

Emphasis in Iraqi Arabic: A Phonological Study

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Abstract:

This treatise investigates the phonological issues related to emphasis in Iraqi Arabic (henceforth IA). Emphasis refers to the process whereby sounds are articulated in the pharyngeal or uvular region in the vocal tract. The purpose of this paper is (twofold: 1) to determine whether those segments are really produced with an emphatic flavor or it is a tendency on Iraqi speakers' part to produce certain consonants in an emphatic way , and 2) to pin point the phonological contexts where those emphatic segments are uttered in given utterances. This paper clearly shows that emphasis spreads minimally over the syllable and maximally over the entire phonological word. Besides, emphasis is absolute in that it can spread right ward and leftward likewise.

Key Words: Emphasis, Iraqi Arabic, Phonology, Pharyngealization

1. Introduction:

Consonant production ,in most languages, involves partial or complete obstruction of the vocal tract between the glottis and the lips. In Arabic language, certain consonants are produced with a kind of constriction in the pharyngeal cavity between the velum and the glottis. Such consonants are known as emphatics.

Lehn (1963) and Whaba (1993) assume that the term emphasis stands for one of the following formulations : 1) spreading and raising of the tongue, 2)elevation of the back of the tongue and 3) thickness and heaviness. The second formulation is used by Arab phoneticians to describe the state by which emphatics are produced (Sibawayh,1982 ;Jakobson ,1957); Abdul Qader ,1998 Gussenhoven and Jacobs, 2011; Clark and Yallop(1996).

Catford (1977:123) and Bellem(2007:22) argue that emphatics can be velarized, uvularized or pharyngealized in different accents of Arabic . In IA, however; researchers have posited that emphatics are pharyngealized (Ali & Daniloff, 1972: Gianni and Pettorino, 1982).

This is not the case in English where pharyngealization is described as the superimposition of a narrowing of the Pharynx and this mainly happens with Cardinal vowel -5 [a] .Ladefoged 1923:231) and Bellem (2007:46) argue that it is the imposition of this vowel quality as a secondary articulation which causes what is called Pharyngealization.

Ladefoged (1972:62) considers consonants with secondary articulation to have added vowel like characteristics. This suggests in a way or another, that pharyngeal consonants trigger the advancement of neighboring vowels ,e.g., the vowel /a/ is fronted and lengthened after pharyngeal consonants as in /saam/ " he fasted" with a pharyngeal alveolar and a fronted vowel , compared to /saam/ " poisonous" with a fricative interdental and a retracted vowel.

In the same line of thought, Ohala (1993 :167) argues that there is "a higher priority on maintaining an acoustic - auditory norm for speech element rather than an articulatory norm". This seems to suggest that coarticulatory effects of the emphatic consonants on neighbouring vowels affect these vowels acoustically .

However, Pharyngealization occurs as an important means for pharyngeal contrasts in the dialects of Arabic as the manifestation of emphasis.

2. Preliminary Remarks :

Emphasis is a common feature of many Arabic dialects, traditionally studied under the heading of " tafxeem" or" Itbaaq" to be mainly specified to consonants and giving rise to the phrase 'emphatic consonants'. Emphatic then refers to a consonant which is articulated in the pharyngeal cavity (Al-Ani, 1970 ; Kuriyagawa , 1988 ; Laver 91194 and Crystal, 2003).

IA has a set of complex coronals /s/ , /t/, /d/ and /ð/ which are the emphatic sounds of their plain counterparts, /s/ , /t/ , /d/ and /ð/ , as shown in table (1) below:

Table 1. Emphatics and their plain Counterparts

	Denti- alveolar	Interdental	Alveolar
Plosives	t, d		
Fricatives		ð	S
Pharyngealized	<u>t</u> , <u>d</u>	<u>ð</u>	<u>S</u>

Following Al-Ganimi (1930:250), the author argues that /l/ as a lateral consonant, can be emphatic in IA in words like "xali (my uncle) vs. "xali" (empty) and "xal" (vinegar) vs. "xal" (leave). But it is excluded in this paper because of its sporadic occurrence in IA.

The nasal consonant /m/ is excluded in this paper for the same reason. Yet it can be considered as a secondary emphatic consonant as cited by Majid (2012:63) with the statement used in zubairi Arabic "ʕateenaah ma ṣumma wa ma rumma (we gave him whatever he wanted).

To produce Pharyngealized , i.e. emphatic consonants, the root of the tongue is retracted towards the back wall of the pharynx and this is what differentiate emphatics from their plain counterparts. McCarthy (1995:) describes the production of emphatics as a "combining the dorsal articulator with the radical articulator".

Heselwood (1996:) and Bellem(, 2007-60) agree that in Baghdadi IA /t/ is voiceless aspirated, whereas /t̤/ is plain voiceless and this may indicate a systematic difference rather than an accidental one. Another systematic difference is suggested by Ibrahim (2012:61) who realized that the /d̤/ production merges into the production of the Arabic standard / ð/ as they are both pronounced with the same quality especially in southern Iraqi varieties. In this connection, Anis (1971:55) remarks that "Iraqis and some Bedouins produce /ð/ with a somewhat similar way to the /d̤/ production as in the Arabic proverb 'hatha gayd min fayd' "It's just the tip of an iceberg".

Ibrahim (ibid.63) argues that in Zubairi Arabic /t̤/ is produced in the environment of certain consonants, and the examples he gives show that it is followed by either of the following vowels /a ,i/ and a geminated favour /l/ as in , tallaag is "divorce", /x/ , xall" & "vinegar", and killla " as a whole".

3-Methodology :

This study is data- oriented in that it seeks to present a descriptive analysis of IA .The author relies heavily on the spoken repertoire and saying of daily natural conversation , and on her intuition as a native speaker of the language. The set of minimal pairs presented in this paper differs only in term of the feature [\pm emphatic] in monosyllabic words, bisyllabic words and trisyllabic words.

4-Discussion and Results:

This section will discuss how IA speakers tend to spread emphasis over the syllable and maximally over the entire phonological word.

As stated earlier (see table (1)), the set of emphatics in IA comprises / \underline{t} / , / \underline{d} /, / $\underline{\delta}$ / , and / \underline{s} /, which exhibit phonemic contrast respectively with /t/,/d/,/δ/and /s/ as tabulated below :

Table-2-Phonemic contrast between emphatics and their plain counterparts word - initially

Emphatics	Gloss	Plain	Gloss
\underline{t} een	mud	teen	figs
\underline{t} uba	ball	tuba	repentance
\underline{d} aal	remained	daal	guided
\underline{d} ilaal	shading	dalaal	fondness
$\underline{\delta}$ aa ζ	got lost	δ aa ζ	broadcasted
$\underline{\delta}$ aal	stayed	δ aal	humiliated
\underline{s} afar	an Arabic month	safar	travel
\underline{s} aad	hunted	saad	controlled

Examining table (2) shows that the set of emphatics in IA exhibits phonemic contrast with their plain counterparts in vocalic positions.

Emphatics can also occur in vocalic environments word-medially and word-finally, as shown in table (3) below.

Table 3 . Emphatics word-medially and word-finally

Word -medially	Gloss	Word-finally	Gloss
ru <u>ṭ</u> uuba	moisture	baa <u>ṭ</u>	duck
ya <u>d</u> far	to succeed	ha <u>d</u>	luck
mu <u>ḍ</u> lim	dark	ma <u>r</u> a <u>d</u>	disease
ma <u>s</u> eer	fate	fu <u>s</u>	lobe

Blanc (1964:) argues that Baghdadi Arabic speakers spread emphasis over the syllable and maximally over the entire phonological word. In fact, the author realizes that this statement is applicable on all IA accents, as tabulated below:

Table-4- The Spread of Emphasis into Suffixes

Emphatic segments	Gloss	Plain Segments	Gloss
ru <u>ṭ</u> ab-hum	their date	rutab-hum	their ranks
y-ra <u>ṭ</u> buu.ha	they wet	y-rat buuha	they arrange
y- <u>d</u> a lellu-hun	they mislead them	y-dale lulu-hum	hey pamper them
<u>d</u> e/a/-hum	their shade	y- <u>ḍ</u> al.uun	they humiliate
ye - <u>ḍ</u> alil-uun	they mislead	y- <u>ḍ</u> alil-uun	they remove handicaps
y- <u>s</u> alli	he is praying	y-salli	he entertains
Fa <u>s</u> eelat-hum	their family	Faseelat-hum	their plant

Left ward emphasis is absolute in IA ,i.e. emphasis spreads without being blocked by any segment as shown in table (5) below:

Table -5- Leftward Emphasis Spread in IA

Emphatic segment	Gloss	Plain Segment	Gloss
ba <u>ṭ</u>	duck	batt	decided

haf <u>a</u> d	memorized	hafad	helped
fa <u>ðð</u>	finished	faðð	individual
pa <u>a</u> s	vehicle	baas	kissed

Likewise, right ward emphasis is absolute in IA. Consider the examples given in table (6) below :

Table -6-Rightward Emphasis spread in IA

Emplatic segment	Gloss	Plain Segment	Gloss
ta <u>a</u> b	to heal	taab	to repent
du <u>f</u> rat	she succeeded	dufrat	she pushed
ð <u>a</u> b	packed	ðab	threw
sa <u>a</u> r	became	saar	walked

Table (5) and (6) clearly show that emphasis is absolute in IA, e.g. emphasis spreads leftward and rightward likewise without being impeded by any segment.

5-Conclusion:

This paper has investigated emphasis as a phonological process spread in Iraqi Arabic and the emphatic segments in this dialect that comprises four emphatic segments /t/ , /d/ , /ð/ and /s/. Two other emphatic segments are detected in sporadic uses in Zubairi Arabic, i.e., /l/ and /m/. It is apparent that emphasis is of a notably recognizable use in Iraqi Arabic as it can occur in all vocalic positions whether word- initially word - medially or word finally with an upmost occurrence with /a/ environments. This paper clearly shows that emphasis spreads minimally over the syllable and maximally over the entire phonological word. Besides, emphasis is absolute in that it can spread right ward and leftward like wise.

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