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NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS' PERCEPTION VIS-À-VIS ARABIC BORROWINGS IN URDU: A PSYCHOLINGUISTIC STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Urdu has borrowed a large number of words from standard Arabic without any morphemic substitution. Some of the loan words are used with the same meaning as in standard Arabic while others have undergone semantic shift. This research paper deals with the lexical analysis of Standard Arabic words borrowed in Urdu with meaning shift and how they are perceived by Urdu speakers when they come across those words in parent language. Selected sentences from Arabic have been used for collecting the data. The data has been collected through a questionnaire distributed to two groups of native speakers of Urdu not having madrasa education. The researcher analyzed the lexical aspects of Arabic borrowings in Urdu and its use in semantically different context leading to a different type of perception among the masses. Throughout this paper 'L2' refers to Standard Arabic and 'L1' refers to Urdu.The present paper is different from the previous studies in the area of 'borrowings' because in the present study, Arabic loan words' perception of native speakers of Urdu has been tested.

Keywords: Perception, Urdu, Arabic, Semantic-Shift

1. Introduction

In general terms, perception refers to an understanding on the basis of inputs that we get from the outside world. "Perception is a term used collectively for those processes that give coherence and unity to sensory input" (Rashmi:2015). Iinformation, received by our minds, comes in through our five senses. A sizable amount of sensory input that we receive, is through language; thus, language plays a key role in the formation of perception. Lexicon is the backbone of any language, that is a language cannot have its existence without lexicon but, at the same time, no language is free from linguistic borrowings. Incorporating lexiconon from one language into another without any morphemic substitution is the most far-flung kind of borrowing. Some key factors that contribute to how we perceive information are: schema, personal choices and language. Metaphorically speaking, schemas are organized folders in the memory of our mental computers where we save learned

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information which is used to make sense of the world. A lot of information is present in our minds but what we decide to concentrate on and interact with, largely depends on our personal choices. Personal choices are formed on the basis of language we use to express our thoughts and feelings to help ourselves and also others to understand us.

The term 'perception' is used for identification, recognition, discrimination, understanding, and comprehension. In psycholinguistics this term is used to designate diverse processes like word recognition, segmentation of the speech, judgments of similarity between two linguistic structures, and even the comprehension of words, sentences or connected discourse. It is very difficult to create a sharp boundary between language perception and language comprehension. As pointed out by Fodor, 'Where does sentence recognition stop and more central activities take over?' (1983:61). In spoken form of language sequence of sounds is not perceived but we perceive words and sentences.

Educated people in Uttar Pradesh are generally in possession of Urdu/Hindi and English. There is a stereotype that Urdu is the language of Muslims. Muslims in general also learn to read Arabic because of their religious associations. Thus, Arabic becomes a familiar language to them. Llistening to 'Mother Tongue' and a familiar language both involves perception. Perceiving a language involves **different** psychological operations such as isolating and segmenting words, sentences and higher units, and also aassociating meaning to them.

S.No	Classical Arabic Loan words in Urdu	Meaning in Arabic	Meaning in Urdu
1.	/təhaffuz/	Caution, precaution.	Security, safeguarding, preservation.
2.	/ʔila:qa:/	Connection, relation	Area, province
3.	/fitna:/	temptation, trial, charm, enchantment, and disturbance	Mischief, evil, calamity, riot, revolt, sin.
4.	/mʊlk/	'kingdom/regime'	'country'
5.	/ma:ruf/	'truthfulness'	'popular'
6.	/məkr/	'planning'	'deceiving'
7.	/ghərib/	'unknown'	'poor'
8.	/məjal/	'field, ground'	'(how) dare'

Urdu and Arabic are two languages belonging to two different language families. Urdu belongs to the Indo - Aryan language family, which was born in and around Delhi in 12th century AD as a result of a political incident in the history of India. (Beg: 1988) The entry of Muslims (Turks, Iranians and Afghans) largely influenced the linguistic scene of Northern India. The historians have strong opinion that the cultural contact of Indians with the Arabs and the Iranians is very old. As a result of this contact linguistic cohesion could be very clearly

observed in the literature from 13th century onwards. Thus, assimilation of a large number of words from Arabic and Persian into the dialects of western Hindi could be observed in the documents of those days. The basic structure of Urdu is purely Indo Aryan and most of its vocabulary is also Indo-Aryan in origin. Due to its religious connections Urdu readily accepts words from Arabic. Since a long time, Indians, in general, and Muslims, in particular, had been bilinguals or multilinguals. As Urdu is considered as the language of Muslims in the subcontinent so it is learned by majority of Muslims as group identity, Hindi is learned because it is the official language of India and English is learned because it serves as lingua Franca from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. In addition to this Muslims are supposed to learn Arabic for religious reasons, but majority of Muslim population master just the reading skill of classical Arabic. In the course of its evolution Urdu has borrowed a large number of words from Arabic and Persian. The words incorporated from one language to another without any morphemic substitution are called 'loan words. Loan words are sometimes incorporated with the same meaning as in the parent language and sometimes they undergo 'semantic shift'. This research paper intends to focus on the non-native speakers' perception of classical Arabic words used in Urdu with 'semantic shift', some examples of such words are given in the table above. Native speakers of Urdu unconsciously use a number of loan words from Arabic with semantic shift but when we come across those loan words back in parent language (Arabic) undergo Semantic Transfer. Since the last quarter of 20th century psycholinguistics has emerged as an interdisciplinary field of Linguistics that consolidated cognitive science, psychology and neuroscience in order to interpret how people conceive, put across and process information during their language use. According to MacWhinney (1992), there are psycholinguists who conduct research on language processing in adults, and those who work on language acquisition in children. However, the field of second language learning integrates both acquisition and processing within the framework of Psycholinguistics. The present paper does not deal with the issue of learning the second language but it deals with the development of weak perception as a result of learning of reading skill of the second language for religious reasons only. Classical Arabic (Arabic of the holy Quran) is the only language which is memorized without learning the language, it is one of the few languages for which only reading skill is learned by a large group of learners.

The researcher observed that Urdu speakers in Aligarh depend on their pre-existing semantic network of Arabic loan words (used with semantic shift), which shows that they do not create a separate semantic network for when they use them in the Quranic Arabic. As a result, they appear to face problems in interpreting Arabic loan words back in the parent language. This could be understood in terms of semantic content that is located in an L2 word which is claimed to be transferred from L1. That is, 'the concept onto which L2 word is mapped is an L1 concept' (Jiang, 2004). This claim of semantic transfer is in contrast

with the assertions of some L2 researchers (e.g., Bogaards, 2001). Bogaards (2001), contrary to the claim of semantic transfer hypothesis, states that '...one should not forget that vocabulary acquisition may also include the learning of new meanings for well-known words or for combinations of well-known words—that is, meanings that are not predictable on the basis of the already known meanings.'Ssemantic transfer further suggests that 'L2 words are mapped according to existing meanings or concepts,' yet it postulates that this mapping is true when such meanings are available. If not, the changeover from processing to pre-existing meanings to forming new concepts may not occur for many words as declared in the second stage of the model.

Jiang (2002) tested the Semantic Transfer Hypothesis. He conducted experimental study for Chinese-English bilinguals where they were given word pairs that have the same translation in Chinese and another group of word pairs had semantically related but different translations in Chinese. The subjects were asked to rate the degree of semantic relatedness. The findings supported his Semantic Transfer Hypothesis because Chinese participants gave a higher rating score to the same translation set than to the different translation set. Van Patten (2004) states that L1 concepts may affect L2 vocabulary acquisition because L2 learners tend to conceptualize L2 words through L1. Since our sense organs constantly collect information from the environment, which is then interpreted to form perception. Perception involves both bottom-up and top-down processing. Bottom-up processing refers to the fact that perceptions are directly built from sensory input. It is data-driven and takes place in real time. However, the interpretation of our sensory information is also affected by our preconceived knowledge, experiences and thoughts, which are schema driven, this is called top down processing.

2. Hypothesis

A considerable amount of literature hints at the intimate relationship between language and perception. The appropriate characterization of these interactions remains an important challenge. However, based on the studies conducted so far, the following hypothesis was put to testing for the present study:

> 'The subjects will incorrectly interpret Arabic loan words used in Urdu with a semantic shift when they come across them while reading Arabic text.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Participants

The participants in this study consisted of two groups of students; one group consisting of 38 students were not studying Arabic in any form and the other group, having 12 students, studying Arabic either as Minor or Generic subject. In all 50 respondents participated in the study. Most of them were female native speakers of Urdu. All them were Muslims knowing just the reading and recitation of Quran. Most

of the respondents were Bonafede students of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, they were under graduate and PG students of Linguistics.

3.2 Instrument of the Study

The instrument of the study was a two-section structured questionnaire created on Google form particularly designed for this study. The first section elicited personal data like inquiring about the informant's Minor subject, if he had basic madrasa education, and is able to read Quran in Arabic or not etc.

The second section elicited data related to the perception of Arabic words used in Urdu. There were seven questions based on six words of Arabic which are also used in Urdu. The questions were close ended having three options each. Out of those three options, one option carried the meaning of the word as used in Urdu, the other option carried the sense of the word as used in Arabic and the last option carried 'something else' and the subjects were asked to choose any one of the given options. The six words taken for the study were /mulk/, /maru:f/, /fItna:/,/əsləha/,/mUnkər/ and /məkr/.

3.3 Material and Procedure

The researcher used 7 different verses from the Holy Quran carrying the selected loan words and the subjects were asked to read the text without translation and answer the questions on the basis of known words present in the sentences. This was done to find out whether the respondents are cautious in making perceptions about the Quranic text or are casual and make perceptions according to their mother tongue.

4. Data Analysis

Data was collected online by means of a questionnaire covering the aspects of the study. The raw data drawn from the questionnaire was recorded in the form of tables and then analysed and interpreted by using simple descriptive and statistical procedures by calculating percentages and mean.

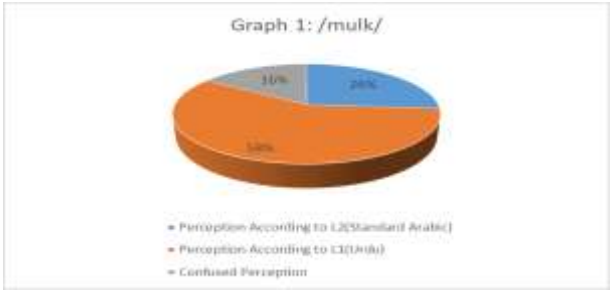
4.1 Respondents' Perception

4.1.1 Perception of Students not Studying Arabic

In order to measure the non-native speakers'(speakers of Urdu/Hindi) perception of Quranic verses having known words, respondents were asked to choose any one option out of three. Thus, table1 shows the responses for the word /mulk/

Table1 (/mulk/)

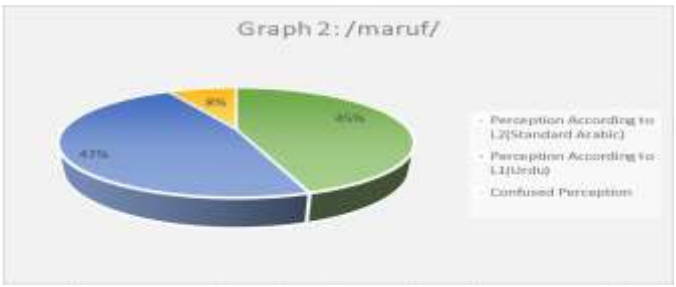
Total Responses	Perception According to L2 (Standard Arabic)	Perception according to L1(Urdu)	Confused Perception
38	10	22	6



Thus, for the word /mulk/ 26.31% people perceived it according to the context given in Quran. 57.89% people perceived it according to their L1(Urdu), 1.58% people although claimed to be native speakers of Urdu but it appeared that did not even know the sense of the word as used in Urdu. The following Table 2 shows the responses for the word /maruf/

Table 2 (/maruf/)

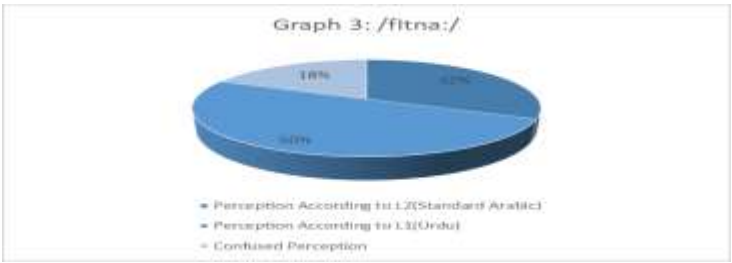
Total Responses	Perception according to L2 (Standard Arabic)	Perception according to L1 (Urdu)	Confused Perception
38	17	18	3



Thus, for the word /maruf/, 44.73% people perceived it according to the context given in Quran, 47.37% people perceived it according to their L1(Urdu), and 7.89% people although claimed to be native speakers of Urdu but were confused and did not even know the sense of the word as used in Urdu. The following Table 3 shows the responses for the word /fItna:/

Table 3 (/fItna:/)

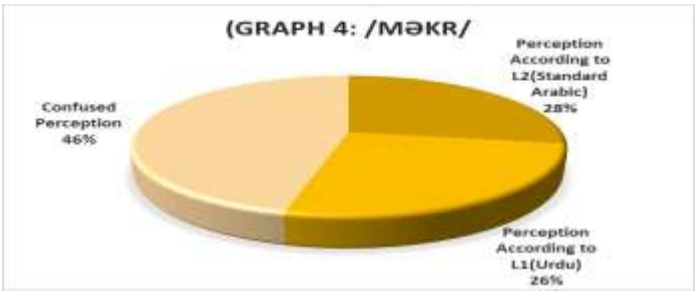
Total Responses	Perception According to L2(Standard Arabic)	Perception According to L1(Urdu)	Confused Perception
38	12	19	7



Thus for the word /fItna/: Data shows that 31.58% people perceived it according to the context given in Quran 50% people perceived it according to their L1(Urdu), 18.42% people were confused. The Table 4 given under shows the responses for the word /məkr/

Table 4 (/məkr/)

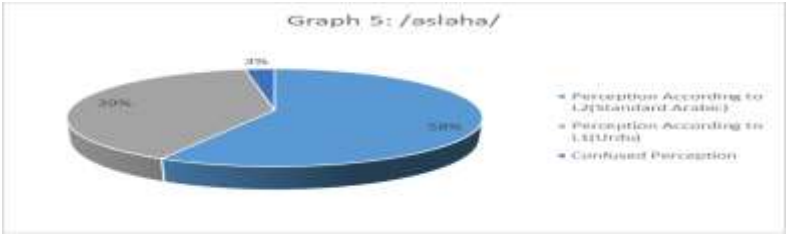
Total Responses	Perception According to L2(Standard Arabic)	Perception According to L1(Urdu)	Confused Perception
76	21	20	35



For the word /məkr/, 27.63% people perceived it according to the context given in Quran, 26.31% people perceived it according to their L1(Urdu), 46.05% people although claimed to be native speakers of Urdu but it appeared that did not even know the sense of the word as used in Urdu.

Table 5 (/əsləha/)

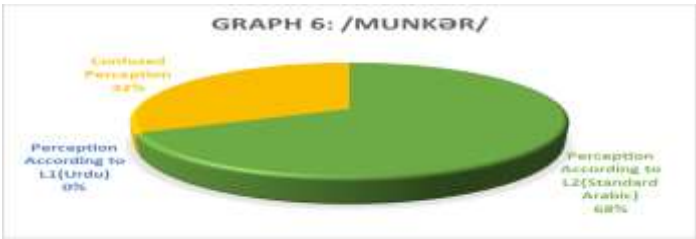
Total Responses	Perception According to L2(Standard Arabic)	Perception According to L1(Urdu)	Confused Perception
38	22	15	1



In case of the word /əsləha/, 57.89 % people perceived it according to the context given in Quran while as 39.47% people perceived it according to their L1(Urdu). 2.63% people, claiming to be native speakers of Urdu, did not even know the sense of the word as used in Urdu.

Table 6 (/mUnkər/)

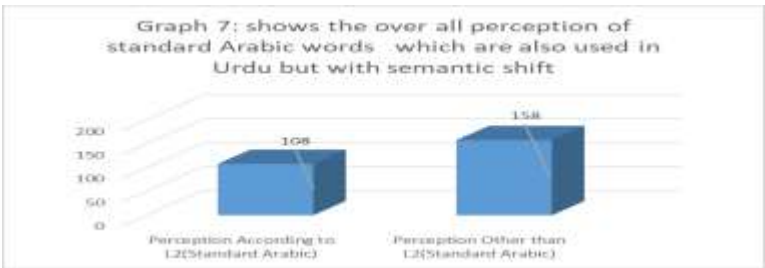
Total Responses	Perception According to L2(Standard Arabic)	Perception According to L1(Urdu)	Confused Perception
38	26	0	12



For the word /mUnkər/, 68.42% people perceived it according to the context given in Quran but data shows that no perception was found according to the speakers' L1(Urdu). However, 31.58% people although claiming to be native speakers of Urdu did not even know the sense of the word as used in Urdu.

Table 7

Total Responses for Standard Arabic words	Perception According to L2 (Standard Arabic)	Perception Other than L2 (Standard Arabic)
266	108	158

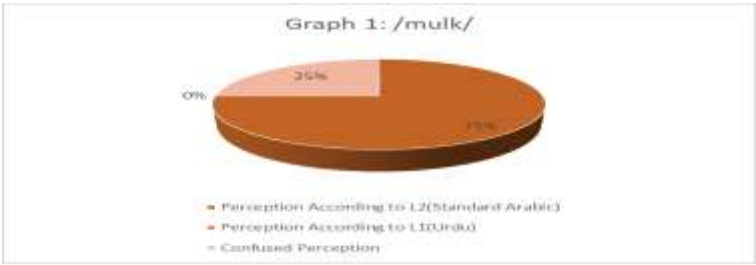


Thus, out of the total responses for the Standard Arabic words 40.60 % responses show the perception according to Standard Arabic(L2) where as 59.40% responses show perception other than L2.

4.1.2 Perception of Students Studying Arabic (As Minor/Generic subject)

Table1 (/mulk/)

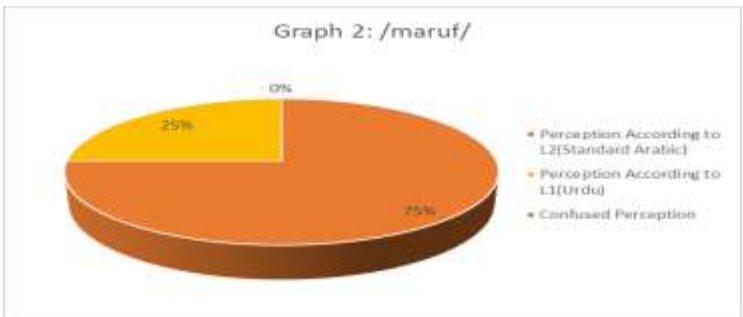
Total Responses	Perception According to L2(Quranic Arabic)	Perception According to L1(Urdu)	Confused Perception
12	9	0	3



In case of the word /mulk/ 75% subjects studying Arabic language perceived it according to the context given in Quran, according to L1(Urdu) no perception was found for the word /mulk/, and 25% respondents were confused. The following Table 2 shows the responses for the word /maruf/.

Table 2 (/maruf/)

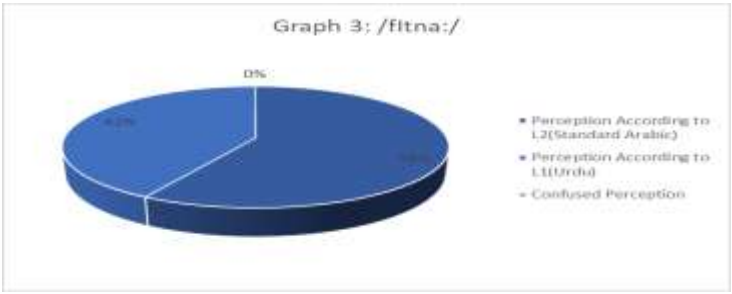
Total Responses	Perception According to L2 (Quranic Arabic)	Perception According to L1 (Urdu)	Confused Perception
12	9	3	0



The figures reveal that for the word /maruf/ 75% subjects studying Arabic language perceived it according to the context given in Quran while as 25% people perceived it according to their L1(Urdu) and no confused responses were found for /maruf/. The following Table 3 shows the responses for the word /fItna:/

Table 3 (/fItna:/)

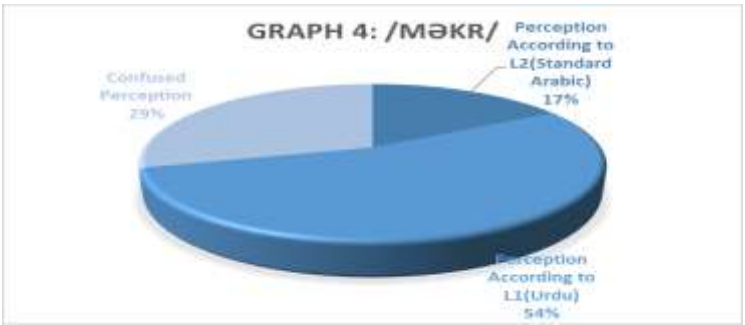
Total Responses	Perception According to L2 (Quranic Arabic)	Perception According to L1(Urdu)	Confused Perception
12	7	5	0



For the word /fItna:/, it was found that 58.33% subjects studying Arabic language perceived it according to the context given in Quran, 41.67% perceived it according to their L1(Urdu), and no confused perception was found for the word /fItna:/ among the students studying Arabic as minor or generic subject. Table 4 given below shows the responses for the word /məkr/

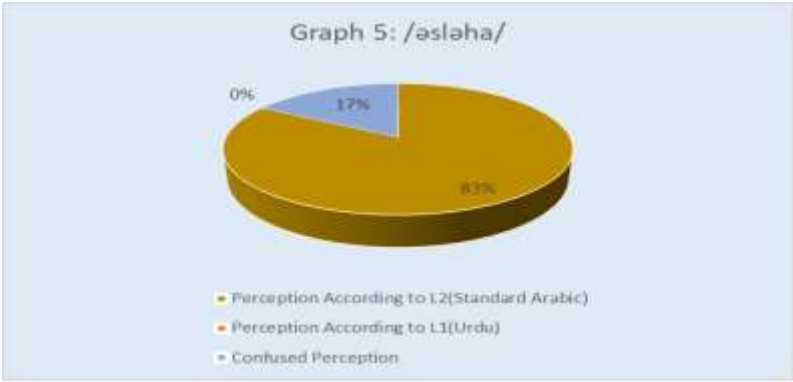
Table 4 (/məkr/)

Total Responses	Perception According to L2(Quranic Arabic)	Perception According to L1(Urdu)	Confused Perception
24	4	13	7



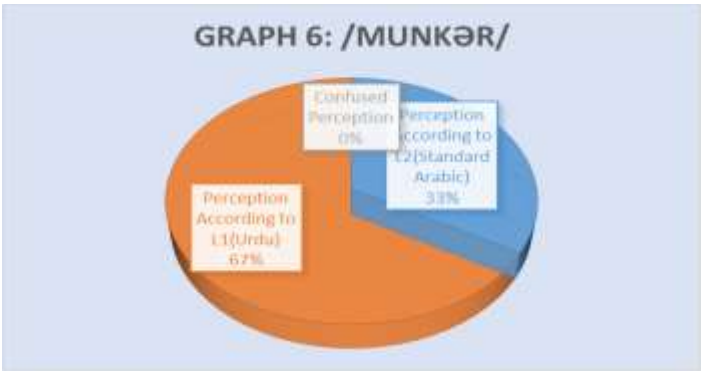
Thus, for the word /məkr/ 16.67% subjects studying Arabic language perceived it according to the context given in Quran 54.17% perceived it according to their L1(Urdu), 29.17% were confused. The Table 5 given under shows the responses for the word (/əsləha/)

Total Responses	Perception According to L2(Quranic Arabic)	Perception According to L1(Urdu)	Confused Perception
12	10	0	2



As is obvious for the word /əsləha/ 83.33% people perceived it according to the context of standard Arabic, this was not perceived according to L1 (Urdu) by students who were studying Arabic as minor or generic subject, 16.67% students did not even know the sense of the word as used in Urdu. The Table 6 given under shows the responses for the word (/mUnkər/)

Total Responses	Perception According to L2 (Quranic Arabic)	Perception According to L1 (Urdu)	Confused Perception
12	4	8	0

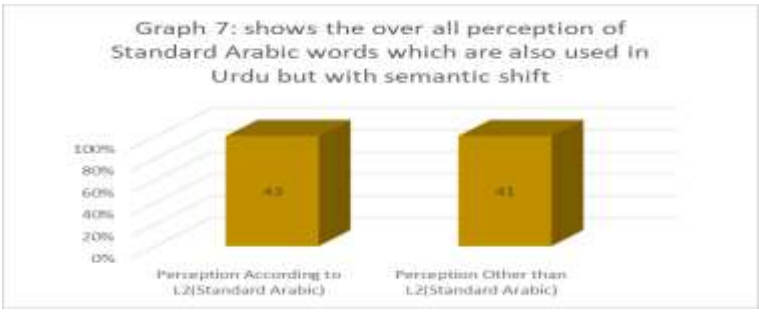


Thus, for the word /mUnkər/, 33.33% people perceived it according to the sense given in Standard Arabic. 66.67% people perceived it according to their L1(Urdu), and no confused perception was found among the students who were studying Arabic as minor or

generic subject. Table 7 given below shows the overall perception of selected Arabic loan words in students studying Arabic language.

Table 7

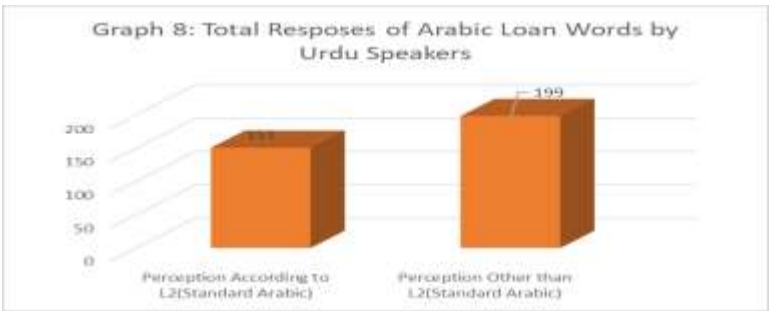
Total Responses for Standard Arabic words	Perception According to L2 (Standard Arabic)	Perception Other than L2 (Standard Arabic)
84	43	41



If we look at the consolidated picture of the data, it is well evident that when Urdu speakers, in general, come across the Arabic loan words (used in Urdu) in Arabic text, they perceive them outside the semantic framework of Standard Arabic. Table 8 shows the overall perception of words in Standard Arabic which are also used in Urdu but with semantic shift.

Table 8

Total Responses of Arabic Loan Words by Urdu Speakers	Perception According to L2 (Standard Arabic)	Perception Other than L2(Standard Arabic)
350	151	199



Thus, out of the total responses from Urdu speakers for the Standard Arabic words 43.14 % responses show the perception according to Standard Arabic where as 56.86% responses show perception other than L2.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The data presented above shows that words for which confused perception came out to be 25% or less in the group where students were not studying Arabic language demonstrate a high percentage of perception of the selected words according to the sense used in L1(Urdu). However, in the group where students were studying Arabic language, the words for which the confused perception was calculated to be 25% or less were having a high percentage of perception according to the sense used in L2(Standard Arabic). According to 'Logogen model of word recognition' in Psycholinguistics, it could be safely said that in the group where students were not studying Arabic (but reading Quranic Text with translation) and having a low percentage of confused perception had logogens for the selected words with in the domains of their first language but in the group where students were studying Arabic as a subject and had low percentage of confused perception had logogens for the selected words with in the domains of Standard Arabic. It could be concluded that a large number of Muslims learn only the reading skill of Standard Arabic (Quranic Arabic) and have a very weak perception of known words with in the domains of Standard Arabic. Most of them process the Classical Arabic loan words (used in Urdu with semantic shift) back in the parent language (Quranic Arabic) in the similar sense as used in Urdu, giving a perception away from the original text. They transfer the semantic content from L1 to L2. Hence, in order to have a real understanding of the original text, it is essential to learn Arabic language at all the linguistic levels with special reference to semantic and pragmatic level.

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