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NOTES ON THE ARABIZATION OF THE TERMINOLOGY OF MODERN LINGUISTICS

Introduction

This paper discusses some attempts on the part of Arab scholars to convey the terminology of modern linguistics in Arabic usage.

Two approaches have been followed, namely (a) Arabization and (b) translation. These two terms are not synonymous, although the term Arabization is used freely to incorporate the two approaches when speaking about the conveyance of foreign concepts in Arabic. The two terms, however, need to be defined, both for the sake of clarity of approach and precision of methodology.

To Arabize a foreign term is to convey it in Arabic in its original linguistic shape after subjecting it formally to a process of naturalization: phonologically, morphologically and syntactically. Semantically, however, the Arabic meaning of an Arabized term is based on what it is meant to be in the foreign context in which it originally occurs. The rendering of its interpretation in Arabic largely depends on the Arabizer's linguistic ability in both Arabic and the foreign languages.

To cite only a few examples may help illustrating our argument. those linguistic noun-terms ending in –eme, e.g. phoneme, become /funi:m/ (sg.m.indef.), /ʔal-funi:m/ (sg.m.def.), /funima:n/ (m. dual normative indef.), /funimain/ (dual accusative indef.), /funima:t/ (f.pl.indef.). Adjectives derived from them ending in –ic, e.g. phonemic, become /funi:mi/ (sg.m.indef.), /funimiyya/ (sg. f.indef.) etc. Noun-terms derived from them ending in –ics, e.g. phonemics, become (funi:mya/ (sg.f.); but rarely /funi:miks/. Noun-terms ending in –ology, e.g. phonology, become /funuluzya/. Adjective-terms ending in either –ic or –al, e.g. phonological, become /funulu:zi/ (sg.m.), /funulu:ziyya/ (sg.f). Adverbial terms derived from them become /funuluziyyan/.

On the other hand, translation of foreign terminology into Arabic may be accomplished either literally or morphologically. Although phonetics could be Arabized as /ʔal funeti:k/, it is translated into the two-word phrase /ʕilmul ʔaswa:t/ in which /ʕilm/ stands for 'science' and /ʔaswa:t/ means '(the) sounds'. Both Arabized and translated forms are used synonymously and interchangeably. The term physiology usually accompanying phonetics is also Arabized as /fisyuluzya/, yet it is paraphrastically translated into /ʕilmu waʐa:ʔif ʔaʕda:ʔ ʔajsa:mil ʔaʃya:ʔil Hayya/ 'the science which studies the functions of the organs of the bodies of living things'. The Arabic rendering is invariably shortened to /ʕilmu waʐa:ʔifil ʔaʕda:ʔ/ 'the science which studies the functions of the organs'. The term physiological, however, is usually reduced in Arabic to literally mean 'functional'. Thus physiological phonetics becomes /ʕilmul ʔaswa:til waʐi:fi/ in which /ʕilmul ʔaswa:t/ is the Arabic term for phonetics while /waʐi:fi/ stands for functional.

## Hypothesis

The Arabization of linguistic terminology seems to suffer from a number of weaknesses. The most fundamental of these is a concentration on formal adaptability without adequate grasp of the full content represented by the foreign term. By formal adaptability is meant the Arabic naturalization of a foreign term like morpheme becoming /ṣarfi:m/ instead of /ṣarfiyya/, a suggested translation by the author of this paper. Needless to say, /ṣarfi:m/ is partly Arabic and partly English, whereas /ṣarfiyya/ is intrinsically Arabic in form and content; while /ṣarf/ stands for morphology, /-iyya/ is an Arabic noun formative. Moreover the suffix -eme in /ṣarfi:m/, originally English, is solely introduced and used by an individual Arab linguist, by way of transplantation, without due regard to the possibility of an existent equivalent in Arabic linguistics, directly connected with a certain established interpretation of the semantic content.

Accordingly, the term /ṣarfi:m/ which is thus coined as partly English and partly Arabic, could be replaced by a term entirely Arabic in both form and content, and enjoying at the same time clarity, acceptability and productivity. The same argument also applies to the term /ṣauti:m/ to stand for phoneme instead of the exclusively Arabic term /ṣautiyya/, also devised and suggested by the author of this paper. Still the same argument holds for the French-Arabic version /ṣautim/ devised, whether by way of coincidence or through imitation by a Tunisian linguist, to stand for the French term /fonem/.

## Corpus

The presented discussion is based on a number of linguistic terms selected from a corpus of about sixty terms taken from three Arabic books in modern Arabic linguistics written by three Egyptian scholars in the medium of Arabic. They are referred to as Hassan (1955), Bishr (1973) and Omar (1976), respectively. The three quoted authors graduated from Dar Al'uluum, one of the Cairo University Colleges specializing exclusively in traditional Arabic linguistics and Islamic studies. They obtained their Ph.D. degrees from British universities, mainly during the 1950s. It is worth noting that their first serious encounter with the English language as well as modern linguistics was as students at British universities.

## Analysis

The terms phonetics, phonology and related concepts such as phone, phoneme, minimal pairs are selected here with a view to finding out to what extent the three authors agree or disagree in the process of their Arabization or translation and interpretation.

For instance, Hassan's (1955:112) translation of the concept phonology into /ʔattaški:lus ṣauti/ reveals the inadequate conveyance of the full meaning of the English term in Arabic. Since he has not given any reason why he has chosen /ʔattaški:lus ṣauti/ as an equivalent it seems that the choice of the Arabic term has been arbitrarily determined. Besides, Hassan has not mentioned

its foreign equivalent next to it, in keeping with the practice usually followed by the majority of Arab scholars when a foreign term is newly introduced into the language. Whatever the case may be, the problem arises from the term /taški:l/, since /sauti/ is the adjective derived from /saut/ 'sound'. The term /taški:l/ expresses the act of shaping and forming things out of a substance, especially in plastic arts. It also means the formation of private or public bodies such as committees, authorities and the like. The word is also connected with a state or thing that is man-made rather than natural or mental. Within the frame of reference of these different meanings and uses of the word /taški:l/, together with the term /sauti/ as a translation of phonology, betrays at once the non-adaptability of the word to convey the full content of the English term, in spite of the fact that Hassan states more than once that the study of phonology is of a mental nature.

When the word is translated back into English, the attempt may reveal why Hassan preferred it to other words which might have sounded more acceptable. The term /taški:l/, however, has a variety of English equivalents: formation, shaping, order, organization and formulation. From among these words, organization is nearest to Hassan's interpretation of the term phonology. Yet translating organization into Arabic also gives rise to problems, since its immediate Arabic equivalents are /niˤa:m/ and /tanˤi:m/. If /niˤa:m/ is a possible substitute for /taški:l/ in /ʔattaški:lus sauti/, the adjective derived from it would lead to semantic confusion in translating such phrases as phonological unit (wiHda niˤa:miyya/ which would insinuate at once that the meaning of the unit has a disciplinary nature.

This could have been the reason why Hassan preferred the term /taški:l/ although it and its derived adjectives prove an inadequate choice, since they lend themselves, together with /sauti/ 'sound' (adj.), as possible translations of the terms phonology and phonological.

Again, Hassan's presentation of the terms contrast and minimal pairs as concepts of phonological analysis reveals an instance of inadequate conveyance of the full content of both terms in Arabic. He states (1955:112) that unlike phonetics which studies sounds in terms of their articulation, the study of phonology examines sounds in terms of their function in a concatenated stretch of speech. He adds that phonological description is based on finding out in a language what he terms /muqabila:t sautiyya/ 'sound contrasts', and on differentiating one sound from the other, in terms of meaning. Enumerating the possible 'sound contrasts' in a language, and of course having Arabic in mind, Hassan cites the contrast between voiced and voiceless sounds, emphatic and non-emphatic sounds, consonants and vowels, tense and lenis sounds, long and short sounds, to mention but a few. He emphasizes that all 'sound contrasts' together with the meaning of each constitute the basis of the science of phonology /ʕilmut taški:lis sauti/.

Hassan (1955:122) illustrates his statement by providing examples of voiced and voiceless sounds, e.g. /t/ in contrast with /d/ as two sounds sharing the same position of articulation,

yet while /t/ is (-voice), /d/ is (+voice). Thus the two sounds
constitute a pair of sounds mutually related through sharing
the same position of articulation coupled with the absence and
presence of voicing which he terms 'a phonological characteristic',
i.e. /xassiyya taški:liyya/.

In the light of Hassan's statement, a question arises as
to the function and nature of what he terms /muqabila:t ṣautiyya/,
such as the contrasting sounds /t/ and /d/. If these sounds are
different as to voice, how can voice make them differ in meaning?
The content of the English term contrast would have been fully
conveyed in Arabic if it had been presented within the context
of 'minimal pairs'. However, in his attempt to identify the Arabic
phonemes (1955:127), Hassan accidentally provides examples of
minimal pairs, e.g. /θa:b/:/ta:b/, /xa:b/:/ṭa:b/, to which he
refers by using the unqualified term words /kalima:t/, thus
presenting another example of inadequately conveying an English
term in Arabic.

Using the Arabic terms /Harf/ (sg.) and /Huru:f/ (pl.) as
equivalents of phonemes reveals more than one case of inadequate
conveyance of the full content of the English term in Arabic.
After all, the term /Harf/ is categorically used by Classical
Arabic linguists to refer both to its phonemic and phonetic values,
as well as its use as a letter of the alphabet. /Harf/ and /Huru:f/
are always associated with the terms /maxraj/ (sg.) and /maxa:rij/
(pl.) to refer to /maxa:rijul Huru:f/ 'positions of articulation'.

The Arabic conception of the term /Huru:f/, however, has
misled Hassan to conclude that the different pronunciations of
the variants of the Arabic phoneme /nu:n/ are due to their differ-
ent /maxa:rij/ 'positions of articulation'. Needless to say that
although these members of the Arabic phoneme /nu:n/ share the
same position of articulation, except the one occurring initially,
each of the others accommodate, during the process of production,
to the tongue position of the following consonants. Nevertheless,
although Hassan uses the Arabic term /taxa:ruj fil mauqiṭ/ to
indicate that no two members of the same phoneme occur in the
same 'environment' he has never referred to the concept of 'com-
plementation', hence, rendering the correspondence between the
English term members of the same phoneme and its interpretation
in Arabic incomplete.

The term /Harf/ causes Hassan once again to confuse writing
with speech. In his attempt to utilize the concept phoneme as a
criterion to distinguish one 'word' from another in terms of
pronunciation and meaning, Hassan cites the examples: /xa:b/,
/ta:b/, /na:b/ and /sa:b/, in which the initial sounds substitute
for each other. But he mistakenly cites /gadda/ and /gaddada/
as examples of two words which differ in pronunciation and meaning
because of adding an extra phoneme to the former. These examples
could be deceptive when written in Arabic alphabet, but once
they are phonemically transcribed it becomes apparent that a
whole syllable has been added and not a single phoneme.

In his attempt to introduce the concept 'phoneme' and its
related terms to Arab readers, Bishr defines the Arabized term
/ʔal funi:m/ with regard to its function as /wiHda ṣautiyya/

'a sound unit'. In order to make this point clearer, he stresses the fact that such a 'sound unit' is not a 'sound event' actually articulated in a certain 'context' /siya:q/. Thus, while the Arabic /k/ and /g/ in /ka:l/ : /ga:l/ are phonemes, their different articulated 'representations' in different contexts are their /ʔamθila/ 'examples', a term inadequately used as the Arabic equivalent of the English terms variants, phones or allophones, which in turn are synonymously used as if they were one and the same term. He even distinguishes the term allophone from phone as being more up-to-date and more frequently used. However, while his paraphrastic translation of the term allophone into /ṣuwar nutqiyya/ 'articulated representations' could be acceptable, yet translating it into /ʔamθila juzʔiya/ 'fragmentary examples' is by no means rigorous.

Needless to say, the nature of the concept 'allophone' cannot be explained except in terms of complementary distribution. Instead, Bishr uses the unqualified term /siya:q/ 'context/ which is misleading in Arabic since it has both grammatical and stylistic implications. The term /mauqiʕ/ 'environment', however, could have been more exact. Still, by characterizing 'phonemes' as keeping utterances apart, he invariably uses the general term /kalima:t/ 'words' instead of the more specific term 'minimal pairs', in spite of the fact that he cited such 'minimal pairs' as /ta:b/ : /na:b/. Is it because of the seemingly difficult intranslatability of the term 'minimal pair' or because it is impossible to Arabize ?

Omar (1976) has successfully tried his hand in translating minimal pair as /θuna:ʔiya:t suʁra/. Nevertheless, using the misleading term /Harf/ (sg.) and /Huru:f/ (pl.) which are used interchangeably to indicate the names of Classical Arabic phonemes, as well as the names of the Arabic letters of the alphabet, leads Omar to put forth the English sound /k/ and the English letter 'Q' as allophones of the same phoneme /k/ (1976:180). In the meantime he adds that the English letters /Huru:f/ 'Q' and 'K' are two different phonemes in the Arabic language since they keep the minimal pair /qa:l/:/ka:l/ apart. These statements are no doubt striking examples of the inadequate terminological adaptability of form to content in two ways:

(a) confusing two aspects of language with each other, viz. writing and speech. The source of such confusion may be due to the fact that the pharyngeal Arabic /qa:f/ and the English letter 'Q' are transliteration correspondences;

(b) misleading the reader to believe in the existence of a 'general phoneme', i.e., /k/ or /q/.

In his attempt to follow Robins's (1966) criterion of distinguishing 'speech sounds', Omar uses the term /ʔaswa:t/ 'sounds' simultaneously, yet indiscriminately, in two different phrases in the same statement. He states that unlike /ʔaswa:tul funi:mil wa:Hid/ 'the sounds of the same phoneme', /ʔaswa:tul funima:til munfaṣila/ 'the sounds of separate phonemes', have the ability to distinguish between 'words'. Therefore, /b/ and /p/ are distinct in English because of the existence of the two words ban and pan in the language. He also adds that because of this fact these

two different words have two different meanings (1976:178-179).
Once more, such a statement reveals the inadequate adaptability
of form for conveying the required message. While the term
/ʔaswa:t/ 'sounds' is unnecessarily or rather redundantly used
in the two above-mentioned phrases, the already Arabized term
/ʔal ʔalufuna:t/ 'allophones' would have been a more adequate
choice than /ʔaswa:t/ 'sounds' in the phrase /ʔaswa:tul funi:mil
wa:Hid/. Besides, using the general term /kalima:t/ 'words' instead
of /θuna:ʔiyya:t suɣra/ 'minimal pairs', one of Omar's successful
translations is equally misleading.

## Conclusion

These notes reveal two facts:

(a) A strenuous effort has been exerted on the part of three
devoted Arab linguists whose pre-Ph.D. training was mainly
in traditional Classical Arabic studies to introduce notions
from modern linguistics to Arab students;

(b) any shortcomings in their works are mainly due to the
absence of an Arabic encyclopaedic dictionary of modern
linguistic terminology, a contribution the author of this
paper is intending to make.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that when these scholars
first introduced the terms in question, they probably assumed
that they were temporarily using Arabized forms until more adequate
Arabic terms would be found in future. This tendency is in line
with the tradition established by early Arabizers and translators
like Hunain Ibn Ishaq and Ibn al-Na'imah al-Himsi whose responsi-
bility was to translate into Arabic the Greek, Persian and Indian
heritage.

However, when I had a chance to discuss this point with Omar
he indicated that one other explanation may be worth mentioning.
In the light of his experience, students newly introduced to
modern linguistic concepts are more impressed and attracted by
the coinage of Arabized forms. In other words, such Arabized
terms would be more readily accepted, remembered and used once
a clear interpretation has been provided by the instructor.
Naturally the students would not be concerned with the type of
confusion that has prompted this research.

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