Vowel Elision, Stress and Dialect Contact in Bedouin Dialects

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A salient phonological process in Bedouin dialects is what has been called trisyllabic elision, TSE, which deletes a short vowel in an open syllable if it is followed by a non-final short vowel in an open syllable. Another phonological process found in Bedouin dialects is vowel raising, in which a short low vowel /a/ in a non-final open syllable is raised to a high vowel (Al-Mozainy, 1981; Ingham 1979, 1994; Irshied, 1984; Prochazka, 1988). Examples in (1) show that in a stem of the shape /CaCaC/ the first vowel deletes and the second vowel is raised to /i/ when the stem is suffixed with a vowel-initial suffix.

(1)   /katab-at/ 'she wrote'   [kˈti.bat]   /ħazam-at/ 'she tied'   [ħˈzi.mat]
        /katab-u/ 'they (M) wrote' [kˈti.bu]   /ħazam-u/ 'they (M) tied' [ħˈzi.mu]
        /katab-an/ 'they (F) wrote' [kˈti.ban]   /ħazam-an/ 'they (F) tied' [ħˈzi.man]

Examining data collected by the author from three Bedouin dialects, Ruwaili, Bedouin Hijazi and Hofuf Bedouin, spoken in different parts in Saudi Arabia, we find a context that has been overlooked in previous studies. This context is found when a triliteral stem /CaCaC/ is followed by two suffixes to give the form /CaCaC-at-Vh/, henceforth referred to as Triliteral++, as in Table 1.

Table 1. Triliteral++ context in Bedouin dialects in Saudi Arabia

	Ruwaili	Bedouin Hijazi	Hofuf Bedouin
/katab-at-Vh/ 'she wrote it'	[kti.ˈbi.tah]	[kˈtib.tih]	[kˈti.bi.tah]
/rasam-at-Vh/ 'she drew it'	[rsi.ˈmi.tah]	[rˈsim.tih]	[rˈsi.mi.tah]
/ħazam-at-Vh/ 'she tied it'	[ħzi.ˈmi.tah]	[ħˈzim.tih]	[ħˈzi.mi.tah]

In Table 1, although the three Bedouin dialects have the same underlying form, they show variation. Particularly, Hofuf Bedouin shows a different stress pattern than Ruwaili, and Bedouin Hijazi seems to have vowel deletion in addition to TSE. I propose that these differences stem from different treatments of degenerate feet, persistent parse mode, (Hayes, 1995), in Ruwaili and vowel deletion in Bedouin Hijazi and Hofuf Bedouin. In addition, different metrical parameters are implemented in these dialects, which include parse direction, left to right in Ruwaili and Bedouin Hijazi and right to left in Hofuf Bedouin, foot type, iambic in Ruwaili and Bedouin Hijazi and trochaic in Hofuf Bedouin. Taking /katab-at-Vh/ 'she wrote it' as an example, where final syllable is extrametrical, we have the following derivations in Table 2.

Table 2. Derivations of /katab-at-Vh/ in different Bedouin dialects

1. Ruwaili	2. Bedouin Hijazi	3. Hofuf Bedouin
a. (ka.ta).ba.<tah> L-R parse	a. (ka.ta).ba.<tih> L-R parse	a. ka.(ta.ba).<tah> R-L parse
b. (ka.ˈta).ba.<tah> iambic stress	b. (ka.ˈta).ba.<tih> iambic stress	b. ka.(ˈta.ba).<tah> trochaic stress
c. (kˈti).bi.<tah> TSE & raising	c. (kˈti).bi.<tih> TSE & raising	c. k(ˈta.ba).<tah> vowel deletion
d. (kti.bi).<tah> persistent parse	d. (kˈti)b.<tih> vowel deletion	d. k(ˈti.bi).<tah> raising
e. (kti.ˈbi).<tah> iambic stress		

In Table 2 TSE is found in iambic Ruwaili and Bedouin Hijazi, in (1c & 2c). TSE functions here as an iambic-foot repair mechanism, as suggested by McCarthy (2003, p. 40), in order for the iambic foot to have two contrastive members (CˈCi), where the first member C is moraless and the second Ci is monomoraic, instead of even iamb (CV.ˈCV). To avoid degenerate feet, Ruwaili incorporates the unparsed syllable in (1c) through persistent parse in (1d), while Bedouin Hijazi deletes it in (2d). In Hofuf Bedouin, no TSE is found due trochaic stress. Initial vowel is deleted to avoid degenerate foot **ka**.(ˈta.ba).<tah>➔ k(ˈta.ba).<tah> and then raising applies k(ˈti.bi).<tah>. So, what we

have is elision in all varieties, but TSE, as traditionally defined and motivated, in only Ruwaili and Bedouin Hijazi. I attribute the different patterns in Hofuf Bedouin compared to the other two dialects to dialect contact with a local trochaic sedentary dialect, Hofuf sedentary. Hofuf sedentary is a trochaic dialect with right to left parse direction. In addition to original analyses of Ruwaili and Hofuf Bedouin, this study is a first examination of Arabic stress systems in contact with one another, and the kinds of changes that can occur.

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