THE PHONOLOGY AND MORPHOLOGY OF YEMENI TIHAMI DIALECT: AN AUTOSEGMENTAL ACCOUNT

By

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

alv	alveolar
app	approximant
C	consonant
CAL	Classical Arabic Language
Co	coda
conglot	constricted glottis
COR	coronal
dent	dental
DOR	dorsal
dors-gutt	dorso-guttural
fric	fricative
gutt	guttural
HD	Hadhrami dialect
inter	interdental
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet
LAB	labial
lar	laryngeal
lat	lateral
MD	Tihami dialect (used by Ali, 2000). The present study uses **YTD**
MSA	Modern Standard Arabic
N	nucleus
nas	nasal
NHA	nasal homorganic assimilation

O	onset
obs	obstruent
pal	palatal
phar	pharyngeal
PL	place of articulation
R	Rhyme
rhot	rhotic
SD	Sana'ani dialect
SL	supralaryngeal
son	sonorant
TD	Ta'izzi dialect (used by Ali, 2000)
V	vowel
vel	velar
vless	voiceless
YTD	Yemeni Tihami dialect (Ali, (2000: 5a) used **MD** to indicate **YTD**)

ABSTRAK

FONOLOGI DAN MORFOLOGI DIALEK YEMENI TIHAMI : SUATU PERTIMBANGAN AUTOSEGMEN

Tidak banyak kajian metodologi tentang dialek Arab, terutamanya dialek Arab Yemen (YAD) (Versteegh, 1997). Sumber linguistik dan tatabahasa dalam bahasa Yemen tidak mencukupi; walaupun ada diterbitkan, namun masih tidak memadai untuk dijadikan rujukan tatabahasa dan linguistik yang sah (AL-Hanadwah, 2005). Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan menyelidik satu daripada dialek Arab iaitu dialek Yemeni Tihami (YTD). Hakikatnya, kajian ini menyelidik tentang fonologi untuk mendapat pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang objektif berikut: (1) mengetahui sifat fonem konsonan dan vokal dalam YTD, (2) menyelidik tentang penyebaran fonem dalam YTD, (3) mengenal pasti serta menjelaskan tentang set fenomena fonologi yang mungkin wujud dalam YTD, (4) menganalisis proses-proses fonologi dengan mengunakan Teori Autosegmenal, dan (5) mengenal pasti aspek-aspek morfologi (proklitik, enklitik, kata akar dll) dalam YTD. Untuk melengkapkan objektif kajian, data dianalisis dan ditentukan dalam rangka kerja Teori Fonologi Autosegmental dan Model Fitur Geometri. Secara metodologinya, data YTD diperoleh dengan menggunakan kaedah yang berbeza, iaitu, *Swadesh list*, model Labovian – senarai kata dan bahagian yang dibaca, temu bual, soal selidik fonologi secara lisan, rakaman dan penyertaan semasa pemerhatian. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan pelbagai fenomena fonologi dalam YTD, contohnya, asimilasi nasal homorganik, pengguguran, pendiftongan, dan penyesuaian. Data lapangan menunjukkan bahawa andaian Spencer (1996) dapat digunakan hanya pada sesetengah daripada bahasa / dialek dunia. Walaupun berlaku pengguguran koda,

pendiftongan diilustrasikan sebagai suatu proses fonologi bebas, bukannya berlaku secara sengaja dengan pengguguran koda, sebagaimana yang diandaikan oleh Spencer (1996) dalam penjelasan beliau tentang penyukukataan. Di samping itu, sifat fonologi YTD yang ketara ialah vokal /u:/ yang biasanya hadir pada hujung ayat. Dari segi morfologi, dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa terdapat dua jenis klitik dalam YTD, iaitu: proklitik dan enklitik. Dari segi pedagogi pula, struktur linguistik YTD dan proses serta fenomena fonologi didapati menunjukkan serta menyumbang kepada pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang fonologi YTD, terutamanya kepada para akademik dan juga mereka yang berminat untuk menjalankan kajian yang ekstensif dalam bidang ini. Sesungguhnya, natijah kajian ini dapat dianggap sebagai titik mula bagi penyelidikan YTD pada masa depan, di samping mengutarakan permasalahan yang wujud, serta cadangan dalam bidang yang lain (fonetik, semantik dan sintaks), juga isu fonologi YTD yang lain.

ABSTRACT

THE PHONOLOGY AND MORPHOLOGY OF YEMENI TIHAMI DIALECT: AN AUTOSEGMENTAL ACCOUNT

Little methodological studies are available on Arabic dialectology particularly on Yemeni Arabic dialects (YADs) (Versteegh, 1997). Linguistic and grammatical sources in Yemen are insufficient; even those being published are yet not enough to be taken as valid grammatical and linguistic references (AL-Hanadwah, 2005). Hence, the current study aims at exploring one of the Arabic dialects in the Yemeni context namely Yemeni Tihami dialect (YTD). Precisely, the present study is an attempt to undertake phonological investigation to achieve better understanding of these objectives: (1) to examine the nature of consonantal and vowel phonemes in YTD, (2) to investigate the distribution of phonemes in YTD, (3) to identify and describe the set of possible phonological phenomena in YTD, (4) to analyse and explain the phonological processes by using Autosegmental Theory and (5) to identify the morphological items (proclitics, enclitics, roots etc) of YTD. To accomplish the objectives of the study, the data were analysed and examined within the framework of the Autosegmental Phonology Theory and the Feature Geometry Model by Clements (1985). The data of Yemeni Tihami dialect were methodologically elicited by employing different methods, viz. Swadesh list, the two tasks of Labovian models - word list reading and passage reading, interviews, oral phonology questionnaires, recordings and participant observations. As a consequence, the findings revealed various phonological phenomena e.g., nasal homorganic assimilation (NHA), deletion, diphthongisation and alternation. Fieldwork data illustrated that the postulation of Spencer (1996) of compensatory

lengthening is probably applicable to some, but definitely not all, languages/dialects of the world since it is inapplicable to YTD, and thus is not a universal. Although the deletion of coda, diphthongisation was illustrated as an independent operative phonological process rather than occurring accidentally with coda deletion as claimed by Spencer (1996) in his explanation of syllabification. Besides, the striking property of YTD phonology is the vowel /u:/ appended commonly to the end of words. As far as the morphological items are concerned, the findings demonstrated that the types of YTD clitics are two in number: proclitics and enclitics. Pedagogically, the findings revealed the linguistic structures of YTD and the phonological processes and phenomena, which demonstrate and contribute to better understanding of the phonology of YTD for academicians and those who are interested in undertaking more extensive studies in this field. Ultimately, the present study suggested considering its outcome as merely a starting point for YTD to be investigated thoroughly in further research, and stated the gaps and remaining issues, and as well as recommended some other branches (e.g., phonetics, semantics and syntax) and other phonological issues of YTD.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This introductory chapter presents the background to the study. It introduces the statement of the problem, the objectives and the research questions of the study. Then, it progresses to present the significance of the study, the scope and limitations of the study. It also explains the rationale of the study and eventually gives the thesis structure followed by conclusion at the end. In this chapter, some sections refer to other sections and subsections in the next chapters for further details.

1.2 Background to the Study

1.2.1 Introduction

Dialectal studies are one of the most interesting and rather significant topics in sociolinguistics, especially phonological processing which is the focus of the present study. Little methodological studies are available on Arabic dialects particularly on Yemeni Arabic dialects (YADs) (see e.g. Al-Fadly, 2007; Nassir, 2007; Al-Hanadwah, 2005; Watson, 1993; Behnstedt, 1987; Greenman, 1979). Al-Fadly (2007) carried out his study on the morphology of the Mehri Qishn dialect and Nassir (2007) conducted his study on the dialect of Wisab. Watson (1993), on the other hand, devoted her study to the dialects of Sana'ani, Kusma, Jabub, Jabinin and Hubaish. These studies suggest that there is a wide gap in literature regarding the dialectal studies in the Yemeni context. Therefore, this study is an attempt to describe one of the most widely spoken Yemeni Arabic dialects, e.g. Yemeni Tihami

dialect (henceforth, YTD), which has been neglected since the survey of Greenman in 1979 (e.g., Al-Hanadwah, 2005; Behnstedt, 1992). The following subsections highlight an overview of the background of the study.

1.2.2 The Geographical Background of Yemen

1.2.2.1 Location

Yemen is a republic country (is called al-Jumhuriyah al-Yamaniah) situated in the Middle East in the southeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula between latitudes 12-20 of the Northern Hemisphere and the longitudes 41-54 East of Greenwich. It is bounded on the north and north east by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on the east by Sultanate of Oman; which also stretches to the *Ruba Al-Khali* (the Empty Quarter), on the south by the Arab Sea and on the west by the Red Sea.

The capital of Yemen is Sana'a situated in a plateau 7260 feet above sea level. The seaport of Yemen is Hodeidah city where the present study is conducted. The official language is Arabic language and the religion of the country is Islam. The population of the country is more than 22 million and the percentage of Muslims is nearly 100 percent, and yet Yemeni Jewish has a very small spot in North Sa'adah; with the population of some 800 persons as statistical data by Adherents Statistic Citations show in 1998 (National Information Centre, 2004; Ali, 2000). The map below, adopted from Ali (2000: 5a), shows the four main dialects of several dialects spoken in Yemen, of which is the YTD, the focus of the present study. It is important here to mention that the abbreviation MD is used by Ali (2000) in his study to stand for Tihami dialect and TD stands for Taizi dialect. However, the present study indicates at Tihami dialect with YTD rather than MD.

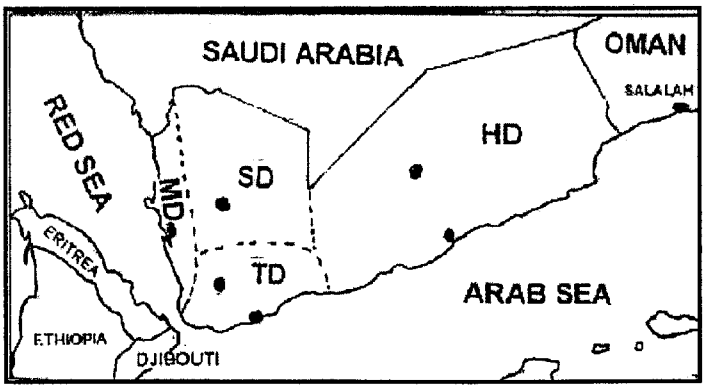

Figure 1.1: The Four Main Dialects in Yemen (adopted from Ali, 2000: 5a)

1.2.2.2 Area and Population

The area of the Republic of Yemen covers almost 555.000 km^2 excluding the Empty Quarter. The number of the population is, according to the last census of 2000 in Sana'a and 2005 in Aden, some 22.500.000. The following map (see **Figure 1.2**) shows the demarcations and geographical location of the republic. Regarding governorates, Yemen has 21 administrative governorates as can be seen in **Figure 1.3** below; of which are divided 3333 divisions (National Information Centre, 2004).

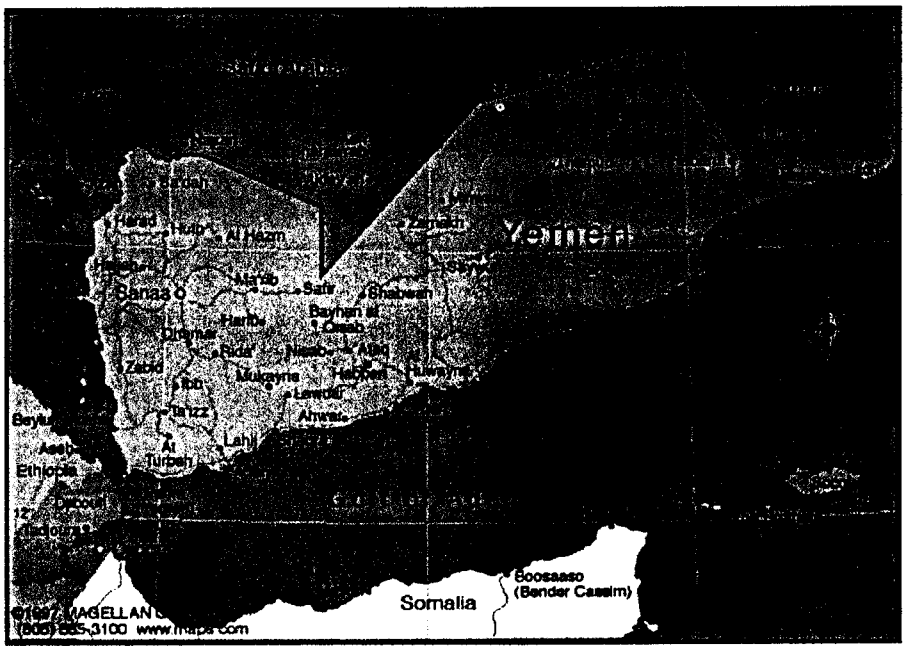

Figure 1.2: The Geographical Map of Yemen (National Information Centre, 2004)

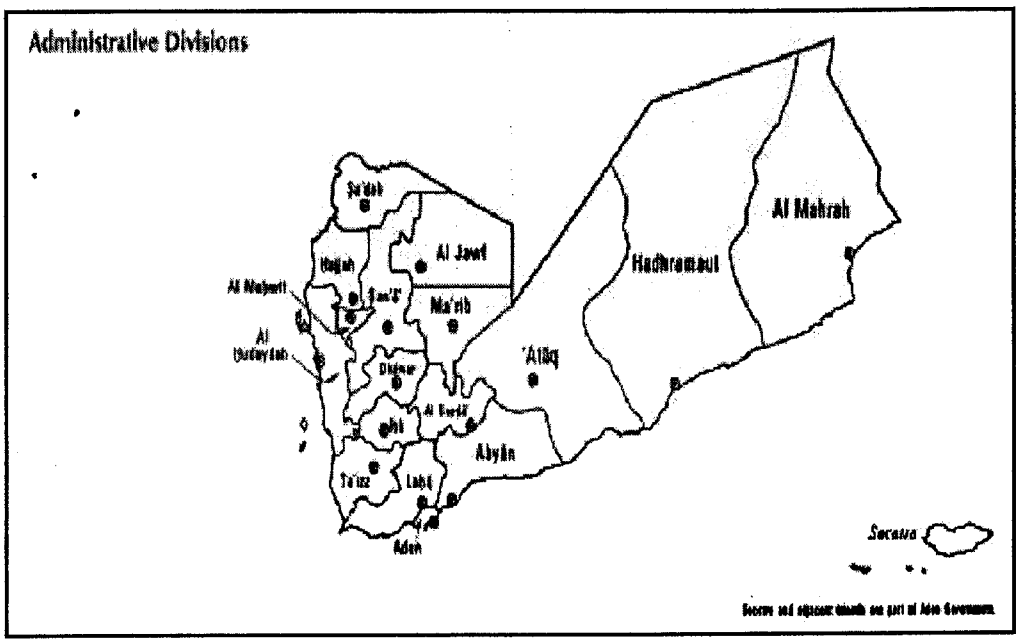

Figure 1.3: The Map of the Administrative Governorates of the Republic of Yemen (National Information Centre, 2004)

1.2.2.3 Hodeidah

Hodeidah (also written as al-Hudaydah) is the second largest city in Yemen with a population of more than two million (see **Figure 1.4**) (National Information Centre, 2004), where the present study is carried out in one of its directorates. It is situated on the Red Sea coast. The YTD is, among other dialects in Yemen, widely spoken by people in different directorates and divisions of Hodeidah city. Hodeidah was developed as an important seaport of Yemen in the mid-19th century by the Turks. After a catastrophe caused by fire in January 1961 and destroyed a wide range of the city, the city was again rebuilt with Soviet aid particularly the vital sections of the port. Moreover, it was used to be a significant site for a Soviet naval base in the 1970s and 1980s (Ibid).

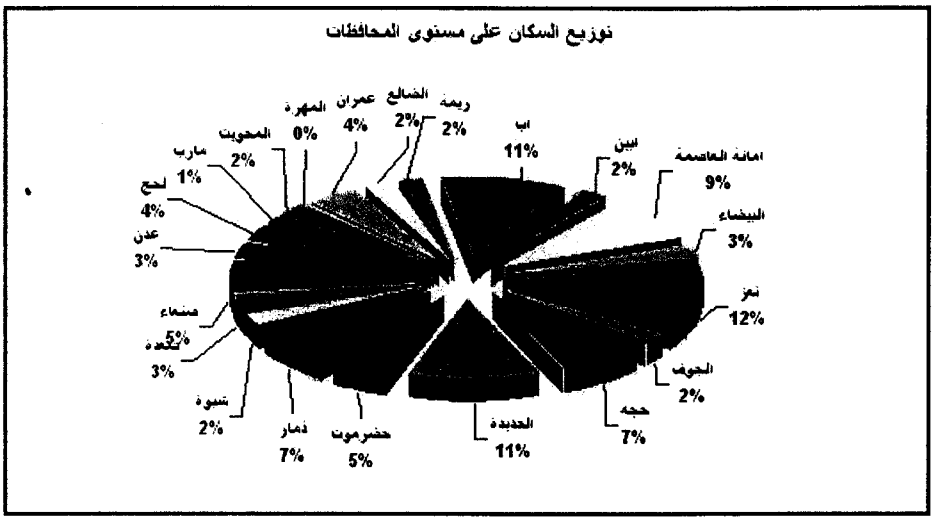

Figure 1.4: The Distribution of Population in the Yemeni Cities

(National Information Centre, 2004)

Moreover, Hodeidah city has the largest number of historical places in Yemen. It has different historical and tourist directorates and divisions of which is Zabid which considered as one of the most important historical and Islamic town in the Arab world. Many of the renowned Islamic Yemeni scientists have studied in this town as it used to have an old university which was as old as al-Azhar University. The most renowned "*ulama*" family is al-Ujayl (Serjeant, 1988). The Tihama region (Hodeidah city and its directorates and divisions) is the cradle of one of the oldest civilization in Arabia, and considered as a home to some of the most important towns of Yemen namely Zabid (the setting of the present study).

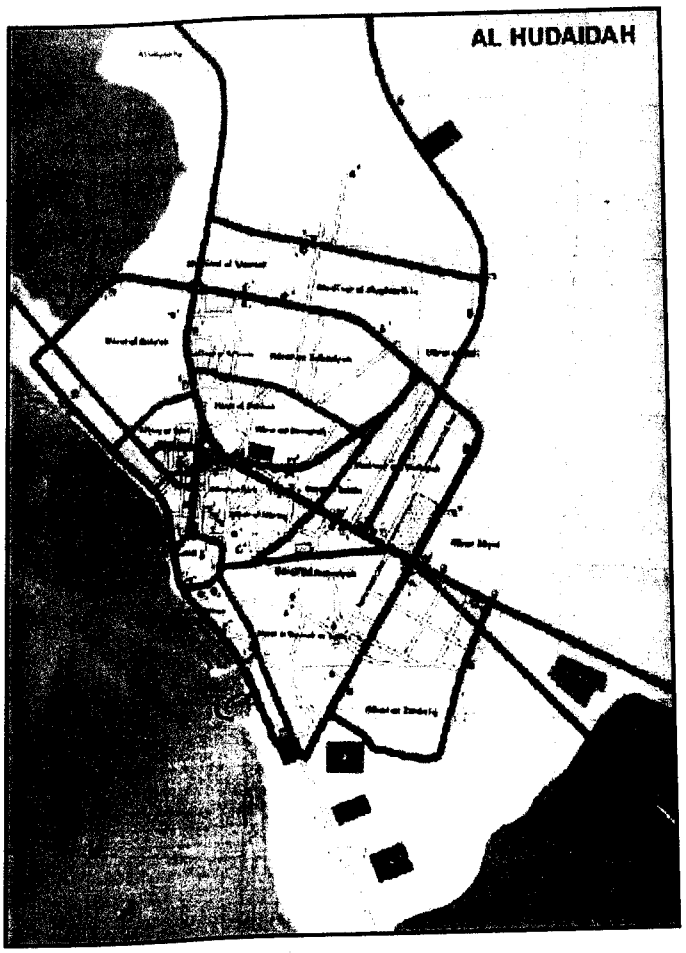

Figure 1.5: The Geographical Map of Hodeidah

(National Information Centre, 2004)

1.2.2.4 Zabid

Zabid is one of the important historical and tourist directorates of Hodeidah city. It is deemed the cradle of the YTD and was the historical capital of Yemen from 13th to 15th century (www.Zabid.com). It has a rich scientific and cultural history. It also has four gates namely al-Qurtub, Siham, al-Shabareeq and al-Nakhl. It consists of four quarters: al-Mugambath, al-Juz'a, al-Jamea and al-Ali. The directorate of

Zabid is characterised by its prominent historical buildings and vestiges, e.g., public libraries, private libraries, mosques, schools etc. As far as the economy is concerned, it has a prosperous role in commerce, agriculture and manual handicrafts as they used to be marketed all over Yemen (Ibid).

1.2.3 Yemeni Tihami Dialect (YTD) and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)

The YTD is one variety of Modern Standard Arabic (hereafter, MSA) spoken in Hodeidah city and its 26 directorates. The phonology of the YTD plays a role not only in a target language (foreign languages) but also in the MSA. It has some sounds to be pronounced differently from MSA. Some of these sounds change the meaning of words while the others do not. For instance, the Arabic pharyngeal /ʕ/ is articulated in the YTD as the glottal sound [ʔ] (Greenman, 1979), which changes the meaning of MSA words, as in /ʕɪma:rah/ 'building' becomes [ʔɪma:rah] 'emirate' and /ʕamal/ 'work' becomes [ʔamal] 'hope', however this change does not affect the meaning of the words all the time. In other words, this change takes place in rare words. These are only some examples to demonstrate the impact of the YTD upon MSA.

1.2.4 Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Classical Arabic Language (CAL)

MSA is an adaptation form from the Classical Arabic Language (henceforth, CAL). According to Khoja (2002), Arab people adapted MSA as it is an easy form. There are several dialects of the MSA spoken by Arab people. These dialects are not

only spoken from one country to another, but from one area to another within the same country. They are used in mass media and official communications daily life such as in schools, academic institutions, trade, etc.

Furthermore, the MSA is also deemed as an official language in the United Nations (Huthaily, 2003) and the medium of instruction in most, if not all, Arab countries (Waston, 2004). In short, Arabic language can be defined as the substantial and static language of 21 countries. That is to say, changes, in the passage of time, might take place in the adopted MSA but not in the CAL; since the latter is the language of the Sacred Book (Holy Qur'an) and the purest form amongst all the other adapted forms. Arabic language provides a prime instance of the linguistic phenomenon of diglossia – the normal use of two separate varieties of the same language, usually in different social situations. In the case of Arabic, educated Arabs of any nationality can be assumed to speak both their local dialect as well as their school-taught literary Arabic (Al-Shaebi, 2006).

As regards to the Yemeni dialects, most of them, if not all, are closely similar to the MSA (Ali, 2000: 9). This is due to the fact that Yemen is situated in the southern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, and is a 'country from which the Arabic language is historically known to have sprung' (Ibid). Consequently, there are, to a large extent, similarities amongst these Yemeni dialects. In fact, the concern of the present study is about the YTD, a spoken dialect in the city of Hodeidah and its 26 directorates.

1.2.5 The Origin of Arabic Language

Some Arabic linguists referred the origin of Arabic language to the time of Prophet Adam (PBUH), the Father of all human beings. While, some other linguists related the start of Arabic language to the time of Prophet Ismael bin Ibrahim (PBUH) (Al-Mikhlafi et al, 1996). Many Arabic researchers have carried out thorough studies pointing out that the CAL had been well formed in the third century, and well known in Mecca and its neighbouring regions; spread from a village called *That Kahil*; reached along to *Alheera* in Iraq; stretched out to some regions in Syria (Ibid).

The start of history of Arabic phonetics and phonology has no exact date (Al-Dhalea, 2002). However, Arabic language has been kept by the Sacred Book 'Noble Qur'an', which has been revealed to the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) as the first source (constitution) of Islam. Since then, all linguistic researches and studies in Arabic language considered the Noble Qur'an as the axis of Arabic linguistics. In short, the Noble Qur'an has become the main source on which Arabic linguistics is conducted. This shows the substantial relationship between Arabic language and the Noble Qur'an that preserves this language alive up to the present time (Abdultawab, 1987).

Arabic language is generally divided into two divisions: the southern Arabic language and the northern Arabic language. The former is known as *Hemyaric* language; its origin is from Yemen and the south of Arabic Peninsula; having two dialects: *Sheba* and *Maeeniah* dialects. The northern Arabic language is, on the other hand, known as classic Arabic (CA); spoken by the people of middle and northern

Arabic Peninsula. It is characterised by its wide spread in the globe since it is the language of the Holy Book, 'Noble Qur'an'. Hence, the northern Arabic is deemed the most successful language spoken by Muslims, in general, and Arabs, in particular (Ibid).

Furthermore, the Holy Qur'an and *Hadith* have great influence in keeping Arabic language immortal, polished, classic and rich with its vocabulary up to date. This influence is obviously shown when Arabic language is promoted from locality to universality (Al-Mikhlafi et al, 1996). Ouzon (2002) adds that Arabic language has enriched different languages of the world. He exemplifies this by presenting some words borrowed by the English language such as *algebra*, *chemistry*, *cipher*, etc. This is, in fact, due to the many translations of Arabic volumes into English and other languages; consequently, many of Arabic words had been merged into those languages.

Moreover, Arabic language belongs to the Semitic language family spoken by more than 200 million people around the world (Huthaily, 2003; De Young, 1999). It is the official language in all Arab countries as it is the language of the Sacred Book, the Holy Qur'an; and it is also the official language for all Muslims to practice their religion.

Chejne (1969: 9) described Arabic language as a language given by God. He said 'Muslims in general and Arabs in particular have long regarded Arabic as a God-given language, unique in beauty and majesty, and the most eloquent of all

languages for expressing thought and emotions'. In addition, Awde & Samano (1986: 13) added the following:

> its unbroken literary tradition goes back about thirteen centuries, it is the language of one of the world's major religious – Islam – and it is the written and spoken means of communication in a region of steadily rising importance in international affairs: the Middle East. The numerical, geographical, political, and cultural status of the language was formally recognised by the United Nations in 1973, when Arabic was made the sixth official language of that body (the others are English, French, Spanish, Russian, and Chinese).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Arabic dialectology lacks methodological studies generally (Versteegh, 1997); however the studies of Behnstedt & Woidich (1994, 1988, 1987, 1985) have to some extent coverage in some of the Arabic dialects specifically Egyptian dialects. Lebanese dialect, on the other hand, was investigated and documented by Fleisch (1974). Behnstedt (1992, 1985) published dialect atlas produced by Syrian and Yemeni regions, but 'the fact remains that large parts of the *Arabophone* area are literally *terra incognita* (unknown land), in particular the Arabian Peninsula' (Versteegh, 1997: 147).

As far as Yemeni context is concerned, Yemeni dialects have, until quite recently, received little scholarly attention. Versteegh (1997: 170) stated obviously that 'the dialects of Yemen used to be one of the most neglected topics in Arabic dialect geography'. One of these dialects, which has been neglected, and which lacked documentation, is the YTD. Studies on Arabic dialects in general and Yemeni dialects in particular showed what had been already investigated and what had been

not (see e.g. Al-Fadly, 2007; Nassir, 2007; Al-Hanadwah, 2005; Watson, 1993; Behnstedt, 1992; 1985; Greenman, 1979). As a matter of fact, YTD is one of the most dominant dialects of Yemeni Arabic which has been not investigated sufficiently. Thus, the following section (**1.4**) is formulated on the basis of the gaps discussed and highlighted in the present section, with particular regards to the YTD in Zabid, one of the 26 directorates of Hodeidah city.

As Zabid is the setting of the present study. It has been listed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in the year of 2000. The UNESCO has declared Zabid as a World Heritage Site for its prominent Great Mosque and vestiges of its university but the fact remained that it is at the intellectual and economic margins of modern Yemen (www.Zabid.com). Hence, this directorate is chosen from the other 26 directorates of Hodeidah city to be the place where speech data is obtained from the informants. On the other hand, it is almost considered to be the cradle of the YTD and further it was the historical capital of Yemen from 13th to 15th century (Ibid).

Al-Hanadwah (2005) maintained that the linguistic and grammatical sources in Yemen are insufficient; even those being published are yet not enough to be taken as valid grammatical and linguistic references. Based on this argumentation, he, as a Yemeni linguist, called upon students of higher studies in Yemeni universities, who are specialists in language, to investigate and conduct their studies in this field, to enrich Yemeni intellectual heritage. Accordingly, the present study is an attempt to discover some intellectual aspects in the Yemeni heritage specifically the phonological processes in the YTD.

Al-Mikhlafi (2004) demonstrated some reasons behind the lack of methodological studies of Arabic dialectology. The first and foremost reason is the sacred view of the Arabic linguists in the past towards CAL as they found a great relevance between the Holy Qur'an and CAL. It was this reason that made the Arab linguists neglect methodological studies of Arabic dialects. Another reason which made Arab linguists neglect investigations of Arabic dialects was their concern to achieve the solidarity and union between Arab, since they considered Arabic dialects as one of the intellectual factors that prevent such solidarity (Ibid).

The preceding arguments suggest that there is a need for the application of clear methodology to Arabic dialectology. Thus, the focus of the present study is a phonological analysis and documentation of the YTD based on Autosegmental Phonology Theory, which has never been utilised before for the study of YTD. Most of the past studies (Al-Hanadwah, 2005; Versteegh, 1997; Woidich, 1994, 1988, 1987, 1985; Behnstedt, 1992; 1985; Behnstedt & Fleisch, 1974) investigated the phonological aspects of the Yemeni dialects based on their intuitions; however, the current study is carried out with the support of recorded and fieldwork data from the Tihami context as an evidence to the theoretical aspect. In other words, this study is not solely carried out based on the researcher's intuitions, but utilising different methodologies (see **Chapter 3**).

As mentioned earlier (see subsection **1.2.3**), the phonology of the YTD plays an important role in the phonology of the MSA. In this connection, Habash et al (2005: 18) maintained the following:

> Dialects (Arabic dialects) differ phonologically, lexically, morphologically, and syntactically from one another; many pairs of dialects are mutually unintelligible. In unscripted situations where spoken MSA would normally be required (such as talk shows on TV), speakers usually resort to repeated code-switching between their dialect and MSA, as nearly all native speakers of Arabic are unable to produce sustained spontaneous discourse in MSA.

According to Critchfield (1979: 44), with reference to Arabian dialects, 'there is so great a difference between dialects that members of different groups would understand very little of each other's speech if they adhered to their local tongues'. In this regard, speakers of the YTD use it not only as a home language but they dominantly speak this dialect in everyday activities, dealings, jobs and formal functions; giving it great prestige especially in some media programmes introduced usually in Hodeidah radio station. This indicates the strong influence of the dialect and the self-esteem of its people. In this case, the study of the linguistic aspects of the YTD is not merely of a general interest but would highlight the potentialities of underlying structures and forms which are the objectives of the present study. These objectives are constructed in the following section.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

Having discussed the gaps and lack of methodological studies in Arabic dialectology in the previous section, the present section is concerned with the focus on one of the Arabic dialects, namely, Yemeni Tihami dialect (YTD). The salient aim of the present study is to give a synchronic description (documentation) of the phonology and morphology of the Yemeni Tihami dialect within the domain of Yemeni context in Hodeidah city and its directorate Zabid. Within the framework of Autosegmental Phonology Theory, based on the Feature Geometry model by

Clements (1985), the study attempts to identify, describe and examine the underlying structures (phonological processes and rules) that are involved in yielding contemporary Tihami dialect in the Yemeni context. According to Dobrovolsky & Katamba (1997: 68), although 'the study of phonology attempts to discover general principles that underlie the patterning of sounds in human language', the present study is confined to only certain objectives summarised as follows:

- To examine the nature of consonantal and vowel phonemes in YTD.
- To investigate the distribution of phonemes in YTD.
- To identify and describe the set of possible phonological phenomena in YTD.
- To analyse and explain the phonological processes by using Autosegmental Theory.
- To identify the morphological items (proclitics, enclitics, roots, etc) of YTD.

1.5 Research Questions

Knowing the gaps of the YTD which have been highlighted in the statement of the problem, this section is formulated as merely a reflection of the objectives to systematically achieve the objectives of the study and therefore the findings should give an account for the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of consonantal and vowel phonemes in YTD?
2. What is the distribution of phonemes in YTD?
3. What is the set of possible phonological phenomena in YTD?
4. What are the phonological processes analysed by Autosegmental Theory?
5. What are the morphological items (proclitics, enclitics, roots, etc) of YTD?

1.6 Significance of the Study

It is the task of this section to highlight the gaps in Arabic dialects in order to justify the choice of the present topic of the YTD rather than other dialects.

The dialects of Yemen used to be one of the most neglected topics in Arabic dialect geography (Versteegh, 1997). Therefore, the present study is an attempt to provide some initial investigations on one of the most dominant dialects in Yemeni Arabic, YTD. In fact, the first and foremost significance of the present study is to identify, describe and examine the phonological processes in the YTD as to contribute a greater understanding for academic researchers who are interested in conducting some linguistic studies on Tihami learners in the Yemeni context. Thus, the present study would be utilised and referred to as not only a background for their studies but also a grammatical source of Yemeni Tihami phonology. Consequently, it should be considered a valuable contribution to the Yemeni context for being the first phonological Tihami source of its kind for academicians and researchers. The anticipated data gathered from the study, therefore, would set out some grammatical rules (phonological rules) of the YTD and hence part of the grammar of this dialect would be brought out and given documentation with its own rules.

More importantly, the present study would be an original discovery of some aspects of Yemeni Tihami phonological processes, e.g. nasal homorganic assimilation, deletion, diphthongisation, alternation, etc, which have not been investigated yet.

It is worth to mention here that the role of phonology is very significant in human languages especially to describe 'speech sounds and the way speech sounds can be written down' (Spencer, 1996: 1). Accordingly, the focus of the present study is mainly on the speech sounds of the Tihami people to investigate and analyse the phonological processes as highlighted in the following section **1.7**. It is also hoped that the present study would be fruitful and informative not only to students and researchers in the Yemeni context but also to students and scholars of other disciplines who are looking for information from methodological sources with particular regard to dialectology.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The current study is conducted on the YTD in Yemeni context. It is very important to mention here that Tihami dialect is also spoken by people living in the neighbouring country of Yemen, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, this study is limited to the Tihami people who live in Yemen. More specifically, the setting of the study is Hodeidah city and its directorate Zabid.

The study is limited only to the Tihami people who basically reside in Zabid, one of Hodeidah directorates. The purpose of choosing this related directorate of Hodeidah city is due to the fact that the researcher is able to elicit and observe 'anthropological linguistic and ethnographic data directly' (Bradley, 1979: 23). The present study limits its scope by focusing on the speeches of the Tihami people in the social gatherings in order to collect the corpus for analysis and consequently describe the phonological processes of the YTD. However, some of these Tihami people are chosen as key informants to interview them for checking and verifying data (see

Chapter 3 section **3.5.2**). Both spontaneous speeches and careful ones are focused on during data collection. It should be noted that this study does not attempt to elaborate details of the YTD because of the limited nature of the data.

The phonological processes and rules are the main focus of the present study to be investigated. However, the existence of morphology is included in the investigation since it has an inevitable interaction to phonology as 'there is a symbiotic relationship between the results that build the morphological structure of a word and the phonological rules responsible for the way a word is pronounced' (Katamba, 1993: 89). Jensen (1990: 81) points out 'all morphological operations take place before all phonological rules'. Therefore, the fifth objective of the study is concerning the morphological aspect.

The focus of the respondents is only on the Tihami males rather than females. The females are excluded since the Yemeni society in general and that of Tihami in particular are very conservative. Vanhove (1999) cited in Al-Fadly (2005: 90) 'it is a taboo in Yemeni community for a foreigner (stranger) to speak with a woman or to tape-record her voice'. Therefore, access to female gender is not facile and accordingly due to these social restrictions and for the safety of the researcher all the samples of the study are males only. In fact, the present study is an exploratory and descriptive one in which the gender factor might not be necessary in all qualitative studies (Neuman, 2003 & Babbie, 2005); so it is not necessary to include female data in the present study since it is qualitative and an exploratory one.

1.8 Rationale of the Study

Dialects of the Arabian Peninsula in general and Yemeni dialects in particular remained the least-known dialects in the world (see e.g. Versteegh, 1997) which reveal a wide gap in literature in the field of sociolinguistics. Hence, the present investigation tackles one of the most dominant Arabic dialects spoken in the Yemeni context namely the YTD attempting to add some initial contribution to Arabic literature in this field. In fact, the present investigation is conducted from the belief that there is 'a wide gap' in this area (Ibid). Besides, it is considered the first phonological study on the Yemeni Tihami dialect since the survey of Greenman in 1979 as Versteegh (1997) explicitly indicated that Greenman (1979) is the only scholar who sketched the dialects of the Central Tihama; yet as a preliminary survey. Like the previous studies of Al-Fadly (2007) on the Mehri Qishn dialect, Nassir (2007) on the dialect of Wisab and Al-Hanadwah, (2005), the present study will be added to them as a significant contribution to the Yemeni dialects.

The main rationale to conduct the present study is due to the fact that there is a serious lack in finding out a linguistic source/reference that can be referred to know the background of the YTD. Hence, the present study would be a reference for researchers to fall back while attempting their studies on Tihami learners with regard to the phonological and morphological aspects. Therefore, the present study would be the first of its kind to describe and examine the phonology of the YTD.

It is important to mention here that the present study is a descriptive one since the major purpose is to identify, describe and examine the phonological processes of the YTD after systematic observations (Babbie, 2005). It is, on the other hand, an

exploratory study as the researcher attempts to provide some initial investigation in this field. Since it is an exploratory study, the researcher could 'find at least approximate answers to some' of the phonological rules of the YTD (Babbie, 2005: 89). According to Babbie (Ibid) an exploratory study has the following features:

a. to satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for better understanding,
b. to test feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study, and
c. to develop the methods to be employed in any subsequent study.

However, the third feature mentioned above is not the aim of this study since the purpose is only to sketch the phonological processes and rules of the YTD; hoping that further studies pursue on developing the methods and also covering the gaps that might not be looked into in the present investigation.

1.9 Thesis Structure

The present study is organised into five chapters. The organisation of the remaining chapters is as follows:

Chapter 2 surveys some previous studies which have addressed themselves to the description of the phonological processes (e.g., Tajul Aripin, 2000; Teoh, 1994; Asmah, 1991; Zaharani, 1991; Bradley, 1979; Greenman, 1979). The chapter also reviews the literature of previous dialectal studies. It starts first reviewing the past studies on world languages and dialects (non-Arabic dialectal studies) and progresses to the Arabic ones. Finally, the conclusion of the chapter is given.

Chapter 3 is designed to highlight how the methodology of the present study is systematically conducted. It discusses the objectives, techniques and research design of the study (e.g. Naturalistic/ Ethnographical Inquiry approach) providing the diagram of the procedural steps of the research design. It rationalises the adopted theory of Autosegmental and Feature Geometry, approaches and models of the present study. A detailed description of the pilot study, samples and sample selection of the study, setting of the study, informants and their background, variable selection, instruments, ethical considerations, measuring equipments, procedures of data collection, secondary data and the method of the procedures of the data analysis are provided. Following that, the chapter addresses issues related to some concepts and models of phonology and approaches to phonological descriptions such as Autosegmental Theory by John Goldsmith (1976, 1990) and Feature Geometry by Clements (1985) which are adopted and utilised in the analysis of the present study. Finally the chapter introduces the diagram of the conceptual framework of the study as blueprint steps and procedures to be followed while conducting the study. Ultimately, the conclusion of the chapter is given.

Chapter 4 represents the core of the present study. It includes a detailed analysis of the data obtained from the informants in the YTD context. This chapter discusses the phonological system of the YTD and examines the phonological processes. Processes like nasal homorganic assimilation, deletion, dipthongisation, alternation, etc. have been fully explained with examples within the framework of Autosegmental theory based on the Feature Geometry model to demonstrate that features are grouped into classes (Clements, 1985) and segments are no longer bundles of unordered features but feature trees (trees of hierarchically organised

features). The chapter slightly highlights the sound system of CAL (e.g., place and manner of articulation) for the purpose to illustrate the phonological processes that YTD undergoes and on the other hand provides extensive explanations of the YTD sound system. Phonological rules and motivations of these rules are explained in detail.

The significance of distinctive features of the YTD consonant phonemes is illustrated to investigate and analyse the phonological processes, and describe forms undergoing these processes. The syllable structure of the YTD and the Onset-rhyme model is comprehensively demonstrated with examples to show the change and contrast in the onset and coda of the two systems as well as the phonological process that the YTD undergoes. Following this, the three types of the syllable structure (e.g, light syllable, heavy syllable and super-heavy syllable) of the YTD are autosegmentally explained and illustrated by diagrams based on the Onset-rhyme model.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion of the study in which a summary of the present study, revisiting objectives and research questions, some conclusions of the results, an account of the dissertation contributions, recommendations and suggestions for further studies, pedagogical implications and remaining issues are stated. Moreover, some suggestions and recommendations on how students from Tihami background overcome difficulties while learning English and other foreign languages are included. The chapter finally presents a conclusion of the chapter.

1.10 Conclusion

This introductory chapter described the background of the study. It introduced the statement of the problem of the study, the rationale and significance of the study and the scope and limitation of the study. The research questions and objectives are stated. The next chapter will review the past studies that have to do with dialectal studies.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the previous studies that were carried out on several languages and dialects in general, and dialects of Arabic and in particular Arabic dialects spoken in Yemen. The chapter discusses the existing literature concerning the gaps in research on Yemeni dialects to justify the significance of carrying out the present study. The chapter presents the past studies on Malaysian dialects as models, and proceeds to Arabian dialects and then goes on to Yemeni dialects. Some past studies on certain dialects from around the world are also touched upon to review the significance of investigating dialects. This is followed by a summary of these studies. Eventually, the conclusion of the chapter is given.

2.2 Previous Studies on Languages and/or Dialects

This section and its subsections attempt a critical discussion of the previous studies carried out on world languages and/or dialects. There are a number of studies which have been conducted to sketch the phonology as well as morphology of dialects spoken by specific people (see e.g., Tajul Aripin, 2000; Zaharani, 1998, 1991; Teoh, 1994; Asmah, 1991; Bradley, 1979). However, a paucity of dialectal studies has been done in the Yemeni context. To the best of the researcher's knowledge and his search in the library and internet, the literature shows only a few scholars who conducted their dialectal studies in the Yemeni context, namely, Nassir (2007); Al-Fadly (2007); Watson (1993); Behnstedt (1987) and Greenman (1979). Nassir (2007) conducted his study on the dialect of Wisab and Al-Fadly (2007)