

خطط مؤنس–Main Dialect Points

Here are some items you will hear in this video that vary between dialects. Remember, at this point in your Arabic career, you are just working to understand and predict variation—you don't need to be able to say these phrases in every dialect!

The letter ق

This letter has three common variants in Arabic that you should get used to hearing: q (like k but farther back in your throat), ʔ (glottal stop), and g (like the g in get). This is an approximate geographic distribution, but there is significant variation.

MSA	Moroccan	Egyptian	Levantine	Gulf
q	q/g	ʔ	ʔ/g	g

The letter ج

This letter has four common variants in Arabic that you should get used to hearing: dʒ (like the j in judge), ʒ (like the z in azure), g (like the g in get), and y (like the y in yellow). This is an approximate geographic distribution, but there is significant variation.

MSA	Moroccan	Egyptian	Levantine	Gulf
dʒ	ʒ	g	dʒ	ʒ/y

The letter ذ

This (along with other interdental sounds you make putting your tongue between your teeth such as ظ and ث) tends to become an alveolar sound (hitting the alveolar ridge behind your teeth), either d or z. This is an approximate geographic distribution, but there is significant variation.

MSA	Moroccan	Egyptian	Levantine	Gulf
ð	d	z	z	z/ð

The letter ث

This (along with other interdental sounds you make putting your tongue between your teeth such as ذ and ظ) tends to become an alveolar sound (hitting the alveolar ridge behind your teeth), either t or s. This is an approximate geographic distribution, but there is significant variation.

MSA	Moroccan	Egyptian	Levantine	Gulf
θ	t	s/t	s/t	s/θ

The letter ظ

This (along with other interdental sounds you make putting your tongue between your teeth such as ذ and ث) tends to become a pharyngealized alveolar sound (hitting the alveolar ridge behind your teeth), either dʕ or zʕ. This is an approximate geographic distribution, but there is significant variation.

MSA	Moroccan	Egyptian	Levantine	Gulf
ðʕ	dʕ	zʕ	zʕ	zʕ/ðʕ

Hamza

The glottal stop is dropped in most dialects (or represents the sound of ق). So, الصحراء in MSA becomes الصحرا in many dialects.

Also, as well

The word for “also, as well” can mark whether a speaker is using dialect or MSA.

MSA	Multiple Dialects	Multiple Dialects
أَيْضاً	كَمَان	برضو

Because

The word for “because” is also a common dialect marker. Here are some common variants.

MSA	Moroccan	Egyptian	Levantine	Gulf
لَأَنَّ بِسَبَبِ	حبيب	عشان	منشان امشان	عشان

Good

The word for “good” is also a common dialect marker. Here are some common variants.

MSA	Moroccan	Egyptian	Levantine	Gulf
جَيِّد	مزيان	كويس	منيح	زين

Only

The word for “only” is also a common dialect marker, mostly showing a difference between MSA and dialects.

MSA	Multiple Dialects
فَقَطَّ	بَسَّ

That

The word for “that” as in “The shops that are near the apartment” is also a common dialect marker, mostly showing a difference between MSA and dialects.

	MSA	Multiple Dialects
Masculine Singular	الَّذِي	اللي
Feminine Singular	الَّتِي	اللي

Plural	الَّذِينَ	اللي
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What

What is another word that commonly varies between dialects. Here are some common varieties.

MSA	Moroccan	Egyptian	Levantine	Levantine/Gulf
ما؟ ماذا؟	شنو؟	ايه؟	شو؟	ايش

Where (Question)

The word for “where” varies in Arabic between MSA, Eastern, and Western dialects.

MSA	Western Dialects	Eastern Dialects
أَيْنَ ayna	فين feyn	وين weyn

Note: In MSA, the phrase “from where”, used to ask “where are you from”, is من اين min ayna.

In dialectس, you will often hear منين mineen although you can also hear من وين min weyn and less commonly من فين min feyn.

Progressive Markers on the present tense verb

In many Arabic dialects, a prefix is added to the present tense verb that gives a progressive (ongoing) meaning. The key thing is to listen for the verb itself, rather than being thrown off by different consonants at the beginning.

English	MSA	Moroccan	Egyptian	Levantin	Gulf	Iraqi
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				e		
You like/love	تُحِبُّ	كُتِبَ	يَتَحِبُّ	يَتَحِبُّ عَمَّ يَتَحِبُّ	يَتَحِبُّ	دَتَحِبُّ

Future Tense Marker

In both MSA and Arabic dialects, a word or letter is added to the present tense verb that gives a future meaning.

MSA	Moroccan	Egyptian	Levantine	Gulf	Yemen
سوف س	غادي	ح ه	راح رح	راح رح	ش-
سوف أطبخ سأطبخ	غادي نطيبو	حنطبخ هنطبخ	راح نطبخ	راح نطبخ	

Negating Nouns and Adjectives

In MSA, nouns and adjectives using the verb ليس. In Arabic dialects, they are negated with a single word, as in the chart below. This word is not conjugated as ليس is.

MSA	Moroccan	Egyptian	Levantine	Gulf
ليس	ماشي	مش	مش	مش مو مب

Active Participles as Verbs

In addition to verbs, Arabic has active and passive participles from the verbs. While technically nouns, in Arabic dialects these can act more like verbs. Be ready to recognize both forms.

English	MSA	Egyptian
I live	أَسْكُنْ أَعِيشْ	ساكِن (male) ساكِنَة (female) عايش (male) عايشَة (female)
I'm traveling	أَسَافِرْ	مُسَافِر مُسَافِرَة

Object and Possessive Pronouns

In MSA and dialects, there is often gender differentiation between second person object pronouns [you (masculine) and you (feminine)] and second person possessive pronouns [your (masculine) and your (feminine)]. In Introductions, you will hear these differences in the phrases “how are you?” (object pronouns) and “what is your name?” (possessive pronouns). In second person, the object and possessive pronouns have the same forms.

Male Second Person Object/Possessive Pronouns

MSA	Dialects
كَ -ka	كَ -ak

Female Second Person Object/Possessive Pronouns

MSA	Egyptian/Levantine	Yemeni	Iraqi/Saudi
كِ -ki	كِ -ik	شِ -ish	تَشِ -ich

Note: Moroccan Arabic doesn't distinguish between masculine and feminine second person object/possessive pronouns (-k).

Plural Second Person Object/Possessive Pronouns

MSA	Moroccan	Egyptian	Levantine	Gulf
كُم	كُم	كو	كن	كُم