

التغير الدلالي في اللهجة العراقية

محمد فزع عبد الرزاق

جامعة الفلوجة / العراق

قسم البعثات والعلاقات الثقافية

muhammed22286@uofallujah.edu.iq



المستخلص

يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على جملة من التغيرات الدلالية في اللهجة العراقية المحلية المثيرة للاهتمام. تمثل التغيرات الدلالية تغيرات تطورية لطبيعة المعنى بمرور الوقت نتيجة التأثيرات الاجتماعية والثقافية واللغوية. يحاول هذا البحث ان يتحقق عن كيفية تعرض تلك المفردات العراقية المنتخبة الى تغيرات فونولوجية ودلالية ووفق اطار بلانك التحليلي من خلال نماذج التغيرات التالية (التسمية بالجزء , الاستعارة , نزع التصنيف النحوي الاصلي , نزع المعنى الدلالي الاصلي , او تحول عنصر لغوية معين الى اداة نحوية.

طرائقياً , تم جمع البيانات من مصادر متعددة من بينها منشورات التواصل الاجتماعي , والاحاديث اليومية الاعتيادية والتركيز على التعابير العراقية التي تعرضت الى تغيرات دلالية جوهرية. أذ تم تحليل كل كلمة منتقاة من خلال تاريخها الدلالي واستخدامها الحالي والاسباب العميقة التي قادت الى تلك التغيرات.

تم تبني انموذج تحليل بلانك ١٩٩٧ لتقصي العمليات الدلالية كالتعميم والتخصيص اضافة الى نظرية النحوياتية او التكوين النحوي للعام ١٩٩٣ للاستبصار على التكييفات الصرفية والتركيبية والوظيفية.

تم تصميم هذا الاطار التحليلي لتوفير دراسة تبصيرية للتطور الدلالي للهجة العراقية في مسعى لتحليل ودراسة تغير المعنى في اللهجة العراقية. حيث تركز النتائج على التفاعل الثقافي والتركيب اللغوي في صناعة الديناميكية الحركية اللغوية .

كلمات مفتاحية

التغير الدلالي , اللهجة العراقية , التسمية بالجزء , الاستعارة , نزع التصنيف النحوي الاصلي , نزع المعنى الدلالي الاصلي , التكوين النحوي , التعميم , التخصيص.

Semantic Shift in Iraqi Arabic word expressions

By

Muhammad F. Abdulrazaq

University of Fallujah

International Office

muhammed22286@uofallujah.edu.iq

07800075591

Abstract

This paper sheds light on semantic mutations in Iraqi Nonstandard Arabic by investigating words observed in Iraqi Arabic.

Semantic change represents a reflection of the evolutionary nature of meaning over time due to societal, cultural and linguistic influences. This piece of research seeks to investigate how specific lexical items in Iraqi Arabic have undergone meaning mutation, as addressed in Blank's model—through the type of shifts of metonymization, metaphorization and—or through grammaticalization through decategorialization and desemanticization.

Methodologically, data has been collected from a diverse corpus, including social media posts and banal conversational interactions to identify words that have underwent substantial semantic changes. Each word is investigated in terms of its history, its current usage, and the underlying mechanisms driving the mutation.

Blank's model 1997 is adopted to account for the semantic processes (e.g., generalization, specialization), while Grammaticalization theory 1993 is harnessed in this paper to offer an insight into morpho-syntactic and functional alterations.

This eclectic framework has been forged to provide a nuanced account of semantic evolution in Iraqi Arabic, in a bid to contribute to the study of meaning change in Iraqi Arabic. The findings highlight the interface between cultural context and linguistic structure in crafting language dynamics.

KEYWORDS

Semantics Shift, Iraqi Arabic, Decategorization,
Desemanticization, Grammaticalization, Metaphoration,
Generalization, Specialization.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

language is a living organism, where it constantly mutates to accommodate the communicative needs of its speakers (Doe, 1999, p. 45). Semantic shift, which points out to the process through which words change their underlying meanings over time, is a basic characteristic of this evolution.

Semantic shift is a landmark characteristic in Iraqi Arabic, due to its profound historical and cultural roots let alone the technological advancements, societal transformations, cultural interactions. This study is conducted to examine these changes to decipher the interface between linguistic structure and sociocultural influence.

Blank's (1997) model of semantic change and the Hopper, P. J., & Traugott, E. C. Grammaticalization model (1993) have been adopted to account for this research matter in question. While Blank's taxonomic model categorizes semantic mutation based on cognitive and contextual Type of Shifts like **metonymization** and **metaphorization**, the grammaticalization theory indicates how lexical items can be grammatical markers. This framework offers a panoramic lens to account for the semantic shifts in Iraqi Arabic.

1.2. Research Questions and Objectives

The central objective of this study is to analyze specific examples of semantic shift in Iraqi Arabic using Blank-Grammaticalization eclectic model. This piece of paper aims to address the following research questions:

- What are the common Type of Shifts of semantic mutations observed in Iraqi Arabic, per Blank's Model?
- How does Grammaticalization contribute to the functional and structural changes of words in Iraqi Arabic?
- What sociolinguistic and cultural factors influence these semantic shifts?

In light of these questions, the study seeks to contribute to the wider understanding of semantic change in Arabic dialects and its relevance to the sociolinguistic fabric of the region.

1.3. Scope and Significance

This study is made to account for the most frequently used words utterances in Iraqi Arabic in daily oral communication and social media platforms, where these words have been found to experience noticeable semantic mirroring the wider dimensions cultural and societal dimensions in Iraqi Arabic. Applying Blank's and Grammaticalization eclectic framework, the research goes in-depth to study the cognitive and structural aspects related to this semantic change.

The significance of this study stems from twin rationales: firstly, it makes us better figure out semantic change across Arabic dialects—something rather under-researched in linguistic scholarship; secondly, it adds a methodological framework to the analysis of semantic change, where it merges the functional and conceptual perspectives. Moreover, the study shows how changes in culture, technology, and society shape language.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Blank's (1997) Model of Semantic Change

Blank's (1997) model is a systematic taxonomy where semantic change can be accounted for by categorizing the type of shifts through which word meanings evolve. This model is based on key tools, including:

Specialization: A word's meaning becomes narrower in its use. For instance, a general term for "vehicle" might come to refer exclusively to "car."

Generalization: a process, where a word meaning expands to include a broader range of contexts or applications.

Metonymization: a semantic shift element where a “part defines the whole” or an effect is represented by cause. Words in Iraqi Arabic appears to be influenced by this element change.

Metaphorization: a process where conceptual similarity generates meaning extension. It occurs when a term is used metaphorically to represent a new concept. For example, in Iraqi Arabic, a word associated with a physical nature undergo mutation to refer to a emotional state.

Amelioration and Pejoration: where words acquire a more negative (pejorative) or positive (ameliorative) connotation influenced by social or cultural factors.

2.2. Hopper & Traugott (1993) The “Grammaticalization Model”

Grammaticalization theory explains the process through which lexical items develop into grammatical elements, undergoing semantic and morphosyntactic changes. Key Type of Shifts include:

Desemanticization (Semantic Bleaching): A word loses its original lexical meaning and acquires a more abstract grammatical function. For instance, a word in Iraqi Arabic

originally meaning "go" might evolve into a marker for future tense.

Decategorialization: A lexical item loses its status as a content word and transitions into a functional element. For example, verbs or nouns may evolve into auxiliary verbs, prepositions, or conjunctions.

Erosion: Phonological reduction accompanies grammaticalization, where the word becomes shorter or simpler as it shifts to a grammatical function.

Extension: A grammaticalized item is used in new a context or construction, broadening its application.

Grammaticalization offers an implement for understanding how certain semantic mutations in Iraqi Arabic lead to the development of functional linguistic elements, reflecting both linguistic economy and cultural influence.

2.3. Integrating the Model

The merger of Grammaticalization theory and Blank taxonomy yields a thoughtful account of semantic mutation in Iraqi Arabic. While Blank's model hinges on the conceptual and cultural catalysts of meaning change, Grammaticalization addresses the structural and evolution of language. This eclectic model can offer a complementary insight into the dynamics shaping Iraqi Arabic.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

Focused on naturally occurring instances of semantic mutations in Iraqi Arabic. The researcher systematically noted examples from various sources, including casual spoken conversations, social media interactions (e.g., Facebook,

Twitter), where the naturalistic observation was the tool for the data collection. This approach allowed for the documentation of semantic changes as they appeared in everyday language use.

The selection of lexical items stems from their noticeable semantic shift and relevance to current Iraqi Arabic usage.

3.2. Analytical Procedure

The data analysis was conducted using the twin theoretical framework: **Blank's (1997) model of semantic change** and **Grammaticalization theory (1993)**. Each word was accounted for through the following phases:

1. **Semantic Change Level:** using Blank's model, the element, driving semantic shift were identified. This involves classifying the shifts under elements such as specialization, generalization, metaphor, metonymy, and amelioration pejoration.
 2. **Grammaticalization Level:** Words that showed structural or functional changes were investigated via the tenets of Grammaticalization model. Key processes such as semantic bleaching or decategorialization (transition to a different grammatical element), and erosion (phonological reduction) were made to figure out these shifts.
 3. **Contextual Level:** Sociocultural and contextual influences on the identified semantic shifts were investigated, particularly factors like influence of technology and changes in societal norms.
-

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Semantic Changes in Selected Words

The following Iraqi Arabic words are analyzed consistent with **Blank's (1997) model**, focusing on Type of Shifts such as metaphorization, metonymization, generalization, and specialization:

1. العينتين (Al-'Ayntain – Two Eyes)

- i. **Original Meaning:** Refers to a person's two eyes.
- ii. **Current Use:** Used in conversation to refer to a person without mentioning their name, especially when the speaker wants to avoid naming the individual directly.
- iii. **Type of Shift: Metonymization** – The association of the person with an attribute (eyes) allows the term to represent the individual indirectly.

2. امنور (Amnawer – Illuminated One)

- i. **Original Meaning:** Literally means "illuminated" or "brightened," often used to describe something or someone glowing with light or radiance.
- ii. **Current Use:** In current Iraqi Arabic, it is used on social media to flatteringly refer to someone who posts a photo or update on Facebook after a long pause in contact, implying their return has metaphorically brightened the platform.
- iii. **Type of Shift: Metaphorization** – The original sense of physical brightness is extended metaphorically to social presence. The return of the individual to the platform is likened to an "illumination," creatively expressing their

absence as a form of "darkness" now replaced by "light" with their update. This semantic shift showcases the interplay between traditional meanings and modern digital interactions.

3. سويچ (Switch)

- i. **Original Meaning:** A mechanical switch for turning something on or off.
- ii. **Current Use:** Refers to a person who becomes mad or mentally unstable.
- iii. **Type of Shift: Metaphorization** – The functional action of a switch (turning off or on) is metaphorically extended to describe mental instability.

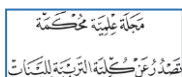
4. ميز (Mez – Table)

- i. **Original Meaning:** A flat surface used for work or dining.
- ii. **Current Use:** Refers to a person who is a source of ridicule.
- iii. **Type of Shift: Metaphorization** – The idea of a "table" being a static, exposed surface becomes a metaphor for someone who is always an object of ridicule.

5. حديقة (Hadiqa – Garden)

- i. **Original Meaning:** A plot of land used for cultivating plants.
- ii. **Current Use:** Refers to a person who is loveless or without emotional warmth.
- iii. **Type of Shift: Specialization** – The word shifts from describing a physical space to symbolizing a barren or loveless personality.

6. ضلعي (Dhla'i – My Rib)



- i. **Original Meaning:** An anatomical rib.
- ii. **Current Use:** Refers to a sincere, supportive, and helpful friend.
- iii. **Type of Shift: Metaphorization** – The rib's closeness to the body becomes a metaphor for the loyalty and support of a friend.

7. دفتر (dafter – Notebook)

- i. **Original Meaning:** Refers to a notebook for writing
- ii. **Current Use:** In Iraqi Arabic, it is commonly used to mean 10000\$
- iii. **Type of Shift: Metonymization** – The term shifted from its original meaning of a physical object (notebook) to represent a bundle of banknotes, drawing from the way money is often bundled like pages in a notebook.

8. قافل (Qafil – Locked/Closed)

- i. **Original Meaning:** Refers to something that is locked.
- ii. **Current Use:** a person who is rigid-minded or opinionated.
- iii. **Type of Shift: Metaphorization** – The quality locking is transferred to mental or emotional rigidity.

9. وردة (Warda – Flower)

- i. **Original Meaning:** Refers to a flower.
- ii. **Current Use:** Used metaphorically to describe a kind, nice, or gentle person.
- iii. **Type of Shift: Metaphorization** – The aesthetic and pleasant qualities of a flower are extended to describe a person's character.

10. **عربانة (Arabana – Cart)**
 - i. **Original Meaning:** Refers to a wheeled cart used for transporting goods.
 - ii. **Current Use:** Describes someone who is impulsive, acting without carefulness.
 - iii. **Type of Shift: Metaphorization** – The erratic and uncontrolled movement of a cart is associated with impulsive human behavior.

11. **حوت (Hout – Whale) (حيتان الفساد)**
 - i. **Original Meaning:** Refers to a large aquatic mammal.
 - ii. **Current Use:** Colloquially, it refers to a greedy and financially corrupt public servant.
 - iii. **Type of Shift: Metaphorization** – The enormity and consuming nature of a whale that prey on aquatic weaker and smaller creatures are metaphorically applied to excessive greed and corruption.

12. **الأصلع (Al-Asla' – The Bald One)**
 - i. **Original Meaning:** Describes someone without hair on their head.
 - ii. **Current Use:** Refers to a 100-dollar note, symbolized by Benjamin Franklin photo in the 100\$.
 - iii. **Type of Shift: Metonymization** – the 100\$ note is metonymized by Benjamin Franklin Bald head according to Iraqi Arabic colloquial context.

13. **طشه (Tashah – Scattering/Spreading)**
 - i. **Original Meaning:** Derived from the verb "يطش" (to scatter or spread randomly).

- ii. **Current Use:** Refers to a person seeking attention on social media.
- iii. **Type of Shift: Metaphorization** – The act of scattering or spreading is metaphorically extended to describe a person's effort to "spread" their presence for visibility.

14. **كمر (Gummar – Moon)**

- i. **Original Meaning:** Refers to the celestial moon.
- ii. **Current Use:** Used to describe someone who is exceptionally beautiful or radiant.
- iii. **Type of Shift: Metaphorization** – The moon's brightness and beauty are metaphorically applied to human appearance.

15. **قصف (Qasaf – Bombardment)**

- i. **Original Meaning:** Refers to military bombardment or heavy attack.
- ii. **Current Use:** Used to describe someone delivering sharp, witty, or scathing remarks.
- iii. **Type of Shift: Metaphorization** – The destructive force of shelling is likened to verbal attacks.

16. **سايق مخدة (Sayiq Mukhadda – Driving a Pillow)**

- i. **Original Meaning:** A literal description of someone holding a pillow while seated.
- ii. **Current Use:** Refers to a person who is extremely lazy or inactive.

- iii. **Type of Shift: Metaphorization** – The act of holding a pillow suggests joblessness and lack of productivity.

17. **خشم (Khashm – Nose)**

- i. **Original Meaning:** Refers to the anatomical nose.
- ii. **Current Use:** Describes someone arrogant or proud, metaphorically "lifting their nose."
- iii. **Type of Shift: Metonymization** – The association of the nose with arrogance is used to symbolize haughty behavior.

18. **ذهب (Thahab – Gold)**

- i. **Original Meaning:** Refers to the precious metal gold.
- ii. **Current Use:** a conversational filler used to admire someone exceptional in value or quality.
- iii. **Type of Shift: Metaphorization** – The intrinsic value of gold is extended metaphorically to other contexts of high worth.

19. **البيت (Albeit – The house)**

- i. **Original Meaning:** Refers to a building where one lives.
- ii. **Current Use:** Used to refer to the housewife, where the typical housewife spends most of her time in housekeeping.
- iii. **Type of Shift: Metonymization** – given the privacy of home and the wife, some Iraqi communities use the word “house” to refer to their wives as an act of privacy and protection within the context of the Iraqi cultural sensitivity.

٢٠. حافي (Hāfi – Barefoot)

i. **Original Meaning:** Refers to the state of being barefoot.

ii. **Current Use:** harnessed metaphorically to describe someone who is poor, lacking resources . It often implies social or economic deprivation.

iii. **Type of Shift:** Metaphorization and Pejoration – the literal state of being barefoot is extended metaphorically to describe poverty, where the word gained a negative connotation over time.

4.2. Grammaticalization in Iraqi Arabic Semantic Shift

1. دستره (Dastarah – Derived from دستور, Constitution)

Original Meaning: دستور (Dustoor) a constitution.

Current Use: In Iraqi Arabic, the word has categorically changed into a verb "دستره" (Dastarah), meaning to act in a corrupt or illegal manner.

Type of Shift: Decategorization – The noun دستور (constitution) is changed into a verb, losing its original referential meaning and acquiring a specific functional and semantic role related to corruption.

Type of Shift: Pejoration – The word shifted from neutral to a negative connotation, reflecting societal attitudes toward corruption in governance or legal processes.

٢. امجيش (Amjiash – "To Be Like an army member)

Original Meaning: the noun "جيش" (Jaysh), meaning "army."

Current Use: in Iraqi Arabic, it was transformed into a verb "امجيش" (Amjiash), meaning "to wake up early and feel active like a soldier," simulating the disciplined lifestyle of military personnel.

Type of Shift:

Grammaticalization:

Desemanticization: The term underwent semantic bleaching and its direct association with "army" and takes on a broader, functional meaning referring to disciplined behavior.

Decategorialization: The noun "جيش" transitions into a verb with a new grammatical function.

Extension: The meaning of "army" is extended to refer to actions or habits associated with soldiers, particularly waking up early and being active.

Type of Shift: Metaphorization – The qualities of soldiers, such as discipline and punctuality, are metaphorically attributed to other individuals.

3. اخو الجديد (Akh Al-Jadeed – "Brother of the New")

Original Meaning: The noun "أخ" (Akh) traditionally means "brother," and "جديد" (Jadeed) means "new."

Current Use: The phrase "أخو الجديد" is used metaphorically (personificationally) to describe something that is used but retains still retains near new condition.

Type of Shift:

Grammaticalization:

Desemanticization: The underlying meaning of "brother" shifts to a non-human association with newness.

Extension: The expression "أخو الجديد" is metaphorically used to a commodity that is a near new condition.

Type of Shift: Metonymization – The term "brother" in this shift associates newness to kinship, emphasizing association rather than direct identity.

Specialization: The meaning is narrowed to indicate things that are "not new," excluding entirely new items or concepts.

5. Conclusion and Findings

Concluding Remarks

This paper has accounted for the semantic mutations in local Iraqi Arabic through the investigation of selected words and expressions, employing Grammaticalization theory (1993) and Blank's (1997) model of semantic change.

The findings reveal that semantic shifts in Iraqi Arabic are driven by both cognitive Type of Shifts, such as metaphor and metonymy, specialization, and generalization as well as by grammaticalization processes.

Word expressions like "دستره" (from دستور) and "امجيش" indicate how grammaticalization plays a role in semantic change, transforming nouns into verbs, reflecting new functional uses within given sociocultural contexts.

The analysis above shows that expression such as "أخو الجديد" shows the metaphorical adaptation of family terms to refer to near-new quality commodity. Meanwhile, terms like "حوت" and "طشه" are metaphorized to extend physical or symbolic characteristics to describe human behaviors or social roles.

Such semantic mutations are not arbitrary but are deep-rooted in cultural and social contexts. They show the evolving needs and values of Iraqi society, propelled by increasing social changes, technology, and shared cultural norms.

Findings

1. Linguistic Evolution

The findings underscores the resilient nature of language to be adaptable to the sociocultural and functional needs of its speakers. Semantic shifts in Iraqi Arabic shows us how cognitive and grammatical processes can generate newer meanings and usages, providing an insight into language evolution in other Arabic dialects and linguistic systems.

2. Cultural Reflection

Semantic changes often project societal attitude. For instance, "دستره" connotes corruption, mirroring an indirect societal critique of governance, while "امجيش" reflects admiration for activism and discipline. These shifts are linguistic markers of cultural societal perceptions.

3. Potential for Further Research

The study paves the way for broader investigation into the role of digital communication in accelerating semantic shifts. It also opens the door for accounting for semantic shift (calquing) in certain institutional contexts, for example in the Iraqi medical young community idiolect. By applying both Blank's semantic Type of Shifts and Grammaticalization framework, this study tap us into the complex processes through which Iraqi Arabic evolves, reflecting the unique interface among language, culture, and society, where this dialectical evolution remains dynamic in an ever-changing linguistic world.

References

- Blank, Andreas. (1997). *Principles of Semantic Change*. In *Historical Semantics and Cognition*, ed. Andreas Blank and Peter Koch. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Hopper, Paul J., & Traugott, Elizabeth Closs. (2003). *Grammaticalization* (2nd Edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Croft, William, & Cruse, D. Alan. (2004). *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Geeraerts, Dirk. (2010). *Theories of Lexical Semantics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Hopper, P. J., & Traugott, E. C. (1993). *Grammaticalization*. Cambridge University Press.
- Radford, Andrew. (2004). *Minimalist Syntax: Exploring the Structure of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sampson, Geoffrey. (1980). *Schools of Linguistics*. London: Hutchinson.
- Palmer, Frank. (1981). *Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.