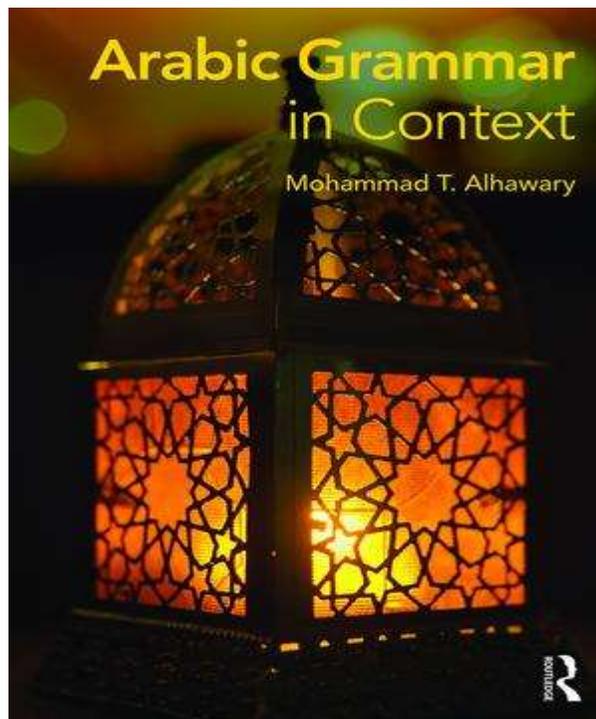


Book Review

Arabic Grammar in Context: Languages in Context



Author: Mohammad T. Alhawary

Title of the Book: Arabic Grammar in Context. Languages in Context.

Year of Publication: 2016.

Publisher: London & New York: Routledge

Number of Pages: xi + 276 pp.

Reviewer: Yahya Kharrat, Western University, London, Ontario, Canada.

The teacher of Arabic as a second language, confronted with an ever-increasing demand for Arabic studies in western universities and institutions, finds at his or her disposal a veritable wealth of printed academic resources to assist in advancing personal academic qualifications and in developing teaching curricula. Alhawary's book, *Arabic Grammar in Context*, appears amongst these resources. The author is an accomplished academic with extensive experience in linguistics and the acquisition of languages. His book presents us with a welcome new offering in this field of study.

The introduction of the book gives clear expression to the essentials of teaching the rules of grammar, a teaching which if presented to a class only in theory remains beyond the

comprehension of the students if not given along with practical applications. The practical applications supplied by this book include extensive use of examples that illustrate these different rules. These are then followed by written exercises that reinforce the rules.

The author takes great care to present examples of well-known styles taken from excerpts of famous as well as less well-known texts. These form a required part of each of his 22 lessons that contain the fundamental rules of Arabic grammar that all students at the upper-intermediate and advanced levels need in order to master the essentials of Arabic grammar. The acquisition of these grammar rules thus occurs through the examination of actual texts rather than simply through studying summaries of grammatical rules and theoretical formulations. The lessons deal with the most commonly encountered grammatical rules of which the student of Arabic as second language must have firm grasp. The author proceeds by presenting the lessons in a consistent manner, taking great care to extract from the texts, along with other examples, those relevant passages which serve to illustrate the rule in question.

The author also takes care to add the correct textual vocalization of each word (through diacritical marks) and makes it possible to double-check the accuracy in detail. Rarely does the reader encounter any errors in the text, including the examination of each word letter by letter. Some diacritical marks in the examples, such as those found on page 93, are left without the correct vocalizations as an exercise, in order to allow the student to apply the correct declensions.

Alhawary addresses the importance of the methodology of trial and error when introducing rules of grammar in his lessons. Students are encouraged to learn by experiencing with their own ears and eyes the sounds and appearance of incorrect grammatical usage and by applying their knowledge to correct the errors such as exercise 3, page 43. Theoretical rules are thus transformed into practical experiences of incorrect, then correct and precise linguistic usage. By virtue of this method the teacher of Arabic as a second language stimulates the intellect of the students through these lessons, reinforcing correct usage and avoiding by example and experimentation many common mistakes and shortcomings.

Exercises in the practice and application of the grammatical cases i.e. nominative, accusative, genitive (well known to Latin students as declensions), are not highlighted. Such exercises, in my opinion, are a fundamental necessity for fully understanding the theoretical grammatical rules presented in the lessons. I expect there will be ample opportunity in forthcoming editions of the book to include such practical exercises. These are especially useful, for instance, in the study of verb tenses, attached pronouns, case indicators (declensions) and the truncation of soft letters in defective verb forms etc. Unless accompanied with practical exercises the student will be unable to acquire an adequate proficiency in the application and understanding of these declensions.

As teachers of Arabic grammar, it is in our interest to familiarize our students with the rules of declensions. We encourage the students to proceed in proficiency by practicing their understanding of declensions by forming many written and auditory examples and exercises in Arabic. Furthermore, we encourage students to apply their learning, in addition to their classroom lessons, to real life examples outside the classroom, by remembering and reviewing

these rules in the selection of prose, poems and essays encountered in their studies. These studies effectively become practical exercises for students, helping them familiarize themselves with the material while working on other texts and passages.

The author has produced fine work in his comparative table highlighting the grammatical differences between special cases of nouns and adjectives and regular verbs, with examples given in the Arabic text. The comparative presentation illustrates the differences between the two groups. This comparative approach is extremely helpful to those studying Arabic grammar. This illustrates the analogous grammatical structures between 'Kana' and 'Inna', page 39, for example. In the exercises the author relies heavily on the practice of filling in the blank in a partial sentence by having students choose a word from a selection of possible choices. This method helps to stimulate the students' thinking by challenging them to choose the appropriate word from the list of possibilities.

The amount of space dedicated to the subject of morphology is limited. We would hope that subsequent editions of the book will give this subject the attention it deserves. There are in fact plenty of opportunities in the Arabic vocabulary for further study of these grammatical forms. For instance, we have in the sample texts provided by the author significant examples of active and passive participles, nouns of time and place, the relative adjective, verbal nouns and verb patterns. All of these morphological rules should be taught in order to stimulate the students' minds, in addition to providing the vocal declensions that form part of the usual grammar lessons.

The author completes his book by including a number of lengthy texts written on page 178 in order to review the rules that have been studied. This review helps students to better understand the rules they have learned in the preceding chapters. The end of the book also contains a helpful glossary of new terms used in the texts, along with their translations organized in alphabetic order.

Alhawary's book, Arabic Grammar in Context, offers a valuable supplement to the collection of academic texts available to the student learning Arabic as a second language. This is especially true given that the reviews of the subject matter in the book is distinguished by error-free formatting and printing, whether in the Arabic or the English. Furthermore, the book contains practical teaching methods that the author has accumulated over many years of practical instructional experience. We look forward to the next edition.

About the Reviewer:

Yahya Kharrat is an Assistant Professor of Arabic at Western University in London, Ontario, Canada. He holds a PhD in applied linguistics and an MA in language teaching methodology from the University of Kansas. Dr. Kharrat has taught a wide range of language courses for non-native speakers as well as heritage speakers. His areas of interest include Arabic literature, applied linguistics, and pedagogy of Arabic as a second language.