

ARTICLE

The Dual Status of Judeo-Georgian

Tamari Lomtadze¹ , Ani Kvirikashvili^{2*} 

¹Arnold Chikobava Institute of Linguistics, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi 0160, Georgia

²University of Georgia, Tbilisi 0171, Georgia

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to show the dual nature of the status of Judeo-Georgian based on its studies, theories, and methods adopted from variationist sociolinguistics, distinctive linguistic repertoire approach to Jewish languages, using descriptive/synchronic, diachronic, and comparative-contrastive methods. Based on the traditional studies in Georgia in the twentieth century, Judeo-Georgian was considered one of the varieties of Georgian, and the main works were about presenting its features and searching for similarities from standard Georgian or its dialects. The purpose of such studies was to give Judeo-Georgian a status in the Georgian linguistic space (be it a dialect of Georgian, a sub-dialect of Georgian dialects, an ethnolect, an ethno-socilect). Today, in the 21st century, Judeo-Georgian studies have acquired new dimensions. It is already considered as one of the varieties not only of Georgian but also of Jewish languages. In the works of comparative linguistics of Jewish languages, there exist common features characteristic of all Jewish languages and Judeo-Georgian too is familiar with these criteria. Therefore, searching for its similarities and differences with other Jewish languages has begun. From this point of view, the understanding of Judeo-Georgian has acquired a new dimension at the modern stage and has become interesting in two ways: 1. as an ethno-dialect of Georgian with its sub-dialects; 2. as one of the Jewish languages, which has a certain place in the modern classification of Jewish languages.

Keywords: Georgian Jews; Georgian Dialects; Jewish Ethnolect; Judeo-Georgian; Jewish Languages

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Ani Kvirikashvili, University of Georgia, Tbilisi 0171, Georgia; Email: annkvirikashvili@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

What is the status of the speech of Georgian Jews? This problem is interesting, on the one hand, from the standpoint of Georgian dialectology and, on the other hand, from the perspective of Jewish languages. A complete description of the Georgian linguistic space will not be possible without clarifying the status of Judeo-Georgian speech; on the other hand, it will also be impossible to determine the place of Judeo-Georgian speech in the existing classification of “Jewish languages”. Despite the centuries-old history of the existence of the Jewish population in Georgia, linguistic research on Judeo-Georgian did not come to the agenda until the second half of the twentieth century (in contrast to historical sources and studies, which have a centuries-old history). Rosa Tavdidishvili recorded the first materials just in the 40s of the last centuries, in Kutaisi^[1]. Those records are interesting from the linguistic, folklore, cultural, and ethnographic points of view. Single linguistic works, focusing on a very narrow range of issues, can be found since the late 70s^[2-5]. The phenomenon of Judeo-Georgian came to scholarly attention, its study acquired special importance and expanded considerably, only in the 21st century.

1.1. What Is the Language Variety of Judeo-Georgian? In What Terms Is This Concept Denoted?

The speech of Georgian Jewry was distinct from that of local non-Jews and this distinction was commonly acknowledged. Therefore, it was referred to as “*Kivruli*” to emphasize its unique linguistic quality. “*Kivruli*” was not a neutral term; rather, it was a lexical unit of negative/sarcastic connotation. Later, the terms “*Uriuli*” and “*Israeluri*” were coined to be used interchangeably with “*Kivruli*” by non-Jews. The Jews themselves coined the term “*Chveneburuli*” to denote their speech. It was mainly a word of neutral connotation. However, in some cases, upper-class Jews were ashamed of using it as a humiliating term. For example, we have encountered such an example - the father scolded his son: “Why do you speak *Chveneburuli*, speak Georgian!”. After the large-scale immigration of Georgian Jews to Israel, the term “*Gruzinuli*” appeared to denote the speech of Georgian Jews^[6]. In the late 20th century when Judeo-Georgian came to scholarly attention such terms as Jewish

speech, Jewish ethnolect (emphasizing the importance of ethnic affiliation), and Jewish ethnosociolect (emphasizing the importance of social factors along with the ethnic affiliation. Jews use Judeo-Georgian according to the situation, and its use also varies according to social classes) were coined^[7]. Later, the term “*Judeo-Georgian*” was introduced to denote the speech of Jews living in Georgia, as one of their identity markers^[8, 9].

1.2. Judeo-Georgian as a Constituent Part of the Georgian Linguistic Space

Since the end of the 20th century, the issue of granting status to Judeo-Georgians has come to the agenda of Georgian linguistics’ problems. It was widely known and recognized in Georgia that the Jews were not using Hebrew as their vernacular language, Georgian was their colloquial language, and Hebrew was the language of prayer. As hypothesized, this was the reason why Georgian Jews translated the Torah into Georgian, and this translation is called *Tavsili*^[10]. The text of “Tavili” is not homogeneous: it contains some archaic forms from old Georgian, and new Georgian, and peculiarities characteristic of Judeo-Georgian, both at the grammatical and lexical levels. Georgian translation of the Torah that was transmitted orally from generation to generation. Reuven Enoch was able to record *Tavsili* only at the beginning of the 21st century. Consequently, we don’t have information regarding its original language - what it was like linguistically in the beginning. But it is a fact that the language of *Tavsili* is different from the Georgian of the non-Jews. Although, according to official data, Jews constituted 1.2% of the population of Georgia during the Soviet period (census of 1970), nevertheless, neither dialectologists nor sociolinguists had ever pointed out that Judeo-Georgian was a distinct speech variety. It should be taken into consideration, that there exists no statistical data about the linguistic division and possession among the Jewish population of Georgia before the repatriation to Israel, but if we depend on the earlier census, more than two-thirds of them were Jews of Sephardi tradition, so-called Georgian Jews (according to the census from 1926, 20,897 Georgian Jews (Sephardic) and 9,637 Ashkenazi Jews lived in Georgia) and could speak Georgian/Judeo-Georgian^[11]. In Besarion Jorbenadze’s 1989 book on Georgian dialects, as well as in scholarly works in the field of dialectology published later, the speech variety of Georgian

Jews was not mentioned among Georgian dialects either^[12]. In the 40s of the 20th century, Rosa Tavididishvili recorded the speech of Jews of Sephardi tradition living in Kutaisi (which can be found in the form of the manuscript). The peculiarities of their speech are visible in this material. However, even based on these texts, the research of the speech of Georgian Jews did not start. Research about the Jews of Soviet Georgia in the 1950s and 1960s was more historical^[13–16]. In the 1970s Georgian Jews started to immigrate/repatriate to Israel. Exactly from that period, in Georgian scientific literature, there appear works dedicated to the ethnonyms of Georgian Jews in Georgia and epigraphs engraved on the graves of Georgian Jews^[2, 5, 17–20]. However, in theoretical dialectology, the issue of granting status to Judeo-Georgian speech did not arise, nor did the collection of databases begin. At the crossroads of the centuries, the first research works on Judeo-Georgian also appeared in Israel^[10, 21, 22]. In these works, Judeo-Georgian was studied concerning Georgian language varieties. According to popular legends and some historical works, the first wave of Jews reached Georgia in the VI century BC^[8, 15, 16, 22–25]. We cannot say what was the scale and geography of Jewish settlement in ancient Georgia, but we can accurately talk about the reality of the 20th century. We have no statistical data on the geographical scope of the Jewish population or settlement/s in ancient Georgia, but we can discuss the situation in the 20th century. There were compact Jewish settlements in almost every part of Georgia except for Svaneti and mountainous regions in Eastern Georgia (see **Figure 1**). Judeo-Georgian was surrounded by different local or regional dialects of the Georgian language: Kartluri or Kartlian (in Surami, Kareli, Gori, Tskhinvali, etc.), Kakhuri or Kakhetian (in Ninotsminda, former Ulianovka), Imeruli or Imeretian (in Kutaisi, Kulashi, Vani, Sachkhere), Rachuli or Rachan (in Oni), Lechkhumuri or Lechkhumian (in Lailashi), Meskhuri or Meskhian (in Akhaltsikhe), Adjaruli or Adjarian (in Batumi), Megreli or Megrelian (in Bandza, Sujuna, Poti, Senaki). In addition, the Jews lived in Abkhazeti or Abkhazia (Sukhumi), the capital city of Tbilisi, and, in relatively smaller numbers, some other places (Zestaponi, Tkibuli, Ozurgeti, etc.) where they did not have compact settlements. Even though the study of territorial dialects in Georgia has a centuries-old history and the above-mentioned dialects have been thoroughly studied, the peculiarities of Judeo-Georgian speech have not been

identified in any of them^[26–32].



Figure 1. Dialectological map of Georgia, indicating (red signs) Jewish settlements.

As has already been mentioned, a thorough study of Judeo-Georgian began at the turn of the century in Georgia and Israel^[7–10, 21, 33–37]. The Georgian speech of the Jews, which was formed during their life in Georgia as a sign of linguistic identity, was socially highly differentiated. Therefore, in the mentioned works, in addition to linguistic indicators, emphasis is made on the relationship between geographical, social, and religious dimensions and linguistic variables, and their use according to situations and social strata. Intensive studies have highlighted the need to grant the status to Judeo-Georgians. The basis for raising the question was prepared by the projects financed by the Volkswagen Foundation and the Shota Rustaveli National Scientific Foundation during this period: 1) “Jewish Identity in Georgia at the Dawn of Globalization” (2013–2016, Volkswagen Foundation); 2) “The Speech of Georgian Jews in Israel” (2016–2019, Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation); In Georgian scholarly journals articles on Judeo-Georgian were extensively published. Studies have made it clear that the speech of the Jews was based on the dialect of Georgian in which it existed but at the same time “created” a difference from it precisely through the Georgian language (to which the status of common Jewish signs was given) and abundantly used the Hebrew/Aramaic vocabulary. The main residences of the Jews were cities and urban areas, so their speech coincided with the local urban speech. In Georgian scholarly journals articles on Judeo-Georgian were extensively published. It was when the term “Judeo-Georgian” was used for the first time to denote the speech variety spoken by Georgian Jews. The existing studies concerning the Georgian linguistic space have revealed that Georgian Jews speak the same

language as co-territorial non-Jews in all regions. Still, their speech is marked with some distinctive features including the use of Hebrew-Aramaic components, displaced dialectisms, and archaisms and there are some distinctions (sometimes very slight or hardly noticeable) in intonation^[37, 38]. In their speech, common Hebrew signs were distinguished: adding the suffix *-e* to pronouns and adverbs: *shen-e* (you), *dghes-e* (today); adding nominative case sign *-i* to the proper names that end in a vowel: *Sara-i*, *Pkho-i*; loss of dative case marker: *mesij(s) vts'eram* (I write a message); replacing the postposition *tvis* with *tvin*: *chem-tvin minda* (I want it for myself); replacing the preverb *ma* with *mo*: *ma-mq'ide*; the frequent production of static verbs: *gitsinia* (you laughed); replacing verb stem sign *av* with *am*: *vkhat'am* (I am painting); frequent use of passive voice with *en*: *ek'erineba* (sews); archaic forms: *jda*, *una*; the intensive use of Hebrewisms and Aramaisms: *kasheri*, *mazali*, *t'obe*. Based on those common markers, we consider Judeo-Georgian speech as a dialect (ethno-dialect), and its sub-dialects are produced by adding different dialectal signs depending on the place of residence. The main questions related to granting status to Judeo-Georgian in the Georgian linguistic space are: a) Is the speech of Georgian Jews from different areas one variety of the Georgian language or not? b) What is the relationship between the speech of Georgian Jews in different areas and the Georgian dialect in which it exists? The answer is unequivocal: Judeo-Georgian is a variety (Ethnodialect) of Georgian, represented in the form of different sub-dialects in different dialectal units (as shown in the **Figure 2**). In other words, Judeo-Georgian includes the sub-dialects of Tbilisi, Ninotsminda, Tskhinvali, Akhaltsikhe, Batumi, Surami, Gori, Kartli, Sachkhere, Kutaisi, Vani, Zestafoni, Poti, Bandza, Sujuna, Senaki, Kulashi, Oni, Lailashi, Sukhumi.

Today Judeo-Georgian can hardly be heard in Georgia. The small Jewish community that still remains in Georgia rarely uses specific forms peculiar to it. However, it is still spoken in Israel, Russia, and some other foreign countries but the younger generations – descendants of the Georgian Jews living abroad - no longer speak it even outside Georgia. It is an endangered language variety. Therefore, Rustaveli Foundation has recently funded three projects dealing with Judeo-Georgian: “Documenting Endangered Languages: The Case of Judeo-Georgian”; “The Status of Judeo-Georgian Speech and its Place in the Kartvelian Linguistic Space”; “Geor-

gia through the Eyes of the Jews - Archiving and Literary-Linguistic Analysis of Georgian Printed Products Issued in Israel”. The research in progress is focused on creating the databases in order to build further research on it.

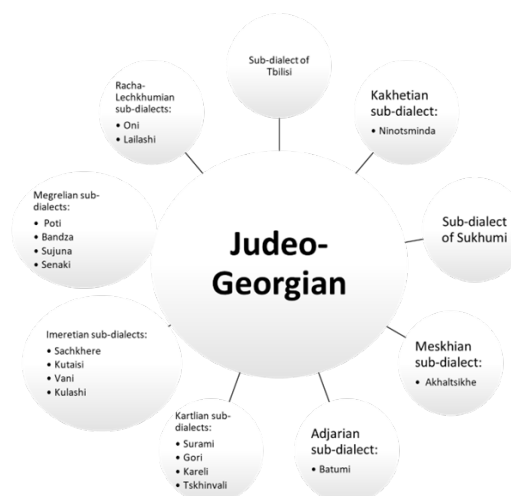


Figure 2. Judeo-Georgian and its' sub-dialects.

1.3. Judeo-Georgian in the Classification of Jewish Languages

The phenomenon of Jewish language varieties came to scholarly attention at the turn of the 20th century. Gradually, the study of Jewish language varieties has evolved into a relatively new field of Comparative Jewish Linguistic Studies, and the studies in this direction intensified after the foundation of the state of Israel^[39-64]. However, partly due to the language policy of the Russian empires and later of the Soviet regime, a research agenda for the linguistic study of the Jewish community in Georgia was set as late as the early 21st century. Increased familiarity with recent scholarly literature made it clear that Judeo-Georgian has much in common with other Jewish language varieties. Therefore, any scholar undertaking the study of Judeo-Georgian is confronted not only with an intricate question of defining its status about standard Georgian and its dialects but identifying its place within the classification of Jewish language varieties as well. There appeared scholarly articles, for instance, the article in the book published by Brill Publishing House “Jewish Languages”^[8]. Article in the Journal of Jewish Languages^[9]. The peculiarities of Judeo-Georgian have been posted on the web page of the Jewish Languages (<https://www.jewishlanguages.org/judeo-georgian>). Recent research has demonstrated that such distinctive characteris-

tics of Judeo-Georgian as Hebraisms/Aramaisms, displaced dialectisms, archaisms, etc. are peculiar to other Jewish language varieties too. A comparative study of Judeo-Georgian and other Jewish language varieties will allow us to define the place of Judeo-Georgian in the classification of Jewish languages divided into the following groups^[64]:

1. Languages connected to spoken Palestinian Hebrew through the language chain (for instance Yiddish);
2. languages that do not have a Hebrew substrate but subsequently acquire a Jewish identity when Jews or non-Jews exchange dialects; when Jews move to a new language area (for example, Baghdad Judeo-Arabic);
3. calcified (literal) translation languages (for example, Ladino, a technical term for a translation variety of Judeo-Spanish);
4. situations in which Jews in all regions speak the same language as the non-Jews of the co-territory, but sometimes introduce Hebrew-Aramaic or Hebrew elements into the conversation (for example, Hebrew-English)^[63].

The question arises, is Judeo-Georgian an independent language system? Of course not; the criteria for including linguistic differences in the category of Jewish languages are not universal^[40]. In many cases, it is difficult to distinguish between a language and a dialect, although it is taken into account that the definition of this or that variety as a language or a dialect is not based on linguistic criteria alone, and very often socio-political factors have to be taken into account, all varieties are combined under the term “Jewish Languages”. That is why we can combine in the languages of the Jews a variant of the speech of the Jews based on Georgian - the Georgian of the Jews. Moreover, there is an experience in the world that the same linguistic variety has the status of a dialect and a language at the same time (depending on the linguistic space in which it is located, for example, in the Georgian language environment, the Georgian of Jews is considered one of the dialects of Georgian, and in the ethnic mosaic of Israel it is one of the Jewish languages, like the Hebrew-English or the Livonian dialect/language in Latvia, etc. 11 linguistic variables that are typical of almost all Jewish languages^[39]. Judeo-Georgian is more or less characterized by almost all of these characteristics.

1.3.1. Textual Hebrew or Aramaic Influence

The linguistic repertoire of the Georgian Jews includes influence from biblical and rabbinic texts. Biblical and religious vocabulary (see the **Table 1**) in Judeo-Georgian is a testimony to this influence. The traces of these influences can be found in old translations as well. Dealing with one of the mentioned Hebraisms *Shabati* - to denote weekdays Georgian language also uses it, for instance, *Orshabati* (Monday) – means the second day of Shabat, *Samshabati* (Tuesday) – means the third day of Shabat, etc. Only *P’arask’evi* (Friday) and *K’vira* (Sunday) are Georgian words.

1.3.2. Substratal Influence

The linguistic repertoire of the Georgian Jews includes features from ancestral languages spoken before migration or language shift. Though the pronunciation of Hebrew amongst the greatest part of the Jews living in Georgia was much closer to the Sephardi than to the Ashkenazi tradition and this pronunciation passed from generation to generation, it is also worth mentioning that in Georgia there lived the Jews raised in Ashkenazi traditions. Therefore, if, for instance, in the words *tobe* and *ganabi*, “b” is an occlusive characteristic of the speech of Georgian (Sephardi) Jews, the pronunciation of *ksiva*, *khavera*, as a result of b>v alternation, shows that these words should be considered as borrowings from the speech of European Jews (*khavera* and not *khavera*, *ksiva* or *ktiva* and not *ktiba* as it would be in the pronunciation by the Georgian Jews). Those words originated from the Ashkenazi source and probably entered the Georgian slang of the influence of the Russian Jews’ pronunciation^[4]. Those words (given in the **Table 2**) have been used since the 19th century in Georgia within the circles of the Jewish merchants and with the same pronunciation by the Jews of Ashkenazi and Sephardi traditions^[13]. However, there is a chance, that Jewish merchants were unaware of the Hebrew origin of these words and simply considered them as Russian words/jargon^[5, 14].

1.3.3. Israeli Hebrew Influence

The primary question is in the era of political Zionism and the State of Israel, to what extent does the linguistic repertoire include features from Modern Hebrew^[40]? This variable isn’t relevant to all the Jewish communities however applies to our research community - the Georgian Jews, whose current colloquial speech includes terminology typical

Table 1. Biblical and religious vocabulary.

<i>Agada</i>	<i>Tora</i>	<i>T'arepa</i>	<i>Kasheri</i>	<i>Ketuba</i>	<i>Kipuri</i>	<i>Shabati</i>	<i>Talmud</i>	<i>Tepilini</i>
a legend, tale	the five books of Moses	improper for eating	proper for eating	a marriage contract	forgiveness	a holiday, Saturday	teaching, central text of Rabbinic Judaism	a prayer religious attribute

Table 2. Substratal influence.

<i>t'obe</i>	<i>ganabi</i>	<i>Khavera</i>	<i>ksiva</i>
good	thief	friend, member	written document

to Israeli society only (see the **Table 3**)^[65]. Since the 1970s, when Georgian Jews started to migrate to Israel, the influence of modern Hebrew and consequently the share of Hebrew vocabulary in Judeo-Georgian has considerably increased.

1.3.4. Adstratal Influence

The linguistic repertoire of the Georgian Jews includes features from other languages, including new co-territorial (Jewish) language(s). The use of Hebrew linguistic markers with Georgian words has become common in Judeo-Georgian. In addition, some Georgian expressions changed under the influence of Israeli Hebrew. For example, a new expression *chems ighbalze* (to my luck) was adopted into Judeo-Georgian after the repatriation of Georgian Jews. While living in Georgia, they used the phrase, that is common in standard Georgian - *chems bedze*. In Hebrew, the concepts of *ighbali* (luck) and *bedi* (fate) are expressed/translated by the same word (*mazal*). It can be assumed that this change and confusion (as shown below in **Table 4**) were caused by the Hebrew influence.

1.3.5. Displaced Dialectisms

The linguistic repertoire of the Georgian Jews includes features from other regions within the same language territory. In the speech of Kutaisi Jews in Western Georgia replacing the preverb *mo* with *ma* is a frequent phenomenon, which is not common in the local regional dialect (illustrative sentence is given below in **Table 5**). The use of *ma/am* preverbs is peculiar to Eastern Georgian (Kakhetian and Kartlian) dialects. The eastern dialect zone/area was the original habitat of Jews in Georgia. Later, after moving to Western Georgia, they retained these forms. The same can be concluded regarding the verb stem *sign am* (often replacing *av*) and adding the marker of the nominative case *i* to the proper names.

1.3.6. L'havdil Factor

Jews avoid local non-Jewish features seen as religious. That's why they translated the Torah into Georgian in the 12th century. Its Christian translation was done centuries earlier but the Jews avoided it because of its Christian connotation. Jews of Georgia had an oral translation of the Torah that was transmitted by the rabbis from generation to generation^[10]. This translation, the so-called *Tavsili*, in Enoch's opinion, must have originated in the 11th–12th centuries by Georgian Jews. *Tavsili* is a Georgian cognate of the Arabic term *tafsir*, the term used in the 10th century by Saadia Gaon for his translation of the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) into Judeo-Arabic. In the 8th–11th centuries, Georgia was invaded by Arabs and, consequently, Georgian Jews had close contact with Arabic-speaking Jews.

1.3.7. Secret Language

To what extent do Jews have secretive/humorous/derisive ways of talking about non-Jews, especially using Hebrew words? A published article titled “On the history of “buy and sell” conducted by Georgian Jews”^[13]. As Papismedov points out “Gradually the Jewish merchants elaborated their own hermetic, secret language. This language was widely used by Jewish merchants at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. It penetrated the everyday speech of the Jews, and some words from this jargon were used by a narrow circle of non-Jewish Georgians^[66]. This professional jargon of Georgian Jews did not disappear without leaving traces. Its vocabulary (examples given in **Table 6**) can be found today in everyday/colloquial Georgian speech, especially urban slang.

1.3.8. Archaisms

Georgian Jews maintained the linguistic features when local non-Jews had already shifted them away from their use.

Table 3. Modern Israeli Hebrewisms.

<i>k'itsoni</i>	<i>miluimi</i>	<i>ierida</i>	<i>neshira</i>	<i>alia</i>
radical/extremist	a reserve duty	decline, descent emigration from Israel	molting, shedding migrating to other countries, instead of repatriating to Israel	growing, going up repatriation to Israel

Table 4. Adstratal influence.

<i>audit'oriumi</i> (instead of <i>audit'oria</i>)	<i>Ierushalaimi</i> (instead of <i>Ierusalimi</i>)	<i>chems ighbalze</i> (instead of <i>chems bedze</i>)
auditorium	Jerusalem	to my luck

Such are, for instance, lexical units and ergative case marker *man*. In the 19th century *dagenatsvle* ('darling' would be an approximate English equivalent of this untranslatable word) was common in Georgian and it can be even found in literature. However, soon it became a Jewish cultural marker. "Are you *dagenatsvle*?" means "Are you a Jew?" In other words, this form was used only by the Jews while local non-Jews no longer used this form. The same can be said of the verbs *una* (instead of *unda*, meaning (he) wants), and *jda* (instead of *ijda*, meaning (he) was sitting), which can be found in the Georgian written texts dating as far back as the 12th century. They are not used in modern Georgian but the Jews preserved these forms and still use them.

1.3.9. Orthography

The Jews never used Hebrew script to record/write down Georgian or Judeo-Georgian texts. However, as Brad Sabin Hill points out in his article "Jewish Languages in Manuscript and Print", there is an exception – in 1892 Georgian Jew Simon Rizhinashvili published *Sefer Hinukh hane'arim*^[67], a Hebrew-Georgian primer and conversation book entirely in Hebrew characters, is the only instance of this Caucasian language printed in Hebrew characters. In addition, there still exist the Hebrew inscriptions preserved in the Jewish cemeteries^[1].

1.3.10. Textual Translation

In some cases, translations include word-for-word rendering of Hebrew/Aramaic sentence structure. The cases of usage of Georgian "Natsevari" as an equivalent of the Hebrew definite article "Ha" in "Tavsili" carry a particular significance. It is worth mentioning, that Georgian "Natsevari" normally follows the nouns, but in this case, it is used along with the noun and the adjective as well, and instead of following, proceeds them, according to the Hebrew arti-

cle pattern. "*da shekmna ghmertma igi ori manatobeli igi didebi, igi manatobeli igi didi tana sauprosod ima dghesa da igi manatobeli igi patara sauprosod ima ghamesa da igi maskvlavebi*" (and the God created the two great luminaries, the great luminary was created for supervision of the day and the small luminary for supervision of the night and the stars). "It is noteworthy, that the article is represented in the original text nine times, and it is completely copied in "Tavsili". It is clear that the frequent use of the article in "Tavsili" is conditioned by the influence of the Hebrew language^[10].

1.3.11. Other Distinctive Features

To what extent does the linguistic repertoire include distinctively Jewish features other than the ones above? Judeo-Georgian is characterized by a distinctive intonation. In Georgian the stress is weak. Standard Georgian is characterized by a weak dynamic stress while Judeo-Georgian is characterized by tonic stress. Tonic stress can be observed in some Georgian dialects but Judeo-Georgian differs from them too^[38]. Thus, Judeo-Georgian bears the same common features as other Jewish languages scattered all over the world.

2. Conclusions

Traditional scholarship treated Judeo-Georgian as a variety of Georgian language and the research primarily dealt with its peculiarities as well as differences and similarities between Judeo-Georgian, standard Georgian, and Georgian dialects. The research aimed at defining the status of Judeo-Georgian in the Georgian linguistic space. In other words, scholars tried to answer the question of whether it was a dialect of the Georgian language, a sub-dialect of Georgian dialects, ethnolect, or ethno-sociolect, because Georgian Jews lived in almost all regions of Georgia and differed from the

Table 5. Displaced dialectisms.

<i>mamtsa</i> (instead of <i>momtsa</i>)	<i>puli</i>
(he) gave me	money

Table 6. Secret language.

<i>ga-a-sukhar-a</i>	<i>naša</i>	<i>goim-i</i>	<i>ksiva</i>	<i>baiti</i>
sold it	girl	Non-Jew, slang meaning not cool	document, slang meaning pass/pass ticket	house

local non-Jewish speech only by a few signs. At the same time, the speech of the Jews living in all regions of Georgia was characterized by common linguistic features, that is why it is considered as an ethnolect of the Georgian language, which is later divided into several sub-dialects. Recently, the linguistic study of Judeo-Georgian has acquired new dimensions. It is treated not only as a variety of Georgian languages but as one of the varieties of Jewish languages as well. Common features of Jewish language varieties identified by comparative Jewish linguistic studies, like textual Hebrew/Aramaic influence, substratal influence, Israeli Hebrew influence, adstratal influence, displaced dialectisms, *l’havdil* factor, secret language, archaisms, orthography, textual translation, and other distinctive features - are also peculiar to Judeo-Georgian. Consequently, Judeo-Georgian is currently being studied in comparison with other Jewish languages. Theoretical understanding of Judeo-Georgian took a new turn in the 21st century. Needless to say, the question regarding the status of Judeo-Georgian speech is still relevant not only from the standpoint of Georgian dialectology but it is also urgent to explore it from the perspective of comparative Jewish linguistic studies. If we look at the classification system of Jewish languages, offered by Wexler^[64], Judeo-Georgian can be considered as the part of the fourth group (4. situations in which Jews in all regions speak the same language as the non-Jews of the co-territory, but sometimes introduce Hebrew-Aramaic or Hebrew elements into the conversation (for example, Hebrew-English), and it can be ranked as one of the Jewish languages. Judeo-Georgian can be classified as a language only conditionally but it can be regarded as a Jewish language variety similar to Jewish English for instance.

Author Contributions

What is the language variety of Judeo-Georgian? In what terms is this concept denoted? Tamari Lomtadze; Judeo-Georgian as a Constituent Part of the Georgian Linguistic Space, Tamar Lomtadze; Judeo-Georgian in the Classification of Jewish Languages, Ani Kvirikashvili; Sections related to old Biblical Hebrew influence and Kartvelian linguistic researchs (1.3.1–1.3.2, 1.3.5–1.3.11), Tamar Lomtadze; Sections related to modern Israeli Hebrew influence (1.3.3–1.3.4), Ani Kvirikashvili. Figures, Tamar Lomtadze; Illustrative materials and tables, Ani Kvirikashvili. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

Most of the databases generated during our research, isn’t available online. Some of the recordings can be found here <https://www.jewishlanguages.org/judeo-georgian>. In

the grant project No.FR -21-4768 we are in a final year and databases will be published online after the completion of the project.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

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