Reflections on the Lexical Exchanges between Persian and Arabic

Dr. Abdul Rahim Haghdadi
Assistant Professor in Arabic Language and Literature, University of Birjand,
Birjand, Iran

Dr. Mohammad Reza Azizi
Assistant Professor in Arabic Language and Literature, University of Birjand,
Birjand, Iran

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction
As for their shared geographical neighborhood, Iranians and Arabs have had long-lasting political, commercial and cultural exchanges. In the linguistic arena, they have been borrowing words from each other in order to fill the lexical gaps in their languages and make their languages richer. Arabic has borrowed hundreds of words from Persian although Persian is an Indo-European and Arabic Semitic language, and the morphological systems of the two are very different. Also, because the number of letters in the Persian alphabet does not correspond with the Arabic alphabet, Persian loan-words undergo special changes during the transition to Arabic in order to adapt to its morphological and phonetic system.

2. Review of Literature
The theoretical basis of this research rests on the premise that some Persian words making their way into Arabic evolve inside the phonetic system of that language. Later, the Persian origin of these words are forgotten and Persian speakers use their Arabicized (Mu’arrab) forms. In this study, some Persian loan-words along with their Arabic version as an entry were collected, and their meaning was investigated both in Arabic and Persian. At the same time, evidence from the Quranic verses as well as Arabic and Persian poetry was given for each. As Persian words have undergone serious changes during different periods of transition from Old Persian to Pahlavi and from Pahlavi to Dari, the qalb, eddil and tashīf processes of these words in the course of the Arabicization have made them more difficult to identify. The novelty of this research lies in the identification of this process in the exchanges between the two languages and also in the examination of some of these lexical units in their original Persian as well as their transformed Arabic version. Although there are many considerable sources for the Arabicized and foreign words in Arabic used in this article, no independent research has been found on the subject of the study. The authors of this paper intend to review and analyze the examples of these Arabicized words which have been introduced from Persian into Arabic and have changed in Arabic and later have returned into Persian in their transformed Arabic forms.

1. Corresponding author. Email: ahaghdadi@birjand.ac.ir
3. Method
The research data was compiled from the printed and electronic documents. After collecting the words from different sources, they were examined using a descriptive and analytical method to answer the main question of the research. Identifying the Persian version of the words along with their Arabicized forms required an etymological approach.

4. Results and Discussion
The lack of use of the original form of some words in Persian and the widespread use of their Arabic counterparts instead seems a significant lexical phenomenon in Persian. To study this, more than forty Arabicized words were introduced in this article out of which twenty one were thoroughly examined and the remaining ones were considered in brief. Examples include words like gaval, kande, dehgan, talesan, pards, etc. which are no more used in Persian, or if used, such as abrizeh, andazeh, chang, gohar, and piadeh, they convey a different meaning as compared to their Arabic forms. Evidence suggests that the Arabicization of Persian words started from the Age of Ignorance, but grew stronger in the Islamic period and became particularly impressive in some areas. However, it seems that the alteration of foreign words in the course of Arabicization has not been a deliberate or conscious measure to preserve and protect Arabic language, but rather an inherent characteristic of Arabic. This is due to the fact that during the Age of Ignorance at the dawn of Islam, many Persian words were openly introduced and integrated into Arabic. Examples of such words are ebriq, sondos, estabraq, jonah, and sanj etc. Accordingly, if such a process was purposeful, certain rules were expected to be drafted for it over centuries, but the rules of Arabicization have always been founded on usage or custom.

5. Conclusion
The re-use of the Arabic form of Persian words among Persian speakers reveals the dynamic and extensive volume of relations between the two cultures. Persian men of letters and literarians of the late periods preferred the Arabic form of the words to their original Persian structure either for the sacredness of the Arabic language, its dominance, or the ease of pronunciation of some of the Arabized words. Since many of these terms have disappeared in Persian and they are only used in Persian in their Arabic form, they bear a significant importance in the historical studies on Persian language.

Keywords: Lexical exchange, Mu’arrab and loanword, Persian, Arabic

References (in Persian)


References (In Arabic)


