RESEARCH REPORT

LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY IN HISTORICAL CAUCASIAN GERMAN

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ABSTRACT

Varieties of German outside the German-speaking area in Europe are often in close contact with surrounding languages and differ from Standard German with respect to various linguistic phenomena. We present a study on a diasporic variety of German spoken in the South Caucasus region (primarily in Georgia), a historically well established settler variety, which until recently had been assumed to be obsolete since WW II. In this contact variety, interaction with the Russian language plays an important role historically and up until today. The language use of this community can only be understood if its complex historical, social and political development as a migrant community is taken into account, as it plays a crucial role for the multilingual settings, the speakers' multilingual competence and their language attitudes (which in turn influence their language use). In our study, we take a historical perspective on Caucasian German, investigating contact phenomena from Russian in the *Kaukasische Post*, a German language newspaper published in Tbilisi/Tiflis (Georgia) between 1906 and 1922. Linguistic contact features serve to position Caucasian German in its specific sociohistorical and geopolitical setting. We show how this is achieved in different sections of the newspaper, with a special focus on advertisements. To support and enrich our analyses, we also consider discussions on language policies in the newspaper, for example with respect to the role of German as a subject and a medium of instruction in local schools. In our conclusion, we discuss in what ways

the analyzed data offer insight into language attitudes and identity matters of the historical Caucasian German speech community.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Varietäten des Deutschen außerhalb des europäischen Sprachraums stehen oft in engem Kontakt mit den umgebenden Sprachen und unterscheiden sich in Bezug auf verschiedene sprachliche Phänomene vom Standarddeutschen. Die vorliegende Studie untersucht eine Varietät des Deutschen aus dem Südkaukasus (v.a. Georgien), die historisch gut belegt ist, jedoch bis vor kurzem als seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg obsolet galt. In dieser Kontaktvarietät spielt die Interaktion mit der russischen Sprache sowohl historisch als auch bis heute eine wichtige Rolle. Zentral für das Verständnis des Sprachgebrauchs der Gemeinschaft ist der komplexe historische, soziale und (sprach-)politische Hintergrund ihrer Entstehung. Aus diesem Hintergrund erklärt sich das mehrsprachige Umfeld, die multilinguale Kompetenz der Sprecherinnen und Sprecher sowie ihre Spracheinstellungen, die wiederum ihren Sprachgebrauch beeinflussen. Die Studie betrachtet das Kaukasiendeutsche aus einer historischen Perspektive und untersucht Sprachkontaktphänomene aus dem Russischen in der Kaukasischen Post, einer deutschsprachigen Zeitung, die zwischen 1906 und 1922 in Tbilisi (Georgien) erschien. Linguistische Kontaktmerkmale dienen dazu, das Kaukasiendeutsche in seinem spezifischen soziohistorischen und geopolitischen Kontext zu verorten. Es wird gezeigt, wie dies in verschiedenen Rubriken der Zeitung erreicht wird, wobei der Fokus insbesondere auf den Anzeigen liegt. Ergänzend und zur Unterfütterung der Analysen werden zudem sprachpolitische Diskussionen in der Zeitung berücksichtigt, beispielsweise in Bezug auf die Rolle des Deutschen als Unterrichtsfach und Unterrichtssprache in lokalen Schulen. Schließlich wird erörtert, auf welche Weise die analysierten Daten Einblicke in Spracheinstellungen sowie Formen der Identitätskonstruktion der historischen kaukasiendeutschen Sprachgemeinschaft bieten.

KEYWORDS

Caucasian German; Historical Language Contact; Advertisements; Language Policies; Language and Identity.

SCHLAGWÖRTER

Kaukasiendeutsch; Historischer Sprachkontakt; Werbeanzeigen; Sprachenpolitik; Sprache und Identität.

EXTRATERRITORIAL VARIETIES OF GERMAN

Varieties of German outside the closed German-speaking area in Central Europe are spoken in many different contexts. Language communities in which a German or German-based variety has been used over several generations can be found, for example, in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Georgia, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, South Africa and the USA. These varieties are typically characterized firstly by dialectal backgrounds (thus differing from Standard German[1] from the start), and secondly by a high degree of language contact. If the use of German became established over a longer period of time and was not limited to the first generation of immigrants, cross-individual and intergenerational stabilization tendencies and contact phenomena occurred and can be investigated.

The history of Caucasian German, the variety examined here, started more than 200 years ago. The variety had been considered obsolete since WW II but recent investigations have shown that there still is a speaker community in Georgia and Azerbaijan (Dück, 2017/2018, 2020b, 2020c).[2] Over the past decade, various steps have been taken to increase the visibility of German as a minority language in Georgia: Georgian legal texts have been translated into German; publications and teaching materials are available in German; and German has become more visible in the linguistic landscape of Georgia through German street and place name signs in former German settlements. Caucasian German shows considerable influence from Russian and Georgian, mainly due to the speech community's traumatic history: In 1941, most (ethnic) Germans from Georgia (and Transcaucasia) were deported from their settlements; later, especially since the 1990s, many of them emigrated to live in Germany. Since then, not only has the transmission of German in Georgia declined, but also the settings in which German can be used are much more limited today than before 1941. As a consequence, Russian and Georgian have become increasingly dominant in the language repertoires of the German speech community. Thus, today the community shows clear signs of being in the process of language shift.

In order to better understand under what historical conditions Caucasian German was used and why it still remains an important identity marker for those who use it today, we focus on the early 20th century up to WW I, a historical period when Caucasian German was still a well established variety. In the following sections, we first present information on the historical background of the Caucasian

1 Throughout this paper, we use "Standard German" to refer to the standardized German variety used in official writing in the German Empire as well as in the Caucasian German newspaper we analyzed.

2 There are no reliable numbers of current speakers available. According to a recent estimate by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior, there are about 2,000 members of the traditional German minority in Georgia today (https://www.aussiedlerbeauftragter.de/Webs/AUSB/DE/themen/minderheiten-ausland/sowjetunion/andere-nachfolgestaaten/andere-nachfolgestaaten-node.html, last accessed July 14, 2025). This is not identical with the number of German speakers, however, which is likely to be lower. In addition, there is a growing number of (young) adult learners of German.

German speech communities and on the languages they use(d). Next, the current state of research on this group and their languages is briefly presented, followed by a section on the data and the methods relevant to our investigation. In section 4, we present our analyses of the data and discuss the findings, followed by a conclusion in section 5.

1. CAUCASIAN GERMAN(S)

"Caucasian German" refers to the German varieties spoken in the Caucasus region, primarily Georgia and Azerbaijan. German-speaking individuals and groups began settling this area in the late 18th century, peaking in the early 20th century with as many as 30 German-speaking settlement colonies.[3] In the context and during the aftermath of WW II, language and settling patterns were forcibly changed. This shared traumatic historical experience is a crucial factor in constructing today's identity of (being) Caucasian German.

1.1. WHO ARE THE CAUCASIAN GERMANS?

Even if the term "Caucasian Germans" suggests a homogeneous group, there are, historically, at least two distinct speaker groups that can be subsumed under this term. Their spoken languages could differ considerably from each other. One group can be traced back to German professionals such as engineers, physicians, pharmacists, scientists and explorers, who originated from different parts of the German-speaking area in Europe. From the end of the 18th century onwards, they emigrated to the South Caucasus from various parts of the German Confederation, such as Saxony or Bavaria, mostly settling in metropoles such as Baku in Azerbaijan (Auch, 2001) or Tbilisi in Georgia (Songhulaschwili, 1997; Springform, 2004). They were generally in Russian service at the time (Boden, 2018, p. 184).

The second group were Swabians from Württemberg (in today's southwestern Germany) who, at the invitation of Alexander I, emigrated to settle in the South Caucasus at the beginning of the 19th century (Laubhan, 2021, p. 173). Most of them were farmers, craftspersons, winegrowers and cattle breeders. They founded closed German settlements where they lived fairly isolated from other

3 For a geographical overview of the settlements, cf. the map in Figure 1.

German-speaking groups for more than 120 years, maintaining and cultivating their heritage culture and language from their original home region.[4]

The former group was directly exposed to other cultures and languages such as Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani and Russian in the big cities, while the latter group had rather limited language contacts with the outside world in the countryside. From the early 1940s, however, the second group suffered a period marked by deportations, labor camps and language repression. In spite of these traumatic experiences, some of the descendants of the Swabians are still living in the former German settlements of Transcaucasia. Depending on the region, the majority language of communication there is Georgian, Azerbaijani or Russian. The majority language is usually part of the German speakers' language repertoire today.

Language-related differences between rural and urban speakers of German in the Caucasus still exist to this day. Today, the descendants of the original settlers try to maintain their German language and a German culture of remembrance. This is done, for example, by constructing a transnational collective identity of Caucasian Germans that includes those Caucasian Germans who re-migrated[5] to the Federal Republic of Germany.

1.2. THE IMPACT OF WW I ON THE GERMAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES

During the second half of the 19th century, the situation of the German minority in the Russian Empire began to change. In an atmosphere of numerous socio-political upheavals, the special legal status of the colonists was increasingly criticized, and numerous privileges enjoyed by the German minority were gradually abolished, culminating in the repeal of the Colonist Law in 1871. This repeal deprived the colonies of their right to self-government (cf. Hertsch; Er, 2017, p. 100) and made Russian the official language, even though the majority of Germans did not speak Russian at that time (cf. Kiel, 2009, p. 22). In 1891, Russian was introduced as the language of school instruction, further restricting the freedom of German settlers (cf. Paulsen, 2016, p. 35). For the Caucasian Germans, however, these changes did not have an immediate impact. Primary school continued to be taught in German, and the community's religious independence and linguistic and cultural characteristics remained

4 The settlement areas (once totaling over 30 German mother and daughter colonies) of the Swabians in the South Caucasus existed between 1817 and 1941 and have generally been well researched. See, for example, Allmendinger (1989); Auch (2001); Föll (2002); Haigis and Hummel (2002); Hertsch and Er (eds.) (2017); Hoffmann (1905); Laubhan (2017); Paulsen (2016); Songhulaschwili (1997); Springform (2004); and Tatarashvili (2018). The Swabian dialect in the Transcaucasian colonies was described by Berend (2011a) and Schirmunski (1928/1929).

5 "Re-migration"/"re-migrate" as used in this paper refers to the voluntary return, without political force, to the region of historical origin (here: in Germany). On the use of the term with reference to the Russian-German setting, see Berend (2011b, 2014).

largely untouched until the end of the Tsarist Empire (Paulsen, 2016, p. 35). It was first in the mid-1930s that Russian was introduced as the sole language of instruction in the Caucasus.

As in the rest of the Russian Empire before WW I, the school system in the German settlements in the Caucasus was closely intertwined with the local church communities in terms of organization, staff and curriculum. Over time, most German settlements established at least one four-grade primary or elementary school, so that by 1900 almost all German settlers can be assumed to be literate (in contrast to the Russian Empire, where 80% of the population was still illiterate, according to the 1897 census) (Paulsen, 2016, p. 28). From the beginning, the language of instruction in the schools was (Standard) German, while the colloquial language continued to be Swabian (Laubhan, 2017, p. 17). The economic rise of the colonists (first and foremost based on viticulture; the wine-growing associations "Union" in Katharinenfeld and "Konkordia" in Helenendorf were particularly successful and widely known; Laubhan, 2017, p. 47) contributed to the communities' ability to set up an educational system, enabling them not only to build school houses but also to install supervisory school boards and central schools for teacher training. Between 1906 and 1910, most German elementary schools in the Caucasus expanded into six-grade schools.

With the outbreak of WW I in 1914, Germans were increasingly regarded as internal enemies because of their national attachment to a country at war with the Russian Empire (cf. Hertsch; Er, 2017, p. 100). To prevent their collaboration with the enemy state, the Russian state passed the so-called Liquidation Laws in 1915, which resulted in the forced resettlement of Germans living in the west of the Russian Empire, to eastern parts of the country. In addition, by force of the Liquidation Laws German schools were closed down, German newspapers – such as the *Kaukasische Post* – were banned, and the German language was prohibited (cf. Steenberg, 1989, p. 17). Between 1918 and 1922, a short period of liberation occurred, starting with Georgia's declaration of independence as a democratic republic on 26 May 1918, which also contributed to a renewed heyday of German culture and language in Georgia. Georgia's independence was initially recognized by the newly established Bolshevik government in Russia. In 1921, however, the Red Army invaded Georgia, and Georgia's independence was ended (cf. Biedlingmeier, 2005, p. 265-266).

1.3. LANGUAGE VARIETIES OF THE CAUCASIAN GERMANS IN RECENT HISTORY

The largest group of Caucasian Germans in terms of number is that of the Caucasian Swabians. After the dissolution of the German colonies in 1941 and the subsequent forced deportations to Central Asian territories, they often ended up in Kazakh/Uzbek-Russian-German mixed settlements where they lived at least until the abolition of the *Sonderkommandantur* ('special command unit') in the mid-1950s, with monthly registration requirements. It was here that the group of Caucasian Swabians

came into close contact with other so-called Russia(n) German[6] varieties for the first time (cf. Berend, 2011a).[7] Many of them re-migrated to Germany between the 1950s and the 1990s; some of them settled in the villages and towns in today's Baden-Württemberg (Germany) where their ancestors had migrated from more than 200 years ago.

A smaller part of the Caucasian Swabian group were exempt from the deportations in 1941 because they had entered into inter-ethnic marriages with Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis or members of other non-German ethnic groups. Even though they were sent to (Central Asian) forced labor camps, too, those who survived were permitted to return to their former settlements after 1956 (at the latest), in contrast to the so-called Russian Germans, who must not return (Laubhan, 2021, p. 210).

A much smaller section of today's Caucasian Germans are the descendants of those who settled in the oil metropolis of Baku as architects and engineers in the 18th and 19th centuries, or in the commercial city of Tbilisi as merchants, pharmacists and physicians, and who blended in with the local population. Some of these descendants still speak a well-educated, (near-)Standard German today, which may be due to the excellent, mostly academic education to which the families attached – and still attach – great importance.

In general, all Caucasian Germans are highly proficient in Russian today, due to the language repression policy in the Soviet Union which affected the Caucasian countries as well as the Central Asian ones. It was only after the collapse of the Soviet Union that the respective national languages such as Georgian and Azerbaijani (as well as Kazakh and Uzbek) were increasingly spoken, although primarily within the family. Russian was spoken in public until the 1990s. After the end of the language repression policy, which coincided with the end of the Soviet Union in 1991, the family languages began to be used more frequently in public. Today, most members of the German-speaking communities in the Caucasus are fluent speakers of Georgian or Azerbaijani (depending on where they live), in addition to Russian. However, the use of the respective languages differs not only according to country and group affiliation, but also according to generation.

In 2013, experts from the Council of Europe and a Georgian inter-ministerial commission submitted a draft for ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages that

6 In the interwar period, the term *Russlanddeutsche* 'Russia Germans' was established as part of the ethnic discourse of the Weimar Republic, referring to German migrants from Russia and the Soviet Union. Although it is commonly used today, the term is misleading and not unproblematic, due to its conceptual history. Cf. Petersen and Weger (2017). On the historical background of Germans from states of the former Soviet Union, cf. Berend (2003); Blankenhorn (2003); Dinges (1925); Eisfeld (1999); Eisfeld and Herdt (1996); Krieger (2006, 2013, 2017); Längin (1991); Stumpp (1991); Wiens (1993); on the heterogeneity of the group, cf. Dück (2020a).

7 Occasionally, there was already contact with Volga Germans before the deportation, for example, when they came from the north to the Transcaucasian German villages in the years of famine. Some Caucasian Germans reported that shortly before the deportations in August 1941, Russians brought Crimean Germans to the Caucasian villages to help with the harvest, before they were all deported to Central Asia once the harvest was over.

recognizes German as one of the 13 traditional minority languages in Georgia. This draft, however, does not mention the Swabian variety of the German-speaking (traditional) minority in the Caucasus; it merely refers to "German" (without mentioning any varieties) which has a long tradition in Georgia. It ignores the distinction between Standard German taught in Georgian schools and universities and the Swabian variety spoken by the descendants of the Swabian minority group described above. To date, there is still no official binding declaration ratifying the Language Charter in Georgia. This ambiguity is reflected in the political sphere, in educational institutions, associations and in society as a whole. There are no tangible consequences of this ratification (except in the area of linguistic landscaping) (Dück, 2022).

1.4. GERMAN IN THE CAUCASUS AROUND 1900

German speaking groups had been migrating to Russia in several waves since the 18th century (cf. above). It is one aspect of the history of the German Caucasus settlements that they became part of Russian power politics. After having conquered the Caucasus region in the early 19th century, and in order to consolidate Russian claims to the territory, Russia designed its settlement policy to favor the settlement of migrants in the Caucasus. These politics had a direct effect on the settlement patterns of the second wave of migrating German settlers.

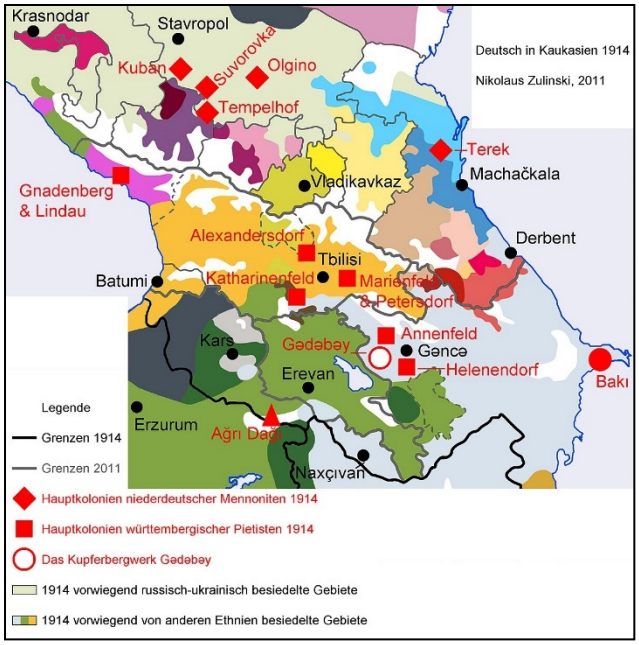


Figure 1. German settlement area in the Caucasus (= orange area; individual German settlements marked by a red square), 1914[8].

8 Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Deutsch_in_kaukasien-1914.jpg) [last accessed July 13, 2025].

At the end of the 19th century, German was still spoken by up to 50% of the population in some areas, as census data of 1897 imply.[9,10] Since many of the settlers came from Württemberg, Swabian was the main variety of German spoken in these settlements (cf. Laubhan 2021). Several issues of the *Kaukasische Post* make reference to this variety and include texts (e.g., letters to the editor) in Caucasian Swabian and in Swabian from Germany.[11] While most of them appear to be fictitious, they nevertheless offer a representation of the local German variety, in contrast to the large majority of the newspaper texts which are written in Standard German.[12]

2. CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH AND DATA OVERVIEW

German-speaking minorities in Central and Eastern Europe have been focused in a range of studies so far. These include works on Germans in Ukraine (cf. Hvozdyak, 2008; especially for Transcarpathian Ukraine, cf. Melika, 2002), in Hungary (cf. Knipf-Komlósi, 2008; Knipf-Komlósi; Müller, 2021 and 2019), in Poland (cf. Lasatowicz; Weger, 2008), in the Czech Republic (cf. Dovalil, 2017; Tišerova, 2008) or in Romania (cf. Bottesch, 2008; Scheuringer, 2010; for Banat Swabian in particular, cf. Scheuringer, 2016). A special focus on Russian-German varieties in Russia and the former Soviet Union is offered by Berend (1998, 2011a), Berend and Jedig (1991), Berend and Riehl (2008), Blankenhorn (2003), and Rosenberg (1994); for Caucasian Swabian in particular, see Berend (2011a) and Schirmunski (1928/1929). They can show that Caucasian Swabian, in contrast to other Russian-German varieties, mixed little or not at all with other German varieties in the Russian Empire and the (later) Soviet Union until the pre-war period of the 1930s, due to the fairly isolated settlements of the Caucasian Swabians (Berend, 2011a, p. 103, 105).

In spite of these numerous contributions, however, research into the language(s) used by the Caucasian Germans – including the present-day settlements of Transcaucasia – is still a desideratum

9 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:German_language_in_the_Russian_Empire_(1897).svg [last accessed: July 24, 2024]

10 The percentage of German speakers may have been even higher. The 1897 census counts 1.79 millions of 'Germans' (77 % rural), with nationality being counted based on the declared primary language (родной язык) of the respondents, as one reviewer pointed out.

11 E.g., KP 1/25, Dec. 16, 1906, p. 14; KP 2/1, June 30, 1907, p.13; KP 3/27, Jan. 3, 1909, p. 15; KP 8/10, Mar.23, 1913, p. 11; KP 9/1, Jan. 18, 1914, p. 16.

12 Through such letters to the editor (authentic as well as fictitious ones), non-standard language use can become visible even if it does not surface elsewhere in a newspaper. Examples for the visibilization of non-standard German varieties from other extraterritorial historical German newspapers appear, *e.g.*, in the *Berliner Journal* (published in Berlin/Canada, 1859-1918; cf. Löchte, 2007) and the *Samoanische Zeitung* (published in Apia/Samoa, 1901-1914; cf. Riese, 2012; Stolberg, 2013). Since letters to the editor can be written by (or ascribed to) non-professional contributors, non-standard language use is accepted in such texts, even in standard language newspapers.

in linguistic research.[13] We place our current study in the field between the well-researched aspects of German in Central and Eastern Europe and the under-researched area of German in the Caucasus.

The aim of our study is to better understand the historical sociolinguistic embeddedness of German (Standard German and Swabian) in the Caucasus as part of the Russian Empire, and the language attitudes and identity issues linked to its use. To this end, we investigated language contact phenomena in Caucasian German, as well as meta-linguistic discussions on German in the Caucasus. We were interested in finding out to what extent and in what ways language elements from German and Russian were combined or kept separate, and what kinds of combination patterns occurred. We also looked at script interactions between Cyrillic and Latin script, and at lexical change in German (e.g., lexical borrowing).[14] In terms of meta-linguistic discussions we wanted to know in what ways the use of German (Standard German and Swabian), especially in schools, was discussed and emerged as a topic in the *Kaukasische Post*.

2.1. HISTORICAL WRITTEN DATA: A CAUCASIAN GERMAN NEWSPAPER

For our study on Caucasian German, we focused on the *Kaukasische Post*, a historical German-language newspaper published in Tbilisi (historically in German: Tiflis) in today's Georgia in the early 20th century. The *Kaukasische Post* (KP) was a weekly newspaper for Germans in the Caucasus and first appeared in June 1906. Most of the texts are written in Standard German with little to no regional features, except for some (possibly fictional) letters to the editor and some of the jokes which variably contain dialect features from different German-speaking regions in the German Empire, Austria, Switzerland, and Russia. The *Kaukasische Post* claimed to be 'the only German newspaper appearing in southeastern Russia' at the time.[15] Its circulation rate peaked in 1911/12 at 1,100 copies. With the outbreak of WW I in 1914 and the enactment of the aforementioned Liquidation Laws, the newspaper had to suspend publication. In 1918, after WW I and the collapse of the Russian Empire, the newspaper saw a short-lived revival when the 'Association of Germans in the Caucasus' was founded to support the newspaper, and the *Kaukasische Post* was able to resume publication twice a week with four pages per issue (compared to 16-24 pages per week before the war). The German communities had to commit themselves to purchasing and paying for a certain number of

13 A small number of publications in journals and edited volumes are the only exceptions so far (cf. Dück 2018, 2020b, 2020c). A more comprehensive monograph is currently in preparation (Beyer; Dück in preparation).

14 One reviewer noted that a diachronic comparison of advertisements regarding the (possibly increasing) use of Russian as compared to German could help identify trends of language shift from German to Russian (cf. Litty, 2022, for a similar approach to data from South Dakota, USA). We do agree that this is an interesting line of research that should be taken up. Since our current focus is not on the process of language shift, however, we have to leave this topic for future research.

15 „Die „KAUKASISCHE POST" ist die einzige in Südostrussland erscheinende deutsche Zeitung […]" (KP 1/28, Jan. 6, 1907:1).

copies in order to ensure the paper's continuation (cf. Paulsen 2016: 43). In 1922, however, shortly after Georgia was invaded by the Red Army and occupied by Soviet Russia, the *Kaukasische Post* was forced to finally cease publication for political reasons (cf. Biedlingmeier 2005: 265-266).[16] The newspaper was revived in 1994, after the end of the Soviet Union, and has been appearing bi-monthly since then.[17]

For our current study, we focus exclusively on the pre-war period (1906-1914) of the historical newspaper.[18] This is a period when changed laws began to affect the German communities to a certain (but not yet crucial) extent (cf. above).[19]

Access to these issues is provided by the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (IOS).[20] The corpus consists of 333 issues from 1906 to 1914. From this corpus, we selected two to five issues for each year,[21] including the first (June 1906) and the last (July 1914) issue of the whole period. We thus considered a total of 33 sample issues (10% of all corpus issues). The issues were selected to cover different months in different years, so that various commercially relevant seasons could be covered (e.g., Christmas, Easter, summer holidays). In addition, and to increase comparability, we chose an early (January) and a mid-year (July) issue for each year, if possible.

For our analysis, we looked through all advertisements of the selected issues and classified them according to the languages used. Further, any texts on language, language policy or school language laws as well as texts containing or referring to Swabian were taken into account. Finally, all jokes were considered. In addition, other texts, e.g. local news from individual settlements or texts referring to the national or international political situation, were spot-checked for comparison of language use.

16 https://enc.rusdeutsch.eu/articles/1075

17 http://www.kaukasische-post.com/?page_id=44

18 The early 20th century was a period marked by dramatic and disruptive political events in Russia and the Caucasus (e.g., the 1905 revolution or the Stolypin reforms in 1906-1911), and these developments do also receive attention in the *Kaukasische Post* (e.g., KP 3/27, Jan. 3, 1908, p. 10-11).

19 In contrast to German (and other minority) communities in the USA, verticalization of social and communal economic relations (cf. Brown, 2022) did not play a relevant role for a changed language use of the Caucasus German communities before WW I. Rather, political changes and upheavals, including forced relocations, led to strongly restricted options for using German. These changes only deeply affected the communities after the beginning of WW I, however.

20 https://leibniz-ios.de/en/.
A complete collection of the issues for 1906-1922 can be found under https://dspace.nplg.gov.ge/handle/1234/112115?locale=en

21 In some years, KP appeared at irregular intervals so that it was not always possible to find enough evenly spaced issues. Therefore, the number of selected issues per year varies. Cf. Table 1 for more detailed numbers.

2.2. THE SET-UP OF THE KAUKASISCHE POST (1906 – 1914)

Each issue of KP contains between 16 and 24 pages.[22] Issue numbering starts with the first issue of June 18, 1906 (no. 1 to 27 in 1906, continuing to issue no. 52 in June 1907, then starting again with no. 1). In 1910, the numbering is restructured so that from then on, the first issue of each year is issue no. 1.

Of the 16 to 24 pages, the final two to four pages contain advertisements. From 1909, the opening pages include an increasing amount of advertisements, too, and from issue no. 11 in November 1909, the first few pages are fully made up of advertisements, with a second front page following the advertisements, when the text contributions start. Thus, in the later issues (from 1909), up to eight pages of each issue are advertisement pages.

The front page of each issue offers subscription information and an overview of the issue's contents. The paper opens with an editorial, greeting the readers and often referring to special events or the specific season (e.g., Easter or Christmas). After that, the following categories are included in almost all issues (cf. also Paulsen, 2016, p. 43):

- political topics ("Politische Rundschau"), divided into national ("Inland", i.e., Russia) and international ("Ausland") sections, with Germany being the first subsection of international news;
- regional and local information from the Caucasus region and the German-Caucasian colonies ("Nachrichten aus dem Kaukasus"; "Aus den Kolonien", the latter based on contributions from local persons who need not be journalists);
- agricultural and domestic topics ("Landwirtschaft und Gartenbau"; "Küche und Haus. Gesundheitspflege und Erziehung");
- literature and arts ("Literatur und Kunst", including poems or extracts from novels) and sometimes book reviews ("Bücherschau")
- parochial notes for the Caucasus region, e.g., information on marriages and baptisms ("Kirchliche Nachrichten");
- a joke section ("Bunte Ecke" / "Lustige Ecke").

In addition, many issues contain non-fictional and educational literature (reprints, excerpts) on various topics, and, in some issues, letters to the editor, some in Standard German, and some in (Caucasian) Swabian.

22 The only exception is an 8-page special issue in 1908.

3. THE *KAUKASISCHE POST*: A GERMAN-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER IN A MULTILINGUAL SETTING

Overall, there is little evidence of language contact with Russian (the dominant public language) in the texts. This finding matches observations from other extraterritorial German-language newspapers whose main functions usually were to provide German settlers and migrants with information in German, and to support the preservation of German in later generations (Litty, 2022; Löchte, 2007; Riese, 2012; Rocker, 2021; Stolberg, 2013; among others). In KP, it is, with rare exceptions, only in advertisements that Russian lexical elements are included within German texts. In addition, a small number of advertisements appears exclusively in Russian. Russian lexical elements are visually distinct from other languages in the newspaper because they are written in Cyrillic script, in contrast to the Latin script used for German.

Beyond the use of visibly non-German elements, the specific linguistic and cultural contact setting surfaces also in the topics treated. This is the case, for example, in the texts on local (Caucasian) German settlements, or when referring to Germany as the "Ausland" ('foreign country'). Another topic is the discussion on schooling in German and Russian and on laws regulating school language use. Further, meta-linguistic comments on the language situation of the Caucasian German speech community occur sporadically in the newspaper texts.

In analyzing and discussing the data more closely, we focus on how the *Kaukasische Post* reflects the positioning of the Caucasian German community as a minority speech community within the Russian Empire.

The *Kaukasische Post* (KP) started in July 1906 with an editorial, addressing its readers as follows:

> Die "Kaukasische Post", deren erste Nummer wir heute unsern Lesern darbieten, soll zunächst ein vermittelndes Organ werden für unsere im Kaukasus zerstreut lebenden Landsleute. Die Wahrung unserer gemeinsamen Interessen ist unsere Hauptaufgabe und wir werden denselben stets die eingehendste Beachtung zuwenden. Was unsern Landsleuten, seien sie Kaufleute, Gewerbetreibende, Handwerker oder Ackerbauer, not tut, soll in unserm Blatte besprochen und erwogen werden, (...)
> Das Bestreben jedes einzelnen im Kaukasus lebenden Deutschen muß unaufhörlich darauf gerichtet sein, den deutschen Namen hoch zu halten, und durch ernste Kulturarbeit, Tüchtigkeit und Redlichkeit diesem Namen Achtung zu verschaffen. (...) In Landwirtschaft, Handwerk[,] Handel und Wissenschaft wollen wir an einer ersprießlichen Entwicklung mitschaffen uns und dem Lande, im[sic] welchem wir leben, zum Nutzen und Frommen (KP, 1906/1, p. 3).[23]

23 "The "Caucasian Post", the first issue of which we are presenting to our readers today, is initially intended to be a mediating organ for our compatriots scattered throughout the Caucasus. The protection of our common interests is our main task and we will always pay the closest attention to them. What is deemed necessary by our compatriots, be they merchants, tradesmen, craftsmen or farmers, should be discussed and considered in our newspaper. (...)
The endeavor of every single German living in the Caucasus must be constantly to strive to uphold the German name, and to earn respect for this name through serious cultural work and honesty. (...) In agriculture, crafts, trade and science, we want to contribute to a fruitful development for the benefit and good of ourselves and the country in which we live". (our translation).

With this opening statement, KP positions itself as a medium that wants to contribute to a strong(er) bond between German settlers in the Caucasus. In addition, it calls on the Caucasian German community to preserve certain characteristics that are claimed to be typically German, thus creating a blueprint of "Germanness".[24] In this way, KP not only states its own intentions but also contributes to the conceptual construction of a (Caucasian) German identity that is claimed to be distinguishable from other (ethnic) identities.

Importantly, however, the text also highlights the intention to benefit "the country in which we live", i.e. the Russian Empire. This (self-)identification as being explicitly German with an equally undisputed membership in the Russian Empire is a recurring topic in the newspaper issues between 1906 and 1914. The community is presented as being firmly anchored in Russia, the country in which it lives, and this is part of its specific identity (cf. phrasings like "unser Vaterland, das weite russische Reich" 'our fatherland, the vast Russian empire', KP 7/1, Apr. 7, 1912, p. 8).

In 1910, the paper includes a self-promotion to solicit subscribers (KP 5/1, Jan. 13, 1910, p. 12), listing the advantages and goals of the paper as follows:[25]

> *Wer* seine Interessen tatkräftig unterstützt wissen will,
> *Wer* deutsche Eigenart, deutsche Sprache und Sitte liebt,
> *Wer* mit Berufsgeschäften überhäuft sich kurz und schnell von dem Gange der Weltbegebenheiten unterrichten will,
> *Wer* weder Zeit noch Neigung hat täglich eine große politische Zeitung zu lesen,
> *Wer* der russischen Sprache nicht genügend mächtig ist, um eine russische Zeitung voll zu verstehen,
> *Der abonniere auf die "Kaukasische Post".*[26]

An interesting detail in this advertisement is the mention of language proficiency, or its absence, with respect to Russian. In this way, KP presents itself as an important means to make political information accessible to Russian citizens of German background. In addition, it is a clear indication that up until WW I, it was still possible to be a Russian citizen without being a (fluent) speaker and reader of Russian.

24 It should be noted that the German language, or its preservation, is *not* part of this list.

25 The ad uses two print scripts, German Fraktur (blackletter typeface) and Antiqua. In the transcription here, italics indicate *Antiqua*, and regular script represents Fraktur.

26 '*Whoever* wants their interests to be actively supported,
Who loves the German character, German language and custom,
Who is swamped with professional business and wants to be briefly and quickly informed about the course of world events,
Who has neither the time nor the inclination to read a major political newspaper every day,
Who is not sufficiently proficient in the Russian language to fully understand a Russian newspaper,
should subscribe to the 'Kaukasische Post'.' (our translation).

3.1. ASPECTS OF MULTILINGUALISM: LANGUAGE CONTACT PHENOMENA AND META-LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES

The multilingual language reality of the Caucasian Germans is reflected in KP in different ways. First, as a Standard German newspaper, the reference variety of the country of origin (Germany) plays an important role, and it is this variety that is represented most in the paper. In addition, texts in Swabian as well as jokes that include quotes in other regional or local forms of German (e.g., from Berlin, Bavaria, or Switzerland) present varieties that differ from Standard German and are reflections of (imitated) orality and informal language use. Non-German varieties are found almost exclusively in advertisements. Russian, English, French and Italian lexical elements are represented to different degrees, with Russian being the only language besides Standard German that is used for monolingual advertisements. English, French and Italian may appear in names of products or locations and occasionally as part of the advertisement text. Russian is visually distinct due to the Cyrillic script while German, English, French and Italian are printed in Latin script.[27]

Besides such object language evidence, multilingualism is also reflected on the meta-linguistic level. Firstly, some advertisements (especially job advertisements and job searches) make reference to language requirements or language proficiency. Secondly, there are discussions in several issues of KP on school language policies and language teaching requirements. This shows that teaching and learning German in Caucasian schools is by no means an undisputed matter, even though there is little to no explicit indication in KP that publishing a newspaper in German could be a (political) problem in the early 1900s.[28]

3.2. LEXICAL AND SCRIPTAL INTERACTION: GERMAN, RUSSIAN AND OTHER LANGUAGES IN ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE KAUKASISCHE POST

On each cover page, KP lists its dealers and offices that accept advertisements. The first issue (KP 1/1 1906) lists locations in the Caucasus region only: Tbilisi, Baku, Wladikawkas, and Batumi. Later, national and international offices are added; they include locations in Russia (Moscow, St. Petersburg), but also in other European countries (Warsaw, Paris, and Berlin). The advertisements in KP promote a broad range of products. The majority of advertisers are, and remain to be, located in Tbilisi, but a gradual increase of external agents over time can be noted, as the newspaper seems to have gained a wider currency. There are different types of advertisements, e.g., product

27 German is usually printed in Fraktur (blackletter typeface) in KP, as is common for the time, with Antiqua used for headlines and for emphasis. English, French and Italian are printed in Antiqua.

28 Obviously, this changed with the beginning of WW I when the paper was forced to discontinue its publication.

promotions, job advertisements, announcements of social events, or recommendations of restaurants, vacation sites, or ship lines.

In total, we analyzed 936 advertisements regarding their language choice. A quantitative overview of the analyzed advertisements classified according to the languages used is presented in Table 1. The rate of German, Russian, and German/Russian advertisements in relation to the total number of ads is illustrated in Table 2.

Year	No. of analyzed issues	No. of analyzed ads	Avg. no. of ads per issue	German- only ads (% of all ads)	Russian-only ads (% of all ads)	German / Russian ads (% of all ads)	other mixed ads
1906	2	37	18.5	33 (89%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	2
1907	4	60	15	44 (73%)	0 (0%)	9 (15%)	7
1908	4	49	12.25	34 (69%)	1 (2%)	12 (25%)	2
1909	5	97	19.4	74 (76%)	0 (0%)	15 (16%)	8
1910	3	117	39	81 (69%)	2 (2%)	18 (15%)	16
1911	4	222	55.5	175 (79%)	6 (3%)	18 (8%)	23
1912	3	129	43	97 (75%)	9 (7%)	11 (9%)	12
1913	5	141	28.2	108 (77%)	1 (0.7%)	21 (15%)	11
1914	3	84	28	60 (71%)	0 (0%)	16 (19%)	8
Sum/Avg.	*33*	*936*	*28.4*	*706 (75%)*	*20 (2%)*	*121 (13%)*	*89 (9%)*

Table 1. Quantitative overview over analyzed advertisements, *Kaukasische Post*, 1906-1914.

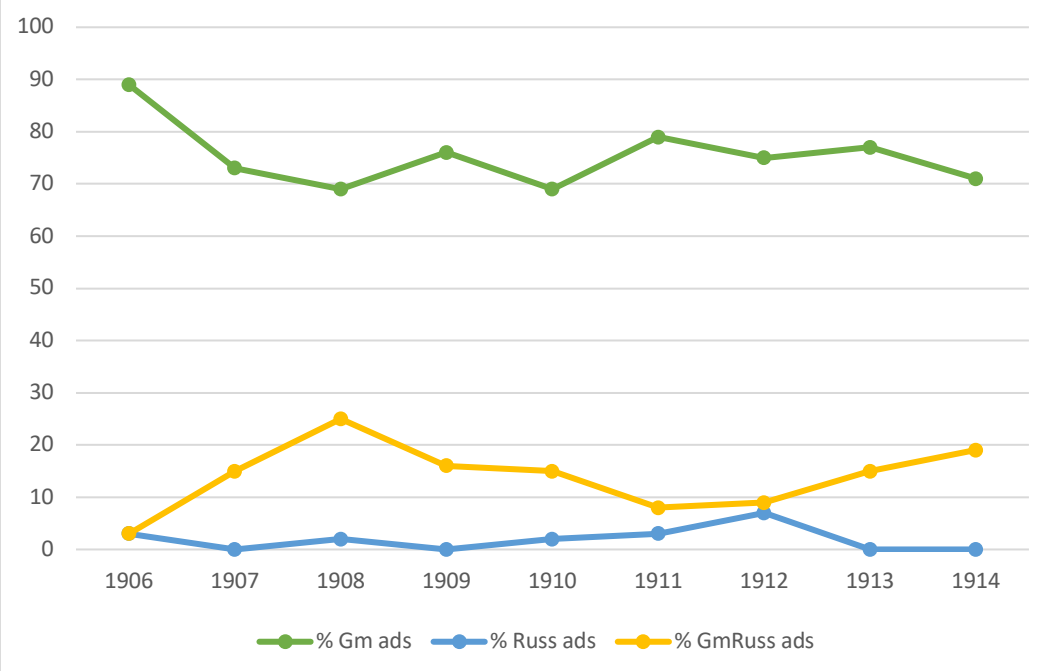


Table 2. Percentage of German (Gm), Russian (Russ) and German/Russian (GmRuss) advertisements (of all analyzed advertisements)

The year with the peak circulation, 1911, marks also the high point in advertisements, with an average of 55.5 advertisements per issue (cf. Table 1), followed by 1912 and 1910 with 43 and 39

advertisements per issue, respectively. The large majority of advertisements throughout all years is in German, as Table 1 and Table 2 show. In contrast, the number of Russian-only advertisements is consistently low, with a single small rise in 1912. Mixed advertisements, i.e. those that include more than one language, make up 22% of all ads. Among these, more than half are advertisements that combine German and Russian (121 out of 210, cf. Table 1). Other language combinations are (in absolute numbers for all analyzed issues) German-English (36), German-French (28), German-Russian-English (11), German-Russian-French (8), Russian-French (3), German-English-French (2), and German-Italian (1).

Since we were particularly interested in the relationship between German and Russian, we classified the advertisements with respect to these two languages for a qualitative overview of different types of ads. A typology consisting of three groups can be derived:

(i) advertisements fully in German;
(ii) advertisements containing elements from more than one language. The majority of these ads is in German with details in Russian (e.g., the product name, or the street address) or in another European language (English, French, Italian). Less frequently, an ad can be in Russian with comparable details in German or other European languages (English, French);
(iii) advertisements fully in Russian.

As pointed out, the largest number of advertisements is either completely in German, or mainly in German with some details in Russian; considerably fewer of them are exclusively in Russian, with a slight increase in 1911 and especially in 1912. Informational details in Russian within a German context occur from early on. This applies most often to the street address and sometimes to product names.[29] The use of Cyrillic for such commercially relevant information implies that, in general, readers were expected to read Cyrillic because otherwise, the address could not have been identified. Elements from other European languages are relatively rare and usually restricted to token items such as product names or producer names. They seem to occur mainly to promote a product or a location as particularly luxurious or international (e.g., the name of a perfume, a ship line, or French wine or meals).

The following examples serve to give an impression of the different types of language choice in the advertisements.

29 The same street names may appear in Latin script and sometimes in Germanized form in other advertisements; cf. the street names in the examples in "(i) German-language advertisements" below.

(i) German-language advertisements

- advertisers from Tbilisi:

(KP 1/1, July 1, 1906, p. 1; a bamboo and wickerwork manufactory)[30].

(KP 1/28, Jan. 6, 1907, p. 1; a physician)[31].

- advertiser from Mannheim, Germany:

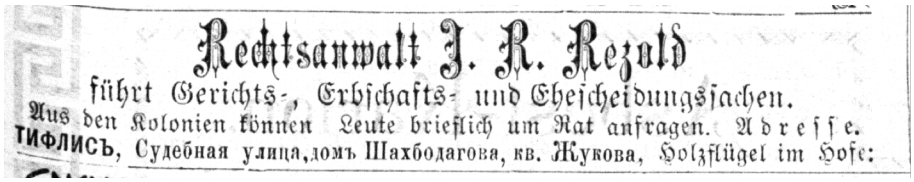
(KP 7/15, July 13, 1912, p. 23; steel and lead seals).

30 This advertisement contains a case marking deviation: Following the preposition "in", dative marking would be expected and is applied in "sonstigen" (second but last word), but not in "Reisekörbe" which would be "Reisekörben" in dative case. In other issues, however, the same advertisement appears with the form "Reisekörben". We therefore assume that this is just a typographical error, rather than an indication of (individual or community-based) language change.

31 An interesting detail in this all-German ad is the note, "spricht auch deutsch" 'speaks German too' (underneath the name), which not only indicates that L.O. is (at least) bilingual but also implies that – even with a German-language advertisement – it was not self-evident that the advertiser was German-speaking.

(ii) multilingual advertisements

- German, with the street address in Russian/Cyrillic (advertiser in Tbilisi):


Rechtsanwalt J. R. Rezold
führt Gerichts-, Erbschafts- und Ehescheidungssachen.
Aus den Kolonien können Leute brieflich um Rat anfragen. Adresse.
ТИФЛИСЪ, Судебная улица, домъ Шахбодагова, кв. Жукова, Holzflügel im Hofe:

(KP 3/27, Jan. 3, 1909, p. 19; a lawyer).

- German, with the street address in Cyrillic, syntactically integrated[32] (advertiser in Zdolbunovo):


Sie können kinderleicht
Ihr Jahreseinkommen vergrößern, wenn Sie sich um Vertretung gangbarer Artikel an A. T. Hoffmann in Здолбуново, ст. Ю. З. Ж. Д. wenden. Postkarte genügt.

(KP 2/41a, Apr. 7, 1908, p. 8; offer for a side job as salesperson)

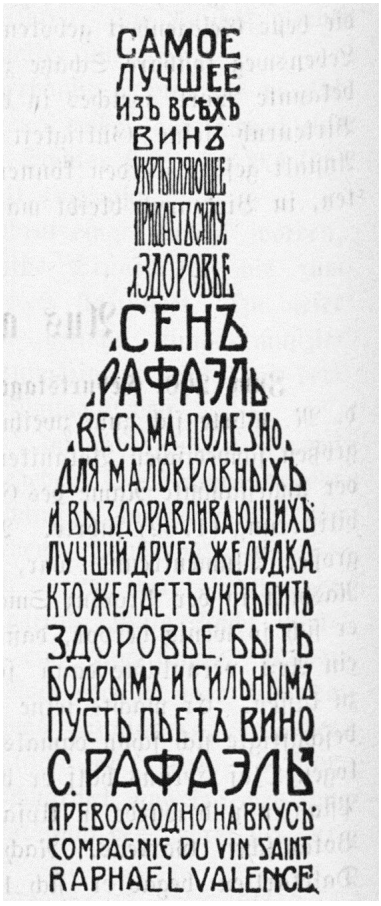
- German, with the product name in Russian/Cyrillic (advertiser from Moscow, product from Switzerland):


ГАЛА-ПЕТЕРЪ
Erste schweizer Milchschokolade. Erfinder
D. Peter Vevey (Schweiz)
„Gala Peter" wird namentlich für Kinder und Kranke empfohlen, ferner für Touristen, Offiziere u. s. w. Zu haben in den besseren Kolonialwaren—Geschäften. En gros Lager bei E. Kussy u. G. Abolnik, Moskau.

(KP 1/1, July 1, 1906, p. 18; milk chocolate).

32 In most advertisements of this type, the street address is syntactically independent of the remaining text. Here, the address forms the complement of the prepositional phrase headed by "in" (as part of another prepositional phrase headed by "an") which is placed within the subordinate clause and followed by the finite verb. This structure can be described as insertion (cf. Muysken 2000, among others) and shows strong parallels to oral code-switching. Translation: "You can easily increase your annual income by contacting A. T. Hoffmann in *Zdolbunovo, st. Yu. Z. Ž. D.* about representing marketable items. A postcard is sufficient." (our translation; Cyrillic script in italics).

- Russian, with the producer name in French (in the two bottom lines):



(KP 1/50, June 9, 1907, p. 14; wine)

- Russian/French:

(KP 9/2, Jan. 25, 1914, p. 18; a new French magazine, 'Le Français', with Russian explanations)

(iii) Russian-language advertisements

(KP 5/51, Jan. 1, 1911, p. 4; a music store for grand pianos and upright pianos)

(KP 8/40, Jan. 5, 1913, p. 19; a new model of a sewing machine by Singer)

Aside from the advertisements, Russian hardly ever occurs in the contributions of KP. In a few cases, reference is made to a letter to the editor or to a contribution in another newspaper that appears to have been written in Russian. In these cases, headers or short quotes are cited in Russian and printed in Cyrillic script (e.g., KP 9/4, Feb. 8, 1914, p. 8, KP 9/9, March 15, 1914, p. 10). Likewise,

there are rare cases when, e.g., a state regulation is referred to by its Russian name and in Cyrillic script within an otherwise German text (e.g., KP 9/28, July 26, 1914, p. 10). There are also singular examples where a short Russian phrase is given in Latin script (e.g., KP 7/1, Apr. 7, 1912, p. 14).

On one hand, such instances underline that the ability to read Russian (to a certain extent) was expected. On the other hand, since the occasions that required this ability were so few in KP, the paper could easily be read by Caucasian Germans with no or little command of Russian, in agreement with the promotional claim in 1910.

With respect to English, it is noteworthy that, in longer texts (not in advertisements), insertions from this language are accompanied by German translations, which is not the case for Russian. For example, in a contribution on "Weihnachten in Australien" ('Christmas in Australia'), the phrases "time is money" and "beg your pardon" are followed immediately by the corresponding German expressions, "Zeit ist Geld" and "Bitte um Verzeihung" (KP 1/28, Jan. 6, 1907, p. 11).

3.3. METALINGUISTIC REFERENCES TO MULTILINGUAL LANGUAGE USE AND LANGUAGE COMPETENCE

3.3.1. JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS WITH REFERENCE TO LANGUAGE ABILITIES

The examples above illustrated that using several languages is common in product advertisements in the KP. In addition, language competences are a recurring topic in job announcements and job searching advertisements. Job announcements for language teachers are a case where the need for multilingual proficiency is obvious. In other professional areas, however, German, Russian and sometimes Georgian (Grusinian) language abilities are offered or asked for as well. Some examples are:

- "Gesucht ein mit guten Zeugnissen versehener Lehrer, welcher der deutschen u. russischen Sprache mächtig ist. […]" (Tbilisi; KP 2/52, June 23, 1907, p. 15)[33]
- "Gesucht zum 1. Januar: Kontorlehrling mit guter Schulbildung, der deutschen und russischen Sprache mächtig […]" (Tbilisi; KP 7/40, Jan. 5, 1913, p. 18)[34]
- "Setzerlehrling, der die deutsche und die russische Sprache in Wort und Schrift beherrscht, wird gesucht. […]" (Tbilisi; KP 9/1, Jan. 18, 1914, p. 17)[35]
- "Junger Deutscher (…), möglichst der russischen, grusinischen und tatarischen Sprache mächtig, wird zum sofort[igen] Antritt gesucht. […]" (Tbilisi; KP 9/11, March 29, 1914, p. 17)[36]

33 'Looking for a teacher with good references who speaks German and Russian' (our translation).
34 'Wanted as of 1 January: office apprentice with good school education, proficient in German and Russian' (our translation).
35 'Looking for an apprentice typesetter with a good command of written and spoken German and Russian' (our translation).
36 'Young German (…), preferably fluent in Russian, Grusinian and Tatar, is wanted for immediate employment' (our translation).

Language proficiency in more than one language thus was an economic asset when looking for a job. Such advertisements show, on the other hand, that bi- or multilingualism was not a given for everybody. If German job announcements ask for other languages besides German (which not all job announcements in KP do), this implies that there were also monolingual (German) speakers as well as societal domains where it was fully sufficient to know German only. This assumption is supported by a (joking) description of the variable outcome of teaching Russian to German L1 speakers, discussed in the following section.

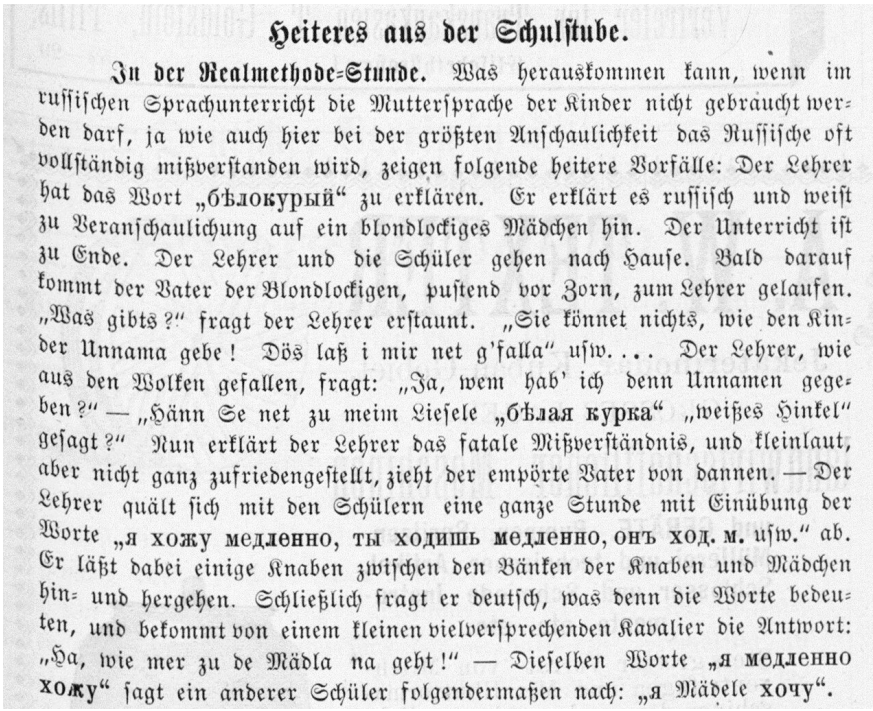
3.3.2. A COVERT DISCUSSION OF LANGUAGE POLITICS AND BILINGUALISM

An anecdote from the "Lustige Ecke" ('funny corner'), called "Heiteres aus der Schulstube" ('Cheerful tales from the classroom', KP 2/7, Aug. 11, 1907, p. 15; cf. Fig. 2 below), refers to a classroom language learning setting for young learners. It makes a clear difference between (Swabian) German as the L1 ("Muttersprache" 'mother tongue') of the students, and Russian, the language to be learned. The students are described as L1 speakers of Swabian and beginning learners of Russian. Their parents, the adult generation, are similarly pictured as not being proficient in Russian, which is jokingly illustrated by the complaint of a Swabian-speaking parent to the teacher based on a misunderstanding of a Russian expression. The major part of the text is in German and Latin script; the few inserted Russian phrases are printed in Cyrillic. The script distinction is kept up also within a mixed phrase at the very end of the text (cf. Fig. 2).

While seemingly arguing against a specific teaching method, the anecdote addresses more than just that: It pleads for permitting the use of German in Russian language classes to secure content comprehension, and the plea is supported by citing further examples of students' misunderstandings and misrepresentations of Russian phrases. The anecdote conveys several attitudes regarding the speakers it mentions. First, the German community is presented as not being able to speak Russian (well) and having difficulties learning it. Second, the parent's Swabian within the story's context points at the image of Swabian-speaking settlers as not being highly educated.[37] Third, the anecdote asks for the right to use German in schools, and the main argument to support this request is that it is needed in order to teach the students Russian. This seems to be a diplomatic argumentation at a time when apparently the use of German, at least in Russian language classes, was not permitted.[38]

37 This notion shows up in non-humoristic contexts as well, e.g. KP 1/1, July 1, 1906, p. 13-15; KP 2/7, Aug. 11, 1907, p. 14.

38 Salmon's (1988) investigation of humorous dialect use shows that "intraethnic humor" (Salmons, 1988, p. 159) can contribute to a stronger ethnic group identity. This function seems to play a role in the anecdote in Figure 2, as well.



Heiteres aus der Schulstube.

In der Realmethode-Stunde. Was herauskommen kann, wenn im russischen Sprachunterricht die Muttersprache der Kinder nicht gebraucht werden darf, ja wie auch hier bei der größten Anschaulichkeit das Russische oft vollständig mißverstanden wird, zeigen folgende heitere Vorfälle: Der Lehrer hat das Wort „бѣлокурый“ zu erklären. Er erklärt es russisch und weist zu Veranschaulichung auf ein blondlockiges Mädchen hin. Der Unterricht ist zu Ende. Der Lehrer und die Schüler gehen nach Hause. Bald darauf kommt der Vater der Blondlockigen, pustend vor Zorn, zum Lehrer gelaufen. „Was gibts?“ fragt der Lehrer erstaunt. „Sie könnet nichts, wie den Kinder Unnama gebe! Dös laß i mir net g'falla“ usw. ... Der Lehrer, wie aus den Wolken gefallen, fragt: „Ja, wem hab' ich denn Unnamen gegeben?“ — „Hänn Se net zu meim Liesele „бѣлая курка“ „weißes Hinkel“ gesagt?“ Nun erklärt der Lehrer das fatale Mißverständnis, und kleinlaut, aber nicht ganz zufriedengestellt, zieht der empörte Vater von dannen. — Der Lehrer quält sich mit den Schülern eine ganze Stunde mit Einübung der Worte „я хожу медленно, ты ходишь медленно, онъ ход. м. usw.“ ab. Er läßt dabei einige Knaben zwischen den Bänken der Knaben und Mädchen hin- und hergehen. Schließlich fragt er deutsch, was denn die Worte bedeuten, und bekommt von einem kleinen vielversprechenden Kavalier die Antwort: „Ha, wie mer zu de Mädla na geht!“ — Dieselben Worte „я медленно хожу“ sagt ein anderer Schüler folgendermaßen nach: „я Mädele хочу“.

Figure 2. Anecdote "Heiteres aus der Schulstube", German/Russian (KP 2/7, Aug. 11, 1907, p. 15).

3.3.3. SCHOOL LANGUAGE POLICIES IN THE MIRROR OF KP

The topic of using German as the medium of instruction and, more generally, the topic of school language policies is discussed repeatedly in KP. In an early KP issue (KP 1/28, Jan. 6, 1907, p. 5 and 6), the lack of German schools in the Caucasian colonies and in Tbilisi is addressed, and the strong wish to install such schools is expressed. Similar complaints are reported from the German Volga colonies (KP 1/28, Jan. 6, 1907, p. 8) and from Odessa where the application to open a girls' grammar school with German as the language of instruction was rejected by the Ministry of Education (KP 2/7, Aug. 11, 1907, p. 4). This situation had changed somewhat by 1914. In January, KP reports with reference to the German Volga colonies that schools are allowed to teach in German; however,

> nur in solchen Stunden [...], die nicht durch andere Unterrichtsgegenstände besetzt sind, also nach Abschluß der im Programm vorgesehen[sic] 4 Unterrichtsstunden – in der 5. Stunde (KP 9/1, Jan. 18, 1914, p. 11).[39]

39 'only in those lessons [...] which are not occupied by other subjects, i.e. after the end of the 4 lessons provided for in the program - in the 5th lesson' (our translation).

That is, German is not the general medium of instruction but is permitted only for limited instruction at marginal times. In addition, the legal permission necessary for such instruction was contested, which is the main topic of the just-mentioned contribution in KP. The legal regulations apply also to the German community in Riga which at the time was part of the Russian Empire, too. Regarding Riga, KP informs the readers that

> [d]ie Elementarschulen mit deutscher Unterrichtsspache, deren Konzession deutschen Vereinen resp. Privatpersonen erteilt worden ist, besitzen alle ihre Spezialstatuten. [...] Wenn einige Volksschulinspektoren im Uebereifer auf Grundlage jenes Zirkulars die Erteilung des Unterrichts in der Reichssprache verlangt haben sollten, so haben sie das auf ihren eigenen Kopf hin getan und ohne Weisung der Verwaltung des Rigaschen Lehrbezirks. (KP 9/1, Jan. 18, 1914, p. 11).[40]

In July 1914, KP reports on a new private school law which makes it possible to run a German school as a private school, and in that case, the language of instruction can be decided by the school board. Certain restrictions apply, however:

> Die Wahl der Unterrichtssprache wird den Begründern resp. Inhabern der Lehranstalten anheimgestellt, unter der Bedingung, daß 1) die russische Sprache und Literatur, Geschichte und Geographie Rußlands in russischer Sprache gelehrt wird und 2) in den Lehranstalten, die von Landschaften und Städten unterhalten oder unterstützt werden, alle allgemeinbildenden Fächer, mit Ausnahme des Religionsunterrichts für Nichtorthodoxe, der Muttersprache sowie der neuen Sprachen, in der Reichssprache gelehrt werden. Beim Unterricht im Russischen darf die Muttersprache als Hilfssprache gebraucht werden – in den mittleren Lehranstalten in der Klasse, die der 1. Klasse der Kronsschulen entspricht, in den Elementarschulen – im ersten Unterrichtsjahr [...]. (KP 9/28, July 26, 1914, p. 5).[41]

Thus, the new private school law made it finally possible to address the concerns voiced in the anecdote above (in 1907): German could be used as a supporting language at least during the first year of the Russian classes. Even though there were clear restrictions on what school subjects could be taught in German (non-Orthodox religious instruction, German instruction, and modern

40 '[t]he elementary schools with German as the language of instruction, whose licenses have been granted to German associations or private individuals, all have their special statutes. [...] If some elementary school inspectors were overzealous enough to demand that lessons be taught in the imperial language [i.e. Russian] on the basis of that circular, they did so on their own initiative and without instructions from the administration of the Riga teaching district.' (our translation).

41 'The choice of the language of instruction shall be left to the founders or owners of the educational establishments, on condition that 1) the Russian language and literature, history and geography of Russia are taught in Russian and 2) in educational establishments maintained or supported by provinces and cities, all general education subjects, with the exception of religious instruction for non-Orthodox, the mother tongue and the new languages, are taught in the imperial language [i.e. Russian]. When teaching Russian, the mother tongue may be used as an auxiliary language - in secondary schools in the class corresponding to the first year of crown schools, in elementary schools - in the first year [...].'(our translation).

languages), this was nevertheless a step towards more educational autonomy for the Caucasian Germans (and other minority groups).[42]

3.4. SELF-POSITIONING OF THE CAUCASIAN GERMAN COMMUNITY AS A (MINORITY) SPEECH COMMUNITY WITHIN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

In the previous sections, we focused on how the *Kaukasische Post* reflects the positioning of the Caucasian German community as a (minority) speech community within the Russian Empire. For this, we drew on the use of multilingual material in KP (mainly advertisements) and on language-related discussions and comments in newspaper texts.

In these sources, we found evidence for the visibilization of oral varieties (especially Swabian) and for a multilingual language repertoire within the community. The data from KP do not reflect a strong distinction between a Swabian-speaking and a Standard German-speaking community, in contrast to what could have been expected considering the genesis of the German speech community in the Caucasus (cf. section 2 above). Both varieties of German receive recognition in the newspaper, but this is done in different ways: They are assigned specific domains and functions and seem to be associated with different levels of education.[43]

Russian, the dominant public language of the Russian Empire, emerges as another part of the community's language repertoire. It appears in bilingual and, less frequently, monolingual advertisements as well as in a few reported mixed utterances and in occasional quotations. It is thus not a dominant language in KP but present throughout the paper, thus contributing to the localization and positioning of KP and the German speech community within the political entity of the Russian Empire.

While membership in the Russian Empire is not disputed, discussions on German as the medium as well as the object of instruction feature prominently in the language-related discussions in KP. It becomes apparent that the German community does not have access to educational resources in the way it desires, and that it is difficult to achieve acceptance and political recognition of

42 The informants in a synchronic study of Caucasian German (Dück, 2017/2018, 2018, 2020c) who were born between WW I and WW II report that for them, German was the exclusive school language up until the 1930s. Compared to the cited evidence from KP, this information implies that a change in school language policy took place around or shortly after WW I, a development that was already under way by the changes up until WW I. The informants' reported experience seems to be in contrast, though, with the attested post-WW I repression of KP as a German-language newspaper. At the moment, we can only state this apparent contradiction but are not able to resolve it.

43 Due to widespread schooling in German (cf. above), most if not all Caucasian Germans were fluent readers of Standard German. While different German dialects, including Swabian, are used for humorous effects, occasionally there are also features written in Swabian (from Germany and from the Caucasus) that deal with cultural or historical topics. Thus, Swabian was not restricted to being a humorous or non-serious variety in KP.

corresponding activities. Such discussions indicate that the German language and its transmission, including in a standardized written form, play an important role for the self-identification of the community. The discussions show that minority language politics, at least with respect to schooling, are a contested topic in the multilingual Russian Empire during the years up to WW I.

4. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Caucasian German has a long and varied history. While it has been transmitted even under very difficult conditions, today it is in the process of being replaced by surrounding majority languages, in spite of a certain degree of institutional and legal support. As we pointed out, the term "Caucasian Germans" covers several groups of (historically) German-speaking migrants and settlers who can be distinguished based on diverging migration histories. One group were professionals from various German-speaking regions who arrived in the Caucasus region from the late 18th century onwards. They settled in urban regions and quickly came into close contact with the surrounding society. Another group, Swabians from Württemberg, migrated to the same region, beginning in the early 19th century. In contrast to the first group, however, they founded isolated settlements, preserved their German language and culture and had hardly, if any, interactions with speakers of other varieties (German or otherwise).

In this paper, we investigated the sociohistorical and sociolinguistic development of German-speaking communities in the South Caucasus region with a focus on the early 20th century. We explored the use of Russian lexical elements in Caucasian German, and how the patterns we detected can be linked to language identity and language attitudes across time. Our analyses of the non-German, mainly Russian, lexical elements regarding their semantic contribution with respect to the proposition of an utterance, an ad, or a text shows that the Russian elements do not carry crucial semantic weight for the message as a whole. Rather, their relevance pertains to the level of sociolinguistic function: They mark the Russian-dominant setting by framing (and interspersing) German textual content with Russian lexical items.

Multilingual material in advertisements thus provides contextualization cues (cf. Gumperz, 1982; Maschler, 2000)[44] in a sociolinguistic sense by placing the utterance within a specific setting, in this case the setting of "German in the Russian Empire". Especially the Russian lexical and scriptal form of street names and addresses makes this very discernible, not least in a literal sense (by using Cyrillic

44 The term "contextualization cues" was first applied to (oral) discourse markers. We extend the use of the term here by proposing that (written) small other-language items that do not carry much semantic weight can fulfil a similar function in multilingual texts.

script). Script, addresses, product names, emblems and single lexical items fulfil the function of firmly and unmistakably placing the use of German in KP within a Russian-dominant (or Russian-ruled) setting. These elements work as flags marking the socio-contextual frame of this community and their language use. They mark that the speakers (and the community) position themselves as Caucasian Germans. Crucially, these Russian elements do not change the propositions made, i.e., the semantic content, but they contextualize them, for example, when the vendor's street address is in Russian while the advertisement itself is in German.

The results show that, by integrating Russian lexical elements that are small and not crucial for the semantic content into German texts and utterances, speakers and writers ensure that (a) the German identity remains recognizable (since German is the identifier language of the community) and that (b) a clear and explicit contextualization within the Russian language contact setting takes place. In this way, the community's specific identity as Caucasian Germans of the early 20th century, with a language and history entailing both German(y) and Russia(n), is exhibited in their language use.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no competing interests.

STATEMENT OF DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available at:
https://www.difmoe.eu/periodical/uuid:5b2279c9-0491-49b6-8e9a-4ba79940749b

The main language on the website is German (due to the *Kaukasische Post* being in German), but some meta-data are also available in English, Czech and Slovak.

When following the link, a year (1906 - 1914) can be chosen. Within each year, the highlighted dates are those for which an issue of KP is available. Mouse over a date to see the issue number; clicking on a highlighted date opens the issue of that date. Each page of the issue can then be accessed individually and can be zoomed in for convenient reading.

We analyzed the following issues in detail regarding advertisments and in a cursory way regarding discussions on school language and language policies (cf. also the overview in Table 1, p. 16):

- 1906: KP 1/1, July 1, 1906; KP 1/16, Oct. 14, 1906
- 1907: KP 1/28, Jan. 6, 1907; KP 1/50, June 9, 1907; KP 2/7, Aug. 11, 1907; KP 2/17, Oct. 20, 1907
- 1908: KP 2/28, Jan. 7, 1908; KP 2/40, Apr. 5, 1908; KP 2/41[a], Apr. 7, 1908; KP 3/5, Aug. 2, 1908

- 1909: KP 3/27, Jan. 3, 1909; KP 3/28, Jan. 14, 1909; KP 3/52, July 4, 1909; KP 4/1, Sept. 5, 1909; KP 4/11, Nov. 14, 1909
- 1910: KP 5/1, Jan. 13, 1910; KP 5/15, Apr. 24, 1910; KP 5/29, July 31, 1910
- 1911: KP 5/51, Jan. 1, 1911; KP 6/1, Jan. 15, 1911; KP 6/22, June 11, 1911; KP 6/ 24|46, Nov. 26, 1911
- 1912: KP 7/1, Apr. 7, 1912; KP 7/15, July 13, 1912; KP 7/28, Oct. 13, 1912
- 1913: KP 7/40, Jan. 5, 1913; KP 8/1, Jan. 19, 1913; KP 8/8, Mar. 3, 1913; KP 8/28, July 27, 1913; KP 8/41, Oct. 26, 1913
- 1914: KP 9/1, Jan. 18, 1914; KP 9/14, Apr. 19, 1914; KP 9/28, July 26, 1914.

A few additional issues were consulted in a cursory way, regarding the use of Swabian and further language discussions. These issues are referenced with issue number and date when they are mentioned in the text.

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