ENGLISH LOANWORDS IN THE EGYPTIAN VARIETY OF ARABIC: WHAT MORPHOLOGICAL AND PHONOLOGICAL VARIATIONS OCCURRED TO THEM?[1]

Abstract: *This paper investigates the English loanwords in the Egyptian variety of Arabic. Arabic, which is a language of over two hundred and twenty-three million speakers, abundantly borrows from English. This paper reached three findings. Data, in finding one, revealed that over two hundred words were found to be borrowed from English, code-switching was not included. These words were then put into eleven different categories based on their use and part of speech. Finding two addressed the morphological and phonological variation that occurred to these words. Regarding the phonological variation, eight categories were found in both consonant and vowel variation, five for consonants and three for vowels. Examples were given for each. Regarding the morphological variation, five categories were found including the masculine, feminine, dual, broken, and non-pluralize-able nouns. The last finding reported the results of a five-question survey that was taken by 48 native speakers of Egyptian Arabic. It was found that most participants did not recognize English loanwords; they thought these words were originally Arabic, and they could not give Arabic equivalents for the loanwords that they could identify.*

Keywords: *Loanwords, Cognates, Borrowing, Morphology, Phonology, Variation, Arabic Language, Egyptian Dialect.*

Résumé*: Cette etude traite des emprunts anglais dans la variété égyptienne de l'arabe. L'arabe, qui est une langue parlée par plus de deux cents vingt-trois millions de locuteurs, emprunte beacoup de mots à l'anglais. Cette étude nous a mené à trois conclusions. Premièrement, les données ont révélé le fait que plus de deux cents mots ont été empruntés à l'anglais, à part l'alternance codique. Ces mots ont été ensuite classés en onze catégories en fonction de leur usage et partie du discours. Une deuxième conclusion porte sur la variation morphologique et phonologique qui affecte ces mots. Pour ce qui est de la variation phonologique, huit catégories ont été identifiées pour la variation consonnantique et vocalique, cinq catégories pour les consonnes, trois pour les voyelles et des exemples ont été donnés afin d'illustrer ces cas. En ce qui concerne la variation morphologique, cinq catégories ont été identifiées. La dernière conclusion porte sur les résultats d'une enquête à cinq questions qui a été menée sur 48 locuteurs natifs d'arabe egyptien.Selon les résultats, la majorité des participants n'ont pas reconnu les mots empruntés à l'anglais, en croyant qu'il s'agit plutôt de mots arabes et ils n'ont pas réussi à proposer des équivalents arabes pour les emprunts identifiés.*

Mots-clés *: emprunts, mots apparentés, morphologie, phonologie, variation, langue arabe, dialecte égyptien.*

Introduction

It has been taken for granted that all languages of the world play the role of either the giver or the borrower through a process known as *language contact* (Al-Qinai, 2000; Hock & Joseph, 2009; Abderrahman, 1991). In the case of Arabic, unlike the past when Arabic played the role of the lender, it nowadays extensively plays the role of the borrower, (Al-Btoush, 2014; Hijjo & Fannouna, 2014). It is noticed that languages' sounds—either consonant or vowel— are not identical across languages, so it is expected that loanwords

[1] Mohamed **Yacoub**, Indiana University of Pensylvania, Taha.mohamaad@gmail.com // M.A.Yacoub@iup.edu

BDD-A27013 © 2016 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:56:52 UTC)

undergo a process of phonological, morphological, or semantic change when crossing from one language to another (Al-Qinai, 2000).

Arabic, which is a language of, at the very least, a two-thousand-year history, maintains its syntactic, semantic and other systems of the language almost unchanged over the years and is expected to remain so in the future (Yacoub, 2015). Al-Shubashi (2004) stated that "Arabic is the only language in the world whose rules have not changed for 1500 years" (p. 13). Arabic is spoken as a first language in twenty-two countries in the Middle East with an approximate total number of 223,010,130 speakers of it as a first language (Ethnologue Languages of the World, 2014). In terms of consonants, Arabic possesses nine consonant sounds that English lacks; these consonants are (ض,ص, خ, ح, ق, غ, ع, ظ, ط) (/sˤ/, /x/, /ħ/, /dˤ/, /q/, /gh/, /aˤ/, /ðˤ/, /tˤ/), and Arabic lacks the /*p*/, /*v*/, /tʃ/,[1] and /dʒ/ from English consonants. Unlike consonants, Arabic utilizes only six vowel systems compared to the many more vowel sounds in English. The vowel pairs (long and short) are /ɑ/ and /æ/, /i/ and /ɪ/, and /ʊ/ and /u/ (Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ruzic, 1983, p.612). These differences in vowel and consonant sounds between Arabic and English play a role in the phonological variation. Speakers of Arabic either adopt a new sound—which enriches the sounds of the language— or replace it by a native one (Al-Qinai, 2000), as in the case of *video* which is uttered in Arabic as فيديو '*fideo,'* in which /v/ becomes /f/, and as راديو '*radio*' in which /eɪ/ becomes /æ/.

The Egyptian variety (EV) of Arabic is the variety which is spoken as a first language by the population of Egyptians that is made up of about 91,000.000 people according to the census of January 2013. EV is a dialect from the many different dialects of the Arab region (like Sudanese, Gulf, and Shami dialects). The linguistic situation in Egypt is best described as diglossic where two forms of a language exist together: The first form is high (H) and is spoken in formal situations and used as a language of the mass media, and the low form (L) is used for the daily conversations (Yacoub, 2015). However, form L starts to appear in the mass media and exist in some formal speeches, as well (Yacoub, 2015). Form L contains many English loanwords. This paper, hence, addresses three findings. First, it detects the English loanwords that exist in the Egyptian variety of Arabic. Second, it investigates the morphological and phonological variation that occurred to these loanwords when spoken in EV. Third, it reports the findings of a survey that was conducted to find out the feelings and reactions of the participants towards these borrowed words.

Literature Review

The term 'loanwords' is defined by many linguists in the field of language contact. Bynon (1977) defined loanwords as the words that transfer across the boundaries of languages (p. 98).

Owino (2003) introduced a classification of different types of borrowing that are recognized in the literature of sociolinguistics:

1. *The direct type of borrowing*: the borrower language adopts into its system both the form and meaning of a loanword.

2. *Loan translation or calques*: the target language creates new morphemes, and phonemes instead of the foreign ones. In this case, the foreign words only serve as "a model for a native creation." This is the complete opposite of the first kind since none of the

[1] The method of transcription used in this study is the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) according to Cambridge Dictionaries Online.

BDD-A27013 © 2016 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:56:52 UTC)

morphemes or phonemes of the loanwords plays any role in the new word of the target language.

3. *Semantic extension (semantic calques)*: an original word in the target language is given a new meaning for the foreign word. Consequently, the same native word will have multiple meanings that expand to carry the new word. In this case and the previous one, the target language is kept pure from foreign elements.

4. *Loanshift*: this happens when the target language refuses to accept the new loanword with the cultural meaning that is attached to it. Subsequently, what is borrowed is the verbal expression of the loanword. The borrowing aspect happens in only the semantics of the word. In this case and the previous two, the target language is kept pure from foreign elements.

5. *Loanblend*: the borrower here adapts or borrows a part of the word and blends it with an original part of the target language.

6. *Loan creations*: the new coinages in the target language matches "designations available in a language of contact" (p. 27).

7. *Hybrid borrowing*: this refers to a context that has three languages: target languages; source language one; and source language two. For instance, a country that was colonized by France has a source language, which is French, beside its own language (Arabic, for example). When this country needs to borrow a new word from English (which plays the role of the second source language), it replaces the English word for a French one. This is called "Hyper Borrowing" (p. 27).

The reasons why people borrow words have been studied by sociolinguists to be what follows: *Prestige* is one of the reason why people borrow; "When something is PRESTIGIOUS, we may feel a NEED to imitate or borrow it" (Hock and Joseph, (2009, p.259).[1] Hockett (1958) pointed out that "people are expected to emulate those they admire" (p. 68). Weinreich (1963) and Owino (2003) referred to the point that the borrower may wish to conform to the majority whose first language is the source language. In the case of Egypt, English is believed to be highly prestigious. This belief is the result of establishing English-as-a-means-of-instruction schools in Egypt, which charge high tuition and are dedicated to the children of the rich people or as they view themselves as the first-class people. Students of these schools usually matriculate into in the AUC (The American University in Cairo, which is the most prestigious university in Egypt), or other similar universities that are not obtainable for the children of the ordinary people. This status of segregation gives birth to a predilection for English and preferring it to Arabic since these schools have become the dream of every parent for their children in Egypt. *Colonization* is another important reason why people borrow. Countries that colonize big territories affect their language (Abderrahman, 1995). The case is clear when the linguistic situation in North African countries like Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria (all former French colonies) is taken into consideration. In the case of the English language, English people colonized many countries like India, Egypt, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Zimbabwe and many others, in some of which the colonizer changed the language of education and/or the language of the medium of instruction to English (Salama, 1966; Said, 1964). *Religion* can be one of the reasons of why borrowing occurs. For instance, many non-Arabs whose religion is Islam use Arabic Islamic words once they master few words in Arabic because Muslims believe that the Quran—the Muslims' Holy Book—is not translatable and all

[1] Emphasis is in original

BDD-A27013 © 2016 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:56:52 UTC)

Muslims must pray in Arabic. Thus, those non-Arabs start borrowing Arabic words the moment they convert into Islam. *The need to fill* is another major reason for borrowing. When new innovations or concept appear, the need for words that express them appears, too. It is being believed that borrowing a word is easier and faster than coining a new one (Hockett, 1958; Langacker, 1968). This need happens excessively in the field of modern technology (Al-Btoush, 2014). *Pernicious homonymy* has been claimed by Weinreich (1963) to be a very good reason for borrowing. Pernicious homonymy happens when the target language has clashing homonyms, the solution then seems to be in borrowing a word from a source language (Weinreich, 1963, p. 59). *Frequency* is also one of the reasons. If a word in the target language suffers from low frequency compared to a highly frequent word from the source language, this highly frequent word might get borrowed to replace the low-frequency one (Weinreich, 1963, p. 56). *Accuracy* can be a reason for the borrowing, as well. When a word in the source language conveys the meaning more accurately from the one in the target language, it usually gets borrowed. The one in the target language starts to lose its effectiveness (Weinreich, 1963, p.58). *Cacophemistic Purposes*, the need to replace a word in the target language that has unfavorable or negative associations, is one of the reasons why people borrow words (Weinreich, 1963, p.59). *Euphemism* is a good reason for borrowing, as well. When a word in the target language is considered too harsh, blunt, unpleasant or embarrassing, a new word is borrowed to express the same meaning but softly. Finally, *trade and business-related words* get globalized due to the multinational companies that market their products mainly in English as a lingua franca.

Regarding the phonological adaptation, Hyman (1970) argued that language borrows sounds based on the phonemic approximation. He argued that when words are borrowed, a process of approximation occurs to the new sounds that do not exist in the new language. He concluded that sounds of loanwords undergo a process of "phonological constraints" (p. 2). Agreeing with Hyman's conclusion, Mwihaki, Picard and Nicol (1982) concluded that morphemes of the loanwords are borrowed based on the closest sounds in the target language (39, 52). Hansford and Hansford (1989) mentioned that loan phonemes correspond with nearest native phonemes of the target language. Katamba and Rottland (1987) examined the syllable structure of loanwords of English in Luganda by using Lugandan (a Ugandan language) data. They concluded that English loan phonemes are uttered in a way that assimilate the closest phonemes in Luganda. Mwihaki (1998) who examined the same thing in English loanwords that exist in Gikuyu (a Kenyan language) argued that when phonemes are adapted, the process involves substituting the phonological characteristics of the source language with equivalent ones in the target language.

Concerning the stages that a loanword might require to be borrowed into the target language, Ohly (1987) proposed four stages of adaptation through which a loanword goes through when borrowed from the source language into the target one. First, these words get a local class prefix, then they get accommodated into the language. Next, the phonological rules start to apply partly to the new loanwords. Finally, a stage of "assimilated loans" is brought into the target language through a process of nativization.

Finally, borrowing is not code-switching. Mustafawi (2002) investigated the difference between borrowing and code-switching using materials from twelve hours of natural conversations recorded on tapes and collected from seven native speakers of Gulf Arabic whose ages ranged between 24 and 35. She concluded that "loan items must be characterized as borrowings, not codeswitches, and that borrowing and codeswitches are products of different processes" (pp. 220-229). The same conclusion was drawn by other

BDD-A27013 © 2016 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:56:52 UTC)

researchers such as Poplack, Wheeler, and Westwood (1989, pp. 389-406), Sankoff, Poplack, and Vanniarajan (1991, pp. 72-75), Poplack & Meechan (1995, pp. 199-201), Turpin (1998, pp. 221-223), Ghafar-Samar and Meechan (1998, pp. 203, 204), Budzhak-Jones (1998, pp.161-162), and Eze (1998, pp. 183-185).

Academy of the Arabic Language in Egypt (AAL)

Established on December 13th, 1932 by a royal decree, the academy of the Arabic language (AAL) in Egypt is to sponsor, protect and purge Arabic from the foreign words that might affect the Arabic tongue. Egyptian linguists were eager to establish it to defend the standard Arabic against the use of the regional dialects and alien or obtrusive words. The academy aims at having Arabic keep pace with the modern languages, expressing the modern needs of the age, opening the door for Arabicizing and neologizing foreign words based on the urgent need of the age, and permitting a linguistic facilitation without ingratitude to Arabic (Academy of Arabic Language). These duties are carried out through the different production manifestations of the AAL that are:

1. The Magazine of the Academy: it is an academic and linguistic magazine that the AAL publishes every six months.
2. The AAL publishes books about the language, its origins, its dialects, and its odd speeches.
3. Scientific decisions in regards to language matters and problems.
4. The scientific and technical terms and the words of civilization.
5. Linguistic dictionaries and lexicons including a) the Lexicon of the Quranic words, b) the Big Lexicon *Al-Mu'ajam Al-Kabeer*, c) the Mediator Lexicon *Al-Mu'ajam Al-waseet*, d) the Terse Lexicon *Al-Mu'ajam Al-Wajeez*;
6. The scientific dictionaries:
    a. The Dictionary of Geology.
    b. The Dictionary of the Nuclear Physics and Electronics.
    c. The Dictionary of Chemistry and Pharmacy.
    d. The Dictionary of Philosophy.
    e. The Dictionary of Modern Physics.
    f. The Dictionary of Hydrology.
    g. The Dictionary of Biology and Agriculture.
    h. The Dictionary of Psychology and Education.
    i. The Dictionary of Geography.
    j. The Dictionary of the Medical Terms.
    k. The Dictionary of Oil.
    l. The Dictionary of Mathematics.
    m. The Dictionary of Computer Science.
    n. The Dictionary of The Mechanical Engineering.
    o. The Dictionary of Law.
    p. The Dictionary of the Terms of the Prophetical Speeches, *Hadeeth*.
    q. The Dictionary of Jurisprudence, *Al-Fiqh* (the official website of the AAL, 2014).

The importance of mentioning the AAL in this study lies in the role it plays in creating new words to replace the ones borrowed from other languages (from English in this study). It seems that AAL fails in reaching out to people and/or delivering its publications to them as

BDD-A27013 © 2016 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:56:52 UTC)

the survey will show later in this paper. It is possible that the AAL is not having an effect in Egypt since it is not empowered by law, though it was established by one.

Research Questions

The paper addresses three major questions:

1. What are the English loanwords in Arabic that this study can detect?
2. What are the morphological and phonological variations that occurred to the English loanwords when they ended up in Arabic?
3. How do the participants feel and react towards these borrowed words?

The Study

The study represents three findings; each finding answers one of the three questions of the paper. Finding number one introduces the English loanwords used in the Egyptian variety of Arabic. Finding number two investigates the phonological and morphological variation in the English loanwords in Arabic by classifying them into categories. The last finding, which answers question number three, is done by conducting a survey that contains six relevant survey-items for the participants to answer. The answers were then analyzed and put into categories.

Methodology

For finding one, data was collected in two ways. First, the researcher watched different Egyptian T.V channels for a period of two months, roughly two hours every day, and wrote down any loanword. The channels that were watched were: Nile Drama, Nile Cinema, Nile Culture, Nile Comedy, Nile Sport, CBC, ONTV, Dream, Al-Hayat, El-Mehwar, Panorama Drama, Cairo Cinema, Melody Aflam, Al-Jazeera Mubasher Masr, Azhari, Al-Nas, and Al-Rahma. The two hours were randomly chosen and not specified to daylight or night time; it was in both. Also, the researcher switched randomly between these channels and gave no equal time to any. Most of the watching was given to the soap operas and movies since they were the most reflective. The researcher wrote down the words that he, as a native speaker of Arabic, is used to hearing from his Egyptian family and friends, especially those who are not bilingual. Furthermore, no attention was paid to the origin of these words beyond the fact that they existed in the English dictionaries. The researcher was cautious not to mix borrowing with codeswitching; they are different as mentioned above in the literature review part. In addition, many words that are not being used by the majority of Egyptians such as *message, movie, good, school, modern, weekend, recycling, French fries* … etc., were excluded. Also, names like Google, Facebook, Photoshop, Twitter, PlayStation, Nescafe ... etc., were omitted because they are harder to use Arabic alternatives for. No attention was paid to the many technical loanwords because they are known only to the people in technical fields and not to the majority. Second, two other native speakers of Egyptian Arabic, who were bilingual in English and Arabic, were asked to write down any English loanword they knew. Both participants were given a time span of a week. By the end of the week, they submitted all the loanwords they came up with. Participant one provided a list of 109 words and participant two provided 84 words. Both lists underwent a filtration process in which, again, names (such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.,) were removed, and repeated words were deleted. For finding two, IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) system was followed. For finding three, a survey consisting of five questions was distributed to 48 participants that represented different ages, sexes, education, and social

BDD-A27013 © 2016 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:56:52 UTC)

backgrounds. All participants were Egyptians, and all of them were in Egypt at the time of filling out the survey.

Findings

Finding One: English Loanwords in Arabic

It was found that most English loanwords in Arabic were nouns in their parts of speech, and that is why the following first eight groups are 'nouns.' Verbs, nevertheless, are not as readily borrowed as nouns" (Hock & Joseph, 2009). Below the words are categorized into groups:

A) **Technology and Industry-Related Words:**

It was found that the most borrowed words belong to the category of technological words. "The most easily borrowed words belong to more specialized forms of discourse, often referring to technology," and "borrowing of technological vocabulary is … a modern phenomenon" (Hock & Joseph, 2009, p. 246). The words that were collected were:
Academy, answer machine, asphalt, automatic, bank, battery, cable, cafeteria, camera, ceramic, cassette, CD, cement, code, computer, data, download, DVD, electronics, email, film, flash, hardware, icon, internet, gas, geology, graphics, gym, keyboard, laptop, laser, link, mall, metro, micro bus, microphone, microware, mini bus, missed call, mobile (cell phone), mouse, model, modem, motherboard, motorcycle, online, password, post, processor, radar, radio, ram, receiver, remote (control), router, saloon, software, supermarket, taxi, technology, telephone, television, video, virus, website, and *wi-fi.*

B) Clothes-Related Words:

The clothes-related words that were found were:
Badge, body (a kind of women's shirt/t-shirt), *boot*, *boxer* (boxer wear), *cap*, *ice-cap, jacket, makeup, pants, sandal, shorts, style* (used only to describe clothes), *top* (bra), *T-Shirt, under* (underwear), and *X-large* (as a size),

C) Medicine-Related Words:

Found medical words were:
Alzheimer, Aspirin, biology, cancer, diet, doctor, hysteria, Influenza, physiology, protein, psychology, schizophrenia, shampoo, and *vitamin.*

D) Home-Related Words:

Foods and machines related to home-usage were:
biscuit, burger, cake, chips, chocolate, cream, décor, design, freezer, fresh, garage, ice cream, jumbo (big size of a sandwich)*, ketchup, kilo, lamb, list, liter, macaroni, mayonnaise, Nescafe, original, parking, perfume, roof, Sandwich, sticker, Toilet, villa,* and *zero*.

E) Media-Related Words:

Media has its own share in the English loanwords in Arabic. These words are:
Album, caricature, cartoon, classic, comedy, coupon, drama, folklore, program, music, studio, and *tragedy*.

BDD-A27013 © 2016 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:56:52 UTC)

F) Sports-Related Words:
These words were:
Captain, center, coach, game, *goal, karate, match, medal, shoot, sports, squash, stadium, tennis,* and *ultras*.

G) Politics-Related Words:
These words were:
Agenda, application, atlas, bureaucracy, check, course, democracy, dictator, Logistics, Marxist, police, port, pragmatic, protocol, section, strategy, and *visa.*

H) People and Relation-Related Words:
These words were:
Aunt, baby, bravo, business, Bye, desk, card, centimeter, charisma, class, etiquette, group, madam, mama, mechanic, mercy (used as thank-you word), *meter, million, millionaire, mode, Mr., Miss, interview, papa, prestige, prince, professor, romance, routine, secretary, sex, sister,* and *uncle.*

I) Verbs
Words of other parts of speech rather than nouns were not many. "Verbs … are not as readily borrowed as nouns." This does not mean that verbs "are totally impervious to borrowing," but rare (Hock & Joseph, 2009, p. 246). The verbs were:
Cancel, chat, finish, like, post, relax, save, set up (to set up a program on the computer), *share, stop,* and *used.*

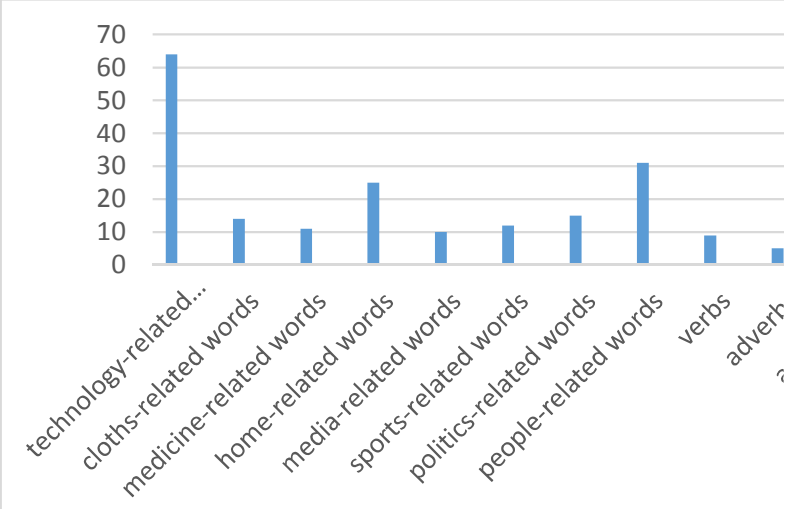
J) Adverbs
The adverbs, as rare as the verbs, were:
Already, offside (as two words used in soccer game) *OK, out,* and *over.*

K) Adjectives
The adjective, as rare as verbs and adverbs, were:
Automatic, classic, fresh, jumbo, large, logistic, modern, online, original, *pragmatic, sorry,* and *romantic*.

The following chart shows a comparison among the categories of the English loanwords in Arabic. Each column represents the number of the loanwords of each category named below:

BDD-A27013 © 2016 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:56:52 UTC)

Figure 1: A Graphic Showing the Number of Words for Each Field.



Finding Two: The Morphological and Phonological Variations

Finding two deals with the morphological and phonological variation/change of these loanwords. The change was categorized into two main sections. The first deals with the phonological change, and the other deals with the morphological variation. Under each one, there are subcategories illustrating the change in detail.

1. Phonological Variation

The phonological variation in the 200+ English loanwords of this study is found to be one of the following:

a) /f/ for /v/

The voiced consonant fricative /v/ does not exist in the Arabic sound system, and hence Arabs change words that carry this sound into its voiceless fricative counterpart /f/. Examples of this category include: فيديو 'fideo' "video;" برافو 'brfo' "bravo;" and انترفيو 'interfiew' "interview." However, some educated or bilingual Egyptians pronounce the /v/ as it is. In addition, there has been an attempt to insert a new consonant letter into Arabic that carries the characteristics of the voiced consonant fricative /v/.

b) /b/ for /p/

The voiceless consonant labial /p/ does not exist in the Arabic consonant sounds, as well, and, hence, Arabs use its voiced consonant labial counterpart /b/ as in كمبيوتر 'koubyoutar' "computer;" سوبر ماركت 'subbar market' "super market;" بروفيسور 'brofessour' "professor;" and جروب 'groub' "group." Again, there has been an attempt to add the /p/ letter to the Arabic alphabet, but it is neither widely accepted nor recognized yet.

c) /r/ is rolled.

The consonant palatal /r/ is not pronounced in Arabic as it is in English. It is "rolled" in Arabic, and it is a voiced repetitious sound. However, some Arabs may stigmatize those who pronounce the Arabic /r/ the same way it is pronounced in English and describe him/her of having *rhotacism* (a term used to describe inability of pronouncing the sound

BDD-A27013 © 2016 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:56:52 UTC)

/r/). Examples of this change includes روتين 'rʕoutine' "routine;" متر 'metrʕe' "meter;" and ريلاكس 'rʕelax' "relax."

d) /ʃ/ for /tʃ/

The palatal fricative /ʃ/ replaces the palatal affricative /tʃ/ as in شيبس 'shibs' "chips;" شيك 'sheek' "check;" and شوكولاته 'shokolata' "chocolate." The reason for this change might be that Arabs are not used to pronouncing palatal affricative /tʃ/ due to its non-existence in the Arabic sound system. It could be represented in Arabic by two letters ت /t/ followed by ش / ʃ/ but that is not practiced.

e) /z/ for /s/, /t/ for /tʃ/, and /ʃ/ for /dʒ/.

The reason why these three changes are combined here is that only one example for each was found. The voiceless fricative alveolar /s/ is replaced by the its voiced counterpart /z/ in the example of ميزد كول 'mizzd kaul' "missed call." As for the second pair, the alveolar stop /t/ replaces the palatal affricative /tʃ/ in the example of كاريكاتير 'karikatair' "caricature." Regarding the last pair, the palatal fricative /ʃ/ replaces the voiced palatal affricative /dʒ/ in جراش 'garash' "garage." It is predicted that these groups will contain more words since the process of borrowing does not stop.

From a) to e) of the phonological change above dealt with the variation in the consonant sounds. The change regarding vowel sounds is to be examined below.

f) /æ/ for /eɪ/

Egyptians use the open-mid front vowel /æ/ instead of the diphthong /eɪ/ as in راديو 'rædio' "radio;" and cable 'kæbl' "cable." Arabic does not have a big variety of vowels, so when there are unfamiliar vowels in the English loanwords, these peculiar vowels change into the nearest native vowel in Arabic following the rule of approximation.

g) /æ/ or /u/ for /ʌ/

Egyptian use the close back /u/ for the open-mid back /ʌ/ as in فيروس 'fayrous' "virus" and أونكل 'ounkle' "uncle," and the open-mid front vowel /æ/ for /ʌ/ as in باص 'bæs' "bus."

h) /ɛ/ for /ai/

The open-mid front /ɛ/ replaces the diphthong /ai/ in words like ميكروفون 'makrafoun' "microphone;" ميكروباص 'mikroubas' "microbus;" and موتوسيكل 'motousikl' "motorcycle." /ai/ is alien vowel sound to the Arabic vowel system, and it is lacking a letter or even group of letters to represent it.

2. Morphological Variation

The variation in morphology in these loanwords was found to happen in only the nouns and verbs. For nouns, the variation happens when the words get pluralized or dualized. Since Arabic is a gender-language, every word in the language should be either masculine or feminine. Plural system in Arabic is threefold; regular masculine, regular feminine, and broken irregular. As for the dual, regardless of the gender, it has its own rule that will be exemplified below. It was also found that some nouns are not subject to the plural form even if they are plural in English as illustrated below. For verbs, some verbs were found to be conjugated the same way their Arabic counterparts are, and some others are anti-conjugation. In other words, they are used as if they were nouns, as illustrated below, as well.

a) Regular Feminine Plural

The regular feminine plural in Arabic is formed by adding the morpheme [aat ات] to the end of a word regardless of the syntactic position of the word in the sentence as a subject or an object. Surprisingly, most of the English loanwords in Arabic were found to

BDD-A27013 © 2016 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:56:52 UTC)

follow this pattern. Examples of this include بروفيسورات 'brofessoraat' "professors;" سسترات 'sistraat' "sisters;" كيلوهات 'kilohaat' "kilos;" شامبوهات 'shamboohat' "shampoos;" and شيبس 'shibsiyaat' "chips." See example 1 below:

1. درسني عشر بروفيسورات
   'Darras ni ashar brofessoraat.'
   Taught me ten professors
   "Ten professors taught me."

The example above shows how the loanword 'professor' gets pluralized in a sentence following the regular feminine plural pattern by adding the morpheme [aat] to the end of the word. The word 'professor' in this sentence, which is in plural, could mean either gender, i.e. male or female professors. The semantics of the word 'professors' is genderless in this sentence, which is rare in Arabic. In Arabic, almost any word has a gender. It could be concluded that loanwords do not only enrich the Arabic vocabulary but also the syntax system itself.

b) Regular Masculine Plural

Regular masculine plural in Arabic differs according to the syntactic position of the noun in the sentence. If the noun is in the position of the subject, then it takes the morpheme [youn ون], and it takes [yeen ين] if in the position of the object to get pluralized. Only a few English loanwords follow this pattern, the thing that needs a further study. Examples of this include ديكتاتوريون, ديكتتاتوريين 'diktatryoun' or 'distatoryeen' "dictators;" ميكانيكيون, ميكانيكين 'mikanikyoun' or 'mikannikyeen' "mechanics;" and رومانسيون, رومانسيين 'roumansyoun' or 'roumansyeen' "romantics." See example 2 below:

2. هؤلاء ميكانيكيون رائعون
   'haoulaa mikanikyoun ra'oun'
   These mechanics amazing.
   "These are amazing mechanics."

In example 2 above, unlike example 1, the loanword 'mechanics' refers only to male mechanics. The loanword 'mechanics' above is located as the subject of the verb, and that is why the morpheme [youn] was attached to it. If this loanword came in the position of the object of the sentence, the morpheme [yeen] would be added, instead.

c) Irregular Broken Plural

Arabic irregular broken plural has no set rule of how to form the plural of a word. However, the word is to be broken down into its three root letters, and then the plural form starts from there. Only few loanwords of this study were found to follow this pattern such as in كباتن 'kabatin' "captains;" برامج 'barameg' "programs;" دكاتره 'dakatraah' "doctors;" and أفلام 'aflaam' "films." See example 3 below:

3. شاهدت خمسة أفلام
   'Shahatu khmsata aflam'
   Watched five films.
   "I watched five films."

In the irregular broken pattern of plural in Arabic, singular words get reshaped in order to be pluralized in this pattern. In Arabic, every word has a group of letters called 'root letters' which usually are three. The words that follow the irregular broken pattern keep these root letters unchanged but change the other letters. In the example above "film," the three root letters are "f," "l," and "m," and that is why the irregular broken plural of this word is 'aflam.' It can be noticed that the three root letters are there in the plural, too.

BDD-A27013 © 2016 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:56:52 UTC)

d) Non- Pluralize-able Nouns

Arabic is similar to English in that both languages have the so-called non-count nouns. When examining the English loanwords of this study, it was found that some loanwords become non-count when they end up in Arabic although they are countable in English such as طنط 'tant' 'aunt;" أنكل 'unkil' "uncle," and باركينج 'barking' "parking." See example 4 below:

4. أنا عندي ثلاثة أنكل
   'Ana Andi Thalatha unkil'
   I have three uncle.
   "I have three uncles."

In this example, the word 'uncle' is not following any plural pattern, and that is why the speakers of Arabic add a number before the loanword of this kind without pluralizing the word itself. The reason might be the difficulty of pronouncing these loanwords with any of these morphemes [aat], [youn], or [yeen] attached.

e) Dual Form

The dual form in Arabic is formed based on its syntactic position in the sentence, either subject or object. If it is in a subject position, then the morpheme [aan ان] is added to the end of the word, and if it is in the object position, then the morpheme [een ين] is added regardless of the noun's gender. Examples of the dual in the study loanwords include, but are not limited to, باصين باصان 'basaan' or 'baseen' "two buses;" كاميراتان, كاميرتين 'kamertataan' or 'kamerateen' "two cameras;" جاكتين, جاكتان 'jaketaan' or 'jakteen' "two jackets." In the Egyptian variety of Arabic, Egyptians stick to only the morpheme [een ين] regardless of the position of the noun. See example 5 below:

5. رأيت كاميرتين جميلتين
   'rayt u kamerat een jamelateen'
   Saw I cameras two beautiful.
   "I saw two beautiful cameras."

In the example above, the morpheme [een] in 'kamerateen' "two cameras" indicates the duality, i.e. "two." Unlike the plural patterns, the dual pattern is very straightforward and applies to all the loanwords detected in this study. It also applies to the words that do not take plural form like *uncle* and *aunt*.

Finding Three: The Survey Study

The survey consisted of five questions. The first question examined the participants' knowledge of the loanwords; they were given 12 English loanwords, but not told that these were loanwords, and were asked to identify which were English loanwords and which were original Arabic words. The second question asked participants to provide Arabic equivalents for other twelve English loanwords. There was neither an intention to choose the number of words in this question, 12, nor was there a certain reason to choose those twelve words. It was a random process. The third and fourth questions asked the participants if they were aware of the existence and role of the Academic of Arabic Language (AAL). The fifth question asked the participants what factors they think resulted in borrowing this large number of English loanwords into Arabic.

The first question below asked: "identify which words are borrowed from English." It was clear that not a single loanword was completely identified as borrowed by

BDD-A27013 © 2016 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:56:52 UTC)

all the participants. Participants showed a lack of awareness in terms of recognizing loanwords.

Table 1: Participants' Responses to the First Question:

The word	Identified as a loanword	Could not identify
1. Match	35	13
2. Computer	41	7
3. Radio	24	24
4. Camera	30	18
5. Comedy	33	15
6. Sandwich	33	15
7. Captain	26	22
8. Film	25	23
9. Protocol	41	7
10. Mechanic	20	28
11. Jacket	34	14
12. Technology	36	12

Question two below asked the participants to give Arabic words as equivalents to the English loanwords. So, they were told that the following words were borrowed from English and that is why they were asked to give the Arabic equivalents.

Table 2: Participants' Responses for the Second Question.

The word	Able to give Arabic equivalent	Unable to give Arabic equivalent
1. Course	34	14
2. Academy	24	24
3. Freezer	25	23
4. Ice Cream	23	25
5. Check	30	18
6. Application	25	23
7. Sandwich	15	33
8. Etiquette	19	29
9. Internet	14	34
10. Comedy	35	13
11. Camera	22	26
12. Classic	14	34

BDD-A27013 © 2016 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:56:52 UTC)

Table 3: Participants' Responses towards the Role of the AAL: [1]

The question	yes	no
3.1 Are you aware of the AAL role?	12	35
3.2 Is the AAL ineffective?	10	2

Most of the participants (35 out of 47) did not know what the AAL was, and ten of those who knew (12) believed that it was ineffective.

The sixth question examined the factors that made this process of borrowing possible. The factors that the subjects mentioned were, a) the weak economics and politics of Arabs, b) the lack of Arabs' inventions, c) school subjects do not inspire students to love Arabic, d) work market requires English as a must for applicants to get a good job, e) the media emphasizes the importance of English and invites people who code switch a lot to show up on the screen of the TV talk show programs and other programs as well, and f) the laws that protect Arabic are not activated.

Discussion and Conclusion

The collected words underwent phonological and morphological variation. Regarding vowels, Arabic has less vowels than English, which makes it difficult for Arabs to produce the exact same vowels in English, and, hence, this is one reason for the phonological variation. Changing in morphemes in nouns happens when making them plural or dual. Plural system in Arabic—which is a grammatical gender language— is fourfold: regular masculine; regular feminine; irregular broken; and dual. A surprising finding of this study was that only fourteen words out of 200+ have irregular broken plural (match, bank, captain, program, doctor, film, meter, million, card, section, goal, taxi, visa, cartoon), and only two follow the regular masculine plural (dictator, mechanic). 84 words were not pluralize-able even if they were countable in English like *uncle* and *aunt*, and 111 words were pluralized following the regular feminine. It is recommended that a further study examines the reason why. When Egyptians want to pluralize the words that are not pluralized or phrases like "missed call," they put the number they want before it but do not pluralize the word itself. For instance, one would say "I have four 'uncles' or 'missed calls." As for the adjectives, it was found that English loan adjectives in Arabic did not follow the rule of pluralizing the adjectives with pure Arabic origins. In other words, adjectives from Arabic origins get dual and plural forms just like the nouns, but the loan adjectives do not. It is not claimed in this study that these loanwords are the only words that Arabic has recently borrowed from English; many more loanwords may exist and many more will exist if powers (economic, political, etc.,) stay as they are.

As for the survey, not all the participates, most of whom were college-level students and above, were able to identify the English loanwords and thought they were original Arabic, as detailed by number in the table of survey question one above. Surprisingly, almost none of them could find Arabic equivalents for these words all. Although some of them claimed that they knew the equivalents, but—ironically— they either gave wrong equivalents or gave other loanwords to the ones of the question. For instance, one has given "gentle" to be an Arabic equivalent for the word "check," which is

[1] One person left this question blank.

BDD-A27013 © 2016 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:56:52 UTC)

both incorrect and not Arabic.[1] In the question that asks about if the participants were aware of the role of the AAL, only twelve said "yes" and 35 were not aware of it, and even did not know what it was. From the twelve, ten said it was ineffective, and two provided excuses for it. As mentioned in the beginning of this study, AAL was issued by law but never empowered by it, which lessens its role and effect in the Egyptian society. Also, the AAL is ineffective not only because of the law but also because of the speed of technology devices that appear rapidly, and the connection between the east and west through the internet does not allow any time for the AAL to spread the Arabic equivalents.

References

Abderrahman, W. (1995). A Linguistic Study of the Impact of English on Arabic Word-Formation. *Islamic Studies* 34(2), 223-231.

Abdelrrahman, W. (1991). A Critical Linguistic Study of Lexical Borrowing in Arabic and English. *Journal of King Saud University* 3(2), 33-66.

Academy of Arabic Language. http://www.arabicacademy.org.eg/FrontEnd/nabza.aspx. Accessed on Mar/ 7/ 2014.

Al Btoush, M. (2014). English Loanwords in Colloquial Jordanian Arabic. *International Journal of Linguistics* 6(2), 109-119.

Al-Qinai, J. (2000). Morphophonemics of Loanwords in Arabic. *Studies in the Linguistic Sciences* 30(2), 1-26.

Al-Shubashi, S. (2004). *For Arabic to Long Live: Down With Sibawayyh*. Cairo: Egyptian General Organization for Books.

Budzhak-Jones, S. (1998). Against Word-Internal Codeswitching: Evidence from Ukranian-English Bilingualism. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 2(2), 161-182.

Bynon, T. (1977). *Historical Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cambridge Dictionaries Online. (2014). Retrieved from http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/british/chef?q= chef#. Accessed on March/1-13/ 2014.

Ethnologue Languages of the World. (2014) *Arabic Standard.* Retrieved from http://www.ethnologue.com/language/arb. Accessed on March/ Mar./2014.

Eze, E. (1998). Lending Credence to a Borrowing Analysis: Lone English-Origin Incorporations in Igbo Discourse. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 2(2), 183-201.

Ghafar-Samar, R. & Meechan, M. (1998). The Null Theory of Code-Switching Versus the Nonce Borrowing Hypothesis: Testing the Fit in Persian-English Bilingual Discourse. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 2(2), 203-219.

Hansford, K. & Hansford, G. (1989). Borrowed Words in Chumburung. *African Languages and Cultures* 2(1), 39–50.

Hijjo, N. & Fannouna, M. (2014). The Lexical Borrowing in Palestinian Colloquial Arabic. *Issues in Language Studies* 2(1), 35-48.

Hock, H. & Joesph, B. (2009). *Language History, Language Change, and Language Relationship. An Introduction to Historical and Comparative Linguistics*. 2nd rev. ed. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

Hockett, C. (1958). *A Course in Modern Linguistics*. New York: McMillan.

Hyman, L.M. (1970). The Role of Borrowing in the Justification of Grammars. *Studies in African Linguistics* 1, 5-7.

Katamba, F. & Rottland F. (1987). Syllable Structure and English Loanwords in Luganda. *Afrikanistiche Arbeitspapiere* 9, 90-101.

Langacker, R. (1968). *Language and its Structure: Some Fundamental Linguistic Concepts*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

[1] He/she thought the word "check" meant stylish from the French loanword "très chic"

BDD-A27013 © 2016 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:56:52 UTC)

Mustafawi, E. (2002). Lone English-Origin Nouns in Arabic: Codeswithches or Borrowngs? *Actes De L'acl,* 219-229.
Mwihaki, N. (1998). *Loanword Nativization: A Generative View of the Phonological Adaptation of Gikuyu Loanwords*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Kenyatta University, Nairobi.
Ohly, R. (1987). Afrikaans Loanwords in Herero: The Question of Folk Taxonomy. *S. African Journal of Linguistics* 5, 130-137.
Owino, D. (2003). *Phonological Nativization of Dholuo Loanwords*. (Doctoral Dissertation). University of Pretoria, South Africa.
Picard, M., & Nicol, J. (1982). *Loanwords and concrete phonology*. Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Linguistics Club.
Poplack, S. & Meechan, M. (1995). Patterns of Language Mixture: Nominal Structure in Wolof-French and Fongbe-French Bilingual Discourse. Ed. Lesley Milroy and Pieter Musysken. *One Speaker, Two languages: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on Code- Switching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 199-232.
Poplack, S., Wheeler, S. & Westwood, A. (1989). Distinguishing Language Contact Phenomena: Evidence from Finnish-English Bilingualism. *World Englishes* 8(3), 389-406.
Said, N. (1964). *The History of Calling for Standardizing Al-Amiyyah and its Effects in Egypt*. Alexandria: Publishing Culture Press House.
Salam, G. (1966). *The Effect of the British Colonization on the National Education in Egypt from 1882 to1922*. Cairo: Egyptian Anglo.
Sankoff, D., Poplack, S. & Vanniarajan, S. (1990). The Case of the Nonce Lone in Tamil." *Language Variation and Change* 2.71-101.
Thomason, S. (2006). Arabic in Contact with Other Languages. Ed. Kees Versteegh. *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, (2). Leiden: E.J. Brill, 20-22.
Thompson-Panos, K. & Thomas-Ruzic, M. (1983). The Least You Should Know about Arabic: Implications for the ESL Writing Instructor. *TESOL Quarterly* 17(4), 610-612.
Turpin, D. (1998). Le francais, C'est Le Last Frontier: The Status of English-Origin Nouns in Acadian French. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 2(2), 221-233.
Weinreich, U. (1963). *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems*. The Hague: Mouton & Co.
Yacoub, M. (2015). Diglossic Situation of Arabic Language in Egypt: Is Low Variety planned to get standardized? *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research* 3(1), 382-387.

Mohamed **Yacoub** is a PhD candidate in Composition and Applied Linguistics in Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Mohamed's publications appear in journals like *The Journal of Language, Identity, and Education, Studii de gramatica contrastiva*, journal of creative writing studies, International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research.

BDD-A27013 © 2016 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:56:52 UTC)