CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0   Background of the study

Arabic, a Semitic language, is one of the most spoken languages in the world, with an estimated 250 million native speakers. It is the largest branch of the Afro-asiatic language family. Arabic has 28 consonants and only 3 vowels (a, i, u) which can be either short or long. It is written from the right to left in contrast to many languages around the world. Some of the sounds are unique to Arabic and may be difficult for foreigners to pronounce exactly. Arabic is also known as the Al (ض) language because no language in the whole world has this letter. It has been a literary language since at least the 6th century and is the liturgical language of Islam. For a period of time, Arabic was the language of scientific discourse, primarily in the fields of chemistry, medicine, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, optics, physics and botany (Kenneth, 2002).

Arabic is strongly associated with Islam. It is the language of *Salah* (Muslims prayer) and it is also the language of the *Qur'an*, the Holy book of Islam and the narration of Mohammed (Peace Be upon Him) the master of prophets. The *Qur'an* is expressed in Arabic and traditionally Muslims deem it impossible to translate in a way that would adequately reflect its exact meaning. Indeed until recently, some schools of thought maintained that it should not be translated at all (Ali, 1995). It is the official language of many countries and is widely studied and known to Arab and non-Arab people; to Muslims and non-

Muslims such as the Arab Christians, Oriental Mizrahi Jews, and to even the smallest sects as the Iraqi Mandaeans (Leslie, 1982). In modern times, Arabic provides a prime example of the linguistic phenomenon of "diglossia" which means the normal use of two separate varieties of the same language, usually in different social situations (Ferguson, 1959). Ferguson identified Arabic as being a prime example of languages which fit into his definition of diglossia. He simply stated that diglossia speech communities have a High variety that is very prestigious and a Low variety with no official status which are in complementary distribution with each other.

The High variety, for instance, might be used for literary discourse while the Low variety for ordinary conversation. His original definition of diglossia was that the two varieties which are in a diglossic relationship with each other are closely related, and therefore diglossia cannot be termed as bilingualism. In his defining example he points out that the High variety is always an acquired form at school, and the low variety is the first acquired form at home. Some educated native speakers might even deny that they ever use the Low variety. An important component of diglossia is that the speakers have the personal perception that the High variety is the "real" language and that the Low variety is the "incorrect" usage.

In Arab nations, people talk about the High variety as being "pure" Arabic and the dialects as being the corrupt forms. Educated Arabs of any nationality can be assumed to be able to speak both their local dialect and their school-taught literary Arabic (Standard Arabic). The modern standard Arabic is used in reading, writing and high register speech (Croft, 2000). The local dialects in the

Arabic world vary from one country to another and from one area to another in the same country. The main dialectal division is between the North African dialects and those of the Middle East and Bedouin dialects. Bedouin, derived from the Arabic word *'badawi'* is the generic name for a desert-dweller. It is a term generally applied to Arab nomadic pastoralist groups found throughout most of the desert belt extending from the Atlantic coast of the Sahara via the western desert, Sinai, and Negev to the Arabian Desert (Martin, 2001). Speakers of some of these dialects have been known to be unable to converse with speakers of another dialect of Arabic.

The five major groups of Arabic dialects are Egyptian Arabic, Maghreb Arabic including (Algerian, Moroccan, Tunisian, Maltese and western Libyan Arabic), Levantine Arabic (including, western Syrian, Lebanese, Palestinian and western Jordanian), Gulf Arabic (including, eastern Saudi Arabia, western Iraq, eastern Syria, Jordanian and parts of Oman), East Arabian Arabic (including, Bahrain, Saudi eastern province, Kuwait, UAE, Qatar, and Oman) and Iraqi Arabic (Ali, 1995). Although dialects vary from one country to another all are united by the standard language of the *Holy Qur'an* (Abd Alrahman, 1991). According to Newman (2002) this differentiations in dialects lay mainly in the variation of word borrowings due to the circumstances of each country especially those in relation to politics. At different times in history, different languages featured prominently as sources of word borrowings into Arabic. Iraq for example, at a period of time was under the rule of the Ottoman Turks. As such Turkish was a vital source for word borrowing. The English language took its place during the period of the British colonials. Whereas Egypt, Algeria (invaded for almost 130 years) and Tunisia were influenced by French as a source language for word

borrowing. On the other hand Libyan Arabic was influenced by Italian (Al Razi, 1989).

In view of the above, it is clear that Arabic has a long history of contact with other languages. It is not surprising then that such contacts should have resulted in the borrowing of new words into Arabic. As already mentioned, one of the languages that are affected by this contact is the Iraqi Arabic dialect.

1.1   Statement of the problem

From the general observation which was first carried out on few Iraqi families by the researcher, it was noted that quite a number of English words have become part of the Iraq dialect. The borrowing of words from English into Arabic has had a strong effect on the structure of the colloquial Arabic language. Ironically most Iraqis are not aware that these words have become part of their everyday language as there are using them even when they have equivalents in Arabic.

There is a need to be concern about these borrowings because the more rampant the borrowing of words, the bigger the gap will be between the Standard Arabic and the everyday dialect. This in turn will influence the individual's proficiency of Arabic as a mother tongue and as a language of religion in the long run. As such it is important to document these borrowings so a greater awareness of their influence and effect can be raised. Such an effort will help preserve the original form and structure of this ancient language.

1.2   The research objectives

The main objective of this study is to investigate the existence of English loanwords in Iraqi Arabic dialect as part of the "colloquial Arabic". It focuses on a list of English loanwords used by Iraqi speakers in their dialectical language. This study will set out to investigate the origins of these loanwords and categorize them into different fields according to their contextual use by Iraqi speakers and find out the reasons behind the borrowing of such words.

It is assumed that phonological production factors are among the more powerful factors in determining the emergence of loanwords in the Iraqi Arabic dialect (Haugen, 1953, cited in Heah, 1989 and Al-Saqqaf, 2006). Thus this study will in part focus on the phonological aspect of the borrowings but for the most part it will focus on the semantic aspect. This study also aims to illustrate the consequences of unbridled use of loanwords over Arabic words in everyday discourse.

1.3   The research questions

For the purpose of this investigation, it was important to concentrate on the forms of English loanwords which exist in the Iraqi Arabic dialect and how these forms played great role in the emergence of the English loanwords in Iraqi Arabic dialect. It was also important to focus on the consequences of the emergence of such words into colloquial Arabic especially the Iraqi dialect. In order to facilitate the investigation these aims were translated into the following research questions:

1. Are users of the Iraqi Arabic dialect aware of the form of English loanwords?

2. Are users of the Iraqi Arabic dialect able to provide equivalents in Arabic to a given list of English loanwords?

3. Why do Iraqi Arab people use (English) loanwords?

1.4   Significance of the study

On the first level, this study will shed some light on the existence of loanwords in Iraqi Arabic dialect. However on another level, it will draw the attention of Iraqi Arabs that many of the words they have conveniently been using in their day-to-day interactions are actually words borrowed from other languages which have eventually been assimilated into their dialects. As it is a topic which is obviously important but which has not been dealt with much, this study will also highlight the consequences of using loanwords to the Iraqi Arabic dialect.

According to previous studies on lexical borrowings between two languages, the phenomena of borrowing have gained great attention of many linguists since a long time. Since the fifties and seventies Haugen (1950) and Weinreich (1979) (as cited in several studies which will be discussed in Chapter Two) have provided evidence on the phenomena of borrowing and the factors that promote it. Their studies still stand as a foundation for subsequent related studies (Field, 2002; Heah, 1989; Muysken, 2005; Newman, 2002) and have provided a great understanding of borrowings among bilingual speakers in different communities throughout the world. A number of studies on borrowings have been done in Malaysia such as Mahaesvary (1994), Parwathy (1993) and

Wong (1993). These studies present a great amount of English loanwords that exists in the Malay language. Wong (1993) for example, discusses the existence of English loanwords in Malay short stories and mentioned that borrowing of English loanwords has expanded the lexicon of Bahasa Malaysia. He also mentioned that Bahasa Malaysia has not limited itself to borrowing from English only; it also borrows from Chinese and other languages.

Since a study on English loanwords in the Iraqi Arabic dialect has not been sufficiently dealt with, the main aim of this current study is to investigate and document this phenomenon in a systematic way so the Iraqi people can be made aware of its existence, reasons for usage and consequences on their daily speech and language.

1.5 Limitation of the study

Word borrowing is widely used by speakers of a language in contact situation with other language(s). The borrowing of words from one language into another can be due to various aspects which may also vary among its speakers. These aspects include language status, the need to fill a gap in the recessive language and the socio - political conditions. The borrowing can be analyzed through many linguistic aspects such as phonology, syntax, and semantics, as well as sociolinguistic and cultural. All these aspects will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

Appel and Muysken (2005), Mustafawi (2002), Heah (1989) and many other linguists have provided evidence that social factors are among the more

significant explanation for the existence of borrowing between two languages. As such, this study will limit its scope to mainly the sociolinguistic factors that promote the borrowing of English words into the Iraqi Arabic dialect. Simultaneously, it will also investigate the phonological aspect of the borrowed words in order to find out the existence of assimilation and non-assimilation of English sounds alongside the borrowed words.

1.6   Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief and general overview of upon which this study is built. It summarized issues which had help determine the research objectives and the research questions. This chapter has also highlighted that the significance of this study lies in its hope that the findings will help the Iraqi people to be more aware of the instances of borrowing which appear to be prevalent in their everyday Arabic dialect. It is also important to bring to the attention of the reader that the study focuses on the dialectal Arabic of Iraqi people and not the standard Arabic which is used in formal discourse situations.