

RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Pluralization of Social Media Loan Terminology in Colloquial Arabic

Reima Al-Jarf

Full Professor of English and Translation Studies, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Corresponding Author: Reima Al-Jarf, E-mail: [reima.al.jarf@gmail.com](mailto:reima.al.jarf@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

Arabic has ancient as well as contemporary loanwords from numerous languages such as English, French, and Turkish that are used as loan words or in code-switches. With the advent of social media, the number of foreign words used in the spoken language is on the rise. This study aimed to find out how social media loan terminology is pluralized in Spoken Arabic and whether there are any pluralization peculiarities that were not detected by prior studies. To identify the plural formation processes followed in each loan term, a sample of 20 students and 5 instructors at the College of Language Sciences, King Saud University participated in the study. The participants verified a 146 social media loan terms to verify the plural form of each. Results showed that 54% of the loan terms in the sample take a Feminine Sound Plural (account اکاونتات /akaynt-a:t/, which is the most productive plural form. In 16% of the loan terms in this category, the final consonants in the stem are geminated before the suffix -a:t when the penultimate vowel in the stem is short as in blogs بلوجات /blogga:t/; clicks كليكات /klikka:t/; stories ستوريات /sto:riyya:t/. In other terms, an /h/ is added to the plural suffix -a:t in stems ending in the long vowel و /u;/as in studios استديوهات /studio-ha:t/. About 22% of the loan terms take a zero plural (voice call; timeline; status; 17.6% have the English plural form ending (followers; threads); only 3% take a Masculine Sound Plural فيسبوكيون /feysbukkiyyu:n/ (\*Facebookers) and 3% have a Broken plural (codes أكواد /?kwa:d/); 3% have two plurals (code كودات /ko"da:t/, أكواد /?akwa:d/; Youtubers اليوتيوبية /yu:tu:bariyya/ & يوتيوبرز /yu:tyu:barz/; and in one loan term, the Feminine Sound Plural is added to the plural form (fans+ -a:t). As in prior studies, the most productive is the Feminine Sound plural as it is the default plural form in most loanwords. Unlike prior studies, this study found two new pluralization processes, adopting the English plural and adding the plural suffix -a:t to the English plural of the loan term. Recommendations for further studies that investigate other types of morphological borrowing in Arabic are given.

### KEYWORDS

Loan words, borrowings, pluralizing loan words, morphological borrowing, social media terminology, pluralizing social media terms, borrowings in Arabic; Feminine Sound Plural in loanwords; borrowed plural forms

### ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 04 December 2023

PUBLISHED: 29 December 2023

DOI: 10.32996/bjal.2023.3.2.6

### 1. Introduction

Lexical borrowing of whole words is a common phenomenon in all languages, such as English, French, Turkish, Farsi, Bahasa, Arabic and other. Specifically Arabic has ancient borrowings from Persian, Roman, Greek, Aramaic, Syriac, Nabataean, Coptic, Ethiopian, Berber, Hindi, Turkish, Negro, Pahlavi, and Indian languages, some of which were phonologically, and morphologically adapted (Arabized), and were even used in the Holy Quran as in سندس استبرق (types of fabric); زرابي (carpet); زمهرير (bitter cold). Arabic also has borrowed full words and acronyms from contemporary languages such as: English, French, Turkish, Farsi, Greek, and others. Those borrowings include full words and acronyms, common words as well as technical terms in various disciplines as in انترنت *internet*, هيدروجين *hydrogen*, اوكسجين *oxygen*, كربون *carbon*, كربوهيدرات *carbohydrates*, بروتين *protein*, هرمون *hormone*, كيلومتر *kilometer*, اينسولين *insulin*, فيتامين *vitamin*, فيدرالي *federal*, بسترة *pasteurization*, انترنت *Internet*, فيسبوك *Facebook*, آيباد *iPad*, كيلوغرام *kilogram*, ميل *mile*, كورونا *Corona*, فايزر *Pfizer*, ليبرالي *Liberal*, تكنوقراط *technocrat*, برلمان *parliament*, استراتيجية *strategy*,

*television* تلفزيون, *film* فيلم, *program* برنامج, *cinema* سينما, *orchestra* أوركسترا, *NASA* ناسا, *UNESCO* اليونسكو and others (Al-Jarf, 2023; Al-Jarf, 2021a; 2011a; Al-Jarf, 1994c; Al-Jarf, 1990).

In the past decade or so, there has been an influx of borrowed lexical items, including social media terminology that are being used in Spoken Arabic dialects especially with the advent of social media. The number of foreign words that are being used in Spoken Arabic is on the rise whether they people are using them in code-switching or as loanwords. Arabic social media users even prefer to use foreign words in their speech and social media posts although Arabic equivalents exist. Some of these loan words have been phonologically, and morphologically adapted and are being treated as Arabic native words to fit the Arabic morphological system, in particular. However, few exceptions exist, which have not been adapted to the Arabic morphological system and remain hybrid in the flow of speech. Such cases can be considered morphological borrowings which are worthy of research (Al-Jarf, 2021b; Al-Jarf, 2021c; Al-Jarf, 2019; Al-Jarf, 2018; Al-Jarf, 2016; Al-Jarf, 2011b; Al-Jarf, 2008; Al-Jarf, 2004a; Al-Jarf, 2004b).

Due to the prevalence of borrowings in Modern Standard Arabic as well as Colloquial Arabic varieties, the pluralization of loan words (borrowing) has been investigated by numerous studies in the literature. For example, Alsadeqi (2010) addressed the issue of integrating English words into Gulf Arabic, specifically Bahraini Arabic, via certain grammatical rules that surfaced through a study of bilingualism at the University of Bahrain. Interviews with students showed that morphological changes take place in borrowed English words as exhibited through the use of Arabic plurals, dual forms, the Arabic definite article, the idafa structure (the genitive), adverbs and verb forms.

In Saudi Arabia, Mushait and Al-Athwary (2020) examined how borrowed nouns from English are inflected for plural and gender in Colloquial Saudi Arabic and the possible linguistic factors that may affect this inflection in light of some theories of morphology. The researchers analysed 250 loanwords and reported that foreign nouns are marked for all types of plural (Broken Plural, Feminine Sound Plural, and Masculine Sound Plural. More than 77% of the borrowed nouns are inflected for Feminine Sound Plural. In some Feminine Sound Plurals, the suffix *-ha:t* and *-ya:t* is attached to singular borrowed nouns instead of *-a:t* to form the Feminine Sound Plural.

In Iraq, Sa'eed (2010) examined a corpus of 409 words English loanwords that have been integrated into the linguistic system of Mosuli Arabic during the last century to find out the productivity of pluralization rules in Mosuli Arabic as revealed in loanwords. Results showed three pluralization rules in Arabic (the Sound Masculine Plural, the Sound Feminine Plural and the Broken Plural). The Sound-Feminine Plural is the most productive as it was applied to 59.79 % of the data. Broken Plural is less productive as it was applied to 5.9% of the loanwords in the sample and the Sound Masculine Plural is the least productive as it was applied to fewer than 1% only.

Laks (2014) examined plural formation of loanwords in Palestinian and Jordanian Arabic. Two types of plural were detected: x-based Sound Plural (e.g.: *maṭa:r/maṭa:ra:t* 'airport sg., pl.') and (ii) a template-based broken plural (e.g. *maktu:b/maka:ti:b* 'letter sg., pl.'). These two types of plurals are also found in borrowed nouns as *fax (faxa:t)*, *blog (bloga:t)*, *film (afla:m)*, *folder (falader)*, *malyoun (mala:yeen)*.

Another study by Al-Saidat (2011) explored gender and number assignment to English loanwords in Jordanian Arabic, i.e., the different gender and number markers used to mark English loanwords. Data analysis showed that English words undergo changes when used as loanwords in Arabic in order not to violate the phonological and morphological systems of the native language.. English loanwords are marked for masculine or feminine and into singular, dual or plural. They go through all processes of feminization, since the masculine is unmarked, and processes of Arabic duality and pluralisation, in which case Arabic is the governing language. Results revealed that the English language number system is abandoned as no examples with English plural marker were found. English loanwords in Jordanian Arabic can be considered loanwords rather than codeswitches as they follow the Arabic rather than the English morphological language system.

The morphology of loans beyond integration in Moroccan Arabic (MA) was examined by (Ziani, 2020) to provide an insight into lexical organization as well as the status of the consonantal root in MA. The researcher found that loan plurals reveal the organization of the MA lexicon into three distinct strata: the non-concatenative, the concatenative and the extra grammatical. The first stratum corresponds to the C-root; the second and third support a stem-based approach. This means that the MA lexicon is organized around both a C- root as well as a stem.

Yacoub (2016) reported that over two hundred English words were borrowed in Egyptian Arabic. Five morphological variations were found including the Masculine Sound Plural, the Feminine Sound Plural, the Dual, the Broken Plural, and non-pluralize-able

nouns. Most participants did not recognize English loanwords, thought they were original Arabic words, and could not give Arabic equivalents to the loanwords that they could identify.

The morphological integration of Standard Average European words into Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) was investigated by Gadellii (2015). Loanwords were collected from contemporary short stories and filtered through a Modern Standard Arabic dictionary of words with non-Semitic origin. Loanwords were then morphologically analysed and categorized into (i) Words that do not fit into the root and pattern system of MSA, i.e., the configuration where a verbal root serves as the basis for derivations and inflections produced by altering the internal vowel or consonant. However, words in this group can take Arabic suffixes. (ii) Loanwords that can be linked to formal roots as evident from their Broken Plural pattern, proper verbal roots or a combination of both. A scale of morphological integration was then created which shows that suffixing is not a viable strategy for integrating loanwords into a language exhibiting the root and pattern-system, such as MSA. Of special interest is the border between loanwords consisting of unintegrated solid stems on one hand, and loanwords that can be linked to a root, on the other.

It can be seen from the literature review, that prior studies focused on general loanwords they have been borrowed over the last century. However, there is a lack of studies that investigate English loanwords that appeared in past decade and how they are pluralized, specifically, the pluralization of social media loan terminology used in Spoken Arabic by social media users, with a focus on college students and the young generation. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out how borrowed social media terminology is pluralized in Spoken Arabic and whether there are any pluralization peculiarities in plural formation that were not detected by prior studies on loanwords in Arabic dialects. It also aims to find out the productivity of plural types in borrowed social media terminology and students and instructors' views on the reasons for pluralizing loan terms the way they do; and the ability of social media users who do not know English to decode and comprehend the meaning of the plural forms of loan terms common on social media.

This study is synchronic as it is exploring how educated Arabs are actually using social media loan terms in this day and age, which morphological phenomena have recently emerged and how language is changing as a result of sociolinguistic factors such as the extensive use of a variety of social media networking sites, globalization, the dominance of English, and the contact among peoples from different language and cultures.

## **2. Pluralization in English and Arabic**

Arabic has four types of plurals: (i) Masculine Sound Plural (regular plural) as مهندسون *engineers* (nominative), مهندسين *engineers* (accusative); (ii) Feminine Sound Plural (a regular plural) as طالبات *female students* (animates); سيارات *cars* (inanimate); دجاجات *hens* (animal); (iii) Broken Plural (irregular plural) as أقلام *pens*, كتب *books*, كراسي *chairs*; and (iv) Dual, i.e. plural of two whether the base form is feminine or masculine, animate or inanimate: كتابان *two books* (nominative), كتابين *two books* (accusative). Some Arabic nouns have a plural form that is different from its singular form as نساء *women*, نسوة *women*; some plurals have no singular form: قوم *people*, لغويات *linguistics*, مجوهرات *jewellery*; some are invariable broken plural forms that have no singular: سكر *sugar*, تباشير *tidings*, ذهب *gold*, أنعام *camels*, آلاء *blessings*, تعجيب *wonders*, أبابيل *birds in flocks*; some have several plurals: A plural of paucity, multiplicity and genus أبيات *lines of verse*, بيوت *houses*, بيوتات *houses*; a Sound Feminine and a Broken plural تمرينات *a number of exercises*, تمارين *exercises*; or two plural forms: a masculine and a Broken Plural for the same singular forms as in some proper nouns محمدون *Mohammads*, محامد *Mohammads*. Some dual nouns refer to two singular nouns that are not identical in form and meaning, two different singular nouns as طريق الخير والشر: النجدان *the two pathways, i.e., The pathway of good and pathway of evil*; اللبن والماء: الابيضان *the two whites: Milk and water*. Some plural forms have several meanings vis مرئيات *views on something, objects that we see, visuals*. Some have two plurals, each having a different usage: اقتصاديات *economics*, اقتصادات *economies*; سلوكات *behaviors*, سلوكيات *behavior, conduct*. Some singular nouns are polysemous and thus they have different plural forms for each meaning: عامل *worker, factor*; عوامل *factors*; عمال *workers*; عمالة *labor*; عاملون *labourers*. Some collective and non-count nouns have no singular stem form but can be pluralized: تراب *dirt*, اتربة *dust*; شعب *people*, شعوب *peoples*; فريق *team*, فرق *teams*; but others are singular and have no plural forms: أثاث *furniture*; دقيق *flour*; أرز *rice*; but some can be pluralized: ماء *water*, مياه *water*, أمواه *waters*. Loan words always take a Feminine Sound Plural as هرمونات *hormones*; استوديوهات *studios*; راديوهات *radios* (Al-Jarf, 2020b; Al-Jarf, 1994a; Al-Jarf, 1994b; Al-Jarf, 1994b).

In English, there is no such classification as Arabic, i.e., the four plural types. In most cases, nouns form their plural by suffixation. The plural suffix -s or any of its variants is added to the singular stem form: *cats, dogs, bridges, branches, wishes, buses*; some words end in -s but are singular as *news*, some nouns have a plural invariable form ending in /-s/ but have no singular form: *scissors, trousers*; some plural nouns have no suffix: *cattle*; nouns ending in -f take an -s and/or an -es: *roofs, halves, dwarfs, dwarves*; words ending in *o*, form their plural by adding an -os or -oes: *hero, heroes; cargo, cargoes or cargos; veto, vetoes*; some plural forms involve mutation as *man, men; woman, women; foot, feet, mouse, mice; goose, geese*; adding the suffix -en: *child, children, ox, oxen*; some nouns have the same singular and plural form as *fish, sheep, buffalo, cod, deer, moose, Cherokee, Navajo*; some nouns ending in -ies: *series; species* are not plural; nouns ending in -s are singular as in *means, headquarters*; subject names ending in -ics are singular:

linguistics, mathematics, paediatrics; nouns describing the people of a country ending in -ese or -ss are plural: *Chinese, Swiss*; singular loan words from foreign languages especially Latin and their plural forms end in foreign and Latin suffixes as in *stimulus, stimuli; larva, larvae; matrix, matrices; curriculum, curricula; analysis, analyses; thesis, theses; stratum, strata; phenomenon, phenomena; cello, celli; tempo, tempi; samurai, samurai*; some foreign plurals occur along with English regular plurals as *formula, formulae, formulas; appendix, appendices, appendixes; dogma, dogmata, dogmas; bureau, bureaux, bureaus; cherub, cherubim, cherubs*; plural of compounds take an -s in the first element, second element or both elements of the compound: *attorney general, attorneys general; major general, major generals; court martial, courts martial; coat-of-arms, coats-of-arms; manservant, menservants; man-of-war, men-of-war; woman doctor, women doctors; head of state, heads of states/heads of state; jack-in-the-box, jacks-in-the-box/jack-in-the-boxes* (Al-Jarf, 2022d; Al-Jarf, 2020b; Al-Jarf, 1994a; Al-Jarf, 1994c; Al-Jarf, 1994b).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Subjects

The first group consisted of a random sample of 20 students and 5 instructors majoring in translation at the College of Language Sciences (CLS), King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, participated in the study. The students were in different levels of the translation program, and they take a variety of language, linguistics, translation, interpreting and Arabic language courses. They are all social media users and are active on at least two social media sites and are familiar with social media terminology.

Another sample of 10 adult Aabs who are social media users but do not know English participated in the study to check for the comprehensibility of the plurals of the loan terms in this study.

#### 3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

A sample of 146 social media loan terms that are used in a variety of Spoken Arabic dialects on social media networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, Snapchat, Tik Tok and others by educated native speakers of Arabic. The social media loan terms were collected from the Bing Copilot, and from numerous glossaries, and Internet websites such as the following:

- <https://www.arab4.net/2023/03/Facebook-terminology.html>
- <https://www.arabnet///Facebook-terminologyhtml>
- <https://www.walmsal.com/post/>
- <https://si-trendsnet/اختصارات-مصطلحات-السوشيال-مديا/>
- <https://kalamsocial.com/social/2022/مديا-السوشيال-مديا/>
- [Social Media Definitions: The Ultimate Glossary of Terms You Should Know \(hubspot.com\)](#)

All the loan terms in the sample are limited to those used on social media and not in computer science and IT in general. All the loan terms had to be nouns and single words. No compounds, abbreviations or acronyms were included.

The author made a list of all the loan terms together. The data were verified through the following phases:

In phase 1, the students and instructors were introduced to the study and loan terms on social media. Examples of loan terms and their plurals were given. Since the terms in the online glossaries and websites are not inclusive and are repetitive, the students and instructors were asked to verify the loan terms on the list, delete and add others if available.

In phase 2, the items were modified, and the list of loan terms was finalized. Some social media loan terms that are not usually used in the plural in English were added as a reliability check (*Facebook, Twitter, X, Tweeter, Instagram*). The students were handed out the list of loan terms and were asked to give the plural form for each, leave it blank if there is no plural, if the participant was not familiar with any, and give more than one plural if applicable. The participants worked on this task individually,

In phase 3 and with the help of the instructors, the students' responses were compared. Since there were some discrepancies in the plural forms given to some items, or lack of plural forms, a plural form was accepted if at least 3 students gave the same form, and was recorded as the commonly used plural. If there were 2 options, both were accepted as alternative plurals if each was given by 3 students or more. Then the loan terms with the plural form (s) or zero plural form were finalized.

For further verification, the author entered the plural form of each term in Google to find out whether it is commonly used or not.

After verification, the plural forms of loan terms were classified into: (i) loan terms with a feminine Sound Plural; (ii) loan terms with an English plural; (iii) loan terms with two plurals; (iv) loan terms with a Broken plural; (v) loan terms with no plural form as they are used by educated Arabis in Spoken Arabic. Percentages in loan terms were calculated. In addition, results of the analysis are reported qualitatively.

The second group of participants consisted of 10 who are social media users but do not know English to find out if the social media loan terms in their plural form are easy to understand. They were asked to decode a sample of 50 plural loan words written in Arabic. Their oral reading was scored for accuracy. They were also asked to give the meaning of those plural terms. Results of the analysis of the readers' responses are qualitatively reported in the Discussion section.

### 3.3 Questionnaire surveys

Participants in the first groups were asked to give reasons or explanations for why the loan terms are pluralized this was, particularly loan terms with an English plural, those with a feminine suffix added to a plural English term, or those that are pluralized in English but not Arabic.

The second group of participants were asked about their views of the comprehensibility of the plural forms of the loan terms in the sample.

Findings of this study are limited to the sample of social media loan terms herein and may not be generalizable to other loan terms in computer science, general or specialized fields. Transliteration variants of loan terms in Arabic are not the focus of this study.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Social Media Loan Terms with a Feminine Sound Plural

Data analysis showed that in 54% of the borrowed social media terms in the sample, Arab social media users use a Feminine Sound Plural as in *account* اكاونتات /akaynta:t/; *Algorithms* لوغاريتما /lugaritma:t/; *badges* بادجات /ba:/; *blogs* بلوجات /blogga:t/; *Brands* براندات /branda:t/; *battery* بطاريات /baTTa:riya:t/; *browser* براوزرات /brawzara:t/; *cable* كابلات /kablata:t/; *cameras* كاميرات /kamira:t/; *captions* كايبيشات /kabʃina:t/; *captures* كابتشات /ka:ptʃara:t/; *click* كليكات /klikka:t /; *Clips* كليبات /klippa:t/; *comments* كومنتات /komenta:t/; *Coupons* كوبونات /kubuna:t/; *design* ديزاينات /disayna:t/; *disk* ديسكات /diska:t/; *Emojis* ايموجيات /imo:dʒiyya:t/; *events* جيوتاقات /jiyotaka:t/; *file* فايلات /fayla:t/; *flogs* فلوجات /flogga:t/; *folder* فولدرات /fo:ldarra:t/; *galleries* غالاريات /galariyya:t/; *Geotag* جيو تاقات /jiyo:taga:t/; *Groups* جروبات /grubba:t/ or /gru:ba:t/; *hashtags* هاشتاقات /haʃtaga:t/; *House party* بارتيات /partiiyya:t/; *Impressions* امبرشنات /impreshina:t/; *ipad* ايبادات /aypa:da:t/; *laptop* لابتوبات /la:ptoppa:t/; *like* لايكات /layka:t/; *links* لينكات /linka:t/; *list* ليستات /lista:t/; *live* لايفات /layva:t/; *locations* لو كيشنات /lo:keyʃina:t/; *mention* منشات /minʃina:t/; *messages* مسجات /masija:t/; *messenger* مسنجات /masinjara:t/; *microphone* ميكروفونات /maykrofo:na:t/; *mics* مايكات /mayka:t/; *modem* مودمات /mo:dama:t/; *monitor* بوسنات /monitara:t/; *mouse* ماوسات /mawsa:t/; *platforms* بلاتفورمات /pla:tforma:t/; *podcast* بودكاستات /podkasta:t/; *posts* بوستات /posta:t/; *profile* بروفايلات /pro:fayla:t/; *protocol* بروتوكولات /prutukowla:t/; *proxy* بروكسيات /proksiyya:t/; *reactions* ريكشنات /reʔa:kʃina:t/; *retweets* ريتويتات /ri:tweeta:t/; *Robots* روبوتات /rubuta:t/; *router* راوترات /rawtera:t/; *scanner* سكانرات /skanara:t/; *scenario* سيناريوهات /sinaryuha:t/; *script* سكريبتات /scripta:t/; *selfies* سيلفيات /selfiyya:t/; *servers* سيرفرات /seyrvara:t/; *share* شيرات /ʃeyra:t/; *snaps* سنابات /sna:ba:t/ (with p replaced by a b); *stories* ستوريات /sto:riyya:t/; *studios* استديوهات /stu:dyu:ha:t/; *tags* تاقات /taga:t /; *trends* تريندات /trenda:t/; *TV's* تلفزيونات /tilivizyu:na:t/; *tweets* تويتات /twi:ta:t/; *videos* فيديوهات /vidiyuha:t/; *virus* واتس آبات /vayrusa:t/; *vlogs* فلوجات /vlogga:t/; *Voice* فويسات /voysa:t/; *webinar* ويبينارات /webina:ra:t/; *WhatsApp* بلوتوثات /bluwtuwtha:t/; *Campaign* كامبينات /kampayna:t/; *cyber* سايبرات /saybara:t/; *audio* اوديويوهات /o:dyo:ha:t/; *timeline* تايملاينات /taymlayna:t/; *Facebook* فيسبوكات /fe:sbukka:t/; *Instagram* انستاغرامات /insta:gra:ma:t/; *Tweeters* تويتيرات /twi:tara:t/; *X* اكسات /iksa:t/; *infograph* انفوجرافات /info:gra:fa:t/.

### 4.2 Phonological Adaptations before the Feminine Suffix {-a:t}

In some loan terms, adding the Feminine Sound Plural suffix {-a:t} results in phonological changes in some final consonants of some loan stems (before the feminine suffix) as follows:

An /h/ is inserted to the feminine plural suffixes in stems ending in the long vowel /u:/ as in *scenario* سيناريوهات /sinaryuha:t/; *studios* استديوهات /stu:dyu:ha:t/; *video* فيديوهات /vidiyuha:t/ and *audio* اوديويوهات /o:dyo:ha:t/ and in general loanwords from French and English as *plateaux* بلاتوهات /plato:-ha:t/; *gateaux* جاتوهات /ga:to:-ha:t/; *casinos* كازينوهات /kazi:no:ha:t/; *radios* راديويوهات /reidyu:ha:t/; *cabarets* كباريهات /kabarei:-ha:t/; *discos* ديسكوهات /disco:-ha:t/; *cliches* كليشيهاات /klifeyha:t/; *stereos* ستريوهات /steryo:-ha:t/; *Euros* يوروهاات /yu:ru:ha:t/; *rodeo* روديوهاات /ro:dyo:-ha:t/; *buffets* بوفيهات /bu:fey:-ha:t/; *shampoos* شامپوهاات /ʃambu:-ha:t/; *bagnos* بانيوهاات /banyu:-la:t/ and others. However, some other general loan words ending in the long vowel /u:/ as in *Kilos* كيلوات /ki:luw-a:t/; & *vetoos* فيتوات /vi:tuw-a:t/ are simply pluralized by adding the feminine plural suffix -a:t like other words. In Feminine Plural forms with -ha:t, Arabic speakers are assuming an underlying /h/ like هاء السكت after the /u:/ in the singular forms. When هاء السكت occurs before a pause, the final /h/ is not pronounced, but it is pronounced in the flow of speech. In addition, final /u/ is pronounced as a short vowel in the first set, whereas in *Kilos* كيلوات /ki:luw-a:t/ or /kilwa:t/ and *vetoos* فيتوات /vi:tuw-a:t/, it is pronounced as a long vowel and Arab speakers are not assuming an underlying /h/ هاء السكت at the end of the base form. In *Kilos* كيلوات /ki:luw-a:t/, a change in the syllable

structure takes place after the addition of the feminine suffix -a:t as a result of deleting the vowel -u: and changing it to /w/that is added to the suffix to form a new syllable as in /kil-wa:t/.

When the final consonant of the stem is a plosive /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, or /g/and the penultimate vowel is short, it is geminated when the plural suffix -a:t is attached as in *blogs* بلوجات /blogga:t/; *vlogs* فلوجات /flogga:t/ but the final consonant is not geminated in *badges* باجات /baja:t/ and *tags* تاغات /taga:t/, as the penultimate vowel in the stem (*blog* and *flog*) is short, but it is long in *badge* and *tag*. Moreover, in pronouncing the singular form, *blog* and *flog* Arabic speakers are assuming a geminated plosive in stem final position. Thus the plural is pronounced with a geminated plosive.

The final consonant /k/in the stem is geminated before the feminine plural suffix in *click* كليكات /klikka:t/& *Facebook* فيسبوكات /feysbukka:t/; when the final consonant of the stem is a /p/as in *clips* كليبات /klippa:t/; consonant /b/as in *WhatsApp* واتس آبات /wats?abba:t/ and *groups* جروبات /grubba:t/. The /p/in *groups* and *WhatsApp* is pronounced /b/by some Arabic speakers as the phoneme /p/does not exist in the Arabic phonological system. As in the previous examples with plosives, Arabic speakers are applying the same Arabic phonotactic rules to words that are analogous to Arabic words (Al-Jarf, 1994b; Al-Jurf, 1994a).

Gemination in the final consonant before the feminine suffixes occurs when the last consonant is a glide /y/as in *galleries* غالريات /galariyya:t/; *Emojis* ايموجيات /imo:dziyya:t/; *proxy* بروكسيات /proksiyya:t/; *selfies* سيلفيات /selfiyya:t/; & *story* ستوريات /sto:riyya:t/ and in general loanwords as *Barbies* باربيات /ba:rbiyya:t/. Here, an underlying geminated /y/is assumed in Arabic words ending in the glide ي /y/ as in *رياضي* & *اقتصادي* in which the ي is pronounced /iy/ before a pause but with a geminated and vowelized /iyy/in the flow of speech in SA. The Arabic plurals *رياضيات* & *اقتصاديات* that end in the feminine plural suffix -a:t are related to them. The Arabic rule is spontaneously and unconsciously applied to words ending in /y/as in *Emoji*, *proxy*, *selfie*, *story*, *gallery*, & *Barbie*. As a result, the final glide is geminated in the plural.

#### 4.3 Social Media Loan Terms with a Zero plural

Results revealed that 22% of the loan terms have no plural in Arabic, the recipient language, as in *blacklist* بلاك ليست; *block* بلوك; *boost* بوست; *cancel* كانسيل; *chat* تشات; *cookies* كوكيز; *credit* كريديت; *data* داتا; *direct* ديراكت; *download* داونلود; *engagement* انجيجمينت; *frequency* فريكوينسي; *history* هيستوري; *internet meme* ميم; *media* ميديا; *poke* بوك; *reach* ريتش; *spam* سبام; *status* ستاتس; *trendsetter* تريند سيتر; *twitterati* تويتراتي; *video call* فيديو كول; *voice call* فويس كول; *hardware* هاردوير; *megabytes* ميغابايت; *terabytes* تيرابايت; *gigabytes* جيغا بايتات; *kilobytes* كيلوبايت; *processors* بروسسر; *update* ابدت although many have a plural form in English, the donor language, probably because of the length and syllable structure. Those terms are also not analogous to Arabic words that have a plural. This means that terms in this category do not fit the Arabic phonotactic system, as a result they are used in the singular only, even if the context mandates the use of a plural. However, the plural meaning is understood from context through other plural indicators.

#### 4.4 Social Media Loan Terms with an English Plural

1) In this category, 17% of the borrowed social media terms in the sample have the same English plural used in the flow of speech in Colloquial Arabic as in *admins* ادمنز; *bios* بايوز; *bloggers* بلوجرز; *dashboards* داشبوردرز /da:ʃbo:rdz/; *emotions* ايموشنز; *fav* (favorites) فافوريتس /feyvrits/; *feeds* فيدز /fiydz/; *followers* فولوررز /folowarz/; *graphics* جرافيكس /grafiks/; *hackers* هاكرز; *influencers* انفلونسرز; *memories* ميغوري; *messengers* ماسنجرز; *Reels* ريلز; *screens* سكرينز; *software* سوفويرز /softwerz/; *tablets* تابلترز; *threads* ثريذز; *Tik Tokers* تيكتوكرز; *vloggers* فلوجرز; *youtubers* يوتيوبرز; *cookies* كوكيز and *media* ميديا similar to general loanwords such as *jeans*. These loan terms have not been morphologically adapted as they do not fit the Arabic phonotactic system, because Arabic users are fluent in English, use English at work or in school and feel the English plurals are smoother to pronounce. In this case, such terms are used as code-switches, not loan terms.

#### 4.5 Social Media Loan Terms with a Masculine Sound Plural

In 4% of the loan words, a Masculine Sound Plural is derived from some loan terms as in *Facebook* فيسبوكييون /feysbukkiyyu:n/ (\*Facebookers), *سنابيون* /snabiyyu:n/ (\*snappers, short for Snapchat); *سنابتشاتيون* /snabʃiyyu:n/ (\*Snapchatters); *تويتريون* /twi:teriyyu:n/ (\*Twitterers); *شاتيون* /ʃa:tiyyu:n/ (\*chatters) & *انترنتيون* /?narnettiyyu:n/ (\*internetters). Such Arabic plurals have no equivalents in English and are hence marked with an asterisk \*.

Interestingly, being a compound, the plosive /k/in *Facebook* is geminated. The /y/ at the end of the derived singular agentive noun /bukki:/ is also geminated for reasons mentioned in section 4.2.

#### 4.6 Social Media Loan Terms with a Broken Plural

Social media loan terms with a Broken Plural in the sample constitute 3% as in *filters* فلاتر /fala:ter/; *Youtubers* اليوتيوبرية /yu:tu:bariyya/; *codes* أكواد /?kwa:d/; *app center* سناتر /sana:ter/; *Tik Toks* تكاتيك /taka:tik/. Here, Arab social media users follow Arabic language patterns in forming the broken plural. *Code* is analogous to *صوت* /So:t/(sound, voice) in Colloquial Arabic; *Tik*

*Tok* is analogous to بلبل /bulbul/ (*nightingale*) and هدهد /hudhud/ (*hoopoe*) in length and syllable structure (each consist of 2 closed syllables with a short vowel); so their plurals are also analogous to the plural اصوات *sounds/voices* /ʔaSwɑ:t/, بلابل (*nightingales*) /ba:labil/ & هداهد /hada:hid/ (*hoopoes*).

#### **4.7 Social Media Loan Terms with Two plurals**

Results of the analysis showed 3% loan terms in the sample have double plurals, i.e., an English plural + a broken plural; or a feminine plural + a broken plural as in *code* كودات /koʔda:t/, أكواد /ʔakwa:d/; Youtubers اليوتيوبرية /yu:tu:bariyya/, يوتيوبرز /yu:tyu:barz/ & megapixels ميغابكسلز & megapixel. Each of these plurals was also mentioned in other categories above.

#### **4.8 Social Media Loan Terms with an Arabic Suffix + an English Suffix**

In the loan term *fans* فانزات /fanz-a:t/, the Arabic Feminine Sound Plural suffix -a:t has been added to the word *fans* which is plural. Other similar examples exist in the general spoken language as *shoes* شوزات /ʃuz-a:t/; *Jeans* جينزات /dʒi:nz-a:t/, where the feminine plural suffix has been added to an invariable plural noun or a singular noun ending with a {-z}.

### **5. Discussion and Conclusion**

Findings of the current study showed that Arab users of social media pluralize loan terms in numerous ways. The most productive plural formation is adding a Feminine Sound Plural suffix -a:t (54%); a Zero plural (22%); using the same English Plural (Morphological Borrowing) (17%); using a Masculine Sound Plural (4%); using a broken plural (3%); using two plural forms (3%); and adding the Arabic suffix +a:t to plural English terms.

These findings are consistent with findings of prior studies in the Arabic literature which found that the Feminine Sound Plural is the most productive in the pluralization of loanwords in Arabic with variations among this study and prior studies due to the differences in the sample of loanwords collected: 77% of the borrowed nouns are inflected for Feminine Sound Plural in Saudi Arabic (Mushait & Al-Athwary, 2020); and 59.79 % in Iraqi Arabic. Broken Plurals and Masculine Sound Plurals are less productive in the current study and prior studies as the Broken Plural were applied to 5.905% and the Sound Masculine Plural was applied in fewer than 1%. (Sa'eed (2010). Yacoub (2016) found five morphological variations in plural formation of loanwords which include the Masculine Sound Plural, the Feminine Sound Plural, the Dual, the broken plural, and non-pluralize-able nouns. As in this study, Mushait and Al-Athwary (2020) indicated that in some Feminine Sound Plurals of loan words in Saudi Arabic, -ha:t is attached to the stem instead of -a:t but did not give a cogent explanation for that. As in the current study, Loan words in Moroccan Arabic are organized around the C-root and the stem-based approach, i.e., the non-concatenative, the concatenative and the extra grammatical.

Unlike the current study, Al-Saidat (2011) found no examples of English plural marker. English loanwords in Jordanian Arabic. Laks (2014) found only two types of plurals of loanwords in Palestinian and Jordanian Arabic: x-based Sound Plural and a template-based broken plural, whereas this study found 7 types of pluralized forms.

Regarding the factors that affect the pluralization of loanwords, Saiegh-Haddad, Hadieh and Ravid (2012) asserted that the Sound Feminine Plural is the dominant default plural form and that plural formation is affected by familiarity with the singular noun stem. They also noted that Children acquire the Sound Feminine Plural earlier than the Broken Plurals as it has a shorter developmental process than Broken plurals. Sa'eed (2010) added that morphological and semantic factors restrict the application of the Broken and Sound Masculine Plurals such as the complexity of the Broken Plural patterns and multiplicity of its sub-patterns. The Sound-Masculine Plural is used with masculine nouns referring to persons only, whereas the Feminine Sound Plural is used for persons, animals and inanimate nouns.

Further factors were given by Hamdi (2017) who attested that speakers follow a form that is standardized by Modern Standard Arabic or that enforces another form following their dialects and community conventions. The variation in number and gender assignment to loanwords gives rise to multiple competing forms that may not be recognized by Modern Standard Arabic or some other varieties of Arabic. However, consistency in assigning numbers and gender to loanwords by applying native patterns motivated by frequency of use and the semantics of the referents.

Moreover, pluralizing certain words with nonconcatenative morphology and pluralizing others with plural suffixes was proposed by Mashaqba, Huneety, Guba and Al Khalaf (2023) based on the Optimality Theory which accounts for the sociolinguistically-grounded variation and explains the way a dialect chooses a pattern while another choose other patterns. Constraints are not language-specific devices, but elements of a universal grammar that are potentially active in every grammar' (Kager 1999). Stochastic Optimality Theory (with special focus on MAX-ENT constraint) seems to be very promising in supporting the selection of the most harmonic components. With Stochastic OT, constraints, as being supported by a numerical index which accounts for the variation and is able to predict the likelihood of frequency for each variant effects within the same constraint hierarchy. The

researchers added that prosodic phonology models do not account for all broken plurals in Arabic, especially in the case of singular forms comprising two or more different plurals.

An explanation for choosing to use the singular form of social media loan terms even in a context that requires a plural form was given by the participating students themselves who pointed out that pluralizing such words is counter intuitive. They do not like the way such loan terms sound and they do not know how to pluralize them. They said that the context usually contains a plural quantifier that helps them understand, even if the loan term is singular in Arabic.

Regarding the transfer of the English plural form of loan terms to Arabic, the participants gave pragmatic reasons. They feel that using English plural feels smoother. It is easier for them to use the English plural form as they are proficient in English and use it in speech in school and at work. They feel that their classmates and colleagues have no problem understanding them. It is also easier to use the English plural that already exists than thinking about and creating a plural form for loan terms that sounds Arabic.

As for social media users who add the Arabic feminine plural suffix -a:t to English plural words with as *fans* فانات /fanz-a:t/; *shoes* شوزات /ʃuz:-a:t/; *Jeans* جينزات /dʒi:nz-a:t/, *shoes* and *jeans* are English plurals, and they just treat them as they treat Arabic words and pluralize them in the same way. Arab social media users are applying an Arabic plural formation rule to loan words regardless of whether it is singular or plural as a strategy for integrating a loan word into the Arabic language system. If the Arabic suffix -a:t is added to the singular stem, (fan) will result in an incompressible, meaningless word /fa:na:t/ which is too far-fetched from *fans*. Adding -a: to the English plural form will not affect the meaning of the stem. Since the plural form *fans* is very common and popular, Arabic users seem to be unaware that it is plural and they just use it without thinking if it is singular or plural.

With respect to social media users who do not know English, they indicated that they do not understand loan terms that some Arabic speakers use in their speech such as *admins* ادمنز; *bios* بايوز; *bloggers* بلوجرز; *dashboards* داشبورذ /da:ʃbo:rdz/; *emotions* ايموشنز; *fav* (favorites) فافوريتس /feyvrits/; *feeds* فيدز /fiydz/; *followers* فولورز /folowarz/; *graphics* جرافيكس /grafiks/; *hackers* الهاكرز; *influencers* انفلونسرز; *memories* ميموريز; *messengers* ماسنجرز; *Reels* ريلز; *screens* سكرينز; *software* سوفتويرز /softwerz/; *tablets* تابلت; *threads* ثيريدز; *Tik Tokers* تيك توكرز; *vloggers* فلوجرز; *youtubers* يوتيوبر; فانات /fanz-a:t/; *app center* سناتر /sana:ter/; *Tik Toks* تكاتيك /taka:tik/ and others. They reported that it is difficult for them to decode the written form of such words and to understand what they mean in the flow of Arabic speech. Thus, they do not fully understand the message conveyed. They also mentioned that social media users imitate each other in using loan terms although Arabic equivalents exist for all of the terms used on social media, whether they use foreign words for prestige or to follow the crowd.

To save time and help students of all levels find the plural form of general as well as specialized words, native or borrowed words, and due to the variety of plural forms of loan terms and native words, this study recommends that a monolingual and/or a bilingual plural dictionary be compiled that shows students and novice social media users which nouns/terms have a plural, which ones have no plural and which ones have multiple plurals together with their meaning. The plural dictionary can be online or as an app (Al-Jarf, 2022g; Al-Jarf, 2020a; Al Jarf, 2014).

In addition, this study calls for raising students' awareness of the significant of using Arabic words and terminology whether on social media or any other context as inserting foreign words in speech and in written posts as such attitude will weaken the Arabic language, our native language, and young people will grow up with the notion that Arabic is inferior to English and other European language due to the seemingly absence of equivalents to the foreign words that they use.

Finally, other aspects of loanword morphology such as gender, definiteness and indefiniteness, mood, case, tense, are still open for further investigation in the future.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

**ORCID ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6255-1305>

**Publisher's Note:** All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, editors and reviewers.

## References

- [1] Al-Jarf, R. (2022d). Difficulties in learning English plural formation by EFL college students. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation (IJLLT)*, 5(6), 111-121. Doi:10.32996/ijllt.2022.5.6.13. ERIC ED620200. [Google Scholar](#).
- [2] Al-Jarf, R. (2022g). Specialized dictionary mobile apps for students learning English for engineering, business and computer science. *Journal of Humanities and Education Development (JHED)*, 4(1), 1-10 <https://doi.org/10.22161/jhed.4.1.1>. ERIC ED618224. [Google Scholar](#)
- [3] Al-Jarf, R. (2021a). Arabic and English loan words in Bahasa: Implications for Foreign Language Pedagogy. *Journal La Edusci*, 2, 4, 23-35. <https://doi.org/10.37899/journallaedusci.v2i4.44>. [Google Scholar](#)



- [4] Al-Jarf, R. (2021b). How interested are Arab universities in supporting the Arabic language? *Eurasian Arabic Studies*, 13, 32-59. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351287384> [Google Scholar](#)
- [5] Al-Jarf, R. (2021c). Impact of social media on Arabic Deterioration. *Eurasian Arabic Studies*. *Eurasian Arabic Studies*, 15, 18-34. [Google Scholar](#)
- [6] Al-Jarf, R. (2020a). Arabic digital dictionaries. *Eurasian Arabic Studies*, 12, December, 16-42. [Google Scholar](#)
- [7] Al-Jarf, R. (2020b). Issues in translating English and Arabic plurals. *The Journal of Linguistic and Intercultural Education - JoLIE*, 13(1), 7-28. <https://doi.org/10.29302/jolie.2020.13.1>. [Google Scholar](#)
- [8] Al-Jarf, R. (2019). Effect of social media on Arabic Language Attrition. Globalization, Language, Literature, and the Humanities Conference in Honour of Mngumber Vicky Sylvester (Abuja, Nigeria, Mar 29-30, 2019). **ERIC** ED614077. [Google Scholar](#)
- [9] Al-Jarf, R. (2018). Marginalization of the Arabic language by educational institutions in the Arab World. *Eurasian Arabic Studies*, 1(2), 22-93. [Google Scholar](#)
- [10] Al-Jarf, R. (2016). Arab preference for foreign words over Arabic equivalents. *ALATOO Academic Studies*, 1, 158-162. [Google Scholar](#)
- [11] Al Jarf, R. (2014). *Online Arabic-English-Arabic specialized dictionaries*. In Miguel Ángel Campos and José Ramón Calvo's Investigating Lexis: Vocabulary Teaching, ESP, Lexicography and Lexical Innovations. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Pp. 95-102. [Google Scholar](#)
- [12] Al Jarf, R. (2011a) Teaching English word-formation processes to translation students. *Komunikacija i kultura online: Godina II, broj 2*, 160-174. **ERIC** ED634163. [Google Scholar](#)
- [13] Al-Jarf, R. (2011b). The language of adult social networks. *Topics in Linguistics*, 8 (December), 48-51. [Google Scholar](#)
- [14] Al-Jarf, R. (2009). Arabic and English Loan Words in Bahasa: Implications for Foreign Language Pedagogy. Southeast Asian Linguistics Society (SEALS) Conference (Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, May 28-29. **ERIC** ED614362. [Google Scholar](#)
- [15] Al-Jarf, R. (2008). Impact of English as an international language (EIL) upon Arabic in Saudi Arabia. *Asian EFL Journal*, 10(4), 193-210. [Google Scholar](#)
- [16] Al-Jarf, R. (2004a). Attitudes of youth towards using of both Arabic and English languages in education. KSA: King Saud university. [Google Scholar](#)
- [17] Al-Jarf, R. (2004b). College students' attitudes towards using English and Arabic as a medium of instruction at the university level. *Globalization and Priorities of Education*. Pp 1-15. [Google Scholar](#)
- [18] Al-Jarf, R. (1994a). *A contrastive analysis of English and Arabic morphology for translation students*. <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Reima-Al-Jarf/publication/312193999df>. [Google Scholar](#)
- [19] Al-Jarf, R. (1994b). English and Arabic phonology for translation students. [Google Scholar](#)
- [20] <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281003181>
- [21] Al-Jarf, R. (1994c). English and Arabic Inflectional Systems for Translation Students. [Google Scholar](#)
- [22] [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281003416\\_English\\_and\\_Arabic\\_Inflectional\\_Systems\\_for\\_Translation\\_Students](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281003416_English_and_Arabic_Inflectional_Systems_for_Translation_Students)
- [23] Al-Jarf, R. (1990). English and Arabic Word-formation Processes for Translation Students. [Google Scholar](#)
- [24] <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281003183>
- [25] Al-Jarf, R. (1994a). Contrastive phonetics for translation students. [Google Scholar](#)
- [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281003427\\_Contrastive\\_Phonetics\\_for\\_Translation\\_Students](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281003427_Contrastive_Phonetics_for_Translation_Students)
- [26] Al-Jarf, R. (1994b). *A contrastive analysis of English and Arabic for translation students*. <https://www.academia.edu/14942469>. [Google Scholar](#)
- [27] Alsadeqi, F. (2010). Integrating English words into gulf Arabic. *International Journal of Arts and Sciences*, 3(10), 115-129.
- [28] Al-Saidat, E. (2011, January). English loanwords in Jordanian Arabic: Gender and number assignment. In *Language Forum* (Vol. 37, No. 1, pp. 59-72).
- [29] Gadelii, N. (2015). The morphological integration of loanwords into Modern Standard Arabic. Bachelor thesis in General Linguistics, Lund University, Sweden. <https://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=5053170&fileId=5053172>
- [30] Gardani, F., Arkadiev, P. & Amiridze, N. (2015). Borrowed morphology: An overview. *Borrowed morphology*, 1, 23.
- [31] Hamdi, S. (2017). Number and gender assignment to loanwords in Arabic: Implications from varieties. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 9(1), 79-88.
- [32] Kager, R. (1999). *Optimality theory*. Cambridge university press.
- [33] Laks, L. (2014). The cost of change: Plural formation of loanwords in Palestinian and Jordanian Arabic. *Zeitschrift für Arabische Linguistik*, (60), 5-34.
- [34] Mashaqba, B., Huneety, A., Guba, M. & Al Khalaf, E. (2023). Broken plural in Jordanian Arabic: Constraint-based evidence from loanwords adaptation. *Dialectologia*, 30(1), 103-134.
- [35] Mushait, S. & Al-Athwary, A. (2020). Plural and Gender Inflection of English Loanwords in Colloquial Saudi Arabic. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume*, 11.
- [36] Sa'eed, A. (2010). The productivity of pluralization rules in Mosuli Arabic: An evidence from loanwords. *Journal of Education and Science*, 17(44), 49-60.
- [37] Saiegh-Haddad, E., Hadieh, A. & Ravid, D. (2012). Acquiring noun plurals in Palestinian Arabic: morphology, familiarity, and pattern frequency. *Language Learning*, 62(4), 1079-1109.
- [38] Yacoub, M. (2016). English Loanwords in the Egyptian Variety of Arabic: What Morphological and Phonological Variations Occurred to them? *Studii de gramatică contrastivă*, (25), 121-137.
- [39] Ziani, Z. (2020). The morphology of borrowings and its relevance to lexical organization in Moroccan Arabic. *International Journal of Arabic Linguistics*, 6(1-2), 242-268.