

Sisters' Class – A Mini Course in Arabic

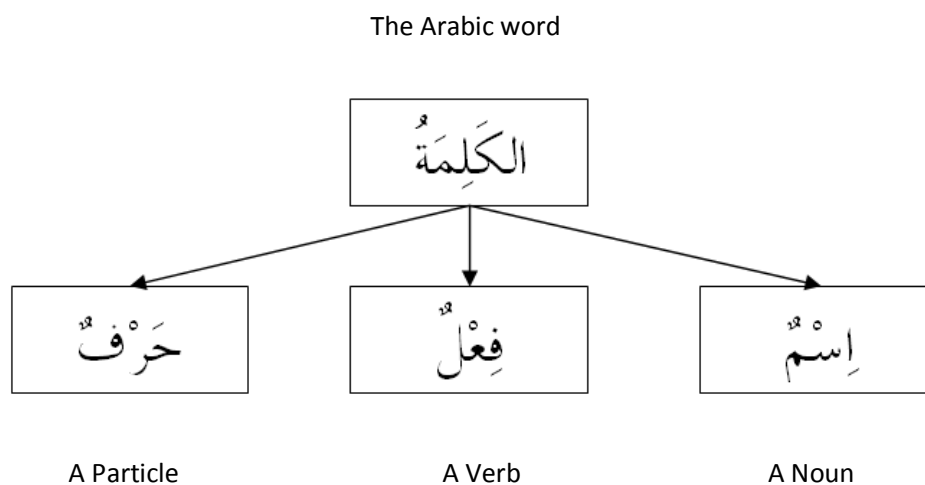
Aims of this class

- Many brothers and sisters want to learn Arabic but need something to start them off
- There are certain topics that you can learn in a short time, but can get you speaking and understanding Arabic very quickly
- These topics are summarised without much vocabulary, but they provide 'keys' which the student can use to develop understanding of the language
- If there are any Arabic speakers in the class, they can also benefit, in learning some of the ways to teach others the language
- Based upon a class which I did two years ago and the accompanying class notes
- Don't worry if you don't memorise any words today – the point of the lesson is for you to be able to go away and learn in your own time

Topics of the class today

- An introduction to how Arabic words work
- How to use an Arabic dictionary to improve your vocabulary
- Simple sentences
- An introduction to Arabic verbs: The past tense

An introduction to how Arabic words work



Nouns

- The first type of words in Arabic are nouns
- The word for 'a noun' in Arabic is: **إِسْمٌ**
- The plural ('nouns') is: **أَسْمَاءٌ**
- Nouns can be 'proper nouns' – the names of people and places; like Muhammad, Faatimah, Makkah etc
- They can also be 'pronouns' – like 'I' 'You' 'My' 'Yours' etc
- They can also be the names of things – like 'desk' 'chair' 'car' etc

Verbs

- The second type of words in Arabic are verbs
- The word for 'a verb' in Arabic is: **فِعْلٌ**
- The plural ('verbs') is: **أَفْعَالٌ**
- Verbs are doing words like 'I went' 'I spoke' 'I'm going' 'I will spend' etc
- Verbs in Arabic are concentrated around two tenses:
 - The past tense: **الْفِعْلُ الْمَاضِي**
 - The present tense: **الْفِعْلُ الْمَضَارِعُ**

Particles

- The third type of words in Arabic are particles
- The word for 'a particle' in Arabic is: **حَرْفٌ**
- The plural ('particles') is: **حُرُوفٌ**
 - This is also the word for 'a letter' (as in a letter of the alphabet)
- These are normally one or two letters which come before or after a word
- Examples include words such as 'in' 'on' 'about' 'for' 'to' etc

Important points to note about word types

- It's not always easy to see which category a word belongs to, so learn as you go along.
- What may be true in English, is not always true in Arabic
- There are certain rules that you can learn which will help you decide which category a word belongs to
 - For example you can learn that every pronoun belongs to the 'noun' category, and so on

How words are formed in Arabic

- Words in Arabic are based on root letters
- These root letters, when they are taken in the correct order, form the basis of every word
- Words which have the same root letters, in the same order, have similar meanings
- Most words have only three root letters
- These root letters are manipulated by putting them in to patterns
- For example, let's look at the root **k-t-b**
 - This root centres around the meaning of writing
 - **Kitaabun** – a book
 - **Maktabun** – a desk (literally 'a place of writing')
 - **Maktoobun** – something which is written down
 - **Kaatibun** – A writer

Understanding the patterns (1)

- A key way to build up your vocabulary is to understand how to manipulate root letters to make new words
- If you learn this properly, you will gain two main benefits:
 - You will be able to make lots of new words, just by learning a single root, and putting it in different patterns
 - You will be able to take a good guess at the meaning of words that you don't understand
- Not every pattern works for every verb, but at least it is a start, that will work for you in most instances

Understanding the patterns (2)

- We said that most words in Arabic, originally come from three root letters, in a particular order
- We can represent the three root letters in a pattern as follows:
 - We will represent the first root letter by using the letter ف (faa)
 - We will represent the second root letter by using the letter ع ('ayn)
 - We will represent the third root letter by using the letter ل (laam)

Pattern examples

- Returning back to the root k-t-b, let's see how the patterns work out:
 1. مَكْتَبٌ – a desk (literally 'a place of writing')
 2. مَكْتُوبٌ – something which is written down
 3. كَاتِبٌ – A writer
- Replacing the root letters with ف ع ل, we are left with the pattern:
 1. مَفْعَلٌ – a place of doing something (Can also be مَفْعِلٌ). For example, if we use the root s-j-d (to prostrate), we can make: masjidun (a place of prostration)
 2. مَفْعُولٌ – The object of a sentence (the thing which is being acted upon). For example: if we use the root q-t-l (to kill), we can make maqtoolun (someone who has been killed)
 3. فَاعِلٌ – The subject of a sentence (the thing which is doing the action). For example: if we use the same root q-t-l (to kill), we can make qatilun (a person who kills/a killer)

Using a dictionary based on roots

- There are two types of dictionary
 - A standard dictionary which lists all words in alphabetical order. For example, you will find 'maktabun' under the letter M
Al-Mawrid Dictionary
 - A dictionary based on roots, in which you will find words grouped according to their root. So you would find 'maktabun' under K-T-B
Hans-Wehr Dictionary (Orientalist)
- There is no doubt that you need both types of dictionary, and certainly the first type is easier, however you will benefit immensely from learning how to use the second type of dictionary

Simple sentences

- Simple sentences without a verb are the easiest types of sentences to make
- These sentences don't contain a verb, and are made up of only two or three words
- For example: 'This is a pen', 'That is a horse'

The formula

- The formula for simple non-verbal sentences is simple:

THE WORD FOR 'THIS'/'THAT' + A NOUN

- You need to remember:
 - The noun should normally end in 'un' (Eg. Masjidun – A mosque, Baytun – A house)
 - You will need to know whether the noun is masculine, or feminine, singular, or plural
- Most feminine words end in ة
 - You don't need a word for 'a'

The word for 'this' / 'that'

- There are several words for 'this' and 'that' in Arabic, depending on whether the noun:
 - Masculine or Feminine
 - Singular or Plural
 - Close to you or Far away

Close Distance (this has the meaning of 'this' or 'these' in English)

	Masculine (المذكر)	Feminine (المؤنث)
Singular (المفرد)	هَذَا	هَذِهِ
Plural (الجمع)	هَؤُلَاءِ	

Far Distance (this has the meaning of 'that' or 'those' in English)

	Masculine (المذكر)	Feminine (المؤنث)
Singular (المفرد)	ذَلِكَ	تِلْكَ
Plural (الجمع)	أُولَئِكَ	

Putting it in to practise

- Start by using masculine words, and using the word 'this' (for things close to you) - haadh^haa
- Then try using the word 'that' (for things that are far away) - d^hhaalika
- Then try using feminine words, with haadh^hihi and tilka
- Ignore plurals for now, since they are quite difficult in Arabic – unless you happen to know some

- Develop yourself by asking Arabic speakers for new words to try – like desk, chair, pen, etc – Make sure you ask whether the word is masculine or feminine

Some words to start you off

- Masculine singular words
 - a mosque: مَسْجِدٌ
 - a house: بَيْتٌ
 - a man: رَجُلٌ
- Feminine singular words
 - a car: سَيَّارَةٌ
 - a bike: دَرَّاجَةٌ
 - a woman: امْرَأَةٌ

Example sentences

- This is a mosque: هَذَا مَسْجِدٌ
- That is a house: ذَلِكَ بَيْتٌ
- This is a man: هَذَا رَجُلٌ
- This is a car: هَذِهِ سَيَّارَةٌ
- That is a bike: تِلْكَ دَرَّاجَةٌ
- This is a woman: هَذِهِ امْرَأَةٌ

An Introduction To Verbs: The Past Tense

Pronouns

- Before you start learning verbs, you need to learn the most basic type of pronouns
- You don't actually need these in the sentence, but you need them to understand how the verb endings work

Singular	Talking about yourself	أَنَا	I
	Talking to others	أَنْتَ	You (masculine/singular)
		أَنْتِ	You (feminine/singular)
	Talking about others	هُوَ	He/It (masculine)
هِيَ		She/It (feminine)	
Plural	Talking about yourself	نَحْنُ	We
	Talking to others	أَنْتُمْ	You (masculine/plural)
		أَنْتُنَّ	You (feminine/plural)
	Talking about others	هُمْ	They (masculine)
		هُنَّ	They (feminine)

The Past Tense

- We can also manipulate root letters to make a past tense verb
- There are three things you need in order to use the past tense verb in Arabic:
 1. The root letters which form the base of the word
 2. The middle vowel letter for the past tense
 3. The past tense endings

The middle vowel letter

- What do we mean by the middle vowel letter?
 - We said that every root (for now at least) is made up of three letters
 - The middle vowel is the vowel sign that is on top of the second letter
 - You need to learn this by heart for every set of root letters
 - It changes in the past and present tense, so you need to learn it once for each (for now we're only learning the past)
 - For example in the root k-t-b (to write), the past tense middle vowel is 'a', in sh-r-b (to drink) the middle vowel is 'i'

The stem

- Once we have the root letters and the middle vowel, we can make 'the stem'
- We put the letters in the following pattern: letter one, then 'a', then letter two, then the middle vowel, then letter three
- For the verb k-t-b, the stem is: katab
- For the verb sh-r-b, the stem is: sharib

The endings

- All we need to do after that is to take the stem, and add the appropriate ending
- There is an ending to match every pronoun

Example Meaning	Example	Ending	Pronoun
I wrote	كُتِبْتُ	تُ	أَنَا
You wrote (m/s)	كُتِبْتَ	تَ	أَنْتَ
You wrote (f/s)	كُتِبْتِ	تِ	أَنْتِ
He wrote	كُتِبَ	ـَ	هُوَ
She wrote	كُتِبَتْ	تْ	هِيَ
We wrote	كُتِبْنَا	نَا	نَحْنُ
You wrote (m/p)	كُتِبْتُمْ	تُمْ	أَنْتُمْ
You wrote (f/p)	كُتِبْتُنَّ	تُنَّ	أَنْتُنَّ
They wrote (m/p)	كُتِبُوا	وَا	هُمْ
They wrote (f/p)	كُتِبْنَ	نَ	هُنَّ

Where to go from here

- Take the notes from the internet, and work through each of the slides, memorising the basic rules, endings, etc
- Start trying to make basic sentences
- Improve your vocabulary
 - Using a dictionary
 - By starting the Madinah course (see Fatwa Online)
 - By asking an Arabic speaker
- Don't be frightened to try!