

SEMANTIC CHANGE IN ARABIC LOANWORDS FROM ENGLISH AND FRENCH

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Abstract

This paper investigates semantic modification in Arabic words borrowed from English and French as they are used in Jordan. The most common types of semantic change, namely, widening, narrowing, transfer (metaphor), shift (drift), amelioration, and pejoration, will be found to be operating in these words. Numerous examples are provided in order to illustrate each type of change. In addition, various reasons, e.g. need and semantic or phonological similarity as well as sociological factors like prestige and taboo, are hypothesized as possible instigators of change. It is concluded that semantic change, especially widening, transfer, shift, and pejoration, reveals the flexibility of the Arabic language and its ability to use words borrowed from other languages in a variety of new meanings and contexts.

1. Introduction

It is a fact acknowledged by all language researchers (e.g. Weinreich 1968; Hock 1980; Appel & Muysken 1987, among others) that language contact results in borrowing. Cases of morphological and grammatical borrowing, e.g. relative clauses (cf. Appel & Muysken 1987: 158-162), may occur, but of all types of borrowing, lexical borrowing is the most frequent and least controversial. In fact, it is hard to find a language that has not borrowed words from some other language (Ibid, 164). The case of English borrowing hundreds or even thousands of words from French and other Romance languages following the Norman Invasion of Britain in the eleventh century is well-known. Stanlaw (1987:93) asserts that the Japanese "have borrowed English loanwords in their vocabulary *en masse* [sic]."

The situation of Arabic, on the one hand, and English and French, on the other, is no exception. English and French came into direct contact with Arabic in many parts of the Arab World from the start of the Colonial Period in the early decades of the nineteenth century (Sa'adeddin 1987: 182). Subsequently, many English and French words passed into Arabic, whether it be the colloquial variety as a result of direct contact with native speakers of the two European languages, or the standard written language as a result of a massive movement of translation (especially in the scientific field). Most of these loanwords had to do with scientific discoveries, modern technology, mechanical equipment and instruments (Zughoul 1978:215). Thus, hundreds of words/phrases borrowed from English and French became part of the vocabulary in active daily use in the Arab World (Abu-Absi, 1986).

Like many other Arabs, Jordanians came into contact with English-speaking people well before the turn of the century, either directly through traveling or indirectly through other Arab countries like Egypt. But the year 1917, which marks the beginning of the British "Mandate" over Jordan and Palestine, features the first serious contact between English and the speech of Jordanians. Since that time, English has gained in importance through formal instruction and second language learning. Exposure to Standard British English became common. Since schools were opened for the public during the second quarter of this century, the learning of English became compulsory and extensive. All students in public schools are required to learn English in the fifth grade until graduation from the Secondary School. Some private schools begin teaching this language in the first grade. In addition, in such university disciplines as medicine, nursing, engineering, agriculture, physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, economics, and administrative sciences, English is the medium of instruction. This, coupled with an intensive movement of translation from English into Arabic, gave English a prominent place in the Jordanian society.

As a result of all these developments, hundreds of loanwords from English and French are in active daily use in both written (Modern Standard) and spoken Arabic (JA) in Jordan. Apart from French words which must have entered JA from neighboring Arab countries, like Syria and Lebanon, which were under a French "Mandate" from 1917 until the early 1940's, it is almost impossible to determine whether a given word entered Arabic in Jordan directly or via other Arab dialects in neighboring or distant Arab countries. This question is, however, pointless because most of what can be said about loanwords in one Arab country may apply to loanwords in other Arab countries.

It is not the purpose of this paper to enumerate these loanwords and analyze them from a morphological, phonological, or sociolinguistic point of view, as several works (e.g.

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Butros 1963; Zughoul 1978; Suleiman 1981; Mahadin 1988; Abu-Haidar 1988) have already dealt with this issue. Instead, the main focus of this study is the semantic modification undergone by many of these words since they have been assimilated into Arabic.

The concept of semantic modification has been largely overlooked by scholars working on borrowing, bilingualism, and language contact. In his classic work, Weinreich (1968), for example, fails even to raise the issue. Although dedicating two chapters to borrowing, Appel & Muysken (1987)) completely ignore the problem. Hock (1980) briefly looks at the issue but mainly within the same language. Morrow (1987), Stanlaw (1987), and Abu-Haidar (1988) dedicate a few sentences or a couple of paragraphs each to talk about this important problem. For their part, Williams (1975) and Pyles & Algeo (1982) discuss in some detail semantic change throughout the development of English in books dedicated to the history of this language. Apparently, however, the problem of semantic change subsequent to borrowing has not yet aroused the enthusiasm or attracted the attention of linguists. It is the purpose of this paper to draw attention to this issue by studying Arabic loanwords from English and French as used in Jordan.

In section 2, we try to develop a definition of semantic change and consider the various processes involved in this kind of change. In section 3, a descriptive account of semantic change undergone by many Arabic words borrowed from English and French is offered. Various types of change will be distinguished. Finally, section 4, tries to hypothesize reasons for semantic modification in Arabic loanwords.

2. Semantic Change

Semantic change means a change in meaning undergone by a word which has conserved some or all of its original phonological form (Williams 1975; Hock 1980; Pyles & Algeo 1982). Such change, which is "frequently unpredictable" but "inevitable", may take place in the language itself (throughout its historical development) or when a certain word is borrowed from one language into another. Examples of the first type of change are copious in English, for instance. Williams (1975) and Pyles & Algeo (1982) cite hundreds of English words that underwent semantic modification. The most well-known examples are the following: Old English (OE) *dēor* 'animal', now 'deer'; OE *mete* 'food', now 'meat'; OE *tīd* 'time', now 'tide'; OE *sellan* 'give', now 'sell'; OE *drēam* 'joy', now 'dream'; and OE *dreorig* 'bloody', now 'dreary'. Arabic also exhibits cases of semantic modification: *taba9a* 'to mark, stamp' has come more recently to mean 'to print', and *jarrada* 'to strip,

lay bare' now means also 'to abstract away' (see Stetkevych 1970: 66-67 for more details).² Examples of the second type of change include **veteran** (from Latin *vetus* 'old'), **toilet** (from Old French *teile/toile* 'a cloth'), and **crescent** (from Latin *crescō* 'to grow, increase'). Semantic change may also be complete as in the examples of **drēam** and **tīd** and partial as in **dēor** and **veteran**.

In a more specialized linguistic sense, semantic change is commonly classified into several types: widening (extension), narrowing (restriction), transfer (metaphor), shift, pejoration, and amelioration. We will take up each one of these with illustrative examples from English.

Meaning may be widened, generalized, and extended, or it may be narrowed, specialized, and restricted (Williams 1975; Pyles & Algeo 1982). Thus, OE *taegl* 'tail' in earlier times meant 'hairy caudal appendage, as of a horse'. The notions of hairiness and horsiness were eliminated, and in Modern English (MuE its scope was widened to mean simply 'caudal appendage' (Pyles & Algeo 1982: 243). Similarly, a **mill** was earlier a place for grinding; today, as we know, its meaning has been extended to mean also a woollen mill, a steel mill, etc. In addition, **pen** once meant a feather used in writing; it now covers all sorts of writing instruments (Williams 1975: 175). Examples where the meaning has been narrowed include **dēor** and **mete**, already mentioned. Moreover, *licōr* once simply meant 'fluid'; the alcoholic limitation was added later (Pyles & Algeo 1982: 244). Another example is OE *steorfan* 'starve', which in earlier times meant simply 'to die' (Ibid). Williams (1975: 173) also mentions the example of **pill**, which "has recently narrowed from its original general category of small medicinal ball to the more specific meaning of birth control pill."

Transfer of meaning apparently "occurs when two categories of actions or objects resemble each other in at least one feature and one of them has a name while the other does not but needs one." (Williams 1975: 178) The term 'metaphor' is often used to refer to this kind of change. Thus, **grasp** 'clutch, seize' acquired the new metaphorical meaning 'understand, comprehend'; **loud** is transferred from hearing to sight when we speak of **loud colors** (Pyles & Algeo 1982:245).

Shift of meaning includes examples like **toilet**, already mentioned above, **bead** (from OE *gebed/bed* meaning 'prayer'), and **fur**, **paper**, and **linen** in expressions like **an expensive fur**, **read the paper**, and **bed linen** (Williams 1975: 186-87). Shift of meaning basically occurs when existing forms are associated with new (sometimes related) meanings. As we see from the examples mentioned, it involves generalization (as in

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toilet) or specialization (as in **fur** and **linen**) of the original meaning. Some scholars prefer to use the term 'drift' when "a word naming one area of meaning" (Williams 1975:188) slides into a related area of meaning. Thus, **shrewd** originally meant 'depraved, wicked'; **mischief** meant 'wicked behavior'; **moody** used to mean 'brave', and **coy** 'quiet'. No distinction between the terms 'shift' and 'drift', however, will be made in our discussion of Arabic borrowings below.

Amelioration and pejoration do not involve a change in the word's literal meaning but in its connotations or associations (Pyles & Algeo 1982: 247). Thus, OE **cnīht** 'boy, servant' became **knight** (Hock 1980: 281), and **praise** 'put a value on' came to mean 'value highly' (Pyles & Algeo 1982:248). Hock (1980:280-81) cites an interesting example from French: Modern French **maréchal** 'high military officer' comes from an Old French form that meant 'person in charge of the king's horses'; then, its meaning changed to 'person in charge of the king's horses and other military equipment', to 'person in charge of horses, war equipment, and troops', and, finally, to the modern meaning of 'high military officer'. Instances of pejoration are found in OE **cnafa** meaning 'boy', which became MnE **knave**, Middle English (ME)) **sely** 'happy, blessed', now **silly**, and **censure**, which originally meant 'opinion' (Hock 1980; Pyles & Algeo 1982). According to Hock (1980:281), French **imbécile** 'feeble-minded, stupid' originally derives from Latin **imbēcillus** meaning 'one who has to lean on a stick; physically feeble'.

3.Semantic Change and Arabic Borrowings

In this section, we describe Arabic borrowings from English and French which have undergone semantic modification. We will see that all the types of semantic change illustrated in section 2 above are represented in these borrowings as used in Jordan. This representation will not, however, be found to be uniform in all types, as some types seem to be more strongly represented than others. In addition, we will discover that many words referring to modern inventions are used in a metaphorical sense in JA.

3.1 Widening

Cases of widening or generalization of meaning are numerous. The word **tanakah** (from English **tin can**), for example, does not mean only 'tin can' but also a can of any size made of any type of metal or other substance, or even a bucket. Thus, we may hear **tanakat blāstīk**, literally 'plastic tin can' but actually meaning 'plastic bucket/container'. In addition, this word means a liquid measurement of twenty liters; thus, **tanakat banzīn** means '20 liters of gasoline', and **tanakat māʔ** '20 liters of water'. Similarly, Arabic

galan/kalan is taken from **gallon**. However, in JA it does not mean only 'measure for liquids, four quarts' (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (OALD, henceforth)) but also a jug which may be as big as a 20-liter (plastic or metal) vessel; thus, **galan mayy** means 'water jug'. The word **tank** does not mean only a 'container for liquid or gas' (OALD) but also a 'tanker'; thus, we hear **tank mayy/mā?** 'road vehicle carrying water in bulk'.³

In the field of motor-cars, **taksi** is not limited to the meaning of 'car hired for journeys' (OALD); it also means 'small car'. To remain in the area of road vehicles, **ʕufēr** (probably originally from French **chauffeur**) does not mean only 'man paid to drive a privately-owned motor-car' (OALD) but also 'car driver'. If it turns out to be true, however, that this word has been borrowed directly from French, in which the word means 'motor-car driver' (Petit Larousse (PL, henceforth)), we may not talk about generalization. In some folk songs, it may mean 'pilot' in expressions like **ʕufēr attayyārah**, literally 'plane driver'.

In the domain of electric equipment, the word **fyūz** (from English **fuse**), in addition to its English meaning of 'short piece of wire which melts and breaks the circuit if the circuit is overloaded' (OALD), also means 'electric outlet' and even 'plug'. Arabic **kāsēt** (from **cassette**) does not mean only 'container for magnetic tape' (OALD) but also both the tape and the container together. The word **battāriyyah** 'battery' has acquired in certain group circles (e.g. students in college or high school) the additional meaning 'buttocks'.

In university circles, **kōrs** 'course' also means 'semester'; **daktōr** (from **doctor**) has acquired a new meaning in addition to 'physician'; this meaning, which is 'university professor', is probably due to the fact that university professors usually hold Ph.D. degrees and carry the title **doctor** (Dr.). What is amazing, however, is that students call **daktōr** any university instructor, even one without a Ph. D.; **daktōrah** is the feminine of **daktōr** and is used when the university instructor or physician is a woman.

In the area of clothes, **blūzah** (from French or English **blouse**), in addition to 'outer garment from neck to waist, worn by women and girls' (OALD) and 'large, baggy top garment' (PL), has come to mean more specifically 'sweater' or 'T-shirt', worn by both men and women. Amazingly enough, the word **kawbōy** (from **cowboy**) has acquired an additional meaning in Arabic, namely, 'blue jeans', probably due to the fact that this article of clothing is often associated with cowboys. One might hear expressions like **hu lābis kawbōy ?il-yōm**, literally meaning 'he is wearing cowboy today', i.e. 'he is wearing blue jeans today'.

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The word **serfīs** 'service', for its part, has acquired new meanings in JA. It, thus, means 'regular small car service from one fixed stop to another and back'; besides, it means in some restaurants 'free side-plate containing fresh peppers and onions and/or pickled olives and peppers'. Amazingly enough, in Japanese the word **sābisu** (from English **service**) has also acquired, according to Morrow (1987:52), the new meaning 'small complimentary gift (e.g. an ashtray) given by a business establishment to a customer'. JA **sūbarmārkit** (from English **supermarket** 'large self-service store selling food, household goods, etc.' (OALD)) is also used to refer to a much smaller grocery store where self-service and household items may not be available.

Arabic **bānyo** (probably from Italian **bagno**), finally, means not only 'bath-tub' but also, for some speakers in urban centers, 'bathroom'.

From a semantic point of view, widening words seem to lose semantic features (Williams 1975: 175). The extension of the meaning of **daktōr** in JA to include, in addition to 'Ph.D. holder university instructor', 'university instructor, without a Ph.D.' can be represented as follows:

daktōr 1	daktōr 2
.	.
.	.
.	.
[+concrete]	[+concrete]
[+animate]	[+animate]
[+human]	[+human]
[+university instructor]	[+university instructor]
[+Ph.D. holder]	

3.2 Narrowing

Whereas widening words lose semantic features, narrowing ones add one or more features. Thus, the narrowing of OE **deōr** 'animal' to **deer** in MnE is "informally" represented in Williams (1975:171) as follows:

dēor	deer
.	.
.	.
.	.
[+concrete]	[+concrete]

[+animate]
[-human]

[+animate]
[-human]
[+mammal]
[+cervidae]

Instances of narrowing are less common in JA loanwords from English and French than cases of widening. For example, they include the word **nārsah** 'nurse+fem. marker', which is never used to mean 'male nurse'; in the latter case, the Arabic word **mumarrid** is invariably used. However, it should be admitted that Arabic **mumarridah** is gradually replacing **nārsah**, especially in the speech of educated people. The word **kwāfēr** (from French **coiffeur** 'barber, hairdresser') means only 'ladies' hairdresser', even though the French word means 'person whose occupation is to cut hair and shave beards' (PL). Arabic **kīlōt**, taken from French **culotte** 'men's shorts; women's underwear' (PL), is used by a small class of highly westernized people in Jordan in the meaning 'women's underwear' only. Arabic **būtīk**, from French **boutique** 'place for any retail sales' (PL), is used only in the meaning 'clothes' retail shop'. JA **tumbāk** (probably taken from English **tobacco** or French **tabac**) is restricted only to 'pipe tobacco'; the word **tabig** (also seemingly borrowed from French **tabac**) is used for other forms of tobacco. The word **trīko**, from French **tricot** 'knitting; jersey, sweater', means only 'knitting' in Jordan.

There are, finally, three words that seem to have undergone narrowing but are originally parts of compounds in English and French. Thus, **stīring** means 'steering wheel', **kondišin** 'air-conditioner/conditioning', and **nūfōtēh** 'shop selling the latest fashion items'. Either these words exhibit a narrowing process, or they may be regarded as simplifications of English **steering wheel** and **air-conditioner/conditioning** and French **magasin de nouveauté**. In the latter case, Arab speakers would have chosen the main (i.e. meaning-restricting) word and used it for the whole compound or phrase.

3.3 Transfer (Metaphor)

This process of semantic change, although common, is difficult to describe (Williams 1975:179). Basically, a certain bundle of features in the original meaning are replaced by another group of features. Normally, in JA complex [-human] and [-cognitive] features are replaced by [+human] and [+cognitive] units.

When names of modern inventions are borrowed in JA, they are often given an additional metaphorical meaning. Thus, **rādyo** 'radio' also means 'talkative person'; **rādār** 'radar' is also figuratively used to refer to a person who spends his/her time watching other

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people's activities and movements; **bās** 'bus', **trēlla** 'trailer', **trak** 'truck', and **trēn** 'train' additionally mean 'huge person'; **talafōn** 'telephone' may also refer to a person who spreads news or gossip in a fast manner; **mākīnah** 'machine' sometimes refers to a person who achieves a lot of work in a short time or a hard-working person. The words **sinima** 'cinema', **tilviziōn** 'television', and **film** 'film' are occasionally used to refer to a funny and/or sad scene in real life, e.g. family fights or arguments. The word **modern** 'modern', as an adjective, may be used to apply to a person different in his/her habits and dress from the majority of the people in the society. The word **lōrd** 'lord', finally, is often metaphorically used to mean 'wealthy and/or influential person'.

At another level, **blāstīk** 'plastic' and **kartōn** (from French **carton** 'cardboard') are metaphorically used in the sense of 'fragile, breakable substance'. Thus, one may hear expressions like **hāyy issayyārah blāstīk/kartōn**, literally meaning 'this car is plastic/cardboard', i.e. the metal it is made of is brittle. In this context, the words are used in a pejorative sense (cf. 3.5 below).

3.4 Shift

This process includes the "most unusual" (Williams 1975:186) cases of semantic change. Although some cases involve partial shift, others exhibit complete shift in meaning, as the reader will realize from the discussion of the examples below. In general, as Williams (Ibid.) states:

"This is a case where discrete elements within a larger whole required special names and the most readily available one was attached to another element within the whole."

Cases of shift in meaning in Arabic words borrowed from English and French appear to be numerous. The word **afarhōl** (probably from **overhaul**) means either 'thorough repair done to a car engine' or 'outer suit for dirty work' (OALD). It could be that the Arabic form is originally derived from two different sources: **overhaul**, which has given it the first meaning, and **overalls**, from which the second meaning has been derived. An instance of merger, due to phonological similarity, would be at work in this case. Examples of merger are not uncommon in borrowing. Thus, Arabic **bank** 'bank; bench' is probably a merger of two words: English **bank** or French **banque** and French **banc** 'bench'.

In the field of hairdressing, at least two words seem to have undergone a shift in meaning: **nīgro** (from **negro**) means 'perm, permanent wave', and **mēš** (from French **mèche** 'wick; lock of hair') means 'streaking (of hair)'.

At another level, **krōs/krōz** (from English **gross** or French **grosse** 'twelve dozens' (OALD and PL)) means 'carton containing many, usually ten, items of the same type'. Thus **krōs duxxān** means 'carton of ten packages of cigarettes'. The word **trumbah** is apparently taken from French **trombe** 'waterspout'. In Arabic, however, it means 'pump; insecticide sprayer used by farmers'. An interesting word is **rūf** (from **roof**), which has come to mean in Arabic 'flat or apartment on the roof of a building with some empty space in front of it'. For its part, the word **film** is used in expressions like **sahab 9alēh film**, literally meaning 'he drew on him a film', i.e. 'he played a trick on him'. It is believed that **film** has undergone a shift in meaning in this context.

3.5 Amelioration and Pejoration

Whereas examples of amelioration appear to be rare in Arabic borrowings from English and French, examples of pejoration are more abundant. Amelioration commonly involves the addition of favourable meaning to an originally neutral one (cf. **knight**, which originally meant 'boy' or 'stable servant'). In the case of pejoration, an unfavourable meaning is added (cf. OE **knava** 'boy' which became MnE **knave**). One example of amelioration in JA seems to be **villa/fella**, from **villa** which in English and French means 'detached or semi-attached house, especially on the outskirts of a town' and 'country house with a large garden' (OALD and PL). In Arabic, it has come to mean 'elegant spacious house, usually on the outskirts of a city'. Sometimes, the same word is metaphorically used when someone says about an apartment **hādi villa/fella** 'this is a villa', i.e. the apartment is elegant and spacious.

Examples of pejoration include **lōbi** (from **lobby**) which most commonly means 'group exerting negative pressure', as in **?allōbi ?aṣṣahyūni** 'the zionist lobby', commonly referred to in Arab news media as exerting pressure on the American Administration and the Congress to adopt anti-Arab and pro-Israeli positions. The words **ṣahyūni** and **ṣahyūniyyah**, 'zionist' and 'zionism', respectively, are often pejoratively used to mean 'racist' and 'racism'.

The word **sikritēr** (from French **secrètaire** 'secretary') is sometimes used in a pejorative meaning to refer to a person higher in rank than a secretary but who appears to be doing the work of a secretary. Thus, one may say about a vice or assistant manager who

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carries out his superior's orders without question **biṣṭaḡil sikritēr**, i.e. 'he works as a secretary'.

Another example of pejoration in JA is **seks** (from **sex**), often used to mean 'illicit sexual activity'. For its part, the word **zift** 'asphalt, tar' is commonly used to depict a bad feeling/situation, as when asked "how are you?", someone may answer: "(zayy/miΘl) **izzift**, literally '(like) tar', i.e. 'very bad'.

As mentioned in 3.3 above, finally, **blāstīk** and **kartōn** may be pejoratively used to mean 'brittle substance'.

4. Reasons for Semantic Change

Reasons for semantic modification are not always easy to pinpoint. Hock (1980:283;285) maintains, for example, that semantic change "proceeds in a rather random fashion...is highly irregular, and extremely difficult to predict." He acknowledges, however, that "a certain systematicity" can be seen in certain semantic changes brought about by radical changes in society and culture. Thus, the replacement of the horse and carriage by the automobile at the turn of the century caused words like **drive** and **car** to undergo a great deal of semantic change. Pyles & Algeo (1982:242), for their part, affirm that "while frequently unpredictable", change of meaning "is not wholly chaotic".

While definite reasons for semantic change in Arabic loanwords from English and French may not be always easy to determine, attempts to formulate guesses, conjectures, and hypotheses should not be ruled out. The present section purports to do just that.

In some cases of widening, the factors of need and semantic similarity may be invoked to justify the extension in meaning. A case in point may be **tanakah** (from **tin can**), which has come to mean various things in Arabic as used in Jordan (cf. 3.1 above). This widening may be due to the need of the colloquial variety of Arabic for a word meaning container made of metal or plastic. Semantic similarity between a tin can and a container of any kind or its contents (cf. **tanakat banzīm** '20 liters of gasoline') could have motivated such an extension in meaning. The same criteria of semantic similarity and need may be behind the various meanings acquired by other words like **serfis**, **blūzah**, **fyūz**, **kāšēt**, and **daktōr** (see 3.1 above for more details about the various meanings acquired by these words). Often, however, it is not possible to invoke need to explain semantic change. Thus, with the factor of need in mind, it is difficult to see why a word like **bānyo** 'bath-tub' has

acquired the additional meaning 'bathroom' when Arabic has at least two words, namely **mirhād** and **hammām**, to mean this facility. Instead, social considerations may be hypothesized in this case. Some may have, consciously or unconsciously, thought that a word like **bānyo**, obscure to many, would be less taboo than the more common and less obscure **mirhād** and **hammām**.⁴ Phonological similarity may be the main reason behind the widening meaning of **afarhōl** 'overhaul' and 'overalls'.

The existence of Arabic **froms** to mean 'male nurse' (**mumarrīd**) and 'barber, men's hairdresser' (**hallāq**) may be the reason why the meanings of **nārsah** 'nurse [fem]' and **kwāfēr** 'women's hairdresser' have narrowed. As mentioned in 3.2 above, however, Arabic has the word **mumarrīdah** meaning nurse '[fem.]', so it is not clear why **nārsah** is still used in the colloquial variety.⁵ Similarly, because Arabic has **šōrt** (from English **shorts**) and **baṭālōn qaṣīr** (literally 'short pants') to mean 'shorts', the meaning of **kīlōt** has narrowed to 'women's underwear'. Thus, lack of need may be behind restricting the meaning of such words. It is worth mentioning, however, that taboo considerations may be to blame for the use of **kīlōt** in Arabic, this word being probably judged less embarrassing than the more common **kalsōn**.

At another level, it is not clear why a separate word (**tumbāk**) is used to mean 'pipe tobacco' when Standard Arabic already has a word, **tabīg**, meaning 'tobacco'. Again, it is not at all obvious why **būtīk** has been borrowed from French to mean 'shop selling clothes' when Arabic words like **hānūt** and **dukkān** can do the job. It could be that sociological factors (e.g. prestige) play a role in the case of **būtīk**.

As far as the words discussed under transfer (metaphor) in 3.3 above are concerned, the factor of need should be excluded since Arabic has numerous words meaning 'talkative' (**rādyo**), 'huge' (**bāṣ**, **trēn**, **trēlla**, and **trak**), and 'funny/sad scene' (**sinima**, **film**, **tilvizyōn**). Recall that the words between parentheses are metaphorically used to convey the meanings indicated. Semantic similarity may be one criterion to be taken into consideration. Indeed, it is not difficult to see, for example, the characteristic of size common to 'bus', 'train', 'trailer', and 'truck', on the one hand, and a huge person, on the other. Similarly, the similarities between 'radio' and a talkative person are not hard to grasp. It is worth mentioning in this context that if the change involving metaphor is indicative of anything, it is that Arabic has the ability to benefit in an utmost manner from borrowings and use them in a metaphorical meaning. Needless to say, Arabic is not unique in this regard. Other languages, e.g. English, (cf. 2.3 above), exhibit a similar capacity.

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Semantic similarity and need appear to be at interplay in loanwords that have undergone shift (cf. 3.4). The use of **rūf** to mean an apartment built on a roof with open-air space in front of it is interesting. Arabic seemingly needed a word to convey this new meaning. Since the English word **roof** was available, it was used in this meaning. Arabic did not need it to mean 'roof' because it had **saṭḥ** for this purpose. Thus, need and semantic similarity between 'roof' and 'apartment built on a roof' seem to have motivated the meaning of **rūf** in Arabic. The same factors appear to be behind the new meanings acquired by **nīgro** 'perm, permanent wave' and **mēš** 'streaking (of hair)' (see 3.4 above).

Semantic similarity (and, sometimes, need) can also be invoked to explain semantic modification involving amelioration and pejoration (section 3.5). If we consider the word **lōbi**, for example, it is easy to notice the similarities between one of the original meanings of the word in English, namely, 'group of people who try to influence members, e.g. of the House of Commons, the Senate in Washington, D.C., to support or oppose proposed legislation' (OALD), and the more common meaning it has acquired in Arabic, viz. 'group exerting negative (political) pressure'. The need of modern Arabic news media for a word conveying the latter meaning may be another reason behind the pejoration process.⁶ The use of **zift** 'tar' to mean 'very bad' may reveal semantic similarity (tar being a dark, sticky, and dirty substance), but the factor of need can not be invoked here since Arabic is rich in synonyms meaning 'bad', e.g. **sayyiʔ** and the colloquial **miš kwayyis** (literally, 'not good'). Thus, semantic similarity coupled, perhaps, with sociological factors (e.g. the willingness to associate bad feelings with a feature of modern life) could be behind the pejorative (and metaphorical) meaning of **zift**.

Finally, the role of news media in effecting semantic modification should not be ruled out. If we take, for example, the word **lōbi**, we can say that the pejorative meaning it has acquired has been caused by the media. In fact, this word was initially used by newspapers, radio and television in reference to Jewish or Zionist influence on the American Administration and Congress, this influence being judged negative or detrimental to Arab causes from an Arab point of view. Again, the influence of the media in the case of **nūfōtēh** and **būtīk** is not difficult to see. These words are often used in clothing commercials on television and in newspapers. This has apparently contributed to the public's understanding of these two words as meaning 'clothes' retail shop' (cf. 3.2 above). The same thing can be said about **kwāfēr** and **sūbarmārkī**, whose restricted Arabic meanings of 'ladies' hairdresser' and 'grocery shop', respectively, seem to have been induced by the media.

5. Conclusion

Almost all types of semantic modification have been found to be at work in Arabic loanwords from English and French. A description of these processes (widening, narrowing, transfer, shift, amelioration, and pejoration) and numerous examples illustrating each process have been presented in this paper. In addition, various reasons, e.g. need, lack of need, semantic or phonological similarity, and sociological factors like prestige and taboo, have been hypothesized as possible instigators of change. In conclusion semantic change, whether it be widening, transfer, shift, or pejoration, reveals the ability of Arabic to use borrowed words in a variety of new meanings and contexts.

Footnotes

1. Sometimes, it may not be possible to state with certainty whether a given word has been borrowed from English or French, due to the great degree of resemblance between English and French forms, e.g. **talafōn/tilifōn** 'telephone' (cf. French **téléphone**) and **trēn** 'train' (cf. French **train**).
2. In transcriptions of Arabic forms, the following reading conventions are used:
 - ? glottal stop
 - t̤ voiceless, dento-alveolar, emphatic plosive
 - d̤ voiced, dento-alveolar, emphatic plosive
 - q voiceless, uvular plosive
 - θ voiceless, dental fricative
 - ð voiced, dental fricative
 - ʃ voiceless, dento-alveolar, emphatic fricative
 - ʒ voiceless, palato-alveolar fricative
 - x voiceless, uvular fricative
 - ġ voiced, uvular fricative
 - ħ voiceless, pharyngeal fricative
 - ʕ voiced, pharyngeal fricative
 - j voiced, palato-alveolar affricate
 - y palatal glide
 - ṽ long vowel
3. **mayy** is the colloquial form of Standard Arabic **māʔ** 'water'.
4. This is the case in many other languages; cf. American English **rest-room** and **powder-room**, and British English **loo** (from Fr. **lieu**) and **throne-room**, all meaning 'toilet' (remark made by an anonymous **Abhath Al-Yarmouk** reviewer).
5. **numarridah** may be a later arrival into the country (remark by an anonymous **Abhath Al-Yarmouk** reviewer).
6. Recently, this word has apparently acquired a non-pejorative meaning in expressions like **?ihna bikājeh la lōbi ʕarabi fī amrīka** 'we need an Arab lobby in America'. This may represent a return to the original meaning of the word in English. However, the pejorative meaning, especially in reference to zionism or Israel, is dominant.

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