

A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND ARABIC PLURAL FORMATION

تحليل طرق بناء الجمع في اللغة الانكليزية والعربية

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مستخلص:

من المسلم به في الدراسات المقارنة ان هدف هذه الدراسات بشكل عام هو كشف اوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين التراكيب القواعدية في اللغات قيد البحث وهذا سيؤدي حتماً الى تحسين تدريس اللغة الاجنبية وكذلك الترجمة وخاصة الترجمة الالية والتصنيف اللغوي.

وتهدف الدراسة الحالية الى تحليل طرق بناء الجمع في اللغة الانكليزية والعربية وتهدف من خلال المقارنة الصرفية والامثلة الى كشف مجالات الاختلاف والتشابه في كلا اللغتين.

It has been axiomatically assumed in contrastive linguistics that contrastive analyses generally aim at revealing the discrepancies and congruencies between particular grammatical structures of the languages under consideration and thus ultimately contribute to the improvement of foreign language teaching, (Snook 1971). They can also make useful and substantial contribution to translational linguistics, especially to machine translation and linguistics typology.

The present contrastive analysis of plural formation in English and Arabic, however, tries to reveal through morphological contrastivity and exemplification areas of discrepancies and congruencies of plural formation in both languages.

Introduction

Plural formation is a sub-category of noun formation which is, in tune, a sub-field of word formation (Bauer, 1983). All are branches of lexical morphology. The word morphology consists of two word- elements: morph, which means ‘form and – ology, which means ‘the study of’. (Mathews, 1972). Morphology has two main branches: inflectional morphology and derivational morphology. Inflectional morphology is a study of how words change their form in indicate number, person, tense, etc.. plural formation is an indication of number which is divided into two parts in English: singular and plural while in Arabic the category dual is also included within number, besides singular and plural.

The present study discusses plural categories in English and Arabic and the process of plural formation in the two languages.

Material:

The material used in the analysis is based on some written texts that will appear in the bibliography.

Transliteration is provided for the Arabic material used for illustration in this study. It is taken from the (Holy Qura’n) English translation of the meanings and commentary, king Fahd Complex (1989).

The transliteration is listed below:

consonants	example	English translation
ʔ	ʔamal	hope
b	bab	door
t	tamr	date
th	thawb	dress
j	jamal	camel
h	har	hot
kh	khawf	fear
d	drab	road
z	zayl	tail
r	raf	shelf
z	zahra	rose
s	salam	peace
sh	shams	sun
s	sawt	sound
dh	dhaw?	light
t	tul	length
z	zulm	injustice
ʿ	ʿayn	eye
g	gam	clouds
f	fam	mouth
g	galam	pencil
k	kalam	speech
l	layl	night
m	mastara	ruler
n	nahar	day
h	hiya	she
w	wahid	one
short vowels		
a	darasa	studied
i	miftah	key
u	dub	bear
long vowels		
a	sala	flow
i	mil	mile
u	nur	light

Plural categories

English grammarians classify plural into: regular and irregular.

Regular plurals

Regular plurals are predictable by adding the suffix 's' or 'es' (Quirk, et al, 1986, 305). The suffix 's' which is added to nouns to form regular plurals has three allomorphs, 'z', 's', and 'iz', determined by the last sound of the word to which the ending is attached, i.e. it is phonologically determined (Nasr, 1984, 67).

Some grammarians, like Praninskas (1957), have tackled plural formation through letters, i.e. the final letter determines whether to add 's' or 'es'. The researcher supports the first opinion according to the last sound as it is more practical in some nouns as in 'epoch', one may add 'es' according to the ending letter and this is wrong as 'ch' here is pronounced /k/ and takes 's' only not 'es',

Epoch → epochs / ... ks/

there are considerable spelling notes that might be taken into consideration. They are as follows:

1. Nouns ending in 'o' have plurals with 's' or 'es':

a. Nouns pluralized with 's' where the final 'o' is preceded by a vowel or a consonant, e.g

Radio → radios, 200 → 200s, kilo → kilos

b. Nouns with 'es', e.g

hero → heroes, echo → echoes

also: embargo, veto, tomato Etc.

c. Nouns pluralized with both 's' or 'es', e.g

cargo → cargos (es), motto → mottos (es)

2. a. nouns ending in 'y' preceded by a consonant, change the 'y' into 'i' and add 'es', e.g

lady → ladies, story → stories

but only 's' is added when the 'y' is preceded by a vowel, e.g.

valley → valleys, donkey → donkeys

- b. Nouns ending in 'quy' change the 'y' into 'i' and then add 'es', e.g

soliloquy → soliloquies

- c. Proper nouns ending in 'y', add 's' only e.g,

the two Germanys, the little Marys.

3. Nouns ending in 'f' change it into 'v' and add 'es' e.g,

Leaf → leaves, wife → wives

The same is with the following nouns:

Life, knife, wolf, shelf, thief, calf, loaf, half.

- b. other nouns ending in 'f' take the suffix 's' only e.g,

cliff → cliffs, roof → roofs

- c. Some nouns have both forms, e.g,

scarf → scarfs 'ves', handkerchief → handkerchief 'ves'

Irregular Plural

Irregular plurals are unpredictable. The following nouns such as: analysis, sheep, curriculum, foot, goose, woman ... etc, have no specific rules, but one can classify them under the following headings.

1. Mutation (a change of vowel)

The following nouns are formed by mutation, e.g,

Man → men, woman → women,

Goose → geese, foot → feet,

Tooth → teeth, mouse → mice

2. The 'en' plurals

These nouns have 'en' suffix added to the end, e.g.,

Child → children (here 'r' is added)

Ox → oxen

Brother → brethren (used in a special sense which means a fellow member of religious society, otherwise regular plural) (Eckersley & Eckersley, 1981, 28).

3. Zero plurals

They are also called 'no plural ending', others refer to them as ??? allomorph which means the absence of the suffix 's' (Stageberge, 1977), hence plurals have the same form in both singular and plural. e.g.,

One sheep, five sheep

Thus, (Quirk, et al 1986) distinguish three types of the zero plurals:

a. Animal names:

Generally, animal names are regular, e.g.,

Cat → cats, dog → dogs, crab → crabs

Some animal names have both forms, regular and zero plural, e.g.,

Fish 'es', antelope 's'

And others have zero plural form, e.g.

One sheep, five sheep, one bison, ten bison

b. Nationality Nouns

These nouns end in ' _ ese' and have zero plural, e.g.,

Japanese, Lebanese, as in

There are ten Japanese in your class.

One Lebanese was injured and two Lebanese were killed.

Number and Measurement Words

These words have unchanged plurals, e.g,

Two dozen eggs, three hundred pounds,

Two gross of pencils

But these words can be pluralized when they have no numeral in front of them, e.g.

Dozens of eggs, hundreds of pounds.

Nouns as Singular or Plural

Some nouns can be treated as singular or plural, e.g.,

Barracks: this or these barracks are wide

Series: he gave a series of lectures about bird watching.

There have been several series of programs on T. V.

Also species, works, data

Singular Nouns with Plural 's' Ending

Some nouns which end in -ics are singular, e.g.,

Physics is a difficult subject.

Statistics is the study of probability.

But sometimes, some of these nouns can be used in plural, e.g.,

Mathematics are sometimes difficult to do.

Other nouns of this type are the followings:

Measles, mumps, rickets, billiards, darts, dominoes, draughts
.... Etc.

Foreign plurals

English is full of words of foreign origins. The great deal is of latin and Greek origins, other are of French, Italian, Spanish, Arabic ... etc. this shows the great readily acceptance of English in absorbing the new vocabularies (Eckersley & Eckersley, 1981, 431).

The following are most of the origins of the foreign words, though there is a great tendency nowadays to make them regular (Thomson & Martinet, 1984, 11).

a. Latin Origin

These words will be tackled according to their endings:

1. Nouns ending in ‘_us’ become ‘i’ in the plural, e.g.,

Stimulus → stimuli, locus → loci

Other words have different forms in the plural, e.g.,

Corpus → corpora or corpuses

Genus → genera

Some have regular forms, e.g.,

Bonus → bonuses, cactus → cactuses

2. Nouns ending in ‘a’ becomes ‘_ae’ in the plural, e.g.,

Alumna → alumnae, larva → larvae

Other are regular, e.g.,

Area → areas, formula → formulas

3. Nouns ending in ‘um’ becomes ‘a’ in the plural, e.g.,

Bacterium → bacteria, erratum → errata

Other nouns have regular forms, e.g.,

Album → albums, premium → premiums

Museum → museums

4. Nouns ending in 'ex' or 'ix' becomes 'ices' e.g.,

Index → indices, matrix → matrices

Codex → codices

Nouns of Greek origin

i) Nouns ending in '_is' the plural becomes 'es', e.g.,

Basis → bases

Analysis → analyses

ii) Words ending in '_on' becomes 'a', e.g.,

Criterion → criteria

Phenomenon → phenomena

Other are regular, e.g.,

Electron → electrons, neutron → neutrons

Nouns of Italian Origin

Nouns ending in 'o' becomes 'i' in the plural, e.g.,

Tempo → tempi

Soprano → soprano

And some take 's' in the plural, e.g.,

Solo → solos

Nouns of Arabic origin

English is rich with words of Arabic origin. These words have been neutralized and become English, and accepted its rules. Words like: sugar, coffee. They have no plural forms in English and they are considered uncountable. The followings are examples of words from Arabic:

Caliph → caliphs

Durra → (uncountable)

Magazine → magazines

Jar → jars

Nouns of Hebrew Origin

Nouns of Hebrew origin are the following:

Kibbutz → kibbutzia

Cherub → cherubs

Compounds

Compounds are nouns which consist of more than one base. Generally, they are treated as regular plurals (Quirk et al, 1986, 313), e.g.,

Assistant director → assistant directors

Close up → close ups

But:

Passer-by → passers-by, runner- up → runners-up

In other compounds, the first element (noun) is pluralized, e.g.,

Father – in – law → fathers – in – law

Notary public → notaries public

Man servant → men servant

Collective Nouns

They can be singular or plural in meaning, (Stageberg, 1977, 139), and accordingly the verbs concord with the nouns, e.g.,

The family is sitting at dinner

The family are gathering there.

Whereas police, clergy, public are always plural nouns, e.g.,

The police have arrested the thief.

Nouns with no plural forms

Generally, most abstract and material nouns are not used in the plural form as they are uncountable, (Eckersley & Eckersley, 1981, 32), e.g.,

Truth, courage, beauty, glass, water, bread ... etc.

Also the following nouns are always singular (Thomson and Martient, 1984, 10), e.g.,

Knowledge, advice, furniture, news, luggage ... etc.

Plurals with no singular nouns

Nouns like: classes, trousers, shoes, pajamas are always plural.

Forms of Address

The plural of 'Mr. Smith' is 'Mr. Smiths' (two people with that name).

Messrs (plural of mister) is chiefly used in the names of firms as shown in the following example:

Messrs Smith and Brown Ltd.

The plural of 'Miss Smith' can be

Either the two Misses Smith

Or the two Miss Smiths.

In Arabic, plural formation is not confined to nouns only but comprises adjectives. Therefore, nouns and adjectives are the only word categories that can undergo the plural process.

The essential point which deserves mentioning is that Arabic has high ability for derivation which is one of its distinct feature (Shaheen, 1985, 32).

Old and contemporary grammarians classify plurals into two categories: regular plural which is called (salim), i.e. ‘sound’ and irregular which is called (taksir), i.e. ‘broken’.

What is noticeable is the variety of plural forms, i.e. one can find more than one plural form for a noun.

Variety of Plural

Grammarians, Arabic and Western, like Al Baydhawy, AS Seyuty, Guyard, Renan and others, have tried to account for this phenomenon.

Al-Seyuty considered variety as ‘a bad use of language and he added ‘it is not widespread in the language but it is restricted to certain words. Al-Baydhawy (1988), states that the plural formation concept is considered as ‘an addition in meaning which depends on the addition in structure’.

As –Samerai (1983), argues that plural variety is caused by the variety of dialects which existed among Arabic tribes that lived in different places of Arabia, and the Holy Qura’n mentions these variable plural forms in many places and occasions purposely to bring about the required meaning in an eloquent and perfect manner.

Sibaweih (1983, 192), mentions that some Arabic tribes (Tameem) soften some letters in their utterances of some vowels, e.g. the plural of (himar) donkey is (humur). Tameem soften it to (humr) without the second vowel (u).

Other pluralize (jabal) ‘a mountain’ as (ajbul) instead of (jibal). The Holy Qura’n chooses two variable plural nouns for ‘donkeys’.

- (i) Domestic donkeys: ‘and (he has created) horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride and as an adornment ...’ (AN-Nahl, verse, 8), here, (al-hamir) ‘donkeys are domestic.
- (ii) Wild donkeys: ‘As if they were frightened asses’ (Al-Muddather, verse: 50- 51).

The two donkeys are for one singular noun (himar) = a donkey

Moreover, plural forms in Arabic indicate either paucity or multiplicity. Generally, sound plurals and four patterns of broken plural show paucity and the reset show multiplicity, e.g.

‘And if all tree on earth were pens and the ocean (was ink), with seven oceans? (?abhur) behind it ...’ (Surat Luqman, verse No. 27).

‘When the oceans [al-bihar] are suffered to burst forth’ (Surat Al-Infitar, verse No. 3).

The singular noun ‘al-bahr’ = an ocean is pluralized in two variable plurals: ‘?al-bihar’ = oceans shows multiplicity and ‘? Abhr’ = oceans shows paucity.

Accordingly, one concludes that mentioning the variety of plurals in the Holy Qura’n and in Arabic is on purpose and considered a distinctive feature of this language.

Plural Formation in Arabic:

Plural is a noun that indicates more than two by adding a suffix to the end of the singular, or by a change in the form or by a change in the pronunciation of the singular. (Qabawah, 1994, 190) e.g.

Mudarris → mudarrism = teachers (un) is a suffix followed the singular (mudarris).

Rajul → rijal = men

A change in the structure of the singular word.

? asad → ? usud = lions

A change in the pronunciation of the singular or by using diacritics.

Types of Plural:

There are two main types of plural in Arabic:

1. Sound plural
2. Broken plural

1. Sound plural

It can also be called regular plural as it follows a definite rule. It is defined as the noun whose structure of the singular stays sound (unchanged) when it is made plural, and takes a suffix to its end (Qabawah, 1994, 190).

Sibaweih (1983) and Ibn Ya'eesh (n.d.) state that sound plural indicates paucity.

Sound plural is of two types:

a- Masculine sound plural

It is the noun that keeps its singular sound when made plural, and it indicates more than two masculine things by adding the following suffixes:

Waw & nun in the predicative [al-raf?] case, and ya? & nun in the accusative and genitive cases.

i.e. masculine plural nouns are syntactically determined. But not all nouns follow the masculine sound plural rules. Certain conditions must be available in the singular noun to be made masculine sound plural. These conditions are the following:

- (i) The singular should be masculine proper noun for persons e.g., Ali, Salim ... etc., or free of being compound noun, e.g. 'Abdullah', or free of the feminine 't' as in Talhat, and free of any dual marker '?alif & nun like Hamdan or plural marker 'waw & nun' as in 'Khaldun' (Ibn Aqeel, 1968, 60).
- (ii) The singular adjective should be an adjective of a masculine noun, e.g. (mukhlis) = an honest man. So this adjective can be plural by adding the suffix 'waw & nun' to

its end in the predicative case, and 'ya? & nun' in the accusative and genitive cases. Therefore, there will be:

Mukhlis → mukhlisun and mukhlisin = honest men.

- (i) The singular adjective should not be of the pattern 'fa?la', e.g. hamra?' = red and 'fa'la', e.g., 'sakra' = drunken men, because these adjectives cannot pluralized by adding the suffixes to their ends. And the singular adjective should not be the kind that matches male and female, like (shuja') = brave man or woman.

The Plural of Compounds

The compounds must be masculine, and proper nouns of persons. There are three types of compounds:

- a. Genitive Compounds:** in this case the first element is pluralized, e.g.

(Abdullah) in the predicative case, and

(Abidullah) in the accusative and genitive.

- b. Predicative Compounds:** these types are pluralized by adding the prefix (zawu) in front of the compound, e.g.

(ta ? abbatasharan) = a name of a person → (zawu ta? Abbatsharan) = in the predicative case and (? Awi ta? A bbat sharan) = in the accusative and genitive cases.

- c. Mixed Compound:** these types are pluralized in the same way as the type in (b), e.g.

(sibaweih) = a famous Arabic grammarian → (zawusibaweih) in the predicative, and (zawisibaweiih) in the accusative and genitive cases.

There are some nouns, which are treated morphologically, as masculine sound plurals. They are the nouns that end in 'u' or 'un' (Ibn Aqeel, 1964, 64). e.g.

1. (?Ulu) = owners of

2. Numbers that have the 'nu' end, e.g.
(ushrun) = twenty, (thalathun) = thirty
3. (sunun) = years
4. (zaidun) = a name of male person
5. (?abun) = fathers

b)Feminine Sound Plural

it is plural whose singular stays sound (unchanged) when it is pluralized by adding the suffix (?alif ta?). This type of suffix can be applied to the following:

1. Every singular, masculine (proper) of feminine noun that ends in feminine 't', e.g.
(nazra) → (nazrat) = looks (n.)
(shajarah) → (shajarat) = trees
- There are some exceptions in which the plural is irregular, such as
(shat) → (shiyah) = many sheep
(?amat) → (?umam) = nations
2. Any feminine, proper nouns for women, e.g.
(hind) → (hidat) = a name of a woman
(zainab) → (zainabat) = a name of a woman
3. A feminine adjective that ends in 't' or follows the pattern 'fu'la', e.g.
(fahima) → (fahimat) = educated women
(‘uzma) → (uzmayat) = great

The following adjectives can be pluralized into feminine sound plural and broken plural, e.g.

(hamil) → (hamilat) or (hawamil) = pregnant

(sibur) → (siburat) or (sibr) = patient women

4. The inanimate male adjectives are pluralized as feminine sound plural, e.g.

(ʔanhur jariyat) = flowing rivers

Here the adjectives 'jariyat' = flowing is an adjective which modifies the inanimate plural noun 'ʔanhur' = rivers

5. Feminine sound plural can also be applied to the local, time and instrument nouns especially where their singulars consist of four letters, e.g.

(majal) → (majalat) = spaces, fields

(sa'ah) → (sa'at) = hours, watches

(mujtama) → (mujtamaat) = societies

(sayarah) → (sayarat) = cars

6. The verbal noun whose letters exceed to four letters, e.g.

(taqsim) → (taqsimat) = divisions

(intikhab) → (intikhabat) = elections

7. Nouns which end in the feminine suffix (aʔ) or (a), e.g.

(sahraʔ) → (sahrawat) = deserts

(shaqra) → (shaqrawat) = blonds

8. Nouns of foreign origin which have not got other plurals, e.g.

(karbun) → (karbunat) = carbon

(radar) → (radarat) = radars

9. The names of Arabic letters and months, e.g.

(ʔalif) → (ʔalifat) = an alphabetical letter

(shawal) → (shawalat) = an Arabic month

10. The irrational nouns which start with – (Ibn) or (Zuʔ), e.g.

(ibn ‘urs) → (banat ‘urs) = weasels

(zu L hijjah) → (zawat? Al hijjah) = an Arabic month

The following nouns have the feminine sound plural forms as they were so heard, e.g.

(bint) → (banat) = girls

(?ukht) → (?akhawat) = sisters

(?umm) → (?ummahat) = mothers

The following nouns are treated as feminine sound plural forms since they end in the suffix (at), e.g.

(?ulat) = owners

(barakat) = a name of man

The verbal nouns cannot be pluralized as they indicate action like verbs. On the other hand, verbal nouns ending in the feminine (t) are pluralized in feminine sound plural,

(shaja’ah) → (shaja’at) = brave doings

(kuramah) → (karamat) = dignity

1. Broken Plural

As – Samerai (1983) argues that broken plural is one of the special properties which Arabic still keeps. Renan (n.d., 342) adds that ‘all semantic languages, except Arabic, haven’t got this plural’.

As – Samerai (1983) accounts for the various patterns of this plural by referring to the variety of Arab dialects. He mentions many examples from the Holy Qura’n, e.g.

(?asir) → (?asra) → (?usara) = prisoners of war

(sakran) → (sakra) → (sakara) = drunken people

Broken plural has raised many controversies about its formation. Some European writers and linguists argue that the ‘affix’ which is added to the singular generates the plural form.

Dillman (n.d., 237), Wright (1862) consider the plural forms as singular nouns implying the meaning of pluralization. These opinions express their point of view though Arabic grammarians consider these plural forms as a feature of Arabic. They have examined the broken plural patterns and concluded that most of them follow definite patterns, e.g.

(?jɗad) = grandfathers.

(?aswar) = fences

(?bwab) = doors

All the above forms are of one pattern which is (?fal), consequently, they have classified them and put them into definite patterns that govern them.

Grammarians, like (AlRadhi, 1982, 89) argue that 'plural forms are not restricted to patterns as they are (heard) from classic Arabs who lived in the Arabia'. The classic Arabic references have classified the broken plural forms into patterns which exceed to twenty-seven patterns.

Sibaweih (1983) delineates these patterns in his book. Broken plural is classified into two categories:

- a. Plural of Paucity
- b. Plural of Multiplicity

Each type will be discussed with its patterns.

a. Plural Paucity

This type of plural indicates the plural which shows the number between one to ten. Thus, it is called paucity' meaning few.

There are four patterns for this type of broken plural:

- a. (?afʷul) – this pattern has the singular noun with the pattern (fa'l), e.g.,
(nafs) → (?anfus) = souls

(wajh) → (?awjuh) = faces

There is another plural for the word (nafs) = soul, which is, (nufus) = souls.

- b. (?afʿal) – this pattern is the plural form of the singular noun which is trilateral and does not follow the previous pattern (?afʿul). e.g.,

(jadd) → (?ajadad) = grandfathers

(sur) → (?aswar) = fences

- c. (?afʿilah) – this pattern is the plural pattern of male nouns (not proper) which have four letters whose third one is a lone vowel (madd), e.g.,

(zaman) → (?zminah) = ages, times

(ʿamud) → (?a ʿmidah) = columns

- d. (fi ʿlah) – this pattern is the plural pattern of the singulars which are of the following patterns:

1. (faʿl), e.g., (shaukh) → (shaykha) = old man

2. (faʿal), e.g., (fata) → (fitya) = juvenility

3. (fu ʿal), e.g., (gulam) → (gulman) = young boys

b. Plural of Multiplicity

It shows the plural counting more than ten. There are many patterns for this type exceeding twenty (Sibaweih, 1983, 567).

In this study, some of the patterns will be tackled since there is no need to that.

1. (fu ʿul) – It is the plural pattern for the singular noun consisting of four letters whose third one is one of the long vowels (a, u, I) (madd), e.g.,

(rasul) → (rusul) = messengers

2. (fu ʿal) – It is the plural pattern of the singular of the pattern (fuʿlah), e.g.,

(gurfah) → (guraf) = rooms

3. (fa ‘alah) and (fu’alah) – They are the plural patterns for the singular nouns of the pattern (fa’il), e.g.,

(khadim) → (khadamah) = servants

(bany) → (bunat) = builders

4. (fa ‘la) – It is the plural pattern for the singular nouns of the pattern (fa’il), e.g.,

(?asir) → (?asra) = prisoners

(maridh) → (mardha) = patients

5. (fi ‘al) – It is the plural pattern for many nouns as in:

(thawb) → (thiyab) = dresses

(‘atshan) → (‘itash) = thirsty men

6. (fu ‘ul) – It is the plural pattern for nouns such as:

(malik) → (muluk) = kings

7. (fi ‘lan) – It is the plural pattern of the nouns such as:

(hut) → (hitan) = whales

(gulam) → (gulman) = boys

8. (fa ‘alil) – It is the plural pattern of nouns such as:

(ferdus) → (faradis) = paradises

9. (mafa ‘il) – It is the plural pattern of nouns such as:

(mal’ab) → (mala ‘ib) = stadiums

(masdar) → (masadir) = sources

10. (fa ‘ala) – It is the plural pattern for:

(sahra?) → (sahara’) = deserts

(azra?) → (azara’) = virgins

11. (fawa ‘il) – It is the plural pattern for these nouns:

(kawkab) → (kawakib) = plants

(shahiq) → (shawahiq) = high places

12. There are few other patterns which are not very common, e.g., (fa ‘alit) as in (afarit) = jinni and (fa ‘alin) as in (tha ‘abin) = snakes.

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns imply plurality and have three cases:

- a. They have no singular derived from the same noun, e.g.,

(nisa?) = women, plural of (?imraza) = a woman

(qawm) = nations, people, plural of (?insan) = a person

- b. They have other plural patterns not mentioned above as in:

(Sahab) = friends, plural of (sahib) = a friend

- c. The same noun is both singular and plural, e.g.,

(walad) = a boy and offspring

Collective nouns can be changed into plural as in:

(qawm) → (?aqwam) = nations

(jaysh) = (juyush) = armies

Also one can make plural of plural, e.g.,

(biyut) → (biyutat) = many families

(rijal) → (rijalat) = many leaders

These plural forms are used to show the hyperbole of multiplicity. These patterns in the case of broken plural.

Zero Plural Morpheme

Zero plural morpheme means the absence of the plural marker (s), e.g.,

One deer → ten deer

Here, numbers or determiners indicate the plural form not the noun itself.

In Arabic, this plural is not existed since most broken plurals follow certain patterns and as a result a change must occur in the form of the noun,

Nouns as singular and plural

Such nouns can be treated as singular or plural, e.g. series is singular though it ends with (s). In Arabic such nouns are not found.

Singular nouns with (s) ending

Nouns like: physics, ethics, end in (s) but they are plural. The same can be found in sound plural, proper nouns, e.g., zeidun, khaldun, Arafat ...etc, where the 'waw nun' ad 'at' of the plural are found.

Discussion of Findings

An attempt has been made in this study to analyze and discuss the plural formation system in English and Arabic to reveal the aspects of similarity and difference. It was found that plural in English involves nouns, pronouns, determiners showing more than one, whereas in Arabic plural formation is restricted to nouns and adjectives, indicating more than two.

Both languages show similarity in the use of suffixes as indicators of pluralization, except in Arabic, prefixes are used with compound nouns, such as (zu) with masculine sound plural and (zat) with feminine sound plural.

In both languages suffixes show plural forms, but there are lexical indications in the reference of these suffixes. In English the suffixes (s) or (es) indicate plural regardless of gender, e.g., (students) are males and females. But in Arabic gender is distinguished by two different suffixes, (un) as in (salihun) = good men, and (at) as in (salihat) = good women.

Also case in Arabic is distinguished by different suffixes (un) for the predicate as in ('amilun) = workers, and (in) as in ('amilin) = workers in the accusative or the genitive cases.

In English adjectives do not take the plural suffix (s) or (es), whereas in Arabic adjectives take the plural suffix as in (sabir) = patient man and (sibirun) = patient men.

Adjectives, in Arabic agree with the nouns in all their cases whether singular, dual and plural.

Both languages have count and non-count nouns. For example (water) is considered non-count in English and can be pluralized. The same is with Arabic. Such nouns, are called as (the generic singular nouns) which indicate littleness and muchness references, e.g.,

Ma? = water, halib = milk ... etc.

These nouns are also called mass nouns. Other nouns are (abstract), such as:

Courage, truth, poverty ... etc.

These nouns are not generally pluralized.

In Arabic, the case is little different. Most of these abstract nouns can be pluralized unless they are verbal nouns, e.g.,

(sudq) = truth or honesty

This word is the verbal noun of the verb (sadaq), so it cannot be pluralized. Concerning the agreement between the plural forms and the numerals, e.g.,

Five pens, twenty pens

In Arabic, agreement occurs only between the numbers from 1 – 10, e.g.,

(sab 'atu muzari 'in) = seven farmers

But:

(sab 'una muzari 'in) = seventy farmers

The first (muzari 'in) is masculine sound plural and the second (muzari 'in) is singular.

The number over ten agrees with the plural noun which comes after the preposition, e.g.,

(sab 'ina mina-l-muzari 'in) = seventy of the farmers

The irregular plural, in English may resemble the term (broken) plural in Arabic respectively.

Zero plural morphemes are existed in English, whereas this kind is not found in Arabic.

Conclusion

An attempt has been made in this paper to analyze and contrast the processes of plural – formation in standard English and modern standard Arabic in order to reveal the aspects of similarity and difference between them and this is hoped that such comparison will be helpful in determining the points of ease and difficulty in learning this subject by Arab students.

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(38)..... A contrastive Analysis of English and Arabic Plural Formation

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