

GRAMMAR

LISTENING

# ARABIC vs. ARABIC

## A Dialect Sampler

VOCABULARY

Algerian  
Bahraini  
Egyptian  
Iraqi  
Jordanian  
Lebanese  
Moroccan  
MSA  
Palestinian  
Qatari  
Saudi  
Sudanese  
Syrian  
Tunisian  
Yemeni

PRONUNCIATION



# Arabic

vs.

# Arabic

A Dialect Sampler

Matthew Aldrich



lingualism

---

© 2018 by Matthew Aldrich

The author's moral rights have been asserted.

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher.

paperback: ISBN-13: 978-0-9986411-8-8

website: [www.lingualism.com/arabic](http://www.lingualism.com/arabic)

email: [arabic@lingualism.com](mailto:arabic@lingualism.com)

Cover art: © ponsuwan / 123RF Stock Photo

Map (p. 1): © negoworks / 123RF Stock Photo

Sample

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>How to Use the Book</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Let's Meet Our Friends!</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Common Nouns</b>	<b>6</b>
Animals	6
Clothing, etc.	7
Furniture	8
Housing and Transportation	9
Food	10
Drinks	11
Publications	12
Technology	13
<b>Social Expressions</b>	<b>14</b>
Greetings	14
How Are You?	15
Introductions	16
Common Courtesies	17
<b>Number</b>	<b>18</b>
People	18
Quantity	20
Numbers	22
Numbers with Nouns	28
<b>Pronouns</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Demonstrative Pronouns</b>	<b>32</b>
This: Masculine Singular	32
This: Feminine Singular	33
That: Masculine Singular	34
That: Masculine Singular	35
These: Masculine Plural	36
These: Feminine Plural	37
Those: Masculine Plural	38
Those: Feminine Plural	39

This is.....	40
These are.....	41
This is not.....	42
<b>Relative Pronouns .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Possessive Pronouns .....</b>	<b>44</b>
First-Person .....	44
Second-Person.....	45
Third-Person.....	46
Family.....	47
<b>Personal Pronouns .....</b>	<b>51</b>
First Person .....	51
Second Person .....	52
Third Person .....	53
<b>Here and Now .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Other Pronouns.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Adjectives .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Prepositions .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Verbs .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Verb Conjugatoins.....</b>	<b>67</b>
Perfect Tense: First Person .....	67
Perfect Tense: Second Person .....	68
Perfect Tense: Third Person .....	69
Imperfect Tense: First Person .....	70
Imperfect Tense: Second Person.....	71
Imperfect Tense: Third Person .....	72
<b>Common Verbs.....</b>	<b>73</b>
Go, Come .....	73
Do, Become .....	74
Sleep, Wake Up .....	75
Speak, Say .....	76
Give, Take.....	77
Arrive, Bring .....	78
See, Watch .....	79
Eat, Write, Find.....	80
<b>Verb Tenses.....</b>	<b>81</b>
Past Tense .....	82
Present Habit.....	83
Present Continuous .....	84
Future Tense .....	85
Verbs of Motion .....	86
Present Habit and Present Continuous.....	87
Past and Future .....	88
<b>More on Verbs .....</b>	<b>89</b>
Want .....	89
Can.....	91

Have.....	92
There is.....	94
<b>Questions.....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Yes/No Questions .....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Question Words .....</b>	<b>97</b>
What .....	97
Who .....	98
Where .....	99
When .....	102
Why .....	103
How .....	104
How Much.....	105
How Many.....	106
Which.....	107
<b>Conjunctions .....</b>	<b>108</b>
And, Or, But.....	108
Because.....	109
So.....	110
When .....	111
Before .....	112
After.....	113
<b>Time.....</b>	<b>114</b>
Months.....	115
Days of the Week .....	118
Adverbs of Frequency .....	120
<b>Weather.....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>Arabs Say... ..</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>Your Notes .....</b>	<b>127</b>
MSA.....	128
Moroccan .....	130
Algerian.....	132
Tunisian.....	134
Sudanese.....	136
Egyptian .....	138
Palestinian .....	140
Jordanian .....	142
Lebanese .....	144
Syrian .....	146

Iraqi..... 148

Qatari..... 150

Bahraini..... 152

Saudi ..... 154

Yemeni ..... 156

sample

Visit

[www.lingualism.com/arabic](http://www.lingualism.com/arabic)

## Audio Tracks

Access the **free** accompanying **MP3s**, which can be downloaded or streamed from the Audio Library.



## Anki Flashcards

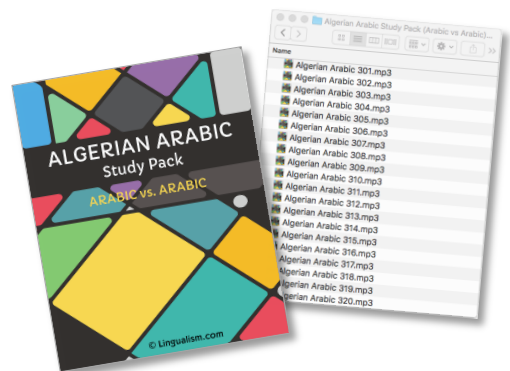
Study the words and phrases of the dialects of your choice using Anki flashcards with audio.

*(Available as a separate purchase.)*

## Dialect-Specific Study Packs

Focus on the dialects of your choice with PDF ebooks and segmented audio files.

*(Available as a separate purchase.)*



# Introduction

## This book is for you.

If you're learning Arabic, you've probably started with Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Or perhaps a dialect? You might be learning both MSA and a dialect (or two!) in tandem. And you're certainly aware that there are many more dialects out there. It may seem daunting. But just how similar *and* different are they from one another? If you're curious, this book is for you.

*Arabic vs. Arabic: A Dialect Sampler* lets you explore the vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar of 15 varieties of Arabic (14 dialects and MSA) through tables with notes and free, downloadable accompanying audio. You can go through the tables in order or skip around the book to see what catches your attention. The book really is meant to be a *sampler platter* to give you a *taste* of each dialect and a better understanding of just how varied the various varieties of Arabic are. The layout encourages the *self-discovery* method of learning. While the notes under many tables identify points of interest, you are encouraged to find patterns, exceptions, innovative features of dialects, and universals by studying the tables and listening to the audio tracks.

## The Dialects

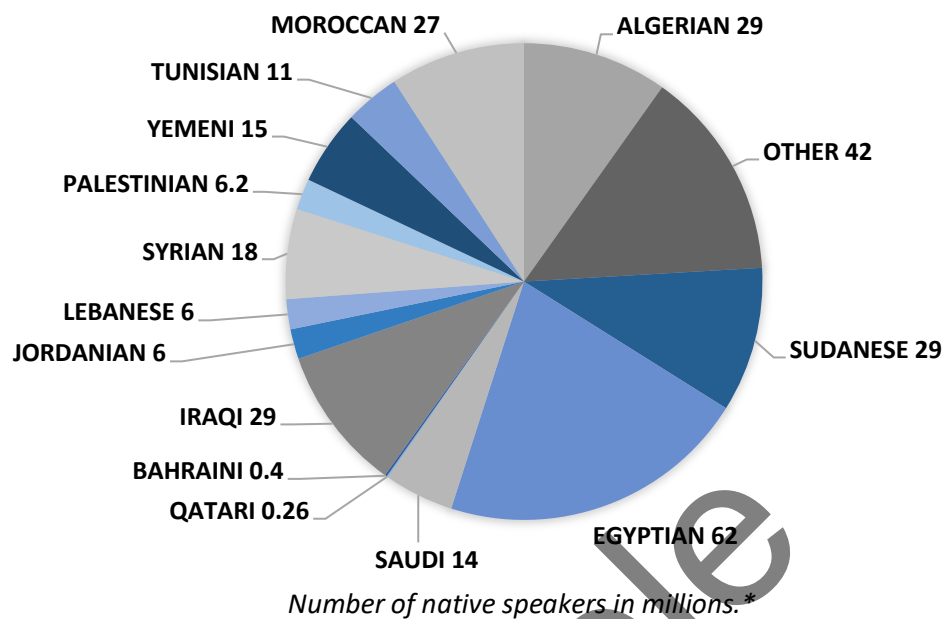
Just how many “Arabics” are there? How many varieties? It's not a question with a straightforward answer. Arabic comprises of a continuum of dialects stretching over the entire Arab world—from northern Africa to western Asia. It's akin to asking how many colors exist. The best we can do is draw artificial lines to categorize dialects, while still understanding that there are regional variations within each named dialect, just as we understand that there are many shades of *blue* or *yellow*.

To keep things simple—more digestible—we have labeled dialects by national boundaries. Many countries have a *de facto* “official” dialect, usually the one widely spoken in the capital city, which carries more prestige than varieties spoken elsewhere in the country. So, for instance, when we say “Egyptian Arabic” in this book, it is more precisely “Cairene Arabic.” However, what we call “Saudi Arabic” is not the dialect spoken around Riyadh (which is known as Najdi Arabic), but the Hejazi dialect of western Saudi Arabia (Jeddah, Mecca, and Medina). The decision was made to include Hejazi Arabic in this book, as the number of its speakers rivals Najdi, which is similar to Gulf Arabic (and can be largely represented by Qatari and Bahraini Arabic in this book).

Arabs refer to their spoken language as *اللّـُغة العامّة* or *اللّـُغة الدّارجة* (*‘the common/colloquial language’*). You might also hear terms such as *لغة الشّارع* and *شعبي* (*‘the language of the street’*). In English, they will often call it *‘slang’*—not an accurate term but perhaps an indication of their attitude toward the spoken language.

The pie chart on the following page shows the 14 dialects presented in this book along with the approximate number (in millions) of native speakers for each. They make up 85 percent of the estimated 294 million native speakers of Arabic. The remaining 15 percent are mainly speakers of Libyan Arabic (which is closest to Tunisian), Sa’idi Arabic (spoken in southern Egypt), Najdi Arabic, as well as Omani, Emirati Arabic, and Kuwaiti (varieties of Gulf Arabic). Note that MSA does not

appear in the pie chart because it has precisely zero native speakers; it is a second-language for Arabs.



### MSA vs. The Dialects

MSA is not considered a dialect, per se. We can call it and the dialects *varieties*. That said, the term *dialects* is used, for the sake of simplicity, throughout this book to refer to all of the 15 varieties presented in the tables, often including MSA.

MSA has a special function in Arab society. It is rarely used in spoken interpersonal communication—this is the realm of the dialect. Instead, MSA has a much more limited role with specific uses—primarily the written language. Arab countries recognize MSA as their official language. (See p. 5 for more. And how do Arabs feel about MSA, and not their local dialect, being official? See p. 126)

The dialects are not commonly written, although this is changing with the advent of phone texting and online social media. Because dialects have no official status, there are no official rules of orthography (spelling). Final short vowels are sometimes represented by a short vowel and sometimes written long, for example: *أنتِ* or *أنت* (f. ‘you’). Both can be seen in various dialects depending on the spelling preferences of the individual. (See p. 124)

### Acknowledgments

I would like to express my appreciation to everyone who participated in this project. Thank you for your enthusiasm in helping others learn about your language and culture; and for your patience with my many questions. I am particularly grateful for the assistance given by Lilia Khachroum in the editing process.

\* The number of native speakers of Arabic was arrived at by averaging numbers from various sources, taking into account the classification of dialects as presented in this book.

# How to Use the Book

*Arabic vs. Arabic: A Dialect Sampler* is meant for browsing, or better put, *exploring*. You are not expected to methodically work your way through the materials in the book and memorize all of the information. This would be both tedious and of little use. Instead, you are meant to study the tables just enough to make observations, deductions, and develop a better understanding of the similarities and differences between various dialects of Arabic and MSA. Flip through the book, see what interests you, play the audio, be observant, take notes.

**Audio tracks** are available to download or stream free of charge from our website. Audio track numbers appear at the top of each table in the book.

Synonyms are separated by a forward slash or appear on a new line in the tables. In the audio tracks, you will hear synonyms separated by a chime. Plural nouns appear in parentheses in the tables; perfect/imperfect verb pairs are separated by a dash. In the audio tracks, these are separated by a short pause (without a chime).

Circle, underline, highlight words and phrases in the tables. It's your book. Mark it up. Make it your own! There are also special pages ("*Your Notes*") for note taking at the back of the book. (See p. 127.) If you are against writing in your book or have a digital copy and prefer taking notes on paper, use a notebook. You can also download a PDF of the *Your Notes* section from [www.lingualism.com/ava-notes](http://www.lingualism.com/ava-notes) to print out for personal use.

Every effort has been made to provide accurate *tashkeel* (diacritics) to illustrate the pronunciation of words and phrases in the dialects. If what you hear on the audio tracks does not, according to your ear, match the tashkeel, by all means, write over the tashkeel to correct it. There will always be some level of subjectivity here, especially since the dialects possess different vowel qualities that are not always easy to represent with tashkeel designed for MSA. In this book, the diphthongs /ay/ and /aw/ are shown with fatha and sukuun, as in the MSA بَيَّتَ /bayt/ and يَوْمَ /yawm/. To represent the long vowel sounds /ē/ ([e:]) and /ō/ ([o:]) found in many dialects, only sukuun is written, as in the Egyptian بَيْتَ /bēt/ and يَوْمَ /yōm/.

You will notice that certain consonants differ in pronunciation among the dialects. ج may sound like [dʒ] (as in English *job*), [ʒ] (as in *vision*), [g] (as in *go*), and even [j] (as in *yes*), depending on the dialect. ق is often [ʔ] (the sound of *hamza*) or [g]. The emphatic consonants ظ and ض also tend to have varied pronunciations among the dialects. And listen carefully to the Moroccan ت! Keep your ears open and take notes.

Some words of foreign origin contain sounds not easily represented with the standard letters of the Arabic alphabet. Special letters represent these sounds: ڤ [v], پ [p]. In some dialects, you will also see ڭ [g] and ڄ [tʃ] (as in *chair*).

Are you ready? Press *play* on track 1 and meet the 15 people who are representing MSA and the fourteen dialects featured in the book.

# Let's Meet Our Friends!

🔊 1 Hello, everyone! My name is \_\_\_. I am from \_\_\_, and I live in \_\_\_. I am \_\_\_ years old.

MSA ① مَرْحَبًا بِالْجَمِيعِ! إِسْمِي هُوَ هَيْبَة. أَنَا مِنْ مِصْرَ وَأَعِيشُ فِي الْقَاهِرَة وَعُمْرِي ثَلَاثُونَ سَنَةً.

⑪ مَرْحَبًا كُلِّكُمْ! إِسْمِي هُوَ حُسَيْن. أَنِي مِنَ الْعِرَاقِ وَأَعِيشُ بِبَغْدَادَ وَعُمْرِي ٢٢ سَنَةً.

⑬ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ! أَنَا إِسْمِي نَدَى. أَنَا مِنْ الْبَحْرَيْنِ وَ سَاكِنَةٌ فِي وَلايَةِ مَارِيلَانْدُ وَعُمْرِي ٢٦ سَنَةً.

⑨ مَرْحَبًا جَمِيعًا! إِسْمِي سَام، أَنَا مِنْ لُبْنَان. عَايِشُ بِبَيْرُوتَ، عُمْرِي ١٨ سَنَةً.

⑧ مَرْحَبًا بِالْجَمِيعِ! إِسْمِي آيَّة. أَنَا مِنَ الْأُرْدُنِ. وَ بَعِيشُ فِي عَمَّانَ، وَ عُمْرِي ١٨ سَنَةً.

⑩ أَهْلًا بِالْجَمِيعِ! إِسْمِي أَمَانِي أَنَا مِنْ سُورِيَا وَ عَايِشَةٌ بِتَوِينْغِنَ وَ عُمْرِي حَوَالِي ٣٥ سَنَةً.

⑦ مَرْحَبًا! إِسْمِي رِيهَام. أَنَا مِنْ فِلَسْطِينِ وَأَعِيشُ بِغَزَّةَ وَعُمْرِي ٢٧ سَنَةً.

⑥ أَهْلًا بِيكُمَا! إِسْمِي مُحَمَّد. أَنَا مِنْ مِصْرَ، وَأَعِيشُ فِي مَحَاظِفَةِ الْقَاهِرَة وَعِنْدِي ٢٠ سَنَةً.

③ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ قَاع! إِسْمِي هُوَ صَلاَحُ الدِّينِ. أَنَا مِنْ دَزَائِرَ وَ نَعِيشُ فِي قُورَايَةِ، وَ عُمْرِي ٢٠ سَنَةً.

② السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ! سُمِّيْتُ أَيُّوبَ. أَنَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ، وَ كُنْ عِيشُ فِي مَدِينَةِ فَاَسَ، وَ عُمْرِي ٢١ سَنَةً.

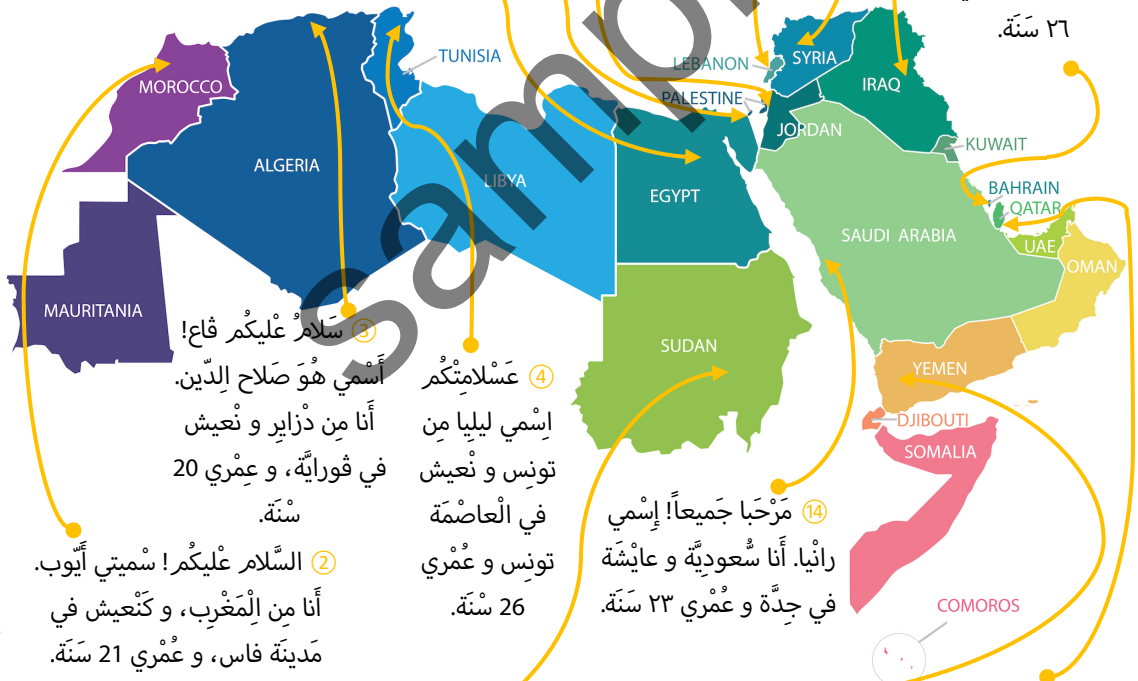
⑤ السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ كُلِّكُمْ! أَنَا إِسْمِي عَوْض. أَنَا مِنَ السُّودَانِ وَ بَعِيشُ فِي الْخَرْطومَ. وَ عُمْرِي ٢٤ سَنَةً.

④ عَسَلَامَتُكُمْ إِسْمِي لَيْلِيَا مِنْ تُونِسَ وَ نَعِيشُ فِي الْعَاصِمَةِ تُونِسَ وَ عُمْرِي ٢٦ سَنَةً.

⑮ أَهْلًا وَسَهْلًا بِالْجَمِيعِ! إِسْمِي عَصَام. أَنَا مِنَ الْيَمَنِ وَبَيْنَ عَايِشُ فِي صَنْعَاءَ وَ عُمْرِي ٣٧ سَنَةً.

⑭ مَرْحَبًا جَمِيعًا! إِسْمِي رَانِيَا. أَنَا سُعُودِيَّةٌ وَ عَايِشَةٌ فِي جِدَّةَ وَ عُمْرِي ٢٣ سَنَةً.

⑫ أَهْلًا بِالْجَمِيعِ! إِسْمِي أَذْهَم. أَنَا مِنْ قُطْرَ وَ عَايِشُ بِالدَّوْحَةِ وَ عِنْدِي ٢٧ سَنَةً.



On the previous page, we met the fifteen individuals who participated in this project. We could refer to them as participants, linguistic informants, or native speakers, but let's just call them *our friends*.

The first voice that you heard was Heba's. She is from Egypt, so her native dialect is, of course, Egyptian Arabic, but she will be representing Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in this book. On the audio tracks, you will first hear Heba speaking MSA, followed by the equivalents in the native dialects of our other fourteen friends.

The order in the tables and audio is fixed:

- |              |                 |              |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| ① MSA ♀      | ⑥ Egyptian ♂    | ⑪ Iraqi ♂    |
| ② Moroccan ♂ | ⑦ Palestinian ♀ | ⑫ Qatari ♂   |
| ③ Algerian ♂ | ⑧ Jordanian ♀   | ⑬ Bahraini ♀ |
| ④ Tunisian ♀ | ⑨ Lebanese ♂    | ⑭ Saudi ♀    |
| ⑤ Sudanese ♂ | ⑩ Syrian ♀      | ⑮ Yemeni ♂   |

If you look back at the map, you will see that the order follows a line, from Morocco eastward across northern Africa, north into the Levant, then from Iraq down into the Arabian Peninsula.

You will not hear the names of the dialects or numbers in the audio tracks, as this would become repetitive and distracting. But you will get to know our friends' voices the more you listen. It may be helpful to keep in mind which dialects are represented by male and female voices.

For the sake of simplification, the dialects are labeled according to the nationalities of our friends. Keep in mind, however, that there is not one uniform dialect per country. Regional variations in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary exist. These differences can be more distinct in certain regions of the Arab world than others. In Algeria, for example, there are clear differences between speakers in the west of the country and the east. In Egypt, on the other hand, the spoken language is much more uniform, at least in Lower Egypt (from Cairo to Alexandria), where the majority of the population lives. In Saudi Arabia, there are two distinct, main dialects, Najdi and Hejazi. The former is spoken around Riyadh, while the latter is spoken in the west of the Kingdom, including Jeddah, where our friend Rania is from. So, when you see *Saudi* in the tables, this is, more correctly, the Hejazi dialect.

Notice both the similarities and the differences between the dialects of our friends in their introductions on the previous page. Would you agree that, overall, they are not so different? If they were all standing in the same room introducing themselves to each other in their own dialects, they would have little difficulty understanding each other. If speakers from two dialects can understand each other with little difficulty, we say that their dialects are *mutually intelligible*.

Of course, this example is not enough to see the whole picture. Everyday vocabulary can vary greatly from dialect to dialect. Look at the 15 versions of the sentence in the table on the following page. Compare the words for *bought*, *very*, *nice*, *shoes*, and *yesterday*.

## I bought some very nice shoes yesterday.

MSA	اِشْتَرَيْتُ حِذَاءً جَمِيلًا جَدًّا أَمْسَ.
MOROCCAN	شَرَيْتُ الْبَارِحَ صَبَّاطَ زَوِين.
ALGERIAN	شَرَيْتُ صِبَّاطَ شَبَابِ بَزَافِ الْبَارِحِ.
TUNISIAN	شَرَيْتُ صَبَّاطَ مِزْيَانِ بَرُشَا الْبَارِحِ.
SUDANESE	اِشْتَرَيْتُ جَزْمَةَ سَمَحَةَ أُمْبَارِحِ.
EGYPTIAN	اِشْتَرَيْتُ إِمْبَارِحَ جَزْمَةَ حِلْوَةَ أُوِي.
PALESTINIAN	اِشْتَرَيْتُ جَزْمَةَ إِمْبَارِحِ كَثِيرِ حِلْوَةٍ.
JORDANIAN	اِشْتَرَيْتُ كُنْدَرَةَ حِلْوَةٍ كَثِيرِ إِمْبَارِحِ.
LEBANESE	شْتَرَيْتُ صِبَّاطَ كَثِيرِ حِلْوِ مْبَارِحِ.
SYRIAN	شْتَرَيْتُ امْبَارْحَةَ كِنْدَرَةَ بَتْعَقْدَ.
IRAQI	اِشْتَرَيْتُ حِذَاءَ كَلَشِ حِلْوِ الْبَارْحَةِ.
QATARI	شَرَيْتُ جَوْتِي وَايِدِ حِلْوِ أَمْسَ.
BAHRAINI	شَرَيْتُ جَوْتِي وَايِدِ حِلْوِ أَمْسَ.
SAUDI	اِشْتَرَيْتُ جَزْمَةَ حِلْوَةَ مَرَّةٍ أَمْسَ.
YEMENI	اِشْتَرَيْتُ جَزْمَةَ حَالِيَّةٍ قَوِيٍّ أَمْسَ.

Small differences in pronunciation aside, there are, among other differences, five distinct words for *shoes*: حذاء (MSA, Iraqi), صِبَّاط (Moroccan, Algerian, Tunisian, Lebanese), جَزْمَة (Sudanese, Egyptian, Palestinian, Saudi, Yemeni), كُنْدَرَة (Jordanian, Syrian), and جَوْتِي (Qatari, Bahraini). If we look back at the map, we can see that this and other shared words are largely regional. For instance, أَمْسَ is used exclusively on the Arabian Peninsula.

In a survey I conducted with speakers from around the Arab world, I asked which dialect(s) were the most difficult for them to understand. The overwhelming response was *Maghrebi*—an umbrella term for the dialects of northwestern Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya). Not surprisingly, Maghrebi speakers thought that the dialects spoken the furthest to the east, namely Gulf Arabic (the dialects spoken in countries along the Persian Gulf) were the hardest to understand.

Non-shared vocabulary can cause a barrier to understanding between Arabs from different regions. In each dialect, local history is reflected in words borrowed from other languages, due to geography, colonization, or globalization (Persian, Turkish, French, Italian, Spanish, English), and even indigenous languages (such as Coptic and Berber). But vocabulary is not the only factor. Accent, pronunciation, and idiomatic expressions also play a role.

## What makes other dialects hard to understand?

*"Most of the Arabic dialects have their own unique words and pronunciation. Some use unfamiliar words, while others use unfamiliar pronunciation. There are wide combinations and varieties in every dialect that make it hard to understand for speakers of other dialects. For example, I can't understand Maghrebi dialects. They use very unfamiliar words and pronunciation. They also use many French words, which, in addition to this combination of unfamiliar words and pronunciation, makes this dialect very hard to understand."* —**Milad, Syria**

*"Variation in vocabulary is usually the number-one reason for difficulties in communication among different Arab dialects. The way people pronounce things comes next. For example, if a Jordanian were to talk to a Moroccan, both would find it very difficult to understand each other due to the lack of common vocabulary. However, if a Jordanian were to talk with a Saudi, vocabulary wouldn't be much of an issue. However, the way words are pronounced would make a slight challenge."* —**Suhaib, Sudan**

*"Vocabulary, as some places use words of non-Arabic origin as a part of their dialect, such as in Algeria. Also, in some places, the words deviate so much from the Arabic origin that you cannot easily relate them to the corresponding words in MSA."* —**Mohamed, Egypt**

*"...Gulf Arabic also has difficult-to-understand vocabulary. For example, I was having a conversation with a U.A.E. national and asking if he'd help me with something, and he kept saying *ياشر*. This, in MSA, means 'go ahead' or 'start,' but in Gulf Arabic, it means 'tomorrow.' In Lebanon, we'd say *بُكْرا*."* —**Rita, Lebanon**

*"One day, I met a Moroccan guy and I had to speak with him, but I couldn't understand what he was saying or talking about. So, we decided to use MSA so we could understand each other. We also shifted to English and French. Of course, this is much easier than talking using the dialects."* —**Zakaria, Palestine**

*"...I will tell you a funny and embarrassing story that happened to me when I was young. An Egyptian friend of my father came to our house, and when he was speaking, he said *بُصْ*. In Egyptian, it means 'look.' In Tunisian, it means 'fart.' I was 10 years old, and I started laughing and embarrassed everyone in the room. Some vocabulary has different meanings in different countries. And some vocabulary is totally new and different. For example, the Algerians say *يَرَّاف* which means 'very.' Other people cannot understand it because it is specific to the Algerian dialect—the same as *بَرْشا* for Tunisians, *أوي* for Egyptians, and *هَلْبَا* for Libyans."* —**Zaidi, Tunisia**

*"Pronunciation and Vocabulary. For example, the Moroccan word for 'very' is *يَرَّاف*, and in my Hejazi dialect, it is *كثير* or *مَرَّة*."* —**Rania, Saudi Arabia**

(For more from the survey, see page 122.)

And which dialects are the easiest to understand? In addition to naming neighboring countries, many Arabs in the survey added that Egyptian and Levantine (the umbrella term for Syrian, Lebanese, Palestinian, and Jordanian) were both easy to understand for the same reason: the popularity of Egyptian and Lebanese media (movies, TV, and music).

Here, we have 15 versions of another sentence for comparison. Notice the words used for *president*, *analyzed*, *economic*, and *situation*.



The president analyzed the economic situation.

MSA	قَدْ حَلَّلَ الرَّئِيسُ الْوَضْعَ الْاِقْتِصَادِيَّ.
MOROCCAN	الرَّئِيسُ حَلَّلَ الْوَضْعَ الْاِقْتِصَادِيَّ.
ALGERIAN	الرَّئِيسُ حَلَّلَ الْوَضْعَ الْاِقْتِصَادِيَّ.
TUNISIAN	الرَّئِيسُ حَلَّلَ الْوَضْعَ الْاِقْتِصَادِيَّ.
SUDANESE	الرَّئِيسُ حَلَّلَ الْوَضْعَ الْاِقْتِصَادِيَّ.
EGYPTIAN	الرَّئِيسُ حَلَّلَ الْوَضْعَ الْاِقْتِصَادِيَّ.
PALESTINIAN	حَلَّلَ الرِّيسُ الْوَضْعَ الْاِقْتِصَادِيَّ.
JORDANIAN	الرَّئِيسُ حَلَّلَ الْوَضْعَ الْاِقْتِصَادِيَّ.
LEBANESE	حَلَّلَ الرِّيسُ الْوَضْعَ الْاِقْتِصَادِيَّ.
SYRIAN	حَلَّلَ الرِّيسُ الْوَضْعَ الْاِقْتِصَادِيَّ.
IRAQI	الرَّئِيسُ حَلَّلَ الْوَضْعَ الْاِقْتِصَادِيَّ.
QATARI	الرَّئِيسُ حَلَّلَ الْوَضْعَ الْاِقْتِصَادِيَّ.
BAHRAINI	الرَّئِيسُ حَلَّلَ الْوَضْعَ الْاِقْتِصَادِيَّ.
SAUDI	حَلَّلَ الرِّيسُ الْوَضْعَ الْاِقْتِصَادِيَّ.
YEMENI	قَدْ حَلَّلَ الرَّئِيسُ الْوَضْعَ الْاِقْتِصَادِيَّ.

Compared to the sentence on page 3, there is very little variation in this sentence. In fact, all of the words are shared among the dialects and MSA. This is no coincidence. Dialects have not developed unique vocabulary for topics non-essential to everyday communication, such as politics, economics, and academics. These are normally the domain of MSA, the official, written language shared by all Arabs. MSA is exclusively used in the news media, official documents (contracts, laws), and academic texts. That does not mean that two Arabs casually arguing about politics at the local coffee house have to switch to MSA to discuss the topic at hand. Instead, they will insert MSA vocabulary into their regular, everyday speech as needed, while maintaining the accent, pronunciation, and grammatical idiosyncrasies of their dialect. They are, in fact, still speaking their dialect but with MSA words sprinkled in when needed.

We've established that high-frequency, everyday vocabulary tends to vary from dialect to dialect more so than formal vocabulary, but not all everyday vocabulary is unique. Take a look at the following table.

# Common Nouns

## Animals

	4 cat	5 dog	6 horse
MSA	قَطّ	كَلْب	حِصَان
MOROCCAN	قَطّ / مُشّ	كَلْب	حِصَان / عَوْد
ALGERIAN	قَطّ	كَلْب	حُصَان
TUNISIAN	قَطّوس	كَلْب	حُصَان
SUDANESE	كَدِيسَة	كَلْب	حُصَان
EGYPTIAN	قُطّة	كَلْب	حُصَان
PALESTINIAN	بِسَة	كَلْب	حُصَان
JORDANIAN	بِسَة	كَلْب	حُصَان
LEBANESE	بُسِين	كَلْب	حُصَان
SYRIAN	بُسِينَة / بِسَة / قِطّة	كَلْب	خَيْل / حُصَيْن / حُصَان
IRAQI	بَزُون	كَلْب / چَلْب	حُصَان
QATARI	قَطو / قُطوة	چَلْب	حُصَان
BAHRAINI	قَطو / قُطوة / سَنور	چَلْب	حُصَان
SAUDI	بِس / بِسَة	كَلْب	حُصَان
YEMENI	دِم / عَرِي	كَلْب	حُصَان

There are quite a few ways to say *cat*, but the words for *dog* and *horse* are much more uniform, with only slight differences in pronunciation. (Notice the letter چ in the Iraqi, Qatari, and Bahraini words for *dog*. As dialects are rarely written, this letter isn't regularly used by locals, but in this book, it is used to demonstrate the pronunciation [tʃ] (as in the English *child*) See p. viii).

The next several pages continue with common nouns. As you go through the lists, you'll start to develop a better understanding of just how similar and different the dialects are, both in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation.

# Verbs

## Verb Conjugations

Let's take a look at the conjugation of a very common verb: **كتب** *to write*. On the following pages, we have the first, second, then third-person forms of the perfect (past) tense followed by the imperfect (present) tense forms. The conjugations are given together with their corresponding pronouns for clarity, but in actual practice, a verb is normally used without a pronoun subject. A pronoun subject is only used for emphasis.

### Perfect Tense: First Person

🔊 189

**I wrote**

🔊 190

**we wrote**

<b>MSA</b>	أَنَا كَتَبْتُ	نَحْنُ كَتَبْنَا
<b>MOROCCAN</b>	أَنَا كُتَبْتُ	حَنَا كُتَبْنَا
<b>ALGERIAN</b>	أَنَا كُتِبْتُ	حَنَا كُتِبْنَا
<b>TUNISIAN</b>	أَنَا كُتِبْتُ	أَحْنَا كُتِبْنَا
<b>SUDANESE</b>	أَنَا كَتَبَتَّ	نَحْنَا كَتَبْنَا
<b>EGYPTIAN</b>	أَنَا كَتَبْتُ	إَحْنَا كَتَبْنَا
<b>PALESTINIAN</b>	أَنَا كَتَبْتُ	إَحْنَا كَتَبْنَا
<b>JORDANIAN</b>	أَنَا كَتَبْتُ	إَحْنَا كَتَبْنَا
<b>LEBANESE</b>	أَنَا كَتَبْتُ	نَحْنَا كَتَبْنَا
<b>SYRIAN</b>	أَنَا كَتَبْتُ	نَحْنَا كَتَبْنَا
<b>IRAQI</b>	أَنِي كَتَبْتُ	إَحْنَا كَتَبْنَا
<b>QATARI</b>	أَنَا كَتَبْتُ	إَحْنَا كَتَبْنَا
<b>BAHRAINI</b>	أَنَا كَتَبْتُ	إَحْنَا كَتَبْنَا
<b>SAUDI</b>	أَنَا كَتَبْتُ	إَحْنَا كَتَبْنَا
<b>YEMENI</b>	أَنَا كَتَبْتُ	إَحْنَا كَتَبْنَا

The endings for the first-person forms are quite consistent. However, in the Levantine dialects, the final **ت** is preceded by *kasra* (◌ِ): /-it/. In rapid speech, you may notice that this *kasra* can disappear, especially when the following word starts with a vowel.

# Weather

🔊 319

It's raining.

🔊 320

It's very hot today.

MSA	السَّمَاءُ تَمُطِرُ.	الْجَوُّ حَارٌّ جِدًّا الْيَوْمَ.
MOROCCAN	كُطَيْحُ الشِّتَا.	الْجَوُّ سُخُونٌ بِزَافِ الْيَوْمَا.
ALGERIAN	الشِّتَاءُ رَاهِي الطَّيْحِ.	الْجَوُّ سُخُونٌ بِزَافِ الْيَوْمِ.
TUNISIAN	الْمِطَرُ تَصُبُّ.	الْيَوْمَ الطَّقْسُ سُخُونٌ بَرَشَا.
SUDANESE	فِي مَطَرَةٍ.	الْجَوُّ حَارٌّ شَدِيدَ اللَّيْلَةِ.
EGYPTIAN	الدُّنْيَا بَتَمَطَّرُ.	الْجَوُّ حَرٌّ أَوْي النَّهَارَدَه.
PALESTINIAN	الدُّنْيَا بَتَشْتِي.	الْيَوْمَ شَوْبٌ كَثِيرٌ.
JORDANIAN	سَمَا بَتَمَطَّرُ.	الْجَوُّ شَوْبٌ بَرَّا.
LEBANESE	عَم تَشْتِي.	كَثِيرَ شَوْبِ الْيَوْمِ.
SYRIAN	السَّما بَتَشْتِي.	الْيَوْمَ الْجَوُّ شَوْبٌ كَثِيرٌ. الْيَوْمَ الْجَوُّ حَرٌّ كَثِيرٌ.
IRAQI	السَّما تَمَطَّرُ.	الْجَوُّ حَارٌّ كَلَّشَ الْيَوْمِ. الْجَوُّ كَلَّشَ حَارَّ الْيَوْمِ.
QATARI	السَّما تَمَطَّرُ.	الْجَوُّ وَايِدِ شَوْبِ.
BAHRAINI	يُطِيحُ مَطَرٌ.	وَايِدِ بَقَّةَ الْيَوْمِ. وَايِدِ حَرَّ الْيَوْمِ.
SAUDI	السَّما بَتَمَطَّرُ.	الْجَوُّ مَرَّةً حَارًّا الْيَوْمِ.
YEMENI	الْمَطَرُ يَنْزِلُ.	الدُّنْيَا حَمَا قَوِي الْيَوْمِ.

# Arabs Say...

In this section, we can read some of the most interesting responses to a survey I conducted with native speakers of Arabic from various parts of the Arab World. I have tried to provide enough responses in the book in order to show a good sampling of viewpoints held by Arabs towards their language and usage of it. (Minor edits have been made for English grammar and punctuation, as well as for conciseness and clarity. The term 'MSA' is used in place of *al-fus-ha*, 'Classical Arabic', etc., for the sake of consistency.)

## Does everyone in your country speak the same dialect?

*"Nowadays, nearly all youth speak the same dialect with very few differences regardless of the place (big cities, the countryside, Upper Egypt\*). However, old people still speak in a different way from place to place. Usually the differences aren't major, so it is very rare that people couldn't understand one another in Egypt. For example, the word 'pregnant' is حامل in most of Egypt, but some old people in the countryside and Upper Egypt say حَبْلِي. Also, the word 'yesterday' is in MSA أمس, but in dialect in most of Egypt, we use امبارح, while in some places in the countryside and Upper Egypt, people say عَشِيَّة. There are a few places in Egypt where the language spoken there cannot be understood by other people, such as Nubia\*\* and the Western Desert."* —**Mohamed, Egypt**

\* Upper Egypt = central Egypt, from south of Cairo to Aswan

\*\* Nubia = southern Egypt, south of Aswan

*"No, there is sometimes a slight, sometimes a big difference in accent according to the area. The varieties differ in some sounds like ق and ق. In the coastal areas, people use the first sound (ق /q/) in a word, while in the internal areas of the country, people use the second (ق /g/). Let's give an example: People in Sousse (the coastal area) say قُرْبِيَّة (which means 'near'); in Tatawin (the far south), people pronounce the same word as قُرْبِيَّة."* —**Zaidi, Tunisia**

*"In Algeria, there are almost 30 dialects. In the east, dialects are closer to the Tunisian dialect. In El-Taref, for instance, they say ياسر ('a lot'); in Tebessa, they say تو ('now'). Toward the west, the dialects are merged with Moroccan terms and accent. For example, in Oran, they say واه ('yes'), مطيشة ('tomato') like the Moroccans. Those varieties are also influenced by their proximity to the Amazigh [Berber] region. We can take the Jijli dialect (from the wilaya [state] of Jijel near Bejaia, where Amazigh is the mother tongue), in which the ق is pronounced like ك [k]. In the center [of Algeria], especially in Algiers, the dialect is influenced by some Turkish words. In North and Tassili regions, mostly French has a great impact on dialects. They mostly use French words but with Algerian grammar and pronunciation. For example, كسرونة from French casserole, which means 'a pan'. In the western regions, we can also find words having Spanish origin, such as بولا from Spanish bola ('ball')." —**Nesma, Algeria***