

Standard Georgian language: History and current challenges¹

Gruzīnu literārā valoda – vēsture un pašreizējie izaicinājumi

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This article outlines some debates and issues in the field of Georgian linguistics and offers a research agenda for standard Georgian language, including its history, phases of development, present-day challenges and prospects. There is a multitude of conflicting and even mutually exclusive ideas and points of view regarding these issues. My key point is to provide the periodization of the standard Georgian language that encompasses sixteen centuries, taking into consideration not only the level of normalization and standardization of the Georgian language in a particular historical period, but also the language variety on which the standard / literary language was based, and the institutions controlling and governing the development of the standard language. The point of departure here is the definition of the “standard” as a historically determined set of commonly used language assets, recognized by society as the most appropriate and prestigious variety due to its common usage and high cultural status. Using descriptive, synchronic, diachronic, and comparative research methods, I have tried to identify four phases / periods in the continuous history of the Georgian standard language spanning sixteen centuries.

Keywords: standard Georgian; periods of the Georgian standard language; old Georgian language; Middle Georgian language; Modern Georgian language.

1. Introduction

The history of the standard Georgian language is a history of language planning and policies, the unique amalgamation of which has created the language we use today. Yet, far from being historical relic, these language policies are ubiquitous in the modern era and continue to be appropriated and enforced by prescriptive

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grammarians, Georgian language teachers, lexicographers, official institutions, and the community.

The periodization of the Georgian language depends on the extent to which it has been normalized and standardized during different phases of its development. Therefore, each scholar offers his or her own variant periodization, Shanidze's (1923), Chikobava's (1952) and Jorbenadze's (1989) variants being the most influential and widely discussed ones. There are some other viewpoints, as well (cf. Tchumburidze 1956, 24; Kavtaradze 1964; Tvaradze 1968; Dzidziguri 1978; Sarjveladze 1984; Gogolashvili 2013, 32). Most scholars tend to divide the history of standard Georgian language into two or three periods except for Besarion Jorbenadze, who identifies five distinctive periods (Jorbenadze 1989, 155). However, if we add to the above-mentioned criteria the vernacular language / dialect on which the linguistic standard was based in this or that period, and institutions in power / authorities controlling and defining the linguistic standard, we can identify four periods in the continuous development of Georgian literary / standard language:

- 1) The 5th to 11th century: the so-called Old Georgian Language: presence of the common standard; absence of grammars; the standard was based on the rules established by the clergy (therefore, it was also referred to as church / ecclesial standard); the last phase saw the emergence of the so-called Hellenophile trends (the use of Greek grammatical constructions, derivation / word-building system, lexical borrowings (Ioane Petritsi and his followers)); the standard was controlled by the Church / ecclesial authorities.
- 2) The 12th century to mid-18th century: the so-called Middle Georgian Language: the beginning of the linguistic reform; domination of secular / vernacular elements over the standard language; rejection of Hellenophile tendencies; from the old standard, only linguistic heritage of Giorgi and Ekvtime Mtatsmindeli and their followers, which was closer to the vernacular language, was maintained; penetration of loan words of oriental origin; the standard was based on secular / vernacular speech variety (therefore, it is also referred to as secular / vernacular standard), which was not canonized in a timely manner due to the complicated political and socio-economic situation. Consequently, standard Georgian varied from region to region depending on social and geographical factors. There were no grammars, standard was established by the secular authorities / royal court.
- 3) The mid-18th century to mid-19th century: the so-called Anton's Period: the theory of three styles; the dominant style, bookish / scholarly / theological one, was based on the Church/ecclesial standard, while historical narratives and secular texts were based on secular/vernacular standard. Grammars were written, linguistic standard was established and maintained by the Church/ ecclesial authorities.
- 4) The mid-19th century to present: Modern Georgian language: new linguistic reform based on the 12th century secular / vernacular standard. Grammars were written, linguistic standard was established and maintained by

the secular government and, from the 20th century onward, standard Georgian was granted the status of official / state language of Georgia and protected by the Constitution, as well as state institutions.

2. Periodizing Georgian literary language

Akaki Shanidze distinguished three periods in the development of standard Georgian: Old Georgian (from the 5th to 11th century); Middle Georgian (from the 12th to 19th century) when we had no common standard language; and the 19th and 20th centuries when Modern Georgian was shaped (Shanidze 1920, 1976). Each of these periods saw substantial changes in graphical and writing systems, i. e., at the level of orthography, as well as at the level of grammar and vocabulary.

Arnold Chikobava (1952, 364–369) divides the history of standard / literary Georgian into two periods: from the 5th to 11th century, when the common linguistic standard took shape, and from the 12th to 20th century when the new linguistic standard emerged and, consequently, standard Georgian was implemented.

It should be noted that the division of the continuous development of the Georgian language spanning sixteen centuries that can be unmistakably traced through written texts is fairly conditional, as far as Georgian has remained relatively stable over the centuries, hence, old and medieval texts can be easily understood by a present-day cultivated reader. It is a common knowledge that, over the centuries, languages may change in such a way that new generations might have to study the language of their ancestors as a foreign language. This has been the case with English, Greek, Armenian, etc. The continuity of the standard / literary Georgian has not been achieved through its artificial separation from the vernacular language, it has always been closely interconnected with the everyday colloquial language. It should be also noted that throughout its sixteen-century history, Georgian language has developed three scripts that are still alive / active: Asomtavruli and Nuskhuri, that were widely spread before the 12th century, are still in limited ecclesial / liturgical usage and, vice versa, secular/vernacular Mkhedruli, the use of which was limited until the 12th century, is the dominant / major script today. Georgian scripts were granted the national status of intangible cultural heritage in Georgia in 2015 and inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2016.

However, if we take into consideration not only the above-mentioned criteria (normalization, standardization, graphization, continuity, etc.) but also the definition of “standard”, describing it as a term applied to the speech variety which, by the value of its cultural status and currency, is recognized by society as the most appropriate in a particular historical period, and the role of the official / state institutions in the formation of the linguistic standard, it seems reasonable to distinguish four periods in the history of standard Georgian language:

- 1) Old Georgian language (the 5th to 11th century);
- 2) Middle Georgian language (the 12th century to 1760s);

- 3) Anton's Period, or the Period of the so-called three styles (1760s to 1860s);
- 4) Modern Georgian (1860s to present); this period can be subdivided into two phases: 1860s–1920 and 1920–present; 1920 is a kind of milestone, when the Constitution granting Georgian language the status of official / state language was adopted during the years of the first independence (1918–1921).

According to the 11th century Georgian chronicler Leonti Mroveli, the first attempts of language standardization date as far back as the 4th century BC. He points out that the first Georgian state was formed at the end of the 4th century BC – it was the Kingdom of Kartli. The first king was Parnavaz who declared Georgian as a state language (Qhaukhchishvili 1955, 26; Pataridze 1980; Abashidze 1986, 10, 232, 466). There are important references to the ancient Colchis (Laz) academy scattered in historiographic sources. It can be assumed that standard Georgian already existed in the 4th century BC. However, this assumption thus far remains purely hypothetical and unverifiable, since we have no tangible proof of the existence of the Georgian script or normative grammar belonging to that age.

The first Georgian written monuments date back to the 5th century. These are epigraphic inscriptions, manuscripts, and historical-literary narratives. Even though no normative grammar books of that period survive until our time, the written monuments of the 5th to 11th century prove the existence of a standard language. All the written monuments were created according to the norms of the common literary language. However, it is unknown who implemented the linguistic standard, since we have no grammars belonging to those period and historical sources do not provide any evidence, either. Literary sources inform us that initially literary and/or scholarly works were produced at the courts of kings, noblemen, and bishops; later, after the intensification of monastic life, educational centres shifted to the monasteries. It is noteworthy that Georgians had educational and cultural centres in monastic complexes abroad, as well (Georgian monasteries of Palestine and Jerusalem, on Mount Sinai, Mount Athos, Black Mountain and elsewhere). Linguistic analysis of texts of this period, both in Georgia and abroad, confirms the existence of a common standard.

The 10th century author, Giorgi Merchule, provides evidence of the policy of linguistic unification in the 9th century Georgia. In particular, he points out that in the 9th century Georgia was the country where worship was conducted in Georgian (see Ingorokva 1954; Baramidze 1960, 186). In other words, this is the period when the royal house of Bagrationi was founded and prayers, masses and other liturgical services were held in Georgian throughout the country. As a matter of fact, the clergymen, who were far more influential than the nobility, were privileged to canonize / legalize the use of Georgian throughout the whole territory of Georgia.

The attitude of scholars of the same period towards the linguistic issues is quite strict; in his will, Giorgi Mtatsmindeli obliges all scribes and scholars to adhere to the established rules strictly (Kekelidze 1980, 226–229, 575). Such a categorical imperative for scribes shows that there was a standard Georgian, i.e., the variety of Georgian associated with formal schooling and written language (Gogolashvili 2013, 15).

It is generally considered that the very first period of the Georgian literary language (the 5th to 11th century) saw the emergence of the strictly normalized, standardized language. This period consists of three main phases: 1. The first one lasts from the 5th century to the end of the 7th century when the standard is associated with the Eastern Georgian dialect; 2. The second period covers the timespan from the 7th to 11th century when the standard is based on the South-Western Georgian dialectic variety; 3. The third one covers the 11th century, when the Hellenophile trends are intensified.

The process of standardization of the literary language largely depends on the socio-political and economic situation in the country. Georgia, devastated by the Arab conquests (especially from the 8th century), is split into several kingdoms and principalities by the end of the 8th century. East Georgia is in a particularly difficult situation. Therefore, South-West Georgia becomes the political-cultural centre and, consequently, South-Western Georgian dialect serves as a basis of the linguistic standard defined by the clergy. That is why Sarjveladze (1997, 11) divides Old Georgian into two sub-periods (the 5th to 8th century and the 9th to 11th century).

It is worthy of note that texts dated by the 5th to 9th century were written in the so-called Asomtavruli or Mrglovani ('round') alphabet (containing 37 letters). The name was given because of the round and large outline of the letters. It is a two-line system: all letters are of the same size and placed between two lines. From the 9th century, based on the round script, the angular variety emerges. Round letters are replaced by angular ones, and at the same time, the two-line system is replaced by a four-line system, which means that the letters of the middle, upper and lower registers are formed. The name "Nuskhuri" is used alongside with "Kutkhuri" – 'angular'. This script was used to rewrite religious texts, sacred books / scriptures, etc. There is an opinion that all three types of writing (the third one – Mkhedruli – will be discussed below) are development phases of the same script: Asomtavruli (the 5th to 9th century) and Nuskhuri (the 9th to 12th century), followed by Mkhedruli from the 13th century to the present day. However, there is also an opinion that all three scripts coexisted simultaneously, and they varied only in terms of their domination and usages at different times.

It is true that a lot of texts written between the 5th and 11th century, especially the translated ones, are accompanied by a body of commentary to describe the grammatical processes but the work "Sitkvai Artrontatvis" (literal translation: 'On Letters') written in the 11th century is considered to be the oldest grammatical work that has reached contemporaneity. It discusses specific grammatical issues of the Georgian language. Eprem Mtsire's theory of translation and a new system of Georgian punctuation date back to the 11th century as well.

This period is referred to as Old Georgian literary language by most scholars. There is a common standard, but there are no grammars or norms. The standard is based on the language of the Bible, scriptures, and other sacred texts and is controlled by the clergy. Thus, in the case of Georgian, the linguistic standard was established and maintained by the high-rank clergymen who lived and worked in

Georgia (almost in all provinces of the country: Meskhet-Javakheti, Kartli, Tao-Klarjeti, etc.) as well as at cultural and educational centres abroad (Palestine, Mount Sinai, Mount Athos).

From the 12th century, when the secular power / authority of the royal court considerably increased and secular motives started to emerge in literature, the earlier tradition of the literary language was, to a certain extent, broken and new standards and norms were being refined and evolved gradually.

In the 12th century, the country made important progress in virtually all areas of life (economic growth, stabilization of political situation, social welfare, etc.). Secular government, the royal court of Georgia, held a higher position in the social hierarchy than the clergy. The changes were also reflected in the language. Namely, the old standard, which had undergone little change from the 5th to 11th century, was considerably affected. The great Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli stands out as the leader of the ongoing linguistic reform. In the 12th century, he wrote a chivalric long poem “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” which turned out to be a milestone in the history of medieval Georgian literature and pivotal in reforming the Georgian language. The long poem played a crucial role in implementing a new linguistic standard. Rustaveli preserves some of the old linguistic forms but he frequently avoids using outmoded / obsolete grammatical and lexical entities that gradually dropped out of the language, introducing new lexical units / neologisms, syntactic constructions and modernizing the vocabulary. As Arabuli (2005, 21) puts it:

“The author of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” refused to accept outdated norms of classical literary Georgian as manifested in the body of sacred writings and concluded the reform that had been maturing in the realm of the Georgian language for centuries due to the coexistence of rich written literary tradition and a strong, vibrant vernacular language. He preserved the best elements from the old standard, combining them with the lively linguistic experience. The poet left a new language to the future generations which, at the same time, maintained close connection with its roots.” Some scholars believe that no substantial change of equal importance has taken place in the history of Georgian literary language after Rustaveli, arguing that the history of standard language should be divided into two periods: before and after Rustaveli (cf. Chikobava 1952).

It is from this period that the third type of Georgian script, Mkhedruli, characterized by a four-line system like Nuskhuri, and roundness like Mrgvlovani, becomes the dominant writing system. The name is given because it was mainly used in secular / vernacular literature.

In terms of linguistic norms, the language of the 10th century written texts is closer to that of the 5th century texts than to the language of Rustaveli’s poem. In short, Georgian literary language was subordinated to one and the same linguistic standard during the 5th–11th centuries.

However, the changes began after the Mongol invasion in the mid-13th century. The country was devastated by the Mongols politically, economically, and socially. The linguistic standard gradually deteriorated and eventually nearly vanished. The language was burdened and littered with barbarisms and grammatical forms

of heterogeneous origin. Linguistic issues that required urgent attention remained unaddressed. To summarize, during the Middle Ages (from the late 13th to 18th century) linguistic standard varied from one region to another and, obviously, common standard Georgian was no longer practiced. The written texts of that period provide ample evidence of the existence of a number of linguistic variations and the disappearance of standard Georgian. Literary works were mostly translated from Persian, Arabic, Turkish and oriental vocabulary dominated over the native stock of words.

The 17th century witnessed the revival of standard / literary Georgian. In 1629, “The Georgian-Italian Dictionary” was printed in Rome (compiled by Stephano Paolini who was assisted by Georgian Nikiphore Irbach). It was followed by the first printed textbook of Georgian grammar entitled “Georgian (Iberian) Grammar” by Francesca Mario Majo, published in Rome in 1670. The author used the system of philological grammar based on Latin grammars.

However, in the second half of the 18th century, Anton I, Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia, wrote the grammar of the Georgian language in which he embodied his overtly conservative linguistic views and attitudes towards the language and its standardization. The first Georgian normative grammar written by Catholicos-Patriarch Anton Bagrationi (in the 1860s) sums up all the grammatical treatises of that period. Anton’s main goal was to revive the standard Georgian language, but grammatical norms formulated by him were not based on the colloquial language.

As mentioned above, the integrity of the Georgian literary language was shaken by the 18th-century political turbulences; single standard literary language disappeared. These circumstances stimulated Anton Bagrationi to create “Georgian Grammar” (1759, 1764). His linguistic endeavours, despite his decent goals, resulted in implementing three styles instead of a single overarching linguistic standard. As a matter of fact, it was the first normative grammar written in Georgian (Babunashvili 1970, 8). Furthermore, Anton made changes to the spelling. He added 2 letters to the Georgian alphabet.

The theory of three styles, canonized by Anton, is important in terms of language policy. He argued that homogeneous language could not be used simultaneously in vernacular speech, liturgy, and philosophy. Therefore, he set the old Georgian standard (prevalent in the 11th century) for high style, declaring it standard Georgian, and secular / vernacular standard for historical narratives and everyday speech.

However, this was not the way to save standard Georgian. The revival of the 11th century linguistic standard led to the break-up with the vernacular language. In response, large-scale reforms aiming at reviving and canonizing standard Georgian began in the nineteenth century, but the Russian Empire actively opposed the reforms. The language policy of the Russian Empire was very rigorous. Georgian was regarded as a primitive language. Education in Georgian language was prohibited. Georgian was deprived of the rights of an official / state language. Therefore, not only the norms, but also the issue of status had to be regulated and resolved.

In the 1860s, national liberation movement erupted in Georgia. One of its main goals was to restore the status and function of the Georgian language. Ilia Chavchavadze's unflinching endeavours to prepare theoretical basis for the normalization of the language proved to be pivotal in implementing a new vernacular standard and paving the way for the regularization of the grammar and democratization of the language. Ilia Chavchavadze's groundbreaking essay "A few words on Revaz Eristavi's Translation of Kozlov's "Madman"" (1861) was the first attempt to implement and promote the spoken/colloquial Georgian language. The essay was a turning point in the reform of Georgian orthography. Chavchavadze reformed the Georgian alphabet removing 5 outmoded / obsolete letters (ჟ, ჳ, Ⴑ, Ⴐ, Ⴑ) from it. Thus, Ilia Chavchavadze laid foundation to the modernization of the Georgian language.

In the second half of the 19th century, important grammatical works were published in periodicals. Special emphasis was made on grammatical variations and normative problems.

In fact, in the last quarter of the 19th century, unified Georgian literary language based on certain theoretical foundations was shaped. This was crucial for the normalization and standardization processes at an early phase of the development of modern Georgian language.

Gaining independence at the beginning of the 20th century and the foundation of the Georgian University and National Academy of Sciences led to the final standardization of the Georgian language.

At the dawn of the 20th century, Nicholas Marr helped to lay the foundations of modern Georgian grammar (Marr 1925; Marr, Brier 1931). He and his disciples Ivane Javakhishvili, Ioseb Kipshidze, Akaki Shanidze established the Georgian linguistic circle at the University of St. Petersburg that was further expanded and strengthened by the establishment of the first Georgian university – Tbilisi University in 1918. Many Georgian public figures, negatively disposed towards the opening of Tbilisi State University, feared that Georgian would never become the language of education, culture and scholarship. However, their fears turned out to be unfounded. In January 1918, the foundation of the first Georgian university transformed Georgian into the language of science and scholarship. As early as 1921, the special learned committee at the University published a bulletin addressing several controversial orthographic issues. The same year, academic council for terminological issues, chaired by Ivane Javakhishvili, was established.

On May 26, 1918, after the declaration of the independence of Georgia, Georgian was declared as the state language of the Democratic Republic of Georgia.

This was the first legal document containing a constitutional clause that defined the status of the state language in the history of the Georgian statehood. Unfortunately, independent Georgia and, consequently, its constitution did not last: the constitution was adopted on February 21, 1921, and after four days, on February 25, Georgia was annexed by Russia.

The Democratic Republic of Georgia became the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia. A new constitution was adopted in 1922. This constitution also granted Georgian the status of the state language.

In 1925, under the guidance of Vukoil Beridze, the central terminological commission was formed, and the government established the State Terminology Commission; in 1934, the State Commission for the Implementation of Georgian Literary Norms was formed under the People's Commissariat, and in 1935, Commission for the Implementation of Literary Norms was founded at the university.

In 1936, based on the Institute of Caucasian Studies, N. Marr Institute of Language, History and Material Culture was founded. It started publishing monographs and dictionaries that helped, on the one hand, to modernize the vocabulary and to enrich Kartvelian / Georgian and Caucasian linguistic studies, on the other. The Georgian Academy of Sciences was founded in spring of 1941. In the same year, the Institute of Linguistics (IL) was established within the Academy of Sciences. IL played a major role in the protection of the purity of language, continuously updating scholarly and scientific terminology and publishing modern dictionaries, monographs, and periodicals. 1941 saw the release of "The Georgian Orthographic Dictionary" compiled by Topuria and Gigineishvili.

In 1946, the Committee for the Implementation of the Literary / Standard Language Norms was established under the presidium of the Academy of Sciences, and since 1953 it functioned under the Council of Ministers of Georgia. The chairmanship of the commission was automatically assigned to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers. The academic staff of the IL together with the State Commission managed to implement an appropriate linguistic system by mutual agreement, introducing common norms and regulations for oral as well as written language which have remained virtually unchanged to this day.

In 1950–1964, the eight-volume set of "The Georgian Explanatory Dictionary" was published under the editorship of Academician Arnold Chikobava.

In 1970, the serial edition of "The Modern Georgian Literary Language Norms" was launched. It was successively published in the years to follow (Gigineishvili 1970).

In 1978, a new draft constitution was published. Thereby Georgian was deprived of the state language status. It caused a wave of protest demonstrations, the government had to compromise, and Georgian retained its constitutional status of a state language.

In 1991, Georgia restored its national independence. On August 24, 1995, a new constitution of independent Georgia was adopted. According to Article 2(3), "The official language of Georgia shall be Georgian, and, in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, also Abkhazian." Article 8, "Georgian is a state language of Georgia; in Abkhazia – Abkhaz, as well".

It should be further noted that in 1995 the Permanent State Commission of the Georgian Language was established, and in 1997 the State Chamber of the Language was founded. Both worked until 2004.

In 2015, the Parliament passed the bill of the state language, and in 2017 the Department of the State Language was established and tasked with implementing, protecting, and promoting Georgian as a state language.

3. Current challenges

Literary / standard language comprises a wide range of fields and areas within which it is used: education, culture, science, scholarship, literature, politics, press, radio and television, law, etc. Therefore, the state law on language incorporates several key linguistic and socio-linguistic conceptual and functional components:

1. Language as an identity marker.
2. The use of language in government and administration.
3. Language in education.
4. Language of cultural production.
5. Language of the media.
6. Language varieties.
7. Linguistic standardization.
8. Linguistic policy management.

In some of these areas, standard Georgian does not face any obstacles, but there are apheres where it is still difficult to cope with challenges. The Language Department oversees enforcing the language law. Some countries have several official / governmental bodies responsible for implementing language laws (Spain, Latvia, etc.). They safeguard the state language and ensures that it functions properly (Siguan 1992; Hirsu 2008). One of the factors hindering the full functioning of Georgian may be that only one body controls the implementation of the law. In some provinces mostly inhabited with ethnic minorities such as Javakheti, located in Kvemo (Lower) Kartli, Georgian is taught as a single subject at non-Georgian public schools, yet most students can hardly speak literary Georgian after leaving school.

The linguistic situation is much worse throughout the occupied territories of Georgia – Abkhazia and Tskhinvali: Georgian TV broadcasting, radio channels and press are not available, and Georgian is not used at the educational institutions. Therefore, it is impossible to spread standard Georgian there. Ethnic Georgians use only dialectal forms.

The current problems of the Georgian language are similar to those affecting other languages of major diffusion throughout the Western world. It has traditionally been considered that within a linguistic community, regardless of geographical and social differences, as a rule, there is a common / standard language which is used in formal schooling and by mass media and is privileged to have a higher cultural status than other language varieties (Siguan 1992). It is a cultivated language, which is also referred to as literary language, especially in Eastern European countries. In this traditional view, the common language should be regarded as a hierarchically organized system that can cover a wide variety of linguistic forms, including such subordinate speech variety as colloquial language, for instance.

This limitation and stratification of the different forms of a language demonstrates that diverse linguistic forms coexist and interact, influencing different forms of social and linguistic behaviour directly or indirectly, in more remote ways. However, the idea of hierarchically organized linguistic system has been questioned lately. The hierarchical approach that situated the written language above the oral/spoken one and evaluated language varieties by exclusively aesthetic criteria, distinguishing between formal and informal, literary, and colloquial / daily, “prestigious” / “correct” and “vulgar” / “incorrect”/“rude” linguistic forms, has come to be viewed as an outmoded cliché to be crushed. Demarcation lines between “correct” / “prestigious” and “incorrect” / “vulgar” linguistic forms have been blurred and, in many cases, completely disappeared. The hierarchy has been deconstructed by placing spoken language above the written one within the hierarchy of language system.

The reasons for this substantial change vary from the anti-authoritarian tendency of rejecting any form of elitism to the increasingly predominant role of audio-visual and digital mass media, and, consequently, the prevalence of the spoken language. Language teaching practices at schools have also been modified and adapted to comply with the requirements of greater linguistic freedom.

To this greater degree of freedom and receptivity, one must add all-encompassing social and technical changes, necessitating the coinage of neologisms / new terms to label and verbalize the new realities. In addition, computer systems are exerting an influence – in one way or another – on linguistic forms and style.

Furthermore, most of these technical novelties come through English; it serves as a kind of lingua franca that has a predominant presence in many social and theoretical contexts, including academic research, computerized management, communication systems, arts, sports, television, and so many other aspects of daily life. Thus, the pressure exerted by English on vocabulary and even on syntax has become the major challenge of Georgian language today.

In the face of these problems, decisive measures must be taken to normalize the language of mass media and education, and to protect standard Georgian from further degeneration and disintegration. The evolution of a language can be viewed as a series of successive crises which are the consequence of the need to adapt to constantly renewable social circumstances. However, current linguistic crisis seems to be substantially different from all those that have preceded it, making its outcomes unpredictable.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, the history of standardization of the Georgian language can be briefly summarized, as follows:

1. The existence of the linguistic standard of the Georgian language is confirmed by the written documents of the 5th to 11th century. However, there were no normative grammars; collective rules for implementing the language system were developed by the clergy. The basis was the language of the Bible.

2. From the 12th to mid-18th century, as a result of the strong secular rule, the secular / vernacular language became the dominant standard. However, no sooner than it was canonized, the historical and political decline led to the gradual disappearance of linguistic standard.
3. From the mid-18th century to the second half of the 19th century, normative grammars appeared. Catholicos-Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church, Anton I tried to re-establish old (ecclesial) standard in vain because this standard was too artificial and far from the vernacular Georgian.
4. By the end of the 19th century, new linguistic reforms, based mainly on the twelfth-century principles shaped by Shota Rustaveli, were implemented. The standard was established and maintained by the secular government. This situation continued into the 20th century; in the 20th century, normative grammars underwent substantial regularization, the vocabulary was also standardized and modernized; Georgian as a state language and its usages were promoted and protected by the Constitution; in the 21st century, Georgian is constitutionally protected as a state language; however, the usage of the standard language faces several difficulties described above. Currently, in the age of globalization, Georgian must rise to new challenges.

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Kopsavilkums

Rakstā aplūkota virkne gruzīnu valodniecības diskusiju par gruzīnu literāro valodu, tās vēsturi, attīstības posmiem un mūsdienu izaicinājumiem un perspektīvām. Par šiem jautājumiem ir daudz pretrunīgu un pat savstarpēji noliedzošu uzskatu. Raksta autores galvenais mērķis ir analizēt sešpadsmit gadsimtu senās gruzīnu literārās valodas periodizāciju, ņemot vērā ne tikai gruzīnu valodas normēšanu konkrētā vēsturiskā periodā, bet arī literārās valodas pamatā esošo lietojuma daudzveidību, kā arī iestādes, kas kontrolē un pārvalda literārās valodas attīstību. Raksta pamatā ir šāda literārās valodas definīcija – literārā valoda ir vēsturiski noteiktu plaši izmantotu valodas līdzekļu kopums, ko sabiedrība atzinusi par piemērotāko un prestižāko valodas paveidu tās vispārējās izmantošanas un augstā kultūras statusa dēļ. Izmantojot

aprakstošu, sinhronisku, diahronisku un salīdzinošu pētniecības metodoloģiju, sešpadsmit gadsimtu nepārtrauktajā gruzīnu literārās valodas vēsturē identificēti un aplūkoti četri posmi.

Atslēgvārdi: literārā valoda; gruzīnu literārās valodas posmi; sengruzīnu valoda; vidus gruzīnu valoda; mūsdienu gruzīnu valoda.



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