

# Inheritance Meets Borrowing: Vocative Truncation in Tbilisi Georgian

Nino Amiridze

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

## Objectives

In today's Tbilisi Georgian (Kartvelian), proper nouns can undergo vocative truncation. However, the formation patterns and attitudes differ for disyllabic vs. other polysyllabic nouns.

- Trace the origin of VOC truncation for the two sets of nouns;
- explain the attitudes;
- suggest theoretical implications.

## Introduction

**Vocative Truncation: reduction of the last vowel or syllable of nouns and/or kinship terms in vocative** (Daniel & Spencer, 2009). Expresses familiarity, affection, endearment.

In Tbilisi Georgian, **the final vowel of the stem** gets reduced in VOC truncation.

- (1) a. *mamuka(-v)!* b. *mamuk!*  
Mamuka-VOC Mamuka.VOC  
“Mamuka!” “Mamuka!” (frndl.)
- (2) a. *gvanca(-v)* b. *gvanc!*  
Gvanca-VOC Gvanca.VOC  
“Gvanca!” “Gvanca!” (friendly)

With regard to the form and speaker attitudes, two strictly different sets of nouns can be noticed:

disyllabic vs. other polysyllabic forms.

**Differences in form:** the **remaining vowel** can be prolonged for nouns with a disyllabic stem only:

- (3) Disyllabic stem *gvan.ca*  
*gvaanc!* (cf. (2b))  
Gvanca.VOC  
“Gvanca!” (friendly)
- (4) Trisyllabic stem *ma.mu.ka*  
*\*maamuk! / \*mamuk!* (cf. (1b))  
Mamuka.VOC / Mamuka.VOC  
“Mamuka!” (friendly)

**Differences in attitudes:** truncated vocative of disyllabic nouns are trendy, while of other polysyllabic nouns are unpopular.

## Modern Georgian Dialects

- Truncation of the vocative for polysyllabic nouns is characteristic to the *Mtiulian-Gudamaqrian*, *Kakhetian*, *Kartlian*, and *Meskhian* dialects (Jorbenadze, 1989):

- (5) a. *maqvala(-v)!* b. *maqval!*  
Maqvala-VOC Maqvala.VOC  
“Maqvala!” “Maqvala!” (friendly)

Polysyllabic truncated vocatives of Tbilisi Georgian (see (1b)) are similar to the truncated dialect forms like (5b). Considering that urbanization brought the spread of various phenomena from different dialects to the Tbilisi variety, the origin of the truncation in (1b) can be traced back to those dialects.

- In these dialects, truncation is not characteristic to disyllabic nouns:

- (6) a. *mate(-v)* b. *\*mat! / \*maat!*  
Mate-VOC Mate.VOC / Mate.VOC  
“Mate!” “Mate!” (friendly)
- (7) a. *maro(-v)* b. *\*mar! / \*maar!*  
Maro-VOC Maro.VOC / Maro.VOC  
“Maro!” “Maro!” (friendly)

## Claim

Vocative truncation has different origins for different sets of nouns in Tbilisi Georgian: language internal development and contact-induced change.

Disyllabic truncated vocatives of Tbilisi Georgian (see (2b)) have no model in the dialects (cf. (6b) vs. (2b)) from where they could have been replicated into the Tbilisi variety.

Instead they could be attributed to the more recent contact language Russian, where disyllabic names (8a) get truncated (8b), cf. Tbilisi Georgian (3):

- (8) a. *má.ša!* b. *maaš!*  
Masha.VOC Masha.VOC  
“Masha!” “Masha!” (endrm.)

## VOC Truncation in Russian vs. Tbilisi Georgian

- First used in the second half of the XIX century, mainly in the speech of peasants (Daniel, 2009).
- Is formed on personal names (8) and kinship terms (9) having a penultimate-stressed nominative in -a (Comrie et al., 1996).
- Got spread to literature in the 1920s and in the intelligentsia (a higher social class) speech in 1960s.
- Today has an informal usage, shows closer social distance between interlocutors and is used to express familiarity, affection, and endearment.

- (9) a. *dedúl'a!* b. *deduul'!*  
Grandpa.VOC Grandpa.VOC  
“Grandpa!” “Grandpa!” (endrm.)

Truncated vocative for Georgian disyllabic nouns is similar to those in Russian (Parrott, 2010):

- optional,
- restricted to an informal setting with a relatively close interlocutor relationship,
- have the same pragmatic meaning.

Therefore, vocative truncation in disyllabic nouns in Tbilisi Georgian can be attributed to borrowing.

## Attitudes

- Truncated vocatives of disyllabic nouns:**
  - a result of *pattern borrowing* (Sakel, 2007) from Russian,
  - trendier (probably because of the earlier positive attitudes towards the Russian in parts of the Georgian society).
- Truncated vocatives of polysyl. nouns:**
  - inherited from Georgian dialects,
  - considered unpopular and backward (probably because of the view of rural Georgia (the home for those dialects) as backward, when compared to the urban spaces.)

## Theoretical Implications

- The presentation is concerned with a relatively new development in the Tbilisi Georgian: truncation of the final vowel in vocative forms of disyllabic nouns; It considers a similar rule, operating in some of the Georgian dialects as well as in the former contact language Russian and argues between the inheritance vs. contact scenarios, to find out the origin of the vocative truncation patterns;
- The data reflect an interplay between language internal development and contact-induced change;
- Apparently similar processes of truncation in a given word class may have had different origins.

## References

- B. Comrie, G. Stone, and M. Polinsky. *The Russian Language in 20th century*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996.
- M. Daniel and A. Spencer. The vocative – an outlier case. In A. L. Malchukov and A. Spencer, editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Case*, pages 626–634. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009.
- B. Jorbenadze. *Georgian Dialectology*. Mecniereba, Tbilisi, 1989. (In Georgian)
- L. Parrott. Vocatives and other direct address forms: A contrastive study. In A. Grøn and I. Marijanovic, editors, *Russian in Contrast*, Oslo Studies in Language 2(1), pages 211–229. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010.
- J. Sakel. Types of loan: Matter and pattern. In Y. Matras and J. Sakel, editors, *Grammatical Borrowing in Cross-Linguistic Perspective*, pages 15–29. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin and New York, 2007.

## Acknowledgements:

The work was done within the project FR-19-18557, supported by the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia.

- Email: [nino.amiridze@gmail.com](mailto:nino.amiridze@gmail.com)
- <https://sites.google.com/site/ninoamiridze/>