

## **Language Identity Change and the Loss of Linguistic Diversity in the North Caucasus**

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This talk addresses socio-linguistic realities evidenced after the collapse of the Soviet system in the North Caucasus, a region with extraordinary ethnic and linguistic diversity (approximately 50 allochthonous and 100 autochthonous languages), through the lens of languages sustainability seen as sticking to linguistic and cultural practices of the past as repositories of local culture and knowledge and providing concentrated efforts to integrate social, cultural and economic resources for preserving and enhancing the adaptive capacity of the linguistic systems.

The presentation based on current case study is designed to fill in the gap in the knowledge regarding the complicated situation with a growing body of threat on endangered languages as many as 50% of which are at grave risk of extinction (some are now included in the Red Book, for example, Ginukh, with only 200 speakers remaining). The changing language identities are the result of interplay of ethnic, geopolitical, economic, cultural, religious and other factors, being products of regional, national and global processes of the 21st century. Low political capital and low status of some non-title languages, acceptance of majority language education, insufficient measures taken by governmental structures for maintenance of minority languages, the loss of the traditional educational practices and language teaching traditions, globalization and the assimilation of one culture within a more dominant culture reduces a number of bilinguals of the North Caucasus and brings about language loss. We focus on understanding the indigenous languages loss and survival that occur within the contradictory modern trends of globalization and language and culture revitalization.

Effective conservation of indigenous languages demands their protection within their natural ecosystems and habitat at all levels of decision making - local, regional, national, and global. So the issues of sustainability and language planning and language policy in the North Caucasus occupy an important place.