



Tamari Lomtadze is a linguist, focused on exploring and supporting linguistic diversity. Her research focuses on Georgian Language and dialects, Judeo-Georgian and Language Policy. For her Ph.D. thesis in Linguistics at the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tamari created a dictionary of Georgian Jewish speech and sociolects of Kutaisi city. She manages and coordinates projects funded by Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia: “The Status of Judeo-Georgian Speech and its Place in the Kartvelian Linguistic Space”; “Linguistic Repertoire of Georgian Jews: migrations, language competencies, and hierarchies”. Tamari serves as an academic advisor for projects “Documentation of endangered languages: Jewish Georgian” and “Georgia through the Eyes of the Jews - Archiving and Literary-Linguistic Analysis of Georgian Printed Products Issued in Israel”. From 2016 to 2019 she was the principal investigator of the project “The Speech of Georgian Jews in Israel” that was funded by Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia. Tamari also was a research team member/key personnel of the projects “Jewish Identity in Georgia at the Dawn of Globalization” (2013-2016) and “Electronic Documentation “Sociolinguistic situation in modern Georgia” funded by Volkswagen Stiftung. From 2017 to 2020, as a scholarship holder of the Latvian Education Development Agency, she worked on research projects titled “the Dialects and Linguistic Varieties of the Latvian Language” and “Language Policy in Post-Soviet Latvia” at the University of Latvia (Riga, Latvia). In 2014-2015, as an Erasmus Mundus Alrakis II postdoctoral research fellow, Tamari conducted research on language policy in Spain at the University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

Till 2022 Tamari Lomtadze was a professor of linguistics at Akaki Tsereteli State University in Kutaisi, Georgia. Currently, she works as a senior researcher at Arnold Chikobava Institute of Linguistics, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, and Endangered Language Alliance in NYC, USA.

Sociolinguistic Functions of Judeo-Georgian: History and Contemporaneity

1. A brief description of current research

The current study of the sociolinguistic functions of Judeo-Georgian will be carried out in two directions: first, examining what its sociolinguistic functions were in Georgia from a historical perspective, and second, investigating its place in the modern world, where Judeo-Georgian continues to exist in various linguistic environments.



To describe the sociolinguistic functions of Judeo-Georgian in Georgia, we will use existing Georgian databases and oral histories that we have recorded both in Georgia and abroad. As is well known, Judeo-Georgian was the main marker of linguistic identity for the Jews living in Georgia. It existed alongside Georgian and, later, in Soviet Georgia, alongside both Georgian and Russian. People called it “Kivruli,” “Israeluri,” “Uriuli,” and “Chveneburi.” Speakers often avoided using this variety of Georgian, as it became an object of ridicule—not only by much of the non-Jewish population but also by Jews belonging to the so-called higher social class. The study will attempt to describe all the situations and spaces in which Judeo-Georgian was used.

The contemporary state of Judeo-Georgian is different. It is now heard outside of Georgia—in Israel, Russia, and the United States—though in a much more altered form, enriched with Hebrew vocabulary, primarily among the older and middle generations. To carry out this part of the research, we will record new material and also use material collected in the 21st century in Israel and the United States. Abroad, Judeo-Georgian is used in almost the same situations as it once was in Georgia.

Today, Judeo-Georgian is an endangered variety both in Georgia and abroad. The study will also focus on this issue and seek to explain why it has become an endangered language variety.