Terminological lexicography. Bilingual dictionaries of linguistic terms (English-Arabic)

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In the last two decades, most of the works on modern linguistics, including Arabic linguistics, have been written in English. The linguistics courses offered in the Arab world in the various departments of English, linguistics and phonetics, including higher studies, use English textbooks and references. The Arabic linguistic conventions long established by tradition, together with the overflow of modern linguistic technical terms, which are radically different from the traditional ones, are a burden on the uninitiated learner in the field, the translator and all who hope to help transfer linguistic knowledge into Arabic.

Among the attempts made to help Arab students of linguistics and translators understand modern linguistic terminology are: Al-Khuli's A DICTIONARY OF THEORETICAL LINGUISTICS (DTL) and Bakalla et al.'s A DICTIONARY OF MODERN LINGUISTIC TERMS (DMLT).

The aim of this paper is to study the terminological and lexicographical policies adopted by both dictionaries. The weaknesses are spotted and analysed and suggestions are made for improving the lexicographical work in English-Arabic linguistic terminology.

In the DTL the terms are alphabetically arranged, with definitions in Arabic, illustrative examples and Arabic equivalents. It means to serve students, specialists of English and Arabic Linguistics and translators. The DMLT is a glossary of English terms alphabetically arranged with their equivalents in Arabic but without definitions or illustrative examples. It aims to serve translators and students of Arabic linguistics and to help in the formation of standardized linguistic terminology.

1. Data/Sources

The references in the two dictionaries are arbitrary. The DMLT English list is limited. It depends on Pei's GLOSSARY OF LINGUISTIC TERMINOLOGY, Pei and Gaynor's DICTIONARY OF LINGUISTICS and Macleish's GLOSSARY OF GRAMMAR AND LINGUISTICS, with additions from Hartmann's DICTIONARY OF LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS (DLL). The Arabic list is also very limited.

The DTL's bibliography, though varied and more comprehensive on the English side, is poor on the Arabic one. It is confined to books written in one Arab

country alone, that is Egypt. Translations of English linguistic texts in Arabic and important English-Arabic glossaries are not included. (cf. Mseddi's DICTIONNAIRE DE LINGUISTIQUE).

On the whole it is not clear on what basis the English or Arabic references have been chosen (cf. Crystal's A FIRST DICTIONARY OF LINGUISTICS AND PHONETICS; the DLL; Ducrot and Todorov's ENCYCLOPAEDIC DICTIONARY OF SCIENCES OF LANGUAGE; Richards et al.'s LONGMAN DICTIONARY OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS). It is not clear either on what basis the entries have been chosen or for what level of learners.

The limited data sources used in a specialized dictionary in a rapidly growing field like linguistics have their effect on the English side as regards:

— the terms included,
— the senses given to each term,
— the term's collocations,
— the definitions provided,
— the Arabic equivalents given.

On the Arabic side a great fund of Arabic equivalents suggested by different authorities, which might be appropriate equivalents, remain unexploited (see Masluh 1986).

2. Aims

The aims of the DMLT do not seem to be achieved through the framework set by its compilers, i.e., a glossary of terms with Arabic equivalents but *without definitions* or explanations. It is also doubtful whether it would help in the formation of a standardized vocabulary as its authors claim.

The DTL has a major advantage over the DMLT. It contains definitions, explanations and examples, but how far these definitions would help the specialist and the translator is a point that is discussed elsewhere (Heliel, forthcoming).

One of the major weaknesses in this dictionary is the lack of prescriptive guidelines on the Arabic equivalents suggested. It is left for the user (the translator) to choose from a number of equivalents (arabized and/or translated) the one he thinks appropriate. This would eventually lead to confusion in communication and most probably help establish the use of synonymous terms, with the inevitable result of more divergency than standardization in linguistic Arabic terminology.

3. Lexicographical and terminological methods

For studying the lexicographical and terminological principles adopted, certain features are chosen for analysis. The entries compared are given in tables with

the Arabic equivalents as they appear in the dictionaries, together with phonetic transcription or English translation in cases where either is needed for discussion.

3.1. Divergencies in the Arabic equivalents

The equivalents suggested for the English terms in Table (1) indicate divergencies. The reasons are:

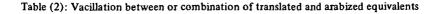| Ref. Nb.	Term	DMLT	DTL
1	pitch	(p. 69) طبقة الصـوت (ṭabaqat ʔal-ṣawt)	(p. 216) درجة الصـوت نغم . طبقـة الصـوت (naɣam. daradʒat ʔal-ṣawt. ṭabaqat ʔal-ṣawt)
2	point of articulation	(p. 69) مخـرج النطـق (maxradʒ ʔal-nuṭq)	(p. 218) نقطـة النطـق ، مكـان النطـق (nuqṭat ʔal-nuṭq. makaːn ʔal-nuṭq)
3	clause	(p. 10) العبـارة (ʔal-ʕibaːrah)	(p. 42) جمـلة (dʒumaylah)
4	case grammar	(p. 9) مدرسـة الحـالات النحـو (= school of grammatical cases)	(p. 38) قـواعد الحـالات (= rules of cases)
5	blade of tongue	(p. 7) طـرف اللسـان (ṭaraf ʔal-lisaːn)	(p. 33) مقـدم اللسـان (muqaddam ʔal-lisaːn)

Table (1): Divergencies in the Arabic equivalents

— Failure to understand the concept behind the term within the subfield to which it belongs and in relation to other closely related concepts. In term (1) in DTL *nayam,* the Arabic word for *tone,* is used for the closely related term *pitch.* In DMLT and DTL *tabaqat ʔal-sawt,* the Arabic equivalent for *register* — in the sense of "voice quality produced by a specific physical constitution by the larynx" — is used for *pitch.*

- The introduction of translational equivalents for which there are well-established Arabic equivalents. E.g. (2), where *maxrad3* (DMLT) is the well-established Arabic equivalent.
- Failure to study the term in context of the school or the linguist using it. E.g. (3), where *clause* may have different senses depending on whether it is used in *traditional* or *systemic grammar*.
- Literal translation of the term without starting from the concept behind it. E.g. (4) in DTL, where the Arabic equivalent is meaningless.

Ref. No.	Term	DMLT	DTL
1	harmonic	(p. 35) الهــارمــونـي (ʔal-haːrmoːni)	(p. 116) نغمة توافقــيّــة (naɣama tawaːfuqiyya)
2	isotonic (lines)	(p. 141) (الخطــوط) الا يـــوتونيــة (ʔal-ʔaysuːtuːniyya)	(p. 141) (خط) التــائــل النغمـــي (ʔal-tamaːθul ʔal- naɣamiː)
3	acoustic (phonetics)	(p. 1) (علم الأصـــوات) الاكـــوســتي (ʔal-ʔakuːstiː)	(p. 3) (علم الأصـــوات) الفـــيزيائــي (ʔal-fiːzyaːʔiː)
4	kinemics	(p. 47) الكينيميــة (ʔal-kiːniːmiyyah)	(p. 145) دراسة الكينيميــات دراسة الحركات المجـــردة (diraːsat ʔal-kiːniːmiyyaːt. diraːsat ʔal-harakaːt ʔal-mudʒarradah)
5	taxeme	(p. 93) الملمـح النظمـي (ʔal-malmah ʔal-naðmiː) (= a syntactic feature)	(p. 283) تاكســيم ســمـــة نحــويــة (taːksiːm. simah nahwiؚyah= a syntactic feature)

Table (2): Vacillation between or combination of translated and arabized equivalents

— Failure to find the exact equivalent though it exists in Arabic. E.g. (5), where in DMLT *taraf* means *tip* in Arabic and in DTL where *muqaddam* means *front*. The Arabic word *nasl*, which refers to the flat part of a leaf, may be an appropriate equivalent.

3.2. Vacillation between or combination of translation and arabization

In Table (2) it has to be noted that:

— The compiler may vacillate between translation and arabization. The DMLT uses arabized forms for terms 1, 2 and 3 and 4 but a translational equivalent for term 5.

— The compiler may combine translation and arabization as is manifested in terms 4 and 5 in the DTL.

In all cases, there is no indication that the compilers have taken a decision about circumstances where the term may be arabized and others where it may be translated. Each concept, it seems, is handled in isolation, as it does not come as part of a coherent system.

Such an approach of combining translation and arabization of a term gives the false impression that we are dealing with two different concepts and is a hindrance to standardization.

3.3. Lack of precision

Reasons for lack of precision in the terms given in Table (3) are:

— Literal translation of the foreign term without studying the concept behind it. For term (1) the DMLT's translational equivalent is unintelligible, the DTL's is general, unrestricted and is subject to many interpretations.

Ref. No.	Term	DMLT	DTL
1	metalanguage	(p. 54) ما وراء اللغــة (= what is beyond language.)	(p. 160). لغــــة واصفــة (= a descriptive language).
2	duration	(p. 21) المـــــدّة (?al-muddah = duration)	(p. 81) كميــة الصوت · طول الصوت (= sound length, sound quantity)
3	syllabication	(p. 89) التنطيـــع (?al-taqtiʕ)	(p. 276) تنطيـــع (taqtiʕ)
4	segmentation	(p. 82) التنطيـــع (?al-taqtiʕ)	(p. 250) تنطيـــع (taqtiʕ)

Table (3): Lack of precision in the Arabic equivalents

- Failure to study the interrelated relationships between terms in the field or subfield. In term (2), *duration*, as the length of time given to the articulation of a speech sound, has to be distinguished from *quantity*, which is the duration of a speech sound as a *phonological* feature. Thus the DTL's translational equivalents (length and quantity) are confusing and by no means satisfactory.
- Using one Arabic equivalent for two different English terms or concepts, though Arabic does not lack equivalents that could be properly assigned to each concept. Examples are terms (3 and 4).

3.4. Overabundance of synonymous Arabic equivalents:

Table (4) indicates that the DTL's equivalents suffer from synonymy. The reasons are:

Ref. No.	Term	Page No.	DTL
1	hard palate	116	الغـــار · النطـع · الحنك الصلـب (ʔal-ɣaɪr. ʔal-niṭʃ. ʔal-ḥanak ʔal-ṣulb)
2	closed-class word	44	كلمة مغلقـة النــوع · كلمـــة وظيفيـــة (kalima muɣlaqat ʔal-nawʕ . kalima waḍiɪfiyya.)
3	sound spectrograph	263	مرســـام الصوت · مرسمـــة الصـــوت (mirsaɪm ʔal-ṣawt. mirsamat ʔal-ṣawt)
4	spectrograph	264	مرسام الصوت · مرسمة الصوت · جهــــاز الرســم · الطيفــي (mirsaɪm ʔal-ṣawt. mirsamat ʔal-ṣawt. dʒihaɪz ʔal-rasm ʔal-ṭayfiɪ

Table (4): Overabundance of synonymous Arabic equivalents

- The parallel use of a translational equivalent and a traditional Arabic term. E.g. term (1), where the first and second equivalents are traditional phonetic terms and the third a translational one.
- Translation of the term together with its synonym in the source language. E.g. term (2), where *kalima muɣlaqat ʔal-nawʕ* is a translational equivalent and *kalima waḍi:fiyya* a translation of the English synonym to the English term, i.e., *function word.*
- Variation in using Arabic derivative forms as equivalents. E.g. (3), where *mirsa:m* and *mirsama* are two permissible Arabic derivatives used as *nouns of instrument.*

— Using different Arabic derivative forms in addition to translations as equivalents. E.g. (4), where *mirsa:m* and *mirsama* are derivatives from Arabic *rasama* (drew) and *dziha:z ?al-rasm ?al-ṭayfi:* a translation of the term.

The abundance of synonyms in *DTL* is a glaring example of the absence of a *unified methodology* in transferring the linguistic terms from English to Arabic.

The weaknesses spotted in our analysis may be summed up as follows:

— the inadequacy of bibliographical sources used,
— divergencies in the Arabic equivalents to the English terms,
— lack of precision in the Arabic equivalents,
— vacillation between or combination of *translated* and *arabized* equivalents,
— overabundance of synonymous Arabic equivalents.

To remedy these weaknesses we briefly put forward the following suggestions:

(1) The fast growth of linguistic terms with the resulting outcrop of new terms, neologisms and polysemy requires exact *definitions* and *ample references* to a specific meaning of terms referring to a specific concept. Thus an extensive bibliography is badly needed.

(2) Since one of the aims of special language (terminology) is reducing ambiguity of natural language, it follows that the term tends to fix, to a large extent, the relation between the *concept* and the *term* assigned to it. Unique designations are created and consequently precise communication is maintained (see Felber 1984, Sager 1984). Hence Arabic equivalents should be *precise, unambiguous* and where possible *without synonyms*.

(3) A carefully studied and unified consistent lexicographic policy should be adopted. To implement such a policy the following points should be taken into account:

   — There is as yet no exhaustive study of traditional terms as used by the Old Arab grammarians. Using these terms side by side with coined or translated ones gives rise to *ambiguity* and constitutes a handicap to standardization. Thus the intensions of the concepts associated with these terms should be carefully and precisely defined. In cases where the traditional term may lead to confusion, a new equivalent should be found.

   — Decisions should be made concerning the cases where either *arabization* or *translation* (as devices of transferring linguistic terminology to Arabic) should be adopted. This will help reduce synonymy of Arabic equivalents to foreign linguistic terms.

   — All causes for abundance of synonyms should be eliminated, or at least reduced, to guarantee easy inter-Arab, interdisciplinary and international

communication between the specialists and to help in the harmonization of linguistic terms in Arabic.

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