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The enhancement of state and foreign language teaching to national minorities in Georgia
(using the examples of Azeri and Armenian students)

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the results of the research carried out within the frame of a joint project of two faculties Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Psychology and Education) ''Elaboration of Multilingual Education strategies for integration of ethnic minorities into society'' and focuses on the degree, quality and effectiveness of competence in the Georgian and English languages revealed by non-Georgian speaking students enrolled in Georgian Universities within the frames of the programme referred to as 4+1.

Key words: Multilingual Education, Georgia, ethnic and language minorities.

Introduction

The program aiming at facilitating enrollment in Georgian Universities for national minorities (1+4) was adopted in 2010. This program, which is considered to be important for both ethnic minorities as well as for the majority, played a considerable role in the process of integrating national minorities into society. However, during the six years of its implementation a number of issues have arisen, the description and analysis of which are crucial for enhancing the Program.

This article discusses the results of the research carried out within the frame of a joint project of two faculties Ivane

Manana Rusieshvili, Izabella Petriashvili, Kakha Gabunia, The enhancement of state and foreign language
teaching to national minorities in Georgia (using the examples of Azeri and Armenian students)

9 2016
pp. 55-83

Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Psychology and Education) ''Elaboration of Multilingual Education strategies for integration of ethnic minorities into society'' and focuses on the degree, quality   and effectiveness of competence in the Georgian and English languages revealed by non-Georgian speaking students enrolled in Georgian Universities within the frames of the programme referred to as 4+1.

Georgia   is   a   multiethnic   and multicultural country with 10.8% of its population made up of Azeri and Armenian ethnic minorities living in various parts of the country.

As well as these ethnic minorities, Ossetian and Abkhazian citizens of Georgia are also presented with an opportunity to enroll in Georgian Universities on the basis of the results of the testing in the General Abilities Test taken in their own native language. After the exam the students take an intensive course in the Georgian language which should equip them with sufficient knowledge to continue studies at the Universities of their choice in Georgian. Consequently, the Georgian language preparation educational program aims at

providing   the   non-Georgian   speaking students with communicative skills.

It is worth noting that the situation tends to be difficult regarding both of the issues - teaching Georgian as a state language to the students mentioned above and regarding teaching English as a foreign language. The project carried out at TSU is focused on revealing issues related to the learning and teaching of Georgian as a state language and English as a foreign language to such students on the one hand and the analysis of the data and providing recommendations for them, on the other. The project data were collected by means of field research.

The aim of the field research

The aim of the research was to explore initial, linguistic competences and the factors hampering the process of achieving the competence in the state language (Georgian) as well as the foreign language (English) of the   non-Georgian   speaking   students applying to the BA of English Philology at TSU via the Program .

Based on the goals of the research, two main tasks were outlined:

1. Determination of the level of their competences in Georgian at the starting point of the Program and revealing the issues hampering their progress in this language

2. Determination of initial competences of students in English at the moment of their start at BA program of English Philology and revealing the reasons hampering achieving the desired standard.

In addition, one of the goals of the research was providing recommendations regarding the issue for schools, universities and the Ministry of Education of Georgia.

1. Issues regarding teaching the State Language of Georgia

This research revealed certain issues regarding teaching the State language at the high school stage of secondary school (XI - XII forms).

The data for the survey were collected based on the analysis of the questionnaires filled out by 432 students learning Georgian at the Program (from 5 universities of the country : Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Ilya State University, Medical State University, Georgian State Polytechnic University and Samtkhe-Javakheti State University).

It is also worth noting that not only students, but also 30 teachers involved in the Program participated in the survey regarding the methodology and strategies of teaching languages within the Program. The questions posed to the students and teachers were used as control tools for the students' self-assessement. In addition, the questionnaires included questions about the approaches, strategies and methodology regarding the issue of improving language competences.

2. Results of the analysis of the survey among Azeri and Armenian speaking students

2. 1 Methodology and instruments of the research

The research included filling in the structured questionnaire by the students of the Program and by the students learning at a BA program of English Philology. The questionnaire included questions about the communicative skills and knowledge of the Georgian language obtained at a school level and about the possible reasons behind a low level of competences in Georgian.

The questionnaire consisted of 12 questions. Specifically, they referred to the quality of the teaching of the Georgian

language, assessment of their personal competences and skills and their ideas regarding amending the Program. Consequently, the questions were grouped into 5 blocks:

a) Assessment of the knowledge in the Georgian language, general aspects of learning and teaching;

b) Providing the learning environment and resources;

c) Qualification and professional development of the teachers involved in the Programme;

d) Out-of-class, non-academic and integrating activities;

e) Issues connected with the Programme.

Due to the format of the questionnaire, it took the students only 15 - 20 minutes to fill in the questionnaire.

2. 2   Selection of the participants for the research

As mentioned above, students from ethnic minorities studying at the Georgian language preparation educational program (Program) for Azerbaijanian and Armenian students from 5 State universities were selected for the study. About 95% of the non-Georgian speaking students go to these universities (Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University accepts more than 50 % of such

students).   Altogether   432   students participated in the research (N=577), the limit of reliability was 90%, limit of errors was 4.11%; redistribution of the answers - 50%.

Respondents were selected by a random selection method. Out of 577 students registered in all the focus groups 432 students were selected. If it was not possible for the selected students to participate in the research, the next person in the list was selected. Out of the filled - out interviews 424 were considered to be valid (230 (54%) were Azeri's and 194 (46%)-were Armenians; 242 were male students and 182 females (43%).

Although the gender balance is observed, it should also be noted that among the Azeri students the male students prevail (61% - 39%) whereas among Armenian speaking students the number of girls is slightly higher. However, although the overall number of Armenian speaking students is lower than that of Azeri students, the overall number of boys is higher (Tabatadze., Gorgadze, 2016, pp. 8-16).

2. 3   Results of the research

The questions of the questionnaire were grouped into 5 thematic aspects: (a) General aspects of assessment of the knowledge of Georgian language and learning and teaching; (b) Provision of a suitable learning environment and leaning resources; (c)

Teachers' qualifications and professional development; (d) non-academic, out of class and integration activities; (e) issues connected with the Program.

The ultimate goal of the research was to explore and analyse the evaluation of the Program and perception of cucial aspects as seen by the students. Below there are the results obtained in each direction regarding the current situation, drawbacks of the programme, progress and further development plans.

a) Assessment of the knowledge in Georgian (self-assessment)

It was interesting to learn how the students assessed their own language competences after finishing the secondary schools.

The competence-related question was formulated as follows:

How would you assess your knowledge of Georgian at the moment of enrolling at the Program?

a) Very good
b) Good
c) Fair
d) Bad
e) Very bad (no competence at all)

The research revealed a high self-assessment level among the students: out of 424 students 15 assessed their competence in the Georgian language as "very good'' whereas the category "very bad" was indicated only by 11 students, ''fair'' by 51 students and finally, ''bad'' by 90 students.

Table N 1 Self-assessement of their competence in Georgian as provided by the students

a) very good	3.5 %
b) good	12.0%
c) fair	60.5%
d) bad	21.5 %
(e)Very bad (no competence at all)	2.5 %

Manana Rusieshvili, Izabella Petriashvili, Kakha Gabunia, The enhancement of state and foreign language
teaching to national minorities in Georgia (using the examples of Azeri and Armenian students)

9 2016
pp. 55-83

It should also be noted that the students assess themselves much higher compared with reality. One of the reasons for this may be the fear ''not to be regarded as inferior'' to the standards necessary for the Programme. The results of the research conducted in 2015 - 2016 revealed similar results:

Table 2 : TSU students results based on placement and final tests:

| Levels	Placement (pretest) test results	Students placement into language groups according to the pretest / placement results	Final test points	Students placement into language groups according to the final test results
A1	0-6	32%	0 - 6	0%
A2	7-15	62%	7 - 15	32%
B1	16-18	6%	16 - 18	36%
B2	-	-	19 - 20	32%

Tabatadze., Gorgadze, 2016, p. 63.

In addition, the fact that students are generally prone to exaggerated self assessment is confirmed by problems frequently arising at the BA level and a high number of dropout students (from the first generation of those students who became students by the quota system) (*Tabatadze., Gorgadze, 2016, p. 63*, pp. 8-16).

Table N3: Difference between the self- assement and pretest results

Self-assessment	Self-Assessment percentage	Pretests	Pretest Percentage
Very good	3.5%	B2 (19-20)	0.0%
Good	12.0%	B1 (16-18)	6.0%
Fair	60.5%	A2 (7_15)	6.,0%
Bad or very bad (no competence at all)	24,0%	A1 (0-6)	32.0%

Diagram 1. Difference between the self- assessment and pretest results
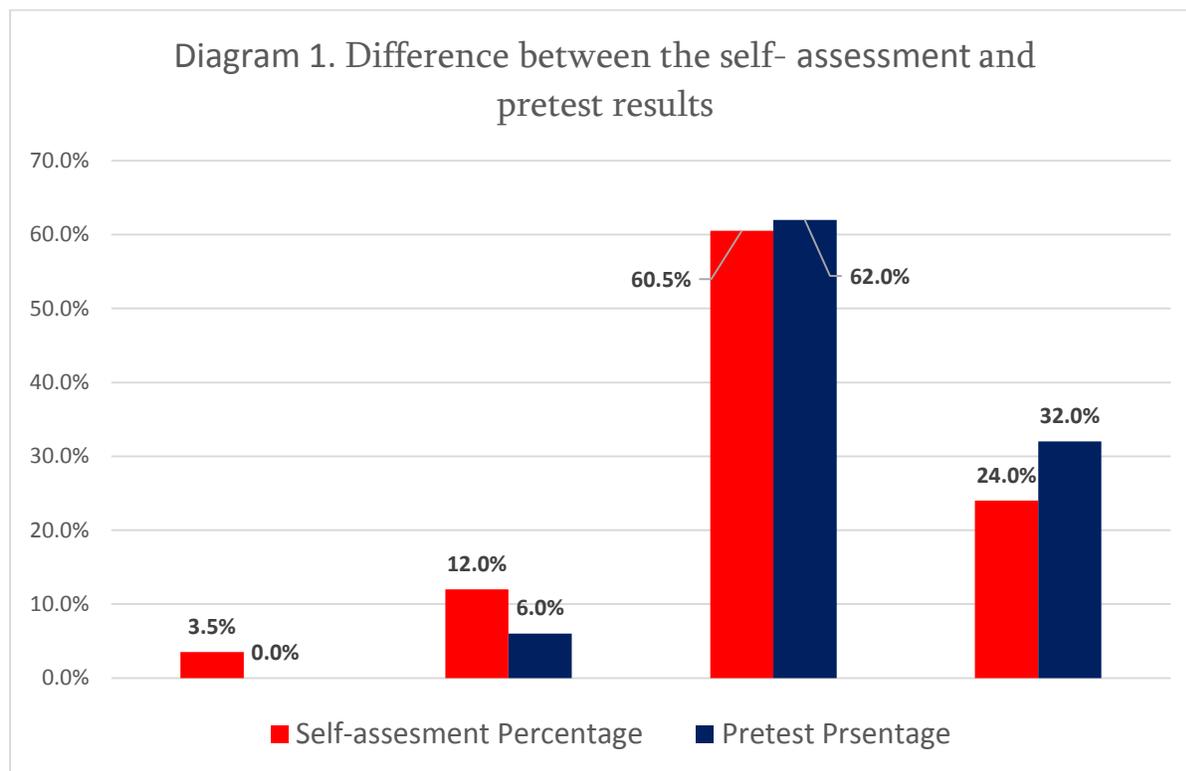
(b) **Provision of an appropriate learning environment and learning resources**

A low level of competence in Georgian must be conditioned by several factors. One of them is the provision of appropriate environment and quality of learning resources. As it was interesting to explore the quality of the resources non-Georgian schools are provided with as well as the appropriacy of the leaning environment they face. Due to this reason, the second question of the questionniare referred to this issue:

Which of these activities was paid more attention to at the lessons of the Georgian language at your school?

Manana Rusieshvili, Izabella Petriashvili, Kakha Gabunia, The enhancement of state and foreign language
teaching to national minorities in Georgia (using the examples of Azeri and Armenian students)

9 2016
pp. 55-83

Table N 4 Activities performed at the lessons of the Georgian language

a) Speaking	27.1 %
b) Writing	13.7 %
c) Reading	7.3 %
d) Listening	8.9 %
e) Grammar exercises	27.6 %
f) Pronunciation	3.3 %
g) Readings from literature	2.1 %
g) Other	10.4 %
No answer	0.3 %

Diagram 2. Which of these activities was paid more attention to at the lessons of the Georgian language at your school?
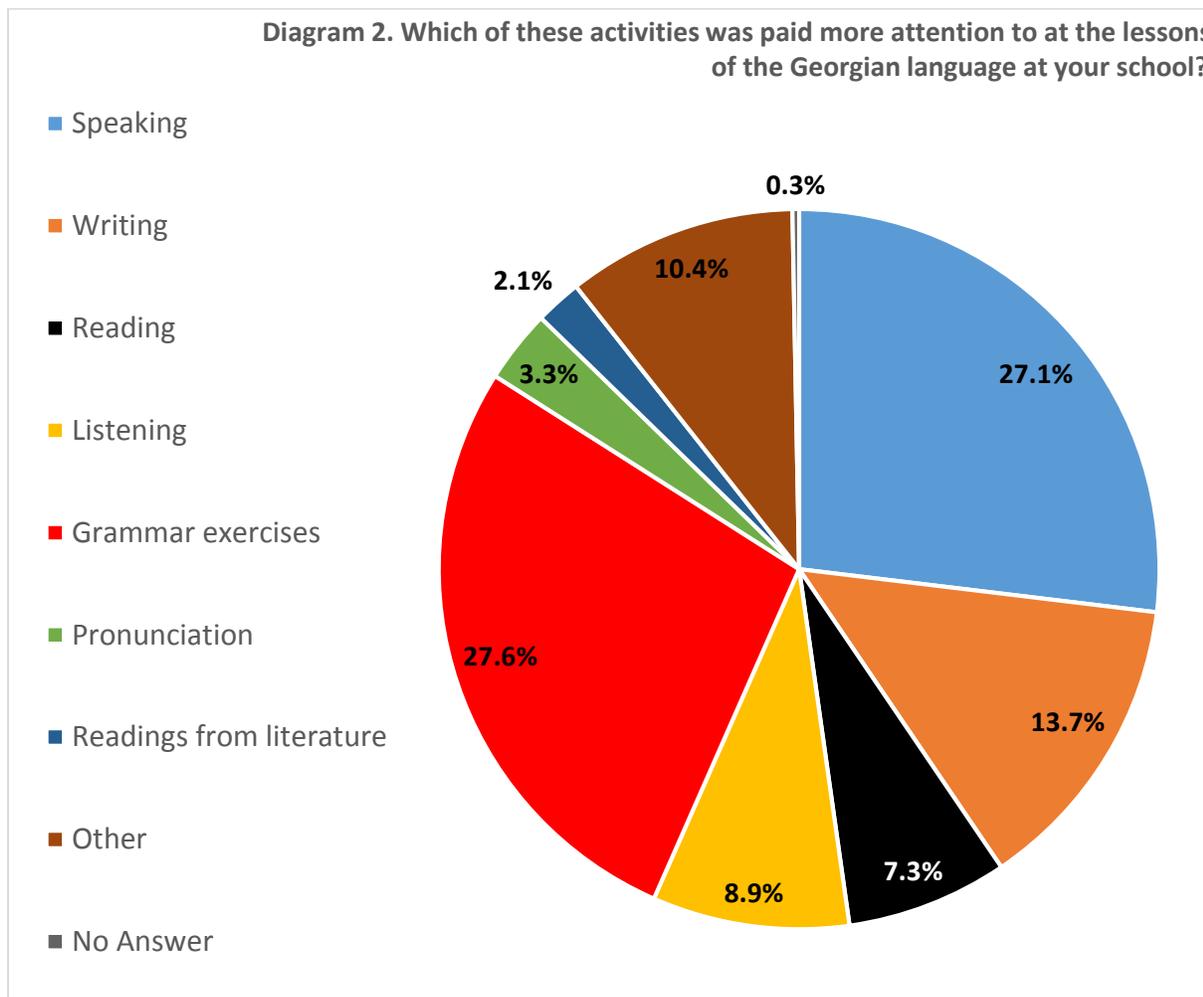
It is also worth noting that the latest approaches to the language didactics put less emphasis on the teaching of grammar and thus focus on commanding of communicative skills. Therefore, listening and speaking skills (as parts of communicative skills) become particularly important in this respect. The results of this survey also reveal that a considerable part of the teachers of Georgian as a second language still pursue a dated method of grammar translation. However, it should also be mentioned that, quite rightly, development of speaking skills is also one of the foci of attention. The low percent allotted to the development of listening skills can be explained by technical problems persistent in the regions of Georgia. Despite the fact that the textbook is accompanied by audio discs, it is still not possible (or not always possible) to perform listening activities at the lecture.

What do you think is the reason for the fact that after having finished 12 grades at schools your command of the Georgian language does not meet the required standards?

Besides the suggested answers to this question indicated below, the students also had a chance to write what they found relevant to the problem in the 'other' box:

a) Quality of textbooks;

b) Qualification of the teacher of the Georgian language

c) Inadequate national programme

d) The environment in the region, village, town

e) Other (write down)

The answers revealed the following situation:

Table N 5 Issues leading to low competency in Georgian

a) Quality of textbooks;	13.7 %
b) Qualification of the Georgian language teacher	12.7 %
c) Inadequate national programme	11.5 %
d) The environment in the region, village, town	51.4 %
e) Other (or no answer)	10.7 %

Manana Rusieshvili, Izabella Petriashvili, Kakha Gabunia, The enhancement of state and foreign language teaching to national minorities in Georgia (using the examples of Azeri and Armenian students)

9 2016

pp. 55-83

Diagram 3. What do you think is the reason for the fact that after having finished 12 grades at schools your command of the Georgian language does not meet the required

- Quality of textbooks
- Qualification of the Georgian language teacher
- Inadequate national programme
- The environment in the region, village, town
- Other (or no answer)

13.7%

12.7%

11.5%

51.4%

10.7%
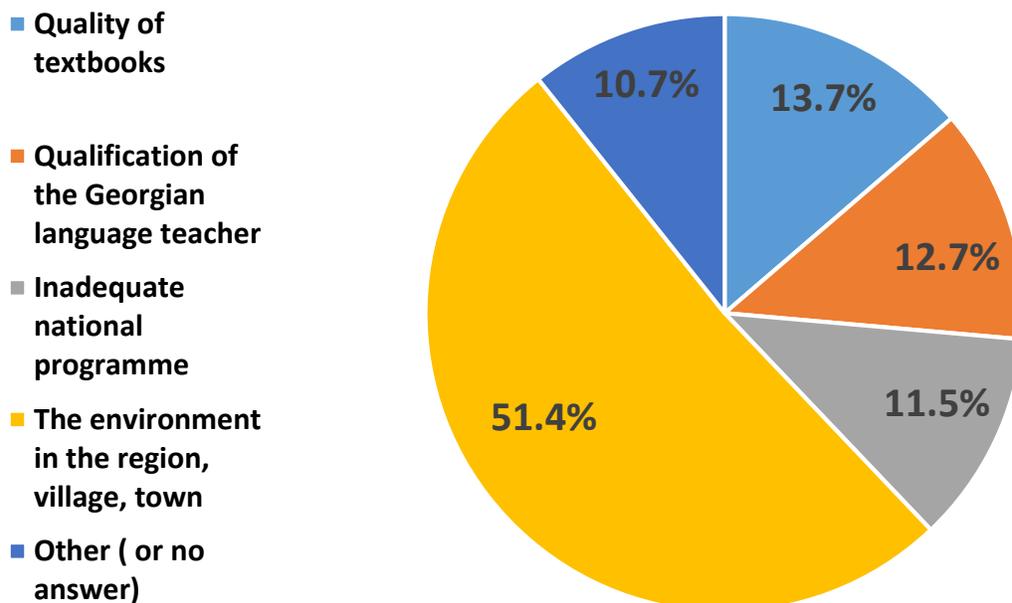
Clearly the students adequately assess the most important problem and, as is revealed by the research, more than half of the participants point out the limited status of the state language in regions in favour of Armenian, Azeri or (in some cases of Russian).

The issues indicated by the students should be taken into account not only regarding the University level of education (The Program and later, the BA programs the students select after finishing the Program), but also, at the school levels.

(c) The teachers' qualifications

The goal of the next block was to analyse the attitude of the teacher towards their students, which is one of the most important components of the learning process.

Table N 6 Percentage indicating Georgian teachers' qualification (as indicated by the students)

a) I liked her/him very much;	63.2 %
b) Her/his competence was mediocre	23.1 %
c) She/he was weak	7.3 %
d) Other (no answer)	6.4 %

As can be seen from the answers to this question, the majority of the students are satisfied with the competence level of their teachers of Georgian as a second language. However, the high percentage indicated is unexpected and requires explanation. As revealed by the survey conducted by the Ministry of Education in 2011, the level of competency of 60% of the teachers of Georgian in the regions did not reach A2, which clearly clashes with the assessment of the students. We would argue that, in this particular case, the positive response can be explained by the traditional benevolent attitude towards teachers these students maintain. Otherwise the negative percentage would have been much higher.
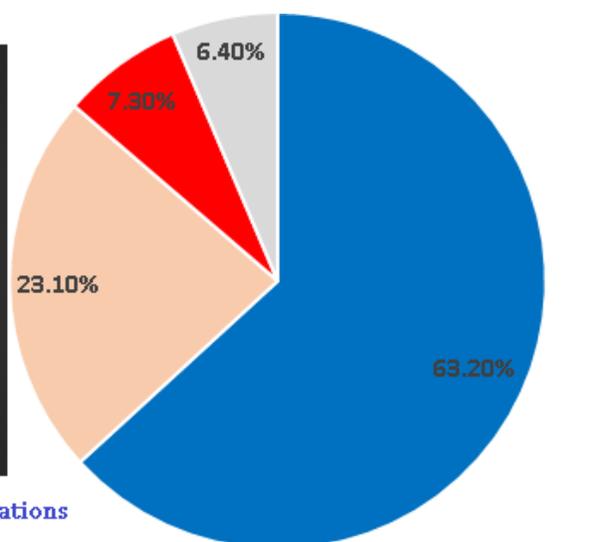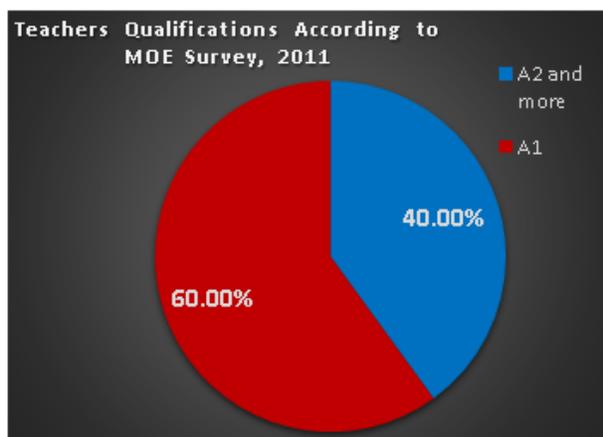

Diagram 4. The teachers' qualifications

■ I liked her/him very much ■ Her/his competence was mediocre ■ She/he was weak ■ Other (no answer)

(d) Non-academic, out –of- class and integrating activities;

As is known, out-of-class activities are of major importance in the process of learning a second language. It is also worth mentioning that the language environment in the regions inhabited by non-Georgian speakers does not encourage enhancing competence in Georgian through informal learning as the Georgian language is not used in everyday life. Moreover, minority languages (Armenian in Samtsokhe - Javakheti and Azeri in Kvemo Kartli) are prevalent in shops, educational institutions, even in court. However, despite this situation, the need for encouragement of the state language in out-of-class activities was stressed many times in various recommendations. However, initiatives regarding out-of-class activities aiming at the integration of students into the Georgian-language environment are still very rare. This is conditioned by subjective as well as objective reasons. Not surprisingly the students participating in this survey also provide us with a scarce list of activities.

(e) Issues related to Georgian language preparation educational programme for Azerbaijan and Armenian students

In the final part of the questionnaire which aimed at the assessment of various aspects of expectations expressed by the students of the Programme, the students were given the following questions:

In your opinion, what aspects of the Program should be pointed out as challenging ?

The majority of the students (87.7 %) agree with the opinion that out-of-class activities are crucial for a better command of the language. This was expected as the students experience a lack of communication and thus demand inclusion of this component into the learning process. More specifically, 117 students indicated the importance of regular contact (talks) with Georgian children; 50 students thought that private lessons (with private tutors) in Georgian would improve their competence in Georgian; 34 singled out reading Georgian books as the major factor in learning the language whereas 24 indicated outings and other out-of-class activities to be crucial in

this respect; 9 students stressed the importance of allotting more hours to the Georgian language to be extremely helpful for them and necessary for the program; 6 students considered watching Georgian TV channels a major factor in raising their competence in Georgian whereas 6 students thought that exchange programs with Georgian schools would be helpful.

Based on the survey of the students, a number of issues were singled out which could only be solved through cooperation with various institutions.

In order to further identify the reasons behind the slow process of integration of the students from ethnic minorities into society, the teachers of the Georgian language working within 5 universities were invited to participate in the survey. As a result of this part of the survey, several major issues were revealed (together with several other points – an analysis is given below).

3. Analysis of the survey of the teachers of Georgian of the Program

The questionnaire which contained 4 closed and 10 open questions was filled out by 30 teachers involved in the Program. The questions were formulated as follows:

How is the level of competence in Georgian determined and are students divided according to their level of language?

All the teachers confirm that the students are divided into groups based on their competence levels. Only Ilya University does not conduct placement testing and consequently, students in this institution are not grouped according to their competence in Georgian.

How is the level of language competence determined?

The majority of the teachers indicated that the competence was determined by means of testing;

Are the students grouped according to their native languages? (Into Azeri and Armenian language groups)

Students from these ethnic groups are put in separate groups. Only Ilya University and BA program in English Philology consider it principally important not to separate such students.

Is the Program different regarding Azeri and Armenian students?

22 teachers replied to this question negatively whereas only 6 teachers provided a positive answer to it . 2 teachers did not answer this question at all.

It is worth noting that the syllabi of the Program are identical in all the Universities involved in the project. Due to this fact all the 30 teachers were expected to have answered positively. However, it may be argued that one specficic course had an impact on the results: at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University one out of six courses -"Practical grammar of the Georgian language" is divided into 2 modules (for Azeri and Armenian speakers seperately). Consequently, this course is delivered in a slightly different format for each of the target group. All the other 5 courses are identical.

Statistically what kind of results do your students achieve regarding learning the Georgian language?

The majority of the teachers stated the results wre very positive whereas 8 teachers chose medium results indicating that the results depend on the skills and general abilities of the students.

Besides teaching the Georgian language what other activities are organised at the Program?

Teachers indicated the following out-of-class activities: outings; student's involvement in social activities; sport competitions; showing Georgian films; reading Georgian literature. 3 teachers did not answer this question.

It can clearly be seen that the teachers were able to provide only a limited list of activities. As well as this, they did not reveal enough readiness to offer students a variety of out-of-class activities to raise their competence of the second language.

Do you offer any other format of relationship with students, besides lectures and seminars   (e.g, outings, literary evenings, performances, etc.) ?

All the teachers indicated that they maintain social contacts with their students.

Is there any academic or social support at the programme?

Most teachers stated that the Youth Centre helps the students with academic issues. Supposedly, the teachers who have answered negatively (or did not answer at all) work at the Medical or Technical University as such centres function only in Tbilisi State University and Ilya University. It is also advisable to share knowledge and experience in this direction.

What is the most difficult challenge students face during the period of learning at the Programme?

The majority of the teachers (23) underlined grammar errors during writing as well as oral practice. Several teachers singled out the issue of perception of specific texts. 2 teachers did not refer to specific issues but indicated that students were very motivated.

What do you think needs to be emphasised at the Program in order to improve standards of teaching Georgian as a second language?

17 teachers answered this question by indicating the importance of the integrated teaching in the process of the students of the ethnic groups establishing contacts with their Georgian friends. 10 teachers believe that more varied learning resources (audio-video materials, dictionaries, literature) should be provided and the number of extracurricular instructive activities should also increase. 3 teachers left this question unanswered.

What problems can be indicated regarding teaching Georgian? Name typical errors of your students.

Out of 17 teachers 16 stressed the low language competence and, in particular, issues related to grammar, phonetics and spelling. On the other hand, 11 teachers believe that the main challenges such students face is a low level of general knowledge and lack of communication with Georgian friends. 2 teachers did not answer the question.

Indicate the reason for the errors.

22 teachers indicated the following factors: non-Georgian environment and

lack of communication; inadequate secondary education, structural differences between Armenian and Azeri languages on the one hand and the Georgian language on the other; inadequate knowledge of the Georgian language; 6 teachers believed that the main reason for the errors is laziness and lack of motivation from the students. Finally, 2 teachers did not answer the question.

What would you change in the Program?

The majority of the 25 teachers believe that the Georgian language should be taught academically and thoroughly; moreover, these teachers emphasised the necessity of increasing the weekly workload and number of lectures and seminars delivered at the Program. In addition, they believe that the programme should last 2 years (instead of one) and also, one more important issue indicated is the textbooks of the Georgian language which should be based on the levels of the language competence.

In your opinion, should the teacher of Georgian be fluent in the target group's native language?

The answers to this question were divided evenly: 15 teachers answered the question positively, whereas 15 teachers were negative regarding the issue. There is no doubt that knowledge of the target language will be very useful for the successful teaching process, especially at the beginner stage. However, much depends on the ways the knowledge is activated at the lessons. Obviously, part of the teachers is still orientated on the methodology frequently pursued several years ago at the lessons of the Georgian language for non-Georgian speakers, which meant word-for-word translation of the Georgian texts into the target language for better understanding as well as conducting the lesson in the target group language, which, by all means, decreased the effectiveness of the lesson.

4. Problems in Teaching English to Azeri and Armenian speaking students

As mentioned above, the second part of the research dealt with identification of the

initial English language competence of the language minority students (mostly Azeri and Armenian speaking students) at the Bachelor's level, and stating the reasons for existing problems in teaching English. The analysis of the research findings would enable us to elaborate recommendations for both general education schools, as well as higher educational institutions, and in total, for the Ministry of Education.

For research methodology in this case, as well as in case of research conducted in teaching the State Language (Georgian), we used the survey of Azeri and Armenian speaking BA students of English Philology by means of a structured questionnaire. 42 BA Students of English Philology at the Faculty of Humanities, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, participated in the research. Also, the interview was conducted with 4 professors of English Philology who teach English to these students. Due to the small number of teachers who had language minority students in their groups, we decided to conduct interviews instead of a survey in order to get more valid results.

As a research tool in the case of the student survey, we used a questionnaire consisting of 5 closed and 5 open questions. The questions were about the degree of teaching the English language, evaluation of students' own language competence and skills, their problems in learning English, as well as suggestions for the improvement of English language teaching programs. The survey was anonymous. According to the format, 10-15 minutes was needed to fill in the questionnaire.

The interview with the English philology professors consisted of 9 questions, including 2 open and 7 closed questions.

The questions were grouped into three categories:

1. The English language competence of non-Georgian speaking students when entering the university, and typical language errors revealed later in the process of studying, the reasons of these errors and the methods used to eliminate them

2. Teachers' relationship with non-Georgian speaking students apart from their classes, and relationship of Georgian and non-Georgian speaking students at the

University, as seen from the teachers' perspective.

3. How the teachers help non-Georgian speaking students to integrate successfully in the university community

Selection of the research participants was conducted randomly for the student survey. As for selecting samples for the interview, the teachers who had many Azeri and Armenian speaking students in groups were selected.

4. 1 Results of the survey of Azeri and Arenian speaking students learning at the BA Program of English Philology at TSU

The questions of the questionnaire were grouped into 4 thematic aspects: (a) Self-assessemnt of the knowledge of the English language at the moment of enrolment; (b) Reasons for low competence in the English language;   (c) Teachers' qualifications and professional development and their role in solving the problems; (d) ways of solving the issues .

The ultimate goal of this part of the research was to explore and analyse cucial aspects regarding non-Georgian speaking students on the BA Program of English

Philology , TSU and the ways of overcoming them . Below there are the results obtained in each direction regarding the current situation, faults of the programme, progress and future, further development plans.

(a) Self-assessemnt of the of the knowledge of the English language at the moment of enrolment;

How would you assess your knowledge of English at the moment of enrolling on the BA Program?

26 Students indicated that their competence in English was equal to the Intermediate level, 14 students stated that their command of the English language was poor whereas only 2 students thought that their command of the English language was good.

What do you think is the reason for the fact that after having finished 12 gradees at school your command of the English language does not meet the required standards?

The answers to this questions included various reasons, such as a) low quality of

textbooks (5 students); b) low qualification of the English teachers (17 students); inedequate National plan (10 students) and other reasons (5 students)

(b) Reasons for low competence in the English language and how to overcome them?

What was the greatest challenge when learning English?

While answering this question, the students singled out the following issues: a) Grammar (22 students); b)Lexis (8 students); c) Pronunciation (6 students); difficult textbooks (10 students); Students also specified the following reasons: lack of grammar and listening exercises, low level of English at the moment of enrolling on the BA program, etc. (see the diagram N).

Diagram 5. Reasons for low competence in the English language

- Grammar 48%
- Lexis 17%
- Pronunciation 13%
- difficult textbooks 22%
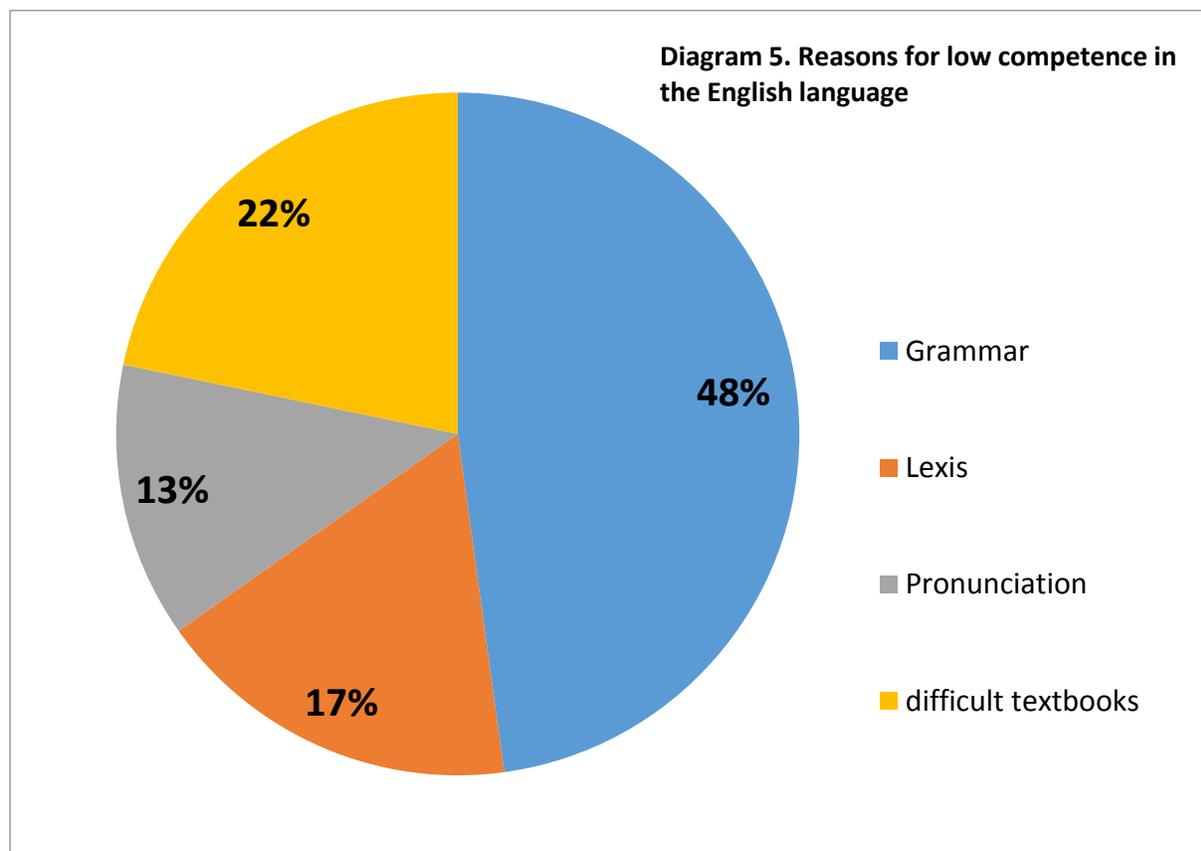
How do you overcome the above mentioned challenges?

The answers to this questions revealed that students a) take private lessons (9 students); b) rely on the help from groupmates (5 students); c) do not cope with the problem at all (6 students); d) work individually, employ the internet and additional materials in English.

c) The teachers' qualifications

The goal of this block was to analyse the attitude of the teacher towards their students, which is one of the most important components of the learning process.

## How would you assess the competence of your English teacher at school?

Unlike the assessment of the Georgian language teachers, in this section the students were more realistic and indicated that (a) they liked the teacher very much (7 students); (b) the teacher was mediocre (18 students); the teacher was weak (5 students). As well as this, the following reasons were indicated in the section of "Other": the teacher was irresponsible and non-professional.

Which of these activities were given more attention at the lesson of English?

a) Speaking - 3 students;

b) Writing - 12 students ;

c) Reading- 11 students;

d) Listening- 3 students;

e) Grammar exercises- 15 students;

f) Pronunciation - 2 students;

g) Literature –was not mentioned by students;

h) The majority of the students indicated the understanding of the text.

One student did not answer the question.

Diagram 6. Which of these activities were given more attention at the lesson of English?

0% 2%
4%
6%
26%
32%
24%
6%

- Speaking
- Writing
- Reading
- Listening
- Grammar exercises
- Pronunciation
- Literature
- No answer
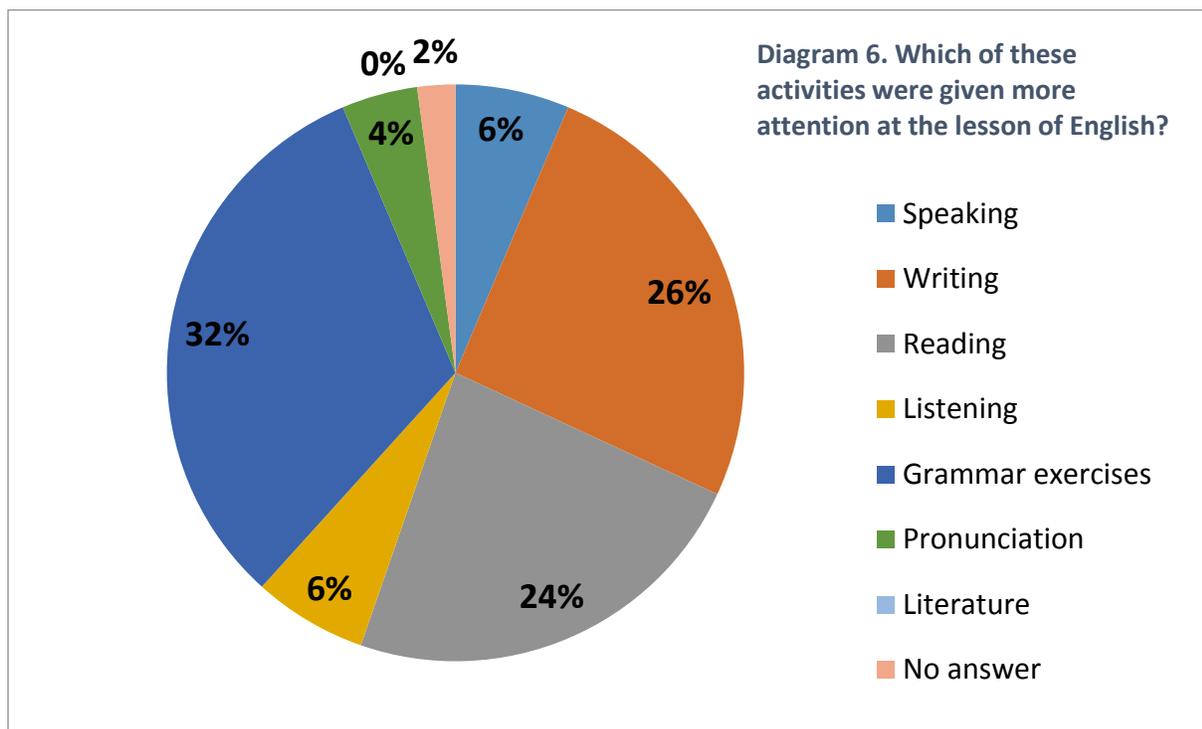
The questions **"Do lecturers and teachers take into consideration the competence of the students in English" and "What is being done in this respect to overcome/neutralize the issues"** were answered positively by 30 students, whereas 2 students indicated no assistance in this respect and 4 students did not answer the question at all.

(d) Future means of solving the issues. What would you change in this respect?

10 students indicated that they would not change anything;

14 students did not answer the question at all whereas other students indicated the following issues they had: a) lessons are very difficult; b) too much for the weekly workload; c) it would be better to make special groups with Azeri and Armenian students and elaborate special programmes for them.

Do you thnk it is necessary to introduce a course of practical English language into the Program?

The majority of the students (25) answered this question positively whereas

Manana Rusieshvili, Izabella Petriashvili, Kakha Gabunia, The enhancement of state and foreign language teaching to national minorities in Georgia (using the examples of Azeri and Armenian students)

\# 9 2016

pp. 55-83

6 indicated that they did not thnk this was necessary. 6 students did not answer the question at all.

Those students who indicated the importance of introducing the course in English into the Program argued their answer in the following way: a) English is not taught well at schools and it is also important to learn it at the Program; b) Egnlish is an international language; c) it is very difficult for the first year students to be successful without English.

Is it necessary to introduce an additional institution for academic or social support at the level of BA programs?

This question was answered positively by 20 students; negatively by 1 students and 15 students did not provide any answers at all.

As it can be seen, the analysis of the questionnaire singled out a range of issues which have to be overcome by cooperation of various institutions.

4.2. Analysis of the interview with the professors of English Philolgy

As mentioned above, within the research the interview was conducted with 4 professors of English philology who teach English to Azeri and Armenian students. The interview was conducted in three directions:

1. The English language competence of non-Georgian students when entering the university, and typical language errors revealed later in the process of studying, the reasons of these errors and the methods used to eliminate them.

The analysis of the interview revealed that on average language minority students (mostly Azeri and Armenian) enter the university with the English language competence at A1-A2 level, which is a rather poor indicator.

As for the typical errors of the students, according to the respondents the biggest problem is mispronunciation, speaking, questions and answers. Because of the scarce/poor vocabulary it is difficult for students to understand and acquire material

(they cannot understand the simplest texts without additional help), translation, reading for gist and rendering the content. Alongside the phonetic and lexical errors the make grammar mistakes as well, including such typical errors as tenses, passive voice, plural of nouns, subject-verb concordance and word order.

It should be noted that the students' survey showed the similar results – in particular, students also mention grammar, lexis and pronunciation as the main problems in learning English.

Among the reasons causing these errors the respondent professors consider mainly the low level of teaching Georgian and English languages at school, which in its turn results in the fact that non-Georgian students do not possess relevant knowledge and skills, the minimal language competence to study different aspects of English at the English philology department. The interviewed professors admit that the students do their best, though they encounter difficulties in

learning because of the lack of the basic knowledge.

The responses of the majority of the surveyed students to this question coincided with the teachers' responses as well, though a relatively large number of students consider that poor textbooks are the reason causing these errors.

To correct these errors the respondents apply various methods and techniques. For instance, students are given individually detailed explanations and/or additional activities to solve the problem; working in groups based on repetition/drills, correcting mistakes, translating (which they often find difficult due to the insufficient knowledge of Georgian), discussing the mistakes in general with relevant examples, and doing the activities again. With these approaches the teachers try to assist the students in reading-translating, speaking, understanding the content and developing writing skills.

2. Teachers' relationship with non-Georgian students apart from their classes, and relationship of Georgian and non-

Manana Rusieshvili, Izabella Petriashvili, Kakha Gabunia, The enhancement of state and foreign language
teaching to national minorities in Georgia (using the examples of Azeri and Armenian students)

\# 9 2016

pp. 55-83

Georgian students at the University, as seen from the teachers' perspective.

According to the 3 interviewees' responses, they do not have any relationships with non-Georgian students apart from their classes, though if necessary, they have consultations for them. One respondent admitted that she has additional classes if needed, and has individual consultations after classes as well.

As for the students' relationship in the group, 3 respondents think that Azeri and Armenian students have difficulties in integrating with the Georgian students, especially during the 1st-2nd ears of study. They consider that the reason of this is the poor knowledge of the Georgian, as the language of communication. Only 1 teacher thinks that Azeri and Armenian students do not have difficulties in integrating with the group. This different response in our opinion, is due to the fact that she teaches 3rd-4th year students, and most probably, at this stage the students more or less have the problem of integration solved.

3. How the teachers help non-Georgian students to integrate successfully in the university community.

Responses to this question were of rather general character, such as trying to raise motivation of students to learn English (e.g. by using authentic materials), advising to raise the level of general education and learn Georgian. One of the respondents considers the appropriateness of helping students taking into account specific characteristics of the student (native language, age, ethnic origin and other aspects).

In order to integrate non-Georgian language students successfully in the university community according to the respondents, more time should be allocated to learning both Georgian and English at school, before entering higher education institutions.

In this respect we would like to point out one professor's response, as she addresses this issue in a complex way and gives some recommendations on how to solve this problem. Namely, she thinks it

will be beneficial if within the preparatory program non-Georgian students will be offered to learn English along with Georgian, in particular for those students, who desire to continue studying at the English philology department. She thinks differentiated programs for the lower level (A1-A2) students and give them more class hours, so that they should be able to complete the required program. She speaks about the necessity of coordinated work of teachers with non-Georgian language speaking students to identify common problems and try to solve those by sharing good practices.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the results of the present study of the improvement of learning and teaching Georgian and English to Azeri and Armenian speaking students, the following conclusions were drawn and several important recommendations were offered:

1. In different universities the preparation programs in the Georgian language are designed differently – there is no common standard. It is necessary for the Ministry of Education to determine officially the levels of Georgian language knowledge (according to the Common European Framework for Languages) and standardize the outcomes for the 1 year preparation programs in Georgian language.

2. It is necessary to develop strategies, methods and materials for teaching English to non-Georgian speaking students, taking into consideration the specific features of their native language.

3. It has been noted that the teachers of Georgian as the second language lack the necessary qualifications: most of them are not aware of the newest methods and strategies. Therefore, it is necessary to arrange training for the teachers of Georgian at schools and at higher education institutions both at the ministry and the university levels.

4. It is necessary to create guidelines for the multilingual teachers, which will help them to use contemporary methods and strategies in teaching. A special group of

Manana Rusieshvili, Izabella Petriashvili, Kakha Gabunia, The enhancement of state and foreign language
teaching to national minorities in Georgia (using the examples of Azeri and Armenian students)

9 2016

pp. 55-83

acting teachers and professors/researchers should be established to work on this Guidebook.

5. It is important to develop and modernize teacher professional development programs (strategies and methodology for teaching a second language) at the university level, in teacher education programs.

6. It is necessary to make the "universal courses" more diverse and to cater for the students' needs: to implement different modules (at least 3) for different language levels (low, intermediate, high); the length of study to be determined according to the pre-test points to cover the appropriate module – by 4, 3 and 2 semesters for low, intermediate and high level students respectively.

7. It is desirable to create multilingual textbooks (English-Georgian-Armenian/Azeri languages) for school pupils and university students for different language levels.

8. It is necessary to diversify and enrich teaching resources with different themes and contents and with approaches aimed at developing social skills.

9. It is necessary to create academic support centers at the Faculty to provide cognitive and academic support in learning Georgian to not only for non-Georgian speaking students who are citizens of Georgia, but also for foreign students, who study the Georgian programs.

10. It is important as well that academic support centers to coordinate the work of the English language teachers who have non-Georgian speaking students in their groups. These centers will host regular meetings of students and teachers, where they will share their suggestions, approaches and good practices.

11. To implement individual and group consultations within the preparatory program.

12. It is desirable to offer English language courses within the preparatory program, in particular for the students, who intend to continue their studies at the English Philology department.

13. Half of the students and the majority of professors think it is necessary to combine Azeri and Armenian speaking students, as they will have to communicate in Georgian or English, which will help them in learning both languages.

14. Solving language problems of non-Georgian speaking students is only one step to integrate them fully into the society. It is necessary that teachers promote joint out-of-class activities with students.

15. It is important to implement technology in the learning/teaching process – to provide full and equal access to the existing and newly designed electronic resources.

16. It is important to unite separate programs for different ethnic minority students and to implement a common "Program in the Georgian language". It will enable grouping Armenian, Azeri, Ossetian and Abkhazian students together. This will promote the process of integration of these students in the Georgian environment, as well as enhance intercultural education.

Manana Rusieshvili, Izabella Petriashvili, Kakha Gabunia, The enhancement of state and foreign language
teaching to national minorities in Georgia (using the examples of Azeri and Armenian students)

9 2016
pp. 55-83

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