

Syrian Arabic politeness formulae and responses

A Contrastive Approach to the Analysis of Politeness Formulas

Root-echo responses in Syrian Arabic politeness formulas. CA Ferguson - Linguistic studies in me

Root-Echo Responses in Egyptian Arabic Politeness Formulae. Devin Stweart. Understanding Arabic

Arabic has a highly developed system of formulaic polite phrases for different situations, and most phrases have a specific response. Knowing these phrases, in what situations they are used, and how to properly respond to them, is an important part of oral language proficiency in Arabic. I have not seen a comprehensive list of such phrases[^steward] and thought I'd set out to make one.

The phrases below are given in Arabic and then in EALL transliteration as pronounced in Syrian Arabic. The translations provided are fairly literal. Many of the expressions no or only partial equivalent in English anyway. Each phrase is followed by its appropriate response. Forward slash indicates alternative responses. Note that that Arabic text is the wrong way around relative to the reading direction, with the initial phrase to the left and the response to the right.

0.1 Greetings

0.1.1 General greeting

]

[

as- wa-
salām‘alaykum
‘alayksalām
/wa-
rahmatu
al-
lāhi
wa-
barakātuh]
 Peace And
 be upon
 upon you
 you. peace
 [and
 God’s
 greace
 and
 his
 blessings]

Islamic connotations. The pronoun *-kum* (3mpl) is invariable the phrase and in its response. The optional extension of the reply in brackets is recommended in a *ḥadīṭ*.

| | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>marḥaban</i> | / | / | |
| | <i>ahlan/marḥabatēn/mīt</i> | <i>marḥaba</i> | |
| Hello | Hi/Two | <i>marḥabas/a</i> | hunderd <i>marḥabas</i> |

0.1.2 Greeting before noon

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>ṣabāḥ al-xēr</i> | <i>ṣabāḥ an-nūr/ṣabāḥ al-full</i> |
| Morning of good | Morning of light/Morning of rose |

Xēr does not easily lend itself to translation. Wehr, the standard Arabic-English lexicon, translates it as “good thing, blessing; wealth, property; — good, benefit, interest, advantage; welfare; charity.”

0.1.3 Greeting after noon

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| <i>masāʿ al-xēr</i> | <i>masāʿ an-nūr</i> |
| Evening of good | Evening of light |

0.1.4 Welcoming

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <hr/> | |
| / | |
| <i>ahlan wa-sahlan</i> | <i>ahlan fik/ahlēn</i> |
| Welcome | Welcome to you/Two welcomes |

Also general filler in pauses in polite conversation.

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| <i>nawwartu</i> | <i>bi-wujūdکم</i> |
| You have enlightened | In your presence |

0.1.5 When being introduced to someone

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>tašārrafna</i> | <i>yazīdak aš-šaraf</i> |
| We are honored | May he increase your honor |

0.2 Parting

0.2.1 General good-byes

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| <i>maʿa salāma</i> | <i>allāh maʿak</i> |
| With peace | May God be with you |

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>ilā liqā</i> | <i>allāh maʿak</i> |
| until [our nex] meeting | May God be with you |

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| <i>biddak šī?</i> | <i>salāmtak</i> |
| Do you want something? | Your wellbeing |

0.2.2 Parting before sleep

| | | |
|------------------------|---|---|
| <i>tuṣbiḥ ʿalā xēr</i> | / | <i>wa-inta bi-xēr/wa-inta min ahlu</i> |
| Wake up in wellness | | And you are well/And your are of the its people |

0.3 Phrases for special occasions

0.3.1 To someone in grief (at funeral (ʿazā))

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| <i>al-ʿiwāḍ bi-salāmtak</i> | <i>allah yusallimak</i> |
| May the compensation be in your health | May God give you health |

or

| | |
|----------------------|--------------|
| <i>al-ʿumr illak</i> | <i>tʿiš</i> |
| The lifetime to you | May you live |

0.3.2 To newlyweds (at wedding)

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>mbāarak mā ʿamiltu</i> | <i>allah yubārik fīk</i> |
| Blessed that which you have done | May God bless you |

0.3.3 To someone departing on a journey

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>trūḥ u-tarjaʹ bi-s-salāma</i> | <i>allah yusallimak</i> |
| Leave and return in peace | May God preserve you |

0.3.4 To someone returning from a journey

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>al-ḥamdu li-llāh ʿala s-salāma</i> | *allah yusallimak |
| God be praised for your wellbeing | May God preserve you |

0.3.5 Parting from someone you have met for the first time

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>furṣa sa^cīda</i> | <i>u-ana as^cad</i> |
| Happy occasion | And I am happier |

0.4 Phrases for not so special occasions

0.4.1 To someone who has recently cut their hair, shaved, or have had a shower or bath

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| <i>na^cīman</i> | <i>allah yin^cam ^calēk</i> |
| Gracefully | May God bestow grace upon you. |

0.4.2 To someone who has performed the prayer (*ṣalāt*)

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>taqabbal allāh</i> | <i>minni u-minnak</i> |
| May God accept [your prayer] | From me and from you |

0.4.3 Asking someone to be patient/calm down

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <i>ṣalli ^ca-n-nabi</i> | <i>allah yuṣalli ^ca-n-nabi</i> |
| Pray for the Prophet | May God pray for the Prophet |

0.4.4 Asking someone to pass a greeting

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| | / | / |
| <i>sallimallah</i> | | |
| <i>^cala yusal-</i> | | |
| <i>X li-</i> | | |
| <i>mak/byūṣal/ṣār</i> | | |
| <i>^cindu</i> | | |

Give
my
re-
gars
to
so-
and-
so
May
God
pre-
serve
you/It
will
ar-
rive/It
is
with
him

0.4.5 Guest after finishing meal

| | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| <i>dāyima</i> | <i>ṣaḥḥa</i> |
| Always | [I wish you] Health |

Dāyima as a wish for the host always to have food.

or

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| <i>inšalla bi-l-afraḥ</i> | ??? |
| God willing on the weddings | |

0.4.6 To someone who is eating, drinking or sneezing

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| / | |
| <i>ṣaḥḥa/ṣaḥḥatēn</i> | <i>ʿala ʿalbak</i> |
| Health/Two healths | On your heart |

0.4.7 To someone who has purchased something

| | |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| <i>mabrūk</i> | <i>allāh yubārik fīk</i> |
| Blessed | May God bless you |

0.4.8 To someone returning from the restroom

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>šufitum</i> | <i>ʔufitum</i> |
| May you have been healed. | May you have been ... |

I was told about this phrase but have never actually heard it in use. People seem to be aware of it, however, since I have used it jokingly with some measure of success. The pronoun is invariable. I have been told it is used by religiously conservative speakers but I have observed it myself.

0.4.9 To someone who is sick or injured

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>salamtak</i> | <i>allah yusallimak</i> |
| Your health | May God bring bring you health |
