Lexical Innovation between Unification and Purism: The Case of Corona-Related Terminology in Arabic-Broadcasting Media

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Abstract
Media is strong enough to influence different fields, including economy, politics, education, to name but a few. This influence is inevitable on languages of the world. Distant contact has proved to introduce interesting language contact phenomena just like direct contact does. The present paper investigated Corona-related lexis in the spoken language of Arabic-broadcasting media, namely *Aljazeera* and *A3* (an Algerian public channel). The significance of the study lies in showing the extent to which such media can influence Standard Arabic and how journalists can be important language agents. The question guiding the research is to circle the main linguistic process(es) adopted by journalists when they are faced with a situation which calls for immediate lexical modernization to name new concepts or objects. The research built on a descriptive discourse analysis method within the language-in-use approach for studying a corpus of 9314 utterances. It was found that media plays a role of prime importance in the diffusion of new vocabulary. Such diffusion remains uncontrolled by linguistic bodies, and therefore the linguists' role is, to a certain extent, divorced. It was found that the media language builds on *borrowings*, manifested in different types. *Semantic expansion* of already existing Arabic words was less attested. *Coinage* was found to be the least adopted method to introduce new items to name novel objects and concepts. Also, a point of prime significance is that English remains the main lending language on which Standard Arabic depends in the modernization of its dictionary. It was reported that some of the core borrowings of English origin are diffused even in the Maghreb region (namely Algeria) where French used to be a dominant foreign language.

Keywords: Arabic, borrowing, Covid-19, linguistic purism, media, modernization, semantic expansion

Introduction

The spread of Coronavirus pandemic worldwide resulted in significant effects on different walks of life, including politics, economy, education and so forth. This pandemic has also introduced a linguistic dimension. Because it is a novel concept, world languages were required to revise their dictionaries to name novel objects and concepts associated with the new pandemic. Some terms of this scientific jargon already exist in the dictionary; some other terms were coined (varying across languages). Because of its status as a global language, English remains a resource from which languages of the world fill in their linguistic gaps (borrowing, translating, etc). The main aim of this research is to identify the role of Arab journalists in the *lexication process* of Standard Arabic. This is done with consideration of Corona-related jargon. The point is to show how journalists can effectively contribute to the innovation and diffusion of new terms. Therefore, the main questions to probe relate to (1) whether the media language is controlled by language bodies (e.g. academies) throughout the Arabic-speaking states or journalists divorce the linguists' role in their practices, and what linguistic process(es) is/are mainly followed by Arab journalists to introduce new lexis to Standard Arabic.

Literature Review

Revising the dictionary of a language requires language planners to take serious measures. In such cases, vocabulary elaboration stands at the very core of language planning activities. In this vein, Cooper (1989) defined language planning as "the activity of preparing a normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogeneous speech community" (p.8). The revision of a dictionary is generally associated with *modernization* of the language. Modernization is part of *lexication* which is, in turn, part of a larger *corpus planning* activity (one out of four types of language planning). In general terms, language modernization denotes the expansion of the lexicon by adding new words and expressions. Ferguson (1968) considered modernization as "the process by which (a language becomes) the equal of other developed languages as a medium of communication; it is in a sense the process of joining the world community of increasingly intertranslatable languages recognized as appropriate vehicles of modern forms of discourse" (p. 32). According to Neustupný (2005), modernization translates that language "must be adequate to the industrializing economy, society and culture' and that 'relatively equal access to language for all participants is essential" (p.2219). As for Arabic, lexical modernization still generates hot debates among Arab linguists and researchers.

Although the need for modernization differs from one language to another, such a process sets "a major challenge for all languages" (Spolsky, 1998, p.70). As far as vocabulary modernization is concerned, linguists (lexicographers) usually have three options at hand: coinage, semantic expansion, or simply borrowing from other languages. As its name implies, coinage refers to the invention of new lexemes. Coinage is the least common process of word formation (Yule, 2006). Semantic expansion is taking an existing (or old) word and giving it a new meaning. Borrowing, on the other hand, is "the general and traditional word used to describe the adoption

into a language of a linguistic feature previously used in another" (Haugen, 1989, p.197). In a narrow sense, borrowing refers to "the incorporation of foreign elements into the speakers' native language" (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988, p.21). Therefore, such words "are opposed to native words" (Haspelmath, 2009, p.38). Languages worldwide are borrowers and the lexicon of any language can be divided into indigenous and foreign. The lexical material is the most likely to borrow, and nouns come at the forefront of loanwords (Winford, 2003). This does not dismiss the verity that other materials (morphemes, inflections, etc.) are not borrowed.

Linguists identify different types of borrowing. Myers-Scotton (2006), for example, distinguishes between *cultural borrowings* and *core borrowings*. Cultural borrowings are words related to objects and concepts that do not exist in the lexicon of the host language. These words are therefore called to fill lexical gaps in the host language (Myers-Scotton, 2006). Core borrowings, on the contrary, are words that are already expressed by an equivalent lexical item in the recipient language. Such words are therefore gratuitous as they only duplicate meaning. In a broader sense, borrowing includes also *calques* which are literal word-for-word translations from one language into another- a reason to label them *loan translations* (Postan, 2020). In such a case, the linguistic unit has no foreign features. *Loanblends* are also a different kind of linguistic borrowing. A loanblend refers to a hybrid word composed of native and foreign elements. One example of loanblends in English is the compound word *diglossia*, which consists of the Greek prefix *de* (two) and the Latin root *glossia* (tongue), referring now to *two varieties of the same language*. The other type of borrowing is known in the literature as *loanshift*. This relates to the *semantic expansion* to denote a change in the meaning of a native item to accommodate a new concept acquired from another language. For example, a semantic extension from Portuguese to English is *frio* meaning cold infection (Winford, 2003). This word is formed under the impact of model of the native language usage.

In fact, it is in languages of developed countries that lexical modernization begins as these countries are associated with innovations and discoveries, which will certainly involve a need for new words to label novel objects and concepts. Of course, the lending languages are those of the powerful. In other words, the lending-borrowing attributes depend on the level of development a country enjoys in sciences, technology, economy, etc. For instance, English was at a point, as described by Crystal (2010), an "insatiable borrower" (p.267) as a result of foreign subjugation. In this vein, Klein (1966) claimed that only 30% of English words are native. Likewise, Green (2003) asserted "that today English contains twice as many words derived from French and Latin as from German" (p.11). Now, English is assertively the world's major lending language due to the supremacy of the Anglophone World headed by the USA. It is simply a global language (Crystal, 2003)

Likewise, when the Arab-Islamic Empire reached its apex, Arabic also became a significant lending language, which enriched world languages with many items in different ways. English, among other languages, borrowed heavily from Arabic (see, for example, Shipley 2001; Smith 2007). With the decline of the empire and the rise of European domination of Arabic-speaking

states, the direction of borrowing has reversed. In the present time, Standard Arabic, like other languages, needs to extend its dictionary and modernize its lexis to meet the necessities of contemporary communication. Because the Arab World consists of developing countries, elaboration of terminology remains a major challenge in the linguistic policy of Arabisation. As far as lexical modernization is concerned, there is a research gap about the Corona pandemic. The literature counts mainly glossaries about Covid-19 terminology with no detailed consideration of the different linguistic processes to introduce such terms into Standard Arabic (e.g. Aboelez and Diouri, 2020). As such, the present study follows a new drive with the aim to unveil the different modernization practices that are undertaken by Arab journalists.

Method

The present study considered in essence Corona-related vocabulary in Standard Arabic. As far as methodology is concerned, it has opted for a descriptive discourse analysis method within the language-in-use approach. Two samples of Arabic-broadcasting media were considered. The first one is *Aljazeera*, which seats in Qatar and hosts journalists of different Arab nationalities. This amalgam of journalists is important in the sense that some of them come from countries where English is the first foreign language (e.g. Egypt, Qatar, etc) and others are from countries where French is the dominant foreign language (mainly Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia). The second TV channel which formed a source for data collection is *A3*, an Algerian public TV channel.

News delivery and reports about Coronavirus formed the basis for data collection. This translates that forums and round-tables where journalists had little contribution were excluded from the study. Consideration was only given to the spoken language, with a particular focus on vocabulary to the exclusion of syntactic structures, phonology and other linguistic aspects. Also, no written products (reports, newspapers, etc) were included in the analysis. Data collection lasted for three months (from May 2021 to July 2021). A total number of 9314 utterances were considered. Table one includes a non-exhaustive glossary of the most recurrent English Corona-related terms with their Arabic equivalents (transliteration of Arabic terms in italics)

Table 1. *Examples of English and Arabic Corona-associated jargon*

English Term	Arabic Equivalent (Transliteration)	Phonetic Representation of Arabic terms
Chloroquine	Chloroquine	Klo:ro:ki:n
Communicable	quabil liannaql	qa:bil liʔannaql
Corona	Corona	Koro:nah
COVID-19	Covid-19	Kovid tisçata çaʃar
confirmed case	hala muakkada	Ha:la muʔakkadah
congregate settings	alhushoud	ʔalħuʃu:d
community spread	Intishar ijtimaie	ʔintiʃa:r ʔiʒtima:çi:
contact tracing	Iqtifaa alittissal	ʔiqtifa:ʔ ʔalittiṣa:l
Diagnosis	attashkhis	ʔattaʃχi:ṣ
Epidemic	wabae	waba:ʔ
Epidemiology	ïlm alawbia	çilm ʔalʔawbiʔa
herd immunity	manät almujtamae	Mana:çat ʔalmuʒtamaç
Incubation period	fatrat alhajr assihi	Fatrat ʔalħaʒr ʔaṣṣiħi:

Isolation	aläzl	Ɂalçazl
Mask	cammama/quinae	Kamma:mah/ qina:ç
novel coronavirus	virus Corona almustajad	Veiru:s koro:na Ɂalmustaʒad
Outbreak	attafachi	Ɂattafaʃʃi:
Pandemic	jaïha	ʒa:Ɂiħa
PCR test	ikhtibar tafaoul albalmara almutasalsil	Ɂiχtiba:r tafa:çul Ɂalbalmarah Ɂalmutasalsil
Quarantine	aläzl/alhajr alilzami	Ɂalçazl/ Ɂalħaʒr Ɂal Ɂilza:mi:
Screening	tahari ärad alissaba	taħarri: Ɂaçra:ḍ Ɂal Ɂiṣa:ba
self-isolation	alhajr addati/attawie	Ɂalħaʒr Ɂaða:ti:/ Ɂaṭṭawçi:
Social/physical distancing	attabaud alijtimaie	Ɂattaba:çud Ɂal Ɂiʒtima:çi:
Superspreader	sarie alintishaar	sari:ç Ɂalintiʃa:r
Symptomatic	du ärad	ðu: Ɂaçra:ḍ
SARS (Severe acute respiratory syndrome)	mutalazimat aliltihab arriawi alhad	mutala:zimat Ɂa Ɂiltiha:b Ɂarri Ɂawi: Ɂalħa:d
Transmission	alintiqual	Ɂal Ɂintiqa:l
Zoonotic	hayawani almasdar	hajawa:ni: Ɂalmaṣdar

Results

Analysis of a total number of 9314 utterances extracted from the two Arabic-broadcasting channels (Aljazeera and A3) revealed a variety of results. It was noticed that the media language vis-à-vis Corona heavily builds on borrowing. As for the present study, the different types of borrowings are discussed below.

Core Borrowings

Table two sketched below, exposes the ratio of use when core borrowings occurred in a certain utterance and when viable Arabic equivalents could be used instead. The table only mentions borrowings that were frequently attested in the spoken media language. This implies that some other instances were not taken into consideration as they were used one or two times at best. It is evident that there is no need to use such terms as Standard Arabic, the formal language, already has viable equivalents (see table one). This implies that such terms only duplicate meaning.

Many times, journalists and reporters showed a strong tendency to opt for such foreign items (English) at the cost of their Arabic counterparts. Journalists use these terms with no to slight adaptation to Arabic grammar. For example, 'mask' or 'screening' were used with no integration into Arabic. This is not the case with 'epidemiology', which showed slight adaptation, being uttered as '*epidemiologia*'. The most important remark relates to the term 'SARS' as the utterances that were considered revealed no use of its Arabic equivalent. Journalists always opted for the easiest way, using the acronym as it exactly exists in the source language. The same remark perfectly works for 'PCR test' with the replacement of English 'test' by its Arabic equivalent (sometimes even the word 'test' was kept instead of Arabic '*ikhtibaar*'). As for the item **'**Coronavirus', it showed a high percentage of use although its Arabic equivalent is more prevalent in the media. The only difference between Arabic and English in this case is a question of word ordering, i.e., Arabic inverts the term, starting with virus followed by Corona.

Table 2. *The occurrence ratio of core borrowings*

Term	Occurrence Ratio
epidemiology	53%
incubation period	17%
mask	29%
Coronavirus	43%
outbreak	4%
PCR	100%
screening	33%
self-isolation	31%
social distancing	37%
SARS	100%
transmission	17%

It should be noted that the terms sketched in table two do not show homogenous use in *Aljazeera* and *A3* channels. Words like 'incubation', 'mask', 'outbreak', 'screening', 'self-isolation' and 'transmission' only appeared on *Aljazeera*. These are core borrowings of an English source. On *A3*, such words appeared under other types of borrowing as discussed below. What is evident is that many times core borrowings take precedence over Arabic equivalents, especially in the spoken language of the media. This covers all fields, including sciences, technology, economy, politics, etc.

Cultural Borrowings

Analysis of the results revealed many instances of what Myers-Scotton (2002) labels cultural borrowings. The items listed in table one that can be considered cultural borrowings include 'Chloroquine'**,** '**Corona'**, '**COVID-**19' and 'SARS'. Such words form now an integral part of the Standard Arabic dictionary. One can easily notice that such borrowings show no adaptation to Arabic grammar. Concerning the listed examples, one must clarify that the term 'SARS' is actually open to discussion. It can be considered a cultural borrowing for the simple reason that it relates to an object new to the Arabic language. As such, it is directly borrowed from English with no integration into Arabic to the extent that it is the English acronym, which is borrowed instead of the full name. This term can also be considered an instance of core borrowing as providing an Arabic equivalent is a possible option (e.g. through calquing or coinage)

It should be noted that cultural borrowings are not always kept in their foreign state. For example, the English term 'virus', which is now an established loanword in Standard Arabic dictionary, shows a slight phonetic adaptation. Instead of its original pronunciation /ˈvaɪrəs/, it is realized as /veirus/. The term has also been subject to morphosyntactic integration as it can be captured in its Arabic plural form '*veirusaat*' (/veiru:sa:t/). The addition of the inflectional bound morpheme '*aat*' makes the word obey Arabic rules of plural formation (known as feminine plural in this case). Adaptation of cultural borrowings into Arabic grammar extends to cover other items associated with different fields. Such instances are abundant.

Calques

The data obtained from the analysis of the different utterances also divulged examples of 'calques' (loan translation). Examples of calques that can be extracted from table one are presented in Table three.

Table 3. *Instances of Corona-related calques in Arabic*

English Term	Arabic Equivalent (Transliteration)
contact tracing	Iqutifae alittissal
herd immunity	Manät almujtamae
Incubation period	Fatrat alhajr assihi
novel Coronavirus	Virus Corona almustajad
PCR test	ikhtibar tafaoul albalmara almutasalsil
Self-isolation	alhajr addati/attawie
Social/ physical **distancing**	attabaud alijtimaie
SARS (Severe acute respiratory syndrome)	mutala:zimat ʔaʔiltiha:b ʔarriʔawi: ʔalħa:d

Words in column 'B' are no other than word-for-word translations of words in column 'A' (see table three). Although Standard Arabic counts such words for centuries, if not millennia, they only existed as separate terms not denoting the exact same meaning that they convey when they are used in Corona-related discourse. For example, the two words forming the concept '*attabaud alijtimaaie*' (social distancing) exist in Standard Arabic for ages. However, their combination in the form of a compound word was only popularized with the spread of Coronavirus. This was after popularizing the English compound word 'social/physical distancing'. Therefore, one can argue with pose that the Arabic word is no other than a calque, although it apparently displays no linguistic elements of a foreign origin.

Standard Arabic is full of calques. Examples would include, beyond Corona-related terminology, words like '*naatihat assahaab*' (/na:tiħa:t assaħa:b/) and '*haassub*' (/ħa:su:b/) which are, literally speaking, only an exact translation of the English words 'skyscraper' and 'computer', respectively.

Loanblends

Analysis of the data revealed another instance of borrowing, known as loanblend. In our data, two hybrid expressions occurred frequently (Arabic in italics). They are 'protocol *sihi*' (/ṣiħħi:/, health protocol) and '*ikhtibaar* PCR' (/iχtiba:r/, PCR test). One can easily notice that these are hybrid expressions containing Arabic and English elements. Our data showed that English 'protocol' always collocated with Arabic '/ṣiħħi:/'. Also, the Arabic word '/iχtiba:r/' is collocated most of the time with the English acronym PCR.

Loanshift

Data analysis also presented another interesting phenomenon, known as loanshift, i.e., 'semantic extension'. As for our data, the Arabic term '*jaaiha*' (/ʒa:çiħa/, which stands for English

'pandemic', is a perfect instance of loanshift. '*Jaaiha*' has originally different meanings depending on the context where it occurs. It may mean 'calamity', 'barren', 'locust', 'invasion', and so forth. However, this word has been called into use to denote the high spread of Coronavirus. It received an agreement among the Arabic-speaking communities, and it has been largely popularized by the media to the extent that no other word could compete with it. This word has therefore undergone a semantic extension to denote another meaning that is acquired from a lending language (English 'pandemic' in this case).

Beyond Corona-related items, Arabic counts some other instances of loanshift. For example, the Arabic word /nadʒm/ originally meant *star* in the astronomical sense. However, this word is now also used to denote another meaning (e.g. celebrity). This semantic extension was built on the basis of another semantic extension which took place in English as the word 'star' has been extended semantically to denote 'fame'.

Terminology Unification Issues

Data analysis also revealed another matter which relates to terminology variation and the need to meet unification. This requires serious discussion. It was noticed that Arabic-broadcasting media show some variation in use to refer essentially to two words, namely 'mask' and 'self-isolation'. Arab journalists use two, supposedly, synonyms for the English item 'mask', which are *kammama* (/kamma:ma/) and *quinaa* (/qinaaς/), with the first item prevailing in most utterances that were considered. Likewise, the item 'self-isolation' was also found to have two equivalents which are *hadjr tawii* (/ħaʒr ṭawςi/) and *hadjr thati* (/haʒr ða:ti/). Again, the first item gained more ground in the discourse under investigation.

Terminology variation was not highly attested in the study. However, it remains a serious problem facing the modernization of Standard Arabic as it practically persists in most domains, including sciences, technology, economy, etc. Arriving at a compromise on terms is hard to meet across the Arabic-speaking World, even within one country, sometimes within the same institution. To put it another way, the same object or concept may be referred to by a variety of terms that may sound synonymous (Djennane, 2016). Djebbari (2005), for example, provides some instances where the English term has one French equivalent but more than two corresponding Arabic counterparts; suffice it to mention those terms related to the computer. For example, English 'server' corresponds to French 'serveur' but to four Arabic terms '*mulaqqim*', '*muzawwid*', '*khadim*', and '*mikhdam*' (/mulaqqim/, /muzawwid/, /χa:dim/ /miχda:m/, respectively). It goes without saying that lexical variation can create lexical chaos that may blind people in literature searches. The point is that any register (scientific, legal, economic, etc.) requires precision and refutes vagueness in terminology. This, of course, builds on the semantic rule that no two words are perfect synonyms.

Another point that also needs to tackle is that Arab journalists do not seem to differentiate between some Corona-related vocabulary. For example, it was noticed that the word *alhadjr* (/alħaʒr/, incubation) is the most widely used item to describe a situation. This can be misleading

since English uses three terms with different meanings: incubation, isolation and quarantine (note that the use of the three items was not probed in English-broadcasting media, and therefore one cannot imply that such media are characterized by terminology exactness). If Standard Arabic heavily depends on English in terms of Corona-related vocabulary (through different types of borrowing), Arab journalists (and other users) must take the semantic difference into account as the use of an item (/alħaʒr/ to mean incubation period) where other items (isolation and quarantine) fit would be a fallacy.

Discussion

Examination of Arabic Corona-related items that are frequently used by Arabic-broadcasting media indicated that many items are new or at least have acquired a new meaning. This is surprising in no way as Standard Arabic, like any other language, needs to extend its dictionary to host the rapid changes and unstoppable developments occurring in the present era. Such developments make it a must to revise the language and modernize it, especially when it comes to naming novel objects and concepts. Data analysis revealed that most of the Corona-related items are, in one way or another, of a foreign origin. Because of the supremacy of the Anglophone World, English has become the world lingua franca, or more precisely a *global language* (Crystal, 2003). Being associated with international trade, diplomacy, science and technology, etc., English is now de jure or de facto the main lending language. As for Standard Arabic, new vocabulary and expressions are now borrowed from English more than other world languages combined.

As for the Corona pandemic, the data showed that the media play an important role in the diffusion and popularization of new lexis. Reporters and news broadcasters were faced with a sudden situation, which imposed an urgent need for a jargon to talk about the new pandemic. This answers the first research question proving that journalists are an important agent of language planning to the extent that their role in the dissemination of new vocabulary is not strictly controlled by language bodies. As an answer to the second question that revolves around the methods used by journalists to talk about new objects and concepts, it was found that the Corona jargon is mainly characterized by 'linguistic borrowing'. If fact, journalists showed a strong dependency to use loanwords which are, directly or indirectly, borrowed from English with/without integration into Arabic. Our data also revealed that 'semantic expansion' comes second in position in terms of the methods adopted by journalists to talk about new concepts/objects. The findings showed that 'coinage' remains the least used option in the media language. This echoes what Yule (2006) observed about English revealing that coinage is the least attested process of word formation.

Borrowing is certainly the simplest way to introduce new terms to a language. However, this is the least favorite solution for native 'purist' linguists who only approve of (total) reliance on indigenous resources. Arabic protectionists insist on using pure Arabic words to name anything new, be it a concept or an object. Proponents of linguistic purism see that borrowing must be kept

as the last option that may be used only when other alternatives cannot be met. Efforts towards linguistic purism are not Arabic-specific. Other examples include the continuous endeavor of native linguists to purge English from foreign origin- an activity popularized by the author Paul Jennings under the label 'Anglish' (Bidwell, 2017). Efforts of purism are also reflected in the ongoing activism of the *Academie Française* to rid French of the growing influence of English. Another instance may relate to Ataturk's Turkey which fostered a strong demand to purge Turkish of Arabic and Persian linguistic elements.

Conclusion

The main aim of this research was to identify the role of Arab journalists in the *lexication process* of Standard Arabic, and how they can effectively contribute to the innovation and diffusion of new terms. It was found that direct borrowing is the main process they opt for to name new objects and concepts. The point is that overpopulating the language with foreign elements is not recommended by purist native linguists. Therefore, calquing (loan translation) becomes a good alternative. Semantic expansion and/or coinage will be, of course, the best options for purist linguists. Whatever the method used, the most significantly emphasized point among Arabic lexicographers is the need to meet terminology unification across the Arabic-speaking countries that share one standard language. Lexical variation in the scientific jargon is a flaw as it makes the language users experience confusion and they can easily fall in the trap of misunderstanding and misuse. Such linguistic issues cannot be fixed without cooperation between the different academies of Arabic scattered throughout the Arab World. This issue also calls for immediate political support, i.e., there must be top-down legislation which takes the linguistic dimension as a high concern. The aim of legislation must be controlling and regulating the language of broadcasting, be it verbal or written. This is an option not to divorce the linguists' role in modernizing the language.

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