An Analysis on Vowel Classification of Modern Uyghur*

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Abstract—Since the founding of the people's Republic of China, the Uyghur language research has made a breakthrough research results, that is, Uyghur pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar have published a lot of textbooks and works. Although many scholars have a common understanding of these textbooks and works, there are still different opinions on the classification of modern Uyghur vowels. In this way, there are some wrong researches on Uyghur pronunciation research, which brings inconvenience to beginners. This paper discusses the classification of vowels in modern Uyghur language from the perspective of historical linguistics.

Keywords—modern Uyghur language; vowel; classification

I. INTRODUCTION

The Uyghurs mainly live in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous region, mainly in the south of Tangritagh Mountains, the oasis around the Tarim Basin is the center of Uyghurs's settlement, among them, Kashgar oasis, Hotan oasis and Aksu River and Tarim River basin are the most concentrated. The Turpan basin at eastern end of Tianshan is also a relatively concentrated Uyghur area. Ili Valley and Jimusar, Qitai area in north of Tianshan Mountain are also for many Uyghurs settled.

In addition, there are a few Uyghurs in Taoyuan County, Hunan Province and Mianchi County, Henan Province. According to the sixth National Census of 2010, the total population of Uyghur is 10069346[1].

According to the historical stages of Uyghur language, most scholars divide the historical stage of Uyghur language into three stages: ancient Uyghur language, Chaghatay Uyghur language stage and modern Uyghur language stage. At the same time, there are written works on languages, biographies, music, medicine, philosophy, literature, history and so on at all stages of history. Modern Uyghur language is the common language of Uyghur nationality, which is divided into three dialects: central dialect, Hotan dialect and Lopnur dialect. But the difference between these dialects is not very big, communication is not any problem. There are 32 vowels in

modern Uyghur, including 8 vowels and 24 consonants, scholars engaged in Uyghur language teaching and research know that Uyghur language belongs to adherent language, and the rules of phonetic harmony are strict.

From the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, scholars at home and abroad have published a lot of academic papers and monographs of great academic value on the language of inscription literature, the ancient Uyghur language, the Chaghatay Uyghur language and the modern Uyghur language. From the perspective of historical linguistics, these works have become a must-read document for Uyghur language teaching and research personnel. In order to better study the pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar of Uyghur language, we must understand the internal rules of Uyghur language and its evolution.

Uyghur scholars at home and abroad, divide the history of Uyghur language into three stages: ancient Uyghur language, Chaghatay Uyghur language and Modern Uyghur language. Although different scholars have different views on the stages, they have a unified opinion on the pronunciation system of the works language of all ages and works of each stage, especially the number of vowels in Uyghur language, the classification of vowels and their characteristics. This paper analyzes the classification of modern Uyghur vowels from the perspective of historical linguistics and puts forward Individual opinions.

II. VIEWS ON UYGHUR VOWELS IN FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC WORKS

In addition to our scholars, there are also scholars of Germany, Russia, Japan, the United States, Turkey and other countries in Uyghur language have a lot of research results. Let us briefly understand the content of Uyghur pronunciation aspect on Monographs and textbooks at home and abroad:

German scholar Annemarie von Gabain: "The Grammar of Ancient Turkic languages" states that "there are two groups of vowels in ancient Turkic languages and two types of vowels before and after them.[2]" Marcel Erdall (Marcel Erdal)'s "The Grammar of Ancient Turkic Languages"[3] suggests the same

[1]   https://baike.baidu.com/item/ Uyghur nationality

[2]   A.Von.Gabain, Old Turkic Grammar, (translated by Geng Shimin), Inner Mongolia Education Press, 2004. 40 pp.

[3]   Marcel Erdal, Old Turkic Grammar, (translated by Liu Zhao), Nationalities publishing house, 2017, 44 pp.

view as Professor Gabain; Russian scientist W. M. Nasrov's "The Language of the Literature of Orhu-Yenisai Inscription" puts forward that "there are eight vowels in the pronunciation of literature of Orhung-Yenisai inscriptions [4] "; Professor Tursun Ayup of Minzu University of China agrees with the above experts in his book "The Ancient Uyghur Language Course"[5].

As far as Chaghatay Uyghur language, modern Uyghur language are concerned, related research scholars at home and abroad mentioned in their monographs about the number of Uyghur vowels. Yános Eckmann, an internationally renowned Hungarian scholar in the Chagatay Uyghur monograph, "Chagatay Manual" [6] , famous American scholar András J.E.Bodrogligeti's "A Grammar Of Chagatay" [7] (lincom Europa2001, P14), Minzu University of China Professor Abdureop Polat's "An Introduction to Chaghatay Uyghur Study"[8], Chen Zongzhen's, researcher of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, "A History of Uyghur Language"[9], and "The Introduction to Altay" [10] , edited chiefly by Litip Tohti, a professor of Minzu University of China, etc. and some other monographs all agree that there are eight vowels and two kinds of vowels in the phonology of ancient Turkic language and Chaghatay Uyghur language. At the same time, scholars attach great importance to the above principles when sorting out ancient literature, that is, to abide by the law of harmony of vowels in Uyghur language, and no expert or scholar abide by the law of harmony.

Ever since the founding of the People's Republic of China, great changes have taken place in Uyghur language and Uyghur language studies, and great achievements and gains have been made. In addition to the teaching materials commonly used in schools at all levels, institutions of higher learning, research institutions and government functional departments have published textbooks, treatises and reference books on Uyghur language and Uyghur orthography. In particular, there is agreement on Uyghur pronunciation and orthography. Relevant departments at all levels follow the relevant principles of the dictionary of orthography published by Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous region language and character working Committee. In this way, Uyghur pronunciation and orthography rules are protected by laws or regulations. However, general textbooks used in institutions of higher learning,elementary and secondary school do not comply with reference books published by the editor-in-chief

of the said unit. As a result, among the graduates of Uyghur language and literature, the phenomenon of nonstandard writing in Uyghur language is common and some publishing units do not abide by the rules of Uyghur writing.

III. THE CLASSIFICATION PROBLEMS OF VOWELS IN UYGHUR LANGUAGE IN THE WORKS AND TEXTBOOKS PUBLISHED IN 1950S

From research works and textbooks on the ancient Uyghur language, Chaghatay Uyghur language, we can see that the vowels in Uyghur phonology can be divided before and after into two types. Why are different views in textbooks, monographs or papers published after 1950s? To answer this question, we should refer to the following books:

Monographs published after 1950 and textbooks both mention that there are eight vowels in modern Uyghur language. But views on the classification problems of eight vowels in Uyghur language in these textbooks and monographs are not consistent. Some scholars divide the modern Uyghur vowels into before and after two types. Other scholars divided vowels into front, center and back three categories. At the same time, their classification methods or principles are also different.

Some scholars have divided the eight vowels of modern Uyghur into front and back two categories, namely, front-vowels "ä,é,i,ö,ü", and back-vowels "a, o,u". But other scholars have classified the eight vowels in modern Uyghur language as three kinds, including front-vowels "ä,ö,ü", central-vowels "é, i,"back-vowels "a,o,u", etc.

The reference books edited by the government departments and used by them are as follows: "Simple Orthography of Uyghur Written Language"[11], edited by the Xinjiang National language and Characters Work Steering Committee, "Modern Uyghur Written Orthography" [12] edited by the Xinjiang National Language and Characters Work Steering Committee, "General Knowledge of Modern Uyghur Orthography" [13] , edited by Mirsultan Osmanov and Abdureshid Sabit, "Knowledge of Orthographic in Modern Uyghur written languages"[14] edited by Abdureshid Sabit, Himit Semet, Tahir Abduweli, etc., "Modern Uyghur Dictionary of Orthography"(Uyghur) [15] edited by Mirsultan Osmanov, "Modern Uyghur Reference Grammar"[16] edited by Litip Tohti,

[4]   W.M. Nasrov, "the language of the Literature on the Orhung-Yenisai inscription", (Uyghur Sayrani, Sabit Rozi Uyghur Translation) Xinjiang people's Press, 2005, 5 pp.

[5]   Tursun Ayup "Ancient Uyghur language course", National Press, 1998, 13 pages, Uyghur.

[6]   Yános Eckmann Chagatay Manual, Indiana University Press, 1966, P28.

[7]   András J.E.Bodrogligeti, A Grammar of Chagatay, lincom Europa2001, P14.

[8]   Abdureop Polat："Introduction to the study of Ctai Uyghur Uyghur language". The Ethnic Publishing House, 2017, 89 pp.

[9]   Chen Zongzhen. "A study on the History of Uyghur language". China Social Sciences Press, 2016, 37 pp.

[10]   "Introduction to Altay Linguistics" edited chiefly by Litip Tohti, Professor of Minzu University of China, Shanxi Education Press, 2002, 34 pp

[11]   "Simple Orthography of Uyghur Written Language", edited by the Xinjiang National Language and Characters Work Steering Committee. Printed in 1956, 6 pp.

[12]   "Modern Uyghur Written Orthography"edited by the Xinjiang National Language and Characters Work Steering Committee. 1983, 8 pp.

[13]   "General knowledge of Modern Uyghur orthography", edited by Mirsultan Osmanov and Abdureshid Sabit, Xinjiang People Publishing House, 37-38 pp.

[14]   Knowledge of Orthographic in Modern Uyghur Written Languages" edited by Abdureshid Sabit, Himit Semet, Tahir Abduweli ,Xinjiang People's Press, 1997, 67 pp.

[15]   Modern Uyghur Dictionary of Orthography" (Uyghur) edited by Mirsultan Osmanov, Xinjiang People's Press, 1997, 17 pp.

[16]   "Modern Uyghur Reference Grammar" edited by Litip Tohti, China Social Sciences Press, 2012, 52 pp.

Abdukerim Baqi's "Modern Uyghur Language"[17],Wang Haibo and Alimjan Tohti's "Modern Uyghur Grammar Tagging Text"[18], Qaydarov, G.Saidvaqqasov and T.Talipov's "Modern Uyghur Language"[19] (Pronunciation and vocabulary), Zeynep Niyaz's "Modern Uyghur Language"[20] (Pronunciation and syntax) and so on ,The textbooks and monographs divide the eight vowels in modern Uyghur into three categories: front vowels "ä, ö, ü", central vowels "é, i", back vowels "a, o,u".

Contrary to the above point of view, the vowels of the modern Uyghur language in the following works are divided into two types: front vowel and back vowel.

Nasurlla Yolbldi's "Modern Uyghur Language"[21], Adil Eziz, Abduletip Tashpolat's "The Fundamentals of Modern Uyghur Language"[22] and so on, the works divide the modern Uyghur vowels into two types, that is, eight vowels are divided into front vowels, "ä, ö, ü, é,i", back vowel, "a, o,u".

From the above views, we can understand that they hold different views on the classification of modern Uyghur vowels. At the same time, their principles of reference are also different. None of the Scholars who hold these two views refer to Works and textbooks related to ancient Uyghur language and Chaghatay Uyghur language or do not rely on the actual parameters of experimental phonetics.

IV. THE AUTHOR'S VIEWS ON THE CLASSIFICATION OF VOWELS IN MODERN UYGHUR LANGUAGE

According to the theoretical knowledge of ancient Uyghur language and Chaghatay Uyghur language, especially on the basis of phonological knowledge, we can conclude that it is reasonable to divide modern Uyghur vowels into front vowels and back vowels. This classification is based on the following:

First, from the perspective of language evolution, especially from the perspective of phonetic change, by comparing the modern Uyghur phonology with the ancient Uyghur language and the Chaghatay Uyghur phonology, We'll find out that over the course of a long history, the replacement of the writing system and the contact of various cultures, which does not accord with the orthographic principle of Uyghur pronunciation and influences Uyghur phonology to some extent. For example, "f, ž,h" etc. which do not exist in Uyghur phonology, enter into Uyghur phonology during language contact.

[17]   Abdukerim Baqi"Modern Uyghur Language" (Uyghur), The Ethnic Publishing House, 1983, 15-16 pp.

[18]   Wang Haibo, Alimjan Tohti. "Modern Uyghur Grammar Tagging Text", Social Sciences Literature Press, 2016, 2 pp.

[19]   A.Qaydarov, G.Saidvaqqasov, T.Talipov. "Modern Uyghur Language" (Pronunciation and syntax) (Uyghur), Xinjiang People's Press, 1983, 286 pp.

[20]   Zeynep Niyaz. "Modern Uyghur language" (Uyghur), Minzu University of China Press, 2008, 38 pp.

[21]   Nasurlla Yolbldi" Modern Uyghur Language" (Uyghur), Xinjiang People's Press, 16 pp.

[22]   Adil Eziz, Abduletip Tashpolat. "The fundamentals of Modern Uyghur language" (Uyghur), Kashgar Uyghur Press, 1985, 9 pp.

However, it is difficult to find or verify the phenomenon that some front vowels in ancient Uyghur language to anaphase pronounce as back vowels.

Secondly, from the perspective of Uyghur phonetic harmony, when suffixes are added to the root, the harmony of vowels and consonants must be strictly required. In the long process of language evolution, in addition to individual cases, to maintain the continuity of phonological harmony, to abide by this rule, when sorting out documents and archaeology, it also obeys the law of phonetic harmony.

- mang + dï; bar + dï; qač +tï; ač + tï; yat+ tï; qal + dï; tal + dï; aš+ tï; bol + dï; qïl + dï

- käl + di; kät + ti; ögän + di; kör + di; bil + di; küt + ti; yät+ ti; ät +ti; yüt+ ti; püt+ ti

Third, if we divide "é, I" into central vowels, problems arise when affixes are added to monosyllabic and polysyllabic words, for example, "iš, qïš, pïš, tïz, til, yéšil, sériq, qériq,béliq, yériq, qïliq" and so on words are followed by affixes, it's easy for people who grow up in their native language, but it is not easy for Uyghur beginners to distinguish these words with front-vowel suffixes or back-vowel suffixes.For example: "iš+kä or +qa; qïš+qa or +kä; pïš+qan or kän; tïz+lä or la; yéšil+lïq or lik; sériq+lïq or lik; béliq+lar or lär; qïliq+lar orlär", etc. If we do think that the word "é, I" in the above words are central vowels, these vowels sometimes tend to be in front of the tongue or sometimes tend to look behind the tongue, in a way which leads researchers and beginners to the wrong way; in the course of the research, it will definitely lead to wrong judgment and opinion, but the most unfortunate thing is that the Uyghur vowel harmony is ignored. I would like to explain and illustrate this with the following example:

- mang + dï; bar + dï; qač +tï; ač + tï; yat+ tï; qal + dï; tal + dï; aš+ tï; bol + dï; qïl + dï

- käl + di; kät + ti; ögän + di; kör + di; bil + di; küt + ti; yät+ ti; ät +ti; yüt+ ti; püt+ ti

The "i" vowel at the end of the word in the first example above is inclined to is back-vowel naturally; this is because the reasons given in the root-words in the example are all back vowels. In the second example, the reasons in the root- words are front-vowel, so the vowels at the end of the words are also the front vowels. From the inscription of Orhun to pronunciation, international phonetic sign of documents and archaeology in the early 20th Century, both are the principles of dividing front vowel and back vowel. Why put forward the concept of central vowel in modern Uyghur language when the concept of central vowel has not been put forward in the textbooks and research works of ancient Uyghur language and Chaghatay Uyghur language? Uyghur linguists both at home and abroad agree that modern Uyghur language is the extension of ancient Uyghur language and Chaghatay Uyghur language, so it is not scientific to classify vowel by tongue into three categories in modern Uyghur language.

V. Conclusion

According to the historical evolution of Uyghur language, ancient documents and archaeology, research findings, especially the basic law of Uyghur language, the author thinks that the vowels in modern Uyghur language are classified from tongue to front-vowel and back-vowel, understanding and studying this basic law is beneficial to modern Uyghur language teaching and research.

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