

## Arabic

This lively introduction to the linguistics of Arabic provides students with a concise overview of the language's structure and its various components: its phonology, morphology, and syntax. Through exercises, discussion points, and assignments built into every chapter, the book presents the Arabic language in vivid and engaging terms, encouraging students to grasp the complexity of its linguistic situation. It presents key linguistic concepts and theories related to Arabic in a coherent way, helping to build students' analytical and critical skills.

Key features:

- Study questions, exercises, and discussion points in every chapter encourage students to engage with the material and undertake specific assignments.
- Suggestions for further reading in every chapter allow readers to engage in more extensive research on relevant topics.
- Technical terminology is explained in a helpful glossary.

KARIN C. RYDING is Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id Professor Emerita of Arabic linguistics at Georgetown University, where she taught Arabic linguistics for over twenty years.

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*A Linguistic Introduction*

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## Preface

Despite widening international interest in Arabic language and culture, few resources exist for a systematic introduction to the linguistics of Arabic and for teaching the basics of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics. This is true despite the fact that distinguished works exist in Arabic, English, and other languages examining and documenting Arabic language history, structure, and processes. Works by Aoun, Badawi, Bateson, Beeston, Bohas, Carter, Eid, Holes, Owens, Parkinson, Stetkevych, Talmon, Versteegh and others have contributed vastly to understanding the linguistics of Arabic. However, there is a place for an organized overview, both as a reference tool and as a foundational textbook for learning about the field.

For teaching courses on Arabic linguistics, I have used books and articles by all the above-mentioned authors. In particular, I have found Bateson's *Arabic Language Handbook*, Beeston's *The Arabic Language Today*, and Stetkevych's *The Modern Arabic Literary Language* useful for concise summaries of key topics. These books originally date from 1967 (Bateson) and 1970 (Beeston and Stetkevych). Holes' *Modern Arabic* (2004) is a more modern and comprehensive approach, but I have found that it is less useful as a textbook than as a reference work, and I usually assign only certain parts of it. Versteegh's *The Arabic Language* (1997), provides historical background for key developments in the Arabic language but does not analyze the actual linguistic structures and processes of contemporary modern standard Arabic (MSA). Owens' many excellent works on the history of Arabic and Arabic grammatical theory are focused primarily on premodern developments. Thus none of these books – despite their many merits – forms by itself a framework for a course in contemporary Arabic linguistics, and there is a distinct need for a more pedagogically focused work that includes discussion topics, questions, and suggestions for further readings on specific subjects. This book aims to meet the challenges of teaching elements of Arabic linguistics to students and teachers-in-training who may know little about linguistic theory, and for classes where there are mixed levels of ability in the language and in academic background.

In 2005, I published *A Reference Grammar of Modern Standard Arabic* based on a corpus of data from contemporary Arabic newspapers and other types of expository prose. It was intended for audiences of Arabic learners and teachers, as well as for those with a general interest in the grammatical features of the written language. The present book is a more technical introduction to the structures and processes that characterize Arabic linguistics, aiming to gather in one place current scholarly resources and theories for study and further research. It has emerged and been distilled from the content of graduate courses that I have taught at Georgetown University during the past thirty years. Rather than adopt one particular theoretical stance, I have chosen to be as objectively descriptive as possible, introducing theories of varying levels of formality and indicating where readers may want to pursue further reading on particular topics. Due to length limitations, I have had to omit a considerable amount of interesting and relevant research; likewise I have omitted extended descriptions of grammatical structures because this is not a grammar of Arabic, but an introduction to linguistics as applied to Arabic.

A key factor motivating the writing of this book is the need for more extensive professional resources for teachers of Arabic as a foreign language, especially with the steady demand for knowledge of the Arabic language both as a professional skill and as a discipline within the fields of humanities and social sciences. Teaching practical knowledge of Arabic relies on the sophistication and depth of understanding that teachers bring to their classes – understanding not only the rules of language structure, but the theoretical underpinnings of the language, its intellectual and scholarly heritage, and the ways in which its grammatical system can be elegantly and efficiently portrayed.

This book may serve as a text in courses on Arabic language and linguistics, or in courses on Arabic pedagogy, or it may serve to give non-specialists a general picture of linguistic issues in MSA. In designing this book, I have assumed an audience with some knowledge of the Arabic language, but little knowledge of technical linguistic terms, theories, or approaches. There are bound to be those who will find shortcomings and gaps in this overview, and I assume total responsibility for any errors or deficiencies. I hope that this book will constitute a useful first step in conveying the enormous wealth of meaningful data, methods of linguistic research, and critical insights into language systems that have made progress through close analysis of Arabic language structures and processes.



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# Abbreviations and symbols used in this book

Additional abbreviations used specifically in syntactic theory are listed at greater length in Chapter 9.

acc.	accusative
adj.	adjective
adv.	adverb
AP	active participle
C	any consonant (phonology); complement, complementizer (syntax)
dat.	dative
def.	definite
du.	dual
EALL	<i>Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics</i>
ESA	educated spoken Arabic
f./fem.	feminine
fut.	future
gen.	genitive
IC	immediate constituent
imp.	imperfect
indef.	indefinite
indic.	indicative
m./masc.	masculine
MSA	modern standard Arabic
N	noun
no.	number
nom.	nominative
NP	noun phrase
O	object
pl.	plural
PP	passive participle; prepositional phrase (syntax)
pron.	pronoun

xii	Abbreviations and symbols
S	subject; sentence
sing.	singular
subj.	subject; subjunctive
UG	universal grammar
V	any short vowel (phonology); verb (syntax)
vd	voiced
vls	voiceless
VN	verbal noun
VP	verb phrase
VV	any long vowel
WFR	word formation rule
#	word boundary
-	morpheme boundary
{ }	encloses morpheme
//	encloses phonemic transcription
[ ]	encloses phonetic transcription
‘ ’	encloses glosses
*	indicates a hypothetical or nonstandard form
~	‘alternates with; or’
SMALL CAPS	indicate morphemic structure