

Teaching Morphology: Introducing the Right Thing at the Right Time in the Right Amount

My experience teaching Arabic has taught me that the most effective and efficient method is to begin with morphology. But even in morphology, the question remains as to what to teach first and what to teach last.

Unfortunately, many morphology and grammar books available today fail to teach it in a way that produces results efficiently and effectively. Consequently, many student-teacher hours are wasted.

In an attempt to solve this inherently difficult problem, I have rearranged the topics to make it easier for the student as well as the teacher. The particular ordering of the chapters in Level One and the series in general may not be familiar to many teachers. It is the result of years of trial-and-error teaching experience. By adapting this unique order, I hope to have developed an effective and efficient method for systematically imparting knowledge, developing skills, and making both learning and teaching easier and enjoyable. Furthermore, I have made an attempt to keep the overall organization as logical as possible by minimizing circular dependencies.

I do not claim to have perfectly done the job, and remain open to any comments and suggestions to improve the book in any manner whatsoever. All comments and suggestions may be sent to QL@QuranicLinguistics.com

The table provided on the next two pages summarizes the order in which morphology will be taught in this book. The teacher is highly recommended to take advantage of this tried and tested method by sticking to the order of units and lessons as presented in the book.

An 11-Step Approach to Teaching Arabic Morphology to Beginners

Step	What to teach	Reasons & Benefits
1	الضمائر وأسماء الإشارة	Pronouns and pointing nouns play an important role in the Arabic language. They affect understanding of the word, the sentence, and over all meaning. All of the three word types (verbs, nouns, and particles) mingle with pronouns and pointing nouns. Just about every page of the Quran has them. The good news is that they are relatively simpler and don't require a lot of technical background. The bad news is that, because Arabic has many different types and usages for them, pronouns and pointing nouns may confuse the beginner. It is absolutely necessary that they be mastered early on because understanding of most, if not all, subsequent material will depend on them. Therefore, it is best place to begin one's study.

2	المفرد والمثنى والجمع	Arabic employs three different forms for the number: singular, dual and plural. These too can cause a lot of confusion for beginners. Like pronouns, these need to be mastered early on because most of the morphology and grammar concepts that will be introduced in subsequent units require this knowledge as a necessary prerequisite.
3	تصريف الاسم مع الضمائر	Once the student is comfortable with Arabic pronouns and the pointing nouns, she may begin to practice conjugating them in the context of singular, dual, and plural nouns. This not only shows how meaning is affected, but also introduces the simple nominal sentence structure consisting of the subject and the predicate.
4	أنواع الجمع	<p>The three major types of plurals in Arabic are used frequently and therefore require special attention. The good news is that they are relatively easier to learn and master.</p> <p>Note: For steps 1 through 4, it is highly recommended that the teacher NOT use any technical terms except for those already used. At this stage, it's best to focus on conjugation, meaning, and vocabulary instead of grammar jargon. Introducing technical grammar concepts at this stage can overwhelm the student. All technical terms are introduced gradually throughout level one on a need to know basis.</p>
5	أنواع الكلمة	After grasping the basics of noun conjugation with pronouns, the student is ready to study the three word types (aka parts of speech): nouns, verbs, and particles. This is covered in Unit 2 of Level One.
6	تصريف الفعل مع الضمائر	<p>If a beginner is asked about the most confusing topic, she would most probably say it is verb conjugation.</p> <p>Verb conjugation is one of the key concepts in Arabic. To facilitate it's learning, I have developed a simple and efficient color coded scheme as explained in <i>How To Explain The Color Coded Tables in Class</i>, on page 44 of this guide.</p> <p>Using the color scheme in the way suggested above, basic verb conjugation can be learned and mastered quickly. Once the basic tri-literals have been mastered, advanced verb conjugation becomes relatively easier to learn and master.</p>

7	المصدر وكان	<p>Before going into the advanced forms, it is worthwhile to study the infinitive from the perspective of حدث and زمن. If taught correctly, these two simple but powerful concepts solve a lot of “mysteries” in the mind of the student. The Infinitive indicates حدث, not زمن, while <i>kana</i> only indicates زمن, not حدث. So, in this sense, the infinitive and the <i>Kana</i> are “opposites”. If the students can fully grasp this key difference then the rest becomes a little easier to comprehend, God willing.</p>
8	المشتقات	<p>Once the foundational concepts of the infinitive and <i>kana</i> in terms of حدث and زمن have been mastered, the student becomes ready to take it one step further: derivation. This simple yet powerful feature of the Arabic language empowers the student to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Systematically acquire and expand vocabulary (this solves one of the major challenges in language acquisition) 2. Guess the meanings of unfamiliar words. 3. Understand the deeper meanings by extending the concept of حدث to derivatives.
9	تركيب الجملة والإعراب	<p>Having gone through the basics of morphology (Units 1 through 3), the student is now ready to appreciate the fundamentals of syntax and inflection. Even though this topic is not technically part of morphology, it is appropriate to teach it at this point.</p>
10	تصريف مزيد الثلاثي وأوزانه	<p>After successfully completing the basics of morphology, syntax, and inflection, the student becomes ready to get into the advanced forms (aka “the 10-forms”) and the associated morphological semantics. If all previous material has been properly understood and practiced, then she should not have much difficulty grasping these patterns <i>in sha Allah</i>. The challenge here is to memorize the patterns and apply them. Many helpful tips are included in Unit-by-unit Guide beginning on page 33 of this guide.</p>
11	الأسماء والأفعال المعتلة	<p>Weak lettered nouns and verbs often cause confusion especially when identifying the word types, patterns, and conjugation. These should be covered last because understanding them depends on understanding the strong lettered nouns and verbs patterns first.</p>