On the Mediation of Languages in Iranian-Georgian Language Contacts

During the longstanding Iranian-Georgian language contacts, lexical-phraseological units penetrated into Georgian both directly from Persian or via a mediator language. In the Middle Iranian language period, parallel to direct borrowing, Georgian obtained Persian and Parthian lexical units via Armenian. During the New Persian language period, beginning from the 11th century, after the termination of direct language contacts between Arabic and Georgian, Persian itself became a mediator language in the process of penetration of Arabic lexical units into Georgian.

It should be noted that the analysis of some New Persian loans in Georgian also reveals the mediation of Turkish or Azerbaijani. This fact, which had been neglected until recently, proves that during the New Persian language period, lexical units penetrated into Georgian in an indirect way too.

The direct and indirect loans in the corpus of Georgian lexical borrowings from Parthian, Middle Persian, New Persian and Arabic are mainly distinguished based on the phonetic criteria worked out by M. Andronikashvili(Andronikashvili, 1965: 298-330; Andronikashvili, 1966: 167-176; 182-215; Andronikashvili, 1996: 21-55).

However, the phonetic criterion becomes useless if the etymon does not contain specific sounds or sound complexes adapted differently in the process of direct or indirect borrowing. In some cases, the morphosemantic and morphosyntactic criteria are applied.

In certain cases, the etymon, the loan and the parallel form represented in the mediator language differ in their morphological peculiarities and semantics For instance, from the phonetic viewpoint, the word იავარ/ავარ[iavar/avar] "booty" found in Georgian may be derived from both Middle Persian etymon āvār "robbery, pillage" and the Armenian form աւար[avar] "booty". However, its semantic coincidence with the Armenian parallel proves that the word იავარ[iavar]/ავარ[avar] penetrated into Georgian via Armenian. The morphological sub-class of the etymon is also changed: the Middle Persian noun of action āvār "robbery, pillage" is replaced in Armenian and Georgian by the semantics of result.

The morphosyntactic criterion is efficient in the process of distinction of Arabic words borrowed by Georgian directly or through a mediator language. Frequently, late Arabic loans are not independent units. They are found in the form of morphosyntactic units, hyper-calques from Persian, namely, the nominal parts of compound verbs. This proves that these units penetrated into Georgian via Persian. For instance: Persian خیر دیدن[xeir didan] and Georgian ხეირ-ის ნახვა[xeir-is naxva] "take advantage, gain profit".

The phonetic form or semantics of certain Persian loans in Georgian prove that these forms have penetratred into Georgian via Turkish or Azerbaijani. For instance, the phonetic form of the Georgian word თერძi[terʒi] "tailor of men's clothes" has been obtained from a Turkish-Azerbaijani form terzi "tailor"<Persian درزی[darzi] "tailor". There is a semantic coincidence proving the mediation of Azerbaijani language in case of Georgian ნარ[nar] "male camel", cf. Azerbaijani nər "male camel"and Persian نر [när] "male animal".

Thus a combination of the phonetic, morphosemantic and morphosyntactic criteria should be applied when making a distinction between direct and indirect loans.

References

Andronikashvili, M.(1965). Arabuli sityvebis sparsuli gzit shemosvlis shesaxeb qartulshi[On the Penetration of Arabic Words into Georgian via Persian], Proceedings of Tbilisi State University, 105, 298-330, Tbilisi: Tbilisi University Press.

Andronikashvili, M.(1966). Narkvevebi iranul-kartuli enobrivi urtiertobidan I[Studies in Iranian-Georgian Linguistic Contacts I], Tbilisi: Tbilisi University Press.

Andronikashvili, M.(1996). Narkvevebi iranul-kartuli enobrivi urtiertobidan II[Studies in Iranian-Georgian Linguistic Contacts II], Tbilisi: Irmisa

Key words

Iranian-Georgian Language Contacts, Mediation of Languages, morphosemantic, morphosyntactic, hyper-calquing