

# The Applicability of Borrowing: Crossing SL Boundaries Towards the TL Typology (the case of English-Arabic translation of specialized terminologies)


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## Abstract

Translating neologisms and specialized terms from any SL into any TL poses a real challenge for translators of scientific or specialized text types, since it requires not only an optimal knowledge of the languages in question, but a thorough understanding of the locus of that particular term in a particular domain. Arabic language, being different in terms of its expressive potentials, and phonological, as well as morphological characteristics, many procedures need to be put in effect in order to reach into a state of translatability of foreign terms, and in order for such terms to be adapted into the Arabic language system. Borrowing stands as the most adopted technique in rendering varieties of specialized terms into Arabic. Yet, for borrowing not be disruptive and uninformative, it needs to be combined with some other techniques like analogy, definition or explanation. Arabicizing foreign terms, may even be a better option to be opted for, yet, the same problem arises when it comes to the TL receptors' familiarity vs unfamiliarity with the imported term/s, added to the volume of Arabicized terms in a particular text or a part of a text.

**Keywords:** Terminologies, Translation, Arabicization, Borrowing

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## Introduction

Translation of special or specialized terminologies is often deemed as a real dilemma that translators encounter in the course of their work. Attempting to render any specialized term from a SL into any TL necessitates opting for the right technique to give an equivalent that can both be expressive of its denotative value, as well as understandable by the respective TL receptors.

Due to the fact that languages have different characteristics and linguistic feature, translators have to thoroughly analyze the SL term in question before attempting to ingest it into the TL lexicon. The need to transcend geography and linguistics and facilitate the access to a myriad of information pertaining to varieties of knowledge domains, necessitates appropriately making use of translation as a mediator between knowledge and languages' informative power.

### 1-Most-Opted for Translation Techniques of Specialized Terminologies

In order to suggest an appropriate translation strategy or technique to render even a single scientific term, it's necessary to explore translation techniques as explained by Molina and Albir (2002: 509), that such techniques of translation cannot be viewed as 'good or bad in themselves, they are used functionally and dynamically' in terms of: "the genre of the text, the type of translation, the mode of translation, the purpose of the translation and the characteristics of the translation audience; and, finally, the method chosen."

A natural by-product of translation is the adoption of technical, scientific and culture-specific terms for which ready-made equivalents are either unavailable or unpopular, Al-Qinai (ND: 1) observes, adding that, "The process whereby a particular language incorporates in its vocabulary words from another language is technically designated by such terms as «borrowing», «loaning» or «adoption», though the latter is usually the case."

Terminologies representing particular scientific or specialized weight, project the crucial need to review the way translators work to 'informatively present knowledge using the most appropriate terminological system'. Undeniably, no scientific or specialized text can ever be rendered without frequently resorting to borrowing or loan word strategies. Yet, indeed, excessively relying on this 'low wall' would devastate the understandability of that text in the TL, and even precludes its communicative prospects considering its TL receptors. Adopting the right strategy to reflect the denotative value of any of the scientific or specialized terms should be given the highest priority while rendering such text types from any SL to any corresponding TL.

### 2-Arabicization

Arabicization, is defined by Al-Qinai (ND:1) as, "...a process whereby foreign words are incorporated into the language usually with phonological or morphological modifications so as to be congruent with the Arabic phonological and morphological

paradigms, hence the term «analogical Arabicization». Al-Qinai (ND: 2) comments that the definition of ‘Arabicization’ ‘/a-l-t-a-ʔ-r-i-b/ التعريب’, “has always been a matter of controversy among Arab philologists particularly with regard to the status of the borrowed word and the parameters that apply in the naturalization process of foreign vocabulary.”

Arabicizing neologisms is imposed by the frequent need to familiarize Arabic language receptors with the original nature of the foreign term, then explaining that term or defining it, to make it more comprehensible. Indeed, Arabicization is not and cannot be blindly adopted as an absolute translation technique, since, like borrowing and loan word strategy, has to be rationally used, observing text comprehensibility. Arabicizing too many newly emerged scientific and specialized terms, ultimately hinders communication and devastates the message conveyed to the intended TL receptors.

### 3- Discussion

As long as a non-stop pace toward scientific discoveries and global issues becoming constantly at the fingertip of all and every person on the globe, either through multilingual channels or by means of the MT widgets like Google Translate, knowledge will keep up reaching people throughout the globe in their respective languages. Yet, the question is, how can knowledge and information, with their inherited nomenclatures, be conveyed to various receptors in rather or entirely different language communities, in different multilingual settings? Definitely, translation, whether rendered mechanically or by means of a human translator, appears as the sole mediator to bring people together and give them an informative access to the global scientific or even social updates.

No one can deny the fact that rendering scientific or specialized nomenclatures needs to be given a higher consideration, particularly when it comes to the issue of trying to give the same equivalent to the same thing or item produced in a given language, by the speakers of the same language, despite the huge disparities between the expressive value of the various dialects of that specific standard language variety.

Rendering special or specialized terms from foreign languages into Arabic, in particular, remains an issue of argument and inconsistency, since translations reaching audience through the various Mass Media and Social Media, in addition to individual attempts of getting a mechanized equivalent by means of an MT widget, making it even more complicated and causing a sort of lack of consensus *ad idem* over a single term. The denotative value of every specialized term, should remain unchanged whatever and whenever rendered into any TL.

**Table 1: Example borrowed terms in Arabic**

SLTerm	Borrowed Term (in Arabic)	TT (IPA-Transcribed)	Translation technique adopted
Television Microwave Sponge	تلفزيون ميكرويف إسفنج	/t-i-l-i-f-i-z-y-o-n/ /m-a-y-k-i-r-w-a-y-f/ /i-s-f-a-n-j/	Phonological adaptation
Secretary	سكرتير	/s-i-k-i-r-t-a-y-r/	Morphological adaptation
Filtration Television	فلتر تلفاز	/f-a-l-t-a-r-a/ /t-i-l-f-a-z/	Arabicization (Naturalization) (using analogical forms)
Filter	فيلتر	/f-i-l-t-a-r/	Direct transliteration (transference) (transcribing the term into the TL writing system) maintaining original pronunciation)
C Vitamin	فيتامين ج	/f-a-t-a-m-i-n/ /j-i-m/	Transliteration + equivalent symbol or item
Television	تلفاز		Analogical form

While borrowing is a direct term of blindly taking the term and indulge it into the TL system, this is not really the case, where the borrowed term may frequently require some kind of adaptation in order to be rewritten in the letters of the TL system; moreover, slight, or even, radical changes may be carried out in terms of pronunciation or morphological status of the foreign term in question. Adopting the TL morphology and pronunciation makes the foreign term sound “natural” in the TL despite its foreign origin. Naturalization is a sort of disguise over the imported term and it serves to help the TL receptor guess the meaning of the newly entered term, particularly when it is deciphered pertaining to the domain in question.

To borrow a word from a SL to any TL, makes of that word as a ‘loan’ in the TL lexicon. Haspelmath, M. (2008:13) defines a loanword as, “a word that at some point came into a language by transfer from another language”. Arabicizing foreign terms and assimilating them into the Arabic language coding system is also similar to ‘borrowing’ in terms of maintaining the general features of the SL imported item. Arabicization, then, entails the processes of borrowing, combined with naturalization of the term, both phonologically, as well as morphologically, in order to facilitate its access to the Arabic lexicon. Some translators may refrain from Arabicization for the reason that it is not much more than borrowing, and it cannot frequently be adopted in a short text that is immersed in a pool of terminologies, as it may even disrupt informational flow.

It seems that some scholars use the term ‘Arabization’, to refer to ‘Arabicization’, despite the fact that to Arabize, has something to do with the identity of the Arabs, whilst Arabicizing relates to adhering a foreign term to the Arabic language norms. Khrisat and Mohamad (2014: 140), state that, “Arabization is a major factor that provides Arabic language with new vocabulary”, additionally noting that, “... there are no guidelines or rules to be followed in this process.” They further state that, “...Arabic language... has loaned a huge number of vocabulary to other languages like English, French, Italian, Spanish, Turkish and many other languages.”

Interchangeably using both the borrowed, as well as the analogized version of the same foreign term rendered into Arabic, also remain a locus of argument and individual preference of translators. For example, while some translators directly transliterate terms like ‘television’ (which becomes /t-i-l-i-f-i-z-y-o-n/ تلفزيون in Arabic), others prefer analogy or arabicization, using versions like /t-i-l-f-a-z/ تلفاز as an equivalent to television, /f-a-l-t-a-r-a/ فلترة as an equivalent to filtration, ...etc.

Sager, J.C. & Nkwenti-Azeh, B. (1989:7) depict the complex problem “...created by terminological needs in the encounter of a society with a foreign technology”, “...as a filtering process with an inadequate tool which is both wasteful and damaging”, stating that, “The problem is complex because the flow of terminology into the filter is greater than the filter can handle. It is further stated that, “the filter itself has to be modified in the process of terminology conversion”, explaining that, “Some terminology is adequately converted, some is provisionally converted, some bypasses the filter without conversion and leads to conceptual confusion and monolingual contamination.” As for “multilingual societies”, it has been noted that “the problems multiply”.

Translating specialized terms (scientific, legal, ...etc.) requires highly considering the weight of that term in the respective domain. Sensitive terms need one and only one TL equivalent. Duplicating terms to refer to the same or, worse, different terms lead to wrong translation of content, and causes comprehension to be hindered. Loading the meaning of a foreign term on a single TL item is supposed to be given priority by translators.

Think of an air jet parts given different naming system by different translators, then TL receptors of technical manuals will be shocked by the output, and subsequently, imagine how that would affect the beneficiaries. A worse scenario would be that of medical terms being translated differently into the same TL.

Translation techniques that indulge SL vocabulary and nomenclatures into the TL system, may gradually cause changes at the level of expression, as well as morphological system of the TL. For example when the word ‘Secretary’ has been rendered into Arabic as /s-i-k-i-r-t-a-y-r/ سكرتير, applying all suffixes implied by the use an context like feminizing suffix, duality, plurality,...etc. that are often adhered to words of the same category “a name of a profession”, such processes naturalize SL words to be used according to the TL system. At the long run, such continuous flow of lexical items would

certainly imply a change on the expressional authority of the TL. Haspelmath, M. (2008 :1) states that:

‘One of the most important tasks of diachronic linguistics is to establish general constraints on language change. There are two main types of constraints on language change: paths of change, which limit the direction that changes can take (cf. Haspelmath 2004), and rates of change, which give us an idea about the frequency or speed with which certain types of changes occur. Constraints on language change are of interest for at least two reasons:

(i) A theoretical reason: Understanding the nature of language change presupposes identifying constraints on language change. If there were no such constraints, if anything goes, then we would have a difficult time understanding how and why change occurs.

(ii) An applied/practical reason: Constraints on language change are a prerequisite for reconstructing unattested changes and unattested linguistic situations.’

In the same vein, Emery (1982: 87) asserts that, “Western technology has been introduced into the Arab world principally through English and French. English or French is a second language in all Arab states and, generally speaking, a knowledge of the second languages is indispensable for career advancement.” Therefore, particular change on languages occur, indeed, affected by the recurrent resort to borrowing more and more terminologies dictated by the pressing need to render varieties of scientific, legal, religious, culture-specific texts where direct equivalence does not exist.

#### 4- Conclusion

As long as global scientific developments are unconditionally going on, no one would ever expect a language to stand still in front of such a wave of scientific and informational update. Many of specialized terms resulted from such developments, need to be rendered into the languages of the world. In this respect, many of those specialized terms often undergo a lot of change before they find their way to TL lexicons, particularly terminologies of origin other than that of the SL. For example, translating varieties of medical terms of Latin etymological nature, imposes such a type of change whenever rendered into, say, Arabic. Van Hoof (1998), cf(Berghammer, 2006: 40), asserts that, “the translator will soon find that medical texts[,] are full of potential pitfalls, such as changes in spelling, changes in prefixes and suffixes, parallel forms, and root switches from Greek to Latin and vice versa.”

Arabic language in the midst of endeavors to find proper equivalents for foreign terms of specialized nature, Arabicization is not always able to provide a comprehensive solution for the terminological deficiency resulted from the lack of direct equivalents. Therefore, reviving original Arabic lexical items that most of them are no longer in use by current generations which are influenced by globalization and dissolution of cultures and expressional volume posed by the frequent interaction among individuals using the same

or similar platforms in the cyber space, may provide originally Arabic equivalents for so many specialized terminologies used instead of resorting to Arabicization or, simply, borrowing. For example, the word ‘H-a-w-a-i-e هوائي’ may be used instead of the Arabicized /t-i-l-i-f-i-z-y-o-n/, /m-i-ð-y-a-ʔ/ instead of /r-a-d-y-o/, /b-a-r-q-i-y-a/, instead of /t-i-l-i-g-r-a-f/ ’تلغراف’, /a-m-i-n/ instead of /s-i-k-i-r-t-a-y-r/...etc. Despite the fact that the SL terms when directly rendered into TL using direct equivalents (whenever available), even though such a process may impose resorting to some obsolete nomenclatures, and may even appear odd or unfamiliarity for the TL receptors, yet, this stands as the sole way out that facilitates reducing the volume of loan or borrowed words in any TL. Of course, that is not always possible, and translators, critiques, as well TL receptors have to be ready to tolerate the presence of SL terminologies disguised in the TL coding system.

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