

Ivrit

The penetration of Arabic loanwords into Modern Hebrew (Ivrit) is vast. Some of these loanwords derive from *fushā* (Literary Arabic), some from the dialects, especially the Palestinian dialects, and a rare few from the Jewish Arabic dialects of other regions. All layers of Israeli society, including the media and modern literature and poetry, rich and poor, Jews of Ashkenazi or Sephardi origin, use Arabic loanwords in their speech. There seems to be no geographical connection with the degree of usage of Arabic loanwords, but it is possible that younger people, especially those who have been in the army, use a higher percentage of such words in comparison with other age groups.

The phonological developments in Ivrit – the loss of emphatic and guttural consonants such as *ḥ* and *ʔ*: *q > k*, *t > ṭ*, *ḥ > x*, ' > ' ; some changes in the vowel system, such as the loss of vowel length; and the shift of the stress – have led to some misconceptions about the etymology of loanwords of Arabic origin. Therefore, the Ivrit words in this entry will be written out according to the modern pronunciation. An example would be the Arabic loanword *tafrān* 'penniless' (Ivrit *tafrān*, with the same meaning). The root *t-f-r* (and not *ṭ-f-r*) exists in Ivrit with the meaning 'to sew'; with the loss of emphatics in Ivrit, the Arabic loanword in *fa'lān* created another meaning to this loanword, namely 'a tailor', hence 'poor as a tailor'. The word *tafrān* has become naturalized to such an extent that Israeli speakers do not think of it as an Arabic loanword. Arabic loanwords that have changed their original vowels have entered Ivrit, e.g. *ya'ēni* 'as though', derived from the Arabic *ya'nī* 'that is'. Some Ivrit speakers attribute a folk etymology to this Arabic loanword and think that it is derived from the Arabic word 'ayn 'eye'. Apart from *ya'ēni*, the Arabic filling word *ya'nī* exists in Ivrit with the same meaning as in Arabic (pronounced *ya'nī*).

When dealing with Arabic loanwords in Ivrit, a distinction must be made between loanwords and loan translations. The Arabic words that have penetrated into Ivrit can be divided

into two groups: a natural penetration through the spoken language and Modern Hebrew literature, and a planned insertion of Arabic loanwords, especially by numerous innovators beginning with Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, the Hebrew Language Council (Va'ad ha-Lašon ha-Ivrit) in the late 1920s, and, since 1952, the Academy of Hebrew Language (ha-Akademya la-Lašon ha-Ivrit).

Ben-Yehuda often borrowed from Literary Arabic. His innovations, based on Literary Arabic vocabulary, occurred on different levels. One level is that of direct copies of the Arabic word or root, e.g. *adiv* from Arabic 'adib 'polite', *mehagér* < *muhājir* 'immigrant', *retsini* 'serious' from Literary Arabic *rašm*, *bubá* 'doll' from *bu'bu* (lit. 'pupil of the eye'), *ribá* 'jam' < *murabba*, *miurák* 'telegram' < *barqiyya*, *kidmá* 'progress' < *taqaddum*. A second level is that of loan translations based on Arabic, e.g. *afór* 'gray' from Hebrew *éfer* 'ash', since the Arabic word for 'gray', *ramādī*, is related to *ramād* 'ash'. The third level of Ben-Yehuda's innovations was based on morphology, e.g., the Ivrit word *mitriyá* 'umbrella' has the suffix *-iya*, imitating the Arabic word *šamsiyya* (lit. 'parasol'), with a similar suffix *-iyya*. Another example is *iriyá* 'municipality' from the Hebrew *ir* 'city', based on the Arabic *baladiyya*.

Ben-Yehuda was not the only one to innovate words based on Arabic. Mirkin (1902) proposed the combination 'eglát kitór for the English *steam car* (German *Dampfwagen*; French *wagon à vapeur*). Yalin objected to this innovation and said that this new loanword based on European idioms could be understood in the developing Ivrit as 'vapor'. Therefore, he preferred Arabic *qitār*, which could be built according to the Hebrew morphological structure of *fa'āl*, hence *qattār* (today *katár*, meaning 'locomotive'). In the 1930s and 1940s some neologisms were based directly on Arabic but did not survive, e.g. *baddorá* from Arabic *bandōra* 'tomato'. The word used today is *agvanyá*, derived from the Hebrew root *a-g-v* 'to lust for', based on the supposition that the tomato is an aphrodisiac. Another example

is 'egóz hódu (lit. 'nut of India'), meaning 'coconut', as a loan from the Arabic *jōz hindi*. The prevalent Ivrit word today is *egóz kókus*. Two other examples of Ben-Yehuda's innovations that have not survived are *latif* < *latīf* 'gentle, cute', today *nexmád*; and the invention *mózen ha-'avír* from Arabic *mīzān naql al-hawā* 'barometer', a term that was not accepted at all, as Ivrit today uses *barométer*. Piamenta (1961) quotes Ben-Yehuda as saying that Arabic holds out hope for the enrichment of the Modern Hebrew language because its words preserve the ancient etymologies of the Semitic languages.

Already at the beginning of the Hebrew Language Council's work one finds words derived from Arabic, e.g. *tappil* 'parasite' (nowadays *tapil*) from *tufayliyy*. In recent years there has been a tendency in the Academy of Hebrew Language to derive Arabic loanwords, particularly in the field of botany, e.g. *xilbá* 'fenu-greek' from Yemenite Arabic *hilbe*. In 2003 the Academy decided that the official word for 'pine nut' should be changed from 'óren ha-séla' to *tsnovár*, from Arabic *šanaubar*, a word which had been naturalized by the Israeli public in any case. The plant *prosopis* (English 'burdock') was named by the Academy after the Arabic *yanbüüt* (with the same pronunciation, *yanbüüt*, Spoken Hebrew *yanbüüt*), although this plant is mentioned in some old Hebrew sources as *kalīs*.

Blanc (1955) divides the Arabic loanwords in Ivrit into groups:

- i. Words for food, e.g. *xúmus* < *hummuṣ*, *txína* < *ṭahīna*. *Faláfel*, the representative and symbol of Israeli food, is a loanword from the Arabic *falāfil* (pl.). It is used in the singular, not as in Arabic, e.g. *faláfel ta'im* 'a tasty falafel'.
- ii. Words connected to Israeli society, especially those adopted before the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, e.g. *xamsín* < *xamsīn* 'hot and dry weather', or the head covering *kafiya* < *kufiyye* 'kefiyyeh'.
- iii. Blessings, curses, and interjections, e.g. 'áblan or 'álen < 'ahlan 'welcome, hello!', 'iná'al 'abük < 'inna 'al 'abük 'may your father be cursed!' or the well-known *kuss 'immak* 'motherfucker!', or *xabíbi* < *ḥabíbi* 'my dear'.

- iv. A wide range of adjectives or adjuncts, e.g. *zift* 'a very bad thing' < *zift* (etymologically 'pitch') or *jéda* 'a strong and vigorous woman/man' < *jada'* 'a vigorous and courageous man'.

Ben-Amotz is responsible for a large contribution of Arabic loanwords in Ivrit. His dictionary of spoken Ivrit (1972), written together with Ben-Yehuda, is a landmark in the history of the language for its audacity and daring. Many words in this dictionary are curses belonging to certain sociolinguistic registers, like army language and street language, e.g. 'axú *lmanyúki* < 'axú *l-manyúki* or 'axú *šarmúta* < 'axú *š-šarmúta* 'the brother of the prostitute'. A very interesting phenomenon is that many curses derived from Arabic have both negative and positive meanings in Ivrit. For example, one can say 'asíti 'axú *lmanyúki* šel 'avodá, meaning 'I did a very good job'. It is worth noting that various entries in Ben-Amotz's dictionary are not known to many people nowadays and it even seems that some of the entries were already idiolects or obsolete words at the time and are considered archaic today, e.g. *furšáye* 'bad and superficial work', an archaic word in Palestinian Arabic that is no longer in use, since today *furšáy* has the meaning of 'toothbrush'.

Some loanwords were taken from Palestinian Arabic dialects like that of the Triangle Area in modern Israel (*al-muṭallaṭ*), e.g. *čilba* 'to be angry with' from *čilba* (Literary Arabic *kalba(tun)* 'a bitch') or *čizbát* 'fib', used as a singular noun in Ivrit, from *čizbāt* 'fibs' (Literary Arabic *kiḏbāt*). We occasionally find Arabic loanwords in Ivrit derived from Jewish Arabic dialects, e.g. *šlóx* 'a shabby person' after the name of a Berber tribe in Morocco.

The use of Arabic components is found not only in the vocabulary but also in loan translation (calque) and external borrowing, e.g. *hu 'axál otá* < 'akalha w širib 'aléha mayy sāfi 'he got done', 'al ha-bóker < 'ala šsubih 'first thing to do early in the morning', *hu met aléha* < *bimüt 'aléha* 'he is dying for her'. However, Blau (1974) notes that it is often quite difficult to locate the real origin of foreign borrowings into Ivrit. He observes that borrowed phrases like *hitsil et ha-matsáv* (Literary Arabic 'anqaḏa *l-mawqif*) exist in several languages, e.g. German *die Situation retten*, French *sauver la situation*, and English *save the situation*.

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