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## Comparing English and Arabic Consonants

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### Abstract:

In this short article, I will apply R. Whitman's procedures to deal with this issue in a contrastive analysis way. A learned person may make predictions about difficulties Arabs, who learn English, will face. This short paper will address the domain of consonants.

**Keywords:** Consonant, English, Whitman, Arabic

### 1. Comparing English & Arabic Consonants

At the beginning, it is a good idea to draw a couple of "charts"; one for English and the other for Arabic.

	Bi-labial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops vls vd	p b			t d		k g	
Fricatives vls vd		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ		h
Affricates vls vd					tʃ dʒ		
Nasals	m			n		ŋ	
Laterals				l			
Glides	w			r	y		

Table 1: English Consonants

	Bi-labial	Labio-dental	Dental	Dental Velarized	Alveolar Velarized	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Laryngeal (Glottal)
Stops vls vd	بب		تت د		ط ظ			كك (g)ق	(q)ق		ء
Fricatives vls vd		ف	ث ذ	ظ	ص ض	س ز	ش ج	خ غ		ح ع	ه
Affricates vls vd							dʒج				
Nasals	م		ن								
Laterals			ل								
Glides	و						ي				
Tap			ر								

Table 2: Arabic Consonants

By overlapping one "chart" onto the other, a researcher can get into the process of contrasting the two linguistic systems. The following points will make a general contrast between the two systems which may help both a native-Arabic speaker learning English and his/her teacher:

- English has the voiceless bi-labial stop /p/, the voiced labio-dental fricative /v/, the voiced palatal fricative /ʒ/, the voiceless palatal affricate /tʃ/<sup>1</sup>, and the velar nasal /ŋ/, but in Arabic we have no equivalents.
- English /t d n l r/ are alveolar as shown in the chart; the corresponding consonants in the Arabic language are dental.

<sup>1</sup> /tʃ/ is a phoneme in English, but it is an allophone of /k/ in some dialects of Arabic; it does not exist in standard Arabic.

- From an articulatory point, English /r/ and Arabic /r/ are of quite different nature; /r/ in English is “glide” whereas in Arabic it is “tap”.

After looking at the above description and charts, one could notice the level of difficulty in the following way:

0-LEVEL: A native-Arabic person, learning English, can transfer in a positive way certain phonemes /b k s z ʃ f θ ð dʒ m w y/ from Arabic to English. In addition, a learner can phonemically transfer /t d n l r/. Speakers of certain Arabic dialects can transfer /g/ and /tʃ/ as well.

- 1-LEVEL: There is no clear instance of “coalescence”.
- 2-LEVEL: From the charts above, one can notice many instances of absence; Arabic /ʔ ɖ ʒ ʂ q ʁ X ʕ ʔ/ don't exist in English at all.
- 3-LEVEL: in this level, English consonants /t d n l/ are alveolar when it comes to the place of articulation, and the Arabic speaker will have to relocate these consonants to be similar or at least close to his/her native language-dental.
- 4-LEVEL: English consonants /p g v ʒ tʃ ɲ/<sup>2</sup> are new to Arabic speakers; some might be traced in some dialects.
- 5-LEVEL: There is no clear instance of a “split”.

## 2. Conclusion

Considering the charts provided above, a teacher could be aware of some difficulties an Arabic speaker may face while learning English. Such knowledge will enable teachers to predict some solutions and to focus on handling the problems directly.

## 3. References

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<sup>2</sup> English /g ʒ tʃ/ are found in some dialects of Arabic.