

## Grammar

To those readers unaccustomed to reading reference grammars, this document, albeit brief and compressed, may seem unreasonably complex. Be aware that the Arabic language has the most complex grammar of any language with a written, literary tradition. Hawyood & Nahmad's *Arabic Grammar* requires 500 pages of dense description, while an equivalent, complete English reference grammar would need only a hundred pages. Sim-Arabic, although preserving almost every expressive feature of formal Arabic grammar, is simplified and regularized to the extent that it fits within fifteen pages.

Significant differences from Arabic, and formal linguistic terminology, are found in the footnotes (which may be skipped if the reader is so inclined).

## Word Order

The constituent word order of Sim-Arabic is Verb-Subject-Object (*bite dog man*).<sup>1</sup> Adjectives always follow nouns. Possessives always follow nouns (that is, the thing possessed is followed by the possessor: *the house of the man*). If both are present, the adjective follows the possessive phrase.

## Nouns

Nouns have four attributes: number, gender, definiteness and case.

- Number: Singular, Dual (exactly two), or Plural.<sup>2</sup>
- Gender: Masculine or Feminine (in the Dual, both genders are coalesced)<sup>3</sup>
- Definiteness: Definite (*the house*) or Indefinite (*a house*)
- Case: Nominative and Genitive.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In Arabic, this is the usual word order for formal language, but Subject-Verb-Object is also used.

<sup>2</sup> Many plurals in Arabic are ablaut plurals (known as “broken plurals”), which are formed by changing the vowels of the singular form. There are many different patterns of ablaut pluralization. In Sim-Arabic, **all** pluralization follows the regular pattern shown in the table.

<sup>3</sup> In Sim-Arabic, all semantically feminine words (such as “mother” or “daughter”) are regularized and spelled ending with e. No semantically masculine nouns in Sim-Arabic (such as “caliph”) end with e.

<sup>4</sup> In Arabic, there are three cases: Nominative, Accusative and Genitive.

The table below shows the suffixes that distinguish number and gender (groups of mixed gender use the masculine in the plural):

To Form:	(to masculine singular)
Masculine Singular	<i>(no change)</i>
Feminine Singular	Add: -e
Dual	Add: -An
Masculine Plural	Add: -Un
Feminine Plural	Add: -At

Example: TALib = male student  
 TALibe = female student  
 TALibAn = two students  
 TALibUn = male students  
 TALibAT = female students.

Nouns prefixed by *al* are Definite. Unmarked nouns are Indefinite.

bait = *a house*

albait = *the house*

Proper nouns (names) are definite without the use of *-al*. Moreover, there are other ways that cause a noun to be considered definite, as described below.

The nominative case is unmarked. To put a noun into the genitive case, the word is suffixed by: *-i* (See the section on Possessives below.)

## Pronouns

The table below shows the pronouns of Sim-Arabic:

Form	Nominative (Subject)	Accusative (Object) Also used for Possessive	English translation
Singular, 1 <sup>st</sup> person	*anA	-I (after consonant) -nI (after verb)	<i>I/me/my</i>
Singular, 2 <sup>nd</sup> person, Masculine	*anta	-ka	<i>you/you/your</i>
Singular, 2 <sup>nd</sup> person, Feminine	*anti	-ki	<i>you/you/your</i>
Singular, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person, Masculine	huwa	-hu	<i>he/him/his</i>
Singular, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person, Feminine	hiya	-hA	<i>she/her/her</i>
Dual, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person	humA	-humA	<i>they/them/their</i>
Plural, 1 <sup>st</sup> person	naHnu	-nA	<i>we/us/our</i>

Form	Nominative (Subject)	Accusative (Object) Also used for Possessive	English translation
Plural, 2 <sup>nd</sup> person, Masculine	*antum	-kum	<i>you/you/your</i>
Plural, 2 <sup>nd</sup> person, Feminine	*antunna	-kunna	<i>you/you/your</i>
Plural, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person, Masculine	hum	-hum	<i>they/them/their</i>
Plural, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person, Feminine	hunna	-hunna	<i>they/them/their</i>

The nominative pronouns are separate words. The accusative pronouns are suffixes<sup>5</sup> attached to the verbs by which they are governed. Example: *huwa yara\*aYhu* = *he sees him*. Note that the nominative pronouns are used for emphasis and usually precede the verb.

## Adjectives

Adjectives also have Number, Gender, Definiteness and Case like nouns. They must agree in all four attributes with the nouns that they modify. The same prefixes and suffixes are used as for nouns.

Possessive adjectives (shown in the table above) are suffixed to the noun they modify. A noun with a possessive adjective is considered **definite** for agreement of adjectives.

Example: *bait kabIr* = *a big house*;

*al**ba**it al**ka**bir* = *the big house*;

*baithu al**ka**bir* = *his big house*.

A “relative adjective”<sup>6</sup> can be formed from a geographical place or an occupation by dropping the final A or e, if present, and then adding the suffix *-iyy*. These relative adjectives can then be feminized, dualized or pluralized like any other adjective.

Example: *TahrAn* (*Tehran*) may become: *walad TahrAniyy* (*Tehrani boy*)

*binte TahrAniyye* (*Tehrani girl*)

*waladUN TahrAniyyUN* (*Tehrani boys*)

*bintAT TahrAniyyAT* (*Tehrani girls*)

## Adverbs

Adverbs may be formed from adjectives by suffixing *-AN* to the masculine singular form of the adjective.

## Possessives

In Sim-Arabic, the genitive case is used to mark, or distinguish (with *-i*), the things or people that possess other things. As in English and Arabic, the genitive marking is put on the possessor.

<sup>5</sup> Formally known as “enclitics.”

<sup>6</sup> Or *nisbah*.

(Example: bait alrajuli = *the man's house*) The suffix for the genitive follows the other inflectional markings. (Example: bait alrajulUNi = *the men's house*). More than one possessive can be strung together: TAwile baiti alrajuli (*the man's house's table*).

Only the final noun in a sequence of possessives can be marked with the prefix al- to indicate definiteness. The first noun inherits its definiteness or indefiniteness from its ultimate possessor (the last in the sequence).

Adjectives follow the final noun in a possessive sequence, and they agree in number, gender definiteness and case with the first noun in the sequence: TAwile alrajuli alkabIre (*the man's big table*). However, the adjective can be made to modify a different word in the sequence of possessives if it agrees with that word: TAwile alrajuli alkabIri (*the big man's table*).

## Verb Tenses

There are two simple tenses and four compound tenses in Sim-Arabic, as shown below:

Tense	Formation	Closest English Equivalent
Present	(The simple present is imperfective in aspect)	" <i>he is eating</i> "
Present Perfect	qad + present	" <i>he has eaten</i> "
Past	(The simple past is perfective in aspect)	" <i>he ate</i> "
Past Perfect	qad + past	" <i>he had eaten</i> "
Past Imperfective	kAna + <u>present</u>	" <i>he was eating</i> "
Future	saUf + present	" <i>he will eat</i> "

(qad, kAna and saUf are separate words preceding the verb, not prefixes.)

## Verb Conjugations

The simple present and past are conjugated according to the following table. The hyphen represents the verb stem:<sup>7</sup>

Form	Present	Past	English Example
Singular, 1 <sup>st</sup> person	*a-	-tu	<i>I am eating / I ate</i>
Singular, 2 <sup>nd</sup> person	ta-In	-ti	<i>You are eating / You ate</i>
Singular, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person, Masculine	ya-	-a	<i>He is eating / He ate</i>
Singular, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person, Feminine	ta-	-at	<i>She is eating / She ate</i>

<sup>7</sup> In Arabic, there are thirteen conjugations, instead of nine, and there are a number of irregularities, as well

Form	Present	Past	English Example
Dual, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person	ya-An	-A	<i>They (both) are eating / They (both) ate</i>
Plural, 1 <sup>st</sup> person	na-	-nA	<i>We are eating / We ate</i>
Plural, 2 <sup>nd</sup> person	ta-Un	-tum	<i>You (all) are eating / You (all) ate</i>
Plural, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person, Masculine	ya-Un	-U	<i>They (men) are eating / They ate</i>
Plural, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person, Feminine	ya-na	-na	<i>They (women) are eating / They ate</i>

As in Spanish, a pronominal subject can be omitted from a sentence, because it is contained in the verb. If the pronoun is present, it provides emphasis.

## Verb Moods

There are two moods in Sim-Arabic: the Indicative (*He runs.*) and the Imperative (*Run!*). The imperative is simply the unconjugated verb stem.<sup>8</sup>

## Copular Verbs

There are two verbs used to represent the English verb “to be.” They are:<sup>9</sup>

kaWun - which means “to be”

laYis - which means “not to be”

(Since these verbs are copular, they take the nominative case for their complement, as in English: *It is I.* Note that this only affects pronouns.)

## Verb Roots

In Sim-Arabic (as in Arabic), verbs have what are known as “trilateral roots.” Every verbal root takes the form of three consonants (known as “radicals”), separated by two short vowels (a or i or u). The verb, and all related and derived forms, can be identified by the three consonants of the root.<sup>10</sup>

The form of a trilateral root can be generalized by this pattern: C<sub>1</sub>V<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub>V<sub>4</sub>C<sub>5</sub>

<sup>8</sup> Arabic has two additional moods: the Subjunctive and the Jussive.

<sup>9</sup> Unlike Arabic, these verbs are regular in all tenses in Sim-Arabic. Moreover, kaWun in the present tense **cannot** be omitted from a sentence, but must be explicitly written.

<sup>10</sup> In Arabic, verbs are known as “hollow verbs” whenever the second consonant of the root is the semi-vowel W (و) or Y (ي), and they are known as “defective verbs” whenever the third consonant is the semi-vowel W (و) or Y (ي). Those verbs have irregular conjugations in Arabic, but they are regularized in Sim-Arabic, with W and Y being considered as consonants for purposes of conjugation and derivation. This does, however, change the conjugated or derived spelling significantly from what would be used in Arabic. (Note that the only use of the Sim-Arabic character W is when the Arabic character و appears as one of the radicals.)

## Derivational Forms

### Derived Verbs

The verbal root represents the simplest form of the verb. It is possible to derive verbs with related meanings from the root. In Sim-Arabic, there are nine derived forms.<sup>11</sup> Not every derived form exists in the language for every verb. Only a dictionary can inform you of which ones exist. The meanings of the derived forms do not always conform to the archetypes shown in the table. Only with a dictionary can the meaning of a verb be known for certain.

The table below shows the derivational patterns for Sim-Arabic:<sup>12</sup>

Verb Form	Meaning	Pattern
I (simple)	(basic meaning)	$C_1V_2C_3V_4C_5$
II (causative)	to make or cause someone or something to be or to do	$C_1aC_3C_3aC_5$
III (relational)	to involve someone in; to do to someone	$C_1Ac_3aC_5$
IV (causative)	to make or cause someone or something to be or to do	$*aC_1C_3aC_5$
V (reflexive)	to make oneself do something	$tac_1aC_3C_3aC_5$
VI (reciprocal)	to do to or with each other	$tac_1Ac_3aC_5$
VII (passive)	to have done to one	$*inc_1aC_3aC_5$
VIII (reflexive)	to do something for oneself	$*ic_1tac_3aC_5$
IX (acquisitive)	to acquire or possess some attribute	$*ic_1C_3aC_5C_5$
X (supplicatory)	to ask for or seek for; to esteem because of	$*istaC_1C_3aC_5$

Examples: (I) *kataba* (*he wrote*), (II) *kattaba* (*he made someone write*), (III) *kAtaba* (*he wrote to someone*), (IV) *\*aktaba* (*he dictated*), (VI) *takAtaba*, (*he corresponded with*), (VII) *\*inkataba* (*he subscribed*), (VIII) *\*iktataba* (*he copied*), (X) *\*istaktaba* (*he asked someone to write*).

There also a few “quadrilateral roots.” Those follow the pattern:  $C_1V_2C_3C_4V_5C_6$ . These verbs follow the patterns for form II.

### Passive Verbs

Associated with each active verb form (except forms VII and IX) is a passive form (*was eaten*). Note that the passive is used less often than in English.

<sup>11</sup> In Arabic, there are more forms, but only the first nine are common.

<sup>12</sup> In Arabic, if  $C_3$  and  $C_5$  are the same, then  $v_4$  is absent. In Sim-Arabic, though, a vowel is inserted between  $C_3$  and  $C_5$  to improve regularity.

## Verbal Noun

Associated with each verb, is a verbal noun form.<sup>13</sup> In English, the verbal noun of *to sleep* is *sleeping*. This verbal noun can function as the subject of a sentence, as a predicate, or as an adjective: *Sleeping is good. My hobby is sleeping. Let sleeping dogs lie.* Moreover, if followed by the adverbial suffix *-AN*, the verbal noun can be used as an adverb.

## Agent

Associated with each verb, is an agentive form, or “active participle,” which represents the doer of the action.

## Patient

Associated with each verb (except form IX), is a “patientive” form, or “passive participle,” which represents the “do-ee” of the action.

The two tables below gives the patterns for these four derived formations:<sup>14</sup>

Verb Form	Stem (active)	Passive	Verbal Noun
I	C <sub>1</sub> V <sub>2</sub> C <sub>3</sub> V <sub>4</sub> C <sub>5</sub>	C <sub>1</sub> UC <sub>3</sub> IC <sub>5</sub>	C <sub>1</sub> V <sub>2</sub> C <sub>3</sub> AC <sub>5</sub>
II	C <sub>1</sub> AC <sub>3</sub> C <sub>3</sub> AC <sub>5</sub>	C <sub>1</sub> UC <sub>3</sub> C <sub>3</sub> IC <sub>5</sub>	taC <sub>1</sub> C <sub>3</sub> IC <sub>5</sub>
III	C <sub>1</sub> AC <sub>3</sub> AC <sub>5</sub>	C <sub>1</sub> UC <sub>3</sub> IC <sub>5</sub>	C <sub>1</sub> IC <sub>3</sub> AC <sub>5</sub>
IV	*ac <sub>1</sub> C <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>	*uc <sub>1</sub> C <sub>3</sub> ic <sub>5</sub>	*ic <sub>1</sub> C <sub>3</sub> AC <sub>5</sub>
V	taC <sub>1</sub> ac <sub>3</sub> C <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>	tuc <sub>1</sub> uc <sub>3</sub> C <sub>3</sub> ic <sub>5</sub>	taC <sub>1</sub> ac <sub>3</sub> C <sub>3</sub> uc <sub>5</sub>
VI	taC <sub>1</sub> AC <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>	tuc <sub>1</sub> UC <sub>3</sub> ic <sub>5</sub>	taC <sub>1</sub> AC <sub>3</sub> uc <sub>5</sub>
VII	*inc <sub>1</sub> ac <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>	(does not exist)	*inc <sub>1</sub> ic <sub>3</sub> AC <sub>5</sub>
VIII	*ic <sub>1</sub> taC <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>	*uc <sub>1</sub> tuc <sub>3</sub> ic <sub>5</sub>	*ic <sub>1</sub> tic <sub>3</sub> AC <sub>5</sub>
IX	*ic <sub>1</sub> C <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub> C <sub>5</sub>	(does not exist)	*ic <sub>1</sub> C <sub>3</sub> ic <sub>5</sub> AC <sub>5</sub>
X	*istac <sub>1</sub> C <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>	*ustuc <sub>1</sub> C <sub>3</sub> ic <sub>5</sub>	*istic <sub>1</sub> C <sub>3</sub> AC <sub>5</sub>

Verb Form	Stem (active)	Agent (“doer”)	Patient (“do-ee”)
I	C <sub>1</sub> V <sub>2</sub> C <sub>3</sub> V <sub>4</sub> C <sub>5</sub>	C <sub>1</sub> AC <sub>3</sub> IC <sub>5</sub>	maC <sub>1</sub> C <sub>3</sub> UC <sub>5</sub>
II	C <sub>1</sub> ac <sub>3</sub> C <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>	muC <sub>1</sub> ac <sub>3</sub> C <sub>3</sub> ic <sub>5</sub>	muC <sub>1</sub> ac <sub>3</sub> C <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>
III	C <sub>1</sub> AC <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>	muC <sub>1</sub> AC <sub>3</sub> ic <sub>5</sub>	muC <sub>1</sub> AC <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>

<sup>13</sup> Known as *maSdar* in Arabic. Sometimes called a “gerund” in English.

<sup>14</sup> In Arabic, there is no pattern for formation of the verbal noun (*maSdar*) for verb form I.

Verb Form	Stem (active)	Agent (“doer”)	Patient (“do-ee”)
IV	*ac <sub>1</sub> c <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>	muc <sub>1</sub> c <sub>3</sub> ic <sub>5</sub>	muc <sub>1</sub> c <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>
V	tac <sub>1</sub> ac <sub>3</sub> c <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>	mutac <sub>1</sub> ac <sub>3</sub> c <sub>3</sub> ic <sub>5</sub>	mutac <sub>1</sub> ac <sub>3</sub> c <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>
VI	tac <sub>1</sub> Ac <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>	mutac <sub>1</sub> Ac <sub>3</sub> ic <sub>5</sub>	mutac <sub>1</sub> Ac <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>
VII	*inc <sub>1</sub> ac <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>	munc <sub>1</sub> ac <sub>3</sub> ic <sub>5</sub>	munc <sub>1</sub> ac <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>
VIII	*ic <sub>1</sub> tac <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>	muc <sub>1</sub> tac <sub>3</sub> ic <sub>5</sub>	muc <sub>1</sub> tac <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>
IX	*ic <sub>1</sub> c <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub> c <sub>5</sub>	muc <sub>1</sub> c <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub> c <sub>5</sub>	<i>(does not exist)</i>
X	*istac <sub>1</sub> c <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>	mustac <sub>1</sub> c <sub>3</sub> ic <sub>5</sub>	mustac <sub>1</sub> c <sub>3</sub> ac <sub>5</sub>

Example: katab (*to write*) can become kAtib (*writer*) or maktUb (*something written*).

### Locative

Associated with each verbal root, there is a locative form, which represents the place where the action habitually takes place.

Given the root c<sub>1</sub>v<sub>2</sub>c<sub>3</sub>v<sub>4</sub>c<sub>5</sub>, the locative form is mac<sub>1</sub>c<sub>3</sub>ac<sub>5</sub>. Example: katab (*to write*) becomes maktab (*office*).

### Instrumental

Associated with each verbal root, there is an instrumental form, which represents the means by which the action habitually is accomplished.

Given the root c<sub>1</sub>v<sub>2</sub>c<sub>3</sub>v<sub>4</sub>c<sub>5</sub>, the instrumental form is mic<sub>1</sub>c<sub>3</sub>Ac<sub>5</sub>. Example: fataH (*to open*) becomes miftAH (*key*).

Moreover, there are often other nouns associated with a verbal root in addition to the ones described above. Only recourse to a dictionary can inform you of the particular meaning of those words.<sup>15</sup>

### Negation

Sentences are negated by placing lA before the verb. Nouns can be negated by placing Ra<sub>i</sub>r before the noun.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> All of these derived forms have been much simplified, and irregularities removed, from the Arabic grammar upon which they are based. (The complete set of rules for derivational forms in Arabic is tremendously complex.)

<sup>16</sup> There are several other means to express negation in Arabic, and the rules are not straightforward.



not	lA	sentence negation
un- non- other than	Rair	noun negation

## Interrogative Sentences

Interrogative sentences (example: *Who is that woman?*) begin with one of the interrogative particles in the table below. Note that yes/no questions (example: *Is that woman your mother?*) are indicated by starting with the particle ha1. The word order does not change as in English.

what?	mAXA
when?	matY
where?	*ain
which?	*aI
who?	man
why?	limAXA
how?	kaif
how much?	kam
interrogative particle	ha1 (yes/no questions start with ha1)

## Relative Clauses

Relative clauses are, as in English, introduced by a relative pronoun (example: *The woman who is John's mother is not here.*), as given in the table below:

what whatever	mA
when	^indamA
where	Haixu
which (masculine)	*allaXI
which (feminine)	*allatI
who(m) who(m)ever	man

## Other Subordinate Clauses

Complement clauses in Sim-Arabic are introduced by \*anna (*that*), as in: *He thinks that....*

Conditional clauses are introduced by \*in or \*iXA or lau (all of which mean *if*). lau is used to introduce an unlikely or hypothetical condition (as in the English construction: *if I were you...*). The main clause associated with the conditional clause can optionally be introduced by fi- (which means *then* in this context).

## Comparisons

Whereas English has distinct adjectival forms for the comparative (*better*) and the superlative (*best*), these two forms are merged in Sim-Arabic.<sup>17</sup> The formation from a “base” adjective follows this pattern:  $c_1v_2c_3(v_4)c_5$  becomes \*ac<sub>1</sub>c<sub>3</sub>ac<sub>5</sub>

Examples: kabIr (*great*) becomes \*akbar (*greater/greatest*); sahl (*easy*) becomes \*ashal (*easier/easiest*).

For comparisons, min is used with the meaning of *than*.

## Other Function Words

Any word in these tables written with a final hyphen is a prefix<sup>18</sup> and written attached to the word that follows it.

Conjunctions	
after	ba^d
and	wa-
because	li*anna
before	qabl
but	lakin
except	*illA
or	*aU
then <i>sequential (as in: and then)</i>	xumma
until	HattY
while	raixamA

<sup>17</sup> In what is known formally as the “relative.”

<sup>18</sup> Formally, a “proclitic.”

Demonstratives		
	Masculine	Feminine
this	haXA	haXih
that	Xalik	tilka
these	ha*ulA*	
those	*ulA*ik	

Prepositions	
about	^an
belonging to	^ind
by/in/with	bi-
for/because of	li-
from	min
in	fI/fi-
like/as	ka-
on/over	^alY/^alI
to/toward	*ilY
with	ma^
without	bidUn

Miscellaneous		
definite particle	al-	<i>the</i>
vocative particle	Y^A	<i>O</i> <i>as in: O king!</i>

## Numbers

Numbers do not decline like other adjectives. The numbers one (wAHid) and two (\*ixnAn) are not usually used as adjectives since the indefinite singular and dual inflections imply those

quantities. For quantities three (xalaxe) and larger, the modified noun is put into the plural.<sup>19</sup>

Cardinal and ordinal numbers, unlike other adjectives, precede the nouns that they modify.

There are also a few “quantitative” adjectives that do not decline. These also precede the nouns which they modify. For example: kul1 (*every/each*).

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<sup>19</sup> This differs from Arabic, which has complicated rules for numeric pluralization.