

Exploring Bilingual Dictionaries: A Case Study of Al Mawrid Arabic English Dictionary

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الملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقديم تحليل شامل عن قاموس المورد عربي-إنجليزي عبر دراسته في المستويين الكلي و الجزئي، انطلاقا من التنظيم العام للقاموس ووصولاً إلى مداخل الكلمات. أخذنا كنموذج لبحثنا جزء (العين) من القاموس من الصفحة 740 إلى الصفحة 770 دارسين إياه على المستوى المعجمي محللين العشرات من الكلمات وترجماتها في قاموس المورد مزدوج اللغة.

انقسمت الدراسة إلى ثلاثة أجزاء أساسية و حاولت أن تجيب عن التساؤلات التالية: 1- إلى أي نوع من القواميس مزدوجة اللغة ينتمي إليها قاموس المورد عربي إنجليزي؟ 2- كيف يُحقق التكافؤ في القواميس مزدوجة اللغة؟ 3- ما هي نقاط التشابه و الاختلاف بين قاموس المورد و قاموس هانس فير الذي يعتبر مصدرا أساسيا و مرجعا قيما في الترجمة بين اللغة العربية و الإنجليزية؟

نصل بعد الإجابة عن الأسئلة إلى بعض النتائج تلقي الضوء على إمكانيات قاموس المورد عربي إنجليزي و حدوده.

الكلمات المفاتيح:

القاموس مزدوج اللغة، المعجمية مزدوجة اللغة، قاموس عربي-
إنجليزي، التكافؤ

Abstract:

In the current paper we aim to carry out an analysis of Al Mawrid Arabic English dictionary. We will study both the macrostructure and the microstructure of Al Mawrid Arabic English dictionary starting from its general organization to its headword entries.

We have chosen as a sample of the dictionary: The عين part (from page 740 to page 770). We have taken the thirty first pages of this section and tried to analyze them at the lexicological level.

Our paper is not entirely based on theoretical constructs, but also on the detailed examination of dozens of words and their translations in Al Mawrid Arabic English bilingual dictionary.

Our aim is to reach some conclusions that would help to improve Al Mawrid Arabic English dictionary.

We have organized our study in three main parts: First we will try to answer this question: Which kind of bilingual dictionaries Al Mawrid Arabic English dictionary is? Second, we will go onto the details examining each feature of the dictionary relying only on the part of the dictionary delimited above. We will deal with the issue of translation equivalence which represents a core issue in bilingual lexicography. Then, we will compare Al Mawrid with another Arabic English dictionary recognized as being the best in the field which is Hans Wehr Arabic English dictionary. We will then deal with some findings and conclusions .

Key words:

Bilingual dictionary, bilingual lexicography, Arabic-English dictionary, translation equivalence.

Lexicographers distinguish different types of dictionaries depending on the *intention* of these dictionaries. In classifying a bilingual dictionary, we have in mind seven contrasts:

(1) Dictionaries for the speakers of the source language vs. dictionaries for the speakers of the target language.

(2) Dictionaries of the literary language vs. dictionaries of the spoken language.

(3) Dictionaries for production vs. dictionaries for comprehension.

(4) Dictionaries for the human user vs. dictionaries for machine translation.

(5) Historical dictionaries vs. descriptive dictionaries.

(6) Lexical dictionaries vs. encyclopedic dictionaries

(7) General dictionaries vs. special dictionaries.

Our purpose here is to determine to which kind of bilingual dictionaries Al Mawrid Arabic English dictionary belongs to.

(1) The source language of Al Mawrid Arabic –English dictionary is Arabic. It is the language of its entries. Its target language is English; it is the language of its translations or equivalents.

The vast majority of the existing bilingual dictionaries... claim that they are designed to serve the speakers of both languages (Al-Kasimi M.Ali. 1977.p.18)

Dr.Rohi Baalbaki (2006 p.10) goes on the same track and says:

لا يخفى أن معجما عصريا شاملا، من طراز" المورد عربي انجليزي"...

قد بات حاجة ماسة و مطلبا ملحا لدى أصحاب الثقافتين العربية و الانجليزية

However, linguists declare that it is impossible to serve the speakers of both languages equally in one and the same bilingual dictionary; the fact is that a bilingual dictionary for the speakers of the source language should be put together in a different way from a bilingual dictionary for the speakers of the target language.

(2) Our dictionary is obviously a dictionary of literary language because it deals with classical Arabic, and not with the spoken Arabic which can differ in sounds, grammar and vocabulary e.g. Moroccan dialect, Syrian dialect.

(3) By the past, bilingual dictionaries were intended to be used to study classical works of foreign literature that is why the dictionary makers assumed that the function of the dictionary was to help the reader in understanding the hard words he came across in his reading of foreign literature, so the whole thing was about comprehension.

The distinction between a dictionary for production and one for comprehension is exhibited in the very first stages of making the dictionary; i.e., the choice of source and target languages. (Al-Kasimi M.Ali. 1977,25)

Our Dictionary seems to serve only the purpose of comprehension because it does not provide the necessary information such as the morphological and the syntactic behavior of the words.

With Al Mawrid bilingual dictionary, one can understand the words but not necessarily produce correct sentences.

A dictionary which intends to help speakers of Arabic in both comprehension and production of English sentences should be **bidirectional**; it means it must have two parts: Arabic-English and English-Arabic.

(4) Obviously, our dictionary is intended for the human user because **it does not include grammatical information at all which by the way constitutes one of the greatest weak points of Al Mawrid dictionary**

(5) Our dictionary is descriptive rather than historical (prescriptive).

(6) Our dictionary is a lexical dictionary because it does not include encyclopedic information such as names of persons ,places,and literary works as well as culture terms .Nevertheless ,it

should be mentioned that inclusion of such information can be of great help for the English user of our dictionary because it would make him acquainted with the Arabic culture.

(7) Our dictionary is a general dictionary because it attempts to cover the whole lexicon of the language whereas a special dictionary deals with one sector of the lexicon.

Finally , we can draw this “**defining**” **chart of Al Mawrid Arabic –English dictionary:**

Al Mawrid Arabic English Dictionary purposes			
√	Source language speaker	Target language speaker	√
	Literary language	Spoken language	
√	Production	Comprehension	√
	Human user	Machine translation	
	Historical	descriptive√	
√	General	Special	
√	Lexical	Encyclopedic	

Purpose:

Probably the most serious shortcoming of our dictionary is that the purpose of its compilation and the readership it is addressing is not very clear in the mind of its compiler

The usual bilingual dictionary is made up of two vocabularies, one for each language, and **its primary purpose is to help the user in his task of translating from one of the languages to the other.** (Kemp, Malone. P:111)

The introduction does not specify a class or type of users even if it clearly addresses the educated bi-lingual Arab scholar or scholar of Arabic.

The introduction (front matter) specifies special characteristics of the dictionary. These are:

(a) The inclusion of a greater than usual number of commonly used scientific and technical terms in all fields.

E.g.

Gymnospermae	عاريات البزور: طائفة من النباتات
Herbivora, herbivores	عاشبات: آكلات العشب
retill	عبوة: منتج معد لاعادة ملاً جهاز ما
scotoma	عثمة: بقعة مظلمة في المجال البصري

(b) The discarding of some obsolete words or certain obsolete meanings of the same word.

For example under the headword عَرَضَ We can find

But not : عرض من سلعته

عرض سعرا ، عرض جندا، عرض متباها

That we find in the Arabic-Arabic dictionary meaning: عارض بها

فأعطى سلعة و أخذ أخرى¹

(c) The addition of new meanings to already existing classical items.

(d) The splitting of the headword into several entries if the meanings are quite different (i.e. **homophones-homographs**) and each section of the different meanings of the word is followed by a definition.

1. ابن المنظور. لسان العرب. دار احياء التراث العربي. مؤسسة التاريخ. الطبعة الثانية.

E.g.

To go back to	: عاد الى
To relate to	: عاد الى
To balance	: عادل
To neutralize	: عادل
Sweat, perspiration	: عَرَقَ
arrack	: عَرَقَ مشروب مسكر

(e) The compiler also claims to have differentiated very explicitly between one meaning of the entry and another.

E.g.

Buttonhole	: عروة (الثوب): ما يدخل فيه الزر
Loop, noose	: عروة (الحبل): حلقة ، أنشودة
Ear, handle, tab	: عروة (الابريق): مقبض
Tie, bond	: عروة (الصدافة): رابطة
Evergreen	: عروة: دائم الخضرة

(f) He says that he has paid special attention to **idioms**, and to have given examples of use including quotations : (in fact very few can be found in the body of the dictionary).

Idioms are very difficult to comprehend for foreign language learners, unfortunately ,they are likely to search for them in a bilingual dictionary a few times before being discouraged at the generally spotty coverage. They are difficult to treat adequately in a reasonable amount of space.

Idioms fall entirely within the province of the dictionary, because the meaning of each idiom is an isolated fact which cannot be inferred from the meaning of the words of which the idiom is made up: a dictionary which explains the meaning of (do) without explaining that of (How do you do?) is useless as a guide of the meanings of words. (Sweet, Henry.1964, 139)

E.g.

To retrace one's steps, go back (the way one has come from), turn back : عاد أدراجه :

The situation returned to normal : ادت المياه الى مجاريها :

One more characteristic of our dictionary is that it follows the **alphabetical order** that has got the merit of being fixed and uniform.

E.g.

عائق
عائل
عائلة

But the problem is asked if it would not be better to use: **root classifications** so that we will find

No difficulty in finding such apparently disconnected words as مسلم, إسلام, سلام under the common root سلم with a few cross-references for disguised and irregular forms **this method works very well**, and **effects a great saving of space**. (Sweet, Henry.1964.p151)

The danger of Al Mawrid Arabic English dictionary approach is that:

“Its sustained use by learners may result in their indifference to, and ultimately ignorance of ,the roots, and that the great productivity of the derivational system may be lost for those learners” (Kharma, Nayef..P.33)

The items that occur between **brackets** are used for clarification:

عالة (على غيره)

Content:

Most of the headwords of our bilingual dictionary appertain to the classical Arabic. Some **specialized terminology** has been introduced, for instance:

Absurdism	عبثانية، عبثية: فلسفة العبث
Apoda	عديمات للأرجل: رتبة من الحيوانات البحرية
Decapoda	عشاريات الأقدام: رتبة من اللافقاريات

The terms that appertain to specific fields occur as follows:

عبث [فلسفة]

عاجل [قضاء]

عادل: حايد [كيمياء و كهرباء]

We also can find some **neologisms**:

Nudist	عُرِّي: مناد بمذهب العري أو ممارسه
Osteoid	عظمانى: شبيه بالعظم

Plural forms are sometimes provided:

عاطفة (عواطف)

If a learner of Arabic was to use Al Mawrid Arabic English dictionary, he would think that there are no **abbreviations** or **acronyms** in the Arabic language for they have not been used as word entries at all.

One other problem is the **lacking of phonetic transcription**,

“Bilingual dictionaries have many important functions. Their main one is that they serve the purpose of translation. One another function is that they are “**a guide to the pronunciation**” (Malone, Kemp .p.111)

Nowhere in our dictionary do we find a guide to pronunciation. Even in the front matter ,there is no mention of it. A very strange matter! Is not Arabic language pronounced? Information on this subject normally appears both in the front matter and in the individual entries in the body of the book

In **the front matter** it is customary to outline **the spelling systems** of the two languages, that is the relation between the written and the spoken units (Malone, Kemp p.112)

No mention has been done of **derivations, inflections or affixation**.

In the front matter one may find a list of the commoner suffixes ‘less often, of prefixes too’ and **an outline of the inflectional system of each language dealt with in the dictionary**” (Malone, Kemp . p.112)

The sources of the dictionary have been mentioned in the front matter: Monolingual dictionaries, Bilingual dictionaries (Arabic-English, Arabic-French, English-Arabic, French-Arabic), Classical dictionaries such as Al Muhit, Thesaurus, Arabic

The **etymology** of head words is not mentioned. it seems at that level of our analysis that

Al Mawrid Arabic English dictionary is more like a list of two different vocabularies than a real dictionary,

“A bilingual dictionary may include historical information, such as the etymology of entry words, words marked obsolete, etc., dialectal information, as words marked local or regional or otherwise restricted in currency, and stylistic information, as distinctions in level of usage. In the conventional bilingual dictionary the entries are devoted to words and phrases, chiefly individual words but with some attention to phrases as well.” (ibid)

If Al Mawrid Arabic English dictionary is to become a dictionary for production as well as a dictionary for comprehension, it should provide information about words like: **the parts of speech**.

“Dictionaries in the nature of the case deal little with syntax, but it is customary to include in the entries **a classification of the entry-forms by parts of speech**, and here structural linguistics can have something to say.” (Malone, Kemp.118)

In Al Mawrid dictionary parts of speech are given but in very few cases:

عالم (اسم)

عالم (صفة)

Polysemous Headwords

In our dictionary we find some entry words with **no discrimination in meaning**. For example the entry word: **is given 25 translations with nothing to indicate which meaning of this headword each of the English words translates.**

عطل

To break down; to leave without work, leave idle; to disable, incapacitate, maim ,cripple; to suspend, ban temporarily, stop or cancel temporarily, make temporarily inactive; to dispense with (a law , etc); to disrupt, interrupt ;to paralyze, neutralize, counteract, frustrate, thwart, put out of action; to deactivate, inactivate, make inactive or ineffective; to defuse (a bomb , a mine, a crisis, etc.)

A kind of negative discrimination is provided by punctuation: the commas separating synonyms or near synonyms and the semi-colons separating words of more or less different meanings. The English-speaking user of an entry like this will probably find it adequate enough. He has found the word in specimen 4 in an Arabic context and wants to know what it means. As a native speaker of English, he is likely to know the meanings of the English and should therefore be able to find the appropriate

meaning for this context. If he is translating into English, he should be able to choose the appropriate word or even to supply a word which is more appropriate than any of those listed in the entry. The Arabic-speaking user, however, would refer to this entry in order to express himself in English. He has a particular meaning of the entry word in specimen 4 in mind and wants to find the appropriate English word for that meaning. Since English is a foreign language for him, he is much less likely to know the meanings of the English words in the entry, and he therefore needs information on how these English words differ in meaning. If he is translating an Arabic text into English, he still needs this information.

In our bilingual dictionary, we find some **definitions** :

Bad, ill

عائر: سيء, منحوس

**Stumbling, tripping,
tumbling; stumbler**

عائر: من يزل أو يسقط

Finder; finding

عائر: واجد, من يعثر على شيء

For the entry word: عارض one of the translations of the Arabic headword is English accident, and this is accompanied by the definition:

حادث طارئ

In fact, **what is needed is enough information to distinguish one meaning of the Arabic headword from any of its other meanings.**

Most of the time, such meaning discriminations are given in the form of **synonyms**, as for example,

Disgusted, nauseated ; averse, loath

عائف: مشمئزٌ من، كاره لـ

The Arabic headword عامر is given 17 translations with 5 synonyms to discriminate the different meanings of the entry word

Inhabited, populated; populous	عامر: أهل، مسكون
Flourishing, thriving, prosperous, booming, full of life	عامر: مزدهر
Ample, abundant; full	عامر: وافر
Big, large, sizable, huge, substantial, considerable	عامر: كبير
Often the discrimination is in the form of a context word or phrase. For example	عدّة المرأة
Under the entry	عدّة

“To provide adiscrimination for every target word would increase the size of a dictionary considerably and would also make the longer entries more unwieldy” (Williams.Edwin. 205-206)

Providing examples:

-Illustrative examples:

Just few examples have been provided with entry words to illustrate their meanings which can be regarded as a deplorable thing. Rohi Al Baalbaki gave examples, so that the reader will know in which context one can use a particular word because the words can get a special meaning in a special context. Sentences from the Quran have been used to illustrate the meanings of the words, the Quran being an authentic text.

E.g.

عاز:

أعوذ بالله من

أعوذ بالله أن اكون من المستهزئين

قل أعوذ برب الفلق

- Pictorial illustrations:

There are no pictorial illustrations provided in the dictionary.

The compiler of the dictionary has to give special attention to examples, because words cannot be understood out of their context. At best, they will be presented before their equivalents and with their translations.

Choices are difficult to make, e.g. between ‘invented’ (but often artificial) and ‘authentic’ (but often obscure) examples, and compromises are unavoidable.

Collocations:

Sets of collocates of most of the words are provided,

E.g.

عاتق : أخذ على عاتقه (ألقى، وقع)

There is no mention of **linguistic usage** as : “formal”, “informal”, “poetic”, neither do the dictionary use **social labels** as: “derogatory”, “offensive”.

Appendices:

There are no appendices providing commonly sought information about the target language culture as: currency, weights and measures, thermometer system, lists of major educational and political institutions and maps.

Format: The dictionary has an eye-pleasing and attractive format. The entry words are provided in red color and in bold face.

The pages are well printed and typographical errors are kept to the minimum.

The question of translation equivalence.

The main aim of the bilingual dictionary is to provide equivalents in the target language, indeed “One of the perennial problems in the compilation of bilingual dictionaries lies in the management of translation equivalence” (Hartmann. R.R.K.p.23)

Different strategies are used to reach translation equivalence, the bilingual dictionary being in fact a translation dictionary. **"Equivalent discrimination is more important than sense division"** (Williams Edwin.p.246)

An equivalent in the target language very often can be found, but there are differences caused by the different cultural connections. In general, Rohi Al Baalbaki provided the equivalents of the Arabic words in English by giving the exact translation of the lexemes or by using paraphrase as we have already seen in previous parts of our analysis. We can mention the use of superordinates in some cases when there is no exact equivalence of the original lexeme. The aim is “to coordinate with the lexical units of one language those lexical units of another language which are equivalent in their lexical meaning”. (Zgusta 1971:294. in Hartmann. R.R.K.p.24)

Comparison between Al Mawrid Arabic English dictionary and Hans Wehr dictionary “a Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic”:

Hans Wehr dictionary is “the best and the most reliable [work] produced so far” (Kharma, Nayef. P.22), that is why we tried to compare Al Mawrid Arabic English dictionary to it.

Major differences between the two dictionaries:

Hans Wehr dictionary aims both comprehension and production while Al Mawrid aims comprehension only. Nevertheless, the latter does not specify its users while the former does.

One major problem in al Mawrid is that there is no indication of pronunciation for no valuable reason!

Al Mawrid does rely on a corpus while Hans Wehr does,

“a corpus of 45000 citations was collected from carefully selected modern Arabic sources” (ibid)

There are just few phrasal verbs and collocations mentioned, and taboo-obscene items are completely omitted.

Grammatical information such as verb forms, syntactic restrictions is not included in Al Mawrid.

One very positive point with Al Mawrid is that it includes antonyms in some cases, while Hans Wehr does not.

Another excellent feature of Al Mawrid is its format i.e headwords in red bold face letters.

Both dictionaries do not include encyclopedic information, both need to be improved in this sense.

One thing that has to be mentioned is that Al Mawrid includes Hans Wehr dictionary in the list of its references.

Conclusion:

We conclude that in order to become an excellent bilingual dictionary ,Al Mawrid Arabic English dictionary should be a dictionary which first “captures the meaning”, then “hunts for equivalents” and finally “gives examples” without forgetting to give the necessary grammatical information.

You want to make a dictionary that will be concise but exhaustive; exact while not exacting; linguistically adequate for both languages, yet uncluttered with trivial details. Sooner or later you have to concentrate on certain goals and forget others. Each dictionary represents some unique compromise, useful- we hope – for some purposes and frustrating for others. (Martin.samuel. In Householder and Saporta.p.153).

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