

English Lexical Items of Arabic Origin: A Linguistic Study

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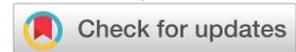
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ABSTRACT

This study is a linguistic one. It investigates the English words of Arabic origin. These borrowed words are organized and classified into different groups with their percentages. Sound modification of these words are also taken into consideration for the Arabic words to be nativized in English. It is clear that English borrowed various lexical items from many languages and Arabic is one of them. These words are classified into different groups: words related to animals, words related to vegetables, Fruit and food, words related to perfume, words related to science, words related to Islamic religion and miscellaneous words. However, borrowing is a linguistic phenomenon that no language can escape from it. This study comprises seventeen sections, they are as following an abstract, an introduction, objective of the study, significance of the study, limitation of the study, data collection, methodology, language, word – formation processes, borrowing phenomenon, types of borrowing, causes of borrowing, English language and the Arabic lexical items, data analysis, phonological changes, conclusion and references.

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1. Introduction

Borrowing among languages is a global and cultural phenomenon. Languages borrow and lend different lexical items from each other. Borrowing is a mirror that reflects the contact between different languages and cultures. In fact, it enriches the lexical items of any languages lexicon (Al-Obaydi et al., 2022; Rahman & Weda, 2019; Kaharuddin et al., 2025).

Undoubtedly, linguists are divided into two groups. Those who are against the process of borrowing and consider it as a defect and it weakens the national language. The opinion of the second group of linguists believes that borrowing from linguistic point of view is a natural and healthy linguistic phenomenon (Andini et al., 2021; Sukmawaty et al., 2022). No language can flee from it and it is necessary since language is in need of borrowed words to fill the lexical gap in the borrowed language.

It is noteworthy to indicate that languages are not the same regarding borrowing phenomenon. Some of them borrowed a small number of lexical items since they are in need of them, while others borrowed a great deal of lexical items. Some languages are regarded as heavy borrowers such as English, Turkish and the like, while others are not.

1.1 Word – Formation processes

It is the result that linguistic process to enrich any language which is in need of new lexical items. There are many types of word formation processes, some of them will be mentioned here with some detail:

1- The affixation process: It is one of the most crucial ways of creating new words. This morphological term is divided into two types. The first one is the prefixation process and the second one is the suffixation process, each one will be discussed in some detail.

a- The prefixation process:

It is a bound morpheme that comes at the beginning of the word (root) to change its meaning or parts of speech (Bauer, 1983). For example, the prefix “re” in the word “re-write” which means “write again”, it changes the meaning rather than the part of speech. Another example is the prefix “en” in the word “enlarge” which changes the adjective “large” into the verb “enlarge”. Since English is in need of new lexical items, this kind of process is suitable to be applied.

b- The suffixation process:

It is one of the productive ways of word – formation.

It is a bound morpheme that attaches at the end of the word (root). It usually changes the parts of speech of the word, for example the suffix “en” changes that adjective “cheap” into the verb “cheapen”.

2- Coinage:

It is the invention of new words or phrases. It is the less productive one of word- formation process, for example the coinage of the word “Kleenex”.

3- Clipping:

Clipping means cutting, it is a small piece cut from something bigger. Regarding linguistics, a word of a syllable or more than one syllable which reduced into a shorter form, for example the word “gasoline” changed into a “gas” (Bauer,2001).

4- Conversion:

It means changing the function of the part of speech of the word, for example the word “water” is a noun which can be changed into a verb “to water the garden” (Rochelle,2009, p.49, Martin and Andrea, 2010, P.39).

1.2 Borrowing Phenomenon

It is clear that borrowing is a linguistic and cultural phenomenon (Al-Qinia,2001). No language is immune from it. It is a must since there is a cultural and commercial contacts among languages. It is common knowledge that the lexical items of any language may change or disappear through the time, therefore one of the solutions is borrowing.

As it is mentioned earlier, languages borrow from each other to fill the gap in their lexicons. Regarding borrowing, west (1975,163) states “it would be next to impossible to stop these borrowings. They enrichment of the various languages, and necessary for communication in the modern world”. Lexical borrowing involves a word being taken from the lexicon of one language, into that of another.

1.3 Types of borrowing

Generally speaking, there are two types of borrowing, the “direct” and indirect borrowing”. The direct borrowing means that the receptor language borrows the words directly from the donor language. According to Sara et al. (2016) direct borrowing can be classified into three types, “the cultural” borrowing, the “core” borrowing and the “therapeutic” borrowing.

The cultural borrowing means that borrowing of lexical items that are new or they don't exist in the recipient language. Myers – Scotton (2006, p.2012) states that “Cultural borrowing are words that fill gaps in the recipient languages' store of words because they stand for objects or concepts new to the language's culture”. The second type is the core borrowing which means the borrowing of lexical items which already exists in the recipient language (myers – scotton,2006) the third and last type of direct borrowing is the “therapeutic”. It occurs because the native words become unavailable.

Indirect borrowing can be classified into three types (Sarah, et al.2016): “Calque or loan translation”, “loan shifts” and “loan blends and hybrids”. The majority of calques consist of more than one word. In this kind of borrowed words the meaning is borrowed while the form is of the native language, for example: “the surgery room” غرفة الجراحة

The second type is “the loan shift” which means that the phonological shape is borrowed but given a different meaning, for example the Latin morpheme “ex” combined with English words to give different meaning” ex-husband”, “exclude”, “exchange” etc. The third and the last type is “the loan blends and the hybrid”. It means that part of the loan word is from the recipient language and the other part is from the donor language, for example the English word “grandmother”, “grand” is French and “mother” is English.

1.4 Causes of Borrowing

There are a number of causes regarding borrowing. The most important of them will be mentioned here:

1- The cultural, religious, political or economic dominance of one language over the other languages, for example the Arabic language and the Islamic cultural dominance over the European languages in the Middle Ages. Another example is the dominance of English over many languages and Arabic is one of them in the recent time.

2- Closeness and direct contact among languages lead to direct borrowing of various lexical items.

3- The lack and urgent need of certain lexical items which are unavailable in the native language.

4- The simplicity and easiness of borrowing rather than to coin new words.

5- Historical factors, genetic and structural proximity lead to borrowing.

6- prestige factor is present in borrowing since language users use borrowed words to show off and tell others they are from high class.

7- A number of mechanical, technical and scientific inventions may travel with their names to the recipient languages.

8- Long wars and conflicts may lead to lexical borrowing, this happened when English borrowed a respectable number of Arabic words because of the crusade wars.

English language and the Arabic lexical items

It should be emphasized that a number of Arabic lexical items took their way to English language directly or indirectly. Some of them related to the field of science, religion etc. in the Middle Ages (Islamic ages) (plies, 1971, pp.334-335).

Another contact of English and Arabic languages was in Spain through the Islamic culture, and crusade wars. It should be indicated that English hosted a respectable number of lexical items from different languages, of course Arabic is one of them. English borrowed these words as we said either directly or indirectly, through contact or wars or indirectly via another language such as Spanish, Portuguese and other languages.

Those Arabic borrowed words may expose to few or many modifications to be nativized and Englishized and be part of the English lexicon. The English words of Arabic origin are of two types, "productive" and "nonproductive". The productive words are those which are used in spoken and written forms with modifications. While the non-productive words are words which are not used in everyday language and used particularly in written English.

2. Methodology

This study is a descriptive one. It depends on the classification of the English words from Arabic origin and their percentages.

Significance of the Study

Limitation of the study

This study is limited to the English lexical items from Arabic origin.

2.1 Data collection

Some sources are used to collect this data. The first one is the Arabic monolingual dictionaries. The second one is English monolingual dictionaries. The third and the last one is Arabic English bilingual dictionaries.

2.2 Language

It is agreed upon that language is a global, old and social phenomenon. Communities cannot live without language. It facilitates their life through communication and exchanging information. Naturally, productivity is the most crucial feature of language. It is accepted that some borrowed lexical items enter any language and stay forever and some of them stay for a short period then disappear. Language is like a tree, it may change its branches and leaves, it even may die. Languages tend to develop and accept many borrowed lexical items to its lexicon, and even get rid of old lexical ones.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 The English Lexical Items from Arabic Origin

The data here will be classified into six groups as following:

a. Words related to animals:

Table 1. Words related to animals

NO.	Words in English	Words in Arabic	Arabic Transcription
1	Bug	بق	/baq/
2	Camel	جمل	/3amal/
3	Cat	قطه	/qittā/
4	Gazelle	غزال	/ghazal/
5	Giraffe	زرافة	/zarafa/
6	Octopus	أخطبوط	/axṭaboot/
7	Saker	صقر	/saqar/

b. Words related to vegetables, fruit and food:

Table 2. Words related to vegetables, fruit and food

NO.	Words in English	Words in Arabic	Arabic Transcription
1	Apricot	عمبروت	/ambaroot/
2	Banana	بنان/موز	/banan/
3	Cake	كعك	/Ka9k/
4	Camin	كمون	/kmoon/
5	Curcuma	كركم	/kurkum/
6	Guava	جوافه	/zawwafa/
7	Lemon	ليمون	//limoon/
8	Mocha(Coffee)	بن المحاء	/maxa/
9	Sesame	سمسم	/simsim/
10	Spinach	سبانخ	/sabanix/
11	Sugar	سكر	/sukkar/
12	Tamarind	تمر هندي	/tamr hindi/

c. Words related to perfume:

Table 3. Words related to perfume:

NO.	Words in English	Words in Arabic	Arabic Transcription
1	Amber	عنبر	/qanbar/
2	Attar	عطر	/9aṭṭr/
3	Caphor	كافور	/Kafoor/
4	Hanna	حناء	/Ḥinna/

5	Jasmine	ياسمين	/jasmin/
6	Musk	مسك	/misk/
7	Saffron	زعفران	/zaqfaran/

d. Words related to science:

Table4. Words related to science:

NO.	Words in English	Words in Arabic	Arabic Transcription
1	Acid	أسيدي	/asid/
2	Alcohol	الكحول	/alkuħool/
3	Algebra	الجبر	/al3abr/
4	Algorithm	الغرييمات	/alughritimat/
5	Arsenal	دار الصناعة	/darasinaqa/
6	Captain	قبطان	/qubṭan/
7	Chemistry	كيمياء	/kimija/
8	Cipher	صفر	/sifer/
9	Earth	أرض	/ardd/
10	Elixir	أكسير	/aksir/
11	Mansoon	منسون	/mansoon/
12	Physic	فيزياء	/fizija/
13	Soda	صوداء	/ṣoda/
14	Zink	زنك	/zink/

e. Words related to Islamic religion:

Table 5. Words related to Islamic religion

NO.	Words in English	Words in Arabic	Arabic Transcription
1	Afreet	عفريت	/qafrit/
2	Age	أجل	/a3al/
3	Alcove	القبة	/alqubba/
4	Assasin	الحششاشين (قتلة)	/alħashshasheen/
5	Body	بدن	/badan/
6	Coffin	كفن	/kafan/
7	Crime	جريمة	/3arima/
8	Imam	إمام	/imam/
9	Islam	إسلام	/islam/
10	Jihad	جهاد	/3ihad/
11	Justice	قسطاطر(عدل)	/adel/-/qiṣṭaṭ/
12	Jin	جن	/3in/

13	Minerate	منارة	/manara/
14	Mosque	مسجد	/masʒid/
15	Muezzin	موذن	/moaḏin/
16	Mufti	موفتي	/mofti/
17	Muslim	مسلم	/muslim/
18	Salam	سلام	/salam/
19	Satan	شيطان	/shiṭan/
20	Sheikh	شيخ	/shix/
21	Sheriff	شريف	/sharif/
22	Paradise	فردوس	/firdos/
23	Thanks	ثناء	/Ṫana/

f. Miscellaneous words:

Table 6. Miscellaneous words

NO.	Words in English	Words in Arabic	Arabic Transcription
1	Almanac	المناخ	/almanax/
2	Arabesque	النسق العربي	/annasaq alqarabi/
3	Asthma	أزمة	/azma/
4	Castle	قلعة(قصر)	/qalqa/ /Qasir/
5	Candle	قنديل	/qandil/
6	Cave	كهف	/kahf/
7	Cup	كوب	/kob/
8	Defense	دفاع	/difaq/
9	Davon	ديوان	/diwan/
10	Dummy	دمية	/domja/
11	Ghoul	غول	/qool/
12	Girl	جارية	/3arija/
13	Jar	جرة	/3arra/
14	Jewelry	جواهر	/jawahir/
15	Loofa	ليفة	/lifa/
16	Lute	عود	/qud/
17	Magazine	مجلة	/maʒalla/
18	Mattress	مطرح	/matraḥ/
19	Merry	مرح	/maʀaḥ/
20	Mirror	مرآة	/mirah/
21	Nadir	نظير	/nadir/

22	Noble	نبيل	/nabil/
23	Safari	سفر (رحلة)	/safar/
24	Story	أسطورة	/astora/
25	Talisman	طلاسيم	/talasim/
26	Tariff	تعريف	/taqrifa/
27	Valley	وادي	/wadi/

Table 7. Group percentage of English lexical items from Arabic origin

Group	Frequency	Percentage
A	7	7.78%
B	12	13.33%
C	7	7.78%
D	14	15.56%
E	23	25.56%
F	27	30.00%
Total	90	100

3.3 Discussion

According to the data in table one above. Group “f” is the first group regarding the numbers of English lexical items from Arabic origin. Its frequency is (27) and its percentage is 30.00%. The second group is group number “E”. Its frequency is (23) and its percentage is 25.56 %.

The third group is group number “D”. Its frequency is (14) and its percentage is 15.56% The fourth group is group number “B”. Its frequency is (12) and its percentage is 13.33%. The fifth group is group number “A”. Its frequency is (7) and percentage is 7.78%.

The last group is group number “C” which has the frequency of “7” and its percentage is 7.78% .

It is noteworthy to indicate that group “A” and group “C” has the same frequency and percentage. Group “f” is the biggest one regarding frequency and percentage which means that this group is open to accept any other English lexical items from Arabic origin.

Phonological Changes

It Seems to be the case that the majority of the English borrowed words of Arabic origin are subjected to phonological modification. Phonological modification takes place due to the distinction between the English and Arabic languages and their phonological systems. Since Arabic and English systems are different, phonological modifications are inevitable. Here some examples of phonological changes (not every change):

Substitution of phonemes: consonant substitution:

Vowel substitution

1- Substitution of the Arabic vowel phoneme /i/ into the English vowel phoneme /oo/, /lifa/ /oofa, in group (F).

2- Substitution of the Arabic vowel phoneme /a/ into /i/ ,/manara / minerate , in group (E).

3- Substitution of the Arabic vowel phoneme /a/ into the English vowel phoneme /o/, /masgid/ /mosque ,in group (E).

4- Substitution of the Arabic vowel phoneme /a/ into the English vowel phoneme /e/, /sharif / /sheriff, in group (E).

Addition of phonemes

- 1- Addition of the English vowel phoneme /a/ in banana while in Arabic is/banan/, in group (B).
- 2- Addition of the English consonants phonemes /z/and /k/ in "physics" in group "D".
- 3- Addition of the English vowel phoneme /i/ in the word "Safari" in group (F).

Deletion of phonemes

- 1- Deletion of the Arabic vowel phoneme /a/ in the English word "Tarif", in group (F).
- 2- Deletion of the Arabic vowel phoneme /a/ in the English word "story", in group (F).
- 1- Deletion of the Arabic consonant phoneme /q/ in the English word "cake", in group (B).

4. Conclusion

It is noteworthy to indicate that borrowing is a linguistic and global phenomenon. Languages can not a void this phenomenon. In fact, they give and take of lexical items since they are in need of them. English as a universal language has borrowed a respectable number of lexical items approximately from many languages. Arabic as well borrowed a number of English lexical items which related to science and technology. It was found in this study that English borrowed a number of lexical items from Arabic origin, especially in the Middle Ages for different reasons some of these Arabic lexical items are used in spoken and written mediums as we might expect that these words are englisized and modified phonetically. Many reasons of borrowing mentioned in this study. However, borrowing is a phenomenon which affects any language in the world.

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