

**LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN GEORGIA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
OF THE LANGUAGE POLICIES IN THE PERIOD 1991-2012**

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Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate a within – case variance in the language policies of the different governments of Georgia towards its largest minorities, Armenians and Azeris, by looking at how the language policies have changed during the period between 1991-2012. It will compare the top-down language policies that are officially declared policies by the government of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili. It will examine the bottom-up perceptions and attitudes of the Armenian and Azeri minorities to those language policies through in-depth interviews. Furthermore, my research draws on normative implications for the legitimacy of the different governments based upon the given theoretical framework and empirical findings. According to the findings of my research there is a large within–case variance in the language policies under the governments of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili. This thesis concludes that the government of Georgia should not take a ‘hands-off approach’ that implies a benign neglect policy of ignorance of the situation related to the linguistic diversity that leads to the marginalization of minorities in Georgia. The promotion of the state language along with the ‘norm-accommodation approach’ of providing special accommodations for those minorities who have limited proficiency in Georgian seems a plausible solution of the language barriers and low participation of the national minorities in Georgia’s socio-political life. Furthermore, the government should take the policy of preserving minority languages and promoting linguistic diversity by ratifying the ‘European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages’ (ECRML).

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List of Abbreviations

ECRML - European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

GFSIS-Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies

FCNM- The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

NAEC –National Examinations Center

ECMI- The European Centre for Minority Issues

Introduction

The Georgian language is a crucial factor in building a common Georgian identity. Language is one of the three components of “fatherland, language, and faith” - a shared understanding of “Georgianness” or what it means to be Georgian.¹A state’s language policy plays a crucial role in the majority-minority relations within an ethnically heterogeneous society. Recently, there has been a growing interest in the language policy and language rights of liberal democratic states. The literature shows that a state’s language policy can be considered relevant for the ideas of public equality and legitimacy of the democratic authority as described by Thomas Christiano, for instance. It seems that top-down language policies reflect the democratic qualities of the governments by serving as evidence of the effectiveness of the government to advance the interests of its citizens equally. Christiano’s normative approach to legitimacy as a right to exercise power requires a moral justification for imposing a duty of obedience upon its citizens. Since the essence of legitimacy lies in the right and capacity of the democratic authority to provide public equality for those affected by its decisions, the positive and negative perceptions of Armenians and Azeri minorities about top-down language policies will indicate how effectively the government of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili provided public equality and to what extent its rule cohered with Christiano’s normative approach of the legitimacy of democratic authority. This is why it is relevant to study the top-down language policies of the different governments and its bottom-up reactions, which can indicate the limits of the legitimacy of the different governments.

¹Amirejibi-Mullen, Rusudan " Language Policy and National identity in Georgia", The Queen Mary University of London, 2011. (Amirejibi-Mullen 2011, 314)

Many recent studies have focused on the language-policies and identity development under the government of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili.² However, the previous research failed to discuss the normative implications of the language policies that reflect the democratic credentials and legitimacy of the government. My study extends previous works by using a different normative approach to the problem of the linguistic diversity in Georgia.

Since Georgia became independent in 1991, the equal participation of the national minorities in the state-building process has always been a problematic issue that is strongly correlated with the top-down language policies of the governments of Georgia.³ The exclusion and low participation of national minorities in the socio-political life of Georgia can serve as evidence of the governments' failure in providing public equality. This is why it is relevant to use Christiano's conception of democratic authority and its limits for exploring the question of the legitimacy of the government of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze, and Saakashvili by looking at the bottom up reactions of the Armenian and Azeri minority language groups.

Since the adherence to the best practices and standards for the protection of the minority language groups is the contested issue in Georgia, Will Kymlicka's suggestions related to the best practices and standards for the promotion of minority languages clearly has a considerable application to analyze the problems related to the linguistic diversity of Georgia. Based upon the given theoretical framework about the legitimacy and language right, the normative implications will be drawn from the top-down language policies of the government of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili and its bottom-up reactions.

²Korth, B., A. Stepanian, & M. Muskhelishvili. 2005. Language Policy in Georgia with the Focus on the Education System. Working Paper, Cimera, April .
Amirejibi-Mullen, Rusudan " Language Policy and National identity in Georgia", The Queen Mary University of London, 2011.

³See bottom-up reactions in the third chapter

After Georgia became independent, Zviad Gamsakhurdia came to power (1991-1992) and the process of state building started. The Georgian language played a crucial role in Gamsakhurdia's state-building process as a marker of a common national identity. However, the government of Gamsakhurdia started the state-building process by excluding minorities.

In contrast, the Armenian and Azeri minorities more positively assessed the presidency of Shevardnadze. The main difference between the approaches of Gamsakhurdia's and Shevardnadze's governments was that the former focused on ethnic nation-building and the latter employed a strategy of civic nation-building. The strategy of civic nation building was to maintain neutrality with regard to the ethno-cultural identities of its citizens. However, national minorities suffered from alienation within the political process. The adopted laws related to the use of Georgian did not have any practical implications for the minorities' duty to obey these laws. The lack of proficiency in Georgian was the major problem in the period of Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze for minority populations.

After the Rose Revolution the government of Saakashvili started the implementation of civil integration policies of ethnic minorities in Georgia. The implementation of the various educational and legislative reforms significantly improved knowledge of Georgian and promotion of Georgian among national minorities. However, due to a shortage of qualified bilingual Georgian teachers and teaching assistants, the successful implementation of the bilingual educational program is still on-going process. The effectiveness of the state in providing full access to information for the regions populated by the national minorities still remains a problematic issue. Ethnic minorities are not fully informed about the developments occurring in the country and information received from other sources that could be biased increases the misperception, distrust and skepticism about on-going political life. It is clearly evident that the deficiencies in information flow prevent minorities from equally participating in the governance of the state. The lack of access to full information has a significant impact

on the perception of the minority groups regarding the top-down language policies of the governments that might seem to discriminate against them. The limited knowledge of the Georgian can be considered as a major obstacle for minority language groups to receive complete information and filter it properly. It is clearly evident that uniformed minority groups cannot participate in shaping the state institutions as well as holding the majority accountable.

The aim of the research is to investigate a within- case variance on how the language policies of the governments of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili towards its largest Armenian and Azeri minorities have changed in the period between 1991-2012.

Ultimately this paper address the question: **what implications can be drawn from the comparative analysis of the top-down language policies in Georgia and its bottom-up reactions?**

My expectation is that there is a large within–case variance in the language policies under the governments of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili in the period between 1991-2012 that can indicate the effectiveness of the government in accommodating the linguistic diversity of the nation and setting the limits to the legitimacy of the different governments.

According to my principal finding, there is a large within – case variance in the top-down language policy under the governments of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili. Based on the perceptions of the minorities surveyed and interviewed the controversies between the top-down language policies and its bottom-up perceptions became clearly evident during the presidencies of Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze compared to that of Saakashvili.

Case Selection and relevance of the research

Georgia belongs to the category of states where the interplay between language and politics is a crucial factor in defining the common Georgian identity as well serving to divide people. However, the case of Georgia shows that the language policies are amenable to change along with the regime transition. It is not only a top-down, but also a bottom-up process. The top-down language policy is a major concern of minority language groups, since it has the direct implication on how they use the language to express their identity and exercise the basic rights. The practical implication of my study is that it not only explores the within-case variance in the language policies of the governments of Georgia in the period between 1991-2012. The study also deals with the question of the legitimacy of the governments under scrutiny.

Methodology

The research is based largely on qualitative study. While conducting research, content analysis was used focusing on the study of official documents such as government decrees, laws and other documents, media publications, social surveys issued in the research period regarding the language policies under different governments. Furthermore, the statements and speeches of political figures were studied; existing literature (academic books and articles) were examined concerning the language policies of Georgia. I conducted in-depth interviews in the following regions of Georgia: Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli; where the Armenian and Azeri minorities form the majority of the population in order to identify the controversies between top-down language policies and its bottom-up perceptions. This method allows me to gain the insider view in the field. It seems interesting and relevant to study a within-case variance in the language policies under the different governments of

Georgia by using a congruence procedure. As Van Evera claims, the congruence procedure will allow the investigator to conduct the paired observation of the values on the independent and dependent variables within a case.⁴ The dependent variable is *a legitimacy of the different governments*, It will be operationalized through Christiano's normative approaches to legitimacy and empirical findings of the research. Among the independent variables there are *the top-down language policies and its bottom-up reactions*, that will be operationalized through critical evaluation of the language policies and its bottom-up perceptions. This observation aims to explore the co –variance how the bottoms up perceptions of the Azeri and Armenian minorities move in tandem on the values of the language polices of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili.

The main body of the thesis consists of three chapters. In the first chapter I will outline the nature of the problem related to the linguistic diversity in Georgia and provide the theoretical background of the puzzle that will be conceptualized through Will Kymlicka's theory of Language Rights, Language Policies and Thomas Christiano's theory of the democratic authority and its limits. In the second chapter I will compare the language policies of the different governments of Georgia in the period 1991-2012. Furthermore, I will explore within–case variance particularly changes in state's language policies towards its largest Armenian and Azeri minorities. In the third chapter I will analyze how bottom-up perceptions versus top-down language policies by looking at the reactions and prevailing attitudes among minority groups.

⁴Van Evara, Stephen (1997). *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press (Van Evara 1997, 49-88)

CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since the thesis explores the within –case variance in the language policies under the governments of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili by focusing on how top-down language policies versus its bottom-up perceptions, particularly the effectiveness of the different governments to provide public equality for those affected by its language policies. It seems plausible to conceptualize the puzzle through Christiano’s theory of democratic authority and its limits. Furthermore, the theoretical debate regarding the best practices and standards of dealing with the linguistic diversity in Georgia seems relevant to conceptualize through Will Kymlicka’s theories of language rights and language policies. Since Kymlicka addresses the best practices, minimum standards and other contested issues related to the state’s language policy, his argumentation seems most applicable to the puzzle of linguistic diversity in Georgia.

1.1 The Limits to Democratic Authority

The state’s language policy has had a dominant role in defining majority-minority relations under the governments of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili. It poses the question of the legitimacy of the governments and how fairly the majority treats the minority language groups. It seems relevant to use Christiano’s theory of the democratic authority and its limits in order to explore the legitimacy and effectiveness of the governments of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili to provide the public equality by looking at the top-down language policies and its bottom –up reactions.

Christiano (2008: 1-2) introduces the non-instrumental justification of democracy by focusing on the intrinsic value of the democratic decision-making that embodies the public equality. The idea of public equality is a moral foundation of democracy, which implies that

democratic-decision making must treat each citizen as an equal. Thus the idea of public equality answers the question of government's legitimacy by indicating to what extent the authority has the right to make decisions and power to impose the moral duty of the obedience on the citizens. Can democratically made decisions be so unjust that they undermine the legitimacy of democracy? The democratic assembly loses legitimacy when it disenfranchises some groups of people and violates their core liberal rights. As Christiano (2008: 275-276) claims, democratic assembly has authority only to the extent that it realizes the public equality, which can indicate where the limits of the democratic authority can be found. Christiano distinguishes between countervailing and undercutting limits of democratic authority. Countervailing considerations provide counter reasons for obeying democratic decisions, overriding them in some cases, but being outweighed by them in other cases. On the other hand, the undercutting considerations are not to be balanced against the weighty consideration for obeying the democratic decisions. It negates the considerations that justify democratic authority. This is why the authority of the democratic assembly is undercut if it undermines the public equality (Christiano 2008:261-262). This is a problem of the tyranny of majority when unrestrained majority rule make unjust rules and pursuing their interest at the expense of minorities. According to Christiano, the case of majority tyranny involves the violation of the civil, political and economic rights of minority groups. The majority is aware of the mistreatment of minorities but does not take measures to end mistreatment or endorse this mistreatment. The majority treats the minorities in accordance with different standards like an inferior group of people and violates the legitimacy requirement of the equal consideration of the interests of the minorities within the political community (Christiano 2008:289-290). It is clearly evident that the case of majority tyranny is subject to the undercutting consideration against the democratic authority as was the case of Gamsakhurdia's government. The unequal treatment of the minority groups and the violation

of their basic rights undermine the capacity of the government to provide public equality and its being justified in holding political power.

The presidency of Gamsakhurdia (1991-1992) is best characterized as a period of flourishing extreme ethnic nationalism and a tyranny of the majority.⁵ Since the government of Gamsakhurdia started the state-building process coined with the motto “Georgia for Georgians” by excluding minorities from it, national minorities were not able to participate in the shaping of state institutions and became marginalized within Georgia. The ethnic minorities were treated as an inferior group and perceived as an assault on the Georgian language and culture in the public statements of the political leaders by referring to them as “guests” or “traitors”. Despite the fact that government of Gamsakhurdia did not adopt any laws that actually discriminate against the national minorities, Gamsakhurdia’s intolerant ethnocentric discourse led to the emigration of minorities from Georgia.⁶ At the same time, ethnic minorities were forced out from the villages of Kvemo-Kartli region, which is compactly settled by Azerbaijanis who were replaced with ethnic Georgians from the Western part of Georgia to settle there.⁷ The public educational system discriminated between ethnic Georgian and non-Georgian students based on their Georgian language skills. The segregation of students into ethnic ‘Georgian’ and ‘Non-Georgian’ created more language barriers for non-Georgian students who have to learn the language.⁸ It is clearly evident that Gamsakhurdia’s government undermined its own legitimacy by actively discriminating against minorities.

The second contested issue is the problem of persistent minorities who suffer from alienation within the political process. This can occur even if the majority tries to treat the

⁵See in the third chapter

⁶Amirejibi-Mullen 2011, 301-302

⁷Korth, B., A. Stepanian, & M. Muskhelishvili 2005, 17

⁸ Seiler et al. "The Decline of the Russian Language in Georgia" (2012), <http://www.usrccne.org/news2.phtml?m=520> (accessed June 30, 2013).

minority fairly but the norms by which the majority treats the minorities may be alien to the minorities. As Christiano claims the existence of persistent minorities in democratic decision-making process implies that democratic assembly fails to satisfy public equality fully (Christiano 2008:290-292).

The majority-minority relations can be seen as a problem of persistent minorities under the government of Shevardnadze, which is characterized by the approach of benign neglect towards the minority language groups that led to the alienation of Armenian and Azeri minorities from the political process. Since the top-down language policies of the government of Shevardnadze gave rise to countervailing considerations against the legitimacy of the government, the adopted laws did not have any practical implications for the minorities' duty to obey the government. Since 1988, the popular movement "Javakhk" began advocating greater autonomy for Javakheti. However, Shevardnadze's government diffused a protest of popular movements by aligning with its leaders and offering higher positions in the government or economic incentives.⁹

By contrast, the top-down language policies under the government of Saakashvili cannot be considered either the problem of the tyranny of the majority or the persistent minority. Nevertheless, the adherence to the best practices and standards for promoting the linguistic diversity in Georgia, the incomplete educational reforms and lack of full access to information might give rise to countervailing considerations among minorities against the legitimacy of Saakashvili's government.

⁹Interview with Abashidze, Zviad. Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Tbilisi State University. 2013. Tbilisi, Georgia, May 2.

1.2 Language Rights and Political Theory

It seems plausible to conceptualize the puzzle of the best practices and standards for equal advancement of the interests of the Armenian and Azeri minority language groups in Georgia through Kymlicka's perception of language rights and language policies.

Kymlicka and Patten's (2003) introduction of "*Language Rights and Political Theory*" identifies linguistic diversity as a major causal component of the ethno political conflict that arose in the former Soviet republics of Eastern Europe after the collapse of communism in 1989 (Kymlicka and Patten 2003:3). The linguistic diversity was one of the major obstacles to building a common identity and institutions in Eastern European countries.

As was the case with Georgia, the Georgian language played a crucial role in the nation-building project as a necessary tool of the ethnic mobilization and symbol of the common Georgian identity. However, the problem of the accommodation of linguistic diversity and exclusion of national minorities from the state-building process was a major obstacle for the formation of a common identity among citizens of Georgia.

After the emergence of the ethno-political conflict in post-soviet space, Western academia started developing the field of ethnic relations and appropriate standards for how well liberal democracy can resolve this issue. These standards are enshrined in the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992), its framework convention for the protection of National Minorities (1995) and Organization for Security and Cooperation Oslo recommendation on Linguistic Rights of National Minorities (1989). The adherence to these minimum standards and best practices regarding linguistic diversity was one of the necessary preconditions for the integration of Eastern European states into Euro-Atlantic structures (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 3-4).

Kymlicka' and Patten' argumentation concerning the factors for adherence to international agreements and best practice regulating minority rights by Eastern European states seems similar in the case of Georgia. It is clearly evident that the governments of Georgia started joining the international agreements regulating minority rights in order to prove the democratic qualities of the regime as well as the ambition of Euro-Atlantic integration.¹⁰

Kymlicka and Patten further discuss how Western democracies accommodated the claims of minority groups by granting co-equal status to the regional language along with the dominant majority language or the status of the only official language within the region by setting up public institutions, courts, media, local government in minority languages (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 4). This is deemed as the best practice and minimum standard for dealing with regional language groups. However, the best practices of granting minority languages the status of regional language have practical implications for minority groups. The regional language groups see themselves as national groups focusing on having their distinct language and forming a distinct nation within a state in both East and West. They mobilize behind political parties with the nationalistic goals of self-government. As Kymlicka and Patten argue, multilingualism is what the majority tries to avoid, due to the fact that acceptance of the regional language groups have far-reaching consequences, which involves claims not only for the protection of regional language and culture but a claim to self-determination over territory, sometimes even its secession. This is why Western countries until recently abstained from granting official status to regional languages (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 4).

¹⁰Interview with Gogenia, Lela. Head of the International Organizations Department at the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Georgia.2013. Tbilisi Georgia. May 1.

When I asked my respondents about the main obstacle for the ratification of the "European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages" (ECRML), most of them answered that granting regional status to the minority language groups would expand their demands for self-government and autonomy. This is why the government of Shevardnadze abstained from granting official status to regional languages by focusing on the non-autochthonous status of minority languages, despite the fact they had lived on the territories of Georgia for centuries. As a result, the Armenian and Azeri languages were accorded the status of "non-state" languages and classified as immigrant languages.

Kymlicka developed different argumentation with regard to immigrant groups. Since the immigrants know before joining a new society that they should learn the language of the majority in order to gain the citizenship and advance their interest, they are less likely to demand either territorial self-government or official language status (Kymlicka 2003:7). Kymlicka's arguments explain clearly why the government of Shevardnadze and Gamsakhurdia treated national minorities as immigrant groups in order to avoid the accommodation of their further demands for territorial self-government and official language status that gave rise to the countervailing considerations against the legitimacy of the government.

Kymlicka and Patten (2003: 13) claim that language plays an essential role in building civic identities. Linguistic homogenization has been used as an effective tool by the state to form civic identity among diverse societies. However, the linguistic homogenization might cause resistance where the historically concentrated minorities are deprived of their rights to maintain public institutions operating in their native language. Thus the policy of linguistic homogenization can lead to the dissatisfaction of minority groups.

Georgia's policy towards minorities in 1991-92 played a significant role in fostering ethnic mobilization among all minorities in the country. The Azeri and Armenian minorities

were referred as an “immigrants” and were marginalized during the presidencies of the Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze. This caused ethnic mobilization of a popular movement “Javakhk” against the state’s approaches towards minority language groups. They began advocating greater autonomy for Javakheti, in particular for the Armenian population.

Kymlicka claims that the language policy of public institutions, such as courts and legislatures and the public education system, have significant impacts on people’s access to public service and social rights. He poses the question whether public institutions should adopt the policy of “laissez fair” that implies non-interference and neutral language policy by allowing them to use their preferred language. Or should such institutions adopt the more prescriptive approach by insisting on knowledge of the particular language as a precondition for hiring or emending the use of the particular language in internal communication or record keeping? Furthermore, the concern is what languages they should operate in when they are serving the general public (Kymlicka and Patten 2003:13-20).

During the presidency of Saakashvili, the state employed a bilingual staff and interpreters in public institutions, such as courts, municipalities, and civil registration agencies in order to accommodate the people with limited Georgian proficiency. This is highly appreciated by the minority language groups.

The language policy of the public educational system is subject to public scrutiny. What the main language of instruction of public educational system should be and what additional language should be taught as a secondary language have significant impacts not only on the student’s language skills, but the ability of the linguistic groups to reproduce themselves over time (Kymlicka and Patten 2003:21). Kymlicka and Patten discuss the various options available to the educational policy-makers to deal with this issue, such as special immersion programs for pre-school children with limited proficiency of the official language as well as transitional bilingual educational programs. In the case of transitional

bilingualism, students take some subjects in their native language while they are simultaneously acquiring proficiency in the main language of instruction used in their educational system. The “bilingual bicultural maintenance programs” allow the use of both the majority and minority language in different parts of the curriculum, as is the case of the public school system in the United States. The third option is the establishment of the parallel school system that implies the teaching of the majority language as a secondary language for those students for whom it is not the medium of instruction (Kymlicka and Patten 2003:21-22).

Kymlicka’s and Patten’s argumentation concerning a language policy of a public education system and various options available to the educational policy-makers seems applicable to describe the education system under the government of Saakashvili. Recently, significant educational reforms have been implemented, such as the introduction of bilingual education, pre-school immersion programs and establishment of the parallel school system with the purpose of promoting the state language.

Kymlicka and Patten (2003:26) distinguish several categories of language rights, such as tolerance versus promotion-oriented rights, norm and accommodation versus official language right regime. According to Heinz Kloss (1917,1977), tolerance rights permit individuals to speak and use their preferred language at home, institutions of the civil society or workplace, free from governmental interference. In contrast to this, the promotion-oriented rights allow the public use of a particular language in courts, legislature, the public school system and other public services. Tolerance rights basically apply to the immigrant language groups who are not allowed to use their language in public institutions, while the national minority groups who lived for several generations within a state are granted both tolerance and promotion rights. Kymlicka and Patten (2003:28) further discuss other categories of language rights, such as “the norm-and-accommodation approach”, which

implies the predominance of the particular language used in public institutions. However, the special accommodations are made for citizens with limited proficiency of the majority language, such as interpreters, bilingual staff in public institutions, special transitional bilingual or intensive educational programs to promote the effective acquisition of Georgian. In contrast, the official language rights approach grants a number of languages equal status to the official language used in public institution. This allows conducting public business and keeping any records, laws, and other documents in all the official languages. The official languages approach has a non-instrumental and intrinsic value and the goal of the recognition of speakers of these languages as a distinct nation. However, in reality no state grants official status to every spoken language on its territory (Kymlicka and Patten 2003:29).

It is clearly evident that the government of Gamsakhurdia's top-down language policies cannot be placed within the above-mentioned categories, since the minority language groups had not been granted either the promotion-oriented rights to use their language in public institutions, or the special accommodations for overcoming language barriers. In contrast, the top-down language policies of Shevardnadze can be categorized both as tolerance and promotion-oriented rights. The minority language groups were allowed to use their language in both private and public life without interference from the government. By contrast, the government of Saakashvili took both a tolerance and a norm-accommodation approach by providing special accommodations for minorities with limited proficiency of the majority language, such as hiring interpreters, special transitional bilingual or intensive educational programs to promote the effective acquisition of Georgian.

There is still a controversial debate over the promotion of linguistic integration and linguistic diversity in academia. Some scholars support the idea that language policy should promote linguistic assimilation in a way to ensure the single common language within the territory. The linguistic convergence is deemed to achieve national unity, social cohesion,

and the equality of opportunity. However, other scholars support the promotion of linguistic diversity due its instrumental value of preservation of ecological diversity and the rights of a weak language (Kymlicka and Patten 2003:30). The other arguments in favor of the promotion of linguistic diversity have an intrinsic value as well, which is perceived as a symbol of identity and expresses equal respect to all (Kymlicka and Patten 2003:45).

Kymlicka and Patten (2003:42) claim that the nation-building approach of promoting a common official language seems hostile to the preservation of the minority languages. To many people a linguistic integration policy is associated with marginalization and disappearance of their own language. Patten suggests the argument in favor of the preservation of the language is based on the distinction between language groups who have no access to their social culture in their own language and those who have this opportunity. The latter is the case of language groups who form the national minorities within a state while in the former case the nation-building approach based on the arguments of providing equal opportunities seems more applicable (Kymlicka and Patten 2003:46). Patten suggests that there is also the intermediate case when the linguistic minorities have access to their social culture in their own language but they are at risk of losing this access due to the language domain shift to the majority language. This causes a number of problems for linguistic minorities who are not fluent in the majority language. The aggressive nation-building policy seems a solution of this problem, which ensures that everyone will be fluent in the majority language. However, this solution does not seem applicable to the cases where the nationalist dynamics of interplay between language and politics takes place. The public policy, which aims to struggle against the marginalization of the minority language, may have more chance of success than the policy of promoting the majority language (Kymlicka and Patten 2003:46).

Patten's argumentation precisely describes the top-down language policy of the government of Saakashvili and its bottom up reactions. Despite the fact that minority language groups welcome the implemented reforms related to the promotion of Georgian of my respondent's major concern is that the dominant status of the majority language in the public and educational institutions of Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli, where minorities form the majority of population.

Because of the country's past experience of ethnic cleavages and claims of minority language groups for territorial autonomy influences the prevailing perception of the majority groups, it seems problematic to grant Armenian and Azeri languages the status of regional languages in Georgia. As the theoretical debate of Kymlicka and Patten indicates, the complete "laissez fair policy" on linguistic issues does not seem a plausible solution to accommodate linguistic diversity in Georgia. I argue that the top-down language policies of the governments of Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze led to the marginalization of the minority language groups. By contrast, the government of Saakashvili took a policy of civil integration along with the "norm-accommodation approach" for minorities who have limited knowledge of Georgian. The politics of civil integration aims to avoid the marginalization of the minorities through the promotion of the state language along with the preservation of their native language. Since their limited knowledge of Georgian appears to be the major obstacle for the Armenian and Azeri minorities to be fully informed about the social and political life of the country, this prevents them from equally participating in the governance of the country, the promotion of Georgian seems the best solution for providing public equality in Georgia. My main argument is that the government of Georgia should not take a 'hands-off approach' and a benign neglect policy of ignorance in dealing with linguistic diversity that leads to the marginalization of the minority languages and undermines the effectiveness of the government to provide public equality. The normative justification for the claims of the

legitimacy of the government coheres with its effectiveness to provide public equality and advance the interest of its citizens equally. This is why the government should accommodate the linguistic diversity by reflecting the bottom- up reactions of minority languages in the top-down language policies in order to advance their interests equally. Furthermore, the government should adopt the best standards for the preservation of minority languages and the promotion of linguistic diversity by ratifying the “European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages” (ECRML).

CHAPTER 2. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TOP-DOWN LANGUAGE POLICIES UNDER THE GOVERNMENT OF GAMSAKHURDIA, SHEVARDNADZE AND SAAKASHVILI

In the second chapter I will compare the language policies of the different governments of Georgia in the period between 1991-2012. Furthermore, I will explore within- case variance on how the state's language policies changed towards its largest Azeri and Armenian minorities under the governments of Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili. Furthermore, I will examine the significant legislative, educational and other linguistic reforms that were implemented under the different regimes in the period between 1991-2012, and its implications for the Azeri and Armenian minorities of Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli. After this I will discuss the similarities and differences between the top-down language policies of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili.

Furthermore, I will draw the normative implications from the evaluation of the language policies within the given theoretical framework of the legitimacy of the democratic authority and language rights of minorities.

2.1 Top-down language policy under the government of Zviad Gamsakhurdia 1991-1992

Georgia gained independence on April 9, 1991, before the collapse of the Soviet Union and Zviad Gamsakhurdia was elected as the first President of independent Georgia in the same year. In the Soviet period Russian and Georgian had equal status as official languages. Since the threat of "Russification" implies a process of linguistic and cultural assimilation, which was highly visible in Soviet Georgia, the preservation of Georgian became a major concern for the newly elected government of Gamsakhurdia. After Georgia

became an independent country, Russian lost its status as an official language, but it still remained a major means of communication between ethnic Georgians and other ethnic groups. At that time the Armenian and Azeri minorities either preferred to receive education in Russian or attend the Armenian and Azerbaijani schools.¹¹ The government of Gamsakhurdia started to develop linguistic and ethnic nationalism by referring to the Georgian language as a symbol of common identity. The language policy of the government of Georgia in 1991-1992 had instrumental value for developing linguistic nationalism as a response to the process of “Russification”.¹² Ethnic nationalism, with the emphasis on ethnicity as a constitutive element of the nation, was developed during the presidency of Gamsakhurdia as a uniting force in Georgia. The Georgian language and the Georgian Church played a significant role in Gamsakhurdia’s state-building process as necessary conditions for the moral, religious and linguistic rebirth of an old collective identity. Gamsakhurdia assumed the Georgian Orthodox Church and the Georgian language as a sacred language known as “*lingua sacra*” and unifier of the Georgian nation. Georgian gained the status of an official language, which should be mandatory for all who used to live in Georgia, despite the fact that national minorities, who lived on the territory of Georgia, did not speak Georgian, which was not the language of inter-ethnic communication during Soviet times. The xenophobic articles and speeches of members of Gamsakhurdia’s government led to the alienation of minorities, who were called to learn Georgian or emigrate. Guram Petriashvili, who was a member of the Supreme Council of Georgia argued that only books written by Georgian authors should be published in order to “return Georgia to Georgians” (Tavisupali sakartvelo, 1991, 19 August).¹³ The slogan of Gamsakhurdia’s election campaign was “Georgia for the Georgians”. The ethnic minorities were referred to as “guests” and

¹¹Interview with karapetiani, Narcis . Head of the Educational Resource Center of Akhalkalaki.2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia . April 25.

¹²Interview with Abashidze, Zviad . Associate Professor, Department of Political Science , Tbilisi State University. 2013. Tbilisi, Georgia, May 2.

¹³Amirejibi-Mullen 2011, 301-303

“traitors”.¹⁴ The nationalistic discourse of the government and the discriminatory statements directed towards national minorities pushed them to leave. This resulted in massive emigration from Georgia. According to the most recent official data of the 2002 census, the number of Azeri and Armenian minorities significantly decreased during 1991-2002 (see appendix 1). At the same time, ethnic minorities were forced out of villages in the Kvemo-Kartli region, where Azeris formed a majority and replaced with ethnic Georgians from western Georgia.¹⁵ Gamsakhurdia's election campaign “Georgia for Georgians, therefore “caused the resentment of the Armenian and Azeri minorities. The public educational system discriminated between ethnic students based on their Georgian language skills. The segregation of students into ethnic ‘Georgian’ and ‘Non-Georgian’ created more language barriers for non-Georgian students who had to learn Georgian.¹⁶ As Christiano (2008) argues, the unequal treatment of the minority groups and the violation of their basic rights can undermine the legitimacy of the government to exercise power and impose a moral duty of obedience on its citizens. The presidency of Gamsakhurdia (1991-1992) is best characterized as a period of flourishing extreme ethnic nationalism and a tyranny of the majority, since the Armenian and Azeri minorities were deprived of their basic rights and equal opportunities to participate in the state-building projects, segregated in public schools, referred to as “guests” and expelled from their villages. Gamsakhurdia’s intolerant ethnocentric discourse led to the migration of minorities from Georgia. It is evident that the government of Gamsakhurdia undermined its own legitimacy by discriminating against minorities. The bottom-up reaction

¹⁴Interview with Metreveli, Eka. Researcher, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS). 2013. Tbilisi, Georgia. May 1.

¹⁵Korth, B., A. Stepanian, & M. Muskhelishvili 2005, 17

¹⁶Seiler et al. "The Decline of the Russian Language in Georgia" (2012), <http://www.usrccne.org/news2.phtml?m=520> (accessed June 30, 2013).

of Azeri and Armenian minorities to Gamsakhurdia's language policy still remains extremely negative.¹⁷

2.2 Top-down language policy under the government of Eduard Shevardnadze 1992-2003

Georgia's policies towards minorities in 1990-92 played a significant role in fostering ethnic mobilization for promotion of their own nation-building projects among all minorities within Georgia. It resulted in ethnic tensions in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and their secession from Georgia between 1992-1993. In the same year, the civil war started, which resulted in the overthrow of Gamsakhurdia. After this civil war, Eduard Shevardnadze came to power in 1992. During Shevardnadze's rule, the first Constitution of Georgia was adopted in 1995. According to Article 8 of the Constitution of Georgia of 1995, "The state language of Georgia shall be Georgian, and in Abkhazia also Abkhazian". However, Article 8 did not have any practical implications for Samtskhe–Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli, inhabited by mainly Armenians and Azerbaijanis. The government was not able to implement this article due to the fact that Russian still dominated as a bridge language, the so called "*lingua franca*" between Georgians and minorities.

Under Shevardnadze, the Georgian Law on Education was adopted in 1997 granting the right to minorities to receive education in their native languages. It was similar to the Soviet practices of running schools in minority languages, which had significant side effects, such as ethnic and linguistic segregation that became one of the major obstacles for the implementation of successful civil integration policy of ethnic minorities. There were 239

¹⁷See in the third chapter

Russian schools, 153 Armenian schools and 149 Azeri schools in Georgia by the end of Shevardnadze's presidency.¹⁸

The teaching of Georgian was mandatory in minority schools according to the Law on Education of 1997. The state was responsible for the implementation of this law; however the government of Georgia had a careless attitude towards its national minorities. The teachers of Georgian were not paid, which is why standards were low and this discouraged new teachers coming into the field. The poor knowledge of Georgian and the high level of corruption within the education system encouraged Armenians and Azeris to further their education abroad, particularly in their kin states of Armenia and Azerbaijan.¹⁹ The Law on Public Office was adopted in 1998, which stated that the requirement of the legislation is that fluency in Georgian is mandatory for hiring employees in the public sector.²⁰ Despite the requirements of this legislation, the local ethnic political elites had poor knowledge of Georgian, who kept their positions by providing support for the government of Shevardnadze during the elections.²¹ Thus the law was not enforced and Georgian knowledge decreased in the regions of Samtskhe–Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli. Since public education did not provide them with a proper language education, the minorities lost motivation to learn Georgian.

The requirements of this legislation became contested issues for Armenian and Azeri minorities who assumed the learning of Georgian language as a tool of their assimilation. As Kymlicka and Patten (2003:13) argue, linguistic homogenization might cause resistance where the historically concentrated minorities are deprived of their rights to maintain public institutions operating in their native language. Thus the policy of linguistic homogenization

¹⁸ Amirejibi-Mullen 2011, 272-274

¹⁹ Interview with karapetiani, Narcis . Head of the Educational Resource Center of Akhalkalaki.2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia . April 25.

²⁰ Amirejibi-Mullen 2011, 274

²¹ Interview with Abashidze, Zviad . Associate Professor, Department of Political Science , Tbilisi State University. 2013. Tbilisi, Georgia, May 2.

led to the dissatisfaction of the Armenian and Azeri minorities who had a limited knowledge Georgian.

Another legislative reform initiated by the government of Shevardnadze was the adoption of the law on advertising in 1998 dealing with the use of languages and alphabets used for inscriptions on billboards. Article 4 of this Law stipulates that all types of advertisement should be dispersed in the state language throughout the territory of Georgia. The practical implication of this law was the replacing of Russian signs in Tbilisi. However, the Russian signboards and advertisements still persisted in the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli. This law was perceived as discriminatory by the Armenian and Azeri minorities.²²

The official status of Georgian was the concern of other laws such as the Organic Law on the Common Courts of Georgia, which was adopted in 1997, the Administrative Code adopted in 1999 and the Organic Election Code adopted in 2001. According to Article 10 of the Organic Law on Common Courts, any individual in court proceedings who was not fluent in Georgian should be provided with an interpreter by the state. The Administrative Code stipulates that any documentation or statement of an applicant presented not in Georgian requires a notarized translation into Georgian and related expenses should be covered by the applicant'. According to the amendments made to the Organic Election Code in 2003, Article 51 stipulates "a ballot paper shall be printed in Georgian and in Abkhazia, in Abkhazian, and if necessary, in any other language understandable to the local population". At the same time Article 92.1 of this code stipulates that those who are elected as officials should be proficient in Georgian.²³ By the end of Shevardnadze's presidency 2003, the Chamber of the State Language drafted a language law, which was not ratified by the parliament. Article 11 of this law required knowledge of Georgian as compulsory for every citizen of Georgia. In the first

²²Korth, B., A. Stepanian, & M. Muskhelishvili 2005, 25

²³ Amirejibi-Mullen 2011, 274 -275

version of this law all languages other than Georgian were referred to as “foreign” and this terminology became a contested issue, which granted the minority languages the status of foreign languages and simultaneously perceived minorities as foreigners or immigrants. Then the term “foreign” was changed to “non-state language” in the second draft of this law. As a result the Armenian and Azeri languages were accorded the status of “non-state” languages and classified as “immigrant” languages. Elene Tevdoradze, head of the Parliamentary Committee on Civic Education and Human Rights argued that only Abkhazian may be recognized as a second state language in the territory of Abkhazia, because it is an autochthonous language. However, she claimed that the Armenian and Azeri languages could not be given the status of autochthonous languages despite the fact that those minorities had lived on the territories of Georgia for centuries. It seems that their strong ties with their kin states Armenia and Azerbaijan fostered their perception as immigrants.²⁴

As Kymlicka (2003:7) highlights, in contrast to immigrant groups, national minorities are less likely to demand either territorial self-government or official language status. Kymlicka’s arguments explain clearly why the government of Shevardnadze and Gamsakhurdia treated national minorities as immigrant groups that discriminated against the Armenian and Azeri minorities by denying the fact that they are historical minorities as well as being hindered in advancing their interests.

To summarize, under Shevardnadze linguistic minorities were excluded from participation in the state-building process and their knowledge of Georgian was poor as was the case under Gamsakhurdia. The main difference between the approaches of Gamsakhurdia’s and Shevardnadze’s government is that the former focused on the ethnic nation and the latter employed the strategy of civic nation–building. As Kymlicka (2000:24) argues, the main goal of the ethnic nation is the reproduction of a particular ethno-national

²⁴B. Korth, A. Stepanian, & M. Muskhelishvili 2005, 25-26

culture and identity. By contrast, the civic nation endorses the neutral policy with regard to the ethno-cultural identities. The majority-minority relations can be seen as a problem of persistent minorities under Shevardnadze's government, which was characterized by the approach of benign neglect that led to the alienation of national minorities from the political process. Since the Armenian and Azeri minorities had countervailing considerations against the government of Shevardnadze, the adopted laws did not have any practical implications for the minorities' duty to obey the government. The top-down language policies of the government of Shevardnadze gave rise to countervailing considerations against the legitimacy of his government and ethnic mobilization of a popular movement "Javakhs" against the state's approach to minorities. They began advocating greater autonomy for Javakheti. However, Shevardnadze's government defused the protests by aligning with its leaders and offering political appointments or economic incentives²⁵. The language policies under Shevardnadze can be described as "don't wake the sleeping dogs".²⁶

2.3 Top-down language policy After the Rose Revolution under the government of Mikheil Saakashvili 2003-2012

In November 2003, mass demonstrations started against the regime of Shevardnadze who was accused of election fraud which led to his resignation. It has been called the "Rose Revolution", after which Mikheil Saakashvili came to power. After the Rose Revolution, Saakashvili started the elaboration and implementation of an aggressive policy of integration of ethnic minorities by promoting Georgian in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli. However, the minorities did not see any benefits from learning Georgian due to the political legacy of Shevardnadze's presidency, when the language barriers did not create major

²⁵Interview with Abashidze, Zviad . Associate Professor, Department of Political Science , Tbilisi State University. 2013. Tbilisi, Georgia, May 2.

²⁶Interview with Metreveli, Eka. Researcher, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS). 2013. Tbilisi, Georgia. May 1.

obstacles for Armenian and Azeri minorities to hold public office.²⁷ Saakashvili always focused on the significance of the knowledge of Georgian language for the full integration of minorities within Georgia: “Your children should learn the state language so that they have equal possibilities and equal rights to be promoted in the hierarchy of state structures,” Saakashvili said during meetings with the representatives of Azeri minorities in Marneuli.²⁸

As Kymlicka and Patten(2003:42-46) argue, the nation-building approach of promoting a common official language aims to provide equal opportunities for linguistic minorities within a state. Since the linguistic minorities have access to their social culture in their own language, they are at risk of losing this access due to the language domain shift to the majority language, this causes a number of problems for linguistic minorities who are not fluent in the majority language. The nation-building policy appears as a solution for this problem, which ensures that everyone will be fluent in the majority language. The case of the persistent minorities emerged from the benign neglect policy of ignorance of issues related to minority languages that led the marginalization of minorities under Shevardnadze. However, Saakashvili’ polices of civil integration aimed at promoting Georgian and struggle against the marginalization of the minority languages. Furthermore, the adherence to the best practices for the preservation of the minority language seems an optimal solution to accommodate the linguistic diversities in Georgia.

2.3.1 The Legislative Reforms

During the presidency of Saakashvili several amendments were made in the legislation dealing with linguistic and other rights of its national minorities. The government adopted several laws regulating the use of language such as the Law on Higher Education (2004), the Law on Broadcasting (2004), the Law on General Education (2005) and the Law on Self-

²⁷Ibid

²⁸Saakashvili stresses importance of knowledge of official language’, civil.ge, 21 March, 2006.
<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=12136>

Government (2005). Article 4 of the Law on Higher Education stipulates that ‘the language of instruction in higher educational institutions is Georgian, in Abkhazia – also Abkhazian’ and Article 89 states that the national examinations should be held in Georgian language and literature, foreign languages, general abilities and mathematics, Article 4.3 of the Law on General Education states that ‘citizens of Georgia whose native language is not Georgian have the right to receive complete general education in their native language.’ However, Articles 5 and 58 stipulate that minority schools must follow the new national curriculum, which requires that all social sciences be taught in Georgian by 2010-2011 academic years.²⁹

At the time these articles produced dissatisfaction on the part of ethnic minorities that were not proficient in Georgian during the period of examination.³⁰ The government tried to solve the problem by offering simplified exams in Georgian, for those who were applying to Russian-language faculties. However, the Armenian and Azeri minorities still faced difficulties to pass the simplified exams in Georgian language and literature. This led the government to allow students from non-Georgian schools to pass the national examination in Russian. Most of the Armenian and Azeri students welcomed the amendments made to the Law of Georgia on General Education in 2009.³¹ According to the amendments, the rule for passing the unified national exams by Azerbaijani and Armenian-speaking school graduates was simplified by letting them pass only an exam in the general skills within the framework of the program 1+4. As a result, the access of ethnic minorities to higher education was significantly improved. According to the statistical data of the national examination center, in 2005, 11 Azerbaijani speaking and 10 Armenian-speaking citizens passed the entry threshold. The number of admitted Azerbaijani speaking students increased to 185, Armenian-speaking

²⁹ Amirejibi-Mullen 2011, 279-281.

³⁰ See in the third chapter.

³¹ Ibid

students to 128 in 2010 and two years later the number of admitted students increased again, with 390 Azerbaijani and 200 Armenian students passing(see appendix 2).

During the presidency of Saakashvili, the government ratified the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) on 22 December 2005. Articles 10, 11, 12,13 of this convention stipulate that “every person belonging to a national minority has the right to use freely and without interference his or her minority language, in private and in public, orally and in writing”³² and the state should recognize the rights of national minorities to use their minority language signs, inscriptions and the “state should provide equal opportunities for access to education at all levels for persons belonging to national minorities and recognize the rights to set up their own educational system.”³³

Since 2011, the national legislation and international agreements dealing with the protection mechanisms of minority language groups have been translated into the minority languages. The government made a significant effort to raise the awareness among Armenian and Azeri minorities about the legal protection mechanism of minority groups.³⁴

Nevertheless, Georgia has not yet ratified the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. The charter promotes linguistic diversity and stresses the value of multilingualism. It aims to promote the protection of linguistic-cultural heritage of historical (autochthonous) minority. An inter-governmental working group was created in Georgia in order to define which language groups should be placed in this list of autochthonous minority. There is still an on-going debate over this question.³⁵

³²The Council of Europe. “The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities”. February, 1995.

[http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/1_AtGlance/PDF_H\(95\)10_FCNM_ExplanReport_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/1_AtGlance/PDF_H(95)10_FCNM_ExplanReport_en.pdf)

³³Ibid

³⁴Interview with Khvichia, Maka. Head of the Department of the Civil Integration at the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reintegration. 2013.Tbilisi, Georgia. May 2.

³⁵ Interview with Gogenia, Lela. Head of the International Organizations Department at the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Georgia.2013. Tbilisi Georgia. May 1.

In the third chapter, I will discuss the implications of the adoption of the above-mentioned legislative acts by focusing on the bottom-up reactions of members of the Azeri and Armenian minorities.

2.3.2 Educational Reforms and Promotion of the state language

In 2008, Saakashvili made a statement that poor knowledge of Georgian should not be an obstacle for anyone wishing to pursue higher education in Georgia and minorities were granted the right to pass the unified national exams in Armenian and Azeri (*Georgian Times*, 2008, 25 February).³⁶ Since 2004 the main goal of the implemented educational reforms was to increase the motivation of ethnic minorities to learn Georgian. The government started to promote Georgian actively as a part of the implementation of the objectives of the Action Plan for Tolerance and Civic Education, which was ratified by parliament on May 8, 2009. The Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reintegration was established on January 24, 2008 by Presidential Decree No. 33, which coordinates the activities of other responsible state institutions for the implementation of the Action Plan of the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration. The implementation of the action plan was launched in 2009 aimed at improving the quality of preschool education, teaching Georgian as a second language in minority schools, promoting minority languages as a value of the country, ensuring access of minorities to higher education, promoting the employment of ethnic minorities through vocational education. The Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reintegration has two representatives who are responsible for informing the central authority

³⁶Amirejibi-Mullen 2011, 280

about the concerns of the Armenian and Azeri national minorities in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli.³⁷

During the presidency of Saakashvili, “Georgian Language Houses” were established in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli. The Georgian Language Houses are being coordinated by Zurab Jvania School of Public Administration, which aims to implement professional-educational programs for public officials of ethnic minorities working in government. The interviewed minorities welcomed the establishment of the language houses and Zurab Jvania School of Public Administration has increased their access to intensive studies of the Georgian language irrespective of their age.³⁸

2.3.2.1 Pre-School Education

According to the first annual report on the implementation of the Action Plan of the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration, the Ministry of Education played a significant role in the implementation of the objectives set up in the action plan related to education and the state language. Since 2009 the Education Minister implemented the subprogram “Enhancement of the Georgian Language Teaching and Learning at Pre-School Level in Regions Populated by Minority Communities”. This program aims at improving the Georgian language skills among children by providing Georgian language programs for pre-school students. Six pre-school centers have been established in public schools of Kvemo-Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti.³⁹ Armenian and Azeri minorities endorsed the implementation of this program.⁴⁰

³⁷Interview with Khvichia, Maka. Head of the Department of the Civil Integration at the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reintegration. 2013.Tbilisi, Georgia. May 2.

³⁸Interview with Tetvadze, Shorena . Director of the Language House of Akhalkalaki .2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia. April 26.

³⁹ Office the State Minister of Georgia for Reintegration. *Annual Report of Implementation of the National Concept and Action Plan for Tolerance and Civil Integration*. Tbilisi, Georgia . May – December,2009:6 <http://www.smr.gov.ge/docs/doc48.pdf>

⁴⁰See the bottom-up reactions in third chapter

2.3.2.2 Multilingual Education

In 2009 a ministerial decree approved the “Multilingual Instruction Support Program”. The program aims to promote multilingual education for all schools in Georgia. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) provided training for 40 pilot school principals, 30 staff-members of educational resource centers and 64 accreditation experts who trained approximately 400 teachers of 40 pilot schools in working out bilingual instruction programs and syllabuses conducting bilingual/multilingual classes.⁴¹ The introduction of bilingual education increased the number of hours for Georgian language teaching in non-Georgian schools, however problems still persisted due to a shortage of qualified teachers as instructors for the bilingual courses.⁴² Many of those interviewed, students and directors of non-Georgian schools, have a skeptical attitude towards bilingual education due to the limited number of qualified teachers.⁴³

2.3.2.3 Teacher training program

In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and the Teacher Professional Development Center started implementing the program “The Qualified Georgian Language School Teachers in Regions Densely Populated by Ethnic Minorities” that aims at selecting and sending highly professional teachers of Georgian Language and Literature into the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli regions. As a result, in 2009, 28 Georgian language

⁴¹ Office the State Minister of Georgia for Reintegration. *Annual Report of Implementation of the National Concept and Action Plan for Tolerance and Civil Integration*. Tbilisi, Georgia . May – December,2009.6-7 <http://www.smr.gov.ge/docs/doc48.pdf>

⁴² Interview with Jakheli, Tamar. Head of the Department of the National Curriculum in Social Science, Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia . 2013. Tbilisi, Georgia . May 3.

⁴³ See bottom up reactions in third chapter

teachers in Kvemo-Kartli and 17 teachers in Samtskhe-Javakheti were sent to teach in non-Georgian schools. ⁴⁴

Since June 2011, by way of the initiative of the president, a new project “Georgian Language for the Future Success” was launched. The program aims to send postgraduate students to regions that are mainly populated by minorities in order to teach them Georgian.⁴⁵ However, the successful implementation of the program “Georgian Language for Future Success” seems problematic for my respondents, due to the fact that postgraduate students who are sent as teaching assistants have not earned a major in Georgian language and lack the expertise to teach in Georgian. As a result, the incomplete educational reforms gave rise to countervailing reasons and objections against the effectiveness of Saakashvili’s government to provide equal opportunities in the public educational system.⁴⁶

2.3.3 Media Reforms

Besides the educational reforms, the government started implementation of activities in order to improve access to information in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli. Article 16 of the Law of Georgia on Public Broadcasting obliges the public broadcaster to broadcast in respective proportions of programs minority languages about the concerns of minorities and be prepared by minorities. The Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) produces a 15-minute news program “Moambe” in Armenian and Azerbaijani, which covers the on-going political, social and educational issues in Georgia. The news program “Moambe” is disseminated via different channels – Channel 1 (in the morning hours), by Channel 2 (in the evening hours) and through the regional TV “atv16”, “Marneuli TV”. In addition, the radio transmission of

⁴⁴ Office the State Minister of Georgia for Reintegration. *Annual Report of Implementation of the National Concept and Action Plan for Tolerance and Civil Integration*. Tbilisi, Georgia . May – December ,2009: 8 <http://www.smr.gov.ge/docs/doc48.pdf>

⁴⁵ Interview with Kekelidze, Tamar. Coordinator of the program “ Georgian Language for Future Success” , Ministry of the education and Science of Georgia.2013. Tbilisi, Georgia. May 3.

⁴⁶See the bottom up reactions in the third chapter

the public broadcaster airs the audio version of the “*National Moambe’s*” news program on “*First Radio*”.⁴⁷

Since 2009, a TV talk show “Italian Yard” is aired by the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) once a week. The project deals with issues related to the integration of minorities, teaching Georgian, healthcare, professional education and other issues. The audio version of the program is recorded and disseminated in the regions through the regional TV channels.⁴⁸

Since 2011, the Ministry of the Culture and Monument Protection started the promotion and distribution of print media, namely the Armenian-language newspaper “*Vrastani*” and the Azerbaijani-language newspaper “*Gurjistani*” with the purpose of raising awareness of the interests of the non-Georgian speaking population. However, full access to the information still remains as a problem for the Armenian and Azeri minorities. The news program is too short and insufficient for making ethnic minorities fully informed about on-going developments in the country.⁴⁹ Therefore, the minorities receive information from each other about on-going events in Georgia. Thus, the system for the provision of information to national minorities requires further improvement.

It is evident that the government fails to provide full access to information in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli. The deficiencies in the information flow prevent minorities from equally participating in the governance of the state as well as holding the majority accountable which gives rise to countervailing considerations against the effectiveness of the government in providing public equality.

⁴⁷ Office the State Minister of Georgia for Reintegration. *Report of Implementation of the National Concept and Action Plan for Tolerance and Civil Integration*. May-December. 2011. 16-17
<http://www.smr.gov.ge/docs/doc160.pdf>

⁴⁸ Interview with Dvali, Zurab. Producer of the programs in national minority languages, TV channel I. 2013. Tbilisi, Georgia . May 2.

⁴⁹ Interview with Agdgomeladze , Dali. Coordinator, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS) Akhalkalaki Branch.2013. April 23.

Overall, according to the assessment of interviewed experts, there is a large within-case variance in the language policies under the governments of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili. During the short term presidency of Gamsakhurdia, the language policy of the government primarily focused on building a commonly shared Georgian identity of “us” and “others”. His tenure was distinguished by its radical ethno-nationalistic state-building approaches and exclusion of national minorities from this process. As a result, minorities were marginalized and alienated from the state-building process.

The language policies of Shevardnadze were more cautious by employing the strategy of accommodating radical national minority groups like “Javakh” who strove for regional autonomy. After the Rose Revolution of 2003, Mikheil Saakashvili started the implementation of the civil integration policy through promotion of Georgian as well as providing support for minority languages in Samtskhe–Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli. Most of those interviewed welcome the implemented reforms during the presidency of Saakashvili compared the top-down language policies implemented by the Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze regimes. However, full access to information and incomplete educational reforms still remain a problem, which undermines the effectiveness of the government to provide the public equal access.

I will discuss the implications of all of the above-mentioned reforms in the third chapter according to the perceptions of the interviewed Azeri and Armenian minorities.

CHAPTER 3. BOTTOM-UP REACTIONS TO THE TOP-DOWN LANGUAGE POLICIES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF GEORGIA BETWEEN 1991-2012

This chapter discusses the bottom-up reactions of the Armenian and Azeri minorities to the top-down language policies of the governments of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili. I conducted in-depth interviews, asking eighteen questions that lasted for one hour on average in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli, where the Armenian and Azeri minorities form the majority of the population. I interviewed 25 members of the Armenian population and 20 members of the Azeri community whose ages varied from 10 to 72. The social status of my respondents can be classified as high school students, undergraduate students, teachers, directors of non-Georgian schools, head of municipalities, employees of the public service, doctors, maids, and housewives. The interviews led to several interesting observations about how the bottom-up reactions of the Armenian and Azeri minorities co-varied with regard to the language policies implemented before and after the Rose Revolution of 2003.

3.1 Within case–variance in the top-down language policies of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili

When I asked the representatives of the Armenian and Azeri minorities to compare the language policies of the governments of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili, most of my respondents expressed an extremely negative attitude towards the language policies of Gamsakhurdia. They had a more positive attitude towards Shevardnadze and most of them welcomed the linguistic reforms implemented by the government of Saakashvili.

Most of those interviewed described the period of Gamsakhurdia's presidency (1991-1992) as a resurgence of ethnic nationalism and exclusion of ethnic minorities from the

process of state building. Both Armenian and Azeri minorities agreed that Shevardnadze's government did not reveal any hatred towards them, as was the case with Gamsakhurdia. *"Gamsakhurdia's government revealed the very negative attitude towards Armenian and Azeri minorities refereeing to us as "guests".*⁵⁰ *"I can only describe the policy of Gamsakhurdia in negative terms such as a policy of discrimination directed against minorities. We were deprived of our property rights and expelled from the villages of Kvemo-Kartli by the government of Gamsakhurdia".*⁵¹ However, while not being actively discriminated against, the Armenian and Azeri minorities were isolated from the political and public life of the country during the presidency of Shevardnadze. At this time the minority languages along with Russian were used as working languages of public and educational institutions in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli. The legislation adopted by the government of Shevardnadze regulating the use of Georgian did not have any practical implications for the minorities' duty to obey these laws.

The situation changed after the Rose Revolution. The government of Saakashvili started the implementation of civil integration policies, which was welcomed by most of my respondents: *"after the Rose Revolution, the government of Saakashvili started the implementation of a civil integration policy and paid more attention to the Armenian and Azeri national minorities."*⁵² Like Ruben's response, Avtandili's statement illustrates a very negative attitude towards the language policies of Gamsakhurdia. However, both respondents expressed their positive attitude towards Shevardnadze's government and its policies, due to the fact that they did not feel any oppression and interference from the government in their private and public life. *"However, during the presidency of Shevardnadze I felt more secure and stable. I express my full support for the integration policy initiated by the government of*

⁵⁰Interview with Gorgorian, Ruben. Ethnic Armenian, 72 years old, Veterinary. 2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia, April 23.

⁵¹Interview with Gasanov, Avtandil. Ethnic Azeri, 62 years old, taxi driver. 2013. Marneuli Georgia. May 6.

⁵²Ruben

Saakashvili.”⁵³ Both Ruben and Avtandil expressed their support for the civil integration policies, however they identified full access to information as a problematic issue in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli.

There is a widely shared perception among the older generation of those Armenian and Azeri minorities that co-varies together with regard to the language policies of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili. All of the interviewed respondents identified a large within- case variance between the top-down languages policies in the period between 1991-2012.

3.2 Importance of the state language knowledge and reflections on the recent educational reforms

The interviews led to several interesting observations on how the perceptions of the Armenian and Azeri minorities to the top-down language policies are shaped by the morally prescriptive perception of “being a citizen of Georgia”. Every citizen of Georgia must know the state language.

When I asked older respondents about the language policy of Saakashvili’s government, they assessed positively the educational reforms initiated by his government such as free Georgian language courses for national minorities. As Ruben said, he used to attend Georgian language classes offered by the center for Adult education in 2011. Their perception of “being a citizen of Georgia” is strongly tied with the moral obligation of learning the state language. Both respondents consider themselves citizens of Georgia despite the fact that they do not speak Georgian fluently.

⁵³Ibid

A similar perception of strong correlation between “being a citizen of Georgia” and “knowledge of the state language” prevails among the new generation of Azeri and Armenian minorities. Most students claim that they endorse the statement of Saakashvili that they should learn Georgian in order to have equal possibilities to be promoted in the hierarchy of state structures. *“My perception of being a citizen of Georgia” and “living in Georgia” coined with the practical implication of the teaching of Georgian encouraged me to apply for the program of Georgian language and Literature at the undergraduate level. I feel that we are obliged to learn the state language due to the fact that we have lived in Georgia for centuries.”*⁵⁴ The Azeri students revealed similar attitudes by focusing on the strong connection between their citizenship of Georgia and knowledge of Georgian. “It is necessary for those who live in Georgia to speak Georgian fluently, I fully agree with the statement of President Saakashvili that we should learn Georgian in order to have an equal opportunity to work in the governmental agencies of Georgia.”⁵⁵ It is evident that the Armenian and Azeri students see the practical implications of learning Georgian as one of the necessary preconditions for employment in the public sector. Overall, their responses show that they also explain the requirements of knowledge of the state language by focusing on their status of “citizens of Georgia”.

When I asked the Armenian and Azeri students, directors, and teachers of non-Georgian schools about their attitudes towards the legislative and educational reforms implemented before and after the Rose Revolution, most of the interviewed respondents identified a large within-case -variance in the period 1991-2012. Based on the responses of the teachers of Georgian who used to work during the presidencies of Shevardnadze and

⁵⁴Interview with Qalashyan, Aregnaz . Ethnic Armenian, undergraduate student at the University of Samtskhe-Javakheti, Faculty of Georgian Language and Literature.2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia. April 25.

⁵⁵Interview with Piraevi, Rima. 10th grade ethnic Azeri student at the Public School N1 of Kaspi.2013 Kaspi, Georgia . April 29.

Saakashvili, the promotion of Georgian was not the main concern of Shevardnadze's government.

During the presidency of Shevardnadze the government did not pay any significant attention to the teaching of Georgian at non-Georgian schools. However, the situation changed drastically after the Rose Revolution as bilingual textbooks were written, special training was arranged for teachers and their salaries increased significantly.⁵⁶ *“Before the Rose Revolution, the number of Georgian language teachers were limited in the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo–Kartli, due to the fact that we did not receive our due salary for months, we lost the incentive to work effectively”.*⁵⁷

Most of the interviewed teachers and directors of non-Georgian schools endorse the educational reforms implemented after the Rose Revolution by Saakashvili's government. My respondents acknowledged that the state took a significant step forward by improving the access of members of ethnic minorities to higher education institutions by allowing them to pass the general skills tests in Azerbaijani and Armenian languages within the framework of the program “1+4 program”. However, the lack of qualified teaching assistants and the resulting incomplete implementation of bilingual educational programs still remains a problematic issue for my respondents.

*There are 608 students at the Russian school N2 located in Akalkhalaki; only 10 per cent of who can speak Georgian fluently. I see the lack of qualified teaching assistants who have no expertise in the field of Georgian Language as a major obstacle for the successful implementations of the bilingual educational programs in non-Georgian schools.*⁵⁸

There are 480 students at the Azerbaijani public school N 3 in Marneuli. 90% of these students speak the Georgian fluently due to the high number of qualified

⁵⁶Interview with Karshiladze, Nunu. Teaching Georgian language at the Azerbaijani public school N2 in Marneuli. 2013. Marneuli, Georgia. April 29.

⁵⁷Interview with Bablueni, Ana. Director of the Language House of Marneuli.2013.Marneuli, Georgia. April 29.

⁵⁸ Interview with Karayan, Larisa. Director of Russian School N2 in Akhalkalaki. 2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia, April 21.

teachers that were sent within the framework of the program “Learn Georgian as a Second Language”. However, the ministry of education and science of Georgia should send more experienced and qualified teaching assistants within the framework of the program “Learn Georgian for Future Success.”⁵⁹

I asked the Azerbaijani and Armenian students about their attitudes towards the recently implemented programs related to the promotion of Georgian. They expressed very positive attitudes towards the recent educational reforms. However, they expressed their dissatisfaction with the program “Georgian Language for Future Success” due to the unqualified Georgian teaching assistants that were sent to their schools.

“The postgraduate students who were sent to non-Georgian schools as teaching assistants do not fulfill their duties properly. The main problem is that they have not earned a major in the Georgian Language.”⁶⁰

Anush’s response demonstrates that she does not entirely endorse the present educational projects to promote the Georgian language. As she later said, the government of Georgia should provide other options such as more qualified teaching assistants in order to remedy the existing shortcomings. The other Armenian students expressed a similar position regarding the shortcomings related to the program “Georgian Language for Future Success”.⁶¹ After visiting the Azerbaijani schools in Marneuli and meeting with students from the 3rd grade through the 10th grade, my key finding is that they have a better command of Georgian compared to the Armenians. Tarani Huseinova is a 3rd grade student and Lamia Parajeva is a 6th grade student at Azerbaijani School N3 who both had a good command of Georgian. As they said they started learning Georgian in kindergarten within the framework of the pre-school immersion program. The responses of the students of Azeri origin clearly demonstrated that they have a very good knowledge of Georgian, which encourages them to

⁵⁹Interview with Gajiev, Ruslan. Director of the Azerbaijani Public School N 3 in Marneuli. 2013. Marneuli, Georgia, May 6.

⁶⁰ Interview with Muradyan, Anush. 12th grade ethnic *Armenian* student of Russian Public school N 2. 2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia. April 28.

⁶¹Interview with Mosoyan, Parisa. 12th grade ethnic *Armenian* student of Russian Public school N 2, Akhalkalaki, Georgia. 27 April, 2013.

pursue their higher education in Georgia. *“I plan to pursue further education in Georgia within the framework of the program 1+4. I can speak Georgian fluently since the teaching quality of the Georgian language is high at my school”*.⁶² By contrast, the Armenian high school students identify more shortcomings in the recent educational reforms. A more positive attitude and co–variance to the language policy of Saakashvili can be seen in the responses of the Armenian and Azeri primary students compared to the high school students. *“I started learning Georgian at school in the 1st grade, and then I passed the exam in general abilities and was admitted to Tbilisi State University. I speak Georgian fluently⁶³”* and *“I was admitted to the University of Samtskhe-Javakheti after passing the exam in general skills within the framework of the program 1+4. After the graduation I plan to pursue my career in Georgia.”*⁶⁴

3.3 Employment opportunities and knowledge of the state language

When I asked my respondents about the correlation between unemployment and language barriers, many of them identified unemployment as a general problem in Georgia that may not directly correlate with the lack of proficiency in Georgian. I asked my respondents, including those minorities who work in the public service, to comment on the relevance of the legislation of Georgia on self-government, which establishes Georgian as a working language in the public institutions. The outright contradiction is that those Armenian and Azeri minorities who work in the public service and speak Georgian fluently claim that the knowledge of Georgian is one of the necessary conditions for working in the

⁶² Interview with Gojaeva, Zora. Ethnic Azeri. 12th grade student at a public school in the village of Zemokharali. 2013. Marneuli, Georgia. May 4.

⁶³ Interview with Mamedova, Tarana. Ethnic Azeri. Second year student at Tbilisi State University, Faculty of Foreign Languages. 2013. Tbilisi, Georgia. May 4.

⁶⁴ Interview with Jinisianis, Artak. Ethnic Armenian student at the University of Samtskhe-Javakheti - Faculty of Economics. 2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia. April 25.

public service. However, those minorities who do not speak Georgian, but work in the public service argue that they are professionals and limited knowledge of Georgian does not preclude them to implement their jobs properly.

*I am fluent in Georgian. I graduated from Ilia State University in Tbilisi's Faculty of Law. Then I passed the selection procedures for the vacant position of a public servant at the Revenue Service of Georgia. When I became the employee of the Revenue Service I was sent to take the course in the Georgian language at the state school of public administration. I think that knowledge of Georgian is crucial for officials who work in public service.*⁶⁵

I had an interview with other ethnic Azeri and Armenian public officials who work the municipality of Marneuli and Akhalkalaki in high positions, despite the fact that they do not speak Georgian.⁶⁶ They have a number of employees who do not speak Georgian but work as public officials due to their professional skills.⁶⁷ Drawing from my observation, there are a number of cases when the employers prefer to hire non-Georgian speaking employees who are professional in the public service of Georgia, despite the fact that they do not speak Georgian fluently. The same case occurs in the private sector (hotels, shops, gas stations), where employees do not always speak Georgian fluently. My respondents explain this outright contradiction by comparing the educational and employment background of those who speak Georgian fluently with ones who have a limited knowledge of the Georgian language and whose customers mostly speak in minority languages.

⁶⁵Interview with Mamedov, Aziz. Ethnic Azeri. Employee at the Revenue Service of Marneuli, 2013. Marneuli, Georgia. May 4.

⁶⁶Interview with Rustamov, Tarkhan and Karakovi, Pulkhan. Employees of the Municipality of Marneuli. 2013. Marneuli, Georgia. May 4

Interview with Movsesisn, Alekandre. Former Member of the Parliament of Georgia and Currently Head of the Municipality of the Akhalkahalki .2013. 30 April

⁶⁷ Interview with Karimova, Ispandir .Head of the Municipality of Marneuli. 2013. Marneuli, Georgia , May 4.

3.4 Information Flow

Most of the interviewees agreed that the government of Saakashvili started the implementation of a number of significant projects in order to improve access to information in minority languages. However, full access to information in minority languages still persists as a problem. When I asked my respondent, which sources they usually, use to receive information about on-going events in Georgia; they said that they are informed about the on-going public and political life in Georgia by local and Russian TV channels. They rarely use the print media and Internet. They basically inform each other about the on-going events in Georgia. This raises the question about the chances to equally participate in the governance of the country and about deficiencies in the state's top-down language policy. *“Access to information about the on-going events still persists as a major problem in the region. However, the improvement of access to information in the regions populated by the national minorities is a part of the implementation of the action plan of the concept of the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration.”*⁶⁸ As I proceeded with the interviews, I tried to establish some focus on the problem of information flow for the respondents' as replies such as the following reveal: “I receive the information about the present political situation of Georgia from my co-citizens. Since I do not speak Georgian fluently, it is hard for me to watch the news on Georgian TV channels. Our local TV channel “*Marneuli TV*” broadcasts the 15-minutes daily news program “*Moambe*” in Azerbaijani, however it is not enough to receive full information about the on-going events in Georgia.”⁶⁹ Most of my respondents, particularly those of the older generation who have a limited knowledge of Georgian, identified information flow as one of the main problems in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli. *“Since we have a limited knowledge of the Georgian language, we do not watch Georgian TV channels. As a result, we receive information from our neighbors about the*

⁶⁸Interview with Mirzaev, Savelan. Representative of the Ministry of the Reintegration of Georgia in Kvemo-Kartli .2013. Marneuli, Georgia, May 6.

⁶⁹Interview with Gasanov, Avtandil. Ethnic Azeri, 62 years old ,taxi driver. 2013.Marneuli Georgia. May 6.

political and public life of Georgia".⁷⁰ By contrast, the younger generations who are fluent in Georgian argue that they can watch the Georgian TV channels and receive full information about the on-going events in the country. The younger generation is more involved in the political and cultural life of Georgia through active participation in the Youth Civic Activism Network.⁷¹ *"I am fully informed about the political, cultural and social life of Georgia. Since I speak Georgian fluently, I receive full information from the Georgian TV channels."*⁷²

It is clear that despite the outright contradiction between the perceptions of the older and younger generations of the Armenian and Azeri minorities, the current deficiencies in the informational flow undermine the effectiveness of the government to provide full access to information in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli.

3.5 Legislative Reforms

The interviewed minorities endorse the legislative reforms implemented after the Rose Revolution such as the adoption of the "Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities", "National Concept for Tolerance and Civic Integration", the amendments made to the "Law of Georgia on General Education" in 2009 regarding the simplified examination process for the Armenian and Azeri students. However, minorities who do not speak Georgian fluently and work in the public education system where the state language becomes more prevalent endorse granting minority languages the status of regional language in order to preserve these languages for the future. *"Georgia should sign the*

⁷⁰ Interview with Sykisian, Syrush and Aleksian, Marta. 2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia. April 27.

⁷¹ Interview with Qalashyan, Aregnaz . Ethnic Armenian, undergraduate student at the University of Samtskhe-Javakheti, Faculty of Georgian Language and Literature.2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia. April 25.

⁷² Interview with Aboian, Nino. Ethnic Armenian undergraduate student at the University of Samtskhe-Javakheti, faculty of the Georgian language and Literature. 2013. Akhalkhalaki,Georgia. April 27.

*“European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML)” and Armenian language should be declared a regional language. Since, it is hard for the staff of non-Georgian language schools to fill out the business correspondence in Georgian, it will be better for us if the working language of public educational system would be Armenian.”*⁷³

By contrast, the Azeri and Armenian public officials who speak Georgian fluently do not see any necessity to grant Azerbaijani the status of regional language.⁷⁴ *“The government of Saakashvili implemented a number of significant legislative reforms for enhancing the interest and motivation of Armenian and Azeri minorities to learn the state language. If the government of Georgia grants Armenian and Azerbaijani the status of regional languages, it will decrease the motivation for learning Georgian among national minorities. It will lead to the marginalization of the national minorities as was the case under Shevardnadze’s presidency.”*⁷⁵

The overall results of the interviews depict that the bottom up perceptions of the Armenian and Azeri older generation co-varies together with the top-down language policies of the governments of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili, since their responses revealed similar attitudes. However, the Azeri younger generation seems less skeptical than those of the Armenians. The overall results of the interviews suggest that there is a large within-case variance in the top-down language policies of the governments of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze, and Saakashvili. Thus my findings confirm my expectations that there is a large within-case variance in the language policies of the governments of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili. The overall results of my findings answer my research question by drawing normative implications from a combination of both normative theories

⁷³Interview with Karayan, Larisa. Director of Russian School N2 in Akhalkalaki. 2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia, April 21.

⁷⁴Interview with Mamedov, Aziz. Ethnic Azeri. Employee at the Revenue Service of Marneuli, 2013. Marneuli, Georgia. May 4.

⁷⁵Interview with karapetiani, Narcis . Head of the Educational Resource Center of Akhalkalaki.2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia . April 25.

and empirical findings. According to my findings, there is an overlap between empirical findings and the given theoretical framework of the legitimacy and language rights. The Armenian and Azeri minorities' descriptions of the majority–minority relations under the government of Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze reflect the features of Christaino's model of the tyranny of majority versus persistent minorities.

The interviewed respondents describe the language policies of Gamsakhurdia as a discrimination of minority language groups and tyranny of the majority. As the Azeri and Armenian minorities claim they were treated as inferior groups, referred as a “guest”, excluded from the state building process and deprived of the basic rights. In contrast, they assess more positively the non-hostile attitude and “benign neglect” policy of the government of Shevardnadze. The majority-minority relations can be seen as a problem of persistent minorities under Shevardnadze, which is characterized by the approach of benign neglect that led to the alienation of national minorities from the political process. The language policies of Shevardnadze led to countervailing considerations against the legitimacy of the government and protests of popular movements. However, Shevardnadze's government diffused the protests of popular movements by accommodating its leaders' interests.

However, my findings about the main concerns of my respondents with regard to the linguistic homogenization policies of the Saakashvili government and their perceptions of the best practices for the preservation of their languages seems to be explained through Kymlicka's theory of language rights and language policies . As Kymlicka (2003) argues the linguistic homogenization policy might cause dissatisfaction of minority language groups and increase their concern regarding the preservation of their languages.

Most of those interviewed welcome the implemented reforms during the presidency of Saakashvili. However, the deficiencies in information flow and incomplete educational reforms still remain a problem for my respondents in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli.

It is obvious that the current deficiencies in the information flow undermine the effectiveness of the government to provide full access to information that precludes the minorities to be fully informed and equally participate in the political life of Georgia. More extensive programs in minority languages are required to solve this problem.

Another recommendation deals with the improvement of the bilingual educational programs by focusing on the need to increase the competency of teaching assistants of Georgian. Furthermore, some of my respondents argue that the government should adopt the best standards for the preservation of minority languages and the promotion of linguistic diversity by ratifying the "European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages" (ECRML).

Thus my findings confirm my hypothesis that there is a large within-case variance in the language policies of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili. Furthermore, the bottom-up reactions of the Armenian and Azeri minorities co-varies with regard to the language policies implemented before and after the Rose Revolution of 2003. It also answers my research question by drawing the implications from the theoretical debate and reflections of the Armenian and Azeri minorities on it.

Conclusion

The study has investigated the within-case-variance with respect to how the language policies of different governments of Georgia towards its largest minorities have changed in the period between 1991-2012. Some scholars mainly addressed the issue of the language-policies and identity development under the government of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili.⁷⁶ However, the previous research failed to discuss the top-down language policies that reflect the democratic credentials and legitimacy of the government. My research extends previous work by using the different normative approach to the problem of the linguistic diversity in Georgia.

Based on the content analysis and in-depth interviews it compares the top-down language policies of governments of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili and its bottom-up reactions. The normative implications of the problem of linguistic diversity in Georgia are conceptualized through Kymlicka's account of Language Rights and the top-down language policies of the government of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili are critically assessed based upon Christaino's theoretical model of the democratic authority and its limits.

Based upon the theoretical discussion the research finds the main arguments for discussing the puzzle of the linguistic diversities in Georgia. It seems relevant for addressing the question of the legitimacy of the different governments to formulate my main arguments based upon Christaino's normative approach to legitimacy of the democratic authority as a right to exercise power that requires the equal treatment and advancement of the interest of its

⁷⁶B. Korth, A. Stepanian, & M. Muskhelishvili. 2005. Language Policy in Georgia with the Focus on the Education System. Working Paper, Cimera, April.

Amirejibi-Mullen, Rusudan " Language Policy and National identity in Georgia", The Queen Mary University of London, 2011.

citizens. Drawing from the comparative analysis of top-down language policies and its bottom-up reactions, I argue that the top-down language policies of the government of Gamsakhurdia gave rise to undercutting considerations against its legitimacy by violating public equality and actively discriminating against minorities. Based on the content analyses of the speeches of political figures and its bottom-up reactions, Gamsakhurdia's presidency can be described as a tyranny of the majority. Since the Armenian and Azeri minorities were deprived of their basic rights and equal opportunities to participate in the state-building projects, segregated in the public educational system, and referred to as "guests" and expelled from their villages, Gamsakhurdia's intolerant ethnocentric discourse led to emigration of minorities from Georgia. It is clear that the government of Gamsakhurdia undermined its own legitimacy by discriminating against minorities.

However, the majority-minority relations can be seen as a problem of persistent minorities under Shevardnadze, which was characterized by the approach of benign neglect that led to the alienation of national minorities from the political process. The language policies of the Shevardnadze government gave rise to countervailing considerations against its legitimacy and active mobilization of popular movements such as "Javakhk" for advocating greater autonomy for Javakheti. However, Shevardnadze's government diffused the protests of popular movements by offering higher positions in the government or economic incentives. His government did not intervene directly in the everyday affairs of citizens in Kvemo-Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti that formed the more positive attitudes towards Shevardnadze's government in contrast to the case under Gamsakhurdia. Both under the government of Shevardnadze and Gamsakhurdia national minorities were treated as immigrant groups in order to avoid the accommodation of their claims for territorial self-government and official language status that gave rise to the countervailing considerations against the legitimacy of the governments.

After the Rose revolution, the government of Saakashvili started the implementation of civil integration policies towards national minorities. The linguistic integration was a crucial factor in the successful implementation of the action plans. The number of the significant educational and legislative reforms was implemented such as developing bilingual educational programs, pre-school immersion programs and establishing Georgian Language Houses. However, as my respondents claim, there are significant deficiencies in full access to information in Samtskhe–Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli regions of Georgia. The lack of full access to information prevents minorities from equally participating in the governance of the state as well as holding the majority accountable. This allows the Armenian and Azeri minorities to elaborate countervailing considerations against the government of Saakashvili. The government of Georgia should provide more extensive news programs in minority languages and increase the number of such programs as well.

Another concern of the Armenian and Azeri minorities is the incomplete educational programs. An additional recommendation deals with the improvement of the bilingual educational programs by focusing on the need to increase the competency of teaching assistants of Georgian. Furthermore, some of my respondents argue that the government should adopt the best standards for the preservation of minority languages and the promotion of linguistic diversity by ratifying the "European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages" (ECRML). However, Georgia still considers the ratification of the European Charter for Regional and minority languages as a big deal. Special working groups were created in order to decide which language groups should be granted regional language status.

My recommendation is that the government of Georgia should ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and grant the Armenian and Azeri languages the status of regional languages. Since there is a tendency that the language domain shifts to the

majority language in the regions of Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli, the preservation of the Armenian and Azeri language might be threatened in the future.

Based upon the theoretical discussion of Kymlicka and Patten the complete “laissez fair policy” of non-interference in linguistic issues does not seem a plausible solution to accommodate the minority language groups in Georgia. I argue that the top-down language policies of the governments of Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze led to the marginalization of the Armenian and Azeri minorities. By contrast the government of Saakashvili took a policy of civil integration along with the “norm-accommodation approach” for minorities who have limited knowledge of Georgian. As Kymlicka and Patten(2003:42-46) argue, the nation-building approach of promoting a common official language aims at providing equal opportunities for the linguistic minorities who form the national minorities within a state. The linguistic minorities have access to their social culture in their own language but they are at risk of losing this access due to the language domain shift to the majority language, and this causes a number of problems for linguistic minorities who are not fluent in the majority language. The nation-building policy appears to be a solution to this problem, which ensures that everyone will be fluent in the majority language. Since the case of the persistent minorities emerged from the benign neglect policy of ignorance of issues related to the minority languages that led to the marginalization of the Armenian and Azeri minorities under Shevardnadze. It seems to me that that the civil integration policies that aim to promote the state language and struggle against the marginalization of the minority languages by adherence to the best practices for the preservation of the minority language are an optimal solution to accommodate the linguistic diversities in Georgia.

This thesis concludes that the government of Georgia should not take a ‘hands-off approach’ and benign neglect policy of ignorance in dealing with the linguistic diversity that leads to the marginalization of the minority language groups and undermines the

effectiveness of the government to provide public equality. The normative justification for the claims of the legitimacy of the government coheres with its effectiveness to provide public equality and impose the moral duty of obedience on its citizens. That is why the government should accommodate the linguistic diversity by reflecting the bottom-up reactions of minority language groups in the top-down language policies in order to advance their interests equally.

I believe that the top-down language policies of the governments of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili can serve as a litmus test for the legitimacy of the government and its capacity to provide public equality. It is important to study the different aspects and implications of the linguistic homogenization policies on minority language groups. This raises the question how the linguistic homogenization policies will serve the interests of the minority language groups in such a way that it will not undermine the legitimacy of the government to provide public equality and preserve linguistic diversity. This might be a question for further research in the future, but it is beyond the scope of this paper.

APPENDIX 1: Ethnic Group of Georgia Census 1926-2002

Source: (ECMI)

Ethnic Groups of Georgia							
Censuses 1926 – 2002							
	1926	1939	1959	1970	1979	1989	2002
Georgians	1,788,186	2,173,922	2,600,588	3,130,741	3,433,011	3,787,393	3,661,173
Abkhazians	56,847	57,805	62,878	79,449	85,285	95,853	3,527
Ossetians	113,298	147,677	141,178	150,185	160,497	164,055	38,028
Armenians	307,018	415,013	442,916	452,309	448,000	437,211	248,929
Azeris	*	188,058	153,600	217,758	255,678	307,556	284,761
Turks	137,921	4,950	1,411	853	917	1,375	441
Osman Turks	3,810	*	*	*	*	*	*
Hemshins	625	*	*	*	*	*	*
Iranians	2,220	1,150	73	64	91	123	46
Russians	96,085	308,684	407,886	396,694	371,608	341,172	67,671
Greeks	54,051	84,636	72,938	89,246	95,105	100,324	15,166
Jews	30,534	42,300	51,582	55,382	28,298	24,795	3,772
Ukrainians	14,356	45,595	52,236	49,622	45,036	52,443	7,039
Belorussians	540	1,796	5,152	6,149	5,702	8,595	542
Czechs	143**	183	203	154	99	101	46
Poles	3,159	3,167	2,702	2,565	2,200	2,014	870
Bulgarians	160	1,268	1,163	889	600	671	138
Kists	*	*	*	*	*	*	7,110
Chechens	66	2,538	105	232	158	609	1,271
Ingush	1,893	70	33	140	89	170	*
Assyrians	2,904	4,707	5,005	5,617	5,286	6,206	3,299
Udins	5	*	422	154	320	93	203
Avars	1	114	585	450	3,680	4,230	1,996
Lezgins	3,420	4,481	4,030	3,650	768	720	44
Roms	70	727	1,024	1,224	1,223	1,744	472
Moldovans	142	1,511	2,630	2,417	2,392	2,842	864
Kurds	7,955	12,915	16,212	20,690	25,688	33,331	2,514
Yezids	2,262	*	*	*	*	*	18,329
Estonians	871	2,498	2,148	2,108	1,625	2,316	59
Latvians	363	467	606	828	601	530	91
Lithuanians	283	342	513	822	603	977	134
Germans	12,074	20,527	2,259	2,317	2,093	1,546	651
Other Groups	25,232	12,922	11,967	13,649	16,529	21,846	2,349
Total Population	2,666,494***	3,540,023	4,044,045	4,686,358	4,993,182	5,400,841	4,371,535
*Data missing or not provided							
**Data for 1926 include Slovaks							
***Data for 1926 does not include foreigners							

APPENDIX2: The statistics of the admitted Azeri and Armenian students

2005-2012

Source: NAEC –National Examinations Center

Year	Azeris	Armenians
2005	11	10
2006	101	262
2007	64	175
2008	40	54
2009	3	1
2010	185	128
2011	268	191
2012	390	200

APPENDIX 3 : Questions for Interviews:

The Question for the representatives of the ethnic Armenian and Azerbaijan minorities

1. What's your attitude towards the official language policy of the current government of Georgia? Does it serve your interest?
2. How do you compare the language policies under the governments of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili?

Do you see the significant within case variance in the language policy under the governments of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili .

Agree	
Disagree	
<i>(Don't know)</i>	
<i>(Refuse to answer)</i>	

3. Do you agree or disagree with the statement of the president Saakashvili that” Your children should learn the state language so that they have equal possibilities and equal rights to be promoted in the hierarchy of state structures”

Agree	
Disagree	
<i>(Don't know)</i>	
<i>(Refuse to answer)</i>	

4. Should the government of Georgia sign The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML)?
5. What will be changed for you by granting your language the status of the regional language?
6. Do you feel that you will be able to express better your identity after granting your language the status of regional language?
7. How do you feel are you able to express your identity by use of you native language under the current government of Georgia compared with the previous ones?
8. Do you find the Russian language as a better way of communication rather than Georgian language between majority and minorities?

9. Do you agree or disagree with the statement that state perceives the minority groups as a threat for the territorial integrity of Georgia?

Agree	
Disagree	
<i>(Don't know)</i>	
<i>(Refuse to answer)</i>	

10. How do you find your knowledge of Georgian Language ?

Very good	
Good	
<i>Fair</i>	
<i>Poor</i>	
<i>Very Poor</i>	
<i>Don't Know</i>	

11. Do you think that language barriers is the major problem that prevents you from participating in political and public life and having success in the job market ?
12. How do you assess the impact of the Law on General Education states that ‘citizens of Georgia whose native language is not Georgian have the right to receive complete general education in their native language.’ ?
13. How do you assess the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia’s new program “Georgian Language for Future Success,” launched in 2012 that promotes the sending of postgraduate students to regions that are mainly compactly populated by national minorities and to teach them the Georgian Language?
14. Do you think that that this policy aims to provide fair equality of opportunity and competitiveness of national minorities in the job market? Do you find it as a policy of integration or assimilation?
15. Are you fully informed about the ongoing political and public life of the country? Which sources do you usually use to receive information about current events in Georgia?

16. Do you find the Law of Georgia on Self-Government (article 10) established Georgian as the working language of local self-government discriminatory?
17. Do you think that the requirement of the proficiency in the state language is the major cause of your problems to find the suitable job, to be represented in the state institutions of the country?
18. How do you find the service of the interpreter provided at court, police to solve the problems related to the language barriers? Do you face any difficulties in the public service sector of Georgia due to the language barriers?

Questions for the political experts

19. How do you assess the language policies of Georgia under the government of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili ? Do you see the significant variance in it ?
20. How do you explain the civil integration policy initiated by the government of Saakashvili, does it serve the interests of Armenian and Azeri minorities in Georgia?
21. Do you think that the top-down language policy under the government of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili versus bottom- up language policy ?
22. Under which government do you find the most/ less significant variance between top down and bottom up language policies?
23. Do you see any significant threat of separatism and ethnic cleavages in case of granting the regional language states to minority languages?
24. Should the government of Georgia sign the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML)?
25. What are its main advantages and disadvantages for states as well as Armenian and Azeri minorities by signing the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML)?
26. What would you suggest for solving the problem of language barriers of ethnic minorities?

APPENDIX 4. The list of Interviews:

Interview with Karayan, Larisa. Director of Russian School N2 in Akhalkalaki. 2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia. April 21.

Interview with Gorgorian, Ruben. Ethnic Armenian, 72 years old, Veterinary. 2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia. April 23.

Interview with Agdgomeladze, Dali. Coordinator, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS) Akhalkalaki Branch. 2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia. April 23.

Interview with Jinisianis, Artak. Ethnic Armenian student at the University of Samtskhe-Javakheti - Faculty of Economics. 2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia. April 25.

Interview with Qalashyan, Aregnaz. Ethnic Armenian, undergraduate student at the University of Samtskhe-Javakheti, Faculty of Georgian Language and Literature. 2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia. April 25.

Interview with karapetiani, Narcis. Head of the Educational Resource Center of Akhalkalaki. 2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia. April 25.

Interview with Tetvadze, Shorena. Director of the Language House of Akhalkalaki. 2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia. April 26.

Interview with Ketevan Khutisshvili. Head of the Center of the Adult Education. 2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia. April 26.

Interview with Aboian, Nino. Ethnic Armenian undergraduate student at the University of Samtskhe-Javakheti, faculty of the Georgian language and Literature. 2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia. April 27.

Interview with Aleksian, Marta. Maid at hotel. 2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia. April 27.

Interview with Sykisian, Syrush. Ethnic Armenian, 50 years old, housewife. 2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia. April 27.

Interview with Mosoyan, Parisa. 12th grade ethnic Armenian student of Russian Public school N 2, Akhalkalaki, Georgia, 27 April, 2013.

Interview with Muradyan, Anush. 12th grade ethnic *Armenian* student of Russian Public school N 2. 2013. Akhalkalaki, Georgia. April 28.

Interview with Piraevi, Rima. 10th grade ethnic Azeri student at the Public School N1 of Kaspi.2013 Kaspi, Georgia . April 29.

Interview with Karshiladze, Nunu. Teaching Georgian language at the Azerbaijani public school N2 in Marneuli. 2013. Marneuli, Georgia. April 29.

Interview with Bablueni, Ana. Director of the Language House of Marneuli.2013.Marneuli, Georgia. April 29.

Interview with Movsesisn, Alekandre. Former Member of the Parliament of Georgia and Currently Head of the Municipality of the Akhalkahalki .2013. 30 April

Interview with Chapaliani , Koba . Coordinator, Centre for Tolerance at the Public Defender's Office of Georgia at the Office of the Public Defender of Georgia.2013. Tbilisi, Georgia. May 1.

Interview with Gogenia, Lela. Head of the International Organizations Department at the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Georgia.2013. Tbilisi Georgia. May 1.

Interview with Metreveli, Eka. Researcher, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS). 2013. Tbilisi, Georgia. May 1.

Interview with Abashidze, Zviad . Associate Professor, Department of Political Science , Tbilisi State University. 2013. Tbilisi, Georgia, May 2.

Interview with Siordia, Giorgi. Project Coordinator, European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI). 2013.Tbilisi, Georgia. May 2.

Interview with Khvichia, Maka. Head of the Department of the Civil Integration at the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reintegration. 2013.Tbilisi, Georgia. May 2.

Interview with Dvali, Zurab. Producer of the programs in national minority languages, TV channel I. 2013. Tbilisi, Georgia . May 2.

Interview with Jakheli, Tamar. Head of the Department of the National Curriculum in Social Science , Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia . 2013. Tbilisi, Georgia . May 3.

Interview with Kekelidze, Tamar. Coordinator of the program “ Georgian Language for Future Success” , Ministry of the education and Science of Georgia.2013. Tbilisi, Georgia. May 3.

Interview with Gojaeva, Zora. Ethnic Azeri. 12th grade student at a public school in the village of Zemokharali. 2013. Marneuli, Georgia. May 4.

Interview with Mamedova, Tarana. Ethnic Azeri. Second year student at Tbilisi State University, Faculty of Foreign Languages.2013. Tbilisi, Georgia. May 4.

Interview with Rustamov , Tarkhan . Employee of the Municipality of Marneuli.2013. Marneuli, Georgia. May 4.

Karakovi, Pulkhan . Employee of the Municipality of Marneuli.2013. Marneuli, Georgia. May 4.

Interview with Mamedov, Aziz. Ethnic Azeri. Employee at the Revenue Service of Marneuli, 2013. Marneuli, Georgia. May 4.

Interview with Karimova, Ispandir .Head of the Municipality of Marneuli. 2013.Marneuli, Georgia , May 4.

Interview with Mirzaev, Savelan. Representative of the Ministry of the Reintegration of Georgia in Kvemo-Kartli .2013. Marneuli, Georgia, May 6.

Interview with Gasanov, Avtandil. Ethnic Azeri, 62 years old ,taxi driver. 2013.Marneuli Georgia. May 6.

Interview with Gajiev, Ruslan. Director of the Azerbaijani Public School N 3 in Marneuli. 2013. Marneuli, Georgia, May 6.

Interview with Namazov Bairam , Ethni Azeri. Soldier in Georgian Army. 2013. Marmneuli, Georgia. May 7.

Interview with Mamedova, Aigul. Ethnic Azeri, Nurse.2013. Marneuli, Georgia, May 7.

Interview with Guseinova, Jamila. Ethnic Azeri , Assistant Coordinator at Georgian Language House of Marneuli. 2013. May 7.

Interview with Ramin, Mamedovi. Prisoner released after the Amnesty of the president Saakashvili.2013. Marneuli, Georgia. May 7.

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