

# 3arabizi

and other oddities of Arabic language interactions with  
modern technology

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# A quick primer on Arabic writing system

- Arabic is an alphabet<sup>1</sup>
  - <sup>1</sup>: technically an Abjad<sup>2</sup>
    - <sup>2</sup>: Technically, technically, Arabic is an impure abjad
- In alphabets-based writing systems, each sound maps to a glyph
  - At least that's the original intention, but then you get crazy languages like English

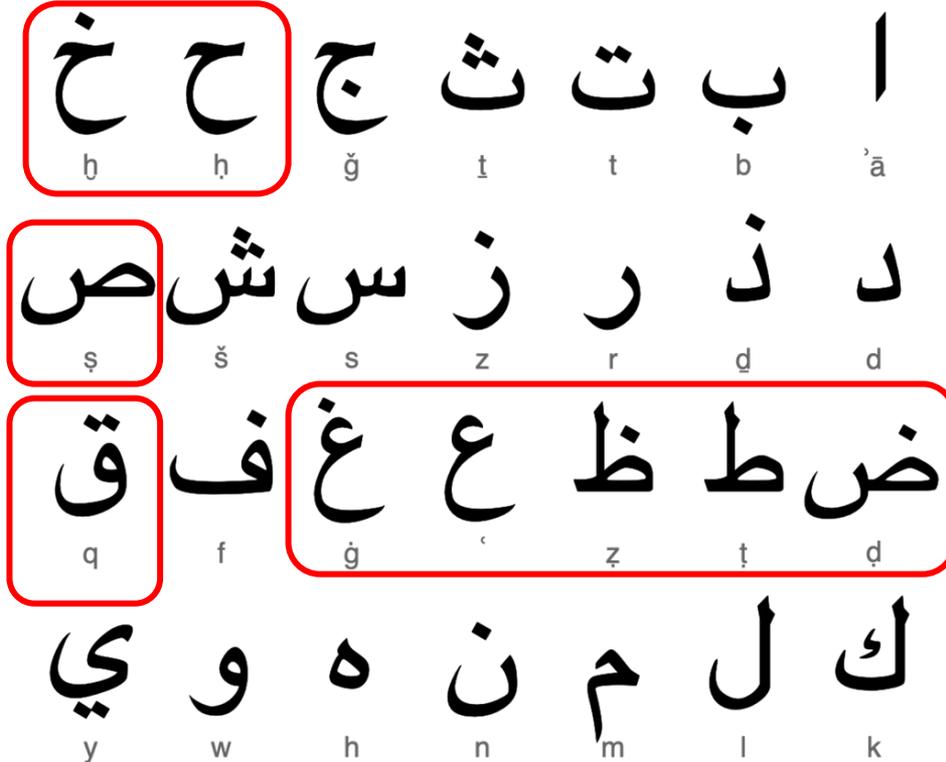
# Arabic alphabet

ا	ب	ت	ث	ج	ح	خ
'a	b	t	t	ǧ	ḥ	ḫ
د	ذ	ر	ز	س	ش	ص
d	ḍ	r	z	s	š	ṣ
ض	ط	ظ	ع	غ	ف	ق
ḍ	ṭ	ẓ	ʿ	ġ	f	q
ك	ل	م	ن	ه	و	ي
k	l	m	n	h	w	y

Arabic, like most widely used alphabets, has a Pheonician origin

Arabic		Greek		Value
'alif	ا	alpha	A	1
bā'	ب	bēta	B	2
ǧīm	ج	gamma	Γ	3
dāl	د	delta	Δ	4
hā'	ه	epsilon	E	5
wāw	و	wau	F	6
zāy	ز	zēta	Z	7
ḥā'	ح	ēta	H	8

# A quick primer on Arabic writing system



That was a problem for the SMSing...



Using English alphabet to write Arabic has big issues



سحور (pre-dawn meal)

Shoor (?)

# 3arabizi!

- 3arabizi = Arabi + Inglizi (i.e. Arabic + English)
- 3arabizi is an unofficial writing system that emerged in the 90s
- Became widespread with the the use of instant messaging and SMSing



# 3arabizi map

Arabic	3arabizi	IPA	Closest English
ء	2	ʔ	A (glottal stop)
ع	3	ʕ	A(??)
غ	3'	ɣ	Gh
ط	6	tʕ	T
ظ	6'	ðʕ	Dh
ح	7	ħ	H
خ	7'	x	Kh
ق	8	q	K/G
ص	9	sʕ	S
ض	9'	dʕ	Dh

2 ↔ ء

3 ↔ ع

6 ↔ ط

7 ↔ ح

9 ↔ ظ

Arabic	3arabizi
ء	2
ع	3
غ	3'
ط	6
ظ	6'
ح	7
خ	7'
ق	8
ص	9
ض	9'

## Examples

عربي	شو عم تعمل بالحديقة؟
3arabizi	Shu 3am ta3mel bel7adi8a?
English	What r u doing at the park?

## Examples

عربي	خليني شوفك عل 8 الصبح
3arabizi	'7allini shufak 3al 8 i9ib7
English	Let me see you at 7am

## ʕarabizi is kinda controversial

- Arabic standardization is old (1400+ years old)
- But no one speaks standard Arabic as a mother tongue!
- Cultural criticism of ʕarabizi usually come from a prescriptionist place
- The same prescriptionist critiques usually criticize non-standard Arabic dialects overall

Movies, signs, tattoos, and others fucking up  
Arabic script: A rant

## Two important rules of Arabic script

1. Arabic is written right-to-left
2. Arabic is always written “cursively”

Two important rules of Arabic script

براء عرابي

Baraa Orabi

Baraa Orabi

## Two important rules of Arabic script

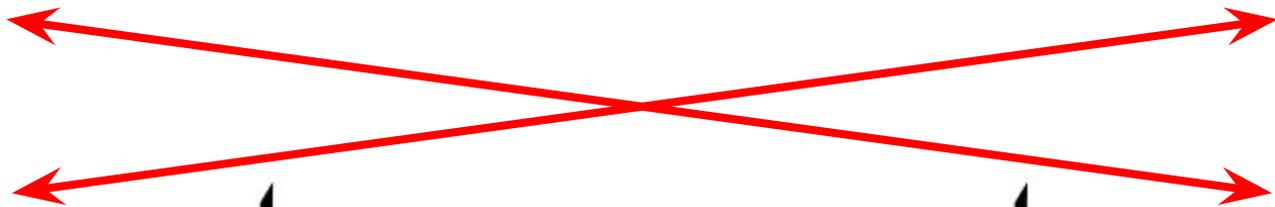
ع ر ا ب ي      ب ر ا ء

Computers were not  
designed with this in  
mind!!!

A lot of graphic design software fails to render Arabic by default

براءة عربا بي

يب اربع ء ارب



So much gone wrong in these tattoos



Left-to-right,  
broken, and terrible  
typeface!

Even Arrival, a movie about linguistics, got it wrong 🙄🧐



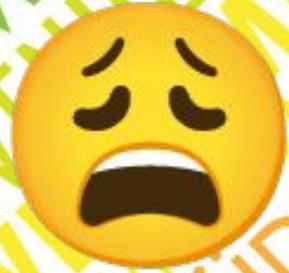


BIENVENIDOS  
BIENVENUELA

SELAMAT DATANG  
WELCOME  
BIENVENUE

歡迎  
WELKOM

BIENVENUE  
WILKOMMEN



ÜDVÖZLET  
HAYKUYKUY!  
TERE TULEMAST



الها  
الها  
WIT



Thanks for listening to  
my rant and talk!

