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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Phonological Adaptation of English Loanwords in Omani Arabic

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ABSTRACT

Lexical borrowing is a widespread linguistic phenomenon within world languages. Loanwords undergo adaptation processes to become fully integrated into the borrowing language. This study investigates the phonological adaptation processes of English loanwords in Omani Arabic at the segmental and suprasegmental levels. The study is based on the analysis of a corpus of 100 English loanwords that were collected using data elicitation techniques. The findings show that English loanwords undergo various phonological adaptation processes at the segmental and suprasegmental levels in the integration process. At the segmental level, it seems evident that the phonemes that are not part of the phonemic inventory of Omani Arabic are mapped into the closest counterparts or modified phonologically to fit the patterns of the native language. Adaptation processes such as phoneme substitution, deaffrication and monophthongization play a major role in the adaptation processes. Regarding the suprasegmental aspects in the nativisation process, two prominent adaptations can be observed: the insertion of the glottal stop /ʔ/ in syllables lacking an onset and the insertion of epenthetic vowels in complex syllables. These modifications are made to adapt the English loanwords to the syllabification patterns of the native language. Furthermore, stress placement in English loanwords obeys stress patterns in Omani Arabic as stress is often placed on the heaviest syllable in the word.

Keywords: Loanwords, Adaptation, Epenthesis, Monophthongization, Phonology

Introduction

Linguistic borrowing is a pervasive linguistic phenomenon that involves transferring lexical, phonological, morphological, and syntactic forms from a ‘donor’ language to a ‘recipient language’ because of language contact between speech communities speaking different languages. Lexical borrowing is a universal phenomenon and ‘... probably no language in the world – is entirely devoid of loanwords’ (Haspelmath, 2009, p. 55). In this respect, Poplock (2018) also points out that ‘the act of transforming donor-language

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elements into native material is universal' (p. 2). The dominance of English language in fields as education, culture, business and technology has contributed to the spread of lexical borrowings in world languages. Modern varieties of Arabic are not an exception as they include lexical items from foreign languages such as English, Hindi, Urdu, French, Italian, Turkish, Persian, etc. Such borrowed words are often adapted to fit the grammar of the borrowing language, which is a widespread phenomenon across languages (Kang, 2011).

Omani Arabic is one of the modern varieties of Arabic that exhibits lexical borrowing from several languages including English. The spread of English loanwords in the language can be ascribed, as pointed out by [Algryani and Syahrin \(2024\)](#), to several factors including a) the influence and prestigious effect of Anglo-American culture, b) influence of communication technology, e.g. social media, c) internationalization of education, d) lexical voids in the receptor language, and e) conciseness of English loanwords. It is worth noting that in Omani Arabic, lexical borrowings from English are found primarily in the open lexical classes such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Loanwords in the class of function words as pronouns, articles and conjunctions are absent. Furthermore, it has been observed that numerous borrowed words are adapted to conform to the phonology, morphology and grammar of Omani Arabic. English loanwords that have been integrated into Omani Arabic undergo the inflectional and derivational processes of the language. To illustrate, the English verb 'cancel', which has been adapted morphologically and phonologically, is used with attached suffixes and prefixes to express tense, aspect, gender and number distinctions, mirroring verb inflection in Arabic (*ibid.*).

As the phonological adaptation of English loanwords in Omani Arabic has not been previously investigated, the current study intends and aims to provide the first comprehensive account of the phonological adaptation processes that English loanwords undergo to adapt to phonological system of Omani Arabic and become incorporated into the language. Given that phonological adaptation of loanwords takes place at different levels of phonological structure, the current research is restricted to adaptation processes at the segmental and suprasegmental levels, focusing primarily on the changes affecting phonemes, syllable structure and stress placement in English loanwords. The paper is structured as follows. In section 2 the research objectives and questions are presented. Section 3 discusses loanword phonology with special focus on different approaches to loanword adaptation. Section 3 reviews previous studies on the phonological adaptation of English loanwords in world languages and modern Arabic varieties. Section 4 presents the methodology adopted for the collection and analysis of data. Section 5 presents the findings and discussion of the data. Finally, a conclusion is drawn in Section 6.

Objectives and questions of the study

The current study is an attempt to provide a description of the phonological integration of English loanwords into Omani Arabic. Specifically, the description aims to determine what phonological transformations English loanwords undergo to become fully integrated into the receptor language, i.e. Omani Arabic. The main questions that the paper attempts to answer are as follows:

- a) - what are the phonological adaptation processes that English loanwords undergo to become integrated into Omani Arabic?
- b) - what are the factors influencing the phonological adaptation processes?

Literature review

Loanword phonology

Borrowed lexical items undergo adaptation at different linguistic levels. For full incorporation into the grammar of the borrowing language, borrowed words are assigned a word class, gender, number and person inflections. In addition, borrowed words are also expected to conform to the native phonetic and phonological patterns' (Poplack, 2018). In the literature of loanword phonology, three major approaches with respect to loanwords adaptation are mentioned, namely the phonology approach, the phonetics approach and the phonetics-phonology approach. Studies on loanword phonology have shown controversial outcomes as the main concern revolves around whether loanword adaptations are phonologically or phonetically driven.

Following the phonology approach, LaCharité and Paradis (2005) argue that 'loanword adaptation is overwhelmingly phonological' (p. 223). To put it in simple terms, this approach assumes that the borrowing language speakers interpret the loanword sounds according to the phonemic inventory of their native language. Thus, when the loanword sounds do not exactly align with the sounds available in the borrowing language, they are reshaped into the closest alternative phonemes in the borrowing language to conform to the phonotactics of the language. The phonetics approach, on the other hand, is based mainly on perceptual assimilation (Peperkamp & Dupoux, 2003; Vendelin & Peperkamp, 2004). It presupposes all adaptation processes to be determined by acoustic and perceptual factors, that is, the way the acoustic signals are perceived by speakers determines the outputs of loanwords. An example that supports this perception approach is the adaptation of English /v/ into Cantonese /w/. The voiced fricative phoneme /v/ is not part of the phonological inventory of Cantonese, but its voiceless counterpart /f/ exists in the language. Accordingly, it is predicted that English /v/ will be mapped into /f/ as the latter is the closest to /v/. However, /v/ in English loanwords is adapted to Cantonese approximant /w/, because /w/ is the closet phoneme to /v/ perceptually. This instance is taken as an indication that loanword adaptation involves perceptual factors (Kim, 2019; Silverman, 1992).

However, the findings of recent studies, e.g. Kim (2019), Iverson and Lee (2006), Smith (2006, 2009), Yip (2006), and Kenstowicz (2003), concluded that neither phonology nor phonetics can alone account for loanword adaptation. Instead, both perception/phonetics and phonology play a role in loanword adaptation. In other words, the phonetics-phonology approach is considered a more adequate and comprehensive approach that can provide consistent and systematic explanation of loanword adaptation processes.

Phonological adaptation of English loanwords: A cross-linguistic perspective

Previous studies on loanword integration have demonstrated that borrowed lexical items undergo different phonological processes to adapt to the phonology of the native language. Wells (2000), for instance, states that loanword adaptation involves different phonological processes such as voicing, devoicing epenthesis, metathesis and elision. Such processes affect consonantal and vocalic segments, the positions of the segments within the syllable as well as suprasegmental features such as stress assignment and intonation. The application of these adaptation strategies may involve replacing, modifying and/or deleting segments in the adapted form, resyllabification and stress shifts in order to conform to the phonological system of the receptor language (Wells 2000; Kang 20011). Investigating English loanwords in the Lubukusu dialect of western Kenya, Evans (2014)

found out that English loanwords in the dialect are adapted to the borrowing language via various phonological rules such as vowel insertion, sound substitution, and vowel deletion. Moreover, he pointed out that no single loanword ‘was found to maintain its morpho-phonological structure’ (p.45). In another study, [Naziman and Jaafar \(2023\)](#) examined the adaptation strategies of English loanwords in the Kelantan dialect of Malay. The study found out that there are four adaptation strategies that reshaped the loanwords, namely consonant substitution, consonant elision, debuccalisation, vowel epenthesis and final consonant clusters simplification. The study also argues that ‘the adaptation process in Kelantan Malay dialect is mostly phonological’, suggesting that the phonological approach can better explain how English loanwords are processed and adapted in the Kelantan dialect. This is consistent with the view of [Tsvetkov and Dyer \(2016\)](#) who point out that Loanword integration in the receptor language is primarily a phonological process. Loanwords undergo phonological repair strategies such as substitution, degemination, elision, epenthesis and assimilation to conform to ‘the segmental, phonotactic, suprasegmental and morpho-phonological constraints of the recipient language’ (p.64). Finally, [Laidier \(2023\)](#) studied the adaptation of the British English long schwa /ɜ:/ in English loanwords in Russian and the interplay of phonology, acoustic similarity and orthography in the adaptation process. The analysis of 200 English loanwords revealed that the nativization of /ɜ:/ seems to be often influenced by orthography; however, ‘spelling-based adaptations are inevitably reinforced by phonology and in some cases acoustic similarity’ (p. 180), demonstrating the need for a comprehensive approach that can explain how phonology, phonetics and grammar external factors interact with in the process of adaptation.

Phonological adaptation of English loanwords in Arabic varieties

There have been a number of studies on the adaptation of English loanwords in the modern varieties of Arabic. To begin with, in a study of English loanwords in Egyptian Arabic, [Yacoub \(2016\)](#) investigated the phonological adaptation processes that affect loanwords in the language. The findings of the study showed that loanwords have been adapted to conform to the sound system of the borrowing language via substituting foreign and non-existing phonemes with closest variants in the language following the rule of approximation. For instance, since Egyptian Arabic lacks the diphthong /eɪ/, the open-mid front vowel /æ/ is used to replace /eɪ/ in words as ‘radio’ and ‘cable’, which are pronounced as /rædju/ and /kæbl/ respectively. This vocalic adaptation change was also observed in the integration processes of English loanwords in Iraqi Arabic ([Abdulrazzaq & Al-Ubaidy, 2023](#)). In another study, [Al-Athwary \(2017\)](#) conducted a study on the phonotactic adaptation of English loanwords in Standard Arabic. The study that was based on the analysis of 300 English loanwords concluded that English loanwords are often adapted at the syllabic level by replacing foreign phonemes with similar phonemes in Arabic and reorganizing the arrangement of sounds to conform the phonotactics of Standard Arabic. The study also showed that the adaptation processes such as declusterization, conversion of syllabic consonants, consonant lengthening and vocalic glide insertion are motivated by the phonological system of Arabic.

In addition, [Alawni \(2019\)](#) examined the phonological and morphological integration of English loanwords into Saudi colloquial Arabic and concluded that English loanwords underwent systematic phonological and morphological integration patterns, resulting in treating loanwords as native Arabic words. [Al-Qudah and Mahadin \(2021\)](#) studied the integration of consonantal phonemes in English loanwords into Standard Arabic. The study revealed that consonantal alternations are influenced by various phonological

repair processes such as voicing, devoicing, affrication and deaffrication, emphasisization, fronting and and uvularization.

In the same vein, [Almathkuri \(2022\)](#) investigated English loanwords in Taif dialect of Saudi Arabic. The study was based on the analysis of approximately 190 English loanwords used by the native speakers of the dialect. The findings revealed that the loanwords under investigation underwent phonological adaptation at the segmental and suprasegmental levels. For instance, a complex syllable in a lexical item is often broken into two syllables via vowel insertion within consonantal clusters. Other processes of phonological adaptation include sound substitution deletion. These processes pave the way for the loanwords to become normalized in the sound system of the recipient language. In another study on Saudi Arabic, [Almoayidi \(2023\)](#) studied the phonological adaptation processes of English loanwords in Qunfudhah variety of Saudi Arabic. Consistent with previous studies, the study showed that foreign vowel and consonant sounds in English loanwords are phonologically adapted to fit the system of the recipient language. For instance, phonemes that are missing in the sound system of the native language are often mapped into the closet phonemes. Vocalic sounds are also affected in the integration processes as they undergo adaptation strategies such as monophthongization, lengthening, or position shift. Finally, adopting optimality theory as a theoretical framework, [Bosli \(2025\)](#) conducted a study on the adaptation of English loanwords in the Jizani dialect of Saudi Arabic. The study found out that English phonemes that are missing in the phonemic inventory of the dialect, e.g. /p/, /v/, /tʃ/ and /ŋ/, are replaced with their closest counterparts. The findings also revealed that the suprasegmental features are affected by the adaptation processes. For instance, epenthetic vowels are inserted to break up consonantal sequences and avoid having complex onset or onsetless syllables. As for stress assignment in loanwords, stress generally falls on the heaviest syllable, and in case syllables are of the same weight stress targets the penultimate syllable.

Methodology: Participants, data and procedure

This study is both qualitative and descriptive in nature. The participants are all native speakers of Omani Arabic of varying ages, genders, and educational levels. Focus group discussions were used as a data collection method. Data elicitation techniques were used to understand the structure and the linguistic features of loanwords. The participants were asked to list the English loanwords they use in their day-to-day interactions and use them in different contexts. The researcher recorded the English loanwords used and noted down how the loanwords are pronounced and used in different grammatical forms to determine their phonological, semantic and morpho-syntactic properties. Since the study is restricted to the phonological adaptation processes that affect English loanwords, the analysis focuses mainly on the phonological changes that occur during the adaptation processes.

Findings and discussion

Previous research on loanword adaptation states that when loanwords are introduced into a language, they are often altered somehow to conform to the phonotactic constraints of the borrowing language. It is argued that loanword adaptation is a multi-step process. First, the input of the source language is replaced with the corresponding phoneme(s) in the phonological system of the recipient language. If the input does not correspond to any phoneme in the recipient language, the loanword will be modified to

fit the phonological system of the language. This means that the adaptation process occurs for the input of the source language to ‘not only map into the closest phoneme but also to conform to the system of the borrowing language’ (Kim 2019, p. 58). Based on the data analysis, it is evident that English loanwords in Omani Arabic are phonologically transformed to conform to the phonological system of the language via various processes that operate at the segmental and suprasegmental levels. These processes include consonant and vowel substitution, monophthongization, declusterization and stress shift. The processes are discussed in detail in the following subsections.

Consonant substitution

The first group of English loanwords that exhibit full integration into Arabic phonology involves replacement of foreign consonant sounds by their phonologically closest Arabic equivalents. Given that some English consonants are absent from the Arabic phonemic inventory, such missing segments are replaced with the closet substitutes within the native system in integration process. Table 1 below illustrates examples of consonant substitution in English loanwords

Table 1. Consonant substitution in English loanwords.

Consonant Substitution	English		Arabicized Loanwords	
	Word	Phonetic Transcription	Word	Phonetic Transcription
p → b	computer	/kəmˈpjʊː.tər/	كمبيوتر	/kum.ˈbijuː.tar/
	supermarket	/ˈsuː.pəˌmɑː.kɪt/	سوبرماركت	/su.bar.ˈmar.kat/
	podcast	/ˈpɒd.kɑːst/	بودكاست	/pud.ˈkaː.sit/
v → f	interview	/ˈɪn.tə.vjuː/	انترفيو	/ʔin.tar.ˈfju/
	video	/ˈvɪd.i.əʊ/	فيديو	/fid.ˈju/
	visa	/viːzə/	فيزا	/ˈfiːza/
	receiver	/rɪˈsiː.vər/	ريسيڤر	/rɪˈsiː.far/
	cover	/ˈkʌv.ər/	كفر	/ka.far/
	service	/ˈsɜː.vɪs/	سيرفيس	/seːr.fis/
dʒ → g	strategy	/ˈstræt.ə.dʒi/	استراتيجية	/ʔist.ˈraː.ti.gija/
	agenda	/əˈdʒen.də/	أجندة	/ʔa.ˈgen.da/
dʒ → ʒ	Message	/ˈmes.ɪdʒ/	مَسَج	/ˈma.sɪʒ/
	Juice	/dʒuːs/	جُوس	/ʒuːs/
/tʃ/ → /ʃ/	chocolate	/ˈtʃɒk.lət/	شوكولاته	/ˈʃɒ.ku.ˈlaː.ʔa/
	chips	/tʃɪps/	شبس	/ʃɪbs/
	chat	/tʃæt/	شات	/ʃat/
/ŋ/ → /n/	Bank	/bæŋk/	بَنك	/bank/
	Hanger	/ˈhæŋ.ər/	هانقر	/ˈhan.gar/
s → ʃ	cancel	/ˈkæn.səl	كنسل	/ˈkan.sal
	Sauce	/saʊs/	صوص	/ʃaʊːʃ/

It is obvious from the data that due to phonological variation between English and Arabic, English consonantal phonemes that are not part of the phonemic inventory of Omani Arabic, e.g. /p/ and /v/ are replaced by their closest counterparts in the language to facilitate the production of these missing segments. In Table 1 above, it can be noticed that the consonant sounds /v/ and /p/ in English loanwords are replaced by /f/ and /b/ respectively. Consequently, borrowed words such as ‘video’, ‘interview’, and ‘computer’ are all transformed phonologically and pronounced as ‘fidju’, ‘ʔin.tar.fju’, and ‘kum.biju:.’ ‘tar’ respectively. The adaptation of English /v/ and /p/ into Arabic /f/ and /b/ is predicted and is consistent with the findings of previous studies on other modern varieties of Arabic (e.g. [Almoayidi, 2023](#); [Bosli, 2025](#) among others). Furthermore, the data show that Omani Arabic exhibits the phonological process of deaffrication which involves replacing the affricate consonants /dʒ/ and /tʃ/ by the fricative sounds /ʒ/ and /ʃ/ respectively as in /ʃibs/ ‘chips’ and /ʒu:s/ ‘juice’. It is worth noting that the phoneme /dʒ/, which is missing in Omani Arabic and is perceptually and phonologically close to /ʒ/, is often adapted to /g/ as in /ʔagenda/ ‘agenda’. [Morano \(2022\)](#) pointed out that although the phoneme /ʒ/ exists in some dialects of Omani Arabic, it is ‘generally realized as the voiced velar stop [g]’. Thus, the consonants /ʒ/ and /dʒ/ in English borrowed lexical items are mostly realized as /g/. Finally, the phonemes /ŋ/ is not part of the phonemic inventory of Omani Arabic and consequently is adapted to its closet counterpart available in the language which is /n/ as in /bank/ ‘bank’. Such findings suggest that the phonology of the borrowing language plays a main role in the nativisation process, indicating that the adaptation of the consonant segments above is phonology-driven.

Vowel alternation

Phonological adaptation in English loanwords includes vowel alternation which is a conspicuous phenomenon across languages. The data show that several vowel sounds undergo alternation processes such as monophthongization and vowel substitution. For instance, in Table 2, the diphthong /eɪ/ is changed into /a/ or /e:/, and /ai/ is changed to /e:/. The diphthong /əʊ/ which is not part of the phonemic inventory of Omani Arabic is replaced by the monophthongs /ɔ:/, or /u/. In addition, vowel substitution is also at play as the short vowels /ʌ/ and /ə/ are replaced by the longer vowels /a:/ and /u:/ respectively, as illustrated in the data below.

The data in Table 2 provide various examples of vowel alteration processes affecting vowels in the nativization of English loanwords. The analysis shows that diphthongs in English loanwords are often subject to monophthongization, which is also attested in other Arabic dialects ([Morano, 2022](#); [Almoayidi, 2023](#)). As the data show, the diphthongs /eɪ/ and /ai/ are often monophthongised as /e:/. Thus, /eɪ/ and /aɪ/ in borrowed words such as ‘tape’, ‘light’ and ‘pipe’ are monophthongised as /te:b/, /le:t/ and /be:b/ respectively. In some other words, the /eɪ/ is adapted to /a/, as in /radju:/ ‘radio’ and /kabəl/ ‘cable’. Likewise, as the diphthong /əʊ/ does not exist in the phonemic inventory of Omani Arabic, it is monophthongised as /ɔ/ or /u/ respectively, as in /sɔ.ʃal.mi.di.ʒa/ ‘social media’, and /ru.bət/ ‘robot’. The diphthong /au/ is also monophthongised as /ɔ/ or /u/ in loanwords, as in /pɔ.dar/ ‘powder’. These findings echo the results of [Morano \(2022\)](#) who pointed out that diphthongs in loanwords in al-ʿAwābī dialect of Omani Arabic ‘can be subject to monophthongisation’. However, it is worth mentioning that diphthongs in loanwords are retained in word final positions as in /baɪ/ ‘bye’ and /haɪ/ ‘hi’. Furthermore, the data show that monophthongs are also affected in the adaptation processes. To illustrate, the schwa sound, which is a short vowel occurring in unstressed syllables, is often substituted by the

Table 2. Vowel alternation in English loanwords.

Vowel alternation	English		Arabized loanwords	
	Word	Phonetic Transcription	Word	Phonetic Transcription
ei → a	Radio	/ˈreɪ.di.əʊ/	رادیو	/radju/
ei → e:	cake	/keɪk/	كیک	/ke:k/
	tape	/teɪp/	تیپ	/te:b/
	break	/breɪk/	بریک	/bre:k/
ai → e:	microphone	/ˈmaɪ.krə.fəʊn/	میکروفون	/me:.kru.fəʊn/
ai → ai	motorcycle	/ˈməʊ.təˌsaɪ.kəl/	موتورسیکل	/mɔː.tar.s e:.kal/
	light	/laɪt/	لیت	/le:t/
	pipe	/paɪp/	بیب	/be:b/
	bye	/baɪ/	بای	/bai/
	hi	/haɪ/	های	/hai/
/əʊ/ → /ɔ:/, /ɒ/	social media	/səʊ.ʃəl ˈmi:.di.ə/	شوشل میدیا	/sɔː.ʃal mi:.dija/
/əʊ/ → /ɔ/	robot	/ˈrəʊ.bɒt/	روبوت	/rɔːbɒt/
/əʊ/ → /u:/	telephone	/ˈtel.ɪ.fəʊn/	تلیفون	/ta.la.fəʊn/
	remote	/rɪˈməʊt/	ریموت	/ri.mu:t/
/ɔ/ → /u/	cocktail	/ˈkɒk.teɪl/	کوکتیل	/kuk.te:l]
/ʌ/ → /a:/	Bus	/bʌs/	باص	/ba:s/
/ə/ → /u:/, /u/	Virus	/ˈvaɪə.rəs/	فیروس	/fe:.ru:s/

open low front vowel /a/ particularly in word final positions, as in /fri:.zar/ ‘freezer’, /tan.kar/ ‘tanker’, and /ka.far/ ‘cover’. Other cases of vowel substitution, which were also observed in Iraqi Arabic loanword adaptation (Abdulrazzaq & Al-Ubaidy, 2023), involve replacing /ʌ/ with /a:/ as in /ba:s/ ‘bus’, and /ə/ with /u:/ as in /fe:.ru:s/ ‘virus’.

Vowel epenthesis

Vowel epenthesis plays an important role in the adaptation of loanwords (Kenstowicz, 2005; Boersma & Hamann, 2009). Previous research shows that English consonant clusters are problematic for Arabic speakers (Alotaibi, 2021; Kalaldeh, 2016). English permits elaborate constant clusters in word-initial, medial or final positions, whereas in the phonology of Arabic the occurrence of consonant clusters is restricted. Initial consonant clusters are permissible in Omani Arabic. The onset of a syllable can be occupied by two or three consonants¹ in word initial but not in word medial or final positions (Al-Aghbari, 2004). Moreover, a cluster of two or three consonants in a word-medial position is broken so that ‘only one consonant is left for the onset of the following syllable’ (Al-Balushi, 2016). Thus, to ensure that borrowed words comply with the phonotactic restrictions of the native language, it is noticeable that speakers of Omani Arabic tend to insert an

epenthetic vowel to break up consonant clusters, a process referred in phonological theory as declusterisation. This aligns with recent studies on Arabic varieties such as those of Bosli (2025), Almoayidi (2023), Almathkuri (2022), and Al-Athwary (2017). As illustrated in Table 3, consonant clusters in loanwords are broken up by the insertion of epenthetic short vowels, e.g. /i/, /ɒ/ and /u/, and by the prefixation of the prosthetic syllable of /ʔi/ to initial consonant clusters starting with /s/.

Table 3. Vowel epenthesis in English loanwords.

Vowel Epenthesis	English		Arabicized Loanwords	
	Word	Phonetic Transcription	Word	Phonetic Transcription
<i>Word initial</i>	scooter	/ˈsku:.tər/		/ʔis.ˈku:.tar/
	screenshot	/ˈskri:n.ʃɒt/	سِكْرين شوت	/ʔis.ki.rɪ:n.ʃɒt/
	bronze	/brɒnz/	بورونزية	/bɒ.rɒn.ziʒa/
	crystal	/ˈkris.təl/	كْرِيسْتال	/ˈki.rɪs.tal/
	squash	/skwɒʃ/	ايسكواش	/ʔi.sik.wa:ʃ/
	split	/splɪt/	سِبْلِيْت	/sɪp.lɪt/
<i>Word medial</i>	computer	/kəmˈpjʊ:.tər/	كُمْبِيوتَر	/kum.bɪju:.tar/
	control	/kənˈtrəʊl/	كُونْتْرُول	/kən.tu.rɔl/
	electric	/ˌel.ɪkˈtrɒn.ɪk/	الْكْتروني	/ʔi.lɪk.tu.ru:.ni/
	ice-cream	/ˌaɪs ˈkri:m/	ايسِكْرِيْم	/ʔaɪ.sɪk.ri:m/
<i>Word final</i>	film	/fɪlm/	فِيلْم	/fi.lam/
	cable	/keɪbəl/	كابل	/ka.bal/

The data show that word initial consonant clusters in words as ‘screenshot’, ‘crystal’ and ‘scooter’, pronounced by Arabic speakers as /ʔi.sik.ri:n.ʃɒt/, /ˈki.rɪs.ta:l/ and /ʔis.ˈku:.tar/ respectively, are all adapted to the phonotactic constraints of the native language by inserting the glottal stop /ʔ/ to avoid having an onsetless syllable and an epenthetic vowel to break up the consonantal sequences to avoid a syllable with a complex onset. Likewise, medial and final consonant clusters in English loanwords are phonologically transformed to fit the phonotactics of the receptor language. Thus, the borrowed words ‘control’ and ‘film’ are pronounced as /kən.tu.rɔ:l/ and /fi.lam/ respectively.

Stress assignment in English loanwords

As in other varieties of Arabic, syllables in Omani Arabic must begin with a consonant. The most widespread syllable forms that appear in the language are CV, CVV, CVC, CVVC and CVCC (Morano, 2022; Al-Balushi, 2016). In terms of syllable weight, syllable structure is categorized into three categories: light syllables, e.g. CV, CC; heavy syllables,

e.g. CVV, CVC; and superheavy syllables, e.g. CVVC and CVCC (Morano, 2022). With respect to stress assignment in Omani Arabic, it normally ‘falls on the long syllable in a word’ (Al-Balushi, 2016). A long (heavy) syllable is a syllable that includes a long vowel followed by one or two consonants as in /zár.hum/ ‘he has visited them’, or a syllable with a short vowel followed by two consonants, as in ‘ka.tábt ‘I have written’. In bi-syllabic words containing two long syllables, stress falls on the ultimate syllable, as in /ráy.hát/ ‘we are leaving’. As for polysyllabic words, stress falls on the long syllable if there is one as in /ḡa.rábt.na/ ‘you have hit’; in case the polysyllabic word has no long syllables, then the antepenultimate syllable is stressed, as in /már.ka.bak/ ‘your boat’ (Al-Balushi, 2016). Regarding stress placement in loanwords, there are two strategies. First, stress placement of the source language is maintained in the recipient language; second, stress placement is changed to adapt the stress patterns of the borrowing language (Buczek-Zawiła, 2015). The data in Table 4 show how stress shifts across syllables to fit the stress patterns of Omani Arabic.

Table 4. Stress assignment in English loanwords.

English		Arabicized Loanwords	
Word	Phonetic Transcription	Word	Phonetic Transcription
album	/ˈæl.bəm/	ألبوم	/ʔal.ˈbu:m/
airbag	/ˈeə.bæg/	أيرباغ	/ʔir.ˈba:g/
poster	/ˈpəʊ.stər/	بوسٹر	/ˈbo:s.tar/
dollar	/ˈdɒl.ər/	دولار	/duˈla:r/
coupon	/ˈku:.pɒn/	كوبون	/ku:ˈbo:n/
pancake	/ˈpæn.keɪk/	بانكيك	/pæn.ˈke:k/
tactic	/ˈtæk.tɪk/	تكتيك	/takˈti:k/
doctor	/ˈdɒk.tər/	دكتور	/dɒk.ˈto:r/
professor	/prəˈfes.ər/	بروفيسور	/bu.ru.fi.ˈso:r/
crystal	/ˈkrɪs.təl/	كريستال	/ki.ris.ˈta:l/
petrol	/ˈpet.rəl/	بترول	/bit.ˈro:l/
protocol	/ˈprəʊ.tə.kɒl/	بروتوكول	/bu.ro:tu.ˈko:l/

The data in Table 4 indicate that stress assignment in English loanwords changes to obey the constraints governing stress placement patterns in Omani Arabic. It is evident from the data that stress in loanwords falls on the long/heavy syllable. To illustrate, in the English words /ˈæl.bəm / ‘album’ and /ˈeə.bæg/ ‘airbag’, the first syllable is stressed; whereas, in the adapted forms of these words, the second syllable, which is the heaviest syllable, bears stress as in /ʔal.ˈbu:m/ and /ʔir.ˈba:g/ respectively. Another example on stress shift in English loanwords involves the word /prəˈfes.ər/ ‘professor’ and /ˈkrɪs.təl/

‘crystal’ which are adapted as /bu.ru.fi.'so:r/ and /ki.ris.'ta:l/ with stress falling on the heaviest syllable to conform to the language-specific constraints.

Conclusion

This article provided a description of various phonological adaptation processes that English loanwords undergo at the segmental and suprasegmental levels before they become integrated into Omani Arabic. At the segmental level, data analysis revealed that English loanwords are phonologically transformed to conform to the phonology of the native language via various phonological processes including phoneme substitution, deafrication and monophthongization. Phonemes that are absent in the phonemic inventory of Arabic are often mapped into the closest counterparts available or modified phonologically to fit the requirements of the native language. Regarding the suprasegmental level, the analysis shows that speakers of Omani Arabic tend to insert the glottal stop /ʔ/ into onsetless syllables and an epenthetic vowel into complex syllables to conform to the predominantly CV syllable structure in Arabic. Furthermore, stress assignment in English loanwords seems to follow stress patterns in Omani Arabic as it often falls on the heaviest syllable within the word. Finally, the results of the study suggest that English loanword adaptation in Omani Arabic is mostly phonology driven.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

AI usage statement

The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the conception, writing, analysis, interpretation, or preparation of this manuscript.

Endnotes:

1. Shaaban (1977), as mentioned in Al-Balushi (2016), points out that the consonantal sequence stCVC as in /strah/ ‘he rested’ is restrictive, as it occurs only with the stated consonants in the onset. The sequence CVC̄CC, as in /rādd/ ‘returning’, is restricted to the active participle form of geminate verbs.

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