

Semantic Shift of Hebrew Words Borrowed into Palestinian Arabic in Hebron City

Tasnim Swaitti*, K. Yeshoda

Department of Studies in Linguistics, AIISH University of Mysore, Manasagangotri, Mysuru, India

Email: *tasneemsowaity@gmail.com, kyeshoda@aiishmysore.in

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Abstract

This research paper is an attempt to explore some of the changes in the Palestinian Arabic lexical items due to the contact between Arabic and Hebrew. Both Arabic and Hebrew belong to the Semitic language family (Blau & Blau, 1981). The nature of the contact and its effect on both languages has gained the interest of the scholars in the field of sociolinguistics and language contact. The objective of this paper is to shed light on the Hebrew lexical elements borrowed to the Palestinian Arabic, and identify these words with respect to the replacement of the original Arabic words by borrowed Hebrew words. The data have been collected from the native speakers of Arabic, and the data are classified and analyzed to find out whether the lexical borrowed elements affect the semantic properties of the original Palestinian Arabic words in the Hebron area. The discussion concludes that the high impact of Hebrew lexical elements is using the nouns more than other elements.

Keywords

Language Borrowing, Semantic Change, Hebrew Language, Palestinian Arabic

1. Introduction

This research paper investigates Hebrew loanwords in colloquial Arabic spoken by the Palestinian citizens in Hebron. Hebron is the capital of the economy and the biggest city in the west bank, and lies to the south of it. The study constitutes a new type of research that extends the research borrowings between two languages. Moreover, the issue of Hebrew borrowings into Arabic has not received much attention from a linguistic perspective.

A study conducted by Farheen Anwar on the borrowed words investigated the type of changes that are occurring in Urdu language and the author concluded that huge amounts of vocabulary were borrowed to Urdu from Arabic language

(Anwar, 2017). These words were used similarly in Urdu and Arabic. On the other hand, at the semantic level, the author asserted that some words were semantically changed and semantic shifts were noticed.

Language contact has been the most influential factor that has resulted in language change. It is fundamentally a process based on the borrowing of some linguistic elements at all linguistic levels. Some of these levels are lexical and semantic borrowing. It is part of a cycle that starts with borrowing of the lexical items from a donor language to another. Once lexical borrowing occurs, searching for the effect on other levels starts.

Lexical items are borrowed into the recipient language through several ways and mechanisms. Some of the indigenous meaning of the transferred lexical items may retain while others may change. This involves cases where both the form and the content of a lexical item are borrowed into the recipient language (Haugen, 1950). It is a reciprocal process in which any language can be a donor and recipient in given circumstances. Typically, though, the donor language is usually the one with higher status and prestige than the recipient language (Haspelmath, 2008; Haspelmath & Tadmer, 2009). For more details about borrowing the authors advice to see (Akidah, 2013; Mapunda & Rosendal, 2015).

Borrowing, as defined by Thomason and Kaufman (1988: p. 37), is the incorporation of foreign features into a group's native language by speakers of that language: the native language is maintained but is changed by the addition of the incorporated features. According to Thomason and Kaufman (1988) the first items that enter the borrowing language are content words (nouns, adjectives, verbs), and loanwords are the most common indicators of borrowing. The authors introduced the borrowing scale that consists of five thresholds and they claim that the features that appear higher on the scale (for example, 35) have to be borrowed after the features that appear lower on the scale (12). The five stages of the scale are as follows:

- 1) Casual contact that results in lexical borrowing only (mainly nouns).
- 2) Somewhat more intense contact resulting in slight structural borrowing of functional words like conjunctions, adverbials, discourse markers, as well as limited structure minor phonological, syntactic, and lexical semantic features.
- 3) More intense contact leading to slightly more structural borrowing, such as prepositions and postpositions, and slightly less minor structural features than in 2).
- 4) Strong cultural pressure resulting in moderate structural borrowing.
- 5) Very strong cultural pressure leading to heavy borrowing.

Palestinian Arabic has a long history with borrowing from Hebrew. In fact, it goes back to the first quarter of the 20th century after the occupation of Palestinian people. Although strategies have been followed by the Palestinian to eliminate the Jewish customs and culture effect, Hebrew language still found its way to the daily life conversation among Palestinian. Further, since all aspect of the political and economic daily life activities and the needs were in the hand of Jewish, Palestinians were forced to communicate with Jewish people using some of the Hebrew expressions to ease the communication between the two parties.

These expressions slowly seeped to the Palestinian language. They have been recognized vastly among the group of Palestinians especially the youth. Some of these words came about with small distinctive semantic change, whereas, others have undergone some changes at other linguistic levels.

Workers who know Hebrew are preferred and chosen for work. They learn Hebrew for communication with the employers. Gradually, some of the Hebrew lexical items have started to be utilized among members of the Palestinian community and occupied a position in their speech. Overtime, these words have become a part of the daily life used words among large part of the Palestinian community. The quality of the borrowed lexical items is mainly influenced by the political and the economic relations with Jewish community.

Arabic is considered a highly rich language in terms of having lexical items; therefore, words being borrowed from Hebrew are not loaned due to the need to name new objects. Haspelmath observes that there are cases where words are borrowed even when it was not necessary to do so since a word already existed in the native language (Haspelmath, 2008). Palestinian Arabs borrowed words from Hebrew even when they had their equivalents in their own language. Besides, socio-cultural factors are recognized as one of the most influential factors that play a significant role in the process of Hebrew lexicon and semantic borrowing.

In reality, even though Hebrew is a revived language but due to the present situation on land, the reciprocal conflict and the need of people for a living has made Hebrew language to be ranked higher relative to Palestinian Arabic, at least among the workers strata group of the society. People in occupation come into contact with the Jewish people for a variety of needs, topmost is for communication at work field. Social factor has influenced the quantity and the quality of borrowing. This impact is attributed to the nature of the contact with Hebrew and the interaction with Jewish people. According to Sankoff (2001), linguistic contact normally takes place under conditions of social inequalities often resulting from conquests and colonialism.

With this background, we investigate some of the changes in the Palestinian Arabic lexicon that has taken place in the Palestinian language in Hebron city and also will explore the probable reasons that contributed to these changes. An attempt is made to investigate the changes in the Palestinian Arabic lexical items that take place in the Palestinian language in Hebron with the following specific research questions/objectives:

- 1) Do the words borrowed from Hebrew into Palestinian Arabic undergo semantic change in Hebron?
- 2) Why are these words, in particular, borrowed from Hebrew into Palestinian dialect in Hebron?

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The participants were Arabic-speaking Palestinians, fifty individuals ranging in

age from 20 - 60 years participated in the present study. 15 of the participants were females and 35 were males who lived in Hebron city and used Hebrew mainly while working and communicating with Jews daily. 20 participants (7 females and 13 males) participated in online interviews with and 30 participants (8 females and 22 males) took part in the face-to-face interviews.

2.2. Materials

A telephone voice recorder with headphones for face-to-face interviews was used. For online interviews, headphones and Skype, the telecommunication applications were used and the conversation was recorded through Quick Voice Recorder on Skype.

2.3. Procedure

Participants' consent to enroll in the study was obtained after explaining the purpose of the study in their mother tongue and interviews were conducted by means of online interviews and face-to-face interviews. They were initially asked about socio demographic information including age, gender, education level and language background and all participants responded. A group of random topics were shown about the nature of their work and daily life while communicating with the Jews, and it was noted that they used a lot of Hebrew words in their conversation. The data was stored as a list sorted into different categories which helps in sorting the semantic change. The first author conversed with all the participants and asked them to speak about their daily work for about 5 minutes each and the conversations were recorded for each of them using a telephone voice recorder.

2.4. Analysis

The speech samples of each participant were verbatim transcribed and the first author wrote and counted all the words on Microsoft Word. The lists of words used was noted under categories of work, food and related services and tabulated.

The lists were compiled separately for each participant and group, i.e., online and face-to-face modes.

2.5. Statistics

Python program was used to carry out the statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to obtain the mean percent and frequency of occurrence of words.

3. Results

The samples of all 50 participants were analyzed. It was noted that 15 were females forming 30% of the total sample and 35 were males and formed the remaining 70% of the total. **Tables 1-3** depict the details of total words spoken, their percentage and distribution across the two modes: online and face-to-face.

Table 1. Total number of words spoken, borrowed and their percentages for the participants.

Number of participants	Total number of words	Total number of borrowed words	Percent of borrowed words
50	35,406	6797	19.2

Table 2. Mean and percentage total and borrowed words in online mode.

Gender	Total mean number of words	Total mean Percent of total words	Total mean Number of borrowed words	Total mean Percent of borrowed words
Females N = 7	685.14	68.51	126.57	18.47
Males N = 13	740.77	74.17	140.8462	19.35

Table 3. Mean and percentage of total and borrowed words in face-to-face mode.

Gender	Total mean number of words	Total mean Number of borrowed words	Total mean Percent of borrowed words
Females N = 8	686.63	135.75	19.77
Males N = 22	703.95	136.09	19.33

Table 4, contains examples about the words that used by the Palestinian in Hebron in their daily speak while working and using machine names with no difference of meaning.

Table 5, contains examples about the words that used by the Palestinian in Hebron in their daily speak while talking about food and related services with no difference of meaning.

Table 6, contains examples about the words that used by the Palestinian in Hebron in their daily speak while talking about places and locations with no difference of meaning.

Table 7, contains examples about the words that used by the Palestinian in Hebron in their daily speak while about jobs and professions with no difference of meaning.

Table 8, contains examples about the words that used by the Palestinian in Hebron in their daily speak while talking about apologies and greetings with no difference of meaning.

4. Discussion

Table 1 shows that the total number of the spoken words was 35,406 which means that each participant spoke, in general, 708.12 words, and the number of loanwords were 6797 which means that each participant borrowed, in general, 135.94 words. Also, the table shows that the percentage of the loanwords was 19.2%.

Table 4. Machinery related words used by the Palestinian in Hebron during work.

Arabic transcription	Hebrew transcription	English meaning
Ramzone	Ramzore	Traffic light
Mazgan	Mazgan	Air condition
Belifone	Belifone	Mobile phone
Magbare	Macvare	Loudspeaker

Table 5. Food and related services related words used by the Palestinian in Hebron.

Arabic transcription	Hebrew transcription	English meaning
Shemainet	Shamainet	Yogurt
LaiXim	LaiXim	Bread
MailaX	MailaX	Salt
Shockow	Shockow	Chocolate_milkshake

Table 6. Places and Locations related words used by the Palestinian in Hebron.

Arabic transcription	Hebrew transcription	English meaning
Sheitah.	SheitaX	Piece of land
Gfish	Gfish	Road
Kinion	Kinion	Mall
ʕas.yon	Goshʕtsyon	Colony

Table 7. Job and Professions related words used by the Palestinian in Hebron.

Arabic transcription	Hebrew transcription	English meaning
Manahail	Manahail	Principle
Shomair	Shomair	Guard
ʕozair	ʕozair	Worker

Table 8. Apologies and Greetings words used by the Palestinian in Hebron.

Arabic transcription	Hebrew transcription	English meaning
Bokertove	Bokeghtove	Good morning
Lailatove	Lailatove	Good night
Todaraba	Todaghaba	Thank you
SliXa	SliXa	Excuse me
Litraaut	Litraaut	Bay
MashloomXa	MashloomXa	How are you
BarrowXashaim	BarrowXashaim	Fine
Mitgaʕgaiʕ	Mitgaʕgaiʕ	Miss

Table 2, shows the mean and percentage total and borrowed words in online mode and separated the samples by gender since we found that the mean of the

spoken words for females and males in this mode were 685.14 and 740.77 successively, and the mean of loanwords were 126.57 and 140.85. Also, the table shows that the percentages of the loanwords in the online samples were 18.47% in females and 19.35% in males. This indicates that males used borrowed words slightly more when compared to females.

Table 3, shows the mean and percentage total and borrowed words in face to face mode and separated the samples by gender since we found that the mean of the spoken words for females and males in this mode were 686.63 and 703.95 successively, and the mean of loanwords were 135.75 and 136.09. Also, the table shows that the percentages of the loanwords over the face to face samples were 19.77% and 19.33% in females and males respectively.

In this study, we found that the case of Hebrew borrowing into the Palestinian dialect in Hebron conformed to in between stages 1 and 2 according to **Thomson and Kufman's (1988)** classification due to the fact that speaking in Hebrew was mainly for work related contact and dealing with Jews was mainly for different aspects of trade and related to jobs or occupation. This means that we would expect to find not only lexical borrowing but also a few structural borrowing of functional words.

Hebrew loanwords are not very widespread throughout the Palestinian lexicon except in the area that is totally controlled by Jewish which named Arab 48, relates to the year in which Israel occupied this area. There are few domains from which lexical items are borrowed. These words are frequently used and constitute a substitute for the indigenous words among specific groups of Palestinian people. Seemingly, some of the lexical items were subjected to semantical, phonological and morphological modifications. Although some resistance appear on the surface due to the conflict between the generation in which elderly and language purists call for heritage preservation, youth strata especially those who are in direct contact with the Jewish people frequently use Hebrew lexical words even when they are in contact with other Palestinian speakers. However, Hebrew lexical words are commonly used in particular fields that have a relation to the Palestinian circumstances and daily life activities. The following is a very small sample of some domains that portrays the direct borrowed forms and content of lexical Hebrew items borrowed into Palestinian Arabic in Hebron with no change in meaning (zero semantic change) although some phonological changes takes place.

Immediate glance at the list of the loanwords mentioned in **Tables 4-8**, reveals that the majority of these words are nouns. Although, there are other words from different syntactic categories borrowed into Palestinian Arabic like verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, some of the words are treated according to the Arabic derivation patterns by which they are subject to be derived in different syntactic categories. There are noun lexical items borrowed and could be changed into verbs according these patterns by adding the inflectional prefix for 1st person singular "أ" (pronouns as /a/ in English) like the noun "عزير" meaning worker change into a verb "أعزر" meaning to work, "شومير" meaning guard

changed into a verb “أشمر” meaning to guard, “طياح” meaning bleacher changed into a verb “أطيح” meaning to bleach, “إسلاخا” meaning excuse me changed into a verb “إسألني” meaning to excuse, “مرداف” meaning drifting or tracking can be used as a verb like, “أمردف” meaning to track or to drift, “حوفش” meaning holiday changed to be used as adjective like “أنا محوفش” meaning I am in a holiday.

Due to the fact that both Arabic and Hebrew are of the same family, therefore, it is not surprising to find a lot of similar words phonologically and semantically identical, although phonological modification takes place in some cases when these words come into use as shown in **Table 9**.

Bloomfield (1933) suggested the theory of semantic changes in which he divided the semantic change into numerous sub-branches, namely additive and substitutive loanwords, and semantic broadening, narrowing and shift. According to this theory, changing in the semantic meaning resulted in the change of the limited meaning of the foreign borrowed words that are incorporated into the target language. Some of the borrowed lexical words undergo meaning expansion, so that their meanings capture more information in the target language than their original meaning in the source language. An instance of broadening is the English word "business", which originally meant "a state of being busy, careworn or anxious", but has now broadened to include all kinds of work occupations. Other words undergo narrowing in meaning, so that their meaning changed to be reduced, limited or more specific. An instance from English language is the word girl which is originally meant a child of either gender, rather than a female child. Over time, it has evolved to mean what was only part of its original definition.

Semantic change in words meaning may refer to the semantic shift that is related to the usages of words and the deviation of the current word meaning from its original meaning. It is not an immediate process of change but rather words change their meanings over a period of time. Bloomfield proposed a widely accepted form of the meaning classification that involves semantic narrowing, semantic broadening (widening), metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, hyperbole, meiosis, degeneration and elevation (**Bloomfield, 1933**). This study limited to two types of semantic change namely: Broadening, Narrowing.

Broadening is a type of semantic change process refers to the change when the word meaning becomes more general or more inclusive in the target language than its earlier historical meaning of the word. It is a process of generalization, widening, or extension. This type of the semantic change takes place when a word of limited meanings expanded to capture other meanings.

Some of the Hebrew lexical words incorporated in Palestinian Arabic have witnessed semantic change which expands their meaning in different fields, see the example in **Table 10**.

When a word changes its meaning to acquire a restricted narrower meaning it is called meaning narrowing. It is the opposite of widening (broadening). It is a restriction in the meaning, **Table 11** mentions some examples of narrowing.

Table 9. Words with same pronunciation in both Arabic and Hebrew.

Arabic transcription	Hebrew transcription	English meaning
Moftah.	MaftaiX	Key
h.olm	h.olom	Dream
h.emar	Xamor	Donkey
Arnab	Arnaab	Rabbit
Yaom	Youm	Day

Table 10. List of broadening words.

Word	Hebrew using	Palestinian Arabic	Palestinian Arabic using	English meaning
SheitaX	Working area (specific area)	Sheitah.	Any place or area	Land

Table 11. List of narrowing words.

Word in Hebrew	Gloss	Restricted meaning in Arabic
Argaz	Any box	Restricted only for a box contains drinks
Pagout	pastry (all kinds)	Restricted only for sweet pastry
Bo bo	Come (for people and animals)	Come (restricted for dogs)
Shayesh	Any manufactured stones	Restricted for marble and granite

5. Conclusion

In this paper, it was examined whether the loanwords from Hebrew borrowed into Arabic language in Hebron undergo semantic change and the results indicated that some of those words have undergone a semantic change. Also, when reason for borrowing these words was scrutinized, we found that it is related, in general, to the words that are used by the workers and traders who work in Israel and use Hebrew in their work to communicate with their superiors who are Israeli citizens with Hebrew as their mother tongue. But when communicating with family, friends, in local environment they would still use loan words as a mark of prestige or sometimes sub consciously and then it will seep into their native language for transference to his family and neighbors. This also explains the reason that why most of the borrowed words are nouns as they are the names of the things that they used in their trades or jobs or employment.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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