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## IS ARABIC DIGLOSSIC?

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### Abstract

This study tries to explain diglossia as a phenomenon from a historic background and link this phenomenon to the case of Arabic. Arabic is seen by many linguists as a diglossic language with two irrelevant forms (spoken and written). The problem with Arabic is that the gap between spoken forms and FuSha (Standards Arabic), as described by many linguists, has been so wide that spoken Arabic forms or colloquial Arabic forms can sometimes be considered different languages. This paper attempts to analyse all forms of diglossia to see if Arabic diglossia is a unique form of diglossia, or that other languages can also be described as diglossic.

### Keywords

diglosia, background, standard Arabic (FuSha), colloquial Arabic, spoken, written, gap

## ¿ES DIGLÓSSICO EL ÁRABE?

### Resumen

Este estudio trata de explicar la diglosia como un fenómeno desde una perspectiva histórica y vincular este fenómeno a la lengua árabe. El árabe es considerado por muchos lingüistas como una lengua diglósica con dos formas irrelevantes (la hablada y la escrita). El problema con el árabe es que la brecha entre las formas habladas y el estándar árabe (Fusha), según lo descrito por muchos lingüistas, es tan amplia que las formas árabes habladas o las formas árabes coloquiales a veces pueden ser consideradas lenguas diferentes. Este trabajo trata de analizar todas las formas de diglosia para ver si la diglosia en árabe es una única forma de diglosia, o otras lenguas pueden ser también descritas como diglósicas.

**Palabras clave**

diglossia, antecedentes, árabe estándar (FuSha), árabe coloquial, oralidad, escritura, diferencia

**1. Introduction**

Arabic is seen by many linguists as a diglossic language with two irrelevant forms (spoken and written). The problem with Arabic is that the gap between spoken forms and FuSha, as described by many linguists, has been so wide that spoken Arabic forms or colloquial Arabic forms can sometimes be considered different languages (see Versteegh 2001/2003).

This paper will try to define diglossia as a phenomenon; the study will also try to answer the following question: can diglossia be considered as language specific (e.g. Latin and Arabic), or a relative phenomenon that characterizes all languages to different degrees? In other words, is a language like Arabic diglossic in its own way?

According to Fishman (1972b), Zughoul (2005) and Istaitiyeh (2003), diglossia occurs in almost every living society or, to be more accurate, it exists in every human being who uses any language to express her/his needs at various levels; e.g., home, work, the club with friends, conferences. Yet, one can only sense this phenomenon in written materials since in writing one has to follow certain rules that the language deems necessary.

Yet, Arabic is not the only language that suffers from this phenomenon since Greek is a similar case, as indicated by Karl Krumbacher. In 1902, Krumbacher called for the universal adoption of colloquial Greek in order to eliminate completely the gap between the “high” and the spoken forms. He also suggested the same be done to Arabic. But the question is: Can the Arab countries follow in the steps of Greece and adopt only one of the many colloquial varieties used in the Arab world? And if so, which one of the colloquial Arabic dialects can replace FuSha or standard Arabic in literature and in all literary works? And what are the social, religious, scientific and cultural effects of this adoption over the Arab World?

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### 2.1 What is Diglossia?

At the outset, it is necessary to define terms and particularly the term “diglossia” since it is a key concept in the development of this study. The earliest reference to this phenomenon in literary scholarship goes back to the work of the German linguist Karl Krumbacher, *Das Problem der Neugriechischen Schriftsprache* (1902) which dealt with the origin, nature and development of diglossia with special reference to the Greek and Arabic cases. More often, however, reference is made in the literature to the French linguist William Marçais, who is credited with the coinage of the term “diglossia”. Marçais (1930) introduced his definition in an article entitled “La Diglossie Arabe” as the encounter between a written literary language and a spoken colloquial widespread language.

Somewhat later and in an article that has become a classic in the linguistic sciences, Ferguson (1959) re-introduced the term discussing it in the context of four language situations which display diglossic behaviour: Arabic, Modern Greek, Swiss German and Haitian Creole. Ferguson offered his often quoted definition of diglossia as:

A relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature either of an earlier period or in another speech community which is learned largely through formal education and used for most written and formal spoken purposes but not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation (Ferguson 1959: 326).

The superposed variety was called the High (H) variety and the primary dialects were called the Low (L) varieties and the speakers of the four languages under study do have different names for the H and the L. In Arabic the contrast is between FuSha “Classical or Standard Arabic” (H) and Al-Amiyyah or Al-Dariyah “the spoken forms of

Arabic"; in Swiss German it is between Schriftsprache (H) and Schweizerdeutsch (L); in Haitian Creole it is between Francais (H) and Creole (L); and in Greek it is between Katharevousa (H) and Demotiki (L). Ferguson formulated his definition as a multidimensional characterization of diglossia in relation to attitudes and usage that included function, prestige, literary heritage, acquisition, standardization, stability, grammar, lexicon and phonology. The most important of all these features of diglossia, Ferguson maintains, is that of the functions the H and L varieties of the language serve. In fact, it is the function dimension which puts diglossia in its proper context. As an illustration, Ferguson gave the following sample listing of situations where H or L is used.

H or L is used	H	L
Sermon in church or mosque	X	
Instructions to servants, waiters, workmen, clerks		X
Personal letters	X	
Speech in Parliament, political speech	X	
University lecture	X	
Conversation with family, friends and colleagues		X
News broadcast	X	
Radio "soap opera"		X
Newspaper editorial, news story, caption on picture	X	
Captions on political cartoon		X
Poetry	X	
Folk literature		X

Table 1. Ferguson's diglossia situations

These are just a few examples of the functions of H and L and it should be made clear that depending on the locus, the topic and the education of the speakers there are thousands of other situations where the specialist might ask if H or L is appropriate to the situation (see Abu-Melhim 1991, Dickey 1994, Kallas 1994). It should also be made clear at this point that the speakers in diglossic situations consider H to be superior to L and they generally view H to be more beautiful, more logical and more appropriate for the expression of important thoughts. These views are held even by those whose command of the H variety is limited.

Other commentators have presented a range of views on diglossia. Dell Hymes (1964), commenting on Ferguson's article, viewed diglossia as an excellent example of co-

existence in the same community of mutually intelligible codes adding that the two varieties Ferguson talked about correlate with values and situations and indicate the necessity of taking the community as a frame of reference to avoid distorting the communication situation. Gumperz (1962, 1977) noted that diglossia is not restricted to multilingual societies that have vernacular and classical varieties, but is also manifested in societies which employ separate dialect registers or “functionally differentiated language varieties of whatever kind”. He also investigated the social patterns that govern the use of one variety rather than the other. Fishman (1972b), on the other hand, attempted to “trace the maintenance of diglossia as well as its disruption at the national or societal level”. He also attempted to relate diglossia to “psychologically pertinent considerations” such as compound and coordinate bilingualism”. He also extended the term, diglossia, to cover any society in which two or more language varieties are used under distinct circumstances (Fishman 1972b, 1972c), which will take us to the term “register”, usually defined as “varieties according to use” in contrast with the term “dialect” defined as “variety according to user”. Hudson (1980: 55), however, considered this extension as “a regrettable development” since it will make every society diglossic where different registers and dialects are used. Hudson believed that the value of the concept diglossia is that it can be used in “sociolinguistic typology — that is, the classification of communities according to the type of sociolinguistic set-up that prevails in them”. Moreover, Hudson (1980: 55) viewed diglossic communities as “those in which most linguistic items belong to one of two non-overlapping sets, each used under different circumstances”. But in contrast with this position, he considered that the linguistic items in a non-diglossic community do not fall into a small number of non-overlapping sets but are nearer to the opposite extreme where each item has its own unique social distribution. Hudson, finally, saw the difference between diglossic community and non-diglossic as less clear-cut than Ferguson’s definition, if we want to reconcile the definition of diglossia with our claim that varieties do not exist except as informal ways of talking about collections of linguistic items which are roughly similar in their social distributions.

### 2.1.2 Classical and Extended Diglossia

Many linguists have proposed terminologies for a taxonomy of diglossia. For what is here referred to as “classical” (Ferguson 1959) and “extended” (Fishman 1967) diglossia,

Kloss has proposed the term “in-diglossia” (for the kind where two varieties are closely related) and “out-diglossia” (for situations where the two languages are unrelated or distantly related) (Kloss 1966: 138). Some classicists prefer the terms “endo-diglossia” and “exo-diglossia” derived from the appropriate Greek prefixes (Schiffman 1993). Scotton (1986) proposed the terms “narrow” for Ferguson’s 1959 version, and “broad” (or “diglossia extended”) to refer to Fishman’s expansion of the discussion. According to Scotton, few truly diglossic (in the 1959 sense) communities actually exist, since two conditions must be there in order to meet the criteria: “(1) Everyone [...] speaks the Low variety as a mother tongue” and “(2) The High variety is never used in informal conversations”. Clear examples of these cases are Tamil and Swiss German. Britto (1986) proposes the term “Use-oriented” (or diatypes) and “User-oriented” (or dialectal) diglossia to refer to the same dichotomy others have also tried to define.

Ferguson (1959)	Classical diglossia	Classical diglossia
Fishman (1967)	Classical diglossia	Extended diglossia
Kloss (1966)	In-diglossia	Out-diglossia
Schiffman (1993)	Endo-diglossia	Exo-diglossia
Scotton (1986)	Narrow diglossia	Broad diglossia
Britto (1986)	Use-oriented (diatypes)	User-oriented (dialectal)

Table. 2 Terminology of Diglossia

#### 2.1.2.1 Fishman’s Taxonomy

Fishman’s 1980 taxonomy of “kinds of linguistic relationships between H’s and L’s” is so important as to be fully stated here:

(a) H as classical, L as vernacular, the two being genetically related, e.g. classical and vernacular Arabic, classical or classicized Greek (Katharevousa and Demotiki), Latin and French among francophone scholars and clergy in earlier centuries, classical and vernacular Tamil, classical and vernacular Sinhalese, Sanskrit and Hindi, classical Mandarin and modern Pekingese, etc.

(b) H as classical, L as vernacular, the two not being genetically related, e.g. Loshn Koydesh (written Hebrew/American English) and Yiddish (Fishman 1976, 1981) (or any one of the several dozen other non-Semitic Jewish L's), as long as the later operate in vernacular functions rather than in traditional literacy-related ones (Hary 1992).

(c) H as written/formal-spoken and L as vernacular, the two being genetically unrelated to each other; e.g. Spanish and Guarani in Paraguay (Rubin 1972), English (or French) and various vernaculars in post-colonial areas throughout the world.

(d) H as written/formal-spoken and L as vernacular, the two being genetically related. Here only written/formal spoken and informal-spoken varieties will be admitted (otherwise every dialect-standard situation in the world would qualify within this rubric), e.g. High German and Swiss German, standard spoken Pekingese? [Putonghua] and Cantonese, Standard English and Caribbean Creole (Fishman 1980: 4).

Schiffman (1993) believes that these differences range beyond the obvious ones of genetic vs. non-genetic relationship, and that they have to do primarily with power relationships in the societies characterized by them. Various scholars have proposed that extended diglossia is usually unstable, unless certain conditions having to do with power are met. Classical diglossia, usually thought to be more stable than extended diglossia, can also be shown to be more unstable under certain conditions. It may also be said that the type of diglossia in question may also be changed, i.e. a narrow kind of diglossia may be replaced by a broad form without much awareness on the part of the speech community.

#### 2.1.2.2 Extended diglossia

Schiffman (1993) noted that the extensive research on diglossia and the many attempts to refine and extend it, especially those pertaining to the socio-economic conditions in which diglossic languages are usually embedded, seems to be warranted. It should be noted that diglossia is a gradient, variable phenomenon, which cannot be boxed into an either-or, binary system of categorization. And as Ferguson himself later noted (Ferguson 1991, in Hudson 1991), his original formulation of diglossia was not meant to encompass all instances of multilingualism or functional differentiation of

languages. Hence, many attempts to “refine” or “extend” diglossia, or to discern whether a language is or is not a case of diglossia may be ill-founded.

Fishman (1967), however, introduced the notion that diglossia can be extended to situations found in many societies where forms of two genetically unrelated (or at least historically distant) languages occupy the H and L niches, e.g. Latin in medieval Europe, where H is used for religious, educational, literary and other prestigious domains, while L is rarely used for such purposes, being only used in spoken domains.

### 2.1.3 Diglossia and language shift

Diglossia has been noted as a factor in language shift, especially in speech communities where a minority is in a diglossic relationship with a majority language. Fishman (1967: 36) notes that bilingualism without diglossia tends to be transitional both in terms of the linguistic repertoires of speech communities as well as the speech varieties involved per se. Without separate though complementary norms and values to establish and maintain functional separatism of speech varieties, the language or variety which is fortunate enough to be associated with the predominant drift of social forces tends to displace the other(s).

### 2.1.4 Power and Prestige in Diglossia

Schiffman (1993) viewed diglossic situations as consisting of two (or more) varieties that coexist in a speech community. The domains of linguistic behaviour are parcelled out in a kind of complementary distribution. These domains are usually ranked in a kind of a hierarchy, from highly valued (H) to less valued (L). When the two varieties are accepted as genetically related, the H domains are usually the reserve of the more conservative form of the language, generally the literary dialect if there is a written form. ‘Formal’ domains such as public speaking, religious texts and practice, education and other prestigious kinds of usage are dominated by the H norm; the L norm is used for informal conversation, jokes, street and market, the telephone and many other domains (e.g. cinema, television). For diglossic situations involving two different (genetically unrelated)



linguistic codes ('extended' diglossia), the one dominating the H domains has the greater international prestige or is the language of the local power elite or the dominant religious community. In such cases the H variety is the more powerful, however power is defined. Thus, in French Canada, English occupies the H-variety niche because it has the greatest prestige in North America, its population within Canada is greater than that of French speakers, and its speech community is economically dominant, both in Francophone Canada and Anglophone Canada. In France, however, French is the H variety in diglossic situations involving other languages or dialects, such as Breton or Alsatian where these L varieties can be used only in streets, home, etc.

It remains to be seen whether the same kind of imbalance of power exhibited in non-genetic diglossia can be said to exist with regard to classical or genetic diglossia. In many diglossic situations, only a minority or elite control the H domain successfully, so those who know only the L variety are at a disadvantage.

#### 2.1.5 Diglossia and Literacy

The prevalence of literacy has an important impact on diglossic situation (see Salah 2006). Zughoul (2005), Schiffman (1993) and Al-Mousa (1987) note that in a society where literacy is not universal, not all speakers control the use of the school-imparted H-variety. This does not mean that illiterates have the option of using the L-variety in H-variety domains; rather, the expectation is that they will remain silent rather than exhibit inappropriate linguistic norms. Their linguistic behaviour is in fact restricted to the L domains, and use of H domains is de facto the monopoly of the educated few. However, real life speech situations at the most prestigious places (houses of parliament in the Arab world) contradict Schiffman's expectation where we can find that most of the parliamentarians choose to use the L-variety in their speeches to illustrate their ideas. This does not mean that they abstain from using the H-variety but rather they seem to switch into L-variety a short while after the beginning of the speech. Moreover, the less educated deputies adhere to well written H-variety speeches rather than keeping silent, and if they want to indulge in a conversation they tend to use a version which only approximates H-variety.

### 2.1.6 How does Colloquial Arabic differ from Standard Arabic?

Zughoul (1980: 201-217) contends that the term Colloquial Arabic (Spoken Arabic, Al-Amiyyah, Dialects, or Al-Daarjah) describes the native varieties spoken by the Arab population as a whole. Colloquial Arabic is the means of communication in the daily life matters, in varied informal situations all over the Arab World. Each Arab country has at least one or more distinctive dialects that vary within the country and across the Arab World. Varieties are found mainly in phonology and vocabulary items. Zughoul cites the situation of Jordan as an example where there are three distinctive mutually intelligible dialects, namely, the dialect of the city dwellers (particularly in Amman), the dialect of the Bedouins, and the dialect used by farmers in rural areas. Within the rural dialects, for example, there are regional variations; the broadly Bedouin dialects also have the same variations according to their geographical location. Moreover, even among the city dwellers, one can feel the variation among users of this dialect which reveals the ecological background of the speaker. These dialects and their varieties are distinguishable from the spoken Arabic of Cairo, Damascus, or any other dialect of an Arab country in the Arab world.

Colloquial is simpler than FuSha in syntax and lexicon. Most of the vocabulary items used in dialects are in fact of FuSha origin but with some alterations of sounds as Al-Tannir (1987) pointed out in the introduction to his dictionary *Eloquent Colloquial Terms*. The declensional endings (i'raab) are deleted. The dual is rarely used and plural formation is simpler. Colloquial Arabic uses more familiar vocabulary items and it is more open to borrowings from other languages. In contrast, FuSha (standard Arabic) uses mainly learned items and is very conservative when it comes to borrowings.

Colloquial Arabic has almost all the sounds used in FuSha, in addition to some phonemic combinations which are foreign to FuSha such as the emphatic /dj/ and the /jh/ that resulted from historical linguistic change (see Zughoul 1980). Some FuSha sounds are changed in dialects; for example, the FuSha sound /q/ corresponds to a glottal stop in Cairo, Damascus, parts of Lebanon, and most city dwellers in Palestine; and to a voiced velar stop /g/ in most of the Bedouin dialects in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and most parts

of the Arab World where dwellers are of Bedouin origin like the Libyan people, the desert inhabitants of Sinai in Egypt, and those of Negev in Palestine. Also /q/ corresponds to /k/ in most of the rural areas of Palestine, and to the affricate /j/ in some Bedouin dialects in the Gulf. The interdental fricatives of FuSha /th/ and /TH/ are changed in some dialects to /s/ and /t/, or to /d/ and /z/ in other dialects. The /k/ sound is uttered in some Bedouin dialects in the Gulf and in some rural areas in Palestine as /ch/ or /tch/. Yet, it is worth mentioning here that most of the changes in sounds are similar to the changes in old Spoken Arabic. Abdel-Tawwab (1997: 75-93) and Anees (1984: 10-14) elaborate in relating the current phonetic changes to phonetic phenomena that historically goes back to the dialects of certain Arab tribes.

Zughoul (1980: 201-217) believes that because it has not been written, Colloquial Arabic has not been developed in schools and universities. It remains limited in its communicative value, and it is always looked upon by the majority of Arabs as inferior to FuSha, or to be more exact, as a distortion of that highly regarded variety; it has been described in literature as “associated with ignorance and vulgarity” (Abdel-Malek 1972: 132), as “the tongue of drunkards and servants [...] archaic, confused, having no rules of grammar, a mixture and a distortion of FuSha”. However, it can be said that this point of view against Colloquial is mostly endorsed by highly educated Arab people or even people who are specialized in Arabic since most commoners in the Arab World think of themselves as speakers of Arabic without paying any attention to the division that exists between FuSha and Colloquial varieties, considering their own varieties as an inseparable part of Arabic (see Zughoul 1980). In spite of this negative attitude towards Colloquial Arabic among the elite, it has been able to find itself a suitable milieu to flourish in. Most of the Drama works (series, movies, and plays), songs, mass media... etc. are written and performed in Colloquial allowing it, therefore, to be enhanced (see Al-Kenai 1985).

### 2.1.7 The Gap between Standard Arabic and Colloquial Arabic

It is noticeable that the gap between FuSha and Colloquial is increasing in the Arab World. Al-Zayyat (1969: 400-438) enumerated various factors standing behind the widening gap, such as the increasing illiteracy in the Arab World during the more than five

centuries when the Arab World was ruled by various non-Arab people who did not give much care to the protection of the Arabic Language, by favouring non-Arabic spoken varieties. These non-Arabic spoken (and sometimes written) varieties severely affected the spoken Arabic. The political decision in the Arab world was not an Arab one. Moreover, it is well known to Arab linguists and historians that during the last 100 years of Othman rule over the Arab World, hunger, poverty, and of course non-literacy increased. The rise of nationalism began during the last 100 years in the Arab World as a reaction to the Turks' humiliation and oppression of the Arabs. The formal language of the government became Turkish all over the Turkish Empire and the language of the elite was the Turkish Language: education among common people reached low levels in the Arab world. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Arab World started to suffer from the European Colonialism. French colonialism started suppressing Arabic by forbidding the teaching of Arabic (see Al-Manasrah 1999); the rate of illiteracy severely increased among Arabs; and British colonialism was not much better. Today, the Arab World suffers from around 72% illiteracy and this rate is likely to increase due to the economic situation in the Arab World and the new trend of Globalization (Zughoul 2005). In fact, the increase of literacy in the Arab World will not eliminate dialects at all: dialects will always be there since they are inherent; but literacy can smooth the excessive dialectal use, i.e. the exaggeration in changing the sounds as an indicator for the uniqueness of the speaker's dialect (Abdel-Tawwab 1997: 115-123). All Egyptian people, for instance, can pronounce the /j/ when they are reading FuSha or during the recitation of the Holy Qur'an: what makes them utter the same element as /g/ in their daily speech is related to what can be called over-dialectic (see Zughoul 1980).

### **3. Is Diglossia a restricted Phenomenon?**

It is safe to state that languages other than Arabic have been subject to the same influences. Latin, for example, was the language of a conquering country where the population of the invaded nations was much greater than the conquering armies. The conquered people started adopting Latin as well as the customs of the conquerors as citizens. Ferguson's diglossia perfectly fits the development of Romance languages and

High Latin in the Middle Ages, which possessed a large body of literature spanning many centuries combined with very low literacy rates. There was a high variety of the language and low varieties, used for most ordinary conversations, which later became separate languages. Unlike Arabic, however, Latin was frozen in time by the body of Latin literature and the Catholic Church. This allowed Vulgar Latin to evolve into geographically separate languages. The new Spoken Arabic dialects have evolved unchecked while great care has been taken to keep the FuSha or Standard Arabic protected (see Zughoul 2005).

Zughoul (2005: 13) and Salah (2006) state that most languages around the world can be described as diglossic such as classical Greek (Katharevousa) and Demotiki, classical and vernacular Tamil, classical and vernacular Sinhalese, Sanskrit and Hindi, classical Mandarin and Pekinese; and the more complex situation of Bengali languages (varieties). There are also the Dutch language and the more increased spoken variety of Frisian; Leshon Kodesh (textual Hebrew/Aramaic) and Yiddish, “in addition to the wide spread of bilingualism for most Jewish people spoken in their varied communities”. Moreover, Spanish (and all its varieties used in America) is a similar case to that of Latin, as well as French or (English) and the varieties of French or (English) in post-colonial areas throughout the world, in addition to the case of Standard German and the spoken form of Swiss German.

Hudson (1980: 35) highlights the situation of the so called “Chinese dialects” which are not mutually intelligible to the extent that a person from Peking can not understand a person from Hong Kong when using his own dialect; the case is similar in India where two adjacent villages speak two different varieties that may not be mutually intelligible. In Norway, two varieties are used as standard varieties.

Another language that seems to have faced the same influences that Latin did is English. McArthur (1998) sees the future of English as follows:

One possible scenario for English as an international language is that it will succumb to the same fate as Latin did in the Middle Ages. That is, that the regional varieties will develop independently to the point where they become different languages rather than varieties of the same language (McArthur 1998: 180).

McArthur (1998: 181) states that “few today would suggest that there is a single standard of English in the world”. Trudgill (1999: 1-2) believes that “there has been a move, in interest in dialects of English, from a concern with phonological and lexical into a deeper interest in the grammar of the different varieties of British English”. Hence, if the more conservative English Grammar is being changed in the varied varieties of English, then what can be the case in the morphology of English? Surely, many people may tend to deny the fact that English is considered diglossic, but it cannot be denied inside an English speaking country like the United States or England (Received Pronunciation vs. spoken varieties of English). Trudgill (1999) presented the wide differences among the dialects in England in terms of pronunciation and grammar; the term diglossia seems here to be, more or less, a suitable term to describe the case of English.

In a nutshell, it is crystal clear that diglossia is not a restricted phenomenon but rather a universal one that applies to all living languages in the world. Surely, other languages which were described as non-diglossic, if meticulously studied, would reveal their diglossic situation.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Arabic, like any other living language, has over time experienced great changes in its written form as well as its spoken forms. Recently, for several reasons (see Salah 2006), the spoken forms have been more prevalent than the usually written form “FuSha” (the Arabic term for Standard Arabic). The written form of “FuSha” has witnessed slight changes in grammar but great changes in semantics.

## A Guide To Arabic Transliteration

The study uses the following representation of Arabic sounds:

Arabic letters (consonants)	Transliteration	Place and Manner of Articulation	Example
أ	ʔ	Glottal stop (plosive)	ʔamal (hope)
ب	b	Voiced denti-alveolar, non-emphatic	ba7r (sea)
ت	t	Voiceless denti-alveolar plosive, non-emphatic	tilmi:TH (student)
ث	Th	Voiceless dental fricative	Thaman (price)
ج	J	Voiced palato-alveolar affricate	jamal (camel)
ح	ʕ	Voiceless pharyngeal fricative	ʕama:m (pigeons)
خ	'ɣ	Voiced uvular fricative	'7ashab (wood)
د	d	Voiced denti-alveolar plosive, non-emphatic	Dawlah (country)
ذ	TH	Voiced dental fricative, non-emphatic	THawq (taste)
ر	r	Voiced alveolar trill	raʔs (head)
ز	z	Voiced denti-alveolar sulcal fricative	zuka:m (cold)
س	s	Voiceless denti-alveolar sulcal fricative, non-emphatic	sama:ʔ (sky)
ش	Sh	Voiceless palato-alveolar fricative	shams (sun)
ص	S	Voiceless denti-alveolar sulcal fricative, emphatic	Saqr (falcon)
ض	D	Voiced denti-alveolar plosive, emphatic	Da'7m (big)
ط	T	Voiceless denti-alveolar plosive, emphatic	Ta7i:n (flour)
ظ	<u>D</u>	Voiced dental fricative, emphatic	<u>D</u> amaʔ (thirst)
ع	ʕ	Voiced pharyngeal fricative	3ayn (eye)
غ	'ɣ	Voiced uvular fricative	'3uba:r (dust)
ف	f	Voiceless labiodental fricative	fam (mouth)
ق	q	Voiced uvular plosive, emphatic	qamar (moon)
ك	k	Voiceless velar plosive	kalb (dog)
ل	l	Voiced denti-alveolar lateral	layl (night)
م	m	Voiced bilabial nasal	misr (Egypt)
ن	n	Voiced denti-alveolar nasal	naml (ants)
ه	h	Voiceless glottal fricative	hawa:ʔ (air)
و	w	Voiced bilabial glide	wa7sh (beast)
ي	y	Voiced palatal glide	ya:fa: (Jaffa)

The double consonant can be achieved through the “shaddah” (a small Arabic s) over the consonant that need to be doubled.

Vowels	Transliteration	Place and manner of articulation
----- َ	a	Low back short vowel
ُ	u	High back short vowel
ِ	i, e	High front short vowel
و	u:	High long back vowel
ا	a:	Low long back vowel
ا	o:	Long mid round tense back vowel
ي	i:	High long front vowel
ي	ai	Closing diphthong

Note: “tanween” is part of the vowel system of Arabic achieved through adding one of the short vowels: /a/, /i/, or /u/ to the sound /n/ to locate the grammatical slot of the term, e.g. the word “kita:b” (book), it would be inflected “kita:ban”, “kita:bun” or “kita:bin” according to its grammatical slot.

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