CHAPTER ONE

On Etymology
1.1 History of Etymology

The grammarians and linguists have tried to find the meaningful origins to familiar or strange words, and their relationships with other languages from ancient time, etymology supposed that the origin of words changed due to the contemporary requirements.

1.1.1 Ancient Indian Etymology

India is considered as the first country in the world, which has the oldest etymological studies, the Sanskrit linguists and grammarians of ancient India were the first to make a comprehensive analysis of linguistics and etymology. The study of Sanskrit etymology has provided Western scholars the basis for the historical linguistics and modern etymology. The most famous Sanskrit linguists are: Yaska (7th - 6th century B.C.E), Pāṇini (520-460 B.C.E), Kātyāyana (2nd century B.C.E), and Patañjali (2nd century B.C.E). The earliest of attested etymologies can be found in Vedic literature, in the philosophical explanations of the Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads. The ancient Indo-Aryans considered sound and speech itself to be sacred, and for them, the words of the sacred Vedas contained deep encoding of the mysteries of soul and God.

1.1.2 Ancient Greco-Roman Etymology

One of the earliest philosophical texts of the Classical Greek period deals with etymology was the Socratic dialogue Cratylus (360 B.C.E) by Plato. During the dialogue, Socrates makes guesses as to the origins of many words, including the names of Gods. Since then the etymological studies involved more and more in many languages as in Semitic languages and Persian.

1.1.3 Arabic Etymology

The real studies in Arabic grammar started in 9th century with the famous book in Arabic grammar: "Kitab Siybawayh" (the book of Siybawayh). In Siybawayh book many discussions are found, which are linked to the origin of words, of Arabic grammars, Ibn jinny with his famous book: "al-ḥasa'iṣ" (characteristics) was the first linguist who spoke about the theory of origin of

1 Encyclopedia of Linguistics p. 3198.
language; he analyzed whether the language has been created by God or made by people, he also spoke about the sounds of the words, and he linked many sounds words with the sounds of nature, and according to his theory many words have same sound in nature just like ḥariyr (babble, bubble) the sound of water especially in rivers³.

1.2 Origin of the word Etymology

The etymology of the word “Etymology” (ultimately from Greek etumon true meaning or form, in turn from etumos true) is a perfect illustration of the ‘etymological fallacy’, the view that the earliest meaning of a word is truer or more correct than subsequent meanings⁴. Merriam Webster's online dictionary says that this word comes from: "Middle English: ethimologie, from Anglo-French, from Latin etymologia, from Greek, from etymon + -logia – logy"⁵. The term was originally applied to the search of supposedly "original" or "true" meanings of words, principles that are rejected as unscientific by modern linguistics.

1.3 Definitions of Etymology

What is “Etymology”?

In order to start the research in a right way, researcher should have good information about the meaning of "Etymology”.

1.3.1 General definitions

Now, let us see some general definitions of the term "Etymology": According to Britannica Encyclopedia:

"Etymology is the history of a word or word element, including its origins and derivation. Although the etymologizing of proper names appears in the Old Testament and Plato dealt with etymology in his dialogue Cratylus, lack of knowledge of other languages and of the historical developments that languages undergo prevented ancient writers from arriving at the proper etymologies of words "⁶.

⁴ Encyclopedia of Linguistics, p. 3198.
⁵ Merriam Webster’s online dictionary http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/etymology (28-1-2007).
This means, researchers should follow the historical and comparative linguistics method, so Britannica Encyclopedia puts the basic principles that were established by linguists during the 19th century, they are as follows;

1. The earliest form of a word, or word element, must be ascertained, as well as all parallel and related forms.

2. Every sound of a given word, or word element, must be compared with the corresponding sound in the form (often called its etymon) from which it is derived.

3. Any deviation in the previously established phonetic correspondences for the language of which the word is a part must be plausibly and rationally explained.

4. Any shift in meaning that has occurred in the historical transmission of the word must also be explained.

5. Words that present non-native sounds, or combinations of sounds, that appear isolated in the language, or that demonstrate marked deviation from the usual phonetic correspondences, are probably borrowed rather than inherited, and the language of origin must be determined.

The definition of the word Etymology in Merriam Webster's online dictionary—which is famous for giving etymology for each word—is:

"Main Entry: et·y·mol·o·gy, Function: noun. Inflected Form(s): plural –gies. Etymology: Middle English ethimologie, from Anglo-French, from Latin etymologia, from Greek, from etymon + -logia –logy.

1. The history of a linguistic form (as a word) shown by tracing its development since its earliest recorded occurrence in the language where it is found, by tracing its transmission from one language to another, by analyzing it into its component parts, by identifying its cognates in other languages, or by tracing it and its cognates to a common ancestral form in an ancestral language.

2. A branch of linguistics concerned with etymologies".

8 Merriam Webster's online dictionary http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/etymology (28-1-2007).
According to James Lynd in his book *First book of Etymology*, “ETYMOLGY is that science which explains the true origin and derivation of words, with the view to ascertain their radical or primary signification” \(^9\).

In *Illustrated oxford dictionary*, the term Etymology is:

“1. A- The sources of the formation of a word and the development of its meaning. B- An account of these. 2. The branch of linguistics concerned etymologies {from Greek etumologia}” \(^10\).

### 1.3.2 Specific definitions by linguists

For more specific definitions, researcher should search for them in linguistics books which written by linguists, as *"The Cambridge guide to English usage"* by Pam Peters, which gives the definition of Etymology in this way:

"Etymology. This is the study of the origins and individual history of words: what languages they came from, and how their meaning and form have changed over the course of time. It confronts us with the mutability of language, although etymological knowledge has been used to try to prevent language change" \(^11\).

The last sentence is very important, many etymologists used their knowledge to keep the language faraway from any change, and so many countries tried to protect their national language or standard language from any change, by using many methods, one among is etymological knowledge. After that the author gives us examples for etymological words from English language:

"Etymologies are sometimes used to identify an "original" form or meaning for a word, which is then held up as true for all time. This was the basis for a number of the strangest spellings of English, such as debt, indict, receipt, whose Latin ancestors (debitum, indictare, receptum) are invoked in the letters b, c and p, added during c15/16. The etymological letters were and are superfluous in terms of our pronunciation of these words, which is based on French. Likewise, the fact that aggravate contains the Latin root grav- meaning "heavy, serious" moves some

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\(^10\) Illustrated oxford dictionary, P.273.
people to insist that the English word can only mean "make more serious" and ought not to mean "annoy"."\(^{12}\)

Pam Peters, then takes our attention to the fact that scholar should not stop their research in one point of time, that means he/she should be careful in dealing with the history of a word which may be older than we think, or it may be borrowed from one language to another, for example in Semitic languages, Arabic is a classical language which donated Persian some words, later, those words were borrowed by Urdu from Persian, just like many Islamic words as in Arabic Šukran (thanks) it became Šukriea with same meaning in Persian and Urdu, or Ḥafīz in Arabic "protector", it became Ḥafīz with same meaning in Persian and Urdu. Pam Peters says:

"Etymological arguments about language are ultimately arbitrary, choosing a fixed point in time (such as classical Latin) as the reference point for language questions. But usage stretches still further back in time. Many Latin words had Greek antecedents, and they can be traced back to Indo-European... Apart from scholarly uses of Etymology, there's no doubt that ordinary users of a language like to see a word's meaning reflected in its form or spelling. Words sometimes adjust their spelling in response to an assumed Etymology. In cases like bridegroom, the etymon ("original word or form") new enshrined in the spelling is quite wrong"\(^{13}\).

In Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics\(^{14}\) the words of Voltaire when he said: "In Etymology, consonants signify little and vowels nothing at all". The author P. Durkin considers the modern etymological vitiates much pre-modern etymological work. And for him the term Etymology is in fact little more than a variety of 'applied historical linguistics' and its methodology is the same as that of more broadly historical linguistics.

The origin of words becomes obscured from time to time for the reason that: Sound change, and Semantic change. In many cases, it is not possible to find or detect the etymology of the modern word-forms from first look, and without the combination of sound change and semantic change we can't know the basic form or origin meaning of the words.

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\(^{12}\) Peters, Pam. The Cambridge guide to English usage, p.192.

\(^{13}\) Peters, Pam. The Cambridge guide to English usage, p.192.

\(^{14}\) Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics, p 3198.
1.4 Methods of Etymology

Etymologists have some methods to study the origin of words, just as:

"The methodology by which the history and/or pre-history of the lexis of a language may be traced, and/or its affiliations in other languages"\(^{15}\). That means by using all the applications of the methodology of historical and comparative linguistics as manifested at the level of the lexeme.

"An account of the history of a word, including all major developments in meaning and form, so far as these can be traced in historical documents or reconstructed from the available evidence, together with an account where appropriate of the word’s affiliations in other languages, or in the case of a loanword, a similar account of the relevant facts in the word’s history within the donor language(s), and sometimes also the ulterior history of the word within the donor language or beyond"\(^{16}\).

The comparative method, in semantic comparison between related languages, the etymologists may be able to detect which words come from, and which were borrowed from another language, and which word is earlier. Comparative etymologies; (the establishment of cognates and proto-forms) and comparative grammars are completely symbiotic. This comparative depends fundamentally on a group of firmly established etymologies, because of that sorts of secure etymologies are normally not numerous. This is not necessarily a problem for the historical grammar, but the etymologist should be aware that these few secure etymologies do not exercise a “gravitational pull”\(^{17}\) that attracts other, weaker etymologies.

The study of semantic change. The etymologists can study the change of meaning of particular words. This process of reconstruction takes into account the various causes and factors for linguistic change. These may be categorized as internal and external. External factors are primarily social pressures like prestige, taboo, and those related to cultural contact. The principal internal factors in innovation, which results primarily from two linguistics mechanisms: sound change and analogy\(^{18}\).

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15 Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics, p 3199.
16 Same above.
17 Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics, p 3200.
18 See “studies in Semitic Historical Semantics- words for man and woman” by: Edina M. Wright .P.4 (Dissertation)
Philological research. Changes in the form and meaning of the word can be traced with the help of ancient texts, if such are available.

Dialectological data, we can find in some dialects clues or lines which may have the earlier historical origin. Wolf Leslau suggested that one of the basic shortcomings in Semitic languages studies is the tendency on the part of Semitists not to utilize the modern languages. He said: "It is not yet generally accepted among Semitists that the still-spoken languages and dialects are as important as the 'classical' languages when dealing with Etymologies". That means some modern dialects may be preserve an archaic root that has disappeared from an ancient language.

1.5 Etymology and Dictionaries

Without referring to dictionaries, the study of etymology is not complete, and the relationships between etymology and dictionaries are so symbiotic. However, the linguists used different kinds of dictionaries which can be classified as follows:

1.5.1 General dictionaries

In Semitic languages, as in Arabic some general dictionaries can be used to build the account of the words especially modern meaning; like synchronic ready-reference dictionaries, just like in Arabic (Al-munjid dictionary), small dictionary like (Muḥtar al-Ṣiḥḥah), or contemporary dictionaries, as in Arabic (al-muṣjam al-madrasiy), bilingual dictionaries just (Arabic=Hebrew) or (English=Arabic) etc. In general dictionaries, the etymological section of each entry usually is in a sense detachable, so some brief identifiers of the core meaning of each word were retained to tell apart homographs.

1.5.2 Historical dictionaries

In historical dictionaries, there is a detailed account of historical forms and meanings which has innumerable points of intersection with the etymology section proper, so all of the material which is developed from a single origin and which has the same form in the modern language will be kept together in a single entry. Taking Ibn Manẓur’s Dictionary: Lisan Al-Aarab Dictionary (Historical Arabic- Arabic dictionary) as the typical example of

19 Semitist(s): An expert in or student of Semitic languages, literature, etc.
20 See his words in "studies in Semitic Historical Semantics- words for man and woman" by: Edina M. Wright .P.3 (Dissertation)
such dictionary. The subsequent semantic development brings some senses of each word so close together that it becomes almost arbitrary to assign them to one entry or the other. Affixes will often be included in the dictionary’s headword list, for convenience as much as anything in the presentation of etymologies within the work.

1.5.3 Etymological Dictionaries

In most of the etymological dictionaries, the focus is more restricted on those facts which are most important in understanding the historical development of the word. It differs from the historical dictionary only in that way. And in most of the etymological dictionaries, the Comprehensive illustration of continuing use in a given sense will normally not be found.

1.6 Etymology in Semitic languages

Etymology can be studied more in languages which have a long written history. However, both Arabic and Hebrew have long written history, in Hebrew the written records found are older than in Arabic. Also from the philological tradition, Etymology makes use of philology, the study of how words change from culture to culture over time; etymologists also apply the methods of comparative linguistics to reconstruct information about languages that are very old. By analyzing related languages with the help of comparative method technique, we can make inferences about their shared parent language and its vocabulary, as the study conducted between Arabic and Hebrew. In this way, word roots have been found which can be traced all the way back to the origin of, for instance, the Semitic language family.