

## Biliteral Approach to Weak Verbs in Arabic

**Abdellah Chekayri**  
**Tobias Scheer**

Curiously enough, no glide ever appears on the surface in measure I of Classical Arabic hollow verbs, *al-fiʕl al-ajwaf*, (glide in C2). Also, they possess only one single vowel, to the effect that each hollow verb follows that pattern CVi(Vi)C-suffix, e.g. *sir-tu*, *xif-tu*, *lum-tu*, *Tul-tu* (ipf act 1sg) or *ya-siir-u*, *ya-xaaf-u*, *ya-luum-u*, *ya-Tuul-u* (ipf act 3m sg). Neither of the two properties mentioned are shared by the two other categories of weak verbs that involve glides, i.e. assimilated (glide in C1, e.g. *wajada* “he found”) and defective (glide in C3, e.g. *danawnaa* “we were close”). Here, glides sometimes appear on the surface, and two vowels can be distinguished.

We argue for a general approach to weak verbs (including deaf verbs of the C1C2C2 class, e.g. *madad* “to extend”) whereby only two consonants are recorded in the lexicon. Traditionally (both in analyses of Arabic grammarians and generativists), glides are assumed to be present in the lexicon. According to analogy developed by AG, *qaala*, *qultu*, *saara*, *sirtu*, etc. are derived from *qawala*, *qawaltu*, *sayara*, *sayartu*, etc. respectively. Grammar, in this view, defines in which contexts glides are deleted. In order to get the phonetic representation, according to Arab Grammarians (AG), /*qawaltu*/ and /*bayaʕtu*/ are subject to the rules summarized in Bohas (1982: 283) as follows:

1. Underlying representation.....	/ <i>qawaltu</i> /	/ <i>bayaʕtu</i> /
2. Scheme change .....	<i>qawultu</i>	<i>bayiʕtu</i>
3. Vowel truncation .....	<i>qwultu</i>	<i>byiʕtu</i>
4. Vowel transfer .....	<i>quwltu</i>	<i>biyʕtu</i>
5. Glide elision .....	<i>qultu</i>	<i>biʕtu</i>
6. Phonetic representation .....	<i>qultu</i> “I said”	<i>biʕtu</i> “I sold”

In contrast, in our biliteral approach to weak verbs, we consider that at the phonological level, there is no strong reason to believe that [*qaala*, *qultu*, and *qiila*] and [*saara*, *sirtu*, and *siira*], are derived from a tri-radical root [*qwl*] and [*syr*] respectively. Instead of giving many rules to reach the attested output form, we consider that grammar creates glides in certain contexts.

We show that glides come into being for two (and only two) reasons: 1) in order to satisfy the template and 2) in order to avoid a hiatus. Glides are not created out of nothing. Rather, we demonstrate that the phonological process that creates them is apophonic in the sense of Guerssel & Lowenstamm (1996). Their derivational source is always an adjacent vowel (V1 (*flexional vowel*) for assimilated, V2 (*lexical vowel: Vlex*) for hollow and defective verbs). In this sense, our analysis is anchored in the body of work that evidences the role of apophonic mechanisms in derivational activity not only in Arabic but in other languages as well (e.g. Ségéral 1995, 2000, Chekayri & Scheer 1996, in press, Ségéral & Scheer 1998).

When weak verbs are biliterals, then V2 and the suffix are in contact in defective items, while V1 and V2 are directly adjacent in hollow verbs

We show that even though the difference between defective and hollow verbs seems great, it is in fact predictable from the general principles that govern templates and hiatuses in Classical Arabic. That is, our analysis derives all deviating properties of hollow verbs from 1) the general phonology of Classical Arabic and 2) the only real peculiarity of hollow verbs, i.e. their biliteral status. Unlike other analyses, our account does not invoke any special tool whose only *raison d'être* is to account for the special hollow phenomenology.

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