internal migration 2001-2014

This study focuses on the sociolinguistic outcomes of these waves of migration within Georgia under the Russian Empire, in the first democratic republic (1918-1921), during Soviet rule (1921-1991), and in the subsequent period of independence 1991-2015).

In summary, the historical trajectory of migration in Georgia reflects a series of forced movements and political restructurings that have had a significant impact on the sociolinguistic fabric of the country. Whether under Persian, Ottoman, Russian, Soviet or post-Soviet influence, each wave of migration has left its mark on the linguistic landscape - altering dialect distribution, fostering new linguistic islands and reshaping speaker identities. Internal migration, especially in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, has resulted not only in physical displacements but also in lasting cultural and linguistic shifts. These developments underscore the need to consider migration as a central force in the evolution of Georgia's dialectal and sociolinguistic realities.

## 5. Data Basis

The main source of data for this study is the Migration Database (Beridze et al. 2017), which was created as part of the long-term research project ‘Linguistic Portrait of Georgia’ (2009-2015) (<http://www.corpora.co>). The database is based on empirical field research using a complex questionnaire administered in key regions of internal migration in Georgia. The data is mapped and can be used interactively. The other source of data is the archives of the Georgian Ministry of the Interior. These are mainly documents on the activities of the government in the First Republic (1918-1921), but also newspapers from the 19th Century. Most of these documents were used for the first time in this study from the perspective of internal migration. The data published by the Georgian National Statistical Office should not be neglected. Here the waves of migration are recorded geographically and statistically under various social categories.

## 6. Sociolinguistic networks in internal migration

Sociolinguistic networks serve as a conceptual bridge between language and the spatio-temporal structures of society. In the context of internal migration, these networks are crucial for understanding how linguistic behaviour is embedded in historically developed and ecologically shaped social relations. This chapter explores how such networks are formed, maintained or disrupted when communities are relocated, especially in a country like Georgia, where geographical diversity and traditional subsistence structures have strongly shaped dialectal variation. It builds on the notion that language not only reflects but also stabilises social relations across time and space.

The formation of social networks can be considered through two heuristic dimensions: temporal and spatial. The interaction between the two dimensions opens up the possibility of narrowing the concept of ‘social network’ thematically and empirically. The attribute ‘social’ in the network concept encompasses spatially determined and temporally established realities. The temporal dimension refers to the significant persistence of spatial processes, so that sustainable and rule-governed structures are formed. The term ‘sociolinguistic network’ therefore refers to the historically developed and spatially determined social contexts with corresponding linguistic representations. There are different interpretations of the dialectal landscape of the Georgian language. From a geographical point of view, Georgian dialects are divided into two main groups: (a) West Georgian and (b) East Georgian dialect groups. However, the dialects that exist outside Georgia are described within these two groups. In the East Georgian dialect group, the Georgian highland dialects form a subgroup, as do the autochthonous (Ingiloyan in Azerbaijan) and allochthonous (Fereydani Georgian in Iran) dialect islands. The number of dialects is mainly influenced by the historical and ethnographical parts of Georgia (for instance, the Imeretian dialect is prevalent in Imereti, located in western Georgia, while the Kakhetian dialect is spoken in Kakheti, situated in the eastern part of the country). The dialectal landscape of Georgian has always been interwoven with the ethnological landscape of the country (see Figure 2). The ethnocultural boundaries, which have always been blurred in Georgia, form the basis for the demarcation of Georgian dialects. Thus, the ethnological and linguistic maps of Georgian look almost identical by tradition.

What can be considered ‘spatial’ or ‘ecological’ in the case of the Georgian language area? The region, 80% of which consists of mountainous highlands, has historically had well-developed transport routes with seasonal accessibility in most parts of the area. The development and consolidation of a millennia-old subsistence economy can be described as a result of the above conditions. Apart from the Black Sea coast and some places in the lowlands, the Georgian-speaking region (as well as the North Caucasus in general) has no market tradition. Historically, it has lacked an important platform for exchange and linguistic contact with the outside world. Another result of the specific economic forms adapted to the ecology are the social hierarchies, which essentially correspond to the enculturation of the mountain landscape. The fact that the mountain ecology has limited vital resources is a natural prerequisite for the establishment of social conventions that serve or ensure the peaceful use of rare resources. Traditional social ties focus on maintaining and respecting boundaries that must not be crossed for reasons of social peace. The resulting social networks serve to resolve potential conflicts quickly and permanently, including through the use of language. One example of this is the “hunter’s language” that functions across languages in the Caucasus and ensures the peaceful shared use of mobile resources (game).



Figure 2. A general map of Georgian dialects

The linguistic strategies that are practiced and regulated form the framework for the social networks that are the end result. The social characteristics of the community in a given ecologically and economically coherent area are reflected in the specific linguistic structures and determine the peripheral ethnic variants of a general culture.

In a nutshell, the concept of sociolinguistic networks allows us to interpret language use as part of broader ecological, social, and historical processes. The Georgian case shows how dialects are closely aligned with ethno-cultural zones, maintained by traditional social hierarchies and ecological constraints. Internal migration disrupts but also reconfigures these networks as speakers negotiate their linguistic identity in new spatial contexts. Far from being passive reflections of change, linguistic strategies actively mediate social integration and boundary maintenance, confirming that language functions as both a product and a regulator of social organisation.

## 7. The concept of dialectal ‘self-assertion’

Dialectal self-assertion refers to the active linguistic strategy by which speakers consciously or unconsciously maintain distinctive features of their dialect in the face of contact with other varieties. It contrasts with accommodation, which reduces differences. In the Georgian context, self-assertion often emerges as a response to internal migration, where speakers come into close contact with linguistically different communities. Instead of assimilating, they may emphasise certain phonological, lexical or syntactic elements in order to preserve their linguistic identity. This chapter explores a variety of such strategies, based on the concept of “self-confinement” as described by Jorbenadze (1989), and illustrates them with real-life examples and folk linguistic perceptions.

Linguistic accommodation refers to the process of reducing the contrastive features of two contact varieties. The counter-process of accommodation is described in Georgian dialectology as ‘self-confinement’ (Jorbenadze 1989: 37) and refers to the state of language contact in which the process of accommodation has reached a kind of saturation. According to Jorbenadze, ‘mutual influence (including accommodation) is not the only force at work in dialect contact. If it were, the dialects in contact would merge over time into one dialect. However, reality shows that dialects coexist in the long term and have retained their linguistic characteristics. This observation justifies the assumption of an imminent and obvious process of self-limitation of dialects’ (ibid).

In order to understand the process of ‘self-assertion’, it is important to link it to the speakers’ perception of the dialect and to so-called naïve linguistics. It is precisely on this basis that ‘demarcation decisions’ are made: Which elements to block and which not to block, or which elements of one’s own variety to insist on in order to avoid assimilation, are all decided on the basis of naïve judgements.

An example of such naïve linguistic observation is described by Jorbenadze (1989: 38): “If you go from Poni to Marelis, there are the same idioms. But from Marelis the first insignificant differences will appear, until Zestaponi. Our idiom is not so much Imeretic, nor Kartlich... we don’t say *açi* ‘future’ or ‘-qe’, nor ‘*ķe*’, instead we say ‘*ki*’, say *çevida*, *movida*.”

The process of dialectal ‘self-restraint’ keeps adaptation at a level that avoids the complete dissolution of differences, and the features that are considered prototypical are given a special role in differentiation. As an example of this, the case of the Samtskhe-Javakh dialect will be analyzed, which has historically been the geographical focus of internal migration in Georgia. Under the administration of the Ottoman Empire, Samtskhe-Javakheti was a destination for the migration of many ethnic or religious minorities and experienced a significant increase in migration in the 20th Century. In addition to the indigenous population, there are migrants from Imereti, Ajara, Ratcha and Mtiuleti (Beridze 2005).

What is the relationship between Samtskhian-Javakhian and Standard Georgian? As the dialect is relatively well documented, it is possible to reconstruct the stages of development over the last 80 years. Harmonisation with Standard Georgian is now well advanced. Borrowings from Turkish have either been merged or replaced by Standard Georgian.

Due to the morphonemic transformation, the thematic signs *-av*, *-am* and *-eb* is realised as *-an* and *-en* in Samtskhian-Javakhian as in *xat-an-s* instead of the standard word *xat-av-s* ‘he/she/it grinds (something)’ or *aķet-eb-da* > *aķet-en-da* ‘he/she/it did (something)’. Despite this expectation, this feature is rarely encountered and is more common in older speakers.

When switching from the dialect to the standard language, Samtskhian-Javakhian retains the features associated with intonation: *deda* > *deda-i* ‘mother’; *akvs* > *ākvs* ‘he/she/it did (something)’; *zma* > *zmā* ‘brother’. The preservation of the phonetic elements that realise the dialect-specific intonation has an identity-forming function and is therefore at the center of the use of the dialect in various contexts.

Observation in a metropolitan context serves as evidence for this assumption. If an original dialect speaker lives in a large city and uses the standard language in his everyday life, he exercises linguistic empathy towards the dialect speaker by realising precisely this dialect-specific intonation through certain phonetic transpositions. Dialectal accommodation in the context of internal migration is not a straightforward process, but involves the

parallel use of codes. In the household, migrants retain the original dialect code. Outwardly, they appear using the accommodated code. The accommodated code does not match either the standard language or the surrounding dialect at the destination of migration, but it is crucial that it differs from their own (home) code.

In the dialect contacts between Imeretian and Samtskhian, the overlap of the codes is particularly striking. In Samtskhian, the nominative marker /-i/ appears for a few types of nouns (proper names only) in all positions of the noun in the sentence. In Imeretic, on the other hand, the same marker marks all types of nouns (both proper names and appellatives) only in certain positions in the sentence (in the postverbal position). In the course of adaptation, Imeretian generalised the Samtskhe-Javakhian feature and introduced the nominative mark /-i/ in general, regardless of the nominative position in the sentence.

The standard marker in the Meskhian dialect (target environment of Imeretian after migration):

(1)a			(1)b	
<i>pɛtrɛ-i</i>	<i>movida</i>	but never	* <i>dana-i</i>	<i>damartɔa</i>
Peter	came		knife	he/she has stabbed me

The standard marker in the Imeretian dialect (migrated dialect):

(2)a			(2)b	
<i>pɛtrɛ</i>	<i>movida</i>	but	<i>movida</i>	<i>pɛtrɛ-i</i>
Peter	came		came	Peter
<i>dana</i>	<i>damartɔa</i>	but	<i>damartɔa</i>	<i>dana-i</i>
knives	he/she struck me		he/she struck me	knives

After contact with Meskhian, a new standard designation was created in Imeretian:

(3)a			(3)b	
<i>pɛtrɛ-i</i>	<i>movida</i>	and	<i>movida</i>	<i>pɛtrɛ-i</i>
Peter	came		came	Peter
<i>dana-i</i>	<i>damartɔa</i>	and	<i>damartɔa</i>	<i>dana-i</i>
knives	he/she has stabbed me		he/she has stabbed me	knives

An untouched lexical isogloss between the migrant codes in Samtskhian-Javakhian is the lexeme ‘child’:

At the migration destination	The origin of migration	
Samtskhian-Javakhian	Imeretian	Mtiulian
<i>bavšvi</i>	<i>bovši</i>	<i>balgi</i>

Such grammatical and lexical contrasts even function as pseudo-ethnonyms - informal labels that function like ethnic or regional group names - or as ethnophaulisms when used in a derogatory or mocking context (cf. Roback 1944; Mullen & Rice 2003). For example, the vocative *balgo* ‘child’ served as a collective name for migrants from Mtiuleti, while the substituted pronoun *kvten* became a nickname - sometimes derogatory - for an entire village community: The representatives of a village in Samtskhe-Javakheti (for whatever reason) used the substituted form of the plural personal pronoun *tkven* > *kvten*, so that practically all the inhabitants of the village were called by the nickname *kvtena*.

The perceptual-dialectological perspective plays an important role in the internal differentiation of dialectal codes. The differentiation is based on individual lexemes that refer to everyday objects and are therefore generally accessible in terms of content. A village in Samtskhe-Javakheti distinguishes its own subdialectal variety from the other on the basis of metathesis, which is exist ‘there’ and not ‘with us’: -čx- > -xč- as in *çindaxčiri* vs. *çindačxiri* contraction from *çindis čxiri* ‘knitting needles’. The migration history of this village comprises several stages. The place of origin of the migration is in present-day Turkey. Two villages - Khiza and Bavra - moved to Jawacheti, while a generation later they moved on to Aspindza (on the outskirts of Javacheti). The idioms used

by the villagers are now fully assimilated into the Samtskhe-Javakheti dialect; however, their origin can still be identified based on a distinct linguistic feature.

It can be observed that simple linguistic features remain stable over time, resisting the process of assimilation. Naive folklinguistic observations are expressed in the form of poems and passed on orally. The mountain people of Khevsur were almost completely resettled in the Georgian lowlands, in Kakheti, in several waves of migration. A poem by an internal migrant from Khevsureti reads:

*me ḳi čamave ḳaxeta, ḳldet magiera xenia...  
xolme' da 'metki' siṭḳvani satkmelad saḳvirelnia.*

'I descended to Kakheti, where fields replaced the rocks,  
Looking at the words 'xolme' and 'metki', it closes itself in astonishment' (Shanidze 1931: 678; Arabuli 1998: 17).

For a Khevsurian, the words of the dialectal variety at the destination in Kakheti are as surprising and unusual as the fields are compared to the rocks of his homeland.

This poem is symptomatic for a number of reasons. The speaker, who has emigrated from the Georgian mountains to the lowlands, is surprised by the dialectal characteristics of the speakers at the destination of the migration and emphasises two particles in particular: *xolme* 'now and then' or 'every now and then' and *metki*, literally 'I say', as a univerbation of the citation particle. From the naive linguistic point of view of the migrant from the mountains, these two elements represent the dialectal code most clearly. From a purely grammatical point of view, both cases (*xolme*, *metki*) are relatively peripheral linguistic phenomena. Against this background, there are clear grammatical differences between Khevsurian (mountain dialect - place of origin of migration) and Kakhetian (lowland dialect - place of destination of migration) with regard to the paradigms of important grammatical categories such as tense, aspect and mode. However, such differences are not recognised in dialect contact or are weakened and abandoned after a certain time. The speakers' decision as to what should function as a linguistic difference between two dialect codes in dialect contact is not of a (naive) linguistic but of a socio-linguistic nature.

The lexeme (a compound) *čindačxiri* means 'weaving sticks'. A simple substitution within this word *činda[cx]iri činda[xc]iri* is sufficient for speakers to completely differentiate its dialect from the contact dialect. Weaving is a relevant socio-economic aspect and lexicons related to this craft are highly frequent compared to other fields. In line with this relevance, the simplest lexical differences represent important aspects of identity.

Observations made during fieldwork conducted between 2009 and 2015 as part of the Linguistic Portrait of Georgia project show how deeply rooted and 'untouchable' such folk perceptions of assimilation are. This contrasts with objectively measurable changes, such as the standardisation of entire nominal case paradigms, which have been widely adopted. From a purely linguistic point of view, such decisions are neither predictable nor explainable. The explanation lies outside of grammar: the sociologically determined linguistic decisions of dialect speakers along the contact line serve to identify demarcation elements in order to initiate a counter-process of assimilation. The sum of such markers composes the 'I/we' of a dialect speaker and thus creates the idea of 'not-I/we'.

The naive linguistic analysis and categorisation based on it is, as already mentioned, widespread and persistent. It is particularly evident in relation to the widely separated dialect areas. The eastern dialects of Georgian are characterised by the consistent use of the complement vowel -a (*sad* 'where?' > *sad-a*) and the preverbs *ma-* and *ša-* instead of *mo-* and *šo-* (*mo-iṭane* 'bring it here' > *ma-iṭane* and *še-iṭane* 'bring it in' > *ša-iṭane*). The characteristic feature of Western dialects is the complementary vowel -e (*šen* 'you' > *šen-e*) and the preverbs *me-*; *ču-*; *šo-* instead of *mo-*; *ča-*; *še-* (*mo-iṭana* 'he/she brought it' > *me-iṭana*; *ča-iḡo* 'he/she took it' > *ču-uḡo*; *še-uṭana* 'he/she brought it (in/to)' > *šo-uṭana*).

These characteristics are the basis for recognising and classifying the respective representatives of the dialect areas. They are also used to imitate or simulate one variety or another. In most cases, the imitations and simulations are exaggerated, creating forms that do not actually exist. They can be called pseudo-dialectisms or pseudo-urbanisms. The same phenomena occur when a dialect speaker tries to distance himself from his own variety and adopts the characteristics of the country of destination. The end result is a mixed code that is neither completely different from the original code nor completely overlapping with the target code.

Interestingly, such socio-linguistic markers (lexemes, particles, intonation) become part of anecdotes, imitations, nicknames and other folklore. The social interaction surrounding these communicative genres reinforces the status of the markers and ensures their continued existence.

Another example of a naïve analysis is that in Fereydani Georgian the word *saḳvebi* 'food' is derived from the Masdar form *ḳveba* with the help of the circumfix *sa-ḳveb-i*. The Fereydani Georgians reanalysed the *-eb-*

found in the word stem as a plural sign and derived the singular *saḳve* ‘food’ from the presumed plural form *saḳv-eb-i* ‘food’, which is not a Georgian lexeme.

The most difficult thing for migrants is to adopt spatial names at the destination of migration. This is particularly the case when the migration is compact and the environment of the person encountered is not given, so that the toponyms are learnt on a micro or macro level in the exchange. A language assistant (70) from Giorgitsminda (who migrated from Kaspi) was only 11 years old when his village was resettled. Even at that age, he was able to meticulously list the names of places in his home village with his eyes closed. This makes it all the more astonishing that there is so much confusion about place names at the destination of the migration. Since the original population was no longer there, the information about the place names has not been preserved. When asked how to communicate when a pet is lost, the language assistant replied that they define the house of a particular person or the country road as a fixed spatial point.

The Turkish population of Giorgitsminda was forcibly removed by the Soviet secret service and military. In one night, they were packed into a railway carriage and transported to Kazakhstan. Parallel to the resettlement, the village was repopulated by internal migrants. They arrived in a ghost village with empty houses. There was no one to tell the newcomers the place names or other peculiarities of the village. The logbook of the local collective records that despite these events, agricultural work was not interrupted. This shows the power and the whole machinery of the Soviet state with which these demographic reorganisations were carried out.

These diverse examples - from phonetic distinctiveness and lexical pseudo-ethnonyms to perceptual contrasts and playful metathesis - illustrate the phenomenon of dialectal self-assertion in action. Rather than simply fading under the pressure of contact, dialects demonstrate a form of resilience by preserving salient identity markers and reinterpreting them in new social contexts. This self-assertion is not always systematic or consciously strategic; it often manifests itself through folkloric perceptions, poetic reflections, humorous nicknames or shifts in register. Crucially, these forms of differentiation serve a sociolinguistic function: to mark the boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and to maintain a linguistic sense of belonging. Dialect self-assertion thus plays a central role in resisting total assimilation and enables dialect speakers to maintain continuity of cultural and linguistic identity across generations and geographies.

## 8. Conclusion

Observing the relationship between migration and identity highlights the central role of strong socio-linguistic networks. These networks capture the specific linguistic and cultural features that define group identity. If such networks are successfully maintained after migration, they allow speakers to continue to practice a recognisable version of their original local identity. The first effects of internal migration are typically felt in the place of origin, where dialect diversity tends to decline. This is particularly true of Georgian mountain dialects, many of which have lost their traditional geographical domains as a result of resettlement. The disappearance of dialects is often accompanied by the loss of associated customs, such as burial practices and communal speech rituals. The decline in the everyday use of these dialects reveals the vulnerability of linguistic identities in the face of social change.

At the place of arrival, however, some dialect features take on new significance. Lexical items, particles and intonations that once went unnoticed in the place of origin now stand out in the new environment, where they contrast with the surrounding dialects. These linguistic markers may take on a new symbolic function - not just as remnants of the language, but as instruments of identity preservation and resistance to assimilation. This dynamic is also evident in non-linguistic practices such as funeral traditions or village festivals. Even when rituals from the place of origin are adapted or hybridised at the destination, they often retain key elements - just as dialect speakers selectively retain phonetic or lexical features that mark their difference.

In sum, internal migration reshapes, but does not erase, both linguistic behaviour and social identity. Language becomes a site of negotiation between memory and adaptation. Speakers, consciously or unconsciously, engage in a process of deconstructing, reconstructing and replicating their socio-linguistic network. Through these networks, linguistic elements serve as tools for expressing belonging and difference — and in doing so, they anchor cultural continuity across displacement. Even in the absence of a fully intact dialect, the persistence of speech features in new contexts demonstrates how language remains central to the maintenance of local identity in migratory processes.

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# The Megrelian-Georgian Diglossia Switching and Mixing of Codes მეგრულ-ქართული დიგლოსია. კოდების გადართვა და კოდების შერევა

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**Abstract.** In Georgia, the Kartvelian language family includes Georgian, Svan, Megrelian, and Laz. Among them, Georgian is the official state language, while the others are used primarily within families. Traditionally, diglossic relationships have formed between Georgian and the other Kartvelian languages: Georgian–Svan, Georgian–Megrelian, and Georgian–Laz. This article analyzes the Georgian–Megrelian diglossia in two directions: a) the sociocultural domains in which Megrelian and Georgian are spoken and used; b) the typical switching patterns and mechanisms of code-mixing during natural speech. The study is mainly based on surveys and interviews conducted in the Samegrelo region of western Georgia in March and April of 2023. Additionally, other published materials have been used. The first part of the findings discusses code use and proficiency within the framework of traditional diglossic identity: “I am Megrelian” (contextual identity), and “ultimately, I am Georgian” (absolute identity). Code usage is analyzed across categories such as: at home, in the community, and in formal institutions. Attention is also given to psycho-emotional motivations behind code-switching. The second part of the paper discusses the social and functional basis for code-switching, including narrative role differentiation, citation, domain of activity, and more. While distinguishing between code-switching and code-mixing in Georgian–Megrelian speech is often difficult, the article attempts to make such distinctions at the phrase, sentence, lexical, and morphemic levels.

**აბსტრაქტი.** საქართველოში გავრცელებულია ქართველური ენები: ქართული, სვანური, მეგრული, ლაზური. მათგან ქართული სახელმწიფო ენაა, ხოლო დანარჩენი – საოჯახო ენებია. ტრადიციულად ჩამოყალიბებულია ქართულ-სვანური, ქართულ-მეგრული და ქართულ-ლაზური დიგლოსია. სტატიაში გაანალიზებულია ქართულ-მეგრული დიგლოსია ორი მიმართულებით: ა. მეგრული და ქართული კოდების ფლობისა და გამოყენების სოციოკულტურული სფეროები, ბ. ამ კოდების ტიპური გადართვისა და კოდების შერევის მექანიზმი ბუნებრივი მეტყველების დროს. კვლევა, ძირითადად, ემყარება ჩვენ მიერ 2023 წლის მარტსა და აპრილში დასავლეთ საქართველოს რეგიონში, სამეგრელოში, ჩატარებული გამოკითხვის/ინტერვიუების შედეგებს. გარდა ამისა, გამოყენებულია სხვა გამოქვეყნებული მასალაც. კვლევის შედეგების პირველ ნაწილში კოდების ფლობისა და გამოყენების შესახებ მსჯელობა ემყარება მეგრულ-ქართული დიგლოსიით ჩამოყალიბებულ ტრადიციულ ხედვას: მე მეგრელი ვარ (კონტექსტური იდენტობა), მაშასადამე, მე ქართველი ვარ (აბსოლუტური იდენტობა). კოდების გამოყენება გაანალიზებულია კატეგორიებით: შინ/სახლში, გარეთ/თემში, ოფიციალურ ორგანიზაციებსა და ინსტიტუტებში. ასევე, ყურადღება ექცევა ფსიქო-ემოციური მოტივაციით კოდების მონაცვლეობას. სტატიის მეორე ნაწილში განხილულია კოდების გადართვის სოციალურ-ფუნქციური საფუძველი, როგორცაა: ნარატივში მონაწილე პირთა დიქტომია, ციტირება, საქმიანობის სფერო და სხვ. მეგრულ-ქართული კოდების გადართვისა და შერევის გამიჯვნა ხშირად რთულია, თუმცა სტატიაში არის ამის მცდელობა ფრაზების/წინადადებების, ლექსიკის, მორფემების დონეზე.

**Keywords:** Kartvelian languages, Georgian–Megrelian diglossia, code-switching, code-mixing

**საკვანძო:** ქართველური ენები, მეგრულ-ქართული დიგლოსია, კოდების გადართვა, კოდების შერევა

## 1. Introduction

According to different scholarly perspectives, particularly those of the Arn. Chikobava Linguistic School, the Kartvelian language family comprises three languages: Georgian, Svan, and Zan (Chikobava, 1936). Zan, in turn, encompasses Megrelian and Laz as closely related dialectal varieties. The Kartvelian languages are predominantly spoken in Georgia. Georgian, the state language, has its own script and serves as the dominant, unifying, and identifying language of Georgians (Gabunia et al., 2010, 89-95).

Megrelian, which lacks a written script, is primarily spoken in western Georgia, particularly in the regions of Samegrelo and Abkhazia. Megrelian does not have an alphabet and in everyday life it is only a means of oral communication, despite the impressive number of Megrelian speakers (Bolkvadze, 2007, 223). Svan, also an unwritten language, is mainly spoken in Svaneti, located in the northwestern part of Georgia. Laz is prevalent in Western Georgia, especially in Adjara, and extends into parts of Turkey. Consequently, unwritten Kartvelian languages can be defined as the home languages. In practice, Megrelian, Laz, and Svan are primarily used within family settings, whereas Georgian serves as the dominant language in other domains of daily life.

In the 20th century, the systematic research of Kartvelian languages revealed their genealogical and typological unity. Since the 1980s, much attention has been paid to research on language contact, lexical borrowing and on sociolects of Georgian. The sociolinguistic research of Megrelian, Laz and Svan became significant at the beginning of the 20th century. In particular, the question was whether Megrelian-Georgian, Svan-Georgian, and Laz-Georgian (socio-) linguistic relations may be evaluated as bilingualism or diglossia. Naturally, the theories of Ferguson (1959, 1971) and Fishman (1972, 1980) were taken as a theoretical framework. These explorations were accompanied by intense debates over the years (Gabunia, 2004; Gvantseladze, 2003; 2005; Putkaradze, 2003; Kartvelian languages and dialects, 2007; Bolkvadze, 2007). Regarding empirical research on Megrelian, the first moves were made by Karina Vamling and Revaz Chanturia when studying the social spheres of the employment of Megrelian based on field research data (Vamling & Chanturia, 2010). Large-scale research conducted in 2005-2007 (with the support of the Volkswagen Foundation) entitled "The Sociolinguistic Situation in Modern Georgia" (Gippert & Tandashvili, 2005), in which 40 researchers participated, covered all the regions of the country. Within the scope of the project, together with other issues, code-switching and their functioning were explored as well as processes of word formation and change, etc.

Considerable time has passed since this research, however; a complete sociolinguistic description of the Megrelian-Georgian code-switching peculiarities has not yet been conducted. The issue is relevant against the background that the continuity of the natural transmission of the unwritten language, Megrelian, from generation to generation will be threatened in the near future. This tendency emerged during field work 17 years ago, and today this language shift is more and more noticeable.

In the present article, we will try to analyse the aspects of the functioning of Megrelian and Georgian speech codes, the sociolinguistic mechanism of their alternation or mixing, to present the types of code-switching and to provide their qualification. The discussion on Megrelian and Georgian speech codes follows the meaning that is defined in the literature: "Speech codes theory contemplates speaking as a linguistic action in the oral mode, but the term 'speech' here is itself a figure of speech used to refer to all the means of communicative conduct operative in the life of a speech community" (Philipsen & Hart, 2015, p.1).

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 The Data to be Analysed

This article is based, on the one hand, on video materials recorded in 2005-2007 within the framework of the above-mentioned project. These are the spoken speech samples of the informants living in Samegrelo, specifically in the Zugdidi municipality. This municipality is the central area of Samegrelo, with the largest population, where the social relationship between Megrelian and Georgian languages is best seen. We also used quantitative data revealed by sociolinguistic questionnaires in 2005-2007 on a relevant theme. In addition, for comparison, we rely on the Megrelian texts recorded and published in other municipalities of Samegrelo (Tsalenjikha, Chkhorotsqu) in 2007-2011 (Lomia & Gersamia, 2012). Furthermore, the results of the survey based on questionnaires conducted in March and April 2023 are also presented below. We targeted youth and recorded their assessment and interpretation of code-switching and the samples of their speech. Informants were the inhabitants of the towns of Samegrelo: Zugdidi, Chkhorotsqu and Martvili.

## 2.2 The 2023 Survey Target Group

The maximum age of young people was determined to be 30. Respondents were selected randomly, in total 31. All of them are local residents (Samegrelo), with secondary or higher education. The language of education is Georgian, and home language is Megrelian. An important aspect to be researched is language choice and language proficiency in young families. We introduced marriage as the main criterion: a young family is a micro-model for analyzing future trends. Married young people make a conscious choice by following the code of communication with their children, since unmarried young people just follow the “routines” established at home by their parents. In this respect, the choice of new parents determines the final trend. 7 out of 31 respondents were married, 6 of them had underage children.

**Table 1.** Data from the 2023 Research (Survey Target Group)

Age	Gender	Educational Level	Place of Residence	Marital Status
8	Male	Secondary	Zugdidi	Single
10	Female	Secondary	Zugdidi	Single
10	Female	Secondary	Chkhorotsqu	Single
11	Female	Secondary	Chkhorotsqu	Single
11	Female	Secondary	Chkhorotsqu	Single
11	Female	Secondary	Chkhorotsqu	Single
13	Female	Secondary	Zugdidi	Single
13	Female	Secondary	Chkhorotsqu	Single
16	Male	Secondary	Chkhorotsqu	Single
17	Female	Secondary	Martvili	Single
17	Female	Secondary	Chkhorotsqu	Single
18	Male	Secondary	Chkhorotsqu	Single
18	Male	Secondary	Chkhorotsqu	Single
18	Male	Secondary	Zugdidi	Single
19	Female	Secondary	Chkhorotsqu	Single
21	Female	Tertiary	Chkhorotsqu	Single
22	Male	Secondary	Zugdidi	Single
23	Male	Tertiary	Chkhorotsqu	Single
24	Female	Tertiary	Martvili	married
25	Male	Secondary	Zugdidi	married
25	Male	Secondary	Zugdidi	Single
27	Male	Secondary	Zugdidi	married
27	Female	Tertiary	Martvili	married
27	Female	Tertiary	Martvili	Single
28	Female	Tertiary	Martvili	married
28	Male	Tertiary	Martvili	married
28	Female	Tertiary	Martvili	Single
28	Female	Secondary	Zugdidi	Single
29	Female	Tertiary	Martvili	Single
29	Male	Secondary	Zugdidi	married
30	Female	Tertiary	Martvili	Single

## 2.3 Questionnaires

Structurally, the questionnaires used both in 2005-2007 and 2023 are presented in 3 blocks:

### 1. Language fluency (in Megrelian, Georgian, English/Russian or other)

The questions of this block are as follows: Which language did you start speaking? Which is your first language? Do you speak the national (Georgian) language? Which is your third language? Which language is a literary language for you? When do you use English? Russian? Do you know a Megrelian who can't speak Megrelian? In addition, for frequency reasons: How often do you use Megrelian? Georgian? other languages? The response categories: Every day, sometimes, seldom, never

2. Use of Megrelian (in Samegrelo in different domains). This category has three subcategories:

*a. At Home / in a Family:*

Which language do you use to speak / did you use to speak to your father? Which language do you use to speak / did you use to speak to your mother? Which language do you use to speak / did you use to speak to your siblings?; Which language do you use to speak / did you use to speak to your spouse?; Which language do you use to speak / did you use to speak to your children? Which language do / did your parents speak? Which language do your grandmother and grandfather speak?

Which language does your spouse speak? Which language does your spouse use to speak to the children? Which language does your spouse speak / did you use to speak to your parents? Which language(s) do your children speak to each other at home?

*b. Outside / in the Community:*

Which language do you speak to your neighbours? which language do you have to speak most often in your village (neighbourhood)? Which language do you speak most often with village elders?; which language do you have to speak / did you have to speak most often at the market?

*c. In Official Organisations/Institutions:*

Which language do you most often have to speak with co-workers? Which language do you have to talk with the district administration most often? Which language do you have to speak most often at the hospital? Which language do you speak most often with teachers at school? Which language do you have to speak most often at the bus station / railway station / ticket office?

3. Basic psycho-emotional foundations of language function were determined based on the following questions: Which language do you express your happiness in? Anger? Fear? Gratitude? Sympathy? Solidarity? Which language do you use while cursing, or blessing? In which language do you confide in someone else?

Through qualitative and quantitative analysis, the issue of switching between Megrelian-Georgian codes is studied in two directions: (1.) The sociocultural aspects of Language fluency and language choice; (2.) Type of code-switching and code-mixing mechanisms during natural speech. Our methodological approach to terminology is informed by both Muysken's (2000) perspective, which categorizes code-mixing into three types – insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization – and Eastman's (1992) view, which posits that code-switching, code-mixing, and language borrowing are components of a unified linguistic process. We contend that within the context of Megrelian-Georgian diglossia, code-switching, code-mixing, and borrowing indeed constitute a singular, natural speech phenomenon, although the sociolinguistic factors distinguishing each category remain discernible. This article will aim to illustrate these distinctions in detail.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Language Fluency

According to the data of the 2014 census of Georgia (<https://www.geostat.ge/ka/modules/categories/738/mosakhleobis-geografiuli-ganatsileba-da-shida-migratsia>), the population of all seven municipalities of Samegrelo exceeds 321,445. Taking into account that the number of IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) from the region of Georgia, in the autonomous Republic of Abkhazia is 159,754 (occupied by the Russian Federation, since the wars of 1991-1992 and 2008) it is reasonable to assume that at least two-thirds of these speak Megrelian. It can be said that more than 400,000 Megrelian-speaking Georgians live in Georgia. We would have accurate statistics if there were a survey of the Georgian population concerning an internal differential linguistic feature - Megrelian speaker, Svan speaker, Laz speaker. "Megrelians often boast that they study literary Georgian and, in this regard, their Georgian is more refined than the representatives of other regions of Georgia" (Gabunia et al., 2010, 100). This language is represented by twenty dialects, which are spread over the territory of Georgia according to certain geographical markers. Megrelian-Georgian diglossia best reflects the unity of *contextual identity* (I am a Megrelian) and *absolute identity* (therefore, I am a Georgian). In the scientific literature, attention is focused on the *hierarchy of identity*, when the choice of speech codes is related to the identity of society; for example,

researchers of the Gaelic language note that the concept of ‘we’ of the older generation is related to the Gaelic language, whereas for the younger generation it is related to the English language (Smith-Christmas *et al.*, 2009). Naturally, we were also interested in the survey of young respondents due to two factors: Language fluency and their attitude to the Megrelian-Georgian code-switching.

According to the research, It was revealed that out of 31 respondents of the target group, 24 started speaking (in childhood) in Georgian, and 7 started speaking in Megrelian; nevertheless 16 respondents considered Georgian their first (native) language whereas 15 considered Megrelian their first language. It is likely that mostly young generation (under the 19 years) claim that their first language is Georgian.

For comparison, statistics from the 2005-2007 survey are cited by first and second language designation. A total of 696 Megrelian-speaking respondents (all between the ages of 10 and 80) were interviewed, of which 328 named Georgian as their first language (47.2%), whereas 331 named Megrelian (47.5%). 37 respondents (5.3%) selected both languages, i.e., it was difficult for them to separate the languages. The position of the first language was shared by Georgian and Megrelian languages (Gabunia *et al.*, 2010, p.92-93). The current general trend is similar to the one appearing 17 years ago: Megrelian shared first place with Georgian, the so-called symbolic language for the older generation. However, there is another difference: according to the 2023 survey, the young generation assigns first place to the Georgian language.

Finally, the frequency of language use also indicates the preferential use of Georgian compared to Megrelian. This seems natural considering the difference in spheres of usage of these codes; see. Table 1. Here and below the percentage is rounded, error 0.5 - 0.8.

**Table 1.** Data from the 2023 Research: The Frequency of Language Use (31 Respondents)

	Every Day	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
How frequently do you employ Megrelian?	71%	16%	13%	0%
How frequently do you employ the State language / Georgian?	97%	0%	3%	0%
How frequently do you employ other languages?	13%	42%	32%	13%

### 3.2 Use of Megrelian

To describe the use of Megrelian (in Samegrelo) in different domains, the questionnaires from 2023 included only activities characteristic of oral communication. As was mentioned above, the interviewed young people were divided into two groups: unmarried (24) and married (7). Only one of the latter had no children. The main question that differentiates their answers is related to the choice of communication language with their children.

It is notable that unmarried young respondents follow the family trends, since the language of communication with parents was not their choice, it was only the parents' will. According to the survey, the use of speech codes (either Megrelian or Georgian) by unmarried informants according to three areas - *at home, outside, in official organisations/institutions* – reveals the following: Megrelian still remains the main language *at home / in a family*. However, *outside / in the community*, it gives up positions in favour of Georgian. *In official organisations/institutions*, the Georgian is unconditionally used. Otherwise, for a few respondents it is hard to define which language is in preference.

**Table 2.** Data from the 2023 Research: Language Use in Different Domains; the Responses of Young Single People (24 Respondents)

	Georgian	Megrelian	Georgian-Megrelian
At home / in a family	34%	63%	3%
Outside / in the community	49%	39%	12%
In official organisations/institutions	76%	12%	12%

The responses of young married people show a completely different picture: most respondents prefer the Georgian language when communicating with their children *at home / in a family*; however a considerable number of them use both languages. As for the language of communication, *outside / in the community*, both languages are used almost equally. *In official organisations/institutions* Georgian keeps its position steadily. Answers to all questions reveals the following data:

**Table 3.** Data from the 2023 Tesearch: Language Use in Different Domains; the Responses of Young Married People (7 Respondents)

	Georgian	Megrelian	Georgia-Megrelian
At home / in a family	54%	7%	39%
Outside / in the community	43%	36%	21%
In official organisations/institutions	71%	9%	20%

The fact that the rate of speaking in the Megrelian “community” is a little higher is caused by the communication with older people and their linguistic influence. However, this will decrease over time in direct proportion to a child's growth, that is, generational change brings an unpleasant perspective to Megrelian. For comparison, we will quote the results of the survey conducted in 2005-2007 where representatives of all age groups were included. In particular, which drew the following picture:

**Table 4.** Data from the 2005-2007 Research (696 Respondents)

	Georgian	Megrelian	Georgian-Megrelian
At home / in family	20%	56%	24%
Outside / in the community	25%	46%	29%
In official organisations/institutions	82%	8%	10%

It is true that informants of all ages participated in the old survey, and at first glance, it provided a useful indicator regarding the use of Megrelian codes of *at home* and *outside*, although the rate of simultaneous use of both codes was also high, which, in the end, can be considered a useful trend in favour of Georgian. 17 years ago, the predominance of Megrelian *at home / in a family* and *outside / in the community* reflected the natural, regular situation of an unwritten language, although the current survey of young people has already shown a regression in the use of Megrelian in the same areas, *at home* and *in the community*. In the future, this will have a negative impact on the continuity of the language transmission from generation to generation.

In reality, the field work and conversations with the respondents showed that the knowledge of Megrelian is not a priority for young people. In fact, the following was revealed:

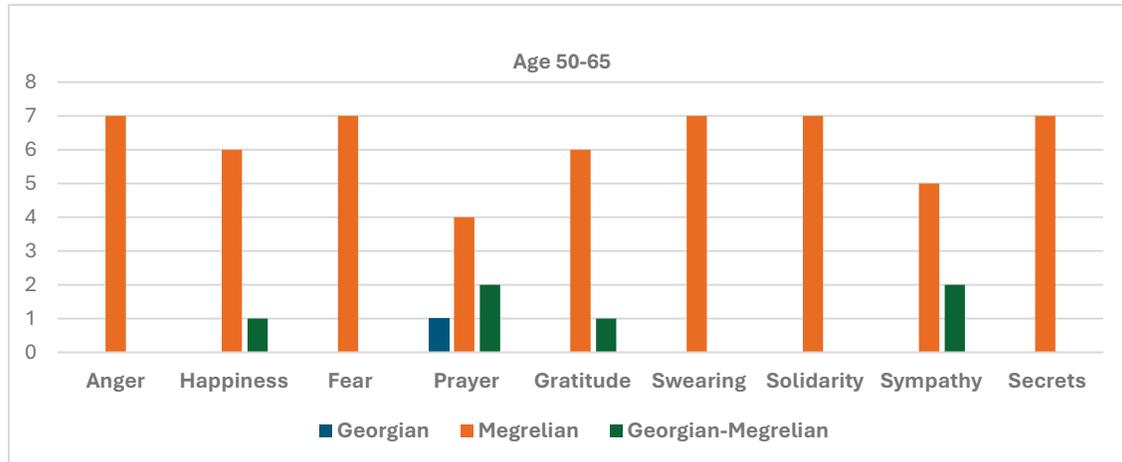
- *Young parents communicate with their children in Georgian considering that they will learn Megrelian anyway and they should go to school already prepared, that is, with the knowledge of Georgian: Megr.: muzhams baghana ordali reni do sk'olasha maulari reni, ina ishen diguruansia margalurs.... 'When a child is to be raised up and he/she should go to school, he/she will learn Megrelian anyway', says Ira, 64*
- *The grandparents' generation also communicates with children in Megrelian. 'With difficulties, but they still speak with them in Georgian', revealed by a respondent from Zugdidi.*
- *Megrelian is not prestigious: Megr.: ase irk'ochi kortulo ichiebu do mi re, sopelishi t'et'ia, sovre gutosopua. margalepi kortulo ichiebunani, k'ult'urash donesha apuna eonapili 'Now everybody speaks Georgian and who is (the person speaking Megrelian) this villager, from where he/she appeared. Megrelians consider speaking Georgian a mark of high culture'.*
- *The preference of Georgian was determined by the great desire among children to learn English, which modern technologies and globalization made a necessary requirement. 60-year-old Dodo from Martvili specifies: Megr.: kortuli vauchkun peri baghanepi inglisursha gilula ometsadinebusha. ts'erimidgini si! 'Kids not knowing Georgian go to learn English, imagine!' Obviously, the knowledge of Megrelian, a language without an alphabet, is not useful when learning English.*
- *The psycho-emotional bond with Megrelian is broken: Megr.: margaluro jgarjgai vamosiamovnu 'I don't enjoy speaking Megrelian'. This shows the low prestige of Megrelian. This phrase belongs to a respondent from Martvili. It is also worth noting that the word jgarjgai denoting 'speech' has a negative connotation as it refers to unpleasant, slurred speech.*

This last factor is essential because language is not only a means of communication and thinking, but it also determines the psycho-emotional and cultural context of a person and society. From this standpoint, we interviewed respondents of all ages. The following questions were asked:

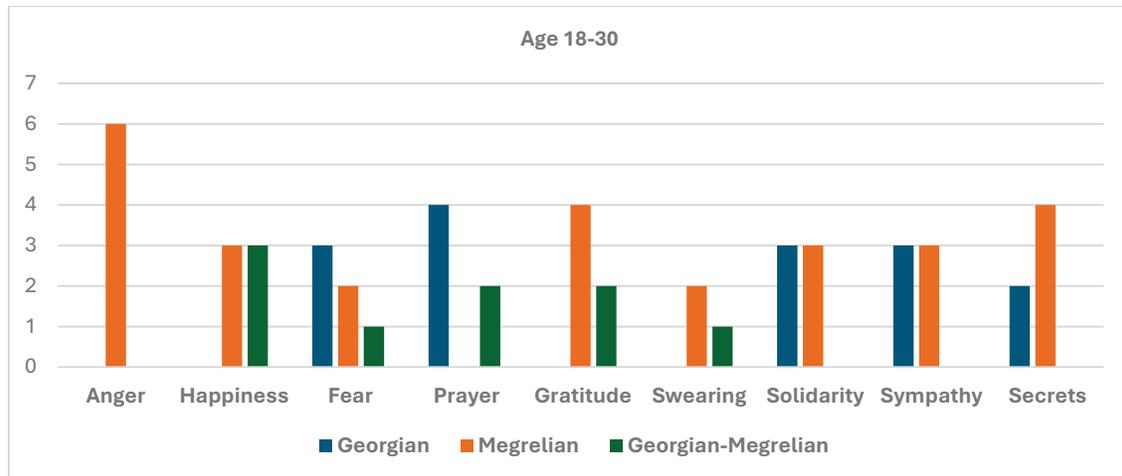
- *Which language do you express your happiness in? Anger? Fear? Gratitude? Sympathy? Solidarity?*
- *Which language do you use while cursing, or blessing?*
- *In which language do you confide in someone else?*

Almost all of the elderly respondents named Megrelian as a code expressing their psycho-emotional state. Georgian was mentioned as referring to prayer/blessings, which is natural because Georgian is the language of the Orthodox Church of Georgia. The picture is different concerning young people: both speech codes were named as the language for expressing almost all kinds of emotions, which is a logical consequence of the trend described above.

The diagram contains the following psycho-emotional characteristics: anger, happiness, fear, prayer, gratitude, swearing, solidarity, sympathy, secrets. The representatives of the first age group (50-65) (blue column) use Georgian only during praying; moreover, both Megrelian and Georgian are mixed to express gratitude, happiness and solidarity, but also when praying. Nevertheless, the dominance of Megrelian is clear. As for the second age group (18-30), the language of prayer is only Georgian, as for the other emotions –fear, solidarity, sympathy and secrets – they are expressed both by Georgian and Megrelian. Consequently, according to the diagram below, for the young generation, Georgian is the way of express their emotion.



**Figure 1.** Results of Psycho-Emotional Questionnaire of Age Group 50-65



**Figure 2.** Results of Psycho-Emotional Questionnaire of Age Group 18-30

As a result of the survey, based on the findings of all three blocks (Language fluency; Use of Megrelian (in Samegrelo) in different domains; Basic psycho-emotional foundations of language), it can be stated that Megrelian-Georgian speech codes coexist in all areas of oral communication. The picture was different 20 to 30 years ago, and even more so, in the previous century. For communication at home, and in the community, only Megrelian was used whereas Georgian was employed in public spaces. The surveys regarding the younger generation made it clear that the Georgian language has almost replaced Megrelian at home and in the community. This is already a noteworthy tendency which will hinder the process of the production of Megrelian in future generations. This situation has an objective reason. Generally, under globalization, universal education, and technological development, home languages without an alphabet are increasingly losing prestige. These languages

do not determine the well-being of their speakers, therefore, the emotional-cultural bond towards these languages also decreases.

### 3.3 Switching and Mixing of Codes

Georgian and Megrelian are agglutinative languages characterized by the same type of declension system of nominal elements, verb conjugation system and the syntactic structure of the sentence. It is believed that when languages share similar grammatical structures, there is less code-switching. Therefore, it is more logical to analyze code-mixing at the level of grammar, although sometimes it can be challenging to differentiate between code-switching and code-mixing.

In the given paper Georgian and Megrelian language codes are discussed in terms of both switching and mixing. In discussing the use of languages above, it became clear that the Megrelian and Georgian speech codes are relevant to the daily lives of their users, whether at home or in their community. That's why our informants moved from one code to another naturally without any special self-control. However, the basis of this switch was still singled out: on the one hand, there is a socio-functional reassignment of codes; on the other hand, code-switching is caused by linguistic markers (tag, word, phrase, morpheme).

### 3.4 Socio-functional Labeling of Code-switching

According to our observation, the alternation of speech codes is conditioned by structuring the narrative, when the informant includes himself in the narrative. Specifically, if the narration in the third person begins in Megrelian ('Megr' below) and the narrator includes himself/herself (the first person), it continues in Georgian ('Geo' below), see (a). In the same way, if the narrator starts in the first person in Megrelian when the third person is included, he switches to Georgian (b).

(Abbreviations: Geo.=Georgian, Megr.=Megrelian, Megr. Txts.=Megrelian Texts)

- a. *Megr.: sabat'oni do zhashkhas deda do mama kho kimishes, odo / Geo.: egreve, rogorts k'i davinakhavdit, chantebts... movpkhik'et qvelaperi... Megr.: 'When Mum and Dad used to come at weekends, / Geo.: As soon as we saw them, we would gran the bags and all...'*
- b. *Megr.: mitink ts'qari kugmobuk'oni, tisheni kholo ch'k'uashe giniblendi, atesheni, shalva chilachava, shalva kugaigonebunada, / Geo.: gmiri iqo is, mere germaniashi ts'aiqvanes. Megr.: 'if someone had thrown some water over me, I would go mad. So, Shalva Chilachava, have you heard of him? / Geo.: he was a hero, then he was taken to Germany'.*

The grammatical peculiarity of the Georgian and Megrelian languages is the expression of the dichotomy of the first and third persons at the marking level (the first person is marked by the prefix whereas the third person is marked by a suffix, e.g.: *v-ts'er - ts'er-s* (Georgian) / *b-ch'arunk - ch'arun-s* (Megrelian), 'I am writing' – 'he writes'. This dichotomy is also manifested at the social/functional level by the switching of speech codes - from the third person to the first person and the reverse transition is expressed by the alternation of Megrelian and Georgian.

We consider quoting someone else's words as a similar phenomenon. In this case, too, the codes are functionally separated. For example, in sentence (c), the narration of the story begins in Megrelian. Then, while narrating, the speaker (to clarify or evaluate what was said before) provides us with new information in the form of a quote from a well-known folk poem, after which, as unexpected as it may be, he continues to tell the story in Georgian:

- c. *Megr.: supta margal qazaqia, khom koichku, ... aznaurishi ina noghve, ts'odeba ... 'dzghabi meurs ch'ich'eturi, bosh getkhoz gejeturiani', teshe do tesh osursheni re tina ch'arili, / Geo.: im kaltan midis, miseirnobts da k'iziria daets'ia, tavadi. tskhenni daat'ak'a ase uk'analit...Megr.: 'He is a real Megrelian man, you know. He had a rank of Aznauri.. 'Zyabi meurs chicheturi, bosh getkhoz gejeturiani' this is written about him and his wife / Geo.: he goes to that woman, walks around and Kiziria caught him up, the prince. He hit him with the horse'.*

The introduction of a new character (*dzghabi ch'ich'eturi* 'girl from Checheti') also initiates code-switching. In the same way, the code-switches from the Georgian code to the Megrelian after the same citation:

- d. *Geo.: hoda, gelam ar miaktsia vapshe quradgheba, aravin ar miaktsia quradgheba, / Megr.: 'chkim dikha, chkim dikhava', - tkuandes kodzirundes timts'k'uma. Geo.: 'And, Gela did not pay attention at all, nobody did, / Megr.: "my land, my land", - they said when they see'.*

To maintain the authenticity of what others said, the speakers include phrases between the sentences in Megrelian, as in the example below:

- e. *Geo.: me k'varebi gavak'ete da / Megr.: 'okh, ena art jars dunordzghapuenia titsali k'vareps ak'etensia', gogik./ Geo.: damits'una, anu bevr qvels ar ak'etebo.. Geo.: 'I made the torches and / Megr.: 'One army can be fed on the scones you make', Gogi said. / Geo.: He did not like it, so, you do not make much cheese, said he'.*
- f. *Geo.: mara mikhvda akhla rat'omats davudzakhe, / Megr.: 'gachendi, gachendi, gggatsilenkia', mits'u. / Geo.: mashin dzalian k'ult'urulad, khma ar amoughia, ise mimatsila sakhlamde.. Geo.: 'but he realized why I had called him, / Megr.: 'stop, stop. I will see you off', - being polite. / Geo.: he did not say anything then, he saw me home without saying a word'.*

Sometimes the opposite thing happens: A Georgian quotation is inserted in a Megrelian utterance to confirm another's words:

- g. *Megr.: babuk dikhor atakini, tinepsha apu dikha gits'naidira atak. k'onts'o ts'ulaia tkuand, jveshi mezobeli rdu tina, / Geo.: amodena gogrebi gadmokondao makedan. Megr.: 'when grandpa settled there, he bought some land here from them. Kontso Tsulaia said, this, he was an old neighbor, / Geo.: he brought such huge pumpkins from there'.*

The reason for switching codes can be the description of the speaker's occupation, in particular, the switch from Megrelian to Georgian, as if describing the activity in Georgian adds more credibility to the speaker. We think that the habit of functional distribution of languages is being activated subconsciously in official structures, in particular, Georgian is the sole "owner" of this function (see Table 2 and Table 3):

- h. *Megr.: ma mangar dikhas mupshendi... / Geo.: me p'irvelad vmushaobdi ingirshi, / Megr.: mudas laborat'orias, chais t'eknologias, paprik'as. Megr.: 'I was working at a good place, / Geo.: First I was working in Ingiri / Megr.: there, in the laboratory, tea technology, at the factory'.*

It is worth noting that the words specifying the place of work are Georgian terms. However, they are conveyed following the Megrelian model, in the form of a dative case and not with a noun with the preposition *shi*. This issue will be further discussed below.

Several other reasons for code-switching were identified. One of the informants talks about the psychomotorical skills of speech: 'I formulate some thoughts in Georgian faster whereas some – more slowly, and I replace them accordingly':

- i. *Megr.: margaluri var, kortuli amiol / Geo.: maints vlap'arak'ob-metki. maints chak'rulad vak'eteb raghats-raghatsas. / Megr.: mushen da, margaluro kholo vamaragade tish machkaras kortulo ptkuankuni tina do, kortulo vamaragade tish machkaras margaluro ptkuankun tina. Megr.: 'Not Megrelian, sometimes Georgian comes first to my mind / Geo.: I still speak, I say. Still I do something / Megr.: Because I can't speak Megrelian as fast, as Georgian and I can't speak Georgian fast when I say something in Megrelian'.*

### 3.5 Linguistic Foundation of Code-switching

The alternation of Megrelian and Georgian speech codes is more intense and profound when individual Georgian words or phrases enter connected speech in Megrelian. It can be said that code-mixing is more pronounced than switching. Simultaneous Megrelian-Georgian speech is conditioned, on the one hand, by the lack of command of the Megrelian vocabulary, especially due to the lack of knowledge of the terminological vocabulary, or forgetting words. On the other hand, it is dictated by the desire to speak more clearly for the interlocutor or to convey the essence of the issue accurately. In general, according to the scientific literature, the classification of the forms of code-switching is done according to the place and form of the switching word/phrase/morpheme, as well as syntactic subordination, therefore, the equivalence of code-switching is determined by the regularity of mixing morphosyntactic and lexical elements (Muysken, 1995). Thus, a distinction is made between intrasentential

switching (the inclusion of another code item within one code phrase), extrasentential switching (switching from one code phrase to another code phrase), phoneme-morpheme switching (the use of a phoneme/morpheme of one code by another code, i.e. switching within a word), syntactic switching (using the syntactic mechanism of one code in another code) (Poplack, 1981). We have already touched on some of these forms above, but we will try to more specifically describe the switching mechanisms according to lexical-grammatical features. Terms, speech parts, phrases, Grammatical or phonemic-morphemic mixing are the characteristics which are discussed below.

#### Terms

In the non-written language, the traditional sphere vocabulary is formed historically, but in the modern era, it cannot keep up with the development of new branches of knowledge and technologies. Therefore, words and phrases denoting new concepts flow abundantly from the literary language. The situation is similar in the case of Megrelian-Georgian diglossia. If the speaker does not know or does not have a word denoting a new meaning or concept while speaking in Megrelian, he finds a corresponding item in Georgian and includes it in his speech in Megrelian. Sometimes such inclusion becomes the reason for complete switching of codes, or remains only as Georgian inserts in connected speech. There can be similar inserted lexical units at the end of the phrase as well as inside it. In the case of employment of the terminological vocabulary, it is poured in the grammatical structure of Megrelian. Due to this, the simple constructions are created, although a large part of the words used are taken from the Georgian terminological lexicon. Examples of such intra-sentential switching are as follows:

- j. *Megr.: muzhans nik'o nik'oladzek kidich'qu potish / Geo.: dap'roekt'eba. / Megr.: tek / Geo.: sark'inigzo magist'raleb / Megr.: gomiones do ... ti adgils akhal/ Geo.: dasakhlebak / Megr.: ginirtu do kigioldves / Geo.: kalaki / abasha. Megr.: 'When Niko Nikoladze started / Geo.: designing / Poti, there / Geo.: railways / Megr.: were built and...a new / Geo.: settlement / Megr.: appeared and was developed and was named a / Geo.: city / of Abasha.'* (Megr. txts., 42, 13-16)

Despite the fact that some words have a Georgian counterpart: *sark'inigzo magist'ralebi* 'railways' – *rk'inasharepi*, *dasakhleba* 'settlement' - *okhoru..* depending on the topic of the conversation, the speaker gives the advantage to the Georgian vocabulary:

- k. *Megr.: ti / Geo.: p'eriodeshi / Megr.: baghanepi rdu ardash umos / Geo.: akt'iur taoba: / Megr.: magurapali, / Geo.: moazrovne / Megr.: irpelnero. Megr.: 'Kids of that / Geo.: period / Megr.: were the most / Geo.: active generation: / Megr.: motivated to learn, / Geo.: thinking / Megr.: in all aspect.'* (Megr. txts., 68, 13-14)
- l. *Megr.: ate umoso / Geo.: tavisupal temepish / Megr.: ch'arua miord, / Geo.: ai, sak'ont'roloeps / Megr.: moch'arapuandes... Megr.: 'so I liked writing / Geo.: essays, / Megr.: we were made to write / Geo.: written tests.'* (Megr. txts., 158, 8-9)

Terms may also lead to extrasentential code-switching; for instance, when using at least one term, a Megrelian sentence is followed by at least one Georgian sentence as in the following example:

- m. *Megr.: do mangar / Geo.: khelpas / Megr.: kholo mighud .... / Geo.: dzaan k'argi mkonda. / Megr.: ase tits'k'umaiani khelpasi / Geo.: as ormotsdaati maneti tsot'a ar iqo. Megr.: 'And I had a good / Geo.: salary / and... / Geo.: very good indeed / Megr.: now the money salary / Geo.: one hundred and fifty roubles was not little'.*

Despite the fact that the speaker tried to continue the conversation in Megrelian *ase tits'k'umaiani* 'Now then', when he mentioned this code word *khelpasi* 'salary' again, he continued the sentence in Georgian.

#### Parts of speech, phrases

Code-switching does not happen only because of terms. Historically, and even today, the intermingling of parts of speech from language to language is a natural process. We will single out some features switching or mixing Megrelian-Georgian codes.

Code-switching is often facilitated by numerals. In many cases, the respondents convey the numbers in Georgian, which is why switching from Megrelian to Georgian and back can happen in every sentence:

- n. *Megr.: ingirs davamtavri/ Geo.: rva k'lasi. sashualo sk'ola / Megr.: guate ingurkaghaldk'ombinat'is / Geo.: atas iskhraas ormotsdatvramet'shi, / Megr.: mushoba kidip'ch'qi ingirish p'irvel/ Geo.: sashualo*

*sk'olas laborant'o, atas tskhraas samotsdatskhrashi / Megr.: mupshendi / Geo.: atas tskhraas otkhmotsdatsamet' ts'lamde. Megr.: 'I finished / Geo.: eight classes in Ingiri. / Megr.: I finished / Geo.: high school / Megr.: in Ingirkaghaldkombinati in / Geo.: nineteen and fifty- eight / Megr.: I started work / Geo.: as a lab technician in the Ingiri first school in nineteen and sixty-nine / Megr.: and worked until / Geo.: nineteen and ninety three.'*

Although many other words in this episode are borrowed from Georgian *sk'ola* 'school', *sashualo* 'high', *laborant'o* 'a lab technician', all are presented in the Megrelian grammatical model, although the numerals are in Georgian, with the corresponding syntax, cf. *Megr.: sk'ola guate ... atas chkhorosh zharnechdovitobruos; Geo.: sk'ola davamtavre ... atas tskhraas ormotsdatvramet'shi. 'I finished school in...nineteen fifty-eight.'*

Surprisingly, similar to the numerals, the names of weekdays may also be substituted. Obviously, these lexical systems are the oldest in all languages, and the phonetic correspondences of the Kartvelian languages have already been established. It seems that this substitution has some social basis (we assume that this basis maybe the occupation and religious motivation), however, this issue requires more in-depth research. Here are some examples:

- o. *Geo.: k'viras / Megr.: kikhvamand tus do / Geo.: orshabatis / Megr.: qvarils. Geo.: 'On Sunday, / Megr.: he blessed by the pig and / Geo.: on Monday / Megr.: by a castrated cockerel.'* (*Megr. txts.*, 154, 5)
- p. *Megr.: tena isheishen ikhvamuk'o k'ochki tutashkha dghas. / Geo.: ts'eli ro gadavidoda, ese igi / Megr.: akhal ts'ana munilendḡni tinash / Geo.: orshabats ar unda gatsdenoda es. Megr.: 'by all means, a man should sacrifice, pray / Geo.: on Monday. When a year passed, / Megr.: when a New Year set in / Geo.: he should not miss on Monday.'* (*Megr. txts.*, 136, 20-23)

The role of unchanging parts of speech in code-switching is also noteworthy. Georgian adverbs are frequently used even though their Megrelian equivalents are available: similar to sentence (q) – the Georgian word *shemdeg* 'then' is matched equivalent to *uk'ul* in Megrelian. Similarly, in (r) the Megrelian equivalent of the word *dzaan* 'very' is *gvalo*. Therefore, it is natural to replace the Megrelian phrase with the Georgian one:

- q. *Geo.: akhali / Megr.: odiares, mdelos, kududgundit mush k'raot'ish tudo, / Geo.: shemdeg qovel ghames / Megr.: ir sers, geurzandit santels. Geo.: 'on fresh grass, / Megr.: on a green field, we sould put [it] under his bed, / Geo.: then every night / Megr.: every night we would light a candle.'*
- r. *Megr.: atena re k'omunist'obashi p'eriodis, / Geo.: adre, dzaan adre, ikneboda, albat, / Megr.: sumonechdovit sumonechdovitokhutiani ts'anepi. Megr.: 'It is the Communist time, / Geo.: It must have been early, very early, / Megr.: in about the seventies-sevety-five.'* (*Field materials, Martvili 2023*)

Interjections can also be the reason for code-switching. These interjections act as a tag as if the speaker inserts an interjection from another code either at the beginning of the sentence (s) or in the middle (t) to strengthen the emotion:

- s. *Geo.: mt'risas, / Megr.: sk'olasha, bebia, mipshini, tiri korduda, sk'olasha ula vamk'odu... Geo.: 'mt'risas, / Megr.: when I went to School, if it snowed, I did not want to go to school...'*
- t. *Geo.: rat'o davanebe tavi, / Megr.: iakha da, / etek kimighes sabech'di mankana. Geo.: 'Why did I quit? / Megr.: iakha da, so, the typewriter was brought there.'*

In one case, the Georgian interjection *mt'risas* (may this happen to our enemy) is followed by a Megrelian phrase whereas in another case, the Georgian phrase is followed by the Megrelian interjection *iakha da* and the sentence continues in Megrelian. A similar switch marker is the conjunction:

- u. *Megr.: ek'lesia mudgaren sasts'aul michkudu do tesh munoprti, / Geo.: rogorts muzeumshi, rts'menit k'i ar shevedi, rogorts muzeumshi / Megr.: do inak saertot vemnort. Megr.: 'I considered Church a miracle and entered there as in the museum, / Geo.: but I did enter it with faith, like a museum / Megr.: and he did not enter at all.'* (*Megr. txts.*, 156, 32-34)

The use of the Georgian conjunction *rogorc* 'as' was followed by a Georgian sentence, and by switching to the Megrelian conjunction *do* 'and', the speaker switches back to Megrelian.

Individual phrases that are used in the Georgian language as clichés for expressing an opinion, or as a kind of stable expressions, which are a linguistic tool for reasoning, are also abundantly confirmed in Megrelian. These phrases also often lead to code-switching, as in the following examples:

- v. *Geo.: mere igzavneboda / Megr.: magalto, shkhvadoshkhva kianepisha... Geo.: 'then it was sent, / Megr.: for instance, to various countries'.*
- w. *Megr.: te ghorontish mimart tetsai / Geo.: p'at'ivis migeba, vedreba... Megr.: 'Respectful attitude to the God / Geo.: To be honored, to beg.' (Megr. Txts., 156, 22)*
- x. *Megr.: brel metsnierep aghiarena ates, mudgaren ren tes. magalto, daushvat do p'lat'onshe kholo mounapili, / Geo.: ts'armogidgenia? p'lat'onidan moqolebuli /, Megr.: mangar, te did metsnierepi. Megr.: 'Many Scientists recognized this, something this one. For example, let's assume and, starting from Plato, / Geo.: can you figure it out? From Plato / Megr.: cool, these great scientists.' (Megr. txts., 146, 22-24)*
- y. *Megr.: mshoblepshe kholo ughudes titsali, mujokho tes, / Geo.: midgoma sts'avlis mimart / Megr.: much'o gurapili irpels mioch'irinuans.. Megr.: 'They had from their parents, what is it called? / Geo.: Attitude to learning / Megr.: that an educated person will achieve anything.' (Megr. txts., 68, 10-11)*

As can be seen from the examples, almost all forms of code-mixing are confirmed in Megrelian-Georgian diglossia. However, we analyse grammatical or phonemic-morpheme mixing separately.

#### *Grammatical or phonemic-morphemic mixing*

It is widely known that the borrowing of lexical units does not significantly change the language, the stability of which is determined by the indestructibility and stability of the phonemic-morphemic and syntactic mechanism. Observations on the Georgian language showed that their syntagmatic and paradigmatic patterns create a systemic difference, although this does not mean that these systems did not affect each other. A number of studies in the scientific literature confirm, for example, the existence of "Zanizms", linguistic features of Megrelian-Laz in Georgian, specifically, in the western dialects of the Georgian language (Akhvlediani, 2001; 2004; Bendeliani, 2000; Beridze, N. & Beridze, M. 2005; Kakhidze, 1987; Jghenti, 1965; Jorbenadze, 1995). Logically, the influence of Georgian is also felt in certain grammatical models, for example, the presence of the suffix *-d* in the category of verbs in Megrelian is explained by the influence of Georgian. Naturally, such model influences cannot be the reason for code-switching today. However, it is possible that such cases can be considered certain sociolinguistic facts in a historical perspective, that is, all similar cases are the result of speech code-switching. Systematic research in this respect is now on its way, although individual current facts can still be described.

Our attention was attracted by the words of one of the respondent, the fragment of which are cited below:

- z. *Geo.: zust'ad is magaliti, ti elenes magaliti mshobelta k'rebas moviqvane, rom / Megr.: baghaneps margaluri vauchkudes do sit'qvas vagebulendes do tena / Geo.: ra sach'iroeba iqo megruli enis... zust'ad avukhseni mshobleps, mshobelta k'rebaze mshoblebs. Geo.: 'I brought her Elena's example to the parents' meeting / Megr.: Kids could not speak Megrelian and could not understand the meaning of a word / Geo.: what was the necessity of the Megrelian language, I explained to the parents in detail, at the parents' meeting, to parents.'*

In this example, the facts of syntactic and phonemic-morphemic mixing are noteworthy: on the one hand, in the example *elenes magaliti mshobelta k'rebas moviqvane* 'I brought Elena's example to the parents' meeting', the part of the sentence indicating the adverbial modified *k'rebas* 'to the meeting' is represented by the dative case which is characteristic of Megrelian; in Georgian, this part requires the form with the proposition *-ze: mshobelta k'rebas moviqvane* 'I brought it to the meeting of parents', cf. Megr.: *mshobelepish k'rebas mip'oni*. 'I took it to the meeting'. On the other hand, we also have the switching of the plural marker: *avukhseni mshobl-ep-s* 'I explained [it] to my parents', where *-ep* in Megrelian denotes the plural number of nouns, although it is a regular equivalent of the Georgian *-eb* marker. The speaker also says the correct Georgian version: *mshobelta k'rebaze mshobl-eb-s* 'to the parents at the parents' meeting', where both previous grammatical "errors" have been corrected.

In Megrelian, the replacement of the plural marker *-ep* by *-eb* was mentioned earlier in the literature (Ezugbaia 2010, 13). Then it was also suggested that these, perhaps, individual cases are more of a sociolinguistic phenomenon and are the result of the alternation of speech codes. Such facts were rare in the texts recorded in the first part of the 20th century, although this trend became evident in the material obtained at the end of the century.

Our attention was attracted by the following sentence by a respondent:

- aa. *Geo.: ghoris khortsishi / Megr.: khashua veshilebed. Megr.: 'It was not possible / Geo.: to boil pork'.*

In this sentence, the word combination *ghoris khortsishi* 'pork' is a contamination of the morphemic pattern characteristic of both codes. The correct model of agreement in the case form of signifier and signified is as follows: in Megrelian – *ghejishi khortsishi*, in Georgian – *ghoris khortsis*. The replacement of the Megrelian word *gheji* 'pig' with the Georgian equivalent *ghori* resulted in transferring a morpheme, a marker of the genitive case -*is*: *ghor-is* 'pig' in a genitive case. The form *ghor-ish* where -*ish* is also a marker of the possessive case, is unnatural for Megrelian.

## 4. Conclusion

This research explores the view that Megrelian-Georgian diglossia is a historical legacy, with speakers of these languages comprising a significant segment of Georgia's population. Traditionally, the domains of these linguistic codes were distinctly delineated. The vast majority of Megrelian speakers have historically used Megrelian exclusively for daily oral communication within familial and community settings. Georgian is universally spoken and utilized in public spheres and official institutions.

The role of these languages in self-identification can be interpreted as follows: the Megrelian-Georgian diglossia best reflects the unity of "contextual identity" (I am a Megrelian) and "absolute identity" (therefore, I am a Georgian).

In 2023, during fieldwork conducted in Samegrelo (Western Georgia), sociolinguistic research and text collection were carried out, alongside a study of previously published examples of Megrelian speech. This investigation focused on two primary issues: (a) the level of proficiency in both Georgian and Megrelian codes and the respective contexts of their use; (b) the mechanisms of code-mixing and code-switching in spontaneous speech.

As a result of the surveys and fieldwork conducted during the last twenty years, three trends are visible:

1. unlike the representatives of the older age, young people prefer the Georgian language both at home and in the community. Moreover, Georgian is considered the language of conversation with children in young families.
2. The main reason for this can be divided into two categories: the decline of Megrelian's prestige and, consequently, the disappearance of the psycho-emotional bond; the challenge regarding modern technologies and globalization: the desire to master the language leading to pragmatic prosperity, English, at an early age.
3. Cognitive and psychomotor factors were also identified, which we consider to be the subject of a separate study.

Megrelian and Georgian speech codes are typologically the languages of the same structure, which is why the switching of codes takes place naturally, without the special pressure concerning grammatical models. The research indicates that code-switching, code-mixing, and borrowing are integral components of a unified speech process. Nevertheless, it is still feasible to delineate each of these phenomena to some extent. Namely:

1. We propose a real switch between Megrelian and Georgian codes appears when the speaker differentiates the codes based on socio-functional motives. Such a motive can be the separation of the persons participating in the narrative and those who convey the narrative, that is, the alternative use of codes to emphasise the dichotomy 'I' and 'he, she /other'. The code-switching due to quoting what others have said is also of this type.
2. The topic of the speaker's activity/profession is related to socio-functional code-switching as if switching to the Georgian code adds more prestige to the persona and their profession.
3. We believe that grammatical or lexical alternation is not always pure code-switching, it is more code-mixing in the conditions of Megrelian-Georgian diglossia. Vocabulary, mainly terminological vocabulary, takes the leading place in this process. Through the natural process, the terminological pressure of the literary Georgian language or the influx of terms occurs in the unwritten Megrelian language. According to our observation, the extra-sentential and intra-sentential switches presented above do not appear to be a complete switch because the speaker soon "corrects" the code, that is, tries to continue in the Megrelian code. As revealed by the analysis, the words or phrases indicating the "switch" can also be any part of speech.
4. In this paper, instances of "cross-over" or mixing of grammatical markers between the two languages were examined (h), (y), (z), (aa), where the mixing of forms with or without prepositions, case and number markers was revealed. This issue requires the observation of more materials and more targeted

research. The respectful and gentle attitude towards the literary Georgian language forces a Megrelian speaker to control his/her speech when switching to the Georgian code. However, this does not exclude the mixing of grammar structures. However, such facts are found in the speech of the speakers of the older generation whereas the young respondents reveal a tendency for more traditional calque constructions.

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## Metaphoric Conceptualisation of the Emotion of Anger by Georgian, Armenian and Azeri Students

### ბრაზის ემოციის მეტაფორული გააზრება ქართველი, სომეხი და აზერბაიჯანელი სტუდენტების მეტყველებაში

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**Abstract.** This paper explores universal and culturally specific metaphorical models that Georgian, ethnic Azeri and Armenian students living in Georgia use to conceptualise anger. It examines how their languages and communities shape their understanding of this emotion through relevant linguistic, sociolinguistic, and cultural elements. Data for this research were collected using an electronic questionnaire in all three languages. Participants were asked to list five metaphorical expressions representing anger in their native languages and identify the metaphors they commonly used when discussing anger or an angry person. Several interviews were also held to specify details. Data collection took place in three stages. First, relevant items were identified from the completed questionnaires in the three languages. Next, the data were analysed and categorised into metaphorical models based on the types of source domains in the conceptual metaphors. Finally, the models were compared across the three languages and cultures, highlighting universal and variant metaphorical models and their cultural and sociolinguistic implications.

**აბსტრაქტი.** ნაშრომი იკვლევს უნივერსალური და კულტურული თვალსაზრისით სპეციფიკურ მეტაფორულ მოდელებს, რომლებსაც ქართველი და საქართველოში მცხოვრები ეთნიკური უმცირესობების წარმომადგენელი აზერბაიჯანელი და სომეხი სტუდენტები იყენებენ ბრაზის მეტაფორული კონცეპტუალიზაციისას. ნაშრომში, ასევე, შესწავლილია, თუ როგორ შეიმეცნება და გამოიხატება ეს ემოცია ენობრივი, სოციოლინგვისტური და კულტურული ელემენტების მეშვეობით სამივე ენასა და კულტურაში. კვლევის მონაცემები შეგროვდა ელექტრონული კითხვარის საფუძველზე. კვლევის მონაწილეებმა ჩამოთვალეს ხუთი მეტაფორული გამოთქმა, რომლებიც მათ მშობლიურ ენებზე ბრაზს გამოხატავს და დაასახელეს მეტაფორები, რომლებსაც ხშირად იყენებენ ბრაზისას ან იმ ადამიანზე საუბრისას, რომელზეც გაბრაზებულები არიან. მონაცემების დასაზუსტებლად ჩატარდა ინტერვიუებიც. მონაცემები შეგროვდა სამ ეტაპად. პირველ რიგში, შევსებული კითხვარებიდან ამოიკრიბა რელევანტური მეტაფორები. შემდეგ ეტაპზე მონაცემები გაანალიზდა და დაიყო მეტაფორულ მოდელებად კონცეპტუალურ მეტაფორებში არსებული წყაროს სფეროს ტიპის მიხედვით. კვლევის ბოლო ეტაპზე, გამოყოფილი მოდელები შედარებულ იქნა სამივე ენასა და კულტურაში, დადგინდა უნივერსალური და ვარიანტული მეტაფორული მოდელები და მათი კულტურული და სოციოლინგვისტური პარამეტრები.

**Keywords.** anger, conceptual metaphor theory, Georgian language, Armenian language, Azerbaijani language, sociolinguistics

საკვანძო სიტყვები. ბრაზი, კონცეპტუალური მეტაფორის თეორია, ქართული ენა, სომხური ენა, აზერბაიჯანული ენა, სოციოლინგვისტიკა

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Metaphors

In Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), a metaphor is defined as a set of correspondences between its source and target domains (e.g., Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010). Because the target domain is abstract, it cannot be experienced directly. In contrast, the source domain is specific and thus can be manifested through bodily interactions or sociolinguistic experiences shared by society.

Metaphors are a cognitive phenomenon that can be instrumental in understanding culture. Society frequently employs metaphors to express cultural and social values and communicate its worldviews (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008). As metaphors represent human experience, they may vary according to social dimensions rooted in society's linguistic and social experiences. Therefore, the cultural-cognitive view of metaphor is a natural and necessary complement to the experiential view.

Culture is often defined as the programming of the human mind by which one group of people distinguishes itself from another group – the set of shared beliefs, values, and norms that are manifested in verbal and nonverbal communication codes and distinguish one group of people from another (Hofstede, 1991). On the other hand, it is also maintained that conceptual metaphors constitute cultural models contributing to their basic structure and the simultaneously present context “fleshes out” the details of the schema (Kövecses, 2005, p. 200). It is also argued that any metaphorical analysis should consider both bodily-based and culture-specific elements to interpret the conceptualisations underlying metaphorical mappings (Ibarretxe-Antunano, 2013).

It is observed that most frequently, the source domain of the conceptualisation of emotions is based on the physiological manifestation, which, in many cases, is associated with the embodied aspect of emotion concepts and can explain why various languages and cultures may share emotion metaphors. Moreover, according to a widely spread view, this shared embodiment can lead to universality in metaphorical conceptualisation (see Kövecses, 2005, for details). On the other hand, in other metaphors, the differentiating principle of conceptualisation is the experience accumulated through the sociocultural process of the differentiation of the world and accepted by a language community.

### 1.2 Previous Research

To reveal similarities and differences between linguistic and socio-cultural peculiarities of society, the metaphoric conceptualisation of emotions (like anger) has been studied in many languages belonging to various language families. More specifically, the metaphoric conceptualisation of anger has been studied in Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages, for instance, in English and Hungarian (Kövecses, 2000; 2005), English and Spanish (Soriano, 2003), English and Arabic (Al-Abed & El-Sharif, 2008), and English, French and Greek (Constantinou, 2014). Regarding non-European languages, the universal and variant ways of conceptualising anger have been explored cross-linguistically in several languages, including English and Chinese (Yu, 1995) and English and Japanese (Matsuki, 1995). Besides revealing universal and variant metaphoric models of emotions, such research also reveals that “emotion conceptualisation derives from both universal embodied experiences and more specific socio-cultural constructs specific to languages and societies” (Ogarkova & Soriano, 2013, p. 141).

Such research also reveals universal and unique tendencies between non-related languages. For instance, general models of metaphors such as ‘anger is heat/ insanity/opponent/burden/animal’ are widely shared (Derki, 2022). In addition, culture influences the conceptualisation of emotions (Matsuki, 1995; Ogarkova & Soriano, 2013, amongst others).

### 1.3 Research Questions

This paper can be deemed innovative as it explores the universal and culturally specific variant metaphoric models employed regarding the conceptualisation of anger by Georgian citizens and ethnic Azeri and Armenian students living in Georgia. Specifically, it explores the ways these languages and societies differentiate the world by relying on sociolinguistic and cultural moments significant to them.

The research described in this paper is based on data taken from the endemic languages of the Caucasus, namely Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani. Georgian, the official language of Georgia, belongs to the Kartvelian subgroup of Iberian-Caucasian languages (Hiller, 1994). On the other hand, Azerbaijani and Armenian belong to the Indo-European languages. Armenian forms an independent branch of this family, while Azerbaijani is a Turkic language from the Oghuz sub-group (Fortson, 2004).

The research questions this paper addresses are as follows:

1. Which conceptual metaphors do Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani language-speaking students use when conceptualising anger in their native language?
2. What universal and variant models emerge concerning the conceptualization of anger in the data?
3. What are the motivations behind the choice of models?

## 1.4 Theoretical Framework

To answer the research questions, this research employs the theory of Kövecses regarding cultural metaphors (Kövecses, 2005) and the pragma-semantic model of the metaphor suggested by Rusieshvili (2005; 2023). In the latter theory, metaphor is a synthesis of three interrelated layers. One of them is the surface layer, whereas the other two are deep layers.

In the surface layer, the metaphoric meaning of a word/phrase is presented, whereas in the second, deep layer, its direct (literary, non-metaphoric) meaning is revealed together with specific contextual, social and pragmatic parameters. The third layer presents the sociocultural model of the world with which the metaphor is associated. Correspondences between a source domain and a target domain are also revealed in this layer. For instance, in example {1}, the metaphoric form of the sentence is fixed in the surface layer of the model; its general literal meaning with the accompanying specific pragmatic and contextual parameters of the discourse context is presented in the second, deep layer. The linguistic-cultural model of the world based on the social and cultural experience of the community is realised in the third layer. The example {1} reflects the community's experience based on the metaphor in which the intensity of anger is presented as a fire, and an angry person may express their anger through an angry look (fire) escaping from their eyes.

- (1) *გამანებე თავი! აღარ ახსენო ჩემი სახელი! – უყვიროს ლიზიკო. ცეცხლს აფრქევს თვალმდიდან* [‘Leave me alone! Never mention my name again! - Liziko shouts, flashing fire out of her eyes’].

The experiential basis of metaphors comprises two sources, both of which are ‘fixed’ in the suggested model. They include experiences based on a human's physiological and bodily activities or the sociocultural environment specific to each community. Therefore, two types of emotion metaphors are singled out: a) the metaphor reflecting the physiological experience of the members of society connected to the body parts or functions of a human being; for instance, in example {2}, the intensity of anger is conceptualised through the conceptual metaphor the source domain of which is connected with the blood becoming hot and shooting up to the brain. In example {3}, the intensity of anger is presented through the turmoil experienced by an angry person and compared to the boiling brain. In both cases, anger is conceptualised through the physiological experience of an angry person.

- (2) *Արյունը գլխին խիտկ* (Armenian, ‘the blood shot up to the head’)
- (3) *esebden beynim xarab oldu* (Azerbaijani, ‘my brain was boiling because of anger’)

The second type of metaphor is based on the social and cultural experience accepted by a community (Rusieshvili, 2023). For instance, in {4}, an angry person is seen as a hyena:

- (4) *ავთარს დავებმგავსე* (Georgian, ‘I became like a hyena’)

In {5}, an angry person is presented as an angry, roaring lion:

- (5) *սողունի պես կատաղակ* (Armenian, ‘to rage like a lion’)

The suggested model of metaphor enables us to single out full cross-language (universal) equivalent metaphoric models of anger if the metaphors expressing this emotion coincide on all of the layers of the model. On the other

hand, partial equivalents (variants) share the second layer of the model, which manifests contextual, discourse and pragma-semantic features of the metaphor.

Universal and variant models within the languages involved in the study were singled out, taking into account the source domain for the metaphorical mapping. The associations of the source domain transferred to the target domain ('anger') were also considered. For instance, in {4}, in the process of mapping, the qualities associated with a hyena (ugliness, squealing and groaning sound this animal makes) construct a negative image of an angry person conceptualised by Georgian society. On the other hand, in {5}, the connotation is more positive and based on the associations connected to the lion in the Armenian culture.

The approach of Rusieshvili (2023) differs from that of Apresjan's (1997) theory on the same issue, which offers a different classification of metaphor. Apresjan distinguishes three groups of metaphors. These are: a) physiological, b) cognitive, and c) cultural metaphors. Metaphors differ regarding the source field and the type of transferred metaphoric associations (Apresjan, 1997). In Rusieshvili's (2023) theory, the differentiating principle is also the type of experience associated with the metaphor, whether based on a human being's body and physiology or the social and cultural experience of society.

As a result of the research, the cross-language metaphoric conceptualisations that coincided with all of the model's levels were deemed full equivalents. Those that shared the meaning (the metaphor's second layer) were classed as partial, variant models.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Participants

The participants in this study were former participants of the 1+4 Program at Tbilisi State University. This program enrolls students taking Georgian language courses for a year, after which successful applicants continue their university-level studies. According to the 2014 census data (<http://pop-stat.mashke.org/georgia-ethnic-loc2014.htm>), there are about 168,102 ethnic Armenians and 233,024 ethnic Azeris living in Georgia. The number of students—representatives of ethnic minorities—has risen significantly since 2010 after the introduction of this program.

Students whose native languages were Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani, respectively, were invited to participate in the study. Although all three languages and cultures are part of the Caucasus and thus have had intensive contact throughout social history, as was mentioned above, they belong to different language groups. Armenian and Azeri students were from the regions of Georgia with compact settlements of Armenian and Azeri populations.

This study's participants were female students of three nationalities: Georgian (71 students), Armenian (69 students), and Azeri (65 students). All the participants belonged to the 18-23 age group. The participants were students of the BA program of English Philology at Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU), the oldest and largest higher education institution in Georgia, which engages the highest student populations from different regions. The English Philology program has traditionally prepared high-quality language professionals from various ethnic backgrounds.

### 2.2 Procedure

The empirical data for this research were collected through an electronic questionnaire shared among the students and available in three languages. The questionnaire, designed in a similar way for Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani language speakers, invited participants to list the metaphoric expressions conceptualising anger in their native languages and to choose metaphors they frequently used in their native languages (Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani) when referring to anger or an angry person. The participants were expected (1) to provide five metaphors of anger in their native language and (2) to provide five metaphors manifesting the same emotion they often used when referring to or describing anger. The students were advised not to use any sources and to provide the most commonly employed metaphors from their memories.

To reduce the number of possible mistakes, relevant preparatory and communication measures were taken by authors and teachers of English, such as explaining the aim of the questionnaire and overall goals of the study to the students, highlighting the importance of their participation, educating them about the meaning of metaphor and encouraging them to invite other students as well in order to accumulate comprehensive data and draw sound conclusions.

The data for this research were collected in three stages. First, the relevant items were identified in the questionnaire filled out in the three languages involved in the study. Next, the data were analysed and grouped in the metaphoric models based on the type of source domains of conceptual metaphors. Finally, the models were compared cross-linguistically and cross-culturally, and universal and variant models were singled out. Possible implications from a cultural and social viewpoint were also explored.

The research identified the most frequently utilised models, as indicated by the study participants. The process of identifying conceptual metaphors and metaphoric models was based on the semantic model of metaphor suggested by Rusieshvili (2005; 2023). When analysing the data, particular attention was paid to the universal and variant models emerging through cross-linguistic analysis and the social practices behind them.

The material taken from the questionnaire was analysed according to the principles discussed above. At the interview, the authors asked five Armenian and six Azeri research participants questions to specify the meanings of some metaphors. At the analysis stage, the metaphors were first identified and then grouped in models based on their experience in the source domain. At the next stage, they were compared cross-linguistically, based on which universal and variant models were singled out.

## 2.3 Presentation of the Results

Below are examples of the metaphors that Georgian, Armenian and Azeri students contributed to the research through the electronic questionnaire. They were asked to provide five metaphors conceptualizing anger in their languages and five metaphors they would use to conceptualize this emotion.

# 3. Metaphoric Conceptualisation of ‘Anger’ in Georgian Language and Culture

## A. Metaphors connected to physiology and body parts

The data provided by the students whose native language was Georgian revealed the following conceptual models denoting ‘anger’ in Georgian:

### 1. Anger is a rising fluid/solid in container

#### 1.1 Anger is a rising/pressurized fluid in a container

- (6) *ბრაზით ავივსე* (‘I became full of anger; word-for-word: I was filled up [to the brim]with anger’).
- (7) *სისხლი თავში ამივარდა* (‘blood ran up into my head’).
- (8) *ტვინში სისხლი ამეჭრა* (‘blood shot up to my head’).
- (9) *ბრაზისგან სული ყელში მომეზღინა* (‘my soul pushed up to the brim of my throat from anger’).
- (10) *ყელში სისხლმა ამომასხა* (‘blood has shot up to the throat’).
- (11) *ბრაზი ყელში ამომივიდა* (‘anger has come up to my throat’).
- (12) *ბრაზისგან ტვინში სისხლმა ამასხა* (‘blood has shot up to my brain’).

### 2. Anger is heat

#### 2.1 Anger is heat/boiling fluid/solid

- (13) *ბრაზისგან დუღს* (‘he/she is boiling with anger’).
- (14) *ბრაზისგან სისხლი ამიდუღდა* (‘my blood is boiling with anger’).
- (15) *სახე აელეწა და აუხურდა ბრაზისგან* (‘his/her face was red/flushed and hot with anger’).

#### 2.2 Anger is rising heat of fire/smoke

- (16) *ფუტი ამივიდა თავში* (‘smoke has come/gone up to my head’).
- (17) *ბრაზისგან ბოლი ამივიდა* (‘I was wrapped in smoke with anger’).

- (18) აღმური მოკიდა ('she/he was red as the fire').
- (19) ალი მომედო ('I have caught fire').
- (20) ბრაზისგან აენთო ('she/he was lit [as a fire] from anger').
- (21) გაცეცხლდა ('he/she became a fire').
- (22) ბრაზისგან გულზე ალი მოედო ('her/his heart was caught on fire').

**3. Anger is losing control**

*3.1 Anger is losing control (body)*

- (23) თავს ვეღარ ვაკონტროლებ ('I can't control myself anymore').
- (24) რისხვამ შემიპრო ('I was overwhelmed by fury/anger').
- (25) ნერვებს ხელით ვიჭერ ('I am holding my nerves with my hands [because of anger]').
- (26) წყობილებიდან გამოვედი ('I was out of order').
- (27) თმას იბრდღვინის ღერა-ღერა ('he/she is pulling his/her hair one by one').

*3.2 Anger is losing control (fire/smoke out of the container)*

- (28) თვალებიდან ცეცხლს აფრქვევს ('she/he is flashing fire from his/her eyes').
- (29) თვალებიდან ნაპერწკლები ვყარე ('I have flushed/thrown sparks from my eyes').
- (30) ყურებიდან კვამლი/ბული ამოსდიოდა ('smoke/steamy air was coming out of his/her ears').

*3.3. Anger is the impairment of normal (body) functions*

- (31) ნერვები ამეწეწა/ამეწეწ-დამეწეწა ('my nerves are all tangled up.').
- (32) ბრაზისგან თვალები დაებინდა ('he could not see due to anger' [literally: 'his eyes became opaque from anger']).
- (33) დანა რომ ჩაგერტყა, წვეთი სისხლი არ წამომივიდოდა ('if I were hit [wounded] with a knife, not a single drop of blood would come out [of the wound]').
- (34) ბოლმით გასივდა ('he/she became swollen with anger/fury').

In the material provided by the students in Georgian, the first group of metaphors (i.e. the metaphors based on the physiological experience connected to the body parts) includes several general metaphoric models: *Anger is a rising fluid/solid in a container*; *Anger is heat* and *Anger is losing control*. These are further subdivided into smaller metaphoric models. For instance, the model *Anger is a rising fluid/solid in a container* includes the sub-models which specify the source domains connected to various specific parts of the body (i.e. soul, brain, throat, etc.). The second general metaphoric model, *Anger is heat*, also reveals several sub-models which indicate the source for specific manifestations of heat. For instance, the sub-model *Anger is a rising heat of fire (smoke)* contains several metaphors, the source domains that employ synonyms of fire [ცეცხლი (tsetskhli)] and flames [ალი, აღმური (ali, almuri)] as well as smoke [ბოლი (boli), კვამლი (kvamli)] and a dialectal form ფუტი [puti]. The general model *Anger is losing control* reveals two sub-models. Unlike the first sub-model, the second sub-model refers to the specific container to which the source domain is connected.

**B. Metaphors connected to society's social and cultural experience**

**1. Anger is losing control**

*1.1 Anger is an explosion (an angry person is prone to explosion)*

- (35) ვულკანივით ავფეთქდები ('I will blow up like a volcano').
- (36) თოვის წამალივით ავფეთქდი ('I blew up/exploded like gunpowder').
- (37) გავისროლე ფიშტო ('I have fired a gun').
- (38) ავფეთქდი ('I have blown up/exploded').

1.2 Anger is losing sanity

- (39) გავაფრინე ('I became ballistic').
- (40) გიჟს ჰგავს ('he/she looks like a mad person').
- (41) გავგიჟდები ('I will go mad').
- (42) გადავირევი ('I will become outraged').
- (43) შევიშლები ('I will become furious').
- (44) გავშმაგდი ('I became infuriated').
- (45) გახელდა ('he/she became insane').

1.3 Anger is an [angry] animal/bird

- (46) გამხეცდა ('he became a brute').
- (47) გავცოფდი ('I have become rabid').
- (48) ცოფებს ყრის ('he/she has become rabid' (literally: 'he/she is pouring out rabid froth')).
- (49) აფთარს დავემსგავსე ('I became/felt/looked like a hyena').
- (50) ავიჯაგრე ('my bristle was up').
- (51) გააფთრდა ('he/she became a hyena').
- (52) იღრინება ('he/she is snarling').
- (53) ბრაზისგან ყმუის ('he/she is howling with anger').
- (54) აივოფრა ('her/his hair became ruffled [like a broody hen's feathers]').

1.4 Anger is a plant

- (55) ბრაზისგან გაწიწმატდა ('he/she became angry/bitter like cress').
- (56) ბრაზისგან გამწარდა ('he/she became hot/bitter [like hot chili]').
- (57) ბრაზისგან გაჭარხლდა ('he/she became beetroot [i.e red] because of anger').

In the second type of metaphor connected to society's social and cultural development, the model *Anger is losing control* is prevalent, with several interesting metaphors manifesting it. For instance, *Anger is an angry animal* presents the concept of anger through metaphoric lexemes compared with a hyena. In other cases, anger is conceptualised through the characteristics of an angry dog, a hog or a bird. In the case of metaphors containing an angry animal – a dog, for instance – the basis for metaphors is the sounds an angry animal produces. On the other hand, in {54}, anger is manifested through an angry and disturbed broody hen. The sub-model *Anger is losing sanity* also seems fruitful and employs verbs expressing various degrees of anger. Interestingly, the sub-model *Anger is explosion* reveals several metaphoric similes {35, 36} where anger, or an angry person, is associated with a volcano and gunpowder. These lexical items reflect Georgian society's choice of source domains (volcano and gunpowder) as well as that of a dialectal word ფიშტო (pishto ['a pistol'] {37}). The sub-model *Anger is a plant* {55–57} compares an angry person to beetroot and cress. The former is based on the analogy of colour between the source domain and anger as an emotion, whereas the latter is based on the bitterness of this plant.

## 4. Metaphoric Conceptualization of 'Anger' in Armenian Language and Culture

The responses by students whose native language is Armenian have revealed the following general and sub-models regarding the specification of 'anger' in Armenian language and culture:

### A. Metaphors connected to physiology and body parts

#### 1. Anger is a rising fluid/solid in a container (body parts)

- (58) *կոկորդին ղևն սռննկ* ('[anger] stuck in the throat')

- (59) սիրտս լցվեց ('my heart filled [with anger]').
- (60) աչքերս լցվեցին ('my eyes are full of tears').
- (61) Աչքերս արյունով լցվեց ('my eyes are full of blood').

1.1 Anger is a rising pressurized fluid/solid in a container

- (62) Արյունը գլխին խփեց ('the blood shot to the head').
- (63) փրփրեց ('he/she foamed [with anger]').

2. Anger is heat

2.1 Anger is a heat of fire

- (64) Աչքերը կայծակի տալ ('to give a spark to the eyes').

2.2 Anger is a hot fluid

- (65) տաք ջուրը բերանը կոխեց ('he/she poured hot water into his/her mouth').

3. Anger is losing control

3.1 Losing control over a liquid/substance/solid out of the container

- (66) Չայրույթը թափեց ('to let/throw anger out').
- (67) Աչքերից արյուն է կաթում ('blood dripping from the eyes').
- (68) Բերանից բոց ու կրակ թափեց ('pour flames and fire out of your mouth').
- (69) Աչքերը կայծակներ արձակեց ('to throw/emit lightning from eyes').

3.2 Losing control over body and body parts

- (70) կատաղությունից իրեն կորցնեց ('to lose one's head in rage').
- (71) մազերը պոկեց ('tear someone's hair').

3.3 Anger stands for a facial expression

- (72) Հնքերը կհանեց ('frown from anger').

3.4 Anger is the impairment of normal body functions

- (73) Մրտին նսնձակ տասս արին չի կաթիլ ('if you thrust a knife into my heart, blood will not drip out of it').

3.5 Anger is a (dark) colour

- (74) Աչքերիս դեմը սևացավ ('my eyes went dark').
- (75) օրը սևանալ ('to darken the face').
- (76) Աշխարհը աշխարհը մթնեց ('the world darkened in the eye').

The data from the questionnaire filled out by the students whose native language is Armenian have revealed the models used by the participants while conceptualising anger. Specifically, in these data, several general models emerged regarding the first group of metaphors connected with physiology and body parts. For instance, the conceptual model *Anger is a rising fluid/solid in a container*, reveals several sub-models conceptualising this emotion through various body parts. In Armenian, in this respect, this emotion is conceptualised through eyes full of tears and blood, and the intensity of anger is seen as pressurised blood shooting up to the head of an angry person.

Another general model, *Anger is losing control*, also seems popular with several sub-models, the most numerous of which is the liquid/substance /solid out of the container model. This sub-model builds a concept of anger as blood trickling or flames and lightning flashing out of the container. The model *Anger is losing control* also emerges in the metaphors based on the social, cultural and historical experience of a language community;

for instance, in the sub-models, *Anger is losing control (anger is insanity)* and *Anger is losing control (anger is violating borders)*. The dark colour is prevalent in the sub-model of Anger is a colour.

## B. Metaphors connected to society's social and cultural experience

### 1. Anger is losing control

#### 1.1 Anger is losing sanity

- (77) *կասաղեղի* ('I got mad').  
 (78) *զժի տամար* ('I became a mad sack').

#### 1.2 Anger is violating borders

- (79) *Ափերից դուրս գալ* ('go off the coast').  
 (80) *Հունից դուրս եկա* ('I exploded in anger').  
 (81) *կասաղությանս չափ չկա* ('there is no limit/border to my anger/fury').

### 2. Anger is an angry animal

- (82) *աշրուծի պես կասաղակ* ('rage/be angry like a lion').  
 (83) *Չայրագած մարդը միշտ լի է թույնով* ('an angry person is full of venom, like a snake').  
 (84) *Այծերը եկան*: ('the goat's thorns came out of an angry person').

### 3. Anger is the rough sea

- (85) *Մղեղնել* ('to become a rough sea').  
 (86) *մաղձոտել* ('to become a rough sea').  
 (87) *բորբոքել* ('to become a turbulent sea').

In this group of metaphors, Anger is an angry animal compares an angry person to a lion, a snake and a goat {82—84}. In {82} the emotion of anger is presented through a powerful and proud image of a lion. On the other hand, in {84} *Չայրագած մարդը միշտ լի է թույնով* (an angry person is full of venom, like a snake), the overall image is different based on the negative associations of the source domain (snake).

## 5. Metaphoric Conceptualization of 'Anger' in Azerbaijani Language and Culture

Responses provided by the students whose native language is Azerbaijani have revealed the following general and sub-models regarding the specification of anger in Azerbaijani language and culture:

### A. Metaphors Connected to Physiology and Body Parts

#### 1. Anger is a rising fluid/solid in a container (body parts)

##### 1.1 Anger is a rising pressurised fluid/substance in a container

- (88) *beyniməqan sıçradı* ('blood rushed up into my brain').  
 (89) *qan beynimə vurdu* ('blood rushed up into my brain').  
 (90) *nerviden qanim qalxdı* ('my blood pressure rose from anger').

#### 2. Anger is heat

##### 2.1 Anger is hot fluid

- (91) *beynim yandı* ('my brain was burnt').

- (92) *esebden beynim xarab oldu* ('my brain was boiling with anger').  
 (93) *eləbil başıma bir qazan qaynar su töküldü* ('it was as if a pot of hot water was poured over my head').

### 3. Anger is losing control

#### 3.1 Anger is losing control over the body

- (94) *esebden ozumu itirdim* ('I lost control due to anger')  
 (95) *əsəbdən hər yerim ağriyir* ('I am angry all over: my whole body is angry').

#### 3.2 Anger is losing sanity

- (96) *dəli oldum* ('I am crazy now').  
 (97) *esebden deli oldum* ('I am mad with anger').  
 (98) *esebden gic oldum* ('I am mad with anger').  
 (99) *ağlım uçdu* ('I almost became mad').

#### 3.3 Solid out of the container

- (100) *ürəyim ağzımdan bəri gəldi* ('my heart came through my mouth').

#### 3.4 Fire/smoke out of the container

- (101) *acığımdan başımdan tüstü çıxırdı* ('smoke was coming out of my head').  
 (102) *əsəbdən gözümdən od parladi* ('fire flashed from my eyes').

#### 3.5. Anger is the impairment of normal body functions

- (103) *qəlbinə dəymək* ('my heart hurts because of anger').  
 (104) *esebden öləcəm* ('I will die of anger').  
 (105) *əsəbdən gözüüm heçnə görmür* ('I could not see anything because of anger').  
 (106) *kəssən qan çıxmazdı* ('if someone stabs me with a knife, no blood will come out [of the wound]').  
 (107) *hirsimmən az qala ürəyim dayadı* ('my heart almost stopped from anger').  
 (108) *əsəbdən başım yerində durmur* ('I am dizzy with anger').  
 (109) *nefesim kesildi* ('I was out of breath').  
 (110) *esebden utreyim sixildi* ('I had a bad heart').  
 (111) *esebden esirem* ('I am trembling with anger').  
 (112) *nervidən gözlərim çöndü* ('my eyes widened from anger/nervousness').  
 (113) *əsəbindən zəncir çeynəməyə başladı* ('he started chewing the chain [out of anger]').  
 (114) *əsebdən oldum* ('I died of anger').  
 (115) *əsəbdən əllərim əsdi* ('my hands were shaking').  
 (116) *əsebdən ozumden cixdim* ('I lost balance').

#### 3.6 Anger is an explosion

- (117) *əsəbdən partlayıram* ('I am exploding with anger').  
 (118) *Ürəyim partlayır* ('my heart is bursting/exploding').  
 (119) *qəlbim partladı* ('my heart exploded').

### 4. Anger is colour

- (120) *əsəbdən rəngim qızarıb* ('I'm red with anger').  
 (121) *qanım qaraldı gözüm qaraldı* ('my blood turned black').  
 (122) *gözüm qaraldı* ('my eyes went black').

### 5. Anger is a lack of heat

- (123) *qanim dondu* ('my blood froze').

## 6. *Anger is a smell*

(124) *ağzından qan iyi gəlir* ('his mouth smells of blood').

The data provided by the Azeri students have also revealed the metaphoric models through which they conceptualise anger. It was also revealed that most examples in this part of the data belong to the first group (metaphors connected with physiology and body parts). The model *Anger is losing control* proves to be the most popular and numerous among the Azeri students participating in the research. The model *Anger is a hot fluid* is focused on the brain and head as the sources of this emotion {91—93}. Interestingly, the model *Anger is a colour* contains not only dark colours which manifest anger, but also red as one of the ways of expressing anger.

### B. Metaphors Connected to Society's Social and Cultural Experience

#### 1. *Anger is a devil*

(125) *cin atına mindim* ('to mount a horse of the devil').

The data provided by Azeri students included only one sub-model in the group of metaphors based on society's experience in which an angry person is compared to someone riding a horse of the devil. As can be seen, in all the other models and sub-models, anger was conceptualized through body parts and the physiology of a human being.

## 6. Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, in the final stage of this study, the data were compared cross-linguistically, and universal and variant models were singled out. The universal cross-linguistic and cross-cultural examples coincided at all the layers of Rusieshvili's model (2005; 2023). On the other hand, the variant models shared only the second layer of the model.

It was also presumed that members of the society or a speech community have extensive knowledge of source domains. This helps them transfer the knowledge accumulated about the source domain to the target domain, making the latter more accessible through specific associations and the bases of comparison.

The cross-linguistic analysis of the material allowed singling out full universal and partially equivalent models within the research context. The data from all of the languages involved in the study contain the following general models of metaphors: 1. *Anger is a rising hot fluid/solid in a container (body parts)*; 2. *Anger is heat*, and 3. *Anger is losing control*. Within these groups, the choice of source domains reveals similarities and differences between the cultures involved in the study. For instance, regarding the model, *Anger is a rising pressurised fluid/solid in a container*, the source domain (actualised in the surface layer of the semantic model employed for the classification of the data in this research [Rusieshvili, 2005; 2023]) is based on the physiological functions of a human being and body parts. However, although the general metaphoric models emerging in all the languages involved in the study may be universal, as they share the principle of conceptualisation of anger, the sub-models do not coincide on the first and third layers of the semantic model and thus do not reveal many full, universal conceptualisations (see Table 6). Regarding quite a few full universal cross-language equivalents, the model *Anger is losing control (the fire/smoke out of a container)* was confirmed in all three languages: *თვალეშვიდან ცეცხლს აფრქვევს* (Georgian; 'she/he is throwing fire from his/her eyes'); *Աչքերը կայծակներ արձակել* (Armenian; 'to throw/emit lightning from eyes') and *Əsəbdən gözündən od parladı* (Azerbaijani; 'fire flashed from my eyes').

The research also revealed universal conceptualisations of anger in two languages. For instance, *Anger is a rising pressurised fluid/solid in a container* reveals the following examples: *სისხლი თავში ამოვარდა* (Georgian; 'blood shot up into my head') and *Արյունը գլխին խփել* (Armenian; 'blood shot up into the head'). These metaphors are full cross-language equivalents as they coincide on all three layers of the semantic model.

The Armenian data proposes more diverse elaborations focusing on the sub-model *Anger is a rising fluid/substance in a container*, in which the source domain includes the lexemes 'heart, throat, and eyes'. In this respect, the lexeme 'eyes' was used only in the Armenian data (i.e., 'my eyes are full of anger'). Therefore, this model can be considered a partially equivalent model of the conceptualisation of this emotion.

Another general model, *Anger is heat*, also yielded interesting data. For instance, the Georgian data emphasised the experience according to which a person becomes angry: either the whole body or blood starts boiling with anger. Apart from the internal physiological reactions, anger can also be expressed explicitly, for instance, by a hot and flushed face. On the other hand, the Azerbaijani material revealed the focus on the

boiling/burnt brain ('my brain was boiling'). The Georgian data contain the metaphoric conceptualisations of anger employing the source domain with several lexemes denoting smoke/fire/flames. On the other hand, the Azerbaijani material showed one example focused on fire breaking due to the heat/anger.

The analysis of the third general model shared by all three languages and cultures, *Anger is losing control*, revealed the following: in all three languages, the model *Anger is losing control: liquid/substance out of the container* reveals differences. Specifically, in the Georgian and Armenian data, the channel of letting out anger is the eyes through which either fire or sparks are being thrown/flushed out. In the Azerbaijani data, on the other hand, the same sub-model is realised by the fire flashing out from the eyes, smoke coming out of the head and heart and coming through the mouth. Interestingly, the Armenian data reveal more numerous conceptualisation channels in this sub-model. The metaphors indicated by the Azeri students as frequently employed mainly belong to the first group of metaphors associated with physiology and belong to various models, including *Anger is losing control (anger is an explosion)*.

Based on society's cultural and social experiences, the second group of metaphors provides more variant models. For instance, in the case of the sub-model *Anger is losing control (anger is an explosion)*, in Georgian, the explosion is compared to the volcano and gunpowder (*ვულკანივით ავფეთქდება* ('I will blow up like a volcano'); *თოვლის წამალივით ავფეთქდა* ('I blew up/exploded like gunpowder')). In the Azerbaijani data, this sub-model is manifested through the first group of metaphors (based on physiology and body parts); for instance, *Əsəbdən partlayıram* ('I am bursting with anger'); *Ürəyim partlayır* ('my heart is bursting/exploding'); *Qelbim partladı* ('my heart exploded').

The sub-model *Anger is an animal* is also interesting. In the Georgian data, anger is conceptualised by comparison to a hyena and a dog. In contrast, in the Armenian data, an angry person is associated with a lion, a goat with thorns and a snake. As mentioned earlier, such comparisons foreground different images while transferring the associations from the source to the target domains. Once again, although these metaphors belong to the model *Anger is an (angry) animal*, on the cross-linguistic plane, they are considered partial, variant metaphors, coinciding on the second layer of the model and thus do not fully share the source domains.

Overall, there are similarities in the social and cognitive models of anger in all the languages and cultures investigated in the study. The metaphors may belong to similar metaphoric models but may not coincide regarding their source domains. The differences found in the language-specific sub-metaphors can be motivated by the socio-cultural preferences of societies involved in the study. It should also be mentioned that both groups of metaphors (based on the physiological reactions, on the one hand, and the social and cultural experiences of societies, on the other) revealed variant metaphoric models. However, the group of metaphors that reflects society's social and cultural experiences yields more culture-specific models through which the linguistic model of the world is distinctly seen. On the other hand, even though the languages of the study have had intensive social and cultural contacts, the data did not contain many full universal sub-models, which would coincide at all the layers of the semantic model of the metaphor.

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<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/culture>.

## Appendix

**Table 1.** The Data about the participants of the research

Background of students	Students taking part in the research	Gender of the students	18-20 years old	21-23 years old
Georgian	71	Female	55	16
Armenian	69	Female	46	23
Azerbaijani	65	Female	35	30

**Table 2.** Metaphoric conceptualisation of ‘anger’ in the Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani languages and cultures

Model	Georgian	Armenian	Azerbaijani
<b>1. Metaphors connected with physiology and body parts</b>			
Anger is a rising fluid/solid in a container	+	+	
Anger is a rising/pressurized fluid in a container	+	+	+
Anger is a heat of fire/smoke	+	+	+
Anger is a heat/boiling fluid/solid out of a container	+	+	+
Anger stands for a gesture		+	
Anger is losing control (body)	+		
Anger is losing control (explosion)	+		+
Anger is losing control (fire/smoke out of the container)	+	+	+
Anger is the impairment of normal (body) functions	+	+	+

Anger is losing control (anger is an explosion)			+
Anger is losing control(solid out of the container)			+
Anger is a lack of heat			+
Anger is smell			+
Anger is colour		+	+
<b>2. Metaphors connected to society’s social and cultural experience</b>			
Anger is losing control (anger is an explosion [an angry person is prone to explosion])	+		
Anger is losing control (violating borders)		+	
Anger is losing control (losing sanity)	+	+	+
Anger is losing control (an [angry] animal/bird)	+	+	
Anger is losing control (anger is a plant)	+		
Anger is the rough sea		+	
Anger is a devil			+

**Table 3.** The metaphors denoting ‘anger’ and indicated as frequently used by the participants of the research

	<b>Georgian</b>	<b>Armenian</b>	<b>Azerbaijani</b>
1	<i>ცოფებს ყრის</i> (he /she has become rabid [word-for-word: ‘he/she is pouring out rabid froth’]).	<i>Բարկությունից մազերը պոկել</i> (‘he/she is pulling out his /her hair’).	<i>əsirəm</i> (‘I am trembling with anger’).
2	<i>տմას იგლეჯს/იპოტავს</i> (he/she is pulling out/plucking his/her hair).	<i>Աչքերից արյուն է կաթում</i> (‘blood dripping from the eyes’).	<i>əsəbdən partlayıram</i> (‘I am exploding with anger’).
3	<i>ცეცხლს აფრქვევს.</i> (‘he/she is pouring out fire’).	<i>თუք ზოიერ ქერასը კოխელ</i> (‘he/she poured hot water into his/her mouth’).	<i>qelbim partladi</i> (‘my heart exploded’).
4	<i>გაცეცხლდება ხოლმე</i> (‘he/she becomes a fire’).	<i>Գլխին կրակ թափել</i> (‘pour fire on the head’).	<i>gozum qaraldi</i> (‘my eyes went black’).
5	<i>იღრინება</i> (‘he/she is snarling’).	<i>Արյունը գլխին խփել</i> (‘blood rushed to one’s head’).	<i>Cin atına mindim</i> (‘to mount a horse of the devil’).

**Table 4.** Conceptualization of ‘anger’ in metaphors connected to the physiology and body parts (in the Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani languages)

<b>Models and submodels</b>	<b>Georgian</b>	<b>Armenian</b>	<b>Azerbaijani</b>
Anger is a rising fluid in a container Anger is a rising fluid/solid in a container (body parts)	I became full of anger. Anger filled me up. Anger was up to my throat.	Anger stuck in the throat. My heart filled (with anger). My eyes are full (of anger). My eyes are full (of blood).	
Anger is a rising (pressurized) fluid/solid in a container	Blood ran up into my head. Blood has shot up to my head. Blood has shot up to the throat. Blood has run up to the brain. My blood pressure rose.	Blood shot up to the head. He/she foamed.	Blood shot up in the head. Blood rushed up in my brain. Blood rushed up into my brain. My blood pressure rose from anger.

	My soul came up to my throat from anger. Anger has come up to my throat.		
Anger is heat/boiling fluid/solid	He/she is boiling with anger. My blood is boiling with anger. His/her face was red/flushed and hot with anger.	To give lightning to the eyes.	My brain was burnt. My brain was boiling because of the anger. It was as if a pot of hot water had been poured over my head.
Anger is the rising heat of fire/smoke	Smoke has come/gone up to my head. I was wrapped in smoke with anger. She/he was red as the fire. I have caught fire. She/he was lit as a fire from anger. He/she became a fire.		
Anger is losing control (body)	I can't control myself any more. I was taken up [as a hostage] by fury/anger.	To lose one's head in rage. Lose your soul.	I am angry all over (my whole body is angry). I lost control because of my anger.
Anger is losing control (liquid substance out of the container)	She/he is throwing fire from his/her eyes. I have flushed/thrown sparks from my eyes.	To let/throw anger out. Blood dripping from the eyes. Pour flames and fire out of your mouth. Pour out the bitterness (of your heart). My nose is bleeding (from anger). To throw/emit lighting from eyes)	
Anger is losing control(the smoke out of the container)	Smoke/steamy air was coming out of his/her ears.		
Anger is unnatural gestures	He/she is pulling his hair out one by one.	To frown (from anger). To hang the nose low.	I am trembling with anger. My eyes widened from anger/nervousness. My eye popped out of my skull. He started chewing the chain out of anger. My hands were shaking.
Anger is the impairment of normal (body) functions	I have my nerves tangled. I am holding my nerves with my hands (because of anger). I was out of order. He could not see because of anger (word-for-word: his eyes became opaque with anger). If I was hit (wounded) with a knife, not a single drop of blood would come out.	If you stab a knife into my heart, blood will not drip out of it.	My heart almost stopped from anger. I am dizzy from anger. I was out of breath I could not breathe. I lost my brains. I had a bad heart (because of anger).

Anger is losing control: losing sanity			My mind has left me. My mind is mad.
Anger is losing control. (anger is explosion)			I am bursting with anger. My heart is bursting/exploding. My heart exploded.
Anger is a colour		My eyes went black To darken the face. The world darkened in the eye.	I'm red from anger. My blood turned dark. My eyes darkened.
Anger is a lack of heat			My blood froze.
Anger is smell			His mouth smells of blood.

**Table 5.** Conceptualisation of ‘anger’ in metaphors connected to society’s social and cultural experience

<b>Models and submodels</b>	<b>Georgian</b>	<b>Armenian</b>	<b>Azerbaijani</b>
Anger is losing control Anger is explosion (an angry person is prone to explosion)	I will blow up like a volcano. I blew up/exploded like gunpowder). I have fired a pistol. I have blown up/exploded.		
Anger is losing sanity	I became ballistic. He/she looks like a mad person. I will go mad. I will become outraged. I will become furious. I became infuriated. He/she became insane.	I got mad. A mad sack.	
Anger is an (angry) animal/bird/reptile	He became a brute. I have become rabid. He /she has become rabid (word-for-word: he/she is pouring out rabid froth). I became/felt/looked like a hyena. My bristle was up. He/she became a hyena. He/she is snarling. He/she is howling with anger. I became a hyena. Her/his hair became ruffled (like a broody hen’s feathers).	To rage like a lion. An angry person is full of venom (like a snake).	
Anger is a plant	He/she became angry/bitter like cress. He/she became hot/bitter (as if he/she had eaten hot chilli. He/she became beetroot (i.e. red because of anger).		
Anger is losing control: violating borders		I went go off the coast. I left the house (because of anger). There is no limit/border to my anger/fury.	
Anger is the sea		Become rough. Become turbulent.	

Anger is a devil			To mount a horse of the devil.
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**Table 6.** Universal models of ‘anger’ in Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani languages and cultures

Model	Georgian	Armenian	Azerbaijani
Anger is a rising pressurised fluid/solid in a container	<i>სისხლი თავში ამივარდა</i> ('blood shot up into my head').	<i>Արյունը գլխին խփել</i> ('blood shot to the head').	
Anger is a rising pressurised fluid/solid in a container	<i>ბრაზისგან ტვინში სისხლმა ამასხა</i> ('blood has shot up to the brain'). <i>ბრაზისგან წნევამ ამიწია</i> ('my blood pressure rose from anger').		<i>beynimə qan sıçradı</i> ('blood rushed up to my brain'). <i>qan beynimə vurdu</i> ('blood rushed up into my brain'). <i>nerviden qanim qalxdı</i> ('my blood pressure rose from anger').
Anger is losing control (the fire/smoke out of the container)	<i>თვალეზიდან ცეცხლს აფრქვევს</i> ('she/he is throwing fire from his/her eyes').	<i>Աչքերը կայծակներ արձակել</i> ('to throw /emit lighting from eyes').	<i>Əsəbdən gözümdən od parladı</i> ('fire flashed from my eyes').
Anger is losing control (losing sanity)	<i>გავფრინე</i> ('I became ballistic'). <i>გიუს ჰგავს</i> ('he/she looks like a mad person') <i>გავგოქდები</i> ('I will go mad') <i>გადავირევი</i> ('I will become outraged'). ( <i>შევიშლები</i> ('I will become furious'). <i>გავშმაგდი</i> ('I became infuriated'). <i>.გახელდა</i> ('he/she became insane').	<i>կատաղեցի</i> ('I got mad').	<i>dəli oldum</i> ('I am crazy now'). <i>esebdən deli oldun</i> ('I am mad with anger'). <i>esebdən gic oldum</i> ('I am mad with anger').
Anger is the impairment of normal body functions	<i>დანა რომ ჩავერტყა, წვეთი სისხლი არ წამომივიდოდა</i> ('if I was hit [wounded] with a knife not a single drop of blood would come out [of the wound]').	<i>Մտին դառնակ տասս արին չի կարթիլ</i> ('if you thrust a knife into my heart, blood will not drip out of it').	<i>kəssən qan çıxmazdı</i> ('if someone stabs me with a knife, no blood will come out [of the wound]').
	<i>ბრაზისგან თვალეზი დაეზინდა</i> ('he could not see due to anger: word-for-word: his eyes became opaque from anger').		<i>Əsəbdən gözüüm heçnə görmür</i> ('I could not see anything for anger').

# Hate Language towards Women in Georgian Electronic Media Platforms

## ქალების მიმართ სიძულვილის ენა ქართულ ელექტრონულ მედიაპლატფორმებზე

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**Abstract.** This paper explores the reasons and linguistic manifestations of hate speech against women in Georgia. Even though the legal system of the country ensures gender equality, deep-rooted patriarchal norms continue to shape attitudes in society that begin in early childhood and are reinforced through language, education, and media. The analysis of 500 comments selected from the posts regarding articles in the electronic media reveals recurring hate speech that includes profanity, slut-shaming, victim-blaming, misogynistic language and dehumanization. Notably, women themselves are the ones who often participate in reinforcing such views, which contributes to their passing down generations. This helps normalize violence and perpetuate gender stereotypes. The findings highlight how hate speech, often disguised as humour, strengthens traditional gender roles and justifies abuse. The study underlines the importance and the urgent need for public awareness and education regarding the problem in order to dismantle harmful stereotypes aiming at a more respectful society where violence against women is neither accepted nor ignored.

აბსტრაქტი. ნაშრომში შესწავლილია საქართველოში ქალისადმი არსებული სიძულვილის ენის გამოვლინებები. მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ ქვეყნის სამართლებრივი სისტემა უზრუნველყოფს გენდერულ თანასწორობას, ღრმად ფესვგადგმული პატრიარქალური ნორმები ჯერ კიდევ ხელს უწყობენ ქალთა მიმართ სტერეოტიპული დამოკიდებულების არსებობას, რაც ადრეული ბავშვობიდან იჩენს თავს ენის, განათლებისა და მედიის მეშვეობით. სტატიაში გაანალიზებულია ინტერნეტპრესაში გამოქვეყნებული მასალა. 500 კომენტარის საფუძველზე დადგენილია, რომ სიძულვილის ენა მედიასივრცეში მოიცავს გინებას, ეგრეთ წოდებულ „სლათ-შეიმინგს“, მსხვერპლის დადანაშაულებას, მიზოგინიურ ენასა და დეჰუმანიზაციის შემთხვევებს. აღსანიშნავი და სამწუხაროა, რომ ხშირად თავად ქალები მონაწილეობენ ასეთი შეხედულებების განმტკიცებაში, რაც განაპირობებს ამგვარი დამოკიდებულების თაობიდან თაობისთვის გადაცემასაც. ეს ხელს უწყობს ქალთა მიმართ ძალადობის ნორმალიზებასა და გენდერული სტერეოტიპების განმტკიცებას. სტატიაში მიღებული დასკვნები გვიჩვენებს, თუ როგორ აძლიერებს ხშირად იუმორის სახით შენიღბული სიძულვილის ენა ტრადიციულ გენდერულ როლებს და ამართლებს ძალადობას. კვლევა ხაზს უსვამს საზოგადოების ცნობიერების ამაღლებისა და განათლების მნიშვნელობას და პრობლემის გადაჭრის აუცილებლობას მავნე სტერეოტიპების დამსხვრევის თვალსაზრისით. ეს ხელს შეუწყობს პატივისცემით აღსავსე საზოგადოების შექმნას, რომელშიც ქალების მიმართ ძალადობა არც მიღებულია და არც უგულვებელყოფილი.

**Keywords:** hate speech, sociolinguistics, media discourse, femicide

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** სიძულვილის ენა, სოციოლინგვისტიკა, მედიადისკურის, ფემიციდი

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Gender Roles and Georgia

Since the 19th and 20th century, women's roles and functions in society have been highlighted through women's rights advocates, suffragists, and various waves of feminism. While initially, the participants of demonstrations demanded the right to vote for women, the main goal of the next wave of demonstrations was equality and the

right of participation of women in all spheres of society. Although today, women are legally equal to men, cultural stereotypes are still deeply rooted in all societies. This situation is an effect of culture, personality, upbringing, and education, which, in the end, is manifested by the violation of women's rights and the perception of them as inferior members of society.

As a member of society, a female's first contact with gender begins at conception if a parent is ready and willing, based on the gender of the fetus, to decide whether or not to bring a female child into this world. Unless a female fetus becomes a victim of a selective abortion<sup>1</sup>, she may be introduced to the next stages of gender roles, when parents and society choose clothes colours and even toys based on her gender (Marc, et al., 2013). Later, during upbringing, at home or school, girls are commonly reminded of their gender roles and are directed towards the roles they should fit into. Depending on their gender identity, whether masculine or feminine, children are instructed to behave accordingly: - 'You're a boy, run in the street', 'girls should stay at home', 'you're acting like a girl', 'don't cry like a girl', 'you shoot like a girl'. These seemingly harmless and frequently employed phrases build unhealthy attitudes to social gender roles that they have to gradually adapt to in life (Totibadze, 2020). Children usually learn which gender they are supposed to belong to. As a result, their actions, beliefs, and even desires over time fit and merge with the gender roles created and accepted, which may cause internal discomfort and even anger among people. Later, fairy tales which reflect traditional and obsolete stereotypes (Totibadze, 2021a), serve as a guide to the behaviour of the members of society and, once again, instruct the child regarding the norms and deviations from their socially acceptable behaviour. Thus, members of society gradually come to know the written or unwritten laws of society about women's social roles which even determine our choice of profession or the choice not to pursue any career. It is common for societies to gradually indoctrinate the child into patriarchal norms and teach women to obey men and men to dominate society (Totibadze, 2023).

## 1.2 Language, Gender Bias and Hate Speech

Language, as an integral part of society and culture, plays a crucial role in challenging prevailing stereotypes and societal views that are transmitted across generations. This influence is evident in various linguistic elements such as folk wisdom, proverbs, and traditional tales (Totibadze, 2021a; Totibadze, 2021b). Linguists committed to different waves of feminism have also highlighted the importance of language in this regard. The structural aspects of language, including phonology, syntax, morphology, vocabulary, and grammar are all marked by gender, shaping and being shaped by societal thinking and development (Tannen, 1990; Holmes, 2006).

Defining hate speech precisely is a challenging task, and it should be distinguished from verbal assault. Richardson-Self (2021) argues that hate speech, while directed at an individual, ultimately harms every member of a particular group or community. For instance, if hate speech targets a specific woman online, it is a form of verbal discrimination that extends to all women, creating a hostile online environment. It serves as a warning to other women that deviating from patriarchal cultural norms may make them targets of hate speech.

It is crucial to differentiate between emotions such as hatred, annoyance, and rage. As cited in Waltman and Haas (2011), Aristotle already noted that hatred is a perilous emotion, characterized by fewer aspects of empathy than annoyance and rage, which tend to diminish over time. If hatred can be expressed in words, it can also manifest in stereotypes ingrained in the human mind. Narratives and cultural myths of hatred are transmitted through language from generation to generation, reinforcing these negative feelings (Waltman & Haas, 2011).

Gelber (2019) provides a classification to differentiate hate speech from offensive texts, emphasising the importance of understanding harmful conversations that may not be subject to legal regulation due to freedom of speech concerns. However, Gelber supports the idea that hate speech should be subject to punishment, proposing a systemic, anti-discrimination approach to identify it:

- **Absence of Explicit 'Hate' Terminology:** Hate speech doesn't necessarily have to include the emotion or the term 'hate.' The identification of hate speech goes beyond explicit language and can encompass a range of expressions.
- **Beyond Lexical Choice:** Hate speech is not solely defined by offensive epithets or profanity; it can exist alongside obscene expressions but can also be conveyed through humour. Lexical choice alone does not define hate speech.
- **Systemic Discrimination Targets:** Hate speech is not directed at all social groups uniformly. It is aimed at groups that are constant victims of systemic discrimination. This aspect recognises the power dynamics and imbalances that often go unnoticed in free-speech debates.
- **Visible Power Imbalance:** Anyone can systemically use hate speech to harm another person, creating a visible power imbalance. Instead of being overlooked, hate speech attracts attention, causing marginalisation and a sense of exclusion.
- **Countermeasures:** Gelber suggests that hate speech can be countered with appropriate measures. By

understanding its components and how it harms different groups in society, countermeasures and strategies can be developed to assist victims of discrimination (2019).

Gelber (2019) highlights that hate speech is often targeted at groups facing systemic discrimination. For instance, women, individuals with weight issues, and people with non-traditional sexual orientations frequently fall into these categories. However, Gelber notes that not every form of mockery or insult can be considered hate speech. Discrimination is linked to the constant victimisation of certain categories, and the context matters in determining whether an expression qualifies as hate speech. For instance, mocking someone for thick eyebrows, in isolation, might not be considered hate speech as thick eyebrows don't represent a category subject to constant discrimination.

### 1.3 Social Media and Hate Language

In the twenty-first century, the ubiquity of technological devices and the Internet have brought forth numerous challenges, one of which is the spread of hate speech online. The ease with which technology and the internet are accessible has given rise to concerns about the potentially negative consequences of hate speech spreading through online platforms. The information posted on the Internet can spread in seconds and may contain specific comments that are harmful to the entire community or some subgroups of the community. According to Nakaya (2021), the dynamics of social media and the Internet often lead individuals to make comments without considering potential consequences. The ability to post anonymously further encourages the dissemination of comments or information that individuals might hesitate to share openly in real life. Social media's reliance on smart algorithms facilitates the rapid delivery of information to specific audiences, making it easier to spread hate speech and connect like-minded individuals against a particular group. The global nature of social platforms allows hate speech to swiftly reach diverse segments of society worldwide.

Nakaya (2021) emphasises the challenge of responding to and deleting such messages promptly due to their rapid spread. Particularly noteworthy are intercultural and interlinguistic hate groups, which habituate and normalize their messages within society. The sheer volume of information on social networks, combined with the sharing of hateful content from personal pages, contributes to the normalisation of such texts. This poses a significant risk, as constant exposure to hate speech may lead individuals to perceive it as a normal occurrence, contrary to conservative norms.

Nakaya (2021) also highlights the role of humour, often presented in the form of memes on the Internet, in the normalisation process. Hate groups strategically use humour and memes to convey their messages, with initial humorous reactions potentially evolving into alignment with the underlying ideologies over time. Nakaya (2021) underscores the impact of social media on the widespread dissemination and normalisation of hate speech, emphasising the need for awareness and countermeasures in society.

### 1.4 Research Questions and Methodology

This research focuses on the linguistic and sociolinguistic analysis of hate speech in the Georgian digital media space. More specifically, it aims to:

- (1) identify linguistic strategies employed in attacking women;
- (2) explore the reasons why women become targets of hate speech.

In the course of six months (August 2022 until January 2023), 500 comments on posts and articles were collected. They were found in various online platforms, such as Facebook (around 60% of our data), TikTok (≈30%), and YouTube (≈10%). In this article, only Facebook and TikTok data are used. The selected posts or articles for analysis feature images of women, taboo topics such as menstruation, or 'scandalous' information about women. Only text is presented below.

The comments in the electronic media were selected manually for several reasons: (1) it is challenging to analyse Georgian material using a computer due to a lack of effective linguistic programs in the Georgian language; (2) words that are misspelt are difficult for a computer to understand; (3) hate speech does not have any specific terminology; it can be encountered using both direct and indirect lexical items, which is impossible for a computer to understand.

The authors of the post were categorised into female and male on the basis of cues like surrounding context (text preceding and following the comment in question), profile picture, name or nickname, literal statements in which gender identity was given ('us men', 'men like me', etc.) in the actual quote or surrounding text by the same author.

## 2. Analysis of the Findings

The sociolinguistic analysis of online comments in Georgian social media has revealed several prominent topics that serve as focal points for hate speech:

- Unacceptability of being divorced/ex-wife
- Encouragement of violence against women
- Non-acceptance of non-traditional orientation
- Discrimination against transgenders
- Justification of femicide
- Defamation of bold, independent, successful, and sexually active women

These topics are thematically grouped and presented under the headings ‘Unconventional Woman’, ‘Divorced Woman’, etc., to further reveal how women are portrayed in Georgian online space.

### 2.1 Unconventional Woman

According to the discussed comments, many members of Georgian society do not approve of representatives of non-traditional orientations. Therefore, a post or video about this segment of society or by members of this group often fall victim to targeted hate speech. For example, an openly lesbian girl active on the TikTok platform made a video tackling a very serious topic. In the video, she explains that the woman's consent is necessary for sexual intercourse, even if the couple is husband and wife; otherwise such intercourse would be classed as violence and could even be considered rape. Because both the topic and the speaker seem to be quite unacceptable for society, we encountered hateful comments on this video mainly in three directions: attacking the girl (specifically her appearance), attacking the content of the video, or both.

- არც არავინ გთავაზობს, იქით რომ დაამალო, მაინც
- ‘Calm down, no one wants to rape you anyway, even if you force yourself on them’
- Posted by a male, TikTok
  
- ალბათ უარის თქმას ყოველთვის გასწრებენ
- ‘Perhaps everyone always rejects you first’
- Posted by a male, TikTok
  
- როცა მამაკაცი, თუნდაც დაქორწინებული, უარს იღებს, ეს იმას ნიშნავს, რომ მომავალშიც უარი ექნება, ამიტომ ქალს თავიდანვე თავისი ადგილი უნდა მიუჩინო
- ‘When a man gets a refusal even if he is married, it means that he will be refused in the future as well, so a woman must know her place from the beginning’
- Posted by a male, TikTok
  
- ამან რომ გამაუპატიუროს, მერე ვის მივმართო?
- ‘If this one rapes me, then who should I turn to?’
- Posted by a male, TikTok
  
- ბოჭკა!
- ‘You fat ass!’
- Posted by a female, TikTok

As can be seen from the comments, the girl is attacked because of her unusual appearance and humiliated by remarking that no one will rape her, even if she wants to, and she is generally an unwanted and undesirable woman, unworthy of love. The mention of the lexical item ‘rape’, even in a dismissive context, is highly insensitive and potentially triggering. It also perpetuates the idea that rape is solely about desire rather than power and control, which is a dangerous misconception. Moreover, because of her appearance and sexual orientation, one man remarked ironically that the author of the video can be violent and even capable of raping men.

Especially dangerous seems the comment of a male who seems to incite violence and ‘teach women their

place' from the very beginning; otherwise they (men/husbands) will be constantly rejected by their wives. The word choices of this comment - the woman must know her place from the beginning – თავისი ადგილი უნდა მიუჩინო – is deeply misogynistic and employs harmful gender stereotypes that women are subordinate to men, who, in turn, are entitled to control and dominance.

Apart from an obvious exhibition of aggression and victim-blaming towards women, hate speech through body shaming is also evident - in one of the comments the author of the video is called (by a female) 'a fat ass'. An exact translation of the Georgian version would be 'a cask/barrel', which is an extremely derogatory expression in the Georgian language. This wording naturally contributes to low self-esteem and feeling worthless.

The linguistic choices of the people commenting on the video hit the target perfectly - they openly and sometimes covertly contribute to the marginalisation of minority groups and create a hostile online environment. Moreover, they encourage people to be violent towards the out-group members.

- 184-ე სკოლის სირცხვილია ეს რაღაცა (ქალი)
- 'This something is the shame of the 184th school'<sup>3</sup>
- Posted by a female, Facebook
  
- ამას არავინ აუპატიურებს და ეჭვიანობს ალბათ
- 'No one rapes her and she is probably jealous'
- Posted by a male, Facebook
  
- ამას კარგი კაცი უნდა
- 'She needs a man [to fuck her]'
- Posted by a male, Facebook
  
- სხვა რომ გაუპატიურებს, ის არ უნდა მოითმინო, თორემ ქმარს ცოლი იმისთვის უნდა, გვერდით რომ ჰყავდეს
- 'If someone else rapes you, you should not tolerate him, but the husband needs his wife to have her by his side'
- Posted by a male, Facebook

## 2.2 Not a (Typical) Woman

Based on the number and aggressiveness of comments, it can be claimed that transgenderism seems to be an unacceptable and sensitive topic for part of Georgian society.

- ვის რაში აინტერესებს ამ კაცის ცხოვრება
- 'Who cares about this man's life'
- Posted by a female, Facebook
  
- ეს ფრჩხილები დაიმოკლე, თუ კაცი ხარ
- 'Cut those nails short if you're a man'
- Posted by a female, Facebook
  
- დაწვით, მაგის ჰიბრიდი დედას ....
- 'Burn this hybrid'
- Posted by a female, Facebook

Interestingly, even though the name, appearance and chosen identity of the addressee in these comments are feminine, the commenters refer to her as a male. The use of the term 'man' to refer to a transgender woman is misgendering, thus invalidating her gender identity. This comment not only lowers the self-esteem of the individual but also denies their identity as a woman. The use of the word 'hybrid' is even more interesting. This word is used in a derogatory manner to denote someone who is neither a man nor a woman. Even more, it is dehumanizing and hateful towards the addressee. The use of 'burn' further deepens the issue – which is hostility, violence and harm towards minorities – and it enforces harmful stereotypes. The use of hate speech in this way is accompanied by the continued persecution and exclusion of this minority group, portraying them as being different.

Political dissent is likely to play a large role in the use of hate speech. The girl who appeared at the demonstrations held in the streets of Tbilisi, was not an exception, and despite her age (the girl is a minor), she caused a great stir of emotions among the people due to her short hair and different style of dress.

- რა სიმშაბიური ბიჭია
- ‘What a handsome boy!’
- Posted by a female, TikTok
- ჯერ გარკვიოს, გოგოა თუ ბიჭი
- ‘First find out if you are a girl or a boy’
- Posted by a male, TikTok
- გოგოს რა ეტყობა ამას, ან ადამიანის
- ‘She doesn’t look like a girl or like a human being even!’
- Posted by a female, TikTok

Emphasizing a girl's uncommon appearance with cynicism can have a great impact on her mental health. One of the negative effects of hate speech is that it excludes people and takes away their right to express themselves. A large-scale verbal attack on the girl prompts representatives of her generation, and not only them, to follow the limitations established by society, if they too do not want to become targets of hate speech. The presented comments demonstrate a range of reactions to the girl's appearance, including misgendering her and urging her to conform to societal expectations of gender and appearance. In the last comment, where the author mentions she can't even call the girl a human, such invalidation of gender identity implies that her appearance is so far removed from the accepted norms of femininity that she cannot even be considered a human. This factor may have a profound impact on the adolescent's mental health.

## 2.3 A Divorced Woman

In traditional and collectivist societies, the breakup of the family is perceived as a tragedy, especially when it is initiated by a woman. Therefore, it is not surprising that a woman who does not forgive her husband for violence, infidelity, and ill-treatment often becomes a victim of bullying by some members of society and is perceived not as a victim, but as a criminal, because it was she who broke the family. The following comments are written about a mother of four, who divorced her very well-respected husband in Georgian society because she wanted to pursue her acting career and he did not allow it. The last four comments are dedicated to a famous Georgian model/sportsman couple. The woman sued her ex-husband for physical violence and psychological abuse.

- რა უნდა ოთხი შვილის დედასთან
- ‘Who would ever want to be with a mother of four?’
- Posted by a female, Facebook
- ოთხი შვილის დედა რომ ოჯახს დაანგრევს, ის ისედაც მკვდარია
- ‘If the mother of four destroys her family, she is already dead’
- Posted by a female, Facebook
- ეგენი მეორად ნახმარი ტანსაცმელივით არიან
- ‘They [divorced women] are like used second-hand clothes’
- Posted by a female, Facebook
- რა ეშვევარებულება ოთხი შვილის დედას
- ‘There is no longer time for love for a mother of four!’
- Posted by a female, Facebook
- შენი სიკვდილის უფლება რომ მქონდეს, ბებისტოლა ქალი ვარ, ალბათ, მოგკლავდი
- ‘If I had the right to kill you (I must be the same age as your grandmother), I would probably do so’
- Posted by a female, Facebook

- დროა ბაწარში უყრიდე თავს
- 'It's high time you killed yourself'
- Posted by a female, Facebook
  
- მაგ გოგოს ყელი უნდა გამოსჭრა. შვილებს რა პასუხს გასცემს, რომ გაიზრდებიან
- 'This girl's throat should be cut. What answer will she give to her children when they ask [her about her behaviour]?'
- Posted by a woman, Facebook
  
- მე რომ კაცი ვიყო, არავითარ შემთხვევაში არ მოვიყვანდი არც განათხოვარს, არც ქვრივს, არც გამოცდილს, რად მინდა სხვისი ნაღეჭი ქალი, რა, ქალიშვილი ცოტაა, საზიარო ჰაერი მეზარება და ქალი რატომ მენდომებოდა, ჩემი უნდა იყოს ჩემი და არა ჩვენი
- 'If I were a man, I would never marry a divorced woman, a widow, or a sexually experienced woman; why would I want someone used (chewed) by another man? Are there not enough virgins out there?'
- Posted by a female, Facebook
  
- ეს ქალი ყოველგვარ საზღვრებს გასცდა, რაღაც ვიდეო დააბრუნა, სადაც სახეების გარკვევა შეუძლებელია, თავმოყვარე ადამიანი პირველ რიგში საკუთარი შვილის მამას უნდა სცემდეს პატივს, ეს კი აშარი ქალივით იქცევა. უკვე ამაზრზენია ეს საქციელი და ერის სიძულვილს იმსახურებს
- 'This woman crossed all red lines, she posted some video where it is impossible to make out the faces, a self-respecting person should, first of all, respect the father of her child, and this woman is behaving like a whore. Her behaviour is already disgusting and deserves the hatred of the nation'
- Posted by a female, Facebook
  
- აღარ ჭირდება, გაიკეთა პიარი და გაშორდა, ისე ვინ შეამჩნევდა
- 'She doesn't need him anymore; she has become famous already because of him; otherwise, who would have noticed her'
- Posted by a female, Facebook
  
- არც ისე მიაბიტი ხარ, რომ რაიმე მოგეთმინა. აღარ მოგწონს სიღარიბე. მოგენატრა ხელგაშლილი ცხოვრება და ყველაფერს კადრულობ
- 'You are not really a naive type, are you? Based on your character, you would not endure violence. You just don't like poverty anymore. You miss a rich life and started photographing everything'
- Posted by a female, Facebook
  
- თვითონ მთელ ბატალიონს შემოაჯდებიან და მერე ვერ ეგუებიან ღალატს
- 'They fuck the whole battalion and then they cannot let go of a single act of adultery themselves'
- Posted by a male, Facebook

The comments presented here are only a small fraction of how much hate a woman receives when she leaves even an abusive or unfaithful husband, let alone chase her happiness:

A married, divorced woman in Georgia no longer has the right to live - 'If a mother of four children destroys her family, she is already dead', 'That girl's throat should be cut'.

She no longer has the right to happiness and love - 'Who would want to ever be with a mother of four?', 'There is no time for love for a mother of four!'

She is perceived as a used thing - 'they are like second-hand clothes'.

People don't believe the truth and women are always seen as gold diggers - 'She doesn't need him anymore, she has become famous already because of him, otherwise, who would have noticed her.', 'You don't like poverty anymore. You miss a rich life and you started photographing everything', 'They fuck the whole battalion and then cannot let go of a single act of adultery'.

The use of a metaphorical comparison ('divorced women are like second-hand clothes') to dehumanize and devalue divorced women is extremely triggering. Through this stylistic device, such women are classed as "used" or lesser objects, which fuels the societal stigma against divorced women and deepens the negative stereotypes. An interesting case of metaphor is also found in the following comment: 'If a mother of four children

destroys her family, she is already dead’.

It was particularly surprising that most of these hateful comments are written by women, who are expected to have more empathy for their gender. However, they attack different women with less female solidarity and urge them and, at the same time, others to follow a traditional, socially accepted way of life at the expense of their happiness. This shows that women, too, perpetuate such ideologies.

## 2.4 A Victim Woman

According to the Center for Social Justice (2021), although the State has constitutionally begun to combat domestic violence, the growing statistics of domestic violence are still alarming. According to their research, domestic violence is perceived as a private matter of the family, to which the surrounding people do not react much. Naturally, this deters crime prevention.

Although most of the comments presented below are addressed to Kato, the character of the famous Georgian TV series ‘My Wife’s Best Friends’, they still reflect the attitude of people towards violence.

- ტკაცანის სუნის მცემს
- ‘The smell of a slap’
- Posted by a male, Facebook
  
- აი, კატოს პერსონაჟი ყველაფრის ღირსია, ძალიან უთავმოყვარეოა
- ‘Kato’s character deserves everything bad, she has no self-respect’
- Posted by a male, Facebook
  
- რა უსამართლობაა, დიტოს, ვისაც მართლა უყვარდა, ერთი შემორტყმა არ აპატია და ამას რამდენს პატიობს
- ‘What an injustice, she didn’t forgive Dito, who really loved her, a single blow, and how much does she forgive him?’
- Posted by a female, Facebook
  
- აი კატო, თმებით გითრევდი! (ქალი)
- ‘Kato, I would drag you by the hair!’
- posted by a female, Facebook
  
- აუ ყლექალა პერსონაჟია, ესეთები მართლა საცემები ხართ (კაცი)
- ‘Fucking women like her should all be beaten hard’
- Posted by a male, Facebook
  
- უარესად უნდა ეცემე (კაცი)
- ‘You should have been beaten worse’
- Posted by a male, Facebook
  
- სოსო მოძალადეა, კეთილი, მაგრამ კატოს საქციელი სწორია? (ქალი)
- ‘Soso is violent, okay/true, but is Kato's behaviour right?’
- Posted by a female, Facebook
  
- რავი, ქმარს რომ თავზე გადავახტე და ასე ჩამარტყას, მე მადლობელი ვიქნები, რომ თვალი ამიხილა და ჩემს ადგილზე დამაყენა
- ‘If I didn’t respect my husband and he hit me like that, I would be grateful that he put me in my place’
- Posted by a female, Facebook
  
- პატარძალი რომ ხარ და ასეთ დროს აღიზიანებ ქმარს, წათაქეზაც უნდა აიტანო. ჩემი ქმრისგან უარესები ამიტანია, სანამ გამწვრთნიდა ღირსეულ მეუღლედ
- ‘If you are a bride and you annoy your husband at such a time, you have to accept a slap too. I have endured worse from my husband before he trained me into a decent wife’
- Posted by a female, Facebook

- ცოლი ქმარს რო არ დაემორჩილება და ენას წაიგდებს, მერე კაცზე იტყვიან, მოძალადეაო. ბევრმა ქალმა დაკარგა ზნეობა და პატიოსნება
  - 'If the wife does not obey her husband and answers back, then they will say that the man is violent. Many women have lost their morals and honesty'
- Posted by a female, Facebook

Such hateful comments encourage violence and crime against women. For instance, the metaphorical expression 'smell of a slap' suggests a casual acceptance of violence against women. The language used in the comments ('she is stupid', 'drag you by the hair', 'should all be beaten hard', 'put her in her place') is quite demeaning. Even more, in the comment when the author suggests Kato should have forgiven Dito for hitting her, as she has forgiven Soso's violence against her, the author takes away the attention from the crime and instead questions the behaviour of the victim, which, undoubtedly, encourages violence.

The women presented here believe that violence against a woman/wife is not a violent act, because it ultimately serves to 'train her into being a worthy wife' and 'put her in her place'. From this standpoint, the language utilized against women further escalates the violence against them. Therefore, it is not surprising that the statistics of domestic violence in Georgia is increasing, and a woman who has to exist in a society based on these stereotypes does not dare to ask for help. The comments that urge women to tolerate violence from their husbands and that informing the police is a disgraceful act should be especially emphasised in this respect. This, once again, aggravates the reality that Georgian society is facing so acutely.

## 2.5 A Dead Woman

It is not surprising that domestic violence ultimately leads to femicide. Between 2014 and 2023, more than 200 women were killed by their husbands/fathers/sons in Georgia (Sakartvelos Ambebi, 2023). It is interesting to analyse the comments regarding the posts about femicide. The following comments are written on the post informing us that a son stabbed his mother to death because he didn't approve of her new partner:

- საცოდავი. არაკაცისთვის და ნაბოზარი დედისთვის დაიღუპა თავი
  - 'Pitiful. He ruined his life for his whore mother'
- Posted by a male, Facebook
- საბრალო ბიჭი ასე როგორ გაამწარა დედამ
  - 'How could the mother make the poor boy bitter like that?'
- Posted by a male, Facebook
- ეს არის დედა? დაუნგრია შვილს ცხოვრება
  - 'Is this a mother?! She ruined her son's life'
- Posted by a female, Facebook
- ქალი დამნაშავე, შვილს გაუმწარა ცხოვრება. საცოდავი შვილი
  - 'The woman is guilty, she made her child's life miserable. Poor child'
- Posted by a female, Facebook

Understandably, the narrative in the given comments is quite alarming, as the derogatory language (e.g. 'whore') used to describe the mother demeans her and robs her of the right to have a private life. Not only this but the mother is assigned full responsibility for her son's poor life choices, even though the mother is the actual victim. Once again, in the comments we see different forms of hate speech, that carry hidden messages of glorifying the murderer and blaming the victim.

The following comments are posted on different cases of femicide, namely on women killed by their husbands, sometimes even in public transport in front of their children. Even though the police have not issued an official statement, according to the allegations and assumptions of the society, the murdered women must have been cheating on their husbands.

- ვერაფერს ვიტყვი, მნელია სხვის საქმეში ჩახედვა, მაგრამ თუ მართლა უღალატა ასეთ კარგს და თავმოყვარეობა გააჩნია, ვერ გაკიცხავ მის საქციელს
- 'I can't say anything, it's hard to poke your nose into someone else's business, but if she really betrayed such a good person and he has self-respect, I can't blame his behaviour'

→ Posted by a female, Facebook

- ნუ მისცემ საბაბს, ქმარმა იეჭვიანოს
- ‘Don’t give a reason for your husband to be jealous’

→ Posted by a male, Facebook

- ეს ყველაფერი ქალების ბრალია
- ‘It’s all the women’s fault’

→ Posted by a male, Facebook

- და რა იცით, რომ ძალით არ გააკეთებინა, გამოიყვანა წყობიდან ალბათ
- ‘And how do you know, she didn’t force him to do it? He must have lost his temper.’

→ Posted by a male, Facebook

- როცა ცოლი ქმარს ღალატობს, ყოველთვის მკვლელი არაა დამნაშავე
- ‘When a wife cheats on her husband, the killer is not always guilty’

→ Posted by a female, Facebook

- ძროხა ქალები დააბრალებენ მერე ქმრებს
- ‘Cow - women will blame their husbands later’<sup>7</sup>

→ Posted by a male, Facebook

- თავი არ უნდა მოეკლა. იმათთვის კი მაღლია სიკვდილი, ეს ჩემი აზრია
- ‘He should not have killed himself. Death is a mercy for the cheating wife though, this is my opinion.’

→ Posted by a female, Facebook

The metaphorical phrase ‘it’s hard to poke your nose into someone else’s business’ suggests that when it comes to domestic violence one should not intervene. However, the author of the comment continues to say that when it comes to betraying your husband, the victim deserves to die. Even more, if the husband gets jealous, they somehow get justification for their wrongdoing, even if it is as violent as murder. The next sweeping statement that claims all women are collectively to blame for any problem one can have perfectly captures the inherent nature of blaming women. The comments continuously depict the idea that when a woman is perceived as unfaithful, death is a punishment they deserve.

Disturbingly, both genders agree that the murdered women are guilty. The authors of the comments justify the men’s behaviour because their wives’/mothers’ (possible) infidelity damaged their self-esteem. Moreover, some even feel sorry for the men who were forced to murder their wives or mothers. It is not surprising that in a society with such a worldview, the issue of femicide is still so problematic.

## 2.6 A Dangerous Woman

Bold, sexually active, able to speak openly about taboo topics, independent, strong women pose a threat to the patriarchal order prevailing in society. That is why a woman who does not obey the binding social dogmas is one of the first targets of hate speech.

- ქალი რომ იტყვის საჯაროდ, დავლიე და პახმელია მაქვსო, მანდ ეკარგება სინაზე
- ‘If a woman says in public that she drank and has a hangover, she loses her tenderness’

→ Posted by a male, Facebook

- ყველა ეგეთი ქალის დედას შევეცი, ერთ წამითაც არ არიან სიცოცხლის ღირსები და არც შვილის ყოლის ბედნიერება რომ გამოცადონ, მაგის (ისაუბრა აბორტის აუცილებლობაზე) (კაცი)
- ‘Fuck them! ... These women are not worthy of life even for a second, nor to experience the happiness of having a child’ (a woman talked about the necessity of abortion)

→ Posted by a male, Facebook

- მამა ან მმა არ ჰყავს, ხმა რომ ჩააგდებინოს? ბარემ დასვრილი ტრუსიკები გამოფინეთ, ფუი (მიემართება ქალს, რომელმაც ისაუბრა მენსტრუაციასა და მასთან დაკავშირებულ ტკივილზე)

- ‘Don’t you have a father or a brother to silence you? Go expose your dirty pants to the public too’ (to the woman who talked about periods and pain)  
→ Posted by a male, Facebook
- ძალიან ცუდ რამეს ვიტყვი, მაგრამ არ მომწონს გახვრეტილი ცხვირები, ენები. ასეთი ქალი ცოლად რომ მომეყვანა, სხვებიც იტყოდნენ, მეძავი შეირთო
- ‘I will say something very bad, but I don't like pierced noses, or tongues. If I were to marry such a woman, others would say that I married a prostitute’  
→ Posted by a male, Facebook
- ცოლად თუ მოგყავს ქალი, გახვრეტილი არაფერი უნდა ჰქონდეს, სხვაგვარად არ ივარგებს
- ‘If you marry a woman, she should not have any holes, otherwise it will not work’  
→ Posted by a male, Facebook
- ნახმარს უხმარი ჯობია, ძმაო, უხმარს შენს გემოზე მოირგებ... ნახმარი ცოტა მოუხერხებელია
- ‘Unused is better than used, you can adjust the unused to your taste...to have a used wife is a bit inconvenient’  
→ Posted by a male, Facebook
- მასეთ [არაქალიშვილს] რძალს ოჯახში არ მივიღებდი, სულერთი რომ იყოს, მამალი დადებდა კვერცხს
- ‘I would not accept this kind of a [non-virgin] daughter-in-law into my family; if it didn't matter, a rooster would lay an egg’  
→ Posted by a female, Facebook
- ფრთხილად ბიჭებო... ქალები საზღვარს სცილდებიან, კომპლიმენტის უნდა გეშინოდეთ
- ‘Be careful, guys... women are crossing the red line, and you should be afraid of giving them a compliment’  
→ Posted by a female, Facebook
- ლადაობს ისე, ოზონის ხვრელი აქვს
- ‘She is joking, she has an Ozone hole down there’  
→ Posted by a male, Facebook
- წესიერი და ჭკვიანი და საქები და სადიდებელი გოგო ისაა, ვისაც ქალიშვილობა და სინდის - ნამუსი შენახული აქვს
- ‘A decent and intelligent and praiseworthy girl is the one who has preserved her virginity and innocence’  
→ Posted by a female, Facebook

The general picture of how part of society perceives women and their roles can be seen well from the above comments. A woman, in the above cases, is perceived as a thing, to be described with words like ‘used’, ‘unused’, ‘with a hole’, ‘having an ozone hole’, and ‘chewed’. According to many of the authors cited here, a woman who has had pre-marital sex is no longer innocent and pure and it is a disgrace for the family to recognise her as a member. Moreover, a different or bold style, like a piercing, is linked to ‘prostitution’ in some people's eyes.

### 3. Conclusions

The analysis of about 500 internet comments illustrates the nature of some of the hate speech within Georgian society. This paper set out to (1) identify linguistic strategies employed in attacking women and (2) explore the reasons why women become targets of hate speech.

Although it is challenging to define hate speech, it is even harder to pinpoint the linguistic repertoire of the people using hateful comments to show their aggression towards certain groups in society. The challenge lies in the fact that hate speech can be masked with humour or with the use of ordinary linguistic strategies but still spread hateful messages. Nevertheless, the analysis of the collected data has shown specific linguistic strategies to attack the minority and marginalise them. Apart from the direct profanity, the commenters on the various posts about women used slut-shaming, victim blaming, misogynist vocabulary, and dehumanising and presenting women as inanimate objects.

Interesting cases of metaphors have also been identified. According to a metaphorical comparison, divorced women are compared to second-hand clothes, which, once again, dehumanises a woman and presents her as an object that others can use.

Rooted in societal stereotypes, these comments often encourage women to conform to societal expectations perpetuated by these stereotypes. A surprising finding from this research is that women contribute to discussions about the supposed positive aspects of physical abuse towards women with a frequency comparable to that of men. This finding raises concerns about the perpetuation of such harmful views through generations, especially if these women are influential in shaping the perspectives of future generations.

The roots of hate speech in Georgia are deeply embedded in stereotypes, reflecting the societal mindset of certain groups in this country. Moreover, violence and femicide are, in many comments, not condemned but might even be tacitly accepted. According to the given data, hate speech often goes beyond verbal abuse, encouraging cruelty and even suggesting harm or death, especially if it is perceived to hurt a man's self-esteem. The authorities' involvement in such cases is oftentimes viewed negatively and seen as a derogatory act within the patriarchal society.

The pervasive use of hate speech, often cloaked in humour, poses a significant challenge as it can go unnoticed and spread rapidly. To combat this issue effectively, consistent dialogue is essential. People need to be educated about the nature of hate speech, trained to identify it, and made aware that expressions of hatred, even when presented as humour, can have destructive consequences for the targeted groups. Encouraging open discussions and fostering a collective commitment to address hate speech is crucial for creating a more inclusive and respectful society.

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# Svan-Georgian Speech Code-mixing in Kvemo Kartli

## სვანურ-ქართული სამეტყველო კოდების შერევა ქვემო ქართლში

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**Abstract.** Svan dialects have been influenced by related and unrelated languages due the fast pace of modern life and movement of the population inside and outside the country. This paper presents the results conducted in December of 2023 with respondents of different ages and genders in the village of Chivchavi, Kvemo Kartli region, considering sociolinguistic questionnaires and methodology. For comparison, data analysed in the same region 20 years ago (in 2003–2004) is also utilised. The informants are the Svans from Lower Svaneti settled in Chivchavi, Tetrtskaro, who have coexisted with the local population in Kvemo Kartli region since 1987. The research revealed that 20 years ago Svan was the dominant language. The situation, according to the new data, is changed. Recent age surveys showed that Georgian has largely replaced Svan in family and community settings, (among middle and younger generations).

**აბსტრაქტი.** სვანური ენის დიალექტები თანამედროვე ცხოვრების სწრაფი ტემპებისა და ქვეყნის შიგნით თუ გარეთ მიგრაციული პროცესების გამო განიცდის როგორც მონათესავე, ისე არამონათესავე ენათა ზეგავლენას. სტატიაში წარმოდგენილია 2023 წლის დეკემბერში ქვემო ქართლის რეგიონის სოფელ ჭიჭავჭავში სხვადასხვა ასაკისა და სქესის ინფორმატორებთან ჩატარებული გამოკითხვის შედეგები სოციოლინგვისტური კითხვარებისა და მეთოდოლოგიის გათვალისწინებით. შესადარებლად გამოყენებულია ამავე რეგიონში 20 წლის წინ (2003-2004 წლების) მოძიებული და გაანალიზებული მონაცემები. ინფორმატორები არიან თეთრიწყაროში, კერძოდ ჭიჭავჭავში, ჩასახლებული ქვემოსვანები, რომლებიც 1987 წლიდან თანაცხოვრობენ ქვემო ქართლში. კვლევამ აჩვენა, რომ 20 წლის წინანდელი გამოკითხვების მიხედვით, მოსახლეობა ყოველდღიურ საუბარში უმეტესად სვანურ ენას იყენებდა, ახალი მონაცემების მიხედვით კი ვითარება შეცვლილია. სხვადასხვა ასაკობრივი ჯგუფის წარმომადგენელთა გამოკითხვებმა ცხადყო, რომ სვანური ენა როგორც ოჯახში, ასევე თემში (სამუშაო და უმცროსი თაობების მეტყველებებში) თითქმის ჩაანაცვლა ქართულმა.

**Keywords:** Kartvelian languages, Svan language, code usage, code switching, vocabulary

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** ქართველური ენები, სვანური ენა, კოდის გამოყენება, კოდის გადართვა, ლექსიკა

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The Svan Dialects

Svan is an unwritten Kartvelian language, with its traditionally known dialects and subdialects, which is only a means of oral communication in everyday life. “The Georgian literary language is the official/dominant language, which is the unifying and, therefore, identifying language of Georgians“ (Gabunia et al., 2010, pp. 89-95). The Svans who migrated to Kvemo Kartli came under the influence of the Georgian literary language. Except for the family, they encountered the Georgian-speaking environment almost everywhere, and the code-switching affected their speech.

Along with Georgian and Kolchian (Megrelian-Laz languages), Svan belongs to the Kartvelian language group. Many researchers consider Kartvelian languages to be one of the branches of the Iberian-Caucasian language family (Chumburidze, 2007, p. 3). The Svan language is spoken by a part of the Georgian people who currently live in Upper Svaneti/Zemo Svaneti (Enguri River Gorge), Lower Svaneti/Kvemo Svaneti (Tskhenistkali River Gorge), mountainous Abkhazia (the Kodori River Gorge) and in different parts of Georgia at various periods - mainly those who settled after a large natural disaster in 1987.

Svan traditionally has four dialects: *Upper Bal*, *Lower Bal*, *Lentekhian*, and *Lashkhian*. Upper Bal and Lower Bal are referred to as *Upper Svan*, and Lashkhian and Lentekhian as *Lower Svan*. These dialects differ in the presence or lack of umlaut, vowel length, reduction, grammatical (declination and conjugation system, syntax), and lexical characteristics. Any dialect containing any of these signs differs from the others. Table 1 shows how the dialects of Svan contrast with each other in terms of phonetic processes (vowel umlaut, lengthening and reduction). A plus sign indicates which dialect is characterized by phonetic processes, and a minus sign indicates which is not.

**Table 1.** Phonetic differences between four Svan dialects (According to the Saghlani, 2016, p. 18)

Dialects	Vowel length (ā ē ī ō ū ā)	Umlaut (Vowel Softening ä ö ü ä ö ü)	Reduction (Attenuation / loss of sound)
Upper Bal	+	+	-
Lower Bal	-	+	-
Lashkhian	+	-	-
Lentekhian	-	+	+
Cholur	+	+	-

Upper Svan dialects exist in the Enguri Gorge, i.e. Upper Svaneti, while Lower Svan dialects exist in the Tskhenistkali River Gorge, i.e. Lower Svaneti. As for Cholur, it is a transitional dialect (arose through the merger of Lower Svaneti dialects) in Lower Svaneti that lies between Lashkhian and Lentekhian. As a result, it shares the main grammatical features of both. "Cholur is as different from all other dialects of Svan as each of them is different from one another, which provides the foundation for classifying Cholur as an independent dialect" (Oniani, 1998, pp. 7-9). Oniani's opinion is part of an ongoing debate in the expert literature regarding the quantity of Svan dialects. (Chumburidze, 2007, p. 11). The researcher admints 5 dialects of Svan language (Oniani, 1998, pp. 7-9).

## 1.2 Describing the Svan Dialects

As a result of the fast pace of modern life and the intense movement of the population inside and outside the country, Svan dialects have been impacted by related and unrelated languages. The influence of other Kartvelian languages is the primary cause of the above-mentioned phonetic modifications. Breaking the linguistic connection between generations poses critical dangers to the vitality of Svan. That is why we consider it very important to study the Svans' speech (from Lashkhethi and Cholur), who migrated to Kvemo Kartli.

The worldwide project "The Sociolinguistic Situation in Modern Georgia," funded by the Volkswagen Foundation (authors: J. Gippert and M. Tandashvili), which included all Kartvelian languages in Georgia, provided the basis for sociolinguistic research of Svan in 2005-2007. The preliminary results were prepared and published by the group working on Kartvelian languages, namely Megrelian-Laz and Svan (Gabunia et al., 2010). In 2006, a study was conducted on the Lower Svan speech in Kvemo Kartli region using sociolinguistic questionnaires. The survey explored the processes of using code switching in terms of vocabulary borrowings, and changes in speech. Some findings were even printed (Gabunia et al., 2010). However, a complete sociolinguistic description of this region has not been carried out yet.

## 1.3 Research Questions

This paper aims to describe the external and internal situation of the Svans who migrated from Svaneti to Kvemo Kartli for ecological reasons. What effect does the settlement of these eco-migrants have on the linguistic situation? What is their daily language life like, and when and which types of codeswitching do they use? The investigation took place in the village of Chivchavi.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.2 The Village of Chivchavi

There are approximately twenty villages with Svans (both Upper and Lower) in Kvemo Kartli. We will focus on the Svans living in Chivchavi village, Tetrtskaro district. Chivchavi is one of the settlements in Kvemo Kartli where the Cholurians (Lower Svans) live. The speech of the Svans living here can be commonly referred to as Chivchavian Svans' speech because the Svans who migrated from different villages of Cholur as well as villages of Lashkheta live in this village, which has caused some remarkable changes in the speech of both groups of people. In other words, the research on Chivchavian Svans' speech is valuable considering the interference of dialects and studying the impact of Georgian written language and Kartlian dialect on the Svans' speech.

According to data of December 2023<sup>1</sup>, eighty-six households (≈ 400 people) live in the Chivchavi village. Most of the residents are from Cholur, specifically from Leusheri (56 families), from Mutsdi (15 families), Sakdari (one family), Lashkheta (10 families), and families displaced from Abkhazia (four families). The speakers of this language can be divided into three groups: adolescents up to 17, from 18 to 30 and over 51 years old.

### 2.3 Respondents

This paper presents the survey results conducted with respondents of different ages and genders in December of 2023 in the village of Chivchavi, Kvemo Kartli region, considering the functioning of Svan-Georgian speech codes, the types of code-switching, etc. For comparison, we use our unpublished data and analyses from the same region 20 years ago (2003-2004). The survey clearly shows the aspects of code-switching caused by migration processes (consciously or unconsciously). We focus on both internal (i.e. Lashkhian-Cholur) and external (Svan-Georgian) linguistic mutual influences and the consequences of these influences.

The informants are the Svans from Lower Svaneti (Lashkheta and Cholur) settled in the region of Tetrtskaro, namely in the village of Chivchavi, who have been living in Kvemo Kartli both with each other and with the local population since 1987. Obviously, this coexistence affected their speech over time, which poses a serious threat to the viability of Svan, which is on the UNESCO list of endangered languages.

**Table 2.** Respondents (N=44) in the 2023 study

Age	Female	Male	Married	Single	Cholur	Lashkhian
9-17	9	6	0	15	8	7
18-50	11	6	13	4	8	9
51-77	6	6	10	2	7	5

Table 2 presents the data of the respondents in three age groups. In total, 44 people were questioned: aged 9 to 17 (15 respondents), 18 to 50 (17 respondents), and aged 51 to 77 (12 respondents). Of the respondents, 23 were married (the number of children is indicated), and 21 were single. The table also shows the data of the Lashkhians (21 people) and Cholurians (23 respondents).

Code-switching can occur in many discourse contexts for some reasons, including the topic of the discourse, the character of the speakers, and reference to general values. As a result, we chose Svan-speaking respondents of all ages and genders with secondary or higher education (regardless of status). They moved from Lower Svaneti (the villages of the Lashkheta and Cholur valleys) to Kvemo Kartli, or the Tetrtskaro district, in the 1980s and 1990s.

### 2.4 Questionnaire

We used a questionnaire<sup>2</sup>, to which we added the following points based on our interests:

- Which language do you speak with your parents?
- Which language do you speak with your children?
- Which language do your parents speak with children?
- Which language do your children speak with their grandparents?
- Which language do you speak with your neighbors?
- Which language do you have to speak most often with the district administration?
- Do you think your children/future generation must learn/know your home language (Svan, Georgian,

Megrelian, Laz)? Explain your answer.

Their response will show us how accurately the respondents notice and evaluate the linguistic threats that Svan faces today.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Possession and Use of Codes

The answers to the first section of the questionnaire showed that the survey of young respondents revealed some fascinating details on speech codes, including evaluation and usage frequency as well as possession and use of Svan and, therefore, Georgian. The following questions were asked (scale: ‘every day’, ‘sometimes’, ‘rarely’, ‘never’).

- Which language did you start speaking at birth?
- What is your first language?
- Do you know the state (Georgian) language?
- What is your third language?
- What is the literary language for you?
- When do you use English and Russian?
- How often do you use Svan, Georgian, and other languages?

In our target group, all 15 younger respondents (aged 9 to 17) started speaking Georgian in their lives. Six respondents used Georgian-Svan, and none used only Svan. Many middle-aged respondents (aged 18 to 50) started a conversation in Svan, and some spoke Georgian-Svan. All respondents from the older generation (aged 51 to 77) started speaking Svan, none spoke Georgian. If the earlier survey findings indicated that the question of Svan language possession was natural to many young people, the 2023 statistics do not support this conclusion. Unfortunately, most young mothers choose Georgian and put the language's viability at risk.

Out of 44 respondents, 42 consider Georgian to be their first language, while two pointed to Svan. It should be noted that among those who started speaking Georgian and Svan at birth, 2 respondents consider both Georgian and Svan as their first language, the rest named only Georgian. It's also worth noting that most of these respondents identified Svan as their third language, rather than Russian (representatives of the middle and older generations) and English (representatives of the younger generation).

**Table 3.** Frequency of use of Svan, Georgian and other languages (44 respondents, 2023)

Setting	every day	Some-times	Rarely	never
How often do you use the Svan language?	60%	22%	17%	0%
How often do you use the state/Georgian language?	90%	6%	4%	0%
How often do you use other languages?	17%	49%	23%	11%

**Table 4.** Frequency of use of Svan, Georgian and other languages (38 respondents, 2003-2004)

Setting	every day	Some-times	Rarely	never
How often do you use the Svan language?	81%	14%	5%	0%
How often do you use the state/Georgian language?	80%	12%	8%	0%
How often do you use other languages?	14%	61%	19%	6%

In conclusion, older Svans always communicate in Svan (with family members or neighbors) in the village, and naturally, they communicate in “Georgian”, i.e. an Imeretian Koine, with a stranger who does not know Svan. This situation is evident, obviously, in both the new and the previous surveys.

The communication language of the Svan-speaking population has always been Svan, although the Georgian literary language has always been used in worship and education. Of course, Svan served other areas of activity depending on the dialect and sub-dialect.

We divided the respondents into three age groups (adolescents under 17, middle-aged and older people, and aged over 50) within the framework of the research conducted in 2023 and presented them in accordance with the tables:

**Table 5.** Answer to the question ‘Which language/languages do you speak at home, outside, in official structures?’ (15 respondents, 9-17 years of age, 2023)

Setting	Georgian	Svan	Georgian-Svan
At home	76%	19%	5%
Outside	82%	8%	10%
In official structures	100%	0%	0%

Respondents who have grandparents at home and communicate with them in Svan provide 19% of the usage of Svan at home, as the older generation speaks Svan at home.

The responses of the middle-aged informants reveal a different situation. Unlike the younger generation, they use Svan at home. Married people speak to their parents in Svan, but they prefer to use the Georgian speech code with their children; in rare cases, they use Georgian-Svan, which can be schematically expressed as follows:

**Table 6.** Answer to the question ‘Which language/languages do you speak at home, outside, in official structures?’ (17 respondents, 51-77 years of age, 2023)

Setting	Georgian	Svan	Georgian-Svan
At home	40%	28%	32%
Outside	45%	32%	23%
In official structures	92%	2%	6%

**Table 7.** Answer to the question ‘Which language/languages do you speak at home, outside, in official structures?’ (12 respondents, 18-50 years of age, 2023)

Setting	Georgian	Svan	Georgian-Svan
At home	12%	80%	8%
Outside	28%	52%	20%
In official structures	84%	5%	11%

**Table 8.** Answer to the question ‘Which language/languages do you speak at home, outside, in official structures?’ (all 44 respondents, 2023)

Setting	Georgian	Svan	Georgian-Svan
At home	45%	41%	14%
Outside	54%	30%	16%
In official structures	90%	4%	6%

For comparison, let us look at the survey results conducted in 2003-2004. Table 9 shows these results.

**Table 9.** Answer to the question ‘Which language/languages do you speak at home, outside, in official structures?’ (all 38 respondents, 2003-2004)

Setting	Georgian	Svan	Georgian-Svan
At home	15%	65%	20%
Outside	35%	40%	25%
In official structures	90%	5%	5%

Twenty years ago, family usage of Svan was 65%, and the overall rate of simultaneous use of both codes (Svan-Georgian) is high. The results of a 2023 survey (among adolescents and the middle-aged generation) already spoke in favour of the Georgian literary language, which has a negative impact on the already endangered Svan language. The fact that Svan is still alive and a means of communication at home and outside is due to the presence and language choices of older representatives in the family, which, unfortunately, cannot be a long-term perspective and is a significant threat to Svan.

As the fieldwork and survey of young respondents showed, knowledge of Svan is not a priority for most young people, especially for the young mothers. It can be said that this trend is observed not only among the migrated Svans, but also in their native/indigenous areas (in Mestia and Lentekhi districts), where mothers communicate with their children intensively in Georgian from birth. The age difference is also visible considering the individual lexical items. In Svan, the lexical units assimilated from Georgian are formatted by Svan affixes, and during speech, the older generation uses these words while the younger generation directly replaces them with Georgian words:

**Table 10.** Age index of the use of Svan-Georgian words in live speech.

51-57 years of age	18-50 of age	9-17 of age	
<i>čwelrigwēded</i>	<i>čwelrigwēded</i>	<i>gavrigdet<sup>h</sup></i>	‘Let’s make a deal’
<i>ž’smocmān</i>	<i>mocmd osōgān</i>	<i>daemowma</i>	‘He cited as witness’
<i>qarwlār</i>	<i>qaraular</i>	<i>qaraulebi</i>	‘Guards’
<i>fature/ifaturāl</i>	<i>fature/ifaturāl</i>	<i>p<sup>h</sup>aturobs</i>	‘He rummages’

Even though middle-aged people correctly evaluate the dangers of language loss, they prioritise Georgian and a foreign language (English) (based on socio-economic perspectives). Therefore, they also talk to their children in Georgian at home, and a small number of them, along with a good possession of Georgian, definitely consider Svan to maintain. Here are some examples of answers:

- “Children should also know Svan, but they need Georgian more, and we speak Georgian in the family as well.”
- “The day is coming without knowledge of Georgian and English, a person will not be able to start a career or do anything else in the future, and will disappear like a spark.”
- “If you do not speak Georgian from an early age, then it's already difficult for them to learn Georgian at school. They also hear Svan in their family. We talk to elders in Svan.”

The grief of the elderly regarding the possible loss of Svan is especially intense:

- “If we lose our language, we will also lose our Svanism and customs. Why shouldn't our children know Svan?”
- “My grandchildren also speak Georgian, but their grandmother and I still talk to them in Svan.”
- “I have frequently heard that some son and daughter-in-law do not like it when the elders talk to children in Svan in the family. Why?”

The impression remains that the younger generation is neither aware nor fully informed about the dangers of their indifferent attitude to the preservation of Svan. Although a long dialogue with them on the necessity and importance of studying Svan gives a reason for hope since they honestly admit that they didn't think about it, and no one talked to them about this problem in depth.

### 3.2 Code-switching and Code-mixing in Speech

In the special literature, two types of linguistic code mixing are distinguished: code-mixing and code-switching (Bokamba, 1989; Wei, 1998; Weinreich, 1972), and different reasons are given for them (Hoffman, 1989, p. 44), although there are differences of opinion regarding this issue. Our work aims to explain as much as possible the reasons for the alternation of Georgian and Svan speech codes of the Svans who migrated to Kvemo Kartli. Accordingly. We wanted to know the following:

- What types of code-switching exist, and are they conscious or unconscious?
- Are they controlled or uncontrolled?
- What is the reason for code-switching in live speech?
- Which language codes prevail?
- At what language level does code-switching take place?
- Does code-switching cause a problem of understanding?

Our observation of the Chivchavian Svans' speech in Kvemo kartli and the questionnaires we created revealed that code-switching and code-mixing in their speech are associated with a direct connection between languages. Code-switching in speech is sometimes conscious (controlled), sometimes unconscious (i.e. uncontrolled). The majority of the respondents consciously and purposefully change the code to represent their own intellectual level and make the communication act understandable to the participant. As for uncontrolled (unconscious) code-switching, which is very common in the speech of the migrated Svans, it is formed with delayed awareness of involuntary code-switching, as indicated in the expert literature (Tandashvili, 2016, p. 127). In many cases, code-switching depends on the specific situation in which the person is at that time, although code-switching may be based on some other reason (aesthetic, expressive) (Ladaria, 2002, p.11).

The fieldwork revealed an interesting case, when the host was talking to the guest who were speaking

Svan language well. In the wellcoming conversation the host was using mainly Georgian regardless of the speaker's responses in Svan. Moreover, at the insistence of one of them to make conversation in Svan because the speaker knows Svan well, some of them continue to speak to him in Georgian (which can be considered a conscious code-switching process). Some Svans (in the mentioned situations) immediately switch to Svan when reminded, although they also mix Georgian words internally. To the question of why their conversation is so mixed, they answer like this: *išgen er li, mušgwri er li, mabža, ere lušnud šejleb doš enmeqras mag i ežya mārēs mekdi kartul* ('If he is a stranger, a guest, I think he will not understand everything in Svan, and probably, that is why I mix it with Georgian.')

## 4. Conclusions

A survey was conducted with Svan informants of different ages and genders in the Chivchavi village, Kvemo Kartli region in 2023. The survey addressed the use of Svan-Georgian speech codes. These data were compared with similar data from 2003-2004. Unfortunately, this comparison does not allow us to conclude optimistically.

The result is as follows: Svan-Georgian speech codes coexist in all areas of oral communication. While Svan dominated the surveys in 2003-2004, the 2023 data show a dangerous situation. Age surveys have shown that Svan, both in the family and community (in the speech of the middle and younger generations), has almost been replaced by Georgian (see Tables 4, 5, 6, 7, 8). Adolescents under the age of 18 have started speaking Georgian (some still speak Svan). It is clear that Georgian is their daily language of communication. In our opinion, this fact poses a threat to the viability of Svan.

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# Language Policy and Planning in Georgia. From Soviet Shadows to Sovereign Words

## ენობრივი პოლიტიკა და ენობრივი დაგეგმვა საქართველოში. საბჭოთა წარსულიდან დამოუკიდებლობის მოპოვებამდე

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**Abstract.** This article explores the nuanced landscape of language policy and planning in the Georgian context, tracing the trajectory of the Georgian language from the Soviet era to the post-Soviet period. Delving into the intricacies of linguistic identity, cultural preservation, and political dynamics, the analysis encompasses the impact of Soviet language policies on Georgia, the challenges faced during the post-Soviet transition after 1991, and the subsequent evolution of language policies in independent Georgia. The narrative underscores the significance of language as a symbol of national unity and cultural heritage. The post-Soviet era has witnessed Georgia's quest for a delicate equilibrium, striving to preserve its linguistic uniqueness while engaging with the demands of a globalized world. The conclusion emphasizes the ongoing importance of dynamic language policies in shaping the nation's identity, fostering inclusivity, and navigating the balance between tradition and modernity in the 21st century.

**აბსტრაქტი.** ნაშრომში განხილულია ენობრივი პოლიტიკისა და დაგეგმვის საკითხები საქართველოს კონტექსტში, აღწერილია ქართული ენის სტატუსი და მდგომარეობა საბჭოთა ეპოქიდან პოსტსაბჭოთა პერიოდის ჩათვლით. ნაშრომში, ასევე, განხილულია ენობრივი და კულტურული იდენტობის შენარჩუნებისა და პოლიტიკური დინამიკის სირთულეები საბჭოთა პერიოდში და გაანალიზებულია საბჭოთა ენობრივი პოლიტიკის გავლენა საქართველოზე. ნაშრომში მოცემულია მსჯელობა 1991 წლიდან პოსტსაბჭოთა გარდამავალი პერიოდის გამოწვევებისა და დამოუკიდებელ საქართველოში ენობრივი პოლიტიკის შემდგომი ევოლუციის შესახებ. წარმოდგენილი ანალიზი ხაზს უსვამს ენის, როგორც ეროვნული ერთიანობისა და კულტურული მემკვიდრეობის, სიმბოლოს მნიშვნელობას. სტატიაში წარმოდგენილია პოსტსაბჭოთა საქართველოს ენობრივი პოლიტიკა, რომელიც ცდილობს წონასწორობის მიღწევას, ერთი მხრივ, ენობრივი უნიკალურობის შენარჩუნებასა და, მეორე მხრივ, გლობალური სამყაროს მოთხოვნებთან ჰარმონიზაციას შორის. დასკვნის სახით სტატიაში ხაზგასმულია დინამიკური ენობრივი პოლიტიკის განსაკუთრებული მნიშვნელობა ერის იდენტობის ჩამოყალიბებაში, ინკლუზიურობის ხელშეწყობასა და 21-ე საუკუნეში ტრადიციასა და თანამედროვეობას შორის ბალანსის დაცვაში.

**Keywords:** Language Policy and Planning, Soviet Language Policy, Post-Soviet Language Policy, Language Education Policy

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** ენობრივი პოლიტიკა და დაგეგმვა, საბჭოთა ენობრივი პოლიტიკა, პოსტ-საბჭოთა ენობრივი პოლიტიკა; ენობრივი განათლების პოლიტიკა

## 1. Introduction

This article provides an overview of the language educational policies of Georgia during the Soviet Union era and in post-Soviet Georgia. It is an analytical paper focusing on the current language educational policy and its relationship with Soviet heritage and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. The article describes the current situation, highlights existing challenges, and identifies opportunities in language policy in modern Georgia, drawing upon research and scholarly literature.

## 1.1 Language Policy and Planning

Language policy planning refers to the deliberate efforts made by governments, institutions, or communities to regulate and manage language learning and usage within a specific context (Liddicoat, 2023). It encompasses the decision-making process concerning language selection, status, and implementation across various domains, including education, government, media, and public life (Beukes, 2009). Education stands as a pivotal realm within language policy planning. Policies concerning the language of instruction, bilingual education, and language acquisition bear substantial implications for educational outcomes and societal mobility. Researchers have scrutinized the repercussions of diverse language policies on student performance, endeavors to revitalize languages, and language policies' role in upholding or challenging social disparities (Baker, 2011; Tabatadze, 2014).

Language policy within education cannot be discussed in isolation. It constitutes a facet of state economic, social, and foreign policies, with ideological perspectives playing a pivotal role in shaping these policies (Spolsky and Shohamy, 2000). Ideological factors, such as nationalism, multiculturalism, and linguistic imperialism, often exert influence on language policies (Katznelson and Bernstein, 2017).

Globalization has ushered in novel challenges and prospects within language policy planning. The preeminence of English as a global lingua franca has sparked debates regarding the impact of English language policies on local languages and cultures. Language policies in multilingual societies, language preferences in international organizations, and the proliferation of English as a medium of instruction constitute some of the subjects explored within this context (Zeng, Ponce, and Li, 2023).

Scholarly research on language planning began in the 1960s (Johnson and Ricento, 2013). The term "language planning" was initially introduced by Haugen in 1959, denoting the process of developing norms for orthography, grammar, and dictionaries to guide communication in diverse speech communities (Haugen 1959). However, this definition is primarily associated with corpus planning (Johnson and Ricento, 2013). Ricento (2000) identified three key phases in the historical development of language planning: (1) the era of Classic language planning theory, which emerged in the 1960s and was largely focused on corpus planning as part of postcolonial nation-building and modernization efforts; (2) an intermediate phase from the early 1970s to the late 1980s, marked by the failure of modernization ideals and the emergence of critical sociolinguistics, which highlighted issues of access and the limitations of technocratic models; and (3) a critical language policy stage characterized by a reassessment of earlier models and the integration of sociocultural contexts into policy-making.

## 1.2 Language Policy in Education

Language policy in education holds significant importance as it shapes the language(s) used for instruction and the overall linguistic environment within educational systems. Language policy is a vast field of scholarly exploration primarily rooted in the social sciences. Nonetheless, its underpinnings are also influenced by economic, cultural, educational, and foreign policies (Spolsky and Shohamy, 2000). Spolsky (2004) categorizes language policy into four fundamental and interconnected factors: national ideology, the role of English as a global language, a nation's sociolinguistic context, and the increasing emphasis on the rights of linguistic minorities. Spolsky's theories on language policy extend further, resulting in the conceptualization of three distinct dimensions within language policy (Spolsky, 2007): (a) Language management: This pertains to the interventions made by authorities to regulate language. (b) Language beliefs or ideology: This refers to a community's underlying convictions about how language should be treated. Language ideology manifests societal, political, and cultural principles within language beliefs (c) Language practices: Encompassing the practical application of language within a given linguistic context.

Numerous other models have been proposed to analyze language planning procedures. Fishman's (1973) language planning model, encompassing corpus, status, and acquisition planning, provides a framework for scrutinizing language policy choices within educational spheres. Corpus planning involves standardizing and codifying a language for educational purposes, while status planning designates the functions and domains of languages within the education system. Another notable model is the framework developed by Cooper (1989), which differentiates between corpus planning (the standardization and codification of language), status planning (the determination of languages' functions and domains), and acquisition planning (the promotion of language learning). This model has laid the groundwork for many subsequent studies in the field of language policy planning.

Decisions and policies regarding language are formulated and executed across various societal levels, closely interwoven with communities' language ideologies, language practices, and linguistic culture (Johnson and Ricento, 2013; Spolsky, 2004). Research in language policy delving into these multifaceted layers highlights the dynamic role of educators and other stakeholders in shaping perceptions and language usage within

educational environments (García and Menken, 2010; Hornberger and Johnson, 2007). It's worth noting that the educational domain and its language policies stand as pivotal facets within the broader landscape of language policy. Language planning theories lay the groundwork for comprehending language policy in education. Acquisition planning centers on promoting language learning and mastery. Language-in-Education (LIE) planning theories, specifically dedicated to language policy in education, concentrate on creating effective language policies for instruction and educational access. Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson and Rannut (1995) propose a LIE planning model highlighting the significance of mother tongue-based education and multilingualism and underlining the rights perspective in language education. This model underscores language rights, educational equality, and linguistic diversity's role in shaping educational language policies.

Approaching language policy in education through social practice theories reveals its socio-cultural dimensions. This perspective explores how language policies are formed, negotiated, and contested within educational contexts, emphasizing their interactions with power dynamics, ideologies, and the agency of various stakeholders. Ricento (2006) emphasizes understanding language policy as a social practice influenced by power relations, ideologies, and stakeholders' agency. This approach acknowledges language policies' dynamic nature and their effects on social identities and interactions within educational settings. Critical language policy theories spotlight power dynamics and inequalities inherent in language policies within education. Advocates of critical language policy challenge prevailing language ideologies, question linguistic hierarchies, and champion inclusive language policies fostering social justice. McCarty (2011) further develops critical language policy, illuminating language policy's role in perpetuating or challenging social inequalities, linguistic dominance, and cultural imperialism within education systems.

Hornberger and Hult (2008) introduce an ecological framework for language policy in education, which examines the interplay between macro-level factors like national language policies and micro-level factors such as classroom practices and individual language choices. Language ecology examines how languages interact, coexist, and evolve within specific environments. This framework underscores the intricate relationship between language policy, language usage, and language vitality within educational settings. Identity theories offer insights into how language policies in education mold students' identities. Decisions like the language of instruction and language choices can impact students' self-perception, cultural affinity, and educational trajectories. Cummins (2000) and Norton (1995, 2010, 2013) delve into the interplay between language policy, language acquisition, and identity formation. Their work underscores the significance of crafting inclusive language policies validating students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and fostering positive identity development.

These theoretical perspectives provide frameworks for grasping the intricacies of language policy in education. Scholars employ these theories to analyze language policy decisions, assess their consequences, and advocate comprehensive language policies that endorse linguistic diversity, educational parity, and holistic student growth.

## 2. The Current Georgian Language Policy Situation

According to the 2014 census, ethnic Georgians constitute approximately 87 percent of the total population, while other ethnic groups account for the remaining 13 percent. The main minority groups are Azerbaijanis, who comprise just over six percent of Georgia's population, and Armenians, making up almost five percent (Tabatadze, 2022). Minority groups densely populate four regions of Georgia: Abkhazians in Abkhazia, Ossetians in Shida Kartli, Azerbaijanis in Kvemo Kartli, and Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti and the Tsalka district of Kvemo Kartli.

### 2.1 Sociolinguistic Diversity in Georgia

Georgia stands as a multilingual and multiethnic nation. The 2014 population census of Georgia furnishes us with insights into the language proficiency of its citizens. Census data reveals that all members of 91% of Georgian households converse in the Georgian language. Only 5% of households have no members proficient in Georgian, while 4% possess at least one household member who can communicate in the state language (Tabatadze and Gorgadze, 2017).

Alongside ethnic diversity, Georgia boasts linguistic diversity, with its ethnic minorities encompassing various language groups. The Georgian language, alongside Mingrelian-Laz and Svan, belongs to the Kartvelian (South Caucasian) language family. Within the Indo-European language family, languages spoken in Georgia span different groups: Russian belongs to the Slavic branch, Armenian and Greek have their individual branches, Ossetian aligns with the Iranian branch, and Azerbaijani falls under the Turkic branch of the Altaic language family (Tabatadze, Gabunia, and Odzeli, 2008).

## 2.2 Multilingualism in Georgian Education

The ethnic and linguistic diversity of Georgia is mirrored in its educational system. The nation boasts a total of 2,086 schools, with data from the 2022-2023 academic year indicating a student count of 633,698 across public and private schools. Within this landscape, 91% of students (equivalent to 576,682 individuals) are enrolled in Georgian-language schools. Azerbaijani-language schools accommodate 4% of students (25,870 students), Russian-language schools cater to 3% (15,882 students), and Armenian-language schools host 2% (13,041 students). Schools with Ukrainian, English, and German as languages of instruction account for a smaller representation. Consequently, language policy in education assumes paramount significance in Georgia's context (Gorgadze, Tabatadze and Antadze, 2023).

## 3. Language Policy in Georgia

As noted by Grenoble (2003), the former Soviet Union stands as a compelling case study of how a nation-state strategically employed language policy to further its political goals. Throughout its historical trajectory, the Soviet administration meticulously orchestrated a series of language policies that fundamentally reshaped the landscape of linguistic practices within its borders. Recognizing the pivotal role of language, Soviet leaders comprehended its power in shaping collective national identity and influencing individual self-perception (Grenoble, 2003). Grenoble also highlights the duality inherent in Soviet ideology, where two parallel yet conflicting currents coexisted. One facet involved the calculated manipulation of national languages to foster distinct ethnic identities, even though this approach bore the potential to inflame emerging nationalist sentiments. Conversely, a strong drive existed to champion a single unifying language as the cornerstone for building a cohesive, industrialized nation-state — often attributed to the Russian language (2003).

### 3.1 Language Policy of Georgia in Soviet Union Times

The impact of Soviet language policy is especially evident in the Georgian context. While the Georgian language experienced significant growth during this period, it also faced certain challenges and suppressive attempts. At the same time, the Russian language held a dominant position, and a large portion of the population in the Republic was bilingual—speaking both Georgian and Russian (Grenoble, 2003).

By the 1965-66 academic year in the Georgian Soviet Republic, the educational landscape encompassed 2959 Georgian schools, 287 Russian schools, 242 Armenian schools, 163 Azerbaijani schools, 39 Abkhaz schools, 194 Ossetian schools, and 372 mixed schools. Russian served as the primary language of instruction in the 287 Russian schools, while in others, it was taught as a subject (Desheriev 1976, p.173; seen in Grenoble, 2003). Georgians held a dominant position within the Republic. Enrollment figures for Georgian schools were significant: during the 1967/68 period, 266,576 students were registered in grades 1–4, with 312,794 students in grades 5–10 (Grenoble, 2003). Based on the 1978 data, the demographic distribution of schools in Georgia showcased a variety of linguistic and ethnic groups. The numbers included Georgians (2505), Russians (252), Abkhazians (15), Ossetians (39), Armenians (195), Azerbaijanis (171), as well as various bilingual combinations such as Georgian-Russian (91), Georgian-Abkhazian (1), Georgian-Armenian (10), and more. In addition to these, schools also featured languages like Russian-Georgian, Russian-Abkhazian, Russian-Ossetian, Russian-Azerbaijani, Russian-Armenian, Abkhazian-Georgian, Abkhazian-Russian, Ossetian-Georgian, Ossetian-Russian, Armenian-Georgian, Armenian-Russian, Azerbaijani-Georgian, and various trilingual combinations (Markozia, 2015). Even though minority languages and mother-tongue education in Georgia were guaranteed for ethnic minorities during the Soviet era, the same privileges were not extended, and the same recognition of language as a right was not granted to various linguistic groups, such as the Bats (Grenoble, 2003).

The use of the Georgian language was constitutionally guaranteed, affirming the right of the republic to employ its titular language. Despite its esteemed status within the republic, Georgian did not hold a prestigious position for the minorities residing in Georgia. Russian was a language of inter-ethnic relations. All minorities had the right to study in minority schools with their native language of instruction; however, some of them preferred attending Russian schools. The rationale was straightforward: while primary and secondary schooling offered a choice of language for instruction, higher education was available in either Georgian or Russian. Consequently, pursuing secondary education in a minority language significantly reduced the prospects of college education (Gabunia and Gochitashvili, 2019). The disparity between the legal and practical status of the Russian and Georgian languages in the multi-ethnic Soviet Republic resulted in a paradoxical situation: proficiency in Georgian was obligatory solely for the titular nation, i.e., Georgians. While minority groups were required to learn

Georgian, the instruction often adopted a formal approach, leaving students with limited motivation (Gabunia and Gochitashvili, 2019).

Gabunia and Gochitashvili (2019) highlight the paradoxical nature of Soviet language policy in Georgia. During the 1960s, the leadership of the USSR experienced an official shift in policy towards the languages of the "Brotherly Republics," transitioning to a proactive approach of Russification throughout the nation. A pivotal school reform introduced in 1958 granted parents in the national republics the authority to decide whether their children would receive education in the titular language or Russian. Due to the perceived prestige and the promise of enhanced mobility and career prospects, many parents opted for Russian-language schools. As a result, these schools gained numerical prominence at the expense of national schools. This trend underscored the simultaneous occurrence of the Russification policy and the voluntary abandonment of minority languages by their speakers (Gabunia and Gochitashvili, 2019).

Starting in the mid-1970s, signs of the Soviet government's efforts to shift the dominant language of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic became apparent. Based on Moscow's directives, it was decided to adopt Russian for teaching subjects like history and geography (Grenoble, 2003). By 1978, the conflict had escalated, leading to a volatile situation. The government initiated plans to amend a section of the constitution that designated Georgian as the republic's official language. In response, hundreds of students began protesting in Tbilisi. The effectiveness of the protests became evident, resulting in the retention of the Georgian language. Georgians remained steadfast in acknowledging the significance of their language.

During the 1980s, the official language of Georgia was Georgian. The Constitutional status of the state language within the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia encompassed not only Georgian but also Abkhazian and Russian. Furthermore, the ethnic minority languages recognized included a variety of languages such as Ossetian, Azerbaijani, Armenian, Greek, Russian, Hebrew, Ukrainian, Kurdish, and others (Markozia, 2015). During that period, a significant portion of the population, particularly the Georgian community, received education in Russian. Markozia provides the example of one of the districts of the capital of Georgia for illustration of the pattern (Markozia, 2015). In 1989, the October district had 6 Russian schools and 1 Georgian-Russian school, catering to students from 26 different nationalities. Among the various ethnic groups in this area, the majority of Armenians (88%) and Yezidis (80%) attended Russian schools. Similarly, 98% of Azerbaijanis, 99% of Kurds, 85% of Jews, 48% of Ossetians, 93% of Assyrians, 94% of Ukrainians and 73% of Greeks studied in Russian schools. Even smaller ethnic groups chose Russian as the medium of instruction. Interestingly, Russian students themselves constituted only 19.5% of the total enrollment in Russian schools. This demonstrated that Russian-language schools also served as a crucial educational space for non-Russian children (Markozia, 2015). Aligned with this fervent nationalism, the "Georgian Language Program" was launched in the 1980s, reaffirming the pivotal role of the Georgian language in education, political domains, mass media, and print. As of 1989, a substantial 94 percent of Georgian children were enrolled in Georgian-language schools (Grenoble, 2003).

### 3.2 Language Policy in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia

Abkhazia was an autonomous republic of Georgia. Georgian, Abkhazian, Russian, and Armenian were all actively used in the educational system of Abkhazia during the Soviet period in Georgia. The realistic possibility of receiving education in the Abkhazian language emerged after the development of the Abkhazian alphabet during the 19th century. This alphabet held a pivotal significance for promoting education in the Abkhazian language. The initial written alphabet for the language was created by P.K. Uslar in 1862, incorporating Cyrillic, Georgian, and Latin characters. Subsequently, in 1926-1928, N. Marr introduced a Latin-based alphabet for the Abkhazian language (Tabatadze, 2018a). The earliest efforts to establish Abkhazian-language education emerged in the early 19th century. In 1810, the clergyman Ioane Ioseliani initiated the use of Abkhazian in education within the village of Likhni. However, this endeavor faced rejection from Russian authorities.

The tide shifted on May 30, 1851, when the Holy Synod of the Russian church sanctioned the establishment of a four-year school in Likhni, which began in 1852. This marked the historic introduction of Abkhazian language instruction. Operating until October 1855, the Likhni church school paved the way. Another school using Abkhazian for instruction emerged in Ilori. This approach persisted until 1884 when "The Society for the Restoration of Orthodoxy in the Caucasus" prohibited Abkhazian language instruction, transitioning Abkhazia's schools to Russian-only education. From 1852 until 1884, Russian became the medium of instruction, although Abkhazian was also taught. Despite this, promoting Abkhazian language proficiency among the population was not well-received (Tabatadze, 2018a; Gvantseladze, 2010; Papaskiri, 2010).

The first substantive attempt to establish Abkhazian schools occurred during the initial years of the Soviet era. This era promoted the instruction of minority languages, extending protection to Abkhazian. Consequently, language instruction in Abkhazia was introduced, with Abkhazian as the language of instruction for grades 1 and 2 until 1932. From 1932 onward, students received Abkhazian instruction from grades 1 to 4 in Abkhazian-language schools (Tabatadze, 2018a). The landscape underwent transformations in the late 20th century, marked

by a vigorous campaign of Russification across much of the Soviet Union. Soviet authorities chose to replace the language of instruction in Autonomous Republics with Russian or the language of the respective republic to which they belonged. This change was implemented throughout the Soviet Union before the 1938-1939 academic years, except for Abkhazia. Here, Georgian authorities resisted the central government's directive due to its political sensitivity. Consequently, the change was not implemented in Georgia until 1945. On June 12, 1945, the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party issued a decree altering the language of instruction in Abkhazian schools to Georgian from the 1945-46 academic years. This transition encompassed 81 Abkhaz language schools shifting to Georgian as the medium of instruction, accompanied by the conversion of the Abkhazian alphabet to Georgian script in 1937. Between 1945 and 1953, Abkhaz was limited to being taught solely as a separate subject in these schools. Following the political transformations in the Soviet Union, Abkhazian schools resumed operation from the 1953-1954 academic years onward. The Abkhazian alphabet, based on Cyrillic, was also reintroduced. Abkhazian schools continued functioning in Abkhazia until the conclusion of the Soviet era. However, the language of instruction for these schools was solely Abkhazian for grades 1-4, while all subjects from grades 5-11 were taught in Russian except for Abkhazian language and literature (Gasviani, 2013; Tabatadze, 2018b, Tabatadze, 2022). By the conclusion of the Soviet era, a total of 52 Abkhazian language schools and 13 Abkhazian sections remained operational in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (Gasviani, 2013).

### 3.3 Conflict after the Disintegration of the Soviet Union

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia experienced the outbreak of two ethnic conflicts. While the conflicts involving the Georgian autonomous republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia were primarily rooted in political factors, the undeniable presence of ethnic animosity intensified their nature. Concurrently, the role of language played a significant role in fanning the flames of ethnic tensions, with certain experts even labeling it "the language war." Establishing a well-considered language and educational policy within the regions under the jurisdiction of the Georgian government holds the potential to serve as a pivotal assurance for the resolution of these conflicts (Tabatadze, Gabunia, and Odzeli, 2008).

### 3.4 Post-Soviet Language Policy in Georgia

The heritage of Soviet language policy and post-Soviet and post-Socialist transformations played an important role in the formation and implementation of language policy in Georgia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The examination of Georgia's post-Soviet language policy is equally significant due to its distinct attributes. As highlighted by Broers (2005), the potential for Russian to transition from a Soviet-era lingua franca to a unifying axis across diverse ethnic groups is likely more constrained compared to languages like English or French. Unlike Russian, these languages do not symbolize the Western democratic paradigm many post-Soviet states strive to align with, nor offer a gateway to international organizations and development agencies. Additionally, Russia's close geographical proximity has impeded the transformation of Russian into an independent marker of cohesive identity within certain successor states of the Soviet Union.

In the post-Soviet era, the importance of the Russian language has waned, resulting in a substantial exodus of ethnic Russians from Georgia. Between 1989 and 1996, approximately 150,000 individuals, out of a total of 347,000, as indicated by the 1989 Soviet census, emigrated. According to Eduard Shevardnadze's official data, by 1998, the number of Russian schools had diminished to 89, along with 133 Armenian schools, 155 Azerbaijani schools, and 4 Ossetian schools outside of the Southern Ossetian region. This transformation highlights a marked decline in the overall count of Russian schools since the Soviet era (Grenoble, 2003).

Since 1991, the post-Soviet republics have implemented fresh language and educational policies. Pavlenko (2008) underscores a number of intricate factors that present challenges when establishing an educational language policy within the post-Soviet region: (1) a substantial presence of Russian speakers; (2) the pervasive influence of Russian language and culture within the dominant cultural groups of former Soviet republics; (3) addressing the needs of non-integrated ethnic minority communities; and (4) functional limitations associated with certain languages spoken by the prevalent cultural groups in post-Soviet republics (Tabatadze, 2019). In response to these challenges, the former Soviet republics initiated language policy reforms in their educational systems. These reforms can be classified into three primary policy directions: (1) the implementation of bilingual education to enhance proficiency in the state language among minority groups; (2) the gradual replacement of the Russian language with the languages of the dominant cultural groups; and (3) the adoption of bilingual education to address the functional limitations of languages spoken by the dominant cultural groups, thereby empowering these languages while concurrently supporting proficiency in Russian (Tabatadze, 2021).

Prior to the educational reform implemented in Georgia in 2005, the educational landscape comprised approximately 3,000 schools. In the majority of these institutions, Georgian was the language of instruction,

encompassing the teaching of all subjects. Concurrently, over 500 non-Georgian language schools were operational in Georgia. These schools employed Russian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Abkhaz, and Ossetian as the languages of instruction. It's notable that in the latter two types of schools, the language of instruction transitioned to Russian from grades 5 and onwards, following the initial four grades (Tabatadze, Gabunia and Odzeli, 2008; Tabatadze, 2015; Gabunia, 2014; Gorgadze, 2016).

Subsequent to the transformative changes introduced after 2005, the educational milieu in Georgia now features four distinct categories of schools based on the language of instruction. This shift has been accompanied by a reduction in the number of non-Georgian language schools as well as an overall decline in the total number of schools, a consequence of optimization efforts. At present, Georgia boasts a total of 300 non-Georgian language schools and sectors. Within these educational establishments, instruction is conducted in languages such as Russian, Azerbaijani, and Armenian (Tabatadze, 2019; Tabatadze, 2022).

### 3.5 The Current Georgian Situation

The current situation in non-Georgian language schools is not optimistic. For example, The prevalence of failing students in school exit exams conducted in 2011-2018 from non-Georgian language schools falls below the nationwide average. For instance, around 29% of graduates from non-Georgian language schools in compact settlements failed the physics school exam, while the overall countrywide failure rate is 4% (Tabatadze, 2017; Tabatadze, 2019). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009, 2015, 2018, 2021 underscores the challenges faced by ethnic minority students in literacy, math, and science when compared to their Georgian counterparts. PISA 2009, 2015, 2018, 2021 results reveal that while Georgian students already exhibit low scores in reading, math, and science compared to international averages, minority students fare even worse in comparison to their Georgian peers (Tabatadze, 2017; Tabatadze, 2019, PISA, 2018; PISA 2021). The cited statistical data and research outcomes unequivocally point to the inefficacy of non-Georgian schools, which are a direct legacy of the Soviet educational system

### 3.6 Minority Language Education

Tabatadze (2019) delineated the challenges within the language education policy of Georgia's general education system regarding minority language education across three distinct levels: political, institutional, and pedagogical. At the political level, primary issues emerge from an exclusive focus on teaching the state language, neglecting necessary reforms for minority schools. A critical impediment to the successful execution of language education policy lies in the inconsistency of education reform at the political level. On the institutional and pedagogical fronts, obstacles manifest through insufficient human resources, a lack of schools' clarity regarding their language policies, inadequate teaching materials, and a dearth of community and parental involvement in school reform implementation (Tabatadze, 2019).

### 3.7 The Role of Russian

The role of Russian schools and the language policy concerning the Russian language is another significant aspect of post-Soviet Georgia. Initially, Russian-language schools faced the prospect of closure or integration with Georgian schools from the time of Georgia's independence until 2016. However, this trend shifted notably after 2016, particularly following the Russian-Ukrainian war. In the 2019-2020 academic year, the student population in Russian-speaking public schools and sectors was 12,920. By 2023, this number had increased to 17,470 students across private and public schools. There has been a marked increase in the number of Russian, Estonian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian students. The influx of new Russian citizen students entering the Georgian education system indicates a growing trend, although challenges exist in accurately tracking student migration, as there is a disparity between immigrant student numbers and official registrations. Enrollment in Russian-language schools has surged, surpassing Armenian-language schools in numbers. Importantly, a significant portion of students in Russian-language schools are citizens of foreign countries, with Russian citizens forming the largest group. The distribution of students in public and private schools varies among different nationalities, reflecting factors such as availability and preferences.

Overall, Tbilisi and the Adjara region emerge as prominent hubs for Russian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian students, with a concentration of Russian-speaking schools in these areas. This demographic shift has prompted the Georgian government to introduce new educational policies regarding schools with Russian language instruction (Gorgadze, Tabatadze, and Antadze, 2023).

### 3.8 Education Policy Challenges

A recent study on language policy in education has highlighted a significant gap in language policy planning and management in Georgia (Tabatadze, Gorgadze, and Gabunia, 2023). One of the main findings of this study is the failure to recognize the developmental benefits associated with effective language policy and planning. While Georgia's current language policy primarily addresses the immediate needs of individuals, society, and the country, it lacks consideration for the long-term potential and advantages of language policy in education. Specifically, the authors note the absence of discussions on the potential of bilingualism as a valuable global asset, the role of language in facilitating political, economic, social, cultural, and educational integration within the Euro-Atlantic context, the importance of Georgian-English bilingualism in promoting international economic growth and integration, the feasibility of bilingualism in enhancing economic cooperation within the region, including the utilization of minority languages, the use of the Georgian language to encourage the return of the diaspora and their contribution to national development, and the transformative potential of employing the Abkhazian language in promoting reconciliation efforts (Tabatadze, Gorgadze, and Gabunia, 2023).

## 4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of existing literature, it is evident that the evolution of language policy occurred during the post-Soviet era, with the Soviet legacy significantly influencing its implementation. The prioritization of strengthening the Georgian language as the state language emerged following independence, particularly within the realm of education. However, this emphasis posed a challenge in the context of minority schools, which inherited their structure from the Soviet era. These schools, while influenced by the post-Soviet legacy, also align with Georgia's European aspirations regarding minority educational rights, including the right to education in their native language. The intersection of these factors led to the retention of minority language schools, despite the difficulties in their transformation, presenting a current challenge in language policy. Russian-language schools, initially part of the post-Soviet transition, experienced renewed vitality amid the Russia-Ukraine conflict, leading to their noticeable and irreversible expansion. Additionally, the forces of globalization and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations have shaped the post-Soviet language policy, particularly concerning the English language, although the policy's clarity in this regard remains ambiguous.

The journey of the Georgian language through the epochs of the Soviet Union and the subsequent years of independence serves as a compelling narrative of resilience and adaptation. The analysis of language policy and planning in Georgia highlights the intricate interplay between linguistic identity, cultural heritage, and political dynamics. As we reflect on the post-Soviet era, it becomes evident that language is not merely a tool of communication; it is a potent symbol of national unity and a vehicle for the preservation of a rich cultural tapestry.

The Soviet legacy has left an indelible mark on Georgian linguistic policies, but the post-Soviet period has ushered in an era of introspection and reform. Independent Georgia has grappled with the delicate balance between fostering its unique linguistic heritage and embracing the globalized world. The development of language policy in the contemporary context serves as a testament to the nation's commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and the recognition of linguistic rights.

Moving forward, the importance of continued language policy and planning cannot be overstated. It is not merely a bureaucratic exercise but a dynamic process that shapes the very essence of a nation. As Georgia navigates the currents of the 21st century, a nuanced and forward-looking language policy will undoubtedly play a pivotal role in defining the country's identity, fostering social cohesion, and bridging the gap between tradition and modernity. In the intricate dance between the past and the future, language stands as both a torchbearer of heritage and a beacon of progress.

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# Georgian as a Second Language. A Case Study

## ქართული, როგორც მეორე ენა. შემთხვევის ანალიზი

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**Abstract.** Georgian is a Less Commonly Taught Language with complex grammar and phonology. Learners are often motivated by cultural interest, personal connections, or academic curiosity, despite linguistic and typological challenges. Georgian largely lacks teaching materials although corpora and resources are growing. Teaching methods vary and CEFR-based programs exist. Outside Georgia, few universities offer Georgian; Leiden hosts a structured embassy-supported course. The study explored successes and challenges in teaching Georgian at Leiden University through classroom observations, interviews, and a Needs Analysis, focusing on student expectations, teaching methods, and learner-centered course design. Three experts and seven students shared insights on teaching Georgian. Teachers used varied methods—structural and communicative—tailored to student needs. Cultural context, linguistic background, and flexible materials enhanced learning. Students appreciated grammar focus, speaking practice, and responsive teaching despite initial challenges. Teachers integrated cultural content to enhance sociolinguistic competence. Students were intrinsically motivated. Challenges included limited visibility, inconsistent vocabulary instruction, and course continuity, though flexible teaching and cultural relevance were appreciated. Georgian as an L2 attracts Linguistics students; combining teaching methods works well, but smoother transitions, better materials, and immersion programs are recommended.

**აბსტრაქტი.** ქართული ენა იშვიათად ისწავლება, თუმცა მას კომპლექსური გრამატიკული და ფონეტიკური სისტემა აქვს. სწავლის მოტივაცია ხშირად კულტურული ინტერესით, პირადი კავშირებით ან აკადემიური ცნობისმოყვარეობით არის განპირობებული, მიუხედავად ლინგვისტური და ტიპოლოგიური სირთულეებისა. სასწავლო კურსს, ძირითადად, აკლია სასწავლო მასალები, თუმცა კორპუსები და რესურსები იზრდება. სწავლების მეთოდები განსხვავებულია და არსებობს პროგრამები, რომლებიც ეფუძნება CEFR-ს. საქართველოს ფარგლებს გარეთ, დაინტერესებულ პირებს მხოლოდ რამდენიმე უნივერსიტეტი სთავაზობს ქართული ენის კურსებს: ლეიდენის უნივერსიტეტში მოქმედებს სტრუქტურირებული, საელჩოს მხარდაჭერით შექმნილი კურსი. კვლევაში შესწავლილია ქართული ენის სწავლებასთან დაკავშირებული წარმატებული პრაქტიკა და არსებული გამოწვევები ლეიდენის უნივერსიტეტში, საკლასო დაკვირვებების, ინტერვიუებისა და საჭიროებების ანალიზის გზით, ყურადღება გამახვილდა სტუდენტების მოლოდინებზე, სწავლების მეთოდებსა და სტუდენტზე ორიენტირებულ კურსის დიზაინზე. სამი ექსპერტი და შვიდი სტუდენტი აზრს გამოთქამდა ქართული ენის სწავლების შესახებ. მასწავლებლები იყენებდნენ მრავალფეროვან მეთოდებს — სტრუქტურულსა და კომუნიკაციურს — სტუდენტების საჭიროებებზე მორგებულს. კულტურული კონტექსტი, ლინგვისტური ფონი და მოქნილი მასალები ხელს უწყობდა სასწავლო პროცესის დინამიკას. სტუდენტებს მოსწონდათ გრამატიკაზე ფოკუსირება, საუბრის პრაქტიკა და უკუკავშირი სწავლების პროცესში, მიუხედავად საწყისი სირთულეებისა. მასწავლებლები კულტურულ შინაარსს რთავდნენ სოციოლინგვისტური კომპეტენციის გასაძლიერებლად. სტუდენტებს ჰქონდათ მაღალი შინაგანი მოტივაცია. გამოწვევებს წარმოადგენდა შეზღუდული ცნობადობა, არათანმიმდევრული ლექსიკის სწავლება და კურსის უწყვეტობა, თუმცა მოქნილი სწავლება და კულტურული აქტუალობა დადებითად შეფასდა. ქართული, როგორც მეორე ენა, იზიდავს ლინგვისტიკის მიმართულების სტუდენტებს; სწავლების მეთოდების

კომბინაცია კარგად მუშაობს, თუმცა რეკომენდებულია ჰარმონიული გადასვლა, გაუმჯობესებული მასალები და იმერსიული პროგრამები.

**Keywords:** Georgian language, LCTL, teaching methods, student motivation, sociolinguistic competence

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** ქართული ენა, LCTL, სწავლების მეთოდები, სტუდენტთა მოტივაცია, სოციოლინგვისტური კომპეტენცია,

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The Georgian Language

Georgian belongs to the Kartvelian language family and is spoken by 3,915,110 speakers, from which 3,760,570 are native speakers, and 154,540 L2 speakers (Ethnologue, 2025). Most of the speakers of Georgian live in Georgia. The language has its own alphabet, the Mkhedruli script, which is fully phonemic (Hewitt, 2005). Georgian has a large number of consonants (28) and only 5 vowels. There is a series of ejective consonants and consonants clusters of up to 8 consonants occur. The most prominent features of the grammar are the split-ergativity and polysynthetic verb forms with a potential of several hundred verb forms per verb stem (Hewitt, 1995). The characteristics of the Georgian language that are particularly important in second language acquisition are its phonemic inventory and grammatical complexity.

### 1.2 Learning a Less Commonly Taught Language

As said, for languages such as Georgian, the culture and history of native speakers are amongst the motivations to learn the language in question. An interest in the nature, history, architecture, literature of the country or region where the language is spoken are also reasons for being interested in learning that language; the ideologies, living space, cultural perceptions, and behaviours of speakers of the language in question. According to Preradović et al. (2019), LCTLs play a crucial role in fostering cross-cultural understanding and the preservation of linguistic diversity. In many cases, the willingness to learn a specific second language may be academic and based on an interest in the structure of the language itself and how it compares to related languages, while some learners may have a personal interest in acquiring a language because they know one or more speakers of the language and want to communicate with them in their own language. The latter motivation may be based on the idea that knowing someone's native tongue helps one understand them in a more personal way.

Gor and Vatz (2009) indicate that LCTLs are oftentimes genetically, typologically, and culturally distant from the native tongue of its learners. They list major factors potentially contributing to the difficulty of learning LCTLs, such as their non-cognate status, different phonological system, writing system and cultural distance. In the case of languages (the learner's L1 and the L2 the learner wants to learn) that are not closely related, a positive transfer could be quite limited. Gor and Vatz (2009) emphasise that LCTLs tend to attract learners with high motivational levels. Research on motivation tends to distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Following the definitions of Hummel (2020), intrinsic motivation leads to internally rewarding consequences, while extrinsic motivation can be characterised by an anticipation or a rewards from outside. A further distinction includes integrative motivation, which refers to an individual's perspective on the target language and culture, and instrumental motivation, which refers to practical learner needs (VanPatten, Smith, & Benati, 2020).

### 1.3 Georgian as a Less Commonly Taught Language

In a globalising world, the need for speaking foreign languages is high. Quite understandably, languages with the highest number of speakers are the most obvious choice for potential learners. If a language is a regional or global lingua franca, then that makes a language even more appealing. Languages like Mandarin, Spanish, English, Russian, and Arabic are examples of languages who meet these two criteria. They are widely spoken and attract large audiences of learners, and teaching materials for these languages are widely available. These languages are taught by both native speakers of these languages and speakers who themselves learned them as a second languages.

Another reason to learn a second language is to learn to communicate with native speakers of this language and learn about the culture connected to the language in question. This is not always the motivation for people learning the ‘large’ languages mentioned above, but it is more often than not true for languages that are not lingua francas, and that may not have many native speakers. As these are languages that are not learned as a second language very often, they are classified as Less Commonly Taught Languages, LCTLs (Preradović, Posavec, & Unić, 2019). In this article, the focus is Georgian, as spoken in the Republic of Georgia, in the Caucasus region. The language is taught as a second language both inside its native land and outside. This article focuses on a Georgian course as taught in the Netherlands.

## 1.4 Teaching Georgian as a Second Language

A Less Commonly Taught Language like Georgian usually suffers from a shortage of didactic materials, like grammars, textbooks, dictionaries and language teaching applications (Preradović et al., 2019). This means that, generally, LCTL teachers have fewer resources at their disposal and need to either use the limited resources they have or develop new materials. During the last decade, large corpora for many of these languages have been constructed. Examples of these are Tymoshuk, Blagoeva, and Sosnowski (2018) (for Bulgarian, Polish, and Ukrainian) and Ljubešić and Klubička (2014) (for Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian). In addition, there have been projects for languages that are resourced less like the DigiSami project (Jokinen, 2018), the Digital Language Diversity Project (Soria et al., 2016), the LRE Map (Calzolari et al., 2012), and many of these resources are now freely available. Ward (2016) pointed out that despite the existence of high-quality resources, there is relatively little awareness of this amongst learners and teachers. The Georgian National corpus (with 2 million tokens of parsed Georgian text, and another 200 million tokens of unparsed text), has been developed since 2012 and is openly available online.<sup>1</sup> However, the main functionality of this corpus suits academic pursuits rather than being a useful resource for L2 learners.

Wesche (1981) famously described the three most common approaches in second language acquisition (SLA): The Audio-Visual Approach, the Situational Approach, and the Analytical Approach. The Audio-Visual Approach is an inductive method based on memorisations of recorded dialogues, where explicit grammatical instructions and traditional activities such as writing and reading are rarely used in the initial stages. The Situational Approach expects students to learn from material that is always centred around a specific situation, and adjusted to their current linguistic level. In the more traditional Analytical Approach, students are first provided with the grammatical instructions that are later followed by reading or listening material. The vocabulary is presented and explained beforehand and independent reading is encouraged. These three basic approaches could also be applied to Less Commonly Taught Languages like Georgian, and it will become clear that teachers with different backgrounds use different techniques while teaching Georgian.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia is responsible for the Program on Teaching Georgian as a Foreign Language. This program is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) with six competence levels (A1-C2). One of the well-known textbooks that is recommended by the Ministry and which is freely available online is Aghmarthi (აღმართი)<sup>2</sup>. This book covers levels from A1 to B2+. However, Makhachashvili (2018) noted that “As we do not have ready-made, workable textbooks for teaching basic communication skills at the beginner level yet, in order to develop receptive (listening and reading) as well as productive (speaking and writing) skills, we plan activities and teach basic vocabulary based on non-authentic texts”. This suggests that there is still a need for more comprehensive study materials for beginners. Moreover, Makhachashvili (2018) emphasizes the need to include mentality and culture of the foreign students as essential factors for strategies in teaching.

## 1.5 L2 Georgian outside Georgia

There are few universities outside of Georgia where the Georgian language is taught. For example, Russian and East European Studies at the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies offers a Georgian course to around 30 students each year. The UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES) offers Georgian courses at five different levels (from beginner to advanced plus). Malmö University has an independent online course that teaches the basics of Georgian. The Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University offers a programme on Georgian Studies. Georgian is taught at the universities of Frankfurt (as part of the specialisation “Caucasian languages” within the BA programme “Empirical Linguistics”) and Jena (as part of the BA programme “Caucasus studies”). In Paris, Georgian is being taught structurally at INALCO (Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales). In Russia and the Caucasus, Georgian is being taught at universities in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Yerevan, Baku, and Makhachkala. Georgian is widely taught in Turkish universities, including Düzce and Kars Universities. Moreover, several universities in Turkey host departments dedicated to

Georgian Studies. We are not aware of secondary schools outside of Georgia offering the language, although in Georgia, Georgian is taught as an L2 to children with Armenian or Azeri as their first language, in areas where these form a significant ethnic minority.

Besides university courses and programs, there are websites and applications that help with learning Georgian. Georgian As a Foreign Language (ქართული როგორც უცხო ენა)<sup>3</sup> provides students with books and materials from level A1 to C1. The Training Center of Justice of Georgia (საქართველოს იუსტიციის სასწავლო ცენტრი)<sup>4</sup> has recently launched a free online course with a certificate of completion. In June 2023, an application for learning languages called LingQ added Georgian to their offer. Georgian is still not available on the other popular language apps, such as Duolingo or Babbel.

## 1.6 L2 Georgian in Leiden

The Georgian course at Leiden University has been organised since 2012. For ten years, the course was organised in the second block of the fall semester. In 2023/2024, the course was extended to the full semester with classes given by two language teachers. The new course was worth 10 credits and consisted of two lectures a week. It was organised as an elective within the BA Russian Studies, but was open to all students of the university.

The Georgian course is mainly attended by students from the BA and MA linguistics, the BA Russian Studies, the MA Russian and Eurasian studies, and the BA International Studies. Each year, a group of 10 to 25 students takes part in the course. A significant portion of participants are students of the BA Linguistics. There is a Georgian Club which is a part of T.W.I.S.T., the study association for Linguistics at Leiden University. The course is organised and founded in corporation with the Georgian embassy in the Netherlands and Tbilisi State University; the latter also pays the salary, travel and accommodation cost of the Georgian guest lecturer. Most years, the ambassador of Georgia to the Netherlands attends the final class of the course.

## 1.7 Research Questions

We have investigated the successes and challenges of the Georgian language and culture course as taught at Leiden University, from both a student and a teacher perspective. The research question for this investigation were:

1. Which successes and challenges did teachers experiences while teaching Georgian as a L2 at Leiden University?
2. In which way did the course meet the expectations of the students?

# 2. Methodology

## 2.1 Background

In the 2023/2024 academic year, a course of Georgian as a second language was again taught at Leiden University, the Netherlands. The objective of the course was to acquire A2 level in Georgian according to CEFR standards and to familiarise the students with the cultural and historical background of native speakers of Georgian. It was announced as ‘Introduction to the Georgian Language’. Seven students with a linguistics background enrolled in the course, and 3 students from the BA Russian Studies.<sup>5</sup> This course was evaluated while it was taking place, with the help of the first two authors of this article – Majer (student taking the course) and Wichers Schreur (lecturer) – Shabashvili (lecturer) and Kurdadze (lecturer in previous year). Majer’s first language is Polish, Wichers Schreur’s first language is Dutch, and Shabashvili’s and Kurdadze’s first language is Georgian. The language of instruction was English. A number of students taking the course also helped answer our research questions. The course was investigated through classroom observations and interviews with the lecturers and students.

The analysis was based on a simplified Needs Analysis (NA). The steps of NA were laid out by Brown (2009). A democratic philosophy underlies this study as it focuses on needs defined as “any learning goals that are preferred by a majority of the stakeholders involved” (p. 271). This analysis enables an overview of the most common needs that are representative of the specific population of students interested in learning Georgian at Leiden University. Because the course was divided in two parts that were given by two different teachers, two different approaches are considered: a structural grammar-translation approach as introduced in the first block of the course, and a communicative approach as used in the second block by another teacher.

According to Brown (2009), the Needs Analysis should be situation-specific, learner-centred, pragmatic, and systematic. In our study, the analysis is specific because it focuses on one course group which was observed throughout the entire duration of the course. The first author of this article was also a student who took the Georgian course in two previous editions and actively took part in the classes. It was learner-centred as it was the main interest of the study to focus on learner needs.

## 2.2 Data Collection Techniques

The data collected for this study were qualitative and consisted of three parts: class observations, interviews with teachers, and interviews with students taking the course.

The observations in the classroom focused primarily on the design of the course, materials and methods used, and the interactions in the class between the teachers and students.

After the observations of the classes given by both teachers, interviews with the two professors were conducted, in which the observations were part of the discussion topic. In an open interview, they were asked about the most significant challenges in learning and teaching Georgian as an L2. The questions also focused on methodology, materials, target group, learners' background and cultural aspects. These interviews and class observation were conducted at the end of November 2023.

The observations from the classroom and the interviews with the teachers were the basis for the interviews conducted with the students. The teachers highlighted the points of interest and difficulties. In open questions, the students were interviewed about their goals and motivations in learning Georgian, how they learned about the course, what the biggest challenges were in the learning process, and how cultural information included in the course help them in acquiring the language. Moreover, the students were encouraged to share their opinions about the general design of the course, the homework and assessment methods and the teaching methods used by both teachers. Each interview took approximately an hour and the amount of data depended on the students' willingness to discuss the motivation of their answers in details. The interviews were conducted in the second week of December 2023; a week before the end of the course. This way the students spent a similar amount of time with both teachers and were able to compare the two parts of the course.

## 2.3 The Expert Interviewees

The three expert interviewees were at some point in time involved in the design and teaching of the course that is taught every year at Leiden University. The first interviewee, RK, is a full professor, who started teaching Georgian in 1998 and has 25 years of experience in teaching Georgian as an L2. He was the first Visiting Professor from Tbilisi State University at Leiden University in 2012. He taught Georgian at Leiden University four times (in 2012, 2016, 2018 and 2022). The second interviewee, GS, is also a native speaker of Georgian, and also employed at Tbilisi State University, as Associate Professor. She has several years of experience as a Georgian L2 teacher at Leiden; in 2014, 2019 and 2023. The final interviewee, JWS, is a lecturer at Leiden university and specialised in historical linguistics, Georgian, and Caucasian linguistics. This native speaker of Dutch is the second author of the current article. He started learning Georgian at Leiden University in 2014, and later on became one of the teachers in the course. Apart from teaching Georgian, this lecturer is an experienced teacher of English, Ancient Greek and various linguistic courses.

## 2.4 The Student Interviewees

In total, 12 students enrolled in the course, 'Introduction to the Georgian Language' in the first semester of the 2023/2024 academic year. Half of the students completed the course 'Georgian for Beginners' at Leiden University a year earlier and had a basic knowledge of Georgian language. The other half took a Georgian course for the first time. In the end, 8 of these finished the course (2 female, 6 male). All of these 8 were Bachelor students of Russian Studies (n=2) or Linguistics (n=6). Seven of the students who successfully finished the course agreed to take part in the study. The native languages of the participants were Dutch (n=2), Polish (n=2), Persian (n=1), Romanian (n=1) and Slovak (n=1).

## 3. Results

The results of this investigation are based upon the combined three methodologies: class observations, student interviews, and teacher interviews. The findings are on the following topics: methods and materials, the role of

culture as part of language teaching, student motivation, and challenges pertaining to teaching and taking the course.

### 3.1 Methods and Materials

Interviewee JWS used a structural approach, Analytical Approach in Wesche's (1981) framework. This is a traditional method that focuses on grammar and translation. The choice of this method was motivated by the syllabus of the course. Because Georgian classes were divided in two parts that are given by two different teachers, this non-native teacher focused on intensive introduction to a broad range of grammatical issues by explicit instructions and translations. The focus in this part of the course was learning writing and reading in Georgian script and acquiring basic vocabulary and grammar rules. JWS used a reader that he prepared himself and based on Abuladze and Ludden (2018), which is a Georgian course written in German.

Interviewee GS used a communicative approach in the second part of the Georgian course. According to Wesche's (1981) framework it is the Situational Approach. The focus was language activation through intensive speaking practice and language in use. Students had a fundamental knowledge of grammar and basic vocabulary after the first block to make such an approach possible. Indeed, they all found grammar either easy or manageable. GS implemented culturally responsible education, taking into account the diversity in the classroom to tailor her classes appropriately. This also applied to the materials used in the classroom. Instead of using a textbook in a fixed and planned order, GS adjusted topics of the classes based on the current level of the whole groups and their interests. For instance, when she heard that students are planning to go to a Georgian restaurant, she prepared the next class centred around restaurant menus, vocabulary and phrases needed for ordering, and cultural information about traditional Georgian dishes. She used a variety of materials from different books and texts and exercises prepared by herself from class to class. She also utilized media to enhance the development of socio-cultural competence in the Georgian language. Moreover, she designed activities aimed at strengthening students' grammatical knowledge and enabling them to apply this knowledge in real-life situations.

Each of the interviewed teachers used a different method of teaching. However, they all agree that it is crucial that the teacher adjusts to the students. Teaching methods might be very teacher-specific, but they should be flexible enough to accommodate the needs, interests and requests of the students. Interviewee RK approved of the grammar and language instructions by Howard Aronson (1982). He also incorporated elements of a textbook he himself wrote (Kurdadze, 2022) in the classes. This textbook for beginners is based on RK's own long experience in teaching Georgian to foreigners. In his classes, he tries to balance explicit grammar instructions with language in use and speaking exercises.

As noted above, the target group of this course were students majoring in Linguistics or Russian Studies. They all had a strong theoretical background in Linguistics and most of them spoke a Slavic language, including Russian, as a first or second language. Interviewee GS stated that it did not affect her way of teaching in a significant way. RK and JWS emphasised that teaching linguists is usually easier because complexities of Georgian grammar can be explained more easily with academic terminology.

The social, cultural and linguistic background of the students was of utmost importance in preparing the material for the class. According to GS, native speakers of Ingush (a language spoken in a region covering the Russian republics of Ingushetia and Chechnya) have least difficulties in learning Georgian. Knowledge of Persian and Arabic also facilitates the learning process because of the generous number of loanwords from these languages. However, as pointed out by GS, speakers of Indo-European languages struggle more. This is consistent with the observations of RK and JWS. All three teachers introduce extensive numbers of loanwords from Indo-European languages to facilitate language acquisition.

All students were satisfied with the design of the course. According to them the course followed a learning process that is natural for beginners. They liked the first part of the course, which focused on Georgian grammar, and also the second part, in which they were challenged to speak and are able to improve their communication skills. Students reported difficulties in preparing for the second part of the course, which transitioned from primarily reading and writing exercises to interactive communication and dialogue. However, the materials were adjusted to the students' needs, due to which the teacher was praised for flexibility and responsiveness.

### 3.2 The Role of Culture

All three teachers emphasised the importance of social and cultural aspects of the target language and the country in the learning process. That was why all of them used various examples of cultural and social differences to help the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence. GS gave an example of politeness in Georgian which is characterised by indirect speech. Such examples can be especially important for students who commonly use direct speech acts in their native language. Because JWS is not a native speaker of Georgian, he was able to

provide the students with his unique perspective of an ‘outsider’, who has himself learned the language. He was aware of the cultural and social differences that are most striking and interesting for the foreigners.

Georgian culture, history and geography were presented to students. Six of the students found cultural information in particular crucial in their learning process. They mostly liked the cultural information that was incorporated into language learning, e.g. explanation of traditional Georgian cuisine combined with food and restaurant vocabulary. Some facts presented by the teacher were met with mixed feelings when students suspected that the cultural facts were intended to promote the country more than genuinely enhance the learning process. One student stated that cultural information could be removed entirely from the syllabus.

### 3.3 Student Motivation

This course was not obligatory, so all participants chose it as an elective. Therefore, it did not count towards their GPA. This suggests an intrinsic motivation to learn Georgian and a deep interest in the language. Most students (n=5) expressed a wish to speak the language in the future, which means that their main goal of the course was actual language use. They were driven by integrative motivation (Cook, 2016) because they wanted to communicate with native speakers of Georgian and interact with the culture in this language. Two students, on the other hand, admitted that they did not desire to speak the language. They were driven by an instrumental motivation (Cook, 2016) because the basic knowledge of a less common language could help them in their work in the field of linguistics. These students wanted to learn some non-Indo-European languages, to be exposed to a grammatically and typologically distant language.

It is important to notice that those students who mostly exhibited integrative motivation also had instrumental reason for learning the language, e.g. treating it as an additional specialisation (skill) in their respective studies or possible field research in the Caucasus.

### 3.4 Challenges

The Georgian course was not well known among the students. It could be found if one specifically searches for it on the university website. That limited the access to the potential students interested in enrolling in the course. The information about the Georgian language course was passed on by word of mouth. Most of the students had learned about it through classmates or the linguistic association of Leiden University.

GS and RK indicated that the most common criticism of the course used to be its duration, which is 6 to 7 weeks with 2 intensive seminars a week. This was not deemed enough to bring students to a sufficient language level. Moreover, there was no other course to continue learning the language. JWS took this course three times. Even though it was always a course for beginners, it was the only Georgian course that existed.

In the academic year (2023/2024), the format of the course changed. For the first time the course was given throughout the first semester. It required the professors to approach it in a different way. All of them emphasised that the success of the course depends on their cooperation. They worked in tandem to prepare a syllabus and materials for the course. They noticed that one of the possible limitations of the course is the fact that the visiting professor from Georgia changes each year. That requires an adjustment of syllabus and materials each year.

All interviewed students said that they were able to handle material successfully throughout the entire semester. There were a few aspects of the language that they find particularly difficult. Speaking and pronunciation was mentioned most often. The second aspect that caused most difficulties was vocabulary that seemed to be adhocly introduced. Homework and grammatical complexity of verb conjugations were also mentioned.

The analysis of the students’ feedback brings to the fore the need to systematize the entire course into one whole. The students did not mind different approaches to teaching and they are satisfied with the variety of resources and activities used in the classrooms. However, they express a need for a more constant and stable way of learning new vocabulary; knowing in advance which vocab to acquire. It was also suggested that there could be a uniform method of assessment (homework) and feedback.

## 4. Discussion

The Georgian language as one of the LCTL’s in the world attracts a particular group of students. The target group consisted of BA students of different courses strongly associated with language. This had a major impact on the motivation, the teaching methods, the intensity of the course, as well as the difficulties in the learning process.

Generally, an academic approach was applied, with both theoretical linguistic aspects, traditional language teaching, and an important role for culture in support of both approaches.

The biggest problems were speaking and pronunciation (speech production) and vocabulary (memorising new words). This is consistent with the findings of Wesche (1981). These students were highly skilled in their native language and had already mastered at least one other foreign language, which explains their strong preference for the traditional approach. This also explains why several students felt more comfortable in the first part of the course, as it was more traditional and grammar-focused. In the second block, they struggled more and felt challenged by activities that required language production, quick responses and memorization.

As for teaching methods, The combination of Analytical and Situational approaches was perceived as effective and contributed positively to the overall teaching quality. However, a smoother transition between the two methods would better support students in adapting to the shift in instructional style. Furthermore, the coherence of the course could be significantly improved through the availability of high-quality teaching materials. As it stands, lecturers often have to assemble their own resources, which may lead to inconsistencies in delivery and structure.

Conclusions about reaching A2 level proficiency cannot be reached as CEFR was not explicitly measured in the class. However, the interviews with students and teachers indicate that a single semester was insufficient to consistently achieve the A2 level of proficiency in Georgian. To attain comprehensive and sustainable results, it is recommended that two distinct courses be offered: "Georgian as a Second Language" and "Georgian Grammar." This division would better address the diverse needs of students, allowing for a more targeted and effective approach to language acquisition. Furthermore, integrating extracurricular activities into the curriculum, developed collaboratively between the two universities, would enhance students' learning experiences and provide practical opportunities to apply their language skills in authentic contexts. Moreover, it could be helpful if students can be offered the opportunity to extend their studies in Georgia, at Tbilisi State University. Indeed, it would be beneficial if students were offered (upon completing the course in Leiden) the opportunity to participate in practical language immersion programs in Georgia, specifically at TSU. Such an initiative would provide students with an invaluable chance to enhance their linguistic and cultural competencies through direct engagement in an authentic Georgian-speaking environment.

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**Russian and English Slang in Georgian.  
An Evaluation Study**  
რუსული და ინგლისური სლენგი ქართულში.  
შეფასებითი კვლევა

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**Abstract.** This study analyzes the sociolinguistic patterns of English and Russian slang usage in contemporary Georgian among speakers aged 15–35. The introduction outlines slang’s role in language change and social identity, especially within the context of globalization and post-Soviet political history. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach: quantitative analysis is based on survey data from 102 participants, while qualitative analysis applies thematic coding to open-ended responses. Results show that English slang is more frequently used by the younger segment of the cohort, while Russian slang tends to be used by those in the higher end of the age range. Respondents from Tbilisi report greater use of English borrowings, while those born in other regions more often use Russian-origin slang. Gender differences are modest, with male respondents slightly more frequent users of both varieties. Participants’ attitudes vary: some view slang as part of natural linguistic evolution, while others express concern over its effect on linguistic identity. The study reveals layered dynamics of language preference in contemporary Georgia.

**აბსტრაქტი.** კვლევა მიზნად ისახავს ინგლისური და რუსული სლენგის გამოყენების სოციოლინგვისტური მახასიათებლების ანალიზს თანამედროვე ქართულ ენაში 15 წლიდან 35 წლამდე ასაკობრივ ჯგუფში. შესავალ ნაწილში განხილულია სლენგის როლი გლობალიზაციისა და პოსტსაბჭოთა კულტურულ-პოლიტიკური კონტექსტის ფონზე. გამოყენებულია შერეული მეთოდოლოგია: რაოდენობრივი ანალიზი ეყრდნობა 102 მონაწილეზე ჩატარებული კითხვარის მონაცემებს, ხოლო თვისებრივი ღია კითხვების ანალიზი - ამავე მონაწილეთა პასუხებზე დაფუძნებულ თემატურ ანალიზს. შედეგი მიუთითებს, რომ ინგლისური სლენგი უფრო მეტად გავრცელებულია ახალგაზრდა ასაკობრივ ჯგუფში, ხოლო რუსულ სლენგს უმეტესად იყენებენ უფრო მაღალი ასაკობრივი ჯგუფის მონაწილეები. ანალოგიურად, თბილისელები უფრო ხშირად იყენებენ ინგლისურ სლენგს, ხოლო რეგიონებში დაბადებული რესპონდენტები - რუსულს. გენდერული განსხვავებები მცირეა, თუმცა კაცები ოდნავ უფრო ხშირად მიმართავენ საუბრისას ორივე ტიპის სლენგს. მონაწილეთა დამოკიდებულებები განსხვავდება: ნაწილი სლენგს ენობრივი ევოლუციის ნიშნად მიიჩნევს, ნაწილი კი ლინგვისტურ თვითმყოფადობაზე ზეგავლენის გამო მას კრიტიკულად უყურებს. კვლევა ასახავს ენობრივი არჩევანის მრავალშრიან სტრუქტურას თანამედროვე საქართველოში.

**Keywords:** slang, sociolinguistics, globalization, post-Soviet context

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** სლენგი, სოციოლინგვისტიკა, გლობალიზაცია, პოსტსაბჭოთა კონტექსტი

## 1. Introduction

Language is a dynamic entity that constantly evolves through various factors, including cultural interactions, historical events, and societal changes. One prominent aspect of linguistic evolution is the incorporation of loanwords and borrowings from other languages. The Georgian language, with its distinct linguistic characteristics and cultural traditions, has a long and rich historical heritage dating back thousands of years. Located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Georgian has come into contact with various linguistic communities, which have

contributed to the evolution and development of various slang terms and expressions. Andronikashvili (1966) delved into Georgian-Iranian language contact and old Persian borrowings, particularly in art-related vocabulary. Jorbenadze (1997) extensively examined Greek influence on Georgian, especially in Orthodox Christianity, adopting religious terminology and concepts from Greek due to the historical significance of the Greek Orthodox Church. Arabic and Turkish also contribute to Georgian vocabulary through historical interactions, with Arabic influencing everyday words and Turkish impacting animal-related and culinary terms.

Throughout this article we use the term (*English/Russian*) *slang use* to refer to the self-reported frequency with which speakers employ English- or Russian-origin slang items. For statistical purposes these frequencies were coded as *High* (daily use), *Moderate* (weekly use), and *Low* (monthly or rarer). We also use *socio-communicative* context to denote the interactional setting in which slang is used (e.g. peer conversation, social-media post, workplace exchange).

Russian and English have significantly impacted Georgian slang. The Russian influence dates back to the 19th-century Russification efforts and Soviet-era influence, as highlighted by Gabunia & Gochitashvili (2019). The 2008 Russia-Georgia war intensified linguistic divisions and shifted perceptions of the Russian language in Georgia, as discussed by Maisuradze (2016) and Jones (2015). Approximately 55% of Georgians claim fluency in Russian, but post-war, 70% see no urgent need to further develop their Russian language skills, and only 10% regularly read Russian literature (Maisuradze, 2016). On the other hand, the increasing globalization and influence of English have introduced English slang into Georgian, shaping it with a desire for modernity and cosmopolitanism, as noted by Kavtaradze & Mgeladze (2019), Lomidze (2008), Kirvalidze (2017), Goshkheletiani & Kikvadze (2018), and Davitashvili (2018).

Understanding the adaptation of Russian and English slang items in Georgian is crucial for revealing sociolinguistic dynamics and expressions of identity, particularly among the youth. Secondly, it contributes to the broader field of language contact and borrowing. Slang in Georgian is not merely a means of communication and the usage of slang words often has a sociolinguistic value as well. The present article will concentrate on various social variables that affect slang use in young speakers, as well as their attitudes toward English and Russian slang. The study aims to investigate the sociolinguistic use of English and Russian slang items in the Georgian language. It employs a mixed-methods approach, combining a qualitative and quantitative analysis of a questionnaire survey. Because slang innovation is typically youth-led, the questionnaire targeted speakers aged 15–35.

## 1.1 Research Questions

This all leads to the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of the selected social variables (age, gender identity, region of birth) on using English and Russian slang items?
2. In which socio-communicative contexts are English and Russian slang items used by Georgian speakers and what is their attitude towards using slang in general?

## 1.2 Defining Slang

Green (2015) defines slang as "informal, nonstandard vocabulary composed of coinages, arbitrarily changed words, and extravagant, forced, or facetious figures of speech" (p. 1). Hickey (2012) describes it as informal, often playful language used to create a sense of solidarity or exclusivity. Chernova and Shemanaeva (2017) find that youth slang is continuously evolving, presenting a significant and contradictory issue in modern lexicology. Adams argues in *Slang: The People's Poetry* (2012) that slang is a democratic and creative language form reflecting the diversity and vitality of modern culture. Slang is considered a complex and evolving aspect of language, often associated with creativity and diversity, contrary to the historical notion of being a language of the disreputable (Zhou & Fan, 2013; Nasution, 2016; Hendrajat et al., 2022; Pangestu, 2019; Amir, 2017; Izmaylova, Zamaletdinova, and Zholshayeva, 2017).

## 1.3 Motivations to Use Slang

Slang, a crucial language variety, is of particular interest to sociolinguists due to its strong connection to social and cultural factors. Research by Bucholtz & Hall (2005) and Eckert (2003) explores how slang is linked to social identity, signaling group membership and reinforcing social boundaries. Slang also serves as a tool for resistance or subversion, empowering marginalized groups (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Mendoza-Denton, 2008) but potentially leading to self-objectification and limiting social mobility (Baker & McEnery, 2015). The discussion on the role

of slang in language change involves perspectives from Labov (1972), suggesting it acts as a catalyst, while Baker & McEnery (2015) argue for a more complex relationship, with slang reflecting broader social and cultural changes rather than directly causing them. Overall, sociolinguistic research highlights the multifaceted nature of slang, significantly shaped by social and cultural influences.

## 1.4 Slang Use and Borrowings in Georgia

Borrowings, or loanwords, significantly contribute to the development of slang, reflecting cultural and societal influences and the dynamic evolution of language. The 2008 war between Georgia and Russia had linguistic implications, contributing to a shift in language attitudes driven by rising nationalism and a desire to distance oneself from Russian influence. While English has gained prominence due to globalisation, Russian still holds sway in various aspects of Georgian society. Research by Jalabadze (2017), Gotsiridze & Bokuchava (2014), and Shioshvili (2018) explores the impact of Russian slang on Georgian youth, hip hop music, and cultural ties. Other studies by Kikvidze and Alavidze (2016), Shanidze (2018), Mikautadze (2020), Darchia (2017), Kurdadze (2010), and Kavtaradze & Mgeladze (2019) delve into the use of English and Russian slang among Georgian youth in different contexts, revealing expressions of identity and rebellion against traditional culture. These studies collectively highlight the intricate nature of Russian slang in Georgian, influenced by diverse social and cultural factors, emphasising the need for further research. Additionally, borrowings in Georgian, shaped by English and Russian, have notably impacted Georgian slang across various domains, prompting a call for more exploration into the attitudes of Georgian youth towards slang.

## 1.5 Borrowings in Use

The subsequent section aims to provide a comprehensive examination of specific examples illustrating the assimilation of English and Russian slang items into the Georgian language. Below are English Slang Borrowings.

*Social Media and Work Related:*

- *modi, es posti davbustot<sup>h</sup>* – ‘Let’s boost this post’ (A Facebook Boost Post is a type of paid advertisement on Facebook promoting an existing post from a business page, Sprout Social, n.d.)
- *tsota khanshi dagirekav, akhla k<sup>h</sup>olze var* – ‘I will call you shortly, right now I am on call’
- *es p<sup>h</sup>oto sastsrapod dasapostia* – ‘We need to post this photo immediately’
- *breinsh(s)tormingi dagvekhmareba* – ‘Brainstorming will help us’ nm

*Everyday-life-related:*

- *eg vinme selebri<sup>h</sup>ia?* – ‘Is he/she some kind of celebrity?’
- *gushin dzaan bevri notip<sup>h</sup>ikeisheni mk<sup>h</sup>onda* – ‘I had a lot of notifications yesterday’
- *dzaan doup<sup>h</sup>i albomia* – ‘This album is super dope’
- *basianze dzaan bevri dragia* – ‘There are many drugs at Bassiani (club)’
- *literali egrea* – ‘That is literally so’

Below are Russian slang borrowings:

*Everyday-life-related:*

- *kokakola davlie da magra momkhoda* – ‘I drank cola and it got more energised’
- *kukhna mak<sup>h</sup>vs gasaremontebeli* – ‘My kitchen needs renovation’
- *spasiba, brat* – ‘thank you, bro’
- *kakraz magas vguliskhmobdi-* ‘That’s exactly what I meant’
- *kak dzela* – ‘What's up?’
- *imena dzaan lamazia* – ‘She is like really pretty’
- *karoche, dzaan nervebs mishlis* – ‘Shortly, he plays on my nerves’
- *idi nakhui* – ‘Fuck off’

## 2. Methodology

To address the two research questions above, the study examines how age, gender identity, and region of birth shape (i) The frequency of using English and Russian origin slang items and (ii) actual slang use across specific socio-communicative contexts (peer talk, social media, education, and the workplace), as well as their attitudes towards using slang in general.

The study was based on an online questionnaire and was conducted online. The research analysed the usage of English and Russian as slang in the Georgian language. It concentrated on the younger population. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the interview, while thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights related to slang use and sociolinguistic aspects.

The first step was to develop a structured questionnaire to collect data on social variables and the usage of Russian and English slang words among young Georgian speakers.

### 2.1 Procedures

The questionnaire included questions related to the participants' demographic information such as age, gender, place of birth, and native tongue. The other social variables employed in the study were the frequency of slang use, socio-communicative context of slang use, and their attitudes towards using English and Russian slang words, on language policies in regards to using English and Russian words in their tongue. The questionnaire was distributed through online platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, etc. The confidentiality of the questionnaire was ensured for all participants. The questionnaire was pilot-tested with a small group of participants to ensure clarity and relevance of the items.

A combination of convenience and random sampling techniques was used to recruit participants. This allowed the representation from different social groups within the target communities. The data for this study was collected through a questionnaire survey administered to participants in Georgia. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended questions, where participants provided numerical responses, and open-ended questions, allowing participants to elaborate and express their opinions.

### 2.2 Participants

There were a total of 102 participants in the study. Tables 1, 2, and 3 show the number of participants in each category based on: age distribution, gender distribution and region of birth.

**Table 1.** Ages of the Participants in the Study (N=102)

Age Group	Number of Participants
Group 1 (15-23 years old)	52
Group 2 (24-29 years old)	33
Group 3 (30-35 years old)	17

**Table 2.** Gender Identities of the Participants in the Study (N=102)

Gender	Number of Participants
Female	52
Male	50

**Table 3.** Regions of Birth of the Participants in the Study (N=102)

Region of Birth	Number of Participants
Capital City	52
Other Regions	50

#### *Analysis*

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative analyses to comprehensively address the research questions. This integrated approach facilitated a nuanced interpretation of the data, offering a more comprehensive insight into the study's objectives.

For the closed-ended questions, quantitative analysis was conducted using correlation analysis. Specifically, correlation coefficients were calculated to explore the relationships between variables of interest, including age, gender, region of birth and the usage of English and Russian slangs. The analysis focused on

examining the correlations between these variables to determine any significant associations. Frequency codes of high (daily use), moderate (weekly use) and low (monthly or rarer) are used to indicate the frequency.

Open-ended questions allowed participants to provide detailed responses. Thematic analysis was applied to code and categorize responses, revealing recurring themes and patterns in the qualitative data. This method provided a deeper exploration of participants' experiences, perspectives, and opinions regarding slang use and attitudes.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The aim of the study was to determine how age, gender identity, and region of birth correlates with the frequency of usage English and Russian slang items and the actual use of English and Russian origin slang in different socio-communicative contexts in Georgian, as well as their attitudes towards using slang in general. *Section 3.1-3.4* presents the quantitative tests that bear on RQ 1: the correlations between the three social variables and (a) frequency of English/Russian slang item use. *Sections 3.5 and 3.6* address RQ 2. Descriptive counts and thematic coding show how slang items cluster in four sociocommunicative contexts—peer talk, socialmedia interaction, education, and workplace, as well as the participants' attitudes towards using slang in general.

#### 3.1 Age and Slang Use

Table 4 provides an overview of the correlation between age groups and how often each group reports using English and Russian slang. “High” = daily/almost daily, “Moderate” = once or twice a week, “Low” = once a month or less. Younger speakers favour English slang ( $r = -0.12$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), whereas older speakers favour Russian slang ( $r = 0.07$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 4.** Correlation between Age and Slang use (102 participants)

Age	English Slang			Russian Slang		
	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low
14-23	30	15	7	10	20	22
24-29	18	10	5	12	11	10
30-35	5	8	4	8	6	3

The correlation between age and English slang use was significant at the 0.05 level ( $r = -0.12$ ), while the correlation between age and Russian slang use was significant at the 0.01 level ( $r = 0.07$ ). As seen in Table 4, younger individuals (under 30) show a moderate frequency of English slang use but low usage of Russian slang. In contrast, participants over 50 exhibit a high frequency of Russian slang use. These results are consistent with age-graded variation studies, indicating that younger generations are more inclined towards English slang, while older individuals tend to use more Russian slang (Smith, 2015; Gabunia & Gochitashvili, 2019). These results also confirm various studies conducted in age-graded variation. In this specific research, the usage of both English and Russian are discussed, showing that Russian is more frequently used by the older speakers, while English is more popular among young people. Generally, as discussed by Smith (2015), younger generations introduce and employ slang words. In the case of Georgia, the declining popularity of the Russian slang among youth can be explained by historical reasons (dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the 2008 war as discussed by Gabunia & Gochitashvili, 2019). As for the rising tendency to use English, in the modern context, it is hardly surprising that the internet and social media platforms have become catalysts for linguistic innovation. Crystal (2001) discusses that English is the “lingua franca” of the internet, thus its implications on slang use is also quite common.

#### 3.2 Gender Differences in Slang Use

Table 5 compares women ( $n = 52$ ) and men ( $n = 50$ ) on the same three-point frequency scale. Men are slightly more frequent users of both English ( $r = 0.15$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and Russian ( $r = 0.13$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) slang.

**Table 5.** Correlation between Gender and Slang use (102 Participants)

Gender	English Slang			Russian Slang		
	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low
Male	25	15	10	20	20	10
Female	28	18	6	15	20	17

The raw counts are shown in Table 3, but the main patterns can be stated in words:

- English slang – Roughly one half of the men (25/50) report daily use, compared with a little more than one half of the women (28/52). When we convert the whole distribution into a Spearman correlation, the association between gender and Englishslang frequency is small but significant ( $r = +0.15, p < 0.05$ ).
- Russian slang – Daily use is reported by 20/50 men and 15/52 women. Here again the association is small but significant ( $r = +0.13, p < 0.05$ ).

As shown in Table 3, men demonstrate a higher frequency of both English and Russian slang use compared to women. Additionally, men express a stronger desire for regulating slang use, aligning with previous research and theories on gender differences in language attitudes (Labov, 1963; Trudgill, 1972; Smakman, 2018). However, it should be mentioned that the difference is modest. Men are slightly more inclined than women to use both English and Russian slang, but the difference is modest: roughly five extra daily users out of fifty.

### 3.3 Correlation between Place of Birth and Slang Use

Table 6 compares respondents born in the capital (Tbilisi,  $n = 52$ ) with those born elsewhere in Georgia ( $n = 50$ ). Capital-born speakers lead in daily English slang use, whereas noncapital speakers lead in daily Russian slang use. The associations are modest but statistically significant: English slang  $r = -0.12$  ( $p < 0.05$ ); Russian slang  $r = 0.13$  ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 6.** Regional Influence on Language Dynamics (102 Participants)

Place of Birth	English Slang			Russian Slang		
	High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low
Capital	30	15	7	10	20	22
Non-Capital	23	18	9	20	20	10

Exactly half of the sample (52 people) were born in Tbilisi, while the other half (50) were born in other regions. Using the same High / Moderate / Low scale as above, we obtain the following picture

- English slang – Daily use is most common in the capital (30/52). Outside the capital only 23/50 respondents report daily use. The overall correlation between region of birth and Englishslang frequency is negative but small ( $r = -0.12, p < 0.05$ ), meaning that moving away from Tbilisi is associated with a slight drop in Englishslang frequency.
- Russian slang – The pattern reverses: daily Russian slang is reported by 20/50 noncapital respondents but only 10/52 capital respondents. The corresponding correlation is positive and of similar size ( $r = +0.13, p < 0.05$ ).

Put simply, Tbilisi speakers lead in Englishslang adoption, whereas speakers from other parts of Georgia retain more Russian slang. The numerical effect is small (about seven extra daily users per fifty people) but statistically reliable, echoing wellknown urban–rural contrasts in language contact situations. This suggests regional variations in language preferences (Bobanovic and Grzinic, 2011; Preston, 2010).

### 3.4 Summary of the Qualitative Results

Overall, the numbers show clear but small links between the three social factors and how people treat slang in Georgia:

- Age: Younger speakers are the main drivers of English slang, whereas older speakers keep Russian slang alive.
- Gender: Men report slightly higher use of both slangs and are more in favour of regulating them, but the gap is modest.
- Region of birth: Capitalborn respondents reach most often for English slang; those from other regions turn to Russian slang more often and are less eager to police either variety.

Because each correlation coefficient is below  $\pm 0.20$ , these patterns are statistically real yet not strong enough to predict individual behaviour on their own. In other words, age, gender, and region set the stage, but other factors—personal experience, peer group, media exposure—still shape day-to-day slang choices. Together, the findings

highlight how multiple layers of social identity interact to steer language use and language policy attitudes in contemporary Georgia.

### 3.5 Qualitative Analysis

#### *English Slang use and Socio-Communicative context*

Table 7 summarizes the socio-communicative contexts, where participants deemed it appropriate to use English slang items. The contexts were as follows: i) peers/friends/social networks, (ii) school/university, (iii) work settings, and (iv) “never/negative view.”

**Table 7.** Contexts for Using English Slang (102 Participants)

Context	Number of Participants
Peer, friends, social networks	87
School and university	32
Work settings	41
Negative views and non-usage	5

A majority of participants (87 out of 102) mentioned using slang when communicating with friends and peers, while a considerable number also reported using it within social networks. Interestingly, slang use was also reported in educational settings like schools and universities (32 out of 102). Moreover, some participants acknowledged using slang in work settings (41 out of 102), indicating its presence in professional environments. However, a small minority expressed negative views towards English slang use (5 out of 102).

#### *Russian Slang use and Socio-Communicative Context*

Similarly, Table 8 shows the distribution of Russian slang items usage across the same four socio-communicative contexts:

**Table 8.** Contexts for Using Russian Slang (102 Participants)

Context	Number of Participants
Older generation	25
Peer, friends, social networks	49
Work settings	None
Negative views and non-usage	23

A high number of participants used Russian slang with the older generation (25 out of 102) and within their social circles, including friends and peers (49 out of 102). However, none of the participants reported using Russian slang in work settings. Additionally, a notable portion expressed negative views towards Russian slang items usage (23 out of 102), with 23 participants specifically mentioning that they do not engage in it.

#### *Attitudes towards Using Slang in General*

Table 9 summarizes three stance categories toward foreign slang in Georgian: (i) acceptance as natural language evolution (48 replies), (ii) concern for preserving linguistic integrity (31), and (iii) resignation to globalization’s influence (23).

**Table 9.** Attitudes towards Using Slang in General (102 Participants)

Attitude	Number of Participants
Acceptance of language evolution	48
Preservation of linguistic integrity	31
Inevitable influence of globalization	23

The table illustrates that a significant portion of participants (48 out of 102) embraced language evolution, viewing the adoption of foreign slang as a natural part of linguistic change. On the other hand, 31 participants expressed concerns about preserving the linguistic integrity of their native language, emphasizing the importance of maintaining its unique characteristics. Additionally, 23 participants acknowledged the inevitable influence of globalization on language change, accepting it as a consequence of increased cultural exchange and interconnectedness.

### 3.6 Summary of the Qualitative Data

#### *Attitudes towards English Slang*

Participants provided valuable insights into the cultural influence of English slang on their native language, revealing various perspectives on the matter. Here are the key points expressed by the respondents:

- **Soft Power of Western/American Culture:** 17 participants attributed the use of English in their native language to the influence of Western or American culture, perceiving it as a manifestation of the soft power exerted by these cultures in media, entertainment, and technology.
- **Lack of Appropriate Terms in Georgian:** 27 suggested that the adoption of English slang is driven by the absence of suitable terms in Georgian, filling semantic gaps or conveying concepts without direct equivalents in their native language.
- **Inevitability due to European Integration:** 21 participants connected the increased usage of English to their country's integration into the European Union, perceiving English as the dominant international language within the EU, necessary for effective communication and participation in a European context.
- **Temporary Trend or "Cool" Factor:** A perspective shared by 37 participants is that the current usage of English in their language is a passing phase or trend, attributed to its perceived fashionable or cool status at present.
- **Expression of Emotions and Influence of Media:** 41 participants noted that English is often perceived as better suited for expressing emotions, influenced by platforms like TikTok, social media, and movies, where English enjoys high prestige and is associated with youth culture.

#### *Attitudes towards Russian Slang*

The participants' perspectives on the cultural influence of Russian slang on their native language revealed several key themes:

- **Soviet Legacy and Historical Influence:** 41 Participants recognized the significant historical connection between Russia and Georgia, particularly during the Soviet era, acknowledging the once-strong influence of Russian on the Georgian language.
- **Declining Influence and Rooted Terms:** 58 participants noted that the influence of Russian in contemporary Georgian society has diminished compared to the past, though certain deeply rooted terms and expressions in Georgian are still used.
- **Political Context and Rejection of Russian Influence:** 36 participants expressed strong sentiments regarding the use of Russian in their language, considering it as the "enemy language" due to political tensions, and advocating for its avoidance to maintain linguistic independence.

These themes underscore the complex relationship between Russian and Georgian, shaped by historical, generational, and political factors. Understanding these perspectives is crucial for analyzing the dynamics of language and cultural influence between the two languages.

## 4. Conclusion

By investigating the utilization of English and Russian slang within the Georgian context, this study aimed to shed light on the multifaceted interplay between slang use patterns, regulatory frameworks, and societal norms, offering insights into individuals' perceptions and evaluations of these linguistic phenomena.

The findings from both the qualitative and quantitative analyses provide valuable insights into the usage of English and Russian slang in the Georgian context, shedding light on the sociolinguistic dynamics and expressions of identity among Georgian speakers. By integrating the results with existing literature, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding slang use and attitudes towards slang.

## 4.1 Age, Gender, and Regional Variations in Slang Use

The quantitative analysis revealed correlations between age, gender, region of birth, and slang use (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Labov, 1973; Trudgill, 1974; Milroy, 2004). While age showed a slight negative correlation with English slang use and a slight positive correlation with Russian slang use, the effect sizes were minimal, suggesting that age has a limited impact on slang use. Gender differences were observed, with men demonstrating a higher frequency for using borrowed slang items and a stronger inclination towards language regulation compared to women (Milroy, 1981; Eckert, 1989; Paulston and Tucker, 2003). Additionally, differences in slang use were observed between the capital and non-capital regions, indicating regional variations in linguistic practices (Takhtarova et al., 2015; Dundua, 2023; Hajanto, 2021; Bobanovic and Grzinic, 2011).

## 4.2 Cultural Influence and Sociolinguistic Motivations

The qualitative analysis highlighted the cultural influence of English and Russian slang use on Georgian speakers. English slang use was associated with the soft power of Western or American culture, perceived as trendy and cool, particularly among the youth (Kavtaradze & Mgeladze, 2019; Lomidze, 2008; Kirvalidze, 2017). In contrast, Russian slang use was rooted in historical ties, reflecting Georgia's historical connection with Russia, albeit with a declining prevalence over time (Gabunia & Gochitashvili, 2019; Maisuradze, 2016; Jones, 2015). Participants expressed various sociolinguistic motivations for using slang, including expressions of identity, resistance, and solidarity, influenced by social, cultural, and political factors (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Mendoza-Denton, 2008).

## 4.3 Attitudes towards Slang

Participants held diverse attitudes towards the impact of slang on the Georgian language. While some viewed slang as a natural part of language evolution, others expressed concerns about its potential negative effects, such as linguistic degradation and cultural dilution (Green, 2015; Hickey, 2012). Attitudes towards slang use varied, with some participants embracing its use in specific contexts, while others advocated for its avoidance. These attitudes were influenced by factors such as nationalism, cultural identity, and perceptions of language prestige.

## 4.4 Comparative Perspectives

Comparing English and Russian slang use revealed distinct patterns shaped by historical legacies, cultural influences, and linguistic dynamics. English slang was perceived as more prevalent in informal settings, and associated with modernity, while Russian slang was often used in conversations with older generations and rooted in historical contexts (Maisuradze, 2016; Shioshvili, 2018). Understanding these differences provides valuable insights into the nuanced dynamics of language adoption and cultural influences in Georgia.

## 4.5 Cultural Dynamics and Language Evolution

Findings of this research align with previous research highlighting the pervasive influence of Western and American culture on the adoption of English slang among Georgian youth. This trend reflects broader patterns of globalization and cultural exchange, as noted by Kavtaradze & Mgeladze (2019) and Lomidze (2008). Conversely, attitudes towards Russian slang are influenced by historical ties between Georgia and Russia, with its usage declining among younger generations, consistent with the findings of Maisuradze (2016) and Jones (2015).

## 4.6 Social Variables and Linguistic Practices

The study reveals generational shifts in linguistic practices, with age serving as a significant predictor of slang use. This finding is in line with previous research by Labov (1973) and Chambers (2013), which suggests that language change is often influenced by generational factors. Additionally, gender differences in language attitudes and usage are observed, corroborating the findings of Milroy & Milroy (1993) and Smakman (2018). Furthermore, regional variations in slang use underscore the diverse linguistic landscapes within Georgia, consistent with previous studies by Takhtarova et al. (2015) and Dundua (2023).

## 4.7 Identity Construction and Language Ideologies

The study highlights the role of language in identity construction, with English and Russian slang serving as markers of sociocultural belonging. English slang is associated with modernity and cosmopolitanism, reflecting

broader trends in multicultural contexts, while Russian slang evokes historical ties and generational divides, echoing findings by Goshkheletiani & Kikvadze (2018) and Jones (2015).

## 4.8 Future Research

The sample size in future studies should be larger, and they should focus on nuanced regional differences. Including more granular regional data would enhance the analysis. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases. Future research could incorporate alternative methodologies to validate findings; preferably self-reliance is combined with other approaches. Also, the findings are context-specific to Georgia and may not be universally applicable. Comparative research in diverse contexts could provide broader insights.

Future studies could track slang use longitudinally and thus elucidate temporal language change patterns. Comparative analyses across diverse multicultural contexts could highlight sociopolitical influences on language dynamics. Furthermore, socioeconomic factors could be included as a factor, as these seemed to be relevant in the present investigation. Exploring socioeconomic determinants of slang use could deepen understanding of social dynamics. Addressing these limitations and pursuing future research avenues can advance our understanding of language dynamics in multicultural societies.

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