

# Arabic

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There are many tendentious issues in proposing a text in any form of Standard or Classical Arabic in spoken form. We will not justify the present text more than to say that the speaker was born in Safad, North Palestine, lived and was educated in Beirut from age 8 to 15, subsequently studied and taught in Damascus, studied phonetics in Scotland and since then has resided in Scotland and Kuwait.

It seems widely accepted that there are two dominant (prestigious) dialect centers of gravity for Spoken Arabic: first, that of Al-Shaam (greater Syria, from the Mediterranean coast to the eastern edge of the Fertile Crescent) and, second, Egypt (focussed on Al-Azhar Mosque and University in Cairo). This is not to disregard the status of the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq or other areas as the sources of models, but the matter remains to be adequately investigated.

## Consonants

	Bilab.	Lab.dent	Dental	Alv.	Postalv.	Retrofl.	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyng.	Glottal
Plosive	b		t d					k	q		ʔ
Nasal	m		n								
Trill				r							
Fricative		f	θ ð	s z	ʃ			x ɣ		ħ ʕ	h
Approximant							j	w			
Lateral				l							

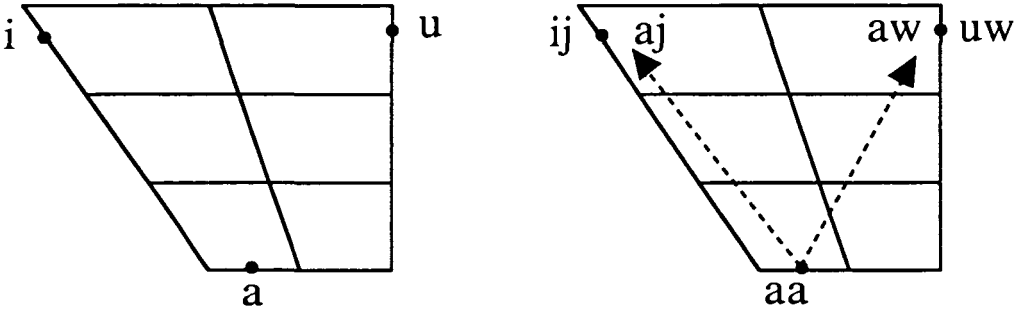
Pharyngealized consonants: tˤ dˤ sˤ ʔˤ lˤ

Affricate: ɟ

b	balla	'recovered'	t	tijn	'figs'	k	kalb	'dog'
m	malla	'got bored'	d	dijn	'religion'	q	qalb	'heart'
x	xilaaf	'dispute'	n	nadda	'released'	ʔ	saʔala	'asked'
f	dafara	'stank'	ɣ	ɣilaaf	'cover' (n)	ʕ	saʕala	'coughed'
θ	daθara	'covered'	s	saara	'walked'	ʃ	ʃadda	'doubling mark'
j	jaraqaan	'jaundice'	z	zaara	'visited'	ɟ	ɟadda	'grandmother'
sˤ	sˤarf	'exchange'	h	huruwb	'escape' (n)	ħ	ħuruwb	'wars'
ðˤ	ðˤarf	'envelope'	r	rawʕa	'splendor'	l	lawʕa	'sorrow'
			tˤ	xitˤaab	'letter'	w	wasˤl	'receipt'
			dˤ	xidˤaab	'henna'	lˤ	alˤlˤaa	'god'

## Vowels

i	ʕidd	‘promise!’		a	ʕadd	‘counted’		u	ʕudd	‘come back!’
ij	ʕijd	‘feast’		aa	ʕaadd	‘came back’		uw	ʕuwd	‘lute’
aj	ʕajn	‘eye’						aw	ʕawd	‘return’



## Stress

Stress within Arabic words falls on the final heavy syllable of the morpheme, disregarding suffixes. A heavy syllable is defined as having either a long vowel or a (C)VCC structure. In words with no heavy syllable the matter is still to be investigated for spoken Modern Standard Arabic, and it is assumed that the stress patterns operating in the background Colloquial Arabic of the speaker will operate.

## Syllabification and the determiner [al-]

The assimilation of the consonant of the definite article to following [+ coronal] segments is shown in the transcription. The vowel is assimilated to the final vowel of the preceding word, if any. Since word division is shown according to orthographic conventions, we have left out the vowel of the determiner in such cases. The actual realisation is, of course, continuous.

## Conventions

/t,k/ are aspirated. /tʕ/ is unaspirated. /tʕ,dʕ,sʕ,ðʕ/ are Retracted Tongue Root, involving simultaneous pharyngealization and greater or lesser degrees of velarization. The convenient phonological term within Arabic phonetic studies is ‘emphasis/emphatic’. These consonants exert a strong co-articulatory effect on all sounds in preceding and following syllables in a given lexemes. This is not blocked by labials, the labialized /ʃ/, and /r/. Only /j/ blocks the process. /ʕ/ is a Retracted Tongue Root glottal stop. This realization is supported by Gairdner (1925), Al Ani (1970) and Käster (1981) as well as extensive observation of a range of speakers from different regional origins residing in Kuwait at present (1990). Nowhere have we observed a pharyngeal fricative. /x/ is accompanied by uvular trill. Geminate consonants in word-final position in pre-pausal realisation have an incipient syllable onset with [ə] e.g /ʕadd/ → [ʕad-də], where - represents a syllable boundary. In context they are realised without this feature.

The primary vowel allophones are conditioned by the presence or absence of neighbouring emphatics in the same word and by word-final position for non-emphatic

contexts. /a/ has three main allophones: [ɑ] before Retracted Tongue Root consonants, [ɐ] before word boundary, and [a] elsewhere, taking phonological length into account. Length is neutralised in open syllables. /i/ and /ij/ become [i] before Retracted Tongue Root and pharyngeal consonants. This may be more retracted than a high central unrounded vowel, reaching towards [ɤ]. In most contemporary colloquial dialects there is no phonological opposition between [i] and [u]. /u/ and /uw/ become [u] and [ɯ] before Retracted Tongue Root and pharyngeal consonants. In word final position the length opposition is neutralised.

Points of particular interest in the sound system include:

1. The 'dzim', which is here pronounced as a voiced lenis palato-alveolar affricate (Gairdner, 1925:23; see however Kästner, 1981:65, where it is described as a fricative).
2. The 'ð<sup>s</sup>aa?', which is here pronounced /ð<sup>s</sup>/ 'a voiced dental fricative with tongue root retraction and concomitant pharyngealization and velarization'. See Kästner, 1981:62ff; and in contrast Gairdner, 1925:21.
3. The 'ʕajn', which is realised as a pharyngealised glottal stop (see also Kästner 1981:49, Al-Ani, 1970:62-71 and Gairdner, 1925:28-29).

There are various different reflexes of these sounds in the present day spoken dialects of Arabic, and in the phonetic descriptions of past dialects, which it is irrelevant to pursue here.

## References

- AL-ANI, S. H. (1970). *Arabic Phonology: An Acoustical and Physiological Investigation*. The Hague: Mouton.
- GAIRDNER, W. H. T. (1925). *The Phonetics of Arabic*. London: Oxford University Press.
- KÄSTNER, H. (1981). *Phonetik und Phonologie des modernen Hocharabisch*. Leipzig: Verlag Enzyklopädie.

## Transcription of recorded passage

kaanat rijhu ʃʃamaali tataɕaadalɔ wa ʃʃamsa fij ʔajjin minhumaa kaanat ʔaqwaa min alʔuxraa, wa ʔið bi-musaafirin jatʔluʔu mutalaffiʕan bi-ʕabaaʔatin samijka. fa tafaqataa ʕalaa ʕtibaari ssaabiqi fij ʔiɕbaari lmusaafiri ʕalaa xalʕi ʕabaaʔatihi lʔaqwaa. ʕasʕafati rijhu ʃʃamaali bi-ʔaqsʕaa ma statʕaaʔat min quwwa. wa laakin kullumaa zdaada lʕasʕf | izdaada lmusaafiru tadaθθuran biʕabaaʔatih, ʔilaa ʔan ʔusqitʕa fij jadi rrijh fa taxallat ʕan muhaawalatihaa. baʕdaʔiðin satʕaʔati ʃʃamsu bi-difʔihaa, fa maakaana min almusaafiri ʔillaa ʔan xalaʕa ʕabaaʔatahu ʕalaa ttauw. wa haakaða idʕtʕurat rijhu ʃʃamaali ʔilaa liʕtiraafi biʔanna ʃʃamsa kaanat hija lʔaqwaa