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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **A Comparative Study of the Phonological Processes of Anbari Speakers in Iraq**

**Raed Ali AlJumaily<sup>1</sup> ✉ and Ahmed Ali Hussein AlMuselhy<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup>Ministry of Education, Fallujah, Iraq

**Corresponding Author:** Raed Ali AlJumaily, **E-mail:** [raedali2009@gmail.com](mailto:raedali2009@gmail.com)

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this article is to delve into the phonological processes and communicative discourse of Iraqi Anbari speakers. The study is analytical and descriptive in nature. Among them are fifty people who speak the Anbari dialect. The premise of the paper is that the Anbari dialect differs from other Iraqi Arabic variations in communicative discourse and phonological processes. Even among dialects spoken in northern and southern Iraq, the study found that certain phonological processes in communication discourse did not apply universally. Furthermore, this paper's findings demonstrated that Iraqi Arabic speakers in various Anbar regions employ distinct phonological processes when compared to other speech communities in the vicinity, particularly those in the Middle Euphrates region, which share a closer social bond. Various political, geographical, social, and economic variables may explain this difference. This research suggests that other studies should be undertaken to investigate dialects in other parts of Iraq in the future.

**KEYWORDS**

Anbari, Middle Euphrates, Dialects, Iraqi Arabic, Phonological Process, Communicative Discourse.

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### **1. Introduction**

The Arabic language is an amalgam of many spoken varieties and a single written form. The three main schools of thought on the subject are Classical Arabic (CA), Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), and Colloquial Arabic. Although written Arabic is very consistent throughout the Arab globe, there are phonological, morphological, lexical, and syntactic variations due to the dialects. According to Abdul Sattar (2002), scripted verbal communication in educational and news broadcast contexts also makes use of MSA (Modern Standard Arabic). Although students in academic settings, such as universities, do use Modern Standard Arabic, it is not often used in children's homes. This is due to the fact that MSA cannot be maintained by subsequent generations as a living language. Social and geographical variations are the most notable and unusual aspects of the Arabic language (Mahadin and Jaradat, 2011). Since most dialects are spoken rather than written, multidialectal variants have a significant and negative impact on the standard language system. The presence of many effects and variations in the Arabic language has significant implications for natural language processing, resulting in disparities across all levels of the language. The Arabic language continues to be a subject of debate because of its phonetic variances, which are influenced by social, economic, and political factors, as well as dialectal differences. Arabic language users encounter distinct phonological, geographical, and social diversity and variances, primarily in spoken form rather than written form (Tamimi and I'lawi, 2006).

Extensive research has been carried out to investigate the diverse linguistic characteristics of Arabic dialects, including comparative studies between different Arabic dialects and the Arabic language in comparison to other languages and languages spoken over the world." Additionally, a great number of studies have been conducted to investigate MSA and CA in Iraq. Concerning this matter, the phonological characteristics of certain dialects and distinctive speech communities, such as the Anbari language variation, are

a subject of interest for the majority of sociolinguists; yet, it is regrettable that this topic has not received the attention that it merits.

Ilawi and Tamimi (2006) carried out a study to investigate the phonetic behaviours of the glottal stop in a variety of Arabic words. Iraqi setting was utilized for the research. A comparison was made between the colloquial Arabic spoken in North Iraq and the Arabic spoken in MSA. The outcomes of the research showed that the behaviour of the glottal stop in North Iraqi Arabic is comparable to that of MSA when discussing it at the word's initial position. However, while discussing it at the word medial and final locations, the behaviour is different. Additionally, Ibrahim (2012) conducted a phonological sketch of Zubairi Arabic in the south of Iraq in order to study the sound structure of the language. The research was carried out in Iraq. The results of the study demonstrated that consonantal and vowel inventories are distinct from one another in the sense that they integrate a variety of phonological events, including emerge, substitution, and deletion. Within the context of their behaviour, distribution, and variation, the geminate segments and phonotactic possibilities of Zubairi constitute a significant phonological milestone. In this corpus, the dialect that is being implemented is the Iraqi Arabic dialect that is spoken in the Anbari Region over the entirety of Anbar. The corpus of Iraqi Arabic (IA) in the Anbari Region was gathered in 2024 by two individuals who directly conducted meetings and interviews with people of the Anbar Region, which is the region in which the Anbari is situated.

## 2. Anbar

The west of Iraq is home to this city, which can be found 60 kilometers west of Baghdad, the capital of Iraq. One of the most breathtaking natural and religious vistas in the entire globe, it is a place of great beauty. It is well known as the richest place of different natural sources in the world, concealing incredible treasures that have been amassed over the course of an incredibly long period of time, throughout the course of countless years. Between seven hundred thousand people are included in that region's population. To obtain the data took approximately one month. In order to facilitate the development of new types of inquiry, the investigation of the Iraqi Anbari dialect was a research project that was conducted in an objective manner and was the first of its kind in such an Iraqi region. To give just one example, how important and efficient is the role that dialectal diversity plays in comparison to the variation of phonological processes and characteristics? There has been a significant amount of research conducted on the various linguistic characteristics of the Arabic language, especially with regard to the structural variation that exists within individual dialects, but none of these studies have been carried out thus far to explore the phonological characteristics of the Anbari dialect of different dialects. Additionally, in relation to this, the study of phonological characteristics is an intriguing field of inquiry because it has not received the attention that truly deserves the attention of Iraqi researchers and academics.

## 3. The Research Question

The following question is addressed in this study to help reach the research objectives:

Q1: How distinct are the phonological processes in comparison to the relevant Iraqi dialects?

## 4. The Research Procedures and Methods

The Iraqi Arabic (IA) corpus in the Anbari Region was collected in 2012 by two informants who interviewed 50 inhabitants in the Anbar Region, where the Anbari is located. Study samples were chosen randomly. The study focuses on phonological processes and peculiarities in the Anbari Dialect. This study focused on Iraqi Arabic native speakers in the Anbar Region for data collection. Informants obtained data through surveys and conversations with individuals in the Anbari region. The researchers consulted Arab phoneticians to ensure data authenticity and dependability, as well as study findings.

## 5. Discussion and Findings

Since the informant is a native speaker of Anbari Dialect, this descriptive-analytical study relies on authentic interaction and communication with several native speakers. The research group included people from all around Al Anbar Province, which stretches from the western borders with Jordan and Syria to the southern region with KSA. Geographical location served as a dividing line for the native speakers in these regions. The tribes in Anbar spread out in all directions of Anbar—south, the middle region of Iraq, and the west—due to its geographical location between Jordan and Syria to the south region with KSA, which is why the Anbari dialect was chosen.

### 5.1 Phonological Processes

There are specific phonological processes that are utilised by the Anbari dialect, which distinguish it from other Iraqi dialects spoken locally Aljomaely, R. (2018). Based on this phonological process, the Anbari dialect is somewhat connected to some of the dialects that are geographically close to it, such as Middle Euphrates Arabic, which is spoken in the middle of Iraq.

### 5.2 Raising

The Anbari dialect typically has the low vowel /a/ without any raising to [i] or [u]. This is a phonological process that remains the same in an open syllable. This is distinct from other Iraqi indigenous Bedouin dialects, Sakarna (1999 as mentioned in Abu Haidar, 2006), hereafter. This is illustrated in the below examples:

**(1)**

/maʃa/	[miʃa]	'walked'
/rakab/	/ [rikab]	'rode'
/ dʃarab/	[dʃirab]	'hit'
/laga/	[liga]	'found'
/raʒaʃ /	/riʒaʃ /	'came back '

Words like [mata] "when" and [bada] "started" are still used in the Anbari dialect, which is different from Middle Euphrates. The raising of the [i] sound is also not used in Anbari Arabic when there is an emphatic consonant either before or after it. (Sakarna, 1999).

**(2)**

/,nahar/	[,nahar]	'river'
/,baʃar/	[,baʃar]	'humans'
/ dʃa,rar/	[dʃa,rar]	'damage'
/fa,ras/	[fa,ras]	'hourse'

There is a striking similarity between the Anbari dialect and other Iraqi dialects in this instance, such as the fact that raising traditions are maintained, as seen in the table below:

**(3)**

/latʃiif/	[litʃiif]	'nice'
/saxiif /	[sixiif]	'stupid'
/ ʔaziir/	[ʔaziir]	'abundant'

However, in contrast to the Middle Euphrates dialect, the low vowel /a/ in the Anbari dialect does not experience [u] rising when it occurs in an open syllable (Blanc, 1979, as reported in Abu Haidar, 2006). This is a difference between the two languages. Consequently, the raising of the letter [u] in the Anbari dialect is much less prevalent than the rising of the letter /i/, as seen by the instances that follow:

**(4)**

/ ʃawa/	[ʃuwa]	'grilled'
/madʃa/	[mudʃa]	'went'
/cartoon/	[curtoon]	'cartoon'
/kawa/	[kuwa]	'laundry'

### **5.3 Syncope**

Anbari dialect shares syncope as its second phonological characteristic. For example, in an open syllable, the unstressed high vowel /i/ is removed. Verbal stems containing the principal CaCiC form are strongly associated with syncope. Supplementing such with a vowel beginning suffix initiates the procedure. Low vowel /a/ development in an open syllable occurs when a consonant beginning suffix is allocated and personal growth. In addition to the Anbari dialect (Sakarna, 1999) and Arabic spoken in other parts of Iraq (Blanc, 1970: 134), Arabic was also spoken in 1984. The table in the section that follows which addresses the /thahiba/ "went" as a whole paradigm:

## (5)

she	[ðahbit]	[maʃit]
they m.	[ð ahbuw]	[maʃuw]
they f.	[ð ahbin]	[maʃin]
he	[ð ihib]	[miʃa]
you m. sg	[ð ihibt]	[miʃit]
you f. sg.	[ð ihibtiy]	[miʃitiy]
you m. pl.	[ð ihibtuw]	[miʃituw]
you f. pl	[ð ihibtin]	[miʃitin]
I	[ð ihibt]	[miʃit]
we	[ð ihibna]	[miʃina]

The first three instances of /ðahb/ and /maʃa/ involve a vowel beginning suffix; since it occurs in an open syllable, the high vowel /i/ is thus eliminated. In the meanwhile, the exceptional cases are stripped of their consonant beginning suffix, with the exception of [ʃirib] and [liʃib], which do not have any such suffix. This allows the low vowel in an open syllable to undergo raising. Surprisingly, unlike Eastern dialects, the raised vowel /i/ is always present in the Anbari dialect (Blanc, 1970).

Another difference between the Anbari dialect and other Iraqi dialects, including Eastern and Western dialects, where the raised vowel is not optional, is the relationship between the optional occurrence of [i] and the compulsory occurrence of the same vowel, as mentioned above. When the high vowel /u/ is in an open syllable, languages like the Anbari dialect (Sakarna, 1999) and Western dialects all delete it. That is clearly demonstrated in the imperative processes of the verbs /qala/ 'said' and /zada/ 'add':

## (6)

	'eat'	'take'
you m. sg	/qul/ [qul]	/zud/ [zud]
you f. sg.	/qul+i/ [kli]	/zud+i/ [zdi]
you m. pl.	/qul+u/ [qlu]	/zud+u/ [zdu]
you f. pl	/qul+in/ [qlin]	/zud+in/ [zdin]

#### 5.4 Epenthesis

The Anbari dialect exhibits different distinct instances of vowel insertion. The epenthesis are /a/, /u/, and /i/. The first form occurs with CaCC nominal stems when the second radical is a guttural. This is comparable to other Iraqi dialects, such as the 9abady dialect, as seen in the following examples:

## (7)

/mahr/	[mahar]	'dowry'
/nahr/	[nahar]	'river'
/bat'n/	[bat'an/]	'abdomen'
/fikr/	[fikir]	'thinking'
/ʕuðr/	[ʕuður/]	'excuse'
/wazn/	[wazin]	'weight'
/fahm/	[fahim]	'understanding'
/ʃakl/	[ʃakil]	'shape'
/ʕumr/	[ʕumur]	'age'
/ħusn/	[ħusunun]	'goodness'
/fiʕl /	[fiʕel]	'verb'

Surprisingly, the use of an epenthesis differentiates the Anbari dialect from other Iraqi local dialects, such as the Arabic spoken in southern Iraq. Previous research on Iraqi dialects has shown that this technique is uncommon outside of the Anbari dialect, where it is highly communal. According to Palva (1986), this phonetic trait is absent in other southern Iraqi dialects (Sakarna, 1999). In addition, colour and fault adjectives use the /a/ epenthesis, just like the Middle Euphrates dialect.

**(8)**

/ʔ sʕar/	[ʔ sʕar]	'yellow'
/ʔbyadʕ /	[ʔbayadʕ]	'white'
/ʔaħmar/	ʔaħmar]	'red'
/ʔatʕra/	[ʔatʕra]	'deaf'
/ʔaħmaq/	ʔaħmaq]	'stupid'
/ʔaxraq/	[ʔaxaraq]	'clumsy'

The next type is /i/ epenthesis, which is employed with CiCC nominal stems. Additionally, it exerts an impact on the CaCC nominal stems that lack the second or third radical as a guttural.

**(9)**

<b>/CiCC/</b>			<b>/CaCC/</b>		
/Bism/	[bisim]	'by the name	/sabr/	[sabir]	'patience'
/film/	[filim]	'film'	/masl/	[masil]	'vaccine'
/Miʕ tʕ/	[Miʕ itʕ]	'comb'	/ ʕabr/	[ʕabir]	'algebra'

As an additional point of interest, the second type of Anbari employs the /i/ epenthesis for nouns that start with two consonants. The cluster of consonants is broken when the epenthetic sound /i/ is employed.

**(10)**

/rqud/	[riqud]	'sitting'
/ sʕ mud/	[simud]	'resistance'
/ ħdud/	[ħidud]	'borders'
/bnud/	[binud]	'items'

A third sort of epenthesis, known as /u/ epenthesis, is also involved in Anbari. The substitution of the high vowel /u/ between the final two radicals of the fundamental /CuCC/ nominal stems are included in this arrangement. There are some southern Iraqi dialects in which this occurrence is rather common. Moreover, it is documented in the Arabic language of Iraq (Sakarna, 1999):

**(11)**

/muzn/	[muzun]	'rain'
/kurd/	[kurud]	'kurds'
/nuzl/	[nuzul]	'lodging house'
/mulkl/	[muluk]	'possession'
/zubd/	[zubud]	'butter.'

The fact that Sakarna (1999) gives examples that are also observed in Anbari, respectively, in which the insertion of /i/, /a/, and /u/ corresponds in a corresponding order should be brought to your attention. Sakarna (1999) builds his categorization and generalization of the phenomena based on these evidence, which suggests that there is another difference between the Anbari dialect and other Iraqi local dialects.

### **5.6 The Syndrome**

Another phonological feature that differentiates the Anbari dialect from other local dialects, such as Middle Euphrates Arabic, is the non-existence of syndrome with regard to the insertion of the low vowel [a] after the guttural /h/ in the word /naxlah/, surfing as [naxalah] 'a date tree' in which such phonological phenomenon does not exist in Anbari but can be found in some of the Iraqi dialects especially in countryside as discussed by Blanc (1970). For a better illustration of this, consider the following examples:

## (12)

/ ʃaʃra /	[ʃaʃara]	'hair
/na ʃjah/	[na ʃajah]	'a goat'
/laħmah /	[laħamah]	'meat
/margah/	[maragah]	'soup'
/naxlah/	[naxalah]	'a date tree'
/ laywah /	[layawah]	"too much talk"

It is also typical in Anbari to put a post-guttural low vowel into a passive participle. The following examples show how this sounds similar to local dialects in southern Iraq.

## (13)

/maʃðuur/	[maʃaðuur]	'excused'	/maħbuub/	[maħabuub]	'friendly'
/mahzuun/	[mahazuun]	'sad'	/maxduuʃ/	[maxaduʃ]	'cheated'

According to the table in the next section, Anbari differs from other Iraqi dialects like Baghdadi Arabic, which was studied by Irshied (1984), in that it does not eliminate the low vowel in the first syllable after the guttural.

## (14)

/ ʃra /	'hair'	/naxlah/	'a date tree'
/n ʃjah/	'a goat'	/laywah/	'too much talk'
/lħmah /	'meat'	/margah/	'meat'

This demonstrates that Anbari differs from other Iraqi dialects in terms of the presence or absence of certain phonological traits, which is distinct from the research done by Palva (1986, 1991).

## 6. Conclusion

To summarise, the research findings can be categorised into three broad areas:

i) The Anbari dialect has a common characteristic, namely, the sound /q/ is pronounced as [k], while the sound /k/ is articulated as [ç]. While it is not true that many Iraqi local dialects, which have been studied by scholars like Sakarna (1999) and Palva (1986), share similarities with Anbari Arabic, it is not accurate or reasonable to assume that all Iraqi subtribes use the same dialect. This generalization is problematic due to several social and linguistic reasons, primarily because the differences seen thus far have shown that this prediction is not valid.

ii) Anbari Arabic exhibits a stronger linguistic connection to Middle Euphrates Arabic in Iraq and the adjacent dialects, as opposed to the dialects spoken in northern Iraq. This fact is clearly evident in the comparison outlined in the previous section between the Anbari dialect and the corresponding Iraqi Bedouin and rural dialects.

This fragmentation may be facilitated by the proximity of the geographical locations, which allows for communication between the western subtribes and the southern Iraqi Bedouin tribes on one side and the subtribes and Middle Euphrates tribes on the other side. Another possible explanation is that the Anbari dialect is a conglomeration of various subtribes that have diverse origins and roots.

Furthermore, the Anbari dialect demonstrates distinct phonological phenomena, including the consistent presence of the low vowel /a/ without any raising to [i] or [u], as well as other variations mentioned earlier. The Anbari dialect exhibits syncope as its second phonological feature. For instance, in an open syllable, the unstressed high vowel /i/ is deleted. Verbal stems that have the primary CaCiC form are closely linked to syncope. Adding a suffix that starts with a vowel starts the procedure. Similarly, within an open syllable, various phonological processes result in separate occurrences of vowel insertion. One distinguishing phonological characteristic of the Anbari dialect, in comparison to other local dialects like Middle Euphrates Arabic, is the absence of a pattern involving the insertion of the low vowel [a] after guttural sounds.

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Raed Ali AlJumaily: **Orcid:** 0000-0002-9936-0203

Ahmed Ali Hussein AlMuselhy: **Orcid:** 0009-0005-9006-0828

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