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# **An Overview of the Concept and Use of Synonymy in English and Arabic**

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## **Abstract**

Synonymy is a phenomenon that is widely spread in both English and Arabic. It is defined as "two or more lexical items which have the same meaning if they can replace each other without any change in the meaning of that context. For example tall and high are synonymous in: a tall building and a high building whereas they are not in a structure such as: a tall boy, since high cannot be used instead of tall to indicate the same meaning. The same is true in Arabic, for example /alhrb/ 'war' and /alhi3a/ 'war' are conceptually synonymous but they are not in: /alhrbu annfsia/ and /alhi3a annfsia/ 'psychological war'. Thus, synonymy remains a problem in terms of its identification and delimitation. Moreover, the relative size of synonymy in English as compared to Arabic has not been investigated yet to the best of my knowledge.

Arab linguists fall in two opposing stands regarding synonymy: those who defend the existence of synonymy and justifies its existence with the richness of the bases in the language, the different dialects used to refer to the same object or to historical developments where obsolete words were replaced by new words that have the same meaning. The other group of linguists represents those who defend the non-existence of synonymy.

The available information shows a lack of words identical in meaning and this confirms the absence of the so-called full synonymy, moreover, the partial synonymy is widespread in both languages, but more pronounced in Arabic than in English.

**ملخص**

الترادف ظاهرة منتشرة بشكل واسع في اللغتين العربية والانجليزية. وعُرف الترادف مجازاً علي أن له عدة استعمالات مجازية، أشهرها ما تواضع عليه علماء فقه اللغة من اطلاقه علي كلمتين أو اكثر تشترك في الدلالة علي معني واحد. لأن الكلمات قد تترادف علي المعني الواحد أو المسمي الواحد.

إن الترادف في اللغة العربية كما هو الحال في اللغة الانجليزية ليس له اسس واضحة حيث أن كلا اللغتين ثرية بالمترادفات إلا أن اللغة الأكثر غنى في هذه الظاهرة ليست واضحة الى الآن.

فإن البحث يهدف الى:

1. محاولة تقديم شرح وافٍ الى حدٍ ما لظاهرة الترادف في كلا اللغتين. 2. تحديد اللغة الغنية بالمترادفات منهما. 3. قياس مدى صحة شروط الترادف الأساسية.

تفترض الدراسة أن:

1. الترادف في كلا اللغتين جزئي. 2. المترادفات في اللغة العربية اكثر شيوعاً منها في اللغة الانجليزية.
- فبناءً على هذه الفرضيات يبدأ البحث بتفسير ظاهرة الترادف في كلا اللغتين ثم يُقدّم مقارنة بين اللغتين للإشارة على وجود الاختلاف والتشابه الرئيسية بينهما مستشهداً ببعض الألفاظ من القرآن الكريم.
- إن المعلومات المتوفرة تُظهر عدم وجود كلمتين متطابقتين في المعنى وهذا يؤكد عدم وجود ما يسمى بالترادف التام، علاوة على ذلك ، فإن الترادف الجزئي واسع الانتشار في كلا اللغتين لكنه اكثر وضوحاً في اللغة العربية منها في اللغة الانجليزية.

## Introduction

Synonymy is a lexical relation that means sameness of meaning; "two or more words with very closely related meanings. They can often, though not always, be substituted for each other in sentences" (Yule 2010, p. 117). Some examples might be the pairs below:

Couch/sofa - buy/purchase - lawyer/attorney - large/big - toilet/lavatory - broad/wide

Synonyms can be nouns, adverbs or adjectives, as long as both members of the pair are of the same part of speech. Traditionally, synonymy can only hold between words, and, more precisely, between words belonging to the same part of speech; for example: 'enormous' = 'huge'; 'gaze' = 'stare'. This is the classic form of synonymy, covered by, for instance synonym dictionaries.



Synonymy is a universal phenomenon that is not limited to Arabic or English, there is no such thing as absolute synonymy but rather near synonymy exists at best. There is a clear controversy that exists among classical and modern Arab linguists concerning the existence or absence of synonymy in language.

Finally, Absolute synonymy in the Holy Qur'an is simply an illusion and it does not exist at all. What exists is simply near synonymy which appears to be synonymous at first glance but reveals different and distinct semantic meanings upon deeper semantic analysis of the vocabulary items that are generally regarded to be synonymous at the surface.

## The Concept of Synonymy in English

Given the complexity of meaning, a person searching for an alternative word must be sure that the synonym chosen is accurate and precise. In the strict sense, a **synonym** is a word with a meaning identical or very similar to that of another word. In fact, it is often said there is no such thing as an absolute synonym for any word, that is, a form that is identical in every aspect of meaning so that the two can be applied interchangeably. According to this view, the only true synonymous are terms having precisely the *same denotation, connotation, and range of applicability*.

As Yule (2010: 117) notes, "we should keep in mind that the idea of 'sameness' of meaning used in discussing synonymy is not necessarily 'total sameness'. There are many occasions when one word is appropriate in a sentence, but its synonym would be odd. For example, standard dictionaries of English treat adjectives 'big' and 'large' as polysemous, (Polysemy deals the multiple senses of the same phonological word and it is invoked if the senses are judged to be related, Saeed 1997: 64).

'They live in a big/large house'.

The two words would generally be regarded as synonymous. It is easy to show, however, that 'big' and 'large' are not synonymous in all their meanings: i.e., that they fail to satisfy 'all their meanings are identical' and so are only partially, not absolutely, synonymous. The following sentence, 'I will tell my big sister', is



lexically ambiguous, by virtue of polysemy of 'big' in a way that 'I will tell my large sister' is not. All three sentences are well-formed and interpretable. They show that 'big' has least one meaning which it does not share with 'large'. There are many such examples of polysemous lexemes that are synonymous in one or more, but not all, of their meanings. Also, whereas the word 'answer' fits in the sentence 'Salem had only one answer correct on the test', the word 'reply' would sound odd. Yule (2010: 117), adds "Synonymous forms may also differ in terms of formal versus informal uses" The sentence 'My father purchased a large automobile' has virtually the same meaning as 'My dad bought a big car', with four synonymous replacements, but the second version sounds much more casual or informal than the first.

This view of synonymy is far too restrictive, however. I think that synonymous terms are those having nearly identical denotations. English is rich in such words. Speakers very often have a choice from among a set of words of differing origin but the same denotation. One may go to the 'shore' (from old English), the 'coast' (from Latin), or the 'littoral' (from Latin). One can refer to the sense of 'hearing' (old English) or to the 'acoustic' (Greek), 'auditory' (Latin), or 'auricular' (Latin) sense. One can make clothing from 'cloth' (old English), 'fabric' (Latin), 'material' (Latin), or 'textiles' (Latin). The reason for choosing one of these words over another is frequently stylistic: one may prefer a simpler or more complex word; one may prefer a more formal or less formal term. However, the fact that these words share a denotation makes them synonymous and available as substitutes for words one has in mind so that one can be more precise, express oneself more colorfully, or avoid repetition.

Lyons (1981: 148) distinguishes between two kinds of synonymy, i.e. what he calls 'complete' and 'absolute' synonymy. He defines them as follows: "... lexemes can be said to be *completely synonymous* (in certain range of contexts) if and only if they have the same descriptive, expressive and social meaning (in the range of contexts in questions). The may be described as *absolutely synonymous* if and only if they have the same distribution and are completely synonymous in all their meanings and in all their contexts of occurrence".



Lyons (ibid.) says 'complete synonymy' is rare, and 'absolute synonymy' hardly exists. If 'absolute synonymy' exists at all, it is merely in every special context such as scientific terms (e.g. *almonds* and *tonsils*). But what happens when we have two absolute synonyms is that specialists or speakers in general tend to use one of the two synonymous words and agree that chosen word should be always used to refer to the concept they are describing.

What about 'absolute synonymy', that is, according to Cruse (1986: 265) where all contextual relations between the two terms are identical. Roughly speaking, this means that in all linguistic contexts, the two terms are interchangeable without any difference in meaning.

Given the difficulty of ascertaining the respective behavior of two candidate absolute synonyms in all contexts, Cruse (ibid.) suggests the normality test as a way of determining the absence of absolute synonymy. This test shows that one of the two terms is normal in a given context, and the other less normal.

1- He told me the match *starts* at 08:00. (+normal)

2- He told me the match *commences* at 08:00. (- normal)

If we add '3', however, and compare it with '1' it is difficult to attribute greater normality to one or the other:

3- He told me the match *begins* at 08:00.

Cruse (1986) rules out the use of contexts where one term is old in syntactic terms, suggesting the context should provide a level playing field in order to ascertain normality. If this is the case, one would have to go a long way to find two contexts where 'begin' and 'start' could be seen to be non-absolute synonymous. Furthermore, Cruse, also, rules out the use of 'irrelevant senses' of a word form.

4- Mohammed's most recent car is an old one. (+)

5- Mohammed's most recent car is a former one. (-)

6- He had more responsibility in his old job.

7- He had more responsibility in his former job.



Cruse (ibid.) adds, normality test works well if we wish to show with the least of contextual investigation that two words are not absolute synonyms. It is more difficult to show that two words are in fact absolute synonyms.

As Palmer (1981:88) states, the synonyms often have different distributions along a number of parameters. First, they may have belonged to different dialects and then become synonyms for speakers familiar with both dialects like Irish English 'press' and British English 'cupboard'. Second, the words may belong to different registers those styles of language, colloquial, formal, literary etc., that belong to different situations. Thus, 'wife' or 'spouse' is more formal than 'old lady' or 'missus'. Thirdly, some words differ only in their emotive or evaluative values but their cognitive meaning is the same. For instance, 'hide', 'conceal'. Fourthly, some words are subject to collocational restraints, i.e. they occur only with specific words. For instance, 'rancid' occurs with butter, addled with eggs. Fifthly, the meaning of some words overlap. For instance, 'mature', 'adult', 'ripe'. If we take each of these words we will have a large set of synonyms. Palmer (ibid.) suggests a test for synonymy by substituting one word for another. For the reason that 'absolute synonyms' are *mutually interchangeable* in all contexts, that is why absolute synonyms are very rare in language. Another way to test synonymy is using antonyms, Yule (2010: 117) defines antonyms as two forms with opposite meanings. For instance, 'superficial' is the opposite of 'deep' and 'profound', while 'shallow' is the opposite of deep only.

When we use language for the purpose of communication, we come to perceive any expression as a tool more or less suitable for our purposes; we come to see it as possessing a certain 'value'. (The task of an expression may, in a particular case, be seen as representing an object, as being a 'name', in such a case its value may possibly be identified with the object. But this would be quite a special case). Expressions which are usable to the same effect have equal values, they are 'equivalent', and synonymy is primarily just this kind of equivalence.

## Synonymy between Sentences





Certain traditional accounts of sentence-meaning make it possible for sentences differing in syntactic form to be synonymous. At first it seems unlikely that sentences with different syntactic forms could be synonymous. One need not reflect much on the individual words to realize that these two sentences are not synonymous:

- 1- Honesty is the best policy.
- 2- No one jumps higher than Ali.

Two sentences are synonymous when they have the same meaning. It is of course still a matter of debate as to whether the 'meaning of a sentence' is itself a *something*: a 'proposition' or other abstract, intentional entity, or whether the notion of 'having' the same meaning' can be explicated in some more nominal's fashion. However, I shall make certain assumptions about meaning and synonymy. On one hand, as should already be clear, by synonymy here I mean not merely sameness of reference or denotation, but sameness of sense or intention, assuming any such distinction exists. On the other hand, I assume that synonymy is an equivalence relation, and hence reflexive, semantic and transitive. In addition, I shall speak of synonymy as if it is a relation between sentences. This overall approach can be summed up as follows: within a given language, beginning with a given sentence, it is possible to obtain any synonymous sentence by a number of synonym-for-synonym replacements among the parts. According to Carnap (1956: 59), synonymy of sentence requires 'intentional isomorphism'. For a simple sign, all that is required for it to be synonymous with another is that it has the same intention, which amounts to having the same extension 'necessarily'. In the case of complex expressions, what is required is that each constituent sign of the one expression be synonymous with the 'corresponding constituent' of the other. Evidently, in order for there even to be an appropriate corresponding expression for each constituent of the original, the two must have the same syntactic structure. A given syntactically simple sign may be introduced as synonymous with a syntactically complex expression. For example, 'bachelor' may be introduced as synonymous with 'adult', 'unmarried male'. Consider:

- 3- My brother is a bachelor.
- 4- My brother is an adult, unmarried male.

While these do not have precisely the same syntactic form, it is still possible to obtain one form the other by replacing synonyms. However, this still leaves out certain cases of pairs of sentences that intuitively seem synonymous. Consider:



5- Fatima loves Salma.

6- Salma loves Fatima.

Such switches from active to passive, or vice-versa, are often given as paradigmatic examples of sentences that despite surface differences have the same meaning or express the same proposition.

## Philosophical View of Synonymy

Language is 'subordinated' to spoken language, and spoken language is 'subordinated' to mental language. The terms of mental language are concepts; its propositions are mental judgments. Whereas the signification of terms in spoken and written language is purely conventional and can be changed, "we might take the various words used for the police around the English-speaking world: *police officer, cop, copper, etc.* Some distributional constraints on these words are regional, like Irish English *the guards* (from the Irish *garda*), British English *the old Bill*, or American English *the heat* ... Speaker attitude is a further distinguishing factor: some words, like *fuzz, flatfoot, pigs* or *the slime*, reveal negative speaker attitudes, while others like *cop* seem neutral" (Saeed 1997: 66). Finally, as an example of collocation effects, one can find speakers saying *a police car* or *a cop car*, but not very likely are *a guards car* or *an Old Bill car*.

Concepts, naturally, signify what they refer to. This natural signification is thought of as a kind of representation relation, based on the fact that concepts are in some way 'naturally similar' to their objects. This arrangement provides an account of synonymy and equivocation in spoken and written language. Two terms (whether from the same or different spoken/written languages) are 'synonymous' if and only if they are subordinated to the same concept, a single given term of spoken/ written language is *equivocal* if and only if it is subordinated to more than one concept simultaneously.

## The Concept of Synonymy in Arabic

Arabic is rich of synonyms, perhaps because variety in expressions is appreciated as part of a good writing style by Arabic speakers. Synonymy is one of



the old linguistic phenomena that attracted the attention of linguists in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.H. It is defined by many linguists, Leabi among them, as "many words that have the same word class referring to one concept, object or one meaning" (1980: 48).

Al-Mubarak (1986: 100) states, most linguists, Al-Asma'ee and Sibawayeh among them, supported this idea which was not a point of dispute at that time in order to achieve certain non-linguistic purposes:

1. Some synonyms are created for the purpose of giving meter or rhyme to poems and prose in order to have rhythm.
2. Some words in use are recondite to some people because they are not popular in the society therefore they use some simple or polished words to explain the meaning of those in use.
3. With the phenomenon of synonymy, the speaker can have a bunch of words, he can use the one that he remembers.
4. Sometimes, some speakers cannot use some words for certain reasons, i.e., the speaker is stammering, therefore an alternative word which carries the same meaning will solve the problem (Al-Zaidi 1987: 184).

## The Conditions of Synonymy in Arabic

'Arar (2002: 79) asserts that, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.H. a great effort began among linguists concerning this phenomenon in that some linguists, Ibn Fares and Ibn Alanbari among them, try to confine its meaning and differentiate it from other phenomena and abandon those which have no relation with this term. Consequently, they argue that every word has a different meaning from the other. For instance, two or more words are synonymous when everyone living in one society insists that these words are identical in meaning. But if a speaker finds in a word like /jalasa/ (3<sup>rd</sup> person singular masculine 'sit') which means he had been lying down before he straightened his position on that of sitting, a meaning that is not found in the word /ga'ada/ (3<sup>rd</sup> person singular masculine 'sit') which means that the person (he) had been standing before sitting this means the two words are not synonymous. From my point of view, what those linguists were trying to establish there was no absolute synonymy.

Alternatively, Ibn Khalaweh and alfirouza Badi (Suyti1957) believed in the existence of complete synonymy in Arabic.

The synonyms must belong to one or more close dialects of the same language.

3. The synonyms must be synchronistic.



4. The linguists argue that both metaphors and euphemism cannot be considered as types of synonymy.

As a consequence, some linguists, Leabi (1980: 66) among them, define /tradouf/ 'synonymy' in Arabic as two or more lexical items that are identical in meaning and are interchangeable in all contexts without any difference in the conceptual or emotive meaning.

The term "identity of meaning" required for the synonymous terms can be understood in two ways: either as "an absolute identity" or as "a very great similarity of meaning". Thus, the term /tradouf/ 'synonymy' is specified by the attribute 'absolute' only for cases of absolute identity in meaning, while for the great similarity of meaning, the term 'near' or 'partial' synonymy is used. The linguists argue that absolute synonymy rarely occurs in Arabic since these synonyms may be affected by the emotional meaning of the word, e.g. حليته /hlilatuhu/ , امرأته /emraʔtahu/ or عقيته /aqilatuhu/, his wife, are synonymous, but it is only the last word which can be used with the word الملك /almlk/ 'king' "/aqilatu almlk/ king's wife, because it is the most prestigious one among those three words . So, it is the social situation which selects عقيته /aqilatuhu/ but not /hlilatuhu/ to be used here. Another example is /jadxul/ 'enter' and /jəlu3/ 'enter', which are considered absolutely synonymous while they are not because /jəlu3/ has a bad connotation that is not found in /jadxul/ since /jəlu3/ means 'he enters a house for stealing'. Therefore, it is not possible to have two words with an identical meaning. This means those linguists who assert the identity of meaning as a precondition for synonymy aim at denying the phenomenon of synonymy as a whole. This view is rejected by the majority of linguists who state that synonyms are always partial and never absolute (Arar, 2002: 84).

Saleh (1986) explains that in modern standard Arabic the differences between pairs of words should not be traced back to their original use as they are now part and parcel of the modern language. Anis (1965) points out that each dialect of Arabic does not have absolute synonymy, but the standard level of the language that refers to all these dialects should have synonymy, and as the Qur'an is a unique and supreme literary text, synonymy is apt to occur frequently. This is aided also by Omar's recent study (2001) in which he gives examples of absolute synonymy in the language of the Qur'an e.g. /âəara/ and /fadhala/ (to favour, past 3<sup>rd</sup> masculine singular).



## Studies against Synonymy in Arabic

The following ancient Arab Linguists reject the existence of synonymy, especially in Qur'an; Abu Hilal Al-'askarî (1934), Ahmad Ibn Faris (1964), Ibn Al-'arabi (in Suyûti 1964), Al-Jaza'ri (1380HJ), Al zamakhshari (1925), Al-shaya' (1993), (Suyûti 1969) explain that their evidences are the following:

1. If two words refer exactly to the same object, then logically one of them would die out.
2. Language communication opts for economy in sending and perceiving messages, and the occurrence of synonymy will violate this aspect of language.
3. The memory storage of one word for one object is less in space and easier in processing than two.
4. Most of the well-known synonyms are in fact adjectives rather than real original words that refer to an object.
5. The use of the connective /wə/ 'and' means that two different things are connected rather than one. Al-'awwa (1998) traces the study of synonyms and differences in Qur'an and explains that even if there is synonymy in the Arabic language, the language of the Qur'an, in particular, should be treated differently. She discusses three terms in the Qur'an that seem to be synonyms and explains the difference in meaning and use according to the context of the verses in which the words were mentioned; /əðannu. 'doubt', /ar-rajaa/ 'hope with fear', and /al-xəwf/ 'fear'. Bint Al-Shati (1987) explains plainly that the Qur'an as a text is quite different. It is different in that it is not written by any one of the Arabs, but rather by Allah in the Arabic language. This means that each word, and even each letter, has a special role to play in the different levels of meaning or usage in a particular context. This is one reason why interpretations of the Qur'an are not treated as Qur'ans in their own, and that's why the translators of the Qur'an state that their work is a translation of the meanings perceived by a certain translator or scholar rather than an equivalent to the holy text. Bint Al-Shati (ibid.) points out that this stand is not taken out of the feeling of protection towards the holy book, but after long exhaustive objective studies according to a very strict scientific methodology whereby she used to handle a certain topic in the Qur'an and analyses the words used in it whenever this topic is mentioned in the book. She concluded that the context is the guideline and the criterion for determining the choice of words in the Qur'an, and that replacing a word in place of another does not fulfill all the different aspects of meaning and uses as the original words do.



Finally, we can explain some of the differences in the meaning of synonyms according to the context in which the words are used, but we do not have all explanations, the matter that tells us that synonymy is a natural old linguistic phenomenon.

## Comparison of Synonymy in English and Arabic

The majority of linguists in both languages assert that synonymy is present in English and Arabic, but it is interpreted in different ways (Leabi, 1980: 71).

The first group defines synonymy as two or more words which have the same sense and thus can replace each other in any context without any difference in their conceptual or emotive import. Such synonyms are called absolute or real synonyms. The second group of linguists denies such synonyms by stating that if such synonyms occur, they can live for a very short time. They (ibid.) argue that lexical items may share the same conceptual meaning but vary in the emotional meaning because such items are used by people who are from different tribes or countries. This means different societies, conventions and traditions. Moreover, the speaker himself in using a word may add his own feeling and imagination to the word he uses which differs from the others.

The linguists in both languages also note that the second condition of synonymy is difficult to achieve because such synonyms differ in use, e.g. /alhj3a/ and /alhrb/ 'war' have a similar meaning but it is not possible to use /alhj3a/ instead of /alhrb/ 'war' in /alhrbu alnafssy-t-u/ 'Psychological war'.

The same is true in English, e.g. tall and high are synonymous since we can say: a tall building and a high building but they are not in \*a high boy and a tall boy.

## Types of Synonyms in English and Arabic

Leabi (1980: 70) states that linguists in both languages classify synonyms into the following types:

1. Pure (absolute) synonymy: This type refers to the words which can replace one another in all contexts without any little change in the conceptual and emotive value of their contents. This type does not exist in both languages.
2. Near (partial) synonymy: It can be of two types: (a) words can be coextensive and interchangeable in some contexts, e.g. "leap-jump" in English, /jəəb/ and /jqfez/ in



Arabic. (b) words which are interchangeable from the conceptual but not from the emotive angle, e.g. 'liberty-freedom' in English, /alhurjia/ and /ala;etq/ in Arabic.

## The Significance of Synonyms in English and Arabic

Arabic is richer than English in synonyms for several reasons: Firstly, most traditional linguists in English believe that the ideal language is the one in which each form has only one meaning and each meaning is associated with only one form. Thus, giving more than one form to indicate the same meaning is considered a defect in English (Lyons, 1968: 405). Secondly, in Arabic, most linguists believe that the ideal language should be rich in vocabularies and they consider synonymy as one of the main sources of vocabularies. This belief leads the linguists to collect as many synonyms as they can to prove that Arabic is the best in this respect (Wafi, 1945: 168). Thirdly, the study of synonymy in Arabic is diachronic. Thus, the synonyms that are used by the linguists are collected from different times. This technique expresses the large number of synonyms in Arabic. Palmer (1981: 88) asserts that English is also rich in synonyms for the historical reason that its vocabulary has come from two different main sources: Anglo - Saxon on the one hand and from French, Latin and Greek on the other. Since English is considered to be a Germanic language from a historical point of view, with Anglo-Saxon as an earlier stage of its development, the Anglo-Saxon's words are considered to be native while those from French, Greek and Latin are foreign. Palmer (1981: 88) states that the terms "native" and "foreign" are misleading for the fact that most of the English words, even those that are believed to be native may have been borrowed from some other languages at some time in the more remote past. Thus, no language seems to be as ready as English to absorb foreign words, perhaps because there has never been any self-conscious worship of pure English that opposed the debasing of the language by the introduction of new words. This significance gives English its power to express exactly the most suitable shades of meaning.

In Arabic, this factor does not contribute much in enriching standard Arabic with synonyms because in the course of time, people abandon using one of the two synonyms while the other is still in use, e.g. /xjar/ and /geəaʔ/ are synonymous, but it is only the former which is still in use in Libya while the latter is abandoned. Moreover, these words are transferred into our language from nations that have important commercial, cultural and social relations with the Arab countries.



Therefore, these words which are used in one country may not be used in another. For example, in Libya, people use the Italian word /ku3ina/ to mean 'kitchen', while all other Arab countries do not use it. Thus, borrowing such words is not a main source of synonymy in Arabic (Leabi, 1980: 168-78). Arabic is rich in synonyms because standard Arabic is a mingling of the dialects of so many tribes. This describes the occurrence of several words for each meaning.

## Conclusion

To conclude, the paper highlighted the definitions of the concept of synonymy which tend to emphasize the aspect of *sameness* in meaning, in use, in the interchangeability or even in the receivers' reaction to the message. While linguists, including Arab linguists, do not agree on whether or not a language has absolute synonymy, there seems to be no such big dispute regarding Near Synonyms which are items that share some, but not all shades of meaning. The Qur'an as a linguistic text is thought to have examples of near-synonyms where there are preferences for using a certain item in a certain position. The context remains the most suitable criterion for determining the interchangeability and the contractiveness of any pairs of near-synonyms.

The major findings of the present research are the following: First, English is rich in partial synonyms and the major source of synonyms in English is borrowing from other foreign world languages, especially French, Greek and Latin. Secondly, Arabic is richer than English in partial synonyms for several reasons: a- These synonyms are collected from Qur'an as a text is quite different. It is different in that it is not written by any one of the Arabs, but rather by Allah in the Arabic language. This means that each word, and even each letter, has a special role to play in the different levels of meaning or usage in a particular context. Furthermore, many synonyms are, also, collected from many Arabic dialects. This means every dialect contributes to enrich standard Arabic with vocabularies which have counterparts in other dialects. b- Exaggeration is one of the major sources of synonyms in Arabic, i.e, some linguists and poets compete with each other to collect as many synonyms as possible in order to gain fame and present enough evidence that Arabic language is the best in the world.





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