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Abstract:

This article comes within the framework of the Maghrebian dialectology through a synchronic study of the Mostaganemois MTG dialect which targeted some linguistic phenomena. We were able to establish the phoneme chart with emphatic and non-emphatic sounds, and the syllabic framework of the dialect in question. Among the problems that have been raised the phonemes in the city region. What prompted us to do this study is the lack of articles dealing with this language by comparison with the dialects of Oran, Constantine, and those of southern Algeria.

Keywords:

linguistic, Arabic dialect, Mostaganem, phonemes, speaking.

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Résumé :

Le présent article rentre dans le cadre de la dialectologie maghrébine à travers une étude synchronique du dialecte Mostaganemois MTG qui a visé quelques phénomènes linguistiques. Nous avons pu établir la charte des phonèmes avec les sons emphatiques et non-emphatiques, et la charpente syllabique du dialecte en question. Parmi les problèmes qu'on a soulevés, les phonèmes dans la région citadine. Ce qui nous a poussés à faire cette étude, c'est le manque d'articles traitant de ce parler par comparaison avec les dialectes Oranais, Constantinois, et ceux du Sud Algérien.

Mots-clés :

linguistique, dialecte arabe, Mostaganem, phonèmes, parler.

The present paper constitutes a humble attempt towards a synchronic description of Mostaganem Spoken Arabic(1). that one should be referring to throughout as MTG. By applying the

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methods developed by modern Linguistics, one intends to examine - though succinctly - some phonological phenomena attested for the vernacular under investigation. Here, and for space limitations, one has selected among an exhaustive list of phonological processes, two major phonological aspects. Namely, those of emphasis and syllable structure. These are preceded by a brief historical survey of the town followed by MTG's phoneme inventory.

It is commonly acknowledged that it is mainly due to some historical and social factors that Arabic dialects spread from outside the Arabian Peninsula to merge with other varieties. Yet, and as George S. Colin (1948) postulates : "On est très mal renseignés sur les conditions dans lesquelles l'emploi de l'arabe dialectal, langue exclusivement parlée, dépourvue de tout prestige, non enseignée dans les écoles, a pu se généraliser sur le domaine extra-péninsulaire..."(2)

The instigation of their evolution, in fact, can be drawn to the Islamic conquests for conversion (during the 7th and 8th c.), when both the Arab armies and the converted indigenous were brought together due to mixed marital bonds. This event gave rise to a spectrum of vernaculars. Hence, it was only for ease of reference that philologists divided the resulting speeches into two major geographical sectors: an oriental and an occidental (or maghribi)(3) area to which MTG pertains.

Among the pioneering works that dealt with the description of an Arabic spoken variety, is that of François de Dombay's "Grammatica linguae-arabicae". An article in which he accounts for Tanger's dialect. Since then, and especially from 1850 onwards, extensive attempts were conducted in this linguistic avenue that summoned the contribution of many distinguished dialoctologists such as G. S. Colin, W. Marçais, Ph. Marçais, J. Cantineau, D. Cohen, A. Dhina... - to name but a few.

As far as one knows, relatively little has been written on MTG, particularly if one compares the brief instances advanced in

its issue with those of other central Algerian towns (Algiers, Oran, Constantine and some Saharian towns). In this respect, Ph. Marçais (1941) writes: "La seule vue un peu générale qu'on est tenté de prendre des formes variées que revêt l'arabe parlé en Algérie se présente comme un triptyque reposant sur un socle : chaque volet recouvre le territoire d'un département administrative, l'Oranie, l'Algérois, le Constantinois ; et le socle, se sont les territoires du Sud"(4).

This division of the Algerian dialects into three mainstream departments - which was also agreed upon by Cantineau (1938, 1939, 1940, 1941)(5) - does not count MTG under its headings. A fact that enticed us to embark on a lengthening of what had been previously reported about this vernacular.

To start with, the town's coastal position had the role of facilitating regional contacts - through commercial transactions - and dialect contact by the same token. Besides, an introductory survey of the historical incursions experienced by the town, as well as its key geographical setting, allowed us to make a direct link between the linguistic heterogeneity of MTG and the contribution of these factors to it.

Mostaganem witnessed the presence of Spain (16th c), Turkey (18th c), and France (19th c) on its land. These Indo-European countries left their prints in the citizens daily conversations and some linguistic interferences still partake their lexical repertoire. These interferences are manifested through some of the sound drifts and lexical borrowings illustrated below:

(likul)	from French	"l'école"	"school"
(ravaj)	from French	"réveil"	"alarm-clock"
(baxnuq)	from Turkish		"cloth"
(Tobsi)	from Turkish		"plate"
(Rokna)	from Spanish	"rincón"	"corner"
(kola)	from Spanish	"cola"	"queue"

1 - Emphasis:

In this section one shall not proceed to a critical analysis of

what is still treated as an unsolved and controversial issue in Arabic Linguistics. Rather, one shall mention some earlier approaches that dealt with "emphasis" in Arabic(6). Thereafter, to select from them what could be considered as "true emphatics" from series of realizations in MTG. Note that for typing conveniences, emphatic consonants will be mentioned in capital letters. "Emphasis" is far from being a recent field of inquiry. Its presence may be witnessed in nearly every descriptive approach to the dialects of Arabic(6). However, one should be limited here to one feature of its four other areas of research(7). Namely, as a consonantal phenomenon.

An extended reading in the literature will perhaps disclose the first institutionary work of the present distinction between "emphatic" vs. "non-emphatic" consonants. In his "Kitab" - written around 750 A. D - Sibawayhi accounts for the entire phonetic repertoire of Arabic. He identifies, on the one hand, the muTbaqa (which are the emphatics) as being the dAd, the sAd, the TA and the Za'; that is S, D, T, Dh respectively.

On the other hand, he sees the munfatiha as all the consonants exclusive to these. This is merely because their tongue's position differs radically from that of the previously mentioned ones. The muTbaqa altogether with q, x, g form the mustaâliyya. That is, "Consonants which have a raising (of the tongue) toward the upper palate"(8).

In the time when Ph. Marçais (1948) brought his contribution to the investigations done on the Arabic of the Maghreb, a new feature of "emphatic" specification was advanced. Pharyngealization became a reference as to the way those thick sounds are produced. Thus, and by pointing out to the narrowing of the pharyngeal cavity on account of the lowering of the dorsum of the tongue and the retraction of its root, Ph. Marçais stood against Sibawayhi and other traditional grammarians previous assumptions.

A great number of structuralists during the decade

between 1950 and 1960 geared all their efforts to model this binary opposition of "emphatic/non-emphatic" consonants of Arabic on the grounds of distinctive features. This was probably done in an attempt to restructure the asymmetry of a broken system, in order to create - as many phonologists strived to do - a harmonic balance between the allocated segments in phoneme repertoires.

Among those "emphasis-hunters", R. Jackobson (1957) stands as the holder of a new analogy between the classical concepts of "tafxim" and "tarqiq" with those of "flat" and "plain" accordingly.

Unlike De Sacy (1810), for instance, who considered in his selection the voiced S, D, T, Dh, q with their corresponding voiceless s, t, d, z, k, Jakobson came with a more extensive list including the four dentals S, D, T, the velars q, x, y and 9 which he called pharyngealized laryngeals. Then, the less distributed B, M, N.

Such are few attempts that cannot cover the substantial works and explored avenues done on this unsettled issue. Thereby, it may be appropriate at this stage to leave the theoretical aspect and embark on a more practical procedure to discriminate between what can be considered as "surface-emphatics" and what one regards as true "thick timbers" in MTG.

A consideration of the following perfective and singular forms together with their imperfective and plural transformations will help in making this distinction.

Set: 1	**Perfective**	**Imperfective**	
tarf:	"a slice"	mtarraf:	"sliced"
metra:	"a metre"	emetar:	"he measures"
9ad:	"he bit"	e9ad:	"he bites"
byud:	"he hated"	jabyud:	"he hates"
saab:	"he found"	eseb:	"he finds"
sna9:	"he fabricated"	masnuu9:	"fabricated"
	Singular	**Plural**	
taabla:	"a table"	twaabal:	"tables"

gat:	"a cat"	gtuuta:	"cats"
mesmaar:	"a screw"	msamiir:	"screws"
rgas:	"he danced"	ragsu:	"they danced"
Set: 2	**Perfective**	**Imperfective**	
wallah:	"and God"	billaah:	"by God"
kbaar:	"grown up"	jakbar:	"he grows up"
baarak:	"he congratulated"	mabruuk:	"congratulations"
	Singular	**Plural**	
naar:	"fire"	niiraan:	"fires"
faar:	"mouse"	fiiraan:	"mice"
maajda:	"coffee-table"	mwaajad:	"coffee-tables"

Following Farouk. A. N. Bouhadiba's Thesis (1988)[9], the coronals T, S, D do preserve their full quality of emphatics irrespective to the morphophonemic contexts in which they occur. The liquids l, r, by contrast, are realized solely as such in specific environments. This is basically due to some phonological derivations which, as soon as they are applied, alter their emphatic status and reveal their plain realizations at surface levels. The labials "b", m and the dental "n" are too victims of this loss of the + prosodeme feature.

The "true-emphatics" that one recognizes for MTG are, thereupon, the S, T, D. While the other exercised consonants, and on account of their instability, exclude themselves from this phonological consideration. Hence, becoming unqualified for the thick brand.

2 - The Phoneme Inventory of MTG:

The phoneme inventory of language is a set of bundles of feature specifications. For many linguists, Trubetzkoy (1939)[10] among others, the included phonemes are defined in terms of oppositions. They are contrastive units that contribute to the semantic load of words. This is what happens when one contrasts the phonemes "k" and "g" in words like came and game.

Charles Hockett's (1942) specification speaks rather of a "class of phones determined by six criteria"[11]. Among them,

stands the feature of pattern congruity which one would like to dwell on a bit due to its inexistence in the Algerian phonological system. If one compares it to the English arrays of sounds, for instance, one shall see that the aspect of contrast is quite obvious in it.

As an illustration, look at these fricative pairs f, v, o, s, z, CH, DJ; stops p, b, t, d, k, g; affricates tCH, dDJ; liquids l, r; glides w, j; and the glottal segments 9, h. There appears to be an equilibrium which is somehow missing in MTG' s phoneme inventory if one factors out the number of holes which can be detected at first sight. Furthermore, a considerable number of consonants stand by themselves functioning as independent phonemes. Namely, the unpaired labials "m" and "w"; the dental "n"; the velar "q"; and the glottal "h".

Those individual segments form indeed an uneven consonantal distribution in the pattern. To draw a parallel between the Arabic and the English phoneme inventories will be to note, also, that while the former has only two oral consonants b, f, the latter has four. These are, the voiceless and voiced stops p, b, and the voiceless and voiced fricatives f, v, respectively. Consequently, it is worth pointing out that the phoneme "b" - even if it exists in Arabic - proves different from that of English, since that of Arabic does not have the phoneme "p" to contrast with. The same thing can be applied to "f" and "v". Subsequently, MTG's phoneme inventory overlaps the aggregate of twenty seven phonemes - as a close list - open to free variation.

In one of Gleason's (1955) phoneme definitions, he draws attention to the fact that phonemes should not only be "phonetically similar" but that they should also: "show certain characteristic patterns of distribution in the language or dialect under consideration"(12).

This precision, in fact, will gear us to account for the palato-affricates tCH, dDJ present in our phoneme inventory,

despite the lack of the fortis affricate tCH in MTG.

A pair of qualitatively mixed phonemes such as a fricative with an affricate (CH, dDJ) or vice versa (tCH, DJ) will be oddly perceived by any phonologist. Martinet (1936)[13] - who appeals for the notion of pattern congruity - points out to the fact that the tCH sound should be analyzed exactly with its corresponding voiced dDJ in a way that allows them to be balanced in their binary opposition.

This is a necessary phonological criterion to take into account despite having divergent contrasts. For, on distributional grounds, it is rather the realizations CH, dDJ that we obtained from our informants. Therefore, it is more conventional to state that the phoneme tCH rewrites CH and tCH, while, the fortis fricative CH is highly opted for than the fortis affricate tCH. Additionally, while the phoneme dDJ encompasses DJ and dDJ as its allophones, the former is mainly adopted by Mostaganem speakers who hardly or occasionally use the variant DJ.

From the previous discussion, one can draw the following illustrative table that covers the totality of MTG's phonemes.

3 - Syllable Structure:

If one wants to understand what may operate in MTG at a phonotactic level, the least one needs is a unit on the basis of which accounts will be rendered. In this respect, the syllable stands as the most appropriate linguistic ground on which phonemes' distribution can be handled and explained. Furthermore, inferences can be logically drawn about their whole organization around the nucleus.

Below is an exhaustive list of various types of syllables shapes (canons) attributed to the dialect under study.

Syllable Structure	**Examples**	**Gloss**
1 - cv	fi	"in"
2 - ccv	sma	"sky"
3 - cccv	stha	"he got ashamed"
4 - cvc	hak	"here you are"

5 - cvcc	hall	"he opened"
6 - cvccc	ma sabtch	"I did not find"
7 - ccvc	9raf	"he knew"
8 - ccvcc	sbaqt	"I overtook"
9 - ccvccc	ma rbahtch	"I did not win"
10 - cccvc	nsbagh	"it was dyed"
11 - cccvcc	nsra9t	"I was hit"
12 - cccvccc	ma nghbantch	"I was not troubled"
13 - ccccvccc	ma nddjrahtch	"I was not injured"

One can note that MTG hardly allows for a VC build-up. This is exceptionally found in some interjections. However, and as advocated by A. Martinet (1965), interjections are ousted from any phonological consideration. What he calls double articulation is but a reference to the impossibility of such monemes as uf? huff! or aj? aw! to be segmented into phonemes irrespective of language's duality.

The CV structure is, too, distributionally limited if one considers the main stream occurrence of the voiced palato-affricate dDJ as opposed to the system of ORSA (here, Oran Spoken Arabic), for instance, which espouses the CV model.

As an example, consider MTG's verb dDJa "he came", and his equivalent ORSA DJa. Moreover, MTG replicates this last structure on account of its meager manifestation.

What one should set out, also, is that neither of the foregoing sequential consonant/vowel classifications allow for a vocalic repeated occurrence. Besides, this aspect is hinted at by Ph. Marçais (1952) in his study of an eastern Algerian dialect (Djidjelli) in particular, and of other Algerian dialects of Arabic as well stating that: "les syllabes y apparaissent le plus souvent réduits à leur plus simple expression : ils ne conservent que la charpente consonantique et un nombre restreint de voyelles, le strict minimum qu'exige l'articulation aisé et la spécification morphologique"[(14)].

In other words, they are taken as having a sequential

constraint on the phonological plane. And even though monosyllabic and disyllabic words are the frequently distinguished types, MTG's words may start with a minimum of one syllable - as reported above - then stretch to a maximum of seven syllables.

To bring evidence to this statement, instances containing from three syllables-word to seven-syllables-word are put forward.

eg:

ta - kul - ha: "you eat it/she eats it"

9a - wan - na – ha: "we helped her"

ma - t9a - wad - dal - humch: "she will not repeat for them"

ma - wad - dar - na - ha - lakch: "we did not lose it"

ma - 9al - lam - na - hum - l - humch: "we did not teach these to them".

It follows from the previous thirteen syllabic patterns that the canonical shape attested to the system of MTG is $C^{3}1\ VC^{3}0$.

Finally, one should say that the present work is but a first tentative launched by us in the dialectological arena. One admits that the results of this undertaking - though limited in scope and confined to one area - constitute a very promising asset for further research.

Notes:

1 - Regardless to its adjacent suburbs.

2 - G.-S. Colin : L'Arabe vulgaire à l'Ecole Nationale des Langues Orientales Vivantes, 1948, p. 97.

3 - Stretching from Morocco to Western Libya and neighboring African countries to the immediate South, as opposed to Eastern (or oriental) Arabic sometimes referred to as Mesopotamian Arabic. See M. C. Bateson: Arabic Language Handbook, Washington, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1967.

4 - J. Cantineau : Les parlers arabes du département d'Alger, in Actes du 3e Congrès de la Fédération des sociétés savantes (Constantine), Alger 1938, pp. 703-711. Les parlers arabes du département de Constantine, in Actes du 4e Congrès (Rabat), Alger 1939, T.II, pp. 849-854. Les parlers arabes du département d'Oran, in Revue africaine, Alger 1940, pp. 220-231. Les parlers

arabes des territoires du Sud, in Revue africaine, Alger 1941, pp. 71-77.
5 - S. de Sacy, is among the first scholars to use this word, 1810.
6 - The exceptions being Maltese and some dialects of North Afghanistan and Central Asia. Cf. J. Aquilina: The Structure of Maltese, Malta 1959, p. 30.
7 - Other areas of research include emphasis as a segmental characteristic of some vowels and consonants; as a feature of supra-segmental analysis; and as an aesthetic phenomenon. Cf. A. Khalafallah: A Descriptive Grammar of Saidi Egyptian Colloquial Arabic, 1969, pp. 27-31.
8 - Sibawayh: II, p. 285.
9 - F. A. Bouhadiba: Aspects of Algerian Arabic Verb, Phonology And Morphology, University of Reading, Ph. D. thesis, 1988, pp. 55-56.
10 - N. S. Trubetzkoy: Grundzüge der Phonology TCLP 7. Eng. Version, trans. C. Baltaxe, 1969, Principles of Phonology, University of California Press, Berkely 1939, p. 36.
11 - The other features are those of similarity, non-intersection, contrastive and complementary distribution, completeness, and economy. Ch. Hockett: System of Descriptive Phonology, 1942, p. 100.
12 - H. A. Gleason: An Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics. Holt, Rinechart and Winston, New York 1955, p. 261.
13 - A. Martinet : Neutralisation et archiphonème. TCLP, 1939, p. 73.
14 - Ph. Marçais : Etude d'un parler arabe du nord Constantinois (Djidjelli), 1952, p. 42.

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10 - Martinet, A.: Neutralisation et archiphonème. TCLP, 1939.
11 - Revue africaine, Alger 1941.
12 - Sibawayh: Al-Kitab.
13 - Trubetzkoy N. S.: Grundzüge der Phonology TCLP 7. Eng. Version, trans. C. Baltaxe, 1969, Principles of Phonology, University of California Press, Berkely 1939.