

Terms of Address in Megrelian and Laz: Linguistic Context and Sociocultural Identity

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Abstract:

Address denotes a speaker's linguistic reference to his/ her collocutor (s), it is a means of initiating contact (Broun, 1998). Terms of address are a rich and fascinating topic in linguistics, encompassing the ways in which people use language to refer to one another in social interaction and contributing to broader discussions in the humanities about the interplay between language, society, and identity. They also function as key indicators of societal structures and cultural identities, revealing layers of social hierarchies, cultural heritage, and community norms. This study examines how terms of address reflect social relations and identity construction, emphasizing their role as ethnocultural markers.

In today's globalized world, norms and values unique to specific cultures and societies are gradually fading away. These changes are reflected in language as a mirror of cultural and societal shifts. We aim to present an analysis of forms of address in Kartvelian languages, more specifically in unwritten, under-resourced Megrelian and Laz. These are endangered languages, and this issue implies the problem of not only linguistic but also cultural transmission.

The talk includes an analysis of such issues as: (1) *kinship terms of address*, intergenerational and cross-generational terms of address. In terms of F. Broun, we analyze the interrelation between ego generation, parent generation, grandparent generation, and child generation; (2) *linguistic means* related to them such as address inversion and avoidance strategies. Our analysis draws on data gathered from linguistic fieldwork.

The mentioned issues are part of the common Kartvelian identity and linguistic worldview. Therefore, this topic is not only important for understanding the mechanics of language but also offers insights into social interactions, cultural norms and identities. Hence, this topic bridges linguistics, sociology, anthropology, and even political science, offering a broad and interdisciplinary perspective.

Keywords:

Terms of Address, Kinship Terms of Address, Sociolinguistics, Megrelian, Laz.

Acknowledgement:

The present paper is part of the project Address Systems in Megrelian and Laz, being implemented by the financial support from Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation (Grant №FR-23-5495). Any idea in this text is possessed by the authors and may not represent the opinion of the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation.