العربية الوظيفية للمبتدئين
الطبعة الثانية
حروف العربية وأصواتها

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Introduction

Letters and Sounds of the Arabic Language has been designed as a workbook to accompany Ahlan wa Sahlan, Second Edition, but it may also be used independently as an introduction to Arabic orthography, basic words and phrases, and culture.

This workbook is divided into six units; most units begin with a presentation of some basic language functions (e.g., greeting people, introducing oneself, describing one’s place of origin) accompanied by comprehension activities based on the audio program and the DVD. Cultural notes describe some of the conventions related to these conversational exchanges; the workbook also contains an introduction to the Arab states and political systems, as well as a discussion of some regional differences in Arabic.

The introduction of these basic conversational exchanges achieves a threefold objective: establishing a communicative classroom, honing learner listening and speaking skills, and whetting the student’s desire to hold authentic conversations outside of class. DVD scenes support all of the workbook’s communicative activities and offer a window into how the phrases are used in context. After viewing the DVD scenes, students are provided with communicative exercises that not only help them learn the phrases, but also foster a sense of community by promoting authentic interaction with their classroom peers.

The Arabic script is introduced letter by letter, with groupings dependent on the shape of the shell. Each letter progresses through a six-phase introduction: (1) providing a chart that illustrates the letter’s four positions (initial, medial, final, and independent); (2) presenting a diagram of how the letter is drawn, using shaded arrows for guidance; (3) tracing the letter in all of its positions in words accompanied by illustrations; (4) practicing the letter in all of its positions; (5) tracing full words; and then (6) writing those words. Listening exercises such as word recognition and dictation reinforce the relationship between the letters introduced in that unit and their associated sounds. Units conclude with recognition exercises in which the letters are used within an authentic context such as maps, newspaper clippings, or advertisements.

We include four appendixes at the back of the workbook for easy reference: Appendix A contains the Arabic alphabet with the different forms of the letters according to their positions in the word and the Roman symbol representing each letter. Appendix B contains a key to the sound system of Arabic and the transliteration system used in this workbook (that is, the Roman symbols used to represent Arabic letters). Appendix C contains an answer key to all of the discrete-answer exercises in the workbook, including listening and DVD exercises. Appendix D contains the DVD scripts.

At the end of the book, there is a cumulative glossary, or dictionary, containing all the words found in the vocabulary lists at the end of the units, as well as key words from the listening and DVD passages. The vocabulary in the cumulative glossary is marked with the lesson number where each word first appears. Although in the initial stage (see the vocabulary list at the end of each unit) we use transliteration in order to facilitate the
learning process for the beginner, we use it sparingly, to exemplify sounds or letters that students have not learned yet; in the cumulative vocabulary transliteration is not used.

*Letters and Sounds of the Arabic Language* is merely one component of the *Ahlan wa Sahlan* educational package, which presents the learner with multiple avenues to explore Arabic: this workbook, the textbook, the DVD program (also available as downloadable MP4 files from the Web site, www.yalebooks.com/ahlan), the audio program on MP3 CD (also downloadable from the Web site), and an online interactive exercise program.

To access the Online Interactive Exercise Program, go to http://yalebooks.com/awsexercises
Username: [SEE BOOK]
Password: [SEE BOOK]

We provide the instructor with an Annotated Instructor’s Edition of the textbook and online resources that include lesson plans, handouts, exercises, texts, and examinations to facilitate the use of the textbook and its supplementary materials.

To the Student

What is the key to learning a foreign language well? Before you embark on your journey in learning Arabic using this instructional package, you may wish to take some time to reflect on this question. Over the past decade, students have offered nearly every conceivable answer after I pose it on the first day of my Arabic classes. The answer that I have become convinced is “correct” is: to think in the language. No matter what your original answer may have been, thinking in the language is central to learning a language well by practicing it on a minute-by-minute basis. This is possible even at the very beginning of your Arabic studies by containing your thoughts in Arabic, using an internal banter as practice, and gradually widening the scope of language use by introducing new words into your repertoire. Make this language your own by actively seeking out those vocabulary words that you use in your mother tongue. These are the words with which you will be expressing yourself and that, in turn, will create an Arabic persona. The more you practice, the more permanent your learning becomes and the stronger your individuality will become in Arabic. We encourage you to actively surround yourself with the language as much as possible, and we have made this quite easy for you in fact. Simply by visiting our Web site at www.yalebooks.com/ahlan, you can download all of *Letters and Sounds of the Arabic Language*’s video and audio materials to your MP3 and MP4 players so that you may listen to or watch them wherever you are and whenever you wish.

Much has been said about the difficulty of learning Arabic. In fact, the United States government lists Arabic as a Category 4 language—among the most difficult for an American to learn. You may view the notion of difficulty in one of two ways: as an obstacle or as a challenge. We tend to think that Arabic is not so much difficult for the Western learner
as it is different. According to studies completed in 2006 in which Arabic grammar was compared to other world languages, it was found that verb conjugation in Arabic is logical (less complex than Spanish), its tense system is easier than English, and given that Arabic is a root-derivational language, it is quite mathematical and elegant in its dexterity—meaning that it is able to accommodate new concepts using its derivational qualities. What this means for you is that you can not only learn Arabic, but learn it well.

We designed Ahlan wa Sahlan and the Letters and Sounds of the Arabic Language workbook to guide you on the most direct learning path to achieve functional language goals and proficiency. It is our hope that this workbook will serve not only to anticipate pitfalls, but also to allow you to experience the joy of learning one of the oldest living languages on the planet and the riches that it has to offer.

To the Instructor

Letters and Sounds of the Arabic Language introduces learners of Arabic to the language’s sound and writing systems and provides them with basic structural and lexical knowledge that will enable them to communicate in Arabic and maintain interest in the study of the language. In the Second Edition of Ahlan wa Sahlan, the workbook was separated from the textbook in order to make learning the Arabic sounds and letters more manageable and to focus more on the mechanics of reading and writing in addition to introducing language functions.

Letters and Sounds of the Arabic Language, used in conjunction with Ahlan wa Sahlan, Second Edition, and the accompanying supplementary material, attempts to provide a learning environment conducive to effective acquisition of specific language abilities. These abilities, in their totality, create a measure of proficiency in Arabic. Upon completing this course, the average learner may achieve a proficiency level within the Intermediate Mid range established by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Naturally, results vary with respect to individual learner differences and may range between higher or lower proficiency levels.

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