

Zughoul, Muhammad Raji (2007). *Studies in Contemporary Arabic-English Socio-Linguistics*. Hamada Establishment for University Studies and Publishing and Distribution. Irbid-Jordan, pp. 582. \$ 15.00. ISBN 9789957491208

S *udies in Contemporary Arabic-English Socio-Linguistics* is a collection of 16 papers that are the product of “years of research, teaching, academic discussions, heated debates and symposia”. (9) The book aims at contributing to the development of Arabic as it sheds light on Arabic-English sociolinguistics, a field that is in need of serious scholastic contributions. The book falls into six sections, and though they differ in their degrees of relevance to translation studies, five of them at least are of main concern for translation theorists.

The first section concerns the problem of diaglossia in Arabic. The first paper defines diaglossia and refers to the intimate relation between Arabic and Islam on the one hand, and Arabic and Arab nationalism on the other hand. By establishing such a background on Arabic diaglossia, the author then moves in the second paper to discussion on diaglossia and literary translation. He examines the translation of excerpts of different text types into two different varieties of Arabic. The author has found that the use of the wrong variety in translating a text may fail in the transfer of meaning and may lead to the distortion of the message.

The third section is made of three papers on language contact and lexical interference. From a contrastive sociolinguistic perspective, the author examines language contact between English and Arabic and the lexical interference of English into Arabic. The first paper examines the influence of English on the spoken Arabic of the Eastern province in Saudi Arabia, which has been selected because this country saw the first instances of contact between Arabic and English in the early days of oil prospecting in the Arab World. The author analyses lexical interference of English in Arabic newspapers. He builds an inventory of borrowed lexical items with a frequency count for each of the borrowed items covering various fields. The writer pinpoints to two general stands taken by scholars vis-à-vis the use of loan words in journalistic Arabic. The ‘purists’ condemn borrowing, maintaining that “Arabic is capable of generating the needed terminology through its internal morphological processes” (288). On the other hand, there are scholars who encourage the introduction of foreign terms into Arabic on the grounds that this practice has enriched Arabic. The author assumes a neutral position and recommends more relevant studies to be carried out in different Arabic countries.

The papers in the fifth section present some ideas on translation and computer processing. The first paper is a proposal for the development of computer-based Arabic corpora. Pointing out that Arabic has lagged

behind in the field of corpus linguistics, the writer outlines the historical development of non-Arabic corpora and carefully tackles their main purposes. The writer says that a corpus can be exploited by Arabic linguists “for research in linguistic theory, natural language processing, lexicography, automatic parsing of morphology and syntax, semantics and pragmatics, speech synthesis and speech recognition, language variation, and language learning/teaching/testing” (438). He recommends the creation of two corpora, one for classical Arabic and the other for Modern Standard Arabic. He explains that the latter variety is the product of modern Arab creative writers, men of letters and academicians. The writer also highlights the main technicalities of corpus building including interface, machine readability and corpus tagging.

The second paper in this section surveys work done on Arabic-English-Arabic machine translation from its very beginnings in the 1950s until the present day. The survey covers the approaches used for developing machine translation and the most available software packages, focusing on the work of some major Western companies as well as on the pioneering work of Sakhr, a leading company in English-Arabic-English machine translation. The paper acknowledges the failure of most machine-translation programmes in Arabic, but anticipates a brighter future for Arabic in machine translation particularly in view of the political and technological changes in the Arab world.

The third paper is about online machine translation between Arabic and English. The paper seeks to evaluate some online Arabic/English translation tools. The goal is to see if the online translation tools can honestly and accurately convey the message into the target language. A multi-level analysis has been used. This type of analysis focuses on “lexical and grammatical ambiguity, syntactic structure and semantic transfer from the source into the target language” (486). The study found that current online tools are still unable to give satisfactory output.

The last section of the book is on lexical semantics and it includes two papers. The first paper uses a descriptive and contrastive lexical semantic account of English and Arabic terms and expressions which depict the various intervals of the day. It was found that Arabic is richer than English in terms which express events.

The other paper points out that Arab learners of English, regardless of their level of proficiency, suffer when dealing with collocational sequences. The paper intended to determine the extent to which university English language majors can use English collocations properly. The findings confirmed the writers' hypothesis that Arab learners of English at all levels face difficulty with English collocations and discuss the role of the native language in foreign language production as well as the need for explicit instructional focus on collocation in schools and universities.

The book is inspiring and thought-provoking. The papers complement each other to serve the establishment of a good background for Arabic/English comparative linguists. They also tackle some of the latest trends in corpus linguistics and machine translation, which makes of this volume a very valuable benchmark for further relevant research, even though the findings will have to be revisited due to the rapid development of translation technology.

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