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Arabic Script and Sounds

This chapter discusses the essentials of the Arabic writing and sound systems at sound/letter, syllable, word, and sentence level. The following will be covered:

- Arabic letters of the alphabet, writing method, and orientation
- Arabic sounds (consonants, vowels, diphthongs, and other sound combinations)
- gemination (or consonant doubling)
- stress
- variations in sounds and spelling
- additional symbols
- formal MSA vs. informal MSA (Modern Standard Arabic)
- definiteness and assimilation of the [l] sound of the definite article
- helping vowels
- the dropping and retention of the *hamza* and 'alif seat of the definite article.

Due to the transparent nature of Arabic spelling, the terms *letter* and *sound* are used interchangeably.

1.1 Arabic Script: The Alphabet

Arabic has a phonetic alphabet consisting of distinct symbols for three long (pure) vowels and 26 consonants. Whether in handwriting or print, Arabic script only exhibits a cursive style and is written from right to left. It may be for reasons to do with this right-to-left writing orientation that Arabs abandoned their (Arabic) numeral system, which was based on a geometrical conceptual design of the number of angles in each number (see Appendix A):

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

and later adopted the Indian Sanskrit number system:

١٠ ٩ ٨ ٧ ٦ ٥ ٤ ٣ ٢ ١ ٠

Whereas most Indian Sanskrit numerals are written from right to left, most Arabic numerals are written from left to right.

Although Arabic script is characterized as cursive, not all letters can be connected to a letter following them, allowing them only to be connected to letters preceding them. These letters comprise a small number of the total letters (six out of the 29 letters) and are usually referred to as *non-connectors*. The remaining letters can be connected to letters before and after them and are usually referred to as *connectors*. The nature of cursive writing style necessitates that:

- each *connector* letter assumes four (slightly) different shapes
- each *non-connector* letter assumes two shapes
- each shape depends on whether it is in initial, medial after a connector, medial after a non-connector, final after a connector, or final after a non-connector (usually referred to as *independent* or dictionary shape) position
- the *initial* and *medial after a non-connector* shapes of all the letters are identical
- the *medial* and *final after a connector* shapes of the *non-connectors* are identical.

Table 1.1a shows the alphabet (in descending order), which consists of 29 letters, including the 26 consonants and three long vowels, the different shapes (initial, medial, final after connectors, and final after non-connectors), and the distinction of connectors vs. non-connectors.

Table 1.1a Shapes of Arabic letters according to their positions within the word

Name		Final after non- connectors	Final after connectors	Medial after non- connectors	Medial after connectors	Initial
أَلِف	'alif	ا	ـا	ا	ـا	ا*
باء	baa'	ب	ـب	ب	ـب	ب
تاء	taa'	ت	ـت	ت	ـت	ت
ثاء	thaa'	ث	ـث	ث	ـث	ث
جيم	jiim	ج	ـج	ج	ـج	ج
حاء	Haa'	ح	ـح	ح	ـح	ح
خاء	khaa'	خ	ـخ	خ	ـخ	خ
دال	daal	د	ـد	د	ـد	د
ذال	dhaal	ذ	ـذ	ذ	ـذ	ذ
راء	raa'	ر	ـر	ر	ـر	ر
زاي	zaay	ز	ـز	ز	ـز	ز
سين	siin	س	ـس	س	ـس	س
شين	shiin	ش	ـش	ش	ـش	ش
صاد	Saad	ص	ـص	ص	ـص	ص
ضاد	Daad	ض	ـض	ض	ـض	ض
طاء	Taa'	ط	ـط	ط	ـط	ط
ظاء	Zaa'	ظ	ـظ	ظ	ـظ	ظ
عَيْن	'ayn	ع	ـع	ع	ـع	ع
غَيْن	ghayn	غ	ـغ	غ	ـغ	غ
فاء	faa'	ف	ـف	ف	ـف	ف

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Table 1.1a Continued

Name		Final after non- connectors	Final after connectors	Medial after non- connectors	Medial after connectors	Initial
قاف	qaaf	ق	ق	ق	ق	ق
كاف	kaaf	ك	ك	ك	ك	ك
لام	laam	ل	ل	ل	ل	ل
ميم	miim	م	م	م	م	م
نون	nuun	ن	ن	ن	ن	ن
هاء	haa'	ه	ه	ه	ه	ه
واو	waaw	و	و	و	و	و*
ياء	yaa'	ي	ي	ي	ي	ي*
هَمْزَةٌ	** hamza	ء / أ / و / ئ	ء / أ / و / ئ	أ / و / ئ	أ / و / ئ	أ / إ

Note: Names of letters in bold = non-connectors; *= (pure) long vowels which never occur in word initial position; **= hamza which has certain writing rules (see Appendix B).

Table 1.1b gives examples of the letter *baa'* [b] occurring in initial position, in medial position following a connector, in medial position following a non-connector, in final position following a connector, and in final position following a non-connector.

Table 1.1b

Name	Final after non- connectors	Final after connectors	Medial after non- connectors	Medial after connectors	Initial
<i>baa'</i>	ب	ب	ب	ب	ب
Examples	تاب <i>taab</i> “he repented”	حليب <i>Haliib</i> “milk”	ربح <i>ribH</i> “profit”	حبل <i>Habl</i> “rope”	بَعِيد <i>ba'iid</i> “far”

Table 1.1a shows the letters according to the most widely known alphabetical order, usually referred to as *al-tarīb al-alfbā'iyy* “the *'alifbaa'* order.” Another (earlier) order exists and is usually used for arranging headings and subheadings within a text. The latter order is based on the first alphabet invented by the Phoenicians and is usually referred to as *al-tarīb al-ʾabjadiyy* “the *'abjadiyy* order.” The order is combined in the following words:

كَلِمُنْ	حُطِّي	هُوَزْ	أَبْجَدْ
ن م ل ك	ي ط ح	ز و ه	د ج ب أ
n m l k	ii T H	z w h	d j b a

صَطْعْ	تَخَذْ	فَرَسَتْ	سَعَفَصْ
غ ظ ض	ذ خ ث	ت ش ر ق	ص ف ع س
gh Z D	dh kh th	t sh r q	S f c s

It is the same Phoenician alphabet that the Greeks relied on for their alphabet. Hence the order of the Greek alphabet proceeds in a similar fashion, as A, B, Γ, Δ, etc. (see Appendix C for the oldest extant tablet of the Phoenician alphabet, the first real phonetic alphabet).

Note: The *'alif* here stands for two sounds: the long vowel [aa] and the *hamza* [ʾ]. This makes the total number of characters in the Arabic alphabet 29: 26 consonants and three (long) vowels. As for the meaning of the words containing the letters arranged according to the *al-tarīb al-ʾabjadiyy* “*'abjadiyy* order,” traditional Arabic sources state that the words refer to names of ancient kings of *Madyan* tribes (in the Arabian Peninsula) who invented the Arabic alphabet, except for the last two words, containing the letters [th], [kh], [dh], [D], [Z], and [gh], which were added later.

1.2 Arabic Sounds

1.2.1 Vowels and Grammatical Vowel Endings

From the above explanation of the letters of the Arabic alphabet, note that only the long vowels are included in the alphabet and the representation

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of the short vowels is left out. MSA has a symmetrical vowel system: three long vowels [aa], [uu], and [ii]; and three corresponding short ones: [a], [u], and [i]. These are explained in Tables 1.2 and 1.3.

Table 1.2 Arabic long vowels

Name	Symbol	Sound	Examples (from English)	Examples (from Arabic)
'alif	ا	[aa]	as “a” in fan	“mortal” <i>faan</i> فان
waaw	و	[uu]	as “oo” in fool	“beans” <i>fool</i> فول
yaa'	ي	[ii]	as “ee” in feel	“elephant” <i>fiil</i> فيل

Table 1.3 Arabic short vowels

Name	Symbol	Sound	Examples (from English)	Examples (from Arabic)
<i>fatHa</i>	َ —	[a]	as “a” in instant	“art” <i>fan</i> فَنَ
<i>Damma</i>	ِ —	[u]	as “u” in full	“jasmine” <i>ful</i> فُلِ
<i>kasra</i>	ِ — َ	[i]	as “i” in fill	“cent” <i>fiis</i> فَيْسِ

Long vowels are twice as long as short vowels. Thus, if we assume the short vowel to equal one beat, the long vowel equals two beats of its corresponding short vowel. Pure long and short vowels as such never occur at the beginning of a word, occurring only in medial or final word position. However, unlike the symbols for the long vowels, the short vowel symbols are not written as part of the word but rather as diacritical marks above or under the consonants. Thus, a short vowel is written above or below the consonant that follows it in speech. For this reason, short vowels are usually left out for adult readers but usually retained for children and adolescents (kindergarten to 12th grade) until they are able to read and spell words without the short vowels.

Arabic script has four additional symbols, one signifying the absence of any vowel (long or short), called *sukuun* سُكُون “stillness,” and three (formal ones) usually referred to as *tanwiin* تَنْوِين or *nunation*, signifying indefiniteness

(equivalent to the indefinite article “a” in English), signaled by the sound [n] attached to the grammatical (case) endings [a], [u], and [i] (to be discussed in subsequent chapters, particularly Chapter 22). These are illustrated in Table 1.4:

Table 1.4 Arabic nunation and grammatical endings and *sukuun*

Name	Translation and function	Symbol	Sound	Examples
تَنْوِينُ الْفَتْحِ (مَنْصُوب)	nunation of <i>fatH</i> (accusative)	◌َ —	[an]	“a boy” <i>walad-an</i> وَكِدًا
تَنْوِينُ الضَّمِّ (مَرْفُوع)	nunation of <i>Damm</i> (nominative)	◌ُ —	[un]	“a boy” <i>walad-un</i> وَكِدٌ
تَنْوِينُ الْكَسْرِ (مَجْرُور)	nunation of <i>kasr</i> (genitive)	◌ِ ◌ِ —	[in]	“a boy” <i>walad-in</i> وَكِدٍ
سُكُون	<i>sukuun</i>	◌ْ —	[∅]	“a rope” <i>Habl</i> حَبْلٌ

As shown in Table 1.4, the nunation, together with the three grammatical endings [an], [un], and [in], only occur in word final position, whereas the *sukuun* occurs in medial or final position but never in word initial position nor following a consonant in initial position, since MSA does not allow consonant clusters in word initial position, unlike English and some other languages. Thus, the word *street* in English contains the three-consonant cluster [str] with no vowels separating the first [s] and second [t] consonants. The absence of consonant clusters in word initial position in MSA is illustrated in the example below:

“he concealed”	<i>satara</i>	سَتَرَ
“concealing”	<i>satrun</i>	سَتْرٌ
“concealing”	<i>satr</i>	سَتْرٌ

Sukuun is not allowed in initial position in any of the three words. Rather, in *satara* “he concealed,” Arabic exhibits short syllables (or chunks of a

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word) consisting of a consonant [s] + a vowel [a], hence the short word consists of three syllables (*sa + ta + ra* → *satara*). In *satrun* “concealing” Arabic allows *sukuun* in the middle of the word following a consonant (following a consonant and a vowel in word initial position), allowing for a longer first syllable, consisting of a consonant [s], a vowel [a], and a consonant [t] and a similar second syllable; hence the short word consist of two syllables (*sat + run* → *satrun*). In *satr* “concealing,” which is similar to *satrun* “concealing” (except that the former occurs in pause form; i.e., without the grammatical *un* at the end), *sukuun* occurs in the middle of the word after the consonant [t] and at the end of the word. A good way to conceptualize the *sukuun* in Arabic, if a word contains *sukuun*, is to consider it the point at which a word can be broken into parts/syllables.

1.2.2 Consonants

As stated above, Arabic has 26 consonants. Most of these have equivalent consonant sounds in English and other languages, although a few do not. Below is a brief description of all Arabic consonants, examples, and, where there is little or no similarity between Arabic consonants and those of the English language, an explanation.

1. ب b [voiced bilabial stop] produced with the two lips: as “b” in *bank*.
2. ت t [voiceless alveolar stop] produced with the tip of the tongue and the alveolar ridge at the base of the upper incisors (with the back of the tongue lowered): as “t” in *tan*.
3. ث th [voiceless interdental/dental fricative] produced with the tip of the tongue and the tip of the incisors (with the back of the tongue lowered): as “th” in *thank*.
4. ج j [voiced alveo-palatal fricative] produced with the tip of the tongue against the alveolar ridge and the middle of the tongue raised against the palate in this sequence: as “j” in *judge*.
5. ح H [voiceless pharyngeal fricative] produced in the middle of the windpipe by constricting it (so as to constrict the air passage without complete closure), just as producing a steam/breath with a *sound*; not to be confused with “h” as in *hat*, which is produced in the larynx.
6. خ kh [voiceless velar fricative] produced with the back of the tongue raised against the back of the roof of the mouth: as “ch” in the name of the German composer *Bach*.

7. د d [voiced alveolar stop] produced with the tip of the tongue and the alveolar ridge at the base of the upper incisors (with the back of the tongue lowered): as “d” in *Dan*.
8. ذ dh [voiced interdental/dental fricative] produced with the tip of the tongue and the tip of the incisors (with the back of the tongue lowered): as “th” in *that*.
9. ر r [voiced alveolar trill] produced with the tip of the tongue and the alveolar ridge above the upper incisors with the back of the tongue lowered: as “r” in *read* or with the back of the tongue raised, as “r” in *rust*.
10. ز z [voiced alveolar fricative] produced with the tip or blade of the tongue against the alveolar ridge (with the back of the tongue lowered): as “z” in *zebra*.
11. س s [voiceless alveolar fricative] produced with the tip or blade of the tongue against the alveolar ridge (with the back of the tongue lowered): as “s” in *see*.
12. ش sh [voiceless palato-alveolar fricative] produced with the middle of the tongue and that of the palate (without complete closure): as “sh” in *shoes*.
13. ص S [voiceless alveolar fricative emphatic] produced with the tip or blade of the tongue against the alveolar ridge (with the back of the tongue raised): as “s” in *saw*. **Note:** The consonant [S], as well as [s] and [z] above, are usually referred to as “alveolar.” Another accurate articulation is where the tip of the tongue is behind the back of the lower incisors.
14. ض D [voiced alveolar stop emphatic] produced with the tip of the tongue and the alveolar ridge at the base of the upper incisors (with pressure applied from both sides of the tongue against the inner sides of the upper molars, so that the sound produced is not just the emphatic/heavy/deep version of the voiced alveolar stop [d]; the closest English sound is “d” in *Donna*.)
15. ط T [voiceless alveolar stop emphatic] produced with the tip of the tongue and the alveolar ridge at the base of the upper incisors (with the back of the tongue raised): as “t” in *tar*.
16. ظ Z [voiced interdental/dental fricative emphatic] produced with the tip of the tongue and the tip of the incisors (with the back of the tongue raised): as “th” in *though* (with the additional effect of the back of the tongue raised).

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17. ع ° [voiced pharyngeal fricative] produced in the middle of the windpipe by constricting it (so as to constrict the air passage without complete closure) to produce a voiced throat sound; not to be confused with the *hamza* “glottal stop” [ʔ] as in *co’opt*, which is produced in the larynx.
18. غ gh [voiced velar fricative] produced with the back of the tongue raised against the back of the roof of the mouth, resembling gurgling, or the French [ʁ].
19. ف f [voiceless labio-dental fricative] produced with the tip of the upper incisors and the upper, inner part of the lower lip: as “f” in *fan*.
20. ق q [voiceless uvular stop] produced with the back of the tongue against the uvular: the closest English equivalent is “c” in *caw* if it were to be produced from the very back of the mouth.
21. ك k [voiceless velar stop] produced with the back of the tongue against the soft palate/velum: as “k” in *king*.
22. ل l [voiced alveolar lateral] produced with the front sides and tip of the tongue and the alveolar ridge above the upper incisors: as “l” in *list*.
23. م m [voiced bilabial nasal] produced with the two lips: as “m” in *man*.
24. ن n [voiced alveolar nasal] produced with the tip of the tongue and the alveolar ridge above the upper incisors (with the back of the tongue lowered): as “n” in *near*.
25. ه h [voiceless glottal fricative] produced in the larynx: as “h” in *bear*.
26. ء ’ [voiceless glottal stop] produced in the larynx: as the catch [ʔ] between the two syllables in *co’opt* (when the word is pronounced with the catch; i.e., when the glottal stop/catch in the middle is not elided/dropped in speech).

1.2.3 Variations in Consonants and Vowels

Of the 26 consonants, seven have an emphatic or deep/heavy quality. These are [kh], [S], [D], [T], [Z], [gh], and [q]. Of these, five have somewhat roughly light counterpart consonants: [S] vs. [s], [D] vs. [d], [T] vs. [t], [Z] vs. [dh], and [q] vs. [k]. However, all seven consonants both influence and are influenced by the quality of the vowels adjacent to them; in particular, the vowels following them. Thus, the deep/heavy consonants are generally:

- deepest/heaviest when followed by 'alif [aa] or fatHa [a]
- less deep/heavy when followed by waaw [uu] or Damma [u]
- least deep/heavy when followed by yaa' [ii] or kasra [i].

With respect to their effect on the vowels, most distinctly, the 'alif [aa] and fatHa [a] are pronounced as deep (back) vowels following any of these seven consonants, whereas 'alif [aa] and fatHa [a] are pronounced as light (front) vowels following any of the remaining consonants. The examples below illustrate the distinction between the [S] and [s].

[S] as in saw/sauce:

<i>Saa</i>	صا	<i>Sa</i>	صَ
<i>Suu</i>	صو	<i>Su</i>	صُ
<i>Sii</i>	صي	<i>Si</i>	صِ

[s] as in see/seem/Sam:

<i>saa</i>	سا	<i>sa</i>	سَ
<i>suu</i>	سو	<i>su</i>	سُ
<i>sii</i>	سي	<i>si</i>	سِ

In addition, another consonant, the voiced alveolar trill [r]:

- is treated as a deep/heavy sound when followed by 'alif [aa] and fatHa [a] or waaw [uu] and Damma [u] by raising the back of the tongue: as “r” in *rust*
- is not treated as a deep/heavy sound following yaa' [ii] or kasra [i] by lowering the back of the tongue: as “r” in *read*.

Note: Some dialects do not treat [kh] and [gh] as heavy/deep consonants, for example, Damascene, Syria, but others do, such as the dialect of Aleppo, Syria. According to the former, a following 'alif [aa] or fatHa [a] sound is produced as a light/front vowel. Thus, the 'alif [aa] in the proper name Khalid [khaalid] is pronounced as a long front vowel (as “a” in *fan*) rather than as a long back vowel (as “a” in *far*). Similarly,

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some dialects do not treat [r] as a heavy/deep consonant (when preceding *'alif* or *fatHa* and *waaw* or *Damma*). Hence, *'alif* in such dialects is pronounced as a long front vowel, as “a” in *rat* with [r] more rolled.

Finally, the voiced alveolar lateral consonant [l] is always pronounced light (as “l” in *list*) except for the name الله [’al-laah] “God,” where it is pronounced dark/heavy (somewhat as “l” in *light*), as long as it is not preceded by a word ending with *yaa’* [ii] or *kasra* [i]. The following examples illustrate the variations of the consonant [l]:

“God”	<i>'al-laah</i> (“l” as in <i>law</i>)	الله	←	dark/heavy [l]
“to God”	<i>'ilaa l-laah</i> (“l” as in <i>law</i>)	إلى الله	←	dark/heavy [l]
“I worship God”	<i>'a'budu l-laah</i> (“l” as in <i>law</i>)	أَعْبُدُ الله	←	dark/heavy [l]
“in the name of God”	<i>bismi l-laah</i> (“l” as in <i>lamp</i>)	بِسْمِ الله	←	light [l]

1.2.4 Diphthongs and other Sound Combinations

In addition to the 29 consonants and vowels of the Arabic alphabet, MSA has at least 16 diphthongs, glides/semi-vowels, and basic sound combinations. These are illustrated in Table 1.5:

Table 1.5 Diphthongs and other sound combinations

“spouse”	<i>zawj</i>	زَوْج	←	[aw]	اَوْ
“the Faw (Port)”	<i>'al-faaw</i>	الْفَاوْ	←	[aaw]	اَوْ
“Zayd”	<i>zayd</i>	زَيْد	←	[ay]	اَيَّ
“tea”	<i>shaay</i>	شَاي	←	[aay]	اَيَّ
“hand”	<i>yad</i>	يَد	←	[ya]	يَّ
“measurement”	<i>qiyaas</i>	قِيَاس	←	[yaa]	يَا

Table 1.5 Continued

“to honor”	<i>yukrim</i>	يُكْرِم	←	[yu]	يُّ
“Joseph”	<i>yuusuf</i>	يُوسُف	←	[yuu]	يو
“minister”	<i>waziir</i>	وَزِير	←	[wa]	وَ
“valley”	<i>waadii</i>	وَادِي	←	[waa]	وا
“sin”	<i>wizr</i>	وِزْر	←	[wi]	وِ
“amateur”	<i>haawii</i>	هَآوِي	←	[wii]	وي
“roses”	<i>wuruud</i>	وُرُود	←	[wu]	وُ
“peacock”	<i>Taawuus</i>	طَاوُوس	←	[wuu]	وُو
“Zaayid”	<i>zaayid</i>	زَايِد	←	[yi]	يِ
“decoration”	<i>tazyiin</i>	تَزْيِين	←	[yii]	يِ يِ

1.3 Gemination

Gemination refers to consonant doubling (termed in Arabic *tashdiid* تَشْدِيد), or the occurrence of two identical consonants with no vowel, short or long, between them. Unlike English, where gemination only occurs in medial word position (e.g., as “pp” in *appear*, “mm” in *immoral*, and “rr” in *irrational*), in MSA gemination occurs in medial or word final positions, but never in initial position. For reasons of economy (keeping Arabic script neat and simple) and because gemination occurs widely, gemination is represented by a single consonant and a *shadda* symbol which resembles a slanted “w” shape placed over the consonant. Below are examples of gemination *tashdiid* in different positions of the word followed and preceded by short and long vowels:

“he deliberated”	<i>tadabbar</i>	تَدَبَّر	←	بَّ = ب + ب
“deliberation”	<i>tadabbur</i>	تَدَبَّرُ	←	بُّ = ب + ب
“deliberator”	<i>mutadabbir</i>	مُتَدَبِّر	←	بِّ = ب + ب

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“Mass”	<i>quddaas</i>	قُدَّاس	←	دَا	=	د + دا
“the Sanctified”	<i>qudduus</i>	قُدَّوس	←	دَو	=	د + دو
“saint”	<i>qiddiis</i>	قِدِّيس	←	دِّي	=	د + دي
“a mole”	<i>Dabb</i>	صَبَّ	←	بَّ	=	ب + ب
“young man”	<i>shaabb</i>	شَابَّ	←	بَّ	=	ب + ب
“to love each other”	<i>taHaabbaa</i>	تَحَابَّ	←	بَّ	=	ب + ب

In addition, gemination in Arabic occurs with diphthongs and glides/semi-vowels (see also Table 1.5) followed by any of the short or long vowels. The following examples illustrate such possible gemination combinations:

“he changed”	<i>taghayyar</i>	تَغَيَّرَ	←	[yya]	يَّ =	ي + ي
“pilot”	<i>Tayyaar</i>	طَيَّار	←	[yyaa]	يَّا =	ا + ي + ي
“changing”	<i>taghayyur</i>	تَغَيَّرُ	←	[yyu]	يُّ =	ي + ي
“the Sustainer”	<i>qayyuum</i>	قَيَّوم	←	[yyuu]	يُّو =	و + ي + ي
“he got married”	<i>tazawwaj</i>	تَزَوَّجَ	←	[wwa]	وَّ =	و + و
“doorman”	<i>bawwaab</i>	بَوَّاب	←	[wwaa]	وَّا =	ا + و + و
“he was married”	<i>zuwwij</i>	زُوِّجَ	←	[wwi]	وِّ =	و + و
“she/it strengthens”	<i>tuqawwii</i>	تُقَوِّي	←	[wwii]	وِّي =	ي + و + و
“getting support”	<i>tazawwud</i>	تَزَوَّدَ	←	[wwu]	وُّ =	و + و
“Mister”	<i>sayyid</i>	سَيِّد	←	[yyi]	يَّ =	ي + ي

1.4 Stress

The very first fact to keep in mind with respect to stress النَّبْر (or emphasis on a syllable within a word) in Arabic is that it is predictable and not phonemic. In other words, absence or presence and even misplacement of stress do not lead to a change in word meaning. This is unlike English where, for example, the placement of stress at the beginning of a word such as *'reject* makes the word a noun, whereas placement of stress on the second syllable (i.e., before [j]), as in *re'ject*, renders the word a verb. However, there are certain stress rules in Arabic which can be very helpful in mastering the Arabic script and sound system more quickly and efficiently. The most basic and most useful stress rules to know are those observed in the presence or absence of long vowels, since in Arabic stress is generally associated with vowel length.

1.4.1 Presence of a Long Vowel

Stress falls on the syllable with the long vowel, whether the syllable is in initial, medial, or final position of the word. The following examples illustrate stress accordingly:

Long vowel in the initial syllable:

“he said”	<i>qaala</i>	قَالَ
“student”	<i>Taalib</i>	طَالِبٌ
“worms”	<i>duudun</i>	دُوْدٌ

Long vowel in the middle syllable:

“he meets”	<i>yuqaabil</i>	يُقَابِلُ
“negotiator”	<i>mufaawiD</i>	مُفَاوِضٌ
“borders”	<i>Huduudun</i>	حُدُودٌ

Long vowel in the final syllable:

“they both”	<i>humaa</i>	هُمَا
“both studied”	<i>darasaa</i>	دَرَسَا
“borders”	<i>Huduud</i>	حُدُودٌ

1.4.2 Presence of Two Long Vowels

Since stress is generally associated with vowel length, stress is distributed between the two syllables where the long vowels occur; that is, with the word containing two stresses, as in the following words:

“negotiations”	<i>mufaawaDaat</i>	مُفَاوَضَات
“high”	<i>‘aalii</i>	عَالِي
“both got lost”	<i>Daa‘aa</i>	ضَاعَا

1.4.3 Absence of a Long Vowel

In the absence of a long vowel in a word, stress generally falls on the first syllable (i.e., the beginning of the word) except when *gemination* occurs in the middle of the word, as in the following examples:

“he”	<i>huwa</i>	هُوَ
“we”	<i>naHnu</i>	نَحْنُ
“office”	<i>maktab</i>	مَكْتَبٌ
“office”	<i>maktabun</i>	مَكْتَبٌ
“he taught”	<i>‘allama</i>	عَلَّمَ
“all of them”	<i>kulluhum</i>	كُلُّهُمْ

Note: There are a few exceptions to the stress rules here, including أَنَا “I” pronounced with word initial stress. However, the word أَنَا “I” is pronounced [’ana] with a final *fatHa* [a] but written orthographically with a final *’alif* (to be distinguished from أَنْ [’an] “to”).

A useful implication of the above stress rules, especially for the beginner, is that when a long vowel and a short vowel occur within a word and we are not sure which of the two vowels is the long one, stress provides the answer: stress falls on the syllable with the long vowel. Similarly, if two long vowels occur in two syllables within a word, we can determine the presence of two long vowels, since stress is distributed; that is, there are two stresses within a word.

1.5 Spelling Variations of 'alif

The symbol of the 'alif [ا] explained as part of the Arabic alphabet above has two additional variant shapes in word medial and final positions. Remember that 'alif does not occur at the beginning of the word as a vowel (see Appendix C for an explanation of rules of the *hamza* and silent 'alif occurring at the beginning of the word and elsewhere as merely a seat for the *hamza* consonant). The medial form of 'alif is also represented by a shorthand form (as part of a CA spelling convention) where 'alif is not actually connected within the word but rather appears as a short vertical line raised to the level of the dots and the short vowels. This form of the 'alif is usually referred to as الألف الخنجريّة 'al-'alif 'al-khinjariyya “dagger 'alif” or الألف الصغيرة 'al-'alif 'aS-Saghiira “the small 'alif.” Sometimes this 'alif does not appear in handwritten or printed texts but occurs in a few words that are quite common, hence perhaps the reason for this short-form 'alif. Below is a list of such common words both with and without the dagger 'alif:

“God”	'al-laah	الله	=	الله
“the Merciful”	'ar-raHmaan	الرَّحْمَن	=	الرَّحْمَن
“a god”	'ilaah	إِله	=	إِله
“but”	laakinna	لَكِنَّ	=	لَكِنَّ
“but”	laakin	لَكِنْ	=	لَكِنْ
“this [masculine]”	haadhaa	هذا	=	هذا
“this [feminine]”	haadhibi	هذه	=	هذه
“that [masculine]”	dhaalika	ذَلِكَ	=	ذَلِكَ
“these [human]”	baa'ulaa'i	هؤلاء	=	هؤلاء
“those [human]”	'ulaa'ika	أُولَئِكَ	=	أُولَئِكَ

The other variant form of the 'alif occurs in word final position and is represented by the same shape of the final *yaa'* (final after a connector or non-connector) without the two dots *ى*. Both final 'alif shapes (ا and ى) are pronounced the same. Arab grammarians refer to 'alif in final position, whether it has the shape ا or ى, as الألف المقصورة 'al-'alif 'al-maqSuura. However, today only the latter is referred to as 'al-'alif 'al-maqSuura. The

variations in the spelling of the final *'alif* depend on the derivation rules of such words (rules of words ending with *'al-'alif 'al-maqSuura* will be discussed in Chapter 2). To distinguish the final *'alif* shape ى from that of the *yaa'* ي (although only the latter has dots beneath it), the symbol of *'al-'alif 'al-khinjariyya* “the dagger *'alif*” or *'al-'alif 'aS-Saghiira* “the small *'alif*” is written above, although it may not be provided in some texts. Below are examples of words ending with final *'alif* ى with and without *'al-'alif 'al-khinjariyya* “the dagger *'alif*”:

“to”	<i>'ilaa</i>	إلى	=	إلى
“on”	<i>'alaa</i>	على	=	على
“he cried”	<i>bakaa</i>	بكى	=	بكى
“he spent”	<i>qaDaa</i>	قضى	=	قضى
“hospital”	<i>mashfaa</i>	مشفى	=	مشفى
“café”	<i>maqbaa</i>	مقهى	=	مقهى
“Layla”	<i>laylaa</i>	ليلى	=	ليلى
“Salma”	<i>salmaa</i>	سلمى	=	سلمى
“Moses”	<i>muusaa</i>	موسى	=	موسى
“Jesus”	<i>'iisaa</i>	عيسى	=	عيسى
“Mustafa”	<i>musTafaa</i>	مُصْطَفَى	=	مُصْطَفَى

1.6 *taa' marbuuTa*

A suffix (word ending) referred to as *'at-taa' 'al-marbuuTa* التاء المربوطة “the tied [t]” ة results from literally tying up the Arabic letter ت . The latter is referred to as *'at-taa' 'al-mabsuuTa* التاء المبسوطة “the flat [t].” There are two shapes of *taa' marbuuTa*, depending on whether it occurs following a connecting letter or a non-connecting letter, as the two examples below illustrate:

“a female dog”	<i>kalb-ah</i>	كَلْبَةٌ	←	ة	following a connector
“a female cow”	<i>baqar-ah</i>	بَقْرَةٌ	←	ة	following a non-connector

The suffix is a feminine gender, as Arabic refers to humans, animals, and any inanimate objects as having either the masculine gender “he” or the feminine gender “she” (see Chapter 2). The *taa’ marbuuTā* is always preceded by the vowel [a]. In pause form (where no grammatical ending is produced) in formal MSA (and CA), *taa’ marbuuTā* is pronounced as a voiceless glottal fricative [h] so that it is pronounced, together with the vowel [a] preceding it, as [-ah]. However, in spoken and informal MSA, speakers do not usually produce the voiceless glottal fricative [h], and instead just produce the vowel [a], so that the *taa’ marbuuTā* is simply pronounced as [a] in word final position to indicate the feminine gender marking of the word. Below are examples of masculine and feminine human, animal, and inanimate objects in pause form:

“a female teacher”	<i>’ustaadh-a</i>	أُسْتَاذَةٌ	“a male teacher”	<i>’ustaadh</i>	أُسْتَاذ
“a female dog”	<i>kalb-a</i>	كَلْبَةٌ	“a male dog”	<i>kalb</i>	كَلْب
“a library”	<i>maktab-a</i>	مَكْتَبَةٌ	“an office”	<i>maktab</i>	مَكْتَب

In full (formal) MSA form (where grammatical endings are produced), *taa’ marbuuTā* is produced as [t] with the only distinction that feminine forms do not require the *’alif* as a seat (i.e., the *’alif* is written but not pronounced) for the nunation of *fatH* [َ], but masculine forms require the *’alif*, as shown in the following examples (see also Table 1.4 above):

“a student F”	<i>Taalib-at-an</i>	طَالِبَةٌ	“a student M”	<i>Taalib-an</i>	طَالِبًا
“a student F”	<i>Taalib-at-un</i>	طَالِبَةٌ	“a student M”	<i>Taalib-un</i>	طَالِبٌ
“a student F”	<i>Taalib-at-in</i>	طَالِبَةٌ	“a student M”	<i>Taalib-in</i>	طَالِبٍ

Finally, a small number of words may end with a *taa’ marbuuTā* following *’alif*. In full MSA form, *taa’ marbuuTā* is produced as [t] followed by any of the grammatical endings, as in the above examples. In pause form in formal MSA (and CA), *taa’ marbuuTā* following *’alif* is pronounced as a voiceless glottal fricative [h] so that it is pronounced, together with the *’alif* [aa] preceding it, as [-aah]. However, in spoken

and informal MSA, it is usually pronounced as [t], so that it is pronounced, together with the *'alif* preceding it, as [-aat]. Below are examples illustrating both uses:

“a channel”	<i>qanaa-t</i>	قَنَاة	“a channel”	<i>qanaa-h</i>	قَنَاة
“life”	<i>Hayaa-t</i>	حَيَاة	“life”	<i>Hayaa-h</i>	حَيَاة
“a girl”	<i>fataa-t</i>	فَتَاة	“a girl”	<i>fataa-h</i>	فَتَاة

1.7 Definiteness

At the word level, a word (noun or adjective) is by default indefinite whether in pause (with no *nunation* attached) or full form (with *nunation*) (see Table 1.4 above). On the other hand, definiteness is signaled by attaching the definite article *ألّ* [ʾal-] “the” to the beginning of the word. The *fatHa* [̣] that appears on the *hamza* (itself seated on a silent *'alif*) is not usually provided in texts, nor is the *hamza* itself, nor is the *sukuun* on *ل*, since the definite article occurs quite frequently. Therefore, the definite article appears simply as *ال*.

Note: The *hamza*, the *fatHa*, and the *sukuun* are provided on the definite article *ألّ* [ʾal-] “the” in this chapter and whenever appropriate in order to clarify the rules involved. Due to orthographic conventions, the *hamza* and the *fatHa* *أ* [ʾa] are widely misunderstood as being merely a *fatHa* on a silent *'alif* rather than a *hamza* and a *fatHa* on a silent *'alif* [ʾa]. As a glottal stop, the *hamza* originates from the larynx, as opposed to a *fatHa*, which would originate from the mouth alone. The latter would be hard to pronounce at the beginning of a word starting with a vowel (without a glottal stop), at least for Arabic and English speakers. In English, every word that starts with a vowel also starts with a *hamza* “glottal stop.” However, English does not require a special symbol to represent it, since it rarely occurs in the middle of a word (e.g., *co'ordinate* and *co'operate*), and even then it is often elided/dropped (see 1.2.2 for a description of the *hamza* and how it is articulated/pronounced). Similarly, in Arabic the *hamza* of the definite article belongs to the *هَمْزَةُ الْوَصْلِ* “connecting/eliding *hamza*” category, which, in certain contexts, is elided/dropped (in speech) (see 1.9–10 below and Appendix B).

With respect to pronunciation, the [l] sound of the article may undergo assimilation with the initial sound of the word following it, depending on whether such a sound is a *sun letter* or *moon letter*. When the definite article is added to a word beginning with a *moon letter*, the [l] sound of the article is not assimilated; hence, the definite article and the word attached to it are pronounced normally. Except for [j], all *moon letters* are produced without involving the tip of the tongue. This makes it easy to remember and we can apply it intuitively by feeling the position of the tongue before applying the rule. Table 1.6 lists all the *moon letters*, with examples for each in indefinite and definite words:

Table 1.6 *Moon letters* in indefinite and definite words

“the Earth”	'al-'arD	الأَرْض ← 'arD	أَرْض + ال	أ
“the door”	'al-baab	الباب ← baab	باب + ال	ب
“the mountain”	'al-jabal	الجَبَل ← jabal	جَبَل + ال	ج
“the milk”	'al-Haliib	الحَلِيب ← Haliib	حَلِيب + ال	ح
“the bread”	'al-khubz	الخُبْز ← khubz	خُبْز + ال	خ
“the eye”	'al-'ayn	العَيْن ← 'ayn	عَيْن + ال	ع
“the deer”	'al-ghazaal	العَرَال ← ghazaal	عَرَال + ال	غ
“the cent”	'al-fils	الفِلس ← fils	فِلس + ال	ف
“the moon”	'al-qamar	القَمَر ← qamar	قَمَر + ال	ق
“the dog”	'al-kalb	الكَلْب ← kalb	كَلْب + ال	ك
“the salt”	'al-milH	المِلْح ← milH	مِلْح + ال	م
“the paper”	'al-waraqqa	الوَرَقَّة ← waraqqa	وَرَقَّة + ال	و
“the hand”	'al-yad	اليَد ← yad	يَد + ال	ي

Note: As shown, the *hamza* and the *fatHa* [ء] on the silent 'alif seat are not provided in texts.

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However, when the definite article is added to a word beginning with a *sun letter*, the [l] sound of the article is assimilated. The [l] sound becomes silent (i.e., not pronounced). The loss of the [l] sound (in pronunciation only) is compensated for by doubling the *sun letter* beginning the word. Like gemination, as discussed above, this is represented by a *shadda* symbol placed on the *sun letter*. All *sun letters* are produced using the tip of the tongue, so it is easy to remember and apply the rule intuitively (by feeling the position of the tongue). Table 1.7 lists all the *sun letters*, with examples in indefinite and definite words:

Table 1.7 *Sun letters* in indefinite and definite words

“the berries”	'at-tuut	التُّوت	←	tuut	توت + ال	ت
“the snow”	'ath-thalj	الثَّلْج	←	thalj	ثَلْج + ال	ث
“the house”	'ad-daar	الدَّار	←	daar	دار + ال	د
“the corn”	'adh-dhura	الدُّرَّة	←	dhura	دُرَّة + ال	ذ
“the leg”	'ar-rijl	الرِّجْل	←	rijl	رِجْل + ال	ر
“the button”	'az-zar	الزَّر	←	zar	زَر + ال	ز
“the sugar”	'as-sukkar	السُّكَّر	←	sukkar	سُكَّر + ال	س
“the sun”	'ash-shams	الشَّمْس	←	shams	شَمْس + ال	ش
“the patience”	'aS-Sabr	الصَّبْر	←	Sabr	صَبْر + ال	ص
“the mole”	'aD-Dabb	الصَّبَّ	←	Dabb	صَبَّ + ال	ض
“the medicine”	'aT-Tibb	الطَّبَّ	←	Tibb	طِبَّ + ال	ط
“the shade”	'a Z-Zill	الظِّلَّ	←	Zill	ظِلَّ + ال	ظ
“the night”	'al-layl	اللَّيْل	←	layl	لَيْل + ال	ل
“the fire”	'an-naar	النَّار	←	naar	نار + ال	ن

Note: As shown, the *hamza* and the *fatHa* [ء] on the silent 'alif seat are not provided in texts.

It is worth noting here that Arab grammarians who came up with the terms *moon letters* الحُرُوفُ الْقَمَرِيَّة and *sun letters* الحُرُوفُ الشَّمْسِيَّة did so as they chose the words قَمَرٌ *qamar* “moon” and شَمْسٌ *shams* “sun” to exemplify the rule and to remind the speaker of the intuitive nature of the rule: it is applied intuitively by first feeling the position of the tongue in a somewhat conscious manner, and eventually by applying it unconsciously. Alternatively, to apply and learn the *sun* and *moon letter* rule, one can memorize the *moon letters* (a total of 14 letters) and *sun letters* (a total of 15 letters) which are distributed somewhat evenly between letters of the alphabet. With practice and exposure over time, applying the rule will become automatic (see Tables 1.6–1.7 above).

1.8 Formal MSA vs. Informal MSA

Formal MSA style is marked by the production of grammatical and vowel (as part of the spelling and pronunciation) endings of words in a sentence, except for the last word in the sentence, which should be in pause form. “Pause form” means that no grammatical or short vowel ending of any kind is produced (except for a few one-letter words usually used in CA). Hence, formal MSA means providing the full form of each word with its ending, whether the ending is grammatical or has to do with its fixed spelling at the end of the word. The following sentence is an example of full formal MSA style:

الرئيس الجزائري في زيارة رسمية مع نائبه إلى سورية .
'ar-ra'iisu l-jazaa'iriyyu fi ziyaaratin rasmiyyatin ma'a naa'ibih 'ilaa suuriyya
 “The Algerian president is on an official visit with his vice-president to Syria.”

Note that every word in the sentence is fully vowelled; that is, every word has the grammatical and vowel endings on the end except the last word سورية .

Informal MSA style, on the other hand, is marked by the production of words in the sentence in pause form, just as one would produce the last word of the sentence in formal MSA in pause form. This means that all grammatical endings are dropped (i.e., not produced altogether). Below is the same sentence in pause form, as an example of informal MSA style at sentence level:

الرئيس الجزائري في زيارة رسمية مع نائبه إلى سورية .
'ar-ra'iis 'al-jazaa'iriyy fi ziyaara rasmiyya ma'a naa'ibih 'ilaa suuriyya
 “The Algerian president is on an official visit with his vice-president to Syria.”

Unlike grammatical endings, short vowel endings that constitute part of the spelling/pronunciation of a word may or may not be produced in pause form. The preposition *ma'ca* “with” in the sentence above is the only word which is produced with the *fatHa* ending here. The ending is part of the pronunciation of the word (prepositions have no grammatical endings) and it may also be produced as *ma^c* without the *fatHa* in pause form.

However, the presence of two MSA styles, formal and informal, does not mean that Arab speakers use one style restrictively to the exclusion of the other. This is especially evident in formal speech, where some speakers may tend to produce full forms and pause forms selectively within the same sentence due to running out of breath or some other consideration, some of which may be idiosyncratic. Below is the same sentence again, restated with words produced selectively both in full and pause forms:

الرئيس الجزائري في زيارة رسمية مع نائبه إلى سورية .

'ar-ra'iisu 'al-jazaa'iriyy fi ziyaaratn rasmiyya ma'a naa'ibih 'ilaa suuriyya
 “The Algerian president is on an official visit with his vice-president to Syria.”

الرئيس الجزائري في زيارة رسمية مع نائبه إلى سورية .

'ar-ra'iis 'al-jazaa'iriyy fi ziyaaratn rasmiyya ma'a naa'ibih 'ilaa suuriyya
 “The Algerian president is on an official visit with his vice-president to Syria.”

Thus, full mastery of MSA skills, especially that of listening, necessitates learning and practicing the use of grammatical and vowel endings.

1.9 Helping Vowels and Dropping the *hamza* of the Definite Article

When full or mixed full and pause forms are used in MSA, Arabic resorts to dropping the *hamza* of the definite article together with the *fatHa* [a] vowel that occurs with it [أ] and to inserting certain vowels to help merge words smoothly, so that words in a stretch of speech in full form style can be pronounced with less effort than in pause form. Many languages resort to similar methods, probably for ease of pronunciation. English, for example, allows the insertion of [n] with the indefinite article before words starting with a vowel (e.g., *a banana* vs. *an apple*). Stated more precisely, this occurs when a word starts with a vowel/*glottal stop* (equivalent to the *hamza* in Arabic) when it precedes a word which also starts with a vowel/*glottal stop*, since any English word that starts with a vowel necessarily starts with a glottal stop (to make vowels easier to pronounce in

word initial position). Similarly, some English dialects allow the insertion of [r] when words preceding the preposition *of* end with a vowel (*idea of* → *idea-r-of*). In Arabic, vowels inserted to help smooth the merger between words are referred to as “helping vowels” that include [a], [u], and [i] and the occurrence is explained due to *إلتقاء الساكنين* “the meeting of the quiescent/still sounds.”

1.9.1 The *fatHa* Helping Vowel [a]

The *fatHa* [a] helping vowel is inserted after the preposition *مِنْ* *min* “from” when a word following it contains the definite article *أَلْ* [’al-] “the.” Inserting the vowel [a] is also accompanied by the dropping of the *hamza* and the *fatHa* of the definite article *أَ* [’a] (in speech only) so that only the sound [l] is produced/heard in words beginning with a *moon letter*, whereas the entire definite article is dropped in words beginning with a *sun letter* (see 1.7 above). The following are examples of both phenomena taking place at the same time:

	After helping vowel [a]		Before helping vowel [a]
“from the moon”	<i>mina l-qamar</i> مِنْ الْقَمَرِ	←	<i>min ’al-qamar</i> مِنْ أَلْقَمَرِ
“from the sun”	<i>mina sh-shams</i> مِنَ الشَّمْسِ	←	<i>min ’ash-shams</i> مِنْ أَشْشَمْسِ

1.9.2 The *Damma* Helping Vowel [u]

The *Damma* [u] helping vowel is inserted after the personal pronouns for second- and third-person masculine plural when a word following it contains the definite article *أَلْ* [’al-] “the.” Inserting the vowel [u] is also accompanied by the dropping of the *hamza* and the *fatHa* of the definite article *أَ* [’a] (in speech only) so that only the sound [l] is produced/heard in words beginning with a *moon letter*, whereas the entire definite article is dropped in words beginning with a *sun letter* (see 1.7 above). The following are examples of both phenomena taking place at the same time:

After helping vowel [u]	Before helping vowel [u]
<i>qaabala-kumu l-waziir</i> قَابَلَكُمْ الْوَزِيرِ	← <i>qaabala-kum ’al-waziir</i> قَابَلَكُمْ أَلْوَزِيرِ
“The minister met you all.”	

After helping vowel insertion [u]	Before helping vowel insertion [u]
<i>waddaʿa-humu r-rajul</i> وَدَّعَهُمُ الرَّجُلُ	<i>waddaʿa-hum ʿar-rajul</i> وَدَّعَهُمُ الرَّجُلُ ←
“The man bade them farewell.”	

1.9.3 The *kasra* Helping Vowel [i]

The *kasra* [i] helping vowel is inserted after any word ending in a consonant sound (i.e., *sukuun*/no vowel) when a word following it begins with the definite article **الـ** [ʾal-] “the” or with a (light) *hamza ʿi* (see also Appendix B on the different types of *hamza*). Inserting the vowel [i] is also accompanied by the dropping of the *hamza* and the *fatHa* of the definite article **أ** [ʾa] (in speech only) so that only the sound [l] is produced/heard in words beginning with a *moon letter*, whereas the entire definite article is dropped in words beginning with a *sun letter* (see 1.7 above). Accordingly, the *kasra* helping vowel is the most frequent of the three “helping vowels” [a], [u], and [i]. The following are some examples of the *kasra* “helping vowel”:

	After helping vowel [i]		Before helping vowel [i]	
“Is the moon ...?”	<i>hali l-qamar</i>	هَلِ الْقَمَرُ...؟	←	<i>hal ʾal-qamar</i> هَلِ الْقَمَرُ...؟
“Is the sun ...?”	<i>hali sh-shams</i>	هَلِ الشَّمْسُ...؟	←	<i>hal ʾash-shams</i> هَلِ الشَّمْسُ...؟
“the sun rose”	<i>Talaʿati sh-shams</i>	طَلَعَتِ الشَّمْسُ	←	<i>Talaʿat ʾash-shams</i> طَلَعَتِ الشَّمْسُ
“take* the book”	<i>kbudhi l-kitaab</i>	خُذِ الْكِتَابَ	←	<i>kbudh ʾal-kitaab</i> خُذِ الْكِتَابَ
“take* the notebook”	<i>kbudhi d-daftar</i>	خُذِ الدَّفْطَرَ	←	<i>kbudh ʾad-daftar</i> خُذِ الدَّفْطَرَ
“from a meeting”	<i>mini jtimaac</i>	مِنْ اجْتِمَاعٍ	←	<i>min ʾijtimaac</i> مِنْ اجْتِمَاعٍ
“who is the man”	<i>mani r-rajul</i>	مَنْ الرَّجُلُ؟	←	<i>man ʾar-rajul</i> مَنْ الرَّجُلُ؟

Note: * = second-person singular masculine

Thus, in addition to the “helping vowels,” the rules of the *sun letters* and *moon letters* apply (see 1.7 above). In the case of a definite word containing a *sun letter* following the definite article, not only are the

hamza, *fatHa*, and *'alif* seat of the definite article *أ* [ʾa] silent, but also the [l] sound; that is, the whole definite article is silent, with gemination giving the clue as to the position of the definite article. However, in the case of the definite word containing a *moon letter* following the definite article, only the *hamza* and its *fatHa* *أ* [ʾa] are silent.

Of course, no “helping vowel” is needed if the word preceding the definite article already contains a vowel (long or short). However, an additional rule applies when a long vowel is present. In this case, the long vowel is shortened (e.g., عَلَى “on” *ʿalaa* → *ʿala* and فِي “in” *fi* → *fi*), as in the following examples:

	After two words are combined		Before two words are combined
“on the moon”	<i>ʿala-l-qamar</i>	عَلَى الْقَمَرِ ←	<i>ʿalaa ʿal-qamar</i> عَلَى الْقَمَرِ
“and the moon”	<i>wa-l-qamar</i>	وَالْقَمَرِ ←	<i>wa ʿal-qamar</i> وَالْقَمَرِ
“in the sun”	<i>fi-sh-shams</i>	فِي الشَّمْسِ ←	<i>fi ʿash-shams</i> فِي الشَّمْسِ
“and the sun”	<i>wa-sh-shams</i>	وَالشَّمْسِ ←	<i>wa ʿash-shams</i> وَالشَّمْسِ

1.10 Dropping the *hamza* and *'alif* Seat of the Definite Article in Writing

In none of the above phenomena is any letter or symbol deleted in *writing*. The only occasion when an actual letter or symbol is deleted in writing (as well as in speech) is when a word containing the definite article is preceded by the preposition particle *لِ* *li-* “for.” In this case, the *hamza* of the definite article, its *fatHa*, and its silent *'alif* seat *أ* [ʾa] are dropped in both speech and writing. Other particles, such as the preposition *bi-* “with/in/by” and *fa-* “so/but,” when attached to a word containing the definite article, do not require the deletion of the *hamza* and its *fatHa* in writing – requiring only the *hamza* and its *fatHa*, together with the *'alif* seat, to be silent. The following examples illustrate the dropping in both speech and writing of the *hamza* (together with its *fatHa* and *'alif* seat) of the definite article with the particle *li-* and its retention in writing with other particles, such as *bi-* “with/in/by” and *fa-* “so/but”:

	After two words are combined		Before two words are combined
“for the moon”	<i>li-l-qamar</i>	لِلْقَمَرِ ←	<i>li- 'al-qamar</i> لِ الْقَمَرِ
“for the sun”	<i>li-sh-shams</i>	لِلشَّمْسِ ←	<i>li- 'ash-shams</i> لِ الشَّمْسِ
“so, the moon ...”	<i>fa-l-qamar</i>	فَالْقَمَرِ ←	<i>fa- 'al-qamar</i> فَ الْقَمَرِ
“so, the sun ...”	<i>fa-sh-shams</i>	فَالشَّمْسِ ←	<i>fa- 'ash-shams</i> فَ الشَّمْسِ
“by train”	<i>bi-l-qitaar</i>	بِالْقِطَارِ ←	<i>bi- 'al-qitaar</i> بِ الْقِطَارِ
“by car”	<i>bi-s-sayyaara</i>	بِالسَّيَّارَةِ ←	<i>bi- 'as-sayyaara</i> بِ السَّيَّارَةِ

1.11 Summary

This chapter discussed the basic facts relevant to the Arabic writing and sound systems. Remember:

- Arabic script proceeds from right to left
- Arabic allows only cursive-style writing, with each letter having a slightly distinct shape to fit five word positions: initial, medial after a connector, medial after a non-connector, final after a connector, and final after a non-connector
- Arabic has a straightforward phonetic alphabet consisting of 26 consonants and three long vowels, in addition to three corresponding short vowels represented as floating symbols above the consonants
- each distinct sound is represented by a distinct symbol, except for the symbol of the long vowel *'alif* [aa], which has three variants
- Arabic has a simple, symmetrical vowel system: with three simple, long vowels [aa], [uu], and [ii] and three short corresponding ones [a], [u], and [i], respectively – allowing for additional semi-vowels, diphthongs, and sound combinations which are simple and which almost all have English equivalents
- Arabic adopts an economical system of writing where gemination/consonant doubling is represented by a special symbol over the doubled consonant, since gemination occurs frequently in many words and in both medial and final word positions

- Arabic stress generally follows straightforward intuitive patterns, as stress is associated with vowel length: where there is a long vowel there is stress
- Arabic has a special symbol, *taa' marbuu* Tā, attached to the end of the word to indicate the feminine gender of the word (whether noun or adjective)
- Arabic indefiniteness is signaled by the default form of the word and/or nunation [n] sound at the end of the word, usually attached together with a grammatical (short vowel) ending
- Arabic definiteness is formed by attaching the definite article 'al- "the" to the beginning of the word following an intuitive assimilation rule, for ease of pronunciation
- Arabic, at the sentence level, is produced both in pause form (informally) and full form (formally)
- Arabic employs three helping vowels for ease of pronunciation
- The *hamza*, together with its 'alif seat belonging to the definite article, is dropped in speech as well as writing only with the preposition لـ *li-* "for."