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**BILINGUAL SPACE OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE: TRENDS IN**  
**LANGUAGE INTERACTION**

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### Abstract

Based on lexicographic sources, Ossetian-language media, texts of speeches and meetings of leading political figures recorded on the website of the Parliament of the Republic of South Ossetia the paper analyzes the bilingual linguistic specifics of political discourse in a new state and reveals the features of Ossetian-Russian bilingualism at the level of strategic codeswitching, and in terms of trends in the formation of Ossetian political glossary. This paper describes specific forms of interference at lexical and morphological levels and intercalation at the level of ordinary speech behavior. Strategic and functional differentiation of languages, which variability of implementation is ethnically determined, is described. The reasons for formality in the South Ossetian political discourse and the factors determining the vector of interference phenomena in bilingual communication are considered. As a result of the study, it was shown that the South Ossetian political discourse is implemented in various language regimes depending on the type of audience and strategic objectives of the policy taking into account the specifics of Ossetian traditional culture. The Ossetian political glossary is currently in the process of formation.

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*Keywords:* Bilingualism, political discourse, linguistic personality, communicative personality, communicative strategy, linguistic interaction



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## 1. Introduction

Active development of a new direction of linguistics – political linguistics – is associated with an increased interest in the study of socioethnolinguistic problems reflecting the peculiarities of modern internal and foreign political processes at various levels of their manifestation, which explains the relevance of addressing the material of political discourse from a polylingual perspective.

Political linguistics considers the micro-level of political language (syntactics, semantics and pragmatics); directions and models of interpretation of different political discourses; formation and representation of key political parties (Demyankov, 2008).

Political discourse is a reflection of the socio-political life of the country, filled with elements of its culture, general and national-specific cultural values. At the same time, political discourse acts as a way of constructing new meanings on the basis of combining semantic elements and practices of all social spheres, many political, ideological and economic models.

Political discourse is considered as a kind of institutional entity, the most significant forms of which are pre-election, presidential, parliamentary types of discourse. The political discourse of states that arose in the post-Soviet space is characterized by the preservation of historically developed national Russian bilingualism. In the new state – the Republic of South Ossetia (RSO) – the Ossetian-Russian bilingualism set by the law of the state actively functions in social and political sphere and in the field of education and external contacts.

## 2. Problem Statement

Political communication in the Republic of South Ossetia is formed according to the model of Russian political discourse: based on the Russian terminology base, as well as patterns and strategies for the implementation of communicative goals by political leaders and social groups in the Russian Federation. Political communication in South Ossetia is carried out in Russian and Ossetian languages, office work is also performed in both Russian and Ossetian languages.

## 3. Research Questions

The specificity of the phenomenon of polylingual consciousness, considered as one of the facets of ordinary consciousness, is discovered through specific mechanisms and methods of its manifestation in the process of functioning of crosslanguage interoperability in each particular case. The sociocultural phenomenon of ordinary consciousness as a ***multilevel mental formation is embedded in its inherent ability*** to serve as a means of forming, storing and processing language signs and the meanings expressed by them, the rules of their combination and use, as well as to include stereotypical and value settings in a language and its elements on the part of a certain individual and society. In turn, as a mechanism for controlling speech activities, linguistic consciousness is a prerequisite for existence and development of all forms of consciousness (Eiger, 1990).

Despite the fact that in cognitive and linguistic paintings of the world there are universal meanings for different languages, national worldviews cannot be considered identical even in the sector of international meanings: “The main mechanism for bilingual consciousness is the psychological

mechanism of semantic creation, which involves a collision of meanings, which occurs when a subject – a bearer of the inner semantic world – meets with other semantic worlds” (Tsvetkova, 2001, p. 72).

It is known that when assimilating the second language, in particular, Russian, which is popular in post-Soviet countries as the second state language, as well as foreign, more often English as the language of international communication, we face the interference of worldviews – both cognitive and linguistic. Foreign-language elements fit into the semantic context of the native language being contaminated, and messages on it are interpreted not only from the point of view of the native culture, but are included in the general civilizational space.

The mastery of non-native languages is associated with the restructuring of national and individual worldviews inherent in each subject: a change in the evaluation of objects due to an increase in new connotative values; rethinking foreign cultural prototypes and stereotyping; re-categorization of core universal components of a conceptual image of the world; restructuring of categorical structure of individual consciousness and streamlining the objects of the surrounding social reality.

Summarizing the above we can conclude that a dialogue of cultures in the consciousness of multilingualists is the communication of images of different cultures within the framework of one consciousness. A holistic picture of the Ossetian world is represented by several zones of culture – Ossetian, Russian and general civilization. Its verbal expression may include the set of languages spoken by each individual, but the dominant is the Ossetian-Russian language worldview.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this paper is to conduct a sociolinguistic study of the features of Ossetian-Russian bilingualism in the Republic of South Ossetia as a topical phenomenon that affects the formation of national political communication.

#### **5. Research Methods**

This study was conducted on the basis of materials recording the activities of the Parliament of the Republic of South Ossetia with the texts of speeches and meetings of top public officials. The leading methods of the study were semantic-cognitive, contextual approaches and methods of morphemic analysis.

#### **6. Findings**

The situation of the South Ossetian political discourse from the point of view of linguistic integration can mainly be described as Ossetian-Russian bilingualism with Kudar accent of Iron dialect as the regional features of the Ossetian language. The functional distribution of Russian and native languages directly depends on the type of target audience and the strategic direction of communication. Despite the fact that coordinate bilingualism has developed in South Ossetia, intercalation or interference in oral speech of both ordinary speakers of Ossetian-Russian bilingualism and political figures has

become the norm under the influence of the important role of the Russian language in the formation of the Ossetian vocabulary fund (Tameryan et al., 2018; Tameryan et al., 2019).

The vocabulary of the Ossetian language due to foreign-language borrowings is mainly replenished through Russian. The fields of development of this group of vocabulary are focused on linguistic specifics of domestic political communication, which takes place in Ossetian and Russian, and international relations of the republic, supported in Russian and English.

In the process of analyzing the Ossetian political lexicon, we identified several main strategies for verbalizing this fragment of the worldview. The outer shell of words most clearly demonstrates lexical units with a complete borrowing of form and content – as a rule these are masculine words ending with a consonant (Ossetian language: *cabinet*, *memorandum*, *minister*). However, subordinations between borrowings in phrases correspond to the norms of the native language: for example, *министрты кабинет* “cabinet”. Taking roots in the Ossetian language through Russian the nouns and adjectives with international roots immediately accept native inflections (*демократион* “democratic”; *политикон* “political”) or affix and inflection, as plural nouns, for example, *дебаттæ* “debates”.

As evidenced by the analyzed text fragments, in oral speech at the morphological level prefixes and flexions of the Ossetian language system are attached to a borrowed Russian-speaking root: for example: *списоктæй* (suffix *-тæй* indicates plural form, ending *-æй* indicates the genitive case in Ossetian); *Верховный судæн*, where *-æн* serves the end of the dative case.

A combined model for the formation of political terms can be demonstrated using the phrase *æвзарæн къамис* “election commission”, in which the first element is native, and the second is an adapted borrowing. Next, let us consider the complicated version of a combined model *æнæзакъонон (блок)пост* “illegal (block) post”: the prefixal formation *æнæзакъонон* correlating with the adjective *закъонон* “legal” formed from the root basis of earlier borrowing *закъон* repeats the semantic-morphological structure of the Russian-language original *незаконный* “illegal” by substituting a negative prefix *не-* (“not-”) to Ossetian *æнæ-* (ill-) with the meaning of the absence of quality in a root.

The terminological unit of the political glossary *æхсæнадæмон хъусдардараг* “international observer” was formed as a result of copying the content and structure of the Russian expression *international observer*: the original prefix *æхсæн* identical to the Russian *между-* and international *inter-*, as a word-forming element took a position before the adjective *адæмон* “national”. The semantic filling of a lexical unit *хъусдардараг* “observer” demonstrates one of the ways of rethinking the subject meanings in Ossetian: the word *хъусдардараг* is a verbal derivative (*хъус дарын* “pay attention; observe”) with the meaning of the subject of a speech. The meaning of agency was able to develop due to the expansion of semantics of the Ossetian lexical unit *хъус* “ear”, which resulted in the transfer of audio perception to other types of perceptions.

Another version of political terminology will be demonstrated by the analysis of the nomination *закъондæттæг орган* “legislative body”, the external form of which visibly demonstrates two borrowings – *закъон* “law” and *орган* “body”, however, the second component of the complex adjective *закъондæттæг* goes back to the Ossetian *дæттын* “give” of pan-Indo-European origin.

The following two models are most typical as a way to expand the Ossetian glossary: 1) borrowed two-component nomination “adjective+noun”, both elements of which are morphologically adapted by

means of the host language (*политикон партии* “political party”); 2) borrowed-load two-component nomination “adjective+noun”, one element of which is borrowed, and another is loaned by Ossetian (*конституцион тæрхондон* “constitutional court”).

The terminological network of the South Ossetian political sphere is formed, inter alia, due to the construction of synonymic relations between words (*æхсæнадæмон* “international”) and adjacent lexical meanings in autochthonal names: for example, the adjective *дунеон* from *дуне* “world, universe” began to be used in the meaning of “international” building a synonymous series *æхсæнадæмон хъусдардараг - дунеон хъусдардараг* “international observer”.

The concept of linguistic personality has developed at the intersection of philosophical, sociological and psychological views on a socially significant set of physical and spiritual properties of a person constituting his qualitative certainty. According to Weisgerber (2004), a language is the most universal cultural heritage; since no one takes possession of it only due to its own linguistic personality, but only due to belonging to a certain language community.

Linguistic personality – deepening, development, saturation with additional content of a concept of personality in general. The latter is made of contradictions between stability and variability, stability of motivational predispositions and ability to succumb to external influences and self-action, thus transforming their results in the restructuring of relations of elements at each level – semantic, cognitive and motivational; between its real-time existence and “irrelevance” of the time parameter for personality identification (Karaulov, 2010).

Karaulov (2010) believes that a linguistic identity itself does not begin with zero, but with the first, linguo-cognitive (thesaurus) level, because only from this level is it possible to choose an individual, personal preference, one concept to another. The zero level – words, verbal-grammatical network, stereotypical combinations (patterns) – is accepted by each linguistic identity as a reality, and any individual-creative personality potentials cannot change this genetically and statistically determined reality.

Karasik (2002) notes that a linguistic identity in the conditions of communication can be considered as a communicative personality. A communicative personality is a linguistic personality in the process of communication, during interaction with another person.

The interest in the study of linguistic identity of politics is based on the fact that a leader in modern political communication is presented as a “metonymic sign replacing the group” (Sheigal, 2004).

In the person of one politician, a political party or organization, racial or ethnic group, social association can be reoriented, he can act as a representative of supporters of certain concepts or political actions. Besides, the individual style and strategic preferences of a subject of political discourse implement a system of culturally conditional meanings that reflect knowledge, presupposition and values shared by the members of the society.

It is worth noting the following strategies as basic communication strategies in the political sphere: information and interpretation, self-presentation, discreditation, decline strategy, improvement strategy and theatricality strategy. They are driven by the desire of an individual typical for a political discourse to ensure self-promotion, attract attention, the need to clearly present his political platform against the background of (in his opinion) positions of other political figures.

Since the main function of politics is the struggle for power, the verbal implementation of this communicative task is aimed at attracting the largest number of supporters, which is achieved through ideals common with the people.

In the speech of South Ossetian politicians, the language systems of both languages sometimes hybridize, which leads to rapid codeswitching from Russian to Ossetian during the same speech or putting words and phrases in another language.

Thus, at the parliament meeting when considering the ban on gambling in the republic, the speaker of the parliament manifests concern for the future of youth identifying himself with the middle and older generation of citizens of the republic:

“I listened: there are two aspects that determine whether a law needs to be passed or not. <... > the very component of the fact that our guys are just killing themselves, this is evident and in this regard, *мах дæр* (“we too”), to be honest, *ныййарджытæ стæм, махæн дæр ис сывæллæттæ* (“we are also parents, we also have children”), I cannot afford not to react to the fact that tomorrow my son may do the pools” (www.parliamentso.org.).

The analysis of linguistic situation made it possible to trace the characteristics of the choice of the language of communication and the type of strategy used by a political figure depending on ethnic and social variation of certain population groups of the republic with which he communicates. During the speech to an Ossetian-speaking audience, the preference is given to an ethnic language that appeals to civil and ethnic identity of the Ossetians. With a mixed ethnic composition, a Russian language code operates marking the inextricable community of the two peoples. Besides, the speaker can switch from Ossetian to Russian language code thus signalling the transfer of attention to another ethnic group.

At one school event dedicated to the victory in the Great Patriotic War, Bibilov (2017), being the speaker of the parliament, thanked the children for the holiday in honor of a memorable date: in Ossetian, without switching to the second state language – Russian. “*Махæн та нæ сомбон, ацы рæсугъд сомбон цы нукуы уал фена хæст, æмæ алы хатт дæр сабырдзинады цы цæрой, цы кусой, цы архайой, уыцы амонд радтæт Хуыцау. Æмæ мæнæ плакатыл фæдтон ахæм ныхæстæ*” – “I wish all good luck in the future! God forbid that we all live and work under peaceful skies. Veterans leave, but the victory remains! I would like the memory of veterans to remain in our hearts. And the victory to be behind us!” (para 8).

A feature of Ossetian discourse is ritualism associated with deep manifestations of ethnic tradition at all levels of communication, including political. At national meetings, regardless of socio-political status, a toast-prayer is made to the patron saint of men – *Фæндагсар Уастырджы* – in the hope of his patronage, help and protection on the road. This prayer is always spoken by an older man in Ossetian, even in a mixed ethnic audience: “*Фæндагсар Уастырджы, табу дæхицæн! Нæ гыццыл Ирыстоны фæндагты æнæфыдбылыз, æнæмаст куыд уой, хæстон машинаы цалх сыл куыннæ тула ахæм арфæ дæ курæм*”. – “Oh, Patron Saint of travelers, Uastyrji! Give us such mercy that the wheels of military vehicles do not touch the roads of Ossetia”.

The President’s congratulation to the people of the Republic of South Ossetia on the Independence Day is also accompanied by the traditional kindness of Ossetians:

“I wish our people peace, unity and well-being! *Дунесфæлдисæг Стыр Хуыцау æмæ Сызгъæрин Уастырджийы фæдзæхст уæд нæ Ирыстон æмæ нæ адæм!* (“May the Great God and the Golden Uastyryj bless our Ossetia and our people!”) (<http://cominf.org/node/1166511970>).

The newspaper *Хурзæрин* (*Dawn*) covering the main events of the country is in Ossetian and does not have a translated version. The major data for residents of South Ossetia is work information and a condition of the Transcaucasian highway, the only road connecting the republic with the outside world: “*Æмæ та маена ныр дæр Транскамы фæндаг, цæмæй æмбæлон уавæры уа, уый тыххæй æнахъусдард нæ зайы ацы организациы æрдыгæй*”. – And at present this organization pays special attention to the maintenance of Transkam Road in appropriate conditions (RSO Parliament, 2016).

The celebration of the Independence Day of the Republic of South Ossetia is marked by a bilingual speech of the president characterized by the fragments of speech in Russian, then in Ossetian languages typical of Ossetian-Russian bilingualism. Such strategic methods are aimed at emphasizing the importance of state independence for the South Ossetian people and the importance of the assistance provided by Russia. The president’s speech ensures a self-presentation strategy:

“I congratulate all of you and the people of the Republic of South Ossetia on a wonderful holiday – the Independence Day! I wish our people peace, unity and well-being! *Дунесфæлдисæг Стыр Хуыцау æмæ Сызгъæрин Уастырджийы фæдзæхст уæд нæ Ирыстон æмæ нæ адæм!*” – (“May the Great God and the Golden Uastyryj bless our Ossetia and our people!”) (Agnaev, 1999).

The strategy of identifying a politician in speech is usually accompanied by bilingual tactics used to identify a certain politician with a South Ossetian subethnic group, a certain party or organization, as well as with the citizens of the Russian Federation.

Another justification for the tactic of inserting a fragment in Russian into the speech in Ossetian is the expressiveness of the speaker’s speech in order to implement the strategy of unity with all peoples of the country and with Russia.

In the considered fragments of the South Ossetian political discourse, the alternate use of a number of duplicating Ossetian and Russian socio-political terms and commonly used expressions testifying the formed polylingual consciousness was recorded: *паддзахадон хицауады къабаз* / branch of state power; practically / *цууылдæр*; *махимæ цумæ* / including; *мах дæр* / we too; *раст у* / right, fair.

## 7. Conclusion

Summing up the results of the study it should be noted that the South Ossetian political discourse is implemented in various language regimes depending on the type of audience and strategic objectives of the policy taking into account the specifics of Ossetian traditional culture: communication is carried out in Ossetian or Russian, in both languages alternately, and besides, the communication parameters allow interference and intercalation at morphological and lexical levels. The Ossetian political glossary is in the process of formation: the vocabulary of the Ossetian language is actively replenished by borrowings from Russian, as well as by loan word-forming models or their components. Borrowed lexical units are adapted under the influence of semantic-morphological norms of the native language.

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