

Materials Adaptation: Race and Ethnicity

Jacob J. Adams

Middlebury Institute of International Studies

Materials Adaptation: Race and Ethnicity

Part 1: Describe the material, context, and learners

The book from which I have taken the material to adapt for this project is part one of *Al-kitaab fii ta'allum al-'arabiyya with DVDs*, second edition (Brustad, Al-Batal, & Al-Tonsi, 2004), a widely used Arabic textbook in the United States. When I was an Arabic student, I studied from this book series myself, and as a teacher, I have taught from both the second edition and from the third edition (Brustad, Al-Batal, & Al-Tonsi, 2011). The material I have adapted is from the first unit of the book, entitled “Ana Maha” (“I am Maha”; Maha is the name of the main character in the central story around which the textbook is based). Regarding learning goals, the chapters do not have learning goals listed, but the book does have a list of objectives. I think the activity which I am revising here relates mainly to the objective that students will “[b]e able to form and understand all basic sentence structures of Arabic” (Brustad, Al-Batal, & Al-Tonsi, 2004, p. xvi) since it presents the *nisba* adjective, which can be used in basic subject-predicate sentences.

My target population is adults at the community college or university level, and I am interested in teaching learners across the spectrum of proficiency. While the book does not specify anything about its target population except that they are beginners who are taking a formal language class with a teacher (Brustad, Al-Batal, & Al-Tonsi, 2004), the book does seem to be geared towards adults rather than children. Thus, the book does seem to match my target population.

Part 2: Evaluation of the material

The material that I have chosen to evaluate (provided in Appendix A) is the set of activities which provide an introduction to, and practice with, the *nisba* adjective, an adjective that comes from a noun and is generally used to describe the affiliation or origin of someone or something. These activities constitute pages 11-13 of the book.

In the material are 1) an explanation of the *nisba* adjective, 2) an activity where students practice forming the *nisba* adjective to complete some sentences, and 3) an activity where students look at a map containing various characters and have to guess the country each character resides in and provide the *nisba* adjective that comes from the name of that country. In this evaluation, I will discuss the activities only, and not the explanation.

Evaluation of the material from the teacher's perspective. I begin my analysis with the activity I listed as 2) above, namely the activity where students use *nisba* adjectives to complete sentences. In the activity, a bunch of people and things are described as belonging to various countries (and, in one case, as belonging to a university, to practice the “affiliation” use of *nisba*). The sentences are very surface-level and stereotypical. Some of the sentences (once the adjectives are filled in) translate to “Nicole is a French girl,” “Raj is an Indian man,” and “Fez is a Moroccan city.” Every person has a name stereotypically associated with his or her country, and furthermore, none of the people actually exist. This activity could have been used to talk about ethnic minorities in the Arab world, to fight the stereotype that everyone who lives in the Arab world is an Arab Muslim, since any ethnic group can be described using a *nisba* adjective, but unfortunately, this opportunity was not seized. Instead, the activity is simply a grammar drill about major cities and fictional people.

As for the map activity (listed as activity 3 above), one of the elements that works in its favor is the fact that it teaches students about the countries of the Arab world. Some of the people shown in the map come from Arab countries less well-known to Americans, like Sudan and Yemen. However, this activity suffers from some of the same pitfalls as the previous activity. For one thing, all of the people depicted are fictional characters created solely for this exercise. This could have been an opportunity to teach students about prominent people in the Arab world, but this activity simply invents people named (to give some examples) Fatima and Abdullah and has students state that they are, respectively, Tunisian and Yemeni. Also, almost all of the characters seem to be Arab and Muslim (based on their names and pictures), which simply reinforces the stereotype that everyone in the Arab world speaks the same language and practices the same religion. The only member of an ethnic and religious minority depicted is the character from Egypt, a Coptic Christian priest named Girgis.

Evaluation of the material from the student's perspective. I feel that my students may have some of the same issues with these activities that I do. Regarding lack of minority representation, this may be hurtful for heritage students of Arabic who do not fit the stereotype of being Arab in culture and Muslim in religion. They may feel as if their peoples' presence in the Arab world has been erased in favor of presenting a homogeneous, stereotypical view of Arab countries. Regarding students who are not heritage speakers of Arabic, they may not notice any issues with the material, but this is a negative outcome as well because they will not be challenged to think of the Arab world in a way that differs from the stereotypes which circulate in the United States.

Evaluation of the material in terms of praxis. Regarding issues of praxis, in addition to the lack of representation alluded to earlier, it is also the case that the authors have missed out on

an opportunity to educate students not only about racial and ethnic minorities in the Arab states but also about people who are fighting for the rights of minorities in Arab countries. Instead of showing imaginary people, the authors could have used the opportunity provided by the map activity, as well as by the sentence completion activity, to introduce students to people fighting for the rights of minorities. This would have served both to get students thinking about current social justice issues in the Arab world as well as (with the right prompting) to encourage students to make comparisons to American society and think about people engaged in the fight for the rights of ethnic minorities here. It seems that the authors, in privileging a stereotypical narrative about the Arab world, have missed out on an opportunity to provide students with information that is not only engaging but which would lend itself to activities that encourage critical thinking.

Part 3: Adaptation

Regarding what I did to adapt the activities, I completely replaced the sentence completion activity, and I revised the map activity to use real people instead of fictional characters, and to make more mention of minority groups. I have placed the map activity in Appendix B (in Arabic and then in an English translation) and the replacement for the sentence completion activity in Appendix C.

Regarding the map activity, I have replaced all of the fictional characters with real people. Each of these people is either a member of an ethnic minority, an activist, or both. I came up with this group of people both by thinking of prominent people I knew and via searching the Internet for activists and prominent members of minorities in the Arab world. My new activity not only challenges stereotypes about who lives in Arab countries, but with the inclusion of activists, it provides a starting point for discussing social issues in Arab countries. Even though the students to whom this activity is geared would not be able to have in-depth discussions about

social issues, the inclusion of activists can at least serve as a first peek into the issues that exist. Furthermore, the students will be able to learn some things at least about the activists and prominent people mentioned via the replacement for the sentence completion activity. I have also retained the map from the original activity, but I have removed the element where students have to identify which country each person is from. Instead, I have labeled each country with a number that corresponds to the sentence about it, and given students the name of each country in parentheses at the end of each sentence.

Regarding the replacement for the sentence completion activity, I have created a project where students work at home to prepare a short presentation (2 minutes) and then present it in class. The presentation would make students become aware of ethnic diversity in Arab countries by having each student choose an Arab country from the map activity and then do some research on it (by searching for materials in English, most likely, due to their low level). For the project, each student would (in Arabic) present his or her chosen country, mention 3-5 of its ethnic groups, discuss which ethnic groups have power (using vocabulary words I have provided), and then discuss the prominent individual from the country who is mentioned in the map activity, giving some information about the person's life. In the assignment, I also require students to use visual aids to supplement the oral aspect, since the students would be very low-level. Given the complexity of the assignment, I would show the students an example presentation first so that they know what to do. This assignment not only gives students the ability to learn about an Arab country in some depth (which is not an element of the original assignment) but also to learn about a prominent person who is either an activist, a member of a minority group, or both, thus helping to familiarize them with both the ethnic diversity of the Arab world and some of the people involved in social justice work. Once again, students at this level may not have extensive

linguistic resources, but this project at least enables them to begin thinking about social justice issues.

I have oriented both of these activities towards one content objective and one social justice objective. The content objective is that students will be able to explain who some of the ethnic minority groups in the Arab world are, and the social justice objective is that students will be able to talk about activism and activists in the Arab world at a basic level. The activities will also serve to set up future assignments organized around a separate social justice objective, namely that students will be able to make comparisons between elements of social justice issues in the US and the Arab world.

Works Cited

Brustad, K., Al-Batal, M., and Al-Tonsi, A. (2004). *Al-kitaab fii ta'allum al-'arabiyya with DVDs: A textbook for beginning Arabic* (Vol. 1, 2nd ed.) Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Brustad, K., Al-Batal, M., and Al-Tonsi, A. (2011). *Al-kitaab fii ta'allum al-'arabiyya: A textbook for beginning Arabic* (Vol. 1, 3rd ed.) Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

READ THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH AND CIRCLE ALL THE NOUNS THAT YOU THINK WOULD TAKE الـ IF YOU TRANSLATED IT INTO ARABIC. SKIP POSSESSIVE NOUNS (SUCH AS HIS TRIBE).

Poetry holds a central place in Arab culture, and this importance is reflected in the high esteem accorded poets. In ancient times, the poet was among the most important members of his tribe. He recorded the tribe's history and defended its honor through his descriptions of its courage and prowess. Throughout Islamic history, rulers rewarded poets handsomely for their "praise poems." Today, poetry remains a powerful medium of political expression.

النسبة

النسبة the nisba adjective

The word **نسبة** in grammar refers to a class of adjectives formed from nouns by adding the suffix **ي** for **مذكر** or **ي** for **مؤنث**. These adjectives generally indicate origin or affiliation, especially in reference to a place. You have learned several of these already:

والدي مصري .

مها مصرية .

الاستاذة عربية .

والدتي فلسطينية .

In formal Arabic, the **شدة** on the nisba ending **ي** is clearly pronounced, but in spoken Arabic it is not normally pronounced in the masculine. Learn to recognize both variants. Listen to this chart on your DVD and compare: **DVD**

مؤنث	مذكر spoken/formal
الاستاذة مصرية	الاستاذ مصري / مصري
الاستاذة سورية	الاستاذ سوري / سوري
الاستاذة لبنانية	الاستاذ لبناني / لبناني
الاستاذة مغربية	الاستاذ مغربي / مغربي

Many family names come from nisba adjectives, and refer to the original hometown of the family. Examples include: الفاسي , التونسي , البغدادي , المصري .

Many nisbas are formed from place names. To form a nisba adjective from a place noun, follow these steps:

(1) **Remove** الـ , ة , and final ا (alif) or يا , if any, from the place name; then

(2) **Add** يّ to make the adjective مذكر , or يّة to make it مؤنث .

Examples:

أمريكا <— أمريك <— أمريكيّ / أمريكية
جامعة <— جامعو <— جامعيّ / جامعية
الأردن <— أردن <— أردنيّ / أردنية

Now practice by completing the steps for the following:

فرنسا <— _____ <— _____
المكسيك <— _____ <— _____
الصّومال <— _____ <— _____

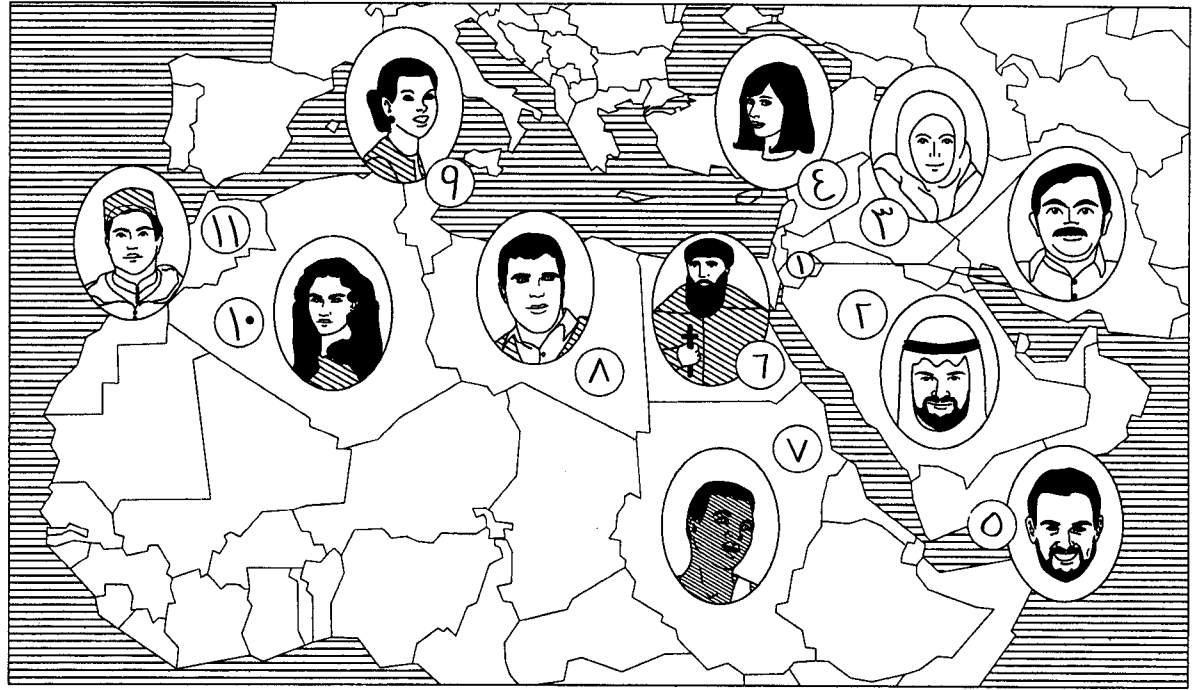
تمرين ١٢ النسبة (في البيت)

IDENTIFY THE NATIONALITY OR AFFILIATION OF THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE, PLACES AND THINGS:

مثال: هذه طائرة أمريكية . (أمريكا)

- ١- فاس مدينة _____ . (المغرب)
- ٢- هذه أستاذة _____ . (الجزائر)
- ٣- «نيكول» بنت _____ . (فرنسا)
- ٤- «راج» رجل _____ . (الهند)
- ٥- هذه قهوة _____ . (تركيا)
- ٦- «ريتشارد» دكتور _____ . (أستراليا)
- ٧- طوكيو مدينة _____ . (اليابان)
- ٨- سلمى طالبة _____ . (الباكستان)
- ٩- مها طالبة _____ . (جامعة)
- ١٠- هذه ساعة _____ . (الصين China)

GIVE THE NATIONALITIES OF THE PEOPLE IN THE MAP:



مثال: ١- حُسَيْنُ أُرْدُنِي

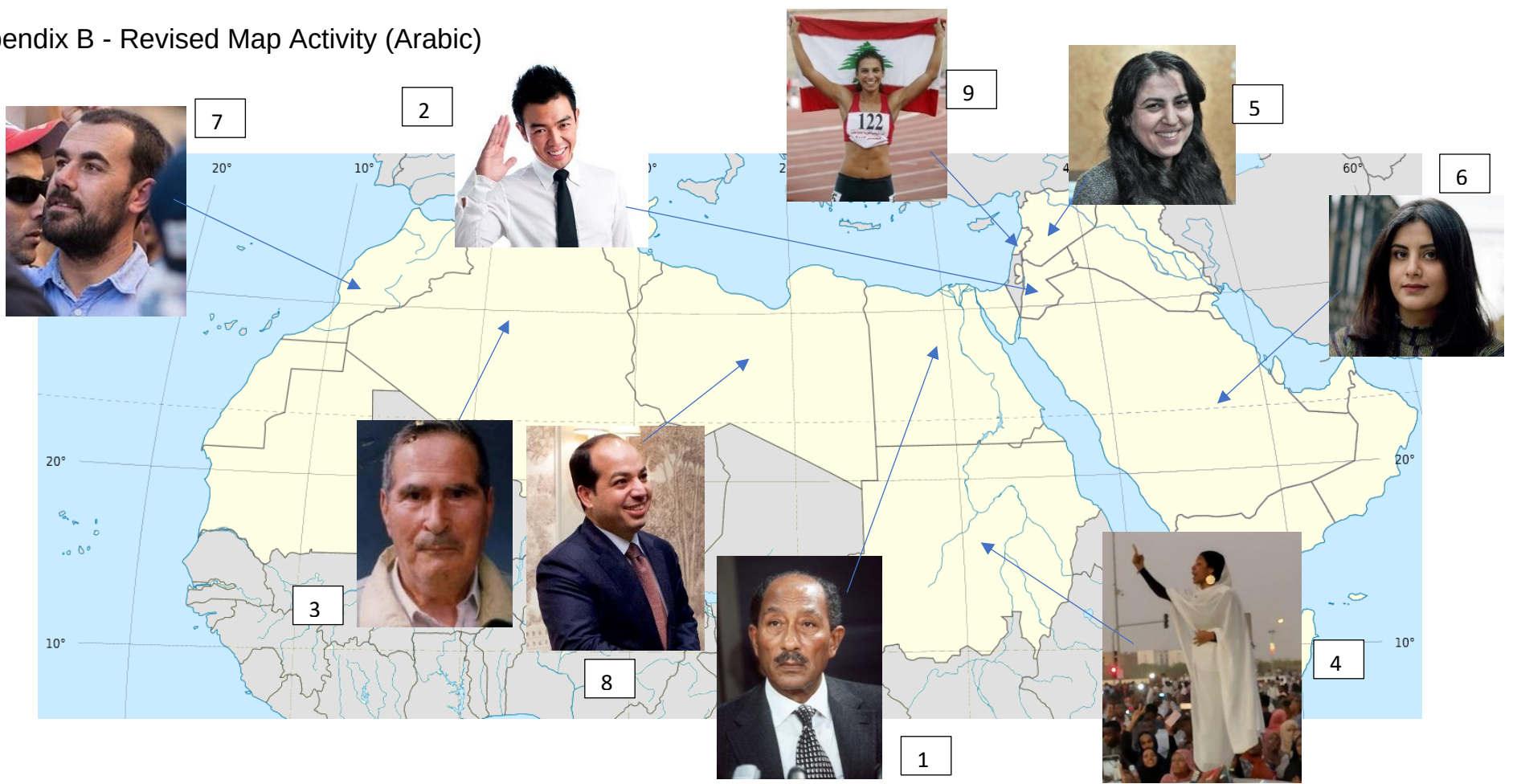
- ٢- فَيِّصَلُ _____ ٧- عَوْضُ _____
 ٣- مُنَى _____ ٨- عَبْدُ الْحَمِيدِ _____
 ٤- خَالِدَةُ _____ ٩- فَاطِمَةُ _____
 ٥- عَبْدُ اللَّهِ _____ ١٠- جَمِيلَةُ _____
 ٦- جَرَجِسُ _____ ١١- إِدْرِيسُ _____

السؤال Asking Questions

Arabic has two main types of questions:

1. Questions that require an answer of *yes* or *no*, such as: *حضرتك مصرية؟*
2. Questions that request information on *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how*, such as: *أين تسكن مها؟*

Appendix B - Revised Map Activity (Arabic)



١. أنور السادات رئيس _____ من أصل _____ . (مصر، نوبيا)
٢. وُنهو شونغ كوميدي _____ من أصل _____ . (الأردن، كوريا)
٣. محند أعراب بسعود ناشط _____ من أصل _____ . (الجزائر، القبائل)
٤. آلاء صلاح ثائرة _____ من أصل _____ . (السودان، العرب)
٥. ليلي مصطفى سياسية _____ من أصل _____ . (سوريا، الكرد)
٦. لجين الهذلول ناشطة _____ من أصل _____ . (السعودية، العرب)
٧. ناصر الزفزافي ناشط _____ من أصل _____ . (المغرب، أمازيغ)
٨. أحمد معيتيق سياسي _____ من أصل _____ . (ليبيا، تركيا)
٩. غريتا تسلاكيان رياضية _____ من أصل _____ . (لبنان، أرمينيا)

Appendix B - Revised Map Activity (English)



1. Anwar Sadat is an _____ president of _____ heritage. (Egypt, Nubia)
2. Wonho Chung is a _____ comedian of _____ heritage. (Jordan, Korea)
3. Mohand Arav Besoud is an _____ activist of _____ heritage. (Algeria, Kabyle)
4. Alaa Salah is a _____ revolutionary of _____ heritage. (Sudan, Arabs)
5. Laila Mustafa is a _____ politician of _____ heritage. (Syria, Kurds)
6. Loujain Al-Hathloul is a _____ activist of _____ heritage. (Saudi Arabia, Arabs)
7. Nasser Al-Zefzafi is a _____ activist of _____ heritage. (Morocco, Berber)
8. Ahmed Maitiq is a _____ politician of _____ heritage. (Libya, Turkey)
9. Greta Taslakian is a _____ athlete of _____ heritage. (Lebanon, Armenia)

Appendix C

Short Visual Presentation Assignment

You will choose a country that was listed in the previous activity. In a short presentation (2 minutes), you will talk about the ethnic groups present in the country (3-5 of them). You will also describe which of the groups have power and which do not. Finally, discuss the prominent individual that was associated with that country in the previous activity, discussing what the person is known for. You may find this information by consulting sources in English, but the presentation must be in Arabic.

Please use visual aids in your presentation; please include pictures depicting some of the cultures you are discussing, and the prominent person you discuss. I will give a brief example presentation in class before the presentation is due to show you what I expect.

Words you may find useful:

Minority	أقلية
Majority	أكثرية
Most	معظم
Power	سلطة
Activist	ناشط
Writer	كاتب
Politician	سياسي
Discrimination	تمييز
Racism	عنصرية
Sexism	التعصب الجنسي
Homophobia	رهاب المثلية