

LANGUAGE FACTSHEET

Arabic

Arabic is the official language in 23 countries.



There is a wide range of dialects, which can make it hard for Arabic speakers to understand each other, especially the further apart they are geographically.



'Fusha' is the written (classical) form of Arabic and is used in media, newspapers, literature and other formal settings. The syntax and grammar are complex.



'Amiyya' is the spoken (colloquial) form of Arabic used in normal conversation and varies from country to country or even town to town. The grammar is flexible and its vocabulary is constantly evolving.



Some Arabic dialects are influenced by other languages spoken locally. For example, Moroccan Arabic is influenced by Berber and French.

Tips



Make sure you know which Arabic dialect your audience uses.



Consider using pictures, graphics, and simple text to help break down language barriers.



Make sure the translator/interpreter uses the appropriate Arabic dialect.

Digging deeper into Arabic...

Where is Arabic spoken?

Arabic is the official language in 25 countries and territories, from North Africa to the Persian Gulf:

Algeria, Bahrain, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Western Sahara, and Yemen.

Differences between dialects

Arabic is a dialect-rich language often with significant variations in pronunciation and vocabulary.

Arabic speakers from areas geographically close to each other are more likely to speak similar dialects than those from more distant countries. For example, it might be difficult for an Arabic speaker from Kuwait to understand an Arabic speaker from Morocco.

Arabic dialects are sometimes influenced by other languages spoken in a certain area. Moroccan Arabic is influenced by Berber and French, for instance.

Written and spoken forms

Standard or Classical Arabic – **Fusha** – is the distinct form of the language used in writing, media, and other formal settings. It is characterized by its complex syntax and grammar. Those who read in Arabic will be able to read the same text regardless of where they come from.

Amiyya is spoken Arabic. It has many forms that are used in ordinary conversation, and varies from country to country, and even from town to town. Its grammar is flexible and its vocabulary is constantly evolving. Arabic speakers may have difficulty communicating with each other verbally unless they share a dialect.

How TWB can help

- Arabic translations through teams of professionally trained translators (working remotely).
- Online testing of Arabic language skills to aid the recruitment of multilingual staff.
- Open-access and tailor-made training for interpreters, translators and cultural mediators.
- Practical tools, online glossaries and good practice guides for interpreters and translators available at www.translatorswithoutborders.org.