

SERIES EDITOR JAVIER MUÑOZ-BASOLS

تعلم اللغة العربية
الأسلوب الصحيح في تفادي القبيح

**SPEED UP YOUR
ARABIC**
STRATEGIES TO AVOID COMMON ERRORS

SEBASTIAN MAISEL



Speed Up Your Arabic

Pronunciation, spelling, the concept of roots and patterns, sentence structure, numbers and idiomatic phrases are just some of the areas that cause confusion for students of Arabic. Learning how to avoid the common errors that arise repeatedly in these areas is an essential step in successful language learning.

Speed Up Your Arabic is a unique and innovative resource that identifies and explains the most commonly made errors, enabling students to learn from their mistakes and enhance their understanding of the Arabic language.

Each of the nine chapters focuses on a grammatical category where English speakers typically make mistakes in Arabic. Each chapter is divided into sections that classify the concepts and errors into subcategories. Full explanations are provided throughout with clear, comprehensive examples and exercises to help the learner gain an in-depth understanding of Arabic grammar and usage.

Key features:

- carefully selected grammar topics and examples based on the most commonly made errors
- comprehensive explanations of the most difficult grammar points help learners gain an in-depth understanding of Arabic grammar and usage
- exercises throughout reinforce learning and link theory to practice
- a complete answer key, making it ideal for self-study
- a glossary of grammatical terms, an Arabic–English glossary and a bibliography to aid learning
- useful drills and listening samples available for free download at <http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415660556/>

Suitable both for classroom use and self-study, *Speed Up Your Arabic* is the ideal resource for all intermediate learners of Arabic wishing to refine their language skills.

Sebastian Maisel is Associate Professor for Arabic and Middle East Studies at Grand Valley State University, USA.

SPEED UP YOUR LANGUAGE SKILLS

SERIES EDITOR: Javier Muñoz-Basols, *University of Oxford, UK*

The *Speed Up Your Language Skills* series publishes innovative, high quality textbooks focusing on common errors as an effective tool to improve one's skills in a foreign language. Such errors are often either driven by linguistic transfer from English or caused by common misperceptions about the grammatical structure of a foreign language.

The primary objectives of the series are to explain and illustrate in context the most common errors made by English-speaking students in a foreign language and to classify them in easy-to-reference categories. Students can thus learn the appropriate usage of words and expressions and understand the reasons why they persistently make the same mistakes. The inclusion of exercises, shortcuts, mnemonic devices and much-needed strategies, not usually seen in conventional grammar books, facilitates vocabulary acquisition and mastery of essential grammatical elements.

Books in the series are intended as primary or supplementary texts at the intermediate and advanced levels. Due to its self-explanatory approach and user-friendly format, the series is also recommended for self-learners who wish to "speed up" their language skills.

Available titles in the series:

Speed Up Your Chinese

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Speed Up Your Arabic

Strategies to avoid common errors

تعلّم اللغة العربية

الأساليب الصحيحة في تفادي الأخطاء القبيحة

Sebastian Maisel



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To my girls: Shannon, Fiona, Sophia and Cornelia

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Introduction

Speed Up Your Arabic is designed to help non-native students of Arabic to reach a higher level of proficiency, at the same time refining their critical language skills. The major aspects of Arabic syntax and morphology are illuminated, highlighting areas problematic for lower-level students, especially common errors. Not surprisingly, students of all levels commit similar mistakes when trying to understand the basic structures and functions of Arabic words, phrases and sentences. Based on my experience of teaching Arabic to different levels, I have found that students carry with them common errors picked up at the beginner and early intermediate stages, mostly in the areas of pronunciation, spelling, and word and sentence structure. Although nowadays an immense pool of language material is available online, and there are textbooks for each level, I have found that no resource specifically addresses these common mistakes. Little or no help is available to reinforce fundamental grammatical concepts and vocabulary practice.

Highlighting these false conceptions and concurrently offering practical solutions and training to avoid such errors are the main objectives of this book. These common errors are too often ignored, which is why they are persistently made. This book is intended to be used as a practical supplement in the classroom or for self-study.

The book is structured to gradually expose the student to fundamental concepts of Arabic, starting with the correct pronunciation and spelling of the Arabic alphabet. This is followed by an introduction to the core aspects of Arabic syntax and morphology and culminates with original native idioms, key words and phrases. Each chapter provides examples of correct usage as well as common mistakes made by non-native learners, which helps to refine the main grammatical message. Additional notes, tips and mnemonic devices are included to highlight the learning outcome: recognizing and correcting common errors.

Each section of the book uses examples of correct and incorrect usage to illustrate the issue. These examples come directly from the classroom and

represent the most common errors language learners repeatedly commit. After these errors have been identified and explained the book provides strategies and exercises to avoid them in the future. If appropriate, comparisons with English grammar are made. Making these associations allows the student to better understand the general linguistic concepts which both Arabic and English are built upon. Data was collected over a period of several years in Arabic language classes for elementary and intermediate levels at universities in the USA and Germany.

Chapter 1 deals with issues of (not) properly pronouncing Arabic sounds. Saying something wrong in a foreign language is not a terrible thing, but pronouncing something wrongly can lead to embarrassing moments. Too often a thick accent is kept for ever. Arabic has a few unique sounds with no equivalents in the English alphabet. Also, two Arabic words may only differ in one tiny short vowel, which makes proper pronunciation even more important. This chapter contains solutions to the problem of how to sound like a native speaker and to avoid English slang in Arabic.

Chapter 2 reviews the Arabic alphabet and looks at common errors in spelling and writing. Although computerized text production is becoming more frequent, there are still many situations in daily life when a spell checker is not available. This chapter reviews all aspects of writing and spelling, such as the alphabet, silent letters and hamza, and enables students to improve their writing skills.

Chapter 3 reviews the most important tool for learning Arabic, the concept of root and pattern. Comprehending this system is like a life vest for you: even if you don't know or remember the word you are trying to say, you can create it on the spot. You may want to argue about the way the tool is taught, but after learning it correctly, you will appreciate it greatly.

Chapter 4 looks at the largest group of words: nouns and adjectives, and focuses on avoiding agreement errors. The importance of gender, number, state and case is stressed, which are often different from English grammar. Students repeatedly begin by relying on their native syntax, often translating literally and word-by-word into the target language. The segments of the iDaafa are often switched and the wrong word is marked with the article. Generally, the wrong use of the definite article is a major error. But in Arabic it all starts with a simple noun-adjective phrase that can be extended by adding attributes, verbs, prefixes and even completed sentences. And all of these pieces need to agree with the main noun of the sentence or phrase.

Chapter 5 covers the case endings, or declension of Arabic nouns and adjectives, which is considered the biggest challenge for native and non-native speakers. Using the case endings, or the i'raab, however, means to speak Arabic properly. Although some believe that the i'raab is not for the intermediate level, in this chapter students will learn how important it can be and how to master it. With a little help from English grammar and simple linguistics,

students will quickly realize that i'raab can be fun. And it is an easy way to impress native speakers.

Chapter 6 covers various aspects of the Arabic verb. Although Arabic recognizes the concept of sentences without verbs, intimate familiarity with verb conjugations in different tenses and modes is a sign of higher proficiency. While the sheer challenge of using verbs frequently is already difficult for non-native speakers, they also have to internalize original Arabic concepts about verbs in order to avoid sounding like a non-native speaker. The absence of an Arabic equivalent of the verb “to be” is another hurdle for beginners. How to use verbs properly and with confidence is thus the main theme of this chapter.

Chapter 7 clarifies another difficult area for students of Arabic: word order and sentence structure. Grammatically, this is the most distant field when comparing English and Arabic syntax. Producing longer sentences and sentences of different types, such as relative or conditional sentences, indicates a higher level of proficiency. In order to reach this level, students must give up English grammatical concepts and actively use unfamiliar structures. It is obvious that lower-level students struggle with this and often confuse the various sentence types and word orders. This chapter helps to set the record straight and put the sentence structure right.

Chapter 8 deals only with numbers. Simple understanding and even memorizing of some Arabic numbers is a small step; however, the correct use of cardinal and ordinal numbers becomes a serious undertaking which many students struggle with. On the other hand, it is crucial to know your numbers when doing banking, finance, selling, buying or measuring things. Unfortunately, students regularly mix the two varieties of numbers and confuse important agreement rules, thus the need to include this special review of numbers.

Chapter 9 looks at key words, idiomatic expressions and other important connectors, particles and phrases. The field of Arabic semantics and vocabulary is very large. Communication, both oral and written, includes many stereotypical phrases and ready-to-use expressions. Because Arabic has only very few cognates, the issue of false friends deserves less attention than the proper knowledge and use of key words, sayings, proverbs and other particles. In fact, false friends are very rare; they only occur through loan translations, usually from English.

However, it is advisable to practice these concepts with native speakers, instructors, tutors, friends and peers. Soon enough you will find that they commit mistakes too, because nobody is perfect:

جَلَّ مَنْ لَا يُخْطِئُ

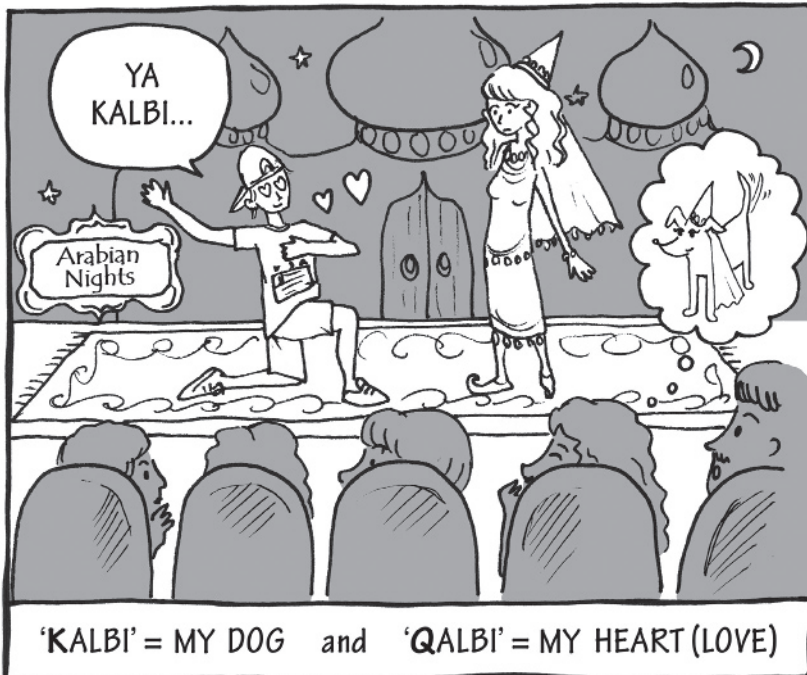
An answer key to the exercises can be found at the end of the book. Several online drills and listening samples are available for free download at <http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415660556/>.

1

Pronunciation

النطق

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2 Speed Up Your Arabic

The correct pronunciation of Arabic sounds and letters is a hurdle for many novice learners of Arabic. If not taught properly at the beginner's stage, mispronunciations carry on to the next level. Repetitive practice with the instructor, peers, Arab friends and relatives is essential. In addition, students should familiarize themselves with Arabic sounds by listening to radio programs, watching films, and interacting with native speakers.

1 The letters

The Arabic alphabet includes 34 phonemes: 28 consonants, three long vowels and three short vowels in addition to two diphthongs. Their correct pronunciation can be achieved easily, because with the exception of three letters, all of the sounds are also found in the English alphabet.

1.1 Equivalent letters

س	ز	ر	ذ	د	ج	ث	ت	ب	أ
siin	zay	raa	dhaal	daal	jiim	thaa	taa	baa	alif
s	z	r	dh	d	j	th	t	b	a
و	ي	هـ	ن	م	ل	ك	ف	ش	
waw	yaa	haa	nuun	miim	laam	kaaf	faa	shiin	
w	y	h	n	m	l	k	f	sh	

Emphatic letters

ص	ض	ط	ظ
Saad	Daad	Taa	Dhaa
S	D	T	Dh

These four letters are called emphatic letters and their pronunciation is the same as their corresponding English letters; however, the difference is in the pronunciation of the surrounding vowels, which become darker and more hollow.

Examples:

س - ص

Arabic letter	Saad ص	siin س
Arabic sound example	صار	سار
Transliteration	Saar	saar
English sound example	saw	sad

د - ض

Arabic letter	ض Daad	د daal
Arabic sound example	ضباب	دباب
Transliteration	Dabaab	dabbaab
English sound example	dark	dad

ت - ط

Arabic letter	ط Taa	ت taa
Arabic sound example	طابع	تابع
Transliteration	Taabi'	taabi'
English sound example	tall	tame

ذ - ظ

Arabic letter	ظ Dhaa	ذ dhaal
Arabic sound example	ظليل	ذليل
Transliteration	Dhaliil	dhaliil
English sound example	those	that

1.2 Original Arabic letters

Of the five remaining letters, two are uncommon in English, while three are unique to Arabic.

The letter khaa (خ) is a deep, coarse sound from your throat equal to the Scottish word Loch or the German composer Bach. The letter ghayn (غ) is another "r"-sound, but unlike the raa (ر) that is produced by rolling your tongue, this one is made down in your throat. The sound is often compared to that of gargling. Try this for a while with water and focus on the muscles you use. The sound of ghayn is very close to the French "r" such as in rue or frère.

The three letters that have no English equivalent are:

ق	ع	ح
qaaf	ayn	Haa
q	'	H



Tip: How do you properly pronounce these letters?

The letter Haa or ح is arguably the easiest of the three. Exhale strongly. Make an effort and breathe out some air. Imagine yourself checking your breath when you exhale. Or for those of you who wear glasses and need to clean them quickly: don't you breathe some air onto them? The same effort is needed to pronounce Haa.

4 Speed Up Your Arabic

The letter ayn, or ع, is considered by many to be the hardest letter to pronounce. But unfortunately, it is also a very frequent letter. So, get your throat muscles engaged, press hard to get the air out (through your throat!), open your mouth wide and squeeze out a sound that includes a vowel. Ayn, like hamza, is best pronounced in combination with a vowel. I have also heard another tip: imagine yourself singing a very deep note. Whatever works for you, don't forget to press and open wide.

The letter qaaf, or ق, is essentially just another "k" sound, only from much deeper in your throat. Try saying "kaaf" as low as you can with your mouth wide open. Engage the muscles in your throat! Don't be fooled by the transliteration of the letter with "q". Because the letter is so hard for many people, even Arabs, its pronunciation has changed in many Arabic dialects. In Egypt, Morocco and urban areas of the Levant it is often pronounced like a hamza as a glottal stop, while in rural areas of Jordan and Palestine and in many areas of the Arabian Peninsula it has become a "g" sound.

Examples:

Khaliji (Gulf Arabic)

dageega

miSri (Egyptian)

da'ee'a

MSA

daqeeqa



Exercises



EXERCISE 1. Read the following words containing the Arabic letter ح. Check the correct pronunciation using the website.

صَحِيح	يُحَافِظ	حَاج
بَحَّاح	مُحَمَّد	حُرِّيَّة
نوح	مُحِبُّوب	حَدِيث
مِلْح	نَحْت	حُرُوف
مِنْح	مَحَلّ	حَتَّى



EXERCISE 2. Read the following words containing the Arabic letter ع. Check the correct pronunciation using the website.

شَارِع	مَعْنَا	عَام
فُرُوع	سَاعَة	عَدَد
وَاسِع	فِعْل	العِرَاق
طَوَائِع	أَعْيَاد	عُمَان
إِجْتِمَاع	يَعْمَل	عَوْدَة



EXERCISE 3. Read the following words containing the Arabic letter ق. Check the correct pronunciation using the website.

القاهرة	أقسام	دقائق
قسم	أقارب	لقلق
قمامة	يقول	أحمق
قرية	مُقابلة	فُسْتُق
قَمَر	تَقْرِير	فَرِيق

1.3 Vowels

Modern Standard Arabic has three long vowel sounds, their short equivalents and two diphthongs.

The three long vowels are:

Arabic vowel	ي	و	ا
English pronunciation	ee as in "deer"	oo as in "root"	aa as in "bath"

The three short vowels are:

Written symbol	—	ُ	َ
Short vowel name	كسرة /kasra	ضمة /Damma	فتحة /fatHa
Short vowel sound	i	u	a



Note that the Arabic vowel sounds are not identical to the English vowel sounds. Modern Standard Arabic has only three short and three long vowel sounds, and they are easy to articulate. In the various Arabic dialects additional vowel sounds can be found. Regarding the difference between short and long sounds, compare them to musical notes where you would hold a half note longer than a quarter note. Long vowels are like half notes and thus need to be held longer. This is important because some words can only be distinguished by the length of the vowel.

Examples:

the company car	sayaarat ash-sharika	سيارة الشركة
the company cars	sayaaraat ash-sharika	سيارات الشركة

2 Diphthongs

Diphthongs represent a vowel combination of fatHa – waw – sukuun وّ or fatHa – yaa – sukuun يّ. The English equivalent sound is in "powder" and "eye".

6 Speed Up Your Arabic

Examples:

English	Transliteration	Arabic	English	Transliteration	Arabic
night	layla	لَيْلَة	sleep	nawm	نَوْم
house	bayt	بَيْت	unity	tawHiid	تَوْحِيد
Faysal	FaySal	فَيْصَل	position	mawqi'	مَوْقِع



Exercise



EXERCISE 4. Listen to the words on the website and mark those that contain a diphthong.

Diphthong?	الكلمة	Diphthong?	الكلمة	Diphthong?	الكلمة
_____	ليس	_____	توحيد	_____	الكون
_____	اشترت	_____	خير	_____	مشيت
_____	صحونا	_____	السيطرة	_____	السيرة
_____	الضمير	_____	موجود	_____	بيروت
_____	بحيرة	_____	عيون	_____	ثوم

3 Emphatic letters الحروف المفخمة



See also section 1.1 above.

The following sounds represent a special category of emphatic letters. Although literally the same as the non-emphatic sounds, in their correct pronunciation they affect the vowels surrounding them and make them sound darker. This distinction is very important.



Listening sample 1 (online)

Listen and compare the pronunciation of the emphatic and the non-emphatic letters.

Non-emphatic letter	Emphatic letter	Emphatic (non-emphatic) letter
سَيْف	صَيْف	ص (س)
دباب	ضُّباب	ض (د)
تابع	طابع	ط (ت)
ذليل	ظليل	ظ (ذ)
كابوس	قابوس	ق (ك)



Exercise



EXERCISE 5. Listen to the exercise on the website and mark the words you hear.

قلب	كلب
كابوس	قابوس
مقر	مكان
صديقة	سكينة
تمر	طميم
مطلوب	متهم
دليل	ذلك
العُسر	الْيُسْر
هيئة	حيّة
مقصود	مكسور

4 Sun and moon letters

Arabic is a language in which almost every letter and sound is pronounced, unlike French or Polish, where several letters form a sound cluster. The exceptions to the rule are the sun and moon letters (الحروف الشمسية والقمرية). The differentiation between sun letters and moon letters is confusing at first and surprisingly often forgotten by students. Frequently, sun letters are not pronounced at all. In writing, sun letters are spelled wrong.



Listening sample 2 (online)

Listen to the correct pronunciation of the sun letters:

خطأ	صواب
النطق	al-shajara al-Tawiila
الكتابة	اشجرة اطويلة
	ash-shajara aT-Tawiila
	الشجرة الطويلة

The regular sound of these letters is pronounced differently when following the definite article (أل). In the case of the sun letters, the laam ل of the article أل is omitted and the first letter of the word is lengthened or doubled by the shadda. With the moon letters, this rule does not apply. Here the article is fully articulated, followed by the first letter of the word.

The sun letters are: ن ظ ل س ش ص ض ط ظ ل ن

The moon letters are: ع خ غ ف ق ك م ه و ي

**Tip**

These letters are called sun and moon letters based on the two Arabic sample words “sun” (*shams* شمس) and “moon” (*qamar* قمر). The first letter of *shams* is ش and requires assimilation, while the first letter of *qamar*, ق, does not.

**Mnemonic device**

إِنِّعَ حَجَّكَ وَخَفَ عَمِيْقَهُ

This otherwise meaningless sentence helps you to memorize the moon letters. It consists of the 14 moon letters only.

**Listening sample 3 (online)**

Listen to the correct pronunciation of the sun and moon letters.

الحروف القمرية			الحروف الشمية		
the moon	al-qamar	القمر	the sun	ash-shams	الشمس
the fall	al-khariif	الخريف	the car	as-sayaara	السيارة
philosophy	al-falsafa	الفلسفة	the student	aT-Taalib	الطالب
dignity	al-karaama	الكرامة	the men	ar-rijaal	الرجال
the rose	al-warda	الوردة	the light	an-nuur	النور

**Exercise**

EXERCISE 6. Can you notice the difference between the sun and moon letters? Identify the words that start with a sun letter by writing ش and those starting with a moon letter by writing ق.

_____	الليل	_____	الصباح
_____	الرمال	_____	الكرسي
_____	الديموقراطية	_____	المتحف
_____	الضمير	_____	الديوان
_____	الرياض	_____	السماء
_____	التفاح	_____	الورقة

_____	الطائرة	_____	الزبون
_____	الظلم	_____	الاختبار
_____	العيون	_____	الفنون
_____	السياسة	_____	الذهاب

5 Hamza

The first letter of the alphabet is hamza, or a voiceless glottal stop. Very often, students do not recognize hamza as a real letter. They also frequently confuse the letter ayn with hamza. In order to articulate hamza it needs vowel sounds to create a syllable. If located at the beginning of a word, hamza always “sits” on the letter alif. In unvocalized text it is unclear which short vowel sound it represents (fatHa, Damma or kasra). This makes it seem as if all words start with the letter alif. But as a general rule, Arabic words do not start with a long vowel sound. Whenever you hear a vowel at the beginning of an Arabic word there is a hamza carrying the short vowel. You only have to write the alif with hamza.



For the rules of writing hamza, see Chapter 2.



Listening sample 4 (online)

Listen to these examples of hamza sounds.

ibn	ابن	udhn	أذن	anf	أنف
imaam	إمام	ukht	أخت	adhhab	أذهب
imkaaniya	إمكانية	udkhul	أدخل	alladhi	الذي



Note that all of these words start with a short vowel sound. In writing, this sound is represented by the alif with hamza and a short vowel sound.

The “a” sound and the alif often cause confusion. And it gets a little bit more complicated. There are additional long “a” sounds besides the regular alif. Luckily, they are very rare and you can easily memorize the spelling of those few words. They include the alif madda, alif qaSiira (also called dagger alif) and the alif maqSuura, all representing a long “aa” vowel at different positions within a word.

Examples:

alif madda: آخر , الآن

alif qaSiira: هذا , الله , لكن

alif maqSuura: إلى , مشى , مصطفى

6 Stress

At the beginner's level, students are not accustomed to the stress of Arabic words. Frequently, the wrong syllable is stressed. However, unlike English, where stress is often unpredictable, Arabic offers guidelines that indicate the emphasis or stress in each word. A simple rule of thumb is to stress the syllable with the long vowel.

ki-taab
ma-dii-na
maa-lik

But many words don't have long vowels. In order to place the stress on the correct syllable, one should start counting the syllables from the end of a word, because stress can only go on the last three syllables of a word. The last syllable of a word is rarely pronounced, only if it includes a long vowel. But as mentioned before, the stress very often goes on the long vowel (if applicable). When adding إعراب endings or suffixes, i.e. adding additional syllables, the stress moves accordingly to the next syllable.



Listening sample 5 (online)

Listen to the correct word stress.

an-tum
ya-ta-dhak-ka-**ruu**-na-hum
ma-dra-sa
ma-**dra**-sa-tun
ku-tub
ku-**tu**-bu-naa



Exercise

EXERCISE 7. Write the number of the syllable that is stressed in the following Arabic words.

_____	مُسْتَقْبَل	١	شَجَرَة
_____	مُسْتَقْبَلُهُمْ	_____	أَصْحَاب
_____	قِصَص	_____	مُسَاعَدَة
_____	اِقْتِصَاد	_____	يَرُورُونَهُ
_____	أُحِبَّ	_____	رَجُل



Tip

The best way of familiarizing yourself with Arabic pronunciation and correct stress is through watching Arabic television and listening to music and radio shows. Even if you don't understand a lot of what is discussed, you will get a feeling for the sound, pitch and stress. Having a native speaker as a conversation partner helps too; however, be aware that he or she might pronounce things differently in his or her native dialect.

7 Taa marbuuTa ة in the إضافة

Another rare case of not articulating the “real” sound of the letter is the taa marbuuTa ة. In most cases the taa marbuuTa ة marks the female gender and is pronounced like a short “a” except when used in the إضافة (see Chapter 4), when two nouns form a compound and it is pronounced “at”. It then serves as a placeholder for the grammatical case ending or إعراب (see Chapter 5).



Listening sample 6 (online)

Listen to the examples.

Madina	مدينة
Madinatun	مدينة
madinat Baghdad	مدينة بغداد
madinatu Baghdad	مدينة بغداد



Exercises

EXERCISE 8. Decide how to read the female ending of the first noun, whether to read “at” or “a”.

_____	الجامعة الحكومية	_____	المدينة الجميلة
_____	الأستاذة فاطمة	_____	الحكومة التونسية
_____	العلاقة السياسية	_____	حكومة دولة قطر
_____	العلاقة بين الدولتين	_____	سيارة والدي
_____	مدينة الرياض	_____	جامعة الدول العربية

12 Speed Up Your Arabic



EXERCISE 9. Listen to the tongue twisters on the website and practice reading them. Then memorize them.

لحم الحمام حلال ولحم الحمار حرام
خيطة حرير على خيط خليل
خوخ الشيخ خوش خوخ
طير طار على جدار دار طة ... جدار دار طة جدار طين
المشمش دة مش من مشمشكم ... مكان المشمش دة مش من مشمشنا

EXERCISE 10. English has adopted many words from Arabic. Read the Arabic word and match it with the English equivalent.

lute	السُفْر
sugar	أَمِير البحر
giraffe	العود
adobe	مَخْزَن
coffee	الزِرافَة
safari	قُطْن
cotton	الجَر
assassin	قُماش دِمَشْقِي
admiral	الكُحول
damask	قَهْوَة
algebra	الطوبَة
magazine	الخوارزمي
alcohol	حَشيشين
jar	الجابر
algorithm	سُكْر