

Georgian Blessing Formulas from the Standpoints of Face and Politeness Theories

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Abstract

Current Georgian speech etiquette, whether formal, neutral, or informal, is abundant in blessing formulas and well-wishing phrases. Quite often in Georgian culture blessings serve as essential elements of the rituals of greeting, leave-taking, thanking, expressing condolences, congratulating, showing sympathy, toasting etc. Moreover, alongside some standard polite formulas the Georgian language employs blessings as their substitutes and emotionally charged equivalents. The paper examines Georgian blessing formulas and well-wishes from the perspectives of face and politeness theories with the aim of stating their cultural specificity and social value. In the study well-wishes are regarded as indirect blessings. For a comprehensive analysis of the data, the following issues have also been discussed: (a) general structural, cognitive, pragmatic, and discursal peculiarities of Georgian blessings; (b) religious experience and the idea of God as reflected in the data under discussion; (c) types of meaning-function relationship in blessings.

Key Words: Georgian, blessing formula, well-wish, ritual, face, politeness

1. Introduction

Ample use of blessings has always been typical of Georgian culture; being an integral part of everyday Georgian speech etiquette, blessing formulas serve as indispensable elements of different types of verbal ritual (both formal and informal) like: greeting, thanking, congratulating, toast-making, expressing condolences, leave-taking etc. Quite often the given peculiarity of Georgian is the main cause of interference errors made by Georgian speakers of English; the observations have shown that any non-native like abundance of well-wishes or blessings in the speech of Georgian speakers of English makes their interlocutors feel uncomfortable. On the other hand, neglect of blessing routines by foreigners speaking Georgian might lead to a misunderstanding and even miscommunication.

1.1. Aims

The paper is an attempt (so far the first one) to examine Georgian blessing formulas from the perspectives of Face and Politeness theories (Goffman 1955, 1972; Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987; Eelen 2001; Holtgraves 2005; Leech 2005; Scollon & Scollon 1984, 1997; Terkourafi 2005; Watts 2003). For the given purpose, the following issues are dealt with:

- a. Relationship between religious experience and blessing formulas; the idea of God as reflected in Georgian blessings;
- b. General structural, cognitive, pragmatic and discursal peculiarities of Georgian blessings;
- c. Types of meaning-function relationship in blessings;
- d. Cultural specificity and values manifested in the use of Georgian blessings, Standard Georgian blessings, in particular, and their relevance for polite behaviour and maintenance of face.

1.2. Data and Methods

In the paper a multi-method approach for collecting data was adopted. The empirical data cover:

- a. Samples of written discourse genres: season postcards, letters, e-mail messages with different degrees of formality/informality (83 altogether);

- b. Samples of spoken discourse genres: public speeches (27 speeches made by 4 Georgian presidents); naturally occurring spoken data obtained by employing the method of observation and note-taking.
- c. Dictionary data examined by testing the informants; 15 informants (7 males, 8 females) belonging to 5 different age-groups: teenagers aged 15, 16 & 17, adults aged: 25, 28, 32; 40, 45 & 53; 61, 66 & 70; 75, 77 & 83. The informants were given a list of blessing formulas and were asked to comment on: (a). the socio-cultural context(s) each of the blessing formulas is used in; (b). the purpose(s) each of the formulas is used for. To follow up, the informants were interviewed concerning their comments.

2. On the Concepts of Face and Politeness

As is known, for over 20 years the issues of face and politeness theories have been the subject of much debate between the representatives of the so-called 'traditional' and 'the post-modern' views (Leech, 2005; Terkourafi, 2005). Besides, there have also been attempts to reconcile the two (Terkourafi, 2005). The 'traditional view' is generally criticized for its: dual premises of Grice's Co-operative Principle and speech act theory; Anglo-Western bias; claims for universality; placing too much emphasis on face-work and viewing politeness as a palliative for FTAs etc (Leech, 2005:2; Terkourafi, 2005).

By contrast, representatives of the 'post-modern view' place special emphasis on the discursive nature of face and politeness concepts, introducing the notion of "discursive struggle for politeness" (Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003), hence the 'post-modernists' seem rather skeptical about the existence of universal as well as culture-specific politeness/face norms, they stress the importance of regularities rather than rules/norms of polite behaviour.

As Thomas Holtgraves suggests: "politeness, (and I should say face as well), as theoretical constructs lie at the intersection of cultural, social, cognitive, and linguistic processes" (Holtgraves, 2005: 74).

In this respect the viewpoint suggested by G. Leech is noteworthy: Leech regards the models worked out by the 'traditionalists' (i.e. Brown & Levinson's face/politeness strategies (1978, 1987), his own, Leech's, 'principles of pragmatics' (1983), R. Lakoff's work (1990) and I should add Scollon & Scollon's works as well (1984, 1997), as a general paradigm (a kind of cognitive basis), providing the "framework for contrastive studies of pragmatic linguistic strategies" (Leech, 2005: 3). To some extent Brown & Levinson's viewpoint sounds similar: "The essential idea is this: interactional systematics are based largely on universal principles. But the application of the principles differs systematically across cultures, and within cultures, across subcultures, categories, and groups." (Brown & Levinson, 1978:288). However, the study of the scholarly literature has proved that on the whole, despite differences, representatives of both schools regard face and politeness concepts as dynamic and continually under negotiation and control during any kind of interaction.

In the given study Scollon & Scollon's (1984, 1997) face/politeness model has been adopted. G. Leech's notions of Absolute Politeness Scale and Relative Politeness Scale have also been applied to the data (2005). As is well-known, Scollon & Scollon (1984, 1997) name three factors: Power (P), Distance (D), and Weight of Imposition (W) that determine what kind of politeness system will be used. Accordingly, they single out three types of politeness system: Deference Politeness System (-P, +D), Solidarity Politeness System (-P, -D) and Hierarchical Politeness System (+P, +/-D). The first two are symmetrical as the participants see themselves at the same social level. However, in the case of Deference politeness system (-P, +D), social distance between the speakers is maintained, each uses politeness strategies of independence (deference, off record, silence) when communicating to the other, imposition is assumed to be high. In the case of Solidarity politeness system social distance between the participants is minimal (-D), imposition being assumed to be low, hence both participants employ politeness strategies of involvement (solidarity, bald on record). By contrast, Hierarchical politeness system is asymmetrical; In the given system the participants recognize and respect the social difference that places one in a superordinate position and the other in a subordinate position, hence the 'higher' in status uses involvement face strategies (bald on record, solidarity politeness) and the 'lower' in status employs independence strategies (deference politeness, off record, silence).

It should be noted that in Georgian culture the old age is highly respected; the status of the elderly is ranked much higher than that of those with achieved or ascribed types of social status. As for G. Leech's terms Absolute Politeness Scale and Relative Politeness Scale, as is known, the former deals with utterances out of context, hence it is "unidirectional and registers degrees of politeness in terms of the lexicogrammatical form and semantic interpretation of the utterance" (Leech, 2005:7). By contrast, Relative Politeness Scale implies "politeness relative to norms in a given society, for a given group. or for a given situation.

Unlike the absolute scale, it is sensitive to context and is bi-directional.”(Leech, 2005:7). For instance, in terms of Absolute Politeness Scale the Georgian blessing formula *Agashena ghmertma/Agashenos ghmertma* (God prosper-you) is perceived as a pure blessing, however, in certain semi-formal and informal contexts (i.e. in terms of Relative Politeness Scale) the blessing in question serves as a thanking formula.

One point should also be mentioned: according to scholarship, the concepts of face and politeness “entail both avoidance strategies (e.g. avoiding threatening topics or violating another’s territory or calling attention to another’s faults) and approach-based strategies (e.g. greetings, compliments, salutations, in order to affirm and support one’s relationship)” (Holtgraves 2005:75). The analysis of the data has revealed that the use of Georgian blessings mainly belongs to approach based strategies, however, there are instances, when a skillfully used blessing serves as an avoidance strategy as well; in certain conflicting situations blessings might defuse the tension between the parties, hence blessing routines can be viewed as essential tools for maintaining social order.

3. On Georgian Culture

Because of Georgia’s location in the Caucasus, between East and West, Georgian culture, alongside specifically Caucasian peculiarities, embraces Western (especially, Mediterranean) as well as Eastern cultural elements. It is generally accepted that Georgian culture can be characterized as extrovert, alter-oriented i.e. a collectivist, group culture, rather than an introvert, ego-oriented, i.e. an individualist, egalitarian one (Cf. Goksadze & Demetradze, 1996; Sumbadze, 1999). The abundance of blessing formulas in current Georgian can be considered one of the features that makes the Georgian language/culture closer to the Caucasian as well as Eastern cultural realm. Showing warmth, friendliness, sympathy as well as empathy towards different interlocutors (whether strangers, acquaintances, or friends) verbally or non-verbally can be viewed as one of the signs of extrovert, alter-oriented cultures. To certain extent, blessings can be considered as one of the linguistic realizations of the above-mentioned human attitudes. However, any approach of viewing certain cultures as purely individualist, egalitarian, or collective, group seems one-sided; as G. Leech words it “the given notions are not absolutes – they are just positions on a scale, the two extremes of the linguo-cultural continuum.” Similarly, as Leech suggests “despite differences between East and West there is no East-West divide in politeness” either (Leech, 2005:3, 4).

3.1. On the Georgian Language in Brief

Georgian is a synthetic language of agglutinative subtype, with specific nominal and complex verbal inflectional morphology. The Georgian verb distinguishes the categories of person, number, tense, aspect, mood, voice, version, and contact, most of them being reflected in the verb form by means of affixation. One of the peculiarities of the Georgian verb is its polypersonalism: it can indicate not only the agent i.e.: the subject of the verb, but also the object (either direct or indirect). While conjugating the verb, 11 groups of forms are singled out: each group being called *mtskrivi* (screeve); the verb within one *mtskrivi* varies according to person and number only; the categories of tense, mood, and aspect remain the same. The 11 *mtskrivis* of the Georgian verb are united into 3 series: Series I (the present series, present stem system) embraces: The Present Tense, Past Imperfect (Continuous), The Present Subjunctive, The Future, The Permansive, The Future Subjunctive; Series II (the aorist series, aorist stem system) includes: Simple Past/Aorist, Subjunctive II; Series III (resultative/perfect series, resultative/perfect stem system) unites: Resultative I, Resultative II, Subjunctive III. The subject of the transitive verb in the forms of Series I is in the Nominative case, with the forms of Series II it is in the Ergative case and with the forms of Series III in the Dative case. (Boeder, 2005; Jorbenadze, 1991; Shanidze, 1973). . It should be mentioned that in Georgian the forms of Aorist and Subjunctive II, as well as Present Subjunctive and Future Subjunctive are used to convey the meaning of the Imperative Mood. The given peculiarity is revealed in the Georgian blessings and well wishes.

4. Religious Experience and the Idea of God as Reflected in Georgian Blessing Formulas

According to *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* (1998:578) religious experience includes such specific experiences as: ‘(a) wonder at the infinity of the cosmos; (b) the sense of awe and mystery in the presence of the holy; (c) sense of guilt and anxiety accompanying belief in a divine judgment; (d) the feeling of peace that follows faith in divine forgiveness; (e) feelings of dependence on a divine power or an unseen order’. The observations of the data have shown that the latter i.e. feelings of dependence on a divine power or an unseen order form the basis of the Georgian blessing formulas.

Georgian Monolingual Dictionary (1990:1004) defines *God* as “a supernatural being having a supreme power, regarded as the creator and ruler of the universe”, or as Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani, the 17-18th Georgian scholar and public figure, suggests in his encyclopedic dictionary *A Bunch of Words*: “God is an infinite, eternal spirit, the cause of all primordial” (1993: 233).

In Georgian God's name is frequently encountered in functionally different formulas; on the one hand, God is the direct addressee in prayers and pleas that follow the pattern – God's name in the Vocative case - *ghmert-o* + the verb in the imperative mood - *damipare- save-me*. On the other hand, there are numerous routines like blessings, well-wishes, curses, imprecations, formulas invoking divine wrath on or anathematizing sb etc. that are samples of indirect address to God. In the given formulas, God serves as the subject in the Nominative or the Ergative (depending upon the transitive verb form) case forms, the verb being in the Present Subjunctive, Subjunctive II or the Aorist respectively. Consequently, because of high frequency of usage, the name of God - this general idea of goodness, the idea of supernatural, omnipotent power can be considered unmarked for the Georgian culture, and presumably, not only for the Georgian culture (Cf. Asatiani 2000).

In the present study, well-wishes are regarded as indirect blessings. In Georgian well-wishes are realized with the help of the verb-form *gisurveb/t* (the verb in Present Tense, Series I, *I/we-wish- you*), the patterns with the verb forms in Present Subjunctive (Series I), Aorist and Subjunctive II (Series II), and also NPs.

4.1. Historical Background

As is well-known, in old cultures mutual blessings were performed and exchanged during different types of interaction; consequently, in different modern languages almost all polite formulas (greetings, leave-takings, thanking or congratulation routines etc.) are diachronically reconstructed as blessings, Georgian being no exception (e.g. Georg. *gmadlob/t, madloba*, meaning *thank you, thanks*, originate from the word *madli* – grace, mercy; or the verb form *gilocav/t* (Present Tense, Series I) – *I/we congratulate-you* comes from the verb *locavs* meaning *s/he blesses sb.*)

The analysis of the data has revealed the following factors determining lexico- semantic composition of Georgian blessings: 1.time deixis; 2.setting (meeting sb on one's way, entering a house etc.); 3. sociolinguistic dimensions of age, gender, social status; 6.occupation or the duty performed by a participant (or both participants) during the interaction; 7. kinship relationships; 8.social or religious events of different type.

4.2 Blessing Formulas as Samples of Impulsive Behaviour

Being one of the subtypes of formulaic language, well-wishes and blessings are essential elements of the native speaker's communicative competence, reflections of native-like behaviour, bearers of cultural norms and values; similar to other types of prefabricated expressions (Aijmer, 1996; Tannen & Oztek, 1977) they are ‘wholes’, ‘gestalts’, stored and retrieved holistically; because of their context boundedness, each of them is closely tied to a particular frame. If analyzed from the standpoint of Dimitri Uznadze's psychological theory of set (1977), blessings can be viewed as samples of impulsive behaviour: the term impulsive behaviour coined by Uznadze denotes routinised, ritualized actions i.e. actions characteristic of stereotypical situations; impulsive behaviour is a chain of interdependent acts, each signalling and stimulating the appearance of the next one, each creating in a person a state of readiness/predisposition to perform a particular action. The specificity of impulsive behaviour lies in its immediacy and sameness. Hence, any failure to perform ritualized actions means that the smoothness of transition from one impulsive act to another is hindered and the expectations of one of the interlocutors are frustrated, this naturally leads to miscommunication, a misunderstanding, or even a culture shock; for instance, any misuse of blessings or failure to use them might bring about the above-mentioned consequences.

4.3. Blessings as Samples of Phatic Communication

According to Austin's theory (1965:159), the verbs *bless* and *wish* are included in the Behabitive subclass of performative verbs; as is known, the given subclass includes the verbs with positive as well as negative connotations. It is noteworthy, that positively connoted performative verbs *apologize, bless, thank, condole, congratulate, sympathize, toast, wish* are associated with phatic communication or phatic rituals. As it has been said, the study has shown that in the Georgian culture blessings are quite often essential elements of the rituals of thanking, expressing condolences, congratulating, showing sympathy, toasting; moreover, in many a case certain blessing formulas serve as substitutes for the performative acts realized by the above-enumerated performative verbs.

5. Meaning-Function Relationship in Blessings

The meaning-function relationship in blessings is of particular interest. The analysis of the empirical data has shown that the relationship between the literal meaning and the function(s) of a particular blessing formula can be quite complex; three types of relationship between the literal meaning and pragmatic function(s) of blessings have been singled out:

- a. A blessing is almost devoid of its propositional content, i.e. it is idiomatized and grammaticalized, and serves as a verbal routine, that can be a part of a verbal ritual;
 - b. It is partially devoid of its referential meaning and functions as an element of a verbal ritual;
 - c. A blessing formula fully retains its literal meaning and serves as a blessing proper in communication.
- It should be mentioned that these classes should be viewed as forming a continuum rather than isolated groups.

6. Analysis

6.1. Class I from the Standpoints of Face and Politeness Strategies

In the first class there can be included a number of polite formulas that are snippets of former blessing sentences/utterances or well-wishes and whose structural and semantic transparency has more or less been preserved; their referential meaning does not fully disappear, however, it is overlaid with a pragmatic function which seems to be dominant. There have been singled out the following subtypes:

1. A certain group of non-standard polite formulas (greeting, leave-taking., thanking, congratulation routines);
2. Season greetings;
3. Miscellaneous polite formulas.

The analysis has proved that for each situation Georgian offers several alternatives: For instance, as a reaction to someone having sneezed (no matter an acquaintance or a stranger) Georgians have the following ready-made phrases:

Icecxle! (Live! - the verb in the Aorist, Series II, with the imperative meaning); the given routine is associated with solidarity politeness system (presumably, because of the imperative mood): depending upon a context either solidarity (when said to a friend or an acquaintance) or bald on record (when said to strangers) strategy can be expressed.

Gaizarde! –said to a child (Grow up! – the verb in the Aorist, Series II with the imperative meaning).

However, the next two are more characteristic of contexts where Deference politeness strategies are more typical. *Sicocxle!* - (the noun, meaning - Life!).

Janmrteloba! (the noun. meaning - Health!).

Ghvtis tsqaloba! (God's grace!) NP - the Noun in the Genitive+the Noun in the Nominative. The routine in question is associated with all three types of politeness; it is noteworthy that in the case of Hierarchical politeness, it is the person with the lower social status who utters the routine.

In the given string of synonymous routines, the last one is marked.

Thanking. Apart from the standard thanking formula *gmadlob/t, madloba.*(I-thank-you, thanks) there are a number of other emotionally charged alternatives in Georgian: *icocxle!* (Live!) *gaixare!* (Be-happy!) *agashena ghmertma!* (All the three verbs in the Aorist, Series II with the meaning of imperative mood) or *agashenos ghmertma!* (Subjunctive II, Series II functioning as imperative, meaning-*God prosper-you!*) the latter two can function as blessings proper as well.

The formulas in question are mainly characteristic of Solidarity politeness system, though they are quite frequent in contexts associated with Hierarchical system as well, in such cases the routines in question are uttered mostly by elderly interlocutors who, as it has already been said, are socially highly ranked in Georgia.

Greetings:

A: (the greeting uttered on entering a house): *aqa mshvidoba* (literally - here peace/peace here).

B: (response): *mshvidoba shens/tqvens mosvlas* (Peace to your coming) expressed by the Noun in the Nominative. + Personal pronoun + Masdar (a non-finite form of the verb) in the Dative. The given adjacent pair is evidenced in the interactions employing Solidarity, Deference and even Hierarchical politeness systems; in the latter case the response contains the polite plural form of the second person pronoun (*mqvens*).

In Georgia a greeting is usually accompanied by a well-wish routine, especially if it is one's first visit to a particular home: *bedniereba da sixaruli am saxls* (NP) (Happiness and joy to this house!) Depending upon the context the routine in question can be associated with all the three types of politeness system.

Leave-takings:

aba, bednierad (particle *aba* + the adverb happily);

aba, kargad (particle *aba*+adverb well/ be well)!

aba, ketili dghe gqondes (particle *aba*+ you have a kind/good day), the pattern contains the Present Subjunctive form of the verb (Series I) with an imperative load;

The first three well-wishes are mostly typical of involvement strategy/Solidarity politeness: depending upon the context either bald on record (the addressee being a stranger), or solidarity strategy (the addressee being an acquaintance) can be expressed.

As for *mshvidobit brdzandebodet!* (Peace be on you! - polite plural form of the verb in the Present Subjunctive-*brdzandebodet!*), because of its peculiar linguistic features (a very formal verb form) the given routine is typical of Deference or Hierarchical politeness systems. However, if used in an informal situation, the routine will sound ironic. or even sarcastic.

Wishing a good journey:

ketili mgzavroba Adj.+Masdar (a non-finite form of the verb)- A kind/good journey;

gza mshvidobisa Noun in the Nominative+Noun in the Genitive. – A peaceful way/journey;

These two routines are samples of Solidarity politeness, though they are not rare in contexts associated with Deference politeness system either.

Wishing a good fate (to a single person, a woman, in particular: *kargi ighbali* – Adj+N - Good fate). The given routine is linked with both strategies of Solidarity politeness (solidarity and bald on record, the latter is evidenced especially in such cases when the routine is said by an elderly person to a young woman s/he is not acquainted with.

Congratulations

mravals daestsari/t (the verb form in the Aorist, Series II, expressing Imperative mood- *attend many occasions*); can be used as a birthday greeting as well as a season greeting.

Wedding congratulations:

ixaret, ibednieret, gamravldit (the Aorist verb forms, Series II, expressing Imperative mood - Rejoice, be happy, multiply). The given samples of congratulation routines (well wishes) suit all the three types of politeness system, much is dependent upon the verb form type (singular, plural or polite plural e.g.: *daestsari vs daestsarit*).

Miscellaneous:

shens pirs shaqari, sugar to your mouth, implying - May what you've said be true/come true. Its synonymous blessings being: *ghmertma gisminos* - May God listen-to-you! *ghmertma qnas* - May God do-it! (the verbs in Subjunctive II, Series II) To some extent the English *God willing* can be regarded as the equivalent of the mentioned Georgian formulas. These routines are characteristic of informal spoken discourse, and are the realizations of involvement strategy.

The formula said (to women, in particular) on a new acquisition or when cutting a piece of cloth and preparing it for sewing is of particular interest: the cutting process is accompanied by the following words: *mshvidobashi, janmrtelobashi, bednierebashi, gatxovebashi* - (Wear) in peace, in health, in happiness, (and if a woman is single) may you get married. The given expression is mostly typical of informal and semi-formal contexts, however, the relationship between the interlocutors may be asymmetrical as well, i.e. typical of Hierarchical politeness system; it is noteworthy that it is the speaker with a lower social status who by uttering the above-mentioned expression employs Solidarity politeness strategy, hence the rule of the Hierarchical politeness system is somehow reversed, or even violated, however, being a blessing, the formula avoids a FTA.

6.1.1. Classes II and III from the Standpoints of Face and Politeness Strategies

As it has already been said, the second class includes blessings that are partially devoid of their referential meanings and function as elements of different types of verbal rituals; while the third class comprises blessings proper. Georgian examples are mostly blessing clichés and are numerous and versatile:

Greetings and Leave-takings:

Alongside the symmetrical response to the common greeting *gamarjoba*, there are two more alternatives: *ghmertma gagimarjos/ghmertma gamarjveba mogces* (the verb forms in Subjunctive II, Series II - God give-you victory/success).

These blessings are characteristic of the speech of the old and elderly and are evidenced in contexts typical of Hierarchical politeness system.

Leave-taking adjacency pair:

This adjacency pair is encountered in contexts employing either Deference or (depending on the type of the verb form - polite plural) Hierarchical politeness system.

A: *mshvidobit brdzandebodet!* (Present Subjunctive, Series I - Peace be on you!)

B: *ghmertma mshvidoba mogces/t- mshvidoba mogces/t ghmertma* (Subjunctive II, Series II - God give-you peace!

In current Georgian, in certain contexts of situation greetings and leave-takings are accompanied by blessings. For instance, according to the rules of Georgian hospitality, the visitor on his/her first visit to a particular home accompanies his/her greeting with well-wishes: *ketili iqos chemi pexi tqvens saxlshi* (May my foot be good for this house!) When parting the host and the visitor exchange blessings: *ghmertma xeli mogimartos/t* –May God help-you! *ghmertma daglocos/t* God bless-you! *ghmertma kargad gamqopos/t* – May God make you feel well!) In the enumerated examples the verbs (in bold) are in Subjunctive II, Series II, conveying the imperative meaning. Depending on the topic of conversation the same or similar blessing exchanges *ghmertma gparavdes/t*; (the verb in Present Subjunctive, Series I) *ghmertma shegetsios/t*-(the verb in Subjunctive II, Series II) God preserve-you! God look-kindly-on-you!) can also be encountered in the closing sections of semi-formal and informal conversations. The above-mentioned blessings as well as some others *dailocos sheni marjvena, ghmertma daglocos/t da gagaxaros/t, gagadzlieros/t* (the verbs in Subjunctive II, Series II- *May your right hand be blessed! God bless-you and make-you-happy/make-you-stronger!*) can replace the standard thanking formulas as well. They can also suit all three types of politeness system; however, much is dependent upon the verb form: whether it is in the singular, in the plural or polite plural (both plural forms are with the marker *t*).

Well-wishes are frequent in the following settings: at a market place, or in a private shop a salesperson's or a shopkeeper's usual response to the customer's *gmadlobt* (thank you) are the words: *tkbilad/gemrielad miirtvi/t* (the verb in the Aorist, Series II, with the imperative meaning - *Eat it with an appetite/sweetly*); *shegergos* (the verb in Subjunctive II, Series II - *may it be good/beneficial for you*); similarly, depending upon the verb form and the context of situation the given well-wishes can suit all three types of politeness system.

Blessings used for wishing a good journey:

gza damilocavs - I bless your way/journey! (the verb in Resultative I, Series III)

ghmertma ketilad gamzavros/t (Subjunctive II, Series II - May God make your journey good).

Congratulations on the birth of a baby:

ghmertma gagizardos/t, ghmertma bednieri amqopos/gimqopos/t - May God raise him/her for you, may God make him/her happy! (The verb forms in Subjunctive II, Series II).

Again depending upon the peculiarities of the verb form (whether it is in the singular, plural, or polite plural) the politeness strategy employed varies from involvement to independence.

Wedding well-wishes: *tkbilad sheaberdit ertmanets* - May you live long/grow old together in sweetness! (The verb in the Aorist, Series II, expressing Imperative Mood)

Condolence formulas are quite versatile in Georgian and are evidenced in contexts typical of all three types of politeness system.

ghmertma acxonos - God bless him/her; (the verb in Subjunctive II, Series II)

ghmertma sasupeveli daumkvidros - God rest him in heaven; (the verb in Subjunctive II, Series II).

ghmertma natelshi amqopos - God let him/her be in eternal light; (the verb in Subjunctive II, Series II).

gaanatlos upalma - Lord let him be in eternal light; (the verb in Subjunctive II, Series II).

ghmertma gakmarot ubedureba - God let this grief suffice you; (the verb in Subjunctive II, Series II).

ghmertma gashorot ubedureba - God protect you from misfortune; (the verb in Subjunctive II, Series II)

nateli daadges - May s/he be in eternal light. (the verb in Subjunctive II, Series II).

cxondes - Blessed be s/he! (the verb in Subjunctive II, Series II).

By contrast the formula *viziareb tqvens mtsuxarebas* - *I-share your grief* (the verb in Present Simple, Series I) sounds very formal and dry.

Blessings on religious holidays:

qristeshobis madli shegetsios/t - May grace of Christmas help you! (The verb in Subjunctive II, Series II)

bednieri aghdgoma. idghegrdzele! Adj.+N. The verb in the Aorist, Imperative Mood.

Happy Easter. May-you-live-long!

aghdgomis brtskinvale dghesastsauls gilocavt (the verb in Simple Present, Series I). *mravals daestsarit* (the verb in the Aorist, Series II). *shegetsiot* (the verb in Subjunctive II, Series II) *am dghis madli da dzala!*

I-congratulate-you on Magnificent Easter Day. May the grace and strength of the day help you!

The observations have shown that different versions of blessings are amply used by female as well as male native speakers of different age-groups (teenagers, middle-aged and elderly); however, the frequency of usage is much dependent on how religious an individual is.

6.1.2. Blessing Formulas in Public Speeches

The study has proved that blessing formulas are quite frequently used by Georgian politicians; they are essential elements of Georgian presidential speeches of different genres (two out of the four Georgian presidents, Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Mikheil Saakashvili, employed them with high frequency). The analysis of the data has shown that in public speeches blessings have a specific pragmatic load, perlocutionary force: by employing blessing formulas public speakers create a friendly atmosphere, stressing the unity between the speaker and the audience. One of the tools for achieving the said is the inclusive use of the second person pronouns:

Zviad Gamsakhurdia, 07.06.1991:

dae aghsrudles (the verb in Subjunctive II, Series II) *neba ghvtisa, neba erisa! gaumarjos tavisupal saqartvelos!*

gvfaravdes (the verb in Present Subjunctive Series I) *ghmert!*

May God's will come true! The will of the nation come true! Long live free Georgia! God preserve- us!

Mikheil Saakashvili

ghmert! iqos (the verb in Subjunctive II, Series II) *chveni da chveni samshoblos mparveli! May God protect us and our homeland!* 25.01.2004

ghmert! iqos chveni samshoblos-saqartvelos mparveli! God be the protector of our homeland-Georgia!

7. Conclusion

1. Being structurally, semantically and pragmatically versatile Georgian blessing formulas perform a variety of functions in different discourse genres (written and spoken) and registers (formal/informal/neutral).
2. Alongside some standard polite formulas the Georgian language employs blessings as their equivalents; in the Georgian culture blessings are quite often essential elements of the rituals of thanking, expressing condolences, congratulating, showing sympathy, toasting, wishing a good journey; moreover, in many a case certain blessing formulas serve as substitutes for the performative acts realized by the performative verbs.
3. The analysis of the data has shown that the neutral, standard forms can be viewed as the bearers of individualist, egalitarian values, whereas their alternative blessings can be considered the manifestation of the concept – 'collective, group culture'; the choice being contextually determined and largely depends upon the speaker/writer; taking into account both individual and group values, the speaker/writer decides on the face/politeness type most suitable for a particular setting.
4. It should also be noted that the blessing formulas presented above acquire different, contrasting, rather, values when discussed from the perspective of either absolute politeness scale or relative politeness scale.
5. The analysis of the data has revealed that the use of blessings mainly belongs to approach based strategies, however, there are instances, when a skillfully used blessing serves as an avoidance strategy as well.

6. It can be said that the results of the study support the viewpoint suggested by G. Leech (2005): 'there is no absolute divide between East and West in politeness; the concepts 'collective, group culture' (East) and 'individualist, egalitarian culture' (West) should be viewed as positions on a scale', i.e. different degrees of the concepts in question should be presented as a kind of continuum.

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