

Describing the Appearances of Renewal and Modernity in the Introductions of Modern and Contemporary Dictionaries

*Taiebi Ahmed Faiza**

Hassiba Ben Bouali University – Chlef

majister79@live.fr

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Abstract:

If modernity relates to change and innovation recently in connection with various modalities of people's lives, then lexical modernity relates to the renewal of the field of lexicography in the modern era. Dictionaries are no longer limited to what happened previously in ancient times, they are placed on along with it and in the spirit of the contemporary era. This connection is reflected in both the content and the techniques used to collect and organize lexical material. Lexical modernity involves a comprehensive grasp of modern words, usages, expressions, and meanings employed across different fields and disciplines, with particular attention given to cultural vocabulary, the names of tools and instruments, and the terminology required by any speaker or learner of Arabic to express themselves in this language.

Keywords: Lexical Modernity – Introductory Methodology – The Contemporary Dictionary – Linguistic Studies.

1. Introduction:

The introductory lexicographic discourse is considered a significant research topic in contemporary linguistic studies, especially with the development of lexicographic production, which has sought to benefit from the vast Arabic lexicographic heritage in light of the contributions of Western linguistic theories in this field of knowledge. As an accompanying text to one of the foundational references of the Arabic language, it complements, explains, and guides the use of the dictionary. Therefore, it deserves the same level of attention and care.

* Taiebi Ahmed Faiza.

In this context, the present research is titled “*A Descriptive Study of the Manifestations of Renewal and Modernity in the Introductions of Modern and Contemporary Arabic Dictionaries.*” Through this study, we aim to answer the following research question: **To what extent have modern lexicographers invested the outcomes of contemporary linguistic studies in constructing their dictionary introductions? And how have the manifestations of renewal and modernity been reflected in them?**

2. Formal Manifestations of Modernity

2.1. Attention to Form and Layout:

It stands to reason that the format of the Arabic dictionary grows and develops in form and its presentation in terms of the type of paper, the size of the page, the font type, the use of pictures and illustrations, the use of titles, color and other visual features to attract the reader, to make it easier to search, whatever the reader's purpose may be.

2.1.1 Colors:

Modern Arabic dictionaries have begun to use colors to facilitate the search process within their texts, as color plays a role in making it easier to distinguish between various types of information. Thus, colors have become one of the guiding tools clarified in the introductions of modern dictionaries, marking a distinctive feature—especially in light of the evolution of lexicographic design and layout.

Al-Munjid in Contemporary Arabic Language's preface serves as an illustration of this, stating: “*We have resorted to printing every 'headword'—whether root or derivative—in red ink solely to make the use of the book easier and to save the reader's time.*” (authors, 2000, p. 1)

To further improve clarity and usage, The Dictionary of Contemporary Arabic Language also provides a table that lists the colors used and their meanings. (Ahmad Mukhtar, 2008, p. 30).

It is important to point out that Al-Fayruzabadi stated in the introductory section of his Al-Qamus Al-Muhit, that he used a different color so the reader could quickly recognize the distinction of his dictionary from Al-Sihah of al-Jawhari. He said: “*I intended that the superiority of my book over his would instantly be recognisable to the reader, so I wrote the entries he had omitted in red.*” (Al-Fayruzabadi, p. 27)

2.1.2 Images and Illustrations:

When a word is accompanied by an image, it can help a reader understand what the word means and connotes simultaneously. Images and drawings assist writing in doing its job of communicating—especially when the drawing or image closely resembles the external object that is referred to, such as a photograph (Abd al-Salam, 1994, p. 80). A photograph can be thought of as a single-indivisible message, as, while they depict reality, they only photo-represent reality (size, angle and color), and they do not modify or distort reality. By pairing the written word with an image of the referent, the reader is left to gradually traverse from the world of the object (which it depicts) to the world of the abstract (which is the meaning ultimately received) (Faisal, 2010, p. 121). For this reason, the pairing of images and illustrations in lexicographic production has become a means of a reference point and a point of definition. Regarding the utility of images or illustrations, lexicographers have noted, especially in their introductions, they are seen as ancillary or added value which additionally make the dictionary a more usable and functional object ¹ (Muhammad, 2010, p. 202).

In the present time, the first usage of images in Arabic dictionaries appeared in Louis Maalouf's *Al-Munjid* in 1908. He was the first lexicographer to implement images in his dictionary and other lexicographers adopted his style, notably Ahmad Rida in his *Matn Al-Lugha*, the Arabic Language Academy in *Al-Ma'jam Al-Waseet*, Jubran Mas'ud in *Al-Ra'id* dictionary, and Khalil Al-Jarr in *Larousse: The Modern Arabic Dictionary* (Haj Hennī, 2012).

2.1.3. Tagging:

Tagging is the process in which the lexicographer places markers to distinguish the dictionary entries. It has become common in lexicography to use conventional symbols in various forms, which are placed next to the main entry, sub-entries, or in the explanations of entries. These symbols provide a range of descriptive information and help organize the relationships within the lexicographic content. (Salam Bazi, 2017, p. 499)

In modern foreign dictionaries, it is customary to preface the dictionary with a list of symbols and abbreviations used throughout, which addresses aspects related to gender, number, grammatical categories, language levels, fields of science and art, and the treatment of lexicographic content such as synonyms, antonyms, and others. This tagging takes three main forms:

¹ Although the use of images to define words is a modern trend in lexicographic production, its presence in the Arabic lexicographic heritage can be traced back to *Al-Qamus Al-Muhit* by Al-Fayruzabadi, which is considered one of the earliest dictionaries worldwide to employ images or drawings to clarify entries, even though this is not mentioned in its introduction

- **The First Form:** The use of the word in its full expression.
- **The Second Form:** Based on abbreviating the first form, replacing the descriptive word with a letter or a set of letters from it.
- **The Third Form:** Based on the use of symbols, which are numbers and linear marks that do not rely on language words.

Modern dictionaries rely on these symbols and abbreviations for two main reasons:

- **Conciseness:** One abbreviation or symbol can replace a lot of words.
- **Precision and Consistency:** To ensure the lexicographic work follows a consistent pattern (Salam Bazi, 2017, pp. 499-500).

Today, these symbols and abbreviations hold an important place in the techniques and production of dictionaries, due to their multiple functions and methodological goals. They are used as keys to the dictionary content. However, upon reviewing the introductions of modern Arabic dictionaries, one notices the scarcity of symbols, in contrast to French and English dictionaries, which are prefaced with long lists of symbols and abbreviations. These lists address aspects such as gender, number, grammatical categories, language levels, fields of science and arts, and the treatment of synonyms and antonyms, among others. For example, in the introduction to *Le Petit Robert*, there is a long list of nearly five hundred symbols and abbreviations. On the other hand, modern Arabic dictionaries typically contain no more than a handful of symbols (Hamza, 2015, p. 166). An exception is found in the introduction to *Al-Ghani Al-Zahir Dictionary*, which is rich in symbols, including many abbreviations related to linguistic matters, such as singular, dual, plural, collective plural, masculine, feminine, active participle, passive participle, adjectives, triconsonantal verbs, quadriliteral verbs, intransitive and transitive verbs, as well as the use of numbers, parentheses, quotation marks, and circles (Abd Al-Ghani, 2013, p. 13).

2.2 Manifestations of Methodological Modernity:

2.2.1 Vocabulary Updating:

Updating vocabulary is considered one of the most important manifestations of modernity in modern Arabic dictionaries, and it is often the first aspect that comes to mind when modernity in lexicography is mentioned. This point is explicitly stated in the introductions of modern Arabic dictionaries. The process of updating vocabulary takes two forms:

Exclusion of Obsolete, Strange, or Rare Words: This refers to the removal of words that are considered archaic, foreign, neglected, or abandoned—those words that are

said to have fallen out of use in contemporary language. Nonetheless, dictionaries frequently do not specify the criteria they follow to determine which words they will include and which words they will not include (Hamza, 2015, p. 154). What constitutes a word being "strange" or "rare" and what does that have to do with pulling that word out of their entries? What is the basis of that exclusion, was it a personal review of a contemporary corpus that systematically discerns the frequency of each word, and in addition, includes usage, or was it a matter of simply the lexicographer's preference and judgment calls in language use? Supplementing New Words: Second, a vocab update is the inclusion of new words that may or may not be in any of the dictionaries or previously in some of the same dictionaries. This is a significant apparent distinction for scientific, technological, and artistic vocab, as those are also language requirements to meet the news or language experience of changes and discoveries in those situations. Put another way, the vocab update is making sure that all dictionaries are as up to date, relevant, and exhaustive, as they can or will be, with the manner in which language is changing and developing, with respect to various areas of study as it relates to current trends.

Through what has been stated in the introductions of some modern Arabic dictionaries regarding the issue of updating vocabulary, which explicitly involves the inclusion of coined, Arabized, modern, and foreign terms and considers this a legitimate practice that does not accuse its author of corrupting the language, these introductions have not clarified the method used to select new civilizational terms, and which modern, Arabized, or foreign terms are needed and have proven widespread use. Few dictionaries, such as the introduction to *Al-Ghani Al-Zahir Dictionary* and *The Dictionary of Contemporary Arabic*, have disclosed this in their introductions, relying on corpora for selection.

From the above, the levels of lexical material included in modern Arabic dictionaries can be discerned, such as classical, coined, modern, and borrowed terms (foreign, Arabized, and translated). These are closely related to the sources relied upon in selecting the dictionary material, as "the collection of sources used by the lexicographer to gather his dictionary material determines his stance on the linguistic levels he chooses to include in the corpus." (Al-Habib, 2011, p. 25). This depends on the type of dictionary and its intended purpose. For example, in the introduction to the first edition of *Al-Mujam Al-Waseet*, it is stated: "The Academy—being the supreme linguistic body—decided to use all means available to achieve its goals, including revitalizing and developing the Arabic language... among these means were significant linguistic decisions, such as opening the door for modern terms, such as derivation, figurative expressions, and improvisation... acknowledging coined words and equating them with the classical words of the ancients." Thus, both coined and modern terms were included as accepted linguistic levels in the dictionary.

As for the social aspect of linguistic levels, most modern dictionary introductions did not address it except briefly. This pertains especially to the colloquial level, which appeared in the introduction to *Al-Ghani Al-Zahir Dictionary* under the title "Dialects in the Dictionary," referring to colloquial terms. It also appeared in the introduction to *Al-Munjid* by Louis Ma'louf: "We have endeavored, as much as possible, to preserve the expressions of the ancients, and we have omitted mentioning those vulgar words that do not harm from ignorance, and whose knowledge rarely proves beneficial," (Louis, 1931, p. 44) referencing the vulgar level.

2.2.2. Entry Arrangement (Ordering of Entries):

Arrangement is the second principle foundational to lexicographical work. It refers to "the manner in which the author chooses to arrange the lexical stock that was compiled for inclusion in the dictionary." (Ibn Huwaili al-Akhdar, 2010, p. 70) In general, there are 2 main forms of arrangement:

External Arrangement: This involves the ordering of entries throughout the body of dictionary. It "provides the work with its reference functionality, and there is no Arabic or foreign dictionary, ancient or modern and certainly not one on a work of the non-Arabic encyclopaedia – that does not tackle this form of arrangement." This importance given to this method led to the establishment and evolution of different lexicographical schools. **Internal Arrangement:** This concerns the information contained in each entry. It is important for structuring and systematizing the dictionary. Increased awareness has clearly been given to the internal arrangement by modern lexicographers, with the need for a uniform procedure when organizing derivational forms in a dictionary. Internal arrangement has, in its own right, 2 forms of arrangement: **Joining Arrangement (by Association):** This joins together secondary entries/distinct entry words with the primary roots, since they all ultimately belong to the primary root, even if they do branch out and depart from the primary root. **Joining arrangement** is for sake of brevity and economy. **Division Arrangement (by Differentiation):** This aspect treats each lexical unit as an independent entry in the dictionary's metabolism, and it does so when it has meaning as a unit.

Arabic dictionaries, as they are currently produced, can contain entries in either a root-based arrangement, which most of its specialists have modeled on the arrangements of classical Arabic dictionaries, or are organized alphabetically in terms of words based on their surface form which does not peel away any affixes. Some examples of modern dictionaries organized with a root-based arrangement are *al-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ*, *al-Mu'jam al-ʿArabī al-Asāsī*, *al-Munjid fī al-Lugha wa al-Aʿlām*, *al-Munjid fī al-Lugha al-ʿArabiyya al-Muʿāṣira*, and others. Conversely, dictionaries are also organized with an arrangement of alphabetical order based on the surface forms of words such as *al-*

Mu‘jam by ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Alāyilī, al-Rā‘id by Jubrān Mas‘ūd, Mu‘jam al-Ghanī al-Zāhir, and several school dictionaries including al-Munjid al-I‘dādī, al-Qāmūs al-Jadīd li-l-Ṭullāb, Rā‘id al-Ṭullāb, among others. This arrangement is explicitly stated in the opening not only as an arrangement style but with the reasoning that it has it is a more difficult arrangement—root based—and the reader has easier access to the content.(Hamza & Jubran Mas‘ūd, 1992).

2.2.3. Lexicographic Definition:

One of the most important elements to which lexicographic practice gives significant attention is the **lexicographic definition**, which has been the subject of extensive specification and clarification in lexicographic theory. It has been defined as “the semantic analysis of the headword, consisting of a set of sentences that are synonymous with the headword, with each sentence being distinct in the way it specifies the meaning.”(Dubois, 1994, p. 131)

It has also been defined as: “a type of commentary on headwords, where different types of phonetic, morphological, syntactic, semantic, rhetorical, and stylistic information converge in the form of successive texts.”(Mohamed Rachad, 1995, p. 16). Thus, meaning and its explanation constitute the fundamental cornerstone of lexicographic work. In this regard, **Ahmad Mukhtar Omar** states: “Meaning lies at the core of the lexicographer’s concern, as it is the most important demand of the dictionary user.”(Ahmad Mukhtar, 1998, p. 20). Lexicographic definitions are categorized into: **nominal definition**, **logical definition**, and **structural definition**.

In addition to what Dr. Mukhtar Dergawi added to the linguist Jilali Hallam’s types of lexicographic definitions, such as definition by metaphor, grammatical definition, definition by example, and definition by image, despite the fact that definition is a fundamental element in lexicographic work, discussions about it have not received much attention in the introductions to many modern dictionaries.(Mukhtar, 2018, pp. 210-212) In most cases, the adopted policy for definition has not been specified, nor has its nature or components been clarified, with the exception of the introduction to Al-Zahir which addresses the specificity of definitions, their coherence, and their relationship with examples and descriptive information, and what is found in the introduction to Lughat Al-‘Arab concerning matters related to interpretation, the arrangement of the specific and the general, and truth and metaphor.(Ibn Huwaili al-Akhdar, 2010, p. 9)

2.2.4 Continuous Updating:

Printing has made a significant contribution to the revival of the Arab lexicographic heritage. Initially, old dictionaries were relied upon, and some were republished to facilitate their circulation among people. This led to the appearance of printed editions of works such as *Taj al-Lugha wa Sahah al-'Arabiyya*, *Al-Qamus al-Muhit*, *Asas al-Balaghah*, *Al-Misbah al-Munir*, *Taj al-'Arus*, and *Lisan al-'Arab*. (Adnan, 1994, pp. 47-48) Additionally, some scholars re-arranged certain old dictionaries alphabetically by the initial letters of words to make them easier to use.

Many linguists and critics saw the necessity of using the old dictionaries as a foundation for creating a dictionary that would keep pace with the developments of the modern era and civilization. As a result, they focused their attention on the foundational Arabic lexicons, studying, critiquing, and scrutinizing them. Among these scholars were Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq (d. 1887), Butrus al-Bustani (d. 1883), Ibrahim al-Yaziji (d. 1912), and others, who paid great attention to the organization of Arabic dictionaries and the arrangement of their entries in an easy and efficient manner, enabling researchers to find the intended meanings.

The process of revising and reprinting dictionaries then became a standard practice in lexicography, as it allowed for the inclusion of new material or corrections to previous editions. Reprinting any dictionary required reviewing its content, reconsidering its entries, and improving its format and presentation to ensure it was a modern dictionary that reflected the evolving language and its usage.

The introductions to dictionaries highlight the new aspects of reprints, their motivations, and their goals. For example, in the introduction to the second edition of *Al-Mu'jam al-Waseet*, it is stated: *"One of the favorable aspects of the work is the efforts of researchers and language critics to trace and comment on the dictionary's entries, providing the Academy with their observations. They expressed their hope in their introduction to request that scholars in the fields of language and literature send any corrections or additions they had. The first edition of the dictionary was about to run out, and the Academy assigned us to review it again and prepare it for the second edition."* (al-'Arabiyyah, 1972, pp. 17-18)

The introduction to *Al-Mu'jam al-Waseet* reveals the new aspects in this edition:

"The committee re-examined the first edition, word by word, carefully reviewing and scrutinizing it. It addressed words and branches of meaning that were missing from the dictionary, supplementing them with what was appropriate. In its review of the definitions and explanations, it sought to clarify its wording and its expression. The

committee also applied some new order, ensuring more accurate and systematic verb and pattern classifications. In addition, it attempted to clarify the distinction between 'coined' words and 'new' words, reducing overlap. In addition, many of the essential scientific terms and terms related to civilization, sanctioned by the Academy, were added to the dictionary. (al-‘Arabiyyah, 1972, pp. 18-19)

Following editing, each scientific term was also reviewed and the definitions clarified while completing the quoted text from the Qur'an, and appropriately edited. The main aspects of renewal and updating in the two new editions may be summarized in the following points: Refinement of word meanings to obtain clearer and more exact definitions.

Adding the possibility of using words in live contexts. Giving more attention to the historical development of words in terms of meaning and usage.

3. Modern Distinctive Manifestations

3.1 The Emergence of Linguistic Bodies and Language Academies:

One of the most notable features of modern Arabic dictionaries is their shift away from individualism, unlike the lexicographical activities of the past. Language academies were established to oversee the classification of dictionaries, transforming the work into a collective effort supervised by specialized bodies and supported by experts in various fields of science and arts, as seen with the *Historical Dictionary of the Arabic Language* and other dictionaries. Consequently, the introductions of these dictionaries often commend the efforts of these bodies and academies. For example, the introduction to *Al-Wajeez* states: "When the Academy of the Arabic Language was established at the beginning of the fourth decade of this century, it felt that it had a duty to address this educational necessity with a new initiative... The dictionary proceeded towards its goal, taking the necessary steps and gathering efforts to carry out this noble mission, fulfilling its national duty to preserve the Arabic language and striving to make it more accessible to people in a new way." (al-‘Arabiyyah, 1972, p. 26)

Similarly, the introduction to *Al-Mu‘jam al-‘Arabī al-Asāsī* mentions: "The Arab Organization for Education, Culture, and Science, which is the home of collective cultural work, has taken upon itself the responsibility of advancing Arabic lexicography along several fronts. It has worked with Arab national institutions, especially the Arabic language academies, universities, and scientific research centers, with a commitment to the advancement of the Arabic language and the promotion of its status." (al-Wajeez, 1979, pp. 9-10).

3.2 Computational Aspect:

The observer of the reality of Western lexicographical practices will find that most of their recent dictionaries cannot do without computers in the stages of dictionary creation, especially after the advancement of the theory related to linguistic data adopted by Western linguists in dictionary production.

As for the Arabs, they ventured into the field of computational linguistic statistics in the 1970s. Since then, the use of computers in lexicography has become an urgent necessity. The employment of various computer programs in lexicographical work has helped produce dictionaries that are refined in both form and organization. Modern dictionaries now rely on computerized linguistic corpora, which are processed automatically using various language processing tools, from which dictionary entries and units are extracted. This also involves adding some words and discarding others based on usage tracking indicators after surveys. Through this process, it is also possible to define the meanings of central and peripheral words, along with their corresponding examples and citations. The next stage involves gathering this lexicographical data to form a computerized dictionary database containing all the information related to words, meanings, examples, and citations. (Muhammad, 2023, pp. 169-175)

Hence, the introductions to modern dictionaries often praise their reliance on computers to collect, organize, define, and arrange their linguistic material. For instance, in the introduction to the *Dictionary of Contemporary Arabic*, it states: "Our reliance in this regard was on the vast corpus gathered from thousands of different texts and writings, which amounted to about one hundred million words and examples – a first in the Arab world – where we identified the most frequent usages by calculating repetition rates using automatic methods, benefiting from the computer systems and programs we specifically prepared for this purpose." It also mentions: "Great care was taken to present this dictionary in two formats: one printed, the other electronic." (Ahmad Mukhtar, 1998, p. 98)

However, the creation of dictionaries using Micro-Applications still requires a concerted effort between individuals and academies. Linguists focus on collecting linguistic material from paper corpora, while information specialists focus on surveying, designing programs, structuring data for input, classifying, searching, and presenting it to achieve the desired accuracy.

3.3. Focus on the Recipient:

The dictionary aims to bring its content and themes closer to the user, as well as the ways in which the material and contents are presented. When beginning to build a

dictionary, lexicographers keep the dictionary user and the target audience in mind, as the material of the dictionary (its levels, types, and quantity) depends on this user and the way it is organized and arranged. The process of explanation and definition also depends on the user. Modern lexicographers mention the target audience of the dictionary in their introductions and direct a message to the intended recipient once it is determined. For example, the introduction to "Al-Asasi" defines the target audience: "This dictionary is distinguished by its primary function, which is to facilitate the teaching of Arabic to non-native speakers... However, this goal does not prevent the dictionary from being useful to Arabs themselves, as the Arabic language is the same for its speakers and non-speakers alike." (Ahmad Mukhtar, 1998, pp. 8-9).

4.3. Simplification and Clarity:

Simplification and clarity are goals that modern lexicographers strive to achieve in any lexicographical work. Clarity involves the formulation of definitions, the organization of entries, and the selection of examples. This focus is tied to the target audience of the dictionary (Ahmad Mukhtar, 1998). We cannot imagine the level of simplification and clarity employed in a dictionary intended for language experts and specialists to be the same as in a school dictionary, nor the same as in a dictionary aimed at native speakers of the language versus one aimed at non-native speakers.

This is known as mental realism, where the lexicographer is not free to build their dictionary at will; rather, they are bound by the dictionary that is represented in the speaker's mind and by the method of organization that is most intuitive for the user to help them easily find their desired information. Thus, the lexicographer, when constructing the dictionary, must consider the mental representation of the dictionary in the speaker's mind and the arrangement that facilitates reaching their goal with ease and efficiency (Aziz al-Din, 1998, p. 20).

A number of modern lexicographers have pointed out the characteristics of simplicity and clarity in their introductions, making them a guiding principle to be achieved in the content of their works.

4. Conclusion:

Today's lexicographers (any lexicographic endeavor) always aim for simplicity and clarity. Clarity entails editing definitions, managing the information for the entries and example, and directing clarity with an audience in mind. We would not consider the same simplicity and clarity for a dictionary made for language experts, as we would for a school dictionary. The same goes for dictionaries for native speakers and dictionaries for non-native speakers. This is called 'mental realism', for the

lexicographer is not creating their dictionary, they are presenting the dictionary that exists in the mental lexicon of the speaker, and organizing it in a basic 'mental' way so that the user of the lexicon can navigate the lexicon, to seek and find an intended meaning. Thus, while the lexicographer annotated a dictionary, they have to consider the way the dictionary is represented in the users mind, and the arrangement to deliver their intended meaning to the clearest advantage to the user to that intention.

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