

## Variants of phoneme /a/ in Tatar lingual areal

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**Abstract.** The results of research of phoneme /a/ on the base specifics in Tatar language and characteristics of distribution of variants in Tatar lingual space are covered in the article. Some facts of the history of Tatar language forming and lingual contacts with representatives of other cultures may explain existence of several forms of phoneme /a/. Territorial isolation of some areals led to preserving more archaic phenomena. There had been also the influence of other languages. Variability of phoneme /a/ usage in central areal is the result of substrate, ethnic variety effect. Studying the nature of phoneme /a/ variants, specifics of distribution of their isoglottic lines in Tatar lingual space has great importance to solve some problems of the history of the people, ethnogeny of Tatars.

[Sattarova M.R., Zamaletdinov R.R., Nurmukhametova R.S. **Variants of phoneme /a/ in Tatar lingual areal.** *Life Sci J* 2014;11(10):657-660] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 100

**Keywords:** areal linguistics, Tatar language, phoneme /a/, isoglottic line, ethnogeny

### Introduction

Areal linguistics is independent direction of linguistics based on the study of special distribution of lingual phenomena [1]. It combines synchronous and diachronic dimensions and allows interpreting lingual characteristics of existing dialects promoting deeper understanding of the history of maturing of a certain languages and their dialects.

Phonetic layer as the most stable layer of a language gives the possibility to describe historical conditions of development of language areals. This work is focused on research of one of the units of phonetic structure chain of Tatar dialect language in particular diversity of phoneme /a/, that reflects complicated history of forming of its dialects and accents.

Tatar language is spread over the vast territory of Russian Federation where Tatars contact with representatives of numerous kindred and non-kindred languages [2-5]. Besides there are Tatar diasporas outside the country in the USA, Finland, China, Australia and others that are the main areals. Specifics of phonetic system of the language of Tatars living in China have been analyzed in the works of A.Sh. Usupova, A.N. Denmukhametova, G.R. Mugtasimova, G.A. Nabiullina [6, 7]. Finn Tatars language features have also been studied [8, 9].

### Method

Complex study of phonetic features of Tatar national language hasn't yet been an object of special research. It defines actual character of these topics. The aim of the work is to research specific variants of using phoneme /a/ in areals of Tatar language distribution.

Methods and approaches of areal linguistics allow deep penetration in the history of lingual space help to interpret interdialect and interlingual isoglottic lines. Results promote revealing more ancient lingual unities and determining of their genetic proximity, etc.

According to the character of studied material we use in the research the complex of methods and approaches, such as: descriptive method that was used in study of phonetic patterns in vowel Turkic languages, reconstruction of facts of Tatars' history, synchronous linguistic description method was used to describe the lexical units in contacting languages, analytic method was used for processing of field materials.

### Main body

Phonetic system of modern Turkic languages has significantly long history of development. New phonemes in Turkic languages have been forming on the base of internal resources of these languages on the one hand and as a result of interaction of non-Turkic languages in the other.

The necessity of scientific study of one of the most complicated and at the same time interesting phenomenon of Tatar language phonetics in particular and Turkic languages in general has determined the choice of phoneme /a/ and characteristics if their isoglottic lines as an object of research. These languages are connected with Bulgar, Nogai and Mari lingual substrates and contain valuable information of linguistic and extra-linguistic character.

Specifics of Tatar dialect language are described in the works of L.Sh.Arslanov, F.S.Bajazitova, N.B.Burganova, L.T.Mahmutova, D.B.Ramazanova, Z.R.Sadykova, D.G.Tumasheva, T.H.Hajrutdinova, F.Ju.Jusupov and others [10, 11]. Works on theoretic and methodological problems of dialectology, lingual geography of such scientists as M.A.Borodina, N.Z.Gadzhieva, A.B.Dzhuraev, V.M.Zhirmunskij, A.M.Sherbak and others were theoretical base of the research [10]. "Atlas of Tatar people accents of Middle Volga Regions and Priuralie" (1989) and "Comments to the Atlas of Tatar people accents of Middle Volga Regions and

Priuralie” (1989), results of researches of Tatar dialects of all generations, regional atlases covering individual dialects and accents of Tatar language and materials of dialectological expeditions of the authors were used as source material. Having studied these works and analyzed materials gathered in dialectological expedition we define the following inventory of variants of phoneme /a/ of Tatar dialect language:

2. /o<sup>a</sup>/ – very labialled;
  3. /a<sup>o</sup>/ – moderately labialled;
  4. /a/ – opened;
- /a<sup>^</sup>/ – very opened;  
/a<sup>\*</sup>/ – moderately opened [10: 70].

*Isoglottic lines of very labialled variant of phoneme /o<sup>a</sup>/.* This variant is not marked by special mark in mapping dialectological atlas. This variant has limited distribution in Tatar lingual space. It is the basin of rivers Shoshma, Burets, the headstreams of rivers Kazanka and Mesha, i.e. northern parts of Mamadysh and Malmyzh regions. According to isoglottic line of the variant /o<sup>a</sup>/, o-pronouncing (okayuschy) Tatars have been contacting for a long time with representatives of Mari people. Like the other Finno-Ugric languages these people use /o/ in first syllable. Turkic-Mari lingual relations have long history. Finno-Ugric tribes had lived on the territory that was later inhabited by Bulgars. This phonetic phenomenon may be explained by the unity of lingual processes that had been going on in languages of Volga-Kama region where Bulgar language played important role.

Due to Mari substrate in Bulgar language further labialling of /a/ in first syllables had been going on. A part of Mari population of Zakazanye had assimilated under the influence of Bulgar people that has more developed state system and culture comparing with neighbors. Now Mari living on the territory of Arsk, Baltasi, Kukmor, Mamadysh regions of Tatarstan becoming Tatars form the population of northern parts of Zakazanye. Toponymy, ethnographic, anthropological and lingual materials kept safe until nowadays prove this fact [12: 38].

Isoglottic line /o<sup>a</sup>/ of insular character in Tatar lingual space appeared in Tobolsk, Tevriz accent of Tobolo-Irtysh dialect of Siberian Tatars. But the origin of very labialled variant of phoneme /o<sup>a</sup>/ together with other variants on this territory is different. Using of very labialled variants /o<sup>a</sup>/ together with soft /a<sup>o</sup>/ in accents of eastern dialect may be explained by the influence of Uzbek language because they are typical for territories with big share of Bukhara people [13: 37]. Forming of deepened phoneme /a/ in Uzbek language may in turn be explained by Iran substrate [14: 168].

*Isoglottic lines of moderately labialled variant /a<sup>o</sup>/.* This variant has the characteristic that is close to Tatar literary language in articulatory and acoustic characteristics. It is used in first syllables of multisyllable words: low back vowel, non-labial sound but it has slightly labial character.

Isoglottic lines of moderately labialled variant /a<sup>o</sup>/ cover relatively vast territory. /a<sup>o</sup>/ is typical for the group of Zakazanskiy and highland (nagorny) accents as well as Laish, Mamadysh, Minzilinsk, Birk accents. Out of Tatarstan territory this isoglottic line covers accents of eastern part of the Republic of Bashkortostan and forms vast zone of vibration that includes accents of South Ural and Over Ural territories. Besides, in the territory of Orenburg region the variant of moderately labialled /a<sup>o</sup>/ forms isoglottic lines of insular character in Ik, Qargaly, Buzuluk, Bashkir subaccents of Orenburg Tatars. Isoglottic lines of insular character exist also in the territory of Tobolo-Irtysh accent of Siberian Tatar.

In most Bashkirian accents and in Bashkir literary language labialization of phoneme /a/ may be explained as a result of bilabial harmony typical for Bashkir language. This variant is not used in first syllable because precedence of a syllable with labial vowel /o/ is necessary. As a result moderately deepened /a<sup>o</sup>/ in Bashkir language is used only in second and further syllables. For example, qola<sup>o</sup>ch – sweep, qoca<sup>o</sup>q – embrace, moga<sup>o</sup>yn – maybe, etc. As some Bashkir scholars believe using of moderately deepened /a<sup>o</sup>/ is observed only in western accents of Bashkir language that may be explained by the influence of neighboring accents of Tatar language [15: 29].

There are different opinions and explanations of the origin of moderately labialled variant /a<sup>o</sup>/ in linguistic literature. F. Iskhakov also notes labial character of phoneme /a/ in Tatar language and connects it with existence of low back sounds /κ/, /ɛ/ in Tatar and Bashkir languages [16: 36]. We believe that this opinion is not convincing because low back sounds /κ/, /ɛ/ exist in many Turkic languages but no one except for Tatar, Bashkir and Uzbek languages has labial /a<sup>o</sup>/.

A.M. Scherbak explains forming of labialled sound /a/ in Turkic languages by influence of lingual substrate.

Analysis of these facts reveals sound reasons to explain usage of moderately labialled /a<sup>o</sup>/ in a certain accents of Tatar language by Bulgar lingual substrate. Usage of /a<sup>o</sup>/ in Tatar language is intermediate stage of transition a → o → y. When the Volzhskaya Bulgaria was broken up, the separation of Bugarian and Chuvash peoples (which had the close languages) resulted in different rates of development of lingual phenomena in our case transition a<sup>o</sup> → o → y. This process in Highland Chuvash people is on the

stage “o” now, and in Lowland Chuvash – on the stage “y”. Mixing Bulgars with Kypchaq tribes which typically used non-labialled /a/ in all positions may effected the process of labialling of phoneme /a/ in Zakazanski accents.

*Isoglottic lines of open variant /a/* are typical for western dialect of Tatar language. This variant of phoneme /a/ has the following characteristic: low back vowel non-labial more back than Russian in articulation that is typical for most Kypchaq languages [16: 65].

Isoglottic line of open pure non-subjected to labialling in any position /a/ covers relatively vast territory of Middle Volga and Low Prikamie including Zakamskiy regions of Tatarstan and south-western regions of the Republic of Bashkortosan, Ryazan, Penza, Ul'yanovsk, Tambov, Saratov, Volgograd regions and south-eastern regions of Mordovia and respectively the following accents of mishar dialect of the Tatar language: Chistopol, Drozhzhanovsky, Mordva-Karatay, Kuznetsk, Temnikov, L'ambra, Khvalyn, Sergach, Baykibash, Sterlitamak, Sharlyk and others. Mishari is not aboriginal nation on this tremendous territory. Spread of this variant of phoneme /a/ in such a way are closely connected with ethnic and historical facts relating maturing of mishar ethnos. Tatas-mishars is complex ethnic system that had developed mainly before the end of XVI century in the boundaries of Meschera, Mordovia, Nizhni Novgorod's region of Volga Region. It has very ancient Kypchaq layer that forms its base as well as madzhar-bortas, together with bolgar and nogay components. Usage of non-labialled variant of phoneme /a/ in mishar dialect may be explained by the fact that the base of this group of Tatars consists of ancient Kypach tribes this variant was typical for.

*Isoglottic lines of very open (Nogai type) variant of /a^/* much more open than in mishar dialect. Insular type isoglottic lines of this variant has the following coverage: Zakazansko-Dubyaz, Kasim, Nagaybak, Noqrat, Bastan accents and also Kukmor and Tashkirmen sub-accents of Zakazansky accent of baptized Tatars, Mullin, Shakvin, Sylvin sub-accents of Perm Tatars. Nogai type of phoneme /a^/ is different from mishar variant: it has more back articulation and resembles respective vowel of Nogai group of Tirkic languages.

Origination of Nogai type of vowel /a^/ in these regions may be explained by the fact that Kazan Khanate being the state of Muslim Turkic population attracted attention of natives of the same Muslim Turkic-speaking regions as Crimean, Astrakhan, Siberian, Nogai and other khanates. There are numerous facts in historical literature which prove the settling of Nogai people in Zakazanye. After breaking up of Golden Horde Nogai tribes actively participated

in development of Astrakhan, Siberian, Kazakh, Krym and Kazan khanates.

Insular isoglottic line of the very open variant of phoneme /a^/ is typical also for accent of Oregurg Tatars. This island includes just a few settlements. Appearance of this variant on this territory may be explained by moving here Astrakhan Nogai people in inhabitation of the region in XVIII century. Appearance of isoglottic line of Nogai type of phoneme /a^/ on the territory of distribution of Kasim and Bastan accents of middle dialect may also be explained by Nogai substrate.

These facts prove the impact of Nogai language on development of Tatar language.

Isoglottic lines of moderately open /a\*/. In acoustic and articulatory characteristic moderately open vowel /a\*/ is between /a<sup>o</sup>/ and /a/. Isoglottic line of /a\*/ is a sort of fragment in Tatar lingual areal. Isoglottic lines of this variant may be observed in the territory of Ural and Zauralie. Further is covers the territory of distribution of Siberian Tatar dialects although isoglottic lines of other variants of phoneme /a/ cover this territory.

There are isoglottic lines of two types in the territory of Ural and Zauralie: moderately labialled /a<sup>o</sup>/ and moderately opened /a/ of kypchaq type. It is known that kypchaq type of phoneme /a/ was typical for Siberian Tatars. Moderately opened variant /a\*/ is nvergence of these forms. The closer to the east the accent is spread the less frequent the labialled /a<sup>o</sup>/ is used. This variant is absent in Sibarian accents and Bashkir language that has additional effect. Forming of moderately opened /a\*/ in these territories had been going on in original way under the effect of several accents one may even say languages. It is intermediate accent of Tatar language and dialects of Siberian Tatars, Nogai, Kazakh, Bashkir languages.

Moderately opened variant /a\*/ forms insular isoglottic lines in the territory of Tatarstan. Some sub-accents form isoglottic line of this type: Pakshin, Vyatka, sub-accents of Zakazansky accent; Elabuga, Chelny, Zainsk, Baqaly sub-accents of kryashen of Low Kama Region (here in parallel with moderately opened variant of /a\*/ labialled variant /a<sup>o</sup>/ is used).

Using of variant /a\*/ in the territory of Elabuga, Zainsk, Baqaly sub-accents of kryashen accent of Low Kama Region may be explained by mixed character of the population as representatives of Zakazansky, Minzilinsk accents of the middle dialect had been moved here and moderately labialled variant /a<sup>o</sup>/ is typical for them, and also native speakers of mishar dialect of Tatar language whose specific feature is using of moderately opened /a/.

Insular isoglottic lines are localized in the territory of Middle Ural and cover a certain sub-accents of Perm Tatars' accent. Appearance of

moderately opened /a\*/ in these accents may be explained by the participation of ancient Eastern Turkic component and Volga Region Tatars. Opened type of the phoneme /a/ of kypchak type had been historically typical for them. There are opinions fixed in historical and ethnographic literature that ethnic composition of Perm Tatars is the following: Volga Region Tatars, Mansi, Ostyaks, Nogai.

Using of moderately opened variant /a\*/ in these territories may be explained by the fact that accents spread on the territory of Bashkortostan, in Ural and Zauralie are transitive between Tatar and Bashkir languages, middle and eastern dialects of Tatar language. Besides Volga Region Tatars in this territory are not native speakers of this language but immigrants.

Moderately opened variant /a\*/ is close to General Turkic opened /a/ in its character and is specific feature of transitive accents and dialects of zones of interlingual contacts.

### Conclusion

Characteristic of isoglottic lines of each variant of phoneme /a/ allowed revealing common features typical for dialects and accents of Tatar language and define complicated processes going on in different lingual areals. On the base of defining and characterizing the isoglottic lines of variants of phoneme /a/ classifying characteristics of dialects and accents of Tatar language are being clarified. Two variants of phoneme /a/ are typical for middle dialect: moderately labialled variant /a<sup>o</sup>/ and /a<sup>^</sup>/ of Nogai type. Mishar dialect is characterized by opened /a/. Moderately opened variant /a\*/ is typical for Siberial Tatars. Very labialled variant /a<sup>a</sup>/ has strictly local character and is just a special system in the scope of middle dialect of Tatar language and Tobolo-Irtysh dialect of Siberian Tatars.

### Resume

Having studied scientific literature on the history and ethnogeny of Turkic people in general and Tatar people in particular we have revealed the reasons of development of the variants of phoneme /a/ in the connection with ethnic composition of Tatar people, native speakers of modern accents, the history of modern dialects and accents formation. Any of the modern dialectological research is not complete if its' results have not get detailed lingual, geographical and areal interpretation. The variants of phoneme are analyzed in the scope of dialect system of Tatar language and beyond this scope in this article, as they

are logically connected with Turkic languages. It is the understanding of a dialect as lingual unity that had been formed as a result of complex processes of historical interaction, as the product of differentiation and integration of local accents due to lingual communication in the scope of the common language for all people. Study of the nature of different variants of phoneme /a/ helps to solve complex issues of ethnogeny of Tatars.

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6/16/2014