

# On Issues of Phonetics and Lexicon in LADO

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Asylum Procedure", Lausanne

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## The main aims of the presentation

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- To examine importance of two linguistic domains:  
**phonetics** and **lexicon** in LADO.
- To draw experts attention to a **spoken** rather than a  
**standard language**.

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## The main proposals

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### Phonetics

- While characteristics of native pronunciation can be established on the basis of short interviews, establishing characteristics of intonation requires longer period of time.
- Content of interview questions affect revealing native intonation characteristics.

### Lexicon

- Lexical domain requires from experts constant updating in new developments of a language.
- Detecting features of spoken language and dialect nuances rather than those of standard language are more reliable for making sound decisions in LADO.

## The organization of presentation

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- Introduction
- Phonetic domain
  - Pronunciation of sounds
  - Pronunciation of words
  - Intonation
  - Some suggestions
- Lexical domain
  - Nonsense words
  - Dialect nuances
  - Some suggestions
- General conclusions

## Introduction

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- Determining native/dialect status through phonetic and lexical cues in LADO.
- Linguistic situation in Georgia.

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## Phonetics

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- Different levels of analysis:
  - Sound/sound groups
  - Word/phonetic alternations
  - Sentence level/intonation

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## Sound/sound groups

- Cues for determining the native Georgian pronunciation. Using specific to the Georgian language features:
  - Affricates: c', č', q'
  - Aspirated consonants: p, t, k, c, x, h
  - Long consonant sequences: brg, mc'vrtn, xvrl

When these sounds and sound groups are pronounced perfectly by an applicant, the expert can conclude that the applicant's native language is Georgian. This applied to bilinguals as well.

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## Some of the hints for native/non-native status

- Native Russians pronounce Georgian aspirated consonants without aspiration, and glottalized affricates without glottalization, etc.
- Almost all non-native Georgian speakers find difficult to pronounce Georgian long consonant clusters.
- Native Georgians find difficult to pronounce Russian palatalized consonants.
- Unlike a native Armenian it is always easy to detect a native Georgian speaking Russian.
- A native Mingrelian pronounces the Georgian liquid *l* with palatalization. There are no palatalized consonants in Georgian.

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## Word/phonetic alternations

- On the word level phonetic alternations often indicate difference between the standard (literary) vs. dialect variation or difference in-between dialects:

Literary Georg.	West Georg. dialects	Gloss
<i>c'avida</i>	<i>c'evida</i>	'sb. went'
<i>daip'q'ro</i>	<i>deip'q'ro</i>	'sb. occupied'
<i>bavshvi</i>	<i>bovshvi</i>	'child'

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## Sentence level/intonation

- Intonation features on sentence/phrase level often reveal dialect nuances.
- Question phrases in dialects often have an intonation contour different from a standard Language.

Examples from the Georgian dialect Javakhuri:

*Sazgvargaret?* 'abroad?'

*borjomshi?* 'in Borjomi?'

*mtlianad kalakis?* 'to the whole city?'

*davudzaxo?* 'to call sb.?'

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## Literary vs. Dialect difference

In Literary Georgia a tone rise is characteristic on the last syllable of the last word of a question phrase. For instance, in Literary Georgian in the first phrase a tone rise would be on the last syllable *ret* in *sazgvargaret*. In the Javakhuri dialect the tone rise is characteristic on the penultimate syllable. Thus, on *gar* in *sazgvargaret*. The same applies to other cases as well, for example, *borjomshi?* instead of the Literary Georgian form *borjomshi?*.

## Different levels of analysis

- While analysis on the sound level can be used by an expert in deciding for applicant's native/non native language, analysis on the word and sentence level can narrow down expert's conclusions about an applicant's place of socialization, e.g. West Georgia, East Georgia, even indicating specific regions of a country, etc..

## Phonetic characteristics and length of interview

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- While characteristics of native pronunciation can be established on the basis of short interviews, establishing characteristics of intonation requires longer period of time.
- Spontaneous speech is usually achieved after 15-20 minutes of interviewing.

## Content of interview questions and intonation characteristics

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- Native patterns of intonation are often shown up when an applicant is asked about local customs, traditional food, etc.

## Suggestions for experts involved in LADO

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- ❑ To keep an interview as long as possible. Usually 30-35 minutes of an interview record yields enough material to analyze an applicant's speech.
- ❑ To keep interview familiar in order to achieve spontaneous speech from an applicant's side.
- ❑ To reveal native patterns of intonation in order to be more specific about an applicant's place of origin.

## Lexical domain

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- Nonsense words
- Dialect nuances
- Suggestions for experts



## Nonsense words

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- Non-content ‘words’ are usually used to fill a pause in a speech.

*isa, ra, nu*

- Nonsense words characteristic to young man’s speech: *simon, to, karoche, vapshe*, etc.

## Dialect nuances

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Literary	Georg.	West Georg.	Dial.	Gloss
<i>tepshi</i>		<i>saini</i>		‘plate’
<i>nesti</i>		<i>siristi</i>		‘humidity’
<i>rogor</i>		<i>raper</i>		‘how’

## Suggestions for experts

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- To keep updating in new developments of a spoken languages: borrowings, neologisms, slang language, etc.
- To acquaint with dialectal differences of a language.

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## General conclusions

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- Two linguistic domains: **phonetics** and **lexicon** have a decisive role in LADO.
- Length of an interview and the content of interview questions help revealing native intonation characteristics.
- Detecting features of spoken language and dialect nuances rather than those of standard language are more reliable for making sound decisions in LADO.

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