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Learning a Second Language / the grammatical difficulties of teaching

Abstract

The Georgian language belongs to the group of Iberian-Caucasian languages whereas Ossetian is a member of the family of the Indo-European languages. There are different methods and approaches to the teaching/learning of the second language. Recently less attention has been paid to grammatical peculiarities of languages. This approach is also acceptable. On the other hand, we consider that taking into consideration grammatical peculiarities, phonetic, morphological and syntactic constructions of a language during the process of learning/teaching a second language is also necessary. Only through their usage is it possible to achieve effective and high quality results. The Ossetian language, for example, uses nominative constructions instead of ergative. Therefore, those learners of Georgian as a second language, for whom Ossetian is a native language, may face certain difficulties while learning this language. Therefore, in the process of teaching it is necessary to take into consideration these and other peculiarities of these languages, which will be discussed in this paper.

Keywords*: Second language, Georgian language, Ossetian language*

The Georgian language belongs to the group of Iberian-Caucasian languages whereas Ossetian is a member of the family of the Indo-European languages. There are different methods and approaches to the teaching/learning of the second language. Recently less attention has been paid to grammatical peculiarities of languages. Moreover, traditional methods of learning grammar are considered dull and boring and several methodologies have been suggested by teachers of the second language to facilitate the process: games, visualization, figures, pictures, drawings, etc. The essence of these approaches is active learning and guided teaching. First this approach was referred to as a waste of time but later it was promoted and deemed very fruitful.

This approach is also acceptable. However, it should be noted that, on the other hand, we consider that taking into consideration grammatical peculiarities of a language, its phonetic, morphological and syntactic constructions during the process of learning/teaching a second language is also necessary. How much grammatical material must be included in a program is the issue for the teachers to solve. While teaching/learning a foreign language it is important to employ the latest, advanced methodology. At the same time, it is advisable to use dictionaries, methodological books and audio-visual materials in the process of teaching. Nowadays, efficient results will only be achieved if these resources are used.

There is a number of foreign and Georgian scholarly works which support and present the language learning process in many different ways: various criteria are given and competencies are determined. It is absolutely right that "when considering the role of competencies at the advanced stages of the language learning, the pathway changes, the needs of learners and the situations in which they have to live, study and

work should be taken into account " (General European Competences 2008: 17). Of course, the increased demands on language learners encourage them to learn as effectively as possible. The learners are reluctant to memorise grammatical rules as, nowadays there are a number of practical methods employed in the process of the language learning. Specifically, there are several recommendations, such as learning 100 necessary words for the language; crash courses and long-term language teaching programs are being developed. This is also acceptable for those who have only practical goals regarding the learning of a language. We agree with that too.

In this article we mainly focus on the language programs developed by the Ministry of Education for public schools. More specifically, we consider programs which are focused on the fundamental approach to the learning   and provide the student with an opportunity to learn a language fundamentally and not only for practical purposes. The ultimate   goal of the Georgian language school programs as well as of national exams programs is to learn the language not only for communicative purposes, but also, to learn it academically, for professional reasons.

The knowledge of the language means not only that of its lexical and grammatical material. Our distinguished scholars in the language learning indicated teaching and learning a language not only for communication but also, for acquiring its grammatical rules.

It is correct to say that the development of the linguistic resources of the learner, envisaged in the complexity of the problem and its parameters change, is the level of knowledge and the use of grammar, vocabulary, phonology, orthography, grammatical and lexical accuracy, correctness of sentence building, as well as free speech, flexibility, relevance" .(General Competences for Learning 2008: 159).

In general, when considering the modern methodology, it is obvious that learning of grammatical rules is classed as a dated method of teaching. However, this approach should be included in the academic program of the language learning. A fundamental study of a language is impossible without focusing on grammar categories. That is why learning the old Georgian language at school must be conducted in parallel to the study of the new Georgian language.

The extent to which old Georgian language categories are employed while teaching / learning a language, is another issue. Although some of the categories in the old Georgian language do not seem to be relevant today, other important nuances are still in force: (plurality, old forms of verb prefixes employed with new ones: tsar-tsa; agh-a; shta: cha and so on).

It is known that the phonetic composition of the Ossetian language and some morphological constructions or syntactic paradigms are different to those of the Georgian language. Due to this fact, for those learners, whose mother language is Ossetian and Georgian is their second language, or, vice versa, for those learners whose mother language is Georgian and Ossetian is a foreign language, there will be some challenges while studying these languages. It is impossible to overcome these difficulties without learning grammar rules. We believe that it is necessary to take into consideration language peculiarities of the first language when learning the second language. The similarities between these languages are also distinguished.

Markers of a grammatical person in initial positions may be preceded by one or two syllables inserted before a noun, which is known as a preverb. However, the preverb is not used with all the verbs and is employed as part of the verb.

The preverb in the Georgian language has four functions: it may indicate: the direction and orientation expressed by the verb (the direction may be of five types: from the bottom up (a-vida), from the top down (cha-vida) - from the inside out (gavida) – from outside into the container (shevida);   overcoming the obstacle (gadavida; gadmovida); completion of the action (aspect: tsera,dastera khata, dakhata); tense (Present : tsers, Future, datsers). A preverb may form a completely different verb: (gaagona, chaagona,moagona, tsiakitxa, moikitxa, aago, daago, tsaago, moigo, etc.)

In the Ossetian language preverbs perform seven main functions:
      1. To express the end of the action, aspect.
      2. To express the direction of the action, orientation.

3. To express unexpectedness of the action.
4. To express great effort (laughed loudly, screamed with all one's might).
5. The action is ended.
6. To express the duration of the action (short-term, long-term).
7. The function of word formation (creation).

There are nine preverbs in the Ossetian language, by which the perfect aspect is formed. **æ-** а-, ра-, ба-, фæ-, ны-, æрба-, с-, цæ-.

-    is used very rarely.
-    a often indicates the end of the action (the perfect aspect).

уый акуыста æмæ стæй ацыд хæдзармæ (He worked and then he left home), æз дын хъуамæ азарон (I must sing to you).

In addition, preverb a –   with the verb indicates the direction of the action from inside to outside:нæ уæзджытæ кæрты дуарæй **ахызтысты (** our guests left through the back door).

а- цыд – (he/she left- indicates that the speaker is inside the container).

a – preverb used with a verb denotes a superficial and non-serious behavior as well as the duration of the action. For instance, Алæууыд (he stopped for a second). Ахордта (he eats fast and very little);. Акуыста (he worked little) ; акуыдта (he cried a little);

азарын (he/she sings for a while); (зарын – sing);

абадын (to sit for a second (for a while);

This preverb also forms a verb: **а-**раст – went out, **а-**даргъ (long) lasted)**.** When **а-**   is used without a preposition, the meaning of the verb is not actualised.

ра- denotes the finished action: райгуырдтæн – (was born), радзырдта – (told us)

ра- denotes the action from inside to outside, when the speaker is outside: райхъуысти хъæрзын (was grieving).

ра- цыд (came out), denotes that the speaker was outside of the container

ба- denotes a completed action in the Past and Future**:** хордта (ate), **ба-**нызта (drank),   **ба-**кастæн (read). уыдон сабырæй æруынаффæ кодтой (they disccussed it in peaceful circumstances).

б**а** denotes an action from outside to inside. б**а-**цыд (came in) when the speaker is inside the container.

ба- can form another word together with the auxiliary verb: æнæнхъæлæджы дуæрттæ байгом сты –(the door opened unexpectedly); изæрмæ хæхты цурмæ бахæццæ уыдзæн – (by the end of the day he/she will have reached the mountains);

Verb prefix - **ба-** can express multiplicity and duration of the   action: ба-зоны (wins (many times, again and again, often); бакусы (works (often, always, again and again);

бакасы (looks (several times, often) **бахуды** (often smiles to him/her).

A widely spread preposition **фæ** has numerous functions:

a) **фæ-** indicates the end of the action: федтон, фехъуыстам

b) **фæ –** the verb expresses an unexpected action, a surprise.

хæрдмæ фæхаудтæ, фездæхтæ

c) it can also mean: duration of the action **фæдуцын**   (milking), multiplicity: æз фæхъусын – (listen (frequent action)), repetition (æз иу фыстон, фыстон иу – I (sometimes) write);   фæдавын- theft, to steal(frequent action); фæкафын (I (sometimes)dance; фæфасын (I (sometimes) comb) ; фæфæдзæхсын (to ask, to beg (sometimes)).

d) **фæ-** indicates distance: фæхаста (took it far away); without **фæ-** - **а**хаста (took it) indicates a neutral action)**.**

фæ-лыгъди (ran far away) **(**without it **фæ-** indicates a neutral action - **æ-**лыгъди (to run).

e) **фæ-** with an auxiliary verb can form verbs and word combinations: фæсырх (became red); фæраст (went out)

The main purpose of **ны-**is to denote the end of the action**.**: ныууагъта (he/she left), **ны**-ффыстон (I wrote) and so on.

It also denotes an action from down to the top. ныххауди –(fell through something); ныххызтис (arrived), **ны**ццыд (the speaker is at the top). Proposition **ны** expresses intensity of the action ныззарыд – (sang); ныббаста (reconciled) : ны-ххудти giggled (loudly).

Together with an auxiliary verb this preverb forms words from various words.

ны- gradually fused to some verb-stems and therefore it does no longer reveal the meaning of proposition Нымайын (to count), нымбæхсын (to hide).

æрба- мард (died unexpectedly, suddenly).

æрба- in the Ossetian language, this is the only complex pre-verb:**æр+ба** indicates the end of an action, as well as the direction of an action. **рба-** цыд (he/she came in), the speaker is inside. The pre-verb **æрба** denotes unexpectedness, sudden end of an action.

æрба- цъал (unexpectedly broke down)

æрба- мард (unexpectedly died).

Together with the auxiliary verb it can be added to a word and form verb-forms: æрбахæццæ – (she/he/it) has reached) ; æрбайгом –(it opened);

æр – expresses the end of an action denoted by the verb in the Past and Future:

æр-цыд (he/she came down) indicates the direction of the action from top to down, when the speaker is down.

(ы) с –expresses an action in the Past and Future tense.

This form expresses the direction of an action from down to top, when the speaker is up as well as the speed and beginning of an action: срызтис (suddenly started shivering);

In addition, when used with an auxiliary verb, **с-** gives the word a verb function and a slightly different meaning: с-хъомыл-дæн – (I have grown up), иу (one), сиу (uniteda); лæг (a man), слæги (became a man).

Цæ creates the meaning of full aspect -цæхсадта (he/she washed).

The preverb attached to this verb marks the direction from the top, where the speaker is located: цæрвыстой (he/she was sent down).

цæ- used with the verb expresses frequency of the action: цæвæры (he/she keeps it).

цæ- this pre-verb is rarely used

The above-discussed peculiarities must be taken into consideration when learning the verb.

As it is known, Georgian possesses a number of negative particles whereas in Ossetian there are only two negative particles**: нæ и ма**

In the Indicative mood only н is used whereas in the Subjunctive mood both, **нæ** and **ма** are employed. On the other hand, only **ма** is used in the imperative mood.

With pronouns, participles and particles the negative *нæ and ма* are used to form the following forms:

нæма/ not yet, no more; мама/jer ara.

ницы/none, nothing, мацы / none, nothing; nobody

ничи/nobody, мачи/nobody, no one

нал/ no more, мауал/no more, no longer

ницыуал/nothing more, no more, мацыуал/nothing else

никуы/nowhere, макуы / never

нæма/ not yet, not now мама/not now

Unlike Ossetian, Georgian possesses negative pronouns (ar) and (ver). ar gavakete (I did not do it because I did not want to) expresses the lack of desire whereas ver gavakete (I was not able to do that) means lack of ability to do something. In Ossetian both forms are expressed by онæ (not).

In addition, in Georgian there are the following forms: aravin/veravin-nobody) ничи/aravin (nobody), мачи /nuravim (nobody);

In Ossetian both corresponding Georgian negative pronouns (ar, ver/ar, ver) are expressed by one form. In Ossetian a noun does not have the Ergative case which in Georgian is referred to as the subject case. In order to comprehend the agreement between the subject and the predicate in Georgian, the learners of Georgian should be familiar with the concept of transitivity/intransitivity. This involves learning the case markers by heart. The subject is in the Nominative case with the transitive verb of the first series , in the Ergative case with the verbs of the second series and in the Dative case with the verbs of the third series. As the Ossetian language does not possess the Ergative case , very often the Ossetian speakers use the subject in the Nominative case: katsi aigo (instead of katsma aigo)

When teaching Georgian or Ossetian verbs, special attention should be paid to the categories of causation and version. The version in the Georgian language is a verb category which denotes the relationship between the subject and the object or between two objects of the sentence. The version can be of three types: subjective, objective and locative.

The subjective version indicates that the direct object belongs to the subject (I am building, you are building, etc.).

The objective version indicates that the direct object belongs to the indirect object (I'm building for him/her, etc.) whereas the locative version shows no relationship between the objects or the subject and the object of the sentence.

The category of version in the Ossetian language, as well as in other Indo-European languages is not indicated. However, it still exists in Ossetian (as well as in other Indo-European languages, "but is not distinct as it is in our languages" (A. Shanidze).

As for the category of the causation, it should also become an object of special attention while learning the verb system of the Ossetian language. In Georgian language the category of causation indicates whether the subject acts on the object directly (I write/ paint) or with the help of another agent (I have it written/ painted) . Accordingly, here there are two forms of causation indicated: direct and indirect .

Although causation is revealed in many languages (for instance, Persian, Turkish, Arabic),it is not attested in others. In such cases, causation is considered together with the Voice (Ossetian).

In general, these categories are not attested in some Indo-European languages. In such instances, it is necessary to mark subjective and objective persons by means of personal pronouns (he has it dug by him, he has it made by him, etc.).

In addition, syntactic peculiarities should also be considered in the process of the teaching/learning of the Ossetian language: there are two main member of the Ossetian sentence: (the subject and the predicate) whereas the number of main members of a Georgian sentence is four (the subject, the predicate, direct and indirect objects).

As mentioned above, when teaching some grammatical categories it is necessary to take into consideration differences between Georgian and Ossetian languages. This will enable the learners to overcome the challenges arising in the process. Therefore, while teaching the Ossetian language in Georgian schools, special emphasis should be made regarding certian grammatical issues. In some cases, the learning / teaching of grammar rules is relatively effective. At the same time, it is advisable to teach some grammatical issues through modern methodology.

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