QUALITY, COMFORT, AND EASE: REMAPPING THE AFFORDANCES OF
RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN TBILISI, GEORGIA

by

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Note on Transliteration and Translation

For transliteration of Russian, I have followed the Library of Congress system, using the ALA-LC Romanization Table. For transliteration of Georgian, I have followed the Shukia Apridonidze's system, which marks abruptives with an apostrophe to differentiate them from aspirates. In Georgian proper names I have omitted the apostrophe marking. Unless noted otherwise, all translations are my own. I am solely responsible for any errors.

CHAPTER 1.

The ideology of replacement: *lingua franca* and the expectations of Empire

How can we describe the ways that the influence of empire is perceived, registered, or rebuffed? Is there a concept of "influence" that can reveal more than it occludes about the reciprocal, shifting networks of empire? To cultivate such a concept, we must take seriously the ways that interfaces of various kinds are constructed, negotiated, or dismissed. Signs of influence are shaped through interaction that is bodily, material, and social. What I will demonstrate in this dissertation is that Russian has become engrained in a variety of contexts as a medium considered ideal for interfaces involving technical instruments and human bodies, whether in sports training, cellular telephone communication, or film dubbing. Through habitual use, speakers channel "influence" through infrastructures and material forms naturalized as proper, easy, and comfortable for specific social practices.

The central contention of this thesis is that we approach languages as consisting of a multiplicity of interfaces– between bodies and technologies, physical settings and psychological states– that cross in habitual, regularized ways in social practice. It is these interfaces, points of contact, frictional edges, and transitional zones through which the

qualities and affinities of objects are thrown into relief.[1] Indeed, it is only through these

edges, borders, and interfaces that separate internalities are understood or imputed. I draw

inspiration from this observation by M.M. Bakhtin:

> ...a domain of culture should not be thought of as some kind of spatial
>
> whole, possessing not only boundaries but an inner territory. A cultural
>
> domain has no inner territory. It is located entirely upon boundaries,
>
> boundaries intersect it everywhere, passing through each of its constituent
>
> features [...] Every cultural act lives essentially on the boundaries, and it
>
> derives its seriousness and significance from this fact. (Bakhtin 1995
>
> [1924]: 274)

In other words, this study privileges points of contact, boundaries, and borders as most

active in determining the significance of phenomena, in contrastive and relational terms.

In contemporary Tbilisi there is a widespread view that the English language is

"replacing" Russian as the predominant secondary national language.[2] This view is

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[1] Note that by "transitional zones," I am not referring to liminality or an "interstructural
situation" in Victor Turner's sense (1967:93). Victor Turner, owing to van Gennep,
advanced the concept of liminality with respect to a stage in *rites de passage* ritual in
which the state of the subject is ambiguous with respect to fixed social structure. Without
tarrying in the details, or later elaborations of Turner's concept of liminality, I stress here
that by "transitional zones," I have in mind spaces of connection, passage, and union that
are not special inversions or margins of social structure, but instead are located at the
very center of it.

[2] What I term *secondary national languages* are those languages used in the capacity of
lingua francas, former state languages, or codes recognized as alternatives to the official
state languages, used in a variety of capacities, functions, and with various degrees of
speaker competence. These languages are not officially identified as national languages,
but nevertheless possess a scope and relevance that is best reckoned in national terms. In
Georgia, for example, the state language is Georgian, or Abkhaz on the territory of
Abkhazia. Yet Russian is a former state language, a language of interethnic
communication, and a code of enduring regional significance. The term *secondary
national language* seeks to capture those attributes of significance by calling attention to

reflected in official legislation, political rhetoric, and public opinion, accessible in both

informal interviews and formalized surveys. This ideology of replacement endures

despite the sociolinguistic facts on the ground, which indicate that Russian and English

occupy very different functions, niches, and sets of ascribed values. In effect, lingua

francas are cast as monolithic, interchangeable entities, transparently referring to Empires

through which one can experience modernities occurring outside of the borders of

Georgia. In this ideological framework, a form of national locality is understood as being

expressed through the use of Georgian and stands in opposition to forms of international

modernity expressed through the use of a lingua franca.[3] How did such an ideology come

to be dominant in Georgia, and what are its consequences? Russian as a linguistic code is

associated with "high" culture of Soviet art, science, and literary life, and the "low"

criminal networks from the socialist past, as well as the many forms of intermediate,

lived experience, from administrative functions to counting out change for flowers

purchased in the market. I address the multiple lives of Russian linguistic code in Tbilisi,

including those forms that have been carried forth unaltered, those that have been

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the link that such languages have in constructing the national. Another component of secondary national languages is that they are the assumed default or normative languages of communication in cases where the primary languages are not used, for whatever reason. Rather than presenting secondary national languages as a rigid category, this term is meant to capture dimensions of communication unsanctioned by but deeply attached to the politics and history of state or national languages. By drawing attention to secondary national languages, I am not endorsing a hierarchy of languages, nor am I suggesting that such an arrangement of languages is natural, inevitable, or unchanging.

[3] This ideology ignores the complexity of the local linguistic situation, in which non-Georgian languages (such as Mingrelian, Svan, Laz, Abkhaz and others) also participate in structuring the "national." Additionally, it overlooks the diverse ways in which lingua francas function, are imputed with values, and come to represent aspirational forms of elsewhere, in political, economic, and social senses.

transformed, and those that have become apparitions "haunting"(Frederiksen 2013) the present.

First, this thesis discusses what functions Russian as a lingua franca has come to serve in Tbilisi by analyzing the values ascribed to its use in a variety of sociotechnical settings. Beyond Russianized and Russian-influenced Georgian lexical forms, this involves a consideration of how certain domains have become linked to Russian infrastructural and evaluative systems. This includes taking stock of the historical, political, and social trends that have contributed to a variety of perceptions about Russian as part of the linguistic ecology in Tbilisi, as at once integral, natural, and potentially threatening. Perceptions of Russian as a secondary national language ascribe to it social functions with respect to the primary national language (Georgian) and minority languages spoken on the territory of Georgia. At the same time, Russian is discursively ascribed values based on the settings, speakers, and their associated genres of talk in which it actively functions, or is considered to be an appropriate medium. This gets at the more general theoretical point, applicable beyond the context of post-socialist studies, that lingua francas are not transparent vessels of symbolic power, emanating identically from Empire. Just as policies of colonial rule varied, so too have did the ways that lingua francas variously populated specific settings, practices, capacities, and connections to infrastructure and social life.

This study takes place beneath a larger historical arc in Georgian politics that has focused on promoting Georgian language as a crucial point of national self-identification. Many scholars have identified Georgian language as a central component of definitions of Georgianness (*kartveloba)* throughout history (see especially Amirejibi-Mullen 2011

and Kleshik 2010), in both top-down policy as well as informal, non-institutional definitions. Many of these studies approach language through the lens of identity, as a medium through which persons simultaneously experience community belonging and personal self-definition. Knowing and/or speaking Georgian has been a durative sign of being Georgian, arguably stronger than ethnic, territorial, or religious claims to Georgian-ness. One move that this dissertation makes is to expand the purview beyond approaching Georgian self- or nation-hood as circumscribed by the Georgian language alone, and to take into account the ways that multilingualism functions in the contemporary context, both in terms of its practices and the ways in which an economy of languages is managed and evaluated by speakers. To do so, I discuss Russian language in its multiple social lives in Tbilisi. Based on fieldwork conducted from September 2011 until September 2012, this thesis seeks to elucidate trends that crosscut age, socioeconomic level, and gender– grounded in values ascribed to lingua francas.

As a secondary national language in Georgia, Russian is unique in generating a range of strong, sometimes contradictory network of associations, linked by turns to politics, culture, and history. Once a language of "modernity," Russian still possesses essential practical significance in the region, while at the same time being cast by former President Saakashvili as a threat to progress and a transparent sign of assimilation to Russian political interests. Recent work in post-Soviet space has described the ways that cultural institutions during the Soviet period were vectors of soft power (Igmen 2012). Taking a complementary approach, this dissertation discusses the ways that Russian language (as a lingua franca, and secondary national language) has come to take on values and associations that make it seem natural for certain settings and practices, a

version of soft power grounded not only in institutions, but in social practices that exist outside of them. Russian has come to be seen as a medium appropriate for structuring interfaces of many kinds: most importantly among interethnic groups, and between human and technological instruments. Among these ascribed values are links to technological interfaces, sport training wherein the body-equipment interface is monitored and developed, and the sound-picture interface in films. This dissertation takes a range of social practices in Tbilisi, Georgia as a starting point to investigate the complex of interpretations of Russian linguistic influence.

At its core, this dissertation is a meditation on what "influence" means in the context of language and culture. The term "influence" is a way of accounting for real or imputed effects of various kind and degree. As such, an estimation or reckoning of "influence" involves recognizing and interpreting signs, which correspond to or emanate from a source. What I demonstrate in this dissertation is that influence is not transparently legible in forms alone, and that associations with empire (as in "imperial language" or "language of empire") are not predictive of the specific ways in which language influence works. The sources and possible effects of influence are not predictable or stable. To be certain, signs of linguistic influence have the potential to be interpreted as metrics of political influence or domination.[4] Yet this is not the only dimension of significance, nor does "influence" always connote the same kind of

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[4] Susan Gal has argued that the evaluation of linguistic codes is a response to the political-economic order. In particular, she has claimed that codeswitching practices are reflective of various forms of resistance to a symbolic order of domination (Gal 1987). Though it is crucial to consider the ways that political relations between states inform the uses and evaluations of linguistic codes, I argue here that political and economic relations of power, domination, or inequality are not enough to explain the various ways in which language functions as a symbolic resource. This dissertation represents an attempt to think beyond hierarchy without dismissing its import.

relationship between causes and effects. Instead, I turn attention to influence as an emergent property of the relation among material signs, human agents, and the environment within which interactions take place.

As a consequence of lengthy political contact and control during and prior to the Soviet period, lasting effects have been exerted over a wide range of cultural forms in Georgia. The rubric of "influence" exposes the multifarious ways in which these lasting effects are manifest in everyday life, as they are discontinuously distributed across social space. Approaching the interfaces of various kinds that have grounded Russian in contemporary Georgian life pulls at the spatial, temporal, and interactional elements in which "influence" appears. A special function of Russian as a lingua franca is that it is associated with a former, aspired-to utopian future, in which it would act as a medium of communication delinked from politics. Yet in this present world of chalked hands, sticky movie theater floors, and chirping cell phones, politics has not receded, even as it has been reconfigured. I ask that we look more carefully at how the functions of Russian in Georgia operate, rather than assuming they are open and obvious expressions of a simple dominant//subordinate form of political relationship. The details of complementarity within a language ecology, the associations and values associated to certain forms of language use, and the particular anxieties about what language is capable of are not established by politics alone, so cannot be understood strictly in those terms.

A Historical Orientation

To understand the language ecology in contemporary Georgia, and why it is widely believed that one lingua franca can "replace" another, I rely on historical research conducted by other scholars (particularly Amirejibi-Mullen 2011; Jones 2005, 2012;

Rayfield 2012; Suny 1994) that outlines how the Georgian nation was formed, and particularly the ways that alliances and antinomies with neighboring powers have contributed to the current political, economic, and social milieu, of which language is inextricable a part. Additionally, this dissertation contributes to anthropological studies in Georgia that have engaged with the ways that European-ness (see Manning 2009) – as a form as aspirational modernity– has long been a just-out-of-reach rubric for members of the 19th century Georgian intelligentsia, who in turn exerted a large influence on the forms that "nation" has taken in contemporary culture and politics (Manning 2012). Further, this dissertation follows in the tradition of approaching the Caucasus through long-term participant observation fieldwork in hopes of elucidating trends that cannot be registered by short journalistic engagements, or by survey-based approaches alone. In this section, I will rely heavily on other scholars' work on the historical of language policy in the Soviet Union in order to emphasize the way that multilingualism (and the use of Russian as a lingua franca) was an unresolved but constantly negotiated concern for the ways constituent republics were treated within the Soviet Union, and, in turn, bears with it this legacy after the Soviet Union's collapse.

In the beginning of the 19th century, Georgia was annexed by the Russian empire. During the 19th century, the place of Russian as a language of empire had to be negotiated with respect to other languages spoken on its territory. In Georgia, this process began as one in which Georgia was subjugated by a strong Russian empire during the first part of the 19th century, but policy shifted to a form of "soft-Russification" and consequent greater acceptance of Russian influence during the later decades of the 19th century, particularly under M.S. Vorontsov, an Russian imperial administrator exerting

considerable influence in the Caucasus (Amirejibi-Mullen 2011:181-183; Jones 2005). Russification continued under Soviet rule in the 20th century, though Soviet policy on nationality and language was not static. My argument here is that multilingualism formed a central problem for Soviet approaches to language and the organization of peoples within the territory of the Soviet Union, the consequences of which are felt in the ways that Russian as a lingua franca within Georgia is thought to operate– that is, what it is capable of, appropriate for, and what these uses signify.

The problem of multilingualism as a sign of demographic diversity was an extension of the larger issue of how to deal with ethnic, religious, and social difference in the Soviet Union. As historian Timothy Blauvelt explains about nationalism in early Soviet policy: "The existence of national minorities was always a political and ideological nuisance for the Soviet Union's Bolshevik leadership. According to Marxist theory, nationalism is a bourgeois condition that presents an obstacle to revolutionary consciousness [...] In order to counter nationalist sentiment, both Lenin and Stalin modified the principle of national self-determination by subordinating it to the principle of class unity, arguing that 'the interests of socialism are higher than the interests of nations to self-determine'"(Blauvelt 2003: 47). This subordination to the principle of class unity, however, did not eliminate the question of how to deal with issues of national minorities, including territorial, ethnic, and linguistic difference. [5] Russian became the

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[5] Russian, then, functioned as a mode of social integration and unification, even as it worked alongside understandings of language as an expression of ethnic difference. One of the themes emerging from comparative work in the post-socialist space is the elaboration of different constructions of national belonging as result of Soviet state-socialist organization. An influential article by Slezkine (1994) describes how ethnic particularism was promoted under the umbrella of the Soviet national project and gave rise to national movements in many parts of the post-socialist space. Slezkine

default or background language of socialism, with accommodations for minority peoples and their languages.

In terms of the most important practical moves in early Soviet policy affecting language, there were two: the "introduction of universal compulsory elementary schooling [...] and the extensive commitment to national written languages with their Latin alphabets"(Crisp 1989: 38). The earlier program of *korenizatsiia*, and the 'national in form, socialist in content' motto conditioned both of these later policy moves. Language policy standardized minority languages while simultaneously emplacing them into a niche within the Soviet Union that delimited their range and functions.[6] As Crisp elaborates, "In the 1930s the overall political climate changed from revolutionary optimism to the retrenchment expressed by the doctrine of 'socialism in one country', one cultural expression of which was the consolidation of the country around the Russian

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demonstrates how the inconsistencies and tensions in Soviet definitions of "nation" in policy terms led to (and supported) ethnic-based claims to group belonging even as territories and administrative units effaced or challenged these groupings. Slezkine delineates the nesting structure of the Soviet national system: "In the short run, national demarcation resulted in a puzzling and apparently limitless collection of ethnic nesting dolls. All non-Russians were 'nationals' entitled to their own territorial units and all nationally defined groups living in 'somebody else's' units were national minorities entitled to their own units. By 1928, various republics contained national okrugs, national raions, national soviets, native executive committees (tuzriki), native soviets (tuzemnye sovety), aul (aul'nye) soviets, clan (rodovye) soviets, nomadic (kochevye) soviets and encampment committees (lagerkomy)"(Slezkine 1994: 430). Note that this structural arrangement links ethnic groups to territories. Proprietary links were established, which professed to affirm existing difference rather than constructing new divisions, between ethnicity and territory in forms that would perdure beyond the temporal bounds of the Soviet period.

[6] "Soviet language policy did not simply impose the Russian language on the non-Russian populations. On the contrary, the Leninist ideology of 'language building' (korenizatsiya) was explicitly aimed at modernising and standardising the national and minority languages of the multi-ethnic Soviet Empire (Desheriev, 1984)"(cited in Koenig 2000: 65). See Lemon (2002) for discussion of how mass media and stage depictions of Romani as "differently functional" from majority language(s) in the Soviet context.

language (hence the measures strengthening its position in the schools) and around a relatively uniform alphabet based on Cyrillic"(Crisp 1989: 29). This process of standardization occurred early in the Soviet experience.

Yet the issue of bourgeois privilege became entrenched in this move to standardization and the widespread use of Russian as a lingua franca on the territory of the USSR. The result was that Russian as a lingua franca was seen as both a necessity for the unity of Soviet power, but also a potential danger to Soviet nationalities, who were constantly assured that fears about the position of their own languages were needless or unfounded (Kreindler 1985). Kreindler nicely captures how the issue of language was never fully worked out with respect to a utopian future: "Soviet linguists go through virtual acrobatics to justify the de facto privilege of the Russian language while simultaneously upholding the claim of absolute equality of languages in the Soviet Union. While to most Western observers the use of Russian as the lingua franca in the multinational state seems quite natural, Soviet linguists are constantly justifying this special role of Russian with a battery of convoluted arguments. They are also unusually sensitive to the so-called 'bourgeois-falsifiers' of the Soviet language question [...] Though Russian is the lingua franca, it does not have any privileges and is only 'the first among equals' "(Kreindler 1985: 358). Durable expectations for what multilingualism means were generated by policies from the early Soviet period (1920s and 1930s), as well as after Stalin's death in 1953. The fall of the Soviet Union caused the question of the national (and with it, multilingualism) to be revived with new urgency.[7]

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[7] I am following Crisp's argument, though altering "bilingualism" with "multilingualism" in order to stress that it was not simply balancing Russian with a minority language, but reconciling the multiple functions and levels of association that "national" languages

Another way of viewing the use of Russian was that political structures create cultural conditions that were favorable for its spread, and not that Russian itself was promoted as linked to a certain identity-based agenda. This is the view of Koenig, who argues in this manner: " [...] the spread of Russian in the Soviet Republics, although concomitant to the totalitarian imposition of modern social structures, was less the result of nationalist identity politics drawing on the symbolic function of language than the effect of structural changes favouring the use of Russian as the language of wider communication. It was only during post-Soviet processes of state-formation and nation-building that the symbolic function of language has come to the fore of public debate"(Koenig 2000: 66). Though the symbolic function of language may not have been the original intent or focus for the spread of Russian, it seems wrong to remove it from the equation, considering that the symbolic importance of Russian – as link to Soviet power, and beyond, as window to Europe– was significant (see Lemon 1991). Additionally, it is worth bearing in mind that the symbolic function of Russian was not a product of the Soviet or even post-Socialist environment, but had been present even during the imperial period.

An interesting contribution to thinking about reconciling the problems of multilingualism for the Soviet Union came in the early Soviet period from the linguist

have. As Crisp explains, "The measures enacted at the end of the 1930s, namely the replacement of Latin alphabets by Cyrillic , the abolition of written forms for some of the smaller languages and the introduction of Russian as a universal compulsory school subject, according to this view represents a reassessment of the role and potential of Russian in the life of the Soviet peoples and the beginning of a gradual diminution of the role envisaged for the native languages, a process which continues thereafter through the emotional glorification of the Russian language in Stalin's later years to the emphasis in the modern period on ensuring universal bilingualism and the widest possible functions for Russian"(Crisp 1989: 37).

Niko Marr. Marr's linguistic theories were influential in terms of their impact on Stalin, as well as more generally on how socialism and ethnicity were understood as linked inextricably to language. Part of Marr's orientation was toward language as conditioning an ideal socialist future: "the theories of Marr in their original form suggested that the linguistic road to the socialist future lay not through stable bilingualism or even language shift, but through a process of language crossing to which all languages would contribute and which would result in a hybrid directly reflecting a higher stage of human political development"(Crisp 1989:37).[8]

By contrast to the policies of the early Soviet period, after Stalin's death in 1953, orientation changed to focus more directly on Russian rather than minority languages. Isabelle Kreindler discusses post-1953 policy in great historical detail (1989). According to her:

> [L]anguage planning after 1953 [...] represents a fundamental change in
> direction. Before 1953, the prime objects of language planning were the
> non-Russian languages, whether the focus was on their initial 'aufbau' and
> functional extension or, towards the end of the period, on their growing
> russification. Throughout the Lenin-Stalin period, the national languages
> were the prime targets of both corpus and status planning, with Russian,
> on the whole, in the background. After 1953, the Russian language takes
> centre stage as most official efforts are devoted to expanding its role as the

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[8] For a historical account of Marr's influence on Soviet linguistics, see Slezkine (1996) on Marr's search for "geneaological justice" to valorize Georgian language in the Japhetic hypothesis. Even though Marr's popularity declined, and Stalin made explicit statements revising his views on language in reconsideration of Marr's position, his major influence – bringing socialism and ethnicity together in a theory of language – remained influential and provocative (see Cherchi and Manning 2002).

language of the 'new historical community - the Soviet people' while at the

same time preserving its norms and firmly guarding against the rise of any

new national varieties. The non-Russian languages [...] are simply

relegated to back-stage. (Kreindler 1989: 46)

In 1958 the status of national languages was shifting, as "[s]et formulations which

had previously proclaimed that 'the Socialist culture of the peoples of the USSR can exist

and develop only in the native, national languages of the Socialist nationalities' now

almost vanished (*Sotsialisticheskie natsii* 1955: 162). 'National' no longer had to coincide

with the national language. In fact the very need of national languages began to be

questioned (Lewis 1972: 74-5; Rytkheu 1987: 27)"(Kreindler 1989: 48). The most

significant language policy change at this time came from the Khrushchev education

reform laws in 1958-1959, which said that parents could choose the language of

instruction for their children (Kreindler 1989:49). This "set aside the basic principle of

Soviet and indeed of tsarist progressive pedagogy, which insisted that children must be

taught in their mother tongue", as parents could select a non-native language of

instruction for their children (Kreindler 1989:49). Russian language during this period

was cast by Khrushchev "mainly in pragmatic terms: the language was needed for

communication, for science and technology, and as the key to Russian and world

culture"(Kreindler 1989: 51). As Pavlenko explains in the case of Ukraine, where

following the education reform, there was an increase in enrollment in Russian-medium

schools, Russian and Ukrainian were used in administration, education, and the media,

but Russian "dominated everyday interaction, and the fields of science, healthcare,

technology and entertainment"(Pavlenko 2012: 39). This division is crucial in understanding Russian's enduring features as a lingua franca. A language of pragmatic function means that it is used in science and technology, as a medium to access "world" culture beyond Russian. Russian language as lingua franca thus takes on these qualities: a language appropriate for technical, pragmatic functions, and for access to international developments. This continued under Brezhnev (1964-1982).[9]

This history of Imperial Russian, Soviet, and then post-Soviet negotiations of how multilingualism and ethnic difference were handled and understood imprinted the way that Russian as a secondary national language is understood in Georgian society today. One crucial historical thread in understanding the contemporary linguistic economy in Georgia is the ideology that Russian language and a local language are the primary components in the titular nationalities' understandings of linguistic nationalism, and that they are believed to be in tension with each other, whereas other languages (lingua francas, international languages, or local languages) are non-players in the construction of nationalism. In this dissertation I emphasize the role of media (especially films), technical settings full of Russian vocabulary, and the importance of family connections and their expectations of Russian competence as the most significant vehicles for continued Russian language presence. Nationalism, and Georgian-ness, is usually reckoned in terms of Georgian language alone. This carries with it a view of language that prescribes and limits how we understand "nation." I will discuss this in more detail in

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[9] "The position of national languages in the Brezhnev period was eroding as Russian expanded its role in the schools, in party and state offices, in publishing, and in the economy [...] The view that national culture and national language need not necessarily coincide, that Russian alone can fulfill most cultural needs continued to gain ground. Giving up one's language and shifting to Russian was now deemed 'progressive', 'mature', 'according to the laws of natural development'"(Kreindler 1989: 56).

the section below, arguing that an account of Georgian nationalism necessarily must

include the roles and values held for lingua francas (especially Russian).[10]

As Zaza Shatirishvili has argued, political leaders in post-Rose Revolution

Georgia have increasingly shifted focus to the creation of memory in material forms,

rather than through erasure (as was common before 2003) (Shatirishvili 2009:66). The

kind of past sought for Georgia cannot be found, for example, simply by removing or

effacing Soviet edifices, but must be actively fashioned through new material forms.

Martin Frederiksen discusses the discontents, hauntings, and ruins of the social past,

present, and future in the lives of young men in Batumi (Frederiksen 2013). Batumi is a

Western Georgian city that was one of the key symbolic arenas for Saakashvili's

refashioning of public space, embodied iconically through the construction of fountains.

In this dissertation I explore how linguistic code has been a part of the tangible realm of

refashionable, reformattable signs. Extending Shatirishvili's observation about the

creation of new signs that index the "proper" kind of national narrative and Frederiksen's

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[10] In Empires of the Word: A Language History of the World (2006), Nicolas Ostler
discusses how empires and their languages were spread, function, and endure in different
ways. He argues that Russian was different in many ways from the other languages
spread by empires, noting that "alone of the European imperial languages, Russian has
left [a] rather poisoned inheritance" in which very few of Russia's old colonies "value
highly the historic links symbolised by use of the Russian language, or indeed the
potential for collaboration that Russian would give them if accepted as a lingua
franca"(Ostler 2006: 429). Comparing Russian to other imperial European languages that
took hold outside of Europe, he asks why Russian "never became a prestige
language"(Ostler 2006:437). He argues that one reason for this was that Russia was never
unified as a language community (Ostler 2006: 441). Leaving aside the specifics of
Ostler's argument, it is worth noting here that Russian's legacy – as a language of empire,
lingua franca, and symbolic unifying link among Soviet peoples – is markedly different
from that of other languages of empire. In this dissertation I approach the question of
Russian's symbolic currency and functions by looking particularly at an array of settings
in contemporary Georgia, which will be of use in answering larger historical-comparative
questions about types or trends in lingua francas by suggesting that patterns found in
Russian in Georgia may find analogs elsewhere.

observations about the ways that expectations of the future populate the present, I discuss how remapping the affordances of lingustic code – including its links to time and the social world – has emerged as a concern in Saakashvili's Georgia.

Lingua Franca and Empire: Signs of Nation

This dissertation contributes to discussions of lingua franca and empire. To do so, it is necessary to deal with literature on nationalism, which has in various ways treated the relationship between language and nation. The bulk of what nationalism has meant as a general concept in anthropology– as a type of social construction, drawing on vectors of group alignment, such as the sharedness of religion, history, territory, language, or ethnic ties to make claims about the naturalness, appropriateness, or necessity of self-governance, autonomy, or other political stakes– has been discussed in foundational literature (Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990; Smith 1971) that grew, in part, in response to German Romantic thinkers like Herder whose earlier uses of the term presented nation and nationalism as primordial and singular forces, within which multiplicity of any kind (for example, religion, language, ethnicity) was construed as an obstacle or impediment to harmony. The term "nationalism" gained currency again with the fall of the Soviet Union, when concepts of state, nation, and group were actively being worked out in the aftermath of the end of a phase of empire. Yet over 20 years later, do theories of nationalism tell us anything worthwhile? Though "nationalism" may still function as a watchword in the press, its currency has declined in value in academic conversations, as no longer a novel way of approaching the world, somehow too broad and cumbersome to stoke conversation or critical appraisal. It has come to be viewed as a term that has already been adequately theorized (or over-theorized).

Yet nationalism is relevant because it continues to be meaningful as a category of experience, as a motivation and explanation for behavior, and as a way to discuss the multiple ways in which group belonging at times aligns with or frustrates political realities and aims. Further, presuppositions about what nationalism entails in everyday life, and in some theorizing, still echo the monolingual, mono-ethnic, mono-religious formulations of earlier German Romantic thinkers, despite the interventions of theorists who have stressed structural considerations or the constructed-ness of the category itself.

Many contemporary scholars of nationalism have taken national languages to be, as Hobsbawm expresses, "almost always semi-artificial constructs"(Hobsbawm 1990: 54), reflecting homogenization and standardization processes to accord with a mythology of group unity or collective identity, rather than primordial, or representing a singular match between group and language (as in Herder's influential 19th century version view of "nation"). Language has been taken as an element more or less central to, or capable of, expressions of such a mythologized collective identity, depending on the particular case. Though multilingualism is acknowledged, and even accepted as the norm in certain cases (Hobsbawm 1990: 61), the use of a lingua franca (or multiple lingua francas) is usually cast as being an issue of pragmatics rather than a constituent element in the construction of the category "nation." This veneer of neutrality and necessity afforded to lingua francas has the effect of naturalizing the political and geographical conditions that create such states of affairs, while simultaneously bolstering the claim that the language of collective identification is properly the national one, constructed though it is, and not the lingua franca. The lingua franca is seen is having functions that the national language does not, as belonging to a different sphere of associations. It is this relationship (among

national languages, with lingua francas numbering among them) that is worthy of added scholarly attention. Secondary national languages do a substantial amount of work in constructing the "national." Lingua francas are not the neutral, pragmatic tongues that they are often assumed to be, but instead carry with them ideologies about how their use should complement or extend functions of the national language(s). In other words, though national languages are selectively illuminated in rhetoric and theory about how to be national, lingua francas are an integral part of the scene itself, comprising part of the ground without which national language(s) cannot figure.

Georgian Nationalism

The historical roots of Georgian nationalism are linked to 19th century intellectuals who actively worked to promote particular elements of Georgian-ness as primary. Oliver Reisner discusses the role of the intelligentsia as pivotal in forming the concept of the Georgian nation. He states that "[f]orming the nucleus of the Georgian nation, [these young Georgian intellectuals] were also known as 'Tergdaleulebi', literally 'those who have drunk the water of the river Terek'. The crossing of the Terek, in Georgian Tergi, functions as a symbol of the geographical and cultural boundary between Russia and Georgia, which also became a mental boundary and the basis of a new national identity for those who crossed it"(Reisner 1994: 125). Reisner argues that although the tergdaleulebi "failed to persuade the majority of their compatriots to embrace the new national identity, but for the first time they shaped the modern Georgian nation's image. This image grew stronger in Soviet times until Georgia's independence in 1991"(Reisner 1994:137). How did this happen? One of the modes of circulation of these nationalist ideas was through print media: "Chavchavadze and others formed a 'Society

for the spreading of literacy among Georgians', which was to promote private school

teaching in Georgian. The Society published Georgian textbooks, bought old Georgian

manuscripts and produced programmes for a Georgian secular education." In other

words, circulation of nationalism was made possible through literacy practices. Other

scholars have also emphasized the role of literary practices and standardization as crucial

in the formation of Georgian nationalism, solidified by the intelligentsia in the 19th c. but

having roots in a much longer tradition within Georgian society (Amirejibi-Mullen 2011;

Manning 2012).

Within the Soviet Union, one sign of Georgia's special status with respect to

language is the perceived value of their alphabet, *mkhedruli*.[11] By the 1940s, Georgia was

one of few Soviet languages (along with Armenian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian,

Karelian, and Hebrew) that retained a non-Cyrillic script (Weinreich 1953: 50). Retaining

the *mkhedruli* script was a sign of Georgia's special status. Additionally, the script was

used in a long written tradition with both religious and secular texts. Georgian has long

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[11] On the Georgian alphabet:"[T]he unique Georgian alphabet was devised probably some time in the fourth century. In fact, during its history Georgian has had three alphabets: the earliest is known as mrg(v)lovani 'rounded' because of the shape of the letters (it is also known as asomtavruli 'capital'). From this developed k'utxovani 'angular' (otherwise known as nusxuri 'miniscule') in the ninth century, which in turn gave rise to the modern mxedruli 'military, secular' in the eleventh century, which has 38 characters, of which 33 are required in the modern language - the script is fully phonemic. From the eleventh to the nineteenth century the two older alphabets continued to be used as a single script under the name of xucuri, 'pertaining to elders, ecclesiastical', for religious works such that mrg(v)lovani served as upper-case forms to k'utxuri's lower-case, letters (hence the alternative descriptive terms given above). Like k'utxuri, mxedruli does not possess upper-case characters of its own - the 1962 proposal by Ak'ak'i Shanidze (the patriarch of twentieth century Georgian philology, who died aged 100 in 1987) that mrg(v)lovani be reinstated in its mediaeval function has never found official or popular support (see Shanidze 1979:145-92)"(Weinreich 1953: 125).

functioned as a *lingua sacra* (Amirejibi-Mullen 2011), one role that has cemented its value as linked inextricably to Georgianness.[12]

Education is another important site for understanding how language policy operates. As Hewitt points out about the effect of Soviet education policy: "[W]hereas during the tsarist regime Georgian was all but excluded from Georgian schools, during the Soviet period it has become not merely possible but actually the norm for Georgians to complete their whole education in their native tongue"(Hewitt 1985: 170).Yet higher education often required the use of materials only available in Russian. Russian language use was often a part of primary education, and certainly for those in higher education, even if Georgian also functioned in those settings. For example, university dissertations were often produced in both Russian and Georgian during the late Soviet period. This was in part in compliance with a ruling by the USSR that they must be written in Russian,

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[12] Georgian literary language was patterned on a tripartite stylistic division imported from Armenian. In the first school grammar of Georgian, written by Patriarch Anton I in 1753 he "chose to transplant into Georgia from Armenian sources the theory of the 'Three Styles' of language (cf. Babunashvili 1963). The lowest style was the language of the peasantry, being suitable for story-telling, as it was easy to understand and lacked linguistic difficulties; the second, 'country,' style was more polished and thus less immediately intelligible, being represented by mediaeval literary works, such as 'The Man in the Pantherskin' and suitable for church-literature; the third style was the most polished of all and was intelligible to, and usable by, only the highly educated. The nature of the subject determined the style to be employed"(Hewitt 1985: 167). Debates followed in the journal ts'iskari 'Dawn' (1857-60) about how it was impossible to distinguish among the three styles in published literature, evidence "support[ed] the simple division into an elevated (sc. spuriously archaising) vs. non-elevated style"(Hewitt 1985:168). In contemporary Georgian, the division between (high) literary style and everyday discourse persists. Additionally, literary language is associated with a way of speaking associated with women. The use of *gineba* (cursing) is associated with men's speech, and is considered inappropriate for use in literary contexts. *tsqevla* (swearing) is associated with women, and is more mild than *gineba*, therefore appropriate for literary uses.

but the filing of the dissertation in both languages indicates a commitment to produce scholarship in Georgian as well. [13]

Value in Opposition: Contrastive Nationalism

The value of Georgian language, in part, comes from its opposition to or differentiation from other languages. In some cases, other languages have been construed as "threats" to Georgianness. For example, Georgia has been taken as an example of "resistance" to Russian language as an expression of fervent nationalism. One example of this comes from political scientist Yaroslav Bilinsky, who describes Georgia as a classic case of "resistance from defenders of the non-Russian patrimony," citing the attempted introduction of courses taught in Russian (to non-Russian majors) in 1975-1976 at the University of Tbilisi (Bilinsky 1981: 328). Writing in the early 1980s, Bilinsky argues that "the study of Russian, which for a number of reasons would, in the normal, unhurried course of events, have attracted a large and willing following, is now being oversold for political reasons and is bound, therefore, to provoke as much resentment as good will [...]"(ibid: 321). Bilinsky argues that Georgian speakers are wary of other codes that could displace the status of Georgian as a primary state language. Highlighting the political valence of language, it is useful to bear this position in mind as the *potential* reevaluation of Russian as a political tool is never far from discussion of its functions in

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[13] "The recent ruling whereby all Candidate Theses within the USSR have to be written in Russian, though clearly a sensible administrative measure (if one accepts the necessity for all post-graduate results to be sanctioned by a central committee in Moscow), nevertheless does create certain difficulties for anyone in a non-Russian village-school and whose exposure to Russian may have been minimal prior to his move to one of the institutions of higher education situated usually in T'bilisi"(Hewitt 1985: 170).

conceptions of Georgia's engagement with modernity. I will take up this nexus of concerns in more detail in the following chapter.

In an article about nation building in Georgian and the role of language, Graham Smith et al. discuss the ways that Russian language use was conceptualized during the early Soviet period.[14] They characterize Georgian society as "highly language-conscious"(Smith et al. 1998:169), and present an interesting example of how this language-consciousness was present and connected to material circumstances:

> [S]o high a priority was attached to the reinstatement of the Georgian language [during the brief period of independence (1918-1921) from the Soviet Union] that N. Chkheidze, the chairman of the National Council, wrote to the Georgian Technical Society on 31 May 1918, just five days after Georgia declared independence, to ask for assistance in organising the mass conversion of Russian typewriters to a Georgian font as quickly as possible. Attempts after 1921 to reintroduce Russian were resisted by Georgian communists as well as by the intelligentsia, to the point where Sergo Orzhonikidze, first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party, had to remind Georgians that Russian was not 'the language of oppression', but the 'language of the October Revolution. (Smith et al. 1998:171)

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[14] In this article, Smith et al. discuss "language myths" about Georgian. It is important to note that "myths" in this context are synonymous with ideologies about language, since the "myths" discussed by the authors are beliefs that influence the ways in which language functions, or is believed to function. Language ideology more neatly captures the multiple dimensions of the phenomenon in question than "myth." I will discuss definitions of language ideology in the next chapter.

What is most striking here is the ongoing negotiation of which connotational associations to Russian should be highlighted to position it as appropriate for use in the Georgian context. As the typewriter example demonstrates, managing the multiple associations to Russian is a poignant and contentious issue with consequences in the material realm. Here we see how an ideological consideration shapes the mechanical impressions of letters.

Smith et al. carry this nexus of concern into the post-Soviet period, arguing that there is a "fear that the Georgian language, and with it, the Georgian identity are still under threat from Russia"(Smith et al. 1998:172). The relationship between language and "identity" here must be fleshed out more thoroughly. First, language is but one of many vectors of alignment that result or contribute to "national" feeling. It is not Georgian alone that comprises a lived or imagined sense of Georgian "identity," but rather the constellation of secondary national languages– chief among them, Russian– and the host of expectations concerning their knowledge and appropriate use. Tbilisian identity is permeated by expectations about being multilingual as a valued and ubiquitous condition (see Manning 2009 for more on the shifting semiotics of Tbilisian life). This does not mean, however, that this multilingualism is a stable or uncontested one– indeed, the notion that Georgian language is, at times, vulnerable to incursions by Russian, or is in danger of disappearing as a result of Russian influence, is a common refrain, and one grounded in anxieties about the capacities and dangers of lingua francas.

Methods and Geographical Orientation

My sources for discussion on language influence are drawn from multiple physical and social settings in Tbilisi. My methodological approach was to move laterally, conducting formal and informal interviews about secondary languages in a wide variety of contexts. I focused on a variety of contexts- some of which have language as a direct focus of the activities taking place in the setting, and others in which language was viewed as minimal to the activities, but nevertheless present- in order to demonstrate the ways that Russian language has become enmeshed in contexts that may seem from the outside to not be filled with Russian language influence, but in fact continue to be vectors for continued replication of language attitudes, knowledge, and expectations. As a counterpoint to hours spent pursuing lawyers, bureaucrats, and academics, I trained and spent approximately 15 hours a week at the National Weightlifting Federation of Georgia, where male athletes ranging in age from pre-teens to early 20s train and socialize.

Tbilisi is a case study of how secondary language policy and practice function in what is perceived by informants as a cultural and political center. Language practices in the capital city of Tbilisi do not necessarily reflect those found in the smaller towns in Georgia. Additionally, the ways that informants characterize other localities in Georgia and their speech styles demonstrate how peripheries within Georgia are viewed from the Tbilisi context, both domestically and in a perspective of international contact. For example, one of the strongest geographic divisions, along which cultural and other distinctions are made, is between east and west Georgia. West Georgia is widely assessed as "closer" to Russia, which is supposedly reflected by linguistic borrowings and other

elements of language contact. Further, specific localities within Georgia contain their own reputations for styles of language use, psychological character types, and other stereotypes. So, describing language contact is not simply a task of assessing foreign influence on a singular, homogenous Georgian nation, but also on discussing internal variation and its (perceived) effects on the contemporary linguistic landscape. With my current research, I detail the ways that ethnic groups and geographically-linked groups within Georgia are viewed as linked to "standard" Tbilisi speech, and to gradations of contact with Russian and "Russian-ness." Indeed, the question of what it means to associate something or someone with "Russian-ness" is not as straightforward as simply having linguistic competence in Russian, but involves other factors, including family connections, perceived sympathy for or connection to Russian culture, and so on.

One of the most significant assessments of Russian language use in Georgia, independent of locality, is that Russian serves as the primary language of inter-ethnic communication. There is tension between the reality of Russian as a language of inter-ethnic communication, and the strong movement toward English as the secondary language of a new generation of "European"-striving youth. Much of the political rhetoric about aspirations and plans for the growth of English as a dominant secondary language in Georgia is phrased as moving towards a "western" and "European" direction. Such a direction is tacitly in opposition to the strong, centuries-long orientation towards Russia and Russian language, which still deeply guides regional policy and everyday inter-ethnic interactions. I discuss how governmental agencies and lawmakers describe laws and their objectives in terms of promoting Georgian language, though the laws themselves are based on prohibiting foreign language use that, by necessity, heavily targets Russian.

Though the laws do not explicitly mention Russian, I argue that they are designed to reduce Russian language use, especially in public settings. Nevertheless, their implementation is challenging based on the realities of the cultural industries in Georgia, which owe a great deal to both Russian products, and international products that physically move through Russia and receive its cultural and linguistic imprint.

One approach to language situations characterized by the presence of multiple languages within a single state– some of which are small in scale, and others of which are recognized as larger in scale ("global," "international," or associated with empires)– has been to emphasize differences in cultural capital or power linked to the use of each language variety. This kind of treatment essentially views languages as hierarchically arranged, with languages understood as dominant or subordinate, based on the political configurations that created the linguistic situation. Often within this framework, the use of a certain code or language variety is understood as expressing features of personhood or identity, either possessed or desired. Without denying the significance of politics, or of the power structures that have impelled certain "international" languages to use and significance in different geographical and historical contexts, this inquiry attempts to push past the rigid dichotomies of local//global and subordinate//dominant in order to discuss the ways in which secondary national languages are configured, valued, and used in social practice. To this end, this dissertation approaches secondary national languages as part of a linguistic ecology, in which linguistic varieties possess a bevy of social effects and functions, the specifics of which cannot be understood by rubrics of power alone. Thus, what I will show in the case of contemporary Georgia is that secondary national languages are understood as having certain associations and values– in this case,

with different forms of modernity– that make sense only alongside the ways in which the primary national languages are constructed.

Theorizing Intermediaries: Ecologies, Technologies, Bodies

In addition to contributing a descriptive perspective to contemporary Georgian language issues, this thesis makes a number of theoretical contributions, directed toward several distinct audiences. First, by taking language contact as the primary term organizing the structure of the dissertation, I direct my arguments here to the language contact literature, mostly from sociolinguistics, that in describing "contact" makes explicit or tacit assumptions about what a "language" is, how it can interact with other languages, and what functions it can fulfill. With this in mind, I work from Einar Haugen's concept of "language ecology"(Haugen 2001 [1972]:57), as "the study of interactions between any given language and its environment," where environment includes both the social and natural surround. By emplacing language in its environment, I emphasize the technical, bodily, and social practices that give semiosis life, texture, and significance.

I offer motivation for an updated model of language contact, building on Susan Philips' "ecosystems" model of ideological diversity (Philips 2004). [15] Philips uses the plant/ecosystem metaphor as a way to move beyond the limitations of the metaphor water, or "flow" (made most famous by Appadurai 1990). But what exactly should we take from the metaphor of plant life and ecosystems that water-based metaphors do not

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15 "[...] just as plants enter into ecological relationships with other plants as they colonize new environments, so, too, do ideas enter into particular configurations as they colonize discourse"(Philips 2004: 233). Also, "[i]deologies are like plant species, entering into and inhabiting different discourse environments"(Philips 2004:247).

grant? The most important aspect is what Philips terms "issues of compatibility" (Philips 2004:247): that existing factors– historical, social, geographical, political, cultural, religious– structure the ways that new presences can development, and the settings in which they flourish or flounder. This is a much-needed perspective in language contact literature, which is predominated by a model that views languages not as living, malleable things, but as more or less solidified objects that can "collide" with each other, to various effects. What is a "discourse environment," and how does it differ from similar terms (such as "setting," "context," "place")? Rather than insist that these terms have non-overlapping definitions, my motivation for using "discourse environment" is to emphasize the embeddedness of language into the practices themselves, into the technical and social parameters, rather than as an extrinsic thing. Language practices, then, cannot be extracted from their environments– even if a description, such as this one, highlights their functions. An ecosystem-based metaphor, rather than the Newtonian colliding-balls model of language contact predominant in language contact literature from both formal linguistics and linguistic anthropology, can more fully capture the historical residues of languages in contact by considering them as vertically-arranged ecosystems.

From a theoretical standpoint, the main contribution of this dissertation is to discuss how linguistic nationalism is configured with respect to multiple national languages, with various hierarchized dimensions, and shifting power dynamics over time. To do so, I reevaluate the predominant metaphors to describe what contact between Georgian and other languages in theoretical and practical descriptions consists of. I search for the material basis in fieldwork for metaphors that can become structuring forces in the ethnographic project itself, which has resulted in taking interfaces of various

kinds as the guiding principle of organization, reaching across chapters that appear to deal with disparate concerns. This means representing multiple contexts within Tbilisi as enduring similar objective, outside political conditions, but internally accommodating Russian language presence in a variety of ways dependent on the discursive practices existing in each context. I envision settings themselves– intricately linked to the people and activities conducted within them, as well as the perceived "edges" they contain or create– as instrumental in forming and stabilizing discursive practices. I stress the interactive habits between human and technology (understood broadly) as the crucial element in understanding how discursive practices emerge and are transformed. Thus, I shift attention to the interactive edge, the interface, between humans and technologies of various kinds (number pads, barbells, film screens).

Also, I address my thesis to an audience of historians and political scientists. I am interested in how the borders between porous "Georgian" and "Russian" cultural realities and language are understood, enacted, and discussed in various social settings within Tbilisi. Without dismissing the import of politics, I draw attention to cultural trends not exclusively as causes or consequences of political situations, but as significant sources of insight in their own right. By this I mean that language and culture can take on political valence, import, or significance, but that they should not be reduced to mere factors of political import, as there is more that we can learn about both the friction and felicity of contact that is not directly reflected in political states but appears at the level of culture, language, and media. My goal is to escape the too-common view that politics must always be privileged in discussing all cultural processes, or that the political can be decoupled from regular, everyday practices. The political, in this account, is neither

greater than nor lesser than the habituated practices of the everyday, which are predicated on traversing, negotiating, and dealing with interfaces of various kinds, from the interpersonal to the technological.

Theorizing Intermediaries: Translation, Entextualization, and Film Dubbing

Anthropological treatments of contact, transfer, and influence can benefit from translation studies theorizing. The problem of how to render a text (with all its incomplete, ambiguous, and culturally-specific worlds of reference and meaning) in a different code cuts to the heart of the difficulty of the ethnographer's role in rendering social life in written form. Yet the language (and theory) of translation has not been fully engaged, even by those social theorists like Clifford Geertz who drew from writing and reading as metaphors for transfer and comprehension. This present study is informed by a commitment to representation as a process, not as an unassailable result. To this end, I will briefly outline in this section what metaphors of "text" in/as representation lurk beyond my understanding of the object of study, so as to put my awareness of my role as ethnographer (and text-maker) in better focus. Further, Chapter 4 (Russian Presence in Georgian Film Dubbing: Scales of Inferiority) addresses what translators do in the context of the imported film industry in Tbilisi, and seeks to further destabilize the notion that translation itself is based on fixed texts or rigidly defined endpoints.

In his seminal article on translation "On the Different Methods of Translation," Friedrich Schleiermacher succinctly describes the two poles of translation: "Either the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him; or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward

him"(Schleiermacher 2012 [1813]:49).[16] What this early formulation captures is that translation is a process of representation founded on accommodation– to an audience, as well as to the form and content of an original text. The relationship between texts and audiences is the key metaphor in Geertz's famous formulation of text-as-culture, in which the anthropologist strains to read texts over the shoulder of those to whom they properly belong. Geertz's vision, read through Schleiermacher, is one in which the anthropologist moves as much as possible towards the writer (informant). It is less clear, however, in Geertz's vision what the relationship between anthropologist and informant becomes in the process of writing ethnography, of shifting the "texts" to new kinds of readers. His promotion of "thick" ethnography suggests that his ideal is one in which the anthropologists' interpretation, as much as possible, is avoided in favor of drawing ethnography reader as close as possible to ethnographic object. Yet Geertz is acutely aware that this intermediary layer of interpretation cannot be erased, that it is the very stuff of anthropology so must be drawn into reflexive awareness.

"Text" has served as a powerful metaphor in anthropology for cultural knowledge, modes of meaning-making, and interpretive practices. Reading, writing, translating, and a host of other text-oriented metaphors have been invoked as ways of captioning components, paraphrasing problematics, and traversing entanglements associated with interpretive practices. Scholars have challenged the use of some of these text-based

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[16] Schleiermacher warns that an attempt at combining these two approaches will produce a "highly unreliable result" and carries with it the "danger that the writer and the reader might miss each other entirely"(Schleiermacher 2012 [1813]:49). Thus, what Schleiermacher conceives of as two separate and divergent paths towards intelligibility – a sort of directional line of communication from writer to reader– I describe here as two poles, emphasizing these paths as expressing an orientation towards what the act of translation entails. Schleiermacher's two possibilities are the extreme poles that express the fundamental values informing the translator's decisions during the translation process.

metaphors on various grounds, including their privileging of literacy over orality, dismissal of the materiality of "text," reduction of diverse practices into homogenized forms, and valuing of the visual dimension over other modes of apprehension. Yet "text" in particular has catalyzed very productive scholarly work, particularly in understanding how the figure/ground relationship functions.

One of the most powerful processes in interpretation is the configuration of a figure-ground relationship, by which one perceives– through contrast– what constitutes figure (text, focus, object) and what is ground (context, background). The figure-ground relationship, along with its entailments, has been described in different ways in the theoretical literature, starting with Gestalt psychology and moving into linguistic anthropology with the text-metaphorical term "entextualization." One of the most helpful discussions of the ways that parameters of interpretive structures or ideologies are set by a figure/ground relationship is in the theoretical term "entextualization." Silverstein and Urban bring together a series of articles that deal with so-called "entextualization practices," focusing on "contextually contingent semiotic processes involved in achieving text – and culture"(Silverstein and Urban 1996:2). They emphasize that to conceptualize culture-as-text is to call attention to the fixed meanings of detachable, thing-like bounded "texts" that are seen as capable of being "clearly transmitted across social boundaries" and then re-contextualized. To Silverstein and Urban, this represents a "deprocessualized" view of (text) meaning (Silverstein and Urban 1996: 1). By drawing attention to the ways that the text-context relationship configures fixity, both of form and its relationship to social meaning, they emphasize entextualization as central to social semiotic processes of meaning-making. For this reason, it is worth revisiting Geertz's

formative concept of "text" to update it so that it encompasses the kinds of script-based, translation-induced concerns emergent from taking mediations across linguistic code not as aberrations, but as regular, legitimate, and constant concerns, as they are in many places in the world.

Geertz's concept of "text" can be usefully updated (or, at least, reconceptualized) by drawing in concepts from translation theory prioritizing practice above product, along with Bakhtinian text-based notions of unfinalizability. Borrowing from Bakhtin, the crucial element missing from Geertz's notion of "text" is unfinalizability (Russian *nezavershennost'*)(Morson and Emerson 1990). This strand of Bakhtinian thought– emphasizing the free, open, creative, and surprising dimensions of discursive practice– is mirrored in translation studies literature that describes (in quite practical terms!) the translated text as a process rather than a finalized item (Venuti 1998). In other words, a translation is but one approximation of an original text that also lacks fixity– this approach emphasizes translation as an active process of interpretation rather than a production of singular, fixed forms. Lawrence Venuti works against what he terms the "invisibility of the translator" by encouraging translators to see their role not as dutifully "transferring" meaning from one code to another, but in actively shaping a new interpretation of the text in translation. [17]

This sort of approach can benefit the ways that anthropologists think of their roles as "translators" of cultures. Assuming that all versions and representation (all "texts") are unfinalizable deflates, to some degree, concerns about "authentic"

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[17] Venuti takes a somewhat radical view of the instability of the written word not necessarily shared by other translators, see esp. Schleiermacher 2012 [1813]; Umberto Eco 2001; and Vladimir Nabokov "Problems of Translation: *Onegin* in English" (2012 [1955]).

representations and encourages an active, creative account of what legitimizes, motivates, or bedevils the anthropologist. It should be said that this does not detract from the anthropologist's responsibility to some sort of criteria of validation (Spencer 1989). Instead, it emphasizes the processual component of "text" as the object of interest. In other words, we may investigate how "ensembles" of interpretations come to be juxtaposed, by whom, and to what end instead of merely "reading" them.

Organization of Chapters

The next chapter discusses the curious place of Russian language in contemporary Tbilisi as a multivalent symbolic resource. I introduce a variety of settings, from movie theaters to weightlifting training halls, through which I will discuss how the affordances of Russian have been remapped (or have resisted remapping). This chapter serves as a theoretical orientation for considering language as a form of infrastructure, as well as a practical introduction to settings that appear in more detail in individual chapters later in the thesis. I discuss how the case of Georgian *zhargoni* (slang) is one that draws out some central contradictions in Russian code linked to multiple scales of value, through which Georgianness is simultaneously enriched and put at risk by the otherness of Russian.

Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 take as their focus the Rustaveli/Amirani movie theater complex and business holdings, who according to their website are "a diversified film & entertainment group leading Georgian market with over 90% share".[18] In interviews, Rustaveli Cinemas Holding Company representatives discussed their position in the market, how they perceive the audience for films (based on their own internally-conducted research), and issues related to the language of film showings and relationship

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to the law, controlled by the Ministry of Culture. While I investigate other Tbilisi businesses involved with film language issues, since Rustaveli Holdings controls a near monopoly, I take it as a main starting point to discuss how issues of legal compliance and audience-interaction are negotiated.

Chapter 3 picks up the theme of entrenched Russian language to discuss the recent law on film broadcasting, which I compare to a widespread rumor about a law that supposedly banned the performance of Russian music in restaurants. This comparison is intended to emphasize that certain laws - even when asserting categorical changes - are inconsequential in terms of understanding real practices on the ground, and certain rumors about laws (even laws that do not exist) have powerful implications and alter behaviors. In this chapter I discuss what organizations are involved in film dubbing and subtitling, how has this changed over time, what the role of the government is, and how different social actors perceive it. I discuss the details of relatively new laws pertaining to state language and film, TV, and radio broadcasts, and how are they followed. This is all to present the "big idea" about film language(s) and state language: though government officials and organizations frame the promotion of Georgian language as a nationalist project, it contains within it particular modes to rid Georgian public space of Russian language. Thus, there are anti-Russian language components of what appears and is presented as a pro-Georgian project. I demonstrate this with a variety of materials from the film theater industry. Materials come from the Georgian Public Broadcasting (GPB), Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC), Georgian National Film Center (GNFC), Amirani movie theater, Rustaveli movie theater, Sakartvelo movie theater, and Kolga movie theater.

Along with this, I discuss how the mandate demanding state language dubbing and subtitling in public film showings is selectively enforced, and does not seem to apply to English language showings. At Rustaveli, the largest Tbilisi movie theater, for example, they began an English-only schedule of movie showings that offered no Georgian language dubbing or subtitling, and did not perceive this to be in violation of the law. Another Tbilisi movie theater (Kolga), shows exclusively English language films without Georgian dubbing or subtitling, and also do not perceive this to be in violation of any law. Rather than moralizing these perspectives as misdeeds or disobedience, I discuss why such a perspective is possible: (1) a lack of information regarding the details and goals of the law from the governmental side (2) an understanding that the law on film showings is intended to target Russian language films, not English ones. The broader issue here is a mismatch between the aspirational legislation regarding language in Georgia and the practicalities and publics that movie theaters must serve to remain profitable and viable in Tbilisi.

By comparing the relatively unheeded official legislation pertaining to the elimination of foreign language (esp. Russian) film showings to the widely believed and followed rumors about a non-existent law banning Russian language songs in restaurants, I emphasize the factors that make changes in public cultural spaces possible. The main practical difference between the two situations is that no measures were provided for alternatives for film showings, as production of Georgian-language dubbing and film subtitling are prohibitively expensive and relatively undeveloped industries in Georgia. In film theaters, most of the movies are in foreign languages. To ban them requires translation, as their value is partially in connecting viewers to present-day new releases.

In the context of restaurants, a ban on Russian songs is more practical, as there is a large canon of Georgian songs that can be played instead. What unites these two legally connected issues is that while most people are unaware of the ban on foreign language films (without state language subtitling or dubbing), many have heard and are aware of the ban on Russian songs. Both precipitated at roughly the same moment, in late 2010, early 2011. I discuss the metacultural mechanisms that made a rumor more powerful than a legal mandate, both of which are intended to affect the use of Russian language in public space. To do so, I draw from interviews, forum discussions, Facebook exchanges, and legal documents.

In addition to interrogating what "influence" has meant when discussing language, another term emerges in the discussion of language behaviors, laws, and attitudes: compliance. Compliance, at its center, is about demonstrating an acceptance of influence. Chapter 3, in which I discuss real and imagined film and song ban laws in contemporary Georgia, invites us to approach compliance not as willingly carrying out the will of others, but as something different: as governmental and private institutional collaboration to accommodate both the letter and spirit of the law. Compliance can be best understood as a two-sided form of acquiescence to demands construed as appearing from entities outside of direct participation (the Saakashvili regime) in the process of law becoming lived practice. Compliance is constructed as a way of tactically avoiding attention.

Chapter 4 addresses dubbing and subtitling practices in Tbilisi by focusing on the ways that different social actors – including former President Saakashvili, managers of the largest movie theater business in Georgia, translators, film sound specialists, film-

goers, and social scientists – describe and assess the role of film language in Georgia. One of the main points of this chapter is to describe how the contemporary debate centers on the term *khariskhi* (quality), a fundamentally relative descriptor without fixed referent. To understand what informants mean when they invoke this term requires understanding the high value ascribed to Soviet (and now Russian) film dubbing, despite political discontents and the simultaneously powerful legacy of shoddy pirated dubbed films from the Soviet Union. This chapter takes on the more broad policy claim that changing film language practices from dubbing to subtitling has the capacity to transform Georgian subjectivities into "European" ones. Underlying this chapter is the demonstration that Russian as has embedded itself into social practices and sites of use that cast it as an ideal language of mediation.

In Chapter 5, I discuss why mobile phone number dictation is frequently done in Russian instead of Georgian. Particularly, I ask why a non-native language is preferred for this task, and how informants explain this preference. One of the most common explanations is about ease of communication, which is directed towards the addressee who is seen as being at risk of miskeying a number if it is given in Georgian rather than Russian. The basis of this, in part, is in a difference in the number systems between Georgian and Russian, as Georgian uses a vigesimal system and Russian uses a decimal system. Is there a psychological reality to claims of "ease" in production and reception of a decimal system rather than a vigesimal one? I argue that this is a case where the technology (particularly, the number key pad on the mobile phone) affects the preferred number dictation system. With this, I discuss how number systems have been used as indications of "primitive" cultures, and in turn, "primitive" psychologies. There is also an

interesting set of literature in language processing focused on math education that emphasizes benefits conferred by certain number systems, such as Chinese, for example. In this direction, I target my comments toward future experimental research informed by anthropological fieldwork in order to investigate non-mathematical uses of numerical systems and their relative cost on attention and memory, in order to determine if informants claims about ease are supported from this perspective.

More broadly, this investigation of cellphone technology's influence on discursive practice invites to ask: what in a given communicative modality exists *a priori* that necessarily has an influence over the *functions* of the talk that are transmitted along, within, or by means of this modality? Can we consider communicative technologies a form of "channel," in Jakobson's sense? What does it mean to say that communication or interaction is "mediated"? Much of the literature about new communicative technologies (such as the internet, cell phones, satellite-based communication, and so on) oppose these modalities to so-called "traditional" or "face-to-face" interaction. The implication in much of the literature is that there is something "new" about "new technologies" that can be understood as a transfiguration, alteration, or adaptation of what we know about "traditional" interactions. However, what we know about "traditional" or "face-to-face" interactions, as well as what might be "new" in "new technologies" is often left unelaborated. So-called "new technologies" should not be viewed as diametrically opposed (or really, opposed in any sense) to "conventional" technologies of communication. So-called "new technologies" of communication contain non-channel features that build in bundles of communicative possibilities and functions outside of those present in "traditional" interactive models. The theoretical move here is to

destabilize the notion that all interactions should be evaluated against a neutral model called "face-to-face," but instead should be assessed according to parameters, based first on Jakobson and expanded in the ethnography of communication, that focus on the specific functions of talk.

Along with the chapter on cell phone technologies, I include examples from other technological communicative modalities. Most significant among these is the Internet, which according to sociologist Lika Tsuladze, became a strong vector for Georgian youth self-identification and communication in 2004 as access grew widespread in Georgia (Tsuladze 2011). Additionally, the movie theater industry in Georgia conceptualizes Facebook as the primary instrument to communicate with its audiences, so analyzing exchanges from that source is useful in terms of understanding how they conceive of the movie-going public, and what sorts of debates or issues are frequently discussed in that medium. Comments on internet articles, forum discussions, and other internet-based reactions to language issues (esp. linked to Russian) in Georgia are useful sources to understand what kinds of concerns readers consider worth voicing, and how they make arguments about Georgia's changing linguistic situation, especially as it relates to Georgian-ness and what an "ideal" Georgia should be. Another purpose for including the Internet inter-text and meta-discussion is to include it as an equal vein of insight to so-called "traditional" interaction, rather than as a special domain uncoupled from "reality."

Turning from translators, movie theaters, and government actors, all of whom participate in constructing public demonstrations of the interface between image and word, the final chapter addresses a different form of mediation, occurring between coaches and their athletes. Chapter 6 discusses the social world of the Georgian National

Weightlifting Federation, focusing particularly on the linguistic practices that regiment physical training. By discussing the mundane and repetitive exchanges used to instructive young weightlifters, I discuss how skill is conceptualized as an intrinsically non-masculine but nevertheless incredibly valued complement to strength, an attribute that is associated with animality and masculinity. Taking the term *gizhi* (crazy) as describing a valued masculine psychology, but also as a limit that can be crossed if the measured restraint of training is not engaged, this chapter discusses the ways in which expertise carefully balances masculine chaos with feminine order, and naturalizes those links in the process.

This chapter picks up the theme of the nexus between masculinities and language in Georgia. Issues of gender appear in earlier chapters (such as detailing gendered labor in the case of telephone operators in the Soviet Union, and language instructors and translators in contemporary Tbilisi), but gender as a central thematic engaged most fully in this section about weightlifting. In thinking through Russian language as a kind of sociotechnical code linked to a form of modernity, this chapter invites consideration of how gender is configured through and against languages of empire.

CHAPTER 2.

Revaluing Russian: Linguistic Code as Infrastructure

"[Words and tools] conduct a skilled and sensuous engagement with the environment that is sharpened and enriched through previous experience"(Ingold 2000:146).

Languages of empire do not bear identical traces of social power, nor are they experienced identically with relation to local languages, settings of practice, or ideological frameworks. Articulating language practices in terms of affordance and infrastructure enables us to account for the particularity of the social, material, and historical vectors that shape a linguistic ecology. The previous chapter included history and an overall orientation to the dissertation, as well as a discussion of the prevalence and significance of the ideology of replacement. This chapter takes as its focus the curious place of Russian language as a simultaneously vilified and valorized symbolic resource in contemporary Tbilisi. I discuss how the affordances of Russian have been remapped (or have resisted remapping) in a variety of settings, from movie theaters to weightlifting training halls. By working across settings, I present the ways that Russian signs– training systems, film distribution systems, and linguistic code – appear as part of the infrastructure of contemporary Tbilisi life. This provides an overview for how to think about Russian language use in contemporary Georgia as a sociotechnical medium. By querying why certain physical settings and social contexts have remained strongly

influenced by Russian, I add specificity to accounts that have characterized Russian in Georgia as an enduring language of Empire. [1]

Russian language has been connected implicitly to the domains of science and technology. This connection to science and technology effaces political import, as these domains are ideologically positioned to be constitutive of a "reality unfettered by human contingency"(Akrich 1992: 205). At the same time, Russian is tethered to domains of cultural life that are maximally human, such as arts and letters. Domains themselves have contributed to the split personality of Russian language use valuation in Georgia, in which Russian is, by turns, seen as asset and risk. The dual character of Russian language use is a component of ideologies of Georgian nationalism, which are built against notions of the "foreign" as simultaneously enriching and endangering. Such ideologies shape contemporary language policy. Georgia is cast as participating, through semiotic forms and language practices, in a version of modernity occurring elsewhere. Russian pulls at this aspiration by being linked to the "backwards" modernity of the Soviet past, along with present-day infrastructure in contemporary Georgia. As I will demonstrate with examples from former President Saakashvili's speeches, movie theater film language debates, and discussions about the use of Russian lexical terms in Georgian, social actors stress certain indexical links, while emphasizing the innocence or neutrality of others in order to navigate the place of Russian language in Tbilisi.

This chapter introduces settings and contexts treated in greater detail later in the dissertation. By drawing out the theme of the multivalent evaluative component of Russian code across settings, I establish it as a sort of infrastructural backdrop against

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[1] For example, see Blauvelt 2013.

which other dimensions of social life are cast. Attitudes about code – and what code use can or should index – are by no means static. Starting with a discussion of Russian language in movie theater film showings (a theme developed in two different directions in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4), I then shift to discuss another realm of cultural production, a literary group called the "Russian Club," where language is consciously placed at the definitional center of activity. Next, I turn to weightlifting (see Chapter 5 for a more extensive description of both the physical and social world of weightlifting within Tbilisi, with an elaboration of the gendered components of training cues). Finally, I discuss the case of Georgian *zhargoni* (slang) as one in which the multivalent hues of Russian code appear most sharply. Drawn from a multitude of sources, I discuss how and why Russian language has been a rich source of identification of ways of speaking linked to criminality.

Legacy, Fulcrum, Influence

What kind of "Russian" interspersions in language or other domains of cultural life impinge on Georgianness, and for whom? Scholars of Georgia have noted the tense, multivalent Russo-Georgian nexus as a point at which values of nationhood, hierarchies of value, and histories of influence are most heatedly hashed out.[2] Hulya Sakarya conceptualizes the Russian-Georgian relationship as "a fulcrum around which many understandings of the Georgian nation turn today"(Sakarya 2012:43). Central to this is ambivalence about how "foreign" one risks becoming by using Russian-identified linguistic code (or other symbolically-charged resources). As an example of this, Martin Frederiksen notes the conflicted place of Russia(n) in Georgia by explaining that for his

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[2] See Layton 1994 and Ram 2003 for how this nexus functions in literature.

informant Manana, it was "not a matter of all foreign influence being problematic, but rather that there were right and wrong kinds of foreign influences"(Frederiksen 2012:133). Frederiksen points out that Russian cultural elements and everyday encounters with Russians were commonplace and not ideologically problematic. Additionally, Frederiksen notes that, "Russian legacies in terms of theatre and 'high culture' are still greatly esteemed"(Frederiksen 2012:133). Frederiksen summarizes these different forms of foreign influence in this fashion: "The strangeness and possible intrusion ascribed to the Chinese trinket shops and Western NGO workers therefore did not apply to ordinary Russians and Russian cultural influences, even at the height of a war against Russia itself"(133). In this chapter, I delve into the ways that *within* Russian "influence" there are "right" and "wrong" forms – and that, by degree, can appear to possess degrees of foreignness, and can be construed as posing a risk for formations like the Georgian nation.

During the Saakashvili presidency, aspirations for the Georgian nation were plotted along geographic and temporal lines, charting a course for an imagined European version of modernity. This version of modernity simultaneously activated already-extant features of Georgian-ness while downplaying the perceived backwardness of other marks of Georgian-ness. As Sakarya explains, "Saakashvili's grasping at a 'return to Europe' as he so often says, reflects his belief [...] that European secular systems and civic forms of national order are superior"(Sakarya 2012: 81). These forms of national order are also linked to notions of temporality. In Saakashvili's rhetoric, for example, "visions of the future" played a central role (Frederiksen 2012: 126). The place of the Soviet past, as well as the uneasy relationship with Russia, are crucial in understanding the aspirations of

Saakashvili's vision of Georgian nationhood and its discontents. This includes, for

example, strategic forgetting (absence, discursive omission (McLoughlin, forthcoming),

or erasure (Irvine and Gal 2000)) of shared alignments between Georgia and the Soviet

project. [3] Multilingualism and multiculturalism have been problematic reminders of the

insufficiency of singular, Herderian language-people-nation mappings.[4]

The Affordances of Linguistic Code

Rather than reify a materialist vs. idealist division by stressing the material basis

of linguistic code, I use the term "affordance" to emphasize the process by which the

elements of linguistic code becomes linked to certain social functions or infrastructural

niches. Linguistic systems can be conceived as tool- or instrument-like, as possessing

functions and perceived "fits" with social activities or kinds of person- or nationhood.In

the case of Russian language in Tbilisi, Russian affords use for technical and inter-ethnic

communication. Its widespread use in these functions, in a variety of settings, naturalizes

this social affordance for Tbilisi users.

Another way of treating the pairing of language choice and social form is with the

term "language ideology," which has been defined in several influential ways in the

linguistic anthropological literature. Two significant definitions come from Michael

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[3] For example, consider Sakarya's observation that "[a]s for including or addressing the Russian or Soviet influence in the formation of the Georgian nation, [Saakashvili] and the cultural producers who respond to this call are silent. As an inclusion project, therefore, Saakashvili's policies exclude Russian and Soviet influence. He seems to ignore an entire period of time in which Georgians contributed and perhaps experienced change, while equally failing to recognize the common goals that existed between the Soviet project and the multiculturalist one,which is the achievement of parity" (Sakarya 2012:45).

[4] For more on the issue of multiculturalism in/as both political aspiration and inherent obstacle, see Hulya Sakarya's dissertation, "Georgian Polyphonic Imaginaries: The Politics of Representation in the Caucasus"(2012) which at its basis is about political managements of multiculturalism in Saakashvili's Georgia.

Silverstein (1979) and Kathyrn Woolard (1998). Woolard presents an overview of the various ways that language (or linguistic) ideologies have been invoked, defined, and applied. She provides her own definition of the term: "Representations, whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world"(Woolard 1998:3). Woolard concludes by asserting that a focus on language ideology "makes a promising bridge between linguistic and social theory"(Woolard 1998:27). Similarly, Silverstein posits a (1979) definition of "linguistic ideologies" as "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use"(Silverstein 1979:193). While encompassing (degrees) of awareness that enjoin linguistic knowledge and use, this definition of ideology remains firmly interiorized as a belief structure. As social theory has moved to incorporate non-human actors, linguistic anthropological treatment of linguistic ideologies must work to acknowledge this shift. This is accomplished by recognizing emergent qualities in the relational matrix between animal, material substances, linguist forms, and interactional traces.

By referring to the habitual linking between linguistic code and thematic dimensions of sociotechnical life with the term "affordance," I am emplacing the meaning of forms and their interpretations in the relational context between subject and object, form and interpreter, instrument and individual. While not dismissing the utility of language (or linguistic) ideology, my use of the term "affordance" aims to capture, or at least draw together, the meaning of linguistic code as a structure of social significance that is as much material, infrastructural, and "grounded" in lexical forms as it is linked to habitual, routinized belief structures. Next I will turn to the specific settings, forms, and

instruments through which we can see how Russian language as an infrastructural element has resisted remapping from cultural domains in which it has inhered as a sticky, constitutive element.

Affordances and the Sociotechnical

One useful way of thinking through the compatibilities, alignments, or fits among material infrastructure, linguistic form, and social relations is to consider what affordances language has, or is believed to have. What does language make available for transforming the material-social world? We must not only force affordances to speak to the always-already social dimension of animal-object interaction, but also to consider how this speaking-to has parameters, fits, capacities, and limits of its own that are part-inherent part-constructed. Thinking about affordances with respect to linguistic code grounds language practice in a fully material and social world rather than divorcing sign, actor, object and practice to later re-assemble them.[5]

James J. Gibson's original definition of "affordance" reads as follows: "*the affordance of anything is a specific combination of the properties of its substance and its surfaces taken with reference to an animal"*(Gibson 1977:67, original emphasis). To illustrate this, Gibson then provides examples of surface, which permit different physical interactions for animals (such as being "stand-on-able," "walk-on-able," and, if the surface is raised to the height of the knees for a human biped, rigid, flat, and extended: "sit-on-able" (Gibson 1977: 67). Surfaces are also "bump-into-able or get-underneath-

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[5] One can phrase this as an attempt to locate more of social life in a sort of interactive "middle" zone, or as de Certeau puts it with respect to the term "frontier": "A middle place, composed of interactions and inter-views, the frontier is a sort of void, a narrative sym-bol of exchanges and encounters"(de Certeau 1984: 127).

able, or climb-on-able, or fall-off-able," as "[l]ayouts afford different kinds of behavior and different sorts of encounters"(Gibson 1977: 67). Gibson has in mind physical properties of objects, and is clear that "affordance cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective," yet affordances are "facts of the environment, not appearances"(Gibson 1977:70). Environment, in this sense includes object and animal - for Gibson, environment-animal interactions are crucial.[6] By stressing that affordances are facts instead of appearances, Gibson moves away from an understanding of the animal-world interaction that relies on subjective, private, perception, as he says that, "the environment does not depend on the organism for existence"(Gibson 1977:70).[7] Gibson's theorizing about affordances moves towards a theory of perception, as affordances "offer" things to the animal.[8]

At its core, Gibson's theory of affordances is a way of dealing with the problem of meaning that seeks to escape from psycho-physical and subject-object dualisms (Costall 1995). Costall points out that Gibson attempted to "establish the existence of a universal, asocial mode of perception"(Costall 1995:470). Costall asserts that the concept of affordances must be socialized on a variety of counts, particularly since artifacts (and

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[6] See, for example, this refinement that forefronts animal-environment interaction: "The definition of an affordance can now be elaborated by saying that it is a combination of physical properties of the environment that is uniquely suited to a given animal – to his nutritive system or his action system or his locomotor system"(Gibson 1977:79).

[7] When discussing physical "facts" of the environment, Gibson refers to substances and layouts. Layouts are the shapes (or configurations) of substances.

[8] It is worth mentioning that Gibson fully acknowledges that felicitous engagement with the environment is not always obtained. Affordances can be misperceived. Gibson provides the example of a closed glass door that is mistaken for an open doorway (Gibson 1977:81). Other examples include quicksand being mistaken for sand, a pitfall mistaken for solid ground, and a thief mistaken for an honest man (ibid). Though Gibson does not frame his discussion in terms of signs or semiotics, in his account, misperception is based on (mis)interpreting signs.

one's encounters with them) have social significance and histories that one learns, encounters, maintains, and participates in (see esp. Costall 1995: 472-473). In archaeology, Knappett has pointed out that artefacts "may act as a common source of what Tomasello calls 'joint attention (1999, 62), a kind of 'pivot' around which activities may form"(Knappett 2004: 45). Language possesses material dimensions, and should also be treated as a 'pivot' for activities. Relationships with objects are mediated not only by individual embodied experience, then, but also through social dimensions, including language.

Gibson's theory of affordances has been taken up and refined in a multitude of ways. For my purposes in this chapter, I will restrict my comments to those interventions that have pushed the concept of affordances towards productive application in anthropology to dealing with the problem of the interpretation of signs. I am leaving aside, for example, ways that affordance contributes to psychologies of perception, though I deal tangentially with scholarly literature that moves in this direction. One example of this scholarly literature is that from ecological psychology, such as the contributions of Turvey (1992), Chemero (2003), and Stoffregen (2003). Like Chemero, Stoffregen is interested in creating a formalized definition of affordance, which they do, in part, by building on (and against) Turvey (1992). Chemero, like Stoffregen and Turvey, is intent on positing the formal logical structure of affordances, taking the form of postulates such as "Perceives [animal, affordance-of-ø]"(Chemero 2003:191).[9]

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[9] Chemero (2003) insists on certain distinctions (such as between "feature" and "property,"(Chemero 2003:187) as well as "effectivities," "dispositions," and "abilities"(Chemero 2003:189)) that I do not discuss or problematize here. I signal this to indicate how terms of the theoretical debate on affordances are outside of the scope of the

Without tarrying into the formal aspects of their arguments, the broad contribution of

Stoffregen (2003) and Chemero (2003) is to see affordances as emergent, relational

structures rather than inherent properties of objects of subjects. Chemero's central

argument in this article is that affordances are relations between animals and situations

rather than properties, as others have characterized them. [10] Chemero helpfully puts

relationality at the center of the definition of affordance, which Stoffregen (2003)

clarifies as emergent properties of the animal-environment system.[11] The move to center

relationality for the concept of affordance is also taken up by Knappett in the context of

archaeology (2004). Knappett states that the "affordance of an object is [...] a relational

property shared between object and agent"(Knappett 2004: 46). Returning to the issue of

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present argument, but will be of interest to those pursuing certain types of rigor in understanding the history and efficacy of the concept.

[10] The way that Chemero frames this intervention, however, is of interest. He argues that his purpose is to make affordances "more ontologically respectable" than Gibson's 1979 formulation, which he writes "makes affordances seem like impossible, ghostly entities [...] that no respectable scientist (or science-worshipping analytic philosopher) could have as part of their ontology"(Chemero 2003:182). The passage from Gibson that Chemero finds "confusing" is one in which Gibson states that affordances are neither objective nor subjective properties, but are "both"(Gibson 1979:129). Chemero's diagnosis of Gibson's original formulation as confusing and inadequate bespeaks the sort of rigor Chemero wishes to cultivate in the theoretical elaboration of "affordance." In Chemero's framing, the dismissal of "impossible, ghostly entities" seems to mischaracterize Gibson's evocative phrasing, as well as sharply delimiting what kinds of entities can be understood to be appropriate for/in theorizing. Chemero emphasizes that affordances, as relations, are real. For Chemero, what are ghosts, and why must they be excluded from ontology? Social science approaches to the "ghostly" (cf. Benjamin 1968, Frederiksen 2013, Ivy 1995) are a counterbalance to this mode of inquiry that impulsively keeps haunting out, even as it constitutes relational modes. In the vein of Costall's (1995) entreaty "Isn't the social *real*?" (which recalls Benedict Anderson's definition of the nation as an "imagined political community"(Anderson 2006 [1983]:6), possessing its force in the ways that imagining stems from and creates material conditions), we may ask, aren't *ghosts* real? To exclude illogic and incompleteness from a description of the social world, of which affordances and perception constitute a part, is to deny their significance.

[11] Alan Costall notes that affordances are relational, though Gibson was "blantantly inconsistent on this point"(Costall 2007:69).

meaning, Ingold neatly draws out Gibson's contribution by saying that, "far from being inscribed upon the bedrock of physical reality, meaning is immanent in the relational contexts of people's practical engagement with their lived-in environments"(Ingold 2000: 168). It is this understanding of affordances, one that foregrounds relational contexts, that can enrich theorizing familiar to linguistic anthropology. Let me turn now to the setting of the movie theater within Tbilisi, to discuss a particular cultural domain that incorporates aesthetic, political, and technical dimensions in a fraught relationship with Russian language as a medium and message.

Language Competence: Movie Theaters

On a sweltering summer day in Tbilisi in 2012, I find myself surrounded by teenagers in a darkened, air-conditioned movie theater as "*adamiani oboba*" ("Spiderman") starring Andrew Garfield begins. The teenagers behind me satirize Peter Parker's outsider, melancholic personality by croaking various humorous completions of the Russian phrase "*Ia – Peter Parker...*" ("I'm Peter Parker..."). This young demographic supposedly lacks competence in the Russian language, yet they are the overwhelming majority at film showings where the language is Russian. Such Russian language showings are common, despite the fact that they are technically illegal, as I discuss in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4. Here I attend to the peculiarity that teenagers overwhelmingly populate such showings, though they are a demographic characterized in popular discourse as well as quantitative research as lacking Russian language knowledge.

What age group goes to movie theaters in Tbilisi? According to research by Rustaveli/Amirani, the movie-going demographics by age breakdown like this:

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22%    under 14
14%    14 - 17
38%    18 - 24
22%    25 - 34
3%     35 - 44
1%     45 - 55
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Figure 1: Movie-Goers by Age (Rustaveli/Amirani)

Rustaveli, Age of Movie-Goers
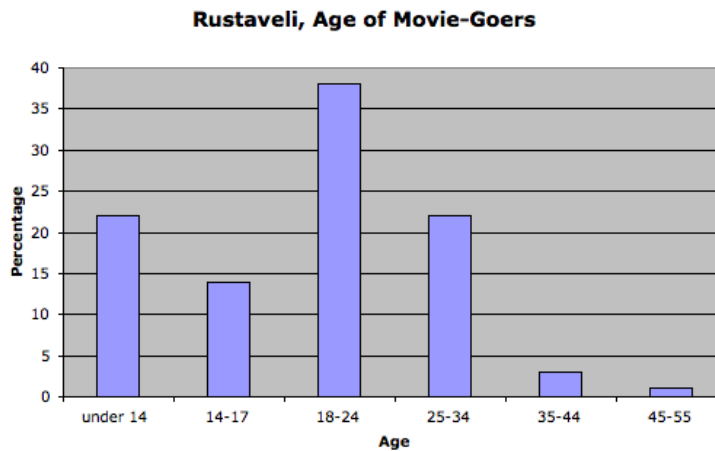
Figure 2: Movie-Goers by Age (Rustaveli/Amirani)

One oft-heard refrain from Tbilisi residents of all ages is that Russian language competence is quickly diminishing, and that in particular the young generation lacks competence in Russian completely. In light of the Rustaveli data cited above, which indicate that 74% of movie attendees are beneath the age of 24, how can this widespread belief about language competence be reconciled with the fact that youth are overwhelmingly attending movie showings where the language is Russian? To respond to this, we first must investigate how age correlates with knowledge of Russian. Assessments of "competence" (both self-assessments, and assessments of others) are fraught with theoretical difficulties, stemming in large part from the lack of clear

assessment criteria. The problem of the indeterminacy of "competence" is reflected in the quantitative, survey-based methods that have been employed to investigate this question in Georgia thus far. By discussing the findings of two quantitative approaches to the issue of Russian competence in Georgia, I aim to highlight the inherent limitations of these methods in terms of how the category of "competence" is construed, and also to discuss what we useful information they produce and report.

John King's quantitative research, based on questionnaires administered to 182 university students in Georgia in May 2010 speaks to the issue of perceived secondary national language shift from Russian to English, "[...] Russian language, while undoubtedly fading away as younger generations learn less of it than their elders did in Soviet times, is still present and even active in certain aspects of life. The respondents understood the decline of Russian and rise of English, but seemed to have an exaggerated perception of this shift, underestimating the existing presence of Russian and overestimating the emerging presence of English" (King 2012: 1). My findings support the conclusion that Russian language presence and knowledge is consistently underestimated, and English overestimated. King's questionnaire asked about language use in different contexts, including for watching films. [From 182 respondents] [w]atching films [in Russian] had 40 "never" responses, 96 "frequently", 40 "sometimes""(King 2012:10). Thus 136 out of 182 respondents (approx. 74.7%) watched films in Russian. One confounding issue here is that the context of film watching (television vs. movie theaters) is not specified, nor is it established that respondents watch films at all. Nevertheless, by comparing contexts, King concludes that "watching television and watching films stood out for high Russian use [...] television and film seem

to be two of the only contexts in which Russian is used in the lives of many people in Georgia"(King 2012:10). Another quantitative entry into the issue of Russian knowledge is found in the Caucasian Research Resource Center (CRRC) large-scale survey materials, which I will turn to next.

CRRC has conducted large-scale surveys in Georgia, including a media-focused survey in 2011. I will be discussing knowledge of Russian language by settlement type (capital vs. non-capital), as well as knowledge of Russian language type by age (independent of settlement type). I view these survey results as indications of general trends, rather than as persuasive descriptions of specifics. From the knowledge of Russian by settlement type materials, for example, 38% of respondents from the capital (Tbilisi) self-report their Russian knowledge as "advanced," in comparison to 16% of respondents from the non-capital (everywhere that is not Tbilisi). Despite inherent problems in defining what "advanced" means in terms of competence, it is significant that this difference in reported competence exists, since as far as I have been able to determine, there is no consistent reason that "advanced" as a self-assessment label would differ in meaning between Tbilisi-dwellers and those not in the capital. In other words, one would expect there to be as much variance in the meaning of "advanced" within the two geographic categories as there would be between them:

Knowledge of Russian by Settlement type (capital, non-capital) (%)
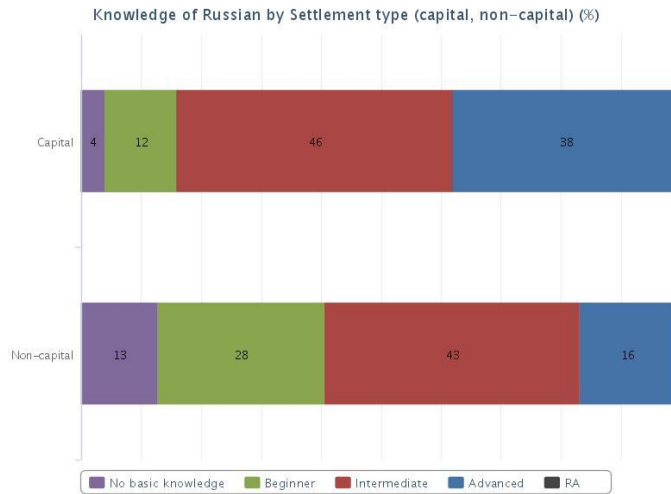
Figure 3: Knowledge of Russian by Settlement Type, 2011

Caucasus Research Resource Centers. (2011) "Caucasus Barometer".[Media Survey 2011] Retrieved from http://www.crrccenters.org/caucasusbarometer/ on {11/11/11}.

Knowledge of Russian by Age groups (%)
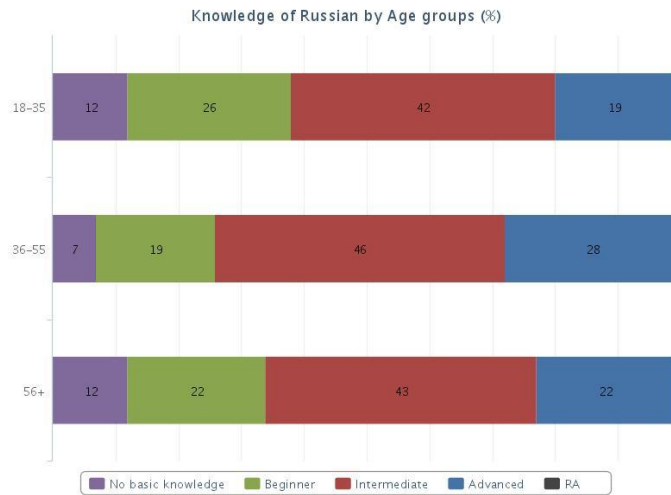
Figure 4: Knowledge of Russian by Age Group, 2011

Caucasus Research Resource Centers. (2011) "Caucasus Barometer".[Media Survey 2011] Retrieved from http://www.crrccenters.org/caucasusbarometer/ on {11/11/11}.

Based on the CRRC media survey data on knowledge of Russian by age group, there are not significant differences in competence between the three age groups (18-35,

36-55, 55+) (Figure 4 above). Though 18-35 has fewer self-reported "advanced" speakers, and more "beginner" speakers than ages 36-55, the difference is not as dramatic and severe as is widely assumed. It should be mentioned, however, that the age group (0-18) that many regard as the locus of a new trend in Russian-language competence lack is absent from this survey material, so it is possible that this new trend simply does not yet register due to the age of the survey respondents. In 2011, when this survey was conducted, the youngest survey respondents would have been born in 1993, so were outside of possessing first-hand experience under the Soviet system. The shift to English has been a recent phenomenon, heightened under Saakashvili's reign (2003-2013). Many discuss the decline of Russian competence as a direct consequence of the end of the Soviet Union, and the attendant institutions that made Russian a necessity in Georgian life. The differing timelines of these two events (decline of Russian, beginning in the 1990s, and promotion of English, beginning in the mid-2000) are blurred in the widespread narrative about Russian-to-English shift.

Another component of this narrative pertains to the categories of "competence" used in this survey. As Russian receded from official use, and appeared less often in public spaces, members of older generations became more likely to report that they were forgetting Russian or experiencing diminished competence simply because of the decreased commonality of Russian in public social life. This impacts the way that survey respondents assessed their own level of competence – in other words, older respondents are less likely to appraise their current competence level as "expert," since they are evaluating their competence against their own real or imagined higher levels of competence from the past. Further, assessing general decline in Russian competence in

the so-called "younger generation" involves a comparison with previous generations of youth, for whom Russian was more vitally significant in educational settings and public life. The decline of Russian, therefore, involves imaginings of what competence has meant in comparative perspective within an individual's life experience. One of the significant ways that competence is understood is as instilled through formal institutional channels.

This data highlights the discord between the notion that only older generation speaks Russian, and the fact that the bulk of films shown in Tbilisi movie theaters, attended by youth, are in Russian. Film showings are a privileged site in Tbilisi life in which Russian language predominates. By "privileged," I have in mind two meanings: first, those who attend film showings are affluent. The cost of tickets is a barrier to entry for lower-income citizens. Movie theaters are considered cultural destinations for the affluent. Secondly, movie theaters are privileged in that laws have specifically targeted issues of language within their domain, separate from television, radio, or other media modalities. Though television, for example, is more widely consumed, movie theaters have received special attention in terms of the way that laws have been written, and the attention that has been allotted them as sites of public, highly visible sites of sociality.

This privileged site is one in which the audience (contrary to expectations about the age-wise distribution of Russian language competence) is composed of a new generation supposedly lacking in Russian language skills. Yet this is not a representative slice of Georgian youth culture – moviegoers are among the most affluent.[12] This moves

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[12] Using the term "representative" is not meant to reify the notion that there is some abstract set of "representative" features of personhood that can or should stand for a norm of youth in Tbilisi. I do not mean to suggest that dis-aggregating persons into categories,

towards an explanation of why the language of foreign films in movie theaters is of

concern: Saakashvili aims to eliminate a Russian presence in this setting for a

demographic viewed as significant (despite small numbers) since they are likely destined

for influential positions in Georgian society. The movie theater is a public testament to

cultural alignments. Film showings are a way that Russian language skills remain

important, especially for younger generations, and should be treated as both a remnant of

Soviet-era distribution networks and social practices (such as valuing the art of Russian

film dubbing). Additionally, by contributing to passive knowledge of Russian, movie

theaters are a mode of socialization unattached to the formal education system, but

nevertheless involved in teaching language skills. Although Georgian language films are

popular in Georgia, the continued influx of foreign films bears examination for the ways

that they draw language debates to the fore.[13]

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or comparing individuals to abstracted attributes can lead us to some kind of higher truth
about social organization. In this case, I am simply signaling one axis of exceptionalism
(movie theaters as destinations for the affluent) that my informants, in various ways,
indicated.

[13] The primary focus in this chapter is on the ways that foreign films are treated in the
Georgian context. However, it would be a great oversight to avoid mentioning the
provisions that have been made to encourage the production and distribution of local-
produced Georgian films. While not linked directly to the law on film showings, the law
providing for national films ("*erovnuli k'inemat'ograpiis sakhelmts'ipo mkhardach'eris*"
'Concerning Governmental Support for National Cinematography") was enacted in 2000
by then-president Eduard Shevardnadze, with the purpose of encouraging the (re)growth
of a "national" film industry. Under section 5 of this law, the primary factor that
determines if a film is considered "*erovnuli*" 'national' is if it is the 'state language'. The
remaining conditions for being considered a national film pertain to the filmmakers
themselves, such as stipulations concerning the citizenship of those involved with film
production. Many of the components of law "Concerning Governmental Support for
National Cinematography" create provisions for an organization called the Georgian
National Film Center (GNFC), which is a legal entity of public law under the Ministry of
Culture and Monument Protection tasked with providing state support to national
cinematography. Their office is located on the fourth floor of the same building as the
Ministry of Culture, but is accessible only by the elevator near a side door, clouded by

Loanwords: Layers of Proximity, Vulnerability, and "Comfort"

In Tbilisi there is a group called the "*Russkii Klub*" ("Russian Club") that

publishes a literary magazine and sponsors events to promote the so-called *dukhonaia*

sviaz' ("spiritual connection") among speakers of the Russian language. I attended a few

of their events during the course of my fieldwork. At one event, I was introduced to

Aleksandr (Sasha) Svatikov, the editor of the periodical "Russkii Klub." We went up to

his office on the 8th floor of the Teatr im. Griboedov and talked there in Russian long

into the evening. Much of the conversation focused on the changing role of Russian in

Tbilisi, a topic about which he has been a keen observer, considering his role in the

Russian-speaking community. Overall, he was skeptical of the Georgian government's

aggressive move towards the English language in the last few years. He characterized the

government's growing promotion of English as a PR move, and doubts that it will

actually succeed, as he thinks it is not realistic. Later in the conversation when I asked

about Russian language and the attachment people have to it, he used the phrase "*zhivaia*

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construction debris. Strangely, the stairs somehow do not go there. I spoke to several
members of the GNFC about film language issues, in reference to the recent laws. It
became clear that individual institutions (film theaters, TV channels, festivals, and so
forth) are the entities that make decisions about how the logistics of dubbing and
subtitling work, and how compliance to laws are achieved. The GNFC conceptualized the
law as a sort of umbrella beneath which public and private institutions must operate,
according to institution-internal resources and systems. The GNFC does not have a
stance relative to the law itself, and did not assist in writing it. Any questions I posed
related to the law, its enforcement, or perceptions of its intended goals were deferred to
the legal department of the GNFC. Members of the GNFC who I spoke to either were
reluctant to comment on legal issues, both because ensuring legal compliance was the
task of the lawyer on staff, and because the bulk of GNFC activities are unaffected by
laws on film showings or broadcasting. Unlike the Georgian National Communications
Commission (GNCC), the Georgian National Film Commission (GNFC) plays no role in
monitoring film showings or broadcasts of any kind, but is strictly charged with
developing national cinema, which it does in multiple ways, including involvement with
film festivals and local film production.

funktsia" ("living function") to differentiate Russian and English language attitudes and behaviors in Georgia. Russian possesses a "living function," unlike English, which possess merely economic or pragmatic benefits. This ideology reflects a widespread about view about the functions of lingua francas. Evaluative terms (such as "ease," "living," or "comfort") naturalize the use of Russian to certain settings or kinds of talk.

Like many intellectuals in Tbilisi, Mr. Svatikov expressed a blend of nostalgia for the past and concern about the linguistic and cultural vibrancy of the present. Mr. Svatikov focused particularly on the lack of Russian language education and interest in contemporary Georgia as a problem.[14] For many, the "living function" that he described for Russian is an index and consequence of its significance in cultural domains. This is a crucial point: the domain of science and technology is viewed as a transparent vessel, through which language can travel without impediment, and without leaving political, cultural, or emotional traces, despite its deep ties to the politics of the Soviet experience. Arts and culture are seen as more vulnerable to the political imprint of language and its links: they are vessels that carry a trace. Yet the domains of art and science, or culture and technology, have never been cleanly separated, in the Soviet context or elsewhere.

For the Russian Club, political quandaries about language selection are put aside – the "spiritual connection" of speaking in a common, Russian language is the goal and justification. The focus on literature, particularly poetry, indicates that issues of language selection are de-politicized for certain communicative genres. An emphasis on the "spiritual connection" points to certain kinds of content (artistic, literary, and self-

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[14] Compare this with John King's survey-based study of university age students: "Georgians are not, on average, anti-Russian language, and the questionnaire respondents even showed regret that Russian in Georgia may soon be forgotten"(King 2012:1-2).

reflective) as politically neutral or non-threatening, whereas other cultural forms can become potentially abrasive in highlighting difference rather than spiritual unity. Serving "art" of a spiritual yearning neutralizes the politics of linguistic code choice by framing the human organism as a medium rather than a locus of choice. Similarly, science and technology, by standing in opposition to human-ness also neutralize linguistic code choice. Both profound feeling and the cold emptiness of machines configure the communicative channel (in Jakobson's sense) as neutral and autonomous.

In certain settings, such as film showings, the union of technical and aesthetic concerns makes the question of language particularly prescient or thorny. In the next section, I discuss domains of everyday life in which the redemptive poles of spirit and science begin to lose their power. In particular, loan words, borrowings, and a register of language known as *zhargoni*, while possessing technical dimensions, also contain currents of affectively-charged, culturally and politically significant signs that voice ways of speaking associated with criminality and the heavily Russianized imprint of the *vory-v-zakone* (thieves-in-law).

Lexicon, Loanword, and "Levels" of Languages

The presence of Russian loanwords in local languages has been one such point of potential fissure or concern about how signs of foreignness can figure as both risk and enrichment. In the Soviet Union, the issue of loanwords was one addressed particularly in mid-twentieth century, as local languages were increasingly populated with Russian terms. [15] Weinreich discusses a Soviet policy called 'Common Rule', decreed in the 1940s

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[15] "A distinction was made early on between loanwords of long standing and more recent borrowings, with a recommendation that the former should be written as they sound in

after scripts of languages spoken in the Soviet Union, with a few exceptions, had been cyrillicized (Weinreich 1953:51). This controversial policy stated that, "in all languages words derived from Russian were to be spelled as in Russian" (ibid). [16] 'Common Rule" was revoked in 1950 (Weinreich 1953: 54). Weinreich notes that accommodations for local audiences were made in print media: "[...] many of the loanwords appearing in print had to be 'cushioned' by native translations. A Tatar newspaper, for example, would [...] follow every difficult russianism with an understandable Tatar equivalent in parentheses. Clearly, the artificial supply of Russian words was ahead of demand"(Weinreich 1953:54). Interestingly, Russian borrowings were positively rationalized as a sign of increased Russian competence (ibid).

Such was the case in Georgia, which despite its reputation for some scholars as "anti-Russian," nevertheless adapted a plethora of Russian-influenced terminology. The examples Hewitt provides[17] in 1985 still function today. For example, one afternoon a

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the receptor language while the latter should reflect as far as possible the pronunciation of the donor language. This meant that, for example, European technical terms could be (and indeed were) borrowed in the spoken form of the original source language. By the time orthographical work began again in earnest in the 1950s, however, it had been decided to write all loanwords in their Russian form. In a situation of increasing bilingualism there are clearly some pedagogical advantages in sticking to the Russian spelling of loanwords, and it need not be regarded as a blatant attempt to russify the national languages [...] However, it takes more than an orthographical commission's decision to bring the pronunciation of a loanword close to the norms of Russian, and the result of such measures could only be the creation of a gap between written and spoken forms of the language which is not entirely resolved even today when bilingualism is so much more widespread (see Bacon 1966: 200; Lewis 1972: 151)"(Crisp 1989: 34).
[16] For example, Yakut *ostool* ('table') from Russian *stol* ('table') must change its spelling to reflect the Russian source (Weinreich 1953:51).
[17] "The close political association of Georgia with Russia during the last two centuries has resulted in many Russian loans entering the language, particularly in the realm of technological terminology, where in any case one tends to find a virtual universal vocabulary based on Graeco-Latin roots. However, it is not uncommon for certain items within the native lexical stock to be ignored in favour of their Russian counterparts; this

group of under-10-year old boys were perplexed when I asked them for a *sakhrakhnisi* (screwdriver), using the Georgian term. Looking blankly at each other, they tried to guess what this might be. I was already something of novelty in the *ezo* (courtyard), and only the bravest among this young set would occasionally shout his single English word (hello!) to me as a shuttled past on the way to the weightlifting training hall, or returning from our neighborhood baker with a *tonis p'uri* (bread from the tone) tucked under my arm. Feeling bold, they asked me what the English term was. "Screwdriver," I said, which was greeted with laughter and perplexed looks. Then I said *otverka*, using the Russian word, and was immediately understood. Numerous offers to retrieve screwdrivers from apartments in the surrounding area were made, and then one boy gave extremely detailed walking directions to a not-so-close store where one could likely be purchased. I was struck that these Georgian monolingual youth only knew the Russian word for 'screwdriver.' This is a testament to the normativity of using technical terms from Russian instead of their Georgian counterparts, which is a longstanding practice.

To give a sense for the technical vocabulary from Russian, those terms that refer to mechanical, technological, or material forms construed as "neutral" and lacking evaluative or political dimension, let me include some examples. One is the term *pat'zemk'a* (underground crosswalk) from the Russian word *podzemka* (underground crosswalk). This functions like any other Georgian noun ending in *-a*, as is evidenced by this cellphone exchange overheard in an underground crosswalk: *pat'zemk'idan girek'av,*

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is especially noticeable when reference is to tools or other objects of relatively recent invention. And so, in the middle of a Georgian conversation one is quite likely to hear such Russian terms as atvertka 'screwdriver' (=sakhrakhnisi), tormoz 'brakes' (=mukhruchi), kran 'tap' (=onkani), kraska 'paint' (=sadzhebavi), trubka 'pipe' (=mili, or ch'ibukhi for 'smoking pipe), etc..."(Hewitt 1985: 172).

pat'zemk'ashi var ("I'm calling you from the underground crosswalk, I'm in the underground crosswalk"). Georgian speakers reported that this Russian-borrowed form was "easier" than the Georgian version (the longer *mits'iskvesha gasasvleli*). Numerous terms from auto mechanic shops are used in the Russian form. For example, from Russian *kalotka* (sg.) / *kalotki* (pl.) (brake pad(s)), are the Georgian terms *k'alot'k'i* (sg.) / *kalotkebi* (pl.) (brake pad(s)). The Georgian word for brake pads, *bork'ilebi* (pl.)[18], is also used, including in a well-known radio commercial, though the Russian-influenced term *k'alot'k'i* was more common. Another term with Georgian and Russian-influenced versions is *p'ak'rishk'a* (tire) from Russian *pokryshka* (tire), whereas the Georgian term is *saburavi*. One auto mechanic I spoke to reported that fancier or expensive garages located towards the center of Tbilisi tended to favor Georgian terms instead of Russian terms when alternate terms exist in both languages. Georgian customers, however, are not as handy with the Georgian technical terms: several people to whom I provided a Russian mechanical term couldn't conjure up the Georgian equivalent. Russian-influenced technical terms are well-known and appear to be durably installed as primary, such as *gaik'a* (nut) from *gaika, p'achep'nik'i*[19] (bearings) from *podshipniki, p'alirovk'a* (polishing) from *polirovka,* and so on.

Many Russian terms are so embedded as normative in Georgian speech that they do not index Russian politics, or confer a political stance to their speakers' choice of linguistic code. They are firmly part of Georgian code. Weightlifters, for example, routintely use the word *mazoli* (callus) which comes from Russian, *mozol'*, and not the

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[18] This term has the meaning of "restricting movement, cuffing, arresting (movement)," and is found in other noun phrases, such as *khelbork'ilebi* (handcuffs).
[19] There are multiple spellings in Georgian for this term. Like the other terms discussed here, the Georgian version phonetically accommodates the Russian term.

Georgian word *k'ozhri*. Another example concerns the way that Russian words are worked into conversation, based on the assumption that listeners will understand then. A taxi-driver and I were chatting in Georgian, and he was talking about how a road had been recently repaired but is still in bad condition. He said "*k'achest'va ar ari,*" ('there is no quality') using the Russian word for "quality" (*kachestvo)* and dropping the final "-*s*" from "*aris*" (3rd person of the verb 'to be'). Though we were talking in Georgian, he assumed that I would have no trouble understanding the Russian word *kachestvo* (quality). I want to leave open the possibility that "quality" as technical superiority is a component linked to Russianness, and as such motivated the choice of the term *kachestvo* instead of the Georgian *khariskhi.* Russian competence, if only for certain lexical items, is an assumed part of the Tbilisian repertoire.

Others also voiced the sentiment that Russian lexical terms were often-encountered and therefore more readily interpretable or sensical, even if not readily understood. For example, I had a conversation with a weightlifter who was studying German in school. I asked him why German, to which he replied that when he started, he had chosen it and simply continued rather than switching to another language to fulfill the language requirement. He spoke no English, and when I asked him if she spoke Russian, he equivocated by saying "*ise, ra*" ("well, sort of") indicating that Russian was manageable, though not completely understood. Russian was commonly construed as in closer proximity to Georgian experience than English or other foreign languages; even if one could not understand Russian, it was more likely that one could accurately interpret Russian utterances by guesswork or asking fellow Georgians than if the code had been English. Russian terms, technical or banal, have the status of belonging to familiar,

everyday Tbilisi talk. Yet there are also swathes of the Russian-tinged lexicon that index social personae, such as the figure of the socially-connected criminal or *dzveli bich'i* (lit: old boy). From technical terminology, let us now turn to *zhargoni* (slang) for affectively-charged Russian-influenced terminology.

Informality: Slang and zhargoni

I noticed that when I told people of a wide variety of different social positions (taxi drivers, xerox copy operators, artists, writers, lawyers, sportsmen) that I was interested in Russian language influence in Georgia, one of the standard responses was: "You should have done this project 15 years ago." Given that Soviet power was in place over Georgia from 1921 until the collapse of the Union in 1991, why was it that I was directed to a point in the mid-1990s as a locus of Russian language contact? The mid-nineties in Georgia are now conceptualized as a historical anchorpoint, in part because these were "dark times" (Chatwin 1997) during which basic services, such as electricity, were unavailable, and violence was rampant on the streets, as Georgia was struggling as a "failed state" (Manning 2005). Also, the mid-nineties were a shifting point in Russian-Georgian relations, both because of political and military conflict, including the wars in Chechnya, and also because of the concurrent decline of Russian cultural influence in Tbilisi. By the early 2000s, policy and attitudes towards Russia and Russian-ness began to reduce its (visible) influence in Tbilisi.

But something else was happening 15 years ago in Georgia that rounds out the rationale of conducting my project then– criminality was rampant, and the influence of the thieves-in-law (*vory-v-zakone*, Russian, calqued into Georgian as *k'anonieri kurdebi)* was at an all-time high. The thieves-in-law are associated with Russia, both by language

and as an organization of organized crime, historically tied to the Russian prison system

(Slade 2007; 2013; see also Glonti and Lobjanidze 2004; Serio 2008; Varese 2001).

These two factors, the beginning of a targeted shift away from public displays of Russian,

and the menace of Russian-connected criminal groups, together have created a special

niche in the lexicon and public imagination charged with emotion and significance.

What is zhargoni?

There are multiple theoretical terms or frameworks that can be invoked to talk

about the subsets of the lexicon that are known to speakers by the terms slang, argot,

barbarism, and jargon. In linguistic anthropology, one dominant mode for analyzing

regularities between social types and formal linguistic features has been by use of the

term register. [20] The majority of my arguments can be made without reference to

"register" or "enregisterment," though for some readers, this term will be useful to bear in

mind as I discuss the ways in which certain pockets of the lexicon have become linked to

Russian-ness and criminality. I am aware of the potential problems with glossing the term

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[20] Within this rubric, a goal of this project is to contribute to theoretical understandings of register (Agha 2000; Halliday 2009 [1964]; Silverstein 2003). I refer specifically to Asif Agha's formulation of register as a "social regularity of recognition whereby linguistic (and accompanying nonlinguistic) signs come to be recognized as indexing pragmatic features of interpersonal role (persona) and relationship"(Agha 2005). What elements render recognizable regularities between linguistic forms and social persons? Incorporating Russian terms into *zhargoni* (slang) is not an inevitable result of language contact, but a consequence of the interactions of particular kinds of Russians and Georgians during the second half of the 20th century– in this case, enabled by the social structure of organized crime. Halliday's influential essay on "Anti-languages"(1976) is an extreme example of the sort of theorizing of registers or code varieties that emphasizes register contrasts as a source of strategic social positioning. It is important to pursue the code contrasts imagined, enacted, or ignored by language users instead of assuming that they interlock into a "system", since such a concept constitutes a "view from nowhere"(Nagel 1989) unless anchored in specific experiences and narratives of human agents.

zhargoni as "slang", but this shorthand is necessary, and should not be taken as an effort to use "slang" as a theoretical term.[21]

Marina Beridze, host the television show "*geost'ari* 2011," Georgia's version of "American Idol," responded to an inquiry "*rogor khart?*" 'how are you?: "*nichivo, nela, nela"* 'nothing, slowly, slowly'. The use of *nichivo* (from Russian *nechego*) does not signal a political alignment, but rather has come to be a way to express a relaxed, joking, or slightly ironic tone. The eldest trainer at the weightlifting federation, who I ran into walking through a back alley near the gym on day, responded to my greeting "rogor khart?" in a similar fashion, "*nichivo, ra."* I tried this response on for size with another trainer, who then admonished me by telling me that this was "incorrect" and not proper Georgian. He explained that it didn't make any sense to say "nothing" in response to teh

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[21] One of the only discussions of the categorical uses of Russian-Georgian slang in Georgia comes from the sociologist Lika Tsuladze. Her basic argument is that Russian-Georgian slang is used to insult or mock someone for "provincialism", whereas English-Georgian slang is used to make the speaker appear "cool" or "intellectual"[21]. Tsuladze's observations are a useful starting point to evaluate what the term "slang" means in this context, as its definition bears on the division Tsuladze posits. Further, Tsuladze's argument is posited on politics as the underlying, motivating factor, where Russian code is viewed as directly and monolithically indexing Russia, and English code as indexing US, which are then viewed by Tsuladze as representing enemy and protector, respectively. When I inquired about terms such as *vapshe, khorosho,* and *k'aroche,* all of which are Russian in origin and used very commonly in Georgian, Tsuladze indicated that these were in fact neutral and did not signal the same kind of political alignments as the slang terms she mentioned in her argument. What, then, comprises "slang", if informal everyday conversational terms are not included in their number? I argue that *zhargoni* (glossed here as 'slang') are those terms that carry with them some sort of affectively-charged component. It is not enough that they are borrowed, or belong to a conversational (as opposed to literary or "high" language)– their definition is predicated on the very thing– insult and mockery - that Tsuladze views as being transmitted through "Russian-Georgian" terms. Russian-Georgian positively evaluative terms exist (think, for example, of *mozgi khar!* 'you are smart' (lit: you are a brain), from Russian *mozg,* or the phrase that an 18-year old taught me: *k'arg vidze* "[it] looks good", from Russian *vid* 'look' (n.), or the widespread formulaic compliment or note of approval: *malodets, shen* "well done, you" from Russian *molodets* 'well done').

question "how are you?". I pointed out that in Russian, responding to the inquiry of *"kak delo?"* ("how are you?") with *nechego* ("nothing"), was acceptable, but this was unpersuasive in terms of acceptable Georgian language behavior, at least for me as a foreigner. I was not yet deemed competent enough to command this ironic, informal or "improper" way of speaking. In this section I will sketch the contours of a category of lexical items that have been fashioned out of Russian, and are deployed to produce stylistic effects associated with informality, casualness, and (sometimes ironic) references to criminality.

In addition to Georgian slang or informal lexical terms, the category of *zhargoni* consists of slang terms from Russian, some of which have undergone semantic shift in Georgian, and others of which have retained the same meaning as in Russian.[22] For example, the terms *rozha*, *t'ip'i,* and *mast'i* (from Russian *rozha* (mug)*, tip* (type (of person))*,* and *mast'* (suit (in cards), used in reference to a type of person), have all retained the semantic fields from Russian. An example of the use of *mast'i* is calling someone a *magari mast'ia* '(he/she) is a great type (of person; lit: a 'strong suit'). The word *nagli* (from Russian *naglyi*, (impudent) is used extensively, both as a noun and in adjectives, such as *ganaglebuli*. Its meaning has shifted to be a general comment on someone's rudeness. A few nouns from the criminal world, such as *bak'lani* from Russian *baklan* (thief), *zhuliki* from Russian *zhulik* (swindler), and *shniri* from Russian *shnyr'* (a

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[22] Borrowed terms from Russian are assigned by speakers to a category of the lexicon opposed to "high" literary style, or refined language. What is ironic about this is that the existing studies of Georgian slang are based entirely on written sources, drawing examples exclusively from novels, newspapers, and journals rather than spoken language (cf. Bregadze 1999; Grishashvili 1997). These collections, along with Donald Rayfield's well-known dictionary, are helpful in understanding the range and nuance of terms, but not in classifying how they function, and in what contextual circumstances.

prisoner who receives some kind of compensation for doing work for others), have retained the same meaning in Georgian as Russian. Other terms, such as the suite of terms based on the term *blat* have shifted in meaning from Russian. For example, one can assert that one *makvs blat'i* (I have connections), but the Georgian verbal form *blat'aobs* (3rd person singular) means 'to act rudely or disrespectfully', and is based on a shifted understanding of what the root *blat* can mean. Another example of a verbal form based on a Russian root is *gip'adkhodebs?* (Is he hitting on you?), based on the Russian word *podkhod* (approach (n.)). Finally, the verb *zhimaoba* (or *zhimva*) (to have sex) is based on the Russian word *zhim* (press), as the physical action may bear some resemblance (think of the position in which one does a pushup, as well as the exertion).

An excellent example of a neologism not found in Russian slang, but prevalent in Georgian, is the Georgian term *posleze*, which is derived from the Russian *posle* (after) + Georgian postposition *-ze* (on). So, *posleze* is a combination of a Russian preposition and a Georgian postposition, but as a single unit functions as a noun. Specifically, it is usually used in the context of paying someone back for something, and designates that this promise to return the favor or pay someone back will go unfulfilled (as in "Yeah, later..." a later that never comes). One of my informants thinks that this started in district stores, where one could get products *posleze*, but has changed now to be used in all sort of contexts where it is unlikely that one will ever get the payment.

Pulling back from the details of specific lexical forms, one way that attitudes about proximity to Russian presence, and the permissibility of influence, have been characterized is in terms of degrees of tolerance. Yet tolerance, like influence, is not a transparent concept. The qualities of tolerance, and the specificities in the ways that

lexical forms referring, in various ways, to Russian code and Russian-ness, must be elaborated. Mikhalchenko and Trushkova take Ukraine and Belarus as two poles in terms of "closeness" of (desired) economic, political, and cultural connections to the Russian Federation, where Ukraine is most opposed to Russian (presence), and Belarus is most welcoming. They regard the "status of Russian as an ethnic language in [...] most of the countries of Central Asia and Transcaucasia [...] might be evaluated as 'tolerated' "(Mikhalchenko and Trushkova 2003: 281). Negotiating the place of Russian has occurred in different ways across post-socialist space, and in countries neighboring Russia.[23] This moves toward an answer to what "tolerance" means, interrogating the middle zone between acceptance and rejection, in which a multiplicity of context, attitudes, and reactions find expression.

Russian Influence on Weightlifting in Tbilisi, Georgia

In this final section, I discuss the influence of Russian practices that continue to shape Olympic Weightlifting training in Tbilisi. I provide additional background on sport, training methodology, and social world of the training hall in Chapter 6. This section serves as a bridge to the chapters that follow, by taking one aspect of a social

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[23] For example, the case of Russian in Finland is a useful case of contrast. Lähteenmäki and Vanhala-Aniszewski describe Russian language use in Finland as having potential negative and positive impacts on Russian-speaking immigrants, as it is both a form of valuable social capital, but also can make them a target for anti-Russian violence or discrimination. In Finland, "[t]here is a dissonance between the official discourses declaring the importance of Russian and emphasizing its positive value as an important cultural, social and economic resource and negative grassroots-level experiences encountered by young Russian-speaking immigrants"(Lähteenmäki and Vanhala-Aniszewski 2012: 138). In Georgia, by contrast, Russian is continuously devalued in contemporary policy, as the Saakashvili regime casts use of the Russian code as associated with Russian political interests, which are at odds with Georgian interests. Despite opposite official orientations to Russian, Finland and Georgia both deal with the issue of how to reconcile these polarized evaluations of Russian language use.

practice that is seen as having "Russian" elements that are evaluated by participants in a variety of ways, rather than clearly and transparently reflecting some kind of political or cultural connection to Russia or the Soviet past. Signs, linguistic and otherwise, of Russian-ness have produced effects of many kinds on a wide range of social practices in Tbilisi. I want to draw attention to the process of identifying Russian-ness as way that Georgian distinctiveness is asserted, whether Russian forms are assimilated, resisted, or reconfigured. Instead indicating those dimensions of Russian presence that go unnoticed in daily use, I turn the analytical focus onto the act of detection and assessment itself. How do words, actions, and beliefs come to be recognized as associated with Russian-ness or the Soviet past? Some components of the Soviet experience are included as quintessentially Georgian, despite appearances as Russian, as I detail in the case of phone number dictation practices. Other components, such as sports science, Olympic weightlifting protocols, and coaching cues, evince a debt to Soviet training methodologies without engaging at all with political elements. In the final arena, the sphere of cultural production (particularly, issues surrounding film showings and Russian songs in Georgia), anxieties about the role of Russian-identified products are most acute. In all of these settings, the durative quality of certain practices, solidified as habit, is naturalized as essential to the technological components of the activity itself - the body, the telephone, and the movie/sound interface. I discuss these very different settings in sequence, within a larger rubric of selective illumination, which is the process by which elements of an ideology come to be seen as essential, necessary, and central. In doing so, I demonstrate that secondary language practices are powerfully structuring potentials in social practice.

As a multifarious sign, Russian is like a vein that glows blue just beneath the surface of the skin, a reminder of durative circulation, sometimes commented upon, sometimes ignored, shifting among muscular contractions but never disappearing entirely. One of many branching vessels, the Russian vein alone does not provide life or danger, even as it participates in infrastructural processes of varied significance. We can treat contemporary Georgian self-understanding as an organism that regularly reflects on the various ways that pathway has come to be a source of pain, joy, and anxiety.

Talk in/as Training

The examples in this section are drawn from the eldest trainer's coaching cues. Unlike other trainers, he never demonstrated physical movements, but instead remained seated stationary on the wooden bench near the window during training. He was charged with training beginner lifters, usually very young (~12 year old) boys who had no experience with the sport.[24] As such, this was their first introduction to weightlifting and the movements it would require.[25] They typically had no idea what the norms of training

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[24] One of his charges was the son of Olympic champion Giorgi Asanidze, who clearly was familiar with the sport. After completing a set of pushups with a 2.5 kg weight plate on his back, the 12 year old was complimented on his diligence and good form: "*shen k'argi bich'i iknebi"* "You will be a good boy." Being a "good boy" in this case means training well and lifting respectable weights, with the possibility of becoming a professional athlete. Although this young lifter was exceptional, the quality of "good boy" is something deferred until he is in well into his teens and training everyday.

[25] The primary lifts in Olympic weightlifting are the snatch and the clean and jerk. During training, lifters perform the primary lifts, as well as segmented versions of the lifts that train portions of the full lift. Additionally, lifters perform exercises that strengthen the muscles required to hold and execute the positions required in the primary lifts. One of the most important assistance exercises is the squat, which is done by all lifters and serves as a proxy (to a point) for one's potential in the primary lifts. On the first day of training, it was not uncommon for trainers to instruct pupils in the squat, using a light bar or simply positioning them in front of wall with no added weight to ensure that their bodyweight remained on the heels throughout the movement.

were, and often were either in the way (wandering onto a platform accidentally), too loud (talking at inappropriate moments), or were simply wide-eyed and appeared shell-shocked by the sight of sweaty men throwing heavy weights around in deep concentration. The typical training session for an absolute beginner consisted of standing a few feet in front of the eldest trainer with a very light bar and following his instructions. This was their introduction to training, and with it, what "training" means: listening attentively to the trainer, and incorporating all verbal corrections into a physical product, the lift.

What made these training session most interesting was that the boys had to quickly ascertain what physical changes were demanded of them by the laconic coaching cues, without the benefit of having spent a great deal of time in the gym hearing the same cues shouted at others. Often the trainer used Russian terms in coaching cues, which would be indecipherable to youngsters who don't speak Russian (the majority of whom do not, and certainly are not familiar with the specific technical vocabulary of weightlifting terms in Russian). Essentially it was a process of determining what was demanded, and then from that, learning what the shouted cue denoted. A great example of this was when a young kid jerked the bar but kept his feet together.[26] The trainer shouted *nozhnitsa!* [sic]*(scissors), from the Russian word *nozhnitsy* (scissors). Perplexed at first, the pupil was not sure what he had done wrong, and the trainer shouted again, pointing at his legs. The youngster brought his legs into the split-jerk position, where one leg is forward and the other back, in the manner of an open pair of scissors.

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[26] In the jerk, the bar moves rapidly from shoulders to overhead with locked out elbows.

Many other training cues were populated with Russian terms. Some terminology has no Georgian equivalent (such as the Russian term *podryv* (snap), which in Georgian is simply *podrivi)*, but many terms have Georgian counterparts. Athletes and coaches commonly use the Russian term instead, or interchangeably. As I discuss in chapter 5, the numbers for weights are often listed in Russian, for example. Most trainers, with the exception of the eldest trainer, use Georgian terminology preferentially. Yet because the eldest trainer uses Russian terms at times, and seems not differentiate between using Russian and Georgian, in the sense that he regarded the codes as interchangeable, athletes learn what the Russian terms mean and begin to use them as well. For example, it was common for athletes to shout *derzhi!* (hold it!) instead of the Georgian term *daich'ire!* (hold it!). Beyond coaching cues and numbers, Russian language competence was very low, with the exception of those lifters who had Russian family members. The eldest trainer once began a long training-oriented tirade directed at a lifter whose family was Azerbaijani, but who spoke fluent Georgian. After a few minutes, a lifter whose family was Armenian interjected (in Russian) and told him that the Azerbaijani lifter didn't understand Russian. The elder trainer had wrongly assumed that Russian, as a language of inter-ethnic communication, could be used to correct this Azerbaijani, when it fact Georgian would have been more successful.

The enduring presence of Russian language in this sphere is a testament to the influence of the Soviet system, and also a way that Russian, divested of political significance, is learned in a subculture or location of directed activity. While certain components of Soviet life - such as public areligiosity and atheism - have dropped away, other aspects of Soviet training systems live on. This extends beyond sets and reps and

encompasses ideological realms of athlete development. Russian language continues to play a role in Georgian weightlifting training. Russian-language cues are a certain form of certain training cues, demonstrating how Russian language continues to play a role in Georgian weightlifting training, not marked as "Russian", but simply as the long-practiced language of the sport, connected as it was for so long to Soviet practices.

Russian System of Weightlifting

Parameters such as accruing the bulk of the training stimulus from working at 70%-85% of 1RM on main lifts and using a variety of assistance work based on segmenting the classic lifts are the essential components of the Soviet system of weightlifting. Aside from the Soviet system, which was validated by the performances of the USSR in international competition in the 1960s onward, what other training systems in weightlifting are construed as proven methods for success? I am not referring here to any kind of objective typology of the way that lifters train, but rather what weightlifters understand as the main differences between dominant training templates. Further, for weightlifters there is a dearth of information detailing particulars of training programs from other countries, so what can be gleaned from Youtube videos, hardcopy publications such as the periodical *World Weightlifting*, and observations and conversations at international competitions provide glimpses into how lifters from around the world train. One of the most notorious training systems apart from the Soviet system is that of the Bulgarians. The Bulgarian system differentiates itself from the Soviet system in that athletes train to a maximum every day of training, though it is a local maximum, in the sense that with twice daily training, it is not possible to constantly work at the body's global maximum. A trainer at GEOWF criticized this approach for

producing unnecessary injury, which is thought to be most likely when lifting near-max weights (Sherouse 2012). The Bulgarian system is linked closely to a single name, Ivan Abadjiev, who implemented this "brutal but effective" system, whose lifters dominated the upper echelon of Olympic weightlifting and set world records for decades (Moser 2011). Detractors to this system point out that the Bulgarian team suffered from a litany of doping violations, though Moser rightly points out that "[w]e all had the same steroids"(Moser 2011:2), so drugs alone do not explain how lifters were able to set multiple world records with this system.

Weightlifters and coaches are interested in emulating the practices that propel lifters to success. As Chinese lifters increasingly perform well on the international stage, attention has turned to the elements of practice that are forging exceptional athletes capable of making world-record performances. Success of lifters at the international level is the primary driving force in interest in a country's weightlifting program, so the recent success of Chinese lifters has been noted and stirred interests in what they are doing to reach the highest levels in the sport. Weightlifting information, however, especially concerning the training of top-level athletes, does not circulate freely. Instead, weightlifters and coaches try to piece together the elements or make certain weightlifting programs successful from impartial information or hearsay.

This was evident, for example, at the 2012 Georgian National Weightlifting Championship, when athletes debated how to properly perform pulls. Pictures and videos of Chinese lifters, as well as their physical presence at international competitions, have circulated a version of the pull in which the athlete re-bends to get under the bar after reaching full extension, rather than simply stopping at full extension. In the warm-up

area, Tserikidze and other lifters discussed how the pull should be performed, referencing the *chinuri* (Chinese) version. This conversation lasted a few minutes, and was augmented by pantomimed demonstrations of the differences. Finally, they reached a general agreement that both styles of pull should be used in training, as they complement each other. The chief difference is in the position of the knees once the barbell has reached its highest point. In the "Chinese"-style, the lifter re-bends his knees, whereas in the other pull they remain straightened.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided a brief description of the social life of Russian language and Russianisms in Tbilisi to orient the remainder of the dissertation towards the particular settings (weightlifting, technical objects, and film dubbing). The concept of affordances and infrastructure is central to conceptualizing ideologies and material conditions of lingua franca use. With this in mind, by focusing on the various ways in which Russian signs are linked to or divorced from evaluatory frameworks, I aim to expand treatments of lingua franca that conceptualize linguistic codes as direct, equivalent, monolithic expression of symbolic power or influence. The rubric of influence must account for the discontinuous, sticky, and uneven ways in which linguistic code functions and in social life. It is helpful, then, to specify how certain domains come to be vulnerable or impermeable to the political valences of talk - as I have indicated with respect to poetic language expressing "spiritual connection," technical language emphasizing efficiency and ease, and *zhargoni*, which integrates foreignness as a sign of ironic affective stance and sometimes-alignment with a way of speaking associated with Russian-oriented criminality. These dimensions of Russian presence contribute to a

broader understanding of how the language of empire is inscribed within social practices

in fashions that make politics, by turns, maximally visible or inscrutably normative.

CHAPTER 3.

The Threat of Law: Real and Imagined Bans on Russian Language Songs and Films

The threat of fines for non-sanctioned language use in Georgia emerged during the Saakashvili era (2003-2013) as a strategy for managing the public dimension of language use in Georgia.[1] Encouraging or protecting the "purity" of language is a common concern in settings where nationalism is conceptualized as inhering in the special status of language as a semiotic system of belonging. What is of interest in this case is that fines, as a predominant enforcement mode, have become the means to

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[1] One recent example of this occurred in September 2013, when the Georgian Parliament's Committee on Education and Science prepared a draft of a bill that would amend the Law on State Language and the Administrative Violations Law to fine media and public officials up to 5,000 lari (3,000 USD) for insufficient knowledge of the Georgian language. Eliso Chapidze, member of the education committee of parliament, explained that this measure was "beneficial in order to protect the purity of the language," and that "the inspection of language doesn't function as punishment, but functions as education" (Democracy & Freedom Watch, 2013). Though the norms and standards of enforcement were not defined, it was announced that, "media outlets will be fined if they violate grammar rules of the Georgian language,"(D&F, 2013). This draft is the initiative of the Georgian Dream party, and has been met with resistance by the United National Movement (UNM) party. Disagreement between the two political parties on this new proposed measure cannot be taken as expression of fundamentally different views on language purity or on modes of proper enforcement measures. Both political parties have expressed commitments to Georgian nationalism, and have supported measures that involve fines for citizens in violation of laws impacting linguistic signs in the public sphere. The Georgian Dream party was created in 2012 by Bidzina Ivanishvili to challenge the United National Movement led by Mikheil Saakashvili. The United National Movement was formed in 2001. Mikheil Saakashvili came to power following the Rose Revolution in 2003, and remained president until November 2013. Margvelashvili was the presidential candidate sponsored by Ivanishvili's Georgian Dream party. In 2013, Giorgi Margvelashvili was popularly elected as president.

linguistic "purity". Fines– or simply their threat– constitute a major componentt of what I term the inter-institutional dialogic emergence[2] of compliance: a mutual accomodation among actors in government and the private sector in pursuit of incremental, adequate fulfillment of the law.

In this chapter I discuss the marginally enforced and largely unknown law against foreign (non-Georgian) film showings, alongside a widely-heeded rumor concerning fines against Russian songs in restaurants and cafes. The same discourse about state-control of cultural domains through fines accompanies a real law and an imagined one. The emergence of compliance through interdiscursive processes is built upon interpretations of the governmental intentions behind law, and the metacultural currents that such interpretations and speculations have in creating and making relevant "fake" bans. As background, I discuss legal measures that Saakashvili put in place to remove Russian language from the public space. The law on film showings is presented as a pro-Georgian project, but in actuality is designed to demote the Russian language and further remove it from the public sphere. Rather than couched in terms of the removal of Russian, these measures – and the ways in which they are understood by many actors within the film industry to which they apply – are rhetorically positioned as promoting Georgian, and with it, Georgianness. The threat of law– specifically, the introduction of fines– has emerged as a dominant strategy for dictating what forms of media language are appropriate in the public, urban space of Tbilisi.

Formal language education policy is only one force structuring the linguistic landscape in Tbilisi, as this chapter demonstrates by taking stock of the presence of

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[2] See Mannheim and Tedlock 1995 for the term "dialogic emergence."

language in the media and the debates that cluster around its effects. In particular, changes in Russian language presentation in public spaces in Tbilisi can be brought into focus through recent legislation and debates about film dubbing and subtitling. I compare the recent law on film broadcasting to a widespread rumor about a law that supposedly banned the performance of Russian music in restaurants. This comparison emphasizes that certain laws –even those demanding extreme changes– are inconsequential in terms of understanding real practices on the ground, and certain rumors about laws –even laws that do not exist– have powerful implications and alter behaviors. Such an approach is not intended as criticism of the Georgian government, but rather tells a story about the force and fissures of the official/unofficial dichotomy, so often called upon as an explanatory narrative for societal discontents. The mismatch between "official" and "unofficial" realities is understood as both the cause and consequence of various social ills, such as corruption, poor planning, or more broadly, some primordial Georgianness that resists bureaucratic structures in favor of personal connections. This ideological construction of the "unofficial," or measures of compliance beyond the letter of the law, appears in recent examples of language-oriented legislation. Movie theaters and the broadcasting industry are intermediaries charged with translating official laws into actual practices, for audiences that are usually unaware of these constraints. Significantly, the Ministry of Culture also is an intermediary, not a monologic entity emanating an unnegotiable and rigid "law." The mutual accomodation between governmental actors and movie theater management invites us to consider compliance as a process of attaining, in negotiated stages, degrees of adequacy rather than finalized states.

Two different social spaces, the movie theater and the cafe/restaurant, are

conduits for differing forms of media (film and song) in which language plays a vital and inextricable role. Both settings became ensnared in narratives of illegality concerning the ban on Russian language. Though the debates were framed differently, both inherently dealt with demoting Russian. The political edge of Russian language presence in contemporary Tbilisi life, construed by Saakashvili and many Georgian nationalists as a challenge to Georgianness, cannot dispense with the aesthetic, historical, and practical associations with Russian code and culture that buoy along its continued use in certain spheres. The tension between Russian as a harmless necessity and Russian sign of danger, decay, and subordination of Georgian culture is a crucial component in understanding its fraught and contradictory associations in the public sphere. In turn, bans (real or imagined) have the effect of foregrounding Russian language as a vital semiotic resource to which one must react. The metapragmatic effect of a ban, in other words, is that it calls attention to or spotlights the banned object. This process of spotlighting engenders increased circulation and reflection.

Russian and Georgian: "Modernity" in Longing and Lament

Russian language use in Tbilisi is multivalent, at times naturalized as appropriate for certain social contexts or actors, at other times vilified or cast as a political or social danger (see Chapter 2). Reference to a Soviet past continues to be a way in which contemporary concerns, trajectories, and indebtednesses are reckoned in Tbilisi. Yet reference to the Soviet components of the Georgia present, whether as historically determinative forces, or ghostly ideologies or material realities, are not the only force at work in shaping Tbilisian concepts of the place of Georgia in relationship to "modernity" and "Europe" – categories which, while heavily overlapping, and not coterminous. There

are multiple versions of "modernity," and Georgian political aspirations, articulated by Saakashvili, enshrine a "European" version of "modernity" as desirable. Contemporary Russia is cast as a "backwards" impediment to reaching Euro-normative standards for modernity, in large part because it has been tainted with the infelicities of a failed version of modernity under socialism. Yet the failure of socialism alone is not what makes alliance with Russian culture or politics unappealing in Saakashvili's politics - rather, it is the subordinate position that Georgia holds with respect to Russia that renders this version of modernity undesirable. The promise of a Euro-normative modernity is one which Georgians are invited to see themselves as a nation equal to others, in cultural and moral terms.

Understanding the emergence of governmental threats about fines for improper langauge use is bound up with concerns about crafting linguistic practices aligning citizens with desirable forms of Euro-normative modernity. In this case, whether anxieties circled around increased surveillance or fines, they continuously make reference to contemporary Georgian language policy as one still-forming, plotted against the contradictory demands of autonomy and aspirations to attain a "European" kind of modernity. This form of modernity is, at times, discursively posed against either a failed version of modernity linked to the Soviet past, or to an undesirable present-day vision of modernity connected to Russia, in which Georgia is conceptualized as in a hierarchically subordinate position. The way that signs of Russianness - in infrastructure and linguistic code - are managed reflects concern about avoiding historically-conditioned hierarchies that manifest a subordinate position (culturally, politically, economically) for Georgia with respect to Russia. Language use is a critical sign of national belonging, group

alignment, political allegiance, and symbolic power (Bourdieu 2003).

Management of the language situation is a locus for citizens to discuss how lack of congruence between law and behavior are signs of either governmental failings, nefarious business schemes, or even undesirable but enduring characteristics of the Georgian psychological type expressed through Georgian institutions. Unreliability, inefficiency, or unpredictability were often attributed not to individual caprice, but to pervasive psychological patterns understood as manifest in Georgianness itself. For example, after recounting to a friend how I had searched in vain for an unfindable office building, calling what turned out to be a no-longer-functional cellphone number given to me by contact who I was scheduled to interview, she simply smiled and said "*sakartveloa!*" ("It's Georgia!"). This explanation of perplexity, unreliability, or confusion as a condition of Georgianness was common when I explained what I had been able to piece together about the laws on film showings in Georgia and their discontinuous, ad hoc enforcement. In this recourse to a semi-lament about the pervasiveness of unreliability within institutional structures in Georgia I detected a tacit comparison to a different kind of relationship among the state and its laws, perhaps existing only in imagination: that laws would be continuously and clearly enforced, and that the law and its enforcement would be readily transparent and predictable. As I demonstrate in this chapter, the way that legal compliance functions in the case of recent film laws in Georgia is not simply as somewhere between broken unreliability and idealized transparency. Instead, compliance is constructed piecemeal by actors across institutional settings (from government, to movie theaters, to sound studios) as a complex choreography of achieving an ever-shifting state of adequacy.

Metaculture and Institutions

Government officials and organizations conceptualize film language initiatives as a promotion of Georgian language as a nationalist project, though the initiatives contain within them particular measures to rid Georgian public space of Russian language. While legal manuevers present Russian as a threat to the project of Georgian nationalism, English is treated differently, as a secondary national (and "international") language that poses no danger to Georgia and the Georgian language. Materials and examples of this differential treatment of Russian and English come from the Georgian Public Broadcasting (GPB), Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC), Georgian National Film Center (GNFC), Amirani movie theater, Rustaveli movie theater, Sakartvelo movie theater, and Kolga movie theater.

The main institutional focus is the Rustaveli/Amirani movie theater complex and business holdings, who according to their website are "a diversified film & entertainment group leading Georgian market with over 90% share".[3] In interviews, Rustaveli Cinemas Holding Company representatives discussed their position in the market, how they perceive the audience for films (based on their own internally-conducted research), and issues related to the language of film showings and relationship to the law, controlled by the Ministry of Culture. While I investigate other Tbilisi businesses involved with film language issues, Rustaveli Holdings is a starting point to discuss how issues of legal compliance and audience-interaction are negotiated since they control a near monopoly, though they do not conceptualize it in those terms.

Along with this, the mandate itself demanding state language dubbing and

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3 http://rustaveli.com.ge/ , accessed 1/2/13

subtitling in public film showings is very selectively enforced, and does not seem to apply to English language showings. At Rustaveli, the largest Tbilisi movie theater, for example, they began an English-only schedule of movie showings that offered no Georgian language dubbing or subtitling, and did not perceive this to be in violation of the law. At another Tbilisi movie theater (Kolga), English language films are shown exclusively, without Georgian dubbing or subtitling, and this is also not perceived as a violation of any law. Rather than moralizing these perspectives as misdeeds or disobedience, I discuss two crucial reasons why this perspective is possible: (1) a lack of information regarding the details and goals of the law from the governmental side (2) an understanding that the law on film showings is intended to target Russian language films, not English ones. The broader issue here is about a mismatch between the aspirational legislation regarding language in Georgia and the practicalities and publics that movie theaters must serve to remain profitable and viable in Tbilisi. As I argue, drawing attention to this mismatch is a way that informants voice various forms of discontent with the state of Georgian politics, not restricted to film showings.

In early 2011 there were widespread rumors about a ban on Russian songs in restaurants. The primary vector for the spread of this rumor was an article in Alia newspaper, which reported with details that restaurant owners had been gathered privately by the ministry of finance and instructed to comply with this ban or face a financial penalty, and also to remain quiet about its existence. The minister of culture, Nika Rurua, vehemently denied this accusation, but the rumor nevertheless spread and gained traction, in part because of its "metacultural acceleration" (Urban 2001) by media outlets.

What Greg Urban terms "metacultural acceleration" (Urban 2001) is one way to look at how a false ban on Russian songs became better known than a real law banning Russian-language film showings. By metacultural acceleration, I am referring to Greg Urban's discussion of how culture that is about culture circulates, and its consequences for ordering and re-ordering the social world (Urban 2001:3). This mode emphasizes a trope of movement as way of understanding how meta-level cultural formations have the effect of propelling along the cultural formations to which they refer or are "about." The unconfirmed, likely false ban on Russian songs was buoyed along and circulated by the existing "social pathways" of expectations of governmental corruption, covert censorship, clandestine dealings. What Urban emphasizes is that culture possesses inertia, in the sense that existing social pathways (along with the modes of interpretation specific to those pathways) are the grooves along which culture moves - whereby "past expressions of culture" haunt current expressions of culture "without being fully apparent"(Urban 2001:6). Urban's trope of cultural movement is helpful in understanding why this rumor was widely accepted and retold, as acceleration involves the process of self-reflection. The discourse of "wrongness" or illegality turns attention to the object itself (in this case, Russian language in Georgian public space). More broadly, Urban's description of metacultural acceleration and cultural inertia cues into a history of describing culture as a dynamic system by using metaphors of movement (for example, Tsing 2005). What this case adds to Urban's concept is that it focuses on the content of metacultural commentary, indicating that links to governmental intentions, understood or cast in terms of a constructed boundary between legal/non-legal, are powerful means by which discursive formations gain legs.

During fieldwork in 2012, I organized short interviews at a variety of restaurants and bars in various parts of Tbilisi to get a small but diverse sample of how the "ban" is understood currently, and what restaurant managers and employees know about it. The facts of the ban are little understood, but many restaurant workers still believe the details presented in the Alia article. In part, what gave the Alia article accelerative cultural force was the presentation of the "ban" and its fine as a secretive, non-public function of government. Such an intimation of secrecy plays into a network of anxieties about governmental corruption, control of the public space, and the post-2008 vilification of anything Russian. The "ban" makes Russian songs more metapragmatically salient – they become a focus, and in this, are linked to other Russian-associated forms and events.

Threat of fines itself serves as a metacultural acceleration of the notion that Russian language presence in media is a danger to Georgian national character and development. The enforcement of law, the fulfillment (or not) of the threat of fines, is not of central importance, except as the institutional contours of compliance become an object of concern and debate for various actors. Instead, the theoretical point that I am emphasizing here by discussing metaculture is that the threat of fines as an emergent, dominant strategy for governmental engagement with media language matters in that it calls attention to (and encourages circulation) of the ideology that language is inherently political, in the sense of developing, highlighting, or encouraging alignments with cultural spheres that have their own historical inertia. More specifically, aligning oneself with Russian, even in passive consumption of cultural products (such as Hollywood films) that have non-Rusian content comes to be seen as a risk to Georgianness, whereas

English language is construed as an alternate fulfillment of engagement with international realities. English, then, as an international language, can come to be seen as a strategic necessity, whereas Russian, as an international langauge, can come to be seen as a dangeous recourse to subordination. What matters here is that the threat of fines calls attention to language as a boundary, the crossing of which entails not only financial risk, but risk of a cultural and national kind. It is tempting to view legislation as a top-down process of state control, but as I will demonstrate in the case of song bans, the model of Russian-language-as-threat is manifest in ways that, although imputed to top-down models, do not emerge from them. Instead, I emphasize the metacultural power of the threat of fines as a way to think the commonalities across these two settings.

By counterposing the relatively unheeded official legislation pertaining to the elimination of foreign language (esp. Russian) film showings with the widely believed and followed rumors about a non-existent law banning Russian language songs in restaurants, I emphasize the factors that make changes in public cultural spaces possible. The main practical difference between the two situations is that no measures were provided for alternatives for film showings, as production of Georgian-language dubbing and film subtitling are prohibitively expensive and relatively undeveloped industries in Georgia. In film theaters, most of the movies are in foreign languages. To ban them requires translation, as their value is partially in connecting viewers to present-day new releases. In the context of restaurants, a ban on Russian songs is more practical, as there is a large canon of Georgian songs that can be played instead. What unites these two legally-connected issues is that while most people are unaware of the ban on foreign language films (without state language subtitling or dubbing), many have heard and are

aware of the ban on Russian songs. Both precipitated at roughly the same moment, in late 2010, early 2011. I connect these two seemingly disparate, unfolding concerns, as both the song ban rumor and the legal mandate treating film language were oriented to the use of Russian language in public space. To do so, I draw from interviews, forum discussions, facebook exchanges, and legal documents.

The Film Showing Law: What, When, and Why

The law governing film and television broadcast language (hereafter, simply "Broadcasting Law") was initiated in 2009, underwent revision, and has been amended. Amendment 3115 ("Demands on Film Demonstrators and Film Showings")[4], written in mid-2010 and enacted on January 1, 2011, specifically addresses the broadcast language of films. Particularly, it specifies that: "1. Film demonstrator showings of films (among them, documentary and animated films) in movie theaters is possible only in the film's original language of production on the condition of having obligatory Georgian state language subtitles or dubbing".[5]

I conducted two interviews with a manager (Mr. A.) at Rustaveli holdings, once in late 2011, and the other in early 2012, just after Rustaveli had been fined for the first time for violation of the law on film showings.[6] During an interview conducted in late

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[4] "*mot'khovnebi pilmis demonst'rat'oris da pilmis chvenebis mimart*"

[5] "1. *pilmis demonst'rat'oris mier pilmis (mat shoris, dok'ument'uri da animatsiuri pilmebis) k'inodarbazshi chveneba shesadzlebelia mkholod pilmis p'irveladi ts'armoebis enaze, sakartvelos sakhelmts'ipo enaze sazaldebulo subtitrebis an gakhmovanebis p'irobit.*"

[6] According to correspondence with a lawyer in the Ministry of Culture, the fine for violation of the law on film language showings is 1500 lari, then 3000 lari for a second violation, increasing to 10000 lari for a third or more violations. Rustaveli/Amirani was fined 1500 lari on Jan. 31st, 2012[6]. They were reportedly given a warning and a grace period beginning in 2011, when the law came into effect, and lack of compliance in 2012

February 2012, Mr. A. stated: "*es jarima tsot'a simboluri raghats iq'o*"("This fine was a bit of a symbolic thing"). Mr. A. discussed issues pertaining to compliance with the law, stressing that discussions with the government were ongoing, and the contents of this law were being reconsidered. His pronoun use during this interview was ambiguous in terms of referents. At times when he used the first person plural *chven* (we), this referred to the Rustaveli/Amirani business, but at other times it included the Ministry of Culture, with whom they appear to have a close working relationship. For this reason, when Mr. A. said that, "*saubari midis"* ("a conversation is going on") regarding the percentage of films that must be subtitled, it was unclear who the participants in this conversation were. The implication was that Rustaveli/Amirani and the Ministry of Culture are discussing ways to make compliance attainable. Additionally, this report of discussion reveals the institutional positions of the actors participating in design and implementation of the film showing ban. Rather than comprising competing interests, they are in fact collaborating to reach a mutually beneficial result. What is most striking about this is that ideological considerations for language selection are not regarded as part of the crucial conversation about law implementation: in other words, beliefs about the proper place of Georgian language with respect to films are viewed as *outside* the domain of either the Ministry of Culture and Rustaveli/Amirani. Both organizations are compliance-seeking: though the Ministry of Culture is technically governmental, the way that they position themselves, and the way that Rustaveli/Amirani relates to them, is as an enforcement arm with whom they may negotiate, and not as the origin of interests that created the idea or reality of the

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resulted in a penalty. What is interesting in this case is that Rustaveli was targeted for this fine specifically for Russian language showings, though they also frequently showed films in English, which is also a violation of the law. No other movie theaters were fined for language violations.

law on film showing. The origin, or author, in Goffman's term for the participant role, for this film law is President Saakashvili. For example, when Mr. A. used the phrase *sakhelmts'ipos mkhridan* "from the government side," the government (*sakhelmts'ipo*) is metonymic of President Saakashvili's intentions rather the governmental structures that enact or enforce them.

In 2011, Rustaveli movie theater began regular English-language only showings, and even advertised these showings on a dedicated portion of their webpage. The market for these showings was the English-language expatriate community. The law on film showings is intended (or understood by those who show films in movie theaters in Tbilisi) to impact Georgian citizens; not English-speaking expatriates living in Georgia. English-language accommodations, which are technically illegal, are not construed as such. Instead, they are regarded as outside of the scope of the law. English-speaking patrons, but not Russian-speaking patrons, are accommodated with English-language showings. The diffuse and uneven way that law, legality, and compliance function in this setting invite us to consider how language, social aspirations, and citizenship are linked. Rather than give an institutional account of law, the selective fashion in which one non-Georgian language (English) is seen as a harmless (or even beneficial) necessity whereas another (Russian) is seen as a possible hazard and the real target for legislation demonstrates that layers of interpretation are at play. Further, the tolerance for English-language showings demonstrates that the contemporary Tbilisi citizen can participate in English-language media consumption without any risk to Georgianness.

During one interview at Bravo studios, my interlocutors assumed that since I was asking about film language issues, I must belong to this (evidently) vocal and insistent

Tbilisi expatriate group, though my puzzled response immediately dissuaded them of the notion. In another interview in November 2011, Mr. A. explained that they organize get-togethers for diplomats and their families, at which English-language films are shown in their original language. In 2012 I tracked down the Anglophone expatriate who spearheaded these regularized film showings and asked him about the logistics. He was unaware about the law on film showings, and had no idea about the specifics of importing or demonstrating films in Georgia. In sharp contrast, Mr. A. was well informed about the Broadcasting Law. In an interview in February 2012, rationalizing English showings, Mr. A. posited a division between what he called the "idea" (in this case, the letter of the law) and the reality that would be tolerable to the government: "In the law this is not written. I am certain that the government will not have a problem with that, that is, why films are showing in English without subtitles, but really in idea it is a violation"[7].

Rustaveli Holdings

As Rustaveli Holdings is the dominant force in the market, legislation pertaining to film showings is targeted at altering their business practices. Before discussing issues of law compliance, and how a key Rustaveli representative understands the government-movie theater relationship, it is worth first reviewing what Rustaveli Holdings is, and how they understand their place in the market and interact with customers. Rustaveli Holdings "[operates] 5 theatres with 8 screens including all existing multiplexes in central Tbilisi as well as several key regions centers. Rustaveli and Amirani – our proprietary sites – are two landmark theaters that were revamped and equipped with

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[7] "*tumtsa me darts'munebuli var, rom sakhelmts'ipos amaze p'roblema ar ekneba, anu - rat'om gadis pilmebi inglisur enaze subt'it'rebis gareshe, magram kho ideashe darghvevaa.*"

Dolby Digital and 3D technologies".[8] The primary vehicle for business-customer interactions is via Rustaveli's Facebook page, on which film language issues frequently arise.

A management representative from Amirani Theater cited Facebook as the main method of receiving unofficial audience feedback. Facebook has become a vector of audience-business interaction. As of early April 2012, the Rustaveli/Amirani Facebook page had received nearly 40,000 "likes", indicating that there is a large audience interacting, usually passively, via this electronic medium. It is clear from conversations with Rustaveli/Amirani management representatives that film selection, including language, is driven in large part by perceived demand. Facebook is a way to register demand for upcoming releases, though Rustaveli Holdings also relies on official research to understand their demographics, and to cater to their preferences.

From following the posts and commentaries on the Rustaveli/Amirani Facebook page over the course of a year, a few common trends emerge. The primary purpose of the Rustaveli/Amirani Facebook page is to advertise upcoming films, which usually takes the form of posting film posters with Georgian language titles, or embedded Youtube trailers, above or beneath which release dates or showing times are listed. Commentary on such posts most commonly includes the question of what language the film will be shown "*ra enazea*?" ("in what language is it?") or "*ra enaze ikneba*?" ("in what language will it be?"). The most common answer from Rustaveli/Amirani Movie Theaters is simply "*rusulad"* ("Russian"), though at times they do not respond. The other comments ask for clarification about release or showing dates, voice excitement about upcoming releases,

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[8] http://rustaveli.com.ge/?p=89 Accessed 1/25/2013

or make other comments about the films. It is noteworthy that the question about film language appears in nearly every release. The fact that this information is never listed on the original film posts, which are often entirely in Georgian, indicates a strategic omission. Interestingly, when a film will be shown in English, this is often indicated under the heading.

In addition to not listing the language on the Facebook announcement, Rustaveli/Amirani does a few other things to manage the perception of film language in public space. For example, the film posters lining the theater's façade are always printed with Georgian language titles, taglines, and cast names. Further, the theater creates online trailers, borrowing heavily from the English language version, though omitting any actors' speaking. Instead, the trailer is a shortened version of the original which has a low-voiced Georgian voice-over at the beginning, and then presents a language-less dramatic trailer. I argue that this is intended to give the impression that the film will be shown in Georgian. For example, consider the action film "Mission:Impossible-Ghost Protocol" (2011) (or, as it was advertised in Georgia, "*sheusrulebeli misia 4"*), starring Tom Cruise, the fourth in the "Mission:Impossible" series in which he plays Ethan Hunt. In this release, Tom Cruise as Ethan Hunt must track down a terrorist who plans to launch a nuclear attack on America from Russia. In the trailer that Rustaveli Cinema released[9], there is a voice-over narrator hyping the film, but not speaking from the film

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[9] Note that they indicate that the film will be showing in four theaters: Apollo, Rustaveli, Amirani, and Sakartvelo. http://youtu.be/DSEB8yOFq_c Accessed 1/24/13 Compare this to the Russian language trailer: http://youtu.be/nQU65mNTbmQ (Accessed 1/24/13), which is identical to the original English language trailer, http://youtu.be/V0LQnQSrC-g (Accessed 1/24/13), except that it has been dubbed into Russian. In the Russian trailer the dubbing of actors' voices is actually shown. Also, note that the Russian trailer is a bit longer than the Georgian one (2:17 compared to 1:06).

itself. The actors of the film do not speak in this version of the trailer. This avoids the language choice issue, and also prevents the theater from stating that they are going to only be showing this in Russian. The Georgian trailer is strategically designed to avoid indicating in what language the film will be. This could be because it is in Russian and without Georgian subtitles or dubbing, which is technically against the law (as of early 2011). In this case, "Mission:Impossible 4" was shown in all Tbilisi locations only in Russian, with no Georgian or English dubbing or subtitling. I should note that the omission of information about the language of the film is not a clear indication of a strategic purpose or ideology on the part of Rustaveli/Amirani, who created the trailer. However, I suggest that the omission is deliberate, and the film poster and trailer advertisements have the effect of giving the impression that the film will be shown in Georgian. [10]

Essentially the Georgian trailer is just the middle of the Russian trailer, the part that has no actors speaking. In the background of both is the same Eminem song.

[10] This component – of language debates being absent from promotional venues– is very similar to the situation in Ukraine. As Laada Bilaniuk succinctly states: "The absence of discourse about language choice in promotional media related to television was in stark contrast to the heated debates surrounding language regulation"(Bilaniuk 2010a: 183).

Figure 5: "Mission: Impossible 4"

Russian, therefore, is the assumed language of film showings. There is an

enduring expectation that movie theaters are domains in which Russian actively

functions, as a sort of unmarked language of cultural belonging activated through film.

Rustaveli/Amirani has made emphatic declarations via Facebook that all film showings

will be in Georgian, but this does not reflect the reality of what one sees at the movie

theater. Because of this, the language of film showings is typically ascertained on Facebook by questioning - one is no longer confident in assuming that a language will be in Russian, as promises to the contrary have disturbed its status as the normative language of film showings. Nevertheless, in practical terms teenagers with whom I spoke assumed that films that had not yet been to would be shown in Russian. One reason that the language of film showings on Facebook is unclear is that the images (film posters, trailers, and promotional materials) are most commonly provided in Georgian irrespective of what language the showing will be.

For example, in May 2012, a couple months after Rustaveli received its first-ever fine for showing Russian language films, a Facebook post announced that only Georgian language (or original language with Georgian subtitling) films would be shown. This announcement generated a great deal of commentary and feedback, much of which lamented the low quality of Georgian dubbing, or discussed the annoyance of watching subtitles, two recurrent themes in public discussions of dubbing and subtitling in Georgia. In an effort to pacify annoyed customers, Rustaveli/Amirani attempted to reassure patrons that the quality of dubbing would increase, and also emphasized that this decision was based on the law, not on their own caprice.

Figure 6: Announcement on May 2, 2012

"Rustaveli / Amirani / Apollo Batumi

Films only in Georgian, or in the original with Georgian subtitles.

Russian films will no longer be shown at our locations (forbidden by law)"

A month later this appeared on the Rustaveli/Amirani Facebook page, contradicting the announcement that films would be shown only in Georgian, or in the original with Georgian subtitles:

Figure 7: June 20, 2012 Announcement

" "The Dictator"

See it in theaters:)"

Figure 8: Comment from June 20, 2012 Announcement

"Lela Okromelidze: On which days do you have English?

Rustaveli/Amirani Movie Theaters: Unfortunately, we don't have English, only Russian "

At around this time, I conducted an interview at the movie theater Sakartvelo

(*k'ino sakartvelo*), located near Didube Metro station, in the northern part of Tbilisi (Didi

Dighomi). Though not part of the Rustaveli/Amirani network, they indicated that they

had a positive business relationship and shared resources and distribution contacts, though the details of this remained vague. I inquired about the fine that Rustaveli had received earlier in the year, and my contact acknowledged that he knew of this. I asked if Sakartvelo had been fined for film language law violations, and he responded no. Then he gave a sly smile and said "*chven suptad vmushaobt* " ("We work cleanly/properly"), indicating that they are not in violation of any law. The employee working at the ticket-booth downstairs later told me and my assistant, Ele, that films were shown in Russian frequently at Sakartvelo without any Georgian language subtitles or dubbing, which she regarded as normal. A movie poster for "The Dictator," a movie shown exclusively in Russian, hung outside as Ele and I waited at the bus stop in the summer heat. The disavowal of illegality was plainly at odds with what was occurring in terms of compliance with the specifications of the film law.

In contrast to the movie theaters above that are negotiating the fraught terrain of Russian language film showings, there is a movie theater in Tbilisi that shows only English language films, without Russian or Georgian dubbing or subtitling. Cinema House "Kolga" located at former "*k'inos sakhli*" ("Film House") near the McDonalds near Rustaveli metro, Kolga prided itself on being the "only theater in Georgian to show English language films three times a week".[11] In 2012, Kolga reported on their webpage that, "Regular English language shows have been suspended indefinitely". Kolga continued to do "private" showings for a large enough audience from their archive of films. They were told to stop doing "public" showings, and were notified of this by an anonymous phone call. Kolga called the Georgian Copyright Association to try to figure

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[11] http://kolga.geoweb.ge/ , accessed 1/27/13

out what this was about, but they didn't know anything about it. The person who made the call telling them to stop showing films was from a film distribution company who apparently were concerned with how their showings were affecting Rustaveli/Amirani. Kolga reopened in late April 2012, and recommenced showings of English language films. A Kolga representative confirmed that, "we are collaborating with the film distribution company affiliated with Rustaveli/Amirani as far as coordinating our film program with them". I inquired about the legality of showing English language films and received this response:

> "As for your question about the 2009 amendment to the law on broadcasting. This amendment applies to TV stations, both public and private and is heavily focused on dubbing the films. Given that we are not a broadcasting station (Kolga operates like a club for foreigners living in Georgia and English speaking Georgians.), and also given that the movies that we show are not dubbed in any language, but are shown in the original language, I would say that our English language showings are not in violation of the said amendment."

In essence, the case of Kolga theater demonstrates that the English language film showings are not perceived to be a violation of the law, nor are they considered problematic for the industry or the government. In this response the Kolga representative focuses on the broadcasting law that came out in 2009 rather than the more recent law on film showings, which would be directly pertinent to their business practices. What is of

concern is Rustaveli/Amirani's market control of new releases, and their profitability. As a representative of Rustaveli/Amirani told me, English-language showings still are not popular, and therefore consist of a small fraction of their business. Nevertheless, this demonstrates that English-language showings are a significant enough concern for Rustaveli/Amirani's bottom line that they would wish to coordinate a showing schedule with Kolga theater to ensure that business is channeled first to Rustaveli/Amirani. This demonstrates that the film showing industry is coordinated largely by Rustaveli/Amirani, and in ways that are beyond the strict letter of the law as relates to film language issues. Practicality is the driving force, as Rustaveli/Amirani is capitalizing on existing English-language demand, though the fulfillment of this demand is technically in violation of the law.

Additionally, the language of Rustaveli/Amirani's film showings is in no way secret; one can simply inquire at the front desk, look at the printed list of showings posted next to the ticket kiosk indicating in which languages the films are shown, or sift through the Facebook postings in order to get a clear sense of what language films are shown in. The relative scarcity of movie theaters makes the issue of monitoring less about surveillance, and more about strategic enforcement.

Broadcasting Monitoring – The Georgian National Communications Commission

As I discuss in the section above, compliance is the main rubric within which Rustaveli/Amirani and the Ministry of Culture understand their institutional roles with respect to issues of language in film showings. It was unclear how decisions about compliance, including the fines discussed above, are made. From my discussions with both the Ministry of Culture lawyers as well as Rustaveli's representatives, it seemed

clear that although they ostensibly represent different interests, there is concern on both sides about how to effectively run the film business in Georgia within the somewhat restrictive language parameters of the new law. As with the film showing restrictions, oversight, monitoring, and enforcement of the law appear to be selective. There are many possible reasons for this. Ascribing nefarious explanations (such as "corruption") to the selectivity of monitoring and enforcement, while possible, as I discuss below with respect to the Georgian National Communications Commission, is indicative of a larger trend of casting doubt on the efficacy of Saakashvili's relationships with semi-governmental organizations. What I hope emerges from this discussion is that the central issue is how compliance emerges as a game in which the morality of actors and institutions is negotiated in terms of adequacy, rather than simply as a mode of bringing law and behavior into congruence.

In the larger discussion of law compliance, language selection, and legality, there is another crucial organization to consider: the Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC). I was puzzled to learn that the Ministry of Culture enforces compliance with the 2011 law on film showings, whereas the Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC) does all other broadcast monitoring (including television and radio). I was interested how larger-scale broadcasting monitoring functions in Georgia, given the somewhat special arrangement afforded Rustaveli/Amirani. Generally speaking, broadcasting monitoring is handled by the GNCC. The GNCC is a governmental organization charged with enforcing the law on broadcasting, which affects film, television, and radio. Members of the GNCC are appointed by Parliament. As Tobias Akerlund reports, "The commission has come under fire from various NGOs for

the lack of transparency of its operations and licensing procedures"(Akerlund 2012: 9). A

particularly strong version of this is the claim, found in Giorgi Lomsadze's 2010 IREX

media report, is that " [some say that GNCC] maintains a stranglehold on the broadcast

news market, barring or restricting access for companies that are not in the government's

good graces"(Lomsadze 2010: 143).

A December 2011 report by Transparency International ("The Georgian

Advertising Market") discusses conflict of interest issues pertaining to GNCC's head

since 2009, Irakli Chikovani. In essence, Chikovani is a shareholder or owner of multiple

business interests, including a company (Magi Style Media) involved with broadcasting

advertisements. Transparency International reports that, " GNCC's legal department has

argued that Chikovani's activities are in no way violating conflict of interest

rules"(2011:18)[12]. There have aso been reports that GNCC's enforcements are

inconsistent, particular in reference to broadcasting licenses. Concerning Alania, a

Russian-language channel broadcast into South Ossetia, and surrounded by controversial

ties to the government, Paul Rimple reports that:

"TV Alania started broadcasting in 2005 without a broadcasting license

and apparently, without the knowledge of GNCC Chairperson, Giorgi

Arveladze [...] Mikheil Saakashvili, however, was aware of this station

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[12] "The Law on Broadcasting is quite clear on conflict of interest rules for
Commissioners: A "Conflict of interest may arise if a Commissioner simultaneously: (…)
c) provides any remunerated work for an entity, whose activity is subject to regulation by
the Commission; d) holds shares or part of the fixed capital of an enterprise, whose
activity is subject to regulation by the Commission; f) has any other direct or indirect
financial interest towards an entity, whose activity is subject to regulation by the
Commission."(Transparency International 2011: 17-18"

and announced to a group of journalists that he watched Alania programs

in the evenings [...] It received its license on 16 May 2008. In the three

years it had been broadcasting illegally, Alania was watched throughout

Georgia, including the Tskhinvali region of South Ossetia – it's [sic] target

audience – but the GNCC claimed it knew nothing of its existence, despite

the fact that TV Alania published its weekly schedule in [the] 'TV

Program' newspaper. *The Commission explained that they never*

monitored Alania's TV signals because no one had instructed them to."

(Rimple 2011:32-33, emphasis added)

What is significant here is that GNCC's monitoring is, at least in certain circumstances,

constrained or controlled by political factors. The reason for non-intervention, as Rimple

relates, is that "Alania was a 'secret' state-backed station designed to broadcast to the

Tskinvali [sic] region in South Ossetia as part of an engagement policy with the

breakaway territory"(Rimple 2012:34). Rimple's information comes from a Studio

Monitor Investigation, aired on the TV channel "Maestro", and available as a Youtube

video. [13] Studio Monitor is financially supported by " 'Open Society - Georgia', the

European Union, "'National Endowment for Democracy', U.S. - U.S. Embassy, the

Eurasia Foundation, [and] IREX".[14] The claim that Alania is a state-supported program

targeted at is supported by an investigative report on Alania conducted in 2008 by John

Horan, in which he states that, "Georgian media analyst and member of the Georgian

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[13] "Media After Rose Revolution", http://youtu.be/d-vefDcvLZY Accessed 1/15/2013
[14] http://monitori.ge/about/ Accessed 1/15/2013

Media Council, Tamar Shamili, says, it is 'common knowledge' that the station is a 'propaganda machine run by the Interior Ministry' "(Horan 2008).

Though it is difficult to piece together the particular participants in the story of government involvement with Alania TV, it seems clear that Alania TV was given exceptional status with respect to broadcasting licensure. This is not meant as an indictment of government corruption, but instead indicates how claims of non-responsibility are used to circumnavigate the law, a theme that reappears in other contexts. Lack of awareness by particular employees, therefore, is a way that bureaucratic structures like the GNCC endlessly shift responsibility from division to division. This is dramatized in the Studio Monitor Investigation video, in which various contacts at GNCC are called, in series, in attempts to determine how Alania broadcast for three years without a license. Each contact claims to not be in charge of this issue, and directs the reporter to someone else, often a contact that only moments earlier disavowed any knowledge and responsibility. It is unclear if this form of responsibility-avoidance is an information-concealing tactic, an unwillingness to affirm rumors by attaching them to particular individuals or departments, or if it reflects a genuine lack of knowledge.

This is not to say, however, that such tactics, conscious or otherwise, are localized to the GNCC. Additionally, working through official channels, though GNCC was circumspect about responding to email and phone inquiries, they responded in full in an official letter to a series of questions I posed about broadcast language. Part of the nature of GNCC as a bureaucracy is their opacity, a fact lamented by NGOs as an impediment to proper institutional functioning, as I mentioned above. The question of transparency aside, answering to journalists' and researchers' queries is clearly not a priority for a

governmental organization busy with broadcast monitoring. Though inconsistency in granting licenses is disconcerting, the materials assembled by NGOs regarding GNCC's operations do not present a full and compelling case of wrongdoing so much as (perhaps strategic) bureaucratic inattention.

According to official correspondence from GNCC, authored by Irakli Chikovani, the Commission's Chairman, the resolution on film and television broadcast languages are not targeted at Russian-language films particularly. [15] Further, from the government's side, there are no incentives provided for compliance with the resolution. [16]

Domain Divisions

Another concern in discussing the film and television industry in Georgia pertains to my position as an foreign anthropologist. When dealing with governmental and private bureaucracies, I found that because my initial questions concerned the functions and applications of legal measures, I was directed almost exclusively towards legal representatives, even if I specified that I was interested more broadly in how organizations actually conducted business and applied the law. Some businesses, especially those involved in television, refused to answer questions related to their internal affairs. As an outsider with sparse connections in the film and television industry, it was very difficult to receive reliable information about actual practices. Bravo Studios is a recording studio located near the central television broadcasting building next to the

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[15] "*zemoaghnishnuli dadgenileba raime gansak'utrebul motkhovnebs rusulenovani ts'armoebis pilmebisatvis*" ("The aforementioned resolution [on Oct. 30th, 2009, Number 3] similarly is not targeted particularly at Russian-language produced films")
[16]"*sakhelmts'ipos mkhridan k'erdzo mauts'q'eblobis litsenziis mplobelebis mier k'omisiis 2009 ts'lis 30 okt'ombris No. 3 dadgenilebis shesrulebisatvis pinansiri nakhalisebis shesakheb inpormatsia, k'omisiashe ar moip'oveba."* ("In the commission no information is found about financial incentives from the government side for performance/completion of the resolution Number 3 on Oct. 30th, 2009 by private broadcast license holders.")

Tbilisi Zoo. It is currently the exclusive provider for film dubbing for Rustaveli/Amirani.

At Bravo Studios, where I conducted two interviews, months apart, I was given

conflicting information about basic facts concerning movie origins and processing

details. Because of this, I am reluctant to act as an authority on these matters, as I could

not access information that would illuminate some of the inner workings of individual

businesses, and their specific connections to government and law-following practices.

Nevertheless, the treatment of information is in itself an interesting object of study, as

certain kinds of information were readily released, while others– especially pertaining to

finances– were closely guarded. My study, of course, is not the only one to analyze

components of the media in Georgia, and similar frustrations have been voiced in NGO

materials, usually under the rubric of "lack of transparency."

In light of this, it should be noted that there is no privileged position within the

diffuse matrix of governmental functionaries, lawyers, private businesses, and creative

experts from which a full "reality" of the contemporary film dubbing and subtitling

industry is visible, as no such thing exists. Instead, participants in this industry see

themselves divided into non-overlapping roles: technical, creative, legal, and

administrative capacities. For example, any questions I posed regarding the logistics of

film dubbing were treated as the domain of creative specialists, whereas queries about

law compliance and language choice were relegated to the domain of legal specialists. It

is notable that these two niches are viewed as existing in separate spheres, and

management figures are reluctant to speak about how either functions. What was most

interesting, simply in terms of business structure as I could perceive it from my outside

perspective, was that management seemed to be mostly about coordinating projects

without getting involved in creative or legal dimensions. Legality was viewed as a "separate" issue, rather than a general concern about which all employees would be aware.[17] Initially it seemed puzzling that creative workers had only a dim understanding of the legal issues dictating what languages film showings must be in, but this is because they viewed their own work as separate from the public space. In other words, they were charged with rendering a strong creative product, not with considering Georgian language issues, except insofar as they made the film more or less intelligible. Indeed, the creative issues associated with film dubbing have their own universe of concerns, along with a rich history, as I learned from Kartuli K'ino.

Vagueness and Enforcement

Additionally, the material conditions of compliance differ between film showings in theaters and the "ban" on songs in restaurants and cafes. These domains have different degrees of public-ness, serve different social actors, and have different vulnerabilities and levels of openness and possible exposure to the public. For example, one can wander past a cafe and be exposed to a song, but cannot inadventently arrive in a movie theater, unless under extenuating circumstances. In this respect, it is instructive to contrast the Georgian case with the comparable and controversial case in Ukraine. Unlike in Georgia, language practices are a particularly contentious issue that have resulted in protests, as they tap into ethnic divisions and conflicts over power within Ukraine. Particularly,

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[17] Additionally, the legal language of official government documents often is deliberately ambiguous. For example, in Article 5, section 2 of Amendment 3115 of the Broadcasting Law it states that the Broadcast Law is "*skhva sak'anonmdeblo akt'ebit*" ("[supported with] other legal acts"). The particular supportive legal acts are not named in the document, so the word "*skhva*"("other") appears as an arrow pointing away from the document itself, but towards no particular location or legal source.

"Ukrainian songwriter Ihor Bilozir died after being beaten by ethnic Russians who did not like that he was singing Ukrainian songs with his friends in a café [...] [t]his incident sparked major protests in the city"(Bilaniuk 2005:179). As Bilaniuk explains, this resulted in the passage of laws for " 'protection of the sound environment,' banning songs with 'amoral content and low aesthetic level' as a means of limiting the airing of some Russian pop songs (Taranenko 2001,11)"(Bilaniuk 2005: 179). Such a law was directed at limiting play of Russian pop music, but was phrased in terms of the content of the songs (ibid). Such controversial measures galvanized protest, debate, and critique in a way that foregrounded ethnic tensions. This differed from the law on film showings in Georgia, which remains largely unknown and unheeded, even as it fed into discussion about the place of foreign languages within Georgia *should* be. However, the central logic – demotion of Russian – is similar in both cases, and is pursued indirectly. In the Georgian case, Russian is demoted by promotion of Georgian.

Laada Bilaniuk notes that "the translation of foreign movies was the focus of controversy in 2006, as lawmakers required Ukrainian translations and media companies protested that this was financially unfeasible (Shevchuk 2006)"(Bilaniuk 2010b:115).[18] The 2006 amendment in Ukraine specified that national television and radio channels should broadcast at least 75% in Ukrainian language (Bilaniuk 2010b: 114). As in the case of Georgian and Russian, the "perceived motives for choosing one language or another" are significant (Bilaniuk 2010b:111). Historically, Ukrainian had been "treated

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[18] Bilaniuk and Melnyk elaborate,"Film distributors protested that dubbing in Ukrainian is financially unsustainable, but eventually agreed to legislation stipulating that 'the distributing companies are under an obligation to bring the quota of dubbed (soundtrack of subtitled films) foreign production movies to 50% (and to 100% in children's films) from the total amount of prints for each film title, imported in Ukraine'(Ukrinform, 2006, 2007a,b)"(Bilaniuk and Melnyk 2008:363).

as a provincial, lower prestige language"(Bilaniuk 2008:365) with respect to Russian, which was the higher prestige language. The ways that the linguistic ecology of Russian and Ukrainian is configured in Ukraine differ slightly from that of Russian and Georgian in Georgia, in that Georgian language remains an insular code of Georgianness, whereas in Ukraine the "choice between Ukrainian and Russian is often portrayed as shorthand for the choice between two political and cultural allegiances: with Russia, in the case of Russian language, or with Europe and the West, in the case of Ukrainian"(Bilaniuk and Melnyk 2008: 340). Elsewhere Bilaniuk has noted, however, that English functions as a prestige language epitomizing "worldliness" and "affording wider opportunites than Ukrainian"(Bilaniuk 2005: 183).

One of the most significant similarities between Ukraine and Georgia with respect to legislation pertaining to public language use is the ways in which ambiguity arose in the language and interpretation of the laws themselves. Bilaniuk and Melnyk note that "[t]he Ukrainian Constitution is somewhat contradictory or vague on issues of language use, especially in education"(2008:350).[19] Enforcement of a vague law requires interpretive mediation. In the Georgian case, degree and type of enforcement involved negotiations beyond the letter of the law between the Ministry of Culture and Amirani

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[19] One example of this: "[...] the Law on Television and Radio Broadcasting, passed in December 1993 by the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament of Ukraine), specified that 50 percent of broadcasts must be produced in Ukraine, and that television and radio organizations must conduct broadcasts in the state language (Ukrainian) but that broadcasts for particular regions could also be conducted in the language of minorities who reside there compactly (Zakon 1993). The law did not specify what constitutes a 'compact' population, and whether ethnicity of primary language was the determinant of a minority population. These ambiguities, and the lack of enforcement measures, facilitated the prevalence of Russian language broadcasting, allowing television companies to capitalize on the availability and popularity of older Soviet films and newer imports from Russia"(Bilaniuk 2005:178).

Holdings.

Song Ban: Opacity, Uncertainty, Gossip, and the "Law"

Now let us shift our attention to another governmental ban, or more accurately, to a widespread rumor about a ban on the performance of Russian language songs in cafes and restaurants in Tbilisi. This rumor can be traced to an article published by Alia newspaper on January 27th, 2011. It is significant that this rumor appeared at roughly the same time as the amendment forbidding the showing of foreign films without state-language dubbing or subtitling, which officially came into force on January 1st, 2011. Most people I spoke to, both inside and outside of the restaurant business, had heard of the song ban but were unaware of the film-showings language restrictions, and were also unaware of the Alia article. Many were unsure of the veracity of the song ban. I conducted a series of short interviews at a diverse selection of Tbilisi restaurants, bars, and cafes, varying in terms of location and type. The purpose of these short interviews was to determine what restaurant workers (especially managers, those in charge of music in these spaces) knew of this rumor, how they talked about it, and how it affected business practices.

Questioning was deliberately open-ended to avoid making assumptions about what restaurant workers knew about the song-ban. To introduce the topic, for example, a formula such as "*amboben, rom...*" ("They say that...") was used to reflect my non-authoritative stance on the ban, which was referred to as a "*gavrtselda khma*" ("a rumor (was) spread") or a "*mosazreba"* ("opinion"). Questioning, thus, was about their view on this "rumor" or "opinion" which I had heard had been circulated, which included

inquiring about its status as a rumor, opinion, fact, or law. Many respondents were

reticent to speak about the topic, either because they did not want to be recorded, were

unwilling to represent the restaurant's official stance, did not want to be included in

research, or were hesitant to discuss anything relating to government and law.

Among those who responded to the questions, many entertained the idea that such

a ban exists in Georgia, though differed in their confidence as to its status as a law. The

more interesting topic, it seemed, was whether such a law *should* exist, and more broadly,

how Russian music in restaurants or cafes could have been interpreted as a sign - to

customers as well as the government - of political influence. This connection was largely,

though not universally, seen as a tenuous, though not unlikely governmental position.

Respondents spoke about the ban in a variety of ways. Note here the multiple methods

that respondents use to indicate uncertainty, or to mitigate the force of their claims:

"*rogorts vitsi"* ("as far as I know"), "*vitom*" ("supposedly"), "*idzakhian*" "they say". Also,

note how the question about existing as a law opens onto assessments of what *should*

exist, and even on an assessment of the thinking behind such a law as an indicator of

backwardness:

One respondent stated that:

"*idzakhian, rom vitom k'anonits iq'o, magram amas k'anoni ar ch'irdeba*

[...]"

"They say that supposedly there was also a law, but a law is not needed for

this [...]"

Another:

"*ara sit'q'vierad aravis gavuprtkhilebivart, ubralod vitsodit rom es rusuli*

est'radis musik'a ar unda gagvezhgherebina rest'oranshi."

"No one had warned us verbally, we just knew that this Russian estrada

music should not have been played in the restaurant."

A third:

"*aris jarimebi musik'astan dak'avshirebit, me ese vitsi p'iradad* [...] *me*

rogorts vitsi k'anonia, rom ak'rdzalulia rusuli musik'is [...]"

"There are fines connected with the music, I know this personally [...] As

far as I know it is a law that Russian songs are banned [...] "

A fourth:

"*ara, ar gamigonia rom eseti k'anoni arsebobs imit'om, rom chems*

kveq'anashi eseti shezghuduli azrovneba ar arsebobs [...] *chemi*

kveq'anashi ar aris eseti chamorchenili."

"No, I have not heard that such a law exists, because in my country such

limited thinking doesn't exist [...] my country isn't that backwards."

A manager from a popular chain of Georgian restaurant reflected on the music situation

in her restaurant, where they have a collection of music, and also employ Georgian folk

musicians in the evenings on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. She explained that these

musicians, clothed in the traditional Georgian *chokha* do not play Russian songs, as they

perform only Georgian songs ("*skhva zhanrshi arian*" "they are in another genre"). She

later explained the non-commensurability of these genres in these terms:

> "*rusul 'moia mulatka'-s ver dauk'raven dolze da pandurze vernairad.*"
>
> "There is no way that they can play Russian 'My Mulatto-girl" on the *doli*
>
> and the *panduri*".

The *doli* (drum) and *panduri* (3-stringed instrument) are traditional national Georgian

instruments. The song that she refers to here is entitled "*Mulatka*" ("Mulatto-girl") by

award-winning Russian pop musician Dima Bilan. With this comment, she highlights the

impossibility and undesirability of performing Russian pop music on traditional Georgian

instruments, both in practical and aesthetic terms. Genre difference maps directly onto

ethno-national difference, in which the instruments themselves prescribe range of musical

varieties that may be enacted in performance.[20]

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[20] In this exchange, there are more social vectors in by than simply ethno-national
belonging and genre incompatibilities. Why, we may ask, is "Mulatto-girl" taken as the
token example of a Russian pop song? Mr. Bilan was born in the Karachay–Cherkess
Republic, located in the North Caucasus, bordering Abkhazia to the northeast. The song
itself is about sexual desire for a mulatto-girl. The chorus is as follows:

Moia mulatka - shokoladka,	My mulatto girl, chocolate girl
Etoi noch'iu vsë budet gladko.	Tonight all will be smooth
Moia mulatka - shokoladka,	My mulatto girl, chocolate girl
Ia liubliu tebia tak sladko.	I love you so sweetly.

On its face, the word "mulatto" refers to a person with mixed black and white ancestry,
and is linked specifically to colonial context. The use of the diminutive suffix *-ka* softens
the term slightly. Part, if not all, of the sexual desirability of the girl (to whom the song is
sung) hinges on her racial identity. In the Russian imaginary, peoples of the Caucasus are
often emplaced as ethnic others, and take on a host of racialized stereotypes. Being
considered "black" ("*chërnyi*") does not necessarily require possessing characteristics of
appearance, or actual "blackness" (Lemon 2000). Being evaluated as "black" includes
being seen as being more animal-like than the normative White Russian standard.
Attribution of animalistic passion or emotionality contains both positive and negative
evaluatory senses- disparagement for being out of control and wild, and a note of envy

The song ban enters onto a more open and contested sphere of discourse connected to anxieties about Russian presence and influence. Whether nationalist, anti-nationalist, or pragmatic, inquiring about a governmental ban on songs –real, or in this case, fabricated – was taken as an opening to discussion the position of Russian cultural (and, by extension, political) factors in Georgian life. On the online forum, http://forum.ge, there is a 47-page thread from late January 2011 entitled "Прощай maia mulatka da stiuardesa po imeni Jana"[21] ("Farewell *maia mulatka* and *stiuardess po imeni zhana"*).[22] "*stiuardess po imeni zhana"* (**"A Stewardess by the Name of Zhana"**) is an older Russian song by Vladimir Presniakov. Most of the comments in the thread germane to the topic (many posts are simply attacks on President Saakashvili) discuss the impossibility of purifying Georgian from outside influences.

The element of uncertainty and governmental secrecy in media reports made a ban on Russian songs seem possible, and even likely.[23] In early February 2012, journalists investigated the song ban by speaking to Nika Rurua, the Minister of Culture. He "denied information about ban of Russian songs at restaurants. 'It is an absolute absurdity. Songs cannot be banned in a free country. Our law does not include any ban. However, if you are interested into my personal opinion, I would prefer not to listen to Russian victory song 'Den Pobedi' on 9 May', the Minister said. On the journalists'

for being able to express emotions in a frank, straightforward fashion impossible for a "cold" Russian. What I argue here is that the appeal of this song for a Georgian audience– aside from its catchy pop tune, and sex-forward music video, in which Bilan seduces his *mulatka* in a crowded bar, staffed by a bartender dressed as Jack Sparrow from *Pirates of the Carribean*– is that it is a coded way of talking about the sexual desirability of Caucasian people.

[21] I have preserved the original scripts in this case in order to show the alternation of Russian and Georgian.
[22] http://forum.ge/?f=29&showtopic=34213243 Accessed 1/28/13
[23] See Samper 2002 on how news media reinforces and authenticates rumor.

question why are the owners of the restaurants intimidated with regard to the matter, Rurua answered: 'I am really unaware of it. You should ask them'."[24] The matter of intimidation was connected, in part, to the article printed by Alia, which reported that, "the order came from the head of the Revenue Service at the Ministry of Finance, Georgi Tskhakaya. The owners of entertainment facilities were threatened with sanctions if they did not respect the ban, up to closure of their establishment. Alia said that the Revenue Service wanted the ban kept a secret. "No one must know - neither clients, nor employees; you may tell them anything you like and give them any explanations but if you try to perform a Russian song you will be visited by the tax service that handles your business," Alia quoted Tskhakaya as saying."[25] Multiple other news sources participated in spreading this story, each with minor elaborations. [26] The multiplicity of conflicting but suggestive reports metaculturally accelerated and promoted the possibility that such a ban existed and was clandestinely enforced.

Conclusion

An unsuccessful legal ban on foreign film showings and a powerful rumor about a ban on Russian songs in restaurants both stem from and circulate similar concerns about

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[24]http://www.georgianjournal.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3402
:culture-minister-denies-information-on-ban-of-russian-songs-at-restaurants-
&catid=9:news&Itemid=8 Accessed May 12, 2012
[25] http://news.az/articles/georgia/31016 Accessed May 12, 2012
[26] For example:
http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/russia-georgia-bans-russian-songs-jan-270.cfm
Accessed May 12, 2012, In which it is reported that Temur Rtskhiladze, "prominent
Georgian pop singer and composer, told Maestro "If this ban is adopted on the level of a
law, the whole world will be laughing at Georgia because it's so stupid.""
http://www.ntv.ru/novosti/219003/ Accessed May 12, 2012, In which it is reported that,
"The leader of Georgian opposition Labor Party Iosif Shatberashvili calls the
Saakashivili's regime's ban on performing songs in the Russian language on air and in
restaurants "a manifestation of Nazism".""

the presence of Russian culture in Georgian space. The overtly anti-Russian posture of Saakashvili's regime propels these anxieties along. Though they are felt in different ways by citizens of various kinds, the extreme anti-Russian cultural position is untenable because it neglects the facts on the ground, including the enduring appeal of Russian products, such as Russian film dubbing. By drawing these two contemporaneous moments together, I have shown how institutional actors in both the government and private domains conceptualize their primary roles as demonstrating and negotiating compliance. A focus on the interdiscursive emergence of compliance moves the conversation away from issues of morality and justice. By considering compliance not as a state, but a process, we orient towards the central guiding concern of both governmental and non-governmental actors involved with film showings: to manifest profitable business practices while remaining ostensibly within the parameters of acceptability. Seemingly unheeded or selectively followed laws are one result of a system in which both sides actively accommodate one another. The confusion surrounding the imagined song ban in Tbilisi is a demonstration of how anxieties need not be grounded in any law, but instead are part of the same ideology of compliance. What matters, in other words, is finding a way to avoid becoming a target of attention, of achieving a veneer of compliance within nebulous limits expressing cultural alignments.

In the next chapter I will discuss in more detail the ways that film dubbing function in contemporary Tbilisi, taking stock of the birth and tumultuous infancy a new Georgian film dubbing industry made necessary by the law requiring state language film dubbing or subtitling. To do so, I consider how ideologies of "quality" emerge from a selectively comparative relationship with Russian dubbing that balances remembrance of

shoddy pirated films alongside the highly-valued "art" of Russian dubbing. This chapter

focuses on the institutions and laborers involved in crafting voices and calibrating

correspondence in imported films.

CHAPTER 4.

Russian Presence in Georgian Film Dubbing: Scales of Inferiority

In late October 2012, I was invited for tea one evening at Giovani's apartment, centrally located above Rustaveli Avenue in downtown Tbilisi. He was a painter, and had worked for years in the late Soviet period as a live-interpreter for movie showings, specializing in films from Italy. The apartment was crowded with frames, commissioned paintings, still-life objects, and the warmth of his family's presence. As we ate pastries and chatted, his son stood nearby, painting ethnographic details of clothing on a sprawling map depicting the various populations of Georgia. Giovani kept a sugary lozenge in his cheek as he spoke animatedly about his experiences as a live-interpreter. His voice, rich with feeling, had been reduced to a strained hush, just above a whisper – a disease of the throat was slowly vanishing the voice with which he had once made a living. Yet this didn't seem to dampen Giovani's spirits or humor, nor did it force him to speak less, painful though every utterance must have been. I listened to his recollections of a career that has vanished from Tbilisi, in a voice that was also disappearing.

As a live-interpreter for foreign films, Giovani's task was to translate films in real-time from Italian into Georgian. He wore headphones, seated in front of a microphone that amplified his voice to the auditorium. The first showing of a film was also the first time he had ever seen it, and without preparation he had to speak the film across cultural

and linguistic borders to an audience of local strangers. Giovani's recollections about live film interpretation reveal how film language demonstrations worked when a Russian or Georgian language version was needed, but unavailable. Though the first showing of a film was extremely stressful, Giovani said that by the fifth showing it was so dull that he had trouble staying awake. In terms of content, these were art films or small productions that would not draw a large crowd. To become more adept at live interpretation, he practiced at home by sitting in front of the television and translating everything aloud. The practice of live interpretation was common to the socialist bloc in the 1960s and 1970s.[1]

Finding direct equivalences was not his method – what was more important, he explained, was that the audience "understands" the film. If a joke or insult were made, he would invent something on the spot to convey that illocutionary act. I inquired about his strategy for representing dialects. He responded that he would find some kind of socially meaningful dialect difference in Georgian to represent the different forms of speech in Italian. For example, he might use a Mingrelian accent to contrast with standard Tbilisian Georgian. This recalls Robin Queen's (2004) observations about representing racial difference in German dubbed films. More broadly, this process can be described as an inter-indexical relationship, by which "indexical order in one language is transposed into that in another language under certain terms of equivalence"(Inoue 2003:327). Giovani gave another example of a difficult translation problem in a film that had Italian, Spanish, French, and Naples (Napoli) dialect, in which some of the characters didn't understand each other. In this case, as in a few others, he had to explain things to the audience

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[1] See Razlogova 2012. For additional perspective on live interpretation, see Nornes 2007.

somehow, to add in little explanations by prefaced by "Dear Audience...". Sometimes, Giovani explained, he would depart significantly from the text of the film, drawing attention to himself as translator. For example, during a stretch of dialogue, he managed to have one actor inquire about the score of a soccer game in progress, and to have the other actor provide an update. The audience applauded.

Presently in Tbilisi, the audience is no longer applauding. Such skillful live-interpretation is gone from film showings in Tbilisi. Now foreign film showings occur with imported soundtracks, the bulk of which are in Russian. Rustaveli/Amirani, which controls a vast majority of the film-showing market, uses the company Bravo Studios for all of their film dubbing and sound engineering concerns. Rustaveli/Amirani shows Hollywood films, along with European imports and locally produced Georgian films. Bravo's position intermediary in the market as dubbing is a relatively new one. When I conducted fieldwork from 2011-2012, Bravo had only been operational in this capacity for two years. They are one of a few fully equipped sound studios in Tbilisi, and at that time were still negotiating the terms of acquiring a Dolby license. Yet with a relatively new law on film showings, which requires that all films have either Georgian dubbing or subtitling, their work has become increasingly essential. The contribution of Bravo Studios to contemporary film dubbing in Georgia has not yet stabilized in seamless, successful practices. A sound engineer at Bravo optimistically forecasted that everything should run smoothly in about three years time.

This chapter describes the social and political forces that have contributed to the construction of a new Georgian filming dubbing industry for an audience that largely does not want it. Taking subtitling and dubbing as contested terrains is a way to look at

the broader context of how film participates in the public linguistic life of Russian and Georgian in Tbilisi, I illuminate the social terrain in which audiovisual translation exists and functions as artistic and technical labor. Rather than focusing on the challenges in rendering the content and context of foreign films through translation, I describe the institutions, practices, and ideologies about language that undergird translation as a social practice.[2]

"Why can't you translate like the Russians?"

In early May 2012, Rustaveli/Amirani movie theater reported on its Facebook page that they would no longer be showing films in Russian. Despite this announcement, and the law enacted on Jan 1st, 2011, mandating that all foreign language films possess either Georgian dubbing or subtitling, Rustaveli/Amirani continued to show films in Russian for a variety of practical reasons.[3] This public announcement was followed by heated commentary, which encapsulates many of the dimensions of the debate about Russian language in film showings in Georgia. Beyond questions of the alignment of politics and linguistic code, the emerging concern about dubbing and subtitling in

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[2] Dubbing has been characterized as "an ontological crisis for cinema, marking as it does the fault line between the medium's absolute mobility (as image, as goods) and its attachment to residual representational forms - in particular language, with its own powerful agenda and resistant history"(Durovicova, 2003).
[3] Film dubbing is considerably more expensive, time-consuming, and difficult than film subtitling. Rustaveli/Amirani, in response to the market, and based on its own research, has categorically avoided showing subtitled films. One of the most significant reasons that subtitling is unpopular is historical. Foreign films during the Soviet period largely came through Moscow or St. Petersburg, and in doing so, were imprinted with Russian language dubbing. This became the predominant form of foreign film commodity available in Georgia. Russian dubbing was renowned for being high quality. Foreign films in Georgia –especially those originating in the United States– continue to move through distribution channels that carry them through Russia, as Georgia is within a geographical area for which Russia is a center of distribution, and it is a periphery to that center.

Georgian centers on the perceived quality of the translated product. In this particular comment thread, Rustaveli/Amirani is at pains to convince patrons that the *done* (level) of translation and dubbing into Georgian has improved. But what do patrons and producers mean by "quality" in the case of an audio-visual translation product? Drawing from interviews, social media, and survey-based research done by the CRRC, statements about translation quality are ways of describing the relationships among languages, and the aspirations, abilities, aptitudes, and sociotechnical scopes habitually linked to them. Statements about language and quality are mediating forces in shaping reception of transnational artistic and entertainment film commodities.

The relationship between the film consumer and the original foreign product is mediated by language (original, dubbed, or subtitled), along with attitudes about what role language should serve as a mediating element. Translation in this context is considered both a necessity and an art. Discussions of quality take this into account, as one's position towards subtitling and dubbing is a statement about how necessity and art *should be* configured in film language for foreign audiences. Concern about "quality" voices preference for the kind of relationship among languages that should obtain in a translated film, of how an ideal product should look and sound.

Rustaveli/Amirani Movie Theaters
May 2

რუსთაველი / ამირანი / აპოლო ბათუმი

ფილმები მხოლოდ ქართულად, ან ორიგინალში ქართული სუბტიტრებით.

რუსულად ჩვენთან ფილმები აღარ გადის (კანონით გვეკრძალება)

Figure 9 : "Rustaveli / Amirani /Apollo Batumi"

"Films only in Georgian, or in the original with Georgian subtitles.

Films in Russian will no longer be shown at our place (prohibited by law)"

The comments in this thread begin with a murky understanding of the mandate that required this action, before swerving into the simmering political side of the film language issue by reading into the intentions of the lawmakers, and generally expressing opinions about what sort of language should be used for films in Georgia. The discussion of film dubbing is subsumed under the rubric of quality. Rustaveli/Amirani insists that dubbing quality has improved, though they have so far been hard-pressed to support this claim, since those chiming in on the thread (and on other film postings) complain extensively about Georgian dubbing, and cite examples of sub-par versions. In one comment response, Rustaveli/Amirani implores customers, "Georgian translation has improved, see the new films and be assured of it!"[4] This is then challenged by the next

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[4] All Georgian translations within this chapter are my own, except where otherwise noted. I will include the original Georgian in footnotes. In an effort to render the act of translation visible (inspired, in part, by Venuti 2008 and Nornes 1999), I have included

comment, by a patron named Ucha, who says, "What has improved, give me a break...it

is better to watch those translations on MUTE.. :|".[5] Rather than ignoring this detractor,

Rustaveli/Amirani replies with a lengthy explanation, which contains this explanation,

"[...] the film's Georgian mix is done in Moscow, in Studio Pitagor and the final Georgian

version is put together in London in Universal Studios. So, this is that film's sound will

be like technical, as well as from an artistic perspective very close to the ideal."[6] What is

interesting in this explanation is that to assert the quality of Georgian dubbing,

Rustaveli/Amirani invokes geographic points (Moscow and London) linked to "quality."

The film product, then, carries the imprint of the Georgian language, but must cycle again

through locations associated with professional quality before returning to Tbilisi for its

quality to be assured. The veneer of quality must been re-placed on the film after

receiving Georgian language dubbing. This happens through a physical channeling of the

film through Moscow and London. Further, Rustaveli/Amirani is at pains to assert a dual

sense of quality - technical (*t'eknik'uri*) and also artistic (*mkhat'vruli*).

Yet the interaction between Rustaveli/Amirani and the dissatisfied patron does not

end there. Rustaveli/Amirani inquires what the last film was that Ucha saw, to which he

replies "Hunger Games". Rustaveli/Amirani replies in this fashion: "Hunger Games was

terrible, about that it is hard to disagree. But recent films that have been done are

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the original Georgian comments in footnotes. This first comment reads: "*kartuli targmani gaumjobesda, nakhet akhali pilmebi da darts'mundebit amashi!"*
[5] "*ra gaumjobesda k'argi ra.. jobia MUTE ze uq'uro eget targmnils.. :|"* Note that Ucha's response uses the Georgian font except for the English word MUTE, which indexes the remote control button he suggests would best be pressed while viewing these translations. Ucha says "MUTE *ze"*, combining the English "MUTE" with the Georgian postposition -*ze*, which means "on."
[6] "*[...] pilmis kartuli miksi k'etdeba mosk'ovshi, st'udia pitagorshi da sabolo kartuli versiis ats'qoba khdeba londonshi universalis st'udiashi. ase, rom pilmis gakhmovaneba ikneba rogorts t'eknik'uri, aseve mkhat'vruli tvasazrisit dzalian akhlos idealurtan."*

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considerably better, aside from Georgian no other languages are heard and no 'sounds' are lost."[7] This response concedes that Ucha's complaint is legitimate, and acknowledges technical ways in which dubbing can be considered low quality (too many languages co-present and overlapping in the sound track, and lack of original non-dialogue sounds in the final product). This is then followed-up by another commenter, who inquires: ("Why can't you translate like the Russians?"[8] Rustaveli/Amirani later composes a longer response, trying to convince patrons of its central tenet: "Our dubbing quality has improved,"[9] but comment reactions indicate that customers remain skeptical. Rustaveli/Amirani's rhetorical strategy of admitting that very recent releases were poorly done[10], while admirable for acknowledging their limitations, seemed to do little to assure customers that any substantial change had taken place. Those commenters who suggested leaving films in the original language, or in Russian, were told that this was no longer possible due to the recent law on film showings.

In this particular thread, Rustaveli/Amirani and the commenting patrons discursively link quality of dubbing to Moscow, and secondarily to London. Moscow functions as an icon of quality (*khariskhi*) in dubbing, as there is a widespread belief in

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[7] "*shimshilis tamashebi sashineleba iq'o, amashi dznelia ar dagetankhmot. magram bolo pilmebi rats gak'etda, aris gatsilebit uk'etesad gak'etebuli, kartulis garda artserti skhva ena ar ismis da arts 'shumebi' dak'argula"* Note the use of the word *shumebi*. This is the Russian word *shum* (noise) with the Georgian suffix for pluralization of nouns, *-ebi*.

[8] *"rusebivit rato ver targmnit?"* Note the clipped, conversational tone in which the final -*m* is dropped from *ratom* ("why").

[9] *"chveni gakhmovanebi khariskhi gaumjobesda"* Here *chveni* ("our") refers to Rustaveli/Amirani's film showing practices, but as they are a virtual monopoly in the market, may also be read as indexical of Georgian film showings more generally. In other words, *chveni* may stand for either the business collective or the national unit.

[10] See, for example, Rustaveli/Amirani's hopeful assurance: *"*It is possible that it was terrible, but really it no longer is." ("*sashineleba sheidzleba iq'o, magram namdvilad aghar aris."*)

Tbilisi that Russian dubbing is of extremely high quality. Yet Russian is exactly the film language in Georgia that must be avoided, the very reason that the law on film showings was enacted. So Russian figures here not primarily as a code, or even as a geographic place despite its links to the film distribution process, but as assurance of film-code quality. The widespread belief that Soviet-era and post-Soviet Russian dubbing are expertly executed co-exists with remembrances of shoddy, pirated films with memorably bad dubbing done by two voices, one of which had a disagreeable nasal timbre. Nostalgia is attached to remembrances of these two Russian film-dubbers who seem to have thorough made their way into the collective memory since official channels of film distribution were either incapable of providing the breadth of new releases in a timely or affordable fashion, so alternative methods were utilized. This is to say that not all Russian dubbing was high quality, though it was widespread. The legacy of Soviet dubbing is largely positive appraised by those in the film dubbing business, such as the important business *kartuli k'ino*, despite the fact that Russian dubbing was not entirely high-quality. There is an irony here at that Russian dubbing in the late Soviet period is regarded as demonstrating exquisite artistic and technical quality, despite the fact that regular consumers and those involved with the film industry immediately recall shoddy pirated Russian versions of foreign films.

Reading is Terribly Uncomfortable: Against Subtitles

When I asked if Rustaveli/Amirani was fined, and if so, for what, Mr. A., a manager, acknowledged that the movie theater was fined for showing films in Russian. Without a follow-up question, he then began to explain why Russian films continued to

be shown, his answer neatly positing three dimensions: 1. economics[11], 2. difficulty of translation (to Georgian)[12], and 3. preference/habit for Russian[13]. All three of these factors are intimately related, as I will explore further in this chapter by discussing how the dubbing industry in Georgian currently stands in both historical and legal perspective.

Mr. A. described the problem with subtitles by explaining that there are two types of people: those who can read quickly, and those who cannot. Subtitles, then, are an impossible challenge to those who are inherently slow readers. What he posited as general problem of reading subtitles and paying attention to the film itself is made more acute for those who are slow readers. [14] Describing the way that one's attention is split between reading subtitles and following the moving picture, Mr. A. categorized the whole physical process this way: "it is terribly uncomfortable."[15] The movie-watching process, then, is conceptualized as one in which patrons ideally are in a state of passive reception, not coerced into the active discomfort of reading.[16]

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[11] "*kharjebis shemtsirebisatvis*" ("for the reduction of costs")

[12] "*pilmebi dzalian dzneli satargmnia*" ("films are really hard to translate")

[13] "*gverchivna rom gvechvenebina rusulad*" ("we preferred that we showed in Russian")

[14] "*isini vints sts'rapad ver kitkhuloben mattvis prost'a azri ara akvs subt'it'rebs*" ("Those who are unable to read quickly, for them subtitles just have no point"). Note the use of the Russian word *prosto* (just, simply).

[15] "*sashinelad arak'omport'uli aris*"

[16] Rationalizations for preferring dubbing call up the typical complaints about subtitling, such as lamenting the aesthetic results of text-on-image and the practical difficulties of simultaneously reading and watching a film. Yet some explanations run deeper, describing more widespread "Georgian" preferences. For example, a member of the Georgian National Film Center (GNFC) told me that he thought subtitles were unpopular in Georgia because reading itself is unpopular ("We don't like to read"). He commented that when you walk around in the streets in Georgia, you don't see people reading newspapers or magazines, unlike in Turkey, he said, where everyone is reading. His explanation is that that reading itself (not words mixed with pictures) is the unappealing thing for a Georgian audience is interesting. Unlike Mr. A.'s claims about the terrible discomfort of reading and watching simultaneously, this GNFC member asserted that reading alone is enough to make this task unpopular.

Within the format of subtitling, there is no way to dispense with the displeasure of reading. However, in order to circumvent the problem of split-attention (focusing on the film and subtitles simultaneously), Mr. A described a pair of special glasses that they witnessed at a display fare in Las Vegas two years earlier. According to Mr. A., with these glasses, one doesn't need to adjust the focus when moving one's eyes from picture to subtitles. Essentially these glasses are created to mediate the gap between picture and subtitles, by reducing the amount of work needed from the human eye. Mr. A. describes this as making the process of watching a film *upro mart'ivi* (more simple). This technology, according to Mr. A., has not yet been made fully effective. It is interesting that this kind of mediating technology would be of interest, even as an aside, in a conversation about subtitling practices in Georgia. When I investigated the concept of subtitling glasses further, I discovered that the only product on the market was in fact geared towards hearing impaired moviegoers, and projects subtitles onto special glasses for films that otherwise do not have them. Thus, Mr. A's description of the special subtitle glasses was either for a product that has not yet been released in any capacity, or was a misunderstanding of the function of the recently created Sony Entertainment Access Glasses. In either case, it is significant that Mr. A. regards subtitles and picture as not properly integrated for *mart'ivi* (simple) viewing.[17]

Showing Russian dubbed films based on the three factors (economics, Georgian language translation difficulty, and preference for Russian language in films) must be

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[17] Setting viewer preferences aside, there is no evidence that reading subtitles requires burdensome information processing allocations. According to Koolstra et al. (2002), Gielen (1998) has demonstrated in an eye-tracking study that viewers use a strategy of looking just above the subtitled text during a film viewing in order to process the image and text together continuously. This study showed that viewers processed subtitles efficiently.

reconciled with top-down policy that seeks to remove Russian language from public demonstration. As we will see in the remainder of this chapter, this top-down policy does not address the three factors Mr. A. identifies as the reason that Russian showings continue. Instead, it is constructed as a mandate that seeks to create a new linguistic and social milieu (for film showings and beyond, into the ways that Georgia finds its place in the world) by creating new kinds of subjectivities, instead of dealing with economics, practicalities, or preferences head on. One dimension of this is President Saakashvili's promotion of film subtitling.

"Vaccinate them on Western Mentality": Subtitling or Dubbing?

In April 2010, in a so-called *k'atsuri saubari* (man-to-man discussion), President Saakashvili explained his plan to promote English-language competence in Georgia. Saakashvili stated that he "[wants] to transform our society into the European standards, we should 'vaccinate' them on Western mentality".[18] The metaphor of vaccination is a telling choice: vaccines provide immunity against disease. Against what malady must Georgian society prepare itself? The malady of entropy, of missing out on "progress" measured against European standards, or worse, of stumbling "backwards" in the direction of Russia. Georgian society is cast an organism at risk of falling ill if it is not injected with the proper "Western" attitudes or ways of thinking. The notion that Georgianness itself is vulnerable if not strengthened in some fashion underpins the way that Georgian language, as a key element in the construction of Georgianness, is

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[18] http://www.president.gov.ge/en/Georgia/GeorgiainWorldMedia/?p=6876&i=1
Governmental translation, accessed 6/12/2013

configured as always in dynamic, balanced interplay with the "international," "modern,"

tongues of elsewhere.

Aside from the ambitious Teach and Learn Georgian (TLG) program, which

Saakashvili claimed would eventually bring 10,000 native English speakers to Georgia[19],

another method to administer this 'vaccine' on Western thought[20] is by exposure to

foreign languages through film. Saakashvili explained that "We say no to direct dubbing -

we release films only in the original language with Georgian subtitles, so that people get

used to the sound of a foreign language" (my translation).[21] Saakashvili's strategy of

eliminating film dubbing in favor of subtitling faced a number of challenges and

detractors. For example, Gia Chanturia, Director General, Georgian Public Broadcasting,

while speaking at the March 14, 2011 sitting of the GPB Board of Trustees, stated that

"The moment a subtitled movie starts our rating immediately drops since the viewers

switch to foreign, and mainly Russian channels."[22] Subtitling was extremely unpopular,

especially in television format.[23]

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[19] "Recently we have brought 3 000 young teachers from America, Australia, New Zealand, Australia. They will teach not only in the cities, but in villages as well - in every single school (we have exactly 3 000 schools and have exactly 3 000 teachers). We intend to increase this number to 4 000 next year and to 10 000 in future. This means that we will have about two or three volunteers at each school. In about five or six years everybody in Georgia will speak English."
http://www.president.gov.ge/en/Georgia/GeorgiainWorldMedia/?p=6876&i=1
Governmental translation, accessed 6/12/2013

[20] "*dasavlur azrovnebaze 'avtsrat'*"

[21] "[...] *p'irdap'ir dublirebaze uars vambobt - pilmebs chventan mkholod original enaze daushveben kartuli subt'it'rebit, rata khalkhi ubralod sheechvios utskho enis zhgheradobas*."
http://www.president.gov.ge/ge/Georgia/GeorgiainWorldMedia/?p=6876&i=1 accessed 6/12/2013

[22] http://www.media.ge/en/portal/news/40562/ accessed 6/12/13

[23] In social media, there was some blowback to the promotion of subtitles in Georgia, including a Facebook page called "Down with subtitled films" ("*dzirs pilmebi*

Saakashvili's hope that Georgian society would grow accustomed to the sound of foreign speech was couched as a way that English language could be passively acquired. The majority of moviegoers in Tbilisi are under the age of 18, the age demographic within Georgian society possessing the lowest Russian language competence. Since films are shown in Russian, this is a way that passive Russian competence is cultivated and maintained. Yet this competence does not emerge in a vacuum– those who understand and speak Russian typically have a family member with whom they interact in Russian, a source for Russian language discussions, reading materials, and so forth. Saakashvili understands the power of the media, and passive exposure to foreign languages. Yet Saakashvili overestimates the didactic capacity of subtitling and underestimates the frustration and intolerance most Georgians report for reading them.

The goal of having Georgians learn English is to participate in what Saakashvili terms the *tanamedrove msoplio* ("contemporary world").[24] English language use is taken by Saakashvili to be a sign of internationalism, particularly indexing European-ness (for the 19th roots of aspirational European-ness in Georgia, see Paul Manning 2012). Saakashvili advocates the idea that Georgia as a nation can become more European by moving towards having English as its primary lingua franca. Saakashvili combats Russian presence in Georgia, in part, by focusing on language, rather than the business and social dimensions that have made this arrangement possible and successful. The state

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subt'i'trebit"), and another page called "Remove subtitles from Georgian television", ("*moashoret subt'it'rebi kartuli t'elearkhebidan*") (which had 3,575 friends in mid-2012).
[24] "Some people may learn our language, but they are very few. So, it is necessary to become a part of the modern world, integrate in it... We equipped every child with a computer, but what will the result be if they don't know any other language besides Georgian?" Governmental translation, accessed 6/13/13: http://www.president.gov.ge/en/Georgia/GeorgiainWorldMedia/?p=6876&i=1

of affairs that has led to Hollywood films being shown exclusively in Russian in Georgia's movie theaters is unaddressed– Hollywood film distribution, for example, remains firmly routed through Russia.

In Saakashvili's policy moves, language emerges as a peculiar kind of infrastructure. Secondary national languages, for Saakashvili, are simultaneously deeply rooted indications of one's ability to participate in modernity as well as easily changeable surfaces that can be effaced and rewritten within half a decade. It is this built-in contradiction in the way that Saakashvili views secondary national languages – as both essential embodiments of culture, and easily mutable–that has resulted in the ineffective legislation intended to push Russian language out of movie theaters in Georgia. This legislation lacks accommodations for the cultural and economic situation that it portends, and instead aims at modifying language practices without the provisions for changing the infrastructure that created them and made them economically and socially viable.

The overriding orientation towards the desired outcome of becoming more "European," fails to clearly define what elements of "European"-ness are sought, and how they realistically can be achieved. Though understandings of "Europe" as a geographic designation may vary, many of the countries of Western Europe rely primarily on dubbing, not subtitling, for foreign film showings (Whitman 1992). This selective understanding of "European" practices is at the center of Saakashvili's policy suggestion. This is because "Europe" or the "West" is an ideological construction, and not a geographical or political one (see Coronil 1996). The ideological construction of the "contemporary world" as "Western" and "European" attainable through English-language

competence keys into a host of other concerns about the instability of Georgia and Georgianness.

Scales of Inferiority

Transnational power relations undergird the development of translation practices, protocols for linguistic transfer, and the movement of cinematic commodities as material and social products. As Natasa Durovicová puts it, the "challenge of translation evolved almost immediately into a gearbox of power through which cinematic flows were regulated, and legitimized"(Durovicová 2010: 94). Russian practices and material products continue to imprint, overshadow, and structure contemporary Georgian practices. Most significantly, Russian dubbing is ideologically linked to "quality." Ironically, even in recent legal measures targeted at removing Russian presence in film language, Russian technical and artistic expression remains the rubric against which Georgian dubbing is compared. Skillful live interpretation, embodied in the kind of practices I've described with respect to Giovani's former métier, also participate in the social valuation of film dubbing as a union of artistic and technical domains. We must approach film dubbing and its layers of mediation through technologies, labor, and infrastructure rather than strictly through the frame of languages-in-contact. The so-called cultural turn in translation studies must be twisted further until we have driven through to the plane of infrastructure where human laborers assemble "quality." Infrastructural changes and constraints have positioned film dubbing and subtitling in Tbilisi as a domain that has been in tacit or explicit relation to Russian code and voicing practices.

Russian film dubbing has played a role in constructing a standard for film translation quality within Georgia, as well for contributing to the specific cultural and

historical factors in Tbilisi that have led to widespread disdain for subtitling on the one hand, and doubt about the worth of Georgian dubbing on the other. Dubbing quality is structured not only by objective measures (such as referential correspondence, audibility of sound track, and so forth) but also by historically and socially contingent understandings of what "good" dubbed films sound and look like. Dubbing quality is both a practical and aesthetic evaluative measure without universal metrics. In conversations with filmgoers and those involved in dubbing and subtitling, a frequent lament was that the "art" of dubbing is absent in Georgia. Soviet forms, which continue to permeate the Georgian social world, have structured expectations about "quality" or "art" in dubbing. Additionally, evaluations of dubbing as a form of linguistic mediation describe Georgian language as in a relationship of inferiority with respect to Russian, which has long been linked to high-culture forms of sociotechnical mediation.

In describing how broken and crappy material goods– and discourses about them– abound in Moscow, Alaina Lemon points out that the attribution of crappiness no longer falls on a system (socialism), but on a people (Russians) (Lemon 2009:203). Lemon discusses how evaluations of "quality" are emplotted against Western goods, which largely are seen as better. This relational concept of "quality" resonates with the hierarchical arrangement observed by Mathjis Pelksmans. In Western Georgia, the hierarchy of value for foreign goods is articulated in such a way that European goods are above Russian, which are above Turkish (Pelksmans 2006:188). Martin Frederiksen observes analogous consumer practices in Tbilisi, noting that his interlocutor Manana was "caught between the unattainable and the inferior"(Frederiksen 2012:131).

Films are a peculiar kind of material good, in that they both possess inherent qualities and represent material conditions in visual form. Palimpsests of "quality" emerge, in which unions or disjunctures among the modalities of communication (channel, content, or poetic functions) can complicate notions of where "quality" is.[25] Quality comparisons only tell part of the story. As Lemon emphasizes in her account, "people engage with broken material things in ways that exceed considerations of comparative 'quality'"(Lemon 2009:204). First, it is worth noting that "quality" is an inherently relational concept, whether it refers to material attributes or, in the case of film dubbing, to a representation that is reckoned as approaching some kind of ideal. Second, in the case of film dubbing, quality does not entrap one between unattainability and inferiority, but rather between scales of inferiority – the original, unmediated film is the unattainable, and all versions are therefore approximations, expressing degrees of inferiority. What matters, then are the values by which "quality" comes to be assessed– that is, how the material attributes (or in the case of film dubbing, the qualities of correspondence and voice) assert notions of "quality." Film dubbing enables us to approach the nexus of socially-constructed and inherently present attributes linked to "quality" in a way that destabilizes the need for a real, authentic, or attainable state. Instead, we can see "quality" as a set of material and immaterial constraints, expectations, and accommodations emerging, in this case, from historical and material circumstances. This further disrupts the notion that "quality" emanates from the "West" by emphasizing

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[25] Think for example of how one might apprise "quality" in a pirated VCR taped version of Rambo, dubbed in a single male voice in Russian. Such an artifact indexes "Westernness" (in content) as well as "Sovietness" (in form) in a fashion that blurs the neatness of singular emanation and "quality."

how Russian dubbing practices sculpt the rubric of "quality," even as they are imprinted upon Hollywood films.

No Single Strategy for Film Translation?

In Georgia, film dubbing was primarily state-sponsored during the Soviet era. Now film dubbing is a private industry, with the exception of state-linked groups such as Georgian Public Broadcasting (GPB). A tender process decides the issue of which institutions dub products for television. GPB awards contracts to independent private studios on the basis of announced tenders (contracts are normally for the period of one year) and those studios do all the language-related tasks, including translation and dubbing, and then providing the ready-to-air material to the GPB. The tender process is multi-staged, and requires interested parties to submit examples of their work, which is appraised by foreign language experts.[26] Each television channel handles dubbing and subtitling independently, and those I contacted were reticent to respond to questions about how specifics were handled. I received the most detailed information from former translators who had worked for television channels, but it should be noted that this perspective necessarily excludes organizational and institutional dimensions of the practice of translation for television. Nevertheless, it is valuable in understanding, even in a preliminary fashion, how film dubbing and subtitling in Tbilisi works.

kartuli pilmi k'inostudio is one of the most famous film and sound studios in Tbilisi, though currently it is largely non-operational. A manager, Mr. L., emphasized

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[26] To give a sense of the monetary investment in translation made by the GPB alone, the budget for 2010 allocated 246.5 thousand GEL (roughly $150,000) and the 2011 budget allocated 187.4 GEL (roughly $113,000) for translating and dubbing. GPB year-end summaries, including finances, are available online at http://www.gpb.ge/Reports.aspx?Location=&LangID=1 , accessed 11/7/13

numerous times during an interview I conducted at the studio that voice recording and

dubbing for films was an art that is no longer practiced. Mr. L. described the present state

of Georgian dubbing as a "morass." His view of why subtitling is unpopular in Georgia

was grounded in a historical narrative: he argues that, historically, as film quality began

to improve, subtitling remained the same, and the dissonance between the two levels of

quality was what caused people to dislike subtitling. He believes that consumers prefer

high quality dubbing as it matched the high quality picture. Subtitling, in his view, was

unchanging and therefore out of sync with newer, high quality visuals.

One of the repeated views from actors knowledgeable about the contemporary

and historical practice of film translation in Georgia is that translators make use of their

own resources to solve the problems posed by a given film. There was no system of

Georgian translation during the Soviet period, or universal principles followed by

translators then or now. This isn't to say that translators are unaware of the difficulty or

significance of the task; rather, there was simply no centralized set of instructions or

guidelines to which all translators attended. Schools of translations existed in the Soviet

Union, such as the Kashkin School, established in the 1930s and emphasizing realism in

translation, particularly stressing the links between social realism and the translation

process.[27] Yet in speaking to translators active in contemporary Georgia, ideological

considerations are not forefront in terms of the practice of translation. Rather, translators,

a group that is overwhelming composed of women, describe translation primarily as a

way to make money, and as such, they seek to work as efficiently and accurately as

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[27] Samantha Sherry, personal correspondence, 11/13/11

possible. With this in mind, translators often rely on unexpected resources, such as scripts in Russian for English-language films.

According to one translator, Ms. N., it is "easier" to use the Russian film script for an English language film than the English language film script, especially for colloquial, slang, and conversational phrases. To explain this, she commented that, "everyone knows Russian." Note that this differs from the normal sentiment that "no one knows Russian" (anymore, or well enough) which one encounters in everyday interactions, official rhetoric, and in survey data (see discussions of Russian language competence in Chapter 2 for more on these ideologies). Ms. N. says that she consulted with the Russian translations while translating English language films, and would find the scripts (more accurately, the Russian subtitles) online. The Internet has become a powerful tool in how translators in Georgia do their work. According to Ms. N., who has done film translations for TV channels Sakartvelo and Imedi, there is a pool of translators for each station, and for an assignment a translator is given a few days to complete the task. In contrast to Ms. N., who received the visual materials from which she made her translation, another translator commented that she was simply given a written script to translate, and was then allowed to watch the content only within the TV facility itself. This was because releasing films to translators was considered a risk of piracy. She stopped working for that institution because she was too poorly paid for the amount of work required.

Piracy of content is a major concern. Additionally, there is a widespread perception that Russian pirated versions of films are ubiquitous in Georgia, even

(allegedly) appearing on television.[28] My research with Rustaveli/Amirani and Bravo

Studios indicates that these organizations are interested in combating piracy, as it

damages the value of their products obtained through legal channels. Yet the attendant

issue of film scripts and their provenance remains cloudy. Opinions varied about whether

scripts were included with films, and if so, if they (for American films) came from the US

(in English) or from Russia (in Russian). [29] My goal of finding neat and organized

channels from by which films and film scripts travel was unfulfilled, likely because such

channels are dependent on the practices of film distribution groups, and are not so neatly

organized. Additionally, translators refer to or supplement their English-to-Georgian

versions by accessing downloadable Russian film subtitles. One begins to see the

translation industry not as a sharp machine, but as a sort of necessary distributed

apparatus supported by ad hoc processes and skilled, poorly remunerated, and easily

replaced female laborers.

A Return to the Art of Dubbing?

For non-Russian peoples living on the territory of the former Soviet Union, the

Russian language has long been cast as a window to Europe and beyond. Through the

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[28] During the Soviet period, there were two Russians who were well known for making dubbed versions of films (for video, the pirated material that then went abroad). One had a terrible, nasal voice, and would read entire films in this voice. They dubbed both male and female voices with unaltered sameness. Everyone seems to remember these two Russians, though no one could recall their names. These two voices are recalled with nostalgia as representative of an era of lack.

[29] According to several informants, for feature films a so-called "creative letter" is included with the film that indicates the type and quality of the voice appropriate for casting the voice actors for each character. There is a database of voice actors from which the sound director selects. These voice actors must also undergo some kind of audition to ensure that they fit the character in the film. My requests to observe this process, or to see the contents of a creative letter remain unfulfilled.

Russian language, the explanation goes, one may contact the world at large. Russian

linguistic code is a means by which to extend outward from one's local situation in order

to participate in forms of modernity happening elsewhere. Feature films, made available

through Russian language, have been one particularly significant commodity associated

with expressing and transmitting values. During the Soviet period, films served as

cultural commodities that revealed the forms and contents of capitalist elsewheres. Films

exposed both the real (albeit fictionalized) material circumstances of life, along

subjective interiorities – hopes, dreams, fears, and discontents– linked to those

circumstances. Films and their contents did not arrive to Soviet publics without forms of

mediation, censure, or accommodation.[30] One particularly significant layer of mediation

for bringing films to audiences who do not know the original languages is dubbing,

which not only translates code, but also encodes sets of decisions about what aspects of

the original are essential to re-present – which is to say, which components of the

indexical order must be translated or re-ordered in the dubbed version. The imprint of

Russian has endured in Tbilisi in channels of film distribution, as well as ideologies about

what "good" or "quality" dubbing sounds like.

Films as artistic, cultural, and economic products are useful for thinking through

the ways that Russian language itself became positioned as a medium through which to

experience forms of modernity emanating from the "West." The process by which foreign

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[30] In the Soviet Union, the content of films was, at various points, mediated, either
through selective transference, such as favoring certain actors, genres, or styles, or
through censorship, by which ideological orientations were included in the presentation
of foreign films. For an overview of Soviet film until 1953, see Peter Kenez, *Cinema and
Soviet Society: From the Revolution to the Death of Stalin* (2001). For a more general
view of censorship and cultural life in the Soviet Union, see the collected volume
Marianna Tax Choldin and Maurice Friedberg, eds., *The Red Pencil: Artists, Scholars,
and Censors in the USSR* (1989).

films arrive to Russian-speaking audiences contains many layers of mediation, both in terms of material commodity chains, as well as linguistic accommodations, including dubbing and subtitling. Establishing connections between Russian linguistic code and forms of modernity was accomplished, in part, through institutional practices. Dubbing is an institutional practice that balances necessity and artistry. Films bundle material and immaterial forms in a fashion that makes them both mediums and contents for foreignness, at several scales. Taking a recent law about film language, and the debates it has spawned, we can open up the way that Russian as a lingua franca has taken on a host of values that continue to inform the way it functions in contemporary Tbilisi. In turn, this demonstrates the values associated with Georgian as a state and national language as they unfold in relation to Russian.

Theoretical Approaches to Dubbing and Subtitling: Authentic Representations

The scholarly literature on dubbing and subtitling varies considerably in terms of practical and theoretical engagement. One central trend in treatments of dubbing and subtitling has been a focus on the possibilities and limits that these modes of translation impose on the transference of referential content and meaning. Audiovisual translation (AVT) theory, which can be considered a subset of translation theory, has been influential in making sense of dubbing and subtitling. Approaches within AVT chiefly account for the practical and theoretical challenges that are medium-specific– translation issues as configured by channel or modality. By this, I mean that audiovisual translation borrows from (and contributes to) more general concerns in translation theory concerning the problematics of representation, transference, and mediation of linguistic forms across

linguistic and cultural systems.[31] Within this general framework, approaches range from those that deal with specific cases of dubbing or subtitling, emphasizing challenges and solutions (see, for example, Caron 2003) to those that deal with audiovisual translation in the abstract by situating it within large-scale formations like globalization– as drawing out, resolving, or amplifying a local-global tension (Mazzarella 2004), or as a metaphor for a kind of social relation obtained through this tension (Boellstoff 2003).

There is a strong trend to conceptualize dubbing and subtitling as competing forms with inherent limitations and advantages.[32] Koolstra et al. (2002) point out that dubbing techniques or strategies vary by country.[33] Naming countries as "dubbing" or "subtitling" is common, and preferences and attitudes are reflective of what mode of translation has become the norm for a given country (Koolstra et al. 2002; Luyken et al. 1991). Preferences for dubbing in the Georgian case, therefore, are based on the dominant mode (dubbing) imprinted as normative from the Soviet period. Discussion of the links between dubbing and subtitling, geography, and demographic trends creeps into the

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[31] For an overview of translation theory in historical context, see Venuti 2008; 2012. For approaches to translation more directly in conversation with linguistic anthropology, see Rubel and Rosman 2003 and Silverstein 2003.

[32] This has contributed to a literature about the psychological effects and consequences of each, specifically on issues of attention and comprehension (for example, see Wissmath et al. 2009; Yetka 2010). Another thread within dubbing and subtitling literature has been to approach the problems posed by particular forms of talk (independent of, but reflected in, a specific language) that pose particular issues for audiovisual translation (for example, see Antonini 2005 on humor). This quick glance at the kinds of approaches to subtitling and dubbing is by no means exhaustive (for more references, start with the edited volumes Gambier and Gottlieb, eds. 2001; Orero 2004) but instead are intended to show the spectrum of ways that dubbing and subtitling have been approached as possessing and reflecting aesthetic, technical, psychological, and cultural concerns.

[33] For example, in Germany there is a greater effort to match the dubbing text to the lip-movements of the speaker than in Italy (based on Luyken et. al 1991). This is termed the "lip synchronicity" problem, for which solutions vary considerably (Koolstra et al. 2002:338).

literature on audiovisual translation in a variety of ways beyond the scope of this chapter. It is worth bearing in mind that attributions of Euro-normative modernity inform Saakashvili's stance towards increased subtitling as a positive re-orientation of Georgia's film showing industry.

Overall, much of the scholarly literature on dubbing and subtitling has focused on problems familiar in translation studies that examine the transfer of denotational meaning. Secondarily, the transfer of other functions of language, or sign systems of various scale (including non-denotational dimensions, often referred to as cultural context) are treated as extra, problematic layers atop the more basic problem of rendering denotational meaning. AVT is an arena in which the classic concerns of translation – treason[34], remainders, accommodations, and the limitations of transfer – become more acute as the "text" incorporates multimodal dimensions. There is much to be said about the complex considerations and negotiations inherent in the process of rendering content, and, with it, enough of the co-textual surround to make "text" interpretable in the target language. Adding to that, I reorient the discussion to begin to account for the sociolinguistic world within which dubbing and subtitling function, by attending to the role of institutional positioning and public reaction. This is a move towards reckoning the social infrastructure within which dubbing and subtitling function. The contribution of this chapter on dubbing and subtitling is to foreground the social life of dubbing and subtitling as contested elements of public linguistic life, linked to valued media forms. In the Tbilisi case, this requires assessing dominant ideologies about what dubbing and

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[34] For an excellent discussion of the concept of "treason" in translation, see the first chapter of Gregory Rabassa's memoir, *If This Be Treason: Translation and Its Dyscontents* (2005).

subtitling can accomplish, and how these ideologies articulate with ideas about the capacities and limits of languages within the Georgian context.

Conclusion

The birth of a new Georgian film dubbing industry and the commentaries on foreign-film language preferences that have encircled it are a way into broader concerns about the relationship between Georgia and Georgianness with different kinds of foreignness. In particular, I have emphasized how evaluatory terms like "comfort" have come to be linked with certain practices (and languages) associated with attaining– or at least closely mimicking– a certain kind of Euro-normative version of modernity. Further, I have argued that in the Tbilisi case, dubbing participates in the construction of a scale of inferiority, in which the attainment of "quality" remains elusively out of reach in both artistic and technical dimensions.

In Giovani's first attempt at live translation (Fellini's film *Amarcord* (1973)), he couldn't keep up with the speed of the dialogue and fell silent. The audience began to shout in Russian *zvuk! zvuk!* ("sound! sound!"). They were appreciative of Giovani's mediation of the spoken soundtrack and his deviations from the denotational text, but were restless when he was silent as speech continued onscreen. In present-day Georgia, the audience has grown restless once again, this time with an as-yet unsatisfactory mode of linguistic accommodation that simultaneously attempts to live up to expectations of Russian language versions while effacing them. Forgiveness for Giovani, the lone human filter in the booth with the projector, has not extended to the new sociotechnical apparatus of film dubbing currently being constructed by Bravo Studios for Rustaveli/Amirani theater. Notions of inadequacy or inferiority of contemporary

Georgian dubbing practices inhere in the union of technical and artistic capacities that a specialized studio is understood to embody.

The labor of translation remains full of contradictions. It is hidden, gendered labor, yet subject to public scrutiny and spirited debate. It is simultaneously technical and artistic, two axes that are understood as at times divergent or contradictory. It accesses and assembles "foreignness" in film by degrees of domestication. Accommodations for linguistic mediation of films in Georgia are shifting, and are built upon infrastructural components and expectations fashioned during the Soviet era. Film dubbing concerns and their temporary resolutions reflect different ways of positioning Georgia and Georgianness in relation to ongoing negotiations about the place of Russian as linguistic and social code in Tbilisi.

In the next chapter, I will turn to another sociotechnical form – the telephone keypad – to make sense of why Russian numbers are used in preference to Georgian numbers when listing telephone numbers aloud. As in the case with film dubbing, language ideologies preferring Russian are cast in terms of the "quality" or "ease" that the linguistic code is thought to have in fitting with the constraints of the technical forms themselves. And as with film dubbing, Russian presence inheres in technical forms, with traces of hidden laborers linked to the Soviet past.

CHAPTER 5.

Hazardous Digits: Telephone Keypads and Russian Numbers

Near the end of the much-beloved Soviet film *Mimino* (1977), there is a memorable scene in which the protagonist, a Georgian airplane pilot, places a phone call from a payphone in Berlin. Mimino, played by actor Vakhtang Kikabidze, attempts to make a phone call to a town in Georgia called Telavi. The telephone operator instead connects him to Tel Aviv, Israel. Coincidentally, a Georgian in Tel Aviv answers the phone. It quickly becomes clear to Mimino that he has not reached Telavi, but his interlocutor in Tel Aviv urges him to stay on the line. Mimino's telephonic interlocutor is eager to learn if a new bridge has been built yet in Kutaisi, and then implores Mimino to sing together the widely known Georgian folk song "*zhuzhuna tsvima movida.*" They sing, and Mimino's unknown compatriot begins to weep, nostalgic for Georgia. One of the top youtube comments on the Mosfilm official channel, where the film can be viewed in full, remarks in Russian: **"***Ia plachu kazhdyi raz kogda smotriu kak on v Tel'-aviv zvonit"* ("I cry every time when I see how he calls Tel-Aviv"). In this humorous and moving scene, human warmth is paired with the fragility of socialist-era communicative infrastructure channels.

An accidental telephonic connection resulting in a fleeting emotional encounter between two Georgians beyond the borders of Georgia is a commentary on Georgianness

and nostalgia. But at a more basic level, this strange serendipity is a consequence of a telephone misdial: a chance human mistake in the use of a communicative technology. In this scene, it is not Mimino who has misdialed, but the telephone operator who misheard "Telavi" as "Tel Aviv." The normally undesirable outcome of misrecording, miskeying, or mishearing a phone number is transformed into a moment of connection.

The role of the telephone operator has receded in contemporary Georgia, yet certain telephone communicative practices endure because of technological and human infrastructural expectations. In this chapter, I examine how and why Russian remains the preferred linguistic code in which to communicate telephone numbers in contemporary Tbilisi.

Unlike in *Mimino*, telephone misconnections and misdials are now largely attributed to user error rather than operator failure. Wrong numbers are typically regarded as hazardous frustrations to be avoided if at all possible. For this reason, one must exercise care to record new acquaintances' phone numbers correctly, to double check the sequence of digits by reading it back, and to accurately key in numbers so that future phone calls go through. At its most extreme, a miskeyed phone number can mean the loss of a contact, a failure to connect. This chapter takes as its focus phone number exchange in contemporary Tbilisi, Georgia. Before telephone connection can be made, phone numbers must be exchanged, verified, and saved. This happens in a manner understood as emphasizing clarity and ease above all else.

Mobile telephone number dictation is a domain in contemporary Tbilisi in which Russian numbers are highly preferred over Georgian numbers. Because of its ubiquity in urban life, mobile telephone number dictation is a compelling speech genre in which

routinized patterns crosscut ethnicity, class, gender, and age categories. Additionally, number dictation is a task-directed linguistic act that is structured primarily by the technological parameters of the mobile phone itself. Mobile phone number dictation requires inscription without literacy or computation, two tasks heavily associated with numbers and technology. In terms of language attitudes, preference for Russian numbers is typically rationalized with a narrative about "ease" or "simplicity." Why is a secondary, often non-native language preferred for this task over a primary, native language? To make sense of this, we need to account for the intersection among ideologies of number, sociotechnical forms, and Russian as a language of modernity.

Telephone Number Dictation in Georgian

Russian, like English, uses a base-ten (decimal) numerical system. In both systems, the numbers from 11-19 are formed in a special manner, by adding a suffix (-teen in English, -*nadtsat'* in Russian) to whatever single digit form occupies the ones' place, with phonetic or spelling modifications. To form the numbers from 11-19, Georgian uses a circumfix *t–met'i* to the same effect, with a few phonetic changes. Georgian, however, uses a base-twenty (vigesimal) number system for numerals 30 to 99, whereas Russian and English use a decimal system. Essentially, numbers from 30-100 are reckoned in multiples of twenty, to which the remainder (1-19) is added. So, 85 is reckoned as *otkhmotsdakhuti* (lit., "four twenties and five").

Mobile telephone numbers in Tbilisi are dictated as three single digits, followed by three double-digits. For example, my telephone number is dictated as 5-9-9-54-98-45, where the dashes separate the numbers. I will use my telephone number as an example since it contains the sort of two-digit numbers that are considered by informants to be

potentially confusing for listeners. Many informants say that it is *upro advili* (easier) to list the double-digit numbers in Russian so that the listener doesn't press the wrong number on the telephone. For example, one may prematurely press a "4" when the number turns out to be "55," which is spoken as (lit.) "two twenties plus fifteen." In an essay about the history of the Georgian language, George Hewitt noticed this preference for Russian numbers in the context of telephone numbers, and adopted the dominant narrative of his informants to explain it: that using Russian, a decimal system, is done in order to "avoid any momentary confusion"(Hewitt, 1985:172).[1] Let us take a closer look at this explanation and its implications.

The most common explanation for preferring Russian numbers in telephone number dictation is that Georgian numbers potentially cause confusion for the listener, possibly resulting in a miskey. For example, in my phone number (599-54-98-45), for the number "54" there is a risk that the listener will key "4" when I say "*ormots...*" ("two twenties..."), not waiting for the completion of the number "*ormotsdatotkhmet'i*" ("two twenties and fourteen"), which requires that the first keyed number be "5". The figure of the potentially misunderstanding listener is widespread as a rationale for preferring base-ten numbers. During my fieldwork, no one ever suggested that a miskeying listener was impatient or inattentive for keying a number before it had been fully uttered. As a foreign, non-native speaker, I encountered this miskey problem only once: when I paused

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[11] As Hewitt explains: "Another occasion when pure Russian is favoured at the expense of the vernacular is in the communication of figures, especially telephone-numbers and, almost without exception, in requests for cash on the part of sales-staff. The reason for this seems to be a practical one: Georgian's system of counting is vigesimal [...] so, in order to avoid any momentary confusion (sc. after hearing a multiple of 29, one does not automatically anticipate a figure other than one beginning with 2, 4, 6 or 8), there seems to be a universal preference for the use of Russian with its decimal system"(Hewitt 1985:172).

an unnaturally long time mid-number while dictating my number to a friend with whom I planned to go on a hunting trip. I was aware that my halting foreign language production was not to be trusted as a window into this phenomenon, so I listened to native Georgian speakers dictate and record phone numbers to each other over the course of a year. I was puzzled that normal, native-speed fluent production of numbers could be considered a hazard for listeners. Dictating phone numbers in Georgian was rare. Although I heard people repeat numbers for clarity, I never witnessed a miskeying issue based on the use of Georgian. Russian numbers solve this perceived problem of decimal-keypad congruence, at least for those who know Russian numbers.

Commanding the Russian numbers does not require fluency in Russian. Additionally, Russian number use is common in other contexts in Tbilisi life, such as in shops or at the marketplace, particularly where the sellers are non-Georgian. For example, Martin Frederiksen noted that during the August 2008 war with Russia, "in the bazaars the price of 2 1/2 was still given as *dva naxevar* ('*dva*' being Russian and '*naxevar*' Georgian)"(Frederiksen, 2012: 133). In situations of inter-ethnic contact in Georgian, the common language historically and presently is Russian. Pro-English and pro-"Western" trends in Georgia are unlikely to alter this strong trend. Because of this, in the setting of the *bazroba* (market), one hears Russian language used as a medium of communication in transactions. Likewise, purchasing telephone numbers at the market occurs in Russian, even if the sellers are Georgian. Sellers assume that Russian numbers are intelligible to customers. Russian number use is reinforced in a fashion that positions the number as linguistically marginal, yet central to certain forms of exchange.

The enduring presence of Russian in Tbilisi assumes many forms that are not seen as direct indexes of the Soviet past, even if such forms exist because of historical circumstance. Just as backgammon players in Tbilisi name dice rolls and keep score in Persian, the boundaries of the use of Russian delimit and define its force as an often-unanalyzed fact of certain activities in Georgian life, established by ideological regimes of the past that have become anchored to certain technical practices. The historical and social values connected to Russian are crucial contingencies for understanding the particularities of contemporary practice. Russian language was bound up in the Soviet ideology of internationalization and modernization, which is one of many social valences shot through contemporary use. The connection between Russian and telephonic communication endures, even as the technical forms and speech actors involved have shifted.

Technology and Number

As mobile phones become increasingly widespread as both mediums of interaction and objects of discussion, a host of academic approaches to their social significance has developed. Among these has been an attempt to grasp the social significance of cell phones as engendering new forms of "mediated" communication (which includes phone, email, internet, and satellite modalities) in opposition to face-to-face interaction (also called "conventional" or "traditional" communication) (Axel 2006; Cook 2004; Ito 2005a, 2005b; Escobar 1994). Cell phones have emerged as a site of anthropological interest, including their capacity to strengthen or reconfigure social networks (Goggin 2006; Goggin and Hjorth 2009; Horst and Miller 2006). Cell phone communication, including specialized codes connected to SMS or text-talk, has become a

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site of interest for understanding language and sociality (Blommaert and Velghe, 2014).

Berger and Luckmann have called knowledge about telephone use and conventions

"recipe knowledge," since it is so pragmatic and limited in scope (Berger and Luckmann

1966: 42). One portion of the social life of cell phone use that bears further analysis is the

exchange of numbers, usually face-to-face in culturally specific ways as a means of

ensuring later contact via cell phone. I label this interactive genre "phone number

dictation," to emphasize the oral dimension of this speech practice. An ideological

preference for Russian code as the normative method of giving and receiving telephone

numbers in Tbilisi is a product of both the inherent constraints of the telephone keypad as

well as the socially constructed associations with Russian as a lingua franca proper for

technical communication.

Technical and scientific domains are ideologically positioned as maximally

distant from human-ness, even as they fully derive from and define spaces, actors, and

interactions. As Madeleine Akrich elegantly states, "Science is taken to go beyond the

social world to a reality unfettered by human contingency"(Akrich 1992:205). Numbers

comprise one of the codes of this socially unfettered domain. Numbers are ideologically

constructed as belonging to a neutral, apolitical, and universal domain implicitly linked to

technology and futurity. David Samuels has discussed common features in the ways that

the communicative possibilities afforded extraterrestrials have been imagined, in science

fiction and elsewhere. Samuels points out that ambiguity in communication is treated as a

central human problem, and consequently that communicative transparency emerges as

the "clearest marker of technological or cultural superiority"(Samuels 2005: 104). To

achieve communicative transparency, one resorts to math, the "common tongue of all

problem-solving species"(Samuels 2005: 111). Math is expressed, in part, through numbers. Nikola Tesla, for example, stated in 1923 that he believed Martians would use numbers for communication because numbers are "universal"(Samuels 2005: 109). Numbers are conceptualized as a medium for universal and logical communication, disarticulated from the social and emotional entanglements of the human. Yet as I demonstrate in this chapter, not all modes of naming numbers are the same. The linguistic representation of number varies significantly, and acquires different social values. Georgian numbers, for example, are viewed as a hazard for communicative transparency, whereas Russian numbers are considered less ambiguous and "easier" for transmission in talk. I explore the contours of this ideology in detail below.

Technological interfaces, such as user-input configurations, cause notions about what is "easy" or "natural" to appear as objective, self-evident qualities expressed by the technology itself. The link between numbers and technology naturalizes assessments of "ease" in number use, even though technologies must be constructed to accommodate different number systems, just as they must handle different language scripts. The default telephone keypad arrangement has the consequence of constructing a representation of number systems based on the decimal system. Telephone keypads have built in the affordance for base-10 counting systems, which has been carried over into mobile phone practices. As Ian Hutchby points out, "affordances constrain the ways that [technologies] can be read"(Hutchby 2001: 21).[2] I discuss the oral exchange of mobile phone numbers,

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[2] For the concept of affordances, see Gibson 1977, 1979; as well as Costall 1995; Ingold 2000; as well as Knappett 2004 for ways that affordances have been theorized in the social sciences.

though landline number dictation holds the same pattern.[3] The keypad, with its arrangement of digits, is identical for landline and mobile phones, and forms the central focus of the discussion of technological affordances in this chapter.[4] The technological interface establishes both the possible kind of informational input that users provide to technologies, and the way in which that information is formatted. In turn, this has consequences for how the ideal compatibilities with technological systems are construed, as I will show in the case of Tbilisian preference for Russian numbers.[5]

We must take seriously technological interfaces – that is, the interactive displays, menus, or outward components of technical devices, intended to manage input and output with human users– as sculpting perceptions and preferences for the fit between the technological and linguistic forms. Rather than seeing technologies as the cause of some kind of macro-level social change, I point to the ways that the technological interface regiments expectations for the relationship between human language and technology.[6] By

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[3] The choice to focus on mobile phones is based on their increased prevalence and significance in contemporary life in Georgia and elsewhere. However, it should be noted that the practice of listing phone numbers in Russian applies equally to all telephone number dictation. Landlines continue to actively function in the Georgian context, and are favored for economic reasons when interlocutors call from home.

[4] For an interesting set of explanations about why the telephone and calculator number pads are arranged differently, see http://www.vcalc.net/Keyboard.htm accessed 11/9/2013

[5] The issue of how technical interfaces encode and express social values in creating standardized material regimes has been the focus of productive scholarly inquiry. Consider, for example, Paul A. David's discussion of the QWERTY keyboard (1985), as well as the cases presented in Lampland, M. and Star, S.L., (Eds.) (2008).

[6] Scholarly engagements with the relationship between technology and social change have varied. Among others, Langdon Winner (1986) and Leo Marx (2010) have pushed back against the move in popular and scholarly writing that describes technology as a catchall force for social change. Marx argues that scholars are responsible for exposing the hazards of viewing technology writ large as *the* agent of social change. Winner counters the related claim that certain technological forms inherently promote or arise out

shifting the focus to the interface with technological forms, we observe the emergence of a certain kind of relationship among technologies and language practices, made to seem natural by the parameters of the technological interface itself. Technological interfaces leave their mark upon socially grounded linguistic practices. The cell phone number pad generates expectations about what "ease" in language use means, and this in turn comes to be seen as an integral, immutable component of the cell phone itself.

The ideological status of numbers as outside of the "core" of a language treats them as shifting easily across borders, infiltrating communicative practice but remaining somehow outside of interpretive modes. Numbers preserve a veneer of neutrality or purity, as if they were divorced from the indexical entanglements, political valences, and contested histories that characterize other aspects of language. Their close attachment to computational tasks and technologies links them to narratives of efficiency, progress, and modernity. Yet even among number systems, qualifications for which systems are "more" modern, progressive, or efficient are established through links to ideological regimes of utopian or modernist social projects, such as state socialism. This linkage lives on, a ghostly vestige of modernities past, present in practices and habits, and rationalized with narratives of "ease."

I invite us to reconsider the way that "complexity" configures understandings of language diversity, both for linguists and language users. The notion that number systems have intrinsic "ease" or "difficulty" is interesting from both a historical linguistic standpoint, as well as factors in language production and processing for users. The concept of "ease" pervades informants' descriptions of linguistic practice, as well as

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of social formations. Such a claim stated most strongly by Lewis Mumford (1964) who argues that technologies are agents for an expression of democratic organization.

linguists' rubrics of cross-linguistic comparison. In order to make sense of informants' evaluative comments about "ease" of Russian over Georgian, I approach them as a reflection on the force of habit in communicative expectations. "Complexity" is a contested analytic in linguistics, at times reflecting the same tacit assumptions that structure its use in folk understandings of language. In both cases, "ease" must be understood as a relational concept, in which beliefs are encoded about what constitutes the normative standards against which given languages, language-subsets, or linguistic tokens are compared.

Why study numerals?

For certain interactions, such as those that require extensive use of numbers, a specialized code (including a "foreign" language) can come to be the normative cultural modality. The use of Russian numbers in mobile phone number dictation has come to constitute a normative Georgian method, and therefore cannot be taken as a sign of cultural shift or transition. This is not a case of one language losing ground to another, in terms of having functions overtaken by foreign influence. I wish to problematize the notion that language use necessarily means acculturation, shift, or the adoption of new values. This is not to say that the use of a particular linguistic code was not initially or ongoingly motivated by social or political values. Rather, once in place as the normative practice, such social values become sedimented and are therefore not unstable, shifting, or transitory. The change, as it were, has already happened, and become sedimented in interactive patterns and expectations.[7]

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[7] For other uses of sedimentation as a metaphor for the accrual of linguistic (or social) practices, see Alfred Schutz (1970). Also, compare Uriel Weinreich's fascinating

One example of reading patterned switches in code as a sign of cultural change is found in Thomas Crump's discussion of Spanish and Tzotzil. He explains that, "No part of speech is more susceptible to linguistic borrowing and cultural diffusion than numerals"(Crump 1990: 34). In trade interactions, Crump interprets numerals as the primary vocabulary, and as part of a sort of outer edge of language most susceptible to borrowing. The example Crump cites in support of his claim is from a shopkeeper-customer interaction that involved monetary exchange, and in which "all the prices were stated in Spanish; the actual quantity [of good], however was stated in Tzotzil"(Crump 1978: 508). Language preference in this setting is cleaved according to exchange-value (Spanish) and use-value (Tzotzil). Crump understands this as "one part of language in a state of transition," and notes that "if Tzotzil is to lose ground to Spanish, the numbers must go first"(Crump 1978: 508). Crump interprets the mixing of Spanish and Tzotzil as a sign of acculturation and shift, presumably because a move to Spanish is registered in other contexts as well. In this account, numbers are the barometer of a broader kind of language shift. Yet mixing, particularly of number systems, can be a fixed, stable, and normative practice, rather than a sign of fragility and transition.[8]

In this approach, numbers are conceptualized as the "edge" of the lexicon, and as such are viewed as transferable, portable, and neutral, in contrast to "core" parts of the

formulation that "In speech, interference is like sand carried by a stream; in language, it is the sedimented sand deposited on the bottom of a lake"(Weinreich 1964 [1953]: 11).

[8] Another interesting example of numerical system change within a market setting is that of the Iqwaye counting system, which Jadran Mimica describes in this fashion: "The currency counting follows the traditional system, but the units are based on the decimal numerical series [...] the crucial structural relation of equivalence – that is, identity between the body and its digits – has been changed since the money denominations are grounded in an independent decimal numerical system"(Mimica 1988: 166-167). As in the case of Tzotzil and Spanish, Iqwaye counting practices have been imprinted by exchange-value, in this case, from linguistic parameters of the currency denominations.

language. This ideology of number – as part of a neutral, apolitical edge– is pervasive. The notion that there is an essential core of a language is prevalent in the literature about linguistic contact as well as in folk notions about what constitutes the structure of a language. Numbers, in both cases, are treated as a distant edge of the lexicon. It is crucial to ground numbers in actual use, rather than treating them as vulnerable abstractions. To do so, taking specialized types of interaction heavy with number use (such as the shopkeeper-customer interaction above) is the proper focus. Specialized tasks, such as number dictation, do not necessarily render this part of the lexicon susceptible or vulnerable to shift. The use of Russian numerals, for example, has become normative in Georgian practice. In this case, the term code switching does not appropriately apply, as the use of Russian numerals is fully part of a Georgian way of giving phone numbers.

To put Crump's comments about numbers as "most susceptible" components of a language in a contact situation in context, it is worth briefly reviewing approaches in linguistics that have sought to describe language mixture and susceptibility. W.D. Whitney's "On Mixture in Language"(1881) is an early attempt to describe the possibilities and parameters or mixture and transference in languages. Whitney, and later scholars influenced by his work, segregates grammar from other domains of language. He asserts that of the elements of speech, "the grammatical apparatus merely resists intrusion most successfully, in virtue of its being the least material and the most formal part of language. In a scale of constantly increasing difficulty, it occupies the central place"(Whitney 1881:14). Much debate concerns what features, structures, or elements can be transferred between languages. Discussion of transference is often phrased in terms of susceptibility, ease, or permeability. Thomason and Kaufman address

hierarchies, typologies, and predictability of contact language outcomes, contending that "any linguistic feature can be transferred from any language to any other language"(Thomason and Kaufman 1988: 14). They emphasize that instead of formal linguistic elements or patterns, "the sociolinguistic history of the speakers [...] is the primary determinant of the linguistic outcome of language contact"(Thomason and Kaufman 1988: 35). While language is always changing, it is meaningful to speak of outcomes that are durable or relatively widespread– telephone number dictation in Russian is one of those that have become normative and embedded into Tbilisi practice. Keeping the notion of susceptibility in focus, multiple co-existing numerical systems to which differences in transparency are ascribed demonstrate that in addition to sociolinguistic history of speakers, we must also include sociotechnical infrastructure and domains of use.

Numeral systems have a specialized status with respect to linguistic categorization and functional range. Taking Russian numerals as an example, Comrie notes that numerals "fall between" the prototypes of noun and adjective in terms of their properties (Comrie 1989: 107).[9] Aside from evading straightforward categorization according to linguistic category, multiple, non-overlapping numeral systems can be used for specialized functions. There are numerous documented cases of specialized counting systems, which exist alongside established numeral systems and are used for particular, socially significant counting tasks. One example is the North English "sheep-counting" numeral system, which Donald Anderson, using Bakhtin's concepts of minor and major chronotopes, describes as serving a specialized performative function (Anderson 2011).

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[9] For more on grammatical categorization of numerals in Slavonic, see Corbett (1978).

Further, numeral systems are inherently serial, and based on relational values. Carol Justus indicates in discussion of Indo-European that numerals were not based on abstractions, and that base is not the only consideration in thinking about the development of numeral systems.[10]

In some respects, telephone numbers function as address-like labels, indicating one's fixed location like a set of non-geographic coordinates. In this capacity as a label or name, one's identity becomes linked to a chain of numerals. Yet unlike an address, phone numbers are not understood as indicating scale or proximity, though certain numerical patterns can indicate geographic location or service provider. In Georgia, as elsewhere, one selects the service provider as well as the number itself. Cell phone numbers are not assigned without the volition of the recipient, though the field of possible cell phone numbers is not completely open. In the market, one observes kiosks plastered with available phone numbers listed on printouts with hand-scrawled additions, and purchased numbers struck through with pen or marker. Considerations emerge, then, in the selection of phone numbers as they become part of the suite of one's personal identifying information. From my observation in Tbilisi, there are no universal qualities by which assessments of telephone numbers are made, though numbers were often informally evaluated as being "good." Personal considerations, such as favored numbers, and repetition of digits seem to be the standouts in terms of what motivates the choice of one

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[10] "Pre-decimal systems of counting, like traditional systems of weights and measures, were first based on rank-ordered, relational units. Digit number words *lethera* and *methera*, preserve pre-numerical linguistic forms for digits with meanings akin to English 'half again as much' and 'next to the last'. The Celtic data of *lethera* and *methera* thus give us precious evidence as to the early relational value that, not just bases, but also digits, must have originally had"(Justus 1999: 73).

cell phone number over others.[11] Recently in Georgia a representative from the opposition party *kartuli otsneba* (Georgian Dream) announced that the prefix "5" would be replaced by "8" since "8" is the election number of Georgian Dream, and "5" is the election number of the Georgian National Movement.[12] An election number is a number associated with a political party, and is used on voting ballots, for example, to select the party. Thus, the first number in a cell phone number sequence has been taken to have political significance, interpreted as having links to political parties. The Georgian Dream representative conceptualizes the use of "8" as a return to pre-Georgian National Movement ways.

What is a "numeral"?

In this chapter, when I discuss "numbers" I am referring exclusively to integers. Numbers (integers) are a special noun class in which the members are memorized as a sequence of conceptually equally-spaced, countable digits. Yet counting is not an equivalent task to the recall/recognition use of numbers in telephone number dictation, where numbers are divested of their character as sequenced number-line positions, and are used instead as memorized blocks, much like physical addresses that are simply chunks of identifying information. In this sense, cell phone numbers are used as labels or names whose other properties (such as computational features) are secondary, if considered at all.

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[11] Selection criteria vary by culture. For example, in Thailand, cell phone numbers with repeated "9"s are highly sought-after, commanding top prices in auctions where they are sold to affluent buyers. The luck or beauty of repeated "9"s is connected to the significance of the number "9" in Buddhist metaphysics.
[12] http://www.apsny.ge/2013/pol/1363316343.php accessed 14/3/2013

Bearing in mind that the central focus of this chapter is on the linguistic representation of number, let us take a step back for a moment to define the terms "number," "numeral," and "numerical," and "number words," as I have thusfar used them interchangeably. George Lakoff and Rafael Nuñez differentiate numbers and numerals in this fashion: "numbers [are] concepts, and numerals [are] written symbols for numbers"(Lakoff and Nuñez 2000: 83). In Lakoff and Nuñez's definition, numerals are a symbolization of numbers that must be learned. This basic division recalls Saussure's famous description of the sign as constituted by the dichotomy of signifier//signified, in which the signifier is the (arbitrary) form of a sign, and the signified is its abstract, conceptual meaning. Thus, in this view, "number" is the signified (e.g. thirteen-ness), and "numeral" is a *written* form of the number (e.g. 13). Lakoff and Nuñez continue by making a three-way distinction, which, in brief, can be summarized as: "[a] the number (e.g., thirteen) [b] the conceptual representation of the number [c] the numeral that symbolizes the number (e.g., 13)"(Lakoff and Nuñez 2000: 83). Thus, for Lakoff and Nuñez, "numeral" is strictly a written representation of the "number," and "number" is a concept. For Lakoff and Nuñez, "numeral system," refers specifically to the written system (think, for example, of the difference between Roman and Arabic numerals). To deal with the issues of differing non-numeral linguistic representations of numbers, Lakoff and Nuñez state that "[t]he decimal, binary, octal, and other base-defined notations are all built on various versions of the metaphor that numbers are sums of products of small numbers times power of some base"(Lakoff 2000: 83). As Lakoff and Nuñez's central focus in this text is to provide an account of the embodied basis of mathematical concepts, they do not elaborate on the many issues present with regard to

linguistic representations of numbers, or numerical systems in historical perspective or contact situations.

Without tarrying in the consequences of Lakoff and Nuñez's theoretical divisions, or offering a definitive take on "number" as a concept, in the short space allotted here I orient the discussion towards the linguistic representation of numbers. Zdenek Salzmann refers to the standardized linguistic representation of numbers as the "numerical system" (1950). Additionally, the term "numerical system" calls attention to the numbers as arranged in a series. Salzmann argues that there are "three general structural patterns which underlie and determine the divergent numerical systems"(Salzmann 1950: 80). These are "the *frame* pattern, (2) the *cyclic* pattern, and (3) the *operative* pattern," each of which can coexist in a given numerical system. *Cyclic* refers to "a succession of morphemes of groups of morphemes according to which the numerical system is analyzable in terms of one or more similar or regular sets of recurring morphemes or groups of morphemes"(Salzmann 1950: 80). The significant difference between Georgian and Russian is how the *cyclic* pattern functions, as Georgian uses a vigesimal system, with the *operative* pattern (in this case, addition) bound by the cycle. The purpose of discussing numerical systems in terms of frame, cycles, and operations is to make structural observations that are more broadly applicable than those possible with limited terms like "decimal" or "binary." However, for the sake of clarity and familiarity, I will continue to use terms like "decimal" and "vigesimal" here. I use "number system" and "numerical system" interchangeably. There is necessarily some ambiguity in the term "number," as it can refer to both the abstraction or "meaning" of a given number (e.g. thirteen-ness) as well as a particular instantiation in a word ("thirteen"). The focus for the

remainder of the paper will be on standardized linguistic representations of number and their social consequences.

Gendered Telephonic History

Historical and contemporary pragmatic precedents contribute to assessments of Russian as "easier" than Georgian for the purposes of mobile telephone dictation. The history of Russian language in Georgia, and particularly the use of Russian by telephone operators during the Soviet Union, has crystallized a form of politics in the expectations for how telephone number dictation should occur. Though the use of Russian numbers is not overtly political, the expectation that Russian numbers are appropriate and intelligible for any given interlocutor is a reflection of political conditions that routinized certain communicative practices, such as the use of Russian as a lingua franca. Such communicative expectations have been grafted onto the technology of the cell phone, which provides affordances and constraints that contribute to the enduring practice of Russian number preference.

The preference of Russian numbers in telephone number dictation has a historical explanation. According to my informants, women exclusively occupied the role of the *telefonistka* (telephone operator) – note the feminine gender on this term from Russian.[13] Telephone operators had something like a headquarters, which was called *telegrapis k'orp'usi* (telegraph building). They were only involved during corporate calls, for instance, if someone was to call the ministries or any other type of official/governmental institution, where calls are transferred to specific people. Employees of the Telegraph

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[13] See Lipartito 1994; Green 2001; and Martin 1991 for elaboration of the gendered dimension of the development of the telephone industry. See also Fischer 1988a, 1988b, 1992, and Frissen 1995 on gendered social dimensions in telephone use.

were Russian, Georgian, and Armenian, so they used both Russian and Georgian language. An informant worked in what is called today the "Georgian Railway," and apparently whenever they needed to get their calls transferred to other countries in the Soviet Union, there were telephone operators who performed these procedures, and did so mainly in Russian. Interestingly, this informant justified the use of Russian by explaining that back then the Georgian Railway had Russian owners, and may have even possibly been a governmental institution.

Telephone-based info-centers, which used and communicated news sources in Georgian, were another dimension of "official" telephone communication.[14] Their documentation (from newspapers and television) was often in Russian. Russian was habitually used at home and in other non-official capacities, which included listing numbers in Russian. Telephone operators' use of Russian-language in various capacities of labor and information dissemination made Russian language a strong force in this setting. An informant rationalized the continuation of the Russian number-listing practice as a form of ingrained habit, reminiscent of the "good times" during communism.

The association between Russian language use and the telephone as infrastructural channel endures, though the laboring actants have shifted from hidden female workers to the telephone keypad.[15] Bruno Latour has described this remapping of role as "delegation" to nonhuman actors, encouraging analytical focus on the "complete chain along which competences and actions are distributed"(Latour 1992: 243). In the case of

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[14] Info-call centers can be reached by dialing 09 or 08, though recently the regional codes have changed so these numbers will require a three-digit code beforehand. After calling the number, an operator is assigned who will answer any question, or will transfer the call. The charge for this service is nominal, but greater than a normal cell phone call.
[15] For discussion of labor, protocols, and hidden worker involved in "information internetworks," see Downey 2001.

telephone number dictation, the telephone keypad is a crucial link in the complete chain, through which action and ideology are channeled. A consequence of this delegation is that Russian code use, in this setting, is politically and morally neutral in its link to the infrastructure of phatic communicative technology.

Number Use Beyond Telephones

I became curious if the use of Russian numbers for reasons of "ease" was present in all settings, or if it was limited in scope to certain settings or kinds of speakers. I could not register a clean-cut match between a category like age, education level, or ethnicity and this linguistic behavior, though the more nebulous category of attitude towards Russian language use, which at times– but not uniformly– can be correlated to categories mentioned above. It is my goal here to focus on the practices themselves, and the settings in which they exist, rather than starting from social categories assumed to be determinant or predictive of behavior. I will introduce two examples in which number use is very common, and for which a kind of language selection and rationalization is at play. The first is at the National Weightlifting Federation of Georgia, where barbell weights are constantly named and discussed during training. The second is in mathematics departments, where numbers and their manipulations are a deliberate focus of activity.

In the context of the National Weightlifting Federation of Georgia, it is not uncommon for weights to be named in Russian. The eldest trainer, age 75, weaves Russian and Russian-isms into his Georgian speech constantly during training sessions. This is due in no small part to the deep influence of the Soviet training system and its vocabulary on the present-day Georgian system. Many of the young weightlifters, however, do not speak Russian, so learn and rehearse the numbers through this context.

This trainer exerts a strong influence on the way that his adolescent charges learn the sport of weightlifting and the discursive practices associated with it. Though other trainers use Russian less often – or mostly with Armenian, Ossertian, or other non-Georgian weightlifters – the daily presence of this elder trainer steeped in Soviet methods has profoundly shaped discursive practices in the training.[16]

One example of this influence on discursive practice came one day when I asked a rapidly improving teenage weightlifter from Svaneti (a mountainous region in Western Georgia) what his maximum squat was. He had just returned from several weeks at a training camp in Western Georgia. With pride in his squat record, but uncertainty in his pronunciation, he responded to my Georgian query in Russian: "*sem'desiat"* ("seventy"), he said, in a heavy Svan accent. I clarified in Georgian, the language we had henceforth used for all interactions: *"samotsdaati?"* ("seventy?") and he confirmed, repeating "*sem'desiat"* proudly. It was common for lifters to report numbers between 100 and 199 without indicating "one hundred..." (*"sto..."* Russian, or *"asi..."* Georgian). Weighing around 72kg at the time, and having trained only a year at the federation, a 170kg squat is impressive. He continued training in the small second training hall as his brother, a rugby player, threw a tennis ball against the wall in idle distraction. Russian and Georgian numbers were used interchangeably in reporting competition results, training tonnages, and other weightlifting-related numerals. The adoption of this fluidity of numeral-

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[16] A moment that neatly captures the unchanging fixity of this trainer's presence came on a summer day when we were the only two people in the training hall. A mailman arrived with a magazine and asked for identification in order to make the delivery. The trainer, seated barefoot on the wooden slatted bench that runs the length of the training hall along the windows, eyed the mailman in disbelief. He stated that he had no ID, but that he'd been in this training hall for decades. The mailman eventually relented and left the mail with the trainer.

language by the younger generation, even those like the young weightlifter from Svaneti who spoke no other Russian, indicates that Russian continues to have a hold in this context.[17]

Another context in which number use is very common is in mathematics departments. I spoke to a professor of mathematics, and inquired why people living in Tbilisi often switch to Russian when reporting phone numbers. He shrugged and responded that it was easier. Then I inquired if Russian numbers were preferred in mathematics lectures, or in mathematics discussions. He thought for a minute and responded that numbers were simply named in Georgian, and did not see any reason to prefer Russian in the context of mathematics. Intrigued, I returned to the notion of "ease" that supposedly motivated the use of Russian for phone numbers. What, exactly, made Russian "easier" for dictating phone numbers, but not for working as a professional mathematician? My informant reluctantly posited that Russian numbers were easier than Georgian numbers because they contained fewer syllables. Yet there are many cases of the use of loanwords from Russian than have more syllables than the Georgian equivalent, as well as Russian words that are significantly shorter but are not used in place of lengthy Georgian forms (such as *tost* (toast, Russian) and *sadghegrdzelo* (toast, Georgian)). We quickly dismissed the syllable-number as simplicity hypothesis, and my

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[17] A humorous number-related episode in this context involved a young weightlifter, regarded by many as a troublemaker and clown, who one day spontaneously sang a modified version of the Spanish-language song "*besame mucho"*. Not knowing Spanish, he replaced the word "*besame" "*kiss me" with the Georgian word "*mesame"* ("third"), and sang "*mesame mucho*" ("third *mucho*"). Since the meaning of the Spanish language original was not clear to him, the phonetic similarity between Spanish "*besame*" and Georgian "*mesame*" was enough. Other lifters laughed at him, and he took the joke one step further, keying in to the fact that "*mesame*" is an ordinal number, and sang "*otsdamekhute mucho* ("25th *mucho*").

informant let the topic drop as a phenomenon without a simple, generalizable explanatory principle. For dealing with numbers bare of infrastructural or technological holdings or connections, there is no reason to prefer Russian to Georgian.

Vigesimal Systems: Transparency and Hazard

The Georgian numeral system has been the focus of scrutiny long before mobile phones were a force in social life. The vigesimal system has been cast as an undesirable hazard, not only in Georgia, but in other language contexts. This has extended into policy discussion, especially with respect to the use of numbers in educational settings. Hewitt mentions that the Georgian counting system has been part of long-standing debate about language reform:

> Georgian, like most of the indigenous Caucasian languages, has a vigesimal system of counting (sc. from 30 to 99). In the 'Russian-Georgian Technical Dictionary' of 1920 it was formally proposed to introduce a decimal system for Georgian, and in their 'Dictionary of Mathematical Terms' (1925) Mushkhelishvili, Nik'oladze and Kharadze actually employed such a system from 30 to 99 (ibid. 135-6). In 1950 A. Shanidze, who had himself changed his mind on this issue, proposed to the Norms Commission of the time that they should officially change the counting system, but he was defeated. (Hewitt 1989: 133)

Such proposals for shifting to a decimal system, though they have not gained firm ground, are based in the notion that vigesimal systems are inherently more difficult or unwieldly.

Increased dominance of a decimal-based numeral system has been presented as a consequence of the spread of global capitalism. Decimal-based numeral system spread is treated with the same ambivalence about the loss of "tradition" and increased homogeneity, familar to the rhetoric of globalization. For example, Comrie argues that "in the modern world one basic system is rapidly taking over [...] This is the decimal

(base '10') system, with separate terms for 'one' to 'ten', and with multiplication by 'ten' and addition of the remainder for numbers from '11' to '99', although there may be some camouflage of the structure through irregular morphophonemics, portmanteau forms, and occasional expressions bearing witness to non-decimal systems"(Comrie 1999: 87). He ascribes this to a consequence of "culturally dominant" languages, and notes that it is contributing to a "rapid decline in the amount of variation attested across the numerals systems of the languages of the world"(Comrie 1999: 90). Brigitte Bauer (2001) details the emergence of the vigesimal system in Romance from what was originally a decimal system. Thus, a unidirectional movement towards decimal systems does not account for the appearance and enduring presence of vigesimals, or other counting systems. Comrie's account, focused as it is on issues of language endangerment and loss of diversity, overstates the movement towards decimals as an inexorable function of modernity. Yet the pressures to introduce and accomodate decimal systems should not be overlooked. These appear as both educational and technological compatibilities for which decimal systems are viewed as fundamentally advantageous.

One common motivation for changing numeral systems has to do with seeking transparency of numeral system for educational settings, in which non-decimal systems are viewed as an impediment for mathematics learning. For example, the notorious difficulty of the Danish numeral system led to "some Danish teachers have started telling the smallest school kids the number names in Swedish to make it easier for them to understand numbers" (Vinther 2011). Hurford reports a similar situation with respect to

Modern Welsh.[18] Certain number systems are seen as conferring advantage or generating disadvantage. This is especially important in the educational context. One of the most frequently referenced examples of this is the linguistic and social factors that may account for the substantial differences in the mathematical competence of North American and East Asian children which have been argued "reflect differences in the consistency and transparency of the linguistic representation of number as well as differences in parental beliefs and practices"(Miller et al. 2005: 176). This is based, in part, on the fact that English number names do not show a base-ten structure as consistently, transparently, or early as the Chinese number names, which leads to later acquisition and mastery of the base-ten structure for native English speakers (Miller et al. 2005: 170). The main concern in this study, and many of those which it cites, is to understand the effect of various linguistic system on the acquisition of mathematical competence. The practical aim is an improvement to pedagogy.[19]

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[18] "There is an interesting case of a whole numeral system invented all in one piece. Modern Welsh has abandoned the vigesimal system and adopted a wholly decimal system. I have not been able to discover the exact details, but from personal communications with Welsh speakers (mainly Gwen Awbery, curator of dialects at the Welsh Folk Museum, Cardiff, and John Phillips) it seems likely that the new decimal system was fairly deliberately devised specifically to facilitate arithmetic teaching in Welsh-language schools, as an alternative to the old vigesimal system which did not match up with the Arabic place-value notation" (Hurford 1987: 84).

[19] This is summarized with an elegant metaphor: "The coupling between concepts and ordinary language representations is, however, a loose and probabilistic one. As an analogy, consider a sidewalk that has a loose paving block [...] The linguistic representation of mathematical concepts in particular languages can present stumbling blocks for children, but ones that can be overcome with instruction aimed at making clear what language obscures"(Miller et al. 2005: 173).

Phone Number Dictation as a Speech Event

One interesting component of the phone-number dictation speech event is that the "ease" of Russian numerals instead of Georgian numerals is justified according to a listener-centric reckoning – a perception-based model of "ease" rather than one based on production. In essence, this is a folk version of what in language processing literature is referred to as "audience design" (Bell 1984; Clark and Murphy 1982; Kraljic and Brennan 2004). In this section I will bring the concept of "audience design" in dialogue with models of the speech event familiar in linguistic anthropology, with the goal of finding a common way of talking about speakers' intentions as a structuring component of the speech event. Phone number dictation, in this case, is a speech event in which audience perception is used to rationalize code choice. To work out the significance of this, I will work through Jakobson's concept of the "set towards" (*einstellung*), as it is helpful in understanding how multiple priorities in interaction can be ordered by speaker focus. Further, I invite an updated understanding of what an addressee or audience is by emphasizing they ways that non-human actors or speech actants, in Shunsuke Nozawa's sense (2013), not only influence or impinge or human interaction, but create constraints that reconfigure participant boundaries.

In his description of the speaking event, Jakobson elaborates on Saussure's famous speaker-addressee model (or "speaking-circuit"(Saussure 1966 [1916]: 11) by emphasizing that the "verbal structure of a message depends primarily on the predominant function" (Jakobson 1980 [1956]: 113) toward which the speaker and addressee orient during interaction. Part of Jakobson's purpose is to stress the significance of the non-referential, such as the poetic, phatic, and metalingual functions, excluded in

Saussure's model of interaction. In describing characters and characterization in Japanese society, Shunsuke Nozawa calls characters "speech actants," which he explains "constitute an interface of objects and spaces that relays signs between other semiotic actants"(Nozawa 2013: 6).[20] Nozawa sees characters as shape-shifting non-human entities participating in semiotic mediation. It is including speech actants into the classic speech circuit itself as fully-fledged interactional participants. Julia Elyachar, drawing together Malinowski and Karl Marx, has coined the term "phatic labor" to illuminate the production of "communicative channels that can potentially transmit not only language but also all kinds of semiotic meaning and economic value"(Elyachar 2010: 453). In the case I have described here, the telephone keypad calibrates and controls the phatic dimension of communication, participating in phatic labor as a speech actant.

Audience design posits that cues are produced for, or in reaction to, the perceived needs of the addressee (Kraljic and Brennan 2004). This has been taken as orientation for experiments in cognitive psychology as "[d]iscovering *if, when,* and *how* speakers take their addressees' needs into account during speaking carries implications for the architecture of the language processing system, its flexibility, and its adaptability to context"(Kraljic and Brennan 2004: 196). The theoretical move of *audience design* is a much-needed adjustment to models that conceptualize language processing as speaker-internal, monologic, a socially-autonomous system. Yet it has the danger of occluding the multiplicity of other orientations that comprise an interaction. *Audience design* fixates on one dimension of Jakobson's classic description of the functions of language, the so-

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[20] Nozawa states that the term "speech actant" remains to be theorized more fully. I leave that discussion aside for the moment, providing instead a tangible example of a speech actant that occupies the conceptual space that Nozawa has described.

called "set towards the addressee." *Audience design,* however, proposes a mechanism – attention – whereas Jakobson's model is silent on where the "set" originates or gains force (in speakers, listeners, linguistic forms, or some dialectical process among them). Thus, I contend that *audience design* revives an older concern in models of interaction by drawing dialogism into the experimental realm. This presents an opportunity to ground observations from linguistic anthropology about the irreducibly dialogic nature of certain linguistic practices in cognitive experimental modalities by working critically with attention as a variable structuring linguistic production and reception.

Hazardous Numbers

As I have indicated above, the use of Russian numerals instead of Georgian numerals in phone number dictation tasks is evaluated as a logical pursuit of "ease," or sometimes as an indicator of laziness. One argument that I have presented is that numerals are an "edge" of the lexicon that is not imbued with emotionally charged social or political evaluations - that numerals are viewed as "empty" and functional, from a (folk) semiotic perspective. The use of Russian numerals in telephone number dictation is ubiquitous and not attached to any particular social type in Tbilisi. Only one informant indicated any sort of negative judgment about the use of Russian numerals. A linguist from the State University, she told me that her colleagues often used Russian numerals in phone number dictation, and that they should "know better" than to do this. The implication was that educated people should be in control of their linguistic production, and the use of Russian was a sign of laziness. Yet this did not indicate any kind of social danger (Douglas 1966), as Russian numerals– in contrast to other Russian signs– have no negatively valorized social component. In other words, dictating phone numbers in

Russian was not a sign of misplaced allegiances, moral failings, or indications of some kind of group membership: it was simply viewed as laziness and the pervasive force of habit. That educated people *should* produce Georgian numbers can be read as a prescriptive position. However, this position is not widely held and the moral consequences in its violation are mild.

In this chapter I have argued that a confluence of historical precedents and technological factors have sedimented the practice of using Russian for telephone number dictation in Tbilisi. Speakers explain that using Russian for this specialized speech genre is "easier" than using Georgian. Those who acknowledge the formal differences between Russian and Georgian make the argument that vigesimal number systems are inherently more "complicated" than decimal number systems. I have demonstrated how practices associated with or heavily involved with numbers are construed as apolitical by their ideological links to technology as a non-human, neutral domain, but are nevertheless populated with political components, some of which are sediments of the past, others of which (such as the new campaign by the Georgian opposition to change the initial digit of the phone number back to "8" from "5") are connected to contemporary political interests. Further, I have described a shift or delegation of phatic labor from female telephonic operators during the time of the Soviet Union to present-day telephone keypads, and the attendant selective mapping of actions and assumptions about competences that have inhered in expectations for transmitting telephone numbers.

Seemingly neutral software and hardware are a way that normative patterns of language use are justified, naturalized, and replicated. Beyond cell phones, other communicatives technologies like voice recognition software, and interactive

voice/keypad systems (such as those used for ordering pharmaceuticals over the phone), also hold the potential to regiment and reify certain number dictation practices. In addition to encouraging the development of experimental approaches targeted at elaborating interactionally pertinent parameters undergirding speakers' assessments of difficulty, this inquiry also opens up discussion on how technological interfaces structure patterns in number system use. Number systems are linked to suites of ascribed qualities such as modernity, European-ness, progress, and simplicity. Such ascriptions of attributes bundle together and are naturalized as components of technologies themselves.

In the final chapter, I will discuss another bundling-together of attributes: skill, strength, and masculinity in the context of Olympic Weightlifting training in Tbilisi, Georgia at the National Federation. In this chapter, I investigate the ways that coach-trainee relationships are crafted through verbal instructions, admonitions, and advice that disciplines the barbell-human complex.

CHAPTER 6.

Skill and Masculinity in Olympic Weightlifting: Coaching Cues and Cultivated Craziness

By examining how athletes at the National Weightlifting Federation of Georgia (GEOWF) are trained by means of physical and verbal cues, I detail how skill, strength, and masculinity are intertwined in the cultivation of positively valorized qualities for weightlifters. The goal of cultivating desired psychological states is manifest as a key component of successful training. Such psychological states have significance in terms of their alignments with a type of masculinity that is naturalized as appropriate for channeling strength into successful weightlifting performance. I emphasize the role of language as a training instrument to properly understand the way that the trainer-athlete relationship structures both physical and psychological development. In this chapter, I piece together how skill, strength, and masculinity function within the training environment as cultivated, mutually-reinforcing attributes.

I argue that through the coaching cue *gizhi* (crazy), we can see the process of tempering masculinity by means of feminine-identified skill as a mode through which animal-like brutality is civilized in sport. Skill and strength are not oppositions, despite their respective links to the feminine/masculine and human/animal dichotomy, but instead are dual factors that must be combined for cultivation of the athlete. The interface

of skill and masculinity is the primary focus of Nancy Quam-Wickham's (1999) article, in which she describes how skill was the primary modality through which the masculine ideal in the extractive industries in the American West was developed, conveyed, and understood. In weightlifting, skill remains a marker of expertise as it does in the case of extraction workers in the American West. However, skill and expertise, expressed through physical practice is not rigidly assigned to masculinity. Instead, skill is marked off from strength and headstrong caprice – masculine qualities – and figures as a conduit through which masculine attributes can flow. Skill, therefore, is not as risk to the loss of masculinity, but as an opportunity for its expression and cultivation.

I begin by providing a description of Olympic weightlifting in context with other strength sports, in order to emphasize its particularities in light of common misconceptions about what "weightlifting" denotes and connotes, both in Georgia and in the United States. I provide a description of the physical and social world of GEOWF, and then move into the training hall itself, where athletes are crafted from an early age. I discuss the characteristics of training in order to single out the form and function of coaching cues in Olympic weightlifting training. By focusing on a single, common cue, *gizhi khar! (*you're crazy!), I describe the ways that masculine physical and psychological vigor are naturalized and promoted in embodied displays of strength within the parameters of sport.

Theoretical Perspectives on (Strength) Sport

Anthropology has offered multiple perspectives on the study of sport, many of which have taken sport as an arena in which broader concerns, such as vectors of race, class, gender, are magnified or temporarily suspended. Sport has also been presented as a

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venue to trouble the nature/culture dyad, which can be seen clearly in investigations of violence and aggression in sport (Atyeo 1979), gender in sport (see esp. Flintoff and Scraton 2002; Messner 1992, 2002; Messner and Sabo 1990; McKay et al. 2000), and performance enhancement (Yesalis 2000; Bell 2008). There is a divide in the literature in terms of the nuanced ways that ethnographies of sport (for example, Chambliss 1988; Dyck 2012; Wacquant 2004) treat their object, and the bodily-focused, bodybuilding-focused ways that strength sports have been represented, usually depicted as "subcultures" for which participants' involvement necessitates psychological rationales[1]. This is due to a number of factors, chief among them that bodybuilding is the most visible representation in the popular media and imagination of what it means to train with weights. As epitome or emblem of a sort of hypermasculinity, expressed by extreme muscular development and increased testosterone, bodybuilding has been treated as a domain in which gendered signs – expressed through individual bodies[2], and made significant in society's simultaneous fascination and repulsion to the pursuit of muscle – are expressed in and through certain modes of physicality and are then naturalized.

Much of the ethnographic material treating strength sport focuses on the visible musculature of bodybuilding that captivates the public and academics alike. Strength sport itself is relegated to the backstage. Alternatively, strength sports are tacitly viewed as boring, self-evident pursuits found in the traditionally male spaces of run-down, black-

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[1] In other words, many scholarly treatments of bodybuilding (standing in, wrongly for all strength sports) begin with the question: Why would someone choose to do this [to their body]?, a query absent from approaches to other sports. Pursued at the elite level, no sport is "healthy", but it is striking that the individual's motivation to engage in most sports seems self-evident, but must be somehow explained (usually with recourse to psychology) in the case of bodybuilding.
[2] See, for example, the collected volume *Building Bodies,* Pamela L. Moore, ed., 1997

iron gyms (for discussion of the gym as a gendered space, see Johansson 1996). Part of my goal here is to bring strength sports – training and objective displays of strength in sanctioned venues – into the discussion concerning sport and gender beyond a focus on the muscular body, to push aside the easily lambasted vanity of subjective aesthetic competition to view the ways that masculinity is inscribed not only on physical bodies, but as psychological states linked to linguistic and physical practices.

What is Weightlifting?

Weightlifting is a sport in which athletes lift maximal weights in two disciplines, the snatch and the clean and jerk. The goal of the sport is to post the greatest possible combined total in these two classic lifts in competition conditions. The snatch, performed standing with a wide grip, moves the barbell from the ground to overhead in a single swift motion, in which the lifter rapidly changes direction once the barbell reaches waist-height and squats beneath it with fully extended arms. The clean and jerk consists of two phases: the first is when a lifter takes the barbell with shoulder-distance grip from the ground to his shoulders (which, like the snatch, involves rapidly changing direction once the barbell reaches waist-height to squat beneath it before it crashes to the floor), and the second is to loft the barbell skyward from its position on the shoulders to fully locked out arms overhead, by either rapidly splitting the legs apart to lower the lifter, or dropping into a squat once again, and then standing up.

In competition, a lifter has three attempts in the snatch, and then three attempts in the clean and jerk. There is a great deal of strategy about attempt selection weights, as it is important to put pressure on opponents by forcing them to take an attempt beyond their abilities, or before they are ready. The main role of weightlifting coaches during

competitions is to monitor attempts to insure that their lifters are sufficiently prepared to put up the most competitive numbers possible. With the Russian-based training methodology, weightlifters rarely perform maximal lifts during training, usually training with percentages between 70% and 85% of maximum. The philosophy is that a lifter saves maximal efforts for competition, the only stage on which they matter. Because of this, the coach must monitor the lifter's training carefully to project what weights will be possible in competition. This includes both physical and psychological preparation, as maximal weights require maximal focus of both physical and mental reserves.

The Muscular Body

In contemporary Georgian Olympic weightlifting, the cultivation of strength is viewed as a masculine domain, whereas technique or skill development is associated with femininity. Both are required to create a champion. Training is about cultivating psychologies and bodies capable of performing under the pressure of competition conditions. Yet strength is a peculiar quality, in that it is manifest not only in muscular development, but consists to a large degree in neuromuscular efficiency, which does not have readily visible signs except in human movement. The development of a muscular physique, then, is an outward sign of masculinity, but not a sure sign of the more valued condition in Olympic weightlifting of possessing strength. Muscularity within the Georgian weightlifting context is never considered a liability, as it is an indication of the likelihood of possessing discipline and strength, though muscularity alone is not a sign of being a good weightlifter. Skill – as a medium through which masculine-identified strength is transmitted– is the essential attribute of the sportsman, but without strength, possessing technique is nothing more than the potential to train.

Though aesthetics are not a concern for weightlifters, training with heavy weights inevitably changes the appearance of one's body, and athletes were not blind to this. Former weightlifters periodically stopped by to lift weights recreationally, if space permitted, usually at the platform closest to the mirror in the corner. Following training, weightlifters often focused on higher-rep "bodybuilding"-style training. One of the trainers often said *k'argad ik'achaveb* (get a good pump) as encouragement to do a variety of non-compound exercises after the work of the day was complete. Lifters sometimes did mock-poses in front of the mirror, flexing their biceps or flaring their latissimi dorsi. Comments about appearance were not detailed, but gaining muscle was always treated as a positive thing. When one weightlifter returned from training camp after gaining seven kilograms, another weightlifter commented admiringly "*vaime, ramkhela*!" "wow, look how big! [lit: wow, what size!]". In the changing room weightlifters occasionally compared physiques, not in technical terms, but as a way to assert superiority over each other in some way: flexing side-to-side, mocking each other, and asking others to say who looked bigger.

Thus, the specter of bodybuilding, and particularly Arnold Schwarzenegger, is present even in an Olympic training hall in Tbilisi. The first time I met the Olympic champion Giorgi Asanidze, he commented that he had been to America to the Arnold Sports Festival, held in Columbus, Ohio. A recreational lifter who periodically worked out at the gym told me that he was a great admirer of Arnold, and had his books, posters, and movies. Voicing a common sentiment, he said that he preferred the classic physique that Arnold had to the super-muscular, less streamlined look of contemporary bodybuilders. One of the coaches, himself a former world-class lifter, frequently talked

with admiration about Jay Cutler. A competitive weightlifter spoke with envy about the massive size of another lifter's forearms. In one instance, a weightlifter was doing high-rep work in front of the mirror with great fervor and was told to stop - there was a competition coming up, and this energy and effort should be saved for the platform, not spent on aesthetics.

Though appearance is no indication of success, muscular physiques are admired and pursued–to an extent. All auxiliary training must support the primary goals of Olympic weightlifting training, and athletes are monitored with this in mind. If an athlete is exerting himself too much on "extra" work, he is told to stop. Extra technique work (say, with an empty bar in front of the mirror) is never discouraged, but excessive vanity work, such as biceps curls before a contest, is not tolerated. Muscles are a sign of dedication, but are no guarantee of performance. As such, they are treated as a positive quality, though not the most important one. The most important quality is skill, and it is inscribed equally in physicality and psychology.

Finding the Training Hall in Tbilisi

There is a network of sports buildings a few blocks from the now-closed Russian Embassy in Tbilisi, near where the road winds up away from Vake towards Bagebi and Tsqneti. Accessible through a lattice of alleys, in which sleeping dogs sprawl in the shadows of BMWs and ancient Ladas, each building houses a different sports federation: fencing, judo, wrestling, soccer, and track-and-field, and others. From Ch'avch'avadze Avenue, the main road through Vake, one is immediately greeted by the weathered façade of the Georgian State Academy of Physical Education and Sport, next to which is a replica of the classic statue of the Apollo Belvedere, his arm outstretched. His silver

patina has begun to chip and deteriorate in strips, and weeds have sprouted up from the graffiti-covered cement blocks on which he is perched. The buildings are distressed from decades of constant use that no measure of *remont* (renovation) can reverse. It is no accident that a symbol of the Greek aesthetic ideal adorns the Georgian State Academy of Physical Education and Sport[3], and it would be tempting to read into its disrepair a narrative about the slow contraction of a certain kind of Soviet-informed ideology of sport. Yet the incorporation of Soviet sports methodologies and ideologies is not so neat, nor has the influence of Soviet sports science dissipated from Georgia's sports.

Down a narrow alley, past the entrance to one of two indoor swimming pools, one then reaches a set of metal stairs next to a small soccer practice field covered in artificial turf. Flanking the near end of the field, protected by a fence and aged netting from errant soccer balls, is the entrance to the weightlifting hall, one of two locations in Tbilisi where weightlifters train. Athletes train every day except Sunday. It is an Olympic weightlifting hall with six platforms, two movable, rickety benches, two pairs of heavy metal-soldered freestanding squat stands, gymnastic stall-bars, and a very basic glute-ham developer, which I accidentally fell off on my first day at the gym after doing back extensions. The most important equipment– barbells and plates– are high quality, mostly Werksan brand, made in Turkey and precisely calibrated. Before one enters the main training hall, the sound of weights being loaded on and off barbells, and dropped from overhead at completion of the lifts, echo off the concrete walls. The door to the training hall remains closed, sealing off this world of strength training from outsiders, as well as from the

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[3] "Bolshevik and especially Stalinist culture rejected and ridiculed religious conceptions of the ascetic body and tried to revive the heroic image of the Greek athlete"(Levent 2004:51).

perceived danger of a cold or hot *skvozniak'i* (air draft), from Russian *skvozniak*, also called in Georgian *orp'iriani kari* (lit. "two-faced wind").

During the year I trained and participated in activities at the training hall in Tbilisi, I visited other gyms as well. The other weightlifting gym in Tbilisi, located near the edge of town in Gldani, is part of an Olympic compound shared with multiple other sports, which includes a dormitory and cafeteria for the athletes. Athletes of all ages train at both, though more serious athletes train at the Gldani location because of the dormitory and cafeteria. In contrast to recreational gyms, which are located around the city, there is no cost to train at GEOWF, and no "membership" in the form of written contracts– one is there to develop as a weightlifter. The government's ministry of sport supports training facilities for Olympic weightlifting. Recreational gyms lack the equipment, expertise, and environment necessary for serious sports training. The GEOWF is a state-sponsored federation with the expressed aim of achieving successful results in competitions at all levels. The profit for such an organization comes in the form of prestige and international recognition, though there are also financial remunerations for very successful athletes.

Certain forms of financial incentive exist for participants in the sport of weightlifting, but it is not by any means a sure path to wealth or fame. One of the trainers told me that the large lari sums awarded for Olympic medals had been increased in recent years. He said that though it is an incentive of president Saakashvili's design, the money itself comes from Georgian businessmen. He said that the prize for a first place (gold) medal was one million lari, but had recently been increased to two million. In his view, these made weightlifting, *p'ersp'ekt'ivni* "promising", in contrast to powerlifting, another strength sport, for which there are no possible financial remunerations. With that said,

there is a misconception in US weightlifting circles that Eastern European countries (among which Georgia is counted, as a former Soviet Republic) possess enormous pools of athletes competing to train, and that the sport of Olympic weightlifting is widely appreciated and followed. In the case of Georgia, this is not the case- it remains a relatively poorly known sport, and participants are few, and recruited in an ad hoc fashion, usually through family ties. Though there may be money for the very best athletes, years of demanding training do not necessarily lead to success. Those who pursue the sport at its highest levels do so only if hard work and genetic potential- along with a variety of other factors, such as health and psychological durability - align, and even in those cases, there is no guarantee of becoming a world champion.

Since the bulk of training at the GEOWF gym in Tbilisi deals with beginner athletes in the first few years of Olympic weightlifting, I contend that my year as a pupil there–albeit an older pupil, with a decidedly different set of social expectations and pressures–granted me a chance to view how training functions in this context. Since there is so much misinformation about weight training, it is tempting to over-esteem one's own level of knowledge. Having spent time with very experienced lifters and coaches, I strongly feel my own limitations but nevertheless hope that my perspective as a patient study provides insight into this domain of sport and the lives of the athletes and coaches that practice and develop it.

Training

At the most basic level, training at GEOWF follows Soviet methods. As Robert Ansovich Roman explains in a foundational text about the training of weightlifters, "beginners and low-class lifters should emphasize multiple repetitions with minimal,

small and medium weights"[4] as the "training of beginners and low-class athletes should promote, first and foremost, an increase in muscle mass and a strengthening of the motor support apparatus"(Roman 1988 [1974]: 43). What I observed and experienced at the Weightlifting Federation in Georgia was largely the training of athletes in their first few years, with the exception of a few athletes who had been training five years or more. For that reason, much of my commentary and observations are based on what it means to create beginning weightlifters through words, actions, and the participation in community-focused activities. All training is geared towards developing young athletes who will have the technical, physical, and psychological foundation to then succeed as professionals, if possible.

In terms of educational materials, there exist Soviet and Russian sports science texts that outline the parameters of training for different athletic levels, the physics of the lifts, and the construction of training cycles, including pre-competition considerations and year-long plans for development. The term "programming" refers to "the regulation of the contents of training in accordance with the athlete's training objectives and the specific principles, determining the rational organization of training loads within a specific time frame"(Verkhoshansky 1988 [1985]: i), which is the domain of the coach. The depth of such texts that spell out the specifics of training, programming, and sport specific concerns cannot be replicated in this format, so I direct readers to those sources[5]. Further, it is important to note that texts themselves play a very small role in the management of day-to-day training practices. When I asked about texts in weightlifting, coaches

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[4] Note: small = 60-69.9%, medium = 70-79.9%, large = 80-89.9%, submaximal = 90-97.5%, maximal = 100%

[5] See especially Issurin 2008, Laputin and Oleshko 1982, Medvedev 1989 [1986], Roman 1988 [1974], Roman and Shakirzianov 1978, Verkhoshansky 1988 [1985], 1986 [1977]

confirmed that such texts, written decades ago, existed and are still used in pedagogical contexts, such as at the Academy of Physical Education and Sport. One coach hastened to add that coaching practices were always evolving, and could not be captured by texts. Decisions about programming considerations were made through consultation with more experienced coaches rather than by recourse to texts. Generally speaking, the content of texts was viewed as established general or scientific principles, rather than providing specific solutions to quandries of programming. The appearance of proper technique, for example, was so deeply internalized by coaches that diagrams indicating all of the angles in a correct snatch were of little use in real-time. With that said, a dog-eared copy of *Ryvok, Tolchok* (Snatch, Clean and Jerk) by Roman and Shakirzianov (1978) lay in the drawer of the trainer's desk, and weightlifters periodically flipped through it, spending time looking at the diagrams of bar trajectories.

Gender and Training

In Michael Messner's interview-based text about the development of masculine identities and sport as a social institution, he stresses the importance of the "hegemonic conception of masculinity in sport" as a force that bonds men and supports the "contemporary gender order"(Messner 1992:19). His focus is on the United States, but Messner's observations about sport and masculinity neatly describe the establishment of the domination of a certain type of masculine peer grouping expressed in the National Weightlifting Federation of Georgia. Weightlifting is a thoroughly male-dominated pursuit in Georgia. Though there are no female weightlifters in Georgia, women's

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weightlifting was officially introduced to the Olympic games in 2000[6]. The presence of

successful women on the global lifting platform, rather than being seen as a promotion of

equality, or of women expressing feminine strength, is viewed in Georgia as women

becoming like men, both in attitude and physical body. In this section I explore some of

the ironies and contradictions born from this male-dominated sphere.

During a year of training at the gym in Vake, women only appeared in the training

hall on several disparate occasions, all of which were notable and disturbed the flow of

normal training. One day Giorgi Lomtadze's sister, who works for the Ministry of Sport

in the capacity of a translator, appeared while he was training. During this session, there

were only a few of us present, as there was no trainer present. Giorgi Lomtadze (69kg)

worked up to 180kg for three repetitions in the squat. Between sets, his sister, standing at

the far wall near the door, admonished him to be careful. In the past year, Lomtadze had

suffered a knee injury that required surgery and was still not fully recovered. Her

cautious, caring words sounded out of place in the training hall- it was at that moment

that I realized that no one had ever discouraged another lifter from attempting a weight.

Injury itself was only mentioned before training, or afterwards, never during unless it

actually occurs during a lift. The other lifters laughed bemusedly by the concern of

Lomtadze's sister. Giorgi squatted 200kg for two repetitions and finished his workout[7].

The only other Georgian female visitors to the gym were family members, usually

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[6] A women's competition debuted at the World Weightlifting Championship in 1987. The IWF (International Weightlifting Federation) is the organization that oversees the sport of weightlifting internationally. Sub-Federations based on geography (Weightlifting Federation of Africa (WFA), Asian Weightlifting Federation (AWF), European Weightlifting Federation (EWF), Oceania Weightlifting Federation (OWF), Pan-American Weightlifting Confederation (PAWC)) all introduced women's competitions around that time. Georgia is a member of the EWF.
[7] http://youtu.be/3nE65-wHVU0 , accessed 3/25/13

mothers or grandmothers who waited in the corridor to drop off or pick up their preteen kids from the first few days of training. The wife of the eldest trainer came twice to reprimand him for domestic insufficiencies, but beyond that, no Georgian women crossed the threshold into the training hall.

Earlier in the year, an American female friend of mine visited the gym to train. This caused a minor uproar in terms of distraction. During the hour that she was there, the coaches repeatedly yelled at the lifters to stop staring at her and to continue their workouts. The coaches praised her form on squats, a foundational exercise in weightlifting. Her technically sound form and strength in this exercise essentially ratified her as a member of the weightlifting community. Her presence in the gym was legitimate, though very out of the ordinary. In addition, her attire, including weightlifting shoes with an elevated, wooden sole, was in keeping with what is expected of weightlifters. After training, we all hung out in the gym and she was obligated to answer endless questions about her music preferences. Unlike Lomtadze's sister, or the oldest trainer's wife, she was viewed as an athlete, and her status as a female seemed intriguing and difficult to reconcile for the Georgian weightlifters.

Invocations of Masculinity

As I have mentioned elsewhere, aside from creating and enforcing training plans, and teaching and developing proper technique, one of the main roles of a weightlifting trainer is to prevent lifters from taking excessive, foolish, and unplanned attempts. One day during training, one of the coaches grew livid at a weightlifter's careless technique, which relied on muscular strength rather than hitting the proper positions with speed. The lifter attended sheepishly to the trainers comments, addressed to the gym at large, about

how women are better weightlifters than men because they do not rely on inherent strength, but instead cultivate technique to lift weights. Men, he informed us, always try to muscle the weights instead of lifting them properly. Because women are physically unable to do this, they become better weightlifters. He instructed us to watch closely at any competition to the superior technique of women weightlifters.

Along invocations to lift in a manly fashion, good weightlifters are often compared to animals, with positive implications. For example, a coach likened a weightlifter's legs to those of a deer, describing the nature in Svaneti, the mountainous region in Western Georgia where this weightlifter was from, with the Russian word *zhestokii* (brutal, severe, fierce) as a way of reckoning the source of his strength. By being from a place with "brutal" nature, he had physical capacities of an animal. This is not simply an equation of location with physical type, but also a statement about the increased physical demands on people living in remote and mountainous places in Georgia, which, according to one coach, makes for better sportsmen since children from these regions have been active (swimming, hiking, and being physical outdoors) since they were young. Another example of an animal comparison used as a compliment was describing Irakli Turmanidze as a "wolf" and a "lion" following his performance at the London Olympics. Likening an athlete's performance to that of an animal (usually those animals associated with aggression (wolf, lion) or strength and grace (deer)) is a way of highlighting how they embody physical virtues. They must become animals to be men, and then constrain that physicality within technique that is seen as coming more naturally to women.

Another moment where masculinity was deliberately invoked was when we were traveling as a group across town to buy vitamins and supplements at a small shop near Isani metro. As we waited for the bus, a coach and a few weightlifters asked Sh., a 14 year-old lifter, whether he would prefer getting vitamins, or a girl. He unhesitantly responded that he would prefer vitamins, which the others framed as being a sign that he was a "real" sportsman, because he wouldn't allow himself to be distracted by girls. Though not a severe as the admonitions against sexual activity that Loïc Wacquant (2004) describes for boxers, weightlifters should not allow women to distract them from achieving goals in sport. Another weightlifter, after spending a month at a secluded training center, commented that he hadn't seen a girl during that whole time. The idea isn't that sexual activity must be avoided (as for the boxers), but that chasing girls is a waste of valuable energy that should be devoted to training and recovery. With that said, the qualities that one develops as a weightlifter (such as fearlessness, or bravery and certainty) are those that are seen as valuable in interactions with women. For example, a trainer encouraged in Russian me to *byt' khrabrym* (be bold) with women, which is the same sort of psychological cue that he gave for how to approach weightlifting. What matters is developing the psychological state of confidence, certainty, and boldness in the practiced application of force, which applies to interactions with barbells as well as women: to become in control of the ways in which you expend energy, and target that expenditure to productive action in pursuit of goals.

Messner observes two dominant character-types, which are applicable to the ways that young athletes in Georgia regard weightlifting coaches. Messner observes that, "two stereotypes of coaches– the responsible 'builder of men' and the authoritarian 'slave

driver' – live side-by-side, each reflecting a different aspect of the same social

reality"(Messner 1992:102). In addition to weightlifting, I observed soccer coaches

instructing their young charges through sets of footwork drills, and toggling back and

forth between these personality types: yelling in anger, encouraging fast feet, praising a

good performance, and then shouting again to remind the young athletes to work and

focus. Messner observantly notes that the "athlete's relationship with his coach takes

place during boyhood and young adulthood, when the young male's masculine identity is

being formed [...]"(Messner 1992:105). Coaches are imbuing a model of masculine

identity that is in line with what will bring success in sport, primarily, and in life,

secondarily. Advice about lifting is extensive, and often given with metaphors, often

using the same sorts of metaphors as periodic advice given about life. Coaches are

primarily focused on developing physical and psychological competence in sports

performance. Let us turn to training cues to investigate how directives in training

contribute to this focus.

Training Cues: What does it mean to be "crazy"?

The term "training cue" is intended to cover the broad range of input provided by

coaches to athletes. These utterances can occur before, during, or after the lift. Though

not a focus of the activity itself, training is coordinated, in part, through talk, as well as

through norms about silence and hierarchies of instruction giving. I select the term "cue"

in order to highlight the function of these utterances: as cuing certain psychological,

physical, or technical dimensions. Additionally, I favor the term cue (as opposed to

feedback or commentary) because it does not have predetermined temporal position with

respect to the action it is linked to. Considerable scholarly attention has been directed

towards sport psychology, particularly psychological dimensions connected to performance, motivation, group dynamics, and health, affecting youth as well as high-level athletes. [8] Much of the psychological literature focuses on the consequences of positive and negative coach evaluations. [9] As I will argue with weightlifting cues, the coach's role is fundamentally evaluatory, so even "neutral" or "informational" cues are interpreted as evaluations. Not only should we pay attention to the ways in which cues are delivered, but also to the speaker roles and particular entanglements with "ideal" techniques, skills, and attributes which make coaching feedback so potent.

Only coaches, for example, are permitted to give evaluative instructions. While other lifters may shout encouragements, only coaches provide technical or evaluative cues. From my experience at GEOWF, there were very few occasions when the coach-trainee hierarchy was challenged directly, in part because its significance is so fully accepted and ingrained into how training works. Nevertheless, one periodically heard rumblings of frustration with certain coaches' methods, especially when an increased result (*shedegi*) was not forthcoming after weeks or months of labor.

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[8] As a starting point, see for example: Handbook of Research on Sport Psychology (1993). Robert N. Singer, Milledge Murphey, L. Keith Tennant, eds. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

[9] One example of this is found in Amorose and Weiss (1998), who conducted a video-based study in which 60 participants (ages 6-8 and 12-14) were asked to evaluate "ability" of youth athletes in videotapes who are attempting to hit a baseball, followed by a "coach who provided evaluative, informational, or neutral feedback"(Amorose and Weiss 1998). Their finding was that all participants rated praise as a predictor of ability. Their division of feedback types into three categories (and within those categories, into remarks appropriate to "successful" and "unsuccessful" outcome conditions) deserves more attention. In particular, the "neutral" category, in my view, issues appraisal (ex. "That's right" and "That's wrong")(Amorose and Weiss 1998: 402). Though lacking exclamations as the "evaluative components do, these are not "neutral" from the perspective of conveying judgment, and also carry within this judgment an informational kernel - something was technically wrong. Even if this is not identified explicitly, the "neutral" feedback types connote both evaluative and informational components.

When no coach was present, lifters were more apt to offer advice and input to their peers. The tenor of the training hall changed significantly literally as soon as a trainer appeared- silence and a focus on work predominated, whereas when trainers were absent, lifters sometimes played music on their cell phones, wrestled, or conversed between sets. Just as Loïc Wacquant (2008) describes in the case of boxers, the social hierarchy of the gym dictates who can give advice. Unlike in the more rigid, clearly-defined roles of coach and trainee, peer-to-peer relationships are more ad hoc and based on personal affinities than on objective requirements. Nevertheless, certain components contributed to one's unstated rank or hierarchical emplacement in the gym's social milieu. Chief among these was the amount of time spent in serious training, indicative of one's status as a lifter.[10]

Training cues are targeted towards engraining proper movement patterns, cultivating desired psychological states, or emphasizing physical positions or muscular recruitment. In many cases, training cues are used to foreground the part of the lift that the coach feels will be rewarded by conscious attention from the lifter. Since the snatch and the clean and jerk are fast, complex, multi-joint speed-strength movements, an athlete

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[10] During one of the only fights at the gym, on a crowded day where all the platforms had at least one lifter at work, a young lifter missed a clean and jerk close to his max. Stubborn, he prepared for another lift at the same weight, and missed again. He refused to remove weight from the bar, and intended to continue training. A more experienced lifter told him to stop, but he refused. This refusal was seen as a sign of his hubris, or "Caucasian macho," as my friend A. whispered to me while we watched the two lifters shout at each other. Plates were stripped from the bar by the more experienced lifter, then added again by the angry novice. The more experienced lifter emphasized his time as a weightlifter (five years) as a reason that his advice should be heeded, to which the novice lifter retorted that he didn't care and wanted to train. This kind of refusal to acknowledge experience was atypical, which is why the fight precipitated in the first place. One of the trainers, hearing the yelling, came in and intervened before it came it violence. The novice lifter, visibly angry, began doing clean pulls with an aggressive shrug, and then more experienced lifter returned to his platform in the corner.

is often unaware of his technical errors or how to correct them. The outside eye of the trainer, by degree, corrects faults in technique, and in doing so, brings the lifter to experience what "correct" positions or lifts feel like. This is a process of developing proprioception along with the strength and psychology required to execute proper technique in the classic lifts consistently. Directives gain force in the training hall environment, in which all athletes are undergoing the same kind of indoctrination, and are constantly observing each other and seeing reflections of their own faults in the lifts of others. In this section I will detail the functions of training cues, and will provide examples of a few common types. This is not meant as an exhaustive treatment, but will instead establish what the standard operating procedure for verbal coaching cues is in this context.

Cues are given at several keys junctures during training. Before a lifter performs an attempt, cues are shouted until he finalizes his set-up, at which time silence is observed. Additionally, coaches and other athletes observe from the side- it is considered rude and distracting to stand in front of a lifter when he is making an attempt. Young children unsocialized in weightlifting etiquette are routinely shouted at (esp. *chumad!* (quiet!)) for speaking at inappropriate moments, such as when a lifter concentrates before a lift, or are chastised and physically pulled aside for walking in front of a lifter as he performs an attempt, or if they walk too close to a lifter's platform during training (as the weight will be dropped from overhead). Since the clean and jerk is a two-part lift, cues for the jerk are shouted once the athlete stands up with the clean. As he is poised with the barbell on his shoulders, prepping for the jerk, it is common, for example that the coach reminds the athlete to dip straight up and down, since a common fault is to lean forward

rather than remaining upright, which results in the bar ending up too far in front of the athlete. During recovery from the clean, as well as the jerk, encouragements are voiced (for the clean: *adga!* (stand up!), and if the lifter is shaky or at risk or missing for the jerk: *nela!* (carefully! (lit. "slowly!")). After an attempt, or a set, more in-depth coaching advice is provided if needed. Typically a lifter looks to his coach after an attempt for corrections or reactions. At times this takes the form of a mini-lecture on form, including demonstration with an empty bar or, more commonly, simply as a pantomime in the air. Usually the lifter is silent during this process and the coach controls the interaction, including telling the lifter to walk around, when to take another attempt, and so forth. At times lifters are instructed to think about technical points, and at other times, they are instructed explicitly not to think, but simply to act.

One very common technical cue is *[shentan] akhlos!* (close [to you]!), which refers to keeping the barbell close to the body during the pull[11] from the floor. Letting the bar get away from the body is a very common problem that results in missed lifts, so the term *akhlos!* (close!) reminds the lifer to keep the bar as close as possible to the body. Related to this is the cue *majebi! (*wrists!), which reminds the lifter to turn the wrists towards the body so that the barbell remains close, rather than keeping them straight, or worse, angled upwards, which would increase the distance between the barbell and the body. Other bodily cues, such as *pekhebi*! (legs!), and *khelebi!* (arms!), emphasize the contribution of certain bodyparts in completing a phase of the movement. It is common,

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[11] Pulls from the floor can be segmented into parts, which is done in technical terms and also in practice to strengthen the different positions required for different segments of the movement. One of the most important moments in Olympic weightlifting is the so-called *podryv* (snap), which is the vigorous completion of the pull from mid-thigh (called the completion to the "second pull" in some sources, cf. Everett 2009).

for example, to hear the cue *pekhebi! (*legs!) shouted at a lifter doing pulls from the floor without vigor, as a way to remind him to flex the muscles of the hips and legs to elevate the barbell, or *khelebi!* (arms!) if a lifter is not aggressively locking out his arms on the jerk phase of the lift. The cue *kuslebze!* (on the heels!) is shouted if an athlete's weight is shifted too far forward (common for beginners in the squat, for example), as a reminder to stay anchored to the floor through the heels.

Other cues are targeted towards generalized motivation. These cues are shouted as encouragement, either by coaches or fellow athletes. They are not targeted at particular positions or training cues: rather, they emphasize how lifts should be performed, in the sense of psychological commitment. One of the most common cues is *dzlierad!* (strongly!). Another very common cue is *midi!* (go!). In addition to gearing the lifter up for action, these cues are a reminder that the lifter is being watched, both by peers and the coach, and that his actions are being evaluated. As a group, weightlifters want their peers to succeed, so this form of encouragement reminds them that they are being evaluated and should perform to the best of their abilities. In a way, these generalized motivation cues function like a spotlight, in that they remain virtually the same irrespective of athlete, and are used with only one athlete at a time. Generally speaking, lift attempts worthy of garnering attention from the training hall - which is to say, attempts that are "difficult" in the sense of being at a higher percentage of an athlete's 1RM - are shown respect by having only one athlete lift at a time. Each athlete's platform is "spotlighted" as he lifts, and when weights become significant, activities on other platforms cease for the duration of the attempt. Cues of encouragement are one way that the shifting spotlight is

managed. Hearing shouts of *dzlierad!* (strongly!) draws everyone's focus to the lift attempt in progress.

A final class of cues is those that emphasize elements of an "ideal" masculine psychology that coaches wish their athletes to manifest through physical movement. Among these are explicit invocations of the word *k'atsi* (man). For example, one more experienced weightlifter said "*k'atsi khar"* ("you're a man") to a younger weightlifter when he made a lift well. Another example of this is at a gym competition, a lifter seemed hesitant and lacking aggression on his first attempt. Though he made the lift successfully, it looked like an effort. On his second attempt he made the lift decisively, audibly stomping his feet on the platform as he locked out the weight overheard. A coach said in response "*ai k'atsi"* ("there's a man"), indicating that this attempt had been made decisively, in the manner appropriate for a man. A more rare cue linked to sexuality was that with which a coach exhorted a lifter to encourage a more aggressive hip extension on the lifter's pull: "*shtanga [...] rogorts kali unda shekhvedros" "*the barbell [...] should be met like a woman," meaning that the hips must thrust forward to meet the barbell as one would thrust while having sex with a woman.

One striking example of a non-standard weightlifting cue that relies on and promotes a concept of masculinity to encourage "proper" physical and psychological performance occurred one day after a copy of the magazine *World Weightlifting*[12] arrived at the training hall. Since the magazine is in English, no one read the articles, but instead looked with interest at the pictures and the lists of competition performances. In this particular issue, there was a section on the female Russian lifter Tatiana Kashirina, a

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[12] Available online: http://www.iwf.net/media-services/world-weightlifting/ Accessed 3/25/13

four-time gold medal winner in the +75kg class at the European Championships, with numerous medals from World Championships (and a silver medal at the 2012 Olympics). At 21 years of age, she competes at a bodyweight of slightly over 100kg. According to a journalist report, she began the sport by accident by literally entering the wrong door, arriving in the weightlifting hall instead of a dance class as she intended[13]. Kashirina posted a 328kg total (145kg snatch, 183kg clean and jerk) at the 2012 European Weightlifting Championship, taking first place by a 54kg margin (for the total) over the second place lifter, teammate Julia Konovalova. Kashirina's excellence in the sport of weightlifting poses a sort of problem for male weightlifters in Georgia, who respect her accomplishments but seem uncertain about how to reconcile them with the fact that she is a woman. There is a sense in which she is regarded as less womanly, both because of her appearance (someone satirically remarked in Russian "*kakaia krasavitsa*" ("what a beauty") upon seeing her picture in the magazine) and because of how she excels in heavy athletics. A weightlifter in his late teens was training on the platform in the corner, closest to the coach's desk. Its proximity to the desk is an icon of the amount of time and more advanced skill level that the athlete has obtained– the closer to the coach's desk, the more advanced the athlete. He was doing multiple reps without rest at a challenging weight, which introduces fatigue into the equation. As he began the 2nd or 3rd lift of the set, the coach yelled "*KASHIRINA!"* at him, reminding him that a female Russian champion is posting totals higher than his, and that he must train to be as good, or better, than her.

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[13] http://www.allthingsgym.com/tatiana-kashirina-weightlifter-accident/ accessed 3/25/13

There is one cue that occurs very frequently, and is aligned with the cues above that I suggest key on qualities considered essential for a masculine self, ideal for performing well at Olympic weightlifting. This is the cue *gizhi khar!* (You are crazy!). Unlike the other cues I've mentioned, being *gizhi* (crazy) is both an asset and a liability. It is a quality that the best lifters possess: the motive to action unfettered by analysis, buoyed along by confidence and the (sometimes) reckless pursuit of success. What is interesting about this term is that it is not confined to the training hall. As Companjen reports, "[t]he reputation of Saakashvili was being hit by circulating the slogan 'giji Saakashvili'"(Companjen 2004:42). Being *gizhi* connotes fearless action, lack of restraint, and a surfeit of personal certitude. In a sense, being accused of being *gizhi* makes Saakashvili's image - and masculinity- normatively stronger, even if it is tinged with unpredictability and caprice. Essentially, Saakaskvili's masculinity was complimented by calling him *gizh*i, thereby undermining its force as an insult. In politics, unlike weightlifting, the liability of being *gizhi* may be far greater - which is to say that masculine vigor, despite having positive connotations, can be a disadvantage in a career in which calm rationality may achieve more stable merits.

Coaching cues are a way that the world of weightlifting training is constructed and shared, and that physical corrections are administered in short, directed bursts. I have called attention to one Georgian cue, *gizhi (*crazy), that calls out a psychological state that is both dangerous and desirable, as being a manifestation of masculine force without thought, as risk pursued with certainty. One can be *too* crazy, take too many risks, miss attempts, or incur injury by being stubborn and selfish, but a measured amount of craziness is desirable, and in line with what it means to be a successful masculine force in

Olympic weightlifting. During a set of snatches, a lifter was praised for being *gizhi*, in that he was performing strongly, and then admonished later in the same set for being *gizhi*, in that he had failed to listen to the coaches demand to do only one additional repetition, instead continuing in a headstrong fashion. This polysemic cue gives us insight into the how masculinity is constructed as a boundary rather than a solid "identity"– as a set of psychological and physical qualities that can be developed, drawn out, and demonstrated.

I have approached coaching cues as a type of illocutionary act (Austin 1975). What is most significant is that certain training cues both rely on and propagate a normative concept of masculinity that is viewed as essential for success in the sport of weightlifting. Yet coaching cues are only a small part of the way that trainers communicate with athletes. A great deal of coaching cues only make sense when accompanied by physical movements – indeed, they are inseparable from the physical positions that they are intended to invoke, modify, and perfect. In this chapter I have focused particularly on the words that are used to generate psychological states, especially those linked to a certain concept of masculinity. These gain force in an environment – the training hall – in which all athletes are undergoing the same kind of indoctrination, and are constantly observing each other and seeing reflections of their own faults in the lifts of others. Cues draw certain psychological qualities or physical foci to the surface, and it is only through constant and repetitive use that they become part of the norms of training, including when and how they are used.

CHAPTER 7.

Conclusion

This dissertation has elaborated several settings and practices in which Russian language endures in Tbilisi, Georgia as a code naturalized as appropriate for sociotechnical functions. I have discussed the mixed legacy of Russian as a language of empire bearing a range of associations: positive, negative, neutral, and ambivalent. At times, the use of Russian code does not index Russianness at all, but is fully incorporated as normative in Tbilisian practice. By including an array of contrasting social actors and settings, I have shown language contact and linguistic influence in which code use is naturalized with terms such as "comfort," "quality," or "ease" to describe the habitual, routinized ways in which language is thought to fit or inhere in sociotechnical practices.

During the Saaksahvili era (2003-2013), the dominant political discourse cast Russian and Russianness as a sign of backwards, as an impediment to attaining a Euro-normative version of modernity for Georgia. Yet this contradicted the status of Russian as an enduring lingua franca and language of inter-ethnic communication embedded in multiple kinds of social practice in Georgia. Russian language use in Georgia has receded in official and unofficial capacities since the fall of the Soviet Union, but from the settings in which it remains durably entrenched we can learn how Russian has figured as a imperial tongue with a mixed symbolic legacy. The negotiation of the formal and informal status of secondary national languages within Georgia remains an ongoing

concern, especially as Georgia continues to aspire towards economic and moral status as "European."

One goal in this approach to secondary national languages is to put pressure on the notion that political influence or social power is transparently or directly present in the ways that primary and secondary national languages function within a linguistic ecology. In addition to drawing to the surface the many other vectors of attachment and influence – including material, affective, and aesthetic concerns– I have demonstrated the ways that national language, as a crucial semiotic resource in crafting groupness, always functions within a network of other languages with which it is imagined or narrated as standing in contrast. In particular, the projection of opposition between a primary national language (or "local" language) and a secondary national language (or "global," "international" language) imputes scales of difference to the functions and capacities of linguistic code. In the case of Russian and English within Georgia, this has resulted in a dominant narrative of "replacement," in which there is imagined to be a single role or function that such languages can fulfill in opposition to Georgian, despite the vast differences in on-the-ground practice for each.

This encourages us to think language across post-Soviet space beyond the template of rigid political and social hierarchy. Nationalism and groupness are constituted within and through relations with secondary national languages as fully part of the linguistic ecology, not as identical or unchanging backdrops. The way that oppositions and contrasts between linguistic codes are imagined (and how they index the Soviet past) varies by place and time. In the Tbilisi case that I have presented here, ambivalence and indeterminacy characterize many of the responses to how to calibrate foreignness, or

indeed, what signs count as foreign. To return to the argument outlined in the first chapter with respect to language and the notion of boundary, borrowing heavily from Bakhtin, I suggest that we approach languages as consisting of a multiplicity of interfaces– between bodies and technologies, physical settings and psychological states– which cross in habitual, regular ways in social practice. Rather than seeing interfaces as aberrations in otherwise seamless, homogeneous, or bounded social practices, such transitional zones characterize the edges through which we witness and participate in crafting alignments, assessments, and interpretations.

In turn, this allows us to reconsider colonialism and imperial power as cultural configurations working in and through relations of many kinds, beyond institutional forms readily interpreted as expressing relations of domination and subordination. We must turn attention to the material forms and bodily forms (along with normative habits and expectations) through which alignments are expressed or avoided. I have indicated ways that Georgia plays out many of the same contradictions that other post-Soviet places bear in terms of handling material, linguistic, and social remainders from the Soviet past. With that said, I have also discussed ways that Georgia can also be treated as a special case in terms of linguistic and social relations with respect to Russian and Russianness, such as its long written tradition and maintenance of the *mkhedruli* writing system as key points of attachment for the construction of Georgian nationalism.

Another component of this dissertation has been making sense of the institutional components of the showing of foreign language films in Georgia, including the interface between private business, governmental interests, and the public. Such an approach works towards establishing domains of cultural production as sites in which social actors

of various kinds discuss linguistic practices and their significance. Further, I have placed the role of the translator – as a cultural mediator – at the center of the discussion, and with it emerge dynamics of gendered labor, calibration of degrees of cultural correspondence, and the notion of allegiance or "faithfulness" in renderings of content and style in voicing for films.

Some formal policy initiatives altering the place of Russian language in Georgia have had unexpected consequences. I detail some of these consequences, such as the creation of a new Georgian film dubbing industry. In a more general sense, I have illuminated the ways Russian language use in Georgia has proved resistant to change in certain kinds of social contexts, especially those linked to technical craft. In a more general sense, this prompts the question: what social affordances of linguistic code are built into the historical, material, and social dimensions of language practices? And further, how do the capacities of imperial tongues vary? This dissertation begins to respond to such inquiries in the case of Russian and Russianisms in Georgia. In doing so, I have articulated an approach to language that unites (or at least momentarily draws together) ideology, material forms, and habitualized social practices, with attention to the ways that such intersections are conceptualized by social actors.

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