

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.

Arabic

A Linguistic Introduction

KARIN C. RYDING



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-02331-4 — Arabic
Karin C. Ryding
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107023314

© Karin C. Ryding 2014

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2014

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-02331-4 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-60694-4 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix
<i>Abbreviations and symbols used in this book</i>	xi
1 Arabic linguistics: overview and history	1
2 Arabic phonology	13
3 Arabic phonotactics and morphophonology	23
4 Arabic syllable structure and stress	33
5 Introduction to Arabic morphology	41
6 Derivational morphology: the root/pattern system	55
7 Non-root/pattern morphology and the Arabic lexicon	79
8 Arabic inflectional morphology	89
9 Syntactic analysis and Arabic	107
10 Arabic syntax I: phrase structure	119
11 Arabic syntax II: clause structure	127
<i>Appendices</i>	
A Fields of linguistics and Arabic	141
B Arabic transcription/transliteration/romanization	145
C Arabic nominal declensions	149
<i>Glossary of technical linguistic terms</i>	157
<i>References</i>	167
<i>Index</i>	181

Figures

Figure 1	<i>Phonemic chart of MSA consonants</i>	<i>page</i> 15
Figure 2	<i>Phonemic chart of MSA vowels</i>	17
Figure 3	<i>Arabic verb forms</i>	59
Figure 4	<i>A typical verb conjugation in all moods of the verb</i>	94

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.

viii Preface

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.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank and acknowledge the following people, past and present, who inspired me, helped me form my ideas for this book, and assisted me toward its completion:

my Georgetown professors Wallace M. Erwin and Michael Zarechnak, who led me to and through Arabic linguistics;
my students, who challenged and stimulated my thinking on points of Arabic linguistics;
my colleagues at Georgetown, outstanding Arabists and linguists;
at Cambridge University Press, Andrew Winnard, for his unfailing support and encouragement every step of the way, and to Helena Dowson for her attentive and patient help in finalizing the manuscript;
my husband, Victor Litwinski, for being a vital interlocutor on all things linguistic, and for his unstinting emotional and professional support; and
His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id, Sultan of Oman, whose patronage and encouragement of Arabic language study has been a great boon to the development of Arabic linguistics, transcultural communication, and intercultural understanding.

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