

Language Endangerment in the Caucasus and the Balkans: Daghestan and Macedonia

The Republic of Daghestan and the Republic of Macedonia share a number of comparable linguistic and cultural features on a variety of levels, some of which I have discussed elsewhere (Friedman 1998). Among the types of language endangerment that are relevant for both Daghestan and Macedonia, ecological fragility is particularly significant (cf. Haugen 1971, Mufwene 2001). Ecological fragility is a situation brought about when a language remains vital in relative isolation, but becomes critically endangered when the linguistic ecology is disturbed, e.g. by rural to urban migration or political factors. In both Daghestan and Macedonia, there are also relevant cross-border issues as well as internal ones that relate to language endangerment. In such environments, linguistically symbolic but also linguistically pragmatic artifacts such as dictionaries can acquire enhanced significance. It is in this context that I shall examine lexicographic practices affecting the languages of Daghestan and Macedonia as they relate to varying dimensions of ecological fragility. I shall conclude that dictionaries can function as crucial components in language vitality when strategically deployed.

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Mufwene, Salikoko. 2001. *The Ecology of Language Evolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.