

The Left Margin of the Word in Berber Derivational Morphology

In Lowenstamm (1999), it is argued that each word of a major category is preceded by an empty CV site, which replaces the traditional SPE symbol #. The postulation of this site, filled by means of phonological operations involving licensing status (Kaye, Lowenstamm & Vergnaud 1990), pits two types of languages against each other: (i) type I languages (French, English) where the initial site is always licensed and (ii) type II languages (Hebrew, Maghrebi Arabic) where it is not always licensed. This differential licensing status implies that the initial site hosts proclitics in type I languages but not in type II.

Lahrouchi (2003) is an attempt to pinpoint a third type of languages (Tashlhiyt Berber) where the initial site is not always licensed and where it is filled by means of two strategies: *movement* and *spreading*. Indeed, it is shown that the quantity variation that causative and reciprocal morphemes display in Tashlhiyt Berber depends on the licensing status of the initial site. That is, the causative /s-/ , the reciprocal /m-/ and their variants remain simple when the initial site is licensed, whereas they geminate when it is unlicensed. Two pairs of examples illustrate the quantity alternation of these morphemes: “ashamed” *s-ħffim*, *n-ħiffim* vs. *ss-knu*, *mm-knu* “lean”. Moreover, the [labiality] dissimilation and [anteriority] assimilation displayed by [m] and [s], respectively, are argued to follow from the use of the initial empty site as a part of the verb domain. This means that [m] dissimilates to [n] and [s] becomes [ʃ] whenever they are associated inside the verb domain.

In this paper, the initial site hypothesis is generalized to other Berber languages: data from the Tamazight, Tarifit, Tamashek and Kabyle languages are examined. First, it will be shown that there exist two types of Berber languages: (i) languages that use both geminated and ungeminated variants of the causative and the reciprocal morphemes and (ii) languages that always geminate them (or more particularly just one of them). At the same time, a prediction is made according to which none of the Berber languages will show *only* ungeminated causative and reciprocal morphemes. Then, the paper turns to the analysis of “inchoative” verbs: those verbs that display a geminated initial consonant which degeminates once it is preceded by a derivational morpheme: e.g. *d dukkl* > *s dukkl* “become friend”, *llugmu* > *slugmu* “spoil”, *mmuktu* > *smuktu* “disgust”. At last, examples will be examined in the case of Noun > Verb derivation: “face” *udm* > *ssudm* “kiss”; “speech” *awal* > *sawal* “speak”.

References

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