

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON MUFAXXAMA THE "EMPHATIC" PHONEMES
 IN ARABIC BY ROMAN JAKOBSON

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These observations show that Jakobson's interpretations of the phenomena of emphasis in Arabic in terms of his distinctive feature theory have a number of shortcomings which affect his concept of binarism, the generalization validity of some of his features such as the opposition flat:plain, and the number of features used in his componential analysis of the "non-syllabic phonemes".

The opposition fortis:lenis which denotes voiced:voiceless overlaps with emphasis:non-emphasis.

Adopting his analysis we have to set up 48 consonantal phonemes instead of his 31, as all the 24 consonants found in the dialect under consideration can be emphatic and non-emphatic and they contrast in minimal pairs.

He assigns emphasis to consonants and neglects the vowels; and he just talks about two degrees of emphasis: emphatic and non-emphatic. The data upon which this paper is based makes it necessary to regard emphasis as a prosodic feature, the minimum domain of which is the syllable and the maximum can be a longer utterance. Five types of syllable can be distinguished with regard to emphasis:

1. Syllables emphasized all the way through
2. Syllables beginning with emphasis and ending with velarization
3. Syllables beginning with velarization and ending with emphasis
4. Syllables with velarization all the way through
5. Syllables with no emphasis.

Hence emphasis has to be regarded as a multivalued feature rather than binary, e.g. in da:ri "he is informed",

da:ri "he used to",
dā:ri "my house".

The /d/ sound is non-emphatic, emphatic and velarized, respectively.

Consonants divide themselves into six classes according to their distribution initially and finally in these five types of syllables.