An Investigation of Exclamatives in Arabic and English: at the Pragmatics-Syntax Interface

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Abstract
This study investigates the cross-linguistic variations of exclamatives in Arabic and English. It discusses the defining characteristics of exclamatives in Arabic, contrasting them with other exclamatory constructions in English, and examines the pragmatic features and the syntactic components in the two languages.

Keywords: Speech acts; Exclamatives; Arabic

1. Introduction

This study examines the characteristic properties of exclamatives, a wide-spread category in the world's languages. Few studies dealt with exclamatives as a clause type (Zanuttini and Portner 2003:1). An exclamation is a type of sentence which is used to express the speaker's feeling or attitude (Leech & Svartvik 1975:230). Exclamatives are sometimes defined on grammatical and sometimes on pragmatic grounds. As a grammatical category, the term is used to refer to a syntactic minor sentence-type together with declarative and imperative sentence types (Quirk et al.1985). The term 'exclamation' is used to refer to one of the sentence functions together with statement, question, and command. Sadock and Zwicky (1985) and Radford (1997) also consider exclamatives as a syntactic phenomenon.

According to (Beijer 2002:5) an exclamative is better defined by its pragmatic function than by its sentence type alone, as there are only three sentence types: declaratives, interrogatives and imperatives. Beijer explains that "all ... functional meanings, illocutionary use potentials can be derived on the bases of the three syntactic sentence types / sentence moods plus the interpretively relevant properties of the additional (structural, lexical, prosodic etc.) elements involved" (2002: 5). Sadock and Zwicky (1985) define clause types as a pairing of grammatical form and conversational use. the form/use relationship (Zanuttini and Portner 2003:1).

2. Pragmatic features of Exclamatives: Form versus function

From a pragmatic point of view, an exclamative utterance is considered a type of expressive speech acts. In general, the illocutionary force of a speech act may be expressed by verb mood or sentence types (Vanderveken 2001: 26). Thus, in English and other languages the assertive, directive, and expressive speech acts are respectively expressed in the utterances of declarative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences. The exclamatory intonation and the wh-phrase consisting of "how" followed by an adjective (e.g. "how nice", "how sad") or "what" followed by an indefinite noun (e.g. "what a man") convey the expressive illocutionary force in exclamatory sentences. The meaning of the wh-phrase serves to determine the particular type

of mental states which are expressed in the speech act. For example, an exclamatory sentence such as ."How glad he is!" is used to express pleasure or joy. Vanderveken (1990:108) argues that only assertive, directive, and expressive illocutionary acts are realized syntactically in a verb mood or sentence type in English and in most other languages. In the utterance of exclamatory sentences, speakers always express special psychological states whose mode is determined by the meaning of the adjectives which follow the adverb "how" in exclamatives. Thus, for example, by saying "How sad he is dead!" a speaker expresses his sadness, while by saying " How glad I am about it", he expresses his joy (Vanderveken 1990:127). Exclamatives are conventionally associated with certain structures, for example:

(1) a. What a nice guy he is! (cf. *What a nice guy is he?)
    b. How very tall she is! (cf. *How very tall is she?)

Both of these have an initial WH phrase. Other syntactic structures that have the pragmatic force of exclamatives are, for instance, interrogatives, as in:

(2) Boy, can he run!

Quirk et al. (1972) consider these structures as questions in form that function like exclamations. Similarly, Quirk et al. (1985) consider them to be syntactically interrogatives but semantically exclamations. Declaratives, too, can express an exclamation.

(3) He can run!

As there is no simple relation of language form to language function, the syntactic form has nothing to do with the illocutionary force of utterances.

Rather than relying on their surface structures we should analyze (indirectly) the deep structure of ordinary sentences (Vanderveken 2001:29). The underlying structure of an exclamative is different from that of the other speech act categories. The underlying structure is a paraphrase, composed of (illocutionary force + proposition). The illocutionary force is the part of the paraphrase which corresponds to

the function of the utterance. Mention must be made of the fact that any speech act can be expressed via using a performative verb. In terms of Ross's (1970) Performative Hypothesis, every sentence has a higher clause with the properties of a performative, except that an exclamative cannot be expressed by using a performative verb. Notice that in Table 1, the underlying structure of the exclamative is in fact an assertion.

Table 1
Underlying Structure of an Exclamative

Surface	He did not open the door!
Underlying	I am surprised that [he did not open the door!]
	I am astonished that [he did not open the door!]

The underlying structure of an exclamative is in the form of assertion or a representative speech act. Beijer (2002) quotes Rosengren (1997), who argues that "exclamatives are different from standard illocution, since they are direct expressive/emotional expressions, and do not propositionalise their emotional meaning in the way expressives proper do" (Beijer 2002:7). Beijer further comments that propositionalising an emotion means talking about it (2002: 11). Exclamatory emotions cannot be expressed in propositional form; this shows the importance of emotion in communication. Sometimes there is discord between the words uttered and the message communicated. Even if an exclamative does not have the default structures *What* or *how*, it still can be communicated through emotion. This fact drives Gilbert (1998) to propose an emotional message act in addition to the speech act. According to Gilbert (1998), the emotional message act is the 'handmaiden' of the speech act. The emotional act includes nonverbal or nondiscursive communications such as tone, innuendo, nuance… etc. Following Van Eemeren & Grootendorst (1984), Gilbert (1998) states that "even speech acts, take place 'implicitly' or 'indirectly' i.e., without words" (1998: 3).

An indirect speech act can be recognized via the 'transformative power' of context in assigning specific illocutionary forces to utterances (Capone 2005:1358). Mey (2001) discusses the idea of the pragmeme; speech acts, in order to be effective, have to be situated.

That is to say, they both influence and are influenced by the situation in which they are realized. Other forms of exclamatory sentences are recognized by features of the situation. In isolation, all utterances without context are indeterminate (Capone 2005:1356).

3. Exclamatives in terms of Explicatures

Exclamative utterances may be interpreted in terms of explicature; this allows us to better determine their expressive point. Explicature involves pragmatic expansion and completion of the semantically incomplete sentence. Pragmatic enrichment aids to interpret the original message by supplying a context. It helps in conveying what is communicated, not just what is linguistically encoded. In addition, Bach (1999) presents the term impliciture, i.e. a pragmatic supplementation which helps to produce a full proposition. The term 'explicature' is introduced in (Sperber and Wilson 1986). It is termed 'enrichment' in (Sequeiros 2002). Whatever the term is, this strategy explicate the text by additional words. Sequeiros (2002: 1070) stresses the need for pragmatic enrichment since the semantic representation is not complete. The utterance's logical form is completed by this process of enrichment, a powerful technique in pragmatics.

Understanding an utterance involves not only its linguistic meaning but its appropriate use in a particular situation. The use of context is part and parcel of pragmatics. Without a contextual situation, an utterance cannot be interpreted. Comprehension is realized by associating or connecting the new information verbalized in the text with the knowledge of the world or of a particular situation (Nord 1991: 88-89).

Bach (1999) presents an underdetermined semantics in which pragmatic aspects of meaning contribute to what is said. He acknowledges that understanding semantically incomplete sentence requires pragmatic supplementation. This pragmatic supplementation explains the relationship between semantics and pragmatics. The context can be used to explain how pragmatics complements semantics (1999: 6). Similarly to Bach, Carston (1999) maintains that pragmatics enriches semantics. Semantic entailments are enriched pragmatically to reach a complete proposition. This enrichment is achieved either

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through explicature (by inferentially developing the logical form) or through implicature (by inference only). Carston's approach builds on Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory (1986), an approach which replaces purely rational communication by appealing to innate principles of cognitive processes and information processing; it maximizes contextual effects at a minimum of processing cost.

4. Pragmatic Analysis of Exclamatives

Pragmatic information is characterized by a distinctive orientation. It represents extra-textual or external factors. These factors in the narrow sense of the word refer to place and time of communication (situationality) and in its broad sense to the relationship between the producer and receptor of an utterance (intentionality and acceptability) (Bell 1991: 209). According to Bell, pragmatic information is concerned with the use of code for communication. It has three important features: situationality, intentionality and acceptability. Situationality refers to the appropriate use in a particular situation, intentionality refers to the intention of the producer, and acceptability refers to the effect of an utterance. Another point worth mentioning is that pragmatic information goes beyond the syntactic and semantic code of the text. Therefore, pragmatic enrichment helps to interpret exclamative utterances by supplying a context. As this study shows, exclamatives are thus better interpreted in terms of explicatures. Consider the following examples:

(4) He can run!

The words in this exclamative utterance have two possible meanings.

(4) a. He can run very well!
    b. He cannot run very well!

Notice also the following example in which the meanings of words do not by themselves express a complete thought.

(5) What a man he is!

The utterance is ambiguous because it is not clear whether a positive or

a negative meaning is intended. Consider the following utterance in which meaning is semantically incomplete.

(6) He is too old!

The utterance, too, can be used in a positive meaning or in a negative meaning. The following shows these pragmatically enriched exclamatives, with possible explicatures given in brackets:

(7) He can run! [well done]
(8) What a man he is! [I am indebted to him so much]
(9) He is too old! [to be a good player]

Thus, the linguistic meaning of an exclamative utterance underdetermines speaker meaning. In other words, exclamatives are better interpreted by the use of pragmatic enrichment or explicature.

5. Syntactic Features of Exclamatives in Arabic

Arabic shows an interesting type of exclamative construction. There are two types of exclamatives in Arabic. The first type is rhetorical; it is governed by speakers' choice or use of language. Rhetorical exclamatives have no fixed form and are entertained via context. In this type language speakers use the vocative particle /ya:/ or words such as /lilah/ or / šadda/ or /9ajabtu/ or /sobHan/.(Hassan 1981) Consider the following examples of the first type:

(10) Arabic: ياله من رجل
Trans: /ya:-la-hu min rajulin/
Gloss: Oh.voc of a-man.gen
English: What a man he is

(11) Arabic: لله درك
Trans: /li-llahi darru-ka/
Gloss: for god.gen your-work.gen
English: Your work is for God!

(12) Arabic: شد ما يفخر الرجل
Trans: /šadda ma yafxaru r-rajulu/

Gloss: much what be-proud-of.imperf.3sg.masc the-man.nom
English: The man is too much proud!

(13) Arabic: عجبت لمن يجهل الأمر
Trans: /9ajib-tu li-man yajhalu l-?amra/
Gloss: wonder.perf.1sg for who be-unaware-of.imperf.3sg.masc the-matter.acc
English: I wonder who doesn't know the matter!

(14) Arabic: سبحان الله
Trans: /sobHana ?allah/
Gloss: praise god.nom
English: Glory to God!

Rhetorical exclamatives can be expressed through interrogative forms.

(15) Arabic: من يبالى؟
Trans: /man yuba:li/
Gloss: who cares.imperf.3sg.masc
English: Who cares?

The second type of exclamatives in Arabic is idiomatic or formulaic. It is standardized or has fixed rules. There are two main formulas. The first formula is the use of particle /ma/ and a verb form based on the pattern /?af9ala/, i.e. Arabic verb formation in this formula is based on the triconsonantal root /?af9ala/ (Hassan 1981). Verbs are formed by substituting the three consonants /f+9+l/ and preserving the vowels. The verb is followed by a noun phrase that functions as an object.

(16) Arabic: ما أضخم الهرم
Trans: /ma ?aDxama l-harama/
Gloss: ma.exc made-big.perf.3sg.masc the-pyramid.acc
English: How big the pyramid is!

This formula can be considered as a process of transformation. In its underlining structure the noun phrase is the subject. The verb is considered a transitive verb. Notice the following underlining structure.

(17)Arabic: ضخم الهرم

    Trans: /Daxuma l-harama/

    Gloss: made-big.perf.3sg.masc the-pyramid.nom

    English: The pyramid is big.

The second formula is the use of an imperative verb form, i.e. Arabic verb formation in this formula is based on the triconsonantal root /?af9il/. Verbs are formed by substituting the three consonants /f+9+l/ and preserving the vowels. The verb is followed by a prepositional phrase (Hassan 1981). The prepositional phrase has the structure /bi/ as a preposition and a noun phrase which is in the genitive case.

Notice the following example.

(18)Arabic: أجمل بالوردة الحمراء

    Trans: /?ajmil bi-l-wardati l-Hamra?/

    Gloss: beautify.imp with the-red-rose.gen

    English: Beautify the red rose!

Hassan (1981) proposes a descriptive view of exclamatives. In his view, a regular exclamatory verb should fulfill the following characteristics:

1- The verb is originally, i.e. before transformation, a past verb form based on the pattern /fa9ala/. After transformation the verb turns to be tense-less.

2- It is originally a triconsonantal verb. Verbs based on the patterns /istaf9ala/ or /tafa9ala/ such as the verbs استفهم /?istafhama/ and تعاون /ta9awana/ cannot be used in exclamatory formulas.

3- It is originally conjugated, it has different forms depending on number, tense, etc. After transformation it turns to be defective.

4- It is semantically a proposition with a gradable content, i.e. it can be used in comparative and superlative forms. The comparative and superlative degrees of the adjectives in Arabic are formulated following the pattern /af9alu/.

5- Verbs used in this formula cannot be negative. Exclamatory utterances are positive.

6. Syntactic Features of Exclamatives in English

The grammarians' choice to describe exclamatives in English as one of the sentence types is based on the fact that most of exclamatives begin with what or how without inversion of subject and operator. These utterances cannot be easily categorized as declaratives or as interrogatives.

(19) What a shoddy trick it is!
 (20) How shoddy that is!

Exclamatives in English can be shortened to a noun phrase or an adjective phrase:

(21) *What a girl* in what a girl she is.
(22) *How funny* in How funny it is. (Leech & Svartvik 1975:134)

Exclamatives in English can be a yes-no question with an emphatic falling tone. The most common type has a negative form:

(23) Hasn't she grown! (she's grown very very much)
(24) Wasn't it a marvelous concert! (the speaker vigorously invites the hearer's agreement; the effect is similar to It was a marvelous concert, wasn't it? (Leech & Svartvik 1975:136)

Zanuttini & Portner (2000) and Portner & Zanuttini (2000) discuss a number of criteria which can be established for identifying exclamative clauses. The three properties are: factivity, scalar implicature and inability to function in question/answer pairs (Zanuttini and Portner 2003:6). The first property, factivity, was first pointed out by Grimshaw (1979). The factivity of exclamatives is made clear by two facts. First, they can only be embedded under factive predicates, as seen in

(25) Mary knows/*thinks/*wonders how very cute he is.

Second, when they are embedded under a verb like know or realize, in the present tense and with a first person subject, this verb cannot be negated:

(26) *I don't know/realize how very cute he is. (Zanuttini and Portner 2003:7)

The second property is that exclamatives are distinguished with some propositional properties, referred to as scalar implicature. Exclamatives introduce a conventional scalar implicature to the effect that the proposition they denote lies at the extreme end of some contextually given scale. Thus, How very cute he is! presupposes that his degree of cuteness is greater than the alternatives under consideration (Zanuttini and Portner 2003:7). According to Beijer (2002), an exclamative must contain a scalar item which can be explicit or inferable. The speaker expresses a proposition of a certain value on some scale. Exclamatives may include adjectives or adverbs which indicate extreme positions on scale.

(27) She is so beautiful.
(28) How beautiful she is.

The high degree of beauty is on the scale of beauty. An expressive must express a deviation from a norm. This is clear in exclamatives consisting of that-clauses.

(29) That she could be so ruthless (Berjer 2002: 10)

The fact that she could be so ruthless is something remarkable. Zanuttini and Portner go further to explain two facts. First, exclamatives cannot be embedded under It isn't amazing, though they can be embedded under its positive counterpart:

(30) a. *It isn't amazing how very cute he is!
     b. It is amazing how very cute he is!

The second, related property is that (30)a becomes good if it is questioned, whereas (30)b becomes ungrammatical:

(31) a. Isn't it amazing how very cute he is?
     b. *Is it amazing how very cute he is? (Zanuttini and Portner 2003:8)

The third property which distinguish exclamatives from interrogatives and declaratives is their inability to function in question/answer pairs. Obviously, interrogatives characteristically serve to ask a question. Exclamatives may not do so.

(32) A: How tall is he? B: Seven feet.
(33) A: How very tall he is! B: *Seven feet. / He really is! / Indeed! / No he's not! (Zanuttini and Portner 2003:8)

7. Difference between Exclamatives and Interrogatives

In English, exclamative clauses differ from interrogatives in that they cannot occur with subject-auxiliary inversion. Explicit exclamatives contain a wh-phrase, but indirect exclamatives cannot be determined by form alone:

(34) a. He's so cute! (Declarative)
    b. Isn't he the cutest thing! (Interrogative) (Zanuttini and Portner 2003:1)

Another observation by (Grimshaw, 1979, 321-322) is the fact that exclamatives cannot serve as answers to questions (Villalba 2004:5):

(35) Q: How tall is John?
    A: #How tall John is!

In Arabic there are two morphemes that can distinguish the exclamatory sentences from the interrogative sentences: verb endings and the definite article. First, in exclamatory sentences the verb is in the subjunctive mood which is realized by the final vowel /a/ but in interrogative sentence the superlative form which is based on the pattern /?af9alu/ is in the indicative mood which is realized by the final vowel /u/. A feature of Arabic exclamatives is that the verb has to c-command the noun phrase. Second, noun phrases in exclamatory sentences are preceded by the definite morpheme /al/ but in interrogative sentences noun phrases are not defined or cannot be

preceded by the definite morpheme /?al/. Notice the following example.

(36) Arabic: ! ما أجمل الوردة
    Trans: /ma ?ajmala l-wardata/
    Gloss: ma.exc made-beautiful.perf.3sg.masc the-rose.acc
    English: How beautiful the rose is.

(37) Arabic: ؟ ما أجمل وردة
    Trans: /ma ?ajmalu wardatin/
    Gloss: ma.Interr the-most-beautiful.super rose.nom
    English: What is the most beautiful rose?.

In English the noun can be indefinite.

(38) How beautiful a rose is!

8. Word Order

Exclamatory utterances have fixed word order, as seen in the following English exclamatives:

(39) What a nice man he is!
(40) *He is what a nice man
(41) How useful knowledge is!
(42) *Knowledge is how useful

As Ono (2006:1-2) puts it, the word order within the exclamative wh-phrases in English shows quite peculiar properties. It looks like the fronted phrase consists of two parts as in (39) and (40): a wh-phrase and a "full" determiner phrase DP, i.e. a phrase which comprises a determiner and a noun.

(43) [What a big car] he bought!
(44) [How big a car] he bought!

The DPs that can appear inside of an exclamative wh-phrase seem to be quite limited. For example, the DP has to be either singular with a determiner a, or plural. Note that a definite determiner the, or a

quantifier such as *some* is never allowed to appear in the exclamative wh-phrases.

(45) *[What the big car] he bought!
(46) *[What some big car] he bought!.

Formulaic exclamatives in Arabic have fixed word order.

(47) Arabic: ما أجمل الوردة الحمراء
    Trans: /ma ?ajmala l-wardata l-Hamra?a/
    Gloss: ma.exc made-beautiful.perf.3sg.masc the-red-rose.acc
    English: How beautiful the red rose is.

(48) Arabic: *الوردة الحمراء ما اجمل
    Trans: / ?al-wardata l-Hamra?a ma ?ajmala/
    Gloss: the-red-rose.acc ma.exc made-beautiful.perf.3sg.masc

9. Pied-piping

Compared to *wh*-interrogatives, the fronted exclamative *wh*-phrases do not like to be prepositional phrases. Preposition pied-piping is not allowed in *wh* interrogatives, and so is investigating what accounts for the contrast between interrogatives and exclamatives (Ono 2006:2). The basic paradigm is shown here:

(49) a. * To what a crook he lent his house!
    b. To which crook did he lend his house?
(50) a. * With what strange men she danced!
    b. With which men did she dance?
(51) a. * In what a charming house they live!
    b. In which house do they live?

10. Island Construction

No parenthetical expressions can be inserted between the verb and the noun phrase in Arabic.

(52) Arabic: *ما أجمل – حقا - الوردة
    Trans: /ma ?ajmala Haqqan ?al-wardata/

Gloss: ma.exc made-beautiful.perf.3sg.masc really the-red-rose.acc

(53) Arabic: ما أضخم – يقينا – الهرم*

Trans: /ma ?aDxama yaqi:nan ?al-harama/

Gloss: ma.exc made-big.perf.3sg.masc surely the-pyramid.acc

In English no parenthetical expression is inserted after the what-structure or the how-structure.

(54) *What a good man, really, he is!
(55) *How big, really, the pyramid is!

In Arabic it is only prepositional phrases and vocatives that can be inserted between the verb and the noun phrase.

(56) Arabic: ما أضخم – فى بلدنا - الهرم

Trans: /ma ?aDxama fi: baladi-na l-harama/

Gloss: ma.exc made-big.perf.3sg.masc in our-country the-pyramid.acc

English: How big the pyramid is in our country!

(57) Arabic: ما أجمل - يا اخى - الصداقة

Trans: /ma ?ajmala ya: ?axi S-Sadaqata/

Gloss: ma.exc made-beautiful.perf.3sg.masc oh brother friendship.acc

English: How useful friendship is, my brother!

In English prepositional phrases and vocatives cannot be inserted after the what-structure or the how-structure.

(58)*How big in our country the pyramid is!
(59)*How useful my brother friendship is!

11. Coordination

In Arabic the noun phrase in the exclamatory utterances cannot be coordinated with another noun phrase.

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(60) Arabic: *ما أجمل الوردة والكتاب

Trans: /ma ?ajmala l-wardata wa l-kita:b/

Gloss: ma.exc made-beautiful.perf.3sg.masc the-rose.acc and the-book.acc

It is only the verb in Arabic exclamatives which can be coordinated with another verb.

(61) Arabic: ما أجمل و أضخم الهرم

Trans: /ma ?ajmala wa ?aDxama l-harama/

Gloss: ma.exc made-beautiful.perf.3sg.masc and made-big.perf.3sg.masc the-pyramid.acc

English: How beautiful and how big the pyramid is!

12. Negation

Exclamatory constructions are not negated. Adjective wh-exclamatives reject negation altogether:

(62) How strong Maria is!

As for Nominal wh-exclamatives, the negative property of 'not-having' is at odds

(63) *What a big house it is not!
(64) *What a big house he has not!

But with verbs other than to-be and to-have negation can be used (Villalba 2004:5), (Ono 2006).

(65) What a big house he has not bought!
(66) Poor boy. How many experiences he won't live anymore!'
(67) How many books (s)he didn't wanted to read!

13. Conclusion

This study has investigated the cross-linguistic variations of exclamatives in English and Arabic. It deals with the main characteristics of exclamatives in English, contrasting them with other

exclamatory constructions in Arabic. A very important finding of the study is that Arabic and English share some of the pragmatic features of exclamatives. Even so, each language exhibits particular properties in its syntactic constructions.

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Appendix A: List of Abbreviations

perf	Perfect
imperf	Imperfect
neg.	Negation
pl	Plural
sg	Singular
masc	Masculine
f	Feminine
nom	nominative
accu	accusative
indef	Indefinite
gen	genitive
voc	vocative
exc	exclamative

Appendix B: Transcription Conventions

The study uses the following symbols to represent Arabic sounds:

Consonants

Arabic	symbol	
ب	/b/	voiced bilabial stop
ت	/t/	voiceless dental stop
ث	/θ/	voiceless interdental fricative
ج	/j/	voiced alveo-palatal affricate
ح	/H/	voiceless pharyngeal fricative
خ	/x/	voiceless uvular fricative
د	/d/	voiced dental stop
ذ	/ð/	voiced interdental fricative
ر	/r/	alveolar trill
ز	/z/	voiced dento-alveolar fricative
س	/s/	voiceless dento-alveolar fricative
ش	/š/	voiceless alveo-palatal fricative
ص	/S/	voiceless dento-alveolar emphatic fricative
ض	/D/	voiced dento-alveolar emphatic stop
ط	/T/	voiceless dento-alveolar emphatic stop
ظ	/Z/	voiced dental emphatic fricative
ع	/9/	voiced pharyngeal fricative
غ	/G/	voiced uvular fricative
ف	/f/	voiceless labio-dental fricative
ق	/q/	voiceless uvular stop
ك	/k/	voiceless velar stop
ل	/l/	voiced alveolar lateral
م	/m/	voiced bilabial nasal
ن	/n/	voiced alveolar nasal
ه	/h/	voiceless glottal fricative
و	/w/	voiced bilabial approximant
ى	/y/	voiced palatal approximant
ء	/?/	voiced glottal stop

Vowels:

/i/ high front.   /i:/ its long counterpart
/u/ high back   /u:/ its long counterpart
/a/ low central   /a:/ its long counterpart