Borrowing vocative truncation rule from Russian: Pattern borrowing in Georgian-Russian language contact

Nino Amiridze

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

nino.amiridze@gmail.com

Many languages have a rule of vocative (VOC) truncation, when the last vowel or syllable of nouns and/or kinshp terms gets reduced in vocative [Prince, 2001], [Daniel and Spencer, 2009, p. 629].

Some Georgian dialects have the rule of truncation of vocative forms of more-than-two-syllable proper nouns (see [Jorbenadze, 1989] and (1a) vs. (1b); (2a) vs. (2b)):

(1) A Georgian 3-syllable male name in vocative

    a. mamuḳa!   b. mamuḳ!   (truncated)
       Mamuka.VOC   Mamuka.VOC
       'Mamuka!'(simple address)   'Mamuka!' (expressing familiarity)

(2) A Georgian 4-syllable female name in vocative

    a. duduxana   b. duduxan! [1]   (truncated)
       Dudukhana.VOC   Dudukhana.VOC
       'Dudukhana!'   'Dudukhana!' (expressing familiarity)

However, the truncation of two-syllable proper nouns has not been allowed (cf. (3a) vs. (3b); (4a) vs. (4b)):

(3) A Georgian 2-syllable male name in vocative

    a. sandro!   b. *sandr!   (truncated)
       Sandro.VOC   Sandro.VOC
       'Sandro!'(simple address)   'Sandro!' (expressing familiarity)

(4) A Georgian 2-syllable female name in vocative

    a. marta!   b. *mart!   (truncated)
       Martha.VOC   Martha.VOC
       'Martha!'(simple address)   'Martha!' (expressing familiarity)

In contact with the Russian language though, standard Georgian borrowed a pattern of vocative truncation for 2-syllable proper names (more on a replication mechanism such as *pattern borrowing* see, for instance, [Sakel, 2007], [Matras and Sakel, 2007]).

As known, vocative truncation rule operates in Russian since the second half of the XIX century [Daniel, 2009]. In modern Russian, the truncated vocative is formed on personal names and kinship terms having a penultimate-stressed nominative (NOM) in *-a* [Comrie et al., 1996] (cf. the VOC form of the male name *Míša* (5a) as opposed to the truncated VOC form *Míš* (5b), or cf. the VOC form of the female name *Marína* (6a) as opposed to the truncated VOC form *Marín* (6b):

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[1] https://www.kvirispalitra.ge/2011-03-31-07-00-04/11031-qarthveli-msakhiobebi-dudukhana-tserodze.html

(5) A Russian 2-syllable male name in vocative

    a. Míša!   b. Míš!   (truncated)
        Miša.VOC   Miša.VOC
        'Misha!'(simple address)   'Misha!' (addressing with affection)

(6) A Russian 3-syllable female name in vocative

    a. Marína!   b. Marín!   (truncated)
        Marina.VOC   Marina.VOC
        Marina!' (simple address)   'Marina!' (addressing with affection)

In Russian, truncated vocatives were first used in the second half of the XIX century, mainly in the speech of peasants [Daniel, 2009]. It got spread to literature only later in the 1920s and in the intelligentsia (a higher social class) speech in 1960s. Today it has an informal usage, shows social distance between interlocutors and is used to express intimacy, affection, and familiarity.

Truncated vocative for 2-syllable nouns in Georgian is similar to the one in Russian [Parrott, 2010]: both are optional, restricted to an informal setting with a relatively close interlocutor relationship, and have the same pragmatic meaning. In Georgian the rule got replicated for 2-syllable nouns approximately in 1980s in the same distribution as in Russian: to address people (cf. the VOC form of the male name *šota* (7a) as opposed to the truncated VOC form *šoot* (7b), or cf. the VOC form of the female name *gvanca* (8a) as opposed to the truncated VOC form *gvaanc* (8b)).

(7) A Georgian male name in vocative

    a. šota!   b. šoot!   (truncated)
        Shota.VOC   Shota.VOC
        'Shota!'(simple address)   'Shota!' (addressing with affection)

(8) A Georgian female name in vocative

    a. gvanca!   b. gvaanc!   (truncated)
        Gvantsa.VOC   Gvantsa.VOC
        'Gvantsa!'(simple address)   'Gvantsa!' (addressing with affection)

The length of the vowel in the Georgian truncated vocatives such as *šoot* (7b) and *gvaanc* (8b is probably due to the comprehension of stressed Russian syllables by Georgian native speakers as prolonged, whose native language is characterized by weak stress [Zhgenti, 1963].

Nowadays, especially in social media, truncated vocatives of 2-syllable nouns (see (7b) and (8b)) that are a result of the replicated VOC truncation rule from Russian are more trendy than the similar truncated vocatives of 3-syllable nouns, characteristic to Georgian even before the contact with Russian. The latter are considered more backward.

It is hard to explain why the number of syllables should matter for such a divide in attitudes, unless one looks back into the history of the use of truncation in the two classes of nouns. Truncation in some Georgian dialects has long been characteristic to 3-syllable proper names, mostly among rural population. Truncated vocatives of 3-syllable nouns are much less popular in urban areas or among younger generation. As for the higher prestige of the 2-syllable nouns with truncated vocative, in our opinion, they are a result of borrowing a vocative truncation rule from Russian and reflect earlier positive attitudes towards the Russian in parts of the Georgian society.

The data suggests the importance of researching the history of spread of particular rules/patterns to account for actual language data.

Today, four decades later, Georgian truncated vocatives, replicating the Russian rule, take it one step further. Namely, the resulting forms in Georgian started getting used also as nominative, thus, as

a form of reference (see, for instance, the male and female truncated names *Shoot*[2] and *Gvaanc*[3] in the nominative function, thus, as reference forms that stand for *Shota* and *Gvantsa*, respectively.

This development, although not attested in the donor language Russian itself, is a typologically standard development of reference forms out of address forms. It is known in the literature by the term *vocativus pro nominativo* and is frequent especially in situations of language contact [Stifter, 2013].

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[2]https://www.facebook.com/shoot.basheleishvili
[3]https://www.facebook.com/gvaanc.khubuluri