



RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

M.Ed. In TESL Program Language Group Specific Informational Reports

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

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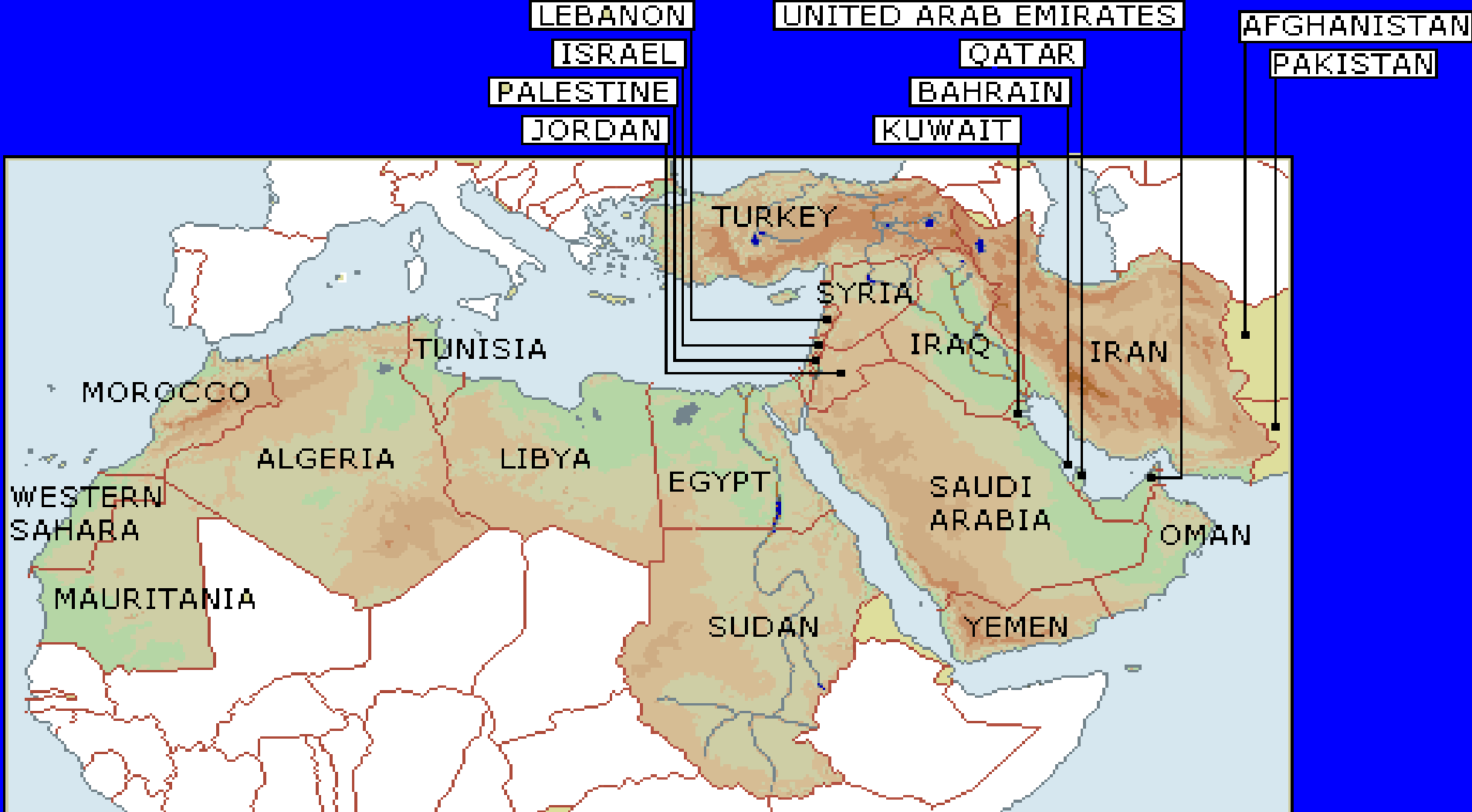
Arabic ESL Learners

Eileen S. Peduto

TESL 539

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العربية



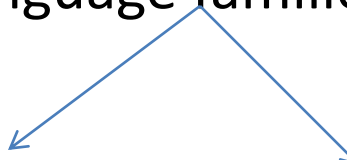
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العربية

(Arabic), the language of The Middle East

Arabic is the 6th most popular world language, with an estimated 186 million native speakers. Approximately 400,000,000 million people can speak some Arabic.

English and Arabic belong to two different
language families



Arabic is a member
of the Semitic
language family

English belongs to
the Indo-European
language family.

Very few words in English are borrowed
from Arabic (radar, helicopter, television)

**There is virtually no positive
transfer**

- Acceptable to speak loudly
- Loudness demonstrates sincerity and strength
- Speak rapidly and sit or stand close
- Gestures, intonations and facial expressions are important
- Look into the eyes of member of the same sex

- Highly values displays of emotion
- Listeners must be sensitive to underlying meaning
- Discourteous to say “no.” Instead use “perhaps” or “maybe”
- Often indirect answers using “Inshalla” (God willing)
- Use titles and last names in greetings

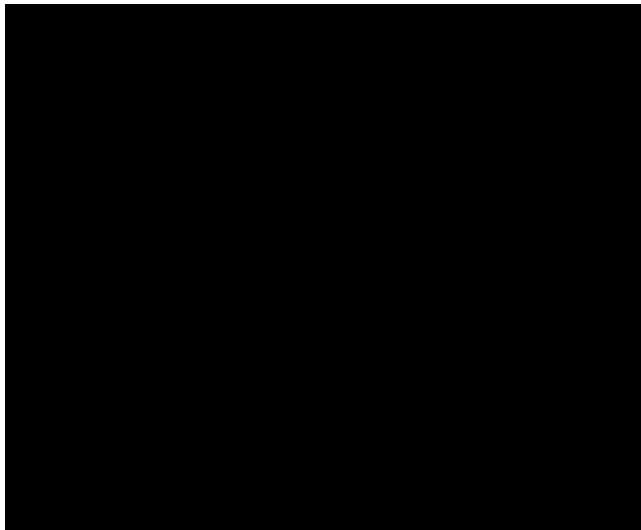
Middle Eastern Communication Styles

Arabic Customs

- No concept of privacy
- Some groups don't talk much during mealtime.
- Important character traits:
Generosity, bravery, friendship and hospitality
- Religion is very important
- Arrive late for meetings with no apologies
- Don't stretch one's legs or cross one's legs
- In some countries like Kuwait, birthday aren't celebrated
- Arab society is very conservative and demands conformity
- Clothing restrictions for women
- Shake hands with the right hand
- May not be appropriate for female professionals to shake hands with males

Differences in Phonology

- 22 vowels and diphthongs



- Only eight vowels and diphthongs to 32 consonants.
- Long vowels can play the role of a consonant in a word
- The 3 short vowels have very little importance, they aren't even written in script.
- The consonants, long vowels and diphthongs provide meaning.
- Vowel diacritics to mark short
- vowels appear only in the Koran

Most Confusing English Phonemes (Vowels)

/ɪ/

/e/

Often confused: bit for bet

/ɒ/

/ɔ:/

Often confused: cot for caught

/eɪ/

/əʊ/

Usually pronounce short, and
confused with:

/e/

/ɒ/

Red for raid, hop for hope

Problem Causing English Phonemes

/p/

- “I baid ten hence for a bicture of Pig Pen.”

/v/

- /v/ and /f/ are allophonic, and are usually pronounced as /f/
“It is a ferry nice fillage.”

/z/

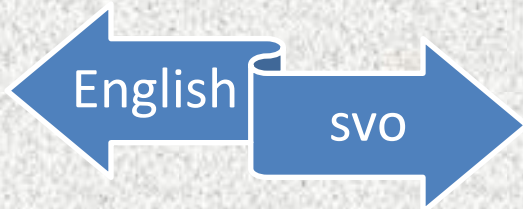
/ŋ/

- Pronounced as /n/ or/ŋg/ /nk/

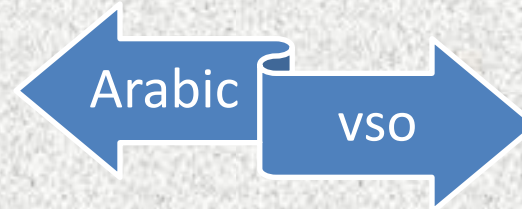
/ɾ/

- Is a voiced flap, very unlike the RP /r/. Commonly overpronounce “r, as in car park.”

Differences in Syntax and Morphology



Yesterday, the minister decided to visit the school.



“Decided the minister yesterday to visit the school.”

- Words are written in lowercase cursive from right to left
- Most letters change depending on where they appear in a word
- Initial 3 segment clusters don't occur (spr, str)
- Arabic spelling is simple and phonetic
- It is a stressed time language that is predictable and regular

A Closer Look at Areas of Difficulty for Arabic ELL's

Many more prepositions including “of, by and at” which don’t occur in Arabic

In writing, difficulty with verb formation, tense and subject-verb agreement.

Letters with ‘mirror’ shapes (p and q; d and b”) are often misread

Nouns, verbs, and adjectives don’t follow patterns, the basis of Arabic is a 3 letter root system.

The words “do” and “to be” don’t exist in Arabic and are often left out by Arabic students

Explanations of Common Errors of Arabic ELL's

I can that I go. Does he can
do that? Yes, he cans do that.

➤ No Modal verbs in Arabic

I prefer (that) I work to (that) I
play.

➤ No Gerund Form in Arabic

I want (that) I go out.

➤ No infinitive form in Arabic

This is book.

➤ No indefinite article in
Arabic

He (is) man tall.

➤ Adjectives follow their
nouns in Arabic

Explanation of Common Errors of Arabic ELL

- ❖ I have many book.
 - ❖ This book is to me/for me
 - ❖ I search my keys.
 - ❖ It appears a horse in that field.
- Plurals in Arabic are often formed by internal patterns, like (mouse-mice)
 - Arabic has fixed prepositions and participles
 - There are no phrasal verbs in Arabic.
 - The expression (is/are) are expressed by the preposition “fee (in)” but isn’t carried over to English.

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Maps

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