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Language Contact and Language Attitudes of Caucasian Germans in Today’s Caucasus and Germany

Abstract: This article examines the language contact situation as well as the language attitudes of the Caucasian Germans, descendants of German-born inhabitants of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union who emigrated in 1816/17 to areas of Transcaucasia. After deportations and migrations, the group of Caucasian Germans now consists of those who have since emigrated to Germany and those who still live in the South Caucasus. It’s the first time that sociolinguistic methods have been used to record data from the generation who experienced living in the South Caucasus and in Germany as well as from two succeeding generations. Initial results will be presented below with a focus on the language contact constellations of German varieties as well as on consequences of language contact and language repression, which both affect language attitudes.

Keywords: language contact, migration, variation, language attitudes, identity


Keywords: Sprachkontakt, Migration, Variation, Spracheinstellungen, Identität
1 Introduction

For approximately 150 years (1817–1941), Swabians lived in the South Caucasus separated from the German-speaking world. Surrounded by other cultures and languages such as Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Russian, they cultivated the culture and language they had brought with them from Germany. Some descendants of these Swabians live in Germany today, and others live in the former German settlements of Transcaucasia, where the current main languages of communication are Georgian, Azerbaijani or Armenian, depending on the local situation; additionally, Russian still plays an important role in everyday communication, especially among those who were born before the 1990s. However, both groups of descendants seem to have maintained a German memory culture and are constructing a transnational collective identity of the ‘Caucasian Germans’, which is linguistically linked to a variety of Swabian. This variety has been cultivated for over 200 years and shows an interesting language history with unique and astounding characteristics due to 150 years of persistently limited language contact with the outside world.

The following article provides an insight into current studies (e.g. Dück 2018) on the connection between the language and identity of Caucasian Germans living today and is part of the “German in the World” project at the Leibniz-Institute for the German Language in Mannheim (Germany). Its aim is to close the gaps in ‘language island’ and language contact research as well as in variational linguistics. In doing so, it seeks to determine the characteristic accumulations of the respective varieties caused by language contact, language skills, language attitudes, perceptions of the social environment, and the cultural situation of this minority group and put into context with the respective self-perceived and externally perceived identity. Of particular interest are the effects of the clash of the acquired ‘conserved’ Swabian variety with near Standard German and other languages as well as the effects on identity constructions. The following study presents initial results from this project with the help of newly collected language data from the speaker group, while focusing on the consequences of language contact for the Swabian variety and the language attitude of the informants.

2 Historical Background and Analyzed Language Variety

The settlement areas of the Swabians in Russia and the former Soviet Union have been widely (and thoroughly) investigated (cf. e.g. Hoffmann 1905; Allmendinger 1989; Songhulaschwili 1997; Auch 2001; Haigis / Hummel 2002; Föll 2002; Springform 2004; Hertsch / Er 2017). Tsar Alexander I had continued the im-
migration policy of his grandmother Catherine I and again invited many foreigners to move to Russia. Due to his settlement policy, he promoted the settlement of the newly conquered southern Ukrainian territories. At the same time the settlement of Germans in Transcaucasia was enforced in order to protect the empire against the Turks in the south. In 1816 forty families followed Alexander I’s invitation to the South Caucasus to flee economic hardship, political oppression and religious confrontations. In 1817, more than 1400 families followed (cf. Biedlingmeier 2005: 17)—mainly radical Pietists from Württemberg. They gathered in Ulm, crossed the Danube to the Black Sea, hibernated near Odessa and continued their journey in the countryside to the South Caucasus, where they founded the first German colony Marienfeld (today: Sartitschala) in early summer 1817, which is situated east of the capital of Georgia Tbilisi.

![Image of migration paths](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Europe_laea_location_map.svg)

Figure 1: Emigration paths of Swabian radical pietists (figure based on [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Europe_laea_location_map.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Europe_laea_location_map.svg))

In the course of the following century more than twenty German settlements were established in Transcaucasia. This settlement development was interrupted during the Second World War, when the mother and daughter colonies were dissolved in 1941 and their inhabitants were forcibly deported. Caucasian Germans who had entered into so-called intermarriages with Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, or other ethnic groups were excluded from the deportations. In the deportation areas of Central Asia, the Caucasian Germans finally came into contact with other so-

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1 Even before the deportation there were some contacts with Volga Germans, for example, when they came from the north to the Transcaucasian German villages in years of famine. Shortly before the deportations in August 1941, some Caucasian Germans also reported that Russians
called ‘Russian Germans’\(^2\) (cf. Berend / Riehl 2008: 22). Nowadays, Caucasian Germans are considered as Russian Germans.\(^3\)

Thus, three different speaker groups of Caucasus Germans emerged, two of which spoke a Swabian variety. First, there are the Caucasus Swabians with the largest number of Caucasian Germans, who often settled in mixed Kazakh, Uzbek, Russian and German settlements after the deportations and migrated to Germany in the 1990s at the latest—partly to the villages and cities from which their ancestors had emigrated 200 years ago. In addition, there are those Caucasus Swabians who were exempt from forced deportations or were allowed to return to the Caucasian villages, which was only the case if they had a local partner.

Finally, the smallest faction of the Caucasian Germans are the descendants of the so-called ‘Russian Germans’, who had already settled in the oil metropolis of Baku as architects and engineers or in Tbilisi as merchants, pharmacists and doctors in the 18\(^{\text{th}}\) and 19\(^{\text{th}}\) centuries and mingled with the locals. Their descendants today speak a well-educated colloquial or near Standard German. This is probably due to the excellent, mostly academic education, to which the families attached great importance (cf. Note 5, on this subgroup of ‘Russian-Germans’).

The three groups also experience very different language contact constellations: The last described and smallest group has as L1 either a Standard German variety or Russian and as L2 either Russian or a Standard German variety, depending on what their parents learned first. Especially with regard to

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brought Crimean Germans to the Caucasian villages to help with the harvest before everyone was finally deported to Central Asia at the end of the harvest.

\(^2\) The term ‘Russian Germans’, which is commonly used today, is questionable. See especially Peterson / Weger 2017. More appropriate is the term ‘Germans from X’. On the historical background of the Russian Germans see Wiens 1993; Eisfeld 1999; Eisfeld / Herdt 1996; Landmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland e.V. 2006; Krieger 2013 and 2017.

\(^3\) It is often overlooked that the group of so-called ‘Russian Germans’ is historically very heterogeneous, and must be divided into at least two groups from a linguistic perspective alone: On the one hand, there were those who had already immigrated to Russia since the middle of the 16\(^{\text{th}}\) century for professional reasons and belonged primarily to higher classes of urban Germany, such as engineers, architects, doctors, officers and merchants. They mostly stayed temporarily in Russia (mostly living in metropolises such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, later also Odessa, Tbilisi and Baku), retained German citizenship, or often relinquished their Russian nationality and later abandoned their German language. On the other hand, there was a much larger group of people who followed the advertising and planned settlement policy of the Russian tsars between 1763 and 1824 and emigrated to Russia. This group had economic, social and religious motives, and mainly a rural, arable population, craftsmen and winegrowers (cf. Stumpp 1982: 6). They settled—permanently first since 1763—in newly conquered, mostly rural areas in southern Russia in mostly closed colonies at the Volga, then since 1780 around the Black Sea and on the Crimea and still later—since 1817—in the Caucasus region. Unfortunately, this cannot be discussed in detail here due to lack of space.
the oldest generation (I)⁴, the respective national language is added as L3. Because this group does not speak any Swabian variety, it is not considered hereinafter.

However, the groups of Caucasian Germans who have not left the Caucasian villages or were not allowed to return belong to the descendants of the Caucasus Swabians and thus speak a Swabian variety: In most cases the L1 is either a Swabian variety or the language of the non-German parent (Georgian or Azerbaijani). The L2 is then usually the language or variety of the non-L1 speaking parent. The L3 is usually Standard German for this group and the L4 is Russian. The L2 and L3 were learned in school. For most Caucasian Germans the L1 is without exception a Swabian variety, the L2 is the Standard German and the L3 is Russian, which generations I and II usually learned in school. These observations coincide with Riehl’s remarks on the language skills of the different generations of ‘Russian-Germans’ in Siberia (cf. Riehl 2017: 22–25). However, questions about the language use in the country of origin were added to the authors interviews.

In general, all three groups speak Russian very well. This is due to the language repression policy in the Soviet Union, which affected both the Caucasian and the Central Asian countries. Only after the collapse of the Soviet Union did the respective national languages such as Georgian, Azerbaijani and Armenian become more widely spoken, but they were still largely confined to the context of the family.⁵ Until the 1990s, the first two generations spoke Russian in public. Finally, with the end of the policy of language repression, the respective family languages also entered the public sphere. However, the use of the respective variety does not only differ according to country and group affiliation, but also with regard to each generation.

3 State of Research

There are already numerous studies on German language minorities in Central and Eastern Europe in general. Besides works about Germans in Ukraine (cf. Hvozdyak 2008, especially Trankarpatien-Ukraine cf. Melika 2002) and Romania (cf. Bottesch 2008; Scheuringer 2010, especially Banat Swabians cf. Scheuringer 2016), the following should be noted from Berend (1998; 2011), Berend / Jedig (1991), Berend / Riehl (2008), Blankenhorn (2003) and Rosenberg (1994), who are mainly dedicated to the Russian-German dialects in Russia respectively the

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⁴ For the determination of the generations see Figure 2 with the distribution of recordings (total).
⁵ Had ‘Russian Germans’ not emigrated in the 1990s from Central Asia, the same might have been said for Kazakh and Uzbek, which would theoretically have affected the language of Generation II.
former Soviet Union. In addition, studies should be considered which deal with the language contact of Russian Germans in Germany, like Anstatt (2011), Meng (2001), Pfetsch (1999) and Rosenberg (2010).

Research on the Swabian variety of Transcaucasian settlements remains a desideratum to this day, although, in contrast to other ‘Russian-German’ varieties (cf., for example Berend 2011), Swabian hardly had contact with other (‘Russian-German’) varieties until the pre-war period of the 1930s due to the comparatively closed settlements of the Caucasus Swabians (Berend 2011: 103, 105). This data gap in language contact research as well as in variation linguistics — primarily the ‘Russian-German’ varieties and their description — needs to be closed. The author recorded voice data on audio and video of almost thirty Caucasian Germans of the experience generation and two generations of descendants: in Baku (Azerbaijan), in Tbilisi’s districts Didube (formerly Alexandersdorf) and Tschugureti (formerly Neu-Tiflis), in Bolnisi (formerly: Katharinenfeld) for the first time, and in various German cities such as Landau, Neustadt an der Weinstraße, Offenburg and Schwaikheim (Rems-Mur-Kreis). The number of respondents is not representative in quantitative terms, but qualitative statements can be made with around 15 hours of footage.

4 Theoretical Framework of Treated Topics and Methodology

19 questionnaire-based interviews with Caucasian Germans were collected in Southwest Germany, where the largest groups of Caucasian Germans live today. 7 interviews were collected in Georgia and 2 in Azerbaijan. The sociolinguistic interview-guide, which contains 40 questions, was designed to elicit quantitative and qualitative data. The interview-guide is inspired by Albert / Marx (2010) in consideration of Nortier (2008) and König (2014) and jointly discussed and developed within the framework of the aforementioned project ‘German in the World’ at the IDS. The surveys in the area of language attitude follow the methods of Gärtig et al. (cf. 2010) and Plewnia / Rothe (cf. 2012: 9–118). So, in order to make statements about the connection between language and identity construction as well as the effects of migration and repression on language acquisition and multilingualism, linguistic biographical data were incorporated and the test persons were asked about their language skills (in German, Swabian, Russian, Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani etc.), their respective language attitudes and the social, cultural and media situation.
The questionnaire-based interviews were conducted by the author herself from September to December 2017 in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Germany. These, as well as informal table discussions, were recorded over audio and in some cases also video recorder. Within the framework of this project the data are currently being transcribed and evaluated (following Schmidt / Schütte 2016). The approach to quantitative and qualitative data evaluation was primarily based on Berend (1998; 2003: 151–164), Meng (2001) and Anstatt (2011: 101–128). Afterwards the voice and video recordings will be processed technically and entered into the Archiv für Gesprochenes Deutsch (‘Archive for Spoken German’) of the Leibniz-Institute for the German Language.

5 Results

5.1 Language Contact of Caucasian Germans in the South Caucasus

This chapter begins by describing the language contact constellations of the Caucasian Germans who were excluded from the forced deportations because they were, for example, married to a Georgian, Azerbaijani or Armenian person, and who still live in the German villages of the South Caucasus. Their language contact situation is described by the Caucasian German Balthasar Megrelishvili6 below. His biography is quite exemplary. He was born in 1947 in Bolnisi (formerly Katharinenfeld, Georgia) and was raised with a Swabian variety (L2) by his German grandmother, with whom he spent most of his childhood. His grandfather was Georgian. His parents both spoke Georgian (L1) with him.

6 The names of the informants were changed by the author.
[1] Balthasar Megrelishvili (BM), born 1947 in Bolnisi, talks about his language acquisition in the family and the first language contact with Russian (also present at the interview: the Caucasian German Gustav Armin (GA), born 1938 in Neustadt / Wstr.)—Interview Katharina Dück (KD) 2017.

7 /din jan/: incomprehensible and intelligible syllables that don’t make sense in any of the three languages used by the informant.
Apart from the numerous hesitations and pauses, which the speaker explains with a lack of language practice, the simultaneous use of the Standard German and the Swabian variety is particularly striking. An example is the interchangeable use of /i/ and /ich/ for the first person. When the speaker remembers his earliest childhood memories with his grandmother, typical Swabian diphthongs such as /gwea/, /hau/ and /taun/ stand out. The latter two forms are over-corrections that other Caucasian Germans do not use. In addition to the Swabian variety as L2, his Swabian grandmother also taught him German songs and poems, such as Heinrich Heine’s Loreley, which he recited freely—in what he called the “high language”. It is uncertain whether the simultaneous use of the standard variety originates from this, from German lessons at school, or from his media consumption—Megrelishvili stated that he still reads a lot in German on the Internet and also watches films and videos in German. He repeatedly and deliberately points out the difference between the Swabian “dialect” and the “high language” German.

He later refers to Georgian (L1) as his mother tongue, although here he still claims that he thought in German up to the first grade and, moreover, that a person is defined by the language he or she thinks in. On the other hand, he repeatedly describes himself as Georgian. In the family Georgian was always spoken except for the grandmother, who spoke German. In school, Russian became his L3, and accompanied him during his professional life as an aviator.
and flight instructor in the army, where Russian was also the main language of communication. Megrelishvili sums up the language contact situations in professional life as follows:

[2] Balthasar Megrelishvili (BM) reports on his language contact in professional life (also present at the interview Gustav Armin (GA))—Interview Katharina Dück (KD) 2017.

{19:22} 0001 BM da hawe wir kontakt (.)
{19:23} 0002 e: (.)
{19:24} 0003 gehabt
{19:24} 0004 mit_e: armenen mit_e:
{19:26} 0006 KD Hm
{19:27} 0008 BM grusine mit_e russen
{19:28} 0009 KD Ja
{19:29} 0011 BM i bin selba ein grusin\desw:

During this time, his Georgian also suffered from the repressive language policy in the Soviet Union. He reports that he usually spoke Russian with his Georgian colleagues and only used Georgian when they were alone in pairs. Only after he had retired and returned to his birthplace Bolnisi did Georgian become his main language of communication again.

Overall, it is difficult for the speaker to speak German, and he occasionally changes to Russian or Georgian during the interview:

[3] Balthasar Megrelishvili (BM) reports about his relatives in Germany language acquisition in the family and the first language contact with Russian (also present at the interview Gustav Armin (GA))—Interview Katharina Dück (KD) 2017.

{31:52} 0001 BM sie g: b: sint: hier (. ) gewesen
{31:55} 0002 GA viel (. ) zwei monat drei zwe monat
{31:58} 0003 BM aha (.)
{31:59} 0004 BM hab_in alle aufgenommen aber (.)
{32:01} 0005 BM mi will niemant aufnommen
{32:03} 0006 KD ((groans))
{32:03} 0007 BM [((attunes))]}}
{32:03} 0008 GA [((laughs))]
{32:04} 0009 BM [was]
{32:04} 0010 KD [ja]
{32:04} 0011 BM soll ich machen?
{32:05} 0012 KD was soll man machen?
{32:06} 0013 BM mit gwalt kann man nichts:
{32:07} 0014 GA ja ja (. ) ja ja (.);
{32:08} 0015 BM liebend sein
{32:09} 0016 [((laughs))]
{32:09} 0017 GA [((laughs))]

8 /grusin/ Russian for ‘Georgians’.
Like all other descendants of the Caucasus Swabians who are living in the Caucasus today, Megrelishvili exhibits frequent (functional and non-functional) code switching (cf. Lüdi 2004 and especially Riehl 2016: 25–27). Apart from transferences (cf. Gass 1996) and spontaneous borrowings (cf. Hoffer 1996 and especially Poplack 2004: 590–591), it is one of the group’s most conspicuous variation phenomena, which can also contain insertions of individual elements in the form of discourse markers (cf. Blankenhorn 2003: 77) and modifiers such as /tak/ and /wot/ (cf. Blankenhorn 2003: 124) as well as changes of complete utterances or complex utterance units. The switch occurs mostly when informants talk about emotions such as disappointment, injury, war, captivity and escape traumas but also when recalling positive memories of earliest childhood. Members of this group switch even if they are unaware of the other person’s ability to understand the other language.

For example, the interviewer was sometimes asked whether she understood the respective language after changing to Russian/Georgian. Despite all his efforts to speak German, Megrelishvili switched to Russian and Georgian without knowing that the interviewer speaks (and understands) Russian. As soon as he noticed this due to the author’s use of the Russian consent particle /da/ (cf. Blankenhorn 2003: 110), he asked directly about the Russian knowledge, and used Russian during the remaining conversation more frequently for longer speeches, and above all for complex contents. Before that, he had tried to explain complex contexts in German and to use his passive German vocabulary. He emphasized several times that he lacks the practice in German. The phenomenon of the alternating use of elements of two or more languages—whether complete

9 /silno ljubimij ne budesch/: Russian for ‘you won’t get very popular’ [like ‘you can’t force popularity / love’].
10 /da da/: Russian for ,yes, yes’.
11 /khartula dassesea/: Georgian for ‘in Georgia it’s not like that’.
12 /tzalitz tzaporeli weri knewi/: Georgian for ‘you can’t be nice on purpose’ [like ‘you’re not necessarily considered nice’].
13 /tak/: Russian for ‘well’.
14 /wot/: Russian für ‘so’.
utterances or even inserts of individual lexemes—is well known to the informants:

[4] Balthasar Megrelishvili (BM) talks about his everyday experiences with code switching (also present at the interview Gustav Armin (GA))—Interview Katharina Dück (KD) 2017.

This example shows the code switching not only between languages (here Russian and German), but also between the Swabian variety (/daitsche/, /schir garts mir rausflogerl/) and Standard German (/deutsch/, /nicht mehr sprech deutsch [...] dann vergess ich/). The change from Swabian to Standard German is even more noticeable when the informant talks about domain-specific processes. When asked why he was not present at the German city festival the day before, he reports on the necessary grape harvest:

[5] Balthasar Megrelishvili (BM) reports from the vintage (also present at the interview Gustav Armin (GA))—Interview Katharina Dück (KD) 2017.

15 As Note 19—here the discourse marker /wot/ has an interaction-strategic function as a prelude to the explanation of a communicative process, namely code switching itself.
Viticulture was a Swabian domain in the former German villages of Transcaucasia and not only in Bolnisi (formerly Katharinenfeld), where the informant was born and raised. In fact viticulture also existed in the South Caucasus before the German settlers, the Württemberg Pietists, came. They came from a wine-growing region, and significantly expanded and effectively improved it in the South Caucasus (again in 2001). The vocabulary of the wine-growing sector contains accordingly numerous Swabian lexemes, which are activated in the informant's speech about the grape harvest and initiate further Swabian variants such as /ropft/, /got alles zum grund/, /ghet/. At the same time, he still uses a speech relatively close to the standard German: /aber jetzt ist was eh: gewesen/, instead of the Swabian variants ‘isch’ and ‘gwea’, which he uses as well during the interview. It is unclear why the informant does not use the Swabian variety throughout the conversation. Perhaps it is because the interviewer does not belong to the network of “Caucasian Germans”, and the informant tries to speak in the “Hochsprache” (“high-level language”) out of courtesy. It is probable that the speaker moves within the range of his varieties and, depending on the in-
terlocutor or domain, switches between his base variety and his standard variety (cf. Riehl 2006: 191).

5.2 Language Contact of Caucasian Germans in Germany

Similar observations can also be made in interviews with Caucasian Germans in Germany. Likewise, the Standard German, in which the informant Georg Alles\(^\text{16}\) tries to speak to the interviewer, obviously is not easy to follow:\(^\text{17}\)


\[^{16}\] The names of the informants were changed by the author.
\[^{17}\] About the context: The Alles couple were asked about their origins. The wife was previously told that I am looking for Caucasian Germans who still speak 'the old Swabian'.
The informant makes an effort to speak High German—especially the adjective /klein/ seems difficult to find; he first uses /klo/ for the Swabian variant ‘kloi’, but then corrects himself. Numerous hesitations, stuttering and many pauses occur, which prove that the informant struggles with finding the Standard German vocabulary. Although he knows how to use it, he cannot consistently maintain it (this concerns for example the lexem /isch/). Caucasian Germans use the language perceived as High German, usually referred to as “literary German” or “high language”, in conversations with non-Caucasian Germans. It is a colloquial variety of German with Swabian colouring—mainly in its phonetic and some lexical Swabian peculiarities such as “schwäzen”. As soon as Caucasian Germans are present, or when someone prompts him to use his variety, he changes to the Swabian variety and speaks much more fluently and freely. Compare the informant’s wife in line 0031: /na schwätz schwäbisch wen du schoibest schwätze verzeele wilschst/. This variety is particularly evident when Caucasian Germans are among themselves (or have become accustomed to the interviewer):

[7] Ida Illig (II), born 1924 in Bolnisi, Alicia Vögele (AV), born 1926 in Bolnisi, and Ida Kromer (IK), born 1927 in Bolnisi, try to remember a song of praise on Katharinenfeld; about this and other former German colonies like Helenendorf, Annenfeld and Traubengrün (the Caucasian German Wilma Schülke (WS), born 1954 in Kazakhstan)—Interview Katharina Dück (KD) 2017.
dr oint versch d lobe mir katrinefeld
[des ischs (. ) des de letsch vers]
[vun de helenederfer une de anefeld]
[über alle hen seoi oin is in debe het gelt (. ) ghet
[ja un troubegrien
[un
[helenederfer a tzt (. )
katrinefelt wir lobe mir]
[dot henn se (. )]
do ebbes
[d_on de eckle stand]
[traubengrien unt annefelt
dott henn die mädle gar
[le besonders]
[ja ja]
[ab a doch sintner von hinne_nieder (. )
vil mener kole unt un henn sich mädle
ous katrinefelt gholt
[ja]
[ja]
die hent_nase bissle hoch ghept
[t_helene (. )]
worum hats
[ja ja]
die hent_reicher gwea wi_t (. ) k
[ja ja]
[ja]
katrinefelder
[ja]
worum
[ja]
[hotts dot noigregnet in_d naselecher]
[wiel sie_s hoch ghept hent °h
[ja ja]
die hent hochmiatig gwea
[die sint stolz gwea:t_helenederfer]
[ja ja]
die sint reicher gwea wie_d katrine
[stolz]
[felder]
die sind]
reicher gwea ja ja
unt worum
[weil die hent de (. )]
The conversation shows an excerpt from a table talk of four Caucasus Swabians in a relaxed atmosphere in a private setting (the author was present but was hardly noticed over time). Being over 90 years old, three of the four female speakers belong to the generation of experience (Generation I). They were born in the 1920s in the former Swabian colony Katharinenfeld away from the German-speaking world, where they were neighbours over 70 years ago (as they are again today). They can still actively remember their childhood in Katharinenfeld.

Particularly impressive in this excerpt are the strongly overlapping, repeatedly confirming speeches—a sign that the participants in the discussion feel comfortable and uninhibited, talking to each other as they always do. Especially noticeable are the numerous lexeme variants of Swabian such as /isch/ for ‘is’ or ‘I’; /oin/, /koin/ for ‘one’ or ‘none’; /guat/ for ‘good’ or /hochmiatig/ for ‘haughty’. There even are examples of words that are typical of the ‘conserved’ Swabian variety and are hardly ever used today, such as /ghet/ for ‘had’; /gwea/ for ‘been’ and /ghept/ for ‘had’. The speakers only switch to Standard German to make sure that the interviewer still understands everything. Apart from that, the two and a half hours of conversation—with few exceptions such as a Russian job title for exterminators—show only a few obvious effects of language contact, which can probably be traced back to the early functional separation (diglossia) of the Swabian (L1) as low variety from Standard German as high variety (cf. Riehl 2014: 16).

The language contact situation of the Caucasian Germans in Germany (here only Generation I applies) differs substantially from that of those living in the South Caucasus today; they initially grew up alone with the ‘conserved’ variety of Swabian (L1) without a further language of a parent. As already mentioned, this generation learned Standard German, which they call “literary German” (L2), in the German village school in Katharinenfeld. They used this variation when talking to the teacher, reciting poems, or in singing lessons. According to their own statements, only the L1 was used in everyday life. After the deportations in adolescence, they used the L1 exclusively in their domestic environment and the L2 with other Russian Germans from the Volga or Black Sea regions, and they continue to do so today with other Germans.
This generation only encountered Russian (L3) as a foreign language at school. This changed in 1931 when the school language was changed to Russian after the summer holidays. From then on it was completely forbidden to use any language other than Russian in public spaces. At home, this generation continued to speak solely Swabian. They only came into contact with other languages, such as Georgian, when they had hired Georgian workers. Some report that they had played with the children of the cattle keepers or housekeepers and thus learned Georgian. Of this closer domestic language contact, only a few words from the domestic and culinary fields have remained to this day: They use ‘shish kebab’ instead of ‘spit roast’, ‘dolma’ instead of ‘cabbage rolls’ or ‘ajap-sandali’ instead of ‘vegetable stew’. As most people of this generation spent their entire professional life in the Kazakh, Kyrgyz or Uzbek deportation areas (until the 1950s it was forbidden to leave the assigned settlement), their Russian is at a good to very good language level: everyone can read, write and speak Russian. However, nobody of this generation (!) spoke Russian with me. Code-switching was limited to individual technical terms from former professional life when they reported about it in a free conversation.

The situation is different with Generation II of the Caucasus Swabians living in Germany, as with the spokeswoman WS, who is represented in the above with a short speech. She was born in 1954 in one of the mixed settlements in Kazakhstan and grew up there. Her language contact in German was primarily with Russian. The language repressions in the Soviet Union also applied to Kazakh, so that there was little or no language contact here (cf. Berend / Riehl 2008: 23). On the other hand, there was variety contact, namely with other Russian-German varieties, so that this informant already shows a weakened Swabian variety both through the dominance of Russian in public life and the pressure of the other Russian-German variants. The fact that she still masters the ‘conserved’ Swabian variety quite well is probably due to the language education of her parents, who despite the ban on speaking a language other than Russian, insisted that the children speak Swabian as soon as they entered the house. Thus, she had the same L1 as the parents, but due to the stronger pressure of the language in her environment as well as other varieties, she developed a weakened Swabian which is characteristic for numerous speakers of this generation. At the same time, there are also some informants in this generation who, have been so strongly influenced by the Russian language contact and the related repressions that they name Russian as their mother tongue. The Caucasus Swabians, however, represent a

18 The fact that Georgian or Armenian employees could be afforded was only possible at the beginning of the 20th century, when the Caucasus Swabians became wealthier with the bloom of the winegrowers’ cooperatives.

19 In 1929, in all parts of the Soviet Union the Russian language was established as the only language to be used (in public life) and from 1931 onwards it was prosecuted.
remarkably small proportion in contrast to other Russian-German speakers. In addition, the Caucasus Swabians, in general—and this is also remarkable—often answer the question about their mother tongue explicitly; their mother tongue, according to them, is Swabian and not German.

Moreover, the cohesion, culture and language of this group is particularly striking: while other ‘Russian Germans’—like in the Volga area—mingled with each other, so that a process of koineization began quite early on (cf. Berend 1998: 10), the Caucasus Swabians sought future spouses almost exclusively among the Caucasus Swabians after the deportations. The internal social structure of the Caucasian Germans is characterised by a strikingly pronounced sense of togetherness (also across countries)—in contrast to other Russian Germans. After the partial rehabilitation of the ‘Russian Germans’ in the 1950s, the Caucasus Swabians had already settled in Kazakhstan and Central Asia in so-called ‘Posjolki gorodskoga tipa’ (“city-like settlements”) and formed new varieties, and thus culture and identity communities. An example of these settlements is the Shelisinka area of Pavlodar territory in northern Kazakhstan, where many more settlements were situated (cf. Berend 2011:106). However, these settlements ceased to exist in the 1990s because most of the Caucasus Swabians emigrated to Germany.

Interestingly, a striking number of Caucasian Swabians have settled again in southern German regions—often not far from the emigration places of their ancestors. Finally, these settlement trends influence the development of the ‘conserved’ Swabian variety that should not be underestimated; it is still quite dynamic within the Caucasian Germans in Germany even among the third generation, of which some were born in the Federal Republic. Some of them also state “Swabian”—and not “German”—as their native language (although only two have been recorded in interviews so far). However, they are increasingly using the variety of Swabian which is already common in Germany. In communication with grandparents (Generation I), however, this generation uses exclusively the ‘conserved’ Swabian variety. None of the 3rd generation informants I spoke to speaks Russian, while their parents speak Russian fluently.

5.3 Language Attitudes of Caucasian Germans

The cross-country identification with the Caucasian German group is reflected particularly strong in the language attitudes that prevail towards the German language: when asked about the German language in general or the Swabian variety in particular, all Caucasian German speakers exhibit strikingly positive reactions and attitudes, whether they live in Germany or in the Caucasus. Associations with the German language as well as the Swabian variety are expressed
by terms such as “beauty”, “love”, and “home”. All informants rate both languages as “good” or even “very good”. The informants make the strongest distinction between the Swabian variety and the Standard German in the point of “speech melody”. Both have a nice sound; but while Standard German sounds “beautiful”, especially in poems and songs, Swabian is, in comparison, considered an “honest” and “direct” language.

The emotional aspect, often closely connected with the Swabian variety, cannot be emphasized strongly enough: Swabian is the “language of childhood”, “family” and “friends”, and is largely associated with the nostalgic feelings “familiarity”, “protection”, and “security”—especially by the Caucasian Germans in Germany. Emotional descriptions like these about Standard German do not occur. While the form of Standard German is mainly perceived favourably, the Swabian variety is primarily linked to its associative content.

Some informants are not sure whether it is possible to separate “Swabian” from “German”. It is often mentioned by the Caucasian Germans in Georgia who show a strong contrast between the Swabian variety and Standard German in their speech that they “belong inseparably” together. This finding is certainly due to the fact that the transitions between the Swabian and Standard German are not distinct (cf. Riehl 2006: 191), although the speakers are conscious of the distinction between the two varieties. Since, for this group of speakers, both varieties have the function as the “language of nearness” (Riehl 2006: 190).

6 Conclusion and Research Desiderata

As has been shown, similar observations could be made in the interviews with the Caucasian Germans as Berend (1998; 2011), Blankenhorn (2003) and Riehl (2006; 2014; 2017). The most striking variation phenomenon in the language contact of Caucasian Germans is code switching, although it can be observed much more frequently in the language use of Caucasian Germans in the South Caucasus, and not specifically in the network. This stands in contrast to the Caucasus Germans in Germany, where code switching is network-specific and takes place less frequently. An essential factor for switching between language elements (non-functional code switching left aside) is the will to verbalize strong emotions. Another important factor is the lack of a counterpart in the situationally dominant language: either the term sought is more appropriate for what is meant in the other language or the informants cannot think of it and the other language is used to bridge a momentary lexical gap.

More ambiguous is the change between the ‘conserved’ Swabian variety and the Standard German. In general, the Caucasian Germans are aware of the difference [“dialect” is “dialect” and “Hochsprache” is “Hochsprache” (“high-level
language’ is ‘high-level language’) and use the Swabian variety primarily in network-specific communication. Riehl (2006) has already described similar observations in her statements on Germans in Transcarpathia. Outside their network, the Caucasian Germans make efforts to use Standard German, even if it is sometimes difficult, but, nevertheless, their speech shows Swabian variants. Sometimes two different variants are used within one speech [/daitsch/ and /deutsch/; /i/, /isch/ and /ich/]. Further studies of the third generation of Caucasian Germans in Germany are required to investigate the ‘conserved’ Swabian variety that has been learned within the families and is currently in contact with the Swabian variety spoken in Württemberg today.

Apart from that, the Swabian variety plays an essential role both for communication and for the identity construction of “Caucasian Germans” across countries, as can be seen above all in the positive results of questions on language attitudes. At the same time there are those speakers who still speak a Swabian variety but are (or feel) isolated from other speakers due to the former language repression policy.

[8] Balthasar Megrelishvili (BM) tells of other inhabitants of Bolnisi with German ancestors (also present at the interview the Caucasian German Gustav Armin (GA)—Interview Katharina Dück (KD) 2017.

A question that remains open is the future (8: 0006) of the ‘conserved’ Swabian variety in particular, since a decline in the number of Caucasian Germans in the South Caucasus (8: 0017) is especially evident today. Since hardly anyone has handed over Swabian variety to the next generation, the language in the Caucasus for these people is about to be lost.
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Appendix

Conventions of transcription according to FOLKER

[ ] Overlaps and Simultaneous Response
°h / h° Inhalation / Exhalation
(.) Micro pause up to 0.2 seconds duration
(0.23) measured pause of 0.23 seconds duration
_ Whipping between word boundaries (e.g. geht_s)
: Stretch, elongation, up to approx. 0.5 seconds
:: Stretch, elongation, from 0.5–0.8 seconds
eh, äh etc. Delay signals / filled pauses
hm, ja,
hmhm, jaja monosyllabic signals
ha ha he he hi hi silver laughter
+++ +++ one or two incomprehensible syllables
((laughs)) para- and extra-linguistic acts and events
akZENT focus accent
? pitch ascending
, Pitch medium ascending
; Pitch medium falling
. Pitch falling low

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