

Linguistics

Iakob Gogebashvili's *Dedaena*: Typological Analysis

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(Presented by Academy Member Elizbar Javelidze)

Iakob Gogebashvili's first study guide titled "Georgian Alphabet and the First Reading Book Compiled for Students" (the title later transformed: "Deda Ena" → "Dedaena") was initially published in 1865, when Gogebashvili was only 25 years old. Subsequent editions followed in 1867, 1868, and 1869. Unfortunately, the original first edition of the book, initially preserved in the Georgian National Library, has been lost. The publication of this manual with minimal changes continued until 1876. Gogebashvili's manual already titled "Deda Ena", which begins with the minimalistic sentence *ai ia* ("Here is a violet"), was completed in 1875 but was not published until 1876. While analyzing Gogebashvili's *Dedaena* it is productive to apply two provisions elaborated within the framework of theories established in general linguistics. 1. Writing practice constitutes an experience based on the semiotics of writing systems. 2. The stages of the phylogenetic development of language cognition are typically reflected in the ontogenetic linguistic development of a child. Iakob Gogebashvili's *Dedaena* stands out from other textbooks available at that time thanks to its unique principles and compilation structure. These principles and structure are influenced by the specificity of the Georgian script, characterized by its strict phonological nature. Moreover, it reflects an isomorphic relationship between the ontogenetic stages of script acquisition and the phylogenetic stages of historical script development. This underscores not only the Georgian "mind-gene" of Iakob Gogebashvili but also highlights his intuitive understanding of the essence of language. © 2024 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

Iakob Gogebashvili, *dedaena*, typology of writing systems, grammatology

Dedicated to the memory of Prof. Winfried Boeder

To underscore the significance of Iakob Gogebashvili's *Dedaena* ("Mother Language") [1], it is helpful to contextualize it within a typological discussion of samples compiled for the study of alphabets worldwide.

The first reading and writing experience began with single-sided alphabet tablets known as

hornbooks, which emerged in Europe during the 15th century. These early predecessors of modern ABC books consisted of thin plates affixed to a wooden frame, typically covered with cow horn material. On these tablets, a brief religious text, often the Lord's Prayer (*Our Father*), was inscribed alongside letters and symbols. Over time, the materials used evolved, with parchment, metal,

silver, ivory, and other substances utilized for these instructional aids.

Starting from the mid-18th century alphabet symbols began to gain significant popularity, often displayed on *battledores*: a more complex type of hornbook printed on thick paper folded in three parts containing enlarged text with word-to-object illustrations. During this period, religious texts started to give way to stories depicting everyday life scenes, accompanied by illustrations. Additionally, there was a shift in materials used, with cardboard becoming the predominant choice. Such *battledores* resembled a book more closely.

From the 1880s onward, modern-style printed textbooks designed for children to learn the alphabet began to appear.

Given this context, here's a brief historical tour of the development of Georgian "Reading Books" through the following confirmed samples:

In 1629, Italian missionaries printed the first edition of the Georgian Alphabet with Prayers, intended for educational purposes, in the "Propaganda Fide" publishing house in Rome. The book printed in the Mkhedruli Script spans 32 pages. The initial seven pages feature the Georgian Mkhedruli alphabet, followed by *Prayers, the Creed, the Ten Commandments*, and a hymn to the *God Mother*. These texts are presented in both Georgian and Latin. Nikoloz Cholokashvili, also known as Niceforo Irbachi, the ambassador of King Teimuraz I and a monk of the "Order of Saint Basil", prepared the Georgian texts. The original copy of the book is housed at the Tbilisi State University, while a copy is kept in the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia [2-7].

In 1737, Kristophore Guramishvili published the "Russian-Georgian Alphabet" in St. Petersburg at the publishing house of the Academy of Sciences. This alphabet was accompanied by Latin transcriptions and notes in the German language. Kristophore Guramishvili, the older brother of the writer Davit Guramishvili, began his publishing activities in St. Petersburg by following Ioseb

Samebeli, the Bishop of Tsilkani, who had been sent by the Synod from Moscow to St. Petersburg in 1734. Later, Kristophore became a prominent figure in the renewed publishing house in Moscow. In 1737, acting on behalf of Samebeli, Kristophore submitted an application to the Academy of Sciences for the publication of the Russian-Georgian alphabet, which was approved. With Kristophore's assistance, the original font of the Georgian Nuskha-Khutsuri alphabet was cast, and 500 copies of educational material consisting of 32 pages and lacking a title page were printed. This edition is preserved in the library of the Russian Academy [7, 8].

In 1739, "The First Study of Children" by Feofan Prokopovich was printed in Moscow, at the request of King Bakar, with funding from Ioseb Samebeli and under the editorial guidance of Kristophore Guramishvili. This book comprises 169 pages of educational material, including the alphabet, a brief explanation of the *Divine Law, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed*, and the *Nine Beatitudes*. Translated from Russian by Gabriel Chkheidze, who served as Darejan Batonishvili's accountant, the text is printed in the Nuskha-Khutsuri script. Monk Germane contributed to the preparation of the publication by arranging it in Georgian. This book is considered a bibliographic rarity. It is registered in the National Library of Russia. A second copy of this edition lacking a title page was brought to Georgia in 1937 by the Society for Spreading Literacy among Georgians and is housed in the National Library, known as "sžuli γmrtisa" ("Divine Law"). However, specific publishing data are not provided [7].

In 1741, it was reported (without specific reference) that the Triphile Scribe-Archimandrite in Tbilisi published the Georgian Alphabet with *Prayers* and other *Church Question-Answer Phrases* [7].

In 1743, Johann Friedrich Fritz published an "Alphabet Book" in Leipzig at the Christian Kessner Publishing. This book featured the

alphabets of 100 languages. Notably, on the 97th page, the Georgian alphabet was presented in both Asomtavruli and Nuskhuri scripts.

In 1797, in Mozdok, the Georgian printing house founded by Gaios Archimandrite, produced Georgian alphabet training material, including the alphabet, prayers, and short Christian studies. This publication comprised 16 pages and featured all three types of Georgian script – Asomtavruli, Nuskhuri, and Mkhedruli. The font for this material was created by Romanoz Razmadze-Zubashvili. More than 600 units were printed, and the book became a bibliographic rarity. It is currently preserved only in the library of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg [7].

In addition to independent alphabet textbooks samples of the Georgian alphabet are included in various other old printed publications.

Iakob Gogebashvili's first study guide titled “Georgian Alphabet and the First Reading Book Compiled for Students” (the title later transformed: “Deda Ena” → “Dedaena”) was initially published in 1865, when Gogebashvili was only 25 years old. Subsequent editions followed in 1867, 1868, and 1869. Unfortunately, the original first edition of the book, initially preserved in the Georgian National Library, has been lost. The publication of this manual with minimal changes continued until 1876. Gogebashvili's manual already titled “Deda Ena”, which begins with the minimalistic sentence *ai ia* (“Here is a violet”), was completed in 1875 but was not published until 1876.

During this period, there was no equivalent guidebook in the Russian language comparable to Gogebashvili's “Deda Ena”. Russia largely followed the developments in the West in this regard. The earliest visual material related to alphabet instruction in Russia is attributed to Ivan Fyodorov's work, the “Lviv Alphabet”, composed in 1574. In 1634, a Muscovite printer named Burtsov printed the “Азбука” (Azбука – “Alphabet”), for the first time. This publication was reprinted in 1637 in a format known as the

“Alphabets on Paper” consisting of eight sets. The author of the modern-type textbook in Russia is K. Ushinsky, whose work dates back to 1864.

Regarding European languages, Gogebashvili became acquainted with textbooks published in Germany only four years after the publication of *Dedaena* [9].

“During the creation of “Dedaena”, my Georgian mind and gene worked together” – writes Gogebashvili. To recognize this “mind-gene”, it is necessary to analyze the structure of “Dedaena” in the light of typological analysis of other similar samples: What is different and distinctive about Gogebashvili's “Georgian Alphabet and the First Reading Book Compiled for Students” [1], which later became the basis of “Dedaena”.

The following principles of composition for Gogebashvili's *Dedaena* provide a framework for understanding its structure and distinguishing features:

- (1) Transition from religious topics to everyday life topics;
- (2) Abundant use of illustrations for visual aids;
- (3) Gradual transition from familiar to unfamiliar, from easy to difficult;
- (4) Using the method of *reading*→*writing* instead of the *writing*→*reading*;
- (5) Advancing the analytical principle and combining it with the synthetic one:
Phrase → *Word* → *Syllable* → *Sound* (*Analysis*)
Sound → *Syllable* → *Word* → *Phrase* (*Synthesis*)
- (6) Gradual release from the principle of acrophony (resp. ideographic identification of letter-sound with the initial sound of the word) and partial rejection of mnemonic (resp. easy to remember) method.

The outlined principles collectively represent a typologically similar process of refinement and development in the creation of “ABC Books”. However, principles (4), (5), and (6) stand out as the most significant proper achievements of Gogebashvili, making *Dedaena* an outstanding example of compiled reading books. These

principles are particularly crucial due to the strictly phonological nature of the Georgian script.

In systems, where alphabets are composed according to phonological principle, the relationship between grapheme and phoneme is one-to-one defined. This clarity is essential for effective reading instruction. However, in languages with less phonological orthographies such as, e.g., English the relationship between graphemes and phonemes can be more complex due to historical processes or structural peculiarities. For instance, the correct reading of the word *SHE* requires prior knowledge that the sequence of graphemes *s* and *h* is for one phoneme /sh/ pronounced as a sound [sh]. In such cases, reading practice cannot effectively develop without prior writing practice. Consequently, such alphabetic systems exclude using the principle “from reading to writing”, which helps to fasten an educational process since the principle “from writing to reading” hampers relying on semantic and context cues to recognize and predict the meaning of words. Gogebashvili's emphasis on the reading-first methodology in *Dedaena* is particularly significant in this context. By prioritizing reading comprehension skills before introducing writing exercises, Gogebashvili recognized the importance of establishing a strong foundation in phonological awareness and decoding skills, especially in languages with transparent orthographies like Georgian. This approach allows learners to develop fluency and proficiency in reading before tackling the complexities of writing.

In summary, Gogebashvili's principles in *Dedaena* reflect a deep understanding of the challenges and requirements of reading instruction. By prioritizing phonological awareness and decoding skills, Gogebashvili ensured that learners could effectively navigate the intricacies of reading in their native language.

For learning the alphabet, activating the principle-(6) in the textbook is extremely important. It helps students to understand that a graphic image of the alphabet is related to the phoneme it represents

conventionally rather than ideographically. To address this, it is crucial to eliminate the practice of acrophony and mnemonic representations, which help simplify the initial memorization process but eventually hinder the perception of the arbitrary nature of alphabet signs. Such an attitude and attachment to visualization can turn into a barrier to the entire learning process.

While analyzing Gogebashvili's *Dedaena* it's productive to apply two provisions elaborated within the framework of theories established in general linguistics [10].

1. Writing practice constitutes an experience based on the semiotics of writing systems.
2. The stages of the phylogenetic development of language cognition are typically reflected in the ontogenetic linguistic development of a child.

In general, *writing* involves the graphic encoding of linguistic expressions using visual signs, or graphemes. These graphemes establish specific relations that form a semiotic system of writing, wherein each graphic sign, or grapheme, possesses content and expression planes.

According to the content plane, two main types of scripts are distinguished — **Semiographic** and **Phonographic**. Semiographic scripts involve the coding of entire situations or individual concepts, while phonographic scripts primarily encode the phonetic aspects of a language, such as sounds of words, syllables, and individual sounds.

According to the plane of expression, a graphic sign can be classified as follows:

1. **Iconic**. In this case, a grapheme is iconic – visually resembles or "looks like" a real object corresponding to the concept it represents. This type of writing is often referred to as Pictography.
2. **Conditional**. Here, the visual appearance of the grapheme, or signifier, is conditionally connected with the proper concept category, in case of ideography, or with the sound substance, in case of Phonography.

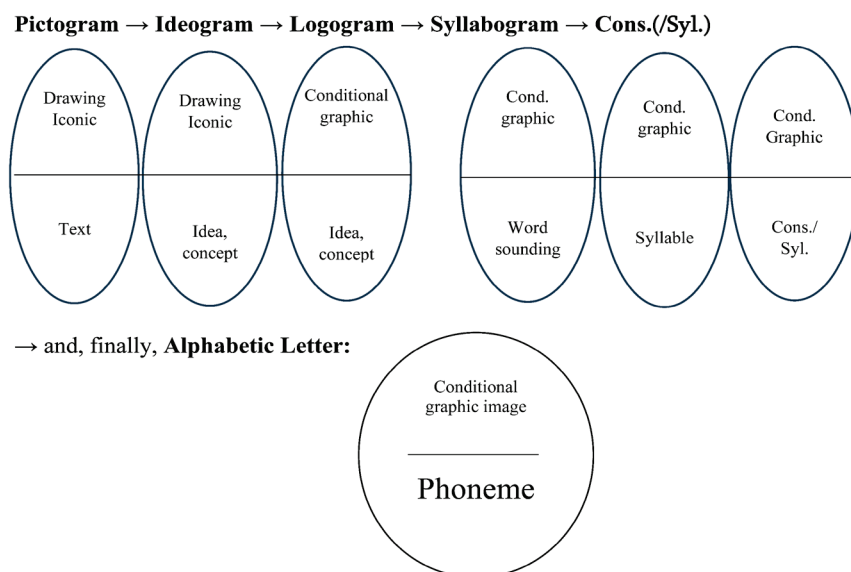


Figure. Historical Development of the Writing Systems.

We can represent the historical development of writing as an evolutionary-revolutionary process during which writing systems successively passed through several stages: *Pictographic* → *Ideographic* → *Phonographic* (*resp. Logographic*) → *Syllabographic* → *Syllabic-Consonant* → *Alphabetic*)

These stages reflect the development of the writing system including its sign in two directions: 1. From conveying the whole information through its fragmentation to the representation of sounds, and 2. From the iconicity of expression to the adoption of conventional graphic symbols. This process can be represented by the Figure.

Indeed, when comparing the structure of *Dedazena* lessons with the stages of writing development presented above, one can observe an isomorphic transformation of the stages of the historical development of writing based on the process of how children learn to write: Iakob Gogebashvili, the creator of *Dedaena*, by introducing each new letter-sound, thanks to his outstanding intuition, follows the stages of changes in writing systems listed above.

In particular, when teaching reading, Gogebashvili, in each lesson, initially presents

children with an iconic image of a sign, such as a picture of a finger, embodying the principle of Pictography.

Then, he presents the fully written word *titi* ("finger"), which is perceived as a conditional graphic representation of the picture given above. So, Ideography → Logography. Typically, students interpret a fully written word as a logogram based on their knowledge and experience, which may sometimes differ from the intended naming assumed in a manual.

At the subsequent stage, syllabic reading is introduced, where the word is spelt out by syllables: *ti-ti* ("fin-ger"), corresponding to the next stage of writing systems development. During the reading process, particularly among children, the syllabic-consonantal stage also emerges. Students may have certain problems when distinguishing syllabic signs. They often hesitate because of the vowel component of the syllable (e.g., *is it the syllable **ti** or **ta**?*), while a consonant component is mostly clear.

At the final stage, Gogebashvili divides the word into sounds and writes it using graphically separated letter signs: *t-i-t-i* ("f - i - n - g - e - r"); That is, he spells it. Each grapheme now called a

letter corresponds to a separate phoneme. A letter is a graphic sign of the alphabetic writing system.

This comprehensive process significantly facilitates the perception, understanding, and memorization of signs, especially in children.

According to the structure of Iakob Gogebashvili's *Dedaena*, the process of appropriating writing by a child, in a certain way, mirrors the main trajectory of development of writing systems as historically confirmed.

To sum up observations presented above: Iakob Gogebashvili's *Dedaena* ("Mother Language")

stands out from other textbooks available at that time thanks to its unique principles and compilation structure. These principles and structure are influenced by the specificity of the Georgian script, characterized by its strict phonological nature. Moreover, it reflects an isomorphic relationship between the ontogenetic stages of script acquisition and the phylogenetic stages of historical script development. This underscores not only the Georgian "mind-gene" of Iakob Gogebashvili but also highlights his intuitive understanding of the essence of language.

ენათმეცნიერება

იაკობ გოგებაშვილის დედაენა: ტიპოლოგიური ანალიზი

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(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიის წევრის ე. ჯაველიძის მიერ)

პირველი წერა-კითხვის შემსწავლელი ტაბულები (Hornbooks) ევროპაში XV საუკუნიდან ჩნდება. თანამედროვე ანბანების წინამორბედი საკითხავები წარმოადგენდნენ ხის ჩარჩოზე გადაკრულ საქონლის რქოვანი მასალით დაფარულ თხელ ფირფიტებს, რომლებზეც რელიგიური ხასიათის მოკლე ტექსტთან, ძირითადად, *მამაო ჩვენოს* ლოცვასთან ერთად დართული იყო ასო-ნიშნები. მოგვიანებით მასალა იცვლებოდა: პერგამენტით, მეტალით, სპილოს ძვლით და სხვ. XVIII საუკუნის შუა წლებიდან ჩნდება და XIX საუკუნიდან განსაკუთრებულ პოპულარობას იძენს ე.წ. Battledore-ებზე გამოსახული ანბანის ნიშნები. ამ დროიდან მოყოლებული თანდათან რელიგიური ხასიათის ტექსტები იცვლება საყოფაცხოვრებო სცენების ამსახველი ისტორიებით, ჩნდება ილუსტრაციები, იცვლება მასალაც – ძირითადად, იყენებენ მუყაოს, თავდაპირველად სამად გაკეცილი ფლაიერის ტიპისას, შემდგომში კი რამდენიმე ფურცლისგან აკინძულს, რაც სულ უფრო და უფრო ემსგავსება წიგნს. XIX საუკუნის 80-იანი წლებიდან ჩნდება ბავშვებისთვის ანბანის შესასწავლად შედგენილი თანამედროვე ტიპის უკვე ბეჭდური სახელმძღვანელოები. იაკობ გოგებაშვილმა

„ქართული ანბანი და პირველი საკითხავი წიგნი მოსწავლეთათვის შედგენილი“ პირველად გამოსცა 1865 წელს, როცა იგი 25 წლის იყო. წიგნი მეორედ გამოიცა 1867 წ., მესამედ – 1868 წ., მეოთხედ – 1869 წელს. წიგნის პირველი გამოცემა, სამწუხაროდ, დაკარგულია. აღნიშნული სახელმძღვანელოს გამოცემა არსებითი ცვლილებების გარეშე გრძელდებოდა 1876 წლამდე. ი. გოგებაშვილის „დედაენა“ დაწყებული „აი ია“-თი მზად იყო 1875 წელს, მაგრამ გამოიცა 1876 წელს. „დედაენის“ სტრუქტურული ანალიზი ეფუძნება ზოგად ენათმეცნიერებაში დამკვიდრებულ თეორიებს: 1. წერა ენის გრაფიკული კოდირებაა და დამწერლობა – სემიოტიკური სისტემა, სადაც გრაფიკულ ნიშანს (resp. გრაფემას) აქვს თავისი შინაარსისა და გამოხატულების პლანები; და 2. კაცობრიობის ენობრივი შემეცნების ფილოგენეტიკური განვითარების ეტაპები ასახულია ბავშვის ონტოგენეტიკურ ენობრივ განვითარებაში. ი. გოგებაშვილის „დედაენას“ სხვა, იმ დროს არსებული სახელმძღვანელოებისგან გამოარჩევს მისი შედგენის პრინციპები და სტრუქტურა, რაც, თავის მხრივ, ქართული დამწერლობის სპეციფიკით, კერძოდ, ქართული ანბანის მკაცრი ფონოლოგიურობით არის განპირობებული – და ასახავს დამწერლობის ათვისების ონტოგენეტიკური ეტაპების იზომორფულ მიმართებას ზოგადად დამწერლობის ისტორიული განვითარების ფილოგენეტიკურ საფეხურებთან, რაც იაკობ გოგებაშვილის შინაგან ალღო-ინტუიციასზე მეტყველებს.

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