

# Arabic loan words in English

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**Abstract:** In this article we are going to analyze English loan words from Arabic language. It begins with different views on Arabic loan words in English from both points of views the English and the Arab linguists. After then, there is a historical preview from the early loaning the first Arabic words in English till the early modern English. Finally, there is a recommendation followed by a conclusion.

**Introduction:** There are about 7000 languages spoken all over the world (Darwish, Hosam M, 2015). Words travel from one language into another as a result of language contact stimulated by a number of linguistic and extra linguistic motivations (Ghazi, Assist. Prof. Haitham, 2014). Also there is no doubt that loaning words is a very common phenomenon and no language is entirely free of borrowed words (Jespersen, 1922). It has been discovered that when languages come into contact, there is transfer of linguistic items from one language to another due to the borrowing of words (Kachru, 1994). English language has been described by Crystal (2010) as an "insatiable borrower". More than 120 other languages have served as sources for the contemporary vocabulary of English. Similarly, (Klein, 1966) states that 30% of English words are native. In spite of this small number, they are being used frequently in the English language. Furthermore, these words have a wide range of lexical and syntactic structures.

Q: What do you notice about the following conversation?

-Would you like coffee with **sugar**, or with **syrup**, or **sherbet** or **lemon**?

-No, thanks. I'd rather sit on the **divan**, in the **alcove**, and read the **magazine** about the Arsenal football match in **Gibraltar**.

A: All the above nouns are derived from Arabic (Bale, 2006).

## 1.2 Linguistic Borrowing

It is considered quite normal for languages to borrow words from other languages. When a language takes words from other languages, these "new arrivals" are usually called borrowings or loan words. (Darwish, Hosam M, 2015). Borrowing is a term used in linguistics to refer to a linguistic form taken over by one language from another (David, Crystal, 2003). The most common form borrowed through English-Arabic contact is loanword which refers to a word come to be used in language from another language with some adaptation to the system of the new language. When borrowing is a single word, it is called a loanword (Richards, Jack C. and Richard Schimdt, 2002). Loanwords are of three main types as is discussed by (Sinha, 2005).

1. Pure Loanwords: the form and meaning are borrowed with no or some modifications. Examples: Carbon, video, bas, chromosome, etc

2. Loan Blend: the meaning and part of the word is borrowed with addition of native syllables. Examples: البايولوجيا الديمقراطية، الفاشية.

3. Loan shift: words that are a combination of foreign and native morphemes are called loan shifts. Latin morphemes like ex is combined with English words to give extra meaning. Examples: ex-husband. Exclude, exchange, etc (Sinha, 2005).

## 1.3 Why Loaning

The following are some of the main factors that motivate borrowing among languages:

1. Lexical holes or lexical lack where the receptor language lacks the form in the donor language makes a necessity for borrowing (Behrens, Susan J, 2010).

2. The prestige of the donor language is another motive behind borrowing in which speakers seek a more prestigious variety as a sign of social superiority and education (Barber, Charles and Joan C. Beal and Philip A. Shaw, 2012).

3. Trading in the ancient times was a great motive behind borrowing. Traders travel to distant places and by their return they carried foreign words with them (Sinha, 2005).
4. To cope with the youth generation who is not much familiar with the recessive language, borrowing helps in replenishing old words (Field, Fredric, W, 2002).

#### A list of Some Arabic words in English

English	Arabic	Meaning	Source
Alchemy	الكيمياء	Form of chemistry studied in the Middle Ages which involved trying to discover how to change ordinary metals into gold	(Hornby, 2013)
Algebra	الجبر	A type of mathematics in which letters and symbols are used to present quantities. Literally, the reduction	(Hornby, 2013)
Koran (also Qur'an)	القرآن	The holy book of the Islamic religion, written in Arabic, containing the word of Allah as revealed to the prophet Muhammad	(Hornby, 2013)
Sugar	كزّاليس	A sweet substance, often in the form of white or brown crystals, made from the juices o various plants, used in cooking or to make tea, coffee, etc.	(Hornby, 2013)

#### Early loaning

(Breeze, 1991) claims that the first known Arabic loanword to English is "ealfara", that means "pack-horse". It is taken from the Hispano-Arabic word "sal-fara" "the horse ". "It first appeared in the 11 the century in "Letter of Alexander to Aristotle, and a similar word (as auferan) is found in Old French as Serjeantson (1935, p. 214) notes, –It is possible that French [borrowing through Arabic] was the direct source of the English word". Yet (Breeze, 1991) opposes saying that the translator of Alexander's Letter to Aristotle may have recognized the word "ealfara" from an independent Spanish source.

#### Middle English «the Age of Loaning»

During the Middle and the Renaissance Ages, English speakers came into contact with the prestigious intellectual personas of the Arab world. This contact led to a flow of borrowings from Arabic into English, primarily in the fields of chemistry, medicine, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, optics, physics, botany, literature, religion (chiefly Islam), music, warfare, shipping, trade, architecture, geography, government and sovereignty (Daher, 2013) .

#### Early modern English

(Smith, 2007) said, by the time of Elizabeth I (1533–1603), English merchant seamen were discovering the world beyond the boundaries of Europe and bringing back rich and exotic objects, materials and customs from the Middle East and beyond. Significantly, many of the Arabic words that travelers brought back with them at this time suggest a gracious, even luxurious style of living. Sugar, syrup, julep, sherbet and marzipan are all Arabic in origin. Coffee

comes from the Arabic "gahwah", which originated in Yemen, and mocha from the Yemeni port city. Added to this are the fragrant spices caraway, saffron, and cumin, all of which have Arabic names

## English

The nineteenth century saw the beginning of European domination of Arabic-speaking lands. Thus, the direction of borrowing has reversed: Yet, English language borrowed a few Arabic words, such as Bedouin, gazelle, giraffe, hashish, minaret, mosque, sultan, vizier, bazaar, caravan ...etc.. (Darwish, Hosam M, 2015).

## 1.4 Recommendation

Meaning of Arabic words in English can be found in the following website [www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com](http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com), furthermore you can find a list of Arabic words in English in the website of [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_English\\_words\\_of\\_Arabic\\_origin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_English_words_of_Arabic_origin)

## 1.5 Conclusion

People travel by sea, by railway, by air, in a horse and on foot. If a person travels, words travel also by the lead of the person. Why? Because person wants to explain his or her anger, love, hate, or fantasy or other expressions wherever he or she goes, using words. So contact between cultures leads to loaning between languages. Many centuries, English and Arabic languages were in a close contact. In fact, there are hundreds of Arabic loan words in the English language. Though some of them have entered directly, others have come disguised as French, Spanish, or Latin words. In some cases the English word is as identical to its Arabic original, though others differ in sound or meaning. Based on the history of loaning, and plus to the small survey which we made in this article. There are many factors that influence the matter of loaning words; these factors could be cultural, scientific, political or others.

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