

# Learner Profile: Arabic

This guide presents common challenges faced by Arabic learners of English and typical features of language production. Please note, these guidelines are intended to advise teachers on areas where students may experience problems; however, native speakers may not all find the following points challenging. There are many varieties of Arabic with different intelligibilities to each other. Speakers from different regions may struggle with different elements of English.

## Facts

- **Language family:** Afro-Asiatic. The language is a Central Semitic language. Arabic is categorised as a macrolanguage encompassing 30 varieties.
- **Native speakers:** Approximately 310 million
- **Liturgical language speakers:** Used by approximately 1.8 billion Muslims
- **Second language speakers:** Around 5 million
- **Location:** Arabic is the official language of over 20 countries, mostly concentrated in the Middle East and Africa. Among those countries are Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. During the Middle Ages, Arabic had a great influence on European culture, which is also manifested in Arabic words being adopted by many European languages.
- **Writing system:** Abjad script, written from right to left.
- **Alphabet:** Arabic alphabet.



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## Pronunciation

- Arabic native speakers frequently encounter problems with pronouncing the 'p' and 'b' sounds. 'Pen' might often sound like a 'Ben' and 'police' becomes 'bolice'.
- Native Arabic speakers may encounter problems with the pronunciations of words that entail the letter 'v', as it does not exist in Arabic. Therefore, 'very' might be pronounced as 'fery'.
- Some Arabic learners of English struggle with the correct pronunciation of words that feature consonant clusters. Words such as 'milk' might be pronounced as 'milik'.

## Grammar

- The Arabic equivalent to the verb 'to be' is often omitted in the present tense and so native speakers might also omit the verb in English.
- Arabic also does not have a direct equivalent for the auxiliary verb 'do'. Thus, Arabic learners of English may misuse the verb or omit it when it needs to be used. 'When do you go on holiday?' becomes 'When you go on holiday?'.
- Arabic native speakers might omit definite articles when speaking English. In Arabic, articles are built by adding a prefix to the noun. English follows a different concept, which leads to omitting the article in sentences such as 'she knows title of book' rather than 'she knows the title of the book'.

## Writing

- Arabic learners will need to learn how to write the Latin script. Writing from left to right might also be a skill that needs to be acquired and practised.
- Another challenge for Arabic learners of English is that there is no distinction between upper and lowercase letters in Arabic. Teachers may need to stress the importance of using upper and lowercase and when to use which type.

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## Recommended FlashAcademy® lessons and resources

 Beginner > Phonics 2 > 3-letter clusters

 Beginner > Food & Drink > Articles

 Beginner > English Language > Subject-verb agreement

 <https://flashacademy.com/resources/articles-activity-sheet/>

 <https://flashacademy.com/resources/conjugation-verb-poster/>

 <https://flashacademy.com/resources/alphabet-lowercase-and-uppercase-practice/>