

Western Armenian: Its role in Identity Preservation and in the Study of the Armenian Language

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Abstract

The importance and necessity of spreading and preserving the Western Armenian language has always been in the spotlight. This issue became especially acute when UNESCO officially included it among endangered languages in 2010. The preservation of the Western Armenian language is usually considered in the context of preserving the national identity, cultural values and continuity of the Armenian communities of the Diaspora. Nevertheless, the importance of the Western Armenian language is not only cultural or social, but also linguistic. Western Armenian is the natural continuation of Middle Armenian, and its systematic analysis makes it possible to reveal phonological, lexical, and grammatical correspondences and developments. The methods used in the work revealed these common features. Particular attention has been paid to grammatical features such as the use of the particle *կը* (*ky'*) in forming the present tense, the pluperfect and colloquial forms. These observations show that Western Armenian not only preserves the heritage of Middle Armenian but also undergoes independent development. The connections between Western and Middle Armenian are of great importance for understanding the overall trajectory of Armenian language development.

The Western Armenian language also influences and is influenced by the Eastern Armenian language; there are transitions in vocabulary and grammatical forms. In this regard, the simultaneous and unified development of the two options, enhancing their practical role and encouraging factors contributing to their preservation and development are crucial.

Today, the Western Armenian language continues to serve as the main language of communication for a significant part of the Armenian communities of the Diaspora. One of the largest and most vibrant environments for the use of Western Armenian is the Armenian community in Lebanon. It has the opportunity to manifest independently and freely. Schools, the press, radio, cultural centers, and the church operate in the Western Armenian language, contributing to the preservation, continuity and creating conditions for the viability of the language. At the same time, migration and political factors lead to a narrowing of the scope of language use, emphasizing the urgency of preservation efforts.

Thus, the study of the Western Armenian language is important not only for the comprehensive study of the Armenian language, but also has a priority in terms of national identity, educational policy and the continuity of Diaspora communities.

Overall, the paper proposes a multifaceted examination of Western Armenian, considering its scientific and identity-related functions, its interaction with Eastern Armenian and possible dangers.

Keywords: Western Armenian, Eastern Armenian, Middle Armenian, diaspora, Lebanese Armenian community

Introduction

The Armenian language has gone through a long developmental path; after the Old Armenian (Grabar) and Middle Armenian periods, it splits into Eastern Armenian and Western Armenian linguistic variants in the Modern Armenian (Ashkharabar) context. Extensive studies have been conducted on Eastern Armenian. The linguistic systems of the Eastern Armenian language and the linguistic shifts continue to be examined in detail. The Western Armenian language has also become a subject of study, but not to the same extent as Eastern Armenian. In particular, the connection between the linguistic systems of Western Armenian and Middle Armenian has not yet been deeply studied. The aim of this research is to study the role of Western Armenian in the development process of language, compare it with the Middle Armenian language, and reveal existing similarities.

In the context of the systematic study of linguistic development, the emphasis on the preservation of the Western Armenian language is relevant and important. It allows for a deep examination; otherwise, studying many forms existing in Middle Armenian would be reduced merely to comparative analysis of written sources. When analyzing linguistic changes, one must also consider external influencing factors, including usage domains, social, and economic conditions. All this can directly affect its development and maintenance. In terms of Western Armenian, it is particularly significant that this variant is mainly used in Armenian Diaspora communities and lacks wide usage domains. The community of native speakers of the Western Armenian language is constantly shrinking. The available research proves that the use of the Western Armenian language is mainly limited to the form of family communication. At the same time, political and economic circumstances, conditions of emigration and immigration also affect the scope of language use. This once again underscores the importance of preserving the Western Armenian language.

Literature Review

As already mentioned, Middle Armenian and Western Armenian have systematic similarities. The great Armenian linguist Gevorg Jahukian (1993) writes that the Middle Armenian and Western Armenian literary

languages are very different from the Eastern Armenian literary language, distributing differences from Classical Armenian. Moreover, Western Armenian is twice as close to Middle Armenian. This means that Western Armenian is considered the heir of Middle literary Armenian “being closer to it than to Classical Armenian, while Eastern Armenian literary language is more distant from Middle literary Armenian than from Classical Armenian, explained by the difference in dialectal bases between it and Middle literary Armenian” (p. 17). The Middle Armenian period is characterized and separated from Classical Armenian by the form and use of the present tense particle “*կը*” (*ky*). This type of present tense formation was widespread in Western dialects. Later, the “*կը*” (*ky*) branch of dialects became the foundation for the development of Western Armenian. Yuri Avetisian (2016) notes that starting from the 12th–13th centuries, Western Armenian linguistic elements actively formed, and by the 15th–16th centuries, with the activation of Eastern Armenian elements, the differentiation of the two variants became visible. Based on all this, the Author proposes to consider Middle Armenian as a sub-period in the development of Armenian “The 12th–18th centuries are a sub-period of the early Modern Armenian formation, which was strictly conventionally called or may also be called the Middle Armenian. From the 18th century, the sub-period of Bilingual Modern Armenian (Ashkarhabar) begins” (Avetisian, 2016, p. 79).

The developments and transmissions observed in the linguistic levels of Western Armenian and Middle Armenian, as mentioned above, have not yet been subjected to a systematic study. However, Avetisian (2021), and Sargsian (2022), in their articles, have addressed the examination of the similarities present in the verb system, attempting to demonstrate that even the study of a single linguistic level can reveal the direct connection existing between these two stages of the language’s development.

Having originated from the Middle Armenian language and formed on the basis of Western dialects in the Modern Armenian language (Ashkharabar) period, Western Armenian unfortunately later developed far from its native homeland. The First World War and, in particular, the Armenian Genocide led to the dispersion of many Armenians around the world. As a result, the Armenian Diaspora was formed, one of the major centers of which is Lebanon. Armenians have resided there since the 19th century. Armenians have resided there since the 19th century. According to Donabedian (2017), in Lebanon, dialects were more dominant than literary Western Armenian, along with foreign languages such as Turkish. However, since the beginning of the 20th century, Armenians have always valued language as a tool for preserving the nation, and the goal of the numerous schools opened in Lebanon was linguistic Armenization.

Overall, the Armenian community in Lebanon has made and continues to make significant efforts toward national preservation. “Lebanon was indeed said to have conduce to *hayabahbanum* more than anywhere else in the Armenian Diaspora. As early as the twenties, the fecundity of Lebanese Armenian cultural enterprise was already in evident” (Abramson, 2021, p. 201).

However, the preservation of the language is facing serious problems today. Donabedian (2017) believes that the main political factor that currently affects the viability of the Western Armenian language is the internal and geopolitical situation in the region. This causes a lack of confidence, which affects the views of families on the future of their children.

Avetisian (2021) considers the reasons for the endangerment of Western Armenian to include the lack of prospects for education in Armenian, the gradual disintegration of viable communities, the influence of dominant languages, the lack of interest in reading and the Armenian language among young people and so on (pp. 206–212). In her studding about Armenians in the Arab Gulf states, Anny Joukoulian (2024, p. 281) notes that the majority of Armenian “neither read Armenian books nor listen to Armenian songs. A good percentage of them do not even attend Armenian gatherings or church. This implies that their attitude towards knowledge of the mother tongue is associated with their attitude towards their own culture”. This is the reason, why Western Armenian has now largely become a familial communication language, while in socio-economic relations, foreign languages, particularly English, play a significant role. Joukoulian’s (2024) research showed that in the Arab Gulf countries, Armenians generally use Armenian with family members, while English is used for writing, reading, and professional communication.

Methods

The preservation of the Western Armenian language has significant linguistic importance, as it represents a specific level of language development and allows evaluation of its relationships with other linguistic stages. To reveal the close connection between Western Armenian and Middle Armenian systems and the interactions between Eastern and Western Armenian, several research methods were applied. A synchronic and diachronic examination was conducted. A synchronic study compared the linguistic phenomena of Eastern and Western Armenian, whereas a diachronic study examined those of Western Armenian and Middle Armenian. Comparative, analytical, and descriptive methods were applied to show the common features existing in the Western Armenian and Middle Armenian language systems, the differences between the Western Armenian and Eastern Armenian languages, and their influence on each other. Written sources in the Middle Armenian language, literary and artistic works in Western Armenian, videos, and press publications were analyzed.

This research also emphasizes the role of Western Armenian in national preservation. As the primary means of communication in Diaspora Armenian communities, the language is important for raising Armenian-conscious generations and ensuring community continuity. To make its use domains more visible, we selected one community, the Armenian community of Lebanon, and based on a comparison of available materials and data, we described the basics of language implementation in the community.

Results and Discussion

The Connection between Western Armenian and Middle Armenian

Western Armenian and Middle Armenian are closely connected and almost identical in phonological, lexical, and grammatical systems.

Thus, a number of Western Armenian words in their phonetic composition, such as *մոռնալ* (*mornal*) (*to forget*), *գիտնալ* (*gitnal*) (*to know*), *հասկնալ* (*hasknal*) (*to understand*), *գողնալ* (*goghnal*) (*to steal*) differ phonetically from older forms in Classical Armenian – *մոռանալ* (*moranal*), *գիտենալ* (*gitenal*), *հասկանալ* (*haskanal*), *գողանալ* (*goghanal*). These changes arose in Middle Armenian through phonetic shifts of *-ան* (*an*) > *-ն* (*n*) and *-են* (*en*) > *-ն* (*n*). Similar phonetic changes are characteristic of that period and were observed in the early period of the Middle Armenian language.

Western Armenian vocabulary also contains words not attested in Classical Armenian but present in Middle Armenian written sources, such as *աղէկ* (*aghēg*) (*good*), *զոյ* (*zots*) (*closed*), *ունկ* (*sugh*) (*expensive*), *նէ* (*ne*) (*if*).

The connection between Western Armenian and Middle Armenian is most evident in grammar, especially in verbal systems. In the Western Armenian language, the present and imperfect past re formed with the particle *կը* (*ky'*). The origin of this particle is connected with the Middle Armenian language. The present tense of Classical Armenian had also been used to express a future sense, causing confusion. This problem was solved in the 12th century with the appearance of the particle *կու* (*ku*)/*կը* (*ky'*). Notably, this formation has been preserved specifically in Western Armenian, whereas Eastern Armenian employs structures with the imperfective participle ending in *-ում* (*um*) and auxiliary verbs, which were formed in the Eastern dialects during the later Middle Armenian and early Modern Armenian (Ashkharabar) periods. This fully associates the Western Armenian language with Middle Armenian. Compare;

Middle Armenian	Western Armenian
Դու ծաղկանց ես թագաւոր՝ վարդի գունով // Զիս ի քն դիմացդ ի փուշն է՞ր կու դատես (Yerznkatsi, 1962, p. 168) (<i>Dow c'aghkanc es t'agawor` vardi gownov // Zis i qo dimacd i p'owshn e'r kow dates</i>) (<i>You are the king of the flowers, with the color of the rose // I am in front of you, why do you judge the thorn</i>)	Սկզբունքները տարբեր ճամբով կ'ընթանան , շահերը՝ տարբեր (Betchakdjian, 2013, p. 476). (<i>Skzbowqnery' tarber twambov k'y'nt'anan, shahery` tarber</i>) (The principles proceed in different ways, the interests—different).

<p>Տեսայ զիմ հոգոյս հոգին, զարդարած, ու կերթար ի ժամ</p> <p>(The collection of Armenian folk songs-hayren, 1940, p. 178)</p> <p><i>(Tesay zim hogoyis hugin, zardarac', ow k'ert'ar i jham) (I saw the soul of my soul, adorned, and She was going to prayer).</i></p>	<p>Ու մենք կը մտածէինք մեր թաղի վաղեմի բնակիչներուն մասին</p> <p>(Cholakian, 2024, p. 5). <i>(Ow menq ky' mtac'e'inq mer t'aghi vaghemi bnakichnerown masin) (And we were thinking about the former residents of our neighborhood).</i></p>
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In the same way, we can consider the pluperfect participle, which has the ending *-էր (-er)* in the Western Armenian language, in contrast to the ending *-ել (-el)* in the Eastern Armenian language. The participle with the ending *-el* comes from the past participle of the Old Armenian with the change *էալ (eal)>ել (el)*; *գրեալ (greal) - գրել (grel) (to write)*, *սիրեալ (sireal) – սիրել (sirel) (to love)* etc. Later, during the transition from *-լ (l)* to *-ր (r)*, the ending *-էր (-er)* was formed. The participle with the ending *-էր (-er)* was used mainly in Western dialects and from there passed into the literary Western Armenian language. Compare;

Middle Armenian	Western Armenian
<p>Դեղներ եմ խընկիդ նըման ու առեր եմ գույն զաֆարան (The collection of Armenian folk songs-hayren, 1940, p. 133). <i>(Deghner em xy'nkid ny'man ow ar'er em gowyn zafaran). (I have turned yellow like fennel and taken the color of saffran).</i></p>	<p>Մօրաքրոջ վրիպած գաւաթէն սուրճի հետքը տարածուեր է ճերմակ սփռոցին վրայ ու մնացեր այդպէս (Batikian, 2022). <i>(Mo'raqroj vripac' gawat'e'n sowrtwi hetqy' tarac'ower e' twermak sp'r'ocin vray ow mnacer aydpe's) (Due to his aunt's slip/contact, the coffee from the cup spilled and spread over the white tablecloth, and staying that way)</i></p>

The verb *թողուլ (toghul) (to leave, to let)* replaced by the verb *ձգել (to let)* բայով in the Western Armenian language, for example; *-Հանգիստ **ձգեցէք** մէզ* (Betchakdjian, 2013, 252), *(Hangist d'gece'q mez) (Let us be)*: Such forms also appear in Middle Armenian; *Քանի՞ լիւց պահես զայս խղճուկ գերիս, // **Ձգէ** խիղճ ի մտիդ, գէ՛մ աստուած ունիս* (Anonymous, 1956, p. 15), *(Qani' lac pahes zays xghtwowk geris, // D'ge' xightw i mtid, ge'm astowac' ownis) (How long will you keep crying for this poor prisoner? // Let go the*

conscience in your mind, for you have God). Although they are rare, they are nevertheless of great importance for the formation of the Western Armenian language and the explanation of existing forms.

In this regard, the study of colloquial or non-prescriptive forms in Western Armenian is particularly interesting. Thus, in the Western Armenian language, verb *եղեր* (*egher*), one variant of the pluperfect principle, is used to express the uncertainty or hearsay an action. This is also present in the Middle Armenian language. Compare;

Middle Armenian	Western Armenian
Յայնժամն կու քակեն եղեր (Grigor Vardapet Kamakhatsi). (<i>Yaynzhamn ku qaken egher</i>) (<i>At that time, they may have divided it that way</i>).	Ֆրանսերէն ալ պետք է գիտնանք եղեր (Teqian, 2024). (<i>Fransere'n al petq e' gitnanq egher</i>) (<i>We should also have known French</i>).

In Western Armenian colloquial speech, the word *նէ* (*ne*) (*if*) is also employed, which is likewise inherited from Middle Armenian. Compare;

Middle Armenian	Western Armenian
Հա՛յ իմ խատուտիկ հարսնուկ, դուրս կ'ելլես՝ գօտիդ մի կապեր.// Կապես ալ նէ՛ թուլ կապէ, որ հովը տարուբեր անէ, (<i>The collection of Armenian folk songs-hayren, 1940, p. 472</i>). (<i>Ha'y im xatowtik harsnowk, dowrs k'elles' go'tid mi kaper.// Kapes al ne" t'owl kape', or hovy' tarowber ane'</i>), (<i>Oh, my little bride, as you go out, don't tie your belt.?? And if you tie it, tie it loosely, so that the wind can pass through</i>)	Չեմ կրնար, վրնտէ', չէ նէ պիտի մեռցնեմ (Batikian, 2014) (<i>Chem krnar, vr'nte'', che' ne' piti mer'cnem ...</i>) (<i>I can't, kick him out, if you don't, I'll kill him</i>).

The press, radio, television, and other domains of language use generally display pronounced conservatism with regard to literary forms. Therefore, the study and documentation of colloquial forms will provide new opportunities to reveal the functional and semantic features of older forms throughout the language's development. Moreover, these forms may serve as indicators of the living use and vitality of the language. In general, it is very important to have a living variant of the language as one end of the comparison in order to bring out structural and semantic-functional commonalities and to understand the

true nature of these constructions in Middle Armenian, considering that Eastern Armenian has undergone an entirely different trajectory of development.

Interaction between Western and Eastern Armenian

Since the late 19th century, debates have taken place regarding the interaction and unification of Eastern and Western Armenian. The issue was especially hotly discussed in the pages of the Western Armenian periodical press of the 20th century. In this case, it is very important to note that unification should not be mechanical; both variants must develop equally and harmoniously. They exhibit phonological, lexical, and grammatical differences. In addition, language has a social role and is connected with the speakers' psycholinguistic thinking. Regarding unification, it should be noted that Eastern Armenian often assumes a dominant role. To this is added the influence of Eastern Armenian, "due to increasing contacts (especially since the 1980s, with the growing number of people studying in Armenia, the opening of Armenia's borders after independence, emigration, and the emergence of new means of communication—such as satellite television) (Donabedian, 2017, p. 266). The issue of preserving the Western Armenian language is also becoming relevant and extremely important in this regard. It is necessary to preserve and ensure broad practical use for both varieties of the language, to strengthen efforts towards the preservation of Western Armenian. Unification should be left to linguistic processes, since in Armenian both Eastern and Western Armenian mutually influence one another. Thus, Eastern Armenian has been enriched with a number of neologisms from Western Armenian, which have been so widely used that today they are often no longer perceived as new words, having fully entered the lexicon and replaced foreign forms, for example *գրատուն* (*gratun*) (*bookstore*), *հրապարակագիր* (*hraparakagir*) (*publicist*), *ատենախոսություն* (*atenakhosutyun*) (*dissertation*), *համույթ* (*hamuyt*) (*ensemble*), *կարգախոս* (*kargakhos*) (*slogan*), *ինքնաձիգ* (*inqnadzik*) (*automaton*), *ամբոխավար* (*ambokhavar*) (*demagogue*), *խոսնակ* (*khosnak*) (*speaker, spokesperson*) and others. The influence of the Eastern Armenian language on Western Armenian is also observed. There are uses of such words that are not typical for Western Armenian speech, for example, *բեկումնային* (*bekumnayin*) (*breakthrough*), *թողարկում* (*t'ogharkum*) (*release*), *ֆինանսական* (*finansakan*) (*financial*), *հաշվարկ* (*hashvark*) (*calculation*) etc (Chekijian, 2018). The use of these forms is often explained by the influence of the press.

The influence of the Eastern Armenian language is also noticeable at the morphological level, which, in our opinion, deserves particular attention. Especially in the speech of diaspora Armenians who have settled in Armenia, it is sometimes noticeable that verb forms with the Western Armenian particle *կը* (*ky'*) are replaced with constructions ending *-ում* (*um*) using the Eastern Armenian. For example, the host says

Քաղցր փռնի պղպեղ, կամ *կըսեն* Հալեպի պղպեղ եւ *ուզում եմ* մի քիչ ջուր ավելացնել

պղպղղի վրա (Qaghcr p'oshi pghpegh, kam k'y'sen Halepi pghpegh es owzowm em mi qich jowr avelacnel pghpeghi vra) (Sweet ground pepper, or as it is called, Aleppo pepper. I want to add a little water to the pepper (Hamegh aravot Shaghiki het, Armenian Public Tv, 2022)). The presenter is a Diaspora Armenian, and she uses the Western Armenian present tense with the particle *լը* (*ky'*), whereas later in the discourse, the Eastern Armenian present tense form is employed.

The particle *լը* (*ky'*) is one of the main factors distinguishing Western Armenian, and such uses should be carefully monitored.

The Preservation of Western Armenian in the Republic of Armenia

Due to political events in the Middle East, today many Armenians living in the Diaspora have settled in the Republic of Armenia. Western Armenian Speech can often be heard in public places. However, the issue of preserving Western Armenian here must be emphasized, especially given the strong influence of Eastern Armenian.

There are various public and private structures in Armenia that implement educational and cultural programs. The Faculty of Armenian Philology of YSU, courses dedicated to the study and teaching of Western Armenian are compulsory. It is often emphasized that instructors should be native speakers to ensure students hear authentic Western Armenian speech. At the Institute of Language named after H. Acharian, a Western Armenian department has been active for 10 years. Among the researchers, there are also Armenian Diaspora members, contribute to the study of the language. The “Harach” Western Armenian center is carrying out active work. This center organizes literary and artistic cultural programs. It conducts presentations and discussions of books written in Western Armenian, serves as a workshop and a gathering place for young people, etc. The main goal of all of these organizations is to promote the preservation of the Western Armenian language and strengthen the Homeland-Diaspora bond.

Articles, textbooks and monographs devoted to Western Armenian are regularly published. Examples include Yuri Avetisian’s “Comparative Grammar of Eastern and Western Armenian”, which presents a parallel examination of the two language variants, highlighting differences and similarities; Ruben Sakapetoian’s “Western Armenian Textbook”; collections Western Armenian Fairy Tales etc. In the Dialectology Department of the Language Institute, the Western Armenian dialects used in the Republic of Armenia are collected and studied. In these studies, literary Western Armenian is compared with the variants of the Western Armenian language, in particular with the dialects of Mush, Karin, Sasun and Diyadin, demonstrating their interrelations, similarities, distinctions, and degrees of proximity. These variants are used in Armenian regions Shirak, Gegharkunik, Aragatsotn. In other words, “the dialects of the *լը* branch that form the foundation of literary Western Armenian remain vital in Armenia today. The contemporary Western Armenian dialects in Armenia do not fully represent the original comprehensive

forms of the Mush, Karin, Sasun, and Diyadin dialects. Instead, they appear as individual spoken forms and as new dialectal states formed through the mixing of these dialects. Nevertheless, as systematic manifestations, they represent the same dialects and can confidently be considered as expressions of the Karin, Mush, Sasun, and Diyadin dialects” (Katvalian, Abrahamian et al, 2016, p. 9).

The Armenian community of Lebanon

The historical past of the Armenian people, particularly the massacres and the First World War, contributed to the settlement of Armenians outside their homeland. A large number of Armenians settled in Lebanon, Syria, Paris, Aleppo, and elsewhere.

Lebanon is one of the largest centers of the Armenian Diaspora. Until the mid-1970s, the Armenian community numbered about 250,000–300,000. This number decreased as a result of the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) and the crises that followed. After the Syrian war, about 15,000 Armenians resettled in Lebanon. Today, according to different sources, around 100,000–120,000 Armenians live in Lebanon. Here, Armenians were granted cultural, religious, and socio-economic freedoms. They established Armenian educational institutions, churches operated, and they participated in shaping the economic, political, and cultural life of the country. The Armenian community of Lebanon is still active; schools, the press, radio, cultural centers operate in the Western Armenian language, contributing to the preservation and continuation of the latter.

Education and Culture. Armenians here have placed great importance and attention on Armenian and national education. There are about three dozen Armenian schools operating in Lebanon, including both Sunday and daily schools. It is particularly important that Armenian Studies subjects are taught from preschool age. Lebanon is also home to the only Armenian higher education institution in the Diaspora — Haigazian University (founded in 1955). Both Armenian and foreign students can receive an education at this university. There are also Armenian students specializing in Armenian language studies, who, upon returning to the homeland, find work in their field. Many others continue their education in various universities of Armenia. This ensures a strong connection between the homeland and the Diaspora. the compilation and dissemination of textbooks related to Western Armenian are also emphasized. Among them, we may mention Zareh Melkonian’s “Practical Grammar”, Haroutiun Kurkdjian’s “New Grammar of the Armenian Language”, Karo Arakelian’s “Modern Armenian Grammar”, and “Easy Armenian. In 2022, Armenag Yeghiaian carried out an important and valuable work by publishing “A Manual for Western Armenian: An Orthographic, Orthoepic and Stylistic Guide”. The book presents the orthographic, pronunciation, and stylistic applications of different linguistic units and points out their incorrect uses.

Cultural, charitable, and sports organizations operating in Lebanon, such as Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society, the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), Homenetmen (Armenian General Union for Physical Education and Scouting) etc. The main mission of these organizations is to promote Armenian identity and disseminate Armenian values. Through numerous educational and cultural programs, they seek to improve the quality of education, enhance the knowledge of the homeland among the youth.

However, the organization of education in the Armenian community also faces many challenges. One of the main problems is the decreasing number of students in schools. The number of students specializing in Armenian Studies at Haigazian University is also small. As a result, a decline in the number of teachers is expected in the near future (Urneshlyan, 2017). This decline is explained by socio-economic conditions and the difficulty of securing employment afterwards. Rapidly developing social relations and labor market demands, the situational necessity and preference for foreign languages in communication affect the degree of language use.

Press. In Lebanon, numerous magazines, quarterlies, yearbooks, and weekly newspapers are published, among which the newspapers “Aztag” (ARF), “Zartonk” (ADL), and “Ararad” (SDHP) stand out. The radio stations “Voice of Van” (ARF) and “Radio Sevan” also operate on a daily basis. In recent years, online meetings and discussions on current issues have been organized, for example, by the daily “Aztag”. In the fields of literature and art, the magazine “Pakine” plays an important role. It publishes literary and artistic works, articles, and analyses. Particularly noteworthy is the publication of works by authors writing in Western Armenian. The magazine is also available online. The active operation of the press, radio, and online platforms plays a crucial role in the use, preservation, and dissemination of Western Armenian.

Church. Throughout the history of the Armenian people, the Church has always had its unique place and role. It has been one of the main centers of national preservation. Three religious communities operate here: Armenian Apostles, Armenian Catholics, and Armenian Evangelicals. The Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia (the seat of the primate is the Saint Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral in Antelias) is located here, serving as the spiritual center for a large portion of the Apostolic Armenians in the Diaspora. It has played a significant role in the formation of the Armenian Diaspora.

The Armenian Catholic Patriarchate is under the subordination of the Vatican. Thanks to this, it has established broad connections in international circles and is able to provide substantial support to pan-Armenian programs.

The Armenian Evangelical community is small and is part of the Evangelical Church of Lebanon. Nevertheless, Armenian Evangelicals have their own role and influence within the community.

Even today, the Church in Lebanon continues to serve as the spiritual and cultural center of the community, uniting people and contributing to the preservation of Armenian identity, which in turn ensures the recognition and enhancement of the role of the Armenian language.

Politics. The Armenian community in Lebanon has actively participated in shaping the country's political life. There are Armenian politicians both in the government and in parliament. Today, the three traditional Armenian political parties—the ARF (Dashnaktsutyun), the SDHP (Hunchakian), and the ADL (Ramgavar)—remain active. Here, political parties have the legal and free right to operate and to raise national issues.

Thus, we can conclude that Armenians who settled in Lebanon created a stable community, which continues to preserve its cultural identity and Armenian values to this day.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to reveal and reassess the role of Western Armenian not only in the preservation of national identity but also in highlighting its scientific and linguistic significance. Having developed on the basis of Middle Armenian, it has undergone an independent path of evolution, displaying specific differences from Eastern Armenian. The phonological, lexical, and grammatical analyses made it possible to observe the structural and semantic commonalities between the linguistic systems of Middle Armenian and Western Armenian. The study demonstrated that the preservation of Western Armenian is crucial for the comprehensive study of the language and for comparative-historical analysis.

The paper also discusses the interaction of the Western Armenian and Eastern Armenian languages, manifested both lexically and grammatically. It was noted that the influence of Eastern Armenian is sometimes more prominent, and in this regard, the preservation of the Western Armenian language is emphasized. Their joint development and dissemination should be encouraged, and their reciprocal influences are to be seen as natural linguistic processes.

Through the analysis of the Armenian community in Lebanon, an attempt was made to show the vital role of the community environment in the preservation and transmission of the language. Armenian schools, the press, cultural and religious institutions contribute to maintaining the vitality of the language, despite the decreasing size of the community and the dominance of foreign languages among younger generations.

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