Abstract

This thesis is dedicated to the study of the phonology of emphasis in Moroccan Arabic (MA), due to its controversial and very ambiguous status which changes from one language to another, from one dialect to another and sometimes from one region to another within the same dialect. We focus initially on the phonetics of emphasis and we show, through a comparative study of the analysis of Arab grammarians, then that of Orientalists, to finish with that of contemporary linguists, that the main articulatory characteristic of emphatics, compared to their non-emphatic cognates, is the retraction of the tongue root, called pharyngealization. This is reflected acoustically in the rise of F1 and lowering of F2 of the adjacent vowels. In the phonological part, we focus first on the evolution of this class of segments, which were glottalized, to show that the parameters set by our predecessors, namely the unique coronal articulation of all emphatic, the emphatisation of adjacent segments, its directionality and its blocking, are no longer valid for the current treatment of emphasis. We then study the different assumptions about the phonological site of emphasis, namely the consonantal and the vocalic site and we show their limits. We propose thereafter our own hypothesis, the 'autosegmental hypothesis', in which we consider that the phonological site of emphasis has evolved, passing from a coronal consonant-specific site to an autosegmental root-specific independent one. This hypothesis is supported by data from MA and also those of other Arabic varieties, such as classical Arabic, which show that some words that do not contain any classical emphatic (/tˤ, dˤ, sˤ ,ðˤ/), nor even a coronal, form minimal pairs where the only difference is at the level of emphasis, as in MA [bˤabˤa] '*father*' vs. [baba] '*bread crust*'. We show in the last part of the thesis that the directionality of this harmony process is, contrary to the previous studies, always unidirectional and that the palatals /i, j, ʒ, ʃ/ play no role in its blocking.