

ON VOWEL DISTRIBUTION IN TAOAN DIALECT OF GEORGIAN LANGUAGE

ABSTRACT

Tao is part of historical Georgia that is within the borders of modern Turkey. Taoan Georgian represents an endangered dialect. In addition, it has a significant influence of both Turkish language and literary Georgian, therefore, it is of utmost importance to further pursue research on this dialect.

The paper presents a detailed specification and distribution of the vowel phonemes in the Georgian dialect of the Georgian language. The findings are compared to both literary Georgian and other Kartvelian dialects. Our aim is to demonstrate the findings analyzed with regard to the dialect speech patterns recorded in dialect expeditions conducted at different times (2006-2014) in Tao and Imerkhevi.

As the analysis of the Georgian dialect texts and scholarly studies illustrates, there are five phoneme vowels in both Taoan and literary Georgian: a, e, i, o, u. Their distribution is free and they are also identical in terms of their origin and type. Besides, similar to other Kartvelian dialects, the following are phonetic variations identified according to their different positions: ā, ē, ī, ō, ū, w (<u), y (<i), ũ, ũ̄, ǒ.

Long vowels (ā, ē, ī, ō, ū) are of secondary origin. The palatalized ũ̄, ǒ occurs in both Turkish borrowings and Georgian materials. The neutral ũ more frequently occurs after a consonant and represents a positional, phonetic variant of a given speech sound.

There is a frequent use of non-syllabic allophones of i, u vowels such as y, w which, in fact, are natural not only in dialects but also in the speech of modern Georgians who speak literary Georgian. Non-syllabic w has unlimited presence in almost every position. It mainly alternates with a labiodental v consonant; and it rarely rather than systematically alternates with u. One may identify the w/v alternation in the speech of one and the same respondent.

Keywords: Georgian Speech, Turkish Language, Taoan Dialect, Vowel system.