

صديق عبد الله حوار–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 ج

This letter has four common variants in Arabic that you should get used to hearing: ɟ (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
ɟ	ʒ	g	ɟ	ʒ/y

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

But

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

MSA	Multiple Dialects
وَلَكِنْ walaakin	بَسْ bas

Friend

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

MSA	Moroccan	Egyptian	Levantine	Gulf
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صَدِيق	صاحِب	صاحب	صاحب اَرَفِيق	صاحب
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Go

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

MSA	Multiple Dialects
أَذْهَب adhhab I go	أَرُوح aruuh I go

Many

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

MSA	Moroccan	Egyptian	Levantine	Gulf	Yemeni
كثير	بُزاف	كثير	كثير	وايد	خيرات

Now

The phrase for now also varies. Here are some common variants for now.

MSA	Moroccan	Egyptian	Levantine	Gulf	Yemeni	Iraqi
الآن al-ʔaan	دابا daba	دالوقتي dilwaʔti	هلق halaʔ	الحين al-Heen	ذلحين dhalHeen	هسا hassa

To see, watch

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

MSA	Multiple Dialects
أرى I see	أشوف I see
أشاهد	أشوف

I watch	I watch أَتَفَرِّجُ I watch
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Where

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

MSA	Western Dialects	Eastern Dialects
أَيْنَ ayna	فَيْنَ feyn	وَيْنَ weyn

Work

There are two common words used to express the verb “to work”, used in both MSA and dialects. يَشْتَغَلُ is used in MSA and dialect, when يَعْمَلُ is used in dialect if often has a meaning more like “to do”.

يَعْمَلُ
يَشْتَغَلُ

What

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

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

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
سوف س	غادي	ح ه	راح رح	راح رح

سوف أطبخ سأطبخ	غادي نطيو	حنطبخ هنطبخ	راح نطبخ	راح نطبخ
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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	Levantine	Gulf	Iraqi
You like/love	تُحِبُّ	كتحبُّ	بِتَحِبُّ	بِتَحِبُّ عم بِتَحِبُّ	بِتَحِبُّ	دِتَحِبُّ

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	أَسْكُنُ أَعِيشُ	ساكن (male) ساكنة (female) عايش (male) عايشة (female)