

DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

An *Introduction to Moroccan Arabic and Culture* (IMAC) is a book designed to enable learners to communicate more effectively in Moroccan Arabic (MA) through the use of multimedia content-based material. The book presents the basic structures of the Arabic language and demonstrates MA through situations. Learners reinforce the information with question-and-answer practice and oral drills. The purpose is to help students go beyond the mastery of these structures so they can use them to communicate meaning in real situations. The learners need to acquire a general communicative ability that will enable them to cope with everyday life. This book's main approach focuses on training people in speaking and listening skills because MA is rarely written and never used in formal communication, but is used extensively in conversation.

This program will be effective for beginning students of Arabic who are simultaneously learning Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). It will also be useful for students and linguists who have studied MSA for at least a year and want to learn some functional Moroccan Arabic (MA). The book assumes prior or concurrently gained knowledge of the Arabic alphabet.

The multimedia, content-based material allows learners to hear the Moroccan pronunciation and to apply it in the interactive exercises that correspond to each chapter. However, the learners will need to rely on the book in order to produce the exchanges prompted in each chapter, because the book contains the core sections

such as grammar, role play, and phonetic transliteration (in early chapters). The electronic application offers a user-friendly interface with drop-down menus for a one- or two-click navigation experience.

This book may be used in either self-directed study or as the basis of work in a conventional classroom. Its objective is to allow learners to interact with native speakers with ease. By the time learners have completed this book “*in šaa’a llaah*” [إن شاء الله], they should be able, among other things, to:

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| • Greet people | • Introduce themselves and others |
| • Ask and reply to simple questions | • Use numbers and days in context |
| • Order food | • Make appointments and reservations |
| • Talk about future plans | • Shop |
| • Give directions | • Use common idiomatic expressions |

The materials are designed to cover approximately 120 contact hours, and will demand 180 to 240 hours of preparation outside class. A novice student should reach the intermediate midlevel by the end of the course.

CHAPTER FORMAT

Each chapter covers the following components: Cultural Introduction, Listening Comprehension, Oral Role Play (Oral Practice), Grammar, and Additional Materials.

The IMAC interactive component focuses on the cultural and listening material and offers a quick and reliable way to memorize vocabulary words and that students can reinforce with the question-and-answer exercises. A chapter is composed of the following subsections:

INTRODUCTION

The cultural introduction videos provide the learner with a cultural introduction to the chapter. This component reflects some social, religious, or cultural aspects of Moroccan society and is designed “to develop the learner’s ability to produce culturally appropriate forms.”¹ Culture-specific or cross-cultural aspects that are of relevance to the learners in their new environment are incorporated in all stages of instruction and practice. The introduction to culture minimizes the likelihood of cultural misunderstanding. To cover these subjects in an efficient way, this section uses multimedia so students hear and view the content simultaneously.

The student can watch the videos and listen to the audios on culture at home, or the class can watch them together and discuss what they see. One video, the “Fantasia” episode, is intended to be used in class with the teacher’s guidance.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

This section presents the main goals for learners during the chapter.

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Learners should remember that practicing the listening skills makes them good listeners.² The recorded material avoids localisms in order to be fully comprehensible in other parts of the Arab world, and especially in the Arab Maghreb المغرب العربي (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya,

and Mauritania). These materials aim to enhance learners’ listening skills at the level of discriminating between sounds (e.g., ح and ع, خ and غ) and understanding word structures, sentences, and global messages.

This component consists of three texts (dialogue and narration), each one composed of five parts:

1. **Vocabulary:** This section gives learners a table of the new vocabulary in the dialogue or text. The English translations given are context specific. Some words may have different meanings in other contexts. In this section learners are able to hear the Arabic words at their own pace and see how words are written in Arabic script. In earlier chapters transliteration is provided along with the Arabic script.
2. **Listening exercises:** This section includes several drills for the classroom and beyond. The “find out” exercise helps students activate and personalize new vocabulary by interviewing their classmates in MA. The fill-in-the-blank exercise before each listening comprehension intends to help students produce the new vocabulary in different contexts. The last fill-in-the-blank exercise in the three texts is meant to review the vocabulary with a drag-and-drop exercise in the interactive component, and by listening and filling in the blanks in the textbook.

Class time should not be spent on introducing new vocabulary, but rather on practicing and activating it through interactive activities.

3. **Questions:** These are related to the dialogue or text. Learners have to listen to the questions and pay particular attention to how questions are structured.
4. **Dialogues and texts:** These exercises are an excellent opportunity for learners to rebuild the conversation by listening and filling in the blanks in the dialogue or the text (in the book) or by dragging the missing words to their correct place in the conversation (in the interactive component).
5. **Oral role play or practice:** Speaking is the most difficult skill for most learners; however, they are encouraged to listen carefully, imitate what they hear, and practice with a partner or in small groups. Oral role plays are task oriented; the classroom becomes an opportunity to practice everyday situations and an opportunity for learners to get comfortable speaking with native speakers in real conversations.

GRAMMAR

The grammatical part of this book is designed to help the learner understand and communicate accurately and appropriately in spoken Arabic. It helps learners understand how native speakers structure their speech so they may eventually speak accurately on their own.

It is recommended that students prepare the grammar before coming to class by reading the explanation and completing the written drills. Class time should be reserved for working with the grammar rather than explaining it.³

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

This section aims to provide additional meaningful cultural material to reinforce

what students are learning in other sections of the chapter.

INTERACTIVE MATERIAL

The interactive material has two main components: Moroccan Arabic and Culture.

1. Moroccan Arabic

This component consists of giving learners information about the sociolinguistic situation of Morocco, Moroccans' perception of their language, and the use of Arabic in the religious context.

a. Letters and Sounds

This part introduces letters and sounds. Learners should pay particular attention to these sounds by differentiating them from close sounds (in terms of place of articulation) and by producing them correctly.

b. Chapters

This section consists of 14 chapters, each of which is devoted to listening, speaking, grammar, and culture. The book reinforces the basic building blocks of vocabulary and grammar through written drills and oral activities. Many exercises in each chapter, such as studying vocabulary and doing listening comprehension activities, should be required as homework in order to leave time for in-class practice.

2. Culture

a. Map

Learners will find in the map:

- Basic information about towns (population, administrative region, zip code)
- Distance between cities. The learner clicks on the city from which he or she starts the trip and on the city of destination; the distance is provided in kilometers.

b. Moroccan History

This part of the culture provides learners with a number of lectures on different periods in the history of Morocco, starting with the pre-Islamic period, to Berber and Arab dynasties (from the 8th to the 16th century, and from the mid-16th to the 20th century, respectively). It also provides history on the Moroccan colonial period and information on contemporary Morocco.

c. Very Important Facts (VIFs)

This component provides facts that learners need in their daily life (e.g., Moroccan currency, important and emergency phone numbers, how to make a phone call, secular holidays, and a tool to convert miles to kilometers and kilometers to miles).

d. Culture

This section presents more than 107 minutes of video and audio lectures. It consists of 26 videos and 3 audio lectures. Lectures expose learners to different components of Moroccan culture. Topics include family, tea, food, religious practice, religious education, the mosque, the public bath, the concept of Medina, shopping, Ramadan, transportation, weddings, and women's clothing. The music component consists of a selection of video clips of Moroccan musical performances. Learners can select the city on the map to hear the music that its region is famous for. Learners have a choice of 10 musical selections.

ARABIC ORTHOGRAPHY VS. TRANSLITERATION

Most writings in MA are either transliterated into Latin characters (Harrell series, 1965),⁴ (Abdel-Massih, 1973),⁵ transliterated into Arabic characters (phrasebooks, plays, *melḥuun* poems,⁶ driving li-

cense reading packs) or written in Arabic orthography, taking into consideration the specificities of MA.

As MA and MSA share most vocabulary, this book adopts the Arabic orthography with certain flexibility and takes into account the specificities of MA. (These are explained in the section “Letters and Sounds.”) The reasons behind this choice are as follows:

1. MSA and MA will always coexist in Morocco, and thus it is logical to facilitate the learning of MSA through MA and vice-versa (as is true for all local languages in the Arab world);
2. the Arabic orthography reflects MA's origin, which is predominantly the Arabic (Classical Arabic) language;
3. MA should be easy to classify on the basis of its appearance as belonging to a particular world language family, that of Semitic languages (derivational language, nonvocalized vs. vocalized texts);
4. an “orthographic bridge” will help avoid the confusion that might result for MA monolinguals as well as for bilinguals from the use of two different systems for languages that share many similarities⁷; and
5. the Arabic orthography conventions should be used to represent sounds that are similar in MA and MSA.

By adopting the Arabic orthography, IMAC also limits the vocalization (adding vowels to words) to a few examples. The objective behind this choice is that signs and names of places typically found in public or in newspapers are not

vocalized. Therefore, students should be accustomed to studying words without vowels.

The IMAC book does not focus on learning the Arabic alphabet in depth because it assumes that the student already knows it or is in the process of learning it elsewhere. IMAC's objective is to give learners a written version of what is oral, because the colloquial language is not written, except in poetry *زجل* "zajal", plays, and other literary works. Most writing is in *فصحى* "fuṣṣḥaa" (MSA). The introduction of the Arabic alphabet is meant to help learners read signs, names, and places. Vocabulary, questions, and texts are introduced in both transliteration and Arabic script. The Arabic script will replace the transliteration starting in chapter 4. We adopted the phonetic alphabet, but we introduced uvular and pharyngeal letters such as ح and ع, خ and غ in transliteration in order to make learners pay particular attention to their pronunciation when they read them.

By targeting the educated forms, this course not only avoids forms of the language that would be strongly marked regionally, but also paves the way for learners who would like to learn the forms of the classical language at a later stage; or who wish to delve into the subtleties of the regional or socioprofessional varieties of MA.

I hope this course will help learners achieve their personal language goals.

NOTES

- 1 A. Elgibali and Z. Taha, "Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language: Challenges of the Nineties," in *The Teaching of Arabic as a Foreign Language, Issues and Directions*, ed. M. Al-Batal, vol. 2 *Al-Arabiyya Monograph* (1995), 79–102.
- 2 N. Auty, R. Harris, and C. Holes, *Just Listen 'n Learn Arabic. The Basic Course for Succeeding in Arabic and Communicating with Confidence*, ed. Brian Hill (Lincolnwood, IL: Passport Books, 1992), 1–2.
- 3 K. Brustad, M. Al-Batal, and A. Al-Tonsi, *Al-Kitaab fii ta'allum al-ʿarabiyya*, 2nd ed. (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), xii.
- 4 R. S. Harrell, *A Short Reference Grammar of Moroccan Arabic* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1962); R. S. Harrell, *A Dictionary of Moroccan Arabic: Moroccan-English* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1966).
- 5 E. T. Abdel-Massih, *An Introduction to Moroccan Arabic* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973).
- 6 M. El Faasii, *maclamat al-malHuun, 'akaa-diimiyat al-mamlaka l-magribiyya*, (Rabat, 1986).
- 7 B. B. Schieffelin and R. C. Doucet, "About the Debate Concerning the Orthography System to Adopt for Haitian Creole" (1998), 299; B. B. Schieffelin and R. C. Doucet, "The 'Real' Haitian Creole, Ideology, Metalinguistics, and Orthographic Choice," in *Language Ideologies, Practice and Theory*, ed. B. B. Schieffelin, K. A. Woolar, and P. V. Kroskitty (Oxford University Press, 1998), 285–316. This program may be used by beginning students of Arabic who are simultaneously learning Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). It also should be useful for students and linguists who have studied MSA for at least a year and want to learn some functional Moroccan Arabic. It assumes prior or concurrently gained knowledge of the Arabic alphabet.