

Given the incalculable number of works, studies, articles and theses devoted to the topic of spoken Arabic, one might assume that everything has already been said on the subject. Nevertheless, the question regularly resurfaces among students discovering Arabic for the first time: How does one make the step from Modern Standard Arabic to colloquial Arabic? What are the differences between varieties of spoken Arabic? In short, how do you say this or that in colloquial Arabic? And above all, what work do you recommend for discovering spoken Arabic?

How to respond? Since I'm no linguist and even less of a specialist in dialects, I have to admit I don't know the miracle work that by itself opens the doors to colloquial Arabic. On the other hand, I'm convinced that by practicing, working together and constantly improving this guide, we can offer something of a response. That's the inspiration for this page which has no scientific pretensions but aims to be both practical and useful. It belongs to its users who are encouraged to make their observations known in order to maximize the guide's efficiency. Songs are present to provide an aural texture. Each of them includes elements from their accompanying sections.

A modest warning: To benefit from this page, one must be willing to work a little. This isn't meant to be a guide for tourists. One should listen, read, observe and take away any useful or pertinent details.

More than sixty sections are being prepared. They'll be gradually published here. In the meantime, other colloquial varieties will hopefully be added to those already present. Visiting this page from time to time can thus bring new perspectives to one's knowledge of Arabic, an extremely rich, varied and living language—moreover, a topic of study that one would like to see expand among our schools in France.

Methodological Clarifications:

-The sections do not follow a rigorous order. Users should feel free to roam around in search of any particular points of interest. Sometimes, for example, in looking at negations, one stumbles upon the relative; the latter can serve as an opportunity to review pronouns that have their own section but of course manifest themselves a bit everywhere.

-When students are interested in a particular variety of spoken Arabic, they should organize their studies and practice with a notebook. They should ultimately be able to pick up on the following characteristics: personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns,

conjugation, negation, relative pronouns, interrogative pronouns, prepositions, etc. They should equally observe the use of the definitive article, preposition-pronoun constructions, the nuances of conjugation (marks of the future, prefixes and proverbs...) Once students have completed the sections on grammar, they should focus on building up specific fields of vocabulary, knowing that certain Arabic words vary in meaning from one region to another. The dynamic is particularly true in the case of food-related vocabulary. No dictionary of modern standard Arabic will be useful in this situation. Personal experience should be the path to follow. And this page can be a part of that.

The audio files available on the page are not entirely "standard"—as limited as the word's meaning is in this case—for any given region. They're simply what local speakers provided as variants of the words in question. This takes away nothing from the authenticity of the pronunciation. But it remains entirely possible to encounter another speaker from the same region—perhaps even from the same city or neighborhood—who might use a different pronunciation or formulation. Any given variant of spoken Arabic, especially in major cities, can evolve over time, can change from one community to the next, or can borrow words after contact with another variety of spoken Arabic or another language, as so happens in neighborhoods affected by rural migration. For example, the colloquial Baghdadi Arabic that one finds here corresponds to the version spoken by young people in the Iraqi capital during the 1960s and 1970s. It's different from the language spoken in al-Kadhimiyya (west) or Sadr City (north), for example. The same principle can apply to other major Arab cities. Ultimately, on-the-ground observation becomes necessary.

After one has acquired the basics of modern standard Arabic, the discovery of its colloquial varieties is a promising next step that can lead to spontaneous conversation with Arabs and eventually the opportunity to encounter rich literary production, especially through songs.

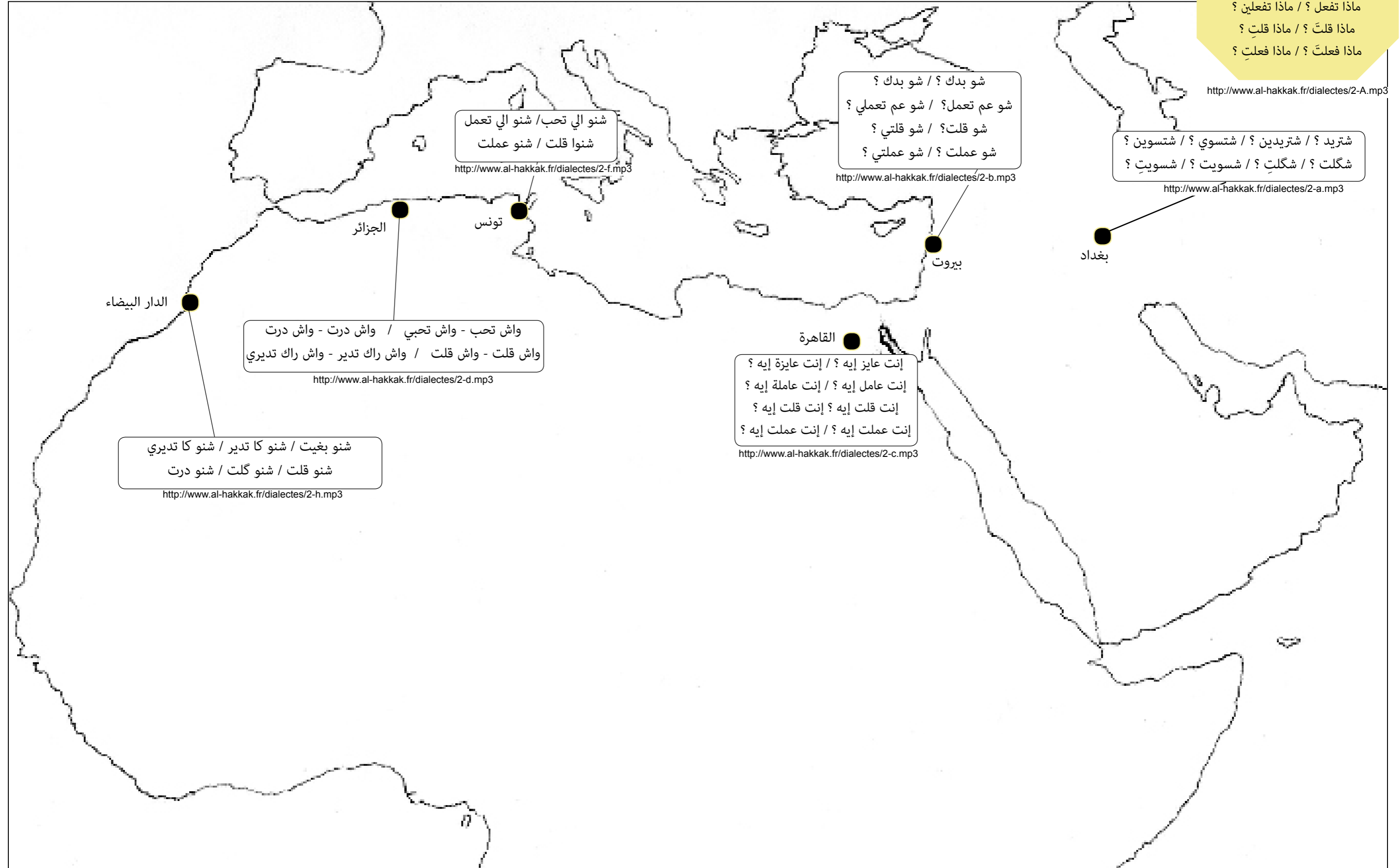
Ghalib Al-Hakkak, April 28, 2016

Edited in English by Cole Stangler

What do you want ? / What are you doing ?

What have you said ? / What have you done ?

<http://www.al-hakkak.fr>



Who are you ? / Who is he ? / Who is she ?

Who are you ? / Who are they ?

<http://www.al-hakkak.fr>

من أنتَ ؟ / من أنتِ ؟
من هو ؟ / من هي ؟
من أنتم ؟ / من هم ؟

<http://www.al-hakkak.fr/dialectes/3-A.mp3>

شكونك انت ؟ / شكونو هو ؟ / شكونا هي ؟
شكونكم انتوما ؟ / شكونهم هوما ؟

<http://www.al-hakkak.fr/dialectes/3-f.mp3>

مين انت ؟ / مين انت ؟
مين هو ؟ / مين هي ؟
مين انتو ؟ / مين هني ؟

<http://www.al-hakkak.fr/dialectes/3-b.mp3>

إنت منو ؟ / إنت منو ؟ / هو منو ؟ / هي منو ؟
إنتو منو ؟ / هم منو ؟

<http://www.al-hakkak.fr/dialectes/3-a.mp3>

