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1999

Lund University, Dept. of Linguistics
Working Papers 47 (1999), 149–168

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With its long history of about three thousand years of statehood and with its geographic situation in the Caucasus, at the cross-roads of the Christian and Muslim worlds, Georgia represents an interesting picture in terms of linguistic (and not only linguistic) diversity.

During the Soviet period and even since the Russian expansion in Georgia (19th century), minority and majority languages and identities formed a complicated hierarchy in Georgia.

Changes during the post-Soviet period have been reflected on this hierarchy. The official status of the languages has not changed but different intragroup and intergroup attitudes have emerged.

This article is an attempt to present a general review of these processes. The hierarchy of minorities from the demographic point of view is discussed in section 1. Section 2 deals with the hierarchy of languages in Georgia, and section 3 discusses the ambiguity of this hierarchy. In sections 4 and 5, the means of creating of a new Soviet identity connected with the script, name-giving and mother tongue are briefly discussed. The paper regards language as a social characteristic (de Vries 1992:211).

Introduction

Georgia is a country with an area of 69,700 square kilometres and a population of 5,726,000 inhabitants (July 1995 estimate). The population consists of different nationalities. The major groups are Georgians (70%), Abkhaz (1.8%), Ossetians (3%), Russians (6.3%), Azerbaijanis (5.7%), Armenians (8.1%), Jews (0.5%), Assyrians (0.1%), Greeks (1.9%), Kurds (0.6%) (1989 census).

The minorities living in Georgia have different historical backgrounds, degree of identity maintenance, status and attitude to the majority.

In the beginning of the 19th century, non-Georgians in Georgia made up a tenth of the population, and only 25 years later, a fourth. These drastic changes of the structure of the population in Georgia in the 19th century were caused by the wars between Russia and Turkey and between Russia and Iran. Armenians and Greeks, persecuted in Turkey and Iran, found a refuge in Georgia. Russia had a specific demographic policy during these processes.

In the 19th century, Ossetians started to settle intensively in the foothills and the lowlands of Shida Kartli (a part of northern Georgia). Most groups of Kurds and Assyrians living in Georgia today immigrated to Georgia in the 20th century. Russians settled in Georgia in the 19th and 20th centuries. Jews, however, have about 26 centuries of history in Georgia and they have never been persecuted in Georgia.

1. The three levels in the demographic hierarchy of minorities in Georgia during the Soviet period

When minority groups or minority languages are studied, usually relations between two groups (and languages) are meant. The situation in Georgia and in all the USSR was even more complicated in this respect. As the USSR was a state consisting of many countries, and each of these countries already had formed its inner structure of majorities and minorities before becoming a part of the new state, more than two levels have appeared in the hierarchy of minorities. Interaction between all these levels should be taken into consideration in order to understand the specific processes that took place in the republics of the USSR, among them Georgia.

From the demographic point of view, the minorities in Georgia formed three levels during the Soviet period:

Group 1. Minority relative to the total population of the USSR. Georgians who live in their historic territory and are the demographic majority in this territory, became a minority relative to the total population of the state after Georgia became a part of the USSR.

Group 2. Minorities relative to the total population of Georgia. Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Ossetians, Russians, etc. living in Georgia belong to this group. These are ethnicities that basically live in other countries whereas a part of them have come to Georgia from their homeland (and in some cases also from other countries, for example, part of the Armenians and Greeks from Turkey and Iran). The problem of the Abkhaz will not be discussed here.

Two groups of minorities, Abkhaz and Ossetians, had autonomy in Soviet Georgia, the Abkhazian Soviet Autonomous Republic and the South Ossetian Soviet Autonomous Region.

At the same time, the minorities in this group are also minorities in relation to the total population of the USSR. Relative to this group of minorities, Georgians may be called the primary level majority group while all the population of the USSR, and more precisely the Russian population of Russia, are the

Table 1. Hierarchy of minorities.

Minority groups in Georgia	Majority groups	Population
–	Secondary level majority	Total population of the USSR, particularly, Russians in Russia
(1) Minority relative to the secondary level majority	Primary level majority	Total population of Georgia, particularly Georgians in Georgia
(2) Minority relative to the primary level majority	Regional majority (in some cases)	Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Ossetians, Russians, etc. in Georgia
(3) Regional minority	–	Georgians in some regions of Georgia

secondary level majority group. As mentioned above, the primary level majority is a minority group relative to the secondary level majority.

Group 3. Regional minority. A minority that lives in its historical territory, but has turned into a demographic minority. An example of this is the Georgians in some regions of Georgia. Factors that give rise to such a situation are:
(a) intensive immigration of other groups into the territory. Georgians are the demographic minority in some regions of Georgia (Akhalkalaki, Ninotsminda, Tsalka, etc.).
(b) struggle of the minority group against the majority group in order to drive them out of the area: in 1992-93 Georgians "have been wiped out in Abkhazia" (Zhorzholiani et al. 1995:95).

The draft project of the bill on minorities in Georgia recognises the fact that Georgians as a demographic minority in some regions of Georgia need protection as an endangered group: "It is necessary to provide the juridical guarantees in order to avoid discrimination of those who do not belong to the minority in those regions of Georgia where the minority group is the majority part of population" (Zhorzholiani & Abashidze 1999:18.2). The demographic hierarchy of minorities is summarised in table 1.

2. Languages and their hierarchy in Georgia

2.1. Three levels in the language hierarchy

"Only about one-quarter of the world's states currently recognise more than one official language – although it is perfectly clear that virtually none of the remaining three-quarters are anything like monolingual" (Edwards 1994:35). Georgia belongs to that one quarter of the world's states that recognises more than one official language, Georgian in all of Georgia and Abkhaz in the

Table 2. Hierarchy of languages.

Russian	Secondary level majority language
Georgian	Primary level majority language
Armenian, Azerbaijanian, Ossetian, …	Minority languages in Georgia

Abkhazian Autonomous Republic. This applies both to the Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

It has been mentioned that: "The new state [USSR] was to have no official language, and this still remains true *de jure* for the USSR and its constituent parts: Russian is not the or one of the official languages, nor are any of the languages of the Union Republics or lower levels of autonomy" (Comrie 1981:22). Still, Georgian did in fact have the status of an official language, while Russian did not. This phenomenon is easily explainable: Georgian as a minority language relative to Russian needed some kind of protection while Russian, with its territorial, demographic and political advantages, did not need such a paragraph in the constitution. "As long as the cultural identity of the majority group is not threatened, there is no particular need to emphasise or reinforce it, nor is there a need to denounce it" (Liebkind 1984:40).

But, of course, the recognition of these two official languages in Georgia does not reflect all the diversity and complexity of the linguistic portrait of the country.

For centuries Georgian has been the majority language in Georgia. After the Russian expansion in Georgia in the 19th century Russian took over the place of the majority language by its rights. Georgian, however, retained its place as a majority language relative to other languages in Georgia (Armenian, Azerbaijanian, etc.). Thus three levels in the hierarchy of languages in Georgia appeared (table 2).

As is known, the Russian Empire aimed at the Russification of all nations of the Empire. During the Soviet period the same aim was maintained: to merge the nations. But, unlike the pre-Soviet policy the Soviet policy was elaborated and decorated with a new ideology. With the slogan of equality of nations and languages, Russia tried to change these three levels of the language hierarchy into two levels followed by a single one.

The slogan of equality made it possible to grant all languages the same rights on the whole territory of the Soviet Union despite the national territorial borders. This was meant to create two levels in the hierarchy of languages – Russian, on the one hand, and all other languages on the other hand by placing Georgian at the same level as Armenian, Azerbaijanian and other

languages in Georgia. Next, the final step would have been an accomplishment of this process with only one level: Russian.

2.2. Megrelian, Svan and Batsbi (Tsova Tush)

Megrelian, Svan and Batsbi represent a special case among the languages of Georgia. Megrelians, Svans and Batsbis consider themselves Georgians and are regarded and treated as Georgians, but speak a different language in addition to Georgian. Their literary language is Georgian and almost all of them consider Georgian as their mother tongue along with Megrelian, Svan or Batsbi, respectively. Megrelian and Svan are Kartvelian languages like Georgian, while Batsbi (Tsova Tush) belongs to the Nakh group of the north-east Caucasian languages. They are not perceived as different ethnicities neither by themselves nor by other Georgians.

This is a very interesting example of consciousness of the citizenship which has been established for centuries. This specific situation in Georgia is often difficult to understand for outsiders, especially when in many cases very closely related languages, almost dialects of one language are considered as different languages and, as Edwards 1994:23-24 says, "We must also bear in mind here issues of political allegiance and national identity (and power: 'A language,' said Max Weinreich (1894-1969) 'is a dialect that has an army and navy')".

Georgia represents the reverse example of issues of political allegiance and national identity: people who speak Georgian, Svan and Megrelian, and also Batsbi, have a 'shared army and navy' and the shared Georgian language that has been even stronger than army and navy: "For many centuries literary Georgian has been the language of state administration, law, religion, science, education, art and inter-ethnic communication in Georgia. It retained these functions in the period of the political disunity of Georgia, because – in spite of the separation – in all parts of Georgia Georgian was the language of political administration, divine service and culture. But where the position of the Georgian language was weakened, the Georgian ethnos began to decline" (Jorbenadze 1991:7-8). To claim that one's mother tongue is Georgian, in this case, means to claim that one belongs to the Georgian nation. This is not only a subjective, but also an objective factor even though only subjective perception and evaluation of one's own identity is very important, and may be a crucial factor in definition of identity.

If we do not look at the history of the Georgian nation but only at the fact that a Megrelian, a Svan and a Batsbi recognise Georgian as their mother

tongue, it is easy to misunderstand this situation as the result of Soviet totalitarian policy (Comrie 1981:3; Lewis 1972:87). This misunderstanding must be the reason for claiming that Soviet scholars regard all Kartvelian languages as "so many dialects of Georgian" (Lewis 1972:40). Georgian scholars have never considered Megrelian, Laz and Svan as dialects of Georgian. The disagreement between Soviet and non-Soviet scholars has been rather to consider Megrelian and Laz as two different languages or as two dialects of Zan (and not of Georgian).

These languages have survived without any institutional support under the condition of using Georgian as a literary language for a long period (Georgian is documented as a literary language from the 5th century A.D.). This is an interesting case for sociolinguists. Diglossia in this case has not reinforced any low status of any group (cf. Landry & Allard 1992:226). In the consciousness of sharing one nationality, one citizenship and one culture under permanent struggle for survival of independence and statehood, diglossia appeared not to create low status of any group or individual, at least not in a different way than diglossia involving a dialect and a literary language.

If shared Georgian consciousness had not been preserved among all these groups, probably none of them and none of these languages (included Georgian) would have existed today.

3. Ambiguity problems of the language hierarchy

The twofold status of Georgia, being a country with a long history, statehood, culture and traditions, and at the same time a constituent part of another state, determined the ambiguous status of minorities in Georgia along with the demographic factors. Ambiguity of status is observable in all groups of minorities:

Group 1. Georgians and the Georgian language had minority as well as majority status at the same time. Despite the fact that "bilingualism involving Russian is taking over from bilingualism involving Georgian" (Comrie 1981:36), the type of bilingualism oral/literate (Lewis 1972:278) quite often involves Georgian. A kind of Georgian koine for non-Georgians in Georgia does exist. In formation of this koine the linguistic affiliation of non-Georgians, who are basically speakers of non-Caucasian languages, plays its part.

Group 2. Russians who lived in Georgia objectively belonged to the second group of minorities (relative to Georgians from the demographic point of view), but subjectively considered themselves as part of the Russian population

of the USSR, i.e. as part of the majority in the USSR. At the same time, their mother tongue Russian occupied the first place in the hierarchy of languages (table 2).

Other ethnicities in group 2 (table 1) also tended to consider themselves as a minority not relative to Georgians in Georgia (primary level majority), but as a minority only relative to the total population of the USSR, in particular relative to the Russians (secondary level majority). This attitude was encouraged by all means by the Soviet policy (encouragement of national diversity of the population by ideology, passport, language, demographic policy, and so on, see below).

After the Soviet period, the second group of minorities turned out to be minorities only in relation to the Georgians, lacking the Soviet (Russian) state with its supranational and even suprareligious or atheistic ideology (communism). Thus this second group found itself to be a part not of the USSR (where every nationality had its contribution, and everybody had the same 'elder brother', Russia), but to be a minority in Georgia, an old country with a very clearly defined historic and cultural face of its own. Official rights of any group in Georgia have not changed during the post-Soviet period, but some of these groups felt for the first time like minorities in relation to their former 'equals'. They protest against the new hierarchy and try to maintain their status, or more precisely to obtain a new status in Georgia. The forms of these protests depend on the demographic and geographic situation of the group. The hard socio-economic situation in Georgia also plays its part in this case.

Protests emerged as soon as Georgia tried to strengthen or to start to realise the function of Georgian as an official language. In 1988, such an attempt caused the protests of Abkhaz and Ossetians. Ossetians refused to introduce Georgian as a subject at the Institute of Pedagogics in Tskhinvali. The Georgian reaction to this was to introduce Ossetian as a subject at the faculties with instruction in Georgian at the same institute in Tskhinvali.

In 1997, 91.65% of the inhabitants of Tskhinvali who participated in inquiries made by the newspaper *Molodjozh Osetii* were against establishing Georgian in television programs, particularly in information programs, 4.2% agreed and 4.2% hesitated (*Gamura* 1997, 24.VII N33, p. 2). These results are not unexpected as by this time Georgians had left the area, "their ancestral homesteads and become refugees in their own country" (Zhorzholiani et al. 1995a:13).

Another fact to consider is that some groups from the second group of minorities are the demographic majority in some regions of Georgia. It has

occurred that one minority has assimilated another minority group: one example is the Greek refugees who came to Georgia from Turkey in 1830. They settled around Akhalkalaki where Armenian refugees from Turkey lived, that came here about the same time. Around fifty Greek families have been Armenised in this area (Lomsadze 1975:337). This is an interesting example of assimilation: one minority group appears as a majority relative to another minority group and assimilates them.

Group 3. Georgians also have ambiguous status in some regions of Georgia: they are the demographic minority, but consider themselves (or have a consciousness of being) the majority because the territory is a part of Georgia, and Georgian is the majority language in Georgia. At the same time they have also obtained some signs of minorities. A sociological study of migration processes shows that a significant part of the Georgian population would prefer to move from the area where they are a regional minority (Lortkipanidze 1994:100-103). In some cases they have been assimilated: some families by Greeks in Samtskhe, in the village Tsikhisdzhvari in the 19th century (Lomsadze 1975:337), and by Armenians in Samtkhe-Dzhavakheti, in three villages around Akhalkalaki, where Georgians moved from a Georgian village in Turkey in the 19th century (Lomsadze 1975:363-364). In the 17-18th centuries many Georgians in Kartli, in particular tradesmen and merchants, also adopted the Armenian confession, which was a step towards their Armenisation (Maisuradze 1982:301-322).

All these processes can be called reversed assimilation: a minority group assimilates the representatives of the majority group. The crucial factor is the demographic factor and the intergroup sociopsychological climate which was formed when Georgia itself was either a weakened state (17th-18th centuries) or a part of another state (19th century) that tried to change the national face of Georgia.

4. Attempts to create a new identity: manipulations of existing identities during the Soviet period

The goal of the state was to create a new nation with one identity – a Soviet identity. This goal was most often expressed as the fusion of nations, the coming together and the subsequent merging of nations, creating a new unity.

Stalin defined the concept of nation as “An historically evolved stable community of people which is characterised by the following features: 1. a common language; 2. a shared and identifiable territory; 3. its own economic

life pursued in common; 4. a common culture based on distinctive psychological characteristics" (Stalin 1950:16; cited from Lewis 1972:60). A society missing any of these four signs was defined as an ethnos with ethnic consciousness, but not a nation which has a national consciousness.

One of the most complicated steps in merging the nations was to have one language and one national consciousness on the whole territory of the USSR.

Changing an ideology or religion is often the first step on the way to change the identity. The Soviet policy involved this as well: the implementation of a new ideology and higher evaluation of Russian history, culture and language than the national values was the starting point for identity change. Another aspect of preparing a basis for identity change would have been the disintegration of the population in the republics, and to direct the orientation of all groups of minorities immediately to the secondary level majority (see table 1) as to the centre of desirable integration and consequently of desirable fusion. This implied depriving the primary level majority of the function of being a centre of integration for the population of the republic. This was the reason for encouragement of the ethnic diversity in republics.

4.1. Means connected with the passport: citizenship, nationality, ethnicity

One of the means of encouraging ethnic diversity was connected with the passport.

The understanding of citizenship and nationality usually coincide. Ethnicity is a lower notion in this hierarchy. "If ethnic consciousness develops further around territorial criteria, it may develop into national consciousness, which, in turn, may imply demands for national (geographical) autonomy" (Liebkind 1984:25). Nationality is a higher level compared to ethnicity by Stalin's formulation too (see above).

In the USSR, the notion of already existing nationality was demoted to the notion of ethnicity. Soviet passports specified two notions: citizenship (Soviet) and nationality. Nationality was not connected with place of birth or permanent residence, it was equalised to ethnicity. This was one of many other means of removing the borders between the different states of which the USSR consisted, and to remove these borders in the minds of people.

The Soviet passport indicated citizenship, nationality and place of birth. This meant that one could be born for example in Georgia, be Armenian, have Armenian as one's mother tongue, Russian as one's second language, and be a citizen of the USSR.

In order to understand this situation we can imagine the EU with the political, military and ideological leadership of Germany, for example, and a person living in Sweden who is a citizen of EU, with Turkish nationality, for example, and Turkish as his mother tongue and German as his second language. The place of birth is Sweden.

4.2. Means connected with the script and name-giving

Among the means of manipulation were those connected with the script and with name-giving. One of the ways to manipulate the sociopsychological climate in the whole country, or to manipulate the attitude of a minority group both to the primary level majority and the secondary level majority, as well as the attitude of the primary level majority to the secondary level majority, is to create profitable conditions for segregation rather than for integration between the minorities on the one hand, and the primary level majority on the other hand.

Among these means were change of (1) script, (2) names of ethnic groups, (3) names of territories, (4) place names, (5) endings of surnames.

Change of script. A script can have a function of expressing social identity. "The attachment of script to social identity is clearest, perhaps, when we see the same language written in different scripts by different subgroups. Serbo-Croatian, for example, is written in Latin script by catholic Croats and Cyrillic script by Bosnian Muslims" (Billigmeier 1987). A language written in different scripts in different periods also shows changes of orientation. The scripts of some groups in Georgia are significant in this respect.

The history of the Ossetian script is one example. In 1753 the first book in Ossetian was written and published in handwriting by Georgian missionary priests. The book was written with the Georgian alphabet since an Ossetian alphabet did not exist that time. In 1798 Gaioz Arkhimandriti (Taqaishvili) wrote a Slavic-Ossetian Catechism. In 1820-1821 the first Ossetian alphabet was created on the basis of the Georgian script by the Ossetian Ivane Ialghuzidze. In the 1830s, a new Ossetian alphabet was created on the basis of the Russian alphabet. In 1923-1938 the Latin script, and during 1938-1954 the Georgian script was used in the South Ossetian ASSR. In 1954 the script was reverted to Cyrillic (for the reasons of the reforms, see Lewis 1972:169-170; Isaev 1979:251-270; Comrie 1981:23, 33; Gvanceladze 1998).

Today in Georgia (and in all the former Soviet Union), the reverse processes take place: a turn from Cyrillic to other scripts. Azerbaijanis begin to use the Latin script like the Turks. Assyrians and Kurds in Georgia used

Cyrillic (earlier, in the 1920s, the Latin script was used, and also their old script). Now they start to learn and use their old alphabet and also the Latin script, like Assyrians and Kurds outside USSR. Ossetians and Abkhaz still use the Cyrillic script as a manifestation of their political orientation.

Change of names of ethnic groups. Not only can history create a name, but names also have their roles in the creation of history. Attitudes create names and names create attitudes. The name of an ethnic group as a means to connect the group with a certain history and a certain identity is a powerful tool for creating or strengthening an identity.

This extract from a book by an Assyrian author is one more proof of this: "Why are we confused and why do we not know the name of our nation? Why do we call ourselves different names? The reason is our undeveloped self-consciousness … We are moving from one country to another without pride in our past, without having any aim in the present and without thinking about the future. Let us know ourselves … In order to preserve our national existence let us call ourselves with the right name, corresponding to the historical reality and a well-known name: Assyrians" (Sarmaz 1965).

Some groups in Georgia have an especially interesting history in this respect.

The part of the population of Georgia which are called Azerbaijanis today were described as Turks until the 1939 census. After 1939 they have been Azerbaijanis.

Georgians who became Muslims in the 17-18th centuries in Samtskhe-Dzhavakheti (a part of Georgia) called themselves Jerli. This was a way of differentiating themselves both from those Muslims who were ethnic Turks, and from the Christian Georgians. In the 19th century all Muslims of this area were called either Tatars or Turks in the Russian censuses. In the 1926 census they where called Turks, and this was a common name both for ethnic Turks and ethnic Georgians who were Muslims. Together with the name change, other events also took place. In the 1920s Georgian schools were closed and Turkish schools were opened for the Georgian Muslims in Samtskhe-Dzhavakheti (Lortkipanidze 1994:59).

Nowadays this group is called Turkish Meskhetians. This name is used not only for ethnic Georgians, but for all Muslims, irrespective of ethnicity, whose ancestors lived in this part of Georgia until their deportation to Central Asia in 1944. Some kind of new ethnicity seems to have formed under this name.

A great number of works has been devoted to the problem of the name Abkhaz. Misunderstandings, changings and shifts connected with this name (and with the history of ethnicities known by this name) have been used as one of the instruments for provoking the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict.

Change of names of territories. This is one of the ways of changing or strengthening an attitude of a minority group towards the primary level majority group and towards the territory where this minority group has immigrated.

For example, the term South Ossetia first appeared in Russian documents in the 19th century as a name for what is Shida Kartli, Inner Kartli. "According to the description and the maps by Vakhushti Bagrationi, a prominent Georgian historian and geographer of the 18th century, and the data furnished by Academician J.A. Güldenstädt (1772), the Ossets at that time lived only in the highlands of Shida Kartli (Vakhushti 1941:200-203; Güldenstädt 1962-4 1:275-279; Gvasalia 1991:165-167). Moreover, according to the censuses, the Ossets settled in the foothills and the lowlands of Shida Kartli only in the 19th century (see the Central State Historical Archives of Georgia, fund 254, inv.1, file 357; fund 254, inv.3, file 1650-1722; Lazarashvili 1966:109; Topchishvili 1989:113)" (Zhorzholiani et al. 1995a:3).

In the 1920s, by the demand of the Ossetian population, this part of Georgia received the status of an Autonomous Region; the Ossetians persistently tried to introduce the name South Ossetia (Tsereteli 1991:83). Within its borders appeared not only villages settled by Ossetians, but also villages, where only Georgians lived. The Georgian town Tskhinvali was chosen as the administrative centre of the region. (According to *Kavkazskij Kalendar* for 1900 only Georgians, Georgian Jews and Armenians lived in Tskhinvali.) All these changes were done with the support of the Soviet government (Toidze 1994). Since this part of Georgia received the name South Ossetia (and the motherland of the Ossetians in the North Caucasus got the name North Ossetia) this name obtained a real force and strength in the mind of Ossetians and not only of Ossetians.

The name of the territory turned out to be stronger than all historic sources. The assertion that Ossetians have been living in this territory since 6th century A.D. without any references to sources has appeared even in the works of 'neutral', for example, European historians.

Changed place names. Place names have been changed both by the Soviet government and by post-Soviet authorities, both by minority and majority groups. New populations as well as new social-political life bring their own names for places too.

Especially characteristic are attempts to change place names not only in the present but also in the past, sometimes with the purpose of removing any sign of the former majority group from this territory. A minority group can use this method as a way of creating its own history connected with the territory where they live today, to master this territory and to make it their own not only in the present, but also in the past, to transform the territory from the place of residence to the motherland. Examples of this are observable in several regions of Georgia.

This attitude of the minority towards the primary level majority group may be held both by secondary level majority (central power of the USSR) and by the adjacent state of the same nationality.

Change of surnames. Surnames, especially the endings of surnames, are like a label of the nationality. Surname changes are not always connected with compulsion, but in many cases these changes may be a reflection and, at the same time, indicator of the sociopsychological climate.

Different kinds of surname changes may occur:

1. Without change of ethnicity and expressing only orientation, without desire to hide or forget the origin. This kind of change is characteristic of whole groups. For example, original Assyrian surnames are formed by means of *bit* 'son', *bar* 'after'. One part of the Assyrians in Georgia have changed their surnames by the Russian ending *-ov*; The real surname of *Ivanov* is *Bit Iukhanan* (son of Iohan), of *Akopov, Bit Iaq'u,* and so on. Assyrians in West Georgia have the Georgian surname ending *-dze: Ionanidze, Ashkashidze, Badavidze (=Bit Badav)* and so on. It was also common that Greeks and Azerbaijanis had Russian ending of surnames.

The common tendency for these groups in the post-Soviet period is to reconstruct the original surnames: Assyrians: *Ivanov – Bit-Iukhanan*; *Badavidze – Bibadav;* Greeks: *Elevterova – Elevteriadu*, *Triandafilov – Triandafilidi*, etc.

2. As a result or accomplishing step of identity change. This kind of change is more characteristic on the individual level. In this case different attitudes (including resistance) of the majority group can appear.

3. As a result of compulsion (change of Georgian surnames of some Muslims with Turkish endings in Georgia, in Samtskhe-Dzhavakheti in 1930s, and later, in other republics of the USSR; Baratashvili 1997:53).

Of course, all means briefly mentioned here could be and have been a subject for special investigations. I mention them here only as different manifestations of the same policy: to change the identity both on the group and individual level, to try to make changes even in the past and manipulate the minds of whole groups.

5. Means connected with the language: mother tongue and second language of minorities in Georgia

The Soviet state supported education and other cultural institutions, as well as the local government for everybody in their mother tongue irrespective of where this group lived and where the homeland of this group was. This applies to all groups in the beginning of the Soviet period (state schools in Georgia functioned in more than ten languages) but since the late 30s only to those groups whose homeland was in the borders of the USSR (state schools in Georgia in six languages).

The final aim of this policy was not the survival of the minority languages, but to create a common mixture. Its aim was to make all languages (except Russian) equal in the whole territory of the USSR, to deprive any other language of the function of interethnic interactions, and to implement Russian as the only language with this function in all republics of the USSR. This aim has never been any secret and was pronounced to be a desirable achievement. The educational system was one powerful means for reaching this aim.

At non-Georgian schools in Georgia, both during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, Georgian is either not studied at all, or only studied to a minimal extent. The history and geography of Georgia were only formally taught among the school subjects even at the Georgian schools during the Soviet period.

Armenian schools in Georgia get all textbooks from Armenia, Azerbaijanian schools from Azerbaijan, and Russian from Russia. Abkhazian and Ossetian schools have their own textbooks in I-IV forms, and from V form Ossetian and Abkhazian schools also continue with Russian textbooks. But the schools are called Abkhazian and Ossetian because the Abkhaz or Ossetian language and literature, respectively, are among the school subjects.

Using the classification of the individual's network of linguistic contacts (Landry & Allard 1992:227-228) we find that educational support and

contacts through the media as the means of implementing the knowledge of Georgian in Georgia do not function. Without interpersonal contacts with Georgians, the non-Georgian population had neither the opportunity nor the necessity to speak Georgian, but they had a need for fluency in Russian, like the Georgians.

Neighbourhoods of different non-Georgian groups in Georgia (for example, Greeks in Tsalka surrounded by Armenians and Azerbaijanis) – on the background when Georgian-Russian bilingualism is widespread in whole Georgia – can also cause ignorance of Georgian among non-Georgians (Mikhailov 1994:14).

The Georgian language policy was a policy of a minority language. The ways to maintain the Georgian language were:

1. *Juridical:* the official language of Georgia was Georgian. The attempt to ban the paragraph about the official language in the Constitution of Georgia in 1978 gave rise to protests and a street demonstration against this attempt, an extraordinary phenomenon in the USSR at that time.

2. Cultural: this involves care of Georgians to create a profitable intragroup sociopsychological climate and high ethnolinguistic vitality for the survival of all functions of Georgian.

Georgian was a language of education, culture, religion, and partly of administration in Soviet Georgia. It lacked only one function – to be the language of the army and military service. Some other languages in Georgia had the same functions too, although without status of being an official language (except Abkhaz, which also has been an official language). Russian had advantages as fluency in Russian gave access to a wider territory than fluency in Georgian. Fluency in Russian was enough to apply for a job in the whole USSR while fluency in Georgian was not necessary and was not sufficient even in the whole of Georgia. The advances of Russian in Georgia are shown by the facts that:

(a) Many Georgians in Georgia preferred to go to Russian schools at any level: primary, secondary and higher education. This was not caused by any difference in the programs, as mentioned above, programs and textbooks were the same in the whole USSR. All textbooks except the history and geography of the republic, and the so-called national literature and language were translated from Russian.

(b) Russians living in Georgia went to Russian schools.

(c) Other non-Georgians preferred to study either at their national or at

Russian schools but not at Georgian ones.

(d) If we consider the notions of negative feelings – anxiety or dissatisfaction in interethnic encounters (Giles et al. 1991:119-122) – not being able to speak Georgian was not connected with any feeling of anxiety or dissatisfaction while not being able to speak Russian was connected with these negative feelings both for Georgians and non-Georgians.

(e) The process of replacement of Georgian as the majority language by Russian was especially obvious in the regions where Georgians were the minority from the demographic point of view: in Akhalkalaki, Tsalka, Marneuli and so on. This situation is still maintained.

Georgian as a second language among non-Georgians is more common in areas where they do not live compactly, e.g. in Tbilisi, while Russian as a second language is dominant in the areas of compact settlement of non-Georgians (Akhalkalaki, Marneuli, etc.). The rural-urban division seems to be less important than regional differences and the time of migration of the minority group to Georgia in this case.

The rural-urban division is relevant for the spreading of the Russian language as a mother tongue among non-Russians (both Georgians and non-Georgians). It is more spread among the urban population. One example of the advances of Russian (increasing during the Soviet period) as a mother tongue compared to Georgian among non-Georgian urban population is shown in table 3.

Generally, the degree of maintenance and strengthening of mother tongue among minorities is quite high in Georgia.

The draft Project of the bill on minorities in Georgia mentions not only the preservation but also the development of minority languages and cultures in Georgia (Zhorzholiani & Abashidze 1999:1.1, 12).

The new Georgian law on education (1997) does not make changes in the educational system concerning the language of instruction at schools. The Georgian state will support schools in minority languages (*Law on education* 1997: section I.4). Minorities in Georgia may use their language without limitation in private, sociopolitical, sociocultural and religious life, and in administration and justice accordingly to the legislation of Georgia (Zhorzholiani & Abashidze 1999:5.1). The rights of minorities to spread and exchange information in their mother tongue are guaranteed and supported by the state (like during the Soviet period) (Zhorzholiani & Abashidze 1999:9,10).

Table 3. Mother tongue of the Armenian population in Tbilisi.

Mother tongue	1922	1989
Russian	6.8 %	18.8 %
Georgian	29.57 %	10.15 %
Armenian	63.26 %	70.9 %

(*Statistic work* 1927:26;32; *Statistic work* 1991: 86; extract)

The number of Georgians at the Russian sections of all levels of the educational system has decreased. Non-Georgians still prefer to study at Russian schools or at their national schools more than at Georgian ones.

After the Soviet period, the Georgian language has acquired a new function: to be the language of military service.

Conclusion

One step of the Soviet policy – to disintegrate, to deconstruct the inner structure of all republics – turned out to be reached to a significant degree, the next step – to integrate all these parts around one centre – the Soviet identity involving the shared history, culture, language, ideology, has been interrupted. The complex of older values appeared to be stronger than the new Soviet one.

The last years of the Soviet period and the post-Soviet period are marked by the further development of ethnic consciousness. The ways of maintenance and strengthening differ (depending on the demographic and geographic situation) including the demands of secession from Georgia and struggle against the indigenous population in this territory (Abkhaz and Ossetians against Georgians). Among peaceful ways are to care for the revitalisation of one's own language among the whole group (Jews) or among those members of the minority group who have lost it, for the strengthening and spreading of this language among the whole group, to equip the language with new functions, to create new associations and language courses (Hebrew, Greek, Assyrian, Kurdish), to introduce the language of a minority group as a school subject instead of other foreign languages (Greek) or as a home language at schools (Kurdish, Assyrian), to begin the divine service in the language of a minority group (in Greek, in Assyrian), to have regular seminars concerning the problems of the minority group, and to search contacts and support from other states where the same nationality has either political independence (Jews in Israel, Greeks in Greece, Assyrians – partly in Iraq) or strong diaspora (Kurds in Turkey, Assyrians in the USA and Canada, etc.).

The other tendency has been emigration from Georgia caused by hard socio-economic conditions and war. A lot of Georgians and non-Georgians have left Georgia: Abkhaz, Ossetians and Georgians for Russia, Greeks and Georgians for Greece, Jews and Georgians for Israel, Russians and Georgians for Russia and so on. This process started to decrease since 1992 (*Social and demographic situation* 1996:16).

Acknowledgement

I am indebted to Karina Vamling, Temur Gvanceladze and Zaal Kikvidze for valuable comments on this article.

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