

Aspects of identity formation in the context of the language island - Case Fereydani Georgian

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Due to the wars of conquest and the resulting forced deportation, a Georgian-speaking island, which still exists today and is known as Fereydani Georgian, was created in Iran near Isphahan at the beginning of the XVII century. According to various historical sources, there were about 80 thousand families, mainly from West Georgia. At present, we can estimate that there are about 15 thousand Fereydani Georgian speakers. Are basically bilingual and acquire Persian and Georgian simultaneously. In some villages Georgian is only a language of memory and the basis of self-identification. The Fereydani Georgian creates a specific language contact situation, in which the grammatical characteristics of Georgian take on an additional dimension: establishing ethnic and cultural identity, which is of existential importance for the preservation of a 400-year-old language island.

The Fereydani Georgians, who actively do not speak Georgian anymore, remember the consonantal phonemes, including ejectives, which do not occur in Persian. For the Fereydani Georgians, the ability to pronounce the uvular fricative consonants alone serves to form a peculiar identity.

The uses of sayings in Fereydani Georgian have been documented, the meaning of which is vague or completely unknown to users. For example, a language assistant reminds us of the saying of the mother in his address: მარგალიტებს ხომ არ აცვამო აცვამო? /margalitebs xom ar acvamo/ "Are you making a pearl necklace?" Through the interaction it was to be interpreted that the saying referred to the slowly working people. After several years, the language assistant found the meaning of the word "pearl" or "pearl chain" in a Georgian-English dictionary and could understand exactly what was meant by the saying at that time.

The talk will discuss the cases that exemplify the creation of a purely linguistically defined ecology, which has nothing to do with the real ecology in Fereydan, but which maintains the memory of the homeland.