

THE PHONETIC ENVIRONMENT
AS THE DETERMINER OF THE ALLOMORPHIC FORMS
OF *THE* IN STANDARD ARABIC

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The definite article 'the' in Standard Arabic is a bound morpheme, which, for reference purposes only, may be represented as /{ʔal}/ —. This bound morpheme has four allomorphs, the phonetic (and phonemic) forms of which are determined directly by their phonetic environment. And since no utterance in Standard Arabic can begin with a vowel (if no other consonant appears in utterance initial position, the glottal stop will appear there), the phonetic environment determining the phonetic (and phonemic) form of the definite article allomorph in initial position is always the particular consonant following it. In utterance medial position, however, the form of the allomorph, in addition, is characterized by the elimination of the glottal stop because of liaisoning.

In Standard Arabic, there are thirty consonants. See Table 1. Out of the thirty consonant phonemes, thirteen (namely, the bilabial, labio-dental, palatal, velar, uvular, pharyngeal, and glottal consonants) clearly take one of the

TABLE 1

| Type of Articulation | | Point of Articulation | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------|--------------|----------|-----------|---------------|---------|--------|--------|------------|---------|
| | | Bilabial | Labio-dental | Dental | Inter-dental | Alveolar | Velarized | Alveo-palatal | Palatal | Velar | Uvular | Pharyngeal | Glottal |
| Stops | vl. vd. | | | t d | | | ʈ ɖ | | | k q | | | ʔ |
| Fricatives | vl. vd. | b | f | | θ ð | s z | ʃ ʒ | ç ʝ | | x ɣ | | ħ ʕ | h |
| Nasals | vd. | m | | | | n | | | | | | | |
| Leterals | vd. | | | | | l | ɭ | | | | | | |
| Vibrants | vd. | | | | | r | ɾ | | | | | | |
| Semi-vowels | vd. | w | | | | | | | y | | | | |

TABLE 2

| Consonant | Initial Position | Medial Position |
|-----------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| /b/ | /ʔalbaab/ 'the door' | /mina-lbaab/ 'from the door' |
| /m/ | /ʔalmaʔ/ 'the water' | /bilmaaʔ/ 'in the water' |
| /w/ | /ʔalwaraq/ 'the paper' | /ʔala-lwaraq/ 'on the paper' |
| /f/ | /ʔalfard/ 'the individual' | /mina-lfard/ 'from the individual' |
| /y/ | /ʔalyawm/ 'the day' | /ðaalika-lyawm/ 'that day' |
| /k/ | /ʔalkiis/ 'the bag' | /haaða-lkiis/ 'this bag' |
| /x/ | /ʔalxaruuf/ 'the sheep' | /ʔuufu-lxaruuf/ 'the sheep's wool' |
| /g/ | /ʔalgariib/ 'the stranger' | /mina-lgariib/ 'from the stranger' |
| /q/ | /ʔalqaanuun/ 'the law' | /bi-lqaanuun/ 'in the law' |
| /ħ/ | /ʔalħuut/ 'the whale' | /ʔaynu-lħuut/ 'the whale's eye' |
| /ʕ/ | /ʔalʕayn/ 'the eye' | /bi-lʕayn/ 'in the eye' |
| /ʔ/ | /ʔalʔumm/ 'the mother' | /ħubbu-lʔumm/ 'the mother's love' |
| /h/ | /ʔalhawaaʔ/ 'the air' | /fi-lhawaaʔ/ 'in the air' |

following allomorphic forms of the definite article: /{ʔal}/ — in utterance initial position or — /{1}/ — in utterance medial position. Thus, see Table 2.

It is noteworthy that the /l/ of the definite article is pronounced with the consonants that are less contiguous to the /l/ itself in point of articulation.

With sixteen consonants (namely, the dental, inter-dental, alveolar, velarized, and one of the alveo-palatal sounds), the definite article is assimilated and takes one of the following allomorphic forms: /{a#:}/ — in utterance initial position or — /{#:}/ — in utterance medial position. Thus, see Table 3.

TABLE 3

| Consonant | Initial Position | Medial Position |
|-----------|----------------------------|--|
| t | /ʔattaaʔ/ 'the crown' | /ʔala-ttaaʔ/ 'on the crown' |
| d | /ʔaddars/ 'the lesson' | /mina-ddars/ 'from the lesson' |
| θ | /ʔaθθulθ/ 'the third' | /haaða-θθulθ/ 'this third' |
| ð | /ʔaððanab/ 'the tail' | /ʔala-ððanab/ 'on the tail' |
| s | /ʔassamaaʔ/ 'the sky' | /fi-ssamaaʔ/ 'in the sky' |
| z | /ʔazzuhuur/ 'the flowers' | /lawnu-zzuhuur/ 'the color of the flowers' |
| n | /ʔannaas/ 'the people' | /mina-nnaas/ 'from the people' |
| l | /ʔallayl/ 'the night' | /bi-llayl/ 'in the night' |
| r | /ʔarraʔul/ 'the man' | /qaala-rraʔul/ 'the man said' |
| t̪ | /ʔaʔʔayʔ/ 'the bird' | /haaða-ʔʔayʔ/ 'this bird' |
| d̪ | /ʔaɖɖayʕa/ 'the village' | /ʔila-ɖɖayʕa/ 'to the village' |
| ʃ | /ʔaʃʃayyaad/ 'the hunter' | /ʔila-ʃʃayyaad/ 'to the hunter' |
| ð̪ | /ʔaððalaam/ 'the darkness' | /fi-ððalaam/ 'the in darkness' |
| l̪ | /ʔall̪iʃʃ/ 'the thief' | /mina-l̪iʃʃ/ 'from the thief' |
| ʔ̪ | /ʔaʔʔaʃʃa/ 'the dance' | /haaðhi-ʔʔaʃʃa/ 'this dance' |
| ʃ̪ | /ʔaʃʃams/ 'the sun' | /fi-ʃʃams/ 'in the sun' |

It is noteworthy that the /l/ of the definite article is assimilated with the consonants that are more contiguous to the /l/ itself in point of articulation.

This leaves one consonant (namely, /ʒ/) which, according to the above analysis, should fall with the second (assimilated) group. Actually, this is how native speakers TEND to pronounce the definite article with /ʒ/: /ʔaʒʒamal/ 'the camel'; /ʔala-ʒʒamal/ 'on the camel'. However, Arabic teachers and authors of grammar books have for years insisted on including /ʒ/ with the first group. More research is needed to determine the historical reasons for this insistence.

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DISCUSSION

HAUDRICOURT (Paris)

Le *z* est un ancien *dʒ < g*' donc autrefois avec les consonnes de la première catégorie.

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This COULD explain the exception from a historical point of view.