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Editor-in-chief

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Borrowing and Grammatical Gender in Arabic

Mahfoodh Khalaf Mahmood *

Marwan Najib Tawfiq **

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Abstract:

This paper draws an inclusive image of the concept of borrowing. After that, it tries to relate the linguistic concept of borrowing to borrowed nouns in Arabic with special emphasis on the gender assignment of borrowed nouns. It studies how words are borrowed in Arabic and tries to explain how gender assignment takes place. The data is from modern Iraqi Arabic, which is one form of modern standard Arabic (MSA). The procedure proposed by leading scholars in the area of borrowing and gender assignment is used in the analysis especially G Corbett (1991). The results show that Arabic follows three tactics in borrowing new words and three ways of respective gender assignment using the semantic and formal criteria .

Keywords: borrowing, loanwords, Arabic, gender assignment.

1-Introduction

Borrowing is a universal phenomenon which may be found in almost all languages because it is a need rather than a desire. It is one of the common sources of new words in languages. The borrowing process is a linguistic one that involves many aspects of the linguistic study of languages starting from language contact, adaptation to normalization. The amount of language contact as a consequence of the revolution in communication accelerated the borrowing process to a great extent. This may result in an international creole rather than a lingua franca. A close observation of this phenomenon is a necessity in our opinion. It is also important to do further studies on the link between social media, borrowing, language change and creole.

This article tries to answer questions like:

1. What is borrowing and what motivates it?
2. How does borrowing take (Haspelmath, 2009) place?

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3. What is the function of borrowing?
4. How does borrowing in Arabic take place?
5. How is the gender of borrowed nouns in Arabic managed?

The data used in the study is collected from different professions in addition to the researchers' own experience being native speakers of Iraqi Arabic and familiar with many Arabic varieties. The loanwords and expressions are analysed using the different tools of linguistic analysis from phonetics to syntax.

Definitions of Borrowing

Borrowing is defined differently by different scholars, but all definitions share a common concept. It is a process of taking over words from other languages (Yule, 2014, p. 52). Mahootian, (2006) suggests that borrowing is any word or phrase taken from one language and used by monolingual speakers of another language. This definition restricts the use of loanwords to monolinguals an idea with which we do not agree as all members of society use them in order to be members of the speech community. The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics (Matthews, 2014) defines it as a conventional term for the introduction into language a of specific words, constructions, or morphological elements of language b. The Routledge Dictionary of language and Linguistics (Busmann, 2006) defines borrowing as the adoption of a linguistic expression from one language into another language, usually when no term exists for the new object, concept, or state of affairs. This is a more plausible definition as it hints at the need for language change.

Our definition of borrowing is linguistic change in response to a change in the non-linguistic world in the form of accepting a foreign word or expression in order to fill a semantic gap.

Why Borrow?

Mahootian, (2006) suggests that the reason behind borrowing is the development and lexical expansion of languages. It fills lexical gaps arising from imported concepts such as television, telephone etc. he also adds that borrowing is motivated by cltural contact. In our opinion, the major factor is the economic contact that motivates the borrowing from the the lending language which is the language of the exporter, but there is no question that other factors do exist. One

of the factors that initiates borrowing is colonial policies. For example, in Iraq of the early 20th century the British

Stages of borrowing

Borrowing is a long process before new words become part of the native language. Speakers usually acquire borrowed words along with other words of the native language and, probably, only specialists and some individual who are interested in linguistic phenomena can notice the existence of foreign words in their language. However, there is a process of borrowing that deserves to be meditated in order to identify the stages of integrating new words in the native language of a community. The following stages are our own understanding from the extensive literature of borrowing that is found in the scholarly work on linguistic influence and contact:

1. Imported concepts from L1 by bilinguals and introduced into L2 as new words or expressions,
2. Adaptation of the loanwords to the morphology and phonology of L2,
3. Becoming fully integrated and used by native speakers of L2,
4. Established as words and expression in the lexicon of L2, passed and acquired by speakers of L2.

To the best of our opinion, the adaptation process of the new words as far as gender is concerned has not been researched as to have a comprehensive theory. Therefore, in the following section, we shall try to analyse the way Arabic assigns loanword nouns to genders. Our major interest is in the close link between the morpho-phonological adaptation of loanwords and their gender in L2.

The pronunciation of loanwords is affected by many factors that may shape the form of the loanword. The pronunciation patterns of loanwords range from preservation of all or most features of the original word to fairly drastic alterations (Broselow, 2006).

We are sure that there is an essential role of the phonotactics of L2 in the adaptation of new loanwords, whether their phonological form or what relates to their gender assignment. Broselow, (2006) suggests that the borrowed word is altered in a way that satisfies L2 constraints, sounds, sound combinations and

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prosodic organization of words. If the sound, for example, does not exist in L2, it is usually substituted by another sound.

The borrowed words take different forms when imported into L2. The first form is called “calque”, which means direct translation of the original word (Yule, 2014, p. 52). The second form is called “Clipping” where the word is phonetically copied with some kind of cutting of part of the word (Yule, 2014). We add a third type which is when the word is fully phonetically copied without any clipping. However, it is usually phonologically adapted to meet the requirements of the L2 phonotactics.

The fourth and most relevant change to our work is the gender change of the borrowed nouns especially in gender-rich languages like Arabic.

The Function of Borrowing

Borrowing has functions in L2 as suggested by (Gottlieb, 2006):

1. Addition of new concepts in the world outside the speech community,
2. Replacement of already borrowed words or existing native words,
3. Differentiating existing forms.

So, we can briefly state that the function of borrowing is to solve a problem of a gap in language resulting from renewing developments in life’s concepts. It is, then, a semantic need based on pragmatic factors.

Gender Assignment of Loanwords in Arabic

The interest of the present study is in how gender is treated during the borrowing process in Arabic. But before we look into this issue, we can have a look at what scholars say about gender in loanwords. Corbett, (1991, p. 91) suggests that loanwords are assigned to a gender by the normal assignment rules. What he means by this is the nature and order of criteria of GA of the respective language is followed in integrating borrowed words. In the case of Arabic, we have two suggested systems: the predominantly semantic system and the pure formal system. The results of the analysis of borrowing in Arabic will provide a supporting evidence for the suitable system of gender assignment in Arabic out of the two.

The dialects of Arabic are full of borrowed words as everybody can see and hear when communicating with others. The rate of borrowing increased proportionately with the speed of the technological and industrial development. The more things are invented or discovered; the more extensive borrowing becomes in addition to the borrowing that took place during the colonial age as a necessity for maintaining communication between the speakers of the languages in contact.

Nouns borrowing

We can take one version of MSA namely the Iraqi Arabic to see how gender of loanword nouns is accomplished. The borrowed nouns in Iraqi Arabic belong to various elements of the physical world: animals, inventions, car parts, tools, professions etc. However, a close look at the loanword nouns reveals that their gender is in one-to-one correspondence with the gender system of the native nouns i.e., we find concrete and abstract marked feminine nouns, common nouns, unmarked feminine nouns and of course masculine nouns.

Arabic divides all nouns, animate or inanimate, concrete or abstract, into two genders only: feminine and masculine. So, we find feminine nouns amongst all types of nouns i.e., animate, inanimate, concrete and abstract. It seems that Arabic does not depend fully on the natural gender of things. The sun, for example is feminine; while the moon is masculine in Arabic. Therefore, we expect that the borrowed words will be assigned to one of these genders (Bahumaid, 2015).

Arabic has its own way of dealing with imported concepts. The new concept is usually dealt with in one of three ways:

1. Translation of the original word with some occasional modifications,
2. Coining a new Arabic word (neologisms) to use it to refer to the new concept such as “sayara” (car, fem.) “dababa” (military tank, fem.)
3. Phonetic copying of the original words with required phonological adaptation, which comprise the majority of loanwords in Arabic. Examples of this type are so many e.g., “radeeta” (car radiator), “dashbool” (dashboard) etc.

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The first method of borrowing is the translation of the meaning of the word or expression. loan translation (calques) is one type of structural borrowing. It is an item-by-item translation of the source unit (Haspelmath, 2009, p. 61). In this type, the meaning of the borrowed concept is translated taking into consideration two things: the word order of Arabic and the suitable equivalents. The modification system in Arabic generally follows the head noun. Therefore, all the words that are in the lending language function as modifiers of the head will be post-posed after the head e.g., spacecraft in which space is a modifier is translated as “safeenat “fadhaa” (ship space) with the modifier space seated after the head “safeenat”.

As for the issue of equivalence, the noun “craft” (meaning ship or boat) is a metaphorical use of the word ship, which is originally a maritime term. But, first let us review the basic meaning of “metaphor” as suggested by Lakoff (1980). Lakoff suggests that metaphor is a general pattern in which one domain is systematically conceived and spoken of in terms of another. Space is framed as the sea and hence any vessel that moves on water is also used as a vessel moving in the air. The Arabic metaphor is identical with the English metaphor which is in our opinion necessitated by the fact that there is no other suitable choice in the physical world that resembles what we see in space. It seems that there is a junction between metaphor and borrowing in the sense that both draw on a different sphere.

A metaphor may take place within the same domain. For example, the word satellite is originally part of the space domain. It is borrowed for metaphorical use and used to call new objects that share with satellites the feature of moving around another object. we believe that this is a form of borrowing in addition to being an example of a metaphorical use.

Now how does Arabic borrow this term? In MSA satellite is borrowed by translation of the expression as “moon artificial”. We can see that there is a big similarity between the Arabic and the English expression in the sense that satellite and moon mean share the meaning of an object revolving around another within the same domain that is space.

Before we explain how the gender of the borrowed concept is determined, we need to understand how the Arabic gender system works. The gender system in Arabic can be summarised as follows: the nouns that end with one of the sounds /a/, /aa/ or some nouns with /aʔ/ are feminine. The nouns that do not end with one of these sounds are either feminine nouns with covert gender or masculine nouns. All masculine nouns in Arabic are not marked for gender.

If the translated word or expression contains a noun, then the gender of the Arabic equivalent noun will determine the gender of the borrowed concept following the same set of rules of the Arabic gender system i.e., either the noun has an overt or covert gender. If the Arabic noun is overtly marked for gender i.e., ends with one of the feminine gender markers, /a/ like “safeena” (ship) or /aa/ like “dunya” (this world), then the borrowed concept is feminine, otherwise the noun is either feminine with covert gender or masculine. (See the reference above)

The second type of borrowing method is coining a new Arabic word (neologisms). It follows a different strategy in integrating the new concept into Arabic. One way is to use the verb that describes what the new object performs to derive a noun e.g., “sajjaara” (car, fem.) “dabaaba” (military tank, fem.). The noun “sayaara” is derived from the verb “saara” (move). The noun “sajjaara” is derived from the verb using one of the Arabic language declensional techniques such as when verbs have the second sound as /aa/, they take the sequence /ajj/ between the first and second phonemes of the word e.g.,

- **“saara” (move) to “sajjaara” (car)**

by which the past form of the verb is transformed into a noun. However, if the coined nouns are going to be long or similar to an existing noun, then the third choice is opted for.

Another example is “qitʕaar” (train). It is a neologism because it did not exist prior to the invention of the train. The verb used in coining this neologism is “qatʕara” (pull). Arabic has a special morphophonemic way of deriving nouns from verbs: each declensional class of verbs follow a special way of derivation (for a full study of this linguistic phenomenon see Arabic books of morphology).

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In the third type, the original word or expression is phonetically copied into Arabic after making the necessary morpho-phonological adaptations. The phonological adaptation can be seen in certain phonotactic restrictions of L2. For example, when a consonant cluster or a sequence of consonants and vowels in the source language is not found in L2, then the borrower would try to either drop one of the consonant sounds or change one of them in order to comply with the L2's rules. It is worth mentioning here that we disagree with Bahumaid (2015) who only considers consonant clusters as separate from vowels. We found out that consonant clusters broken by intervening vowels have reality in the phonological adaptations of borrowed words. For example, the English word "bolt" is borrowed into Arabic as "bolt". The /olt/ cluster is not found in Iraqi Arabic (IA); therefore, the borrower changed the /t/ to /t^h/ due to the difficulty of the final /t/ preceded by /ol/ in Arabic. Another example is the English word "dashboard" which becomes "dashbool". The sequence of English sounds /bo:d/ is changed into /bool/ where the close-mid long round vowel between /b/ and /l/ is changed into close long round vowel for reasons related to phonotactics. One more point about this latter example is that the original word is compound comprising "dash" and "board", a combination that makes the meaning of one object that is the front part of the interior of the car. Haspelmath (2009, p. 59) states that loanwords are always words (i.e., lexemes) rather than lexical phrases, and they are usually unanalysable in the recipient language. However, the source word in the donor language can be complex or even phrasal, but this internal structure is lost when the word is borrowed. In the borrowing Arabic language, this compound is rendered as one word taking the whole phonetic structure of the original compound words.

Now, how is the gender of the loanword is preserved or changed? First of all, it seems that the gender of the words in the source language have nothing to do with the gender of their equivalents in Arabic. The gender of the nouns resulting from **translation** of the original nouns is usually determined by the Arabic words used as equivalents of the source words. Thus, if the equivalent word is a feminine word marked for gender, then the

borrowed word is feminine and so forth. The noun mouse (a computer device) is translated as “faara” (the rodent mouse). The noun “faara” having the feminine gender suffix “a” makes the name of the computer device feminine because it coincides with the animal’s name.

In the neologism of imported concepts, Arabic also follows its rules of gender assignment (GA) because the loanwords are now Arabic words and no more foreign words. It seems that the gender of the coined words is determined by the Arabic rules of GA. New words are not different from translated words as both of them are parts of the L2 and not affected by the phonological structure of L1. It is only the meaning that is rendered minus its gender which is usually added after the rendition. For example, the noun “sajjaara” (car) is a neologism which is feminine in Arabic due to the fact that it is marked for gender by ending with the feminine gender marker.

The gender of the loanwords in the third type is determined by different factors. First of all, if the original noun ends with a phoneme that is near to one of the Arabic gender markers /a/, /aa/ and /aʔ/, then the noun usually retains the sound and is accordingly assigned to the feminine gender like “radeeta” (car radiator). Other types of nouns are usually subjected to phonological adaptation that may not be identical to the source noun and, hence, treated as other Arabic unmarked nouns for gender. So, a noun can be unmarked feminine, unmarked common, or masculine.

Loanwords of animal nouns are usually treated as marked feminine common gender e.g., “zaraafa” (giraffe fem.) with some exceptions like “karkadan” (Rhinoceros). It seems that this noun has undergone double-borrowing (our own term) where it was originally borrowed into Egyptian Arabic and then it was borrowed from Egyptian Arabic into Iraqi Arabic. Since the noun is not marked, it is preferably masculinized unless there is a covert phonological factor that renders it feminine.

Verbs Borrowing

Matras (2009, p. 176) mentions cases of verb borrowing and proposes a number of loanwords integration types. We can summarize what he suggests: first non-modified borrowed verbs; second, morphologically modified borrowed verbs; third, an

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insertion of the borrowed verb in a combination; and finally, importing the verb with its inflection, Bahumaid (2015, p. 7) mentions the borrowing of verbs.

What we want to add here is that usually verbs are not borrowed for the same reasons we stated earlier. It seems that most cases of verb borrowing stems from different types of needs: filling a semantic gap, prestige etc. In this case, we find two verbs of the same meaning and function: one is native and another one borrowed. However, still some verbs may be encountered during language contact that do not have their counterparts in L2. For example, “jbarmidz” (program v.) is the only verb in Arabic to mean “program v.”. First of all, the borrowed verb fills a gap in Arabic of a new meaning that is programming, which came as a result of the invention of the computer. The verb is not getting into Arabic through a phonetic conversion process without undergoing morpho-phonological changes. First of all, we can see a morphological change as the verb begins with the prefix /j/ which is familiar in the Arabic verbs in the present tense. The second change is phonological: the first phoneme, which is a voiceless bilabial plosive /p/, which does not exist in most varieties of MSA, is replaced by a voiced bilabial plosive /b/. This also applies to borrowed adjectives.

There is a general tendency in Arabic to Arabize borrowed nouns into either feminine or masculine nouns on the a formal rather than a semantic basis. The borrowed nouns in Arabic that are assigned to the feminine gender are usually morpho-phonologically marked with one of the familiar suffixes: /-a/, /-aa/ and some nouns ending with /-a?/. The absence of the morpho-phonological marker means a masculine borrowed noun. Examples like بنكة “banka” (ceiling fan), جنطة “t□ant‘a” “bag” are all feminine borrowed nouns while nouns like داشبول “dashbool” (dashboard), كير /ger/ (gearbox) are all masculine borrowed nouns because they do not carry any sign of gender.

To sum up, the linguistic phenomenon of borrowing is so rich and it is not possible to cover all the aspects of the subject, but it is sufficient to lay the basis for studying this phenomenon so that researchers can study it in depth.

Arabic seems to follow a three-way strategy of integrating borrowed concepts each of which has its own nature and motivation. The gender of the borrowed nouns is in congruence with the overall gender system of Arabic; however, there is a selective process in the gender marking i.e., all nouns are assigned to either feminine or masculine but with a general tendency to avoid covert assignment and in favour of an overt gender system.

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الكلمات الأعجمية المعربة تذكيراً وتأنياً في اللغة العربية

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مروان نجيب توفيق **

المستخلص

يرسم هذا البحث صورة شاملة لمفهوم استعارة الكلمات من لغات ثانية، وبعد ذلك نحاول ربط مفهوم استعارة الكلمات بالكلمات الأعجمية المعربة، والتأكيد خاصة على تذكير الكلمات الأعجمية المعربة وتأنيتها؛ إذ يقوم البحث بدراسة كيفية تعريب الكلمات الأعجمية، والكلمات المستعملة في البحث مستقاة من اللهجة العربية العراقية، وهي إحدى أشكال اللغة العربية العامية الحديثة، وقد تم استعمال النظريات المقدمة من كبار الباحثين في مجال الكلمات المستعارة من لغات أخرى، ولاسيما ج كوريت (١٩٩١)، وأظهرت النتائج أن اللغة العربية تتبع ثلاث طرائق في تعريب الأعجمي ويقابلها ثلاث طرائق في التذكير والتأنيت للكلمات المعربة باستعمال المعايير الدلالية والشكلية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استعارة الكلمات من اللغات الأخرى، الكلمات المستعارة، اللغة

العربية، التذكير والتأنيت.

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