The Phonology of Bani Kinanah Dialect

by

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Abstract

This study aims at discussing some phonological processes in Bani Kinanah Dialect of Arabic using the moraic approach and feature geometry. Nine processes are attested in the dialect. Among these, five syllable-based processes are discussed, namely, epenthesis, syncope, gemination, vowel shortening and stress. Three assimilation processes are also addressed, namely, assimilation of -l of the definite article, assimilation of t- of the detransitivizing prefix and nasal place assimilation. The ninth process which is studied is the deletion of -h of the nominal/genitive third person dependent pronoun. Syllable-based processes apply whenever violations of language universal or specific constraints occur. For example, prepausal epenthesis applies obligatorily to forms with CVCC where the -CC cluster violates the Sonority Sequencing Generalization and the output is CVCVC structures. As to the assimilation processes, the notion of dominance and the obligatory contour principle (OCP) are employed to account for such processes. For instance, in the assimilation of -l of the definite article and -t of the detransitivizing prefix, it is noticed that these two processes are triggered in response to a violation of OCP on the coronal tier. On the other hand, nasal place assimilation is successfully described in terms of the notion of dominance. In other words, the unmarked nasal is weak in terms of its position (i.e. coda position), its nasality and its place feature [coronal]. And the dominant feature of the following consonant spreads from right to left overriding the weaker coronal feature.

Key Words: Phonological Processes, Bani Kinanah, Dialect