



## Ethnic Language in the Polylingual Space of the Region: linguophilosophical Approach

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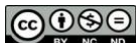
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### ABSTRACT

Multicultural mentality, formed in the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, reflects the vectors of the state language policy of the Russian Federation, carried out in conditions of ethnocultural diversity. Philosophical understanding of bilingualism allows you to show the axiological and value-oriented functions of the native and second languages in the territory of compact residence of various ethnic groups. The study is carried out in an interdisciplinary manner, based on the achievements of the philosophy of language, political linguistics, and theoretical developments in the fields of cognitive and sociolinguistics, linguoculturology, bi- and polylingualism. A multifaceted Ossetian and Russian-language material, including data from parliamentary and government sites of North and South Ossetia, the results of a blitz survey of the population and the texts of genres of official congratulations, information messages and slogans, is at the heart of the search. The article is aimed at demonstrating the established conceptual field of ethnic community within the multicultural communicative space in the republics of ethnic Ossetians – North and South Ossetia, developed because of the application of a common humanitarian strategy for the preservation and development of all languages and cultures. A conceptual analysis of statements about the role of the native language showed a high significant index of the Ossetian language to preserve the ethnic identity of not only Ossetians, but also other people inhabiting these republics. Text fragments indicate that other people perceive the cultural and linguistic originality of the regions under consideration as the “spirit of their native land”, with the historically unifying role of the Russian language and culture in interethnic and intercultural interaction. The analysis showed that the metaphorical image of the Ossetian language in the Ossetian-Russian picture of the world is objectified by such varieties of cognitive metaphors as: astronomical, basic, historical, connective, cultural, psychological, religious, materialistic, metaphor of the place, metaphor of luminescence, conditional, floristic, value, legal and evolutionary metaphors. The structure of conceptual models for representing the image of the Ossetian language varies from single constructions to combined and cluster ones, which become complicated based on addition and refinement. A special variety is comparative metaphorical models.

**Keywords:** ossetian language, conceptualization of ethnic community, cognitive metaphor, conceptual model, polylingualism, multiculturalism, inter-ethnic communication.

## Introduction

The intensification of cultural contacts, the expansion of intercultural communication, migration processes and general globalization trends are based on the principles of multiculturalism in professional practice and in various areas of communication, when two or more languages are used. The influence of polylingualism and the role of the mother tongue in the development of multinational cultures need philosophical reflection.

In modern philosophy, language is considered as the most important component of culture and the basis for the socialization of the individual, as a factor in its development, a way of thinking, forming a worldview at the level of social, group, individual consciousness. The relevance of studying this issue in theoretical terms relates to the need to analyze linguistic phenomena from the point of view of philosophical ideas, aesthetic views, axiological dimensions. Consideration of issues of origin, essence, and functions of language in modern science is based on an integrative approach, when philosophical methodology interacts with linguistic, axiological, psychological, and sociocultural scientific foundations.

The ideas of the German philosopher V. von Humboldt (1985, 346-349) that differences of languages are most manifested in the way of thinking and perception of reality continued to develop throughout the 20th century. One of the main functions of the language, both philosophers and linguists called the function of creating a picture of the world or an orienting function. L. Wittgenstein (2005), the founder of the philosophy of linguistic analysis, considered in detail the issues of the functioning of the language and the possibility of expressing thought using different languages. The philosophical explanation of the mechanism that allows a person to express the same meaning by means of different languages was deepened by the British philosopher G. Ryle (1999). Philosophical understanding of the practice of bilingualism opens the possibility of attracting new empirical material that can meaningfully deepen the understanding of the essence of language as part of culture, the nature of linguistic design of thinking, the role of language in cultural dynamics and personal development.

In connection with the orientation of research on linguophilosophical and anthropological analysis, one of its starting ideas was to use research programs outside the actual philosophy of language for the philosophical reflection of bilingualism and to evaluate the additional opportunities opened by such a construction of research.

The study of the essence, types, and functions of bilingualism is devoted to the work of linguists, psychologists, and philosophers of the language (Bloomfield, 1935; Macnamara, 1967; Krashen, 1988; Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Grosjean, 2010; Zaitseva et al., 2017; Baranova et al., 2020). From the point of view of philosophy and cognitive science, considering language as a means of processing information about the surrounding world, the concepts of balanced or coordinate and unbalanced bilingualism are introduced (Garcia & Lin, 2017). The problem of bilinguality in ontogenesis, cognitive development in a sociocultural context, the psychological foundations of bilinguality, communication strategies in intercultural interaction are described in the works of many authors (Krashen, 1988; Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Bialystok, 2017; Bialystok & Craik, 2010; Luk & Bialystok, 2013, etc.).

The active development of such a new direction of linguistics as political linguistics is associated with an increased interest in the study of the linguophilosophical context of socioethnolinguistic problems, reflecting the peculiarities of the development of modern internal and foreign policy processes at various levels of their manifestation, which explains the relevance of turning to the material of the political discourse of public consultation from a polylingual perspective.

The purpose of this article is a comprehensive linguistic philosophical study of the cognitive features of fixation in the Ossetian-Russian language picture of the world of the inhabitants of the

Republics of North and South Ossetia of the metaphorical image of the ethnic language as a significant factor affecting the formation of the multi-ethnic aspect of communication.

### Methods

Polilingualism has become the norm in Russian society. The multidimensional nature of this phenomenon has been considered in a number of theoretical directions and methodological approaches (linguistic, psychological, with physiological, pedagogical (Macnamara, 1967; Krashen, 1988; Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Grosjean, 2010; Garcia & Lin, 2017; Bialystok, 2017; Bialystok & Craik, 2010; Luk & Bialystok, 2013; Tameryan et al., 2018, 2019a, 2019b, etc.), however, a value-relevant, figurative-metaphorical and cognitive analysis of the objectification of the concept of “Ossetian language” in the linguistic, in the polyethnic consciousness of the population of North and South Ossetia is carried out for the first time.

The functional distribution of Russian and native languages directly depends on the social and professional variety of addressees and the strategic direction of communication. Despite the existence of a coordinate type of bilingualism in the republics, interference in the speech of speakers of Ossetian-Russian bilingualism is the norm of *usus*. This situation developed primarily under the influence of the role of the Russian language as a source of the formation of special groups of vocabulary, as well as considering the differentiation of Ossetian and Russian languages by areas of communication: the Russian language is more focused on the business and pedagogical areas of communication, on the implementation of inter-ethnic communication and the establishment of international relations supported in Russian. As for the Ossetian language, it largely serves for every day, artistic, business, and socio-political communication (Tameryan et al., 2018, 2019a, 2019b; Zheltukhina et al., 2020).

This study was conducted based on blitz-polls on the significance of the Ossetian language, slogans of cultural and educational events on Ossetian Language Day, materials of speeches in the genre of congratulations to the leaders of the Parliament of the Republics of North Ossetia and South Ossetia with the involvement of texts of speeches and meetings of the first persons of the state.

The leading methods of the study were the linguophilosophical approach, cognitive, discursive, and contextual approaches, the method of conceptual analysis and interpretative analysis.

### Results and Discussion

The metaphorical implementation of the Ossetian language in modern North and South Ossetian discourses, presented in a bilingual embodiment, testifies to the current ideologies of intercultural and interethnic interaction and the value priorities of peoples who consider the language of any ethnos to be a common asset and a factor in strengthening the spiritual community of people.

The analysis of contexts through the prism of the theory of conceptual metaphor by J. Lakoff and M. Johnson (1980) serves as a tool for identifying the axiologically significant content of the concept of the Ossetian language as a language of the titular ethnos not only among speakers of Ossetian-Russian bilingualism, but also among speakers of the Russian language as a native or language of interethnic communication (Tameryan, 2019b).

World famous lines from Costa Khetagurov (1959) “The whole world is my temple, / love is my shrine, / Universe is my fatherland...” and the statement of Wilhelm von Humbolt (1985, 231) “Language is as if an external manifestation of the spirit of peoples: the language of the people is its spirit, and the spirit of the people is its language” reflect the basic directions of conceptualization of the idea of multiculturalism, the formation of a global cultural and linguistic space in the aspect of intra-ethnic unity and cross-cultural community, on the one hand, and the preservation and development of ethnic identity, on the other (Alpatov, 2013).

Head of the Republic of North Ossetia Alania Vyacheslav Zelimkhanovich Bitarov expressed the deep content of the need to maintain a single space of inter-ethnic and intercultural communication at

the celebration of the Day of Slavic writing and culture, which followed the Day of Ossetian language and literature. According to the leader, such a language policy testifies “to the commonality of the linguistic space of all peoples living in our multinational republic”; “We are always together, and the richest treasures of each nation and nation, which make up the concept of the “multinational family” of North Ossetia – our common heritage”. The idea of community and diversity consists in a careful attitude to national wealth (“we are equally dear to Russian fairy tales, and the Nart epic of the peoples of the Caucasus, and Greek dances, and Georgian songs, and Ukrainian ditties”) and traditionally significant for Ossetians “respect for the history of the Fatherland, to its main spiritual origins, which became a common destiny for all peoples of Russia” (Bitarov, 2020).

To commemorate the publication of a collection of poems “Ossetian Lira” (Iron fandyr) founder of the Ossetian language and literature, poet, playwright, publicist and artist Costa (Konstantin) Levanovich Khetagurov May 15, 1899 in Vladikavkaz Day of the Ossetian language of literature (The decree *Iran ævzag æmæ literaturæyy bonds tyhhæy*) it is approved in 2003 by the decree of the President RSO-Alania (at that time, A.S. Dzasokhov) in order to increase public attention to the preservation and development of the Ossetian language as the most important component of national culture. This order as a reflection of the strategy of the republic in the field of language policy was written in two languages (in Russian and Ossetian) (Dzasokhov, 2003).

Costa Khetagurov (1959) did not approve of the “zealots of national isolation”, he extended the framework of his native culture, incorporating all the wealth of other peoples into it, demonstrated a brilliant example of cultural interaction: the creative heritage was enriched with poems, plays, articles and notes written in Russian (Dzasokhov, 2009).

Costa's winged lines “The Whole World is My Temple” from the poem “I Am Not a Prophet” (Khetagurov, 1959: 171) predetermined the global trend towards the creation of a common humanitarian space of communication.

Ossetians after the collapse of the USSR are a divided ethnic group – northern Ossetians living in the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania as part of the Russian Federation, and southern Ossetians on the other side of the Caucasian Range, who left Georgia and proclaimed the creation of an independent state in 1991. The Ossetian language is represented by Ironian and Digor dialects and a number of dialects.

Based on a blitz survey conducted by the Res News Agency of the Republic of South Ossetia under the motto “The Future of the Ossetian Language – in Our Hands”, scanning the names and slogans of events in honor of Ossetian Language Day, as well as statements by politicians, we identified metaphorical and value dominants that reproduce the concept of Ossetian language in the language consciousness of Ossetians

The psychological metaphor for the representation of the language, first voiced by Wilhelm von Humboldt, “the language of the people is its spirit, and the spirit of the people is its language” (Humboldt, 1985; Weisgerber, 2004) became the most resonant for this study. The categorization of the basic ethnic value, the Ossetian language, reflected the invariability of the presence of a spiritual core, a source of identity, as one of the most important attributes of social nature, a powerful factor in the formation of the Ossetian ethnic group.

The explication of the image of the native language is structurally represented by single metaphorical models – “Ossetian language is culture/tradition/history” – or metaphorical clusters consisting of psychological, historical, cultural, value, religious types of cognitive metaphors or their combinations serving as multi-directional projections from several conceptual domains:

“The Ossetian language is the soul of the Ossetian ethnic group, its culture, its ancient life, its traditions”;

“<... > language is the soul of the people”;

“It is known that language is an element of the culture and spirituality of the nation”;

“For me, the mother tongue is holy, my history and culture”;

“The native language of the Ossetians is the most precious thing that can be, and it must be preserved”;

“Language is the most valuable part of our culture, and literature is its wealth”.

On Ossetian language the idea of value and a role of the native language verbalize based on the additive metaphorical model attaching floristic, basic, and connective metaphors: “Madælon ævzag at adæymadzhy udyhædy didinæg, næ hjaruya tsædzhyndz, fæltærti 'hsæn fidar a hit <...>”. – Russian language is a flower of soul of the person, a basis of our force, the strong bridge between generations <...>” (Bibilov, 2020).

“The mother tongue of every nation is an invaluable gift that preserves the age-old wisdom of the past and gives strength to live and build for the welfare of future generations” (Machnev, 2020).

In the discourses of the Head of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania Vyacheslav Bitarov and the President of the Republic of South Ossetia Anatoly Bibilov, the metaphorical conceptualization of the Ossetian language is brightly colored ideologically. So, at a speech at the I Congress of Teachers of the Ossetian Language in Vladikavkaz and during the celebration of the Day of the Ossetian Language and Literature in South Ossetia, leaders, through a value metaphor, justified the importance of measures to develop the national language:

“The most valuable thing that our ancestors left us is our native language” (Press service, 2018b).

“Language in its significance is considered the main historical and cultural value, the living memory of the people and the continuation of its history. Centuries later, our ancestors carried the main heritage of their nation – their native language. He was more than once on the verge of extinction, but still managed to preserve his native language” (Bibilov, 2020).

The clarifying metaphor of the repository accumulates the types of metaphors discussed above, presenting the Ossetian language as a treasury of ethnos:

“The Ossetian language is the guardian of the richest spiritual culture” (Unknown author, 2020).

The statement of the Athenian speaker and publicist Socrates “Ellins are called more those who participate in our culture than those who have a common origin with us” (Struve, 1911: 104), repeatedly interpreted by S.B. Struve (1911) in relation to the peoples of Russia, which should be considered Russians, can be paraphrased in relation to the multicultural composition of Ossetian society, which includes more than 110 nationalities in North Ossetia and more than 16 ethnic groups in South Ossetia, as follows: everyone who participates in Ossetian culture is Ossetians, regardless of nationality.

This conclusion is based on the statements of people of various nationalities who consider North and South Ossetia their home, on the patriotic feelings of those “who cherish the history of our people, who consider themselves part of Ossetia” (Machnev, 2017), as well as those “who were born and raised on the land of Ossetia, who consider it their homeland, to whom the centuries-old history of our people is dear”; to those “who cherish Ossetian culture and Ossetian speech, who invest all their strength, knowledge and experience in its development” (Machnev, 2017).

The deep principles of multiculturalism and linguistic diversity that Ossetians have followed for centuries serve as a guide to political, economic, social, religious, and other areas of interaction in any situation of inter-ethnic communication. Under these conditions, all the inhabitants of multinational Ossetia, regardless of nationality, realize the importance of each native language for the spiritual and moral unity of our people.

On the example of the congratulations of the Chairman of the Government of the Republic of North Ossetia Alexei Machnev, ethnic Russian, on the Day of Ossetian Language and Literature, we will demonstrate a metaphorical model, the conceptual structure of which is a combination of objectifiers of



two source spheres with clarifying components: " $X \rightarrow Y_1 (Z + Z_1) + Y_2 (Z_2 + Z_3)$ ", where X is a sphere – a target (Ossetian language),  $Y_1$  is a source sphere<sub>1</sub>,  $Y_2$  is a source sphere<sub>2</sub>,  $(Z + Z_1)$  are elements of the first refinement  $(Z_2 + Z_3)$  are elements of the second refinement. Through the updating of resources of two conceptual domains, legal and evolutionary metaphorical models are implemented:

"The Ossetian language for our people is not only a unique source of national customs and original traditions transmitted from generation to generation, but also the main guarantee of its identity and development" (Machnev, 2017).

Bishop Leonid of Vladikavkaz and Alansky (Gorbachev), who takes serious steps to introduce the Ossetian language into everyday liturgical practice, through cultural, historical and value metaphors, associates himself with the Ossetian people and manifests the duty of his ministry to preserve and develop the ethnic integrity of Ossetians:

"<... > our ancestors were able to carry through the centuries and preserve for the descendants their treasure – the ancient Alan language";

"Language is the living memory of the people and the continuation of their history" (Leonid, 2017).

The metaphor of the condition, exploited in Ossetian and Russian, reflects hypothetically supposed consequences, which can be caused by the refusal to carefully preserve and maintain the language of the ethnos: "Næj ævzag – næj adæm" / "No language – no people" / "If there is no language, then there will be no people" (Mamsurov, 2013).

Based on a materialistic comparative metaphorical construction, the Ossetian language is likened to the mother's mother: "He (language) should be as sweet to us as the mother". The statement of one of the respondents who used the phraseologism "absorb with mother's milk" – "absorb from an early age" also adjoins the cognitive field of motherhood:

"It (tongue) is absorbed with the mother's milk" (Unknown author, 2020).

The analysis of the names-slogans of events and book exhibitions dedicated to the Day of the Ossetian Language and Literature made it possible to find several more perspectives on the metaphorical conceptualization of the Ossetian language – this is a metaphorical chain, exposed by chemical and luminescent models of Ossetians. "Iron Avzag! Mæ of a zyndzha find fault, ma with an art! Ærttivel!" – Russian. "Ossetian language! My fire, my fire! Sparkle!" (Press Service, 2018a). This statement as a complex cognitive education begins with a personalized appeal to the Ossetian language with a capital letter.

The comparative astronomical model shows functional signs of luminescence: oset. "(Iron abzar) Ænusty særtæ næm to ærttivy stjalyya" – Russian "(Ossetic) In centuries burns (shines) as a star". Thus, in the Ossetian picture of the world, the Ossetian language is associated with a source of light, heat, brilliance (Tameryan et al., 2020).

## Conclusions

Philosophical reflection on the phenomenon of bilingualism confirmed the role of language as a factor in the development of personality and society.

The philosophical approach made it possible to determine the essence and features of bilingualism, to identify the unifying role of not only the national, but also the ethnic language in the multicultural regions of the country on the example of North Ossetia. The philosophical ideas of bilingualism confirm the concept of linguistic design of thinking, revealing the functions of various languages when thinking about reality based on switching language codes. And the most important thing in the philosophical understanding of bilingualism is that this approach allows us to show the axiological and value-oriented functions of the native and second languages in the territory of compact residence of various ethnic groups.

Summarizing the analysis of empirical material, we note the following. Thanks to the policy of multiculturalism and the strategy of forming common humanitarian values, not only representatives of the Ossetian ethnic group, but also other nationalities showed a sense of the “spirit of the Ossetian land”, a common regional identity expressed through the Ossetian language.

In the bilingual picture of the world of speakers of Ossetian and Russian languages of the inhabitants of North and South Ossetia, a figurative representation of the concept of “Ossetian language” based on the results of the study is realized based on 15 types of conceptual metaphors: astronomical, basic, historical, connective, cultural, psychological, religious, materialistic, metaphor of storage, metaphor of luminescence, conditional, floristic,

Cognitive models of Ossetian language image explication are structured into single, combined, cluster and comparative. The semantic-syntactic compatibility of key elements in complex metaphorical models is formed due to addiction, concretization, or refinement.

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