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**ON SOME PROBLEMATIC ISSUES IN SECOND LANGUAGE
ACQUISITION: MAIN AND FACULTATIVE GRAMMAR AND
GENDER FACTORS WHILE TEACHING GEORGIAN
AS A SECOND OR A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

I. One of the most problematic grammatical issues while teaching Georgian as a second or a foreign language, is the category of Version. Version is a grammatical category, which indicates the relationship between the subject and object or between direct and indirect objects. This relationship is expressed through lexical means in many languages. It is specific in Georgian because special grammatical markers, which in linguistic literature are known as preradical vowels, indicate the relationship between the subject and object or between direct and indirect objects.

There are three cases of version for transitive verbs:

A. If the action is assigned for the subject the marker ი “i” indicates it:

ი-შენებს კაცი სახლს

“i-shenebs k’atsi sakhls”

The man is building a house for himself

i-shenebs

SV-to build

This case is called the subject version.

B. The action assigned to an indirect object is denoted by უ “u” marker:

უ-შენებს კაცი სახლს მეზობელს

“u-shenebs k’atsi sakhls mezobels”

The man is building a house for his neighbor

u-shenebs

OV-to build

This case is called the objective version.

C. But if the action takes place and it is not clear to whom it is assigned, in such case it is indicated by ა “a” or Ø:

ა-შენებს კაცი სახლს

“a-shenebs k’atsi sakhls”

The man is building a house

a-shenebs

NV-to build

This case is called the Neutral version.

When teaching Georgian as a second or a foreign language, I make use of special texts and exercises to explain this grammatical category. Then I teach the specific verbs in which the above-mentioned preradical vowels are used for facultative purposes.

II. The second part of my speech will be devoted to the use of the forms of the Georgian verb სმენა *smena* “listen/hear” with preradical vowels უ- u-:

უ-სმენს *u-smens* – “he/she is listening to”,
მო-უ-სმენს *mo-u-smens* – “he/she will listen to”,
მო-უ-სმინა *mo-u-smina* – “he/she listened to”
and ი- i-:
ი-სმენს *i-smens* – “he/she hears”,
მო-ი-სმენს *mo-i-smens* – “he/she will hear”,
მო-ი-სმინა *mo-i-smina* – “he/she heard”.

The analyses of these forms are most important and helpful when teaching Georgian as a second or a foreign language.

In my belief the verbs with preradical vowel უ- u- presuppose the active process of listening on the part of the individuals/listeners, who are concentrated on what they are listening to, whereas the forms with preradical vowel ი- i- denote the process in which the individuals/listeners are not active, hence, they do not concentrate on what they hear. It should be explained why the above-mentioned forms with preradical vowel უ- u- correspond to the English verb ‘to listen’ (cf. Russian ‘слушать’), whereas the forms with preradical vowel ი- i- correspond to the English verb ‘to hear’ (cf. Russian ‘слышать’).

These different shades of meanings are expressed by two different verbs in English, whereas in Russian they are expressed by two stems of one and the same verb. However, in the Georgian language two different preradical vowels – უ- “u”- and ი- “i”- perform this function, which are markers of the grammatical category of version and for which the expression of the above-mentioned semantic nuance is an **additional, facultative or optional function**.

III. And finally I would like to dwell upon one gender issue reflected in the Georgian terms denoting kinship: ძმისშვილი / ძმისწული *dzmisshvili / dzmists’uli* “nephew, brother’s son; or, niece, brother’s daughter” and დისშვილი / დისწული *disshvili / dists’uli* “nephew, sister’s son; or niece, sister’s daughter”.

In most cases I found it rather difficult to make the learners of the Georgian language understand these kinship terms because they represent a difficult task when teaching Georgian to students whose native language is English or some other Indo-European language e.g. Russian, German and so on. The thing is that these terms make a distinction between the gender of parents, denoting either brother or sister as a parent of niece or nephew. However, in English (like other Indo-European languages) the gender distinction is made between the children – nephew and niece respectively.

When explaining this difference it is absolutely necessary to take into account the aspect of the gender.

In gender denoting compounds in the Georgian language, the first part indicates the parent: *ძმის ძმა* “brother” or *დას და* “sister” (both are in Genitive case: *ძმის ძმის* “brother’s” and *დას დას* “sister’s”, meaning something or someone that belongs to brother or sister) and the second part of them indicates the *შვილი / წული* *shvili / ts’uli* “child / offspring”. The words *შვილი shvili* “child” and *წული ts’uli* “offspring” mean children of both sexes in contemporary Georgian. But it should be said that the data of Old Georgian language and Georgian dialects show that both words *შვილი shvili* “child” and *წული ts’uli* “offspring” initially denoted only **a male child**. Hence, initially, the Georgian terms: *ძმისშვილი / ძმისწული dzmisshvili / dzmists’uli* and *დასშვილი / დასწული disshvili / dists’uli* must have denoted: ***ძმისბიჭი dzmisbich’i** “nephew, brother’s son” and ***დასბიჭი disbich’i** “nephew, sister’s son”.

The learners of the Georgian language can naturally get interested why it was necessary to make a distinction between brother’s son and sister’s son? And what the reason for differentiation was?

I believe this was caused by social dominance of man, brother in comparison to woman, sister. This gave advantage to the man, brother when it came to the division of property, because the son was considered be the heir, the share-holder of the family property both in the highlands and lowlands of Georgia. The share of the daughter, in case the family also had a son, was mainly confined to the dowry. Thus, taking into account the fact that *შვილი / წული shvili / ts’uli* “child / offspring” denoted only the son in patriarchal families with several generations living together, it was important to create the lexemes which would adequately reflect the social and cultural reality, by making a distinction between the brother’s son and the sister’s son. It can be explained by the fact that the brother’s son was also considered to inherit the family property, unlike sister’s son, who would inherit his property from his own father’s family.

Abbreviation:

SV – Subject Version

OV – Object Version

NV – Neutral Version

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