

Cambridge Elements

Elements in Phonetics

edited by

David Deterding

Universiti Brunei Darussalam

THE PHONETICS OF TARIFIT

*Variation and Change in a Moroccan
Amazigh Language*

Mohamed Afkir

University of California, Davis

Georgia Zellou

University of California, Davis



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-66124-9 — The Phonetics of Tarifit
Mohamed Afkir, Georgia Zellou
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009661249
DOI: 10.1017/9781009661218

© Mohamed Afkir and Georgia Zellou 2025

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take
place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009661218

First published 2025

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-009-66124-9 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-009-66126-3 Paperback
ISSN 2634-1689 (online)
ISSN 2634-1670 (print)

Additional resources for this publication at www.cambridge.org/Afkir_Zellou

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain,
accurate or appropriate.

For EU product safety concerns, contact us at Calle de José Abascal, 56, 1º, 28003
Madrid, Spain, or email eugpsr@cambridge.org

The Phonetics of Tarifit

Variation and Change in a Moroccan Amazigh Language

Elements in Phonetics

DOI: 10.1017/9781009661218
First published online: November 2025

Mohamed Afkir
University of California, Davis
Georgia Zellou
University of California, Davis

Author for correspondence: Mohamed Afkir, mafkir@ucdavis.edu

Abstract: Tarifit is an Amazigh language spoken in northern Morocco. This Element provides an overview of some aspects of the phonetics of this under-studied language, focusing on patterns of variation and ongoing sound changes. An acoustic analysis of productions by native speakers is provided, comparing clear and fast speaking styles, focusing on the phonetic realization of vowels in Tarifit: three full vowels /a, i, and u/, and variation in the realization of schwa. The analysis reveals phonetically vowelless words in Tarifit: vowelless productions are a rare, but are allowable variants of some words (especially those containing multiple voiceless obstruents). Another ongoing sound change is explored: post-vocalic /r/ deletion. We find higher rates of r-dropping by female speakers. A perception study investigating native speakers' discrimination of words is presented. This Element discusses what the findings have for models of phonetic variation, individual differences in language production, and sound change theory.

Keywords: Tarifit, Amazigh languages, Indigenous language documentation, phonetics, speech production and perception

© Mohamed Afkir and Georgia Zellou 2025

ISBNs: 9781009661249 (HB), 9781009661263 (PB), 9781009661218 (OC)
ISSNs: 2634-1689 (online), 2634-1670 (print)

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Brief Phonological Sketch	7
3	Materials for Phonetic Research on Tarifit	16
4	Acoustic Analysis of Tarifit	28
5	The Perception of Tarifit Words	64
6	Future Research	73
	References	79