

Title: Raising of /a/ to /o/ in East Slavic Dialects
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Akan'e is so pervasive in Belarusian and Russian that the apparent neutralization of /o/ and /a/ in favor of /o/ found in several East Slavic dialects is somewhat of a puzzle. Raising of /a/ to /o/ occurs among southwestern Belarusian dialects, in northern Ukrainian dialects, and among archaic northern Russian dialects. Because raising is found in okan'e dialects, and because these are often adjacent to akan'e dialects, the usual explanation for raising is that it is hypercorrection, a reaction to akan'e (Nazarova 1961; Vajtovič 1968: 34; Žukovskaja 1968: 8-10). In northern Russian dialects where akan'e is not an immediate threat the phenomenon has been attributed to coarticulation effects of adjacent labials, velars or the proximity of stressed /o/ (Paufošima 1978; and others). But raising of /a/ to /o/ is found adjacent to coronals and before other stressed vowels, so it is more systematic than it has been given credit for (Al'muxamedova 1985).

Raising dialects are 7-vowel systems, with a height contrast under stress in mid vowels /e/, /□/, /o/ and /□/. The high mid vowels are often diphthongized; the low mid back vowel is weakly labialized. The hypothesis is that extended transitions in consonant plus vowel sequences (onsets) and abbreviated transitions post-vocally are a major contributor to /a/-raising. Thus dialects which raise /a/ to /o/ after non-palatalized consonants are predicted to also raise /a/ to /e/ after palatalized consonants, and they do. The syllable structure of northern Russian (Vologda dialects) differs from that of CSR and southern akan'e dialects in the nature of consonant and vowel transitions (Paufošima 1977); it appears that Belarusian and Ukrainian raising dialects are typologically similar in this respect to Vologda dialects, but this needs further investigation.

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