A study of phonological and lexical systems in Al-Oyoun’s dialect

Um estudo dos sistemas fonológicos e lexicais no dialeto de Al-Oyoun

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Abstract
The present study aims to cover some aspects of the dialect of Al-Oyoun city in Al-Ahsa and whether there is a kind of reciprocal relationships among different Saudi dialects. The present study covers a number of issues, such as the geographic details about Al-Oynoun city in Saudi Arabia, the main features of AIQyoun dialect. The oral data used in the present study is collected from the natural speech of 20 people who were grown up in both Al-Oyoun and Al-hoota. The 20 participants were interviewed and their natural speech was recorded. Phonological and lexical aspects of the representative samples have been linguistically analyzed. The study has reached a number of important findings that there is a kind of mutual relationship among Saudi dialects especially when there is a close contact between the people of two different dialects.

Keywords: Al-Oyoun Dialect. Geographical Dialect. Phongical Aspects. Lexical Aspects.

Resumo
O presente estudo visa abordar alguns aspectos do dialeto da cidade de Al-Oyoun em Al-Ahsa e se existe algum tipo de relação recíproca entre os diferentes dialectos sauditas. O presente estudo cobre uma série de questões, como os detalhes geográficos sobre a cidade de Al-Oynoun na Arábia Saudita, as principais características do dialeto AIQyoun. Os dados orais utilizados no presente estudo são coletados da fala natural de 20 pessoas que cresceram em Al-Oyoun e Al-hoota. Os 20 participantes foram entrevistados e sua fala natural foi gravada.

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Aspectos fonológicos e lexicais das amostras representativas foram analisados linguisticamente. O estudo chegou a uma série de conclusões importantes de que existe uma espécie de relação mútua entre os dialetos sauditas, especialmente quando há um contato próximo entre pessoas de dois dialetos diferentes.


**Introduction**

Al-Oyoun is one of the four cities in Al-Ahsa region which forms the largest part of Eastern County (see map2, page 3); the biggest county in Saudi Arabia (see map3, page 3). Al-Ahsa as a region encompasses four cities which are: Al-Hafuf (the largestone), Al-Mubaraz, Al-Oyoun and Al-Omaran, and it also combines more than 25 villages and more than 37 areas (smaller than villages). Al-Oyoun is about 30 KM far from Al- Hafuf (see map1) and is known by the name of Al-Oyoun, which means in Arabic the “water springs” because it has many of them and it has a considerable number of palm farms. Nowadays, Al-Oyoun has many of oil springs due to the fact that it is part of Al-Ghawar (the largest petroleum fields in the world) (Geographic Atlas of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2001).

This city was inhabited 5000 years before the advent of Islam. Around 1000 AD, Al-Oyoun was the capital city for the whole eastern area in the Arabian Peninsula, and that was when Prince Abdullah AlOyouni -who was from Bany Aduqais (one of the Arab tribes) -established Al-Oyounion country (Ammari, 1985). Today, Al-Oyoun has many Arab tribes and the dialect in Al-Oyoun is not a tribal dialect, rather it is a city dialect.

**Figure 1:** Al-Ahsa region
https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/51077656.pdf
Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive methodology. The descriptive methodology is used to examine the characteristics of the Alqoun dialect quantitatively as well qualitatively. This study draws heavily on the phonological and lexical items of a number of lexical items taken from the dialect of Al-Oyoun.

2.1 Research Group

The oral data used in the present study is collected from the natural speech of 20 people who were grown up in both Al-Oyoun and Al-hoota. The 20 participants were interviewed and their natural speech was recorded. Phonological and lexical aspects of the representative samples have been linguistically analyzed.

2.2 Data Analysis

I was young, and I and my sisters were in my grandmother’s house, where my sisters made boiled eggs for breakfast and in that day my grandmother did not wake up to have her breakfast.

ya’ni ento ,aišeen ,end jadats
That means you live with your grandmother

?i jadatyah om omiyah kilana ya’ni ašan kibirah marah ḥormah kibirah
Yes, she is my mother’s mom and we live with her because she is an old woman.

jadatk liṭifa ?
Is she your grandmother Latifa?

la mob liṭifa .. ,aiša imḥamad el-,ali
No she is not Latifa .. she is Aisha Mohammed Al-Ali

?iih allah allah
Yes yes.
You never saw her; she passed away.

Yes, I do not know her.

Yes, you did not get to know her, and then we had our breakfast then my sisters went to the school while I and my sister ɁOmynah who is younger than me stayed and we were playing until my grandmother woke up. Then we brought the breakfast to her but my sister cried because she wanted to have it.

tabi takil el-biaD

She wanted to eat the eggs.

Yes she wanted to eat it while she had already had her breakfast. Then, I started fighting with her and she started crying and my grandma gave her the breakfast. Then I felt sorry for my grandma because…

jadats ,aṭatha ʔiḥah

your grandma gave it to her

Yes, because she is an old woman; I went to make boiled eggs for her but I was a little girl and I did not know how to light the stove. So I turned on all the gas hubs, then when I wanted to use the lighter the flames blew up from the bottom of the stove.

el-maṭbax

The kitchen

Yes, the whole kitchen was burnt.

Oh!

Yes, because she is an old woman; I went to make boiled eggs for her but I was a little girl and I did not know how to light the stove. So I turned on all the gas hubs, then when I wanted to use the lighter the flames blew up from the bottom of the stove.
Because I was inside the kitchen I was severely injured but my sister was around but not inside and she had some burns.

\[ ? \text{illi hei ?amnah} \]

Amna, isn’t she?

\[ ?i ? \text{illi hi ?omynah w ‘dan ja jarna ah.. ṣagir w ixtah na,imah ṭafoo el-maḥbax ba,deen wadona el-markaz eṣ-ṣiḥi ?illi fi Jilajelah} \]

Yes Omynah, then our neighbor Sakir and his sister Naima came and put out the fire in the kitchen and they took us to the health center in Jilajelah.

\[ ḟ \text{leijlah fi ḥaḍa ṣagir jarkom ?i ?i okai aha ya,ni 20-} \]

That means.. ok ok your neighbor in Jilajelah

\[ ?i fi Jilajelah w axo omyah min ar-raDa,ah ya,ni wlad jadatyah min ar-raDa,ah \]

Yes in Jilajelah and he is my mother’s milk-brother.

\[ ṣagir ḥaḍa elli maxid ,adil bentah \]

Is he Sakir who is Adil's father in law?

\[ ?i maxid bentah ?ihdayah w ṭafoo el-ḥarigah ?imaratah ?ameenah w ixtah wdoona el-markaz eṣ-ṣiḥi fi ḟlaajlah ya,ni moo kibeer ḥaḍ ṭeem ma ṭeem yoom riḥna lohom ma sawowo lina šai ḥawalona bin jliwi \]

Yes, Adil married his daughter Hidaiah. So Sakir's wife Aminah and his sister put out the fire then they took us to the health center in Jilajelah which is not big but the center did not do anything to us except that the center transferred us to Bin Jalawi hospital.

\[ W la es,afat ?awaliah w la šai \]

No first aid, nothing did they do?

\[ w la šay,ašan elḥarg kan marah gawi ya,ni ma ygdoroon w ya,ni kina labseen da en-niloon madri et-titroon madri ... da en-niloon ?illi yalṣig fi el-jesm \]

They did nothing because the burn I got was severe, so they couldn’t help it. T- hat’s also because we were wearing the nylon.. the tetron-made fabric.. I don’t know … It’s that nylon fabric which sticks to the body.

\[ oky \]

OK.

\[ ṣaar ya,ni leṣag ma,a el-ḥarg \]

So that got stuck to the burn.

\[ ẓorwaal \]

Pants?

\[ mob ẓorwaal \]
Not pants.

ʔajal
What is it’?

ġamiš
It is a gown.

oky ʔi ʔi
OK.. yes, yes.

w hağa ʔilli yani xalahom ,ašan čiđa xlooh ma šalooh w Ɂivalona mistaʃfa bin jliwi
And that’s why they did not do anything but to transfer us to the Jalawi Hospital.

w elgimi ʃweel w ʔilla
Was that gown long or..

ʔi ʃweel
Yes, it was long.

Okyah
OK.

ya, ya,ni ɗa ma tikasi feeh ma awal laʔn es-siyarah Ṣaqir dawor w šismah w
37- rfoon enah ɗa ra,i siyarah yuwddi ya,ni bifloos.

So, Sakir took us by his car because there were no taxis at that time. People at that time
didn’t have the concept of taxis developed yet, but they knew that an owner of a car can be
hired.

okeih
OK.

wdana mistaʃfa bin jliwi w gu‘ dna fi el-ʔes,af ma,a jadatyah ya,ni yomken leen el-
,ašair ʔi leen el-,ašair leen Ɂal,ao xawatyah min el-madrisah w daraw bes- salfah yoom
daraw raḥaw bayt jeerana yadgoon talafoon ,ala bayt ʔahalieh.

He took us to the Jalawi Hospital, and we stayed in the emergency room with our
grandma until the afternoon… until the time when my sisters finished their school day. After
that, they knew about what happened to us, and then they went to our neighbor’s house to call
my parents.

fi el, Ɂoyoon

In Al-Oyoun city?

ʔiih laʔan fi jlaʃilah ma ,endna talafoon ma ba,ad yaji et-talafoon..

Yes, because there were no telephones yet in my grandmother's house in Jilajelah.

ah ma ba,ad ja fi baytkom
Ah.. so you had no telephones yet in your grandma’s house.

جو لا إيت للاجى

Yes, no telephones and… when my father finished his work in the municipality, he came to us… No, he went to Jilajelah.

بكي.

OK.

45-w xağ lowilo w raḥ el-mistašfa ,aṣan jadatyah kibeerh ma tigdar titnawam ma,na w ‘daan tamo yisawoon yafḥaṣoon ma yafḥaṣoon

He took Lweilo to the hospital because my grandma was old and she cannot sleep with us.

با إنتي ولولو.

Only you and Lolowa?

جو أممو فووه ورجت مأبويyah وجلات أن باس ولويلو gamoo yašfoon جابو...

Yes, Amneh got aided and went back with my dad. I and Lweilo sat and they went to bring…

Discussion

The hamzah, the glottal stop [ʔ], in the standard Arabic language has two ways to pronounce it. First, the “hamzat qatia”, and in this stage the hamzah stops the speakers for a relatively very short time like in قراءة > qiraʔ > reading. The second is the “hamzat wasil” that is the hamzah does not stop the speakers as in اسم > esem > name. In this way we do not write the symbol of hamzah above or below the letters (Abu Mghli and Salama 2002). In my data I found hamzat qatia pronounced as hamzat wasil . For example:

• لان > liʔan. أن > laʔan > because > No.41
• أممته > ئاممنه > ئومننن > No. 19
• تاكله تبي > tabi tʔaklh. تاكله تبي > tabi taklh > she wants to eat it. > No. 9
• أمي أم > ئومي أم > om omiyah > my mother’s mom. > No. 4

Based on my data and on my own observation as a listener to the dialect, Al- Oyoun dialect prefers to make most of hamzah position as hamzat wasil whether it is hamzat wasil or hamzat qatia.
This is a voiced bilabial sound pronounced in Al-Oyoun dialect and most of Arabic Gulf dialects as (b). In my data I noticed that many words pronounced as (b). For example:

- بنات > banat > girls > No. 2
- بعد ما > ba,ad > not yet > No. 41
- بيت > bayt > house > No. 39

The sound (t) is one of the voiceless dental letters in Arabic language and most of Arabic dialects pronounce it as (t) in tiger. In my data I found that people from Al- Oyoun pronounce it as (t) as well without magnification in the sound and that pronunciation of (t) is very common in all Al-Ahsa's dialects, including Al-Hafuf dialect which is the main dialect in Eastern County in Saudi Arabia. In many words in my data it can be noticed that this sound is pronounced without magnification. Such as,

- بيت > bayt > house > No. 39
- تلفون > talafoon > hom phone > No. 39
- جلست > jalast > I stayed > No. 74

At-ta elmarboṭah (IPA [at or ah])

This is one of the letter (t) forms. However, this form of (t) is used in Arabic to denote that a certain word is feminine and it is known as (ta elmoʔat elmarboṭah [the circle (t) of feminine]). Specifically, this (t) is pronounced as (at) when the speakers keep talking, while it is pronounced as (ah) when the speakers stop on it (Abu Mghli and Salama 2002). For example, when the speaker utters this sentence ɗahabto ʔilla almadrasatibakiran (I went to the school early), the speaker pronounces it as (at) in the word almadrasati. On the other hand, it is pronouncedas (ah) when a speaker stops on it ɗahato ʔilla almadrah bakiran. In Al-Oyoun’s dialect, speakers do usually stop on it and pronounce it as (ah), for example:

- جليجلة > Jilaijlah > a village name > No.
- البلدية > el-baladyah > the council >No.
- المدرسة > el-madrisah > the school > No 39.
- السيرة > es-siyarah > the car > No 37

IPA [q]

Prochazka (1988) states that in Arabic language the sound [q] is a voiced velar sound. In most dialects of Al-Ahsa, the sound ڧ (qaaf) is pronounced ة (g). Therefore, any word with (q) becomes (g) and any word with (g) becomes (q); as mentioned earlier (Feghali, 2004). However, my data only shows one word with the sound (q) pronounced as (g), while all other
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words with (q) are pronounced as (g) as in good, and that is unusual or unexpected in this group of dialects. Moreover, most of Saudi dialects pronounce the letter (q) as (g) as in (good).

- قميص > gimīṣ > غميش > ġamiṣ > gown. > No. 31
- صقر > šagir > Sagir > No. 37
- الحرق > el-ḥarg > burn > No. 27

IPA [k]

The voiceless velar (k) in Arabic language could be a letter in words such as in كلب > kalb > dog. Also, it could be a pronoun in the end of words for masculine with fatha (´) that is placed above the letter and is pronounced as (ka), or for feminine pronoun with the kasra (ـ) that is placed below the letter and is pronounced as (ki) (Bin Hisham,1359).

Almubarred, M. 1997 says that some Arab tribes like Tamim and Bano Amr pronounce the feminine pronoun (k) as (sh) when they stop on it. However, this kind of pronunciation has developed step by step during the time to include any (k) even if it was a letter or a pronoun and to exclude the masculine pronoun. Moreover, the sound also has developed to be (sh) and (ch IPA [č]). So, in my data the [č] is very common with the feminine pronoun (k) like أخوك > haḏa axooki أخوتش هذا > haḏa axooč > this is your brother. On the other hand, the (k) could occur in the word as a letter and not as a pronoun; therefore, it is sometimes pronounced [č] like كذا > čiḏa > like this.

IPA [t]

The voiceless interdental //ṯ// is pronounced [th] and it is preserved in Al-Oyoun’s dialect, but it is variable in Al-Ahsa’s dialects and in the dialects of Eastern County of Saudi Arabia. However, in Shi’ite community, even if the community is in Al- Ahsa or in Qatif, they usually pronounce it as [f] like in fuel (Feghali 2004).

Therefore, this variation of [t] to [f] is mentioned in the Qur’an, Sura 2:61 { وقومها وبيصليها وعدها} wa foomiha wa ,adasiha wa baṣaliha > its garlic and its lentils and its onion. In the Eastern County of Saudi Arabia there are some Sunni people who are affected by Shi’ite dialect and therefore acquired this variation. In Al-Oyoun, there are no Shi’ite people; however, they are very close to Al-Oyoun city (about only 10KM far from it). Yet, they do not affect Al-Oyoun’s dialect in this variable.

IPA [d]

The sound [d] is a voiced dental fricative pronounced as [th] like in they. This sound has a variation with [z] such as هزا > haza > this. However, in Al- Oyoun’s dialect people
preserve the original pronunciation which is [d] and I found that clear in my data as in the following:

• اليوم ذلك > ٨اك ٌليووم > that day > No. 1
• ذا ما تكاسي > ٨اك يما > taxies or something like that > No.37
• هديه بنته ماخذ > max٨ل بنته > he is married to his daughter Hidayah > No. 23

1-2-3- IPA [s]

This is a voiceless dental fricative sound, which is pronounced as [s]. This sound is sometimes replaced with the sound [ṣ] ص like (s) in sun. Thus, I can significantly spot this replacement of the sound in many dialects of the south west of Saudi Arabia, for example, سيارة > ٨أرارة > car. However, between Al-Oyoun and the south west of Saudi Arabia, which is a distance of more than 2000 Km, it is very unlikely to affect Al-Oyoun’s dialect. However, I detected that it has made a change in my dialect, Al-Huta dialect, as well as in my wife’s dialect, Al-Oyoun. Thus, I did not find a reason for this phonological change, but most of the words we speak are pronounced [s] and some of them are pronounced [ṣ]. In the data I have collected I noted these examples:

• صروال مب > ٨وروال > Not pants > No. 23
• وصط فداخل في كنت > kint fi Ԁaxil w٨ش٨ > I was inside. > No. 17

1-2-4- IPA [d]

Feghali (2004) states that the [d] is a voiced interdental sound that is pronounced as its original pronunciation in Arabic Gulf dialects only in educational class. This sound might be the most difficult sound in Arabic language to be pronounced as ض (d). On one side of the scale, most Arab people do not pronounce it correctly as it should actually be pronounced in Standard Arabic. On the other hand of the scale, some pronounce it as the sound ظ (D) or close to ط (t). However, in Al-Oyoun’s dialect people pronounce it as ظ (D) and this can be shown clearly in many words in my data. For example:

• وضحى > W٨ذحا > W٨ذحا > No. 1
• بيط > baa٨د > eggs > No.2
• الرضااعة > ar-ra٨دا,ah. > ar-ra٨دا,ah > breast feeding > No. 21

1-2-5- IPA [ğ ]

According to Prochazka (1988), the sound [ğ] is a voiced uvular sound. In Al- Ahsa’s dialects most people pronounce the sound (ğ) as ق (q) as in Qatar, while others pronounce it as its original pronunciation. However, in my data I found a couple of words with (ğ) are pronounced as (q) in the following words:
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1-3- Affrication and palatalization

The sound [j] in most dialects in Saudi Arabia is a voiced alveolar affricate sound (Prochazka 1988). In addition it is a variable sound in Saudi or Arabic Gulf dialects. It is also a variable sound in Al-Ahsa’s dialects. In view of that, some Arabs pronounce it as jeem mu,aṭṣah IPA [ʔ] while others pronounce it as د [d] or دج [dj] or [y]. However, in Al-Ahsa’s dialect and other Arabic Gulf dialects, there is a variation between [j] and [y] (Feghali 2004), for example، جا > يأ > يا > يأ > he came. As a result, I found in my data that in Al-Oyoun’s dialect they pronounce it [j] as in:

• يجي بعد ما > ma ba,d yaji > did not come yet > No 41
• جدته > jadatyah > my grandmother > No 1
• جلست > jalast > I stayed > No 47
• جلجلة > Jilaijlah > a village name > No 43

2- Lexicon

2-1- Diminutive names

In Al-Oyoun’s dialect, diminutive names are usually used by speakers, for example:

• أمينة > Amna > أمنة
• لويلو > Loolwa > لولوة
• هديه > Huda > هده

2-2- The Haa Assakt

Haa Assakt is the letter هـ (h) as in “house” that comes in the end of words and ends by the self-personal pronoun ي (i) in Arabic. This case is not very common in most Arabic dialects, not even in Standard Arabic; however, it occurs in some words in Quran {سلطاته عنني هلك . ماليه عنني غنى ما} > ma ʔaği,a ani malyah halak,ani solṭányah > that my money does not defend for me and my power is died . In my data I found that most words end with the self-

personal pronouns such as:

• أمي > ʔomi > omieh > my mother > No. 21
• خواتي > khawati > khawatih > my sisters > No. 2
• أبي > ʔoboi > abooyah > my father > No. 47
• جدتي > jadati > jadatih > my grandma > No. 2

2-3- The use of (’aad)
In Saudi dialects the word (‘aad) is used to convey different meanings. So, it might be used to mean please in some sentences such as عاد بسرعة > besir,ah ’aad > quickly. Moreover, it could be used to mean then like مشيئت أنا كذا بعد عاد > مشيت أنا كذا بعد عاد. Also, it can be used as a verb to mean come back, for example, السفر من عاد > ‘aad men es-safar > he came back from his trip. Additionally, it is a variable word in Al-Oyoun’s dialect and it is sometimes changed to ‘adan but this use of (‘adan) does not lead to the verb ’aad > came back, however, it is still used to convey the previously mentioned meanings as well as other meanings. In my data, I noted couple of sentences use ,adan to mean but or then, such a:

- تغطر جلست ما جدتيه عدان اليوم ذلك > dak elywom ’adan jadatyah ma jlisat tfitir > but in that day my grandma did not wake up to have her breakfast. (used to mean ‘but’) No. 2
- جارنا جاء عدان و أمينه هي اللي أي > ḍi ḍilli ḥe ʔOmynah w ‘dan ja jarna > yes, Omynah then our neighbor came > (used to mean ‘then’) No. 19

Al-Oyoun’s dialect and its effect on me

To a certain extent, my wife's dialect has affected my dialect in some aspects but not in all. I can sometimes notice when I speak with my mother or my sisters that I pronounce the feminine pronoun (k) as (č) or sometimes as (ki) while my original pronunciation of the feminine pronoun (k) is (ts), for example:

- رجلك > rijlikci > rijlits > your feet > No. 1
- جدتك > jadatki > jadats > your grandmother > No. 3

On other hand, in my dialect which is one of Najdi dialects, I have similar matter of Hamzah in most of Hamzah positions in the word. For example, the word أمي > ʔomi > omi > my mother.

Conclusion

In this paper I have collected and analyzed data from Al-Oyoun’s dialect which is one of Al-Ahsa dialects. My analysis included some phonological and lexical aspects like the hamzah and the use of diminutive names. The lexical and phonological features of Saudi dialects are similar to each other due to internal immigration across the Kingdom. The local dialect easily changes over time because they are not recorded in books and they are not also used in mass media. They are oral so that they are subject to oblivion and distortion. They can be easily affected by people’s transfer from one place to other place. In this regard, it is worth
noting that not all aspects of Al-Oyoun’s dialect are studied, and therefore it requires more data to be collected and more research to be carried out in order to cover morphological and syntactical aspects of the dialect.

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