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The Language Situation, Sociolinguistic Profile Formulae and Bi- and Trilingual Ballot Papers

Abstract

In order to describe a language situation it is necessary to choose an adequate model which is a very complicated task owing to the fact that every language situation is unique in itself. During the 1960s, there were efforts made to discover general patterns for multilingual communities. Those efforts led to the identification of national sociolinguistic typologies and profile formulae. Their advantage is that they have been designed based on objective criteria and that they allow designations for newly discovered circumstances. I thus picked the sociolinguistic profile formula and applied it to the language situation in Georgia's province of Kvemo (Lower) Kartli. The choice appeared to be successful in two ways: 1) the sociolinguistic profile formula appeared to be an adequate model for the language situation in this case; 2) a new function (viz., use as a language of ballot papers) was identified, so far not dealt with in the sociolinguistic literature. Hence, a new designation was added to the formula.

Key words: bilingualism, language situation, Georgia.

In order to describe a language situation it is necessary to choose an adequate model which is a very complicated task owing to the fact that every language situation is unique in itself. During the 1960s, there were efforts to discover general patterns for multilingual communities. Those efforts led to the identification of national sociolinguistic typologies and profile formulae (see, for instance, Stewart, 1962, 1968; Ferguson, 1962, 1966; Haarman, 1986; Haugen, 1972).

Three general categories were set up: **Lmaj** – *major language*; **Lmin** – *minor language*; **Lspec** – *language of special status*.

Five language types were acknowledged: Vernacular (*V*), Standard (*S*), Classical (*C*), Pidgin (*P*), and Creole (*K*).

Various societal functions were identified: *Group* function (*g*), *Official* use (*o*), *Language of wider communication* (*w*), *Educational* use (*e*), *Religious* purposes (*r*), *International* use (*i*), *School subject* (*s*), *Provincial* (*p*), *Capital* (*c*) and *Literary* (*l*).

With a view to the aforementioned formulaic approach and based on the Constitution of Georgia ("The official language of Georgia shall be Georgian. The official language of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia shall be Georgian and Abkhazian"), the formula will be the following:

$$\textbf{2Lmaj = Lmaj1 (So, Sg, Sr, Se) + Lmaj2 (Sp, Sg, Ss)}$$

where **Lmaj1** is Georgian [a standardized vernacular (S), with its official (o), group (g), religious (r) and educational (e) functions) and **Lmaj2** is Abkhazian (a standardized vernacular (S), with its provincial (p), group (g), school subject (s) functions]. However, this hardly reflects the multilingual spectrum of Georgia, particularly with respect to various provinces. Therefore, it is more adequate to target regional language situations and establish respective descriptions. In the present paper, I concentrate on Kvemo Kartli (Kikvidze, 2014) for which one can provisionally assume the following regional sociolinguistic profile formula:

$$\textbf{1Lmaj (So, Sg, Sr, Se) + nLmin}$$

where **1Lmaj** is Georgian; as for the **n** in **nLmin**, it designates an unspecified number of minority languages within the region. Hence, for Kvemo Kartli can be specified in the following way:

Table 1

LANGUAGE	STATUS & FUNCTIONS	
Georgian	Lmaj (So, Sg,	Sr, Se)
Azerbaijani	Lmin (Sg, Se)	
Urum	Lmin (Vg)	
Armenian	Lmin (Sg, Se)	
Russian	Lmin (Sw, Se)	
Arabic	Lspec (Cr)	
Classical		
Armenian	Lmin (Cr)	
Pontic Greek	Vw	
Modern Greek	Sl	

Irrespective of its unarguably useful and clear specifications, the existing pattern seems to be insufficient. For instance, since the early 1990s, both the ballot papers and all kinds of election-related documentation have been published in Georgian. Naturally enough, this situation caused practical problems for those citizens of the country who did not speak Georgian. Thus, their linguistic deficit was regularly converted into a deficit in their socio-economic capital. In order to cope with the said challenge, the Central Election Commission of Georgia published four linguistic versions of ballot papers:

1) Georgian

2) Georgian-Azerbaijani

3) Georgian-Armenian

4) Georgian-Azerbaijani-Armenian

I am presenting the case according to the 2017 municipal elections in Georgia:

Table 2. Districts with compact settlements of ethnic minorities (as of October 21, 2017)

District No.	District name	Number of voters	Georgian-Azerbaijani	Georgian-Armenian	Georgian-Armenian-Azerbaijani
11	Sagarejo	15,227	13	0	0
15	Lagodekhi	8,668	7	0	0
17	Telavi	5,771	4	0	0
21	Gardabani	40,639	32	0	0
22	Merneuli	93,611	72	8	4
23	Bolnisi	39,193	43	2	0
24	Dmanisi	14,932	32	0	0
25	Tsalka	7,448	3	12	0
26	Tetritskaro	1,486	2	3	0
37	Akhaltsikhe	6,596	0	8	0
40	Akhalkalaki	35,422	0	63	0
41	Ninotsminda	21,026	0	37	0

(CESKO)

This innovation should be reflected in respective sociolinguistic profile formulae. Hence, I suggest that we should introduce a new item to the list of functions:

11) *Ballot* (b) – a standard language which functions as a language of ballot papers both in national and municipal elections.

Hence, the following amendments are to be introduced:

Table 3

LANGUAGE	STATUS & FUNCTIONS
Georgian	Lmaj (So, Sg, Sr, Se, Sb)
Azerbaijani	Lmin (Sg, Se, Sb)
Armenian	Lmin (Sg, Se, Sb)

In the present paper, I attempted to check how adequate the sociolinguistic profile formula model would be for a description of a language situation in one region (Kvemo Kartli) of Georgia. It has been found that the model is adequate; however, as it has happened before (see, for instance, Stewart 1968; Cooper 1989), following the identification of a so far undocumented, albeit actually existing, function, it was necessary to introduce a new, additional designation. It is a positive contribution to the study of both the region in point and language situations around the world, and to the typologizing of multilingual situations in general.

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