The phonology of Colloquial Egyptian Arabic intonation
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The aim of this study is three-fold: to present a description of the phonology of Colloquial Egyptian Arabic (CEA) intonation, to test the validity of the analytical framework claimed by Rifaat (2003), and to verify the assumptions, also provided by Rifaat (2003) about the intonation of Arabic.

The analytical framework provided by Rifaat (2003) for the analysis of Modern Standard Arabic intonation (MSA), which is adopted here, is based on the Tone-Sequence (TS) analysis (Ladd, 1983) working under the tenet of Autosegmental-Metrical phonology of which Pierrehumbert’s is the most influential (Ladd, 1996). The modifications to the TS framework provided by Rifaat (2003) are also adopted and their suitability to analyze CEA intonation is examined.

The speech material is composed of a ten-hour corpus recorded from the Egyptian radio and television. The corpus contains several styles of CEA from the most to the least formal. It was recorded directly from the satellite broadcast of Egyptian Radio and television to the computer. The speech material was then digitized and analyzed using PRAAT version 4.2.21 by Paul Boresma and David Weenink of The Institute of Phonetic Sciences, University of Amsterdam.

The results showed that the intonation of CEA is similar to that of MSA with regard to pitch accent types, peak features of accents, and the redundancy of boundary tones.

There are four pitch accents H, HL, LH, and L. H accent occurs in all positions except tune finally. HL occurs only tune finally in either poly-stress or mono-stress group tunes. LH occurs either tune medially at phrase boundary or tune finally. L accent is more frequent than it is in MSA. In other words, the phenomenon of de-accentuation is widespread in CEA and can be considered as the major difference between CEA and MSA.

Pitch accents are described in terms of peak features. H is assumed to be the default or the unmarked accent. A shift of the peak on an imaginary horizontal axis would cause the accent to be either HL or LH, while the shift of the peak on a vertical axis would cause to be either an L or H.

Further details about the intonational phrasing, pitch range, and trend lines are delineated.

Finally, the study is concluded with the statement of the implications of the analysis of CEA together with that of MSA on a general theory of Arabic intonation.
References

