



PHONETIC CHANGES OF VOWEL COMPLEXES AT THE
MORPHEME BOUNDARY IN THE SPEECH OF ADJARIANS LIVING
IN INNER KARTLI

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Abstract

The presented scientific article discusses the trends, cases of realization and frequency of phonetic changes of vowel complexes at the morpheme boundary in the speech of Adjarians living in the villages of Tsitelubani, Shavshvebi and Natsreti of Gori Municipality in Shida Kartli. The research is based on dialect texts recorded and published by us at different times.

The speech of Tsitelubani, Shavshvebi and Natsreti confirms the cases of mixing of Adjarian and Meskhetian-Javakhian speech codes with the Georgian dialect. In the 90s of the twentieth century, people from the village of Chao in the Khulo district, later from Samtskhe-

Javakheti (the village of Khizabavra) and from various parts of Kartli (the population displaced from the historical Samachablo) moved to these villages of Shida Kartli.

The change in vowel complexes was predominantly confirmed in the initial and final positions of the word. It is noteworthy that three markers of assimilation and dissimilation are revealed: local order (place of articulation), openness (raising), and labiality.

The vowel preceding the verb changes in complexes as a result of regressive, contact, and complete assimilation. ae→ee: tseegho (←tsaegho "to take away"), geegho (←gaegho "to understand"); oe→ee: meeria (←moeria "Interferes"), meekida (←moekida "Hanging"); au→uu: uutsia (←autsia "Raised"), duudedden (←daudeben "They will put"); eu→uu: Shuukra (←sheukra "tied up"); ai→ii: imitana (←amitana "brought"), dimig'vira (←damig'vira "shouted at me")...Complex changes occur not only between neighboring vowels, but also between elements separated by a consonant, especially when a compound preverb is attached to a verb. Both vowel elements of a compound preverb undergo changes: gidimig'ara (←gadimig'ara "I was overwhelmed"). This phenomenon is also characteristic of Shidakartli, only the vowel change is different: gemeerchiya (←gamoerchiya "Chosen"), tsemeeq'vana (←tsamoeq'van + "to bring").

The ee obtained by complete regressive assimilation undergoes regressive dissimilation. ee→ee→ye: giekida (←geekida ←gaekida), diesien (←deesien←daesien). Vowel dissimilation occurs in nouns in the final position. ee→ie: khiebi → khiebi ("Trees"); rdzeebi→rdziebi ("milks").

The study showed that the main trends of phonetic changes of vowel complexes at the morpheme boundary in the speech of Tsitelubani, Shavshvebi and Natsreti are common Georgian, although certain modifications are also confirmed, which are determined by the inte-

rnal laws of the dialect, population migration and mixing of speech codes.

The conclusions obtained as a result of the study are important for the diachronic analysis of key issues of Kartvelian dialectology and, in general, the Georgian literary language.

Keywords: Shida Kartli, Adjarian dialect, vowel complexes, morpheme, phonetic change.

Introduction

Phonetic changes of vowel complexes at the morpheme boundary according to Georgian subsystems are thoroughly described in the scientific literature. According to the same principle, changes of the same vowel complex in dialects can give different phonetic varieties, but, nevertheless, represent a manifestation of the same tendency. Phonetic changes are influenced by the physiological characteristics of vowels and their relationship by distance.

The speech of Tsitelubani, Shavshvebi and Natsreti confirms the cases of mixing of Adjarian and Meskhetian-Javakhian speech codes with Kartli. In the nineties of the twentieth century, people moved to these villages of Shida Kartli from Upper Adjara, from the village of Chao in the Khulo district, later from Samtskhe-Javakheti, the village of Khizabavri and various parts of Kartli. In these villages, after the August 2008 war, the displaced population from the historical Samachablo villages was resettled as a result of forced migration. Ossetian families are also found. It is also worth noting that Meskhetians who settled in Shavshvebi and Tsitelubani from Turkey, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan also live in them. They speak Turkish, Azerbaijani and Russian. They do not know the Georgian language (the traces of Mes-

khetian have been erased from their speech), although their memory has preserved a characteristic of Georgian identity - the surname of their ancestor.

In the speech of Tsitelubani, Shavshvebi, and Natsreti, there are cases of interaction between linguistic phenomena characteristic of both Kartli and Adjarian. These cases are especially noticeable in ordinary conversation, in dialogue, when the speaker is Kartli, the interlocutor is Adjarian, or - conversely, when the interlocutor switches to the speaker's speech.

The cases of speech code switching in the speech of these villages were first noted and analyzed by us in the scientific articles: "On the issue of the relationship between Kartli and Adjarian" (2015: 25-26); "Time adverbs in Shidakartli" (2020: 54). The analysis of phonetic transformations of vowel complexes and their realization cases at the morpheme boundary in the speech of Tsitelubani, Shavshvebi and Natsreti is based on the dialect materials we have obtained over the years. In connection with the research question, it is important to review the main literature that concerns the Georgian, Adjarian and Meskhetian dialects (Noghaideli, 1960; Nizharadze, 1957; Imnaishvili, 1974; Martirov, 1984; Koberidze, 2024)

Methods

In the process of studying the issue, observation, analysis of empirical material, context analysis, questionnaire survey, quantitative research, description and comparison-contrast methods were used. We described the empirical materials found, compared the Adjarian and Kartli speech codes, using quantitative research methods, identified the frequency of changes in sound complexes, and based on the analysis of the scientific literature related to the issue, we drew the relevant conclusions in chronological order.

Results

The presented scientific article studies the tendency of phonetic changes of vowel complexes at the morpheme boundary in the speech of Adjarians living in Shida Kartli, Gori Municipality villages – Tsitelubani, Shavshvebi and Natsreti; the cases and frequency of their realization are identified; the dialect texts recorded and published by us at different times and the scientific literature related to the issue are analyzed; the vowel changes in complexes caused by assimilation and dissimilation (ae→ee, oe→ee, au→uu, eu→uu, ai→ii, ae→ee→ie, ee→ie→ie) and three markers of their detection are discussed: local order (place of pronunciation), openness (raising) and labiality; General Georgian trends in phonetic changes of vowel complexes at the morpheme boundary and modifications caused by the internal laws of the dialect, population migration, and the mixing of speech codes were identified.

Discussion

The regularities of phonetic changes of two-component vowel complexes in Georgian dialects are analysed according to the result - three-order complexes are named and the tendency of phonetic changes characteristic of each vowel is determined: 1. A complex composed of wide + narrow (low or medium stress + high stress) vowels shows a tendency towards regressive assimilation: ae→ee, ai→ii, au→uu; 2. In complexes composed of narrow + wide vowels, the following will appear: ea→ia, oa→ua (a tendency towards diphthongization during a long-term process); 3. Vowels of equal openness (highness) give different results. The oe complex in Western dialects is changed by regressive assimilation (similar to complexes of the first type): Gamoeekida→Gameekida ("Chased"); in the dialects of Eastern Georgia, dissimilation appears: Gamoeekida→Gamuekida ("Chased"). The same group also includes complexes composed of identical vowels

(primary and secondary). Long vowels resulting from the fusion of identical vowels tend to turn into simple vowels (Dzidziguri, 1946: 19).

One more variant can be added to this (attested in the Ajarian dialect): in the case when *ai*→*ei* is disconnected by the consonant *v*, the *i* vowel is lost: *s'avighe* → *ts'evighe*→ *ts'evghe* ("I took"). Essentially, this is a type of *ei* → *ei* change, where instead of a partial reduction (*i* → *y* ("Iot")), a full reduction appears (Jorbenadze, 1998:97-100).

In the Georgian language, the main part of words is formed by combining morphemes (stems and affixes). Accordingly, new sound sequences are formed at the boundaries of morphemes, some of which may not be confirmed within the framework of one morpheme at all (since such a sound sequence is unnatural for Georgian); in such cases, the language tries to make the newly formed unnatural sound sequence resemble a natural sound complex in the process of speech (Putkaradze, & Mikautadze, 2014: 84).

In the speech of Tsitelubani, Shavshvebi and Natsreti, the change of vowel complexes is mainly manifested in the initial and final positions of the word. The preverb vowel is mainly changed. In Zemo-Acharyan, the assimilation of the preverb vowels *a* and *o* takes place (Nizharadze, 1957:15). This process is not foreign to Shida Kartli speech either.

Position at the beginning of a word:

The vowel preceding the verb changes in complexes as a result of regressive, contact, and complete assimilation. The middle-stressed *e* of the front row completely resembles the low-stressed and middle-stressed *a*. *Ae*→*ee*: *tsaegho* → *tseegho* ("to take"); *gaegho*→ *geegho* ("to take"); *daekitkha*→ *deekitkha* ("to ask"); *tsavedi* → *tseveli* ("to go")

...

Compare. Shidakhartlian: deekhvia ("He embraced"), geekhvia ("He embraced") (Martirosov, 1939: 212). Gadeekhvia (He embraced); Deejakha ("He collided"); geetkhovebinat ("They were married") (Gigineishvili, Topuria, & Kavtaradze, 1961: 102, 286, 287, 299, 301).

Deerkvat ("They were called"); geeridnen ("They avoided"); de-emorchila ("They obeyed"); geeretskha ("They washed") (Imnaishvili, 1974 b: 64, 84, 79, 92).

Deemshvidobebian ("They said goodbye"); deekharjat ("They spent"); geetsno ("They got to know each other"); deemegobrebina ("They gathered") (Glonti, 1980: 224, 225, 226, 227).

Deemgvanei ("get acquainted "); geeghvidzebina ("They woke me up"); deetsemi ("They fell"); geetsno ("They fell"); cheetutka ("They were hiding"); cheeparat ("They were hiding") (Koberidze, 2015: 54).

The long e vowel is obtained by complete regressive assimilation through the ee sound complexes in the Adjarian dialect and the speech of Georgian emigrants living in Turkey (Putkaradze, Tabidze, Labadze, Kekua, Gejua, Celebi, & Salia-Beshiroglu, 2022: 188).

The ae-ee-ye process is also confirmed in Imerkhei speech (Mikautadze, 2014: 210-212). ae→ee complete, regressive assimilation is also found in Shavshuri Kilo (Paghava, Shioshvili, Mamuladze, Tsiintsadze, Chokharadze, Shashikadze, Tsetskhladze, Putkaradze, Baramidze, Karalidze, & Chokharadze, 2014: 222).

The change of the pre-verb a element to the vowel e in the complex is also characteristic of other dialects of the Georgian language (Rachuli, Imeretian, Lechkhumi ...) (Jorbenadze, 1998: 611).

The front mid-high e completely resembles the back mid-high labial o vowel⁷⁷. oe→ee: moeria→meeria ("The bag is hanging"); moekida→meekida ("He grabbed the bag").

Compare. Shidakhartlian: meeshva ("Let it go"); meeria ("The bag is hanging") (Martirosov, 1939: 212).

meeshorebinat ("They drove away the enemy"); meetsonat ("They liked this place") (Imnaishvili, 1974, p. 66). Meelaparakos ("He talked to his sister"); meetsona ("He liked it very much") (Glonti, 1980: 224).

Assimilation in the OE complex is more or less characteristic of both Western and Eastern dialects. In Eastern dialects, the process goes even further and the first vowel of complex verbs (aṭo, Ṣam, Ṣaṭo, Ṣaṭo) is also assimilated. This phenomenon is also confirmed in the villages of Upper Imereti as a result of the influence of Kartli (gememekida "He chased me"; gemevida "came out"; tsememetsia "caught up with me"; chemememtvria "crushed me"...). (Dzotsenidze, 1973: 229; Koberidze, 2023: 180).

The vowel e completely resembles both vowels preceding the compound verb: gemeerchia (←gamoerchia "Chosen"), gemeeba (←gamoeba "Released"), gameeghvidza (←gameoghviza "Woke up"), tsemeeqvana (←tsamoeqvana "Taken away"), gedeerchina (←gadeerchina "Saved"), gedeekhvivnen (←gadeekhvivnen "They embraced"), gedeekida (←gadaekida "They hung around").

Such a change of vowels is found in the speech of the Kartli people, and is rarely confirmed in the speech of the Adjarian: Gemeeskrika (←gamoeskrika "Chased"); gemeetkhova (←gemeetkhova "Asked").

⁷⁷ The stress of o in Georgian can fluctuate between medium and low. In such a case, it will be necessary to introduce the differential sign: labiality-non-labiality. O will be characterized as a low or medium back-row labial vowel (Putkaradze, & Mikautadze, 2014: 54).

In Shidakartlian, the vowel *e* completely resembles the assimilation element *a* or *o* separated from it by the signs of the mouth:

degekharja (←dagekharja "You spent it"), dememarta (← damemarta "It happened to me"), degekherkha (←dagekherkha "You managed to"), degedzakha (← dagedzakha "You called me"), demeskha (← dameskha "Demeskha"). In this respect, the hidakartlian speech is closer to the Upper Imereti speech (Koberidze, 2015: 52).

The assimilation of preverbal (*a*, *e*) and verb-inflectional (*i*) vowels is confirmed in the speech of the Adjarians, when there is an objective person prefix between them (Nizharadze, 1957: 14).

In this case, there is a distance assimilation *ai* → *yi*: gidimiknia (← gadamiknia "I changed"); gimishena (← gamishena "I built"); gimiketa (← gamiketa "I made"), gidimigdo (← gadamigdo "I threw"); chimivarda (← chamivarda "I fell"); gimigho (← gamigho); gimikharda (← gamikharda "I was happy"); gigigono (← gagigono "I heard from you").

Both vowels before a compound verb change: gidimiqara (← gadamiqara, "I was overwhelmed").

The first vowel before a compound verb does not change in Shavshuri: gamemishves ("They let me out"), gamemeghos ("Let me go") (Paghava, Shioshvili, Mamuladze, Tsintsadze, Chokharadze, Shashikadze, Tsetskhladze, Putkaradze, Baramidze, Karalidze, & Chokharadze, 2014: 224).

In Gurian, the preverb vowel remains unchanged if it is separated from the assimilating vowel by the consonant *m* or *g* (Imnaishvili, 1974a: 174).

The speech of the Adjarians living in Shida Kartli is also characterized by one interesting phenomenon: the assimilation of the preverb vowels *a*, *o* by the vowels *i* of the genitive or passive gender and then its disappearance without a trace (Nizharadze, 1957: 15).

For example: gamevdzakhe ← gamevidzakhe (← gamovidzakhe "I called it"); gevketē ← gevikete (← gavikete "I made it"); evshene ← evishene (← avishene "I built it").

The low-stressed middle row *a* resembles the back-row mid-stressed labial *o* vowel. *oa*→*aa*: shaanata (← sheanata "Sheanata"); shaagdes (← sheagdes "They threw").

Compare Shidakartluri: Gamaatshakdeto ("Announce it") (Martirosovi, 1939: 219); Maacham ("He will feed it") (Gigineishvili, Topuria, & Kavtaradze, 1961: 286); Gamaataremina ("He will bring it out") (Imnaishvili, 1974b: 84); Amaatatanine ("He will bring it out") (Koberidze, 2024: 131).

In Shida Kartlian, within the same morpheme on the morpheme boundary, the preverb vowel *o* in the vicinity of the *m*-mark of the first objective person is replaced by the element *a* (in the second and third persons, *o* does not change): *Mo* takes the form of preverb *ma* in Upper Imereti when it is followed by the sonor *m*. This is so characteristic of it that it serves as one of the classification marks to distinguish Upper Imereti from Lower Imereti (Dzotsenidze, 1973: 244).

In Imerkhevi, the picture is approximately the same, but it is also noticeable that such a change almost always occurs where the basis for assimilation is prepared, and this mainly occurs with the second and third person forms of the subject (Putkaradze, 2016: 116).

In Kakhetian, the replacement of the *o* element before the verb *mo* with *ani* is sometimes conditioned by the change of the person of the verb. For example, with the first subjective person and the second objective person, we usually find *mo*-(*me* movitane, *shen* mogitane, *shen* mamitane ("I brought it", "You brought it", "You carried it") (Martirosov & Imnaishvili, 1956: 35).

The linguistic literature suggests that the above-mentioned change should have originated in the oa position and only then expanded its scope to environments where there is no basis for this phonetic change (Topuria, 1925: 131).

The back, high-stressed u vowel resembles the middle, low-stressed a vowel. au→uu: duupenen („they will be given"); uuriot („they will be mixed"); guushveben („they will be released"); duudzakha („they will be called"); tsuuvida („they will be taken"); shuukar („they will be taken"); duudeben („they will be sold") ... The back, high-stressed u vowel resembles the front, high-stressed i: iu→uu: muutanon („they will be brought"); muuqvanon („they will be brought")...This process goes even further and ends with long vowels.

Compare Shidakartli: au→ou with regressive partial assimilation. For example: gouketa (←gauketa "He made it"); gougzavna (←gauzavna "He sent it). Such cases are rare.

In Shavshuri, UU is replaced not only by the AU complex, but also by the OU complex for the first time (Paghava, Shioshvili, Mamuladze, Tsintsadze, Chokharadze, Shashikadze, Tsetskhladze, Putkaradze, Baramidze, Karalidze, & Chokharadze, 2014: 225).

The pre-verb vowels a and o change in the neighborhood of the stem (formant) vowel i. The stem vowel i has the power of assimilation. Assimilation in such a position is regressive, partial, contact and distance (Putkaradze, 2016: 56).

Partial, contact assimilation causes a change in complexes: ai→ei: geimseba („filling"); geiqopa („divide"); geichreba („cut") ...

Partial distance assimilation (ai→ei) is followed by the loss of the verbal affix i: evghot ("Let's take it"); tsevdn ("They went"); devtsqop ("I will begin")...

In the speech of Adjarians living in the villages of Shida Kartli, ee, obtained through contact complete regressive assimilation, under-

goes regressive dissimilation $ae \rightarrow ee \rightarrow ye$: giemtquneba (\leftarrow geemt-quneba "to be deceived"); giekida (\leftarrow geekida "to be hung"); giekitkha (\leftarrow geekitkha "to be asked"); diesien (\leftarrow deesien "to be put down") (tsitelubani) (koberidze, 2015: 51).

Cases of partial dissimilation of vowels (oalua) are characteristic of Shidakartli and Adjarian speech: muatbobs (\leftarrow moatbobs "He will warm up"), muakitkha (\leftarrow moakitkha "He asked")...

Vowel dissimilation occurs in nouns in final position, when the final e (sometimes a-c) of the stem undergoes a change under the influence of the plural suffix e. $ee \rightarrow ie$:

khiebi (\leftarrow kheebi "Trees"); kibiebi (\leftarrow kibeebi "Stairs"); rdziebi (\leftarrow rdzeebi "Milk"); tsiebi (tseebi \leftarrow tsaebi "Sky"); qaniebi (\leftarrow qaneebi \leftarrow qanaebi "Fields" ... The process of dissimilation goes even further and takes on the form of a complex. This phenomenon is also characteristic of Meskhetian-Javanese speech.

These examples prove that in Zemo-Ajarian the tendency of $ee \rightarrow ie \rightarrow ie$ is taking on a complete form. It is possible that this circumstance is one of the manifestations of the tendency to diphthongization (Noghaideli, 1960:16).

If we compare the illustrative examples discussed above with Shidakartli, we will see that as a result of contact, regressive assimilation, the vowel complexes ae and ao give us ee and oo complexes. ae \rightarrow ee: a) The vowel e of the suffix -eb, which produces the plural of nouns, resembles the vowel a of the stem (when the final a vowel is not shortened): kochora \rightarrow kochoraebi \rightarrow kochoreebi; b) The vowel e of the suffix -eb resembles the vowel a of the root connected in the relative rotation: tslisa \rightarrow tslisaebi \rightarrow tsliseebi ("Year"), gvarisa \rightarrow gvarisaebi \rightarrow gvariseebi ("Surname") (Koberidze, 2024: 36).

The percentage of the frequency of changes in vowel complexes at the morpheme boundary in the speech of Adjarians living in Shida Kartli, according to the materials we have found:

Head position: ae→ee - 5%; oe→ee - 2%; ai→ii - 6%; oi→ei with the loss of the i vowel - 9%; oa→aa -2%; au→uu-2%; oa→ua-2%; ai→ei -3%; ae→ee→ie- 4%; Compare Shida Kartli: ae→ee - 7%; oe→ee - 2%; oa→aa -9%; au→ou- 2%; oa→ua- 2%; oa→ua 2%.

Final position: ae→ee→ye.

Conclusion

As can be seen from the analyzed materials, the frequency of changes in vowel complexes at the morpheme boundary in the speech of Adjarians living in Shida Kartli varies depending on the head and end positions in the verbal and verbal forms. In the head position of the verb, 9 vowel complex changes were detected: ae→ee - 5%; oe→ee - 2%; ai→ii - 6%; oi→ei with the loss of the i vowel - 9%; oa→aa -2%; au→uu-2%; oa→ua- 2%; ai→ei -3%; ae→ee→ie- 4% The change in the common complexes of Kartlians and Adjarians: ae→ee - 7%; oe→ee - 2%; oa→aa -9%; au→ou- 2%; oa→ua- 2%.

In the final position of the noun, 1 vowel complex change is realized: ae→ ee→ ie- 5%.

In general, it can be said that the speech of Tsitelubani, Shavshvebi and Natsreti shows the basic data of Kartli, the main trends of vowel complex changes at the morpheme boundary correspond to the general laws of language development, are common to Georgian and are more or less confirmed in other dialects, although certain modifications are also confirmed, which are determined by the internal laws of the dialect, population migration and mixing of speech codes.

Adjarian speech is characterized by one-step and two-step changes in vowel complexes, while Shidakartli speech is characterized by one-step changes in vowel complexes. It is noteworthy that there

are three markers for the detection of assimilation and dissimilation: local order (place of articulation), openness (raising), and labiality. Time will tell whether the only sign of the speech of Tsitelubani, Shavshvebi, and Natsreti will be Kartli, if a parallel environment or mixed speech is created.

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