

2. Phonology

2.1. Syllable and Morpheme Structure

All syllables fit the formula: (C) (H) V (V) (C) (t)

where C stands for 'consonant' (as listed in 2.2);

V stands for 'vowel' (as listed in 2.3, the second of

two V's in the same syllable always being a copy of the first);

H stands for either /h/ or /ʔ/;

t stands for the feminine suffix /t/, which may be added either after vowels (/k^waa't/ 'a sister') or to consonants (/yàas-t/ 'a female dog').

Although syllables may or may not start with a consonant, words must start with either C or H, as defined above.

The restrictions on the underlying phonological structure of morphemes are slightly different. In this structure the following occur, none of which are permitted in the surface phonology:

(i) an initial preconsonantal nasal (present in surface forms in earlier stages of the language, according to Reinisch, 1893:10), which is pronounced only after a prefix vowel (e.g., -ngàal-,⁴ 'one,' underlying both /ʔuu-ngàal/ 'the one' and /gaal/ 'one');

(ii) a postvocalic /h/ or /ʔ/, which prevents the vowel-lengthening otherwise caused by the addition of the suffixes, as described in 2.3), but which then appears in the superficial structure before the vowel which it followed in the underlying structure (e.g., -rih- 'see,' in /rhi-t-à/ 'she saw,' and -baʔ- 'lie,' in /bʔa-t-à/ 'she lay');

(iii) two adjacent initial consonants (e.g., -ktàab- 'book'). Where no preceding vowel is provided by a prefix (e.g., /ʔuu-ktàab/ 'the book'), an epenthetic /i/ is inserted (e.g., /kitàab/ 'a book').⁶

If two vowels are adjacent, the first is made long (if it is not already long), and a palatal glide [y] is added (e.g., /daa-aa'k/ 'your men,' pronounced [da:ya:k]). The palatal glide will not be shown in the transcription, but the lengthening of the first vowel will.

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