A Descriptive Analysis of Hypocoristics
in Colloquial Arabic

STUART DAVIS
BUSHRA ADNAN ZAWAYDEH

Abstract

While various aspects of Arabic phonology and morphology have attracted the attention of researchers in generative linguistics over the past thirty years, the study of Arabic hypocoristics (or nicknames) has remained largely neglected. There is virtually nothing published regarding the description of how hypocoristics are formed in present day Arabic even though the use of hypocoristics is common in the spoken language. In this paper we describe three major patterns of hypocoristics in colloquial Arabic based on the Amman Jordanian dialect. We show that the hypocoristics are based on the root consonants and that there is a dispreference for guttural consonants in certain positions of the hypocoristic.

1. Introduction

While various aspects of Arabic phonology and morphology have attracted the attention of researchers in generative linguistics over the past thirty years, the study of Arabic hypocoristics (or nicknames) has remained largely neglected. As far as we are aware, there is virtually nothing published regarding the description of how hypocoristics are formed in present day Arabic even though the use of hypocoristics is very common in the spoken language.1 Our goal in this paper is primarily descriptive. The intention is not to describe all the possible hypocoristic patterns that occur, but to examine several patterns that we think are most common and productive. In particular, we focus on three common patterns of hypocoristics. The first pattern

84 S. Davis and B.A. Zawaydeh
displays the templatic shape shown in (1) and is exemplified by the full name [basma]. (C = consonant; the accent mark indicates the location of primary stress)

(1) Name: basma Hypocoristic Template: C1aC2C3uC3 Example: bussum(e)2

This pattern is relevant for any name that has three root consonants and will be described in Section 2 of this paper. The second pattern, exemplified in (2) by the name [riima], exhibits the reduplication of two root consonants in the name. These will be discussed in Section 3.

(2) Name: riima Hypocoristic Template: C1aC2C3C3 Example: ramruum(c)

The third pattern is exemplified in (3) where the two consonants have to be identical. The details of this pattern will be described in Section 4.

(3) Name: basma Hypocoristic Template: a. C3uC3 Example: bubu3

The data and observations we present in this paper are based on the Amman Jordanian dialect of Arabic. However, from informal discussions that we have had with Arabic speaking colleagues, we suspect that the data and observations reported

2 The hypocorist pattern illustrated in (1) is typically pronounced with a final inflectional vowel. We do not consider this vowel to be part of the hypocoristic pattern and will indicate it in parentheses throughout the paper. The vowel is normally realized as [a] (or, more precisely [e]), but is pronounced as [e] immediately following a guttural: i.e. laryngeal, pharyngeal and uvular consonant phonemes, or emphatic (i.e. consonants that have secondary uvularization). We indicate emphatics with upper case letters. These include T, D, S, Z/ in the colloquial Amman Jordanian dialect. Also, as detailed by Younes (1992) it can sometimes behave similar to an emphatic. The final inflectional vowel is homophonous with the singular feminine ending as in the word [Taalib-ə] a student or [faiih-a] a peasant. But we do not consider it to be the same as the feminine suffix since masculine hypocoristics do not take feminine inflections on the verb. For example, if a male named [salim] with the hypocoristic [sallaum] traveled somewhat, one would say the sentence in (i) and not in (ii) where the latter displays a feminine ending on the verb.

(i) sallaum saaafar
Salim traveled
(ii) *sallaum saaafar-at
Salim traveled-less

3 Any female with the name [basma] could be called both [bubu] or [bussum] e as in (1). There may be other nicknames that a female named [basma] might be called that we do not describe here, such as [biiso]. Hypocoristics tend to be used only among close friends and family members.


1 This research has been supported in part by an award given to Bushra Adnan Zawaydeh by Research and the University Graduate School at Indiana University. We thank Paul Newman for valuable comments on this paper.
2 More generally, there seem to be very few studies on hypocoristics in any of the Afroasiatic languages. One exception is the work of Newman and Ahmad (1992) which describes a variety of hypocoristic patterns in the Chadic language Hausa.
here hold for most other dialects. Obviously, careful investigation of hypocoristics in several dialects needs to be undertaken before we can claim for certain that the data we describe in this paper is pan-dialectal. The sources of the hypocoristic data in this paper come from the judgments of the second author who is a native speaker of the Ammani Jordanian dialect and from a hypocoristics questionnaire that we developed which was written in Arabic. The questionnaire was filled out by eleven speakers of the Ammani Jordanian dialect in Amman in July 1998. The questionnaire only asked about hypocoristics of the patterns in (1) and (2). For each name, speakers were given one or more choices of possible hypocoristic forms, and were asked to circle any that they thought were appropriate for the name. If none of the listed hypocoristics seemed appropriate, speakers were asked to write in one that they considered suitable for the name. Because we did not ask about hypocoristics of the pattern in (3) in our questionnaire, our discussion of this pattern in Section 4 is provisional in nature.

In the following sections of this paper we will describe and exemplify how each of the three hypocoristic patterns in (1)-(2) are formed, relating it to observations regarding Arabic phonology when relevant.

2. ClαιC2C2mnC3 Hypocoristics

A very common hypocoristic pattern in colloquial Arabic is exhibited by hypocoristics with the shape ClαιC2C2mnC3, where the primary stress is on the long vowel. These are exemplified by names like those in (4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>Full name</th>
<th>Hypocoristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>basma</td>
<td>basuum(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>ras̱ud</td>
<td>raṣuud(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>xalqad</td>
<td>xalluud(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>ṣaamer</td>
<td>ṣamuur(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>rafīfe</td>
<td>raffiuud(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>yasair</td>
<td>yassuur(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>wallid</td>
<td>walluud(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td>wasan</td>
<td>wasuum(e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The location of stress on hypocoristics reflect the regular stress pattern of the language. See de Jong and Zawaydeh (1998, to appear) for more on stress and vowel length in Ammann-Jordanian Arabic.

We can describe the formation of the hypocoristics in (4) by the depiction in (5).

(5) Match the consonants of the full name to the consonant slots in the template ClαιC2C2mnC3, where C1 is the first consonant of the full name, C2 the second consonant, and C3 the third.

Various issues need to be discussed given this description. First, only root consonants are typically realized in the hypocoristic. This is shown by the hypocoristics in (6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(6)</th>
<th>Full name</th>
<th>Hypocoristic</th>
<th>Full name</th>
<th>Hypocoristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>ṣaḥmad</td>
<td>ṣamuud(e)</td>
<td>haamed</td>
<td>haumuud(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>muhamed</td>
<td>haumuud(e)</td>
<td>maḥmad</td>
<td>maḥmuud(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>ṣamžad</td>
<td>maḥuud(e)</td>
<td>maḥd</td>
<td>maḥmuud(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>ṣibtiṣam</td>
<td>basuum(e)</td>
<td>basma</td>
<td>basuum(e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The names in the lefthand column in (6) all have consonantal segments that are not part of the root. These may be affixal (e.g. the initial [m] in [muhammed]) or eponthetic (e.g. the [ʔ] in [Ṣibtiṣam]), but neither type surfaces in the hypocoristic. One might conjecture that these elements do not occur in the hypocoristics in (6) because the hypocoristic cannot have more than three different consonants. However,
the data in (7) show that if a full name has four (root) consonants, then all four consonants can indeed surface in the hypocoristic.

(7) Full name Hypocoristic
   a. maryam maryuun(e)  
   b. 'ibrahiim barhuun(e)  [(7) is epenthetic]

The precise pattern of the hypocoristics in (7) would be C1aC2C3uuC4, but this could be seen as a variant of C1aC2C2uuC3 for names that have four-root consonants. The data in (8) show that if a non-root consonant appears at the end of the full name it is not incorporated into the hypocoristic. (The asterisk indicates an unacceptable hypocoristic.)

(8) Full name Hypocoristic
   a. salmaan salluun(e) *salnuun(e)
   b. ramaDaan rammuud(a) *ramDuun(e)

The data in (8) should be compared with the data item in (9) which has a phonologically similar ending to the full names in (8). But the final consonant in (9) is part of the root and so it does surface in the hypocoristic.

(9) Full name Hypocoristic
   'ibsaan hasuun(e)

Thus, the hypocoristic data in (6)-(9) point to a distinction between root consonants and non-root consonants where only the root consonants are allowed in the hypocoristic.

In addition to the requirement that the C1aC2C2uuC3 hypocoristic contain only root consonants, a second issue that arises in the description of this type of hypocoristic concerns the role of certain phonological constraints. For example, as shown by the data in (10), full names with a glide as the final root consonant cannot form a hypocoristic of the pattern C1aC2C2uuC3.

(10) Full name Hypocoristic
   a. suqay *suituw(e)
   b. suqay *suituw(e)

The lack of such hypocoristics reflects a general constraint in Arabic against words ending in a sequence of a long vowel followed by a glide.5

Another case where full names with glides do not form C1aC2C2uuC3 hypocoristics are names where the second root consonant is [w]. This is exemplified by the data in (11).6

(11) Full name Hypocoristic
   a. 'anwar *navuun(a)
   b. rawhi *rawuuh(a)

One can see this as a constraint against a sequence of [w] followed by long [u]. Ohala & Kawasaki (1984) have specifically noted that sequences like [wu] are strongly disfavored cross-linguistically due to the lack of a clear perceptual break between the [w] and homorganic [u]. Notice that such a constraint does not rule out sequences of the glide [y] followed by long [u]. And, consequently, as shown in (12), such sequences can occur in the hypocoristic.

(12) Full name Hypocoristic
   a. suqay *suituw(e)
   b. suqay *suituw(e)
   c. suqay *suituw(e)

Another possible phonological constraint on the C1aC2C2uuC3 hypocoristic output concerns full names where the medial root consonant is the laryngeal continuant [h] or the pharyngeal continuants [h] and [t]. Some speakers of Ammani Jordanian Arabic view such hypocoristics as questionable. Examples are given in (13). (The superscripted question mark indicates the questionable nature of the hypocoristic.)

5 This constraint plays a role in words like [tiqtqas] "meeting" which reflects underlying *[tiqtqa]/ where the glide /q/ is the final root consonant, but fails to surface as such.
6 A few responses from our hypocoristics questionnaire did view the hypocoristics in (11) as possible; however, most of the AmmaniJordanian Arabic speakers did not.
While we do not have a clear explanation as to why some speakers find these questionable given that geminate gutturals do occur in the dialect, we refer to the work of McCarthy (1994) where it is observed that some Semitic languages such as Biblical Hebrew and Tigre do not allow geminate gutturals and that there are Bedouin dialects of Arabic that have restrictions on gutturals surfacing as coda consonants. As a final observation regarding hypocoristics with medial gutturals, we note the peculiar form of the hypocoristic for the name ?ishaq in (14) where the initial [th] is not part of the root.

The actual form of the hypocoristic [sa?uha] shows the metathesis of the last two root consonants where the glottal stop is the dialectal realization of the phoneme /q/.

This metathesis can be understood as a means of avoiding a geminate guttural continuant which can be judged as questionable in hypocoristics as seen in (13). By metathesizing the last two root consonants, it is the glottal stop that appears as geminate. As seen from data like that in (4b), a geminate glottal stop in the hypocoristic is acceptable. Thus, we suggest that the peculiar form of the hypocoristic in (14) comes about as a means of avoiding a geminate continuant pharyngeal from surfacing.

It is possible to analyze the geminate glottal stop in the hypocoristic as reflecting the initial epenthetic consonant of the name ?ishaq rather than as the dialectal realization of /q/.

However, this would go against the general observation that non-root consonants are not incorporated into the hypocoristic and seems to go against the sense that native speakers have regarding this hypocoristic.

90 S. Davis and B.A. Zewaydeh

Given the observations and discussion of the C1aC2C2uuC3 hypocoristic pattern in this section, we revise our original descriptive statement in (5) to that in (15) in order to account for the formation of C1aC2C2uuC3 hypocoristics.

(15) Match the root consonants of the full name to the consonant slots in the template C1aC2C2uuC3, where C1 is the first consonant of the full name, C2 the second consonant of the full name (excluding [w] and pharyngeal or laryngeal continuants), and C3 the third consonant of the full name (excluding glides).

In the following section we consider reduplicated hypocoristics.

3. Reduplicated Hypocoristics

A second pattern of hypocoristics involves the reduplication of two root consonants from the full name. This pattern is more restricted than that described in the previous section in that it usually, though not always, applies to full names surfacing with just two root consonants. The reduplicated pattern is of the form C1aC2C1uuC2 where the two root consonants are repeated. The pattern is exemplified by the names in (16).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full name</th>
<th>Hypocoristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. ruba</td>
<td>rbrub(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. diima</td>
<td>dam(?u?um(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. saami</td>
<td>samsu?um(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. zaki</td>
<td>zakau(b(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. riim</td>
<td>ramru?um(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. ?ula</td>
<td>?al?u?ula(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. 'muusa</td>
<td>mamsu?us(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. mufida</td>
<td>fafi?ud(e) *mafi?ud(e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are a couple of interesting points that emerge from the data. First, the example in (16b) shows that a prefixed consonant in the full name is ignored. This is similar to what was observed by the data in (6)-9 in the previous section. And second, the root consonants that appear in the hypocoristic are those that appear in the full name. This
is significant because the full names in (16) all have an underlying root consonant that does not surface in the full name. For example, the name [ruba] has the underlying root /rb/ and the name [diima] has the underlying root /dwm/. The root glide does not surface as such in the full name. Thus, the hypocoristic is based on the root consonants that appear in the surface form of the full name and not on the underlying root.

In addition to names like that in (16) there are other examples of names that have reduplicated hypocoristics. First, full names that consist of three root consonants where the final root consonant is a glide can take the reduplication pattern. This is shown in (17).

(17)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full name</th>
<th>Hypocoristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. marwa</td>
<td>marrum(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. faadya</td>
<td>faaduud(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. yuday</td>
<td>yaduud(e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We noted in (10) that such full names cannot take the C1aC2C2uuC3 hypocoristic.

Second, full names where the second and third root consonants are identical typically can have a reduplicated hypocoristic as seen in (18).

(18)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full name</th>
<th>Hypocoristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. dalaal</td>
<td>daluul(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. zaalaal</td>
<td>zalzul(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. tamaam</td>
<td>tamuu(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. raniin</td>
<td>ranuu(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. binaan</td>
<td>bannu(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. matta</td>
<td>matnuut(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. widaad</td>
<td>wadduud(e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is interesting is that such names also can have a hypocoristic of the pattern C1aC2C2uuC3 as shown by the data in (19).

(19)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full name</th>
<th>Hypocoristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. dalaal</td>
<td>dalluul(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. zaalaal</td>
<td>zalzul(e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The hypocoristic pattern in (19) is identical to the C1aC2C2uuC3 pattern described in the previous section except that C2 and C3 are identical. One can view the data in (18) and (19) as reflecting an ambiguity as to whether roots with identical second and third consonants consist abstractly of two root consonants or three root consonants. For example, does the root for the name [dalaal] consist of the two consonants /dl/ or the three consonants /dlu/? If the former, then the reduplicated hypocoristic would be expected in a way similar to the names in (16); if the latter then the hypocoristic of the pattern C1aC2C2uuC3 would be expected.

While it should be noted that in our questionnaire speakers gave both the hypocoristic forms shown in (18) and (19) there were several names where there was a strong preference for the forms in (19). Specifically, the hypocoristic in (19g), [wadduud], is preferable to [wadduud] in (18g) because the latter has the sequence [wu] which is problematic given the discussion earlier following (11). The hypocoristics in (19d) and (19e) which have [u] as the repeated root consonant were preferred to their reduplicated counterparts in (18d) and (18e). This suggests a favoring of the pattern C1aC2C2uC3 for names where /u/ is the repeated root consonant.

There is one other group of names with a repeated second consonant that prefers the C1aC2C2uuC3 pattern in (19) as opposed to the reduplicated pattern in

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8 There were certain other cases in our questionnaire where there was a preference for a hypocoristic of the pattern C1aC2C2uuC3 where /u/ is repeated even though a reduplicated hypocoristic might have been expected. Consider the data below.

(1)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full name</th>
<th>Hypocoristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. rana</td>
<td>ranuune(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. manwa</td>
<td>mannuune(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. ranwa</td>
<td>ranuune(e)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For (a) we would expect the hypocoristic [ruuun] based on the data in (16). Likewise, for (b) and (c) we would expect [nnuun] and [nnuun], respectively, based on the data in (17). We do not know why such names prefer the hypocoristic pattern C1aC2C2uuC3, though it does seem to be a significant observation that relevant names with /u/ prefer this pattern where a reduplicated hypocoristic might otherwise be expected.
A Descriptive Analysis of Hypocoristics in Colloquial Arabic

(18) These are names where the first consonant begins with a guttural and is exemplified by the data in (20).

(20) Full name Hypocoristc
a. ʕaːʕaf ʕaffuʃ(e) *ʕaf Fuʃ(e)
b. hanan hannuun(e) *hanhuun(e)
c. xalil xalluul(e) *xalhuul(e)

We see in (20) a disfavoring of having a guttural at the beginning of adjacent syllables. Nonetheless, there can be cases where a reduplicated hypocoristic can occur with a guttural at the beginning of adjacent syllables. This was seen by the name ʕuʃay [ʔuʃay] in (17c) which has the hypocoristic ʕuʃuʃude. However, as was noted in (10a), ʕuʃay cannot take a hypocoristic of the pattern C1aC2C2uunC3 since glide-final hypocoristics of this pattern systematically do not occur.

Finally, we observe based on our questionnaire that there are a few names with three root consonants (where the third consonant is neither a glide nor a repeated consonant) that take the reduplicated hypocoristic pattern C1aC2C1uuc2. Some examples are given in (21).

(21) Full Name Hypocoristc
a. basma basbuus(e)
b. baʃra basbuus(e)
c. hadir hadhuud(e)
d. lubna labluub(e)

We believe that this is sporadic and does not offer a hypothesis concerning which names with three root consonants can form a reduplicated hypocoristic other than to note that based on the data in (21) they tend to be names where the third root consonant is a sonorant.

In sum, we see that names that take reduplicated hypocoristics tend to be those that have only two root consonants like those in (16), a glide as a third consonant like those in (17), a repeated root consonant like those in (18), and sporadically, those with a final sonorant consonant as in (21).

4. CuCu Hypocoristics

A common hypocoristic pattern in colloquial Arabic displays the templatic shape CuCu where the two consonants are identical. This is exemplified by names like those in (22).

(22) Full Name Hypocoristic
a. basma bubu
b. binas bubu
c. fadwa furu
d. dawud dufu
e. Taariq TuTu
f. samira suhu
g. salim suhu
h. malaak mumu
i. nazih mumu
j. zaki zuhu
k. raaf ʃ runu
l. tamaara tuvi
m. buʃruq bulu
n. luʃti luju
o. Sabaah SuSu
p. karin ?koku

Given the examples above, it would seem that an adequate description of the formation of hypocoristics of the pattern shown in (22) would be along the lines of that given in (23).

As mentioned in the Introduction, the hypocoristic data presented in this section are based on the judgments of the second author. We did not ask about CuCu hypocoristics in our questionnaire. Thus, the data in this section should be regarded as provisional, subject to further verification by other speakers of Amman Jordanian Arabic. In the CuCu hypocoristic pattern the first [a] is stressed. We do not indicate the stress in our transcription.
A Descriptive Analysis of Hypocoristics in Colloquial Arabic

(23) Take the first consonant of the full name, put [u] after it and reduplicate the sequence.

This description is supported by the observation that if we attempted to form the hypocoristic based on the second or third consonant of the names in (22) we would get an inappropriate hypocoristic. For example, [susu] is not a likely hypocoristic for the name [basma] since [s] is not the first consonant in the name, although it is a good hypocoristic for [sattila] or [sattila] as shown in (22f) and (22g) where it is the initial consonant of the full name.

While the description in (23) seems to be correct for the data in (22), there are a number of situations in which the hypocoristic pattern CuCu might take the second consonant rather than the first. Consider the data in (24).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full Name</th>
<th>Hypocoristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. yaasir</td>
<td>susu *yuu (*ruru)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. wallid</td>
<td>lulu *wuu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. tabir</td>
<td>bubu *u'u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. bula</td>
<td>lulu *hhu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. ?amal</td>
<td>mumu *u'u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. hind</td>
<td>nunu *hhu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. qamar / ?amar</td>
<td>mumu *quu, *u'u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. yaada / yaada</td>
<td>dudu *wuu, *yuu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. xalil / xalil</td>
<td>lulu *xuu, *xuu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The examples in (24) show that the final consonant of the full name cannot appear as the consonant in the CuCu hypocoristic if that consonant is of a certain type. Specifically, (24a)-(24b) show that if the initial consonant of the full name is a glide, then that consonant cannot be in the hypocoristic.

Likewise, if the first consonant is a pharyngeal, laryngeal, or uvular as in (24c)-(24i), then that consonant cannot appear in the hypocoristic. Note that in (24g) the uvular stop is often pronounced as a glottal stop in the colloquial dialect while the uvular fricatives are often pronounced as velars. When the final consonant of the full name is one of the disallowed consonants, the hypocoristic can be formed with the second consonant of the full name as seen by the data in (24). In such situations it is impossible to form it with the third consonant too. This is indicated in (24a) where *[ruru] would be an inappropriate hypocoristic for [yaasir].

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96 S. Davis and B.A. Zawaydeh

Let us now turn to the explanation as to why glides cannot surface in hypocoristics of the pattern CuCu. A likely explanation for the lack of CuCu hypocoristics with initial glides such as [yuu] and [wuu] is that glides and high vowels are too similar to each other. One of the fundamental characteristics of syllables is that for perceptual reasons sequences of sounds should be dissimilar to one another — hence there is a preference for CV sequences (cf. Ohala 1990). A repeated sequence like [wuu] as in [wwuu] has five similar adjacent noneisonantal elements and thus would be dispreferred. The lack of glide-initial reduplicated hypocoristics such as [wuu] and [yuu] can be seen as reflecting a tendency for the avoidance of sequences involving similar noneisonantal elements.

Now, let us consider the hypocoristics in (24c)-(24i) where the first consonant of the full name is either a pharyngeal, laryngeal, or uvular. These consonants comprise the class of gutturals. Researchers such as Hayward & Hayward (1989), Herrzallah (1990) and McCarthy (1994) have shown that gutturals pattern together with respect to a variety of phenomena in the Semitic languages. The hypocoristic pattern in (24c)-(24i) is just one more phenomenon where the guttural consonants act as a natural class.

There is one other situation where the initial consonant of the full name does not occur in the hypocoristic. This is the case where the initial consonant is not part of the root. Two examples are given in (25).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full Name</th>
<th>Hypocoristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. mufulda</td>
<td>fufu *mumu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. musTafa</td>
<td>SuSu *mumu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, the hypocoristic ignores the initial /m/. It is the first consonant of the root that appears in the hypocoristic. The inactivity of non-root consonants here is what we also noted for the other two patterns of hypocoristics as illustrated by the data in (6)-(9) and (16h). This provides striking evidence for the importance of root consonants even in the spoken language. Now consider the examples in (26).

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*It is worth mentioning, that there are other cases in Arabic where there is a disprefer for sequences consisting of glides and high vowels. Davis (1997) gives Classical Arabic examples such as /wu'dan/ 'black' and /bu'dun/ 'white' which surface as [wu:dun] and [bu:dun], respectively, without the glide. In these examples, a glide falls to surface after a high vowel.

1The data in (24h) and (24i) are interesting in that the uvular fricatives are often pronounced as velar, yet they nonetheless still pattern with the gutturals. The pronunciation of uvular fricatives as velar occurs at least in Ammani Jordanian Arabic as discussed by Zawaydeh (1997) and in Palestinian Arabic as discussed in Herrzallah (1990). Since in both dialects these sounds do not pattern with the other guttural, one can assume that phonologically they are indeed uvular fricatives.

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10 If both the first two consonants of the full name consists of a glide, uvular, pharyngeal or laryngeal, as in the name [wahid], then a hypocoristic with the third consonant may be
A Descriptive Analysis of Hypocoristics in Colloquial Arabic

(26) Full Name Hypocoristic
a. muhammad mumu *huhu
b. muhammad nunu *huhu, *mumu

At first glance, the example in (26a) appears to be contrary to the data in (25) which shows that the prefixed /nu/ is ignored in the formation of hypocoristics. However, because the first root consonant in [muhammad] is the pharyngeal /n/, the potential hypocoristic [huhu] is ill-formed as indicated in (26a). We can then understand the hypocoristic [mumu] as reflecting the /nu/ which is the second root consonant in the name [muhammad] and not the prefixed /nu/. Thus, the hypocoristic [mumu] for [muhammad] is like the data in (24) where it is the second root consonant that appears in the hypocoristic. This is supported by the hypocoristic [nunu] for [muhammad] in (26b).

Given the observations and discussion of the CuCu hypocoristic pattern in this section, we revise our original descriptive statement in (23) as in (27) in order to account for the formation of CuCu hypocoristics.

(27) Take the first root consonant of the full name that is not a glide or guttural, put [u] after it and reduplicate the sequence.

This statement accounts for the formation of hypocoristics in the problematic data in (24)-(26) as well as the unproblematic data in (22).13

5. Conclusion

In this paper we have offered a descriptive account of three major patterns of hypocoristics in colloquial Arabic based on the Ammani Jordanian dialect, namely C1aC2C2uuC2 in Section 2, C1aC2C1uuC2 in Section 3, and CuCu in Section 4. Various issues manifested themselves in the description of these different hypocoristic patterns. One issue concerned the avoidance of glides and gutturals in certain positions in the hypocoristic. Another issue related to the systematic failure of non-

13There are some names that can have a hypocoristic of the pattern C1C1. For example, the names [fidaa?] and [may] can have the hypocoristics [fifi] and [mimi], respectively. It is our impression that this hypocoristic pattern is more restricted than the CuCu pattern in that it typically only applies when there is [i] or [y] in the full name. Thus, [mimil] and [bili] do not seem to be appropriate hypocoristics for the full names [madi] and [butra], respectively.

S. Davis and B.A. Zawaydeh

root consonants to surface in the hypocoristic. Both these issues reflect general concerns of Arabic, such as the patterning of gutturals as a natural class and the importance of root consonants in the morphology.

While we believe that the description of hypocoristics that we presented for Ammani Jordanian Arabic applies to other dialects, specific details may vary. Also, other dialects may have patterns not found in the Ammani Jordanian dialect. We hope this paper serves to motivate further research on Arabic hypocoristics which has until now remained a neglected area of study.

References


