

Arabic Fricative Consonants

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Abstract

Studying the phonology of any language is very interesting because it enables the learner of knowing how sounds are produced and articulated. It also gives the learner more information about the different sounds in every human language and how such sounds differ from each other in the one language and how they also differ from other sounds in other languages. The present study aims at studying the Arabic fricative consonants. There will be a description of these consonants to show how they are articulated. The study will also include some examples for each consonant.

Key Words: Arabic , fricative, sounds, phonology

0. Introduction.

Phonology is the study of sound patterns in language .It stands alongside syntax, morphology, and semantics as one of the major branches of linguistics. It is the kind of knowledge that the speakers have about the sound patterns of their particular language.

According to Hawkins (no date), phonology emphasizes the patterns of sounds to be found in any particular language (and in language generally), and the relationships between those sounds, rather than the description of the sounds in articulatory or auditory terms.

As O'Connor (1980) points out language starts with the ear. When a baby starts to talk, he does it by hearing the sounds his mother makes and imitating them. If a baby is born deaf, he can not hear these sounds and therefore can not imitate them and will not speak. He added that in all languages we speak with air from the lungs. We draw it into the lungs quickly and we release it slowly and then interfere with its passage in various ways and at various places.

Fromkin (1988) points out that phonological knowledge permits a speaker to produce sounds that form meaningful utterances, to recognize a foreign accent, to make up new words, to add appropriate phonetic segments to form plurals and past tenses, to produce aspirated and unaspirated voiceless stops in the appropriate context, to recognize what is or is not a sound in the language, and to know that different phonetic strings may represent the same " meaningful unit " .

Al-Sa'raan (no date) says that Arabic consonants have attracted the attention of many linguists because of their prominent importance in understanding Arabic particularly Arabic phonology. He adds that they are generally made by an interference of the vocal organs with the air stream, and so they are easier to be described and understood.

Bawazeer (1988) points that Arabic consonants are articulated from seventeen places. He adds that there are five positions for the articulation of these consonants, and in each position there are different places for the articulation of these consonants .

The five positions of articulation are the larynx which has one place of articulation, the pharynx which has three places of articulation , the tongue which has ten places where consonants are articulated, the lips which has two places for articulation , and the nose which has one place of articulation .

Al- Qudhah (1998) also affirms that these are the five positions for the articulation of the Arabic consonants He adds that they are known as the general positions of articulation in Arabic .

The present study aims at investigating the Arabic fricative consonants. To deal with Arabic fricatives, learners must first know how each consonant is distinguished from each other, and the characteristics of each Arabic fricative consonant so that they will not mislead when they learn how to pronounce Arabic .

1. Voiceless / Voiced

Arabic has eight voiceless and five voiced fricative consonants as the following

Voiceless / f /, / th /, / s /, / s /, / sh /, / kh /, / h /, / h /.

Voiced / th /, / z /, / z /, / gh /, / 9 /.

3. The Arabic Fricative Consonants

The following is a description of the Arabic fricative consonants.

3.1. Voiceless Fricatives

1. / f /.

The bottom lip is very close to the upper front teeth which forms the narrowing and when air is pushed through this narrowing, it causes slight friction and the soft palate is raised so that no air goes through the nose and it is all forced through the mouth. So the Arabic / f / is a voiceless labio-dental fricative consonant.

Examples

1. fayz / faiz / winner
2. fasl / fasl / class
3. sayf / saif / sword
4. rof / ruf / shelf
5. safeer / safi:r / ambassador

2. / th /.

It resembles the English consonant / th /. It is produced by having the soft palate raised so that all the breath is forced to go through the mouth. The tip of the tongue is close to the upper front teeth : this is the narrowing where friction is made . So the Arabic / th / is a voiceless interdental fricative consonant .

Examples

1. thani / thani/ second
2. thawm / thaum / garlic
3. mathal / mathal/ proverb
4. tha9lab / th9lab / fox
5. thawr / thawr / bull

3. / s /.

The soft palate is raised so that all the breath is forced to go through the mouth. The lip and blade of the tongue are very close to the alveolar ridge. There is a very considerable narrowing at this point , not near the teeth and not near the hard palate. The teeth are very close. So the Arabic / s / is a voiceless alveolar fricative consonant .

Examples

1. sukkar / sukkar / sugar
2. sihr / siher / magic
3. sibaq / sibaaq / race
4. sitar / sitaar / cover
5. sahab / sahaab / cloud

4. / s /.

This Arabic fricative consonant is produced in the same way in which the Arabic fricative consonant / s / is produced but with a little difference in which the / s / is a velarized one . So the Arabic / s / is a voiceless alveolar velarized fricative consonant .

Examples

1. saruukh / saru:kh / missile
2. sabaah / sabaah / morning
3. sadeeq / sadi:q / friend
4. safeer / safi:r / whistle
5. saqr / saqr / falcon

5. / sh / .

The soft palate is raised so that all the breath is forced to go through the mouth with a narrowing between the lip of the tongue and the back of the alveolar ridge. The lips are very slightly rounded . So the Arabic / / is a voiceless palato-alveolar fricative consonant .

Examples

1. shaab / shaab / young
2. shai / shai / tea
3. shahid / shhid / witness
4. shahiq / shahiq / high
5. shajar / shajar/ trees

6. / kh / .

The Arabic fricative consonant / kh / is produced by having the far back of the tongue close to the back of the palate so there is a narrowing allows the air to pass with a friction . So the Arabic / kh / is a voiceless velar fricative consonant.

Examples

1. khazin / khaazin / treasurer
2. kharoof / kharu:f / sheep
3. khareeta/ khari:ta / map
4. khashin / khashin / rough
5. khataf / khataf / grab

7. / h / .

The Arabic fricative / h / is produced at the top of the pharynx where the air passage becomes narrow and the result is a friction. So the Arabic / h / is a voiceless pharyngeal fricative consonant.

Examples

1. har / haar / hot
2. hadeeth / hadi:th / speech
3. hadir / hadhir / present (tense)
4. hub / hub / love
5. habak / habak / weave

8. / h / .

There are as many / h / -sounds in Arabic as there are vowels , because / h / is produced in any position in which the Arabic vowels are produced. The / h / is a voiceless glottal fricative consonant .

Examples

1. hatef / hatif / telephone
 2. habat / habat / come down
 3. hijra / hijra / emigration
 4. harab / harab / escape
 5. hazam / hazam / defeat
- 3.2. Voiced Fricatives

9. / th /.

The Arabic / th / is a friction sound. It is produced as the first sound of the English word (them). When it is produced, the soft palate is raised so that all the breath is forced to go through the mouth.

The tip of the tongue is close to the upper front teeth: this is the narrowing where the friction is made. So the Arabic / th / is a voiceless interdental fricative consonant.

Examples

1. thahab / thahab / went
2. thaki / thakii / clever
3. thaqin / thaqin / chin
4. thawq / thawq / taste
5. thihn / thihn / mind

10. / z /.

The Arabic fricative consonant / z / is produced in the same way in which the Arabic fricative consonant / th / is produced but with a velarization in the tongue. So the Arabic / z / is a voiced interdental velarized fricative consonant.

Examples

1. zalem / zalim / unjust
2. zahir / zaahir / apparent
3. zahar / zahar / appear
4. zabi / zabi / deer
5. zifr / zifr / nail

11. / z /.

The Arabic fricative consonant / z / is produced by having the soft palate raised so that all the breath is forced to go through the mouth. It is produced as the first sound of the English word (zero). The tip and blade of the tongue are very close to the alveolar ridge. There is a very considerable narrowing at this point, no near the teeth and not near the hard palate and the teeth are very close together. So the Arabic / z / is a voiced alveolar fricative consonant.

Examples

1. zar / zara / visited
2. zawya / zawya / angle
3. zarafa / zarafa / giraffe
4. zukam / zukaam / cold
5. zahr / zahr / flowers

12. / gh /.

The Arabic fricative consonant / gh / is the voiced counterpart of the Arabic voiceless fricative consonant / kh /. It is produced in the same place as / kh /. So it is a voiced velar fricative consonant.

Examples

1. gab / ghab / absent
2. gareeb / ghari:b / stranger
3. gubar / ghubar / dust
4. gadar / ghadar / betray
5. gudda / ghudda / gland

13. / 9 /.

The Arabic / 9 / is a voiced pharyngeal fricative consonant.

Examples

1. 9aj / 9aaj / ivory

2. 9ada / 9ada / return
3. 9ashir / 9ashir / tenth
4. 9ushb / 9ushub / grass
5. 9atifah / 9atitifa / emotion

4. Conclusion

The Arabic fricative consonants comprise the majority of the Arabic consonants. There are thirteen fricative consonants out of twenty-eight Arabic consonants. The Arabic fricative consonants are divided into voiceless and voiced consonants (eight voiceless and five voiced). The articulation of the Arabic voiceless fricative consonants need more muscular effort than the voiced fricative ones and a powerful exhalation than that in the articulation of the Arabic voiced consonants. The difference in the power of the exhalation can be observed by putting the palm of the hand in the front of the mouth at the moment of pronouncing a voiceless consonant such .

The present paper aimed at introducing the Arabic fricative consonants to non-Arabic, so that it would be easy for them to read and pronounce Arabic words.

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