

Terms of Endearment in Georgian: Ethnolinguistic Analysis of Verb Forms of Address

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Abstract—Terms of address are an essential component of speech etiquette. They can reflect the social and cultural values. Therefore, in the era of globalization, familiarizing oneself with the communication norms of a certain culture has become an inevitable part of daily lives and a prerequisite to succeed in one's business. This paper looks at the typological models of verb forms of address in Georgian language where they are analyzed from an ethnolinguistic point of view. Verb forms of address represent one group of terms of endearment in Georgian. By focusing on historical events, cultural tendencies and the structure of the society, we discuss the cultural specifics and norms of communication in Georgian. The findings indicate that the verb forms of endearment in Georgian are complex intracultural signs reflecting stereotypical views of a linguistic community.

Index Terms—Georgian, terms of address, terms of endearment, verb forms of address.

I. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has brought along the expansion of scope of human activities. Along with the scope, geography of human communication has expanded as well. Today, the knowledge of principles of how to communicate with other cultures has acquired new significance. At present, this “know-how” is the new and efficient mechanism of regulating relationships with partners. Terms of address are a starting point of verbal communication. They contain significant information about the communication norms, traditions, relationships between different social statuses, and politeness norms within a certain culture. Nowadays, an interest to study terms of address is growing. However, the categorical nature is still undiscovered. Among others, terms of endearment represent an extremely important category of terms of address. They play a significant role in regulating and harmonizing cross-cultural and interpersonal communication.

II. BACKGROUND

Georgian scholars started studying terms of address in the second half of the twentieth century. Various linguists tackled the problem of identifying the nature of terms of address. Akaki Shanidze categorized them as one of the noun cases – vocative [1]. Arnold Chikobava, on the other hand, drew a line between the vocative case and terms of address [2]. The first attempt to study terms of address from a

sociolinguistic point of view was an article in the newspaper “Literaturuli Sakartvelo” [3]. However, it was limited to a one-page review of the term *batono* (equivalent to *sir*). Kaladze studied name-patronymics, stating that this type of address, so prevalent in Georgia, is not natural of Georgian, rather of Russian [4]. This phenomenon was attributed to the fact that Georgian people had close cultural relationships with Russian. The works of Shukia Apridonidze are the most informative and deep in analysis up to date [5]-[8]. The author studied issues related to inversion of nominal address, grammatical classification of terms of address, imperative of predicates as terms of address, and the terms of address used between spouses in Georgian. Zaal Kikvidze investigated plural address as a form of address [9]. The most influential works by authors such as Brown and Gilman [10], Brown and Levinson [11], Brown and Ford [12], Braun [13] and other authors greatly contributed in studying and classifying terms of address. However, despite the continuous attempt to study terms of address in general, their sub-category - terms of endearment - has not been given due attention. The topic has always been under the shadow of its paternal category – terms of address.

III. RESEARCH GOALS

The purpose of this paper is to present a short study of terms of endearments, specifically of verb forms of address. It looks at typological analysis of endearment terms in Georgian. As a result, specifications of ethnolinguistic cognition, interactional style, and cultural parameters are determined. The analysis of sociological and psychological characteristics in Georgian leads to determining the verbal manifestation of ethnolinguistic cognition. The article also looks at the social influence on the usage of the terms of endearments in Georgian. These steps facilitated in revealing national specifics of endearment in verbal communication in Georgian.

IV. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The study employs quantitative as well as qualitative methods since the topic itself is multi-disciplinary. Descriptive method is applied to describe the empirical evidence. Theoretical interpretation of the retrieved evidence is based on theories in speech act theory, ethnolinguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and psycholinguistics. Empirical evidence is retrieved from the corpus of the Georgian language: The Georgian National Corpus.

There was a need to conduct a short diachronic study to explain the specifics of some terms of endearment in Georgian (e.g., *genatsvale*; *shemogevle*). Studies of various authors (e.g., Apridonidze on terms of address used by

Manuscript received February 30, 2019; revised April 25, 2019.

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spouses in Georgian [5]-[8]; Schneider on diminutives [14]; Braun on classification of terms of address [13]) also helped us to shed the light on some national specifics of verbal communication in the language investigated.

V. TERMS OF ENDEARMENT AS A SYSTEM

There are different numbers and types of linguistic resources to express endearment in various languages. Nevertheless, terms of endearment have always been related to idiosyncrasy which acted as a hindrance to study them closer. Ever-developing nature of a language and the limitless fantasy of an individual makes it impossible to record the exact number of terms of endearment in a language. For example, in Arabic, there are around 120 ways of using the term *habibi* (feminine - *habibti*, masculine - *habaybi*) [15]. Some languages are rich in terms of endearments, others are not. However, according to Braun, the absence of a specific term of endearment in the language does not mean the nation speaking the language is impolite or cold by nature. The presence or peculiar usage of a certain term might be related to a certain social structure or specific historic events [16].

Terms of endearments are a part of a more complex system called speech behavior and speech etiquette. The latter two are the components of ethnic style of communication of a specific culture. Despite the importance of a linguistic code, terms of endearment are still an auxiliary tool since their selection and usage are determined by the nature of interlocutors' interaction.

It must be noted that national specifics of speech behavior are not determined only by a linguistic code and nonhomogeneity of the selection mechanism, but also by the frequency and priorities of their usage. Speech behavior is regulated by social hierarchy, national culture, etiquette, rites, upbringing of a linguistic person and many other factors. Another significant tool for regulating speech behavior is "endearing interaction". It communicates a positive attitude together with politeness and is regulated by both speech strategies and speech etiquette. Interestingly, speech etiquette is largely influenced by new communication technology and sociocultural circumstances. All these give rise to new tendencies in cultural behavior (e.g., political correctness, ageism, etc.) affecting the usage patterns of terms of address. Thus, terms of endearments carry a vast amount of significant information about communication norms, traditions, status address, and politeness norms prevalent within cultures.

VI. VERB FORMS OF ADDRESS IN GEORGIAN

Forms such as *genatsvale*, *chirime*, *shemogevle*, *getaqvane*, *sheni knyesame*, and their variations are the major linguistic code expressing endearment through the verb forms of address in Georgian. *Qoghale*, *tolighe*, *shurighe* are used in Megrelian, a Kartvelian language spoken in Western Georgia. All the above-listed forms are used to express love, affection, and care with different degrees of intensity and intimacy in Georgian.

The Georgian language is not rich in terms of endearments for romantic partners. It must be attributed partly to the culture. Historically, nominal address between married couples was tabooed in Georgia, nothing to say about using

terms of endearments [7]. According to some ancient religious beliefs (e.g., equalizing first names with the soul) and social norms in Georgia (partners were restrained from revealing their love feelings towards their spouses), addressing spouses by their names was tabooed. All these can explain why Georgian couples adopted an "off-record" strategy of negative politeness in the old days. The usage of terms of endearments would break socially-accepted norms and pose a threat to one's *face*. And, to avoid this, a Georgian interlocutor would resort to negative politeness by opting for *tikuni*. As Apridonidze explains, *tikuni* was a substitute for a first name [7]. Newly-wed women refrained from addressing their male in-laws by their first names. This made the former resort to using *tikuni*. For example, they would use *patoni* and *bata* to call their senior and middle brothers-in-law respectively. This conventionalized indirectness with redressive action kept women's "wants" unimpeded. In many cases, Georgian female interlocutors would avoid using terms of address.

Verbs as terms of endearment are the forms often used in conversation in Georgian. Such forms are sometimes made up of several words. For example, they are often accompanied by pronouns – *shen shemogevle* (*shen* - you). Georgian language can do without subjective pronouns. Moreover, it often employs verbs as a reference in communication. To illustrate, in Georgian, *sad midikhar?* (Where are you going?) contains an element of address. The inflection marker "kh" (second person singular) is the only element expressing a reference to the hearer.

Apridonidze called the verb forms of address in Georgian as submerged verbs [8]. As she explains, the verb forms of endearment have gone through semantic "wear and tear". This resulted in the loss of the primary semantic content and turning them into emotional signals of endearment. Semantic bleaching or desemanticization occurs in every language, and verb forms of address in Georgian is a case of point.

Submerged verbs in Georgian are second person, transitive verbs. Almost all verb forms of address have been reduced to one-word formulae. Even the remaining predicate parts have gone under reduction process. For instance, *getaqva* is the reduced form of the primary form *getaqvane*. *Genatsvale* and *sheni chirime* are the forms that have been compressed to a one-word formula. As Apridonidze states, the original phrase was as follows [8]: *Sheni chiri me mkondes/momtzes Ghmertma* (May God inflict all your trouble and illness onto me). The phrase has gradually gone through several compression stages: *Sheni chiri me* > *chiri me*. The following forms have gone through the same process: *genatsvale* > *genatsva*, *getaqvane* > *getaqva*. While conducting a quantitative survey through the corpus, each form or variation of the primary term has been counted as a separate term. Later on, we consolidated all the possible forms of one term and counted as one only.

A. *Genatsvale*

The word *genatsvale* is one of most frequently used terms of endearment in Georgian. Its semantic content implies the speaker's wish to share some of the addressee's worries or illness. Nowadays, it is used as a term of endearment expressing affection, love, and even empathy. Along with the semantic bleaching, the form went through a reduction process. Today, 14 forms of the primary terms can be found in the language:

The form *genatsvaloy* is an obsolete form in the modern Georgian. It was mainly used in the eastern Georgian. However, nowadays, one can come across the form only in folklore narratives and poems.

The primary term *genatsvale* can appear in phrases such as: *deda genatsvala*, *deda genatsvalos*, *deda genatsvaloy*. The phrases are used mostly by mothers expressing affection to their children.

TABLE I: CORPUS NUMBER OF FORMS OF ADDRESS

All the possible verb forms of endearment	Primary terms
>50	>15

TABLE II: FORMS OF GENATSVALE IN CORPUS

1. Genatsvale	8. Genatsvat
2. Genatsvalebi	9. Genatsvaleo
3. Genatsvalebio	10. Genatsvaloy
4. Genatsvalev	11. Genatsvalos
5. Genatsvalet	12. Genatsvaloso
6. Genatsvala	13. Gena
7. Genatsva	14. Genav

B. Chirime

The term *chirime* is also a very common term of endearment in Georgian. In Georgian National Corpus, the frequency of the term exceeds 1000. In 700 cases out of 1000, the term is used in collocation with the second person possessive pronoun *sheni/tkveni* (your). It has at least 5 forms:

TABLE III: FORMS OF CHIRIME IN CORPUS

1. Chirime
2. Chirimet
3. Chirimen
4. Chirimeo
5. Chirimos

The term *chirime* is characterized by more flexibility as it can appear in various collocations. Some of the most popular forms are: *sheni gamchenis chirime* and *sheni marjvenis chirime*. The former phrase is a praise of an object in general. The latter praises a person for his/her skills. Moreover, the term *chirime* can collocate with any noun in a possessive case and express praise for a certain quality – *chirime gutano*; *mikhedv-mokhedvis chirime*; *dedakatsobis chirime*; *sulis chirime* (also, *sulshi chirime*), *vazhkatsobis chirime*, etc (praise to a plow; praise for one's manners, femininity, personality, bravery respectively). The collocation *sheni gamchenis chirime* is a unique phrase as it has two objects of praise. Firstly, it expresses a praise to a person's parents for raising him/her well. Secondly, it indirectly praises a person for having a good personality or for his/her deeds. The collocation is equivalent to the phrase *shen gamzrdels* 'parent' *venatsvale*. However, the indirect and implied object

of the latter is predominantly a young person – the interlocutor.

C. Shemogevle

Etimology of the form *shemogevle* is quite interesting as the origin is related to one of the ancient traditions. According to the tradition, family members would do their best to take care of a sick family member. They often showed their readiness and willingness to embrace the fatal end instead of letting the terminally ill do so. Meanwhile, an animal was sacrificed in the vicinity of the sick person [17]. Another version of the source states that an animal would be walked around the sick person to take the sickness away from him/her. Hence, the semantic content 'let me walk around you' has transformed into a term of endearment that expresses love and affection in close relationships. It is often used by senior family members while addressing younger ones.

The form *shemogevle* can be seen in many variations: 1. *Shemogevle* 2. *Tavs shemogevle* 3. *Shen shemogevle* 4. *Shemogevlos* + [addressee] 5. *Shemogevle* + [common noun/gerund + preposition].

Shemogevlos + [addressee] is a form of inversion since the utterance belongs to a speaker who chooses him/herself as the object of the phrase. The speaker indirectly tells the addressee that he/she is praising the hearer:

You	'your grandma'
(1) <i>Shen shemogevlos</i>	<u><i>sheni bebia</i></u>

A reflexive version of the collocation is as follows: *shemogevle* + [chemi tavi] 'myself'.

There are cases when a proper noun is the second part of the collocation:

I/myself	'Eona'
(2) <i>Tavs shemogevlos</i>	<i>Eona</i>

According to Georgian National Corpus, *shemogevle* is one of the most common forms in Georgian with up to 400 frequencies of ten various variations in the corpus. Some other common variations of the term and their frequencies in the corpus are:

TABLE IV: FREQUENCY OF SHEMOGEVLE IN CORPUS

Frequencies	Collocation
59	<i>Shen shemogevle</i>
11	<i>Tavs shemogevle</i>
1	<i>Shemogevle mag...</i>
1	<i>Shemogevle ra</i>
1	<i>Tav shemogevle</i>

D. Getaqvane

The verb form of address *getaqvane* originates from the form *taqvani* (metathesis: *tav* + *kanis* + *tsema* 'to bow until one hits his/her head to the ground'). *Getaqva* is a reduced form of *getaqvane*. In Georgian, the form *genatsvale* is often synonymous and a functional analogy of *getaqvane*. The primary form *getaqvane* is often used in intimate settings and sometimes used to express affection for a close person. Its reduced form *getaqva* has a wider usage than the primary one. It might be attributed to the fact that *getaqva* often denotes a plea as well.

1) *Dabrundi, getaqva! (come back, please!)*

The frequency of *getaqva* in the corpus is up to 30 which is not high. The form *shen getaqvane* is the most frequently used among the retrieved collocations. The form expresses a high degree of intimacy and intensity of feelings.

E. *Sheni Kvnesame*

The form *sheni kvnesame* is another term of endearment in Georgian. It is synonymous to *sheni chirime* as they both express the desire of the speaker to take the addressee's trouble away. The form is rarely used in Modern Georgian. The usage of the form is typical of the speech in the east-northern Georgian.

The original form was *sheni kvnesa me momces [gh'mertma]* (may [God] give me all your ailments and worries). Through time, the phrase was reduced. As a result, only the possessive pronoun, the merged form of the transitive verb and the object, remained – *sheni* (your) *kvnesame*. Three variations of the form are common in Georgian: *sheni kvnesame*, *tkveni kvnesame* (polite form), and *mag sheni gulis kvnesame* (extended collocation). The frequency of the primary form in the corpus exceeds all its other forms:

TABLE V: FREQUENCY OF SHENI KVNESAME IN CORPUS

Frequencies	Collocation
+60	Sheni kvnesame
4	Tkveni kvnesame
1	[Mag] sheni gulis kvnesame

In Georgia, it is quite common to give a short reply to a question by just stating the object of the transitive verb. Short replies frequently incorporate terms of endearments to avoid communicating deference.

A: Mojamagired khar tu tskhori gqavs daziarebuli?... (Are you attending to someone or herding your sheep here?)

B: Tskhori, sheni kvnesame... (Sheep, sheni kvnesame)

Other terms of endearment in Georgian are *chiri mogchame* and *tsamlad dagede (dagaqene)*. Both these phrases, similarly to the rest of the forms discussed in the present article, communicate the speaker's wish to take over the interlocutor's worries and sickness (*chiri mogchame* – Engl. I took your sickness away with me; *tsamlad dagede (dagaqene)* – let me be your cure).

VII. OTHER FUNCTIONS

Terms of endearment often change their functions. A hearer can express surprise, fascination or any other emotion mixed with love and affection towards the utterance of a speaker – *Genatsvale, shvilo!* (approx. Well-done, son!). In general, Georgian is characterized by involving both parties of a dyad in conversation. The listener constantly makes efforts to let the speaker know that the former is following the latter. Terms of endearments such as *genatsvale*, *shemogevle*, *chirime* and their variations can function as backchannels in Georgian:

A: - Gamotsdaze shemakes, ra kargi gogo kharo! (I was praised at the exam; they said I was doing well.)

B: - *Chirimos sheni bebia!* (Well-done!)

Literal translation of the backchannel above would be “Your grandma is praising you!” where the speaker refers to herself in the third person.

In Georgian, forms such as *genatsvale* and *getaqvane* (including their reduced forms) can act as fillers in conversation. Their occurrence in the middle of a sentence or in a reply to a question happens for two reasons. Firstly, it serves to fill an “awkward” space in a spoken conversation. Second, in Georgia, addressing people with senior social status requires using the second person plural pronoun *tkven* (you) and/or honorifics. This implies using deference as a negative politeness strategy. Terms of endearments are often incorporated in such conversations in Georgian. This creates rather a paradoxical mixture of negative and positive politeness strategies. The speaker attempts to express respect based on the social distance whereas using terms of endearment is intended to gain the addressee's empathy and goodwill. This phenomenon often takes place when the speaker has to negatively reply to the interlocutor. The terms of endearment act as the cushion to soften the negative effect:

Setting: A master (A) and his maid (B) found a strange object in the house:

A: Me ver shevkhedav, shen gasinje (I can't even look at it. You check it out!)

B: Ui, ara, *getaqvane*, shen titona nakhe (oh no, *getaqvane!* I can't! You do it!)

Terms of endearment often intend irony:

A: Chemi am chveulebit khom ar shegats'ukhebt? (Do you mind this habit of mine?)

B: Ara, *getaqva*, shegidzliat otkhivfe fekhi shemoatsqot (Not at all, *getaqva*, you can put all of your four feet on the table).

The speaker B intends to express his/her dissatisfaction with the impertinent proposal of the interlocutor, and he/she implies the animal-like habit of the interlocutor by mentioning “all four feet”.

VIII. “ENDEARING” COMMUNICATION

The intimate level of communication usually bonds interlocutors more. This allows the participants of a dyad to receive some psychological support – empathy and sympathy. Terms of endearments start operating based on this type of presupposition.

Terms of endearment in communication require some specifics in order to operate. The environment has to be “positively marked”, specifically verb forms of address, to be employed. Endearing communication almost always involves polite and affectionate attitudes between the interlocutors. Therefore, it is unlikely that a speaker may use terms of endearment during a first-time encounter, formal environment, in conversation with strangers, or in case of the presence of psychological incompatibility of the interlocutors.

In many cases, the speaker identifies himself/herself socially by giving the backchannel to the interlocutor. Thus, use of terms of endearment facilitate in social identification of a speaker/hearer. Moreover, it can reveal the nature of social relationships and attitudes:

A: Gushin gamocdaze shemakes! (I was praised by the

examiners yesterday)

B: *Genatsvalos deda!* (Keep up the good work!) (deda - mother).

Verb forms of address are often pronounced with a stress on the first syllable when affection is intended – *shemogevle!* However, in case of implying irony or annoyance, they are often uttered with a prolonged final syllable and rising intonation – *genatsvaleee* ↑!

The factor of an addressee is extremely important while using terms of endearment. The object of endearment is often children. Other than them, it might be lovers, relatives, or friends. Verb forms of endearment can be used to address people of all age categories. However, it might affect the addressee differently which is determined by the style of communication. Social variables of the addressee affect the conversational style of the speaker, including paralinguistic factors. Speech accommodation is a common phenomenon occurring in conversation with children, e.g., “baby-talk”, slowing down the talking pace, stressing some unstressed syllables, “comfort-talk”, etc.

IX. CONCLUSION

The category of verbs as terms of endearment is specific to Georgian. The phenomenon adds a unique characteristic to the Georgian language since it reflects the ethnic specifics of the language. The existing “arsenal” of terms of endearments, despite a rather limited number of forms of address present in the language, is quite specific for its etymology and usage. The study of the verb forms of address investigated in the present article reveals that once rather a conservative country - Georgia - and its collectivist society gave considerable significance to cultural and religious values. The language reflected most of them through different forms of address, especially through verb forms of address.

From the point of the culture types, collectivism deeply pervades Georgian society, suffice to consider the semantics of the verb forms of address in Georgia. Every of them expresses the willingness to victimize themselves for the sake of other’s well-being. Perception and cognition of “we” is stronger in the society as against “I”.

The notion of a family is significant in Georgia. It implies “a big family” where the attitudes are positive, and relationships are close-knit.

In Georgia, it is not common for romantic partners to express love feelings by linguistic means. However, it is quite prevalent to show surprise, admiration, or fascination for an inanimate object. Corpus data suggest that most of the terms of endearments in Georgian originate from old days. Sadly, many of them are more and more scarcely used nowadays. Moreover, many of their variations become obsolete. Nevertheless, the tendency shows that the linguistic resources of endearment, particularly noun forms of address, in Georgian become more diverse in Modern Georgian which can be attributed to the current events and ongoing social and cultural changes in Georgia.

The “intracultural usage” of terms of endearment involves the factor of the addressee, his/her mind-set, his/her accessibility to a certain piece of information, etc. Terms of

endearment are specific markers of communication which have retained standards of values of a specific culture. Therefore, they are a complex intracultural sign reflecting stereotypical views of a linguistic community. Cultural and historic realia represent a very special layer of any textual information, and they require some pragmatic adaptation by the representative of another culture.

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