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The Impact of the Phonological System of some European Languages on Arabic

Taoufik Gouma

In this article I show one of the important linguistic impacts of some foreign languages on Arabic. Besides the setting up of many linguistic systems such as the second official language of the country, bilingualism, etc. colonialism had also affected the way Arabic countries transcribe Arabic names using the Latin alphabetical system. We are going to show here some of the most important aspects of this impact and also some related problematic issues. The countries concerned with this study are those of the Maghreb; Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia (French Speaking Countries or FSC henceforth) and the countries of the Gulf; Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, including Egypt (English Speaking Countries or ESC henceforth).

Keywords: Arabic, phonology, phonetics, colonial languages, name transcription, Latin alphabet.

1 A Brief History about Colonialism in the Arabic Countries.

Colonialism is the building and maintaining of colonies in one territory by people from another territory. It is something which has always existed through history, but its reasons are different. People in the first era of existence used to move from one area to another looking for shelter, food, water, etc. Later, by the development of life and its needs, the reasons changed. From the 14th century, powerful countries, such as Spain and England, started to look for other lands in order to acquire more lands, more power and more richness. This process had of course different impacts

(social, political, economic, religious, etc.) on the native people of the settled countries. The most important impact which is of concern here is the linguistic one during the colonial period of some Arabic countries.

In order to facilitate their settlement, the colonial countries had, of course, the obligation to acquire the language of the countries they were planning to colonize. One of the most important methods which helped to do this is what is known as *the orientalist expeditions* in the 18th century. These expeditions, according to some historians (Edward, S. 1978), in addition to the will to understand the Arabic world, its culture, religion, language (more particularly the Arabic dialects spoken in those countries) and its grammar, were also used to facilitate the colonization process.

2 The Fields of the Linguistic Impact.

One of the most important linguistic impacts of colonization is the establishment of many systems using the colonial languages. Two of these systems are of concern here: a) the establishment of administrations and b) the modern educational system.

a) The Administrations.

After their settlement, the colonial forces (France and England) established many administrations. In Morocco for example, the French constructed town halls and other official buildings. They also established the birth certificate, in which the information had to be written in Arabic and French. The problem which rose here is that some sounds of Arabic had no matching symbols in the Latin alphabet. So, alternatives had to be found to solve this problem.

b) The Educational System.

Before the colonization period, most of the Arabic countries used for education what is called *Kuranic*¹ school (or *kuttaab* in Arabic). This latter was, in fact, a kind of traditional school in which children (girls and boys) came to acquire *Kuran* and other religious sciences at their very young ages. During and after the colonial period, this system had almost disappeared in some countries, letting place to the modern educational systems known

¹ The word *Kuranic* refers to the holy book of Muslims '*Kuran*', whose graphic form is one of the problematic examples that will be dealt with in section (3.1.2.b), because this sound has three symbols representing it, in Latin alphabet. These symbols are: *k* for *Koran*, *c* for *Coran* and *q* for *Quran*.

nowadays. This is one of the reasons, why the colonial languages became in all the Arabic countries the second official languages that all native people had to acquire at their youth in the modern schools.

3 The Linguistic Impact.

In this section we get into the main goal of this study. I first give some examples showing in what sense the alphabetical system of the colonial languages did have an impact on that of Arabic. Then, I analyze the data starting by consonants and moving then to vowels in order to show the divergences between the FSC and the ESC in transcribing Arabic names. Finally, I try to explain why do we find these divergences and what are the reasons behind them.

Some of the differences in which we are interested, between the FSC and the ESC, as far as the transcription of Arabic names is concerned, are listed below:

FSC	ESC	IPA
<i>taoufik</i>	<i>taoufiq</i>	[tawfi:q]
<i>taoufik</i>	<i>tawfiq</i>	[tawfi:q]
<i>rachid</i>	<i>rasheed</i>	[raʃi:d]
<i>chaikh</i>	<i>sheikh</i>	[ʃajx]
<i>talal</i>	<i>thalal</i>	[tʰala:l]
<i>najib</i>	<i>najeeb</i>	[naʒi:b]
<i>karim</i>	<i>kareem</i>	[kari:m]
<i>mounir</i>	<i>muneer</i>	[muni:r]

As these examples show, some identical sounds, in these proper Arabic names, have different representations. For instance, the uvular stop [q] is represented as *k* and *q*, the palatal fricative [ʃ] is represented as *ch* and *sh* and the high front vowel [i] is represented as *i* and *ee*. This depends primarily, as was noted before, on the second language of the Arabic countries involved here. Before getting into my analysis, I want to bring the attention of the readers to a very important idea. The cases raised here are not systematic, i. e. we can find sometimes names transcribed in the same way whether the country is a FSC or an ESC. But, the examples I am raising here are a kind of standards that we find in almost all the Arabic names, as far as each group of Arabic countries is concerned. In the section below, I

am going to start by the analysis of consonants and move then to that of the vowels.

3.1 The Consonantal System of Arabic.

It is well known that the Arabic language, with all its dialects, is different phonetically from the Indo-European languages by the presence of some special consonants. These last named fall into two groups: a) the emphatics, known generally as the *pharyngealized* consonants and b) the gutturals, which are consonants articulated in the back region of the vocal tract. I will start this analysis with the emphatics and move then to the gutturals.

3.1.1 The Emphatics.

The emphatic consonants of Arabic have been dealt with by many linguists (Cantineau. 1951, Jakobson. 1957, Cohen. 1969, Ghazali. 1977 and 1981, to name but a few). In regard of their complex articulation, they are said to be generally characterized by a double articulation, i. e. one which is principle and proper to each consonant², and one which is secondary and common to all. This secondary articulation is realized in general, according to many linguists (Cantineau, 1951. Ali and Daniloff, 1972b), in modern Arabic dialects as pharyngealization³; that is, a retraction of the tongue root towards the pharyngeal wall, which makes the pharyngeal cavity narrower and the oral cavity larger. This configuration of the vocal tract turns the concerned consonants grave or flat (according to Jakobson's terminology, 1957. p 161-163).

There are four emphatic consonants⁴ in classical Arabic [t^{e} , d^{e} , s^{e} and ∂^{e} ⁵] which have as non-emphatic variants [t , d , s , ∂]. In some Arabic modern dialects, we find additional emphatics like [z^{e} , r^{e} and l^{e}]. The

² This principal articulation is said to be coronal in general. But, some linguists (Cohen 1969 for example) speak about other emphatics which are bilabial such as [b^{e}] and [m^{e}] for 'ḅaḅa' and 'ṃaṃa' respectively.

³ For more details about this subject, the readers are referred to, Jakobson (1958), Cantineau (1951), Laufer A. & Baer (1988), Ali & Daniloff (1972b) and Ghazali (1976).

⁴ The number of these consonants changes from one Arabic variety to another. Sometimes, we find a difference even inside one variety. For instance, in classical Arabic we have four consonants, whereas in Moroccan Arabic we have six (Gouma 2005, 2008, 2010 (in preparation)).

⁵ In approximatively all modern Arabic dialects, this emphatic consonant is whether substituted by, or merged with another, consonant. For instance, in MA it merged with the emphatic [d^{e}] whereas in EA, it was substituted by the emphatic [z^{e}].

problem with this category of sounds, as far as our analysis is concerned, is that each pair is represented by the same consonant in the Latin alphabet. For instance, if we take s/s^{c} , t/t^{c} or d/d^{c} in some Arabic names, they will be represented by s , t and d respectively. Let's consider the following names:

IPA	Alphabet	IPA	Alphabet
[ʔabu s ^h a.liħ]	'abou ṣalīh'	[saħi:d]	'ṣaid'
[s ^h aber]	'ṣaber'	[sami:r]	'ṣamir'
[ħins ^h af]	'inṣaf'	[ya:sir]	'yassir'
[s ^h aba:ħ]	'ṣabah'	[sama:ħ]	'ṣamah'
[t ^h ariq]	'ṭarik'	[tawfi:q]	'ṭaoufik'
[t ^h ahira]	'ṭahira'	[taha:ni]	'ṭahani'
[d ^h awja]	'ḍaouia'	[dawd]	'ḍaoud'
[d ^h ija:ʔ]	'diyaa'	[fari:d]	'farid'

As we can see from these examples, the emphatic and non emphatic consonants of Arabic are both represented in the Latin alphabet by the same letter [s/s^c] - s , [t/t^c] - t and [d/d^c] - d . This is not actually a serious problem, because we cannot be mistaken in reading these nouns. But, the problem arises when we deal with minimal pairs; that is, when we have two nouns in which the only difference is at the level the emphatic consonant (e.g. [sVC] compared to [s^cVC]), here the need to make a distinction becomes more important. The following proper names illustrate this idea:

IPA	Alphabet	IPA	Alphabet
[s ^h aħe:d]	'(the) said' ⁶	[saħi:d]	'said' ⁷
[s ^h anħa:ʔ]	'sanaa' ⁸	[sana:ʔ]	'sanaa'

In some ESC the emphatic [ð^c]/[d^c] and [t^c] are sometimes represented as [dh] and [th] respectively, such as 'Arriadh'⁹, 'Abu Dhabi'¹⁰ and 'thalal'.

⁶ A region in the north of Egypt.

⁷ The pharyngeal fricative sound [ħ] is also a problematic case which will be dealt with in the next section.

⁸ The capital of Yemen.

⁹ The capital of Saudi Arabia.

¹⁰ An emirate of the United Arab Emirates.

We notice here that the graphemes ‘d’ and ‘t’ are combined with ‘h’ to represent the emphatic sound [ð^h], [d^h] and [t^h]. In these cases we can consider that the ‘h’ points out the emphatic status of these sounds.

3.1.2 The Gutturals.

The term guttural refers, as I said above, to a set of consonants articulated far back in the vocal tract. Among this class we find the velars [x, ɣ], the uvular [q], the pharyngeals [ħ, ʕ] and the laryngeals [h, ʔ]. This class was very often related to that of the emphatics (Jakobson. 1958, Angoujard. 1996), but since our interest is devoted to the representation of these consonants, we are not going to take this issue into consideration¹¹. These consonants will be divided into two groups; a) consonants whose sounds are present in the foreign languages (French and English), and b) consonants whose sounds are not present in those languages. In the next section we are going to deal with the former and in the following, with the latter.

a) The Case of [x], [ɣ].

The gutturals that will be dealt with in this section are [x and ɣ]. These consonants are from a phonological point of view present in almost all the languages of the world. But, graphically speaking, there are few languages in which, these consonants, have graphical characters in their alphabetical inventories. Arabic is particularly one of these languages which have them. The graphemes corresponding to these sounds in Arabic are: x [خ] and ɣ [غ]. If we take a language, like French for example, in which these two sounds exist as allophones of the same phoneme¹², we expect that the proper names, in the FSC, containing one of these sound will be represented in the Latin alphabet by the grapheme ‘r’. What we find actually is that the two sounds are represented differently. The sound [x] is represented by the grapheme ‘kh’ and the sound [ɣ] by the grapheme ‘gh’. This is shown by the following examples of Arabic nouns transcribed into Latin alphabet following the French modal:

¹¹ For more information about this subject, the readers are referred to Angoujard (1997a) and Jakobson (1958).

¹² In this language when the [r] is preceded by a voiceless sound it is realized as [x] and when it is preceded by a voiced sound it is realized as [ɣ]. As examples we have ‘prendre’ as [pʁɑ̃dʁ] and ‘tracteur’ as [tʁaktœʁ] for [χ] and ‘bruit’ as [bʁwi] and ‘arbre’ as [ɑʁbʁ] for [ɣ].

<i>IPA</i>	<i>Arabic</i>	<i>French</i>
[ʕabdelɣani]	عبد الغني	abdel <u>gh</u> ani
[ɣa:lja]	غالية	<u>gh</u> alia
[ɣizlæɲ]	غزلان	<u>gh</u> izlaine
[xalid]	خالد	<u>kh</u> alid
[baxta]	بختة	bak <u>h</u> ta
[xali:l]	خليل	<u>kh</u> alil

The choice of the two graphemes ‘*kh*’ and ‘*gh*’ to represent the sounds [x] and [ɣ] of Arabic instead of the grapheme ‘*r*’ is not arbitrary. In fact, this can be explained by the following reason: the grapheme ‘*r*’ represents in many languages the alveolar trill, like in the Spanish word *perro* ‘dog’. As the same sound exists in Arabic, it is this grapheme ‘*r*’ which is used to represent it. Here are some examples showing this:

<i>IPA</i>	<i>Arabic</i>	<i>French</i>
[rabi:ʔ]	ربيع	rabiï
[muni:r]	منير	mounir
[raʔida]	رشيدة	<u>r</u> achida
[ʔkram]	إكرام	ik <u>r</u> ame

But, what about the choice of the graphemes *k*, *g* followed by *h*? This is not also arbitrary. From a phonetic point of view, the two sounds [x] and [ɣ] are velars and the consonants *k*, *g* are also velars. The only difference between the two categories concerns their manner of articulation; *k*, *g* are stops and *x*, *ɣ* are fricatives. In general, *x* and *ɣ* are obtained (in certain languages) from *k* and *g* by a phonological process called *spirantization*, which turns a stop [-continuant] into a fricative [+continuant] without changing its place of articulation. The task then is to find a way to refer to this process. The grapheme *h* is undoubtedly the best one, among all the graphemes, which can refer to this process, because of the phonetic features (fricative voiced or voiceless) it represents. We can then consider that the *h* in ‘*kh*’ and ‘*gh*’ works like a diacritic symbol indicating the *fricative* status of the two consonants.

In the case of [ʁ] we find sometimes another grapheme which is 'rh'. This latter is less widespread than 'gh' and we find it more particularly in the FSC. The reason is, according to me, due to the representation of this sound ([ʁ]) by the letter 'r' in French such as *rue* 'street' or *bruit* 'noise'.

b) The Case of [q].

The uvular stop *q* is certainly one of the most important characteristics of the Arabic language. There exist some non Semitic languages which have it, like Haida, Wintu, South-eastern Pomo and also some Caucasian languages like Georgian and Kabardian (Ladefoged & Maddieson 1996, p. 78). The difference is that, in these languages, this segment is realized as an ejective¹³.

As far as the representation of this sound is concerned, we also find a difference between the FSC and the ESC. In the FSC for example, the [q] is generally represented as 'k' whereas in the ESC, it is the grapheme 'q' which is favoured (the 'k' being used for the Arabic sound [k]). We can interpret this difference as showing that English is more faithful to the phonetic aspect of the sound [q] and gives it then the phonetic symbol it corresponds to. On the contrary, the French language gives more importance to normative considerations. That is to say; for the majority of the native speakers of French, the graphemes 'k', 'q' and in some contexts 'c'¹⁴, refer to the same sound/entity [k].

IPA	Arabic	FSC	ESC
[tari:q]	طارق	tari <u>k</u>	tariq
[ʃawqi]	شوقي	chaou <u>k</u> i	chaouqi
[jaqu:t]	ياقوت	ya <u>k</u> out	yaqout
[ʕati:qa]	عتيقة	ati <u>k</u> a	atiqa

c) The Case of [h], [ʕ].

The pharyngeal fricatives of Arabic are also one of the main characteristics of this language. Their phonetic status is very problematic; if some consider them as pharyngeal fricatives, others like Catford (1983),

¹³ Ejectives are segments produced by the action of the closed glottis, while there is an occlusion in the oral cavity. They are present in 18 percent of the languages of the world (Maddieson 1984a).

¹⁴ followed by a back vowel *u*, *o* or *a*.

Ladefoged & Maddieson (1996) and Laufer & Codax (1979, 1981) consider them as approximants. In the Burkikhan dialect of Agul (a Caucasian language) there is a real contrast between the pharyngeal fricatives [ħ, ʕ] and the epiglottal fricative [Ḥ]. Ladefoged & Maddieson (1996) propose then that these consonants might more be properly described as epiglottal approximants rather than pharyngeal fricatives in Arabic.

We are going to let this problem aside and concentrate on the representation of these sounds using the Latin alphabet. In general, there is no difference between the FSC and the ESC as far as the representation of these sounds is concerned. The only difference lies in the stability of the graphemes used for each of the two. In the case of [ħ], the grapheme used is always the same; ‘*h*’ which is a laryngeal fricative, such as:

<i>IPA</i>	<i>Arabic</i>	<i>FSC</i>	<i>ESC</i>
[ħalima]	حليمة	halima	halima
[muħammad]	محمد	mohammed	muhammad ¹⁵
[sʕabah]	صباح	sabah	sabah

This choice depends simply on the phonetic features of the two sounds, i. e. both of them are fricatives and their points of articulation are adjacent. As far as the [ʕ] is concerned, here we find many graphemes. In fact, according to our remarks, the representation of this sound depends on the vowel following it. Let’s consider the following examples:

<i>IPA</i>	<i>Arabic</i>	<i>FSC</i>	<i>ESC</i>
[ʕali]	علي	ali	ali
[saʕid]	سعيد	said	said/ saeed
[saʕud]	سعود	saoud ¹⁶	saud ¹⁷

As we can see, the pharyngeal fricative [ʕ] is always represented by the vowel following it. We can say that we simply omit this pharyngeal from

¹⁵ As one might see, the vowels in [muħammad] are not represented in the same way. This will be analyzed in the next sections which are about the vowels.

¹⁶ Less common in the countries of the Maghreb.

¹⁷ As *Al Saud* the royal family of Saudi Arabia.

the word keeping all the other segments: e. g. [ʕali] → [øali] → ‘ali’, [saʕud] → [saøud] → ‘saoud’ or ‘saud’.

The question we should ask now is: why do we substitute the [ħ] by ‘h’ and the [ʕ] by the vowel following it? Can’t we make the same thing with the [h]? i. e. substituting it by the vowel following it: e. g. [ħalima] → [øalima] → ‘alima’. In the FSC, this is what we exactly find but, only on the level of pronunciation only. French native speakers do not realize the ‘h’ of ‘halima’, they pronounce this name as if it started with a vowel: ‘alima’. This is undoubtedly due to the status of the ‘h’ in French which is often referred to as dark ‘h’ (*h muet*). On the contrary, in English the ‘h’ has a phonetic realization which is between the Arabic [ħ] and [h]. Hence, most of the English native speakers realize the [ħ] as a [h] like fricative.

d) The palatal fricative [ç].

The palatal fricative [ç] is simply one of the clearest examples which illustrate the focus of this subject. In Arabic, the grapheme corresponding to this sound is ‘ش’. In French and English, we have to associate two graphemes in order to obtain it; ‘ch’ in French and English and ‘sh’ in the latter only. The form ‘ch’ is realized differently in the two languages, i. e. as a real fricative [ç] in French and as an affricate [tʃ] in English. It is the form ‘sh’ which is realized as a fricative in English.

In what concerns the Arabic names having this segment, the impact of the second languages of the country is more than obvious. In the FSC, all palatal fricatives are represented by the grapheme ‘ch’ while in the ESC; they are represented by the grapheme ‘sh’. The examples below confirm this claim:

<i>IPA</i>	<i>Arabic</i>	<i>FSC</i>	<i>ESC</i>
[buʕra]	بشرى	<i>bouchra</i>	<i>bushra</i>
[ʔaʕraf]	أشرف	<i>achraf</i>	<i>ashraf</i>
[ʔal ʕara:ħ]	العرائش	<i>larache</i>	_____
[ʔal ʕariqa]	الشارقة	_____	<i>sharjah</i>

After having analyzed the treatment of the consonantal system of Arabic, we turn now to the vocalic system, in order to see how this latter works.

3.2 The Vocalic System of Arabic.

The vocalic system of Arabic is one of the poorest systems in the world languages. It is composed of the three cardinal vowels: *i*, *u* and *a*, present in approximately all the languages and which can be either short or long. In the modern Arabic dialects other vowels can be added to this triangle such as; *e* and *o*. Our concern in this section is to show how are the vocalic sounds of Arabic represented in the transcription of Arabic names.

3.2.1 The vowel [i].

This vowel is transcribed, in general, in two different ways. In the FSC, it is the grapheme ‘*i*’ which represents it, whereas in the ESC, it is the grapheme ‘*ee*’ which is used. This is clearly related to the phonetic realization of both letters in French and English. In French, for instance, the [i] sound is realized in the alphabetic system as *i*. By way of contrast, in English, it is the *e* which corresponds to this sound, the letter *i* being associated to the diphthong [ai]. Here are some examples illustrating this point:

<i>IPA</i>	<i>Arabic</i>	<i>FSC</i>	<i>ESC</i>
[ʔalʒaziːra]	الجزيرة	aljazira	aljazeera
[maʒiːd]	مجيد	majid	majeed
[ħakiːm]	حكيم	hakim	hakeem
[naʒiːb]	نجيب	najib	najeeb

In the FSC, we find sometimes the grapheme ‘*e*’ for the vowel [i]. This happens basically when two conditions are encountered: a) the name should contain either an emphatic or a guttural consonant and b) the vowel ‘*i*’ of the Arabic name should be brief (*ħaraka* or *kasra*) such as: ‘*saleh*’ [sʰaːleħ], ‘*nasser*’ [naːsʰer] and ‘*reda*’ [redʰa].

3.2.2 The vowel [u].

The sound [u] is also affected by this phenomenon. In French, this rounded back vowel is represented graphically by 'ou', whereas in English, we find two representations: 'u' and 'oo'. In relation with the treatment of the vocalic sound [i], we expect that the [u] in the FSC be represented by the grapheme 'ou' and in the ESC by one of the two graphemes; 'u' or 'oo'. This is what we generally find, with a small exception in English.

In the FSC, the vocalic sound [u] is always graphically represented by 'ou' (see the corpus below). However, in some cases it is the grapheme 'o' which is favoured. The two conditions cited before should also be met: a) the name should contain either an emphatic or a guttural consonant and b) the vowel 'u' of the Arabic name should be brief (*ḥaraka* or *damma*) such as: 'doha' [d^oḥa], 'soltana' [s^ol^tana] or 'lotfi' [lotⁱfi].

There is another way to explain this lowering of the vowels 'i' and 'u' if we take into consideration the effect of emphatics and gutturals on adjacent vowels. It is well known that the two last categories of consonants have a lowering phonological impact on vowels; i. e. /i/ lowers to [e] and /u/ to [o]. This is due to the articulatory configuration of the tongue, during the realisation of an emphatic or a guttural, which is lower than that of the other consonants.

In the ESC as we said we have two forms; 'u' and 'oo'. What we noticed is that the form 'u' corresponds either to the brief vowel (*damma*) or appears at the beginning of names starting by a glottal stop followed by 'u'. Whereas the form 'oo' corresponds, in general, to the long vowel [u:] or 'waw', though it is less used, as the examples below show.

<i>IPA</i>	<i>Arabic</i>	<i>FSC</i>	<i>ESC</i>
[<i>dunja</i>]	دنيا	<i>dounia</i>	<i>dunia</i>
[<i>muḥsin</i>]	محسن	<i>mouhssine</i>	<i>muhssine</i>
[<i>da.wu:d</i>]	داود	<i>dawoud</i>	<i>dawood/dawuud</i>
[<i>muḥammad</i>]	محمد	<i>mohammed</i>	<i>muhammad</i>

[<i>um ʔal quwajn</i>]	ام القوين	_____	<i>umm al quwain</i> ¹⁸
[<i>ʔunajzah</i>]	عنيزة	_____	<i>unayzah</i> ¹⁹

4 Results and Conclusions.

We have shown here some of the general graphic tendencies that we found in the FSC and the ESC as far as the transcription of Arabic names, using the Latin alphabet, is concerned. In short, the choice of one form or the other, as was shown in the examples, depends sometimes on the phonetic value of the sound and sometimes on its phonological value. The former was attested basically in the FSC whereas the latter was attested in the ESC. This is, in general, due to the value of the sound concerned in the alphabetical system of the second language of the country. To put the point another way, in the FSC the choice of the graphemes depends on their phonetic realisation in the alphabetical system itself. On the contrary, in the ESC the choice depends on the phonological realisation of the sound in Arabic. The examples on the high front vowel [i] are the best way to illustrate this claim. In fact, in the FSC there is no difference between a long or a brief [i], while in the ESC, this difference is marked by either the ‘i’ or ‘ee’ for brief and long [i] respectively.

This difference can be also explained by the linguistic history of each foreign language. The French language became officially the second language of the countries of the Maghreb through colonisation in the beginning of the 19th century. This process was accomplished by the military forces that had no special knowledge in linguistics. The assimilation of the Arabic names was done on the basis of perception only and the choice of the transcriptions, then, was a matter of appreciation. However, in the ESC, the contact with the English language has taken place a century before. It started by what we called the ‘*orientalist’s expeditions*’ in the beginning of the 18th century. This process was accomplished by many scientists among which we find many linguists, such as Wallin, Brückce, Rosenmüller to name but a few. Their purpose, among others, was to describe and understand the Arabic language and its varieties in the best possible way. This may explain why we find, in the ESC, transcriptions referring basically to the phonological realization of the sound concerned.

¹⁸ A city of the UAE.

¹⁹ A city in Saudi Arabia.

We have seen also that the grapheme ‘*h*’ has a special status in Arabic transcription in the sense that we combine it with many other letters. For instance, we may combine it (as was seen) with *c* or *s* to represent the sound [ʃ], like ‘chakir’ and ‘Al Sharjah’²⁰ or with *p* for the sound [ʃ]²¹, like ‘moustapha’. As far as *ch/sh* are concerned, we noticed that the FSC use more the form *ch* for the sound [ʃ], where as the ESC, represent the same sound by the form *sh* (cf. Section 3.1.2.d).

The conclusion we got about the ‘*h*’ is that the fact to combine it with *c/s* for [ʃ], with *p* for [f] and with *k/g* for [x, ɣ] is phonetically motivated. Its voiceless/fricative features are well adapted to the sounds concerned. But, we don’t understand why the same grapheme (*h*) is also combined with *d* and *t* for [ðʕ]/[dʕ] and [tʕ] respectively. In what concerns [ðʕ], its only common feature with [h] is the frication. So why do we use the letter *h* as a sort of diacritic for emphaticness and frication at the same time?

Finally and in spite of all what was said and shown about the transcription of Arabic names, there exists many cases which do not correspond to the results found in this work. We find, for example, in the ESC some names with the vowel [u] being represented by the grapheme ‘*ou*’ as in the FSC, such as the name of the city ‘*al mansouriyah*’ in Saudi Arabia or that of ‘*al maamoura*’ in Qatar. A more detailed study is undoubtedly needed to explain these controversies.

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²⁰ One of the UAE

²¹ This combination is also found in Indo-European languages

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