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LANGUAGES IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS REGION AND IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE: CULTURE, SEMIOTICS, AND POLITICS

Southeastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus share numerous similarities in the sociodynamic importance of their languages. This paper asks which features illustrate this and provides a few examples. We assume that internal and external factors always accompany standardization issues, minority language treatment, and geographic language distribution. Thus, we emphasize these similarities between Southeast Europe and the South Caucasus and analyze them from linguistic, cultural, semiotic, and political perspectives.

Keywords: Southeastern Europe, Southern Caucasus, Multilingualism, Intercultural Communication, Cultural Semiotics, Linguistic Diversity, Language Politics.

1. Introduction

Beyond the fact that the nations of Southeastern Europe and Southern Caucasus were previously dominated by state socialist political and economic systems, a fact that came with specific isolation from Western European values, at least in the period 1945–90, they have in common, first and foremost, an openness to linguistic and cultural alterity.

Both regions have a fascinating experience of diversity, whether we are talking about diversity in ethnicities, languages, religions, history, or somewhat more pragmatic matters like diversity in economic and technological development. However, people living in these two regions know that the experience of diversity does not come dressed only in the clothes of harmony and picturesqueness or accompanied by the idyllic scent of discovering the other.

To become a school of tolerance and dialogue with the other, diversity must transcend divisions among major ethnic and language groups, understand religious heterogeneity, cultural and linguistic diversity, and their political significance, in a word, the complex and problematic relationship between linguistic diversity and language communities (Vervaeet and Mandić, 2022).

Suppose we refer to the Southeastern Europe region. In that case, even though there are various sensitivities regarding the name – which cannot be strictly delimited by geographical determinations or in terms of historical contexts – it is accepted that it is the place of twelve nations, ten major ethnic groups, five major language groups, and four major religious groups. The major ethnic groups are differentiated based on language, particularly the distinctly different languages of Albanian, Hungarian, Greek, Turkish, Romanian, as well as the largest group which are the Southern Slavic languages of Bulgarian, Bosnian, Croatian, Macedonian, Serbian, and Slovenian. However, these major language groups have many words in common (Simkus, 2012: 399). Things are not the same when it comes to religious denominations. Some of the major ethnic groups are heterogeneous about religion, which opens up another discussion about the role of religion and the historical context regarding cultural differences in the region (Simkus, 2012: 399).

The Southern Caucasus, a relatively small geographical region located between two seas, the Black Sea on the west and the Caspian Sea on the East, also enjoys a long history and rich culture, being called by medieval Arab historians “a mountain of tongues” (Catford, 1977; Chumakina, 2011; both cited in Polinsky, 2020: 1). According to Mariei Polinsky, “the ethnic complexity of the Caucasus is unequalled in Eurasia, with nearly sixty distinct peoples, including Russians and Ukrainians” (Colarusso, 2009; cited in Polinsky, 2020: 1). The linguistic diversity among these ethnic groups is impressive. Of the approximately one hundred languages spoken in the Caucasus, there are three prominent language families considered indigenous, namely Kartvelian (also known as South Caucasian), Northwest Caucasian (other names: Abkhaz-Adyghe, West Caucasian), and Nakh-Dagestanian (also known as East Caucasian or Northeast Caucasian; Polinsky, 2020: 1-2; Dobrushina, Daniel, and Koryakov, 2020: 27).

It can be easily observed that in both regions, but especially in the Southern Caucasus region, multilingualism is “more a norm than an exception, and research on language contact among languages of the area has always been very productive” (Polinsky, 2020: 3). Therefore, this paper is an opportunity for us to (re)open the discussion about the social relevance of languages in the South Caucasus and Southeastern Europe, regions that, as we have seen, through the complexity of their cultural, historical and political realities, can provide us with a better understanding of the experience of diversity in general.

2. Multilingualism as a semiotic space of encounter with otherness

We live in a world that celebrates and studies linguistic diversity. For example, for 84% of Europeans, regional and minority languages should be protected, according to the latest European Commission Barometer (European Commission, 2024). Furthermore, “attitudes towards multilingualism are considerably positive among EU citizens, with 86% agreeing that everyone should speak at least one other language than their mother tongue and 69% more than one additional language” (European Commission, 2024).

Multilingualism, however, does not only refer to the ability of a speaker belonging to an ethnic group to express themselves in several languages with a particular competence that allows communication of the other. Understood as linguistic adaptability to another language community, multilingualism does not have only an instrumental value.

Learning a new language allows you to step into the universe of language meanings while preserving the nostalgia and depth of your mother tongue to gain new perspectives on understanding different cultures and experiences. Therefore, as a semiotic practice, multilingualism involves creative thinking in encountering with otherness (Marian, 2023).

In a previous article, we talked about the fact that each word is accompanied by a subjective experiential reality of its history (Coșeriu, 1977; cited in Drăgan and Fârte, 2022: 9). In the opinion of the Romanian linguist, “the joy, sadness, pain, and fear of man, his way of considering the world and his attitude towards it, all this is reflected in the word, in the act of linguistic creation” (Coșeriu, 1977: 100). The re-enactment of a short sequence from a TV interview with the Romanian actor Tudor Gheorghe, in which he recounts a friendly meeting with the philosopher Emil Cioran in Paris, seems relevant to our discussion:

Tudor Gheorghe: [...] I sang to Cioran, and he was fascinated. And I asked him – “Mr Cioran! I was told you don’t speak much Romanian”. And he said to me – “Honey, when I left Rășinari and arrived in Paris, I swore to be the best French-speaking stylist,” which he did. He told me he had to forget Romanian to do that.. And he no longer spoke Romanian. And I say – “Well, yes, you still

speak Romanian with me now. Why don’t you always speak Romanian?” He says to me – “Honey, for me, the words are heavy; they make sense. My words do not fly; they are true. For me, every word in Romanian hurts. If I say the word wheel, I only think it is a wheel. It is a wheel that turns, whether a truck or a train, and all the wheels go on a road, and all these roads take me to Rășinari; I go home. Every word in Romanian takes me home”. (Antena 1, Oct 22, 2021)

The attitude of the Romanian philosopher, established in Paris in 1937, masterfully demonstrates the faces and effects of multilingualism. It is a semiotic space in which the fragile mediation between mother tongue nostalgia and the language of the community one chooses to live in is achieved.

Viewed from this perspective as a semiotic space that allows mediation between our complicated and chaotic worlds, multilingualism becomes “a meeting place of emergent conversations, is a space of equivocation, partial understanding, and learning” (cf. Maturana and Varela, 1980; Menezes De Souza, 2017; both cited in Stroud, 2023: 155). According to Christopher Stroud (2023, 155), multilingualism is:

A sensorium through which we can experience, interpret, and orientate to the multiple semiotic environments we inhabit. It provides a way of experiencing the world through difference and vulnerability, and as a medium for change – becoming- with – of selves and others in new modes of co-existence”.

Only in this way does multilingualism transcend the instrumental dimension and become a semiotic space that allows the miracle of encountering otherness.

3. The social relevance of languages in the South Caucasus and Southeastern Europe

The role of language has been semiotically analyzed in various contexts. Starting with Lotman, linguistic features are related to receptivity and associativity (Zolyan, 2020). This paper refers to approaches that handle

which constellations shape this language culture and highlight semiotic, and political circumstances. Our analysis relates to the Southern Caucasus region and Southeastern Europe. We will outline some similar issues in both areas and categorize them thematically.

The connections between language and culture were developed primarily in Russian studies. There, the idea arose that numerous characteristics distinguish a language culture from its outside world. In Russian, the term “лингвокультура” (“language culture”) was launched, which still has a powerful impact on the scholar landscape today. Language is, therefore, a construct that unites a community. It reflects thought patterns, mentalities, and ideas about certain constellations, such as history or territory (Zinovieva, 2016: 19-27). This means that all speakers are intrinsically interested in standing up for the appreciation of language so that social units are preserved.

Languages are unique. They developed over centuries, and numerous intellectuals, clergy members, and institutions often contributed to consolidating literary norms. It is well known that languages need a certain standard for speakers to orient themselves. This begins with the script system and continues through orthography and lexis to sets of rules, dictionaries, and textbooks. Successful standardization processes are symbols of successful language development, strongly linked to cultural emancipation and language upward mobility. From a historical perspective, these processes have been comprehensively described and are part of any qualitative introduction to linguistics, literary studies, or regional studies. In the Caucasus region, Georgia and Armenia have produced their writing systems and literary languages. In Southeastern Europe, the Greek and Cyrillic alphabets emerged, with the latter being used today in Serbia, Macedonia, and Bulgaria. Latin script is used today in other countries in the region, such as Romania and Albania. In all these languages, textbooks and grammars exist, and there is a social consensus on the relevance of the national language. No one doubts that these are standardized state languages that are used in certain countries according to clearly defined rules. These languages have developed a strong language culture.

Nevertheless, some tendencies are less in the focus. Some of them demonstrate the social energy that language emancipatory processes represent. They react to specific social developments, and we are particularly interested in two trends: On the one hand, unifying tendencies emerged in the linguistic reality of many societies. This means that different cultural, religious, or ethnic groups define themselves as a close unit in a linguistic sense. However, there are also tendencies that we can describe as emancipatory because a particular group of speakers separates from its closely related language structure.

We will now use concrete examples to examine what topics, such as unification, were included in the South Caucasian and Southeastern European semiotic context, starting with Georgia, a multi-ethnic country in the Southern Caucasus. The state is home to numerous minority languages, such as Armenian, Aramaic, and Avaric, and religious diversity,¹ e.g., Christian Orthodoxy and Sunni Islam. One example of linguistic unification is the region of Adjara on the Black Sea. Many of the people living there are Muslims who speak Georgian. However, the religious difference has not led to the emergence of linguistic separatism (as is the case with Hindi in India and Urdu in Pakistan, which are one language system in a typological sense). Unifying tendencies can also be attested in the Armenian language, which is spoken in a fissured form from what is now eastern Turkey to Lebanon in an eastern and a western variant with numerous dialects. However, this sizeable geographical territory has not led to the development of different local linguistic identities. We also find this unifying tendency about linguistic identity in Southeastern Europe. In Albania, for example, the two aspects of geographical fragmentation and religious diversity even go together. The language is divided into a northern (the so-called Ghegian) and a southern (the Tosk) variety, both spoken across borders in several countries. The main speakers are Muslims, and some are Christians. Despite these differences, the Albanian language culture has developed a strong sense of togetherness (more on Albanian, cf. Giesel, 2002).

This brings us to the question of how emancipatory processes arise in languages. They can be politically motivated, observed particularly well in Southeastern Europe. For example, attempts were made to drive a wedge between the speakers of the varieties of Romanian in Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Especially in the Russian Tsarist Empire and then in the Soviet Union, people spoke of a so-called Moldavian language (Brezianu and Spânu, 2010: 233) and used the Cyrillic script, while in Romania, they had already switched to the Latin script long before. However, this is being reversed, as the Republic of Moldova is not continuing the Soviet tradition of state-led separatism of ethnic groups and languages (on the Romance languages in the region, see a paper by Kahl, 2008).

The situation of Serbo-Croatian also shows that political events often lead to the division of a language. Of course, Serbian and Croatian are typologically the same languages, but not sociolinguistically. However, these two languages are more institutionalized than, for instance, Montenegrin, which is currently seeking new paths (Čirgić, 2008: 172; Čirgić, 2009; Vujović, 2023: 4-6).

¹ For this issue, see the context of an essay by Novalis (cf. Simyan, 2017).

However, the fact that post-Yugoslavian linguistic reorientation has not been addressed in the same way as, say, in Serbia or Croatia, is possibly due to the lower social stability of Montenegrin (Dudás, 2021: 13-16; Vujović, 2023: 4; Henzelmann, 2024: 252-253; Vujović, 2024). It remains open to how this constellation will develop in the future.

As we can see, unification and emancipation are important components in the social role of languages. They must be evaluated and described from a semiotic perspective, especially against a cultural, literary, and historical background. In any case, one may say that a language is a social immaterial good (Vujović, 2023: 7), but what follows from that? This question has hardly been examined from a semiotic perspective, so we will try to address some points, at least briefly. When studying linguistic culture, it is assumed that a language functions as a social tool, which includes semiotic issues. The proof is the numerous imaginary components through which a particular group of speakers achieves its uniqueness and is held together (in detail, cf. Zinovieva, 2016).

However, we can also go further back because, in the Lotman tradition, as is well known, the point is that language models coexist in a sustainable way (cf. Zolyan, 2020 for further details). This means the immaterial ground is significant from a cultural semiotic perspective. It is not measured by hard facts but by fluid parameters from which the entire community benefits daily. Novica Vujović argues in several contributions that it is precisely for this reason that languages need exceptional support if they are to be adequately protected as an instrument of communication, precisely because they are an intangible asset (Vujović, 2023: 4; Vujović, 2024: 30).

Nevertheless, this also brings us to the following problem: What should a linguistic good be based on from a semiotic perspective? What does standard grammar teach us, or what is the oral variety we are confronted with? We see these two components in a part-whole relationship and think they belong together and represent cultural values. Let us start with the standard language we learn at school and use in writing. Today, countless sets of rules and manuals convey an approach to language. Behind these are didactic concepts that are combined and taught using modern language didactic methods for both the native language and a foreign language (Vesselinov, 2019; Vesselinov, 2020: 7). The concrete benefits are, therefore, the same and everywhere written language can be used in all social domains because everyone learns the same norms. Newspapers, signposts, regulations, and other inscriptions become universally understandable messages.

We tend to call these regularities, which a speaker interprets as standard language and which represent an unmarked use of language, the *inner language*

standard, which gives a language expressive power and represents the obligatory (and therefore universal) structure for the entire group of speakers. In contrast to this, however, we also recognize an *external language standard* that is based on the discussion of accepted norms by the above-mentioned linguist Eugeniu Coșeriu. This covers certain forms of expression not defined in more detail by a written standard but based on pragmatic linguistic tradition. These include not only standard language variations but also unique dialects, obsolete expressions and neologisms, innovations, and socially accepted and practiced forms of communication (cf. Čirgić, 2009; Vesselinov, 2020; Vujović, 2023; Vujović, 2024, among others). From a semiotic and didactic perspective, this creates a dichotomy between “incorrect” and “correct” language use, as it sets binding guidelines for languages that leave little space for variation.

Now that we have seen that language variation and language standard are two levels that evoke different semiotic associations, we come to the next problem. This is the question of what status minorities have in a society and how their languages are respected or not. In addition to individual legal situations, each country has unique features that mark interethnic relations. The Charter for European Minority or Regional Languages is also important, as it has been received differently. In Armenia, where we have a relatively homogeneous demographic structure with around 98% of the ethnic Armenian population (Zolyan, 2019: 197), the Charter was signed and ratified. This means that even small minorities and their languages enjoy special protection status. The situation is reversed in Georgia, with only around 80% of ethnic Georgians living there. The rest – one in five citizens – belong to a different ethnic group. It creates an entirely different ethnolinguistic constellation than in Armenia, but the government in Tbilisi refuses to sign or ratify the Charter. This is a symbolic and geopolitical sign, especially in the direction of Russian: While the latter language is legally protected in Armenia, it is to be left out in Georgia, even though Russian is very widely spoken in both countries (Megrelishvili and Chheidze, 2011: 460-461).

Suren Zolyan provides a separate overview of the situation in Armenia: He describes that, unlike in many former Soviet republics, the Russian community in Armenia was never vital regarding numbers. For this reason, the significance of the Russian language was determined not so much by ethnicity but rather by political, social, and cultural factors. Under the historical and geopolitical conditions that most recently existed when Armenia was incorporated into the Soviet Union, the Russian language has played a role. It still continues to be of significance in the country, and this applies to Armenians and other ethnic groups (Zolyan, 2019: 199-200). As proof, the country’s linguistic landscape is shaped mainly by including the Russian

language in public spaces, as seen in the picture (Fig. 1). It shows a trilingual signpost at the railway station in Yerevan, including Armenian, Russian, and English languages.



Fig. 1. Main Railway Station, Yerevan, Armenia.

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Thus, the situation in Southeastern Europe is complex, too: while Serbia, Croatia, and Romania have signed and ratified the Charter for European Minority or Regional Languages, the Republic of North Macedonia has so far only signed it. The states of Albania, Bulgaria, and Greece have not even done so and have their different approaches to ethnic minorities and their languages. Take Serbia, for example. Several recognized national minorities live there, most of whom have been able to declare their language as a regional minority language. It is not difficult to implement stable languages such as Romanian, spoken in the north and east of Serbia, because the political will to do so exists. Romania can provide immediate support for teaching materials and staff if needed. Therefore, Serbian law requires schools, road signs, television programs, newspapers, and other types of media in which Romanian is written and spoken. The Romanian language is also studied and taught at universities such as Novi Sad (Vintilă, 2013: 480).

In Serbia, the most recent sample of significance in linguistic policy is the introduction of the language of the Bunjevci as a separate minority language. This small ethnic group has undergone an enormous emancipation process over the last three decades and is now taught in schools in Vojvodina in northern Serbia (Henzelmann, 2016: 357-358). Although the protection of minorities is a strategy of reconciliation and acceptance, people and institutions that welcome these emancipatory processes, such as the Serbian government,

academia, and the Bunjevci community itself, have been harshly criticized by Croatia. In the latter country, this group is not regarded as a separate ethnicity, but it is seen as a Croatian subethnicity (Henzelmann, 2016: 354, 357). In contrast to other forms of acceptance of minorities, the step of language tolerance taken in Serbia created a politically explosive issue between Serbia and Croatia (Henzelmann, 2017: 37-38).

We can assume that minority issues in the region are highly politicized and bring to the surface the power of interpretation over certain phenomena, such as historical or cultural issues. What is this connected to? Of course, the answer to this question is very complex and runs the risk of being open to ambiguous interpretations. What is important is that there are never one-sided somatizations in the sense of language culture that include several topics that a community of speakers considers important. Whether this coincides with other opinions is another question that requires a separate investigation.

It is also clear that languages have their limits. The communication radius and the outer boundary in a geographical, linguistic, and political sense can explain this. In some cases, language borders coincide with state borders, such as between Armenia and Iran. In other instances, cross-border speakers such as the Armenian community in Georgia (Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe) and elsewhere in the region can be recognized. It means that an external language border is defined by the areas where the speakers settle, whether as a leading group or as a minority, as seen above. Historical affinities often become visible, especially regarding questions of border demarcation, which have led to deep political crises between countries over generations. This issue is widespread in the Caucasus, as demonstrated by the status debate surrounding Abkhazia or South Ossetia. However, such constellations can also be found in Southeastern Europe, for example, in the question of Kosovo's geopolitical structures. That is why external language borders can become a serious problem between states, as they are linked to questions of cultural history, sovereignty of interpretation, territorial claims, and psychological and mental factors. Here, we will not go further into this topic, but we should mention it in the context of external language borders.

The problems within the internal boundaries of a language are even more complex. One may ask whether the numerous Turkish loans common to the South Caucasian and Southeastern European languages are a hereditary trait or an inherited burden. The question is not unjustified, as numerous debates arose in the 19th century. As a result, scholars and enthusiasts repeatedly juggled between linguistic purism and openness to foreign influences, evident in all our languages. Take Bulgarian as an example of internal language development in Southeastern Europe: Here, we find numerous influences from

Turkish that had to be integrated into the linguistic system of a Slavic language, as described extensively by Milena Yordanova and Dimitar Vesselinov (Yordanova and Vesselinov, 2019). The authors focus on phonetic, morphological, and semantic concepts of particular relevance. This is understandable because phonemes such as /ö/ or /ü/, which occur in Turkic languages and thus in numerous Turkish loans, must be adapted to the Bulgarian sound inventory. The same applies to the sound inventory of Romanian, but in the latter, we find fewer Turkish words than in Bulgarian.

Furthermore, let us look at the foreign influences left behind by French in both languages of Bulgarian and Romanian. We can make the opposite observation: It is well known that French was the most important language of education, culture, and science in the 19th century, i.e., at the time of the national revival of numerous Southeastern European nations. As a result, modern Romanian became very close to French regarding orthography and lexicon. The latter point, in particular, is not very problematic, as both Romance languages developed based on Vulgar Latin and share numerous historical similarities. The situation is different in Bulgarian, where the problem of integrating foreign loans into the native language system arose again, which, as in the case of Turkish, was bridged by leveling and innovations. In any case, the French played a decisive role in the Europeanization of the languages in the region (Vesselinov, 2016; Henzelmann, 2019; Vesselinov, 2019).

The question of a language's external and internal boundaries is relevant for culture and semiotics. First, it determines where a language may be used in practice and what political support it receives in that territory. Second, it shapes how this language will be applied, the institutions to which it is introduced, the possibilities for teaching and public use, and how the phenomenon of linguistic minorities is regarded. All these aspects provide information about symbiotic constructions that are relevant for languages and cultures: if a language is spoken in several countries, for example, as a state language or as a recognized minority language, then it can be assumed that different states stand in a relatively good relationship with each other. However, if minority languages are not recognized, or if their recognition is to be prevented, these are serious indications of at least potential conflicts between states. However, we do not want to go so far as to speak of what is called a "language conflict" because we believe that, in most cases, conflicts are a matter of geopolitical sovereignty and misleading interpretation. For this reason, it is important to scrutinize inter-state relations in the Southern Caucasus and Southeastern Europe when concluding how politics manages different languages.

The appreciation of linguistic diversity is a topic that has been discussed extensively and controversially in both regions. In Southeastern Europe, pra-

ctically all societies have a multi-ethnic structure. In some cases, they are very heterogeneous, for example, in North Macedonia, the Vojvodina in Serbia, or the Dobruja region in Romania. Some other states in Southeastern Europe also have substantial minorities, such as Bulgaria, or at least recognizable ethnic and linguistic diversity on a regional level, such as Greece (for instance, cf. Henzelmann, 2017: 40) or Albania (cf. Giesel, 2002: 115). Looking at the Southern Caucasus, we can draw a similar heterogeneous picture for Georgia but not for Armenia. The latter country is a significant exception with its homogeneous population structure, although we should note that there are some regional specifics. These include, for example, the ethnically diverse capital of Yerevan or some regions of the country where the Yazidis live. A second point distinguishes the Armenians from all other countries in the Southern Caucasus: they live in the diaspora in practically every region and beyond, as far as Greece, Bulgaria, Syria, Iran, Lebanon, and others. This is unique, as other peoples of the Caucasus also settle beyond the borders of their mother state, but not in such a large geographical area as Armenians do. In Southeastern Europe, we find cross-border ethnic structures, such as the Serbs in Montenegro or Albania or the Albanians in Serbia, Greece, or southern Italy. It is beyond doubt that these structures and the different conditions for using a mother tongue that differs from the state language have a decisive influence on linguistic semiotic concepts in the perception of one's culture and international relations.

4. Conclusions

Thus, we can conclude that this paper discusses assessing the social relevance of languages in the Southern Caucasus and Southeastern Europe. We have seen numerous similarities between these two regions and the circumstances under which their languages developed. These include the complex foreign influences from other languages, which in both regions came from Turkish (cf. Yordanova and Vesselinov, 2019; Hacı and Zafer, 2021). On the one hand, this is because these regions belonged to the Ottoman Empire. However, on the other hand, it is also motivated by the presence of significant ethnic Turkish minorities, such as in Bulgaria on a large scale and in North Macedonia and Greece on a regional level. The influence of the Turkish language also applies to the Caucasus, but the traces the Russian language left were much stronger overall, affecting practically all languages in the region. In Southeastern Europe, Russian was primarily limited to the most important Slavic languages in Bulgaria, Serbia, and North Macedonia.

Furthermore, we can see that internal and external factors always influence the social significance of a language. The external factors often provide information about geopolitical constellations and neighborly contacts. In other words, they show us the relationship between states and how this constellation affects linguistic phenomena in the respective countries. The situation is different with internal factors, as, in principle, they coincide with the normative discussion and the regular use of a language. These can be accepted or changed, of which numerous examples exist in Southeastern Europe. All in all, languages represent an extremely relevant socio-dynamic aspect encompassing all levels of a state's cultural, mental, historical, and geopolitical constellation. Many of these aspects have been evaluated separately but have hardly been dealt with in a comprehensive, semiotically structured concept. Future studies will remain to tackle this task.

Finally, we believe that comparing the languages of Southeastern Europe and the South Caucasian regions would be particularly exciting and informative. Such a comparison must be systematically structured, and the considerable linguistic diversity of both regions must be studied in more detail than is possible in our overview.

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ЈЕЗИЦИ У ЈУЖНОМ КАВКАЗКОМ РЕГИОНУ И У ЈУГОИСТОЧНОЈ ЕВРОПИ: КУЛТУРА, СЕМИОТИКА И ПОЛИТИКА

Југоисточна Европа и Јужни Кавказ деле бројне сличности у социодинамичком значају својих језика. Овај рад поставља питање које карактеристике то илуструју и даје неколико примера. Претпостављамо да унутрашњи и спољашњи фактори увек прате питања стандардизације, третман мањинских језика и географску дистрибуцију језика. Стога, наглашавамо ове сличности између југоисточне Европе и Јужног Кавказа и анализирамо их из лингвистичке, културне, семиотичке и политичке перспективе.

Кључне речи: *Југоисточна Европа, Јужни Кавказ, вишејезичност, интеркултурална комуникација, културна семиотика, језичка разноликост, језичка политика.*