ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF TWO HILL MARI PHONEMES IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION OF FUTURE HILL MARI TEACHERS

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Abstract

The relevance of language education as a linguistic reality is due to the role that language, being an integral part of the national consciousness of the people, plays an important role in the processes of socialization of the individual. The problems of language education acquire special significance in modern conditions (there has been a change in social relations, there are rapid changes in the education system), when the prestige of the Hill Mari language as a language of interethnic communication has decreased in the Republic of Mari El. This, in turn, lowers language speakers' national self-esteem.

The decline in the prestige of the Hill Mari language as a result of the existing language policy can have disastrous consequences: the modern generation is losing touch with the heritage of its predecessors.

The presented article states that in the process of the Hill Mari writing creation, the phoneme inventory was defined incorrectly. This led to the loss of two consonant phonemes in the phonological system of the language: the velar occlusive sonant [ŋ] and the glottal stop [ʔ]. The authors demonstrate for the first time that in the Hill Mari alphabet, instead of these lost phonemes, spelling signs are used that do not express the characteristics of the sonant [ŋ] and the glottal stop [ʔ] at all.

The purpose of this research is to describe for future school teachers the true composition of the consonants – an inventory of phonemes used in the Hill Mari language education.

Keywords: the Hill Mari language, system of consonant phonemes, quasi-homonyms, alphabet, backlingual stop consonant, glottal stop, language education.

1 INTRODUCTION

It is known that the status of a language depends on the forms of the historical community of people and is characterized by varying degrees of internal consolidation. Among tribal peoples "there was a large territorial fragmentation of languages" (Popova, Sternin, General Linguistics, 2007, p. 93). This feature is defined by the term "primary linguistic continuity" – each language is similar to the neighboring one, but less like the next" (Popova, Sternin, General Linguistics, 2007, p. 93). Traditionally it is believed that after going through the stages of uniting people into a clan, tribe, usually at the stage of nationality, one of the tribal languages becomes the dominant, consolidating, i.e. "Usually this is the dialect of the tribe around which the unity consolidates" (Pishchalnikova, Sonin, General Linguistics, 2009, p. 243). Perhaps the Mari languages have gone through the stages of a generic dialect, the language of a tribe and, possibly, a nationality, which, as a rule, consists of closely related tribes. However, the Mari did not develop a single language system of

intertribal (international) communication. Numerous circumstances in the life of human society, extra-linguistic factors and linguistic reasons led to the formation of two different linguistic groups. None of the tribal Mari languages became consolidating, each people continued and continue speaking in their own languages. There was no universal language, which would be used by both Hill Maris and Meadow Maris. The system of both languages was so different that it did not allow developing a universal Mari writing, despite the all attempts of the writers to compile a single Mari spelling in the 1920s.

The Hill Mari alphabet had been officially presented in writing and phonemically, and exists to this day in the following form: а [a], ä [æ], б [b], в [v] or [β], г [g] or [ɣ], д [d] or [ð], е [e], ё, ж [ʒ], з [z], и [i], й [j], к [k], л [l], [λ], м [m], н [n], о [o], ö [ø], п [p], р [r], с [s], т [t], [t'] or [ħ], у [u], ү [y], ф [f], х [h], ц [c], ч [č], щ [š':], ы [ʏ], ё [ə], Ъ, Э [e], ю, я.

To a person ignorant of linguistics, it must seem that everything is in order in this alphabet and that there are no flaws in the Hill Mari spelling. However, what is wrong here?

In the article we will consider the phonological system of consonants of the modern Hill Mari language which very important for future language teachers.

2 OPINIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research method was the analysis of the back-lingual stop sonant [ŋ] and the glottal stop [ʔ] implementation in all possible phonetic positions using the most widespread method of quasi-homonyms (minimal pairs) and phonotactics.

The authors proved that the back-lingual stop sonant [ŋ] in the Hill Mari language is a full-fledged and self-sufficient phoneme. It occurs in words before the consonant and at the end of the word. For example, *шонла* [ʃonla] "like a foam" - *шотла* [ʃotla] "he counts", *тонэ* [ton] "a pip" - *тол* [top] "a ball". The limitation of its distribution is at the very beginning of the word, at the beginning of the syllable, and between vocals.

The glottal stop [ʔ] is used in the following positions.

1. In the word:

a) In place of the letter к in front of: [m, n, ɲ, l, λ] (e.g. *мокмыр* [m'oʔmər] "a hangover", *цäкнäш* [c'æʔnæš] "to retreat");

b) In place of the letter т before: [m, n, ɲ, l] (e.g. *мöртни* [m'ørʔni] "caviar") Within the morpheme, there is regularity: the combination of a syllable with a final exponent [k] or [t] is unacceptable before the next syllable starting with a sonant (e.g. combination [k] or [t] with sonants at the junction of syllables is inadmissible). In this position, only the glottal stop [ʔ] can collocate with sonants. In the meantime, it acts as the boundary of a word. We see here the rule of phonotactics, which reflects the compatibility/incompatibility of phonemic units.

c) In all cases of word formation, a glottal stop is pronounced in place of letters к and т if they stand in front of [m, n, ɲ, l, λ, j, β]. For example, *шарыквлä* [šar'əʔβlæ] "a sheep" (from the word *шарык* [š'arək]). The replacement of к and т before the subsequent [m, n, ɲ, l, λ, j, β] by the glottal stop is not caused by any phonetic rules. In this case, we talk not just about the compatibility/incompatibility of phonemes in corresponding contexts, but about patterns of the phonological appearance of morphemes. Inter-morphemic combinations are aligned according to the pattern of intra-morphemic combinations. In other words, the rule here determines how exponents of morphemes have to change phonologically when they are in combination with other morphemes. It is important to note that in speech only phenomena and units that are in the language system are used.

2. Relatively regularly at the beginning of words that begin with a vowel (as a phonetic phenomenon), for example *ёдёр* [ʔədər] "a girl".

3. At the end of a word. For example, [ʔ ə 'ʔ ə] "yes, yes".

4. In onomatopoeitic words like *ньюиквлä* [ɲu'iʔβlæ] "piglets".

Demonstrative are words, borrowed from Russian: if there are letters к and т, Hill Mari people pronounce the glottal stop [ʔ].

The analysis of the phonological system of consonants in the Hill Mari language indicates its relative autonomy and orderliness. As a result, the authors conclude that the consonant system of the modern Hill Mari actually includes 25 phonemes: 5 labial, 11 front-lingual, 4 middle-lingual, 4 back-lingual and a glottal stop:

Labial: [p, b, m, f, β (v)].

Front-lingual: [t, ɖ (d), n, s, z, š, ž, č (h), c, l, r] (variants of phonemes are indicated in brackets).

Middle lingual: [ɸ, ɲ, j, λ].

Back-lingual: [k, ɣ (g), x, ŋ].

Unfortunately, the creators of the Hill Mari writing failed to determine the entire inventory of consonant phonemes. So, the back-lingual stop sonant [ŋ] and the glottal stop [ʔ] don't have letters for their designation in the alphabet.

Phoneme [ŋ]. Among the letters of the Meadow Mari alphabet, there is the letter **нр**, corresponding to the back-lingual stop consonant phoneme [ŋ]. It occurs within a word before the next consonant, in an inter-vocal position and at the end of the word: тунгалаш [tyŋaɭ'aš]- "to begin", ŋngo [ʔyŋgo] – "eagle-owl", *мӱнэ* [tyŋ] – "a basement", etc. Phoneme [ŋ] does not occur at the beginning of a word, at the beginning of a syllable and in a position after other consonants (Gruzov, Phonetics of Dialects of the Mari language in Historical Coverage, 1965, p.203).

L.P. Gruzov believed that in the "Hill dialect, the phoneme [ŋ] in the overwhelming majority is used in conjunction with the consonant **г**: *вингӱ* [β'iŋgə] – "a son-in-law", *цангк(г)* [c'aŋg(k)] – "a bell", etc." (Gruzov. Phonetics of dialects of the Mari language in historical coverage, 1965, p. 204).

When the Hill Mari writing was created, the spelling sign **нр**, designated the corresponding back-lingual stop consonant phoneme [ŋ], was also included in the alphabet. But later it was removed and replaced by the digraph **нр**, which was unable to convey the functions of the phoneme [ŋ] in all its forms. At the end, the phoneme [ŋ] in the Hill Mari had "lost" the status of an independent phoneme. In fact, this meant a "refusal" to recognize the back-lingual stop sonant [ŋ] in this language. Apparently, the developers of the Hill Mari alphabet could not understand that the phoneme [ŋ] in this language had an important meaning and different capacity from the Meadow Mari, and functioned according to its own specific rules.

The analysis of the modern Hill Mari language indicates that [ŋ] is a "full-fledged" independent consonant. It occurs inside a word before the next consonant and at the very end of the word: *шонгы* [š'oŋgə] "old", *тӱнр* [tæŋ] - "a friend", etc. The phoneme [ŋ] does not occur in the very beginning of a word, at the beginning of a syllable, in a position after other consonants and, unlike the Meadow Mari language, does not occur in an intervocal position.

The following linguistic facts prove the independence of the phoneme [ŋ].

1. Objectively existing acoustic-physiological sound differences may not have any linguistic significance. For this reason, for the paradigmatic identification of a phoneme, we use the most common method of quasi-homonyms (minimal pairs). In the Hill Mari language there are many minimal pairs, where the phoneme [ŋ] acts as an independent unit: *монгда* / [t'oŋdɑ] "your seeds" - *монда* [t'oŋdɑ] "in your house – at you", *шонг* [š'oŋ] "foam" - *шон* [š'oŋ] "(he) reached", *монг* [t'oŋ] "pip" - *топ* [t'oŋ] "a ball", *шонгла* [š'oŋlɑ] "like foam" - *шотла* [š'oŋlɑ] "he counts", and etc.

2. It is not necessary for [ŋ] the condition of "pairing" with the consonant **п**. This "pairing" is easily broken when dividing a word into syllables. For example, the spelling division into syllables looks like this: *вин-гӱ* "a son-in-law", and in the actual sound implementation it will be – [β'iŋ – gə]; *пон-гыш* - in modern speech it will be [p'oŋ - gəš] "bosom", *хан-га* – [h'aŋ – ga] "a board", *монгда* [t'oŋ - dɑ] / "your seeds", where is no "pairing" with the consonant **г**. It is obvious that the digraph **нр** does not really convey the functional meaning of the phoneme [ŋ].

Thus, the phonological independence of the phoneme [ŋ] makes it possible to supplement a number of Hill Mari back-lingual consonants with a stop phoneme [ŋ].

The glottal stop [ʔ]. The glottal stop is a voiceless guttural explosive consonant sound; it is obtained by closing the vocal cords, which then, under the pressure of air, suddenly open with an explosive sound. At the same time, organs of the oral cavity are at rest or are preparing to pronounce the next sound. Found in many languages of the world: Arabic; languages of the Far North, Philippines; Chechen, etc.

In the modern Hill Mari language, the glottal stop [ʔ] is present in the following positions:

1. In the word:

a) In place of the orthographic **к** in front of sonants [m, n, ɲ, l, λ]. For example, *мокмыр* [m'oʔ Məɹ] "a hangover", *маклака* [mɑʔ L'ɑkɑ] "a cob", *цӱкнӱш* [c'æʔ Næš] "to retreat", etc.;

b) in place of the orthographic *t* before sonants [m, n, ɲ, l]: *шӧртньӧ* [ʃ'ɔrʔ ɲə] "gold", *мӧртни* [m'ɔrʔ ɲi] "caviar", *пӧртмӧ* [p'ɔrʔ mə] "cut", etc. ;

Inside a morpheme there is a glottal stop [ʔ] that is realized in the place of the orthographic *к* and *т* before sonants: *яклака* [jɑʔ l'ɑkɑ] "slippery", *кӧртни* [k'ɔrʔ ɲi] "iron", etc. Pronouncing [k] or [t] in this position, it is possible but it would attract the attention of others and would be assessed as a "Russian accent". This pronunciation, in general, is simply unnatural for a native Hill Mari speaker.

Within a morpheme, there is a pattern, according to which the combination of a syllable with a final exponent / *к* / or / *т* / is unacceptable before the next syllable that begins with a sonant, e.g. combination / *к* / or / *т* / with sonants at the junction of syllables is inadmissible. In the meantime, it acts as the boundary of a word. We see here the rule of phonotactics, which reflects the compatibility/incompatibility of phonemic units.

c) At the junction of morphemes. In all cases of a word formation in place of letters *к* and *т* if they are in front of sonants [m, n, ɲ, l, λ, j, β] (Mari [β] is characterized by great sonorization): *шарыкна* [ʃar'ə ʔ βlæ] "a sheep" (from the word *sharyk* [ʃ'arək], *sharykna* [ʃar'ə ɲɑ] "our sheep", *shar'iklan* [ʃarəʔ lan] "a sheep", *коклы* [k'oʔ lə] "twenty" (from the word *кокты* "two" + *лу* "ten"), *ikvāresh* [iʔ β'æreʃ] "together" (from the words *икты* "one" + *вӧр* "place"), *кокъяла* [koʔ j'ɑlɑ] "with two legs" (from the words *kokty* "two" + *yal* "leg"), *тотлы* [t'oʔ lə] "tasty" (from the word *тат* "taste"), *утла* [uʔ l'ɑ] "more" (from the word *уты* "extra"), etc.

These examples indicate that the regularity of phonotactics extends to morphological formations. So, in the word *шеклӧнӧш* [ʃeʔ L'ænæʃ] "to be ashamed" (from the word *шек* "conscience") we have the phenomenon described above: the glottal stop stands at the end of a syllable, in front of a syllable that begins with a sonant. The final *к* or *т* of one morpheme before the above-mentioned sonants of another morpheme alternates with the glottal stop [ʔ]. Typical alternations like invoicing – voicing, assimilation – monophthongization, etc. can be explained by "natural" processes, i.e. characteristic of a person in general, and not just a speaker of a given language, however, this type of alternation does not work for a "natural" interpretation. The replacement of *к* and *т* with a glottal stop before subsequent sonants [m, n, ɲ, l, λ, j, β] is not caused by any phonetic reasons. The thing is not in the compatibility / incongruity of phonemes in corresponding contexts, but in patterns of the phonological appearance of morphemes. In other words, we are dealing with a rule that determines how exponents of morphemes have to change phonologically when they are combined with other morphemes (Kasevich, Morfonologiya, 1986: 20). The phonological essence of the rule is that intermorphemic combinations are aligned according to the pattern of intramorphemic combinations. There is no doubt that real speech is a very complex picture in terms of sound, far from the one suggested by the analysis of written speech. But it is important to note that only those units that are in the language system are used in speech production.

2. Relatively regular at the beginning of words that begin with a vowel (as a phonetic phenomenon). For example, *эдэм* [ʔ 'Edem] "a person", *ӧдӧр* [ʔ 'ɔdər] "a girl", *ӧвӧ* [ʔ 'ævæ] "a mother", *ӧшкӧж* [ʔ 'yʃkyʒ] "a bull", *ӧркӧ* [ʔ 'ɔrkə] "lazy", *ыржа* [ʔ 'erʒɑ] "rye", *оролы* [ʔ Or'olə] "a guard", *ушман* [ʔ Uʃman] "beet". The glottal stop at the beginning of a word is found in a number of languages, for example, in German (Knacklaut), in Russian. For these languages, there is no problem of phonemicity of the glottal stop [ʔ]. For the Hill Mari language, the appearance of [ʔ] at the beginning of a word may not be random. In traditional Finno-Ugric studies, it is noted that at the beginning of a word not only [k], but also [h] could appear. The specific distribution [k], [h], [ʔ] in Hill Mari can allow the inclusion of the glottal stop [ʔ]. Anyway, the appearance of [ʔ] at the beginning of a word and the relative frequency of its use, not only in the initial part of the word of isolated words, but also within a phrase, suggests the presence of some kind of phonetic phenomenon in the language that attracts attention.

3. At the end of a word: for example, *ма* [mɑʔ] "Yes" (statement). In this word, the glottal stop is not depicted graphically in any way, however, in speech, at the very end of the word, the glottal stop is often pronounced. Mari interrogative sentence with the word *ма* [mɑ] "yes?" is often accompanied by an affirmative answer *ма* [mɑʔ] "yes". The statement [mɑ] is also used in response to sentences with an intonation of indignation, regret, as well as with a neutral tone of intonation. For example, to the question: *Тенге ма?* [tenge m'ɑ] "So, yes?", – answer: [mɑ-'ɑʔ] "Yes". Replacement of the glottal stop [ʔ] to [k], [t] in this position leads to a change in the meaning of the word: *мак* [mak] "poppy", *мам* [mat] "mate" (in chess). And the absence of a glottal stop here would lead to the transformation of a statement into a question, i.e. to change the meaning of the answer. This example indicates the presence of a minimal pair for the glottal stop [ʔ] and at the very end position.

4. In onomatopoeitic words: *нюик* [ɲu'iʔ] "a piglet". Hence the word *нюикӧлӧ* [ɲu'iʔ βlæ] "piglets", *мӧӧк* [møʔʔ] "a cow". Hence, *мӧӧкӧлӧ* or *мӧкӧлӧ* [møʔʔ βlæ] "cows", etc.

The usage of the glottal stop in place of **к** and **т** is also applied in borrowings from Russian. Borrowed words are often very indicative because they discover the phonetic capabilities of the language. For example, it would be natural for Hill Mari to pronounce *окно* ['oʔ ɲɑ] "a window", and not ['okɲɑ]; *плотник* [pl'oʔ ɲək] "a carpenter" but not [pl'otɲək], *гармонь* [k'arʔ moɲ] "accordion" but not [garm'on'] etc. Although in the speech of modern youth, forgetting their native language, and under the strong influence of spelling, you can find any pronunciation.

So, in the Hill Mari alphabet, the phonologically existing in the back-lingual stop sonorant [ŋ] and the glottal stop [ʔ] are not graphically depicted. This can be explained by the fact that the developers of writing at that time, obviously, did not have an appropriate linguistic knowledge. They relied on information that was available in papers of foreign researchers of the Hill Mari language and domestic priests, where the entire inventory of the Hill Mari language phonemes was not noticed.

3. CONCLUSION

The materials of the evolution of languages show the relative autonomy of the phoneme system, the systemic ordering of phonemes. Any phonological changes, as a rule, are explained by the ratio of intrasystemic oppositions between phonemes, as well as morphemes and their components. As a result, we conclude that the consonant system of the modern Hill Mari language actually includes 25 phonemes: 5 labial, 11 frontal, 4 middle, 4 back-lingual and the glottal stop.

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