

Transcription practice with Russian, Arabic

This exercise is to be done in groups of 2–6. Each group must include at least one Arabic speaker and one Russian speaker. Read the selection from the IPA Handbook on Arabic before you begin. Please try to speak English during your group meeting!

1. Arabic speaker: slowly read aloud the following words, using as “classical” a pronunciation as possible. The non-Arabic speakers should concentrate on learning to recognize the Arabic consonants, as well as vowel length and gemination. Note: if the Arabic speaker’s pronunciation does not match the transcription, then correct the transcription. For example, many speakers say [ʔ] instead of [q], and [d] or [z] instead of [ð]. The vowels are given in a very broad transcription and will probably be pronounced differently.

قَلْب [qalb] - كَلْب [kalb] ؛ قِمَّة [ˈqimma] - قِيَمَة [ˈqi:ma] ؛
مُحْرِج [ˈmuħriɖ] - مُخْرِج [ˈmuxriɖ] ؛ غَرِيْبَة [ɣaˈri:ba] - رَغِيْبَة [raˈyi:ba] ؛
نَذَرَ [naðara] - نَظَرَ [naðˤara] ؛ صُوْرَة [sˤu:ra] - سُورَة [su:ra] ؛
حَمَام [ħaˈma:m] - حَمَّام [ħamˈma:m] ؛ أَلَم [ˈʔalam] - عِلْم [ˈʔalam] ؛
خَلَفَتْ [ˈxalafat] - خَلَفَتْ [ˈxallafat] - خَالَفَتْ [ˈxa:lafat]

After listening, the non-Arabic speakers should read aloud the list of words from the transcriptions, with the Arabic speaker correcting their pronunciation. Spend a while practicing until everyone can at least recognize the sounds, and hopefully produce them. You may want to use additional words in order to hear the sounds in different contexts.

2. Transcription exercise. Arabic speaker: read the following list of words aloud. Everyone (including the Arabic speaker) should transcribe the list of words.

تِيْن ؛ سُغْل ؛ فَنَّاْن ؛ بَحْر ؛ قِرَاءَة ؛ صَمْت ؛ حَسَاْرَة

Non-Arabic speakers: now read back what you transcribed, pronouncing the sounds as well as you can. The Arabic speaker can tell you if you have correctly identified the sounds.

3. Do the same steps as above, but with Russian. Use the following words for practice (the Russian speaker can add more words):

МАТ [mat] — МАТЬ [matʲ] — МЯТ [mʲat] — МЯТЬ [mʲatʲ];
ЛОТ [lot] — ЛЁТ [lʲot]; СТАКАН [stakan] — ВСТАНЬ [fstanʲ];
ЗВОНИТ [zvanʲit] — ЗВОНИТЬ [zvanʲitʲ]; САД [sat] — СЯТ [sʲatʲ];
ПОЛКА [polkə] — ПОЛЬКА [polʲkə]; ВЁЛ [vʲol] — ВОЛ [vol]

In particular, it is important to hear that a palatalized consonant is not simply a consonant followed by [j]. In palatalization, the tongue takes the [j] position all the way through the consonant. Listen to triplets like the following: the first is a non-palatalized consonant; the second is palatalized; and the third is followed by a real [j].

ТА [ta] — ТЯ [tʲa] — ТЬЯ [tja]
СУ [su] — СЮ [sʲu] — СЬЮ [sju]

4. Transcription exercise. Russian speaker: read the following list of words aloud. Everyone, including the Russian speaker, should transcribe them, paying careful attention to whether each consonant is palatalized or not.

ВСЕМ СЪЕМ СТУДЕНТ ЗВОНЯТ КНИГА ГОСТЬ ЗДЕСЬ

Hand in:

Each student should turn in a transcription of the Russian and Arabic words you transcribed, and a short paragraph discussing which sounds, if any, were difficult for you to hear or to produce. As always, spelling and grammar count.