

Etymology of Arabic loanwords in English in Monolingual and Bilingual Dictionaries: Lexicographers' versus EFL Learners' Perspectives

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Abstract: *This study deals with the etymological information provided on Arabic loanwords in English by different kinds of dictionaries; monolingual, bilingual and bilingualized. It also reports on EFL learners' attitudes towards the relative importance of such information for understanding the meaning of these words. The participants were 200 undergraduate students majoring in Applied English at the University of Jordan and the data were collected through writing tasks, a questionnaire and structured interviews. The results showed that both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries vary in giving the word origin in its entry but bilingualized dictionaries do not provide any information in this regard.*

The findings indicated that most EFL students believe that the etymology of English words derived from Arabic can be very helpful in understanding their meaning. Based on these results, recommendations were made for improving the content of various dictionaries, and for integrating word origin in EFL vocabulary instruction.

1. Introduction

Research on the usefulness of dictionaries to their users has focused either on the difference between what is given in bilingual dictionaries (BLDs) and monolingual ones, or on the variations in the information provided by several kinds of the latter (Tomaszczyk, 1983; Tickoo, 1989; Atkins & Knowles, 1990; Nuccorini, 1992; Laufer & Melamed, 1994; Lan, 1997; Rundell, 1998; Diab & Hamdan, 1999; Gonzalez, 1999; McCreary, 2002). For example, Laufer and Melamed (1994) compared the results of students consulting monolingual dictionaries (MLDs) and those using (BLDs) in comprehension and production. They found that the achievement of the students using (MLDs) was better than that of (BLDs) users. On the other hand, McCreary (2002) considered the impact of using three kinds of (MLDs) on his students' written performance. He concluded that there are differences in the dictionaries under investigation resulting in varying effects on the participants' written work. He also reported that his students prefer using learners' dictionaries to those intended for native speakers.

Regardless of its type, a dictionary is usually regarded as a source of information on unfamiliar words in terms of meaning, part of speech and

spelling (Tomaszczyk, 1979; Bloch, 1985; Summers, 1988; Soekemi, 1989; Al-Till, 1990; Scholfield, 1997; Diab & Hamdan, 1999). Other information provided in a word entry such as etymology, which deals with the word origin, is considered marginal (Quirk, 1974; Bejoint, 1981; Jackson, 1988).

However, several scholars believe that the word origin could have an important role in facilitating L2 vocabulary learning (Ilson, 1983; Pierson, 1989; McGavin, 1990; Smith, 1995; Corson, 1997; Woodard, 1998; Bellomo, 1999; Smoke, Green & Isenstead, 2001; Yamazaki & Yamazaki, 2007; Shen, 2009).

For instance, Bellomo (1999) argues that L2 learners can benefit from direct instruction on utilizing etymology as a word attack strategy. More recently, Shen (2009) has argued that drawing FL learners' attention to the borrowings between L1 and L2 could help in L2 vocabulary building.

This study looks at the etymological information provided on English words borrowed from Arabic in different kinds of dictionaries. It also reports on Jordanian EFL students' attitudes towards the relevance of such information to understanding the accurate meaning of these words. The results could provide important information not only to dictionary compilers but also to EFL educators especially in the Arab world.

2. Literature Review

Dictionary use in L2 context has attracted a lot of attention in the last two decades (e.g. Scholfield, 1982; Soekemi, 1989; Nation, 1990; Kelly, 1991; Hulstijn, 1993; Luppescu & Day, 1993; Knight, 1994; Herbst, 1996; Corson, 1997; Harvey & Yuill, 1997; Laufer & Kimmel, 1997; Atkins, 1998; Woodard, 1998; Laufer & Hill, 2000; Smoke, Green & Isenstead, 2001; Yamazaki & Yamazaki, 2007). For instance, Soekemi (1989) explained how to integrate dictionaries in teaching speaking, reading and writing. In a later study, Luppescu and Day (1993) considered the effect of dictionary use during reading on vocabulary retention. They found that dictionary users scored significantly better on a vocabulary test than non-users. Similar results were reported by Knight (1994). On the other hand, Harvey and Yuill (1997) looked at the reasons for L2 learners' use of a dictionary for a writing activity, how exactly they used it and how successful they were in achieving their aims.

Most researchers and educators have always encouraged EFL learners to use dictionaries preferring monolingual ones (e.g. Baxter, 1980; Ard, 1982; Snell-Hornby, 1984; Bloch, 1985; Stein, 1990; Walz, 1990; Hartmann, 1991). For instance, Bloch (1985) demonstrated the preference for (MLDs) by explaining all the possible learning points that they can offer. On the other hand, some scholars have promoted using bilingualized dictionaries (BLZDs), which provide translations in addition to the good features of (MLDs) (e.g. Hartmann, 1991; Laufer & Melamed, 1994; Laufer & Hadar, 1997; Laufer & Kimmel, 1997). In a study comparing monolingual, bilingual, and bilingualised dictionaries, Laufer & Hadar (1997) noticed that regardless of the learners' proficiency level, the (BLZD) was either better than, or as good as the other two types in both comprehension and production activities.

However, EFL students tend to favour using (BLDs) although they tend to be more satisfied with (MLDs) (e.g. Baxter, 1980; Tomaszczyk, 1983; Atkins & Knowles, 1990; Nuccorini, 1992; Diab & Hamdan, 1999). For example, Tomaszczyk (1983) found that the participants in his study were happier with the information given in (MLDs) although they used (BLDs) more frequently. Similar results were reported by Atkins and Knowles (1990), and Nuccorini (1992). Likewise, Diab and Hamdan (1999) came to the same conclusion and observed that their subjects tend to even use (MLDs) more than (BLDs).

Irrespective of its kind, most students consider the dictionary a primary source of information on the word meaning as opposed to other issues. Research has shown that this has been the case for both native and non-native speakers. Back in 1962, Barnhart discovered that freshman English native speakers usually use collegiate dictionaries to look for the word meaning followed by spelling, then pronunciation, synonyms, usage, and finally etymology. Similar results were reported by Quirk (1974) and Jackson (1988). Likewise, Bejoint (1981) observed that for French EFL students using Advanced English (MLDs) meaning came first followed by grammar, then pronunciation, spelling, language variety and finally word origin. Also, Tono (1984) noticed that Japanese University students tend to concentrate on the first definition given in a word entry and to ignore other information including its origin. Similar results were reported by Al-Till (1990).

It should be mentioned that word origin has been included in general-purpose native speaker dictionaries since the late 17th century. Common words were initially listed in dictionaries only for the sake of recording their etymology (Stockwell & Donta, 2001). Since that time, it has become customary to provide the word origin in native speaker dictionaries, but not in most learners' dictionaries (Jackson 2002).

A good number of scholars argue that the word origin should be taught to language students, both native and non-native. They propose three justifications for the study of Latin etymology of English words. The first is the large number of Latin words in English (Skeat, 1917; Nation, 1989; Green, 1990; McGavin, 1990; Henry, 1993; Corson, 1995; Smith, 1995; Bellomo, 1999; Nation, 2001). The second is the psycholinguistic principles for the process of storing words (Pierson, 1989; Carroll, 1992). The third is the recent trend in research on learning strategies (Corson, 1997; Woodard, 1998; Smoke, Green & Isenstead, 2001; Pittman, 2003; Yamazaki & Yamazaki, 2007; Shen, 2009).

Many studies have demonstrated how etymological information can facilitate L2 vocabulary learning (Pierson 1989; Henry 1993; Corson 1997; Woodard 1998; Bellomo 1999; Smoke, Green & Isenstead 2001; Yamazaki & Yamazaki 2007). For instance, Pierson (1989) illustrated how etymology instruction was integrated into a second-language program in Hong Kong. Similarly, Woodard (1998) showed how discussing the word origin can be a useful strategy for teaching vocabulary. More recently, Yamazaki and Yamazaki (2007) explained how teaching the Latin and Greek roots of English words in

EFL classes can improve Japanese students' vocabulary acquisition and active word use.

It is well established that students are not usually interested in the etymology of the words they look up in a dictionary, as mentioned earlier. However, very little attention has been given to their attitudes towards the origin of L2 words which are related to L1 vocabulary. Ilson (1983) argues that word etymology can be very helpful to language learners whose L1 shares cognates with L2. He maintains that such information can make them aware of the kinds of cognates that occur, the area of meaning they cover, the way they are used in the two languages, the morphological analysis of lexical items, the processes of word formation and the historical illusion of certain combinations of elements. More recently, Shen (2009) believes that raising language learners' awareness of borrowings between L1 and L2 can have a significant effect on increasing their vocabulary, improving their translation skills and encouraging positive attitudes towards L2 culture.

A case in point is indicating the origin of English words borrowed from Arabic in MLDs, BLDs and BLZDs, and its relevance to EFL learners' vocabulary building. There are perhaps as many as 10,000 English words derived from Arabic. Some of them have come to English through other European languages such as French and Latin, and later through Spanish, which has been heavily influenced by Arabic (Kees 2001). Borrowing from Arabic into English has continued up to modern times through French or Italian including words like giraffe, carat, garble, sherbet (Cowie 1999; Jackson & Ze Amvela 2000). Also, some Arabic food terms started to find their way into English dictionaries because of increased migration in the past century which has brought direct contact between Arabic and English speakers. Examples of these are tabboleh, couscous, hummus and falafel.

The influence of raising Arab EFL students' awareness of these words on their L2 vocabulary learning has not been given enough attention. Most dictionary-related research conducted on EFL learners in Arab countries have concentrated on their use of different kinds of dictionaries and on their attitudes towards the information they provide (e.g. Diab 1990; Al-Till 1990; Rashid 1991; Diab & Hamdan 1999). For instance, Diab (1990) found that both students and teachers of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at the University of Jordan believe that dictionaries include a lot of irrelevant information. On the other hand, Al-Till (1990) reported that most L2 learners consider dictionaries as a major source of vocabulary learning only. Similar results were reported by Rashid (1991). To my knowledge there has been no study on the treatment of English words of Arabic origin in MLDs, BLDs and BLZDs, or on EFL students' attitudes towards such information.

The present study explores these issues by answering the following questions:

1. Is the origin of Arabic loanwords in English provided in MLDs?
2. Is the etymology of such words indicated in English-Arabic BLDs?
3. Is the origin of English words borrowed from Arabic given in BLZDs?

4. What are EFL students' attitudes towards the importance of knowing the origin of such words for understanding their meaning?

The findings of this study may provide important information to compilers of different kinds of dictionaries. They could also supplement the literature on using dictionaries in EFL context, specifically, utilizing word etymology in L2 vocabulary instruction.

3. Methodology and Data Collection

The study was conducted during the academic year 2006-2007. It was based on analyzing the treatment of (30) English words derived from Arabic in (MLDs), (BLDs) and (BLZDs), and on EFL students' attitudes towards the relative importance of such information for understanding their meaning.

The lexical items under investigation were chosen from (297) Arabic loanwords in English listed in Al-Mawrid (Al- Ba'albaki 1997), a commonly used bilingual English–Arabic dictionary (E-A BLD) in Jordan. They were also looked up in the Dictionary of Word Origin (Shipley 1975) to check their etymology. The target words were selected based on their frequency in both English and Arabic and the minimal change that has occurred in their meaning during the borrowing process. These were the following:

massage, algebra, candy, chap, garble, shift, syrup, safari, cumin, tariff, lemon, cipher, cotton, alcohol, algorithm, alchemy, alkali, giraffe, hashish, sherbet, saffron, sheriff, admiral, gazelle, jar, minaret, sesame, zero, artichoke, caliber.

The words in question were looked up in four (MLDs), two British and two American, to find out if their origin was provided. These dictionaries were: Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD) (Wehmeier 2000), Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE) (Summers 1987), Merriam-Webster's Dictionary (MWD) (Stevens 1997) and the American Heritage Dictionary (AHD) (De Vinne 1991). The words were also checked in three E-A (BLDs) for the same purpose. These were: Al Mawrid (Al-Ba'albaki 1997), Atlas (2002 ed.), and Al Mughni Al-Akbar (Al-Karmi 1991). In addition, they were looked up in Oxford Word Power (OWP) (Wehmeier, Al-Sham'a & Mahmoud 1999) which is an English –Arabic (BLZD) for the same reason. All of these dictionaries were selected based on their high availability and frequent use in Jordan.

The data on which this study is based was collected through writing tasks, a questionnaire, and structured interviews.

3.1. Participants

The participants in this research project were (200) Arabic native speakers majoring in Applied English at the University of Jordan. They were second year students taking a study skills course which deals partly with dictionary strategies. In each class, there were (6) different types of (MLDs) to be compared in terms of their treatment of certain words. In addition, (BLDs) and

(BLZDs) were dealt with for the purpose of comparing the information they provide to that given in (MLDs).

3.2. Writing Tasks

The writing tasks were of three types and were given to the students over a period of three weeks. Each week the participants were required to look up 10 of the target words in three kinds of dictionaries and to indicate if their origin was given. The first task was based on (MLDs), the second on (BLDs), and the third on (BLZDs). The students were also asked to mention whether the word origin helped them in understanding its meaning. Each task was given as a piece of homework to be submitted in the following class.

3.3. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was in English and was designed based on the researcher's own experience and adapting previous studies on the issue (e.g. Bejoint 1981; Diab 1990; Corson 1997; Diab & Hamdan 1999; Smoke, Green & Isenstead, 2001; Yamazaki & Yamazaki, 2007). Its validity was checked by a panel of four EFL professors. In its final form, the questionnaire consisted of twelve questions divided into two sections; the first dealt with general background information including age, gender, and achievement in school and university English tests. The second had to do with the type of dictionary the participants consult, the frequency of its use, the level of difficulty faced when dealing with it and their attitudes towards the etymological information given in the word entry.

The reliability of the questionnaire was established by using test-retest on 21 students who were excluded from the sample, with a twenty-day interval between the two administrations. Chronbach alpha was calculated and found to be 81.6%. After establishing its validity and reliability, the questionnaire was distributed and completed during a regular class.

3.4. The Structured Interview

The structured interview consisted of six open ended questions dealing with the following themes: Awareness of Arabic loanwords in English, checking the word origin in the dictionary, the effect of knowing the origin of English words borrowed from Arabic on understanding their meaning, attitudes towards including the word etymology in (MLDs), (BLDs) and (BLZDs).

The interviewees were 20 students, both males and females, chosen randomly from the participants. After a short explanation in which the interviewees were informed about the goals of the research prior to recording, the interview was conducted in Arabic then coded into English.

4. Results and Discussion

The data analysis indicated that there are variations in the way different kinds of dictionaries deal with the word origin. It also suggested that dictionary users tend to consider such information to be helpful in understanding the meaning of L2 lexical items which were borrowed from L1.

4.1. Writing Tasks

The analysis of the participants' performance in the first writing task showed that different kinds of (MLDs) vary in providing the origin of the words under investigation, as illustrated in Table (1).

Table 1: Availability of the target words' origin in four (MLDs)

No.	Word	OALD	LDOCE	AHD	WD
1	Algebra	X	X	√	√
2	Candy	X	X	√	√
3	Chap	X	X	X	X
4	Cumin	X	X	X	X
5	Garble	X	X	√	√
6	Massage	X	X	√	√
7	Safari	X	X	√	√
8	Shifty	X	X	X	X
9	Syrup	X	X	√	√
10	Tariff	X	X	√	√
11	Lemon	X	X	√	X
12	Cipher	X	X	√	√
13	Cotton	X	X	√	√
14	Alcohol	X	X	√	√
15	Algorithm	X	X	√	√
16	Alchemy	X	X	√	√
17	Alkali	X	X	√	√
18	Giraffe	X	X	√	√
19	Hashish	X	X	√	√
20	Sherbet	X	X	√	√
21	Saffron	X	X	√	√
22	Sheriff	X	X	√	√
23	Admiral	X	X	√	√
24	Gazelle	X	X	√	√
25	Jar	X	X	√	X
26	Minaret	X	X	√	√
27	Sesame	X	X	√	√
28	Zero	X	X	√	√
29	Artichoke	X	X	√	√
30	Caliber	X	X	√	√

It is clear that (MLDs) vary in giving the etymology of the target words such that those intended for native speakers do, while those directed to L2 learners do not. For instance, AHD lists the origin for 27 of the lexical items under

investigation, and MWD provides it for 25. On the other hand, OALD and LDOCE do not give it for any. These results maintain Jackson's observation (2002) regarding the treatment of words etymology in English standard dictionaries and learners' dictionaries.

The analysis of the students' answers in the second task revealed that there are differences among E-A (BLDs) in providing the origin of the target words, as can be seen from Table (2).

Table 2: Treatment of the target words' etymology in three (BLDs)

No.	Word	Atlas	Al-Mughni	Al-Mawrid
1	Algebra	√	X	√
2	Candy	X	X	√
3	Chap	X	X	X
4	Cumin	X	X	X
5	Garble	X	X	√
6	Massage	X	X	√
7	Safari	√	X	√
8	Shifty	X	X	X
9	Syrup	X	X	√
10	Tariff	√	X	√
11	Lemon	X	X	X
12	Cipher	X	X	X
13	Cotton	X	X	X
14	Alcohol	√	X	√
15	Algorithm	√	X	√
16	Alchemy	√	X	√
17	Alkali	√	X	√
18	Giraffe	√	X	√
19	Hashish	√	X	√
20	Sherbet	X	X	√
21	Saffron	√	X	√
22	Sheriff	√	X	√
23	Admiral	√	X	√
24	Gazelle	√	X	√
25	Jar	X	X	X
26	Minaret	√	X	√
27	Sesame	√	X	X
28	Zero	√	X	√
29	Artichoke	√	X	√
30	Caliber	X	X	X

Table (2) shows that there are differences among various types of (BLDs) in their treatment of the target words' origin. For example, Al-Mawrid gives it for (21) words, while Atlas provides it for (17). On the other hand, Al-Mughni Al-Akbar does not list it for any.

The analysis of the participants' performance in the third task indicated that the (BLZD), in particular (OWP), does not provide etymological information on any of the lexical items under investigation although it is directed towards Arab EFL learners.

4. 2. The Questionnaire

The analysis of the students' responses to the questionnaire showed that their level in English is good, in general, since (50%) of them got (100-110) out of (140) in the General High School English Examination, and the other (50%) received (90-100). Also, most of them, (90%), passed the university English placement examination.

The analysis also showed that most of them use different dictionaries for their daily academic activities but with various degrees depending on their type, as illustrated in Table (3) below.

Table 3: Students' use of different types of dictionaries

<i>Dictionary type</i>	<i>Percent</i>
MLD only	24
BLD only	7
BLZD only	3
MLD, BLD and BLZD	66
Total	100

Table (3) indicates that the participants tend to use different kinds of dictionaries for their academic tasks.

Most of them (66%) seem to use all types of dictionaries with preference of (MLDs). On the other hand, (24%) deal only with (MLDs) and (7%) consult only (BLDs). The tendency of the students to consult (MLDs) rather than (BLDs) could be due to two main reasons. First, most of them (80%) find the former easier to use than the latter. Second, they believe that (MLDs) have positive features that are not found in (BLDs), such as providing illustrative examples and listing the different meanings for each lexical item. These findings

are in line with those reported in previous studies (Tomaszczyk 1983; Atkins & Knowles 1990; Nuccorini 1992; Diab & Hamdan 1999).

The data analysis revealed that the participants tend to have various attitudes towards the role of knowing the Arabic origin of the target words in understanding their meaning, as illustrated in Table (4) below.

Table 4: Students' attitudes towards the awareness of loanwords and L2 vocabulary building

<i>Importance of Word Origin</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Yes, always	20.7
Yes, most of the time	20.7
Yes, sometimes	41.4
No	13.8
No answer	3.4
Total	100.0

It can be seen from Table (4) that most of the participants believe that knowing the etymology of English words derived from Arabic is important for understanding their meaning, but with various degrees. For instance, (20.7%) of them think that such information is always necessary, and (20.7%) consider it so most of the time. On the other hand, (41.4%) of the participants feel that the awareness of the Arabic origin of these words is sometimes essential for understanding their meaning, but (13.8 %) do not think so.

These findings partially support those reported in previous research on the importance of integrating word origin in L2 vocabulary building (Bellome 1999; Smoke, Green & Isenstead 2001; Yamazaki & Yamazaki 2007; Zengin, Erdoğan & Akalın 2007).

4.3. Structured Interview

The students' responses in the interview were translated into English then coded into the following categories:

1. Awareness of Arabic loanwords in English
2. Checking word origin in the dictionary
3. The relationship between the awareness of Arabic loanwords in English and understanding their meaning
4. Views on including word origin in (MLDs)

5. Attitudes towards listing word etymology in (BLDs)
6. Feelings about providing word origin in (BLZDs)

The responses are summarized in Table (5) below.

Table 5: Students' responses in the interview

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Number</i>
Awareness of Arabic loanwords in English	Some English words are of Arabic origin.	8
	Just few English words are derived from Arabic.	12
Checking the word origin in the dictionary	Sometimes I do.	6
	I rarely do.	8
	I do not.	6
The relationship between the awareness of Arabic loanwords in English and understanding their meaning	It helps a lot.	10
	It could help.	6
	It is irrelevant.	4
Views on including word origin in (MLDs)	It should be included for interested students.	7
	It is irrelevant for understanding the word meaning.	5
	There is no need for that.	10
Attitudes towards listing the word etymology in (BLDs)	The word etymology should be included.	5
	Only the origin of Arabic loanwords should be included.	10
	There is no need for that.	5
Feelings about providing word origin in (BLZDs)	The origin of English words derived from Arabic should be given.	8
	The etymology of English words borrowed from Arabic can be included.	9
	It is not necessary	4

Table (5) suggests that the participants do not seem fully aware of English words borrowed from Arabic. They used expressions like "*there could be few English words derived from Arabic*". They do not also appear to be interested in the

etymology of English words they look up in different kinds of dictionaries. They expressed that in sentences like *'I rarely check the word origin when I look it up in the dictionary'*.

The table indicates that the respondents tend to have mixed feelings about the importance of knowing the origin of Arabic loanwords in English for understanding their meanings. They used words and phrases like *"could help"*, *"irrelevant"*. They also seem to have various views on providing the word etymology by different kinds of dictionaries. Although they do not have strong feelings about including word origin in MLDs, they believe that it should be in BLDs and BLZDs especially for L1 borrowings in L2. They used sentences like *"It is irrelevant for understanding the word meaning"*, *"It should be included for interested students"*, *"Only the origin of Arabic loanwords in English should be included"*.

It is clear from the results of this study that various kinds of dictionaries treat the origin of English words derived from Arabic in different ways; monolingual dictionaries intended for native speakers provide the etymology for most of the words, while those directed to L2 learners do not. These results maintain Jackson's (2002) observation on the issue. Similarly, some bilingual dictionaries give the origin for most of the words but others do not. However, bilingualized dictionaries do not include any etymological information on these lexical items.

The findings of the study also show that Jordanian EFL students do not seem to pay attention to the word origin in its dictionary entry. These results are in line with those given in several studies (e.g. Quirk 1974; Bejoint, 1981; Tono, 1984; Jackson 1988; Diab 1990). They also do not appear to believe that there are many English words derived from Arabic. Still, they believe that being aware of these words is important for understanding their meaning. These conclusions support those reported in previous research (e.g. Bellomo 1999; Smoke, Green & Isenstead 2001; Yamazaki & Yamazaki 2007; Zengin, Erdoğan & Akalın 2007).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study showed that English monolingual dictionaries vary in providing information on the etymology of Arabic loanwords in English; those directed towards native speakers do, while those intended for EFL/ESL learners do not. Similarly, not all English –Arabic bilingual dictionaries give the origin of such words; some list it for most of the words but others do not. On the other hand, bilingualized dictionaries do not provide any information in this regard. The results indicated that most of Jordanian EFL university students appear not to be interested in the etymology of the words they look up in the dictionary. They also seem to be only partially aware of the English words derived from Arabic, but they believe that such information is relatively important for understanding their meaning.

Based on these results, it is recommended that compilers of English – Arabic bilingual and bilingualized dictionaries consider including the origin of

Arabic loanwords in English in their entries. It is also suggested that the etymology of English word borrowed from Arabic be integrated in EFL vocabulary instruction in Arab countries.

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