

From the history of the Georgian grammatical thought¹

Ieskats gruzīnu gramatiskās domas vēsturē

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This article outlines some debates and issues in the field of Georgian linguistics and offers a research agenda for Georgian Grammar from the 5th century up to present day. It builds on previous research on the Georgian grammars. However, it is the first attempt to identify relevant periods and phases in the history of Georgian grammatical thought. Georgian grammar treatises, guidebooks and their history have been explored by several scholars but interrelations between standard Georgian and Georgian grammars have not been fully studied yet. The existence of standard Georgian doesn't always coincide with the existence of normative grammars and vice versa. The study of the history of Georgian grammatical thought shows that in some periods normative grammars are dominant, while in others practical grammars are prevalent.

The purpose of the present article is to demonstrate that at different stages of its development Georgian grammatical thought produced different types of grammars. Even though Georgian written texts dating back to the 5th–11th centuries were written according to the unified linguistic standard, implying the existence of normative grammar, we don't have any evidence of the existence of such grammars except for supplementary text commentaries. From the 11th to the 19th centuries various types of grammar have been written but the existence of standard Georgian cannot be documented. In the 20th century standard Georgian goes hand in hand with normative grammars. The present paper aims to explore the ways in which different types of grammar have dominated throughout the history of Georgian grammatical thought and the lines alongside which it has developed from its origins up to present day.

The authors employ methods of descriptive and diachronic analysis.

Keywords: normative grammar; practical grammar; normalization; grammatical idea; Georgian grammars.

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Introduction

The Georgian language belongs to the Kartvelian language group of the Caucasian language family. According to Georgian historical sources, the first Georgian state was formed at the end of the 4th century BCE – it was the Kingdom of Kartli. Parnavaz was the first king to declare Georgian as a state language in the 3rd century BCE (Pataridze 1980). However, the reliability and validity of this information cannot be substantiated since there is no empirical evidence confirming the existence of the script nor normative grammar belonging to this period. The first Georgian written monuments date back to the 5th century.

The existence of standard Georgian is confirmed by the manuscripts dating back to the 5th–11th centuries. However, we do not have any normative grammar treatises written during this period, except for a somewhat fragmentary and unsystematic 11th century comparative study of Greek and Georgian case systems attributed to Arsen Ikaltoeli. From the 12th century till the beginning of the 20th century there was no commonly accepted linguistic standard for the Georgian language, whereas first normative grammars of the Georgian language appeared in mid 1700s.

The 20th century brought about standardization of the Georgian language. Since then numerous normative grammar textbooks and/or guidebooks as well as scholarly works have been written by Georgian grammarians. Currently, Georgian is a state/official language protected by Constitution. However, the use of the standard language faces several difficulties in various regions and areas of life.

1. Origins

First attempts to study the grammatical structure of the Georgian language date as far back as the 11th century when original literary texts were written as well as translations were done from Greek and Persian at Georgian Monasteries in Georgia and abroad (Jvari Monastery and Holy Lavra of Saint Sabbas in Palestine; the Black Mountain Monastery and Mount Sinai Monastery in Syria and Arabian peninsula, respectively; Monastery of Iviron on Mount Athos in Byzantine Empire; Petritsoni Monastery in Macedonia) (Peikrishvili, 2015). Under such circumstances it was vital to normalize language and introduce new terminology, thus contributing to the development of Georgian grammatical thought (Peikrishvili, 2015, 139). The first original Georgian work is “Sitkvai Artrontatvis” (‘lit. trans. ‘the word on the letters’) that was published by Mzekala Shanidze (Shanidze 1990). According to Shanidze (1990, 3) “the work is an excellent linguistic story: it is a proof that old scribes were familiar with the linguistic issues, knew Greek grammar and tried to study the nature and grammar rules of the Georgian language”. Shanidze argues that the treatise should have been written by Arsen Ikaltoeli (Shanidze 1990, 2). The latter discusses the function of article and case systems in Greek and Georgian languages. Grammatical terminology he uses and the way they are derived arises special interest (Uturgaidze, 1999, 11).

Apparently, linguistic terminology and derivation norms had been well developed by the time the work was written. The terminology used in the treatise can be found in the 18th century grammars; some of them (for instance, as სახელო

‘name’, ნათესავი ‘relative’, სქესი ‘gender’, მიცემითი ‘dative’, წოდებითი ‘vocative’, to mention just a few) are still in use; these terms are derived by adding suffix ‘ით’ to the root word – მიცემა მიცემ-ით-ი, წოდება წოდებ-ით-ი etc. This derivation pattern can be found even earlier in some cases of Georgian derived names” (Uturgaidze, 1999, 11–12).

In some cases Greek terms are transliterated, in others their Georgian equivalents are coined. These issues have been thoroughly studied by Georgian scholars (see, e.g., Sarjveladze 1984; Ghambashidze 1986; Potskhishvili 1995; Karosanidze, Kurtsilava, 2018).

Intensive translation activities taking place in the 11th–12th centuries necessiated the production of this type of grammatical treatise. On the one hand, it was necessary to study the language of the original texts to be translated on a scientific level and to gain deep insight into the grammatical structures of the Georgian language, on the other. In addition to Arsen Ikaltoeli, Ekvtime and Giorgi Mtatsmindeli, Eprem Mtsire, Ioane Petritsi also produced high-level translations, implying a combination of creative and scholarly endeavors (Gogolashvili 2013). Their translations are supplemented by invaluable linguistic commentary, explaining grammatical and lexicographic nuances of the original source and target languages. Ekvtime Mtatsmindeli practiced the free approach to translation – reproducing the general meaning of the original text, he refused to follow closely the form or organization of the original, modifying the passages of the source texts and widely using new grammatical forms and lexical units. Giorgi Mtatsmindeli, on the contrary, was a proponent of literal translation – it was his imperative to follow the original text closely. Ephrem Mtsire, analyzing linguistic issues related to the process of translation, elaborated his own theory of translation. He introduced his own punctuation system that was widely used in Georgian letters. Ioane Petritsi gave rise to a new literary school and implemented new philosophical terminology (Gogolashvili, 2013, 135).

Grammar was included in the study program/curriculum of the world famous Gelati Academy, founded in 1106 by the King David IV Aghmashenebeli. The curriculum included seven disciplines, divided into trivium and quadrarium cycles (Gogolashvili, 2013):

Trivium included the following disciplines:

1. Geometry;
2. Arithmetics;
3. Music.

Quadrarium consisted of the following disciplines:

1. Philosophy (which was further divided into practical, visual and theoretical subcategories);
2. Rhetorics;
3. Grammar;
4. Astronomy

In another medieval educational center of Ikalto (gold)smithery, ceramic art, winemaking etc. were also mastered (Gogolashvili 2013, 135).

As Ghambashidze (1986, 90) points out, these academies were powerful centers for education, research, and culture. It was in these medieval centers that long-standing traditions of word formation originated.

Study programs/curricula of these academies are not well documented and we can judge them only based on the scholarly works written in these centers. Original as well as translated texts contain invaluable materials for the study of the history of Georgian terminology (Melikishvili 1975 etc.).

Some of the terms coined in these academies, especially in the areas of philosophy and historical science, are still in use; many linguistic terms as well take their origin in the works of the Georgian scholars affiliated with these centers (არსებითი ‘noun’, მეტყველება ‘speech’, სიბრძნის-მეტყველება ‘rhetorics’, გონიერი ‘intelligent’, ნივთი ‘thing’, ნივთიერი ‘material/substantial’, სულიერი ‘spiritual’, წარმოება ‘derivation/word formation’, მსგავსებითი ‘comparative’, მოძღვრება ‘teaching/doctrine’, მეცნიერება ‘science/scholarship’, სიტყვიერება ‘arts and letters’, იგივეობა ‘identity’, ცვალებადი ‘changeable’, მოქმედებითი ‘instrumental case/active voice’, რომელობა ‘whatness’, რაოდენობა ‘quantity’ etc. (Ghambashidze 1986, 91)).

When Shanidze (1990, 7) puts it, “Sitkvai Artrontatvis” provides an undeniable evidence of the existence of Georgian grammatical literature in the 11th and 12th centuries. Consequently, 16th–17th century scholars and scribes inherited long-standing traditions of linguistic studies, drawing their grammatical ideas and concepts from these invaluable sources. These traditions emerged and evolved under the influence of Greek cultural environment.

2. Late medieval / early modern developments

In the 16th–17th centuries Italian Catholic missionaries got interested in the Georgian language. In 1629 “Georgian-Italian Dictionary” was printed in Rome (compiled by Stephano Paolini who was assisted by a Georgian scholar Nikiphore Irbach) (Paolini 1629). This dictionary was followed by “Georgian (Iberian) Grammar” by Francesca Mario Majo that was printed in Rome in 1670 (Majo, 1670). It does not seem to be of any scholarly value but its historical significance as the first grammar book of the Georgian language can hardly be overestimated. The grammatical system described in the book is based on Latin grammars. Majo’s grammar contains some valuable observations. For instance, it points out that Georgian grammar does not have the category of gender; it also notes that Georgian language uses letters ვ, მ, გ to distinguish between different grammatical persons; it also discusses some suffixes and syntagmatic relations between nouns on the one hand and nouns and verbs on the other.

Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani’s “sitkvis kona” (a glossary/explanatory dictionary of the Georgian language) was compiled between the late 17th and the early 18th centuries. Besides its pure lexicographic value, it is also significant in terms of accumulation and utilization of the previous knowledge and research experience in this area of expertise. This work is also notable for coining Georgian equivalents to Latin and Greek grammatical terminology. Some of them are still used today.

In 1737, Zurab Shanshovani wrote a grammar textbook in Moscow; it was printed in St. Petersburg by Alexander Tsagareli much later (1881). In 1992 it was edited and published by Babunashvili and Uturgaidze. This is the first textbook of Georgian grammar written in Georgian. However, as scholars point out, Shanshovani's grammar is not an original scholarly work but a translation of Armenian grammar by Simeon Jughaets which, in its turn, is based on the Armenian translation of the grammar by Dionysus of Thrace (Chikobava 1965).

The above-mentioned grammars can be assessed as an early stage in the development of the Georgian grammatical thought. It was a preparatory phase for Anton I's "Georgian Grammar" (Anton I, 1885).

3. 18th–19th centuries: Anton's period

In 1753 the first edition of Anton Bagrationi's "Georgian Grammar" was published. Its 2nd extended edition appeared in 1767. Anton was familiar with the traditions of Georgian grammatical thought. As a matter of fact, Anton I's grammar is based on previous research. Anton Bagrationi, summing up the knowledge and experience of the preceding grammarians, created the fundamental grammatical work of that time. Obviously, it is hard to say what is taken from the predecessors and what is his own product but it is an undeniable fact that Anton Bagrationi summed up and concluded the early development of Georgian grammatical thought and laid a solid foundation for subsequent research (Babunashvili 1970).

The significance of Bagrationi's "Georgian Grammar" has been thoroughly discussed by Georgian linguists. We would add that Anton's observations and conclusions still retain their scholarly value. It can be defined as a normative grammar: Anton managed to identify grammatical variations and demonstrate normative paradigms in a relevant way. In this sense, the importance of this grammar cannot be overestimated.

The 18th–19th centuries can be described as Anton's period (the second phase of the development of the Georgian grammatical thought). The historians of linguistics have defined it a "pre-scientific" period in the history of the Georgian linguistics, simultaneously describing it as the "period of practical grammars" since grammar textbooks were written for practical usage in the 18th–19th centuries.

During this period, from the 2nd half of the 18th century to the end of the 19th century, 15 grammar books were either handwritten or printed. This period is thoroughly studied by Georgian linguists (Chikobava 1928, 1968; Abesadze 1960; Babunashvili 1970; Potskhishvili 1995; Uturgaidze 1999). In the first place, we should mention here grammars by Gaioz Rektori (1789), Davit Bagrationi (1790), Ioane Qartvelishvili (1809), Varlam Eristavi (1825), Solomon Dodashvili (1830), Dimitri Kipiani (1882), Platon Ioseliani (1883), Davit Chubinashvili (1887), Tedo Zhordania (1889), Mose Janashvili (1906), Silovan Khundadze (1917). The authors of two more grammars are unknown. Most of them are either based on or influenced by Anton's grammar, modifying and complementing it.

Some of them are simple compilations of preceding grammars, while other can be described as original scholarly works (e.g. the works by Platon Ioseliani, Tedo Zhordania and especially Davit Kipiani).

There was much controversy regarding such linguistic issues as the use of dialectal forms and archaisms, reform of Georgian alphabet and linguistic standard, appropriation of written and spoken language varieties etc. between older and younger generations of Georgian men of letters, involving such prominent writers as Ilia Chavchavadze, Akaki Tsereteli, Vazha-Pshavela, Iakob Gogebashvili, Giorgi Tsereteli. Such vital issues as grammatical norm and variation were also debated. An influential poet Akaki Tsereteli initiated debates regarding grammatical forms, orthography and stylistics.

The 18th–19th century grammars laid a solid foundation for the linguistic research of Georgian grammar in the 20th century.

4. 20th century developments

20th century marks the 3rd period in the development of the Georgian grammatical thought. At the beginning of the century Nicholas Marr laid a solid foundation for the study of Georgian grammar. His contribution to the study of the grammatical system of the Georgian verb is huge (Marr 1907, 1925). In 1925 Niko Marr's "Grammar of Old Georgian Literary Language" was published. It is the first fundamental scholarly work concerning old Georgian language (Peikrishvili, 2015, 174). In 1927–1928 Marr was invited to the Institute of Linguistics in Paris to read a theoretical course of the old Georgian language. In 1931, based on this course of lectures and co-authored with Maurice Brier, an 800-page book "Georgian Language" was published in French. He and his disciples (Ivane Javakhishvili, Ioseb Kipshidze, Akaki Shanidze) established the Georgian linguistic school at the University of St. Petersburg that was later enlarged and strengthened by the establishment of the first Georgian university – Tbilisi University in 1918.

Tbilisi State University and later the research institutions of the Academy of Sciences (founded in 1941) greatly contributed to the development of the Georgian grammatical thought.

Ioseb Kipshidze, Giorgi Akhvlediani, Akaki Shanidze, Arnold Chikobava and Varlam Topuria brought the world prestige to Georgian linguistics.

In 1911 Kipshidze published a descriptive textbook "Georgian Grammar". In 1914 his monograph titled "Grammar of Megrelian (Iverian) Language" appeared in Russian. It consists of four parts: phonetics, morphology, word formation, syntax. It is a must-read for Georgian grammarians (Danelia 1985, 4).

In 1918–1919 Giorgi Akhvlediani authored "Introduction to Linguistics" in three volumes. It was the first university textbook published in Georgian. In 1938 he published "Principles of General and Georgian Phonetics" and in 1949 "Principles of General Phonetics", followed by "Introduction to General Phonetics" in 1956. Giorgi Akhvlediani was the key figure in this area of expertise in Georgia.

In 1929 a prominent Georgian linguist, Arnold Chikobava founder of Iberian-Caucasian linguistics, published "The Problem of the Simple Sentence in the Georgian Language". He explored the structures of separate languages as well as theoretical problems of general linguistics. In 1936–1979 he published the following comprehensive works: "Grammatical Analysis of Tchanuri Language with Texts" (1936); "Comparative Dictionary of Tchanuri, Megrelian and Georgian

Languages” (1938); “Ancient Structure of Noun Roots in Kartvelian Languages” (1942); “The Problem of Ergative Construction in Iberian-Caucasian Languages” (1948); “Introduction to Iberian-Caucasian Languages” (1979). He employed historical-comparative methodology his studies of Kartvelian and other Caucasian languages. In his works he demonstrated that Megrelian and Tchanuri are dialects of Zanuri. He is also an author of “General Linguistics” published in two volumes in 1935 and 1945, and “Introduction to Linguistics” (1952).

Varlam Topuria’s explored grammatical order, lexicology and epigraphs of Kartvelian and Iberian-Caucasian languages and dialects. Based on his doctoral dissertation (1938) he published “Svanian Language I: Verb”, “Georgian Language and Some Issues of Orthography” and edited the 1st volume of “Georgian Dialectology”.

The 1st half of the 20th century was very productive in terms of studying the Georgian grammatical system and its history. Dozens of influential monographs and hundreds of scholarly papers were written during the period. In 1953 Shanidze’s monograph “The Fundamentals of Georgian Grammar” was published. On the one hand, this fundamental monograph summed up half a century of studying the grammatical system of the Georgian language and it specified and defined grammatical categories and concepts, identified the main tendencies in the development of the grammatical system on the other. In 1976 Shanidze published “Grammar of the Old Georgian Language”. Shanidze also laid foundation for the study of Georgian dialects. In this respect, his work “Georgian Mountainous Dialects” (1915) is particularly important.

One more scholar, who stands out as a researcher of Georgian verb and dialects, was Besarion Jorbenadze. He also studied theoretical issues of general linguistics. In 1975 he published “Formation and Function of the Category of Voice”, in 1985 “Basics of Georgian Grammar” and in 1989 “Georgian Dialectology” etc.

As we have seen, Georgian linguistics has been focused on three main research areas: old Georgian language, modern Georgian, and Georgian dialectology.

There has been much controversy regarding some linguistic issues. For instance, the number of verb tenses was debated by Georgian scholars. Shanidze (1953) argued that there were eleven tenses in modern Georgian. Gogolashvili (2010) and Oniani (1978) think that there are only eight tenses, while Avtandil Arabuli (2016) maintains that there are sixteen. All these viewpoints are well-argued, and the controversy is still unresolved. Terminological diversity is also apparent. Selection and establishment of terms is not just a technical process because it is related to understanding concepts.-

During the 2nd half of the past century several theoretical questions (Shanidze 1953; Oniani 1978) emerged that complicated the further development of grammatical research to some extent. This situation necessitated publication of the summarizing academic course of Georgian grammar.

The full academic course of Georgian grammar aimed to summarize the ideas of several generations of scholars. The purpose of this project was to select among the multiple contradictory and often mutually exclusive ideas and viewpoints and resolve long debated issues. The project was initiated and supervised by Giorgi Gogolashvili at Arnold Chikobava Institute of Linguistics ten years ago. About

20 linguists were involved in the project implementation. In 2009–2011 Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation funded the project titled “Morphology of the Georgian Literary Language”, and in 2013–2016 “Morphology of Georgian Dialects”. The leading organization was Institute of Linguistics at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. The Principal investigator was Gogolashvili, and the key personnel included Avtandil Arabuli, Nino Sharashenidze, Mariam Manjgaladze, Murman Sukhishvili, Giorgi Tsotsanidze, Nino Tchumburidze, Nino Jorbenadze, Rusudan Landia.

Descriptive and diachronic approaches were used to accomplish the task. As a result of project implementation, in 2016–2017 a four-volume anthology was published edited by Gogolashvili and Arabuli:

- 1) “The Modern Georgian Language: Nominals” (2016)
- 2) “The Modern Georgian Language: The Verb” (2016)
- 3) “The Modern Georgian Language: Dialectology” (2017)
- 4) “The Modern Georgian Language: Paradigms” (2017)

This academic edition, built on previous research, not only summarized current state of affairs in the field, but laid a solid foundation to the further research of Georgian grammar.

Conclusion

Thus, the history of Georgian grammatical thought can be divided roughly into the following periods:

- 1) the 11th–18th centuries, when Georgian grammars were modelled on Latin grammars; this period was concluded and summed up by Anton Bagrationi’s grammar;
- 2) late 18th–19th centuries, the so-called post-Antonian period, also defined as “pre-scientific phase” when mostly practical grammars were written;
- 3) late 19th and the 1st half of the 20th century: this period includes a team of prominent Georgian linguists who worked at St. Petersburg University (Niko Marr, Ivane Javakhishvili, Ioseb Kifshidze, Akaki Shanidze), later relocated in Tbilisi after the foundation of Tbilisi University in 1918; This period was summed up by Akaki Shanidze’s seminal monograph “Principles of Georgian Grammar” published in 1953;
- 4) late 20th and the beginning of the 21st century: 4th and most fruitful period starts in the 2nd half of the 20th century, concluded by 4 volumes of Georgian grammar (2017) summarizing grammatical ideas and viewpoints of several generations of Georgian scholars.

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Kopsavilkums

Raksts veltīts gruzīnu gramatikas vēstures apskatam kopš m. ē. 5. gs., kā arī vairāku gruzīnu valodniecībā diskutējamu jautājumu aplūkojumam. Raksta pamatā ir iepriekšēji gruzīnu gramatiskās domas vēstures pētījumi. Vienlaikus raksts ir pirmais mēģinājums periodizēt gruzīnu gramatikas domas vēsturi. Virkne pētnieku ir iztirzājuši gruzīnu gramatikas traktātus u.c. vēsturiskos avotus, taču plašāk nav analizētas gruzīnu literārās valodas un gramatikas attieksmes. Ne vienmēr gruzīnu literārā valoda sakrīt ar gramatiku materiālu, un otrādi, to applicina arī gruzīnu gramatiskās domas attīstības gaita – pārmaiņus dominē gan normatīvā, gan praktiskā gramatika.

Raksta mērķis ir pierādīt faktu, ka dažādas gruzīnu gramatiskās domas attīstības pakāpes noteikušas arī atšķirīgus gramatikas tipus. Lai gan m. ē. 5.–11. gs. gruzīnu valodā rakstīti teksti applicina vienotu standartizētu veidolu, ko, iespējams, noteikusi kāda normatīva gramatika, taču joprojām nav nekādu liecību par šāda avota esamību. Savukārt 11.–19. gs. ir sarakstītas dažādas gramatikas, tomēr nav dokumentēta gruzīnu literārā valoda. Tikai kopš 20. gs. gruzīnu literārā valoda un normatīvās gramatikas attīstās mijiedarbē. Pētījumā analizēti šādu atšķirību cēloņi, kā arī gruzīnu gramatiskās domas attīstība līdz mūsu dienām. Pētījumā izmantota deskriptīvas un diahroniskas analīzes metodoloģija.

Atslēgvārdi: normatīvā gramatika; praktiskā gramatika; normēšana; gramatikas ideja; gruzīnu valodas gramatika.