

**Syllabification and metrification in Urban Hijazi Arabic:
between rules and constraints**

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I dedicate this work to

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

PRINCE

NAYIF BIN ABDULAZIZ AL SAUD

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All responsibility for any errors and/or omission, that may remain, lies with the author.

Abstract

This study investigates syllabification and metrification in Urban Hijazi Arabic. The objective is to provide a thorough analysis of these suprasegmental processes. To this end, I adopt both theoretical frameworks of Optimality Theory and Non-linear Phonology. This creates a suitable ground for comparison, another important objective of the study.

The study is organised into two main parts: Syllabification and Metrification. Each part comprises two chapters: one analyses the data in a constraint-based framework, and the other in a derivational framework. Preceding those four chapters, chapter two introduces the study's theoretical foundation.

Chapter three provides an OT account of the process of syllabification. In particular, I argue for the uniform distribution of the CV(X) syllable-template. This template will be interpreted as the motivation for the processes of epenthesis and deletion. The process of High Vowel Deletion is problematic for a constraint-based framework, however, and therefore it prompts us to investigate the derivational alternative.

Chapter four provides a derivational account of the same set of facts discussed in chapter three. This leads to a comparison of derivational and OT syllabification. In particular, if DT is capable of providing a more elegant account of High Vowel Deletion, the question arises whether it can achieve the same degree of plausibility with other syllabification-related processes.

Chapters five and six follow the same line of presentation with stress. In chapter five, I discuss the language's stress pattern from an OT perspective, fundamentally involving the opposition between prominence-driven and rhythm-driven stress placement. Another important issue is the asymmetric foot configuration of final CVC and CVV syllables, which reveals the key role of constraint interaction in OT and is therefore discussed at length. On this background, in chapter six, I reanalyse the stress pattern of Urban Hijazi Arabic applying three derivational approaches to footing: Halle and Vergnaud (1987), Idsardi (1992), and Hayes (1995).

Finally, chapter seven provides a comprehensive overview of the main findings of the study, in an attempt to answer to the question of whether or not OT achieves a more adequate analysis of Urban Hijazi Arabic syllabification and metrification.

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