

Plurality in Jebbāli

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0. Goals

- A. Introduce the phonology of Jebbāli through the exploration of its phonemic inventory, phonological processes, supra-segmental and stress patterns.
- B. Explore the most common and systematic processes of forming plurality in the language.

1. Introducing Jebbāli

Jebbāli is one of the Modern South Arabian languages. Other Modern South Arabian languages include Mehri, Harsusi, Baṭhari, Hobyot and Socotri.

1.1 Geography of the language

Please refer to the map on page [6] in your handout.

1.2 The people

70% of 215,000 people in Dhofar speak the language, either as a first or second language.

1.3 Names of the language

- 1. Shehri (pronounced as [ʃəhri]).
- 2. ‘Qarawi’ and ‘Ehkili’

1.4 Classification

Eastern branch in the classification of Semitic.

1.5 Dialectal Variations

2. The Phonemic Inventory

2.1 Consonant

Stops: t, k, ʔ, b, d, g, kʰ and tʰ

Fricatives: f, θ, s, ʃ, χ, h, ʃʷ, ʃʰ, ð, z, ʒ, β and ʎ

Ejectives: θʰ

Pharyngeal: sʰ, ðʰ, and zʰ

Lateral: ʈ, ʈʰ

Affricates: tʃʰ

Nasals: m and n

Liquids: l and r

Approximants: j, w and h

- In addition to these 35 phonemes, Central Jebbāli has the voiced lateral fricative [ɮ] which is an allophone to /l/. It surfaces when /l/ is followed by a high front vowel as in [gʰiɮi] (masculine), [gʰel-at] (feminine) ‘sick, ill’ and [miχɮif, maχablɔf] ‘deserted place/ deserted places’. It also

surfaces when /l/ is preceded by a high front unrounded vowel as in [χiʎ/ χel] ‘maternal uncle/ maternal uncles’.

- /g/ is palatalized and realized as [gʲ] in the context of a front vowel as in [gʲiʎi] (masculine), [gʲel-at] (feminine) ‘sick, ill’ and [miχʎif, maχabləf] ‘deserted places, sing.,pl’.

- Central Jebbāli has the allophone [ʒʷ] for the phoneme /g/ when /g/ precedes /o/ and /u/ as in [hgal/ hɪʒʷol] ‘eyebrow/ eyebrows’ and [fɪnʒʷon/ fangti] ‘coffee cup/ coffee cups’ and [tuʒʷur/teɟarte] ‘rich/ riches, feminine’.

2.1.1 Phonological Processes Pertinent to consonants

Devoicing and aspiration

/kot/ is realized as [kʰot] ‘tower’

/kub/ is realized as [kubʰ] ‘cup’

: -hn#, -ʒn#, -hr#, -ʒr#, -hl#, -ʒl#, -hm# and -ʒm#

Elision:

/mɛl/= [ɛʌ] ‘money’ and /bedɛn/= [e:dɛn] ‘body’. However, intervocalic /m/ may not always delete, e.g. [e-mih] ‘the water’ versus /e-məndik’/= [ɪndik] ‘the rifle’

Palatalization:

[kabid] ‘liver, in Arabic’ which is pronounced as [ʃʷ ubd-et] in Jebbāli, /ʃʷ/ is a phoneme and an allophone of /k’/ as in [k’atməh] ‘to be disappointed, in Mehri’ is articulated in Jebbāli as [ʃʷɪh] ‘to be mean, disappointing person’ and /ʃ/ is a phoneme and an allophone of /k/ as in /kirʃ/ ‘belly, stomach’ → [ʃirʃ], whereby /k/ becomes [ʃ]

Insertion

/kursɪ/ ‘chair’ becomes [kursɪʒ].

Fortition and Lenition

/wħd/ ⇨ [ʒaħdi] ‘alone’; /wħt/ ⇨ [baħt] ‘monster’; /wld/ ⇨ [ʒelɛd] ‘children’; /wgd/ ⇨ [jəbɟəd, ibɟəd] ‘he may go’

Substitution

[θawr] ‘bull’ in Harsusi but [for] in Jebbāli and Mehri.

Metathesis

Examples include [latʰaxa] ‘smudged’, [ʃaħam] ‘fat of meat’ and [χamaʃa] ‘scratched’ in Arabic which are pronounced in Jebbāli as [tʰalχ], [maʃh] and [tχam] respectively.

2.2 Vowels

	front	mid	back
high	i		u
	e		o

mid	ɛ	ə	ɔ
low		a	

- A vowel followed or preceded by /m/ and /n/ is usually raised, /ɔ/ becomes [u] and /e/ becomes [i] (Johnstone 1981 and Hofstede 1998). Compare, for example, [indum] ‘to stay’ and [iʃʃχum]¹ ‘to cry’ versus [intʃf] ‘to visit late at night; to come stealthily’ (Johnstone 1981:xxiii).

-The vowels /e/ and /ɛ/ have the allophone [a] which can be a front or back vowel.

2.3 Syllabic Structure and Stress Patterns

Jebbāli has VC, CV, CVC, CCV, CVCC and V:C syllable structures. In Jebbāli, long vowels are phonologically derived; they surface after the deletion of a nasal /m/. All syllables are equally prominent.

3. Diverse Plurals in Jebbāli

Plurality can be marked by suffixation, /Vb/ infixation, attaching a suffixal template with a fixed vocalism and a copy of the final stem consonant, mapping singular forms onto diverse plural templates and ablaut.

3.1 Vb infixation

The most systematic and widely attested plural shape in Jebbāli involves infixation of Vb. The shape of the singular form is CVCCVC which becomes CVC**Vb**CVC after they pluralize.

(B) *Plurals with /Vb/ infixation*

(B.1) *Regular Vb Infixed Plurals*

Sing.	Pl.	Gloss
1. mɪrʔun	mirɛbʔən	the top parts of legs
2. mɪgnam	migɛbnəm	mattresses made of leather
3. sʔɪndikʔ	sʔinɛbdekʔ	boxes
4. mərtʔum	mirɛbtʔam	pots used to keep ghee

So, the resultant shapes are əC**Vb**CVC and mVC**Vb**CVC.

(B.2) *Singulars with an Initial Deleted /m/*

Sing.	Pl.	Gloss
5. e:ftəh/ mɪftəh	əfɛbtəh/ mɪfɛbtəh	keys
6. e:ktəb/ mɪktəb	mɪkəbtəb/ əkəbtəb	offices
7. e: tʔʃam	ə tʔabʃam/ mɪ tʔabʃam	restaurants
8. e:glɪs/ mɪglɪs	əgɛblɪs/ mɪgɛblɪs	rooms for guests
9. e:sgɪd	əsɛbgɪd/ mɪsɛbgɪd	mosques

¹ n in the imperfective prefix in- is assimilated to a following fricative.

The last groups of singulars that take the Vb infix are quite esoterically shaped.

(B.3) Other Vb Infixed Plurals

Sing.	Pl.	Gloss
10. lgɛm	milabgəm	muzzles
11. tʰad□	tʰbed□	Zizyphus spina Christi
12. tʰɛl	ɛtʰbəl	drums
13. χɛr	χbər	news

3.2 Attaching a VC template with fixed vocalism and copy of the final consonant

(C) Partial suffixal reduplication

Sing.	Pl.	Gloss	Class
1. kətb	ktbəb	books	m
2. ħut	ħtət	fish	m
3. nuf	nɸɸ	selves	m
4. rɛf	ɛrɸɸ	shelves, racks, bulks	m
5. mus	ɛmsəs	razors	m
6. kɛf	ɛkɸɸ	palms of the hand; claws	m
7. ħag	ħgəg	pilgrims	m
8. ħel-ɛt	ħelɛl	dry leaves	f
9. χel-ɛt	χelɛl	lavatories	f
10. hab-ot/ hib-ot	hbeb/ heb	songs	f

3.3 Ablaut/ Vocalic Opposition

(D) Ablaut or vowel opposition

Sing.	Pl.	Gloss
1. ʔətim	ʔɪtəm	orphans (m.)
2. sʰəfrir	sʰ əfrər	flowers
3. χədər	χədər	isolated homes
4. χatʰɪkʰ	χatʰokʰ	dresses
5. nid□	nud□	water skins
6. kʰud□	kʰad□	ropes
7. ɸeg	ɸag□	men

3.5 Templatic Plurals

3.5.1 Plurals Derived from Geminated Singulars

The fourth plural shape concerns geminated singular forms which take on a definite templatic shape.

(E) Plurals derived from geminated singulars

Sing.	Pl.	Gloss
1. məll-ɛt	milɛl	pots

2. k'all-εt	k'elεl	hilts (of swords)
3. tεll-εt	teεl	hills
4. ħall-εt	ħalel	town; small villages
5. dəll-εt	dəlel	coffee-pots

4. Conclusions and Implications

5. References

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