

იდენტობის გამოვლინება ენაში Genesis of Identity through Language

ცოტნე ღუღუნაშვილი

თბილისის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი

Tsotne Ghughunishvili

Tbilisi State University

აბსტრაქტი

იდენტობა შესაძლოა აღვიქვათ, როგორც პიროვნებაში საკუთარი თავის იგივეობის განცდა, რომელიც არის ფიზიკური და ქცევითი მახასიათებლების ერთობლიობა, რითაც განისაზღვრება ადამიანის რაობა. ხოლო, ენა არის ერთგვარი "ინსტრუმენტი", რომლის მეშვეობითაც ხდება იდენტობის გამოხატვა და აღქმა.

სტატია იკვლევს ენისა და იდენტობის კომპლექსურ ურთიერთმიმართებას და შეისწავლის თუ როგორ განსაზღვრავენ ისინი ერთმანეთს. მოცემული კვლევა ამდიდრებს დისკურსს იდენტობის შესახებ შემდეგი ძირითადი საკითხების განხილვით: იდენტობის ფორმირება და ენის როლი, გარემოს გავლენა ენასა და მის გამოხატვაზე, ენა და იდენტობა ლიტერატურაში.

ლიტერატურის, პოლიტიკური ინტერვიუებისა და ისტორიული მოვლენების მაგალითების განხილვით, სტატიაში გამოკვეთილია იდენტობის ჩამოყალიბებისა და გამოვლინის პროცესი მრავალფეროვან კონტექსტში. კვლევა ასახავს იდენტობის ფორმირების სირთულეებს და წარმოაჩენს თუ როგორ მულაზვნდება კულტურული და პოლიტიკური რეალობა ლინგვისტური ხერხებით.

მოცემული კვლევა კიდევ ერთხელ ადასტურებს, რომ ინდივიდები იყენებენ "შეტყველების თავსებადობას", რათა თავიანთი პერსონა უფრო მისაღებად წამოაჩინონ სხვებისთვის. ქალი პოლიტიკოსების მაგალითის განხილვისას ცხადდება ინდივიდის სურვილი- უფრო აღმატებულად წამოაჩინოს საკუთარი თავი,

რასაც ადასტურებს სამეტყველო ლექსიკის ცვლილება და მორგება სხვადასხვა კონტექსტთან. ამ და სხვა მაგალითების განალიზებით ირკვევა, რომ იდენტობის დინამიკური ბუნება ვლინდება მრავალფეროვანი ლინგვისტური ხერხის მეშვეობით, რომელიც ყოველთვის თავსებადია სამიზნე აუდიტორიასა და გარემოსთან.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: იდენტობა, ენა, მეტყველების თავსებადობის თეორია, პოლიტიკა, ლიტერატურა

Keywords: Identity, language, speech accommodation theory, politics, literature

Introduction

Language and identity are closely related concepts that influence each other in various ways. Language can be seen as a marker of identity, as it reflects one's culture, ethnicity, religion, gender, social class, and personal preferences. Taking all these into consideration, it can be said that language can also shape one's identity, as it affects one's cognition, and emotions and it enables us to interact, and express ourselves in different contexts and situations (Baker, 2019).

Language and identity are dynamic and multifaceted phenomena that can change over time and across different domains. These two units are not fixed or static, but rather fluid and adaptable. They can also evolve in response to social, political, economic, and technological changes. (Owen, 2017). It is impossible to neglect the influence they have on each other. They seem to mutually shape and influence one another, even though it is evident that language is the only medium through which identity attains meaning and significance. Naturally, a person cannot be instantly changed by the words he utters, but linguistic elements such as words, concepts, values, and everything that is grounded in language have a crucial role in the construction of our identity. Therefore, we should start talking about identity by discussing the indisputable role of language.

The article will address several issues, which will be elaborated further in the subsequent sections:

- 1) How is our identity formed, and how language contributes to it?
- 2) How does the environment define our use of language and the expression of ourselves?
- 3) How has the issue of language and identity been manifested in literature?

The significance of this study stems from its examination of different contexts (local and international) to understand the interrelationship between the research topics. The primary aim is to elucidate how the mechanism of language functions for individuals in diverse

environments to present themselves variably, thereby effectively influencing their target audience. To achieve the desirable goal, we use examples from various domains of life as well as from literature which enrich our views on this topic. This enables us to draw conclusions about how and in what ways language and identity mutually influence each other. It is important to acknowledge that this influence is bidirectional and that there is no right or wrong about which influences the other. However, this study aims to identify and analyze the factors that contribute to the formation of identity through language.

Theoretical Framework

Identity is “*an individual’s sense of self-defined by (a) a set of physical, psychological, and interpersonal characteristics that is not wholly shared with any other person and (b) a range of affiliations (e.g., ethnicity) and social roles*” (American Psychological Association, n.d.). However, identity doesn’t only refer to one person. Identity also refers to the associations to which each individual belongs. Therefore, it turns out that our social identity is even more complex than our personal identity since social identity is a combination of common elements that more or less everyone shares, and it addresses the issue of “us versus them.” While personal (self) identity defines what you believe and what values your beliefs consist of, social identity, at the expense of opposition, defines who the members of the group are and why (Rusieshvili-Cartledge & Dolidze, 2021).

In the early 1970s, Henri Tajfel developed Social Identity Theory, which, in the years following his death, came to be the single most influential model for analyzing linguistic identity. Tajfel (1978) defined social identity as “*that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.*”

Besides that, social identity forms “in-group” and “out-group” categories, and then it influences the use of stereotypes towards the out-group members. Humans tend to engage in self-categorization processes, and the sense of social belonging is so powerful that it becomes a tool of exclusion and discrimination. This factor also forms the identities of opposing groups.

According to the article “Language and Identity: A Critique”, a psychosocial perspective on identity emphasizes that identity is not something you have; it is something you do. This contrasts with the philosophical view of identity as an innate and internal attribute (Strauss, 2017). It is also noteworthy to mention that there is no consensus among philosophers, sociolinguists, and sociologists on the causal direction between identity and language. Still, the question of whether identity shapes linguistic behavior (language use) or whether linguistic behavior reflects identity adoption remains unresolved (David & Govindasamy, 2017; Schreiber, 2015).

In addition to this, it is interesting to take into consideration the idea of the speech accommodation theory: “*the accommodation through speech can be regarded as an attempt*

on the part of the speaker to modify or disguise his persona in order to make it more acceptable to the person addressed” (Giles & Powesland, 1975. p. 158).

Hence, it can be asserted more precisely that language functions as a tool that constructs a kind of illusory barrier around us. Within this barrier, which serves as a nexus of identity, stands an individual who intricately weaves this invisible web.

Methodology

The main focus of this research is the relationship between language and Identity. For this reason, the Georgian context is also used which provides interesting sources for the analysis. This context is especially relevant for examining the construction of identity in a diverse and multilingual setting like Georgia, where the issues of national, social, and personal identities are more prominent. The research uses examples from literature, political interviews, and historical events in the Georgian context, as well as the international ones, as the data for the analysis.

Furthermore, to encompass various aspects of the research topic of the paper, the process of “faking” an identity in literary works is examined together with the linguistic devices that enabled this fake identity to be manifested in reality. Comparable examples can be found in the cases of George Eliot, the Bronte sisters and Elene Dariani. This is useful for the generalization of the research and the understanding of the identity issue on a more global scale.

To conduct this analysis, we conducted a systematic literature review of various sources, including books, articles, video materials, etc., that were relevant to the topic. We used the following criteria to select and evaluate the sources: relevance and frequency. Then we singled out the main arguments and evidence from the sources, and identified the major factors that influence identity formation. We also provided examples from different contexts and cases to illustrate and support our points. To enhance the clarity and organization of our paper, we used tables to present more specific and detailed information. The whole process of data collection and analysis took three months, as it was necessary to search, read, and evaluate a large number of sources and compare and contrast different perspectives and findings.

Considering the multifaced nature of both language and identity which occur in various contexts and shape human existence and history, the research required a thorough examination of diverse contexts where ‘authentic’ or ‘fake’ identities are manifested through language. Each context examined in the study highlights the purpose for which language is employed and the consequential outcomes.

Furthermore, our research employed textual analysis, encompassing the examination of written and spoken texts, to show how language reflects social dynamics. We delved into formal and informal settings, employing discourse and semantic analyses. By applying these methods to political and literary texts, we identified some linguistic elements that illustrated how language contributes to the realization of identity.

This research pays special attention to the challenges that arise in the contemporary context, and employs the qualitative method to analyze them. Based on this analysis, the aim of this article is to demonstrate how the genesis of identity takes place in the core of language and through its components (slang, idioms, barbarisms).

Results and Discussion

As discussed previously, the identity formation is a complex and dynamic process that involves multiple factors. Humans are social beings, which implies that they are significantly affected by social, political, and other aspects of their environment. Consequently, these aspects shape how individuals express their identity through various linguistic means. To better illustrate this point, we can examine the case of ghetto.

A ghetto is a part of a city where a minority group lives, usually because of some pressure or discrimination from the majority (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2023). In the United States, the term ghetto was used since the 20th century to describe poor neighborhoods of black people who faced racism and segregation from the white society. The ghettos were also places of culture and creativity, where people expressed themselves through music, art, and language. Some of the words and slangs that originated in the ghettos became part of the mainstream American English. Interaction and influence of different languages and dialects in the ghettos, such as Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Yiddish, etc., reflect the diversity and history of the immigrant and minority groups that live in the ghettos and their struggles and achievements in the American society. These languages and dialects also contribute to the culture of the ghettos, creating multilingual and multicultural spaces, such as code-switching, borrowing, mixing, and translating (Cutler et al., 1999)

These languages and dialects also challenge and change the dominant and standard forms of English, creating new and hybrid varieties and expressions, such as Spanglish, Chinglish, Arabish, Yinglish, and others. Thus, to express their identity and culture and distinguish themselves from the dominant or mainstream society or cope and resist the oppression and discrimination they face in society, the ghettos used their own vocabulary and grammatical forms. For example, rap music, which originated in the ghettos, uses language as a form of protest, critique, and empowerment, challenging and changing the dominant and standard forms of English. (Cutler et al., 1999) Table 1 shows some of the words that emerged in the areas of the ghettos:

Slang Words

Table 1

1950's:	Garbage- nonsense; hot- sexy/attractive; hood- mobster/gangster...
1960's:	Chill- relax/take it easy; crib/pad- where you live; bread- money; hassle-annoy; vibes- feelings...
1970's:	Gross- disgusting; horn- telephone; zip- nothing...
1980's:	Go postal- go crazy; melt down- total collapse; wannabe- someone who wants to be something; wicked- excellent/very cool
1990's:	Boot- money; po-po- police; senior moment- memory loss...
2000's:	Cougar- older woman dating younger man; peep- person; tat- tattoo; holla-call on the phone

Linguistic landscape always influences identities of people everywhere, including Georgia. In contrast to the American ghettos, where linguistic minorities have a significant impact on the linguistic landscape (by creating new varieties of the language, affecting grammatical and lexical peculiarities, etc.), the minority groups in Georgia do not possess such influence on the linguistic features of the country. A case in point is the Gypsy community and their integration into the Georgian society, studied through online video materials for this article. A salient characteristic of this community is their use of Georgian, which differs from the standard in several ways. For instance, they use simple and distorted grammatical structures, such as incorrect verb forms, word order, or case endings. They also use peculiar intonation patterns, such as rising or falling tones or stress shifts. Gypsies consistently employ a rising tone, even when their utterances are not interrogative. This persistent rising intonation, typically associated with question formation, deviates from the norm observed in most languages. Such a feature is indeed uncommon within the Georgian linguistic landscape.

More specific examples can be seen in Table 2:

Table 2

ნუ, აქა ბევრი ბომბები <u>იყო</u> .	There were many gypsies here.	The verb must agree in number with the noun it modifies. When dealing with plural nouns, the verb should also be in the plural form. Thus, instead of „იყო- was” it should have been “იყვნენ- were.”
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ბავშვები სკოლაში <u>დადის</u> <u>ჩვენი</u> .	Our children go to school.	Wrong number of the verb and incorrect word order. Specifically, the possessive pronoun 'ჩვენი-our' should precede the noun and the verb „დადის-goes” should be “დადიან-go.”
ყველა <u>ხალხ</u> <u>მიჭირს</u> .	All people are in need.	Wrong case endings, wrong number of the noun and the verb form. In Georgian „ყველა-all” requires singular noun. Therefore, instead of “ხალხი-people” it should have been „ადამიანი-person/human.” Besides, the verb “მიჭირს- to be (am) in need” pertains to the first person, singular pronoun “I/me” and It should have been “უჭირს- to be (is) in need.”
მე არ მინდა ისე ვიმუშაო როგორც <u>დედაჩემმა</u> რო მუშაობს...	I don't want to work like my mother does...	Wrong case ending. „დედაჩემმა-” should have been written without the case ending “მა.” Instead, it should have had the nominative case ending „ი.”
იმისი <u>ქმარები</u> ...	Her husbands...	Syllabic compression was needed in the word „ქმარები” which should have been „ქმრები.”

The above-mentioned features make their speech easily identifiable by other Georgians. Their speech reflects their cultural and social history, as well as their exclusion from the Georgian society. As a rule, Georgian gypsies live in extreme poverty. Therefore, they do not have access to all the services an ordinary Georgian citizen receives. For example, many Gypsies do not receive formal education, and are limited only to the knowledge of the spoken language. This explains why Gypsies despite their long presence in Georgia have not acquired the Georgian language properly. However, their linguistic peculiarities also serve as a means of expressing their own culture, which displays the interconnection of language and identity.

Furthermore, the influence of environmental factors on identity can be observed in the case of Georgian women in politics. To gain recognition and authority in male-dominated spheres, women frequently use assertive and confrontational language, which often includes vulgarity, profanity, and warlike metaphors and words. Gender stereotypes are beliefs or expectations about how women and men should behave based on their sex. In politics, women

are often seen as less competent, less assertive, and less fit for leadership than men because politics is a masculine domain. To overcome these stereotypes, women may use warlike, masculine and harsh words to show they are strong, confident, and capable of being political leaders. Consequently, language becomes a mechanism for expressing identity, especially when persuading society. Table 3 displays the language and vocabulary (including slang and vulgar words) used by Georgian women in politics:

Table 3

Person 1	სულ ფეხებზე მკილია რას იტყვის ნებისმიერი მოლაღატე.	I don't give a f**k what any of you traitors say.
Person 2	ვინ ჩემი ფეხები ხარ?! გაეთრიე აქედან!	Who the hell are you?! Get out!
Person 3	გაეთრიე, შე ჩმორო!	Get out, you wimp!
Person 4	გავიხეთქავ მაგ თავს!	I will kick the sh*t out of you!
Person 5	მერამდენედ უნდა შეგეწეროთ ბიჭებო? ერთხელ ხომ შეგეწერათ.	How many times are you going to p**p in your pants? (This is a derogatory sentence that refers to a person who fails to perform his/her role as it's required and it declines one's reputation).
Person 6	ბერაია, არც გაბეღო. ხმა ჩაიწყვიტე, შე რეგვენო!	Beraia, don't even dare. Shut up, you jackass.
Person 7	თავს ვიკავებ რომ არ შეგავინო...	I'm pulling myself together not to offend you.

Besides using verbal aggression, female politicians sometimes engage in physical violence, which is frequently captured and broadcasted by the media. Their conduct, as well as their use of slang and informal language appears to enhance their credibility and attract their audience's attention to make sure they are seen and heard. As Freud said, violence and self-defense are expressions of our aggressive and pleasure-seeking drives, which are influenced by the conditions and crises of civilization that can trigger or suppress our primal instincts. So, when it comes to politics, aggression (a form of expressing a certain type of identity) can be seen as a self-defense mechanism for women which, in this case, triggers the primal instincts to protect their rights at any cost.

Finally, there is a similar case of identity vs language in literature, especially regarding women who disguised themselves as male writers. There are some peculiarities that helped women authors present their desirable identity through proper language. One of the most common features of the language women used while writing under the male pseudonyms was the employment of gender-neutral or masculine pronouns, nouns, and adjectives (Literary Writing Style of Women: English-Language Authors of the Victorian Age, 2018). For example, George Eliot, the pen name of Mary Ann Evans, often used “he” or “his” to refer to herself or her narrator, as well as terms like “man” or “gentleman” to describe her characters or audience. This was done to avoid revealing the true identity and to appeal to the male-dominated literary market.

Another feature of the language women used while writing under the male pseudonyms was the adoption of a formal, authoritative, and confident tone and style. For example, the Brontë sisters, who wrote under the names of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell, used complex sentences, sophisticated vocabulary, and literary references to demonstrate their knowledge and competence. This was done to establish their credibility and legitimacy as writers and to challenge the stereotypes and prejudices against women’s intellect and creativity. They also avoided using feminine markers, such as pronouns, adjectives, or titles, that could reveal their gender. For example, Charlotte Brontë wrote in the preface to the second edition of *Jane Eyre*: “*I am neither a man nor a woman, I am an author.*”

A third feature of the language women used while writing under the male pseudonyms was the exploration of themes and topics considered taboo, controversial, or unconventional for women writers (Blakey, Z. 2021). For example, George Sand, the pen name of Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin, wrote about social issues, politics, religion, and sexuality, often from a radical and feminist perspective. This was done to express their opinions and views freely and to challenge the norms and expectations of their society and culture. Moreover, this was made much easier by means of the societal stereotypes that assumed that only men would be engaged and interested in such domains as: writing, politics, sexuality, mathematics, physics, and others. Consequently, the public exhibited less skepticism towards new authors.

In the Georgian literature, an intriguing mystique envelops one particular pseudonym, leaving many question marks. This mysticism revolves around the pseudonym “Elene Dariani,” behind which there are two different opinions about the identity of the poet. According to the conventional interpretation, Elene Dariani represents a literary mystification crafted by Paolo Iashvili. Under this guise, the poet attributed 14 poems of erotic nature to Elene Dariani. However, an alternative perspective emerged in the 1990s during archival research. According to this view, Elene Dariani could have been the pseudonym of another person—Elene Bakradze. The latter shared a romantic and creative bond with Paolo Iashvili. While definitive proof remains elusive, many scholars believe that Paolo Iashvili is behind the poems included in the “Darian cycle.” If we follow this line of development of the history, it

is particularly interesting how the poems written under a female pseudonym displayed a man and how a man created a woman's handwriting.

If we read the poem "Pyramids", we will see that it is not only a love poem, but also an erotic narrative full of passion and strong longings.

„იქ, სადაც სდუმან პირამიდები	"Where the pyramids are silent
შენ მომინდები,	I'll yearn for you
შენი თვალები,	your eyes,
შენი მკლავები,	your arms
შენი სინაზე.“	Your tenderness."

„...როგორც ნაზ სანოლს და შენ დამკოცნი	"...like a soft bed and you'll kiss me Like a queen, like a slave and a wife."
ვით დედოფალს, ვით მონას და ცოლს.“	

Such a daring style of narration convinces many scholars that it must have been written by a man. According to Giorgi Javakhishvili, it was impossible for any girl to express her feelings with such passion and courage in the 1920s. Considering the assumptions, it becomes apparent that the language and the concepts woven into it can prepare a breeding ground for discussing the identities behind it.

However, it should also be highlighted that the language, used while writing under the pseudonyms, was not always consistent. Some women writers also used subtle or overt clues to hint at their true gender or identity, such as dedications, initials, or autobiographical elements. Some women writers also experimented with different genres, forms, and voices, and sometimes switched between male and female pseudonyms. Some women writers also revealed their true identity later in their careers, either voluntarily or involuntarily, and faced various reactions and consequences. Therefore, the language used while writing under the pseudonyms was a complex and dynamic phenomenon that reflected personal and historical circumstances, as well as artistic and political goals (Armstrong, N. 1982).

Conclusion

The relationship between language and identity is a multifaceted and dynamic interplay that shapes and influences individuals and groups across various domains. Language serves as a potent marker of identity, reflecting cultural, ethnic, religious, gender, social class, and

personal attributes. Thus, the study highlights the complexity of identity formation, demonstrating how environmental factors significantly influence linguistic expression.

We once again agree that *“accommodation through speech can be regarded as an attempt on the part of the speaker to modify or disguise his persona in order to make it more acceptable to the person addressed”* (Giles & Powesland, 1975. p. 158). Language serves diverse purposes and yields various effects. The study reveals that:

- Influenced by numerous social, economic, and other factors, language contributes to the emergence of cultural innovations, which in turn necessitates a corresponding adjustment of identity to the evolving reality. Language, as a tool for expressing cultural identity differences, is exemplified in the context of ghettos.
- Language can be not only revealing, but also a "concealing/deceptive" tool. As we saw it on the example of women politicians, people usually try to present themselves in a more elevating way (the meaning of “elevating” depends on the context) so that they seem more appealing to other people. Language is not always a mirror that reflects reality, it is sometimes an illusion, enveloping one in a "favourable truth."
- Language creates a prerequisite for self-categorization primarily by shaping our perceptions of ourselves and others, influencing our sense of identity, and reinforcing social norms and expectations. The words and phrases available in a language can influence how individuals perceive and categorize themselves and others. The same case was detected in the discussed examples from literature where the choice of vocabulary, topics, and concepts prepare a breeding ground for the assumptions about one’s identity.

The study reaffirms once again that an identity is not a fixed phenomenon, which means we can express ourselves in a number of ways and since we are capable to do so, the language we use in this process will always be different. For instance, we have different identity roles, such as a son/daughter, a mother/father, a friend, a student etc. and we use different linguistic features, such as vocabulary, grammar, style, or register, to perform these roles. We also adapt our language to different contexts and audiences. We do not speak the same way with our friends as we do with our family members and even in family our vocabulary is different depending on whom we are talking with. Thus, it can be said that we adjust our identity to the environment and it usually happens through speech.

Due to the limited time and resources available for this research, we could not conduct a thorough analysis that would involve interviews, talk-shows, stand-up recordings, and more literary examples. Therefore, much more comprehensive research can be done in the future to further study the topic. The aim of this article was to contribute to the existing knowledge on the topic, and we hope that this study can serve as a valuable reference for future researches.

In essence, the article underscores the intricate interdependence between language and identity, emphasizing their dynamic nature. The exploration of diverse contexts, from ghettos to political domain and even literature, provides an understanding of the ways in which language actively participates in the complex process of identity formation and expression.

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About the author:

A first-year master's student of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities. He completed the undergraduate program of English philology at Tbilisi State University. He worked as a student expert at the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement. He is currently employed as an English teacher at a language learning center.

E-mail: ghughunishvili.tsotne@gmail.com

სამადლობელი:

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