

Salome DUNDUA

Tbilisi, Georgia

The politics of language and education in Georgia (compared with the Baltic States and Ukraine)

Abstract: In the process of ensuring successful and full integration, one of the main obstacles is the lack of knowledge of the state language by ethnic minorities. Despite the fact that Georgia has achieved some success in building a democratic state, democratic institutions are still weak in the country. Having weak democratic institutions makes it very difficult to transform diverse religious and ethnic groups into one civil unit. A lack of trust towards political institutions on the one hand, and the weakness of these institutions on the other, leads to the mutual alienation and isolation of different segments of society. The Georgian government, unlike the Baltic States and Ukraine, by way of teaching Georgian to its minorities, set increasing their civic integration and activity in civic spaces as a goal. How successful the steps taken in this regard were is another question.

Key words: ethnic minorities, education, language politics, integration

Generally, language and education are perceived as having great importance in the process of nation-building or nation-formation. Language and education are the main actors for ensuring the process of communication not only between different nations, but also in the process of achieving success in civic integration within one nation-state.

In the process of ensuring successful and full integration, one of the main obstacles has to be the absence of knowledge by ethnic minorities of the state language (knowledge acting as a powerful means of communication).

Even after 24 years of independence it is difficult to call Georgia's public-political discourse (which is still characterised by a wide range of ethnic diversity) a consolidated, pluralistic culture based on civic participation. After the collapse of communism, that superficial and fake legitimacy which was based on fear and terror was destroyed. Consequently, together with social and economic problems, some ethnic and religious problems have appeared, too. Weak democratic institutions still cannot guarantee the transformation of the society into one civil unit. Consequently, in Georgia, the level of ethnic and religious alienation is significantly high (Dundua, Abashidze, 2009, p. 12).

Despite the fact that Georgia has achieved some success in building a democratic state, democratic institutions are still weak in the country. It makes it very difficult to transform diverse religious and ethnic groups into one civil unit. The absence of trust towards political institutions on the one hand, and the weakness of these institutions on the other, determine the mutual alienation and isolationism of different segments of society. The weak economic and social development of the country hinders social collaboration between religious and ethnic groups. Existing economic and social ties do not promote the feeling of a common economic market and social environment. Therefore, the collab-

oration between religious and existing ethnic groups in the country is mostly based on prejudices and group interests.

It is a paradox that different groups which have lived alongside each other in Georgia for centuries, know little or nothing about each other's cultural values and achievements. The perception of each other's culture reflects prejudices and stereotypes (Dundua, Abashidze, 2009, p. 18). As a result, there is factual isolationism (in most cases) of ethnic minorities.

Taking into consideration the common Soviet tendency to stigmatise historians' heredity, we think it would be interesting to discuss some aspects of several post-Soviet republics' politics of language. This is also because we think the case of Georgia is qualitatively different from the other examples given below.

The Baltic States: the Soviet experience

In the Baltic States (which were annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940) after regaining independence in the 1990s, the Russian-speaking population was quite high, especially in Latvia and Estonia. The Russian-speaking population in Latvia was 45%, and in Estonia – 55% of the total population. As for Lithuania, only 10% of the population were Russian-speaking here (Jarve, 2003, p. 76).

Several years before the collapse of the Soviet Union, language protection and a new language policy became the basis of fighting for the independence of the Baltic States. Depending on the specifics of the given country's ethnic composition, all three countries chose virtually similar policies (although some nuances or differences still existed). For the Russian-speaking minority (although in the case of Estonia, this 'minority' was actually the quantifiable majority) the main problem was a lack of knowledge of the local native language. From the leftover 'goods' of the Soviet Union, this became an acute problem in the Baltic countries. A system based on the principles of brotherhood, unity and the 'strengthening of nations' did not promote the importance of knowledge of the languages of local ethnic groups. Any proceedings on the public level, or at all stages of the education system – starting from schools and finishing with higher education – for the Russian-speaking population were freely available in their native language – in Russian. Accordingly, the knowledge of the native language was practically not of vital importance.

The post-Soviet period

Despite the fact that after gaining independence, language acts were only passed from 1995 to 1999 (with the exception of Latvia – in 1992) in all three states, hints about the state language were made in various civil laws, which actually allocated even more rights to the native languages. This situation was compounded by the fact that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, in contrast to other former Soviet republics, gaining citizenship in Latvia and Estonia for non-ethnic Latvians and Estonians became possible only through naturalisation. This process, in turn, included a language test which was difficult for the

local Russians for the simple reason that they did not know the native language at all, or their knowledge did not satisfy the requirements. As a result, from 1995–1998 only 11,432 persons were naturalised in Latvia (Jarve, 2003, p. 83).

In general, summing up the policies of the Baltic countries, it can be said that their aim was not so much to get the ethnic minorities (in this case using the term ‘minorities’ might be controversial) studying the native languages and, therefore, promoting the integration of ethnic Russians, but rather creating conditions for the ethnic Russian-speaking population that encouraged their emigration. This assumption is made even more valid by the fact that in the post-Soviet period, in the light of beginning the naturalisation process and making laws about the need for local languages, no effort was made by either Latvia or Estonia to help the non-Latvian and non-ethnic Estonian population to study the local language.

As for Lithuania, the events developed in a slightly different way. Due to Lithuania’s reality at the time (where according to the 1989 census about 79% of the population belonged to the native population, while only about 10% were ethnic Russians), it is natural that the language problem was relatively smaller in comparison to Estonia and Latvia. Accordingly, following the independence of Lithuania, it did not impose an age requirements nor begin a process of naturalisation which was virtually doomed to failure in advance. This demonstrates that the issue of language in Lithuania had a less politicised character. The knowledge of the native language became compulsory, although on a certain level (in transport, shops, signs, etc.) operating in any other languages was not forbidden. In addition, the Lithuanian government passed a law about the necessity of teaching everyone the native language in secondary school – regardless of their ethnic origin. This gives us an opportunity to think about the following:

- 1) the issue of language being less politicised by the government of Lithuania;¹
- 2) the Language Act and education policy pursued by the Lithuanian government, which unlike the other two Baltic republics, aimed at teaching the native language to ethnic Russians and other non-ethnic Lithuanians;
- 3) Lithuania’s policy in terms of language did not intend to encourage the emigration of non-ethnic Lithuanians, but, on the contrary, aimed to improve the integration of non-ethnic Lithuanians into the independent Lithuanian state.

As a result of this policy, the level of the linguistic assimilation and civil integration in Latvia and Estonia are quite low, and in Lithuania – relatively high (Jarve, 2003, p. 94).

The Ukrainian experience

The problem of national identity in the post-communist transformation period (perhaps it would be better to use the term ‘creation of a nation’), the politics of language and

¹ However, in exchange for membership of NATO and the European Union, the Baltic States had to make certain concessions anyway. For example, in Latvia, despite laws being passed on this matter several times by the government, in 2002 a presidential amendment was passed – removing the necessity of elected public officials (at parliamentary and municipal levels) possessing a certificate of proficiency in Latvian.

civic integration issues have also become one of the most important issues for Ukraine, like they were for the Baltic States. Like the Baltic States, also in the case of Ukraine, in the complex process of building statehood, the non-ethnic Ukrainian population (mainly, naturally, Russian-speaking) became a problem. However, unlike the Baltic States, in the case of Ukraine, the Russian language and its influence on ethnic Ukrainians and the method of constructing Ukrainian statehood still remains as a major challenge.

Despite the fact that ethnic Russians constitute one-fifth of the whole population in Ukraine, Russian is considered a native language for many more. According to a survey, those who considered themselves 'Ukrainians' did not necessarily mean that they considered Ukrainian as their native language. Soon after independence, public opinion surveys revealed the reality which existed in Ukraine concerning the Ukrainian and Russian languages. According to a survey of the population of Ukraine in 1998, 45% of respondents preferred the Russian language in everyday conversation, 15–16% classified themselves as bilingual, while 39–40% spoke Ukrainian. Roughly similar results were provided by a 2001 survey (Stepanenko, 2003, p. 113).

Because of the limited historical experience of Ukrainian statehood, language has become the most important determinant of what should have better defined ethnic identity. Accordingly, supporters of the declaration of Ukrainian as the sole state language had their own arguments. In fact, the declaration of the Ukrainian language as the state language once again emphasised the sovereignty and independence of the state. This was of crucial importance, because of Ukraine's geopolitical location and strategic importance (taking into consideration its neighbourhood with Russia and that country's centuries-old attempts at Russification).

Even before independence, the "Language Act," adopted in 1989, declared Ukrainian as the sole state language. Russian, and other languages, are referred to there as languages for "inter-ethnic relations." Since then, on all levels, teaching of both Ukrainian and Russian has been mandatory. The final affirmation of Ukrainian as the only official language took place in 1996 with the passing of Article 10 of the Constitution, where Russian was given the status of a minority language (Constitution of Ukraine, Chapter 1, Article 10).

In general, in the homogenisation process, the proper language policy is very important, particularly making the state language the dominant language at school level. In the case of Ukraine, with the background of its very close territorial, cultural, religious and historical relations with Russia, the problem was the appearance of a sense of national identity and construction. All of these factors were supported by the fact that the Ukrainian language is very close to the Russian language, which has been facilitated through the successfully implemented process of Russification over the centuries. Accordingly, in the case of Ukraine, the problem was not so much the multitude of ethnic Russians, whose number in percentage terms compared to the Baltic States is quite low, but the ethnic Ukrainians, for a large part of which Russian was considered as a native language.

With this background, the state programme of the Ukrainian Ministry of Education on the development of Ukrainian and other national languages in 1991 is understandable. The main goal of this programme was learning and entrenching the Ukrainian language through the mandatory teaching of Ukrainian at schools (the results of this programme should have become visible by 2000). The educational policy in Kuchma's period worked to some extent – from 2000–2001, 70% of pupils were already studying in Ukrai-

nian, and 29% in Russian (Stepanenko, 2003, p. 123). On the one hand, according to some experts, it was the right educational policy of Kuchma, which in the process of 'Ukrainisation' achieved substantial success. On the other hand, there is also criticism of this policy, which calls into question the success of that process. The fact that the amount of education in Ukrainian increased does not necessarily imply less frequent use of Russian from the same citizens in everyday life as a means of communication.

Despite the efforts at homogenising the nation, it is a fact that 'Ukrainisation', initiated and implemented from the top by government, was less able to yield a result. The cultural and linguistic origins of this problem are more deeply rooted. Political events in recent years – the replacement of a clearly pro-western policy by an equally clearly pro-Russian focus (especially up to so-called 'Maidan events' of 2014) – show once more that the Russian language and Russian policy in Ukraine have deep-seated roots. In one of the opinions expressed in 2000 about the topic of the Ukrainian language, which is no less relevant against the background of the recent political processes (Stepanenko, 2003, p. 132) three different ways of solving the problems related to language can be suggested:

- 1) development of a new language system, based upon a combination of the two languages, something like a new language prototype;
- 2) the parallel existence of two languages and two cultures, e.g. the Belgian, Swedish, Swiss or Canadian models (also in the Crimean Republic);
- 3) the swallowing of the less developed language by the more developed language. That is, the creation of conditions for fair competition between the Russian and Ukrainian languages.

From today's perspective we think that the following has clearly been demonstrated:

- a) the implementation of the first option is impossible and no steps have been taken in this direction;
- b) the third option – 'the swallowing' of one language by another and its practical expulsion from the public-political arena is such a sensitive issue that it is unlikely to happen (in this case the fact that the 'expelled' language may be Russian is of secondary importance). However, given the probability that in such a scenario the Ukrainian language could share a similar fate, we think that this is less likely to happen. Even the remotest possibility of 'the expulsion' of the Ukrainian language would put national identity and Ukrainian statehood in jeopardy;
- c) the most effective, and least painful option, resulting from the daily reality of Ukraine, implies the coexistence of both languages, and in principle this has become widespread and established in the modern Ukraine.

Historical retrospective: 19th century Georgia – language and education

"Homeland, language and religion" – almost the whole of the 19th century Georgian national movement, in general, as well as the main features of the formation of the Georgian nation were based on these three, concise ideas, as formulated by Ilia Chavchavadze, one of the greatest Georgian writers and public figures. In Georgia, the awakening of the nation took place around this slogan.

In the 19th century Georgia, almost all representatives of the middle class knew Russian. The Georgian elite of that time often spoke Russian in public, in this way they were emphasising their social status and the fact that they had been educated in Russia.

Getting an education in Russia was widespread because of the absence of such institutions in Georgia. The main problem was not so much getting higher education in Russian, and in Russia, but the absence or extreme scarcity of Georgian-language public schools. The major concern for Ilia Chavchavadze and all the thinkers of that period was the proliferation of education and writing-reading. Education acquired in the native language should have become a basis for helping to unite Georgian identity, creating and extending the sense of national identity.

In the background, when the Russian government tried to forbid the term “Georgia”, replacing it in the press with “Tbilisi and Kutaisi provinces”, steps were implemented by the *Tergdaleulebi* (“Tergi-drunks”²): publishing a newspaper (in which issues related to the problems of the history and culture of Georgia, as well as contemporary political, social and economic problems, were discussed), a whole series of publications dedicated to the importance of education and teaching the Georgian language, the establishment of the Tbilisi and Kutaisi provinces’ royal banks (the majority of the money earned was spent on financing Georgian schools and theatre), the creation of the Society for the Spreading of Literacy Among Georgians, the opening of primary, temporal schools or the edition of Georgian language textbooks – this is a short list of the activities that made a great contribution to the creation and development of a national education system, as well as inspiring a sense of nationhood and the construction of a Georgian identity among Georgian society.

At that time, Georgia’s new social and political classes usually had an ethnic dimension. For example, the most financially prosperous was the Armenian bourgeoisie, which was, it is true, local, being of Tbilisi origin, but they stood apart from other ethnic groups and often had a negative attitude towards them. This was followed by the fact that, in the statistics of that time, the levels of education and knowledge among ethnic Georgians had the lowest rate.

The experiences of 1918–1921 (The First Republic of Georgia)

The brief period (1918–1921) of Georgian independence made some corrections to the relations of ethnic minorities. Representatives of the political elite of that time (socialist, as well as right-wing members) ensured the tolerance of minorities in all their legislation. On the side of the political forces in power at that time, the great focus was on the determination of ‘the rights of small nations’, which is clearly visible from the Constituent Assembly’s constitutional committee materials. Before adoption of the Constitution, at a meeting of the Constitutional Committee held on 20 May, 1920, A. Chkhenkeli³ noted: “There are intimate interconnections between the interests of the whole state and

² Tergi – a river in the north of Georgia, on the border with Russia.

³ A. Chkhenkeli – a well-known Georgian statesman (social-democrat) of the independent Georgia in 1918–1921.

the part of national minorities: one's happiness is the other's happiness and one's trouble is a trouble for the other. The revival of the state is the revival and enrichment of the minority. This must be conscious to each minority, while there is not to be any misunderstanding and distrust; the flourishing of a minority is also in our interests and precisely from such a consideration of the issue, we present the maximum of rights that the state gives to the minority" (Matsaberidze, 1996, p. 89).

The 'maximum of rights' declared by A. Chkhenkeli, and in general, by the Georgian political elite of that time, was also reflected in the fact that the ethnic or religious minorities presented various projects concerning certain aspects in the Constitution. Russian and Armenian National Councils, Greeks living in Georgia, the Muslims of East Georgia, the Transcaucasian German Union, Jews living in Georgia – each presented their own project (7 projects in total), and all of them were overflowing with certain distrust to the newly created Independent State of Georgia. In many cases, satisfying the rights demanded by a minority, and including them in the Constitution, was placing even the existence of Georgia as an independent state under question mark. For example, it is enough to note the assignment in the agenda prepared by the Russian National Council of 'language equality', the implementation of which meant in fact the disappearance of the notion of a state language, because up to 16 languages in Georgia could profit by the mentioned status. Despite everything, the leaders of that time were able to overcome such obstacles, and, moreover, in a way that against this background not only none of the rights of ethnic and religious minorities were hurt, but on the contrary, a separate chapter was allocated for them in the 1921 Constitution. The rights granted to minorities, by their essence, were a progressive event for that time (Matsaberidze, 1996, p. 92).

This was the first time in the history of Georgia where, in Georgian reality, a modern nation-state was created. The constitutionalism of that time created the institutional foundations for universal equality and public involvement in politics. Ethnic minorities were given right to receive education in their native language, as well as to use their native language for the law, and also to publish newspapers and magazines in their own language. The former Georgian Republic also provided for the autonomy of some ethno-religious groups (the autonomies of Abkhazia and Muslim Georgia).

One interesting detail is the Constitution, which is typical of its time. The Constitution of 1921 states that the source of legitimacy is the whole nation – "the power belongs to the whole nation; parliament in the framework of this Constitution provides the power of the nation" (The Constitution of Georgia 1921, Chapter 4, Article 52).

So this was the first case in Georgia, where on a formalised level the ethno-cultural variety of society was put aside, and preference was given to civic affiliations. The meaning of Georgian *eri* as the equivalent of the European "nation" in this case has a non-ethnic dimension. This was the case even before the adoption of the first Georgian Constitution. The word "nation" meant a large, secular collection of people, rather than any ethnic or biological determined unity. The Georgian "nation" gained strong ethno-cultural significance more during the time of the Soviet Union (Dundua, Abashidze, 2009, p. 33).

While the independence of Georgia took place more on a formalised, judicial level, ethnic and religious minorities were granted full and equal rights. Despite this, the reality was a little different: the integration of the ethnic minorities remained a sensitive issue.

Contemporary Georgia: challenges and problems

After dismantling the communist system, the external facade of the regime, which was entirely based on fear and terror, was destroyed. Also, along with economic and social obstacles, arose the problems of ethnic and religious character. Typically, in most cases, this kind of tension has its roots not in differences of worship, but in entirely different factors. Often religious differences express only the tip of the iceberg, where deeper meanings are hidden. In Georgia, which is characterised by its ethnic and religious diversity, there clearly exists a risk of mutual incompatibility between different ethnic groups. The still weak democratic institutions cannot ensure the transformation of society as one whole, civil society. Accordingly, the level of alienation which has an ethnic and religious character, is quite high in Georgia.

By alienation, we do not mean only the alienation of ethnic Georgians from non-ethnic Georgians. Alienation from the “named-nation” is quite high, even among non-ethnic Georgians. Despite hundreds of years of living together, neither Tsarist Russia, nor the Soviet regime nor the public-political space of an independent Georgia could even partially eradicate such alliances between Georgians and non-Georgians and weaken existing ethnocentric points of view. In the first two cases – neither Tsarist Russia nor the Soviet government had such aims. On the contrary, the politics they led (with different aims and different means) served more to encourage a hostile spirit than to ensure integration and the eradication of alienation. During 20 years of independence, because of various objective and subjective reasons, the Georgian State was also unable to fully get over the problems concerning ethnic minorities (despite the fact that several steps were made in this direction). We can single out several main issues concerning ethnic minorities:⁴

- 1) among non-ethnic Georgians, especially in densely populated regions (mostly in urban and semi-urban spaces) the level of knowledge of Georgian is very low. According to UN statistics, 24.6% of ethnic Armenians living in the region of Samcxé –Javakheti and only 16.9% of ethnic Azeris living in the Qvemo Kartli region know the official state language. Compared to this, in Tbilisi, which is an urban zone, and at the same time where ethnic minorities are dispersed, the level of knowledge of the state language in the same ethnic minorities is very high: 95.6% among ethnic Azeris and 96.4% among ethnic Armenians (National..., October 2008, p. 36);
- 2) in the country, the level of unemployment is quite high, and the ethnic minorities are no exception. In non-urban spaces, the level of unemployment is higher than in urban spaces. As a result, the Georgian population has less ability to interact with ethnic minorities in the public sphere. All of these factors are not favourable for the full integration of ethnic minorities;
- 3) cultural and informational alliance. The closed cultural development of the ethnic groups causes a lack of interest and information about the cultural achievements of each other. Factually, in one cultural space, several subcultures exist, alienated from each other;

⁴ In this paper only ethnic Armenians and Azeris are the objects of our research.

4) the level of civic alienation is quite high too. The weak, civic institutionalised space does not help the collaboration of ethnic groups and the appropriate articulation of private interests.

In modern Georgia, the low level of knowledge of the state language among ethnic minorities, and their accordingly low level of education, are part of the main factors (although not the only ones) weakening civic integration. Since the beginning of independence neither Zviad Gamsaxurdia's nor Eduard Shevardnaze's governments made any steps forward, increasing the inclusion of ethnic minorities in the public-political space. Gamsaxurdia's government was often condemned for conducting ethno-centric politics, too (although we do not think it is proper to speak about the political course of any government which was in power for only a year and half, especially in regard of the difficult internal and external context in which the newly established Georgian state found itself). The period of Shevardnaze's government was characterised by utter stagnation. The government did precisely nothing to increase the inclusion of ethnic minorities in the public-political sphere of life. Accordingly, nothing was done to improve education levels among them.

During the period of Shevardnaze's governance, ethno-politic elites seemed to lead mostly narrow political interests and did little to help the integration process of ethnic minorities generally. The votes of minorities, mostly malleable segments of our society, were of decisive importance during elections. Afterwards, though, the authorities were inclined to improve neither the level of knowledge of Georgian, nor the level of education, which logically would help to increase the amount of information available and improve communication. As a result, political manipulation of ethnic minorities became more complicated and dangerous.

After the Rose Revolution of 2003, the situation changed for the better. After 2003, several steps were made by Saakashvili's government to improve the situation in this sphere, including two main directions:

- 1) teaching ethnic minorities Georgian;
- 2) taking care of the maintenance of minority cultural values and languages.

At a judicial level, such politics was reflected in the Law of General Education of Georgia, where it is written: "[t]he citizens of Georgia for whom the Georgian language is not their native language are granted a general education in their native language, according to the national teaching plan, by law. In these institutions, it is mandatory to teach the Georgian language" (Law of General Education of Georgia, article 4, chapter 3).

Despite the fact that the majority of non-ethnic Georgians do not know Georgian (or know it very badly), most of them still consider Georgia their native country politically. According to research carried out by SIDA⁵ in the regions of Kvemo Kartli and Samckhe Javakheti, in response to the question: "do you consider Georgia as your native country, and in the future do you connect your own income and employment with Georgia?" – 96% of respondents answered that they linked their own incomes and the incomes of their families to Georgia for at least the next five years (Ethnic and...November 1, 2012). In our opinion, such a high percent of interviewed respondents who associate their future

⁵ SIDA – Swedish International Cooperation Agency.

with Georgia to some degree must be a result of the policies initiated some years ago (along with some other factors, too) and which continues in the sphere of education until today.⁶

According to the law which has been applicable since 2010, representatives of ethnic minorities take a part of the national exams, the so-called “General Aptitude”, in their native language – Azeri, Armenian, Ossetian and Abkhaz. As a result, we have seen a growing number of non-ethnic Georgian students in our high schools. Simultaneously, in the universities, a 4+1 system (which means that students have to study Georgian intensively for one year) was established. Also, during this same time, a quota system was set up which determined the numbers of minorities who could study. It was distributed as follows: out of the total number of students who are pre-admitted, 5% of Azeris and 5% of Armenians take their exams in the Azeri and Armenian languages, and 1% for Ossetian and Abkhaz native speaking students take exams in their respective languages. As a result of this policy the number of non-ethnic Georgians studying at Georgian Universities has increased. All of these steps can, of course, be positively evaluated, although, there are some considerations about this:

1. The quota system may be praiseworthy for a period of time. However, it is not favourable to work with this system for a long period. Generally, quota systems are a widely accepted practice all over the world. On the one hand, this system has a lot of positive effects, but on the other hand it has some negative ones too. In the case of Georgia, there are some possibilities that it may bring a higher number of students to prestigious faculties where there are already a lot of students, as opposed to the less prestigious faculties, where we may still have a shortage of specialists. We do have to consider the steps made in this direction by the government – specifically, that some of the less popular specialities in modern Georgia will be financed by the state, which in turn will augment the number of students in these specialities – in total 14 specialities.
2. On the other hand, we need to take into consideration that this regulated system (where a part of the national exams can be taken in the language of your choice) might reduce the motivation to learn the Georgian language for non-ethnic Georgians (Janashia, 2009, p. 5). Therefore, being admitted to Georgian universities as representatives of ethnic minorities (regardless of which language they take their national exams in), students have to continue studying in the state language. The ethnic minorities, following their interests of integrating Georgia’s public political space, will properly understand the benefits: the execution of an educational programme at secondary school level, their inclusion in such programmes serving to their own benefit, as well as the improvement of their everyday connections to continue studying in universities and getting educated. This

⁶ Unfortunately, statistical data like this for several years before do not exist denying us the opportunity to compare data. Even during the statistical research carried out by SIDA questions which could make it possible to determine the factors of the respondents’ dependency were not asked. Accordingly, our consideration that the politics of education and teaching the Georgian language were somehow the main reason for these opinions, could not be backed up by the results of any research we are aware of.

point of view is validated by the results of statistical research conducted by us while working on these themes.⁷

In researching this paper, in-depth interviews were held with ethnic Azeris and Armenians in the Akhalkalaki-Akhalsikhe and Marneuli-Dmanisi regions. While analysing the results of the interviews, two main problems appeared:

- 1) the number of hours for teaching Georgian is insufficient. According to a large number of interviewed representatives of ethnic minorities, it is necessary to develop the Georgian teaching course further to achieve results;
- 2) relations with ethnic Georgians in non-school spaces and at the level of everyday communication are insufficient. Accordingly, some possible versions of how to solve this problem were identified. Among them we can outline, for example, compulsory military service – where non-ethnic Georgians could have an opportunity to communicate with Georgians; also, broadening projects such as “Patriot Caps”.

Despite this, the evaluation of the politics of teaching Georgian and stimulating ethnic minorities in gaining an education in Georgian Universities by passing exams in their native language is evaluated unequally positively.

Conclusion

Language is often perceived merely as a communication tool, but language groups adhering to their language are not aiming at all to protect their ‘communication tool’; in this case they are protecting their own national identity, culture and autonomous institutions. Language, of course, is the main means of communication but, in addition, language is closely related to national identity and cultural aspects. It is precisely the language factor that determines the process of nation-forming and facilitates its further formation. The examples mentioned, and reviewed by us in the paper, are further proof of the fact that language and education play an important role in the process of creation of a nation as a whole, as well as in strengthening integration and communication.

According to the examples reviewed during our study, taking into consideration the ethnic minorities, their accommodation and, generally, their origin, a number of factors are different in Georgia and, therefore, the educational policy pursued by the government in this regard are qualitatively different from the cases of the Baltic States and Ukraine. The policies of the Baltic States (and more specifically, of Latvia and Estonia) in this direction were less aimed at helping the ethnic minorities in learning the local, native languages, and thus helping them (ethnic Russians) to be integrated in public and political spaces. In Ukraine, raising the status of the Ukrainian language was more aimed at strengthening Ukrainian national identity and at ethnic Ukrainians themselves, than it was aimed at implementing the process of ‘Ukrainisation’ of ethnic non-Ukrainians.

⁷ During our research 10 ethnic Armenians and 10 Azeris were interviewed. Special thanks go to Beqa Bagashvili, an Ilia Chavachavadze State University MA student, who, at the same time studying Educational Politics, was working as a teacher of Georgian in Dmanisi, Jandara village, and to whom we are grateful for conducting in-depth interviews in this region.

The example of Georgia is quite different. After gaining independence, Georgia, in contrast to Ukraine, had no (or very little) problem of identity. In addition, in contrast to Ukraine, Georgia, with its geopolitical situation, has never been very close to Russia and, at the same time, there is the fact of linguistic difference. In contrast to what happened in many other former Soviet Union countries, Georgian, as the main means of communication in various fields of public or social life, never lost its importance in the population (naturally, first of all we mean ethnic Georgians, but in the general public-political environment operating in Russian was entirely free, acceptable, approved and encouraged by the Soviet government). Among ethnic Georgians, it was less widespread and deep-rooted in private or any other type of informal relations to use a non-Georgian language (in this case Russian). Perhaps this reality is reflected in the fact that Georgian never lost the status of an official language, even in the period of the Soviet Union (in spite of efforts made in this direction). In addition, unlike the Baltic States and Ukraine, Georgia had a heritage of completely different ethnic groups, in the form of ethnic minorities, for whom Russian was not the native language (regardless of different degrees of knowledge of Russian, it was not their native language). The case of Georgia was different also from the above mentioned examples, in that, unlike many of the post-Soviet republics, the Georgian government, by way of teaching Georgian to minorities, set increasing their civic integration and activity in civic spaces as a goal. How successful the steps taken in this regard were is another question. In addition, unlike the Baltic States, after gaining independence all citizens of the former Georgian Soviet automatically received citizenship of the newly established, independent Republic of Georgia.

Until recently, the Georgian political establishment was very cautious regarding ethnic politics, and indecision in this regard was also quite common. Despite individual projects and efforts carried out in recent years, it is still difficult to say that the Georgian government has consistent and effective policies to overcome the problems caused by its ethnic and religious multi-membership. Although in this sense, there have recently been some positive trends (for example, the development of the concept of tolerance and civic integration and some programmes realised on the basis of it, removing from passports the Soviet-style identification of ethnicity, holding certain educational programmes, tests of skills on the Unified National Examinations in the languages of minorities, establishment of the quota system, etc.) but these efforts are still quite fragmented and cannot be called a well-formed, considered and coherent policy that in the near future will bring rapid and effective changes in terms of civic integration.

Predominantly, ethnic groups (there is a better picture in the case of thinly settled ethnic minorities) are very poorly integrated into the general public-political space and practically do not participate in the process of building political institutions and the state. Ethnic minorities generally are the passive recipients of the decisions taken in high political echelons, rather than active participants in the development of the political agenda, imbued with a high sense of civic responsibility and a spirit of self-consciousness. However, it should be also noted that the policy in the field of language teaching for ethnic minorities is aimed at the longer term, and naturally its results cannot be immediately apparent. Accordingly, those generations that will know the state language fluently, who will be educated within a Georgian educational space, in the future will be one of (one of, because knowledge of the Georgian language alone cannot solve the diverse range of

problems) the guarantors and contributors to successful and well-grounded integration of ethnic minorities in the public-political space.

References

- Dundua S., Abashidze Z. (2009), *Ethnic and Religious Identities and Civic Integration Issues in Georgia* (in Georgian), "Intelekti", Tbilisi.
- Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Georgia – Achievements and Challenges* (in Georgian) discussion held in November 1, 2012, <http://tolerantoba.ge/index.php?id=1281619861&kat=316>, 3.01.2014.
- Janashia S. (Police Report 2009), *The Quality Assurance System in Georgia*, (in Georgian), Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development, http://www.cipdd.org/upload/files/cipdd_education_quality_assurance_geo.pdf, 18.12.2013.
- Jarve P. (2003), *Language Battles in the Baltic States: 1989 to 2002*, in: *Nation-Building, Ethnicity and Language Politics in Transition Countries*, eds. F. Daftary, F. Grin, LGI/ECMI Series on Ethno politics and Minority Issue.
- Law of General Education of Georgia* (in Georgian), <http://www.mes.gov.ge/uploads/Licenzireba/kanoni%20zogadi%20ganatlebis%20shesaxe.pdf>, 5.12.2013.
- Matsaberidze M. (1996), *The Political Concept of the Constitution of Georgia 1921* (in Georgian), Tbilisi, I. Chavchavadze International Educational Society "Knowledge" of the Republic of Georgia.
- National Integration and Tolerance in Georgia Assessment Survey Report* (October 2008), <http://www.una.ge/eng/artdetail.php?id=74&group=documents>, 10.12.2013.
- Stepanenko V. (2003), *Identities and Language Politics in Ukraine: The Challenges of Nation-State Building*, in: *Nation-Building, Ethnicity and Language Politics in Transition Countries*, eds. F. Daftary F. Grin, LGI/ECMI Series on Ethno Politics and Minority Issues.
- The Constitution of Georgia 1921* (in Georgian), http://constcentre.gov.ge/failebi/1921_clis_konstitucia_33442.pdf, 15.12.2013.
- The Constitution of Ukraine* (in Russian), <http://meget.kiev.ua/zakon/konstitutsia-ukraini/razdel-1/>, 20.01.2014.

Polityka językowa i edukacyjna w Gruzji (analiza porównawcza: Gruzja, kraje bałtyckie i Ukraina)

Streszczenie

W procesie zapewniania pełnej integracji mniejszości narodowych w państwie, jedną z najczęściej wymienianych przeszkód jest brak znajomości języka państwowego przez owe mniejszości. Pomimo faktu, że Gruzja osiągnęła pewien sukces w budowaniu demokracji, instytucje państwowe są wciąż słabe, co z kolei przekłada się na trudności w procesie integrowania różnych grup religijnych i etnicznych z państwem. Brak zaufania do instytucji politycznych z jednej strony i słabość tych instytucji z drugiej, prowadzi do wzajemnego wyobcowania i izolacji różnych grup społecznych. Rząd gruziński, w przeciwieństwie do krajów bałtyckich i Ukrainy, zbliżając Gruzynów do tamtejszych grup mniejszościowych, postanowił zwiększyć ich udział i aktywność w przestrzeni obywatelskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: mniejszości etniczne, edukacja, polityka językowa, integracja

