

PROSODIC DEVELOPMENT IN NORMAL ARABIC SPEAKING CHILDREN

Thesis

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By

Safinaz Nagib Azab

(M.B., B.Ch., M.Sc)

Supervised by

Prof. Dr. Maged Bahgat Amr Bahgat

Professor of ENT

Faculty of Medicine- Cairo University

Prof. Dr. Ashraf Mahmoud Khaled

Professor of ENT

Faculty of Medicine- Beni Suef University

Prof. Dr. Azza Adel Aziz

Assistant Prof. of Phoniatics

Faculty of Medicine- Cairo University

Prof. Dr. Dalia Mostafa Ahmed

Assistant Prof. of Phoniatics

Faculty of Medicine- Cairo University

Faculty of Medicine

Cairo University

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To

My Great Parents

My Dear Brothers

My Wonderful Husband

And

My Lovely Sweetly Daughters

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INTRODUCTION

Arabic is now the old Semitic language with a history spread over one and half millennium. The first and foremost distinguishing character of Arabic is its historic continuation. Since its emergence as a dynamic language before advent of Islam, it remained unaffected by different changes on both political and cultural fronts. It proved its utility by defying the law of nature and stood the challenge of ever-spinning cycle of change. In the context of language, from linguistic point of view it is very strange and unique phenomenon that a language maintains its whole structural entity, its phonology, meanings and syntax for such long period (*Quiz, 2001*).

Despite of being the language of over 300 million people, Arabic phonology and phonetics have always been under-investigated, in the phoniatrics field, in comparison to other languages derived from different origins especially from Latin origin. Semantics, syntactic, pragmatic, phonological and prosodic rules that apply to those languages are quite different from Arabic. Phonology and prosody in particular, have their extensive differences, as Arabic contains unique phonemes that are not used in many other languages. Different vowel system, appearance of many clusters and glottal stops at the middle and end of words, different tone types, different places of tonic accent, all have contributed to it being a completely different case in which regular rules do not apply (*El-Ani, 1983*).

Arabic and its relation to the other Semitic languages:

The Semitic languages are usually classified into East Semitic (consisting of Assyrian with its two dialects, Assyrian and Babylonian) and West Semitic (Consisting of North West Semitic and Southwest Semitic). Arabic is one of the Southwest Semitic languages, which are, sometimes, referred to as North Arabic to differentiate it from South Arabian (which is very different and unintelligible to North Arabic speakers, even though it contains many Arabic lexemes due to the influence of Islam). The Semitic family of languages operate on root + vocalic pattern principle, with Arabic being the most systematic representative of the famous tri-consonantal system and the one usually used by linguists as typically illustrative of Semitic.

Arabic is the Semitic or indeed the Afro-Asiatic language with by far the greatest number of speakers, probably in excess of 300 million. It is the major language throughout the Arab world. It is even the major language of a non Arab country such as the republic of Chad in central Africa. As a minority language, Arabic is spoken and widely studied in other nations in Africa and Asia. Furthermore, it is in wide use throughout the Muslim world as a second language and as a learned, liturgical language (e.g. in Pakistan, India, Tanzania, or Indonesia) (*Kaye, 1997*).

There are from purely descriptive point of view, many recognizably distinct, major Arabic dialects. The peripheral Arabic dialects are, in fact, so radically different from those of the main Middle Eastern core that they are better referred to as separate

languages, by any satisfactory definition of what a language is (*Kaye, 1994*).

Arabic as Central Semitic:

According to **Robert Hetzron's** innovative classification of *Semitic Languages (2002)*, Arabic shares traits of both South Semitic and North Semitic. It shares features with Hebrew, Ugaritic, and Aramaic, such as the masculine plural suffix and the internal passive. The morphology of the definitive article in Hebrew and Arabic also points to a common origin. The consonantal segments of a fairly educated pronunciation of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), identical in most respects to Classical Arabic (CA). Modern Standard Arabic differs from Classical Arabic mainly in vocabulary and in stylistic devices, its phonology is essentially the same and its prosody is more or less also, the same.

Domains of Language Development:

Language is an arbitrary symbolic system which pairs sound to meaning and it is used as an expressive and verbal code to impress the receiver's mental state (*Kotby, 1987*). These codes, when familiar and understood by both the speaker and listener, make communication successful. In other definition, language refers to the system of spoken symbols organized within the brain. It is a system of communication where by speakers and hearers, using a set of internalized operations can relate sounds and meanings (*Bulter et al., 2002*). Language categories are: language content (semantics), language form (syntax), language use in social contexts