

Use of Diminutive Personal Names in the Georgian Formal Discourse

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Abstract

In the given article we examine the usage of diminutive personal names within a formal/institutional discourse on the example of the Georgian linguistic realm. We primarily focus on the current trend of using diminutive personal names in Georgian formal discourse. We will also try to identify the socio-linguistic causes of diminutive personal name usage within the Georgian formal discourse while comparing it with the same trends in other languages. Another sphere of our focus will be the usage of the mentioned names by the Georgian politicians (including their nicknames), journalists etc. as an objective indicator of their widespread utilization.

Two basic questions will be posed within our inquiry:

- Why the usage of diminutive personal names has become widespread in Georgian discourse?
- What is its psycho-linguistic underpinnings?

Keywords: diminutive, discourse, Georgian, discursive strategy

Introduction

Firstly, we try to provide a theoretical background of an issue giving general definitions of some basic terms/concepts and begin with giving a meaning of diminutive names. "Diminutive names are mainly used by older adults or younger children to refer to younger family members, and it often has a vertical and a descending direction. Children and junior family members seldom use diminutive forms of adults' personal names, although there may be exceptions. Peers or children use hypocorisms

horizontally. Often, hypocorisms are used through ought entire adulthood, sometimes even till the end of one's life" (Ferguson, 1977, p. 234).

As seen from the definition given above, proper (personal) names have two forms of usage – formal and informal. This kind of usage can be put within two main discourse usage form in general, which are primary and secondary discourses. Accordingly, two types of discourses should be classified in this manner:

Primary and Secondary Discourses

Primary discourse	Secondary discourse
House	Public sphere: schools, workplaces, institutions
Acquired naturally	Usually taught through overt instruction (especially in school)
Basis of identity	Can only be acquired fluently through apprenticeships/ enculturation
Used to make sense of the world and interact with others	Can be a dominant secondary Discourse, which brings money, power and prestige
Is often influenced by socioeconomic status	Can be in conflict with a primary discourse
Students from marginalized communities and disadvantaged backgrounds have a harder time reconciling primary and dominant secondary Discourses	You are either fluent, or you are not a part of the discourse. There is no in-between.

(Wallis, 2015).

Logically, standard forms of proper names should fall into the first (secondary discourse) category, while their diminutive forms must belong to the second (primary discourse). However, in our case it is obvious, that this rule is not valid/universal and in the issue examined here (usage of diminutive name forms within the Georgian public discourse), we have a conflict between the two (Primary and secondary discourses).

Therefore, one should make a correlation between these:

- Proper names: used within secondary/formal discourse.
- Diminutive forms (of names): used within the primary/informal discourse.

From this point, the difference between proper and diminutive forms and their corresponding characteristics should be identified.

- Formal names are associated with: success, morality
- Diminutive names are associated with: popularity, credibility, closeness

Therefore, in this regard, our subject of interest should be: "Why is it, that people who have been known by one particular name for all their lives, when they reach the age of thirty, suddenly decide to be called by a name by which no one knows them?" (Safire, 1992).

As it turns out, first names are judged higher in traits like intelligence and trustworthiness than nicknames, while nicknames are rated more positively for characteristics like warmth, friendliness and popularity (Meyers, Hansen, 2011).

A general characteristic and a function of diminutive names is that they can add a certain degree of popularity to those who use them, indicating their "modernity", when a person wants to appear in the eyes of others in a positive emotional form. Therefore, their usage must have a certain advantage for a person using them. Elaborating on the above-mentioned, we adopt the notion to the usage of diminutive names by politicians. In the same manner, politicians, presumably have a tendency of using their names in a diminutive form as it should have a specific benefit for them, which is to create one's positive social image.

Again, we have to emphasize an obvious inconsistency between the proper/diminutive names usage by public figures, when they use an element of primary (informal) discourse within a secondary (formal) discourse and pose the following questions:

- Why do individuals choose their diminutive names as part of their formal discourse?
- What possible comparative advantages may the use of diminutive personal names have? Can it be considered as a kind of discursive strategy for achieving certain (political) goals?
- How consciously do public figures the use the diminutive forms of their personal names in formal discourse?

One possible rational explanation/motivation can be formulated as already given above, which is -creating an informal image by politicians/being close to the electorate/being „one of them“.

“Strained First-Name Informality”

From this point, the tendency of diminutive names usage can be linked to a specific psychological notion. The notion should be examined within a fundamental proposition, that a name is to a person's self-awareness. Before trying to elaborate the given phenomena from the psychological point of view, one should pose a question: Can the use of diminutive names by politicians in their public discourse be regarded as an indicator of an identity crisis / Or is it just a part of their discursive strategy? If the second proposition is true, the use of diminutive forms by individuals may be considered a deliberate act, intended to achieve certain (political) goals.

There is a general tendency in the West (as well as in Georgia) of giving babies unconventional names (a totally unique name can be chosen, or an official name is being changed into a diminutive form and used officially). Now parents increasingly look for unique names or spellings of names. As baby names become a matter of choice rather than tradition, they reveal more about the people doing the choosing (Kremer, 2014).

As mentioned already, changing one's proper name must have some sort of function/advantage from a pragmatic point of view. One may argue, that it does: "It is suggested that the decision to alter one's forename may be determined in part by the relative costs and rewards associated with interpersonal

exchange. Willingness to shorten the forename was found to be strongly related to favorableness, satisfaction with one's experience" (Darrel, Drury, McCarthy, 1980).

Now, a psychological elaboration of this psycho-linguistic act can be given. As it turns out, the phenomenon is linked with a narcissistic deprivation (of parents). Parents express themselves through the names they give to their children. Specifically, patients with narcissistic deprivation, in particular, tend to give their children names which often reflect their own deprivations (Nadav, Ephratt, Rabin, Shiber, 2013).

However, Celebrities aren't the only ones giving their babies unusual names. Compared with decades ago, parents are choosing less common names for kids, which could suggest an emphasis on uniqueness and individualism, according to new research. When taken too far, however, this individualism could also lead to narcissism (Bryner, 2010).

The same psycho-linguistic feature can be interpreted as a type of impression management tactics, where "people's choice of English/foreign names are somehow a strategy for identity management – certain names are chosen to show a pleasant personality, or other desirable qualities that they wanted to project to others. Although **impression management tactics** have been extensively studied, there seems no attention paid on **the use of names to manage impression**" (Cheang, 2008).

Another interesting characteristic of a diminutive form usage, paradoxical as it may sound, is that it is linked with a higher social status. For example, it turns out, that people with easier-to-pronounce surnames occupy higher status positions in law firms (Laham, Koval, Alter, 2011).

In 2011, LinkedIn analyzed more than 100 million user profiles to find out which names are most associated with the CEO position. The most common names for men were short, often one-syllable names like Bob, Jack, and Bruce. A name specialist speculates that men in power may use nicknames to offer a sense of friendliness and openness (Rogati, 2011).

Again, a significantly high percentage of Fortune 500 CEOs go by nicknames. This is readily apparent, when you rattle off the most prominent ones like Jeff Immelt, Steve Balmer, Tim Cook, Jamie Dimon, Meg Whitman, etc. I believe that short names are potentially correlated with leadership success for the simple reason that they engender close association and camaraderie.

Nicknames and short names of successful people: Bill Clinton, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Jack Welch,

Fred Wilson, Larry Ellison, Larry Page. It's almost difficult to think of the business leaders without a short names or nicknames (Steinberg, 2013).

Diminutive Forms Usage in Georgian Public Discourse

As to the usage of diminutive names by the Georgian public figures in their formal/institutional discourses, elaborations given above can also be applied, in general. However, there some specifics to it. A general trend in Georgia is, that diminutive forms of official names are widely used by these public figures: 1. by politicians, 2. by journalists, 3. by employees of official institutions/organizations.

Firstly, it would be helpful to figure out if there are certain rules of using proper/diminutive names in everyday language, respectively. Based on a literature review conducted within a given inquiry, one source gives clear definitions/instructions in terms of proper/diminutive names usage:

"...There should be one official name, **the use of diminutive names as official names is impermissible**, but it is also necessary to regulate the usage of diminutive names.

It is not appropriate to use any diminutive name, either. Therefore, next to the official names (with some exceptions), properly selected diminutive names are being provided in the brackets. Examples: ანა (ანიკო, ანო, ანუკა), ეკატერინე (ეკა, კატო), მარიამი (მარო, მარიკო), სოფიო (სოფო, სოფიკო), ალექსანდრე (სანდრო), გრიგოლი (გიგა, გიგო, გიგოლი, გიგლა), გიორგი (გიო, გა, გოგი, გოგიტა), ზაქარია (ზაქრო, შაქრო), მიხეილი (მიხა, მიხო, მიხაკო) და სხვა. Ana (Aniko, Ano, Anuka), Ekaterine (Eka, Kato), Mariami (Maro, Mariko), Sofio (Sofa, Sofiko), Aleksandre (Sandro), Grigoli (Giga, Gigo, Gigoli, Gigla), Giorgi (Gio, Gia, Gogi, Gogita), Zakaria (Zakro, Shakro), Mikheili (Mikha, Mikho, Mikhako)...

Names given in parentheses are recommended as unofficial names corresponding to the official ones. **It is impermissible to use them** in official documents (passport, ID card, certificate, diploma ...), in institutions and schools, official lists and other similar documentations". (თანამედროვე ქართული სალიტერატურო ენის ნორმები : პირველი კრებული/ რედაქტორი: ივ. გიგინეიშვილი ; საქართველოს სსრ მეცნიერებათა აკადემია, ენათმეცნიერების ინსტიტუტი, ადამიანთა სახელების სარეკომენდაციო სია გვ. 238-240 / Norms of Modern Georgian Literary Language: First Edition / Editor: Iv. Gigineishvili; Academy of Sciences of the Georgian SSR, Institute of Linguistics, Recommended List of Personal

First Names, pp. 238-240).

As it can be seen from the above given source, there are/should be clear boundaries between the use of proper names and their diminutive forms in formal and informal discourses, respectively. Another characteristic of diminutive form usage in Georgian discourse is that some diminutive personal names have become official forms: მაკა, სოსო, ვანო, ეკა, მარიკა... (Maka, Soso, Vano, Eka, Marika...) (Levidze, 2017).

Another characteristic of name-giving in Georgia (although, not directly connected to our subject matter) is a tendency of giving biblical names to the children by the Georgian parents, which might be connected to the parents' narcissistic inclinations. This particular subject, we believe, must be examined within a religious discourse analysis framework.

Here, we give some practical examples of diminutive for usage in Georgia (these diminutive forms are being used in interpersonal, as well as in official communication, for example, official correspondence, e-mails etc.):

- თეონა აქუბარდია Teona Akubardia (journalist)
- ანი მიროტაძე Ani Mirotadze (politician)
- ნანუკა ჟორჯოლიანი Nanuka Zhorzholiani (journalist)
- თეო ტლაშაძე Teo Tlashadze (politician)
- თაკო ჩარკვიანი Tako Charkviani (politician)
- **თინა ბოკუჩავა** Tina Bokuchava (politician)
- კახი კალაძე Kakhi Kaladze (politician)
- **გოგი წულაია** Gogi Tsulaia (politician)
- ალექო ელისაშვილი Aleko Elisashvili (former journalist-politician)
- ნიკა მელია Nika Melia (politician)
- გიგა ბოკერია Giga Bokeria (politician)
- კოტე გაბაშვილი Kote Gabashvili (politician)
- **გიგი უგულავა** Gigi Ugulava (politician)
- **ვახო სანაია** (journalist)

One of the most striking examples of using a diminutive form by/towards a politician was/is the name of a former president of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili, who was referred to as "Misha", even during official events. "Misha", being a diminutive form of the aforementioned name, is not even a Georgian variation of it (Russian).

Nicknames of politicians often tell us more than their deeds. They reflect the attitude of the people towards them (politicians). The "grateful" public invented nicknames not only for politicians, but also for political parties as well: "ნაცები" ("ერთიანი ნაციონალური მოძრაობა"); "ქოცები" ("ქართული ოცნება"); "თავდემები" ("თავისუფალი დემოკრატიები") და "რესპები" ("რესპუბლიკელები")... This is the case when even names of political parties have their diminutive forms invented.

During the history, people have given public figures various nicknames and this has almost become a tradition. Moreover, many politicians are remembered with their nicknames, not official ones. When creating a nickname, a sort of a "phonetic game", politician's temperament, character or merits are often considered.

Today's Georgia's (political) reality is quite troubling in the sense that most of public figures' nicknames reflect a widespread hate speech within a political discourse in general.

Conclusion

In this inquiry, we tried to link the diminutive name forms usage to certain psycho-linguistic phenomena. Based on the above-mentioned assumptions, we regard the tendency of name changing into a diminutive form by public figures as a sort of a language-game intended to create a positive image in the eyes of a general public, which, by its side can be thought of as an impression management tactics. This particular discursive strategy should have a specific advantage/benefit for individuals who utilize them (diminutive forms) in their public discourses.

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