

## **Education**

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### **Linguistic Landscape of Georgia**

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*The purpose of our article is to discuss the general situation regarding the use and teaching of foreign languages in Georgia, especially German Language. Knowing several foreign languages is a prerequisite for academic and social mobility, which is one of the main goals of the Bologna process. This problem is particularly important for a small country like Georgia, whose language is not spoken outside of the country. Knowing several foreign languages is a necessary condition to ensure that our graduates acquire knowledge relevant to western standards and become competitive on the international labor market. This is impossible if graduates only know English. Therefore, more students should have the opportunity to study foreign languages including the German. If Georgian Universities consider this trend, then they will be on the right path towards a multilingual Europe.*

The policy of Georgian educational institutions is essentially focused on the ongoing educational system reforms, which should ensure the establishment of the Bologna process in a united European education space. This will give Georgia the opportunity to create the structural basis for paving the way towards becoming part of a European research area. For Georgia, it means the beginning of a new stage of reforms after the already conducted mass reforms (Grishaber, 2010:11).

We would like to review the linguistic situation in Georgia.

### *Overview of the Linguistic Situation*

#### *Georgian as the Language of Instruction*

De facto and de jure the official language in Georgia is Georgian. Thus, it is the language of instruction at schools and higher education institutions. The Georgian language belongs to the South-Caucasian language group and it has its own alphabet. For 4.5 million citizens (the majority of citizens of Georgia) the Georgian language is the native language. There are national minorities in Georgia, whose languages are recognized and protected by the state. Regions - Samtskhe Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli - are densely populated by the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis. The languages of communication in these regions are Armenian and Azeri, respectively. (There are a significant number of non-Georgians living in Tbilisi and there are a number of schools where they are taught in their native languages; there are also several bi-language schools.)

The educational system of Georgia is still the bearer of a difficult inheritance, which was characteristic of the transition period in post-Soviet countries. One of the important components of the ongoing educational reform is to improve the quality of teaching of the national language, especially in the non-Georgian language schools, where Georgian is not the language of instruction. In these schools the Georgian language is not properly represented. There are different reasons for this. In the Soviet educational system, Russian was language of international inter-ethnic understanding.

For this reason there was no interest in the study of the Georgian language among the non-Georgian population of Georgia. The result is that students are not able to use the national language even for daily communication. Such attitude towards the national language is due to negative feelings of some groups of people, in particular, the opinion that the knowledge of the Georgian language may lead to a violation of national interests of ethnic minorities. The second reason for the lack of knowledge of Georgian was due to similar methods of teaching Georgian in Georgian and non-Georgian language schools.

In our opinion, it is most important that people change their attitude towards the national language, so that they can feel and realize the value of it for their own interests and state interests. The Georgian government should introduce the Georgian language not only as a subject, but the medium of instruction (so-called "bilingual lesson" model) in non-Georgian language schools is very important. Accordingly, it is necessary to develop the innovative methods in primary and basic levels in order to study in Georgian language (optional) at secondary level (grades 10-12).

The number of languages learned by ethnic minorities is as follows: Azeri or Armenian + Georgian + English + Russian + German.

This means that the students are confronted with the task of learning four (very different) languages.

While formulating or developing the language policy, it is important to consider the multi linguality that exists in our country. It is important that the ethnic minorities recognize the Georgian language as the national language and learn it accordingly. Therefore, a question emerges if there is any place in the school curriculum for a third or subsequent foreign language.

### *Use of Languages in Media*

The language of almost all the media in Georgia is Georgian. The Georgian language is dominant in the print media as well as television and radio.

Official Radio – Television broadcasting of Georgia has 35 channels, 27 of which broadcast throughout Georgia. Two channels broadcast in the Russian language. One Georgian TV channel broadcasts English-language news once a day. The official public broadcasting broadcasts news in Ossetian, Armenian, Azeri, Abkhazian and Russian. These programs are broadcasted in ethnic minority regions.

There are no TV programs in other European languages in Georgian TV - Radio space. The Language Learning course on Georgian television is only for English language learners (with Georgian subtitles) and is broadcast every day for 20 minutes. In response to our question why there is not a similar program for German or other languages, the respective authority stated that the U.S. embassy helped them to obtain the appropriate license from the American University for a special television program. If the channel could obtain a license for other language courses, it would be able to broadcast in German or other European languages too.

Over the last period, 30 percent of TV movies are aired with Georgian subtitles without synchronism. The demand of the government to show 30 percent of European films without translation with Georgian subtitles on television, can be explained by the spread of European languages. English-language movies are shown mostly. In this way they want the population to learn the English language. In spite of the fact that the Russian language for older generation is the Linguafranca, Russian language movies without synchronism are not allowed on Georgian channels. We think that this approach is politically motivated.

30 percent of movies at movie theaters are in English with Georgian subtitles. People can receive foreign programming via cable television. Unfortunately, there is no statistical data about the most widespread languages. Radio News in European languages are broadcasted by four radio stations. On one channel it is possible to catch Deutsche Welle for two hours, the rest of the time is devoted to the French language. There is also a channel where broadcasts are partially in English and another channel where the broadcast is entirely in English.

### *The Use of Languages in Different Institutions*

For all public organizations the official language is Georgian. But along with the national language the English language is being introduced, which has just replaced the Russian language. The Russian language is no longer used in important economic, political and cultural institutions. The working language is English for all international organizations accredited in Georgia. English is dominant in all areas of the economy, because after the 2008 war, Georgia did not have any economic relations with Russia. English is the only language of communication for foreign missions in the last ten years. In Georgia, there are almost no companies in which knowledge of German language is required for daily activities. Governmental organizations and German firms in Georgia require knowledge of English and often Russian as well.

The same applies to the tourism industry, which is an intensive sector for foreign languages. English is dominant here as well. The German language is less important, despite the fact that the majority of tourists in Georgia are Germans.

The official language of banks is Georgian. Some banks maintain correspondence in English, including Deutsche Bank (Pro Credit Bank). Kazakhstan's Halyk Bank conducts correspondence in Georgian, in addition to the Russian language.

### *Foreign Languages at Schools and Institutions of Higher Education*

#### *Foreign Languages at Schools*

There are 2366 secondary schools in Georgia, out of which 2089 are public and 277 are private.

At all public secondary schools at least two foreign languages are taught; in most of private schools - three. English is the first compulsory foreign language and is taught from the first or the second grade to the end of school. The second foreign language is taught from the 7th grade for at least three years. The third foreign language is taught from the 10th grade to the end of school.

*Number of Foreign Language Learners in Georgia (Kutelia & Abralava, 2012)*

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<b>Languages</b>	<b>Number of students Georgian total</b>	<b>Number of students Region Samtskhe Javakheti</b>	<b>Number of students Region Kvemo Kartli</b>	<b>Number of students Region Ajara</b>
English	470058	21372	55933	15409
Russian	255658	12743	12743	8425
German	59634	5142	30195	1308
French	13011	581	1092	721

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As per the below chart, English language has replaced Russian and was established as the major foreign language in Georgia.

The situation was different in 2009. As per the data of 2009 (Abralava, 2010), Russian was number 1 foreign language in Georgia.

English was the second foreign language, and German was the third most popular language.

*Number of Foreign Language Learners in Georgia 2009 (Abralava, 2010).*

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<b>Languages</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	
	<b>Regular studies</b>	<b>Specialized studies</b>
Russian	414434	16406
English	232402	75098
German	110996	11099
French	30588	4574
Spanish	172	0
Italian	165	0

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German is often taught as the third foreign language after English and Russian. In accordance with the requirements of the Ministry of Education, students are required to achieve level B1 + in their first foreign language, level B1 in their second foreign language, and level A2 in their third language. At schools where the German is taught intensely (from the second grade, 5 hours per week) the level to be achieved is B2/C1. Even at these types of schools, English is taught from the first grade, which, in our opinion, causes students' linguistic overload and decreases their ability to learn. Since 2010, the German International School has existed in Georgia. After graduation, students receive a certificate in Georgian as well as German. According to our statistical survey, the first foreign language in public schools is English, the second – Russian, and the third - German.

## *2.2 Foreign Languages at Institutions of Higher Education*

There are 60 universities throughout Georgia, out of which 39 are private and 21 are public. (Abzalava, 2012). Georgia joined the Bologna Process in 2005 and has conducted higher education reform accordingly.

At all institutions of higher education it is necessary to learn at least one foreign language. At most of these institutions the compulsory foreign language is English, which is taught for 3-4 semesters. At some high schools, the second foreign language is taught as an optional subject. Many students choose the German language, the motivation for which is probably due to the political and economic importance of Germany to Georgia. In addition, while learning German, some students develop a desire to get education in Germany and better professional chances plays an important role too. At some institutions of higher education the Germanic philology is taught as a basic specialty. These universities have close partnerships with German universities. Various exchange programs, including DAAD-funded, make studying attractive among language learners.

## *3. Future Prospects of Improving the Quality of Foreign Language Teachers*

How can we improve the teaching of foreign language? – By training teachers and the developing effective training programs for teachers. Programs for teachers require conceptual and institutional critical review and modification. It is necessary to rely on existing theoretical research in the field of didactics of foreign languages and their use in teaching practice. The fact that some combined training courses, such as journalism/pedagogy, General Philology/Pedagogy, Translator – Interpreter/Pedagogy proposed by experts is of greater demand on the market, unfortunately, have not been provided. For many students intensive training in foreign languages, which would be connected with didactic subjects or cultural science, journalism, will be precondition to choose such course. Students could achieve high levels of competence through curriculum and modules compiled interdisciplinary. As the modules we could offer two modern foreign languages (German, English), media science, cultural science, didactics, etc. While introducing such courses it is necessary to test their advantages and disadvantages.



For this purpose, it is possible to conduct a survey of students, which takes into account self-assessment of their competencies (especially "interdisciplinary thinking" and "specific field competence for the field"). If the students see the perspective of employment in mastering foreign language, they will choose this course. Special attention should be paid to the students' practical language education. The curriculum should be oriented towards school as well as language practice. Double the time should be given to school practice, as well as the preparation/ accompanying seminars, at which the theoretical didactic knowledge will be connected with the practical training skills. In this respect, it is necessary to start active communication classes. It will be good to offer students study abroad for a semester. In addition, we should teach conversational language and specialized languages together with common literary language, because the purpose of teaching of foreign languages at schools is preparation of students for variety of communication situations, such as: - politics, sports, culture, etc. The reason of teachers' low qualification lies in their education. One of the reasons is to use such methods in teaching foreign languages as specialty and subject.

While teaching the future teachers of foreign language at high school, significant attention should be paid to the didactic of multilinguality. Focus should be made on learning 2-3 languages, as well as teaching of pedagogical – didactic subjects. The above mentioned combined courses for students must become one-subject oriented , the alternative only for the faculties intended for the development the teaching profession (which does not have a good perspective on today's labour market). It is necessary to extend the practical parts of such a course . Teachers will be able to teach independently within practice at schools. They should be transferred from receptive learning to the active teaching activities, which will contribute to their further professional activity. Such practices may include working as a long-term assistant to a teacher or development of joint projects along with classes, etc. This process can motivate students, perceive school life and students, as addressees of their future teaching.

Finally, we would like to note that the views expressed above are only our proposals, and we do not regard them as the sole solution to this problem.

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