

## Culture Shift in the Context of Language Shift

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**ABSTRACT.** *The paper deals with attitudes of minority language collective – Tsovatushs – towards own culture and traditions. Our research’s mainly based on the fieldwork materials undertaken by us in Zemo Alvani, the only village populated by Tsovatushs, under scientific project. The village’s situated in Georgia, Akhmeta region, where it’s going on the process of Tsovatush language shift to dominant Georgian. It was interesting for us till which bound were gone shifts of cultures and traditions, in parallels of language shift, when begins the danger of losing group’s identity, is this coincided with danger of language loss? Initial stage of our research was built on mass inquiry method. Interview was selected from its two major types – questioning and interview. We used vis-`a-vis’ interview. The research has revealed that in Tsovatush Society there were changed parameters of spiritual culture such as ethic norms, cult performances, rituals, traditions and parameters of material culture: clothes, headdresses, jewelry, food. Love of mountain, sheep and wool and respect towards mountain churches weren’t changed. It means that the key component for existence of the human and society in general, wasn’t changed. By observing Tsovatush people’s life there has been revealed that their culture, aesthetics, liking, rituals or life features are entirely extent in Georgian reality. The only evidence of their identity stays language and image of universe reflected in it, which won’t exist after several ten years and will take away the left identity, with which they were distinguished making unique niche in diverse history of mankind.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Culture Shift, Identity, Material Culture, Spiritual Culture, Tsovatushs.*

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### I. INTRODUCTION

In sociolinguistic researches the most attention is paid to describing or analyzing ethnic or ethnographic characteristics of the language society. The researchers try to considerate the opinions and values of the society in order to explain the behavior and attitudes of its members. According to the study of Patrick, demographic or ethnographic information should be searched on the people to be investigated [1]. On the road of language maintenance and restoration, the attitude of the natives towards their own language, culture and traditions is very important. It qualifies the group identity [2;3]. In 2002-2003 The UNESCO experts formalized the document: “Language Vitality and Threat”. They identified 9 major factors, which have to be taken into account when assessing language. The attitude of society members toward their own language is the most important. This view is widely shared by sociolinguistics. As the culture (material or spiritual) and the traditions of the group are directly connected to the language, in case of the language been in the stage of shifting, the issue of the switch of these segments make us interested as well. The issue is more relevant to Tsovatush, because their ethnicity and nationality is arguable topic. The significant of our research is determined by its novelty. The work was created based on the living sources and contains valuable materials for wide audience, the representatives of different scientific fields.

### II. SUBMITTING

#### Body part (Methods):

While working on a project, we arranged large-scale expedition to the village Zemo Alvani, where people speak in Tsovatush. Field work was carried out in two stages: in 2010 and 2011, as it was planned in the project. Field works in 2010, was serving the sociolinguistic goals. As for 2011, both sociolinguistic and ethnographic goals were included.

While research we use sociolinguistic and ethnographic methods. A lot has been written about these methods in the scientific literature. There are special courses in these fields at many foreign Universities. For example: the teaching course of Peter Patrick “Sociolinguistic Methods I-II” that contains how to collect and analyze data and present our research results, how to define and carry out language and dialect surveys and their usage.

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are used in sociolinguistic research. It is used in ethnography of speaking, analytical reasoning and so on. Patrick's surveys include the following points: Method of using speaking population as persons of experiment; ethnographic observation and make notes; construction and use of simple questionnaires; central roles of sociolinguistic interviews, participants and technique; Identified and recorded problems of natural speech; approaches to keep records and their results; sociolinguistic research ethics; responsibilities of the individuals and as a community in whole; Professor considers the planning and implementation of data of the project which is dedicated to the data gathering topic [1].

Feagin and Crawford define sociolinguistic interview, as a "classical methods of sociolinguistic" [4]. Milroy and Gordon call sociolinguistic interviews "Traditionally, the most common approach to data collection of sociolinguists" [5].

80-ies of the last centuries, for the research of written and spoken texts, multidimensional, methods for corpus compilation was firstly used by Bieber.

There are different methods of sociolinguistic research: daily protection, participant observation, questionnaires, notes and so on. The combined use of different methods in the research is necessary to achieve more comprehensive and clear picture [6; 7; 8; 9; 10;11).

Ethno linguistic research methods are close to the sociolinguistic research methods. Often they cross each other. They often coincide with sociological and ethnological research methods. The following methods are widely used in the both field: observation, polls, interview, comparative-historical, document analysis, content-analysis, static analysis, secondary analysis, creative and so on.

They separate groups of quantitative and qualitative methods in social research methods.

The following quantitative methods are successfully used: mass polls, social experiment, quantitative content-analysis.

Mass poll is the main method of quantitative data gathering. It implies the questionnaires for studying the populations' attitude towards the different issues.

It should be noted, that the contribution of Samuel Stauffer and Paul Lazarsfeld is big. They study social events with the help of Empirical Methods. Lazarsfeld laid a foundation for the panel research, which provides repeatedly poll for the same group of respondents. It aims to study the changes in attitudes. He is author of "Interpretation method", which is used to explain the relationship between two variables by introducing additional variables [12].

Mass poll, including problem formulation and data analysis, consists of several steps [13: 267-268].

There are two main types of mass poll: Questionnaires and interview [14:14).

General Unity is the unit of people on which they generate the results of research. Selective Unity is the group of people selected from the general unity on which they are planning to make a research and generalization of the results should be held on general Unity.

In our case, the whole society of Tsovatush is the general unity. Group of people, who were collected by respondents, is selective unity.

The initial stage of our research was built on the mass poll method. From its two main types – questionnaire and interview – we chose interview. We used face to face interview.

The questionnaire was drawn up in a way, that Tsovatush attitude towards their traditions, culture and their own society should revealed.

In order to determine this, the questionnaire included the following questions:

1. What are the main characteristics of Tsovatush? What distinguish them from other (spiritual and material culture)?

2. What are the basic features of your character?

3. Which are your oldest traditions?

4. What kinds of traditions do you have today? What have you lost and what have you found?

5. What traditions do you respect mostly? Which one don't you like?

We used selective method while selecting the participants. From two main face of selection - probabilistic and non probabilistic – we privileged probabilistic, because each elements (different ages, gender, education, raise awareness of general unity (Tsovatush) had the equal chance to get in the selective unity. We used simple random sampling, lottery method, random number methods and system selection.

We selected some fixed interval for identify selective unity. From 9 streets of Zemo Alvani, interviewer had to sample one member of every fourth family.

74 respondents were asked during fieldwork. Majority -54- are women, 20 – men. As the interviewers said some of the respondents refused participation (with different reasons: illness, lack of information, scare not to be competent), some of them were gone from the village while fieldwork.

### III. DISCUSSION:

In the research process of history, ethnography, culture and traditions of Tsovatush people the following persons made a significant contribution: Ivane Bukrauli, Aleksandre Xaxanashvili, Ivane Javakhishvili, A. Ziserman, Sergi Makalatia, Valerian Itonishvili, Rapael Eristavi, and many others. Their works contain important information about spiritual and material culture of Tsovatush people. Itonishvili thinks that as a result of Tsova people's settlement, it destroyed the possibility of their ethnographic study, which was characteristic for their traditional being and culture [15: 145].

Ethnographic features are characterized by more or less stable. Political, economical and social factors effects on them as a language. Linguistic contacts are complex phenomenon. Favorable conditions of assimilation or bilingual space effects not only on the language, but on culture, traditions, and morals. They mix in the culture of the dominant group, in tradition features and moral. It is interesting, where these mixes are come? Where do the danger of losing their identity stand? Is it contemporaneous to the danger of language? Are these processes coincided or characterized by antecedence or following?

They note in scientific literature, that identity is not permanent and it may change in some cases. As we discuss about bilingual environment, where the process of language shifting takes place, we should ask: Is the identity of group changed in such an environment, and if it is, how? Where is the boundary between the identity of the individual and identity of the group and when do the margin remove? Is the identity changed in the generation?

Identity is in close connection to language. Identity changing is caused by Language changing in bilingual environment. Identity changing is the accompanying process of language shifting. Language involves the whole system of thought who speak on the language, where the identity code lies. Along with the language shifting, the rule of thought of the group bearing it is changed; therefore the identity is violated and mixed in the identity of the dominant group. With the increase of bilingualism scales, the danger of language and losing identity increase. Changing identity is long process. It needs centuries, as the centuries are necessary for language shifting. So when they are discussing about the social and cultural losing, this kind of losing is also very important.

Paul Lewis, the publisher of the magazine "Ethnology" writes that the risks are much higher because of the close connection between language and identity. If people realize that their identity is losing, it may cause the depression of society, suicide, drug use and so on [16]. It doesn't deal to the cases where assimilation process is going without any coercive and where the dominant group language and culture is native and precious. Tsovatush-Georgian relationships include in such cases. Tsovatush people can't name any fact that representatives of them act unsocial with the reason of linguistic and cultural assimilation. These kinds of facts are expected in bilingual and multilingual environment, where suppressing is expected and the process of assimilation is under pressure.

While observing on the Tsovatush society, we wanted to find a constant, which isn't subject to change and will pass on from generation to generation. The constant is interesting in the context of culture and traditions.

They talk about ethnical culture in ethnology. In Scientific literature, it sometimes named as a traditional culture and sometimes everyday culture [17: 248].

Ethnical culture is the unit of spiritual and material culture. The majority of ethnos is divided into ethnographic groups. Ethnic culture is the collective works of historical-ethnographic parts. When we talk about Tsovatush culture, we mean one of the special kinds of Georgian ethnical culture, which creates the panorama of Georgian unique ethnic culture. We should remember that the people were independent with their moral, culture, life, world vision, ethnical habits and so on...

Spiritual culture is created by rituals, folk, ethnical norm, religion, esthetical performances and cults.

"Material Culture" is the totality of things and objects (also the habits connected to them), which materially exist in the space in specific part of time and are directed towards answering the life requirements" [17: 251].

Material Culture contains: labor tools, the things causing the fire, fighting tools, means for moving, clothes, residences, food, drinks, dishes, furniture, jewelry and etc. In addition, the shoes, kerchiefs, hair styles, body-care means are named as well.

We wondered from Tsovatush population what they would name as their material and social culture and also: how they would characterize their society, what attitudes they had towards their language and we wanted them to mention the factors which made them different from other groups.

During expedition almost every Tsovatushs expressed regret about losing the mother language, they were agree with great pleasure to give us interviews or even narrate something to us. They were sure that in this way they would save their mother language even slightly.

Bernard Spolsky studied the role of attitude of the society towards the language in case of Telugu emigrants. Telugu is the most-widely spoken second language in India after Hindi. Telugu is mother language

for more than 80 million persons. It is included in those 15 languages, which are the most-widely spoken ones in the world [18]. The people speaking this language have created the new emigrant societies at various places of the world. The number of their migration has been increased especially at the latest period in New Zealand and Australia. For instance, according to the inquiries of 2001, over 160 languages were described in New Zealand. The most part of them are the minority languages, which have less than 1000 speakers. By that period there just 1419 speakers spoke in Telugu. Spolsky revealed, that majority of this people spoke in their mother language at home [18].

Holms and Harlov tried to separate some common characteristics of New Zealand societies [3]. Their works show us how the language societies of New Zealand could to offer resistance towards the language shift and to preserve the ethnical identity.

In 2001 only 12 speakers were left from the Belize and Guatemala Itza and they tried with great aspiration to preserve the culture. Their absolute majority spoke Spanish by that period [19].

Irish, Jew, Afro-American and many Amerindian people made it clear that the ethnical identity can save the language from shift [20].

The research on the language of Koma people also revealed that the feeling of identity is very important in the case of saving the language. Koma people live in the West Africa. The group contains only 2500 persons. They use their own Koni language everywhere, the children study it, this people always teach their language to the woman of different group got married on them [21].

One of main questions, the answer of which was the most interesting for us was the first: "What do you regard as the principal characteristic for Tsovatushs, which makes you special from others?"

It was found out that in most cases Tsovatush respondents combined the answers of the second question – What are the main characteristics of your nature and character? and the third one – Which are your oldest traditions? in the answer of the first question as they regard their characteristics like the nature and the character as well as the spiritual or material culture elements.

What kinds of traditions do you have today? From the field of spiritual culture they named their characteristics such as: the language, the past, traditions, love of the mountain, special attitude towards the accordion;

Rituals – wedding, betrothal, burial, "Sashuagamo" or "Midnight Ceremony" – the ceremony of going to the mountain together. All the mentioned rituals are regarded by them as the traditions as well.

In the ethnical norms of Tsovatushs the following were revealed:

The wish for supporting to each other in difficulties and generally the wish for helping each others. Inadmissibility of the habits such as: thieving, walking without the hats or the kerchiefs (the women and the men as well), aspiration towards alcohol, abusing.

Religious beliefs are based on Christian Orthodox doctrine.

Aesthetics of Tsovatushs was revealed in different fields of their life: for instance, at the time of getting married to choose the spouse with the surname and the hair length, behavior of the bride, choice of the present, soft attitude towards the horses and certainly in the art of knitting.

From the cult habits we should mention: cults of pure families, numerous families, the elder person, the man in the family. From the field of material culture, Tsovatushs regard the different clothes, kerchief, jewelry and food as their characteristics. Thus, at the time of making the inquiries, the whole arsenal of spiritual or material cultures of Tsovatushs took place. This information is interesting and significant with the purpose, that it depicts Tsovatushs evaluated by Tsovatushs themselves. From the forgotten traditions, we should mention Tsovatush dance, traditional clothes, "coming standing at night", tradition of "Ochkhar", mourning for the deceased person in Tsovatush language (nowadays it happens very seldom). Young people don't get married according to the advice of the elder person; they choose the bride or the bridegroom themselves. They celebrate the wedding in the restaurant and invite much more people than in the past. They don't dress the special clothes on that day.

Nowadays the woman's rights are increased in the family and she is considered as the capable member of the family. The bride talks with the members of the bridegroom's family easily and without shyness. She doesn't address them with the different names; she doesn't hide the husband's name and her name to the family members. She is allowed to walk with the bare face and not covered with the kerchief. She caresses her children freely. She is able to gain education without restriction.

Respect towards the elder people has been step-by-step lost. In the past the elder people led the wedding, but at present young people are active.

The tradition of processing the wool is under forgetting, it's very difficult and labor-consuming process. The women and the men don't sit at the table separately. This tradition is preserved at very seldom places. The relatives don't express much attention towards each other (which is very painful), they don't even visit each others on Saturday. Tsovatushs express the equal respect towards their traditions as all of them are given from their ancestors. They express the most respect towards remembering the icons and the angels of the mountain, also leading a nomad's life.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS:

To sum up, according to the research it was found out that ethnographic changes are conditioned by natural regulatory more than by the deep influence of the valley. Alternation as the essential condition for development takes place at any time and space and implicates any field of social life. Together with changes of time, ethnographic characteristics are also changed. The research showed that all the ethnographic changes undergone by Tsovatush society may take place in any society. The situation of Georgian life is also changed in the time. Here the type of the clothes as well as the wedding or burial rules was changed as it happened in Tsovatush society. It means the changes in it took place in coincidence of the life development and it's very natural. Each period has its own niche, it dictates its requirements to the society and the society follows them.

Thus, the parameters of the spiritual culture were changed. These are the following: ethic norms, cult ceremonies, rituals, also material culture parameters: clothes, kerchiefs, jewelry, and food (accordingly, the taste was changed). In other words, there were changed not only the things far from the spirit (clothes, life rule etc.), but those things as well been close to the spirit are included in material culture, accordingly they belong to the spiritual culture. The research confirmed that in case of Tsovatushs, the love of Tsovata (the mountain) – mother of Tsovatushs (as they call it), wasn't changed, also love of wool and the sheep as well as the respect towards the praying places of the mountain weren't changed. In spite of poor situation, they go to Tsovata and respect to the ancient belief. To conclude, the basic of the existence of the society and the human wasn't changed. In other words, for the changes and the modification, material culture and the fields of spiritual culture such as ethic norms, cult ceremonies and rituals are more elastic, but the part of spiritual culture, which is connected to the belief (praying places), graves of the ancestors and their memories, mother of the place is stronger and more inaccessible. In Tsovatushs love of the residence is the first. This feeling can't be changed. It's crying for the first ground, which is defensive amulet for them. We see the influence of Georgian ethnical life and the culture in Tsovatushs' life and culture in celebrating orthodox holidays and changing the type of the clothes. After questioning Tsovatushs and observing on their life, it was revealed that their culture, aesthetics, taste, rituals or life peripheries are totally spread in Georgian reality; the only mark revealing the identity is the language and the world depicted in the language, which won't exist after ten decades and it will take the left identity, with which they were special and created the incomparable niche in the diverse history of the mankind.

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