

Arabic Sentence Structure

I- Equational sentences:

1- Simple:

Joseph is a student.
(Yūsuf ṭālibun).

2- Expanded:

(a) *NP*

The school director is an officer.
(mudirul madrasati dābitun).

(b) *Adverb*

The school director is here.
(mudirul madrasati hunā).

(c) *Prepositional Phrase:*

The school director is from
Jiddah.
(mudirul madrasati min Jiddah).

(d) *Apposition:*

The school director, Captain
Yusuf, is from Jiddah.

(Mudirul madrasati, ʔaddābiṭ
Yusufu, min Jiddah).

(e) *Clause:*

1- The director who is an army
officer, is from Jeddah.
(mudirul madrasati, wa huwa
dābitun biljayši, min Jiddah).

2- You are industrious when you
work hard.

(ʔanta mujtahidun, eindamā
taemalu bijiddin).

3- It is clear that you are ind-
ustrious.

(wadihun ʔannaka mujtahidun).

II- Verbal Sentences:

1- Simple:

He walked.

(sāra)

2- Expanded:

Aḥmad saw the officer.

(raʔā ʔaḥmadu ddābiṭa).

The Declarative Sentence In Arabic

A- Basic Nominal Structures:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1- N ¹ + ADJ | Baytun kabīrun
(A) house <u>is</u> big |
| 2- N ¹ + ADV | Baytun hunā
(A) house <u>is</u> here |
| 3- N ¹ + N ¹ | (A) l baytu qaṣrun
The house is a palace |

B- Basic Verbal Structures:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 4- Vintr. | Raʾá
He saw |
| 5- Vintr. N ¹ | Raʾaytu
I saw |
| 6- Vtr. + N ¹ + N ² | Raʾaytukumā
I saw <u>you</u> (<u>two</u>) |
| 7- Vtr. + N ¹ + N ² + N ³ | Araynākumūh
(<u>We</u> showed <u>it</u> to <u>you</u>)
(<u>We</u> made <u>you</u> see it) |

C-

- | | |
|---|--|
| 8- Particle + N ¹ + N ² | Lirrajuli kitābun
The man <u>has</u> a book |
|---|--|

D- Compare:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1- Gaḍiba | He <u>became</u> <u>angry</u> . |
| 2- 'arsala 'ilayya rajulun. | A <u>man</u> sent to me. |
| b) 'arsala 'ilayya rajulan. | He sent me <u>a man</u> . |
| c) háḍihi ulkutub. | These books |
| d) háḍa huwa rrajulu illaḍi
raiyt. | This is the man who(m) I
saw. |
| e) 'Atamma dirásatahu. | He has completed his
studies. |
| a) NP: | This morning. (haḍa
ṣṣabāh). |
| b) Adverb: | Also. (?ayḍan) |
| c) Prepositional phrase: | From Libya (min Libya).
With his sword (bisayfihi). |

d) *Apposition:*

Ahmad, the officer, came.
(jaʔa ddābitu ʔahmadu)

e) *Clause:*

- 1- He bought the book which was published recently.
(ʔistrā lkitāb allaḏī nušira ḥadīṯan).
- 2- We like journeys when the rain does not fall.
(nuḥibbu rrahlāt ḥīn lā yasquṭu lmaṭaru).
- 3- He knows that they seized the thief.
(yaʔarifu ʔanna hum qabadū ʔala lliṣi).

III- Prepositional sentences:

1- Simple:

Filbayti

2- Expanded:

a) *NP:*

Filbayti zuwwārun.

b) *Adverb:*

Hunāka zuwwārun filbayti.

c) *Prepositional phrase:*

Bilqurbi minalbayti nahurun.

d) *Clause*

- 1- filbayti illaḏi-bijiwārinā ʔursun.
- 2- biyadi sadiqi ddābiti mā yudāfiʔu bihi ʔan nafsih.
- 3- filbayti kitābun ʔaqraʔuhu ḥīna ʔaʔūdu.

APPENDIX I

Arabic and English Speech Phenomena

The main differences between Arabic and English speech phenomena may be conveniently dealt with under these four heading:

A. Consonants.

B. Vowels.

C. Stress.

D. Intonation.

A. Consonants:

1. Stops

The voiceless bilabial stop [p] is not commonly found in Arabic, but it is as important to English as the other two voiceless stops [t] and [k].

When any of these three voiceless stops occurs initially in an English word, it is generally pronounced with great force, and a clear puff of breath or aspiration.

The phonetic symbol for this puff of breath or aspiration is [h]; and the three stops are actually pronounced in this case [p^h], [t^h], and [k^h]. Examples of English words with initial voiceless aspirated stops are: *pen* [p^hen], *ten* [t^hen], and *Kent* [k^hent].

However, no aspiration is clearly perceived when any of the three voiceless stops occurs in the middle of a word, and is preceded by [s]: *spin* [spin], *stiff* [stif], and *skin* [skin]. These voiceless stops in word-medial position are called voiceless un-aspirated stops.

At the end of words, English [p], [t], and [k] are un-aspirated; but they may be released or unreleased. When they are released the mouth is open at the end of the sound, and

when unreleased the mouth is closed. Examples of unreleased voiceless stops are *sip* [sip], *sit* [sit], and *sick* [sik].

These features of aspiration, non-aspiration, release and non-release are not important for the pronunciation or the phonetic description of Arabic stops.

Another difference between Arabic and English stops lies in the manner of articulation. The two English stops [t] and [d] are alveolar, but the two Arabic stops [t] and [d] are dental.

2. Fricatives:

The English voiced labiodental fricative [v] occurs in Arabic in borrowed words only.

An important difference between Arabic and English /s/ and /z/ is found in the manner of articulation. English [s] and [z] are alveolar; but Arabic [s] and [z] are usually dental.

3. Nasals:

The English voiced alveolar nasal [n] is also different from Arabic [n] in that the Arabic [n] is dental and not alveolar, or velar.

The English voiced velar nasal [ŋ] has no phonemic counter part in Arabic.

4. The [l] Sound

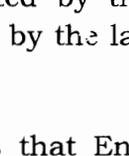
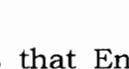
“Dark” [ɫ] before consonants or in word final position in Arabic has a clear consonant [l] similar to the English clear [l] and an emphatic [l], as in the word الله /ʔaɫɫāh/. However, in the production of the English “dark” [ɫ] the back part of the tongue is kept low in the mouth cavity, while in the production of the Arabic emphatic [l], there is an additional constriction or narrowing of the pharynx.

5. The [r] Sound:

This sound differs greatly in the two languages: the Arabic [r] is a voiced trill consonant produced by successive rapid taps of the tip of the tongue against the upper front teeth, whereas English [r] is a fricative or a glided lateral.

B. Vowels:

1. Simple Vowels:

	Front	Central	Back
High	i 		u 
Mid	e 	ɔ 	o 
Low	æ 	a 	ɔ 

The above is a comparison of the relative positions of English simple vowels and Arabic simple vowels. English vowels are represented by the small letters, and the three Arabic simple vowels by the large dark letters (i for كسرة a for فتحة, and u for ضمة).

The chart shows that English has a greater number of simple vowels than Arabic. Consequently, in learning English, the Arab learner has to be drilled to make the following distinctions between vowel sounds which do not exist in classical Arabic: /e/ and /i/; /ɔ/ and /o/, /æ/ and /a/.

[i] and [e] as in pin [p^hin] and [p^hen]

[u] and [o] as [put] and obey [obey]

[æ] and [a] as in fat and father [fa:ðə(r)]

[ɔ:] and [ow] as in bought [bɔ:t] and boat /bowt/

2. Glided Vowels and Diphthongs

Tongue glides either to the front position or to the back position are a very important feature of English. These glides do not occur in Arabic “long” vowels

C. Stress:

Since stress in Arabic usually falls either on the last or the one- before- last syllable of a multisyllabic word, and since stress in English often falls on the first syllable of multisyllabic nouns and adjectives, native speakers of Arabic tend to misplace the stress when pronouncing such English words. Thus they often tend to pronounce *satisfied* [sætisfayd] and *silently* [sáyləntli] as *[sætisfáyd] and *[sáyləntli]

Pronouns and prepositions are usually unstressed in English speech. However, Arab learners of English often tend to stress them. As a result, they pronounce the English sentence:

He went to school [hi wént tə skúwl] as *[hiy wént túw skúwl].

The tendency to stress every syllable in a sentence is due to the differences between the stress-timed rhythm of English and the syllable-timed rhythm of Arabic. The Arab learner of English tends to give equal time to all syllables, stressed and unstressed. Thus he misses the necessity for slurring the unstressed syllables between stressed syllables, as is normally the case in English.

D. Intonation:

Most mistakes in intonation made by Arabs speaking English are also mistakes of stress; but if the intonation of a

sentence is correct the mistakes in stress will become less pronounced.

It may be of help for native speakers of Arabic to remember that, in English intonation, the voice glides and does not jump suddenly from one pitch level to another as is sometimes the case in Arabic.

In Arabic a question ends with a *rising* intonation, while a declarative sentence ends with a *falling* intonation.

APPENDIX II

British and American Pronunciation

A- Consonants:

1. [t]:

Most speakers of English in the United States pronounce [t] as a voiced alveolar flap [t̬] when it is preceded by a strongly stressed vowel and followed by a weakly stressed vowel, as in letter [létər], and better [bétər], and butter [bətər]. But British speakers have in this position the voiceless alveolar stop [t], as in letter [létə], better [bétə], and butter [bətə].

2. [r]:

In British English, initial [r], as in red [red], is a voiced alveolar fricative. This is different from British medial r, as in very [veri] which is not a fricative, but a flap produced by one tap of the tongue.

When [r] is in final position, or post-vocalic, it is not pronounced by British speakers or by speakers of English in the Eastern parts of the United States:

Part [pa:t], and partner [pa:tnə].

However, when a word ending with r is immediately followed by a word beginning with a vowel, the /r/sound is pronounced:

Partner and *friend* [pá:tnər ənd frénd].

But American [r] is a retroflex semi-vowel.

B. Vowels

1. [æ]:

The low front vowel [æ] occurs in American English in some words where British English has the low central vowel [a:]:

	<u>American</u>	<u>British</u>
<i>glass</i>	[glæs]	[gla:s]
<i>half</i>	[hæf]	[ha:f]
<i>path</i>	[pæθ]	[pa:θ]

2. [ɔ]:

The low central vowel [a] occurs in American English instead of British [ɔ] in such words as:

	<u>American</u>	<u>British</u>
<i>top</i>	[tʌp]	[tɒp]
<i>box</i>	[bʌks]	[bɒks]
<i>concert (n).</i>	[kʌnsərt]	[kɒnsət]

3. [ə]:

The stressed mid central vowel [ə] occurs in American English for [ʌ] in British English:

	<u>American</u>	<u>British</u>
<i>cup</i>	[kəp]	[kʌp]
<i>come</i>	[kə'm]	[kʌm]
<i>luck</i>	[lə'k]	[lʌk]

4. [ay]:

Some words which have the vowel [i] in American English occur in British with [ay]:

	<u>American</u>	<u>British</u>
<i>Fertile</i>	[fə'rtɪl]	[fə'tayl]
<i>Missile</i>	[mis(i)l]	[misayl]

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