



STUDYING ARABIC GRAMMAR

Introduction & Orientation

OUR INTENTION

Love and Gratitude for the Quran

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ
وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

Certainly did Allah confer [great] favor upon the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom, although they had been before in manifest error.

(Surah Ale Imran 3:164)

What a huge blessing and honor it is to be able to see, touch, hold, read, memorize, understand and follow Allah ﷻ's word!

Ikrimah (RA) after he became a Muslim - used to open the Quran and cry. He would say, "This is my Rabb's word! This is my Rabb's word!"

The companion Abdullah ibn Masood RA said, "Whoever loves to know if he loves Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, he should look and see for if he loves the Quran, he loves Allah and His Messenger."

It is not possible to love Allah ﷻ, and not love Allah's speech and revelation to mankind.

It is also not possible to love the prophet ﷺ, and not love his mission that he left for us i.e. the Quran and the sunnah.

We are studying Arabic Grammar for the sake of gaining closeness to Allah through a better understanding of His word. We hope and pray that our relationship with the Quran becomes more intimate and more direct.



QURAN IS LIKE A FRIEND

The longer and stronger the friendship lasts, the more we will know of its secrets. The "*uloom al-Quran*" or "The Sciences of the Quran" includes sciences that have a direct bearing on the recitation, history, understanding and implementation of the Quran. Arabic grammar is highly significant, yet it is only a part of the wealth of knowledge and insight that exists with regards to the Book of Allah.

SCIENCES OF THE QURAN



Related to Recitation of the Quran

- Science of pronunciation (*tajweed*),
- Different methodologies of reciting the Quran (*the qira'at*),
- Blessings of reciting the Quran,
- Etiquette of its recitation.

Related to History of the Quran

- Stages of revelation of the Quran,
- Compilation of the Quran,
- Art and history of writing the Quraanic script (*rasm al-masaahif*),
- Preservation of the Quran.

Related to its understanding & implementation

- Causes of revelation (*asbaab an-nuzool*),
- Knowledge of the *Makkee* and *Madanee* revelations,
- Knowledge of various forms (*ahruf*) it was revealed in,
- Understanding of its abrogated rulings and verses (*naasikh wa al-mansookh*),
- Knowledge of the various classifications of its verses (*muhkam and mutashaabih, aam and khaas, mutlaq and muqqayad*, etc.),
- Knowledge of the inimitable style of the Quran (*i'jaaz al-Quran*),
- Knowledge of its interpretation (*tafseer*),
- Grammatical analysis of the Quran (*'iraab al-Quran*),
- Knowledge of words whose usage has become uncommon overtime (*ghareeb al-Quran*)



TADREEJ

Gradual and Regular Progression

SMALL & STEADY STEPS

When we are born, our stomach knows how to process food, our ears know how to hear, our heart beats and we have a sense of hunger. Allah ﷻ could have also decreed that each one of us was born with the knowledge, understanding and memorization of the Quran. It is not a big deal for our Rabb! But He decreed for some things to happen with a process - with *tadreej* (gradual and regular progression). Knowledge of the Quran opens to us gradually when we continually ask Allah for it with a sincere heart and when we invest our intention, time, effort and patience.

Don't be intimidated by the length of this journey. Just enjoy every single step. The idea is to break it down into small digestible parts. If we eat so much and so many different kinds of foods at once, then our tummy gets upset. We have to be patient and eat slowly, in small portions, and one thing at a time.

With the help of Allah ﷻ, all these thousands of bits of pieces of information will eventually become one giant chunk of knowledge. It will eventually come naturally for us and we won't think in bits and pieces anymore. For example, learning to swim, learning to write, learning to ride a bike, and reading in our own native language.



وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ
فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ

And We have certainly
made the Qur'an easy for
remembrance, so is there
any who will remember?
(Surah Qamar 54:32)

رَبِّ يَسِّرْ وَلَا تُعَسِّرْ
وَتَمِّمْ بِالْخَيْرِ
وَبِكَ نَسْتَعِينُ يَا فَتَّاحُ
رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

O my Lord! Make this task
easy for me and do not
make it difficult for me. Let
my affairs end with
goodness. And from You
we seek help, O the One
Who Opens (removes the
hurdles and opens the door
to victory). My Lord,
increase me in knowledge.

1 **Make lots of dua to Allah for help and acceptance.**

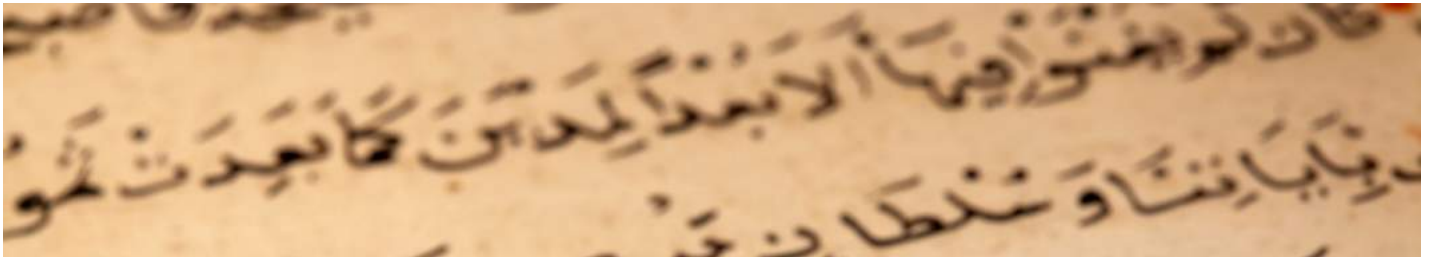
We are not just learning any course. We are learning the language of Allah's words. We all put in our efforts but we have to rely on Allah to help us be the best students that we can be. Ask Allah's help and it will arrive *in sha Allah*.

2 **Recite/ listen to the recitation everyday.**

Every letter of the Quran gives us 10 good deeds. Besides, this will make us more and more familiar and comfortable with the Arabic language and keep our goal of understanding the Quran in focus.

3 **Read/ listen to/ learn some *Tafseer* every week.**

This will subconsciously build your vocabulary and make you familiar with the applied Arabic grammar as it applies to the Quran *in sha Allah*. If you are not already a part of a *tafseer* class, it is recommended to follow one established book/ speaker of your preference and start from the beginning of the Quran.



ARABIC

The Language of the Word of Allah



Allah ﷻ's name is *tabarak*, and we start with name of Allah ﷻ. Whoever gets associated with Allah ﷻ gets blessed with *barakat*. Eg. the prophet ﷺ became *Rahmat-ul-alaameen*.

Arabic language became blessed because Allah ﷻ revealed His final word to mankind in Arabic. Arabic alphabet is the second most widely used alphabetical writing system in the world (after only Latin). Arabic language has carried to much of the Eastern Hemisphere by the spread of Islam. The script has been adapted to diverse languages such as Persian, Turkish, Hausa, Malay, Urdu, and Swahili.

Through the study of Arabic, we too are striving to connect more with Allah ﷻ. And we will *in sha Allah* get access to *khair* and *barakat* of associating with Him too.

Abu Hurairah RA reported: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "**Any group of people that assemble in one of the Houses of Allah to recite the Book of Allah, learning and teaching it, tranquility will descend upon them, mercy will engulf them, angels will surround them and Allah will make mention of them to those (the angels) in His proximity.**" [Muslim]. *Riyadh as-Salihin* 1023

Narrated Ibn 'Abbas RA: that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "**For whomever Allah wants good, he gives him understanding in the religion.**" *Jami' at-Tirmidhi* 2645

تَبَارَكَ اسْمُ رَبِّكَ
ذِي الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ

**Blessed is the name of your
Lord, Owner of Majesty
and Honor.**

(Surah Rahman 55:78)



Abud-Darda RA reported: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "He who follows a path in quest of knowledge, Allah will make the path of Jannah easy to him. The angels lower their wings over the seeker of knowledge, being pleased with what he does. The inhabitants of the heavens and the earth and even the fish in the depth of the oceans seek forgiveness for him. The superiority of the learned man over the devout worshipper is like that of the full moon to the rest of the stars (i.e., in brightness). The learned are the heirs of the Prophets who bequeath neither dinar nor dirham but only that of knowledge; and he who acquires it, has in fact acquired an abundant portion."

[Abu Dawud and At- Tirmidhi]. Riyad as-Salihin 1388



SO MANY BLESSINGS AWAIT US

in our quest for knowledge

WE NEED TO LEARN

the language of the Quran

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an
that you might understand.

(Surah Yusuf 12:2)

Allah ﷻ chose the Arabic language to carry His
final message to all mankind.

Only the Arabic *mushaf* is the Quran - unlike any
other religious scripture today, a translation is a
translation and a *tafseer* is a *tafseer*. The Arabic
Quran contains the exact words which Allah
revealed to our beloved prophet ﷺ and the
exact words which the Prophet ﷺ recited.
Nothing added or deleted.

Our salah is in the Arabic language. We want to
appreciate, love and understand what Allah ﷻ is
saying when we read the Quran, pray salah by
ourselves or behind an imam. Then we can
follow its lead in how we look at our world and
live our lives, so that we can be closer to our
Rabb and gain His pleasure.



QURAN WAS REVEALED IN ARABIA

قُلْ وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا أَعْجَمِيًّا لَقَالُوا لَوْلَا فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ أَأَعْجَمِيٌّ وَعَرَبِيٌّ قُلْ هُوَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هُدًى وَشِفَاءٌ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ فِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرٌ وَهُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَمًى أُولَٰئِكَ يُنَادُونَ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ

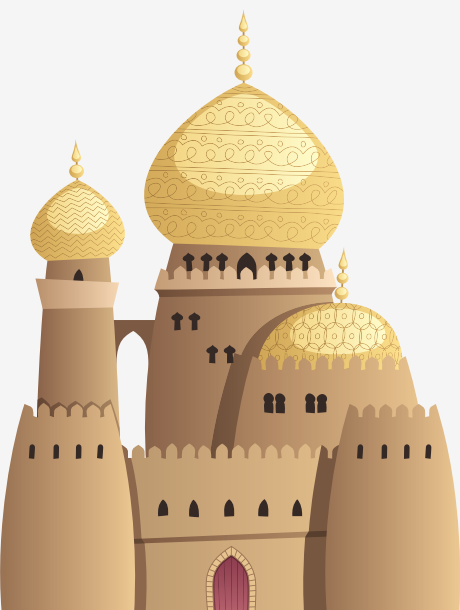
And if We had made it a non-Arabic Qur'an, they would have said, "Why are its verses not explained in detail [in our language]? Is it a foreign [recitation] and an Arab [messenger]?" Say, "It is, for those who believe, a guidance and cure." And those who do not believe - in their ears is deafness, and it is upon them blindness. Those are being called from a distant place.

(Surah Fussilat 41:44)

Prophet ﷺ was an Arab and those who were addressed by the Prophet ﷺ were also Arab. It therefore makes perfect sense for it to be in Arabic. For example, to be able to drive and reach our destination correctly, we need the road signs to be in our own language.

Just like previous scriptures, Quran came in a language of the messenger and the people around him. They could understand it.

It is distinct from other scriptures, because Quran still exists in a living language – spoken, heard, read, written and understood by hundreds of millions of devout followers even to the present day. It is a language that has remained alive and living over the last fourteen centuries.





NOT AN ETHNIC BACKGROUND

Arab is not an ethnic background. It is a background based on language. So anyone who speaks Arabic can be referred to as an Arab.

Current Arab world includes the Gulf, North Africa, and Middle East Countries. (Some historians like Herodius and Greco-Roman authors describe Arabs as the inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula and Yemen. Now it also includes pockets of Arabs in Northern Africa, Jordan and Syria)

Descended from the oldest son of Nuh AS - Shem, who was the ancestor of Semitic people - Arab, Hebrew and Aramaic.


Bible refers to Arabs as Ishmaelites.

Historically speaking - there are two groups of Arabs. Northern and Southern. Southern known to be pure Arabs before Ismael AS and hail from the tribe - Qahtan. Northern were "Arabicized" from a descendent of Ismael AS - Adnan.

Ismael AS was with his mother Hajra RA in Mecca and then became integrated with the Arabs and became "Arabicized" in that sense. So, Ismael AS is not referred to as an Arab prophet. Four prophets are Arab - Hud AS, Salih AS, Shuayb AS and Muhammad ﷺ.

Our beloved Prophet ﷺ said in his farewell pilgrimage, **"O people, your Lord is One Lord, and you all share the same father. There is no preference for Arabs over non-Arabs, nor for non-Arabs over Arabs. Neither is there preference for white people over black people, nor for black people over white people, except by piety and good action."** We learn and take the help of the Arabic language to gain and develop the taqwa of Allah ﷻ. It is the taqwa that will raise our ranks *in sha Allah* and not the language on its own.

Memorization of the Quran is a miracle of Allah ﷻ. So many people who do not understand the Arabic language at all have been able to memorize the Quran cover to cover, and continue to do so.



A RICH LANGUAGE



Arabic is a highly syntactical language in which the placement of words and the slight change in sounds can drastically change the meaning.

Arabic is a language in which every letter has a meaning. Only letter alif (ا) and letter seen (س) have many meanings. Just letter wow (و) has 17 meanings. One time Ali RA started tafseer after Isha and Fajr came while he was still teaching the tafseer of the letter baa (ب) from Bismillahir Rehmaanir Rahim.

Arabic is a very systematic language. Two, three or more letters combine to make meanings very systematically. Also, two or more words can combine to make one word.



Arabic is a rich language.

It is hard to compare Arabic to any other language in terms of its structure and richness.

It has more than 12 million words compared to English, for example, which has around 600,000 words.

ARABIC SCRIPT



Like other Semitic languages, Arabic is written from right to left, and a book begins at what looks like the back for us. The bit that messes with some people's brain is when they encounter numbers in an Arabic text, because numbers are read from left to right, like English!



It is no surprise that environmental and cultural elements help to shape the languages.

Due to lack of paper, Semitic languages were mainly written on stone tablets or animal bones, by chipping away at a large piece of stone with a chisel. Since there were more right-handed people who would typically hold a chisel in their left hand and a hammer in their right hand. Moving from right to left made more sense as they could see what they were writing. As Arabic kept developing, it kept this writing system. As opposed to this, many European languages like English, French and German are derived from Latin, whose roots go back to Greek. Greeks used papyrus (something like paper) and ink to write. They developed a left to right system as it allowed them to see what they are writing and continue without smudging. Chinese and Japanese used to write on bamboo sticks, and therefore developed a top to down writing system.

EVOLUTION OF THE ARABIC SCRIPT

There are some very distinct differences between the ancient and today's script of Arabic. The language is still the same but the script, i.e. writing style, has evolved morphologically (its form).



At the time of the Prophet ﷺ, in the Arabic script:

- Letters had no dots
- Vowel signs were not present (*fatha*, *dhammah*, *kasra*)
- Compound words were not connected to each other

This was not an issue although so many letters looked identical because Arabs knew their language really well. Literacy was very limited and the fact that very few people could read or write elevated their linguistic abilities.

When Quran was revealed, Arabic language was at the peak of its literary beauty and elegance. In this background, the revelation of the Quran in Arabic blew everyone away in terms of its magnificence, great eloquence, wisdom, literary excellence, etc.

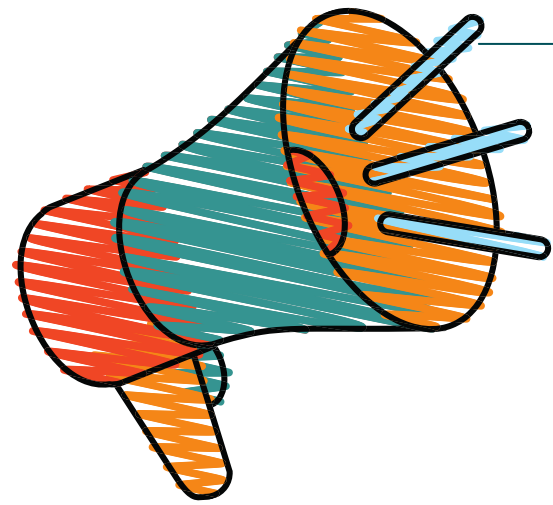
Older style and identical letters made it difficult for non-Arabs to read. Dots and vowels were added to preserve the Quran exactly and to make it easier for others to read it.

AHRUF & QIRAT OF QURAN

Allah ﷻ revealed the Quran to the Prophet ﷺ in 7 different *ahruf* (variations in recitation based on different dialects, singular *harf*). This was extraordinary because *Hijaz* (the Arabic subcontinent at that time) had many different tribes and dialects and it was difficult for them to recite in a dialect which was different from theirs (We can think of a dialect like the differences in American and British English - the words and meanings are same but spellings and pronunciations might be different). Each *Harf* revealed to the prophet ﷺ corresponded to the major dialects of the *Hijaz*. This meant that the same Quran could be recited in 7 different dialects. Some newcomers to Islam were mixing up different *ahruf*, which made it important to standardize the *ahruf*. *Uthmani* dialect was chosen as the standardized dialect. Uthman RA supervised the collection of Quranic manuscript which had been originally supervised by the prophet ﷺ. Seven copies were made of the *Uthmani mushaf* corresponding to the 7 *ahruf* to ensure that the Quran was recited properly. These copies were sent to different regions along with *Qaris* (reciters of the Quran) to ensure recitation was according to what the prophet ﷺ had taught.

Qirah (plural Qirat) is a way of recitation of the Quran that is attributed to a Qirah master who made selections based on the 7 *ahruf* of the Quran. Around the 2nd and 3rd century of hijra, ten Qirat were standardized and codified by our Muslim scholars. 95% of the Muslims today read the *mushaf* according to the *Qirat* of *Hafs Bin Aasim*.

ARABIC WAS HEARD FIRST & GRAMMAR DEVELOPED LATER



Arabic is a language that was heard first and grammar rules were codified later. Arabic clearly had grammar before. Without grammar, how would people even speak? However, the grammar was implicit and not codified. People simply learned it from practice.

After Islam, the Arabs needed to study and teach the Quran to non-Arabs. To aid in this, they needed the codification of Arabic grammar. Various aspects of Arabic grammar were developed to establish a correct reading and interpretation of the Quran, due to the spread of a phenomenon called *Lahn* (errors in speech). Other than the Quran, literary works of Arabic, like ancient poetry and the speech of bedouins, were used as the sources for this codification.

"It is most astonishing to see this robust language (Arabic) growing and reaching a stage of perfection in the midst of the desert, and in a nation of nomads. The language has superseded other languages by its wealth of vocabulary, precise meanings and perfect structure. This language was unknown to other nations. But when it came to be known, it appeared to us in such perfection that it hardly underwent any change ever since. Of the stages of life, that language had neither childhood nor old age. We hardly know anything about that language beyond its unmatched conquests and victories. We cannot find any similar language that appeared to scholars so complete, and without gradation, keeping a structure so pure and flawless. The spread of the Arabic language covered the largest areas and remotest countries."

UNIFICATION OF THE MUSHAF



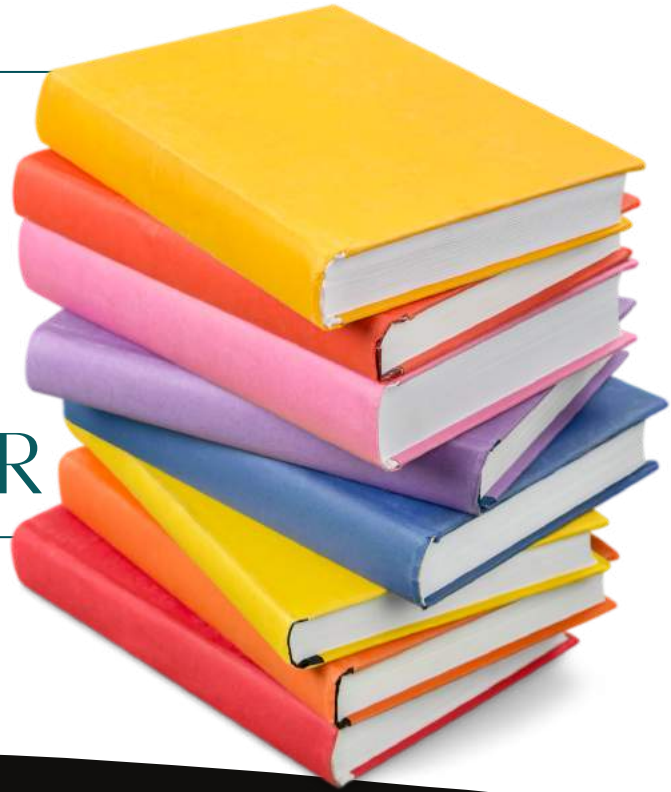
Quran was collected into a book form after the battle of Yamamah in 12 AH where 70 huffaz were killed. This was a big blow because the Muslim ummah was only in thousands (unlike billions today) and these huffaz were very precious. This concerned Umar RA and he went to Abu Bakr RA and requested for the unification of mushaf in the book form. The writings were available because the prophet ﷺ used to dictate every ayah to at least two sahabas after it was revealed to preserve it in both oral and written form. After much discussion, Abu Bakr RA agreed and the writings of the Quran were put together in the book form. Then at the time of Uthman RA, it was standardized into one dialect (Quraishi) with the approval of all companions. This was a big event!

At the time of the Caliphate of Umar RA, a bedouin Arab convert came to Medina and requested a man to read a portion of the Quran for him. The man picked up the Quran and read the first three verses of Surah at-Tawbah (Q.9:3) , where he made a mistake in his recitation, saying: "Inna llāha barī 'un mina 'l-mushrikīn wa rasūlihi" (saying rasulihi instead of rasuluhu), which then translated as: "Allah is free from the idolaters and His messenger". The man, on hearing this asked the reciter to stop and passed a comment, "Allah is free from His messenger! Also, once He that sent him is free from him, I am equally free from him".

The incident got to the notice of Caliph Umar RA who called the man and said, "O Brother is it true that you claimed freedom from Muhammad ﷺ? The man replied: "O Commander of the Faithful, I reached Medina and embraced Islam. I then requested a man to recite some portion of the Quran for me and he recited what led me to the conclusion. Umar RA denied the correctness of the recitation and convinced the man that it should have been: Inna llaha barī' un mina' l-mushrikīna wa rasulu-hu" meaning: Allah and His apostle ﷺ are free from the idolaters." The man then remarked: "By Allah, I am also free from those whom Allah and His apostle ﷺ are free from".

Such were the grave grammatical errors among the Arabs in the early days of Islam. The language remained in that manner for sometime. No written grammatical rules were available at that time, but corrections were made orally whenever necessary.

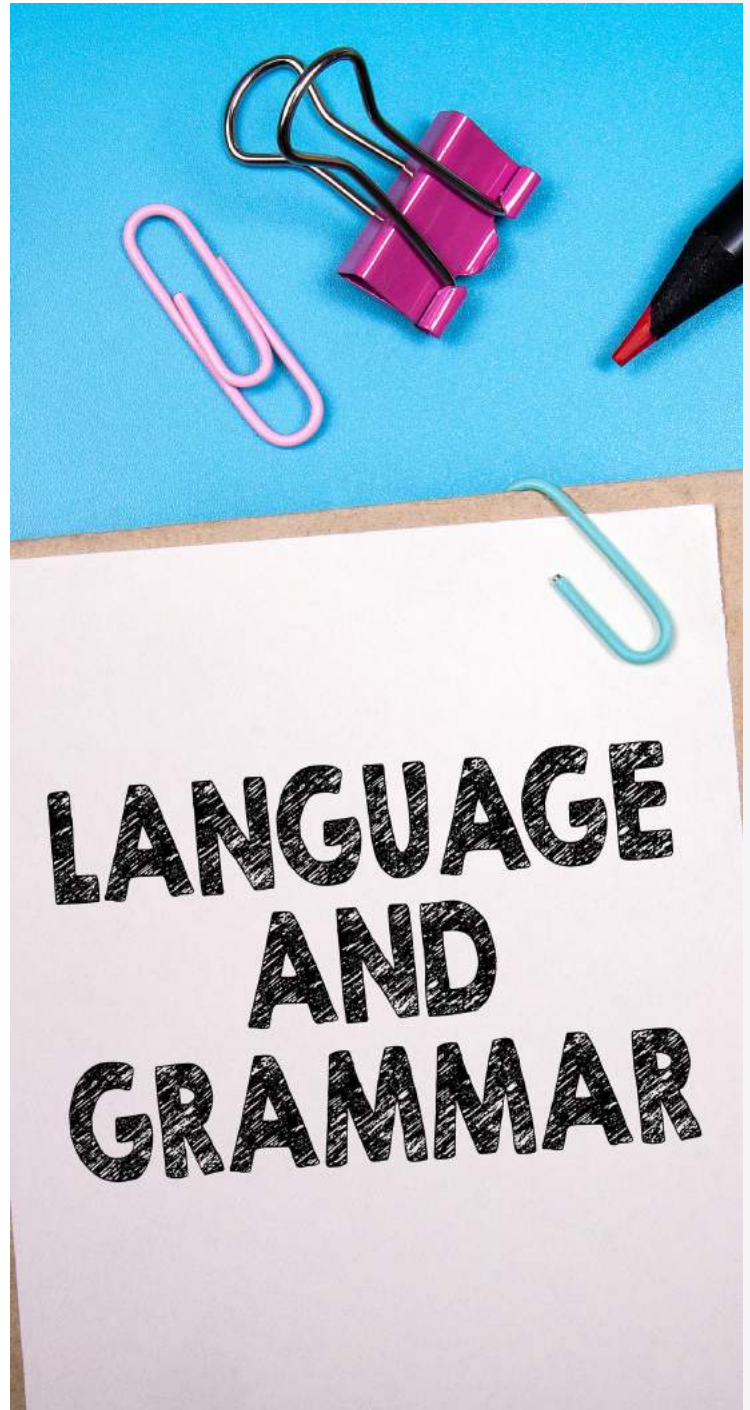
CODIFICATION OF THE ARABIC GRAMMAR



Despite the standardised *mushaf* and its unification, new Muslims were making mistakes in the recitation of the Quran. Moreover, original *Kufic* script was very difficult for non-Arabs to read. This concerned Ali RA and he appointed Tabiin Abu Al-Aswad Ad-Duali (r), the tutor of Al-Hasan and Al-Hussain RA, to codify the Arabic grammar and make the Quran easier for people to read. Abu Al-Aswad Ad-Duali (r) was the first to add vowels to the script. He and his students also introduced dots on similar letters which made it easy to differentiate them. These additions were done approximately 75 years after the prophet ﷺ had passed away. Some *sahabas* (companions of the Prophet ﷺ) were still alive at this time.

Grammar doesn't just tell us what we are going to use, but also how we are going to use it. When we learn grammar, we understand things like - Oh that's how Allah ﷻ said it, and that's what it means!

The concepts of Arabic grammar, like any other language, build one over the other. So, it is best to stay highly focused on the topic at hand. If you are already familiar with some concepts- it is time to solidify them and not jump the gun, otherwise you might confuse yourself and/ or other students. Don't get too deep too quickly. At the same time, do your lessons every week. **FOCUS AND SCHEDULE** yourself.



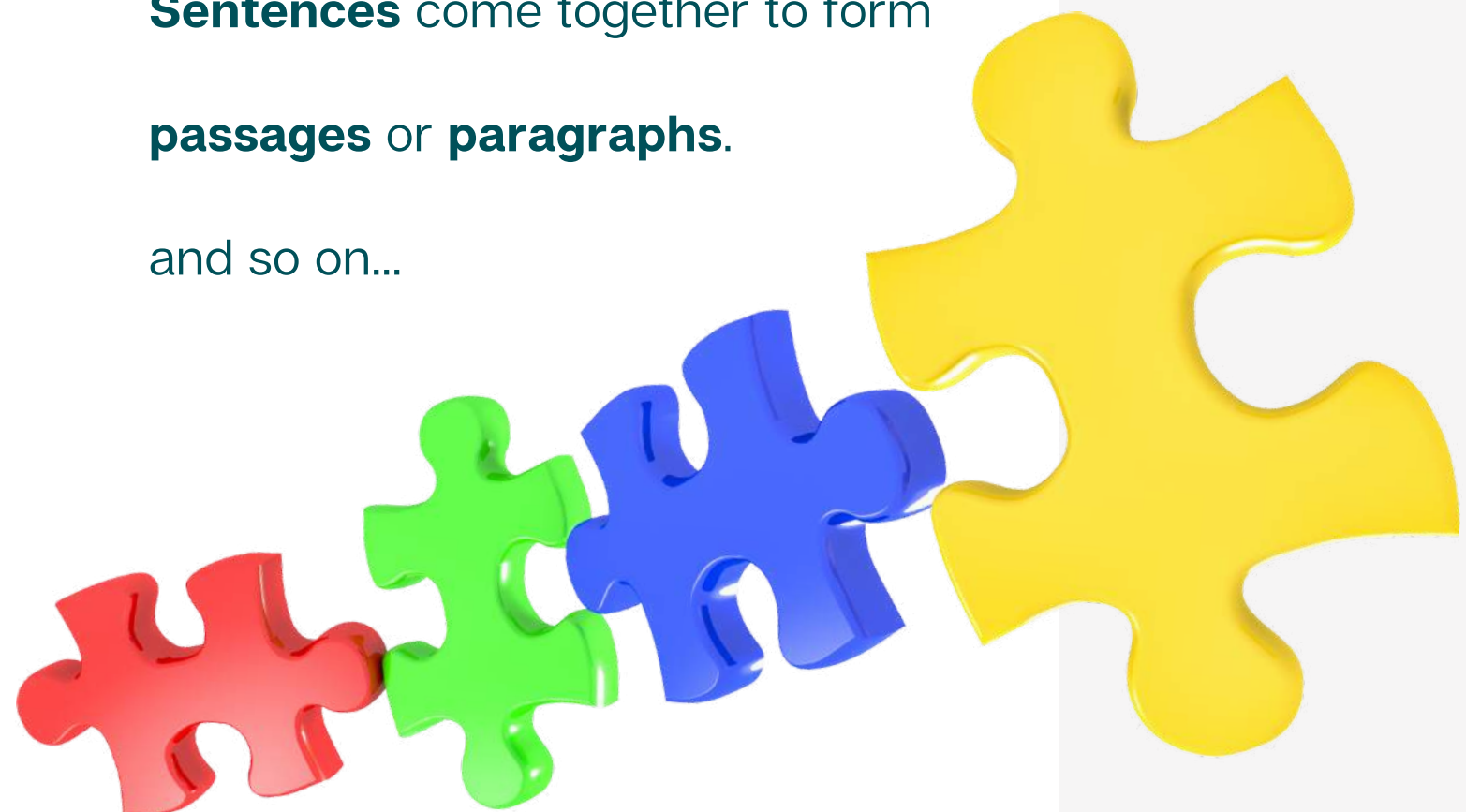
COMPONENTS OF A LANGUAGE

Letters come together to form **Words**.

Words come together to form **phrases**
or **fragments** and **sentences**.

Sentences come together to form
passages or **paragraphs**.

and so on...



ALPHABETS IN ARABIC

Arabic alphabet has a few sounds that don't exist in other languages, such as 'ح', which is a 'h' sound as in 'hubb' (love). To get an idea of how this is pronounced, imagine breathing on a window pane to create a mist.

There are also no capital letters in Arabic.

Many of us were taught that there are 28 alphabets in Arabic but there are 29. *Alif* (ا) is a letter of the alphabet, but it is not a consonant, meaning that it does not have a speech sound. When you say "a" sound, it is not *Alif* (ا) but it is *hamza* (ء). *Hamza* (ء) is very delicate. She needs a chair. So *Alif* (ا) is sometimes a chair for *hamza* (ء).

Sometimes *waw* (و) will become a chair for *hamza* (ء) and sometimes *yaa* (ي), depending on what is in front of her.

Also, sometimes when *hamza* (ء) is feeling strong, she doesn't need a chair. So there are several spelling rules for *hamza* (ء) that we will learn slowly.



VOWEL SOUNDS

Short Vowels

ـَ FATHA

ـِ KASRA

ـُ DHAMMAH

Long Vowels

اـ ALIF

يـ YAA

وـ WOW

= FATHATAIN

= KASRATAIN

و DHAMMATAIN

◦ SUKUN → absence of vowel sounds

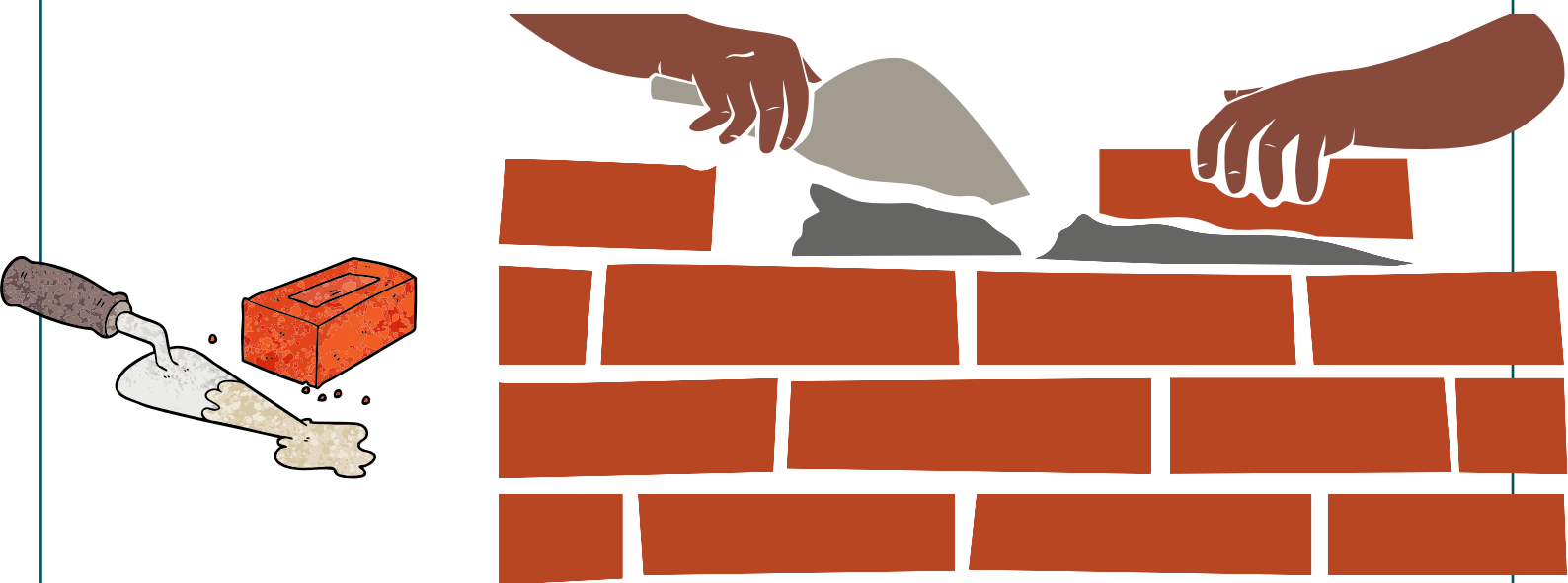
◌ SHADDAH is written in many ways

There is no need to write short vowel marks in Arabic. Just as you might use only consonants when texting the word 'tmrw'. If you really need to display the short vowels, you use little markers above and below the consonants. These feature in children's books and textbooks for foreigners or to remove ambiguity, but with time you will recognize words from the context and no longer need these helping vowel markers.

This might seem like a hard skill to master at first. But after sometime it comes naturally. For example, an English speaker knows how to pronounce "bought" and "tough" differently and how "put" and "but" are different sounds.

WHAT IS GRAMMAR

Language is not just a bunch of words. It is also how we put words together properly. Grammar is the way to put the vocabulary in a proper organized way so that it makes sense. For example, there are several books in a library but how exactly they are supposed to be arranged and organized. If we don't follow the proper way, it will all be a huge mess.



Vocabulary and grammar are like bricks and mortar. They go hand in hand. We need both in the right proportions to build a steady wall, otherwise the whole wall will collapse.

Language is both science and art. First we learn science and its core concepts. Example - doctors learn biology first, engineers learn about physics, architects about materials, painters about colours and brushes. Then they utilize the knowledge artistically.

When we learn grammar, we see how Allah put words together in the Quran and would anything change if we were to rearrange these words, etc.

LEARN AS CHILDREN DO

The way to learn grammar is to focus on understanding the concept, lots of practice, read the Quran, memorize when needed, keep building your vocabulary, keep your notes organized as you will need to refer again and again.

To build vocabulary, we take tips from the best learners of any language - children. Children all over the world learn their native languages within a few years, no matter what the language:



- **Do not obsess over grammatical rules and sentence structures too much in the beginning** (other than what is being taught) because it can be an exhausting approach that has led many to leave learning Arabic altogether.
- **Very good listeners.** Children keep listening for a whole year before uttering a single word.
- **Learn vocabulary in context, chunks and expressions, and make it yours.** Children acquire a language by learning a few words and repeating them like water, glass and want. They learn simple concepts and personalize the words learnt to their needs - I like ice cream. I want a cup of water.

3 KINDS OF ARABIC TODAY

1 STREET ARABIC

Informal Arabic; differs according to location.

It is really good to learn fus-ha but that does not mean that you know all about the Arabic of the Quran.

2 Fus-ha فُصْحَى

A properly spoken Arabic or Modern Standard Arabic. The Arabic that is used in newspapers, magazines, books or news channels like Al-Jazeera

Fus-ha is just a small part of the language of the ancient Arabs. We are studying classical Arabic. In the beginning, we will learn fus-ha but eventually it will expand into other areas of classical Arabic too.

3 Language of the ancient Arabs/ Classical Arabic لِسَانُ الْعَرَبِ

The language that the Arabs are using since 1000s of years ago. The Quran uses the language of ancient Arabs and that is our focus

Some words could mean different things in fus-ha and Ancient Arabic. For example,

اِسْتِغْمَارٌ

In Fus-Ha: colonization

In Ancient: when you want somebody to build something.

In terms of vocabulary, there is no need for us to learn what desk, toilet, rocket and sea shell mean, at least not at the moment. We will focus on words that are used frequently in the Quran.

FIELDS OF ARABIC GRAMMAR

Arabic Grammar

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graph TD; A[Arabic Grammar] --> B[النَّحْو]; A --> C[الصَّرْف]; B --> D[Nahw (Syntax)]; C --> E[Sarf (Morphology)];
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النَّحْو

Nahw (Syntax)

الصَّرْف

Sarf (Morphology)

An-Nahw or Syntax

A science whose subject matter are *Kalima* (word) and *Kalam* (sentence). It teaches us:

- Study of the end of the word and how one word affects another word. The condition of the last letter of a word is called *i'rab*. We will call it status.
- Think about the sentence and how to put words (nouns, verbs and particles) together to make a correct sentence.

As-Sarf or Morphology

Subject through which the knowledge of forming, changing and recognizing words is acquired. It teaches us:

- Study of the spelling of the word (rest of the word except the ending).
- What happens to that word if its letters are changed/ morphed.
- Enables us to correctly read and translate words.

THERE ARE 3 KINDS OF WORDS IN ARABIC

1 ISM

- a person, place, thing, idea, adjective, adverb and more.
- Has a meaning
- Un-attached to time
- Not a *Fi'al* or *Harf*
- For example, table, cats, Canada, mother, kind, he, loudly, Islam, drawing

2 FIAL

- a word that has a tense i.e. past, present or future.
- Has a meaning
- Attached to and stuck in time.
- Not an *Ism* or *Harf*
- For example, drive, drove, will drive

3 HARF

- A word that makes no sense unless another word comes after it.
- Has no meaning on its own
- Not an *Ism* or *Fi'al*
- For example, in, with, on

In English, there are eight parts of speech: noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction and injection.

In Arabic, there are three: *Ism*, *Fial* and *Harf*.

GENDER, NUMBER & TENSE

GENDER



Grammatically speaking, all isms in Arabic are either masculine or feminine. For now, we can think of it as he or she. Unlike English, there is no “it” in the Arabic language. Remember, the grammatical or literary gender does not necessarily mean that the word has a physical or biological gender too. For example, a book, a table, a phone, a library, each will have a gender in grammar.

NUMBER

Unlike English and many other languages which have singular or plural, Arabic has a third category called dual. So for example, *muslimun* means one Muslim, *muslimaani* means two Muslims and *muslimoona* means 3 or more Muslims.



TENSE



Arabic only has two tenses (past and present). The present includes the future as well. Arabic also dispenses with the verb ‘to be’ in the present tense, as it is understood without being said. For example, the word *أنا* *ana*, literally translated as ‘I’, would be used in a sentence for ‘I am’. There is no need for a separate word for “am.”

CONCEPT OF ROOT WORDS

Arabic is a semitic language that works on a “root” system.

A root is a word or part of a word, from which other words grow, usually through addition of prefixes and suffixes. Example in English:
misread, rewrite, reading, joyous, writer, etc.



Root Words

write, joy, read

Most Arabic words are derived from a “root” set of letters that contain the base meaning of the word.

Example - root ك ت ب ka-ta-ba

كِتَاب Kitaab - a Book

كَاتِب Kaatib - a writer

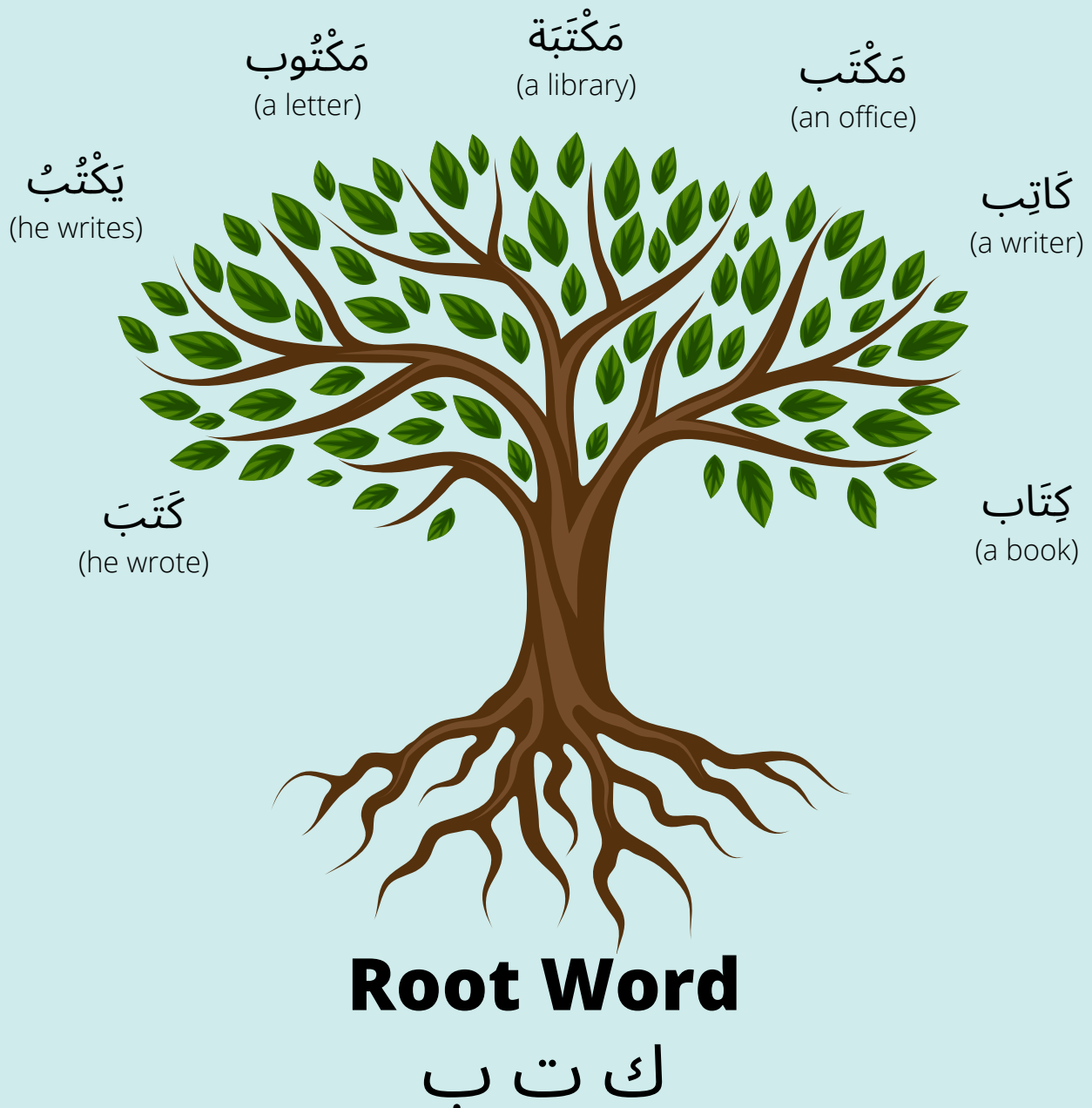
مَكْتَب Maktab - an office

مَكْتَبَة Maktabah - a library

مَكْتُوب Maktoob - a letter

كَتَب Kataba - he wrote

يَكْتُب Yaktubu - he writes



Most scripts used to write Semitic languages are *abjads* - a type of script that omits some or all of the vowels. This is feasible for these languages because the consonants in the Semitic languages are the primary carriers of meaning. The root words of Semitic languages are not themselves syllables or words, but instead they are isolated sets of consonants (usually three, making a so-called trilateral root). Words are composed out of roots by filling in the vowels between the root consonants, and also by adding prefixes and suffixes.

In other words, root letters are put into patterns which morph the meaning of the root to create a variety of related words. Patterns add meaning to root letters as well.

For example, a doer of an action is on pattern Fa'il (فَاعِل) (ف ع ل ----)

ك ت ب Ka-ta-ba - Write ----- كَاتِب kaatib - writer

ن ا م na-a -ma - sleep ----- نَائِم naaim - sleeper

م ش ي Ma-sha-ya - walk ----- مَاشِي mashiy - walker

We can think of it as different kinds of liquids pouring into a container. Every liquid takes the shape of the container that it is poured into. Liquid or raw material is like the root letters and the shape it takes are the patterns.



As we will start to learn the patterns and root words, our vocabulary will build very quickly in sha Allah. This gives Arabic learners a real boost: if you know one word from a certain root, you have a shortcut to recognizing and deciphering new vocabulary which is related (sometimes at a deep and murky philosophical level).

Root system means that direct translation is often difficult, particularly for poetic texts. A word may contain a meaning that could take a few sentences to translate. The beauty of this is that it conveys a depth of both meaning and emotion unmatched by many languages.

- Root words are mostly 3 letters
- Order of the letters must be maintained
- Only *fi'al* and *isms* have root letters
- Short vowels (اَ اِ اُ) and *taa marbutaa* (ة) are not part of the root letters
- Long vowels (اَوِ اَوِ) are also called weak letters (حرف علت) because their shape changes depending on context. They can be parts of the root, but they will often be altered and replace each other.
- Some letters can be part of the root, but they are often parts of the pattern. Weak letters (اَوِ), *Hamza* (ء) and some other letters (ت س ل م ن ه)
- Follow the process of elimination of patterns or prefixes and suffixes to find root words.
- Alif (ا) can not be part of the root letter but hamza (ء) can.

Quranic Arabic captures not just words but also emotions and emphasis



Different prophets and personalities in the stories of the Quran spoke different languages. Some spoke ancient Babylonian, some ancient Egyptian, some ancient Hebrew, and so on. When we read the Quran and the words of these prophets or these people are quoted, it is not just the words but also the emotion and the intensity of those words that are captured. Whoever is fluent with the language of Arabic understands that this is the unique quality of Arabic.

No one can translate words and emotions from the original language and the emotions inside the hearts of the people while speaking these words, except the Owner of all languages. When our scholars with deep knowledge of Arabic have paid attention to the dialogues in the Quran, they have noticed that its words capture depth of emotions like anger, nervousness, fear, joy, etc.

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May Allah increase you and us in beneficial knowledge.
Ameen.

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