

## Pronunciation and Transphonemization of Arabisms in the Islamic English Language

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**Abstract:** This work emphasizes the relationship between the English language and Islam and its significance in contemporary times. It focussed on the important role of the English language as a conveyor of knowledge about Islam to the international community and on the diverse ways in which Western and global cultures, often accessible in English, would no doubt continue to connect with the Muslim world. The English language has been one of the most hospitable languages in the world in accepting foreign loanwords and one of the languages that contributed to English is the Arabic language as a donor of words to other languages. Directly borrowed arabisms which are connected with Islam are pronounced the same in Arabic and English, it is *zero transphonemisation* or partial - *compromise transphonemisation*. They form their orthography on the basis of the pronunciation of the model or an arabism follows the orthography of the model without any change.

### Introduction

With the advent of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, followed by the establishment of Islamic/Muslim kingdoms/empires in various parts of the world, and through a series of historical crusades, contacts between English and Islam, and Arabic and Christianity were established. Whatever the argument is concerning the cultural invasion and political domination of the East by the West, or vice versa, the fact is, both have influenced and learnt from each other in all fields of life throughout the centuries.

The simplest kind of influence that one language may exert on another is the borrowing of words. When there is cultural borrowing there is always the likelihood that the associated words may be borrowed too.

Languages use various strategies in borrowing: perhaps adopting and preserving the form used in the donor language, sometimes adapting the borrowed word to conform more closely to their own phonological and morphological systems, and sometimes creating a new word through loan translation. Not surprisingly, the extent and nature of borrowing between two languages reflect the extent and nature of the contact between the corresponding cultures.

Perhaps most English speakers are not aware of many words that have entered the English language from Arabic, some of which are original Arabic words and some of which entered Arabic from other languages. Of course, it is not merely the case that the words alone entered the English language. In most instances, the ideas and objects that the words represent were introduced to Western culture by the Arabs.

English today has thousands of words in all fields of human endeavour which are of Arabic origin: in architecture, agriculture, art, astronomy, commerce, geography, industry, literature, mathematics, mechanics, medicine, music, physics and religion. Adaptation of these words is a gradual process and progresses in small steps: a foreign word, in our case - Arabic word - must adapt to a language system, to the orthographic and phonological systems of the receiving language, English; certain loanwords become integrated in the borrowing language to such an extent that they are no longer recognized as being of foreign origin. Also, a new lexical unit always enriches the vocabulary of the borrowing language: it names a new concept, product, or invention, or replaces an obsolete native word.

Language is a human phenomenon influenced by collective conceptual memory of the society that speaks it. An Islamic language, therefore, is not a mere surface structural expression nor a language with a set of Arabic loan words. It is a language identified in both communal semantic memory and individual episodic memory with Islamic characteristics. (Abdussalam, 1999, p. 9)

Isma'il Raji al Faruqi (1986, p. 7) forcefully encourages Muslim native speakers of English language as well as Muslim users of English, to stick to Islamic Arabic terminology and vocabularies which equivalencies are not existent in English, in order to make them part of the communal memory of this language and consequently incorporate them in its dictionary.

According to Ahmad Shehu Abdussalam (1999, p. 9) the term Islamic language includes any language spoken by a Muslim language group as a mother tongue, languages used in bilingual community or language

expected to be Islamic. The latter are languages spoken mainly by non-Muslim communities but used widely by Muslims in academic matters. This category may include languages such as English, French, etc., in case of influence of Islamic faith on its speakers. In order to determine to what extent a language community can be Islamic, socio-cultural criteria will need to be applied.

Meanwhile, Arabic language is regarded as the lingua franca of Muslim Ummah. The reason is not that it has any supremacy, but for the fact that it is the language of the Qur'an, Hadith, prayers and main references on Islam. Precisely because of this, it is supposed to be learnt by every Muslim with some degree of proficiency. Beside Arabic, Muslims are encouraged to learn their mother tongues and languages of other Muslim group, in order to foster Islamic brotherhood and amicable social interaction. The driving force in a communal memory is cultural, and Islamic faith ('aqidah) is ought to assume this role in any Islamic language and features clearly in various modes of its expression and stands as well as distinctive feature.

## **2. Islam and Arabic: a Unique Relationship**

The revelation of the Qur'an in Arabic set the scene for a unique and lasting relationship between the language and Islam. On the one hand, Arabic provided a very effective medium for communicating the message of the religion. On the other hand, Islam helped Arabic to acquire the universal status which it has continued to enjoy since the Middle Ages, emerging as one of the principal world languages. (Chejne, 1969, p. 53)

The relationship of Islam and the Qur'an to Arabic involves more than just the use of a language to communicate a divine message. There are a number of factors which set this relationship apart from that which exists between other holy books and the languages in which they appeared, for Arabic has come to be closely associated with Islam, and in this way has acquired a semi-official status. It is implicit that anyone professing Islam cannot ignore the role Arabic plays in his faith. Embracing Islam, therefore, entails exposure to, and familiarity with, the Arabic language. Such familiarity is necessitated by the fact that memorization and recitation of Qur'anic verses in their original language is necessary for the performance of the daily rituals. Other holy books may have had an impact on the languages in which they originally appeared, but the impact that Islam and the Qur'an have had on Arabic appears to be unique in its extent and durability. It has often been the case that a holy book appears in a given language and is then translated into other languages, in which it continues to be read and recited during the performance of rituals, but, in the case of the Qur'an, although it has been translated into many languages, these translations cannot replace the original language as a language of worship, which continues to be Arabic for all Muslims, native speakers and others.

Other holy books also came to be associated with specific languages, such as the Torah with Hebrew, and, perhaps less intimately, the New Testament with Greek and Latin. (Chejne, 1969, p. 53)

### **2.1 Islam, the Qur'an, and the internationalization of the Arabic language**

The revelation of the Quran in Arabic in the early part of the seventh century AD helped the language to acquire an international status which it has continued to enjoy until the present day. (Chejne, 1969, p. 5). It is true that Arabic has played an important role in the life and history of the Arab people, but without the bond it has with Islam it would not have been likely to have acquired the type of international status it has acquired through Islam. It was under the banner of religion that Arabic spread beyond the borders of the Arabian Peninsula. The early Muslims who emerged from the north-western part of the Arabian Peninsula brought with them not only the Islamic religion but Arabic as well. This phenomenon was so remarkable that, within a few centuries after the revelation of the Qur'an, Arabic became the common language of government, correspondence, business, and literary expression.

The speed and facility with which Arabic was first accepted and then eventually absorbed in the new countries was remarkable, and it was largely due to its association with Islam. Converts to the new religion looked with great interest towards the original language of their Holy Book. (Al-Jindi, 1908, p. 31).

### **3. Toward Islamic English?**

The relationship between Islam and Arabic leads us to a very important issue, and that is the relationship between English and Islam. The issue of English terms in Arabic was raised in the mid 1980s by the late Isma'il Raji al Faruqi, himself an immigrant to North America, in a short book *Toward Islamic English* (1986).

Faruqi's goal was to foster the inclusion into English a wide range of Arabic terms that were, in his view, untranslatable and would enrich and enlarge English and other languages. There is a list of Islamic terms in Appendix C. Thus, for example, Urdu, a language based on Sanskrit, was enriched by Arabic words, which become the vehicles of a "new vision and new spiritual sensitivities" (al Faruqi, 1986, p. 13). Faruqi pointed out, for example, how misleading it was to translate *salat* or *namaz* as "prayer," since that term makes no distinction between the requisite, chronologically appointed, *salat* and the spontaneous supplication of *du'a*. Al Faruqi included some thirty pages of words, provided in Arabic script, correctly transliterated and properly defined, to serve as an initial pool of words meant to be regarded as English vocabulary. By adhering to the old cosmopolitanism of Arabic, one would contribute to the new cosmopolitanism of English.

Islamic English is the English language modified to enable it to carry Islamic proper nouns and meanings without distortion, and, thus to serve the linguistic needs of Muslim users of the English language. (Isma'il Raji al Faruqi, 1986, p. 7)

According to Isma'il Raji al Faruqi (1986, p. 7), Muslim users of the English language are, first, the Muslim citizens and permanent residents of the English-speaking countries and those countries around the world where English is an official language, such as Pakistan, India, Ceylon, Malaysia, the Philippines in Asia, and Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania and others in Africa and around the globe. Besides the foregoing, the category equally includes all those Muslims who have mastered or acquainted themselves with the English language, and who use it as a language of reading and research, for writing and communication. Finally, to this large number must be added the millions of Muslims who use the non-Islamic languages – e.g., the languages of Europe, Asia and Africa.

On the basis of professor Faruqi's definition of Islamic English and classification of Muslim users of the English language, Zaidan Ali Jassem (1995) attempts to identify some of the distinctive features of Islamic English in terms of the general language levels: phonology, morphology, syntax, lexis and discourse. He concludes that there are differences between Muslim native speakers of English and Muslim non-native speakers of English in nearly all levels, but the differences occur mostly at the discourse level. Jassem also outlines the following salient characteristics of Islamic English:

- Islam topics
- lexis which includes Islamic Arabic vocabulary, some of which have become part of standard English usage, eg. *Shariah*, *Fiqh*, *Fatwa*, *Islam*, *Jihad* to name a few
- the grammar of Islamic English is plain syntax
- the discourse incorporates many Arabic expressions, e.g., *Bismilla*, *do'a* (supplication), *Salaam* (greeting) and *GazzajAllahu Khyra* (for thank you)
- the audience of Islamic English are Muslims or non-Muslims
- the reliance on primary and secondary sources where the former include the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, and the latter include the work of *Sahaba* (the prophet's companions) and Muslim scholars in all walks of life.

The above survey of the works of Professor Faruqi and Dr. Jassem establishes the existence of Islamic English as a distinct variety. Jassem (1995) makes a step further in recognising Islamic English as similar to other English varieties in the sense that it has topic, lexis, grammar, style, audience and discourse norms. With this, he concludes that Islamic English is an old reality and phenomenon that has been in practice probably since the first Muslims spoke and wrote English.

Ahmad Shehu Abdussalam in his book *Islam and language* (1999, p. 6) states that describing languages as Islamic or non-Islamic normally surfaces while discussing Islamisation of linguistic studies, in the context of difference and similarity between language groups, socio-cultural identity, thought, behavior and beliefs of these groups. In order to offer a clear description, linguistic features of an Islamic language need clarification. It is unexpected that this description will restrict itself to commonality between Arabic and other languages spoken by Muslim commonly on the surface level of lexical borrowing, despite the fact that influence of Islam on language transcends loan words to discourse and in-depth cultural meaning of borrowed lexicon.

As Abdussalam notes, that description of this nature should consider peculiarity in the context of unity between cultures of different Muslim communities, the presumed relativity in perception of realities and linguistic variation in the expression of beliefs and thought of language groups. It is equally important to note language change due to forces within the language system itself, and in association with development and changes in other domains, such as cognition and cultural norms.

## 4. Arabic Contribution to the English Language

If, today, we leaf through the English dictionaries, we will find that words of Arabic origin are to be found, here and there, under every letter of the alphabet. It will surprise many to know that some scholars have made a study of the Skeat's Etymological Dictionary and found that Arabic is the seventh on the list of languages that has contributed to the enrichment of the English vocabulary. Rober Deveux turned up 600 loanwords by leafing through the pages of the Random House Dictionary of the English Language (RHD), Webster's Third New International Dictionary (W3) and the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (SOED).

James Peters and Habeeb Salloum in Arabic Contributions to the English Vocabulary (1996) state that some scholars have made a study of the Etymological Dictionary and found that Arabic is the seventh on the list of languages that has contributed to the enrichment of the English vocabulary. Only Greek, Latin, French, German, Scandinavian and the Celtic group of languages have contributed more than Arabic to the English idiom. According to Peters and Salloum there are over 3,000 basic words, along with perhaps some 4,000 derivatives, of Arabic origin or transmitted through Arabic in the English language. Upwards of 500 of the basic words are common in the everyday language. These Arabic loanwords employed in the everyday vocabulary indicate that in almost all areas, the Arabs contributed to the English way of life. Some examples of these common words with their Arabic origin will give an insight into this contribution. The Arabic loan words themselves are only one aspect of the Arabic impact on English. We must stress that lexicographers differ amongst themselves over the paths some loanwords have followed to reach English and even over the real origins of some of the words. The word *sales* is a good example. It derives ultimately, strange as it may seem, from the Arabic *khusa ath-tha'lab* (the fox's testicles). On that point all lexicographers seem to agree; but the RHD gives its path as Arabic-Turkish-English, the W3 as Arabic-French or Spanish-English and the SOED as Arabic-Turkish-French - English. To cite another example, the W3 says that *safari* entered English direct from Arabic, while both the RHD and SOED say that the path was Arabic-Swahili-English.

Many, Arabic loanwords, especially those connected with Islam (e.g., *dhimmi*, *hafiz*, *ijma*, *khutbah* (or *khutba*), *madrasah* (or *madrasa*), *muezzin* (or *muazzin*), *murshid*, *waqf* (or *wakf*, etc), are simply transliterations of the Arabic originals. But since different individuals have different ideas about how the Arabic alphabet should be transliterated into Latin characters, in many cases there is no single correct way to spell an Arabic loanword and, instead, dictionaries offer several - sometimes as many as seven - accepted variant spellings. What variant spellings have already been cited above. Other prime examples include: *sequin*, *zequin*, *zequine*, *zecchino*, *zechin*, *zecchin*, *zecchine*; *durra*, *dura*, *dhurra*, *doora*, *doura*, *dourah*; *gufa*, *guffa*, *goofa*, *goofah*, *kufa*, *koofah*; *shariat*, *sharia*, *shar*, *shar'*, *sheria*; *qadi*, *cadi*, *kadi*, *kadhi*, *gazi*; *ghazel*, *ghazel*, *gazel*, *gasal*, *ghasel*.

These variant spellings of Arabic loanwords really do not create any serious problems, for the words, regardless of which variant you consider, are generally relatively close both in sound (allowing for English pronunciation) and meaning to their Arabic originals. The key word here is generally, for in more than a few cases loanwords have been altered beyond recognition both in form and meaning.

### 4.1 The Study of Arabisms

For our study we have followed the Narrow Approach using studies of Rudolf Filipović whose whole work was based on the studies by Werner Betz (1949, 1959), Einar Haugen (1950, also 1956), and Uriel Weinreich (1953). Various linguists have gone in for influence of the English language on other languages using the methods that were worked out in *Teorija jezika u kontaktu. Uvod u lingvistiku jezičnih dodira* (Theory of Languages in Contact. An Introduction to Contact Linguistics) by Rudolf Filipović. Since the English language is constantly changing, responding to the world around it and absorbing elements from every other language and culture that it comes into contact with, many linguists have occupied themselves with these loanwords. For the purpose of this study, first we have to define arabisms and we followed Rudolf Filipović (1990, p. 20) and his definition of Anglicism:

An arabism is any word borrowed from the Arabic language denoting an object or a concept which is at the moment of borrowing an integral part of Arabic culture and civilization; it need not be of Arabic origin, but it must have been adopted to the linguistic system of Arabic and integrated into the vocabulary of Arabic.

Our analysis of arabisms in the English language is primarily based on how Rudolf Filipović analysed anglicisms in European languages in his book *Anglicizmi u hrvatskom ili srpskom jeziku: porijeklo-razvoj-značenje* (Anglicisms in Croatian or Serbian: origin-development-meaning) (Filipović, 1990) using his methods that he briefly worked out in his book *Teorija jezika u kontaktu. Uvod u lingvistiku jezičkih dodira. (Theory of Languages in Contact. An Introduction to Contact Linguistics)* (1986).

Filipović introduces his new terminology: adaptation on the phonological level is called *transphonemization* (phoneme substitution) and is further analysed as zero, partial and free.

This study deals with arabisms in the field of religion

## 4.2. Integration of Arabisms

The integration of a certain number of arabisms into English - the receiving language, whose linguistic system is different from that of Arabic, requires a linguistic analysis to explain how the process is performed. Arabic source words in passing from one system into several others must be adapted before they can be integrated. The analysis of every arabism in our dictionaries of arabisms in the English language (Filipović, 1991, p. 125-133) is organised so that it defines:

- 1) the origin of the arabism (i.e. from which Arabic model-source it was developed),
- 2) its orthography or spelling,
- 3) its pronunciation in the receiving language,
- 4) its morphological categories (parts of speech and gender), and
- 5) its meaning.

To achieve this, the analysis is performed on four levels: (a) the orthographic level, to show how the spelling of an Arabic source word is adapted into the orthography of the receiving language - English, (b) the phonological level, to explain the pronunciation of the arabism especially when it differs from the Arabic source word, (c) the morphological level, to show how the citation form of the arabism (and, if it is a noun, its gender, indicated by sb-m/f/n) are determined, (d) the semantic level, to determine which meaning of the Arabic source word is transferred into the corresponding arabism.

We are going to discuss here the orthography and phonetics of arabisms.

## 4.3. The Orthography of Arabisms

The adaptation of an Arabic source word into an arabism begins on the orthographic level in order to determine the spelling of the arabism (the citation form) and its relation to the orthography of the model (the Arabic source).

First we have to define an orthography. It is a learnable human technology consisting of 1) a set of characters and 2) conventions for using them to make language visible.

Since Arabic is written in a very different alphabet from English or any other language written with Latin alphabet, it is difficult for people with no knowledge of the Arabic alphabet to understand Arabic texts. It is then helpful to transliterate this alphabet into the Latin alphabet. For the purpose of this study we have to make a difference between transliteration and transcription because these two terms are often confused.

Transliterating is a representation of an alphabet with letters from a different alphabet. The translation is done character by character, syllable by syllable. In other words, transliteration is used to reproduce the Arabic writing system into Latin alphabets. When trying to find a standard transliterator for Arabic, it was found that the writing is similar to its pronunciation. Therefore, it was decided to find a system for phonetic transcription that both reproduces speech and writing.

The term Transcription, as used here, denotes an orthography devised and used by linguists to characterize the phonology or morphology of a language. Trained linguists often use the International Phonetic Alphabet to transcribe languages.

The typical transcription of Arabic has as its purpose to convey the pronunciation of Arabic words, usually to foreigners who are not comfortable with traditional Arabic orthography. Given their previous schooling in the orthographies used for their native languages, Western Europeans are more comfortable with a Roman-based transcription; Russians and Bulgarians would obviously prefer a Cyrillic transcription, etc. These transcriptions are possible orthographies for Arabic, possible ways of making Arabic visible, but because they use different character inventories and different conventions, they are different from the standard Arabic orthography.

There are four possibilities but with arabisms in the field of Islam there are three:

(1) the orthography of the arabism is formed on the basis of the pronunciation of the model:

Arabic	<b>araq</b>	/arak/	-	English:	<b>arak</b>
Arabic	<b>ra'is</b>	/re'i:s/	-	English:	<b>reis</b>

(2) the orthography of the arabism follows the orthography of the model without any change:

Arabic	<b>Allāh</b>	/a'l'a:h/	-	English:	<b>Allah</b>
Arabic	<b>hijāb</b>	/hi'dʒa:b/	-	English:	<b>hijab</b>

(3) the orthography of the arabism follows partly the pronunciation and partly the spelling of the model in either order:

Arabic **salām** /sɛ'la:m/ - English: **salaam**

#### 4.4 The Phonology of Arabisms

The pronunciation is determined on the phonological level according to the similarity and dissimilarity of the phonological systems of Arabic and the receiving language - English.

(1) If both systems of pronunciation have the elements equally described, then the substitution is complete and the arabism is pronounced in the way of the receiving language. Since there is no change, we call this process zero transphonemisation (Filipović, 1977, p. 125-133):

Arabic **bi-smi-lla-h** /bis'milə/ - English: **bismillah** /bis'milə/

Arabic **'imām** /i'mɑ:m/ - English: **imam** /i'mɑ:m/

(2) If some elements of the receiving language are different by their description, the pronunciation of the arabism is only partially equal to the Arabic source word: the process is called partial or compromise transphonemisation:

Arabic **halāl** /hɑ'la:l/ - English: **halal** /hə'la:l/

(3) If the pronunciation of the Arabic source word consists of elements which do not have equivalents in the sound system of the receiving language, then the substitution is free: this process is called free transphonemisation and there is no such arabism in the field of Islam so there we have provided this example with the Arabism in the field of food:

Arabic **sukkar** /suḳḳer/ - English: **sugar** /ʃugə/

#### 5. Conclusion

The Arabic language has without doubt served as a very effective medium for the communication of the message of Islam. It has also served as a means for preserving the cultural and religious heritage of Arabic-speaking and Muslim peoples. In this sense, the language has been extremely useful to the religion. However, in its role as the language of the Qur'an, Arabic has benefited enormously. Furthermore, the need for Muslims, whether native or non-native speakers of Arabic, to memorize and recite verses from the Qur'an in their daily worship has helped to keep the Arabic language alive. It was due to its association with Islam and the Qur'an that Arabic gained a good deal of prestige as the language of faith, a faith that was gaining more and more followers with each new day. The interest in the new faith brought with it interest in the language of that faith. It was under the banner of Islam that Arabic has influenced many languages.

In addition, the relationship between the English language and Islam has great significance in contemporary times as the English language continues to play an important role as a conveyer of knowledge about Islam to the international community.

The English language has been one of the most hospitable languages in the world in accepting foreign loanwords and one of the languages that contributed to English is the Arabic language as a donor of words to other languages, not only of English but also of other languages.

When it comes to the integration i.e the alteration of a borrowed word to such an extent that native speakers are no longer aware of any foreignness of arabisms from a donor language -- Arabic into English as the receiving language -- arabisms can be broadly divided into loanwords, i.e. those which have been assimilated phonologically, orthographically, morphologically or semantically and foreign words, i.e. those which have no assimilation. Most of the arabisms are loanwords but directly borrowed arabisms which are connected with Islam are foreign words. They form their orthography on the basis of the pronunciation of the model (Arabic: bi-smi-llāh /bis'mil ə/ -English: bimillah /bis'mil ə/) or an arabism follows the orthography of the model without any change (Arabic: hijāb /hi'dʒɑ:b/ - English: hijab).

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