

# Colours Terms across Two Generations in Constantine

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## Abstract

This study investigates how speakers from two generations of the dialect of Constantine use colour terms. The dialect under study is the Arabic Algerian dialect used in the city of Constantine. The initial aim behind this paper is to explaining how speakers of the dialect name the shades and then compare their uses between the old generation having the age between 55 and 64 and the new one aging between 25 and 34. Colours' shades terms were collected from the old generation and questionnaires were administered to the young generation to investigate their knowledge of these terms. The work shows that the dialect of Constantine has undergone both a generational and a communal change concerning the colouring shades terms.

**Key Words:** Constantine, Dialect of Constantine, Colour terms, Language change, Generational change, Communal change, Apparent time study.

## Résumé

Cette étude examine utilisation des termes de couleur par les locuteurs de deux générations du dialecte de Constantine. Le dialecte étudié est un dialecte Arabe Algérien utilisé dans la ville de Constantine. L'étude est réalisée en adoptant une étude comparative. On cherchant à savoir comment les locuteurs du dialecte nomme les nuances et ensuite compare leur utilisation par l'ancienne ayant l'âge entre 55 and 64 et la nouvelle génération entre 25 and 34. Les nuances des couleurs ont été recueillies auprès de l'ancienne génération et données à la nouvelle à travers un questionnaire pour voir si cette génération est capable de reconnaître les termes. Le travail montre que le dialecte de Constantin a subi à la fois un changement générationnel et communal concernant les termes de nuance des couleurs.

**Mots clés:** Constantin, dialecte de Constantin, termes de couleur, changement de langue, changement générationnel, changement communal, étude de temps apparent

## **Introduction**

The dialect of Constantine, like almost all the Algerian dialects is an under-researched one. Only few sociolinguistic studies have been conducted to analyse the variety. The majority of these studies were undertaken during the French colonisation of the country by French dialectologists. After independence, to our knowledge, only two studies were devoted to study the variety used in Constantine, we cite the work of Ait-oumeziane (1981) and the one of Laraba (1981). The present comparative study attempts to contribute to the studies of the dialects of Algeria in general and the one of Constantine in particular. It also aims at analysing the way the speakers of the dialect of Constantine use the color terms. The comparison between an old generation, born between 1954 and 1963, and the young generation, born during the decade of 1984 and 1993, helps to gain more insight about the lexical dialect change happening in the variety under study.

### **1. Constantine**

The old city of Constantine was built on a rock in the north-east of Algeria. At the time of the French colonisation as well as after the independence, the city has extended to an area of 2.297 km<sup>2</sup>. The wilaya<sup>1</sup> is divided into 12 Communes which are organised in 6 Dairas. Its population is estimated by ONS (2018) as 1263051 inhabitants. Constantine has a strategic geographical position enabling it to stay, stand and continue to exist throughout time. In the past, the city was called 'Cirta'. Camps (1979) says that it is a Punic word which means 'city'. However, Haddadou (2011) says that it is Berber it derives from the word 'Tissirt', which signifies grindstone. He continues saying that the reason behind coining it so is due to the wheat abundance cultivation in the region.

The city was first occupied by the Berbers, who welcomed the Phoenicians. With time, the Phoenician guests imposed themselves and conquered 'Cirta'. After, it became the Numidian capital city. In the spring of 313 B.C, the city fell under the Roman Empire, and 'cirta' was named Constantine in the honour of Constantine the great. After the Roman occupation, there was the Vandal and later the Byzantine colonisation. By the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century the Arab arrived to the region and settled down and the city became Arabic and Muslim. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Constantine got under the Ottoman dominance. It was the capital of 'the Eastern 'Beylik'<sup>2</sup>. In 1837, Constantine fell under the French colonisation. It was the centre of

<sup>1</sup> The governorate

<sup>2</sup> Regency provinces administered by Beys

the department of Constantine till 1962. After the independence of Algeria, Constantine was declared one of the Wilayas of the country and the capital of the east. The city has been a crossroad of civilisations. It was the capital of Numidia, the eastern Beylik, centre of the Eastern Department and the capital of the east of Algeria. The historical background of Constantine has influenced its linguistic profile, which is clearly observed in the analysis of its dialect.

### 1.1. Constantine Dialect

The Arabic invasion of Algeria was during two periods. The two conquests had different consequences on the varieties adopted in the region. The first settlement of the Arabs resulted in sedentary dialects also known as pre-Hilali dialects. These dialects were mainly used in the centres. In this respects, “the Arabicisation of the first period is responsible for the Arabic spoken in the old centres and the adjacent mountains regions; thus its various forms can be called ‘Pre-hilali dialects’” ( Marçais, 1957) However, the second Arabic conquest of the 11<sup>th</sup> century was by Banu Hilal, who settled in the peripheries of the centres that were previously conquered. This invasion caused the emergence of the Nomad or Hilali dialects. Hence, the dialect of Constantine is categorised of being a result of the first invasion, it is a pre-Hilali one. Nevertheless, the Algerian dialects classification is no longer valid; both types merged into each other and the distinction cannot be easily made, as the cities are much influenced by the surrounding villages. Accordingly, “every urban dialect possesses characteristics peculiar to itself, but the points of difference are becoming progressively less, only what is common to all being retained, and these dialects are gradually merging into a sort of koine of the town.” (ibid.)

Even though Constantine dialect, henceforth CD, shares a lot of MSA characteristics, it has its own features. Some of CD phonological features<sup>3</sup> are as follows: the /ɾ/, /dʒ/, the variation between /g/ and /q/ and /t<sub>s</sub>/ which is pronounced instead of the MSA /t/, /θ / and /ð /. The /č/ <sup>4</sup> is also present in CD. The dialect shares the same vocalic system of the MSA; the short vowels /a/, /i/, /u/ as well as the long ones /a:/, /i:/ and /u:/. Other vowel sounds are part of the dialect such as /ʌ/, /e/, /ə/ and /o/. Concerning diphthongs, CD has three of them. The diphthongs /a<sup>1</sup>/ and /e<sup>1</sup>/ are allophonic variants of the long vowel /i:/. The /a<sup>v</sup>/ varies freely with the short vowel /ʌ/.

<sup>3</sup> in this paper the phonetic symbols are adopted from (Javed, 2013) (table of phonological symbols appendix3)

<sup>4</sup> Adopted from (Holes, 2004)

Morphologically speaking, the distinction between the genders of the second person singular, for both pronouns and verb, is one of the CD features. Another feature of CD is the use of the diminutive form. This is done by adding a short vowel or a diphthong in the final syllable; as it is the case in the word /mfit<sub>s</sub>eh/ (small key) for /maft<sub>s</sub>ah/. To express the possessive relationship in CD, speakers either link the governing word to the governed one or add the suffix /i:/ for masculine and /t<sub>s</sub>i:/ for feminine.

Concerning the syntax of CD, three word orders are possible for a sentence, S-V-O, V-S-O and V-O-S (Ait-oumeziane, 1986). The negation is formed in two ways; adding the affixes /ma/ as a prefix and /f/ as a suffix to the conjugated verbs, or it is expressed by the /maʃ/ particle. CD is also characterised of the extensive use of an indefinite article /waħd/ (a certain).

The dialect of Constantine has a rich vocabulary, which is of different origins. The dialect has been in contact with other languages over history. This contact is the reason behind the loan words in the dialect. These loan words are either from direct or indirect contact. The direct ones are from Arabic /riʃa/ (a feather), Berber /r̥di:f/ (foot bracelet), Spanish /sannaɾiya/ (a carrot), Jewish /r̥əbi/ (a rabbi), Turkish /sni:/ (a tray), Italian /s̥tɔɾmiya/ (a cushion), French /kanest̥ru:/ (a holey basket) and English /yʃaʃi/ (he chats). The indirect ones are from Persian /t̥awa/ (a pan), Latin /fallu:s/ (a chick), Greek /t̥selwa/ (coffee grounds) and Dutch /čina/ (an orange).

## 2. Language change

The world around us is constantly changing. The technological progress is affecting all aspects of life. It is affecting the human lifestyle, ideas, attitudes and even the language. Unlike the other changes, the language change is not realised by the speakers. Researches have demonstrated that even if language change is not felt by the speakers; it is factual and cannot be denied. Respectively, “We are so intimately connected to our language that we may fail to see its change, in much the same way that our closeness to our children obscures perception of their development, but languages do indeed change” (Shigemoto, 1997, p.1). With different spans and ways, all the languages of the world face the change, which can be of different types; phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical. It can be caused by different factors; experts have categorised them of being either internal or external. The external sociolinguistic are those social factors that are outside the language system. The

internal ones are psycholinguistic i.e. both linguistic and psychological factors laying in the language structure itself as well as the speakers' minds.

To study the language change, experts adopt one of the two methods in collecting the data. The first method is "real time" and the second is "apparent time" (Meyerhoff, 2011). On one hand, the first method uses historical corpus to study the diachronic language change. This can be done either in a "trend study", where two groups of different ages are compared; or by "panel study", following up the speech of the same speakers in different points in time. Apparent time study, on the other hand, studies the synchronic language change and the variation in speech of various age spans in a particular point of time.

### **3. Generational and Communal Change**

There are different change profiles that may occur in a given language. One of these profiles is generational change, which is the difference that exists in the speech between various generations in a given community. At a given point in time, the speech of the community stays stable but the speech of different generations is different. The second profile is communal change. The community-wide change is a possible correlation that might happen between language variation and change, where the speech of the entire community changes and the speakers switch their use of a given variant to a new one approximatively at the same time.

### **4. Colours Terms**

The colour terms are an interesting field of study. The terms have attracted the interest of many scholars. Researchers such as Berlin and Kay (1969) provide the world colour survey; by collecting data from over 180 languages. This enables them to compare the colouring terms across the globe and conclude that the colours categories and terms are different from one language to another. Speakers of different language belonging to different cultures have various ways of expressing and perceiving the colours terms.

It is worth mentioning that there are different technical terms related to colours. There are those terms which refer to the basic colours and others to their shades. The word hue is used to express and denote primary and secondary colours, also known as basic colours. Technically, there is a difference between a shade (mixing the colour with black), a tint (mixing the colour with white), and a tone (mixing the colour with grey). In this research, hues are not dealt with only the colour shades are of our main interest. In addition, the word

shade, in this study, is used to refer to all of the shades, tints and tones. In the dialect of Constantine like in all varieties of the world the colour terms are referred to by a word or by a phrase. Examples of these colours, their descriptions and their equivalents in English are given in the table in the appendix 1.

## **5. Methodology**

### **5.1. Participants**

Adopting an apparent time methodology in studying the language change that the dialect of Constantine has undergone concerning the colour shades terms, two generations of speakers are studied. On one hand, 20 speakers of the dialects of Constantine, born and living in the city are asked to list the colour shades terms used in the dialect of Constantine. The participants have between 55 and 64 years old. The sample is stratified in an equal way; 10 women and 10 men from each year between 1954 and 1963. On the other hand, 20 other speakers of the dialect of Constantine also born and living in the city having the age from 25 to 34 are asked to fill in questionnaires. The sample is also stratified; from each year between 1984 until 1993 a female and a male are questioned about the shades provided by the old generation. These years of birth of the two generations are chosen based on the fact that between a generation and another there is an interval of about 30 years. (Gilleard & Higgs , 2002)

### **5.2. Instruments**

The study is realised with the aid of a questionnaire. It allows knowing the colour terms used by the old generation to denote the different shades. The key-informants provide a total of 18 colour shades (given in the appendix 1). The terms are then given to the new generation in a form of a questionnaire written in MSA (the official and national language of the country) to allow all the participants to answer the questionnaire (appendix 2). In the questionnaire the participants are asked to say if they know the terms by giving an equivalent from French or Arabic or to give a description.

## **6. Results**

Out of 360 total answers, the participants provide only 114 correct answers, 47 wrong ones and 199 empty answers. The females give 80 correct answers out of 180 whereas the males answered correctly 34. The tables below offer an explicit description and analysis of the results.

Year of birth and sex		Colours' samples																		Total and percentage										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Total per year	%									
1984	F	-	✓	*	✓	-	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	12	67%									
	M	-	✓	*	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	*	-	-	*	✓	✓	✓	✓	6	33%									
1985	F	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	13	72%									
	M	-	✓	*	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	*	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	5	28%									
1986	F	-	✓	*	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	✓	*	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	9	50%									
	M	-	✓	*	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	*	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	6	33%									
1987	F	*	-	-	*	✓	-	✓	-	-	*	-	✓	*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	44%									
	M	-	*	*	-	-	-	✓	-	-	*	*	-	✓	*	-	-	✓	✓	4	22%									
1988	F	-	-	*	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	✓	*	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	7	39%									
	M	-	-	*	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	*	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	3	17%									
1989	F	-	-	*	✓	-	*	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	*	7	39%									
	M	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	*	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	2	11%									
1990	F	-	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	*	✓	✓	✓	-	6	33%									
	M	-	-	*	-	-	-	✓	-	-	*	*	-	*	*	-	✓	✓	*	3	17%									
1991	F	✓	-	*	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	-	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	7	39%									
	M	-	*	*	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	*	-	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	3	17%									
1992	F	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-	*	-	*	-	✓	✓	-	✓	7	39%									
	M	-	-	*	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6%									
1993	F	-	*	*	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	*	-	-	-	✓	*	✓	-	4	22%									
	M	-	-	*	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6%									
Total by sex	F	1	4	3	3	2	1	10	2	4	5	4	1	5	4	9	9	7	6	80	69%									
	M	0	3	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	4	6	5	34	31%									
	T	1	7	3	3	2	1	20	2	4	5	4	1	8	4	12	13	13	11	114	32.2%									
- No answer																					✓Correct answer					* Wrong answer				

Table 1: Participants Answers



















Answers		Colours																	
																			
✓	N	1	7	3	3	2	1	20	2	4	5	4	1	8	4	12	13	13	11
	%	5%	35%	15%	15%	10%	5%	100%	10%	20%	25%	20%	5%	40%	20%	60%	65%	65%	55%
*	N	1	3	15	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	16	0	3	4	0	1	0	2
	%	5%	15%	75%	5%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	15%	80%	0%	15%	20%	0%	5%	0%	10%
-	N	18	10	2	16	18	18	0	18	16	12	0	19	9	12	8	6	7	7
	%	90%	50%	10%	80%	90%	90%	0%	90%	80%	60%	0%	95%	45%	60%	40%	30%	35%	35%

Table 2 : Percentage of Colours' Identification

The first colour, /nesri/ is almost not identified; only one participant could recognise it. /xa<sup>v</sup>xi/, which is the second colour, is identified by 35%. 15% are misled and answer by orange or red. The third colour /qalb-dale', is known by only 3 participants and 15 ones say that it is red. 80% could not identify /yaqu:t<sub>3</sub>i/colour. /qor<sup>h</sup>mezi/, out of 20 participants only

two give the correct answer. /zendʒfuɾi/ is recognised by a participant and identified as a mixture of colours by another. /ʔanabi/ is known by all the participants. /ʃaɾbi/, however, is identified by only 10%. 80% do not to know /taɾtaɾi/. /xaʕli/ is not answer by 60%, and /zendʒaɾi/ by 95%. /faɖi/ is a paradox for the participants, as 80% are misled and think that it is silver colour. /neʕli/ almost half of the participants answer correctly. /laʕzi/ 20% say that it is brown colour; whereas it is a shade of green. /fɾiki/ and /tseɓni/ are identified by 60% as well /zeʕti/ and /ɾɕaɕi/ by 65%.

From the table 2, which summarises the percentage of colours' identification, it can concluded that the /ʔanabi/ is known by the new generation and still used. However, the colours /nesɾi/, /qoɾmezi/, /zendʒfuɾi/, and /ʃaɾbi/ are not identified. /faɖi/ is identified by 80% of the participants as silver. They think that the term derives from MSA. However, it is referred to by the old generation to mean a light blue.

The figure below shows that comparing the performance of male and female subjects. Out of 360 answerers, females are able to identify 80 out 180 and male identify only 34 out of 180. It also demonstrates that the younger the participant is, the less he or she could identify the old generation's colours' shades and the older the participant is the more he or she could identify the colours. However, both genders are getting far from the old generation in about the same rate. The figure shows that, the change that has occurred in the dialect of Constantine concerning the colours' shades is not only generational but also communal.

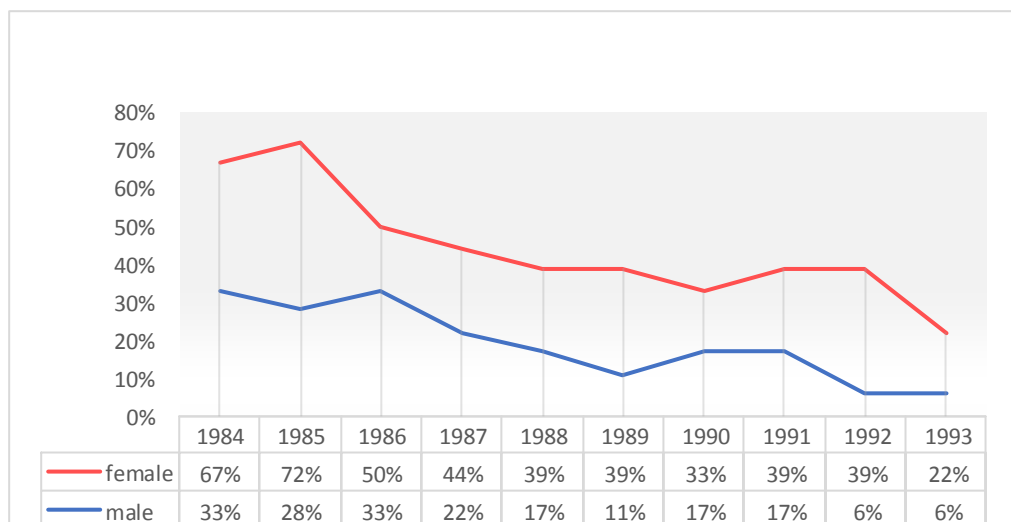


Figure 1: The Percentage of each Participant and Comparison between the Female and Male Performance

## Conclusion

In this paper, we attempt to explain the language change directions of the dialect of Constantine. The dialect under study has a lot been neglected by sociolinguistics and dialectologists. The comparative study conducted between two generations in Constantine shows that the dialect of Constantine has undergone both generational and a communal change. This helps to understand the change directions of the dialect and provides resources for further research.

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## Appendixes

### Appendix 1

	Arabic	Description	English
1. 	نسري/nesri/	The colour of eglantine flower white	Eglantine white
2. 	خوخي/x a <sup>u</sup> xi/	The colour of peaches	peach
3. 	/qalb-dale <sup>2</sup> / قلب دلاع	The inside of unripen watermelon	Pale Pink
4. 	ياقوتي/yaqu:t <sub>s</sub> i/	To describe the colour of ruby	Ruby
5. 	قرمزي/qor <sup>2</sup> mezi/	Produced from scale insect , Kermes	Crimson
6. 	زنجفوري/zend <sup>2</sup> fu <sup>2</sup> ri/	Produced from the cinnabar mineral	Cinnabar
7. 	عنابي/ <sup>2</sup> anabi/	from jujube fruit	Sangria
8. 	شرابي/šar <sup>2</sup> bi/	Burgundy wine colour	Burgundy
9. 	طرطري/ṭarṭari/	Yeast and colloid deposits of wine after filtration.	Purple
10. 	خيلي/xa <sup>2</sup> li/	Violet flower	Violet
11. 	فضي/faḍi/	A shiny and glittery Bleu	Light blue
12. 	زنجاري/zend <sup>2</sup> ari/	Verdigris colour	Verdigris
13. 	نيلي/ne <sup>2</sup> li/	Dark blue	Indigo
14. 	لوزي/l a <sup>2</sup> zi/	From the fraiche shells of almond	Almond green
15. 	فريكي/friki/	The colour of Bulgur cereal	Bulgur green
16. 	زيتي/ze <sup>2</sup> ti/	The colour of the green olive Oil	Oil green
17. 	رصاصي/r <sup>2</sup> sa <sup>2</sup> si/	The colour of dull or lead	Lead grey
18. 	تبني/t <sup>2</sup> ebni/	The hay colour	Light Yellow

## Appendix 2

### استبيان

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة اللهجة القسنطينية، و تسليط الضوء على الكلمات التي كانت تستعمل قديماً للألوان ومدى معرفة الجيل الشبابي بها. و يعد رأيك (ي) مهما جداً لتحقيق هذا البحث. كن (ي) على يقين أن إجابتك ستبقى سرية ولن تستعمل إلا للغرض المذكور أعلاه وشكراً على تعاونك.

الجدول يتكون من كلمات الألوان متواجدة في لهجة قسنطينية. يجب عليك (ي) الإجابة إذا كنت (ي) تعرف (ين) الكلمة أم لا ؛ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم ، قدم (ي) معناه بإعطاء مرادفاً أو تعريفاً.

سنة الميلاد:

الجنس :

□ ذكر □ أنثى

الكلمة	هل تعرف معناها؟		
	نعم	لا	المعنى
1. النَسْرِي			
2. الحَوْجِي			
3. قَلْبْ دَلَاغْ			
4. البَاقَوْتِي			
5. الْقَرْمَزِي			
6. الزَّنْجُفُورِي			
7. العَنَابِي			
8. الشَّرَابِي			
9. الطَّرْطَرِي			
10. الْخَلِيلِي			
11. الْفَضِّي			
12. الزَّنْجَارِي			
13. النِّيلِي			
14. اللُّوزِي			
15. الْفَرِيكِي			
16. الزَّيْتِي			
17. الرُّصَاصِي			
18. التَّنْبِي			

## Appendix 3

## Consonants

Arabic	Symbol	Word	English
أ	ʔ	/qorʔan/	Koran
ب	b	/ʔbib/	Doctor
ث	t <sub>s</sub>	/t <sub>s</sub> lʌt <sub>s</sub> a/	Three
ث	θ	-	-
ج	dʒ	/dʒadʒa/	Hen
ح	ħ	/ħema:r/	Donkey
خ	ʁ	/muʁ/	Brain
د	d	/daʔ/	House
ذ	ð	-	-
ر	r	/ra:s/	Head
ز	z	/ħeza:m/	Belt
س	s	/sma/	Sky
ش	ʃ	/ʔaʃra/	Ten
ص	ʂ	/ʂabu:n/	Soap
ض	ɖ	/ɖalma/	Darkness
ط	t̤	/t̤maʔam/	Tomato
ظ	ɖ	-	-
ع	ʕ	/ʕtaʃ/	Thirsty
غ	ɣ	/ɣeʔab/	crawl
ف	f	/fa:s/	Pickaxe
ق	q or g	/zlaq/-zeʔag/	He slipped-Bleu
ك	k	/kas/	A glass
ل	l	/li:l/	Night
م	m	/dem/	Blood
ن	n	/naʔ/	Fire
ه	h	/hwa/	Air
و	w	/waʔqa	paper
ي	y	/ysu:m/	He asks for the price

## Vowels

Short	Words	English
/i/	/bni/	My son
/u/	/ħut <sub>s</sub> a/	Fish
/a/	/ħal/	Solution
/e/	/ɣema:d/	Ashes
/o/	/moʔo/	Motorcycle
/ʌ/	/ɣʌml/	Sand
/ə/	/ktəb/	He wrote
<b>Long</b>		
/i:/	/fi:l/	Elephant
/u:/	/t <sub>s</sub> u:t <sub>s</sub> /	Berries
/a:/	/ħa:l/	Situation
<b>Diphthongs</b>		
/eʔ/	/zeʔt <sub>s</sub> /	Oil
/aʔ/	/ʂaʔf/	Summer
/aʊ/	/laʊz/	Almond