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Original article

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## LANGUAGE ACTIVISM IN MODERN ABKHAZIA AND ITS CONNECTION WITH THE DIASPORA

*The linguistic situation in modern Abkhazia is an understudied topic. Considering that Abkhaz is officially the state language in Abkhazia, one might erroneously get the impression that the role of other languages in the Republic is small; however, functional dominance belongs to the Russian language, which serves as a lingua franca in the multi-ethnic environment. According to the sociolinguistic classification, the state of affairs in modern Abkhazia should be classified as an unbalanced type of a two-component exoglossic linguistic situation, where two main languages of communication, Abkhaz and Russian, compete. Both state and public institutions are trying to influence the linguistic situation in Abkhazia. Cyberspace, in this context, also serves as a tool used by language activists both to popularize interest in learning Abkhaz and to implement the learning process itself. To date, 116 Abkhaz Internet communities are registered on the social network. Of these, only 7 are dedicated to language topics. They mostly discuss the shortcomings of language teaching methods in schools, express their dissatisfaction with the level of native language proficiency among the youth, and sometimes propose their own programs which, in their opinion, contribute to the preservation and development of the Abkhaz language. At the same time, these online language communities are not very active; out of the 7 groups, only one, “Apsshuala” (Апшыуала), is consistently active. Youth associations contribute to the preservation and popularization of their native language. For example, in 2022, students of the Abkhaz State University developed an educational application for those who want to study their native language. This is a clear indicator of the desire of youth communities to preserve their language. Both Abkhaz students and their like-minded peers from South Ossetia and the North Caucasus participated in developing the application. On Instagram, language pages dedicated to learning the Abkhaz language are becoming more and more common. Graduates of the Philological Faculty of ASU (Abkhaz State University), having united in a group, create educational videos and post them as reels on Instagram. Regardless of the language, such associations are generally similar in their structure and principles.*

**Keywords:** *Abkhazians, language activism, Abkhaz language, diaspora, cyberspace*

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