Lycée secondaire Sbikha 1979

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Standard Maghrebi: Vowels

Emad Adel, Lycée secondaire Sbikha 1979

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1 Introduction

This work is one of many other works focusing on Maghrebi language and its dialects in order to build a Standard Maghrebi language and to set a common grammar and spelling rules for the written standard. This work is based on “Ernest T. Abdel-Massih, Advanced Moroccan Arabic” from “Part one - Notes on the system of transcription”. Although his work focuses on Moroccan Arabic, it applies on most dialects of the Maghreb. That is why it is used as a reference for Standard Maghrebi.

2 Vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Front</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Standard Maghrebi Vowels

2.1 Vowel Allophones

The following table shows the vowel allophones of Standard Maghrebi. Notice the modification of the parameters High, Mid and Low. Also, note that Central or Centralized vowels are shorter in duration than the front or back ones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Front</th>
<th>Central Shorter</th>
<th>Back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low High</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>ï̯</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Mid</td>
<td>e</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid</td>
<td></td>
<td>æ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Mid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Low</td>
<td>æ̈</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td>ä</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Standard Maghrebi Vowel Allophones

/a/ has the following allophones:
[æ] as in English ‘fat’, occurs in the environment of non-emphatic consonants; e.g. /tab/ = [tæb] ‘he repented’.

[a] a little further back than the “a” of English ‘father’, occurs in the environment of emphatic consonants; e.g. /ṭab/ = [ṭɑb] ‘it (m) cooked’.

[v] (centralized pronunciation of [æ]) occurs word finally in the environment of non-emphatic consonants. Notice [v] is shorter than [æ]; e.g. /la/ = [lɐ] ‘no’.

[ɑ] (centralized pronunciation of [a]) occurs word finally in the environment of emphatic consonants. Notice [ɑ] is shorter than [a]; e.g. /brɑ/ = [bɾɑ] ‘letter’.

/i/ has the following allophones:

[i] as in English ‘beat’, occurs in the environment of non-emphatic consonants; e.g. /sif/ = [sɪf] ‘sword’.

[e] as in English ‘mate’, occurs in the environment of emphatic consonants; e.g. /ṣif/ = [ṣef] ‘summer’.

[ɪ] as in English ‘bit’, occurs word finally in the environment of non-emphatic consonants; e.g. /xali/ = [xælɪ] ‘my maternal uncle’.

[i] (centralized pronunciation of [ɪ]), occurs word finally in the environment of emphatic consonants. Notice [i] is shorter than [ɪ]; e.g. /qaḍi/ = [qɑḍɪ̈] ‘judge’.

/u/ has the following allophones:

[u] as in English ‘cool’, occurs in the environment of non-emphatic consonants; e.g. /dud/ = [dud] ‘worms’.

[o] between English ‘door’ and ‘soul’, occurs in the environment of emphatic consonants and back velars; e.g. /ḍulm/ = [ḍolm] ‘oppression’.

[u] as in English ‘wool’, occurs word finally in the environment of non-emphatic consonants; e.g. /dylu/ = [dylu] ‘his’.

[ʊ] occurs word finally in the environment of emphatic consonants. Notice [ʊ] is shorter than [ʊ]; e.g. /qbḍu/ = [qbḍʊ̈] ‘he caught it (m)’.

2.2 Phonetic Schwa

In addition, Maghrebi language has a non-phonemic (with no semantic significance) phonetic schwa or short vowel—v̆ [ᵊ]. This occurs as a transition between consonants or consonant clusters. It is voiced in the environment of voiced consonants and voiceless in the environment of voiceless consonants. The vocalic transition has the following variants ranging from [ᵊ] or [ᵋ] to [ᵊ] or [ᵃ]; [ᵊ], [ᵃ] occur in the environment of /ʕ/ and /ḥ/; [ᵋ] elsewhere.

Examples:

• Ŷndi [ᵊndi] I have

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1/a/ after /x/ can be pronounced either as [æ] or as [ɑ] depending on the dialect.
2.3 Phonological Structure of Words

If a consonant is followed by another consonant, there is predictable transition. Transition between /C/ and /C/ is heard as vocalic and is represented here by a superscript schwa [ᵊ] to represent the short vowels [ᵊ], [ᵣ], [ᵦ] and [ᵅ] discussed above. Schwa occurs as the first speech sound formation in English “about” or as the last speech formation in English “sofa”. The following examples and drills are meant to help the student master this very important feature of Maghrebi phonology, namely the pronunciation of consonant clusters. The examples below include the [ᵊ] in the transcription. Notice that [ᵊ] is voiceless in the environment of voiceless consonants and voiced in the environment of voiced consonants.

Following are some helpful rules for the predictability of the short vowel [ᵊ]:

1. /CC:/ → [CᵊCC]
2. /C:C/ → [ᵊCCᵊC]
3. /C:C:/ → [ᵊCCᵊCC]
4. /CC:C/ → [CᵊCCᵊC]
5. /C:V/ → [ᵊCC]
6. /CC:V/ → [CᵊCCV]
7. /C:VC/ → [ᵊCCVC]
8. /VC:/ → [VCC] (no change)
9. /CVC:/ → [CVCC] (no change)
10. /VC:V/ → [VCCV] (no change)

Examples:

1. šk:2 → [šᵊkk] “to doubt, suspect”
   š:k: → [ᵊššᵊkk] “doubt, suspicion”

2\"š\" is replaced by “c” in Standard Written Maghrebi, following the Berber Latin alphabet.
2. ḃːra → [ˈd̪əɾu] “corn”

3. šːqː → [ʃʃəqq] “to crack”
   dːrːi → [ʔd̪d̪riri] “the boy”

4. klːm → [kˈl̪ːm] “to speak to”
   bdːl → [bˈd̪d̪l] “to change”
   fyːq → [Fyːq] “to wake up (someone)”
   ḥmːm → [h̪mːm] “to give a bath”
   bːlː → [bːlː] “to wet”

5. bbʷa → [ˈbbʷa] “my father”
   rːuẓ → [ˈɾɾoʔ] “the rice”

6. šːbːik → [ʃʃəbik] “window screen”
   kmːa → [kʰmːa] “to make someone smoke cigarettes”
   ɣtːa → [ɣtːa] “to cover”

7. lːil → [ˈlil] “the night”

8. ʔabː → [ʔabb] “father”

9. muxː → [muxx] “brain”

10. ʔamːa → [ʔæmːa] “as for”

Additional examples:

- ʕlːm [ʕlːm] “to teach”
- ʔlm [ʔlm] “to understand”
- klːm lfqih [klːm ɬfqih] “talk to the teacher”
- lwld lkbir [lwld ɬlkbir] “the big boy”
- aʃ xbaɾ ʃːhːa? [æʃ ˈxbar ʃʃʰha] “how are you?”
- nhmdu lːah [nʰmdu lːah] “fine”
- hrːktlkum tːbla [hrːrktlkum tːtla] “I moved the table for you”
- ʔahlːn wa sahlːn [ʔahlːn wæ sahlːn] “Hello”
- mtkrfšin [mˈtkɾʃʃin] “messed up (mp)”
- qːru [qːɾɾʊɾʊ] “he made him confess”