

Uvulars Alternation in Hasawi Arabic: A Harmonic Serialism Approach

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Abstract : This paper investigates a phonological phenomenon, which exhibits variation & “alternation” in terms of the uvular consonants [q] and [ɣ] in Hasawi Arabic. This dialect is spoken in Alahsa city, which is located in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia. To the best of our knowledge, no such research has systematically studied this phenomenon in Hasawi Arabic dialect. This paper is significant because it fills the gap in the literature about this alternation phenomenon in this understudied dialect. A large amount of the data is extracted from several interviews the author has conducted with 10 participants, native speakers of the dialect, and complemented by additional forms from social media. The latter method of collecting the data adds to the significance of the research. The analysis of the data is carried out in Harmonic Serialism Optimality Theory (HS-OT), a version of the Optimality Theoretic (OT) framework, which holds that linguistic forms are the outcome of the interaction among violable universal constraints, and in the recent development of OT into a model that accounts for linguistic variation in harmonic derivational steps. This alternation process is assumed to be phonologically unconditioned and in free variation in other varieties of Arabic dialects in the area. The goal of this paper is to investigate whether this phenomenon is in free variation or governed, what governs this alternation between [q] and [ɣ] and whether the alternation is phonological or other linguistic constraints are in action. The results show that the [q] and [ɣ] alternation is not free and it occurs due to different assimilation processes. Positional, segmental sequence and vowel adjacency factors are in action in Hasawi Arabic.

Keywords : harmonic serialism, Hasawi, uvular, variation

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