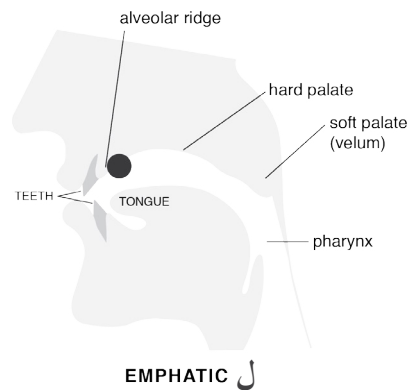
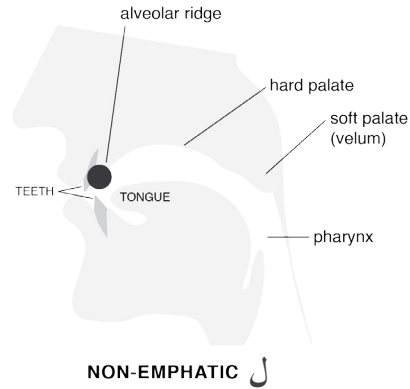


ARABIC CALLIGRAPHY: PRONUNCIATION OF ALLAH

As we've seen, the word **الله** appears in many different expressions and contexts. Not only does it carry particularly important cultural connotations, but, in regards to pronunciation, it is a very interesting word. In Arabic, the letter lam (ل) is almost always pronounced as a non-emphatic, frontal consonant like in the word leg or like and not emphatically as in the word all or old. For the non-emphatic letter, the tongue should be against the teeth. For the emphatic one, the tongue should be against the ridge on the roof of the mouth behind the teeth. In Arabic, the common, non-emphatic ل is generally even further up against the teeth. The diagram below illustrates this point in the mouth where the tongue should be located for each of the different sounds. Practice saying the English words mentioned above to get a feel for the different positioning of the tongue.



However, in a few instances in Arabic, the ل is pronounced emphatically, the most common example of this being the emphatic ل heard in the word *Allāh* (الله). As we saw early, most of the expressions containing the word **الله** have emphatic ل. However, an exception occurs whenever **الله** is preceded immediately by the frontal vowel sound of the *kasra* (ِ). We see this in two of the five expressions from earlier, **الله أكبر** and **بِسْمِ الله**. Since the immediate-preceding sound is a frontal one against the teeth, the ل is pronounced as a frontal, non-emphatic sound as well. Below is a chart that illustrates how the preceding vowel sounds of **الله** influences the emphaticness of the ل.

| Expression | Preceding vowel | Emphaticness |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| الله أكبر | <i>alif</i> | Emphatic ل |
| سُبْحَانَ الله | <i>fatHa</i> | Emphatic ل |
| لا إله إلا الله | <i>alif</i> | Emphatic ل |
| بِسْمِ الله | <i>kasra</i> | Non-emphatic ل |
| الحمد لله | <i>kasra</i> | Non-emphatic ل |

ARABIC CALLIGRAPHY: 3AMMIYYA EXPRESSIONS

Expressions that include the word الله (God) are extremely widespread in the Arabic language, and many of these sayings are used by speakers of any faith, whether or not the speaker is particularly religious. While it may seem odd at first to use the name of God so often in speech, these expressions are a natural part of the Arabic language and play a large role in day-to-day interactions. Because they are so common, these phrases also appear regularly in calligraphy, and the phrases are easy to recognize even in calligraphic writing once you are familiar with how they look.

*An important point to note is that many of these phrases do not have an exact equivalent in English, and their literal translation sometimes is not the best way to understand their Arabic meaning and true usage. For this reason, we have given you the sense of the phrase first, and provided the literal translation in parentheses. You should keep in mind the sense of the word, not the literal translation, when thinking of these phrases.

**In this the pronunciation guide in this table, capital “L” refers to the emphatic sound of the letter ل, while the lowercase “l” refers to the non-emphatic sound of the letter ل. For more information about the pronunciations of these letters, please see the Pronunciation tab in this module.

COMMON PHRASES USING الله

| Arabic phrase | Pronunciation | English equivalent* | Usage in daily speech |
|----------------------|------------------|---|--|
| الله | AL-Laaaah | So beautiful/cute! | This expression is used to express great admiration. For example, when receiving a gift that you really like, or at seeing a cute image. |
| الله عليك \ عليكي | AL-Laaaah | Beautiful! Nice! | This expression is used to praise people for a good action or something that have been said/heard. |
| بِسْمِ الله | BIS-mil-la | (lit. In the name of God) | This phrase is said when beginning actions: before starting an important task (like an exam, a presentation, or a prayer), before eating or drinking, or at the outset of a journey (or even a short car ride). |
| الْحَمْدُ لله | al-HAM-du li-la | Thank God! Hallelujah! (lit. Thanks be to God) | This phrase is used as an answer to: كيف حالك؟ \ ازيك؟ \ كيفك؟ \ لا بأس؟ No matter how you are feeling, it is always proper to use this answer. This phrase is also used to express contentment and happiness in various circumstances. |
| ما شاء الله | **MAA-sha al-Lah | Wow! How beautiful! (lit. It is God's will) | This expression is said to praise talent or beauty, even if it may be exaggerated slightly. For example, after seeing your neighbor's daughter for the first time, you may use this phrase to mean “My God! She is beautiful!” or “Wow!” |
| إن شاء الله | IN-sha al-Lah | Hopefully (lit. God willing) | This expression is used exactly like “hopefully” in English, especially when a speaker is talking about something they plan to do in the future. It can also be used in order to avoid commitment to something. |
| سُبْحَانَ الله | sub-HAAN al-Lah | Wow! Amazing! (lit. Praise be to God) | This phrase is used to express awe or wonder at events or objects in nature, for example, a beautiful view (sunset, ocean, stars) or a natural phenomenon. |

ARABIC CALLIGRAPHY: VIDEO WORKSHEET

VIDEO: INTRODUCTION TO ARABIC, OTTOMAN, AND PERSIAN CALLIGRAPHY

The Arabic Alphabet

1. List at least 3 facts about the Arabic alphabet that you learned from this segment:

a.

b.

c.

The Calligraphy Process

2. What are some special aspects of:

a. Arabic calligraphy pens?

b. The ink used for calligraphy?

c. The paper used for calligraphy?

3. What are some steps that a student undergoes when studying the art of calligraphy?

ARABIC CALLIGRAPHY: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

1. Arabic alphabet used to write Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish, Sindhu, Pashtu, Urdu, Malay, Kurdish; 28 letters; second most widely used after Latin Alphabet
- 2a. Pens made of reeds; sharpened with knife; hole in the middle to hold more ink
2b. Ink made of soot; can last hundreds of years; black color
2c. Paper flat, smooth, dyed, and varnished
3. Writing ربي يسر ولا تعسر ; writing the alphabet; letter combinations; complete words and phrases; visiting master once a week; master corrects in red ink; receiving إجازة