

Loanword adaptation in Makkan Arabic
(Honaidah Ahyad, Stony Brook University)

Literature on loanword adaptation has given special attention to the site of vowels inserted to repair complex onsets while some other research focused on the quality of epenthetic vowels. This study aims at addressing both phenomena in Makkan loanwords. This dialect of Arabic does not allow complex clusters in onset position. The clusters are repaired by vowel insertion. The site and quality of the inserted vowel is determined by the cluster type and the roundness of the vowel following the clusters.

[s]-stop (ST) clusters trigger external epenthesis of a default vowel [i].

- (1) a. ʔis.karb ‘Skype’
 b. ʔis.kul ‘school’

Stop-sonorant (TR) clusters trigger internal epenthesis of a context sensitive vowel. Vowel harmony occurs when clusters are followed by round vowels.

- (2) a. ti.ri ‘tree’
 b. tu.ru ‘true’

The two strategies mentioned above are not employed in Makkan native phonology, in which vowels inserted in native words are always [i], but the part of insertion of a default vowel before ST clusters and a harmonic vowel within TR clusters is consistent with the loanword patterns found in a large number of languages (Broselow, to appear). In order to verify that the two generalizations given above are representative of native speaker behavior, an experiment was conducted. 63 native speakers of Makkan Arabic took part in an online experiment in which they listened to a native speaker of English pronounce either real English words or nonce words beginning in onset clusters. They then listened to four different ways of pronouncing the given word (for example, ‘school’ was pronounced in four different ways: ʔis.kul, ʔus.kul, si.kul and so.kul). Next, participants were asked to choose the pronunciation that sounded closest to their dialect. The results of the study confirm the preference for an external default vowel before ST and an internal harmonic vowel before TR when the following vowel is round. Two mixed-effects logistic regression models were developed to assess the interaction between the site and quality of epenthetic vowel and the two cluster types when followed by round and non-round vowels. The models show a significant correlation between the location and quality of the epenthetic vowel and the two cluster types under investigation. I present an analysis of these patterns using the auditory similarity approach developed by Fleischhacker (2001; 2005) and Zuraw (2007) to account for epenthesis site and Uffmann’s (2014) autosegmental approach to account for the vowel quality in loanword adaptation.

References

- Broselow, E. To appear. The typology of position-quality interaction in loanword vowel insertion. In Y. Hsiao and W. Lee (eds.) *Capturing Phonological Shades: Papers in Theoretical Phonology*.
- Fleischhacker, Heidi. 2001. Cluster-dependent epenthesis asymmetries. In A. Albright and T. Co (eds.), *Papers in Phonology 5, UCLA Working Papers in Linguistics*, 71-116.
- Fleischhacker, Heidi. 2005. *Similarity in Phonology: Evidence from Reduplication and Loanword Adaptation*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation UCLA.
- Uffmann, Christian. 2004. *Vowel epenthesis in Loanword Phonology*. Ph. D thesis, Universität Marburg.
- Zuraw, Kie. 2007. [The role of phonetic knowledge in phonological patterning: Corpus and survey evidence from Tagalog](#). *Language* 83. Pp. 277-316.