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Change is the Law of Nature:

A Semantic Analysis of Iraqi Slang Words

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Abstract.

The current study sheds light on a semantic analysis of some selected highly used Iraqi slang words. These new words have recently occupied Iraq slang which has no association with the Arabic standard language and with the revolution of technology, the internet, diversity, and the spreading of TV programs, new linguistic varieties are born and Iraqi slang makes no exception. This study investigates these new words invading Iraqi slang, which most Iraqi young generation follows. The study explores the effects of these new words on Iraqi society and focuses on how these new words are created and the possible reasons for their creation, with the analysis of their meaning and use semantically. The study concludes that most new words come from Iraqi sarcastic programs that target the young generation.

Keywords: Iraqi slang; New words; Semantics; Word Formation Process; Morphology

1.Introduction

Language is a powerful tool for communication, and slang, as a subset of the language, serves as a dynamic and evolving form of expression that reflects the cultural, social aspects of a community. In Iraq, like many other countries, slang language plays a significant role in everyday communication, providing speakers with a unique way to express themselves, create social connections, and navigate cultural nuances. Creating and adding new words to a language is becoming more common in all languages, especially Arabic. Language as a developing system adjusts to civilization development, as the world changes through development, invention, discovery, revolution, and creation, as well as, language change and this change is reflected in the words people use in every aspect of their lives. Phrases and words come to life for a while and then disappear to be replaced with new words which proves that language changes dynamically.

Usually, these words or phrases come from commercial products, famous names, TV programs…etc. were after their first use, they become everyday words. This process

is one of the modern linguistic phenomena that has spread with the expansion of social media and the internet, especially among young people of both sexes. This has led many linguists to criticize this phenomenon and they have rooted its danger to linguistic identity (Zaid, 2006; Nasser, 2018). Thus, this phenomenon is strange to the Iraqi society and some Iraqis believe it may have a negative impact on the language of young people since it becomes a kind of modern language discourse which is used in certain contexts and for specific goals.

As the environment changes, every language changes, but language change is not a random happening, but rather a result of the conditions of existence as a system, and a continuous change in language state is observed. Systematic language is essential to maintaining conversations (Halliday, 2003). There are many slang vocabulary in everyday life as a result of language change. It is important to understand that language is a social practice used by humans to achieve some goals and communicate with others. Hence, sometimes speakers use new words to express feelings or send a message in a more understandable way (ibid).

Movies and TV programs become a very important part of people's daily lives in which each of these programs conveys an idea or a message (Hammadi, 2018). Besides, the internet has become an essential part of human life where they use it in their daily life, therefore, a notable number of new words and expressions have come into our everyday usage and most of these words come from programs, YouTube, social media and even online games which affected our lives, especially after the revolution of technology. Nowadays, with the progress of inventions and innovations, a significant number of new words have appeared in Iraqi slang and most of them are still unfamiliar to many people.

Launching from these points, the present study aims to explore the effects of these new words on Iraqi society and focuses on how these new words are created and the possible reasons for their creation, with an analysis of their meaning and use semantically, and the purposes of their everyday use.

2.Word Formation Process

The main reason for the creation of new words invented by speakers is to meet the need for social communication to become a part of the vocabulary of the community around the speakers. (Plage, 2003). Moreover, word formation is defined by Behera and Mishra (2013) as an "extension of a name of a product from a specific reference to a more general one such as Google" (28) which means that a word can have another usage according to the context. In the process of language development, speakers from generation to generation create new words to meet their social communication needs, and the creation of words is very common because of the enormous social media.

According to Ge (2018), the word base form comes out from the cognition and thinking activities of people, so creating words based on the people's cognition. In some new words, the same item could have a different meaning in different contexts due to people's consideration and cognition (ibid). In other words, words are formed via people's thinking in accordance with specific environments and conditions.

A cultural acceptance of new words plays a very important role and usually, these words are created in a humorous way to play with the language, especially by young people. The life of new words started with an unstable phase in which a new word is invented and used by a small group of speakers. The second phase is diffuse in which the new word has reached a remarkable number of users but is still not yet widely accepted. The last phase is where the word becomes popular and recognizable (Behera and Mishra, 2013). It should be noted that these new words are not only created as new

words, but also already existing words that have been used differently from their semantic meaning (Yule, 2010), moreover, some of the changes include word class, such as a word known as a noun, but shifted to be used as a verb (Google it).

To form a new word, many word-formation processes explain how new words are invented, Šomanová (2017) summarizes them as follows (the researchers add examples from Iraqi slang):

a. **Compounding**: two words are compounded together to form a new lexical item. It can be one word from a language and the other word borrowed from another language. It can be a combination of noun-noun compounds which is the most common, and it can be also verb-verb, adjective-noun, or verb-verb. For example, the word عَلمَن is a combination of (من) with (على) which means *whose*. Another example is the word هنيالك comes from (لك) with (هنيئاً) means *congratulations*

b. **Blending**: is a combination of two words by taking only the beginning of the first word and compounding it with the end of the other word. Blending also means two words, compounding by fixing them together in which that ends one item shorter than the other one starts; therefore, this type of word formation is more like melting the words together than combining them. For example, the word (مناك) is a blending of (هناك) and (من) which means *from there*.

c. **Clipping**: refers to cutting or shorting of words or phrases where the shortened item has the same meaning as the original word. For example, the word (خَيي) is a shortened version of (يخوي) means *my brother*.

d. **Borrowing**: words that are borrowed from other languages. Iraqi slang borrowed a great number of words from different languages and mostly from English. For example, the word (تانكي) has the same word and meaning as the English word *tank*. Also, the word (تمام) means *it is ok*, originally a Turkish word.

e. **Conversion**: a change in the function of the word or simply it used to be a different part of speech. For example, a noun became a verb like a verb (مسنن) comes from the noun (سن) means *new teeth come out* and sometimes, it is used as an adjective to refer to a person who became upset.

f. **Derivation**: is a process of adding affixes to form new words. In Iraqi slang, it is widely spread the use the affixe (إش) to nouns and verbs. For example, (إش) with (سويت) became (إشسويت) means *what did I do*.

3. Methodology

To achieve the objectives, the study employed a qualitative research approach to investigate the use of slang words. The qualitative approach gives a deeper understanding of participants' real-world experience with these words and the factors that follow their usage.

To gather comprehensive information, the researchers used multiple data collection as follows:

a. Interviews with native speakers were conducted to investigate the reasons for using specific slang words. As highlighted by Park et al. (2019), interviews provide rich data that aligns with the objectives of the study.

 b. The researchers observed the natural language usage of participants in various contexts in order to investigate how these words were used in natural conversations.

In the interviews, the researchers asked participants questions aimed to understand the contextual usage of the words. This helps to gain a deeper understanding and interpret these words in users' daily lives.

Moreover, to collect data on the most common words, the researchers interviewed 100 male and female students aged between 18-22. The reason for choosing this age range is because they are likely to be frequent users of these words, and to get additional insights into the usage of these words, the researchers observed various TV programs.

Moreover, the study identified different social domains where new slang words emerge in Iraqi society. These domains are; social media, TV programs, university environments, games, and technology. To determine which domain has the highest frequency of usage, the researchers classified the collected words based on these domains. The analysis of the meaning and semantic aspects of the slang words aided in understanding their usage patterns within these domains.

In this vein, the analysis of the selected Iraqi slang words will be analyzed according to the following steps:

a. Identify Morphemes: Specify the number of morphemes and their type in each word

b. Break Down the Word: Isolate each morpheme by showing its root and meaning

c. Patterns and Rules: show what word formation process is used in the newly formed   Iraqi slanged word
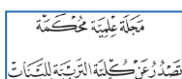
4. The Analysis of the New Words

4.1 Semantic

This section investigates new words that have been recently used by the Iraqi young generation by analyzing their meaning and their usage semantically. The collected data of new words were classified and analyzed in the following table:

Table (1) Semantic Usage of the selected slang words

| No.	The Iraqi New Words	Translation	Meaning
1-	كبد عمري	Liver of my age	The most famous adjectives used to show love for someone are, flatter or sometimes courtesy
2-	ضلعي	My rip	This word, which came out as a sense of humor, is used to show respect and love metaphorically and is usually used among friends. When someone calls his friend as ضلعي that means he is his supporter or protector.
3-	حمبي	My love	This adjective word used to show respect and love for others. Originally it is حبي but the letter م added to the word to become حمبي. According to the meaning of the word, my love, it is supposed to be used between lovers. Nowadays, it is used to show respect and sometimes courtesy.
4-	زاحف	Reptile	Clearly, the origin of this word comes from a name of an animal "reptile". However, It is used for those who harass a girl or try to reach her for possible relation, through their way of speaking or even humiliating themselves to get this relation

5-	حديقه	Garden	Obviously, it is a noun that has been used as an adjective for those who have no money, no girlfriend, or simply have nothing
6-	Sahka سحكَّة	No semantic meaning and no equalvance word in standard Arabic	The stress of a word is a very prominent feature in interaction (Lomotey: 2019) but sometimes it could lead to mispronunciation. It happens a lot during someone's speech, s/he makes a mispronunciation of a word and to make fun of it, they say s/he سحك *sahak*
7-	مكبِل	Couple (In a relationship)	It is a very famous word among university students. It means someone in a relationship, and it comes from the original English word *couple but it is used in Iraqi slang as a verb, not a noun*
8-	امببِچ	Pubg	One of the most recent words started to be used after the revolution of a game called "Pubg" which is a very famous game among the young generation. This online game is played by groups playing it together. In Iraqi slang, when someone wants to play with his friend Pubg he says (تعال امبيچ) means *let's play Pubg.*

9-	نوب	Noob	This word is generally used for a new person who doesn't have experience in any particular field. The word derived from newbie and in the video game world means a new player who has no skill in playing and is often said to be insulting another player.
10-	فصل	disconnected	It is used when the listener does not pay attention to what the speaker is saying so he tells him فصلت !This means *are you disconnected*! In modern terminology, this word refers to the internet connection and it started to be used by Iraqis after the spread of the internet in 2004.

4.2 The Analysis According to the Domains

This section investigates new words that have been mentioned in the previous section according to different domains. The following chart shows the most frequent and common words used in particular domains.

Diagram (1) Domains
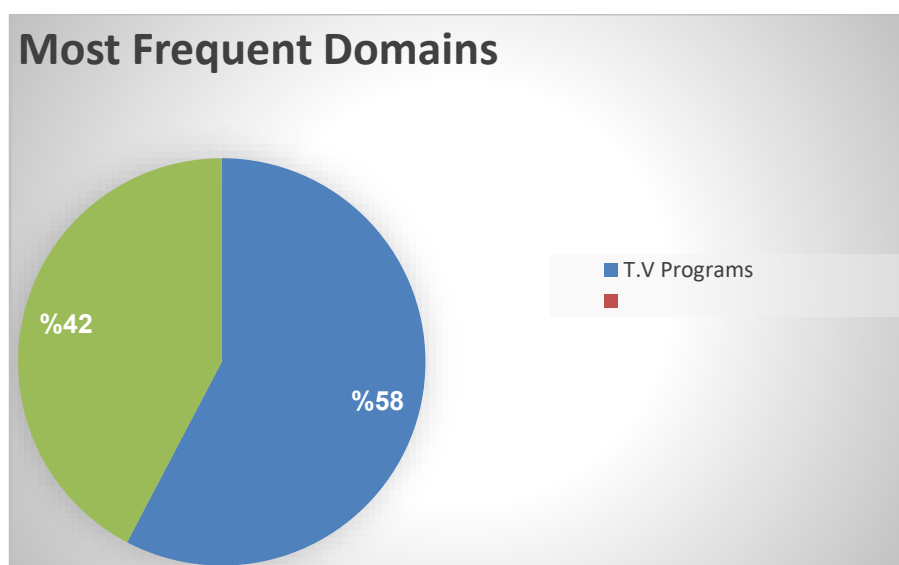
4.3 Words Analysis:

The tenth selected slang Arabic words are analyzed by the 'Word Formation Process' according to the steps mentioned earlier in 'Methodology':

4.3.1 First Slang word: 'كبد عمري' (Kabed Omri)

Word Formation: Compounding

    a. Identify Morphemes:

- The word "كبد عمري" consists of two morphemes:

    a. Break Down the Word:

- "كبد" (kabad) refers to the liver, a vital organ in the human body.
- "عمري" (umri) indicates possession or association with the speaker's age.

    c. Patterns and Rules:

- The pattern here involves combining a noun ("كبد") with a possessive adjective ("عمري").
- The resulting phrase "كبد عمري" can be translated as "the liver of my age.

The phrase "كبد عمري" /kabed omri/ consists of "كبد" (kabed, meaning liver) and "عمري" (omri, meaning my life). "كبد" comes from the root "ك-ب-د" which is a noun, while "عمري" is derived from "ع-م-ر" and indicates possession ("my life"). Together, they form an expression that metaphorically signifies deep emotional importance, with the liver symbolizing life and vitality. In Arabic culture, particularly in the Iraqi dialect, the phrase (كبد عمري) /Kabed Omri/ "you are the liver of my age" is a term of endearment. Iraqi speakers are using a culturally specific metaphor to express deep affection. The liver is considered a vital organ, symbolizing something precious and essential. By saying this, the speaker is expressing that the person is incredibly important and dear to them, much like saying "you are the heart of my life" in English.

4.3.2 Second slang word 'ضلعي' (ḍilʿī)

    Word Formation Process: **Affixation (Inflectional process)**

    a. Identify Morphemes:

- "ضلعي" (ḍilʿī) consists of two morphemes:

    b. Break Down the Word:

- "ضلع" (ḍilʿ) refers to the rib, a bone in the human body.
- "ي" (ī) indicates possession or association with the speaker ("my rib").

    c. Patterns and Rules:

- The pattern involves combining the noun "ضلع" (ḍilʿ) with the possessive suffix "ي" (ī).
- The resulting word "ضلعي" (ḍilʿī) can be translated as "my rib."

In many cultures, particularly in Arabic, referring to someone as "my rib" implies a close, intimate connection, often signifying a deep emotional bond or a significant relationship. The word formation process used to create "ضلعي" (ḍilʿī) is called affixation, specifically suffixation. In this process, a suffix (in this case, "ي" (ī) for "my") is added to the base noun "ضلع" (ḍilʿ) to indicate possession. This transforms the noun into a possessive form, meaning "my rib." The word "ضلعي" (ḍilʿī) is derived from the noun "ضلع" (ḍilʿ), meaning "rib," and the possessive suffix "ي" (ī), meaning "my."

4.3.3   Third slang word   ' حمبي ' (ḥombī)

Word Formation Process: Affixation (Inflectional process)
a. Identify Morphemes:
- "حمبي" (ḥombī) consists of two morphemes:
b. Break Down the Word:
- "حمب" (ḥ0mbī) refers to love.
- "ي" (ī) indicates possession or association with the speaker ("my love").
c. Patterns and Rules:
- The pattern involves combining the noun "حمب" (ḥombī) with the possessive suffix "ي" (ī).
- The resulting word "حمبي" (ḥombī) can be translated as "my love".

The word "حمبي" (ḥombī) in the Iraqi dialect follows a unique morphological process. The root letters are "ح" (ḥ), "م" (m), and "ب" (b). In Iraqi dialect, "حمبي" (ḥombī) is a colloquial term that conveys affection or closeness. Unlike the more formal patterns in standard Arabic, this word reflects regional and cultural influences. It's similar to expressions like "my dear" or "my beloved" in English. In short, while "حمبي" (ḥombī) may not adhere to the typical rules of Arabic morphology, it holds a lot of cultural significance as a way to express endearment in Iraqi speech.

4.3.4 Fourth Slang Word   ' زاحف ' (zaḥif)

Word Formation Process: Infixation (Derivational process)
a. Identify Morphemes:
- "زاحف" (zaḥif) consists of one morpheme.
b. Break Down the Word:

- "زَحَفَ" (zaḥafa) is the base verb which means "to crawl'',
- "زاحف" (zaḥif) is an adjective derived from the verb "زَحَفَ" (zaḥafa)

c. **Patterns and Rules:**
- The pattern involves changing the grammatical category and adding new meaning.
- The resulting word زاحف(zahif) can be translated as "to crawl".

Zaḥif (زاحف) is an active participle (فاعل اسم) from the root زَحَفَand the verb زَحَفَ means 'to crawl' or 'to creep'. The active participle in Arabic derives from the pattern

'فاعل اسم' (fāʿil), where the root letters are fitted to this pattern to make the active participle.

Hence, "زَحَفَ" (zaḥafa) becomes "زاحف" (zaḥif), meaning "crawling" or "creeping." In Iraqi dialect, when someone says "creeping" or "زاحف" (zaḥif), it often has a colloquial meaning beyond the literal sense of crawling. It typically refers to someone who is being overly persistent, annoying, or intrusively trying to get someone's attention (girls' attention), especially in a romantic context. It can describe a person who is making unwanted advances or behaving in a manner that is considered socially awkward or inappropriate.

4.3.5 Fifth Slang Word   'حديقة' (ḥadiqa)

Word Formation Process: Infixation (Derivational process)

a. **Identify Morphemes:**
- "حَديقة" (ḥadiqa) consists of one morpheme

b. **Break Down the Word:**
- The word "حديقة" (ḥadiqa) is a single word cannot be break down.

c. **Patterns and Rules:**

This word does not involve any changing, but it is used in the present day to convey different meaning far away from its original one.

"حديقة" (Hadiqa) is a common pattern for feminine nouns in Arabic that often denotes a place or object associated with the root meaning which means "garden" or "park," a place typically enclosed and cultivated. "حديقة" (Hadiqa) (ḥadiqa) is a well-known Iraqi expression used to refer to a man who doesn't have much money or wealth, lives a simple life, and is not in a romantic relationship or close friendship with a girl

or anyone else. It is connected to the verb "حدق" (ḥadaqa), which means "to stare." It suggests the idea of someone who stares at people without having anything to occupy their time, leading to an empty life.

4.3.6 Sixth Slang Word   'سحكة' (saḥaqa)

Word Formation Process: Infixation (Derivational process)

a. **Identify Morphemes:**

   - "سحقة" (saḥaqa) consists of two morphemes:

b. **Break Down the Word:**

   - 'سحق' which means "to crush" or "to grind,"

   - 'ة' is an Arabic letter which refers here to 'Fatha', diacritics which means 'harakat' (vowel marks).

c. **Patterns and Rules:**

   - This word does not involve any changing, but it is used in the present day to convey different meaning far away from its original one.

The word "سحق" (saḥaqa), meaning "to crush" or "to grind," follows a straightforward morphological process in Arabic. The root letters are "س" (s), "ح" (ḥ), and "ق" (q), and the verb is built on the common pattern فعل (faʿala), which is a simple trilateral root verb form. From this root, various related words are derived, like the verbal noun "سحق" (saḥq), meaning "crushing," the active participle "ساحق" (saḥiq), meaning "crusher," and the passive participle "مسحوق" (masḥūq), meaning "crushed." This shows how flexible and rich Arabic morphology is, allowing a range of meanings and forms to emerge from a single root.

In the Iraqi dialect, however, "سحكة" takes on a different meaning. It's used when someone unintentionally omits or changes a letter in their speech, causing a slip in

spelling or pronunciation. This example highlights how dialects can give familiar words new shades of meaning in everyday language..

4.3.7 Seventh Slang Word   'مگبل' (magbul)

Word Formation Process: **Borrowing**

a. **Identify Morphemes:**

- مگبل **(magbul)** includes one morpheme derived from a borrowed one.

b. **Break Down the Word:**

- 'مگبل' (magbul) is a single word cannot be break down.

c. **Patterns and Rules:**

- This word is taken from English and used in Arabic. It doesn't change the grammar in any way.

In the Iraqi dialect, we see an interesting morphological process with the borrowed English word "couple." The pronunciation is adapted to align with Arabic phonetics, where the "c" is replaced with "م" (m), and the "p" becomes "ب" (b), fitting more naturally with the sounds of Arabic. However, this isn't just a direct borrowing. The word "مگبل" has evolved in Iraqi usage to refer specifically to someone in a romantic relationship or with a partner. This shift shows how languages adapt and grow through cultural interactions, not just borrowing words but also giving them new meanings that reflect the local social context.

4.3.8 Eighth Slang Word   'امبيج' (ambabj)

Morphological process: **Borrowing**

a. **Identify Morphemes:**

- امبيج(ambabj) includes one morpheme derived from a borrowed one.

b. **Break Down the Word:**

- (امبيجambabj) is a single word cannot be break down.

c. **Patterns and Rules:**

- There are no changes to the grammar of this word because it comes from English and is used in Arabic.

The conversion process is clearly seen in the development of the term "امببج" (ambabj) in the Iraqi dialect. This process started with the game name "PUBG" which has become popular globally and in Iraq. The game's name was borrowed and then turned into a verb in Iraqi Arabic by adding the common Iraqi suffix "ج-." This resulted in the verb "امببج," meaning to play or engage in PUBG. This transformation illustrates how language evolves and adapts to global digital culture, enriching its vocabulary by integrating new terms from digital technologies into everyday communication.

4.3.9 Nineth Slang Word   **'نوب' (noob)**

Morphological process: Borrowing

a. Identify Morphemes:
- 'نوب' (noob) consists of one morpheme derived from a borrowed one (noob) or (newbie).

b. Break Down the Word:
- 'نوب' (noob) is a single word cannot be break down.

1. Patterns and Rules:

- This word doesn't involve any grammatical changing, it is borrowed from English language and used in Arabic.

The term نوب (noob) has an interesting morphological process that reflects linguistic borrowing and adaptation. Originally taken from the English word "noob," a slang term derived from "newbie" to describe someone with no experience. The word has been integrated into the Iraqi dialect while retaining its pronunciation as "نوب" (noob). In the gaming world, it is commonly used to refer to a new or unskilled player, often with a negative or mocking tone. The adoption of "نوب" in Iraqi Arabic highlights the impact

of global gaming culture and the way English slang is absorbed into the local language. This example demonstrates how linguistic elements can cross cultural boundaries, adapt to new environments, and they even become part of everyday speech.

4.3.10 Tenth Slang Word   'فصل' **(fasal)**

      Morphological process: **Borrowing**

a. **Identify Morphemes:**
- 'فصل' (faṣal)consists of one morpheme derived from a borrowed one (to disconnect)

b. **Break Down the Word:**
- 'فصل' (faṣal)is a single word cannot be break down.

c. **Patterns and Rules:**

- This word doesn't involve any grammatical changing, it is borrowed from English language and used in Arabic.

In the Iraqi dialect, the phrase فصل(faṣal) demonstrates an interesting morphological process. Originally meant "to separate" or "to disconnect" and was derived from the root characters "" (f), "ص" (ṣ), and "´" (l).I n Iraq, "فصل" began to specifically refer to the loss of internet connection while in colloquial usage, "فصلت" (faṣalt) is now commonly used to describe someone who is not paying attention, like saying "Are you disconnected?" in English. This evolution shows how technological terms can influence and reshape language, integrating seamlessly into everyday conversation in Iraqi dialect.

5. The Results and Discussion

In the previous section, it has been mentioned the semantic meaning of the new words. The researchers reached the most frequently used domain percentage after observing and interviewing 100 young Iraqis. The chart shows that most Iraqi new words come from TV programs. These are satirical programs like Basher Show and

Wlait Bateeh, whose main target is young people. Such programs are the favorite of the Iraqi young generation since they use elements of attraction such as creating new funny words. They present thoughts, ideas, and cases related to politics, society, and even criticism all in a hilarious way.

Moreover, we can see that technology also plays a very important role in spreading new words among Iraqis. After 2003, most Iraqis started to use the internet to surf some sites and play online games. The interview and the analysis show that the phenomenon of using strange words used by young people is not a strange phenomenon, but rather part of youth movements or stages in society in general.

Additionally, this phenomenon is normal for any living language by adding vocabulary to its dictionary as long as life continues also there will be always social development so there will be always new vocabulary. Each generation has its own words that express its own issues which distinguish them from other generations. In addition, these existing words are the result of political and social changes that took place in the country after 2003. However, some of these words are borrowed from other languages and fused with our language which could have a bad effect on the Arabic language because they are used to replace some Arabic words.

Nevertheless, after the fall of the former regime in April 2003, the winds of democratic change afflicted the Iraqi society in general and young people, especially in the form of a new vocabulary. Some of these strange words and phrases have the spirit of humor, which is born from public life or personal experience and transmitted among young people. In addition, some of these words came from the work of violence experienced by the country in a period of insecurity and terrorism, such as the word (علاس Alas) a name used for someone who gives information about victims. Moreover,

in general, the purpose of these words is for humor, and given a short sentence, for instance, one can say one word to refer to a specific situation such as (Garden).

According to the information from the interview, this phenomenon started to be very common in Iraqi society because of *Walit Bateh* and other programs. These new words affect negatively the youth culture and ethics since some of these words became accepted after it was not desirable to use, and unfortunately, they began to affect the mother tongue of young people.

6. Conclusion

Language is dynamic, changing year by year, leaving the old generation lost in the overflow of new words. Creating new words is a natural phenomenon for each language, proving that language is alive and not fixed. However, when these new words exceed the limits and affect the mother language, here it considers a threat to the identity of the society. Kim et all say (2019) "Language functions as a symbolic commodity within the global labor market" (87) that's proven why most Iraqi TV programs use this process of creating new words in presenting their programs, not only to convey their ideas in a simplified way to their audience, but the main reason is fame. Most sarcastic programs use this style because they know that it raises the interest of young people to use it in their daily lives. We can see that most of these new words, especially from TV programs, are useless and aimless, but their use will definitely affect the future. Arabic letters are declining in front of these dramatic changes with the revolution of informatics. Furthermore, if we search in the Arabic language, we may find hundreds of strange words that overwhelmed and replaced many other Arabic vocabulary and these words are frighteningly spread among adolescents and young people. The reason behind this is that social media plays a very important role in spreading strange words

far away from Arabic. A large number of people in our Arabic societies use this vocabulary because the decay of Arabic vocabulary is extinct in the dictionary.

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