The Phonology and Morphology of Wadi Mousa Arabic

Abstract

This study aims to provide a comprehensive account of the segmental and prosodic phonology and the morphology of Wadi Mousa Arabic, a rural Jordanian dialect spoken in the south of Jordan that has not yet been investigated. The data of the study come from twenty native-speaker participants whose ages ranged from 45 years to 88 years.

WM Arabic has a cluster of linguistic features that distinguish it from its fellow Jordanian dialects. These include the merger of */ḏ/ and */ḏ/ into */ḏ/; the realization of the uvular stop */q/ as */g/; and the retention of the voiceless velar stop */k/ in all contexts. The phonology is divided into melodic and prosodic phonology. Under melodic phonology, I examine assimilation processes (definite article assimilation, assimilation of */t/- to coronal obstruents, sonorant assimilation, non-coronal assimilation, and emphasis spread) and umlaut. Unlike some Jordanian dialects where emphasis is never blocked, rightward emphasis in WM Arabic is blocked by high front segments, */i/, */y/ and */š/. Under prosodic phonology, I examine syllable structure, word stress, and major prosodic processes, including epenthesis, syncope, V-V resolution, degemination, glottal stop prosthesis, shortening of long vowels, and pre-suffix vowel lengthening.

The study then examines the morphological aspects of verbs and nouns in WM Arabic. Twelve verb forms are utilized in the dialect, including the first ten verb forms (I-X) plus the first two quadriliteral forms (Q1 and Q2). The dialect exhibits some differences from other Jordanian dialects, particularly the use of Form IX which is absent from other Jordanian dialects, e.g. Bani Ḥassan Arabic (Irshied 1984), Bani Kināna Arabic (al-Damen 2007). Under nominal morphology, the study examines substantives, their templatic patterns, and morphological features; adjectives, their templatic patterns, agreement with the head noun in terms of gender, number and definiteness; demonstratives; verbal derivatives; pronouns; quantifiers; numerals and diminutives.
The study provides a short lexicon which aims to document some of the basic terms in the dialect, following Behnstedt and Woidich’s *Word Atlas of Arabic Dialects* (2011). These classes are: man, professions, animals, nature, violence, feelings and states, money, function words, plants, agriculture, motion verbs, construction, household, adverbs of time, human qualities and deficits, body parts, cooking, belongings and weddings.