

Al-Ta'rib: Pro and Con of Foreign Words Arabization

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Abstract—The Arabic language, like other living languages, is not able to maintain all its vocabularies, meanings, and semantics the same way as the origin language in its ancient land, the land of Hijaz. The Arabic language might accept foreign terms, or create new terms or neologisms in accordance with the modern foreign words to express the new meanings, because of the development of science and technology, information, culture, etc, and the spreading of its people in many countries in the East. The present study aims to discuss the phenomenon of Arabization between its supporters and opponents. Arabization is one of the most important factors which has contributed to the rapid modernization of the Arabic language. Arabization, or *al-Ta'rib* in the technical term, is the process of the assimilation of vocabulary of foreign origin into the Arabic language. This process has happened since the early days before the revelation of the Quran and after it until nowadays. The arabized words grew from time to time through the arabization made by the Arabic scholars and writers, and journalists in various media of information. In facing this phenomenon, there are three opinions, total opposition to the Arabization, total reception, and the moderate opinion that accepts arabization only by changing the foreign words in accordance with the patterns of Arabic language.

Keywords—Arabization (*al-Ta'rib*), neologism, language borrowing

I. INTRODUCTION

Standard Arabic (*Fushhaa*) was once the language used by Quraish tribe which later became the language used by all Arab tribes after the hundreds of year friction between each tribe language. Foreign words and terms have existed in Arabic language since long time ago. Although Hijaz, as the land of Arab people is located far from other foreign countries, foreign languages such as Persian and Roman languages influence Arabic. The Arabic, as language of communication and Qur'anic language, has developed its words meaning. Its part of speech, such as noun and verb, is also developed to respond the development of science, technology, and civilization. Its development is a result of interaction and adaptation between languages. This process enrich the the Arabic language.

The process of adaptation in Arabic language continues to happen through borrowing and adapting foreign words. This

dynamic interplay occurs when two languages or more interact, whatever the reason and purpose are. This law of mutual influence between languages is a social law that cannot be avoided. The mutual influence also occurs between dialects and between Arabic languages by means of mutual adoption of dialects and exchange vocabularies, expressions, and language styles. Dus had included foreign words in his list. It can be found in poems in the period before Islam (know as *Jahiliyah* period), Quranic verses, and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. After the spread of Islam the foreign words included in Arabic increase among government officers and writers, public and domestik area, and among intellectual and common people [1, p. 315]. The process of including foreign words into Arabic is called *al-Ta'riib* (Arabization).

Etyimologically, arabization or *al-Ta'riib* is the noun form of 'Arraba. Originated from three letters: 'ain, raa, and baa (عرب), this word has three basic meanings: explain, viable and good soul, physical disability [2, p. 766]. The first meaning is refected in the use of word *al'arab* (العرب) for one tribe in Hijaz, Nejed, and most tribes in Middle East since their langauage is considered as the clearest (*a'rab*) and most beautiful one. The expression '*araba al-rajulu*, for instance, means 'that man speaks fluently after stuttering.' The second meaning can be found in '*aribat al-bi'ru* (عربت البئر) means 'the well is full.' An example of the third meaning is '*aribat al-ma'idah* (عربت المعدة) means 'he has stomach ache.' The verb '*aruba* also means 'speak Arabic fluently,' '*arraba al-manthiq* means 'educate them to avoid mistakes,' while '*arraba al-isma al-a'jamiyya* means 'make foreign words into Arabic.' Moreover, '*arraba al-kitaaba wa nahwahu* means 'translate foreign books into Arabic.'

Arabization of foreign words is Arabic communication using foreign language adapted to Arabic rules. Al-Syihad al-Khafaji argues that arabization is translating foreign words into Arabic [3, p. 376]. Thahir al-Jazairiy shares the same argument. While Abdl Wadir al-Maghribiy defines it as Arabics who speak full foreign language [4, p. 215]. It can be concluded that arabization is the use of foreign language in Arabic by applying the format (*wazan*) of Arabic language into the foreign language.

The meaning of arabization as translating foreign language into Arabic has been used by scholars and experts in Arabic as

media in revealing foreign words they do not understand. The process of arabization does not only for foreign names, but also translation of foreign language texts into Arabic by maintaining the original meaning. In the context of politics, arabization is government policy to make Arabic as science, business, and administrative language. The context of translating the relics of ancient people who spoke foreign languages, arabization was mentioned by Samir al-Sayyid Abdul Mutolib Ali Zahir 'if the Arabs did not play a role in world history, then the rise of European civilization would have been hundreds of years late. The rise of European civilization occurred because the Arabs had translated the remains of ancients and saved them from extinction. Europeans now the legacy only through books translated into Arabic. Only through the arabization of classical or ancient science carried out by al-Razi, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Ibn al-Nafis, al-Zahrawi, Ibn al-Haytham, and al-Idrisi, European scholars knew Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Archimedes, and Ptolemy through Spain, Sicily, Italy, and Toledo [5, p. 985].

II. METHOD

There are many new words and terminologies included in Arabic language through arabization. There are four terminologies used in the process of absorption of foreign language to Arabic: *al-mu'arrab*, *al-dakhiil*, *al-a'jamiy*, and *al-muqtaradhah*. Among the four terminologies *al-mu'arrab* is the most used by Arab writers. Arabic Language Institution defines *al-Mu'arrab* as arabized foreign words by reducing, adding, or changing. Meanwhile, al-Imam Jalaluddin al-Suyuti argues that *al-Mu'arrab* is foreign words used Arabs [6, p. 84].

Many agree that *al-mu'arrab* is foreign words transferred into Arabic. However, they have different opinions regarding the requirements. Arabic Language Institution requires reducing, adding, changing matching the words in accordance with the format (*wazan*) of Arabic in the process of arabization. While others do not need those requirements. Those opinion can be combined because not every arabized foreign words follow the Arabic rules, such as *Khuraasaan* (خراسان), *Ibraahim* (إبراهيم), *Ihliilij* (إهليلج), *Ibriisam* (إبريسم), *aajur* (أجر), *syathranji* (شطرنج). In Arabic there is no word formation for *fa'aalaan*, *If'aaliil*, *faa'ul*, and *fa'lalli*. There are also arabized words totally different from the original language that cannot be found the format in Arabic, such as "*syahansyaah* (شهنشاه)" originated from Persian word: *syahaansyaah* (شاهان شاه). This condition which make Sibawaih and other scholars defines *al-ta'riib* as speaking Arabic using foreign words without changing or matching them with the Arabic format. Abu Manshur al-Jawaaliqi limits the arabized words (*al-mu'arrab*) until the *Ihtijaaj* era. He defined the *al-mu'arrab* as 'foreign language spoken by Arabic, appear in Quran, mentioned by Prophet's companions and their followers, and used in poems and narration of the Arabs.

Arabic linguists consider the second terminology, *al-dakhiil*, the same as *al-mu'arrab*. Syihabuddin al-Khafaaji used the word *al-dakhiil* in his book title, *Syifaa al-Ghaliil fii maa fii Kalaam al-'Arab min al-dakhiil*. Ibn Fadhlullah al-

Muhibby also used that word in his book entitles *Qashd al-Sabiil fii maa fii al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah min al-Dakhiil*. Al-Khaliil in his book, *al-'Ain*, and Ibn Duraid in his book, *al-Jamharah*, often used the word to replace *al-mu'arrabah*. Ibn Manzhar in his book, *Lisaan al'Arab*, explains the word *dakhiil* as the whole foreign words used in communication by the Arabs [3, p. 375]. Habasyah, Aramia, Suryani and others specify *al-dakhiil* to only words cognate with Arabic. It is relevant with al-Imam al-Suyuthi in his book, *al-Itqaan* who categorizes *al-syahr*, *al-yamm*, and *awwaab* as foreign language. As a result, those words are *al-dakhiil*. Other linguists argue that *al-dakhiil* is all foreign languages except Semitic, such as Persian, Roman, Turkish, English, and others. Semitic is considered cogante language. Other linguists limit the categorization of *a-dakhiil* to words that do not undergo changes, such as *khuraasaan*. There are also those who limit to the arabized foreign words after *ashr al-ihitjaaj* [3, p. 375].

Al-A'jamiy and *al-Muqtaradhah* terminologies are use for foreign words translated into Arabic whether there are changes or not. Those terms are generally used in transferring foreign words into Arabic within its format without any changes. This article will use the terminology *al-mu'arrab* for all foreign words that change into Arabic during the *Ihtijaaj*, Jahiliyah and between the *Ihtijaaj*, or today era.

III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. Changes in Arabized foreign words and how to find their origin

Emil Badi Ya'qub in his work *Fiqh al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah wa Khasha'ishuhaa* states four types of changes in foreign words that have gone through the arabization (*al-mu'arrab*) process [4, p. 217]:

1) *Letter change*, such as the word *jaram* (جرم) which is from the word *karam* (كرم). The origin of this word is Persian with the meaning freedom. Another example is *shard* from *sard*. The origin of this word is Persian means cold.

2) *Vowel change*, such as *sirdaad* from the word *sardaad*. The origin of this word is from Persian which means underground. Two types of changes happen in word *sukkar* (سكر) that comes from word *randah* (رندہ).

3) *Adding another letter*, such as the word *arandaj* (أرندج) that comes from *randah* (رندہ). The origin of the word is Persian which means black skin. The changing on that word is to change the letter *al-Haa* with *al-Jiim*.

4) *Omitting letter*, such as word *bahraj* (بهرج) that comes from *nabahrh* (نابهره) which means false.

B. Al-Mu'arrab in the past

The arabization of foreign words has happened before Islam because of the Arabs interactions with foreigners. It continued during the Islam conquest to other countries. Arabic linguists, scholars, and orientalis have include arabized foreign words in dictionaries and encyclopedia, such as *al-duulaab* (الدولاب) means engine, wheel, cabinet, *al-daskarah* (الدسكرة) means small village, bar, castle, hermitage house on top of a hill, flat ground, *al-ka'k* (الكعك) means cake, *al-samiidz*

(السميد) means semolina *al-jullanaar* (الجنار) means pomegranate flower. Those words originate from Persian. Other examples are words with the origin of Indian language or Sanskrit such as *al-fulful* (اللفل) means pepper, *al-jaamuus* (الجاموس) means buffalo, *al-Syathranji* (الشطرنج) means chess, and *al-shandal* (الصندل) which means sandalwood, boat, sandals, a big head. There are also words from Greek such as *al-qabbaan* (القبان) means steelyard, *al-qintaar* (القنطار) means quintal, *al-tiryaaq* (الترياق) means antidote, *maghnaathiis* (مغناطيس) means magnet. Examples of words from Roman and Hebrew languages are Ibrahim and Ismail. The word *al-araaik* (الأرائك) which means sofa and *al-sarar* (السرر) are examples of words originated from Habasyah.

Greek philosophers and their goddesses are also arabized: Socrates becomes *suqraath* (سقراط), Plato becomes *Aflaathuun* (أفلاطون), Aristotle becomes *Aristhuu* (أرسطو), Pitagoras becomes *fiitsaaghuurats* (فيثاغورث), Hercules becomes *Harqal* (هرقل), and Herodotus becomes *Hiiruuduut* (هيرودوت). Names of country that also undergo the process of arabization are Toledo in Spain becomes *Thaliithalah* (طليطلة), Cordova becomes *Qurthubah* (قرطبة), Lisbon becomes *Lasybuunah* (لشبونة), and Castile becomes *Qasythaalah* (قشتالة).

C. *Al-Mu'arrab in Quran*

Al-Quran an a-karim is Muslims' holy book in Arabic. Many scholars and linguists have analyzed its vocabularies. They found that arabized foreign words are also in *al-Quran*. To respond to the finding they are divided into three groups: those who admit that there are arabized foreign words (*al-mu'arrab*), deny, and accommodate both opinions. Those who admit *al-mu'arrab* in Quran based their argument on some Prophet's companions and their followers such as Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, dan Ikrimah, who believed that there are actually foreign words in al-Quran: *sijjiil*, *al-misykaat*, *al-yamm*, *al-thuur*, *Abaariiq*, and *istabraq*. They provided evidences for their arguments:

1. Ibn Jarir statement, authentically quoted from Abi Masirah, that there are foreign languages in al-Quran.
2. Al-Quran covers knowledge of the past and the last as well as other information. So, there should be signs of other languages.
3. Among many distinctions of Al-Quran is the language of the people used. As a result al-Quran covers all Arabic language dialects and other languages such as Persian, Habsyi, and Roman language.
4. Since Prophet Muhammad was sent for all people, al-Quran accommodates their languages.
5. There are scholar agreements regarding foreign words in Quran. They believe Allah's words *qur'aanan 'arabiyyan* does not indicate the nonexistence of foreign words. The small number of foreign words will not deny Arabic as the language in Quran.

Those who deny the existence of foreign word in Quran are al-Imam al-Syafi'i, Abu Ubaidah Ma'mar bin al-Mutsanna, Abu Bakr bin al-Anbari, and Ahmad bin Faris. Modern scientist who is part of this group as al-Syaikh Ahmad

Syagir. Al-Imam Syafi'i in his book *al-Risaalah* [7, p. 18] argues that people who believe the existence of foreign words in Quran is not valid since all words in Quran are Arabic. Abu Ubaidah bin Ma'mar al-Mutsanna states that such opinion is not feasible. There are many verses in Quran that emphasize Arab as the language of Quran, such as al-Syu'ara: 192-195, al-Ra'd: 37, Yusuf: 2, Asyasyuura: 7, Azzukhruf: 1-3, Azzumar: 28, Annahl: 103, and Fushshilat: 44 [8].

Al-Quran states that every prophet sent spoke the same language as the people. The early Bible used the Hebrew language since Prophet Isa and his people spoke that language. Undoubtedly, Quran used Arabic since Prophet Muhammad is Arab and his people are Arab. Quranic verses support this: Ibraahiim: 4, Attaubah: 128, al-Jumu'ah: 2, Azzukhruf: 44 [8]. Ibnu Aus argues that if there is even one word of foreign language in Quran will create doubt to the ability of Arab to make the equivalent word.

Meanwhile, the third group, the group who combine both opinion, do not deny arabization. They believe the existence of foreign words in Quran that have undergone arabization. Those words which create arguments of the originality and foreignness between the two groups, have actually been adopted by Arab from its neighbourhood countries by change or eliminate some letters. They used those words in poems and speech. Those words became eloquent words.

The scholars who combine those opinions state that *al-mu'arrab* is Arabic. They provide their arguments by quoting some scholars. Abdul Qadir al-Maghribiy said: 1) al-Khalil bin Ahmad statement regarding the absence of words with fi'lal format (*wazan*), apart from dirham since that word is a result of arabization originated from Roman language. 2) following the norms of sorof and istiqaaq, for example *lijaam* (لجام) originated from Persian *lighaam* (لغام) or *likaam* (لكام). The plural form of the word following the *kutub* (كتب) format is *lujum*. The tashghir form is *lujaim* (لجيم), the verb form is *aljama* (ألجم), and the *ism* form is *maf'uulnya muljam* (ملجم). This word is also used in figurative language as in the expression *aljamahu al-maau* (ألجمه الماء).

This group explains that the process of arabization has happened long time before Quran. By following the Arabic language form those foreign words change to become like Arabic. When Quran was revealed the Arab have been accustomed to those words. So the opinion that the words are foreign words and those are Arabic, are true.

D. *Al-Mu'arrab at the present*

After the science, civilization, social, political relationship between the Arabs and Europeans increased, particularly after the France *hamlah* toward Egypt led by Bonaparte followed by Britain, Italy and Germany colonialization toward Arab countries, Arabic Language Institutions began to arabize foreign words related to civilization, science, and technology. The growth of political relation between Arab countries with Europe, US, and Asia (Japan, China, South Korea) played important role in the process of arabization. No wonder there are English, French words being arabized, such as *imbrooliyyah* (إمبرالية) means imperialism, *buurjuwaaziyyah* (بورجوازية) means bourgeoisie, *diimuqraathiyyah* (ديموقراطية)

means democracy, *al-faasyiah* (الفاشية) means fascism, *al-Naaziyyah* (النازية) means nazism, *al-biiruuqraathiyyah* (البيروقراطية) means bureaucracy, *al-intarniit* (الإنترنت) means internet, *al-talifuun* (التلفون) means phone, dan *al-raadiyuu* (الراديو) means radio.

We can find many foreign words that have been arabized in newspapers and magazines. One example is a text in *al-'Arabiyyah* newspaper, 29th November 2017. The text contains words such as *al-tiknuuluujiyaa* (التكنولوجيا) means technology, *ruutruz* (روترز) mean Reuters, *al-dimuuqraathiyyah* (الديموقراطية) means democracy, *al-Amriikiyyah* (الأمريكية) means related to USA, *Istirootiijiyah* (إستراتيجية) means strategy, *al-kuuluuniil* (الكولونيل) means colonel, and *al-Bintaaghuum* (البنتاغون) means Pentagon. There are also other Arab newspapers that use technology terms from English but written in Arabic, such as *ābil* (آبل) for apple, *al-aifuun* (الأيفون) for iPhone, *miiki maus* for mickeymouse, *al-hawaatif al-dzakiyyah* (الهواتف الذكية) means smartphone, *radiyo al-mahmool* for radiophone, *jihaz al-sayidi* for CD, *Wakman* for Walkman, *suwara "salfi"* for selfie, *Instagram* for Instagram, and others.

Those words are arabized through some ways: translated, arabized, derivation, and abbreviated. Linguists face difficulties in looking for equivalent words for the foreign words since the connection between the foreign and equivalent words are not strong. As a result linguists come with different equivalent words, and create ambiguity in terminologies and usage in the written and spoken words. Arabic language institutions, particularly those in Cairo have created a team and conduct seminars to find solution to the problem and set the equivalent words through codification, discussion, and convention.

IV. CONCLUSION

Al-ta'riib is how the Arabs use foreign words, not how Arabic is used in communication and the language format used. *Al-ta'riib* is an important factor in the development and modernization of Arabic, as the solution to accommodate the need for keeping up with the science, civilization development, and the tool to uncover modern terms related to knowledge, literature, and daily life. *Al-ta'riib* is a process that happens long before Quran was revealed and Quran is the proof of that process. There are people who try to maintain the purity of the Arabic while there are others who would like to enrich Arabic vocabulary by adding foreign words. The first people prefer to derive, abbreviate and translate foreign words, while the later are more flexible by allowing the process of *al-ta'riib* in accordance with the Arabic format.

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