

The New Vocabularies in Iraqi Context after 2003 (An Ideological Analytical Reference)

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Abstract

This paper sheds light on the emergence of new vocabularies in post-2003 Iraqi community. It explores the ideological reference behind these vocabularies and tries to show how language has turned into a battlefield for identity, legitimacy, and power. Its questions are: (1) What concept or reality does it aim at naming or legitimizing? (2) In what way does it change the identity? The ideological reference approach is geared to understand vocabulary not as isolated words but as linguistic carriers of ideology.

Keywords: new vocabulary, reference, ideology, post-2003 Iraq

المفردات الجديدة في المجتمع العراقي بعد عام 2003 "اشارة فكرية تحليلية"

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المستخلص

تسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على ظهور بعض المفردات الجديدة في المجتمع العراقي بعد 2003. تحاول الدراسة كشف الإشارة الضمنية وراء هذه المفردات موضحة كيف أصبحت اللغة ساحة حرب للهوية والشرعية والقوة. تطرح الاسئلة : (1) ما المفهوم او الواقع الذي تهدف الى تسميته او تشريعه؟ (2) باي طريقة تغير الهوية ؟ ان طريقة الاشارة الفكرية كُيفت لفهم المفردات ليس كمجرد كلمات منفصلة بل كحاملات لغوية للفكر او المعتقد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المفردات الجديدة، الاشارة ، الايدولوجية ، عراق ما بعد 2003

1- Introduction:

1. 1. Background of the Study

For each major event, there have been new words or phrases which either have originated or their meaning has changed according to that event. It is said that need gives birth to invention. It can be recognized that many vocabularies emerge when there is a need to satisfy any change in people's concepts and values because "every living language continues to evolve to meet the needs of its speakers" as stated by Mercer (2000: 13).

Following the 2003 US-British invasion and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's Dictatorship, Iraqi dialect experienced neological terminology. The

things that have entered in the neologisms are very much significant of the collective imaginative understanding of Iraqis in the wake of the radical political, social and security upheaval.

The invasion of Iraq in 2003 led by U.S. and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime had caused a deep sociopolitical and sectarian change which went beyond the change of institutions. It was a deep change of language when a new vocabulary was created, made use of, and fought over by different occupation authorities, armed groups, new political leaders, media, and ordinary people. Looking at the words used from an ideological perspective shows a struggle to dominate narratives, gain the legitimization of power, and reform the national identity in a broken country. The country has undergone a profound political, social, and ideological transformations reflected directly through linguistic landscape of post-2003 Iraq.

In this study, since some of the new vocabularies are common sense and they came to be used widely in Iraqi context, the analysis will focus on the vocabularies in the post-2003 Iraqi context that have recently emerged in society on the basis of their novel usage – not their essence as words. They will be analyzed structurally by categorizing their ideological origins and implications. The framework of ideological analytical reference reveals how language became a battlefield for identity, legitimacy, and power. This framework or approach asks: (1) What concept or reality do they try to label, de/legitimize? (2) How does this reshape identity?

1. 2. The Language and Ideology: The Framework of Analysis

There were new terminology in Iraq after 2003 as part of the arguments regarding the political orientation of the country. These changes were not merely about the words used, they changed people's perceptions of authority, legitimacy and what was to follow. That greater struggle was an important part of the way language changed. Apparently the conflict for meaning was a crucial factor in forming public understanding. It is hard to overlook how intimately language evolved to be related to national identity.

Language is the main vehicle of ideology which can be interpreted here as a system of representations (words, myths, concepts) to serve a particular social group, often by justifying power relations as natural. The new Iraqi vocabularies after 2003 are subject to analysis in terms of Halliday, (1978); Hock & Joseph, (2009); Fowler et al., (1979) units of analysis: (1) Relexicalization, by inventing new words or expressions for new concepts (e. g., De-Ba'athification), (2) Semantic Shifting, by using the same words with changed or completely different

meaning, often turning the words into a vehicle for ideological message (e. g., al-Mukhabarat – often meant state security, but now it is used to refer to the apparatus of repression); and (3) Overlexicalization, by using too many words to describe the same things that are being ideologically contested to reveal the social tension (e. g., different words for “*militia*” with contrastive positive-negative meanings).

2. The Key Theme-based Categories of New Vocabulary

2. 1. The Vocabulary of Regime Change and Political Transformations

The political vocabulary of post-2003 Iraq is a mirror of its story past, constituting an analytical reference point for the major ideological shifts that happened after the invasion led by the US. The use of language by politician, media outlets, and government entities discloses a complex struggle over national identity, legitimacy, and the essence of the state, which transitioned from Ba’athist centralized totalitarianism era to the fragmented and contended political order (Dodge, 2020; Haddad, 2020).

The US- led occupation and their state-building project were profoundly involved in setting up the new political system and in creating a new language mainly focused on the ideas of democracy, federalism, sectarian representation, de-Ba’athification, and national reconciliation (Mako & Edgar, 2021). Besides, media outlets became major players in not only spreading the official propaganda but also in resisting it. So, a united state discourse was replaced with many competing political and sectarian narratives (Ahmed & Mohammed, 2024). Presented below is a breakdown of the main ideological elements found in the political vocabulary of post-2003 Iraqi society.

- a- العملية السياسية (The political process): This expression became the dominant name for the post-2003 Iraqi political system. Its ideological function is represented by normalizing the new model of power-sharing into sectarian-ethnic trend to be the only vital path and dismiss the other alternatives to be outside the process.
- b- بناء الدولة (State-Building): This technocratic term was imported by the new political elite and the international consultants referring ideologically to pre-2003 state as being demolished or failed and comparing it to the post-2003 process, often ignoring the structures of the existing state.
- c- الدستور الدائم (The Permanent Constitution): Despite its adoption in 2005 and highly contested and boycotted by important sections of the Iraqi people, the term “*permanent*”, in contrast with the “*Transitional Administrative Law*”, was used to bestow finality and legitimacy.
- d- السيادة (Sovereignty): This term was mainly used by US government and Iraqi government to mark the formal act of handing over power. It also suggest self-

governance that might still be under the mask of foreign influence. It became a key term late years (2004 onwards) to indicate the creation of a sovereign government.

e- التغيير (The Change): This term was not just ‘*change*’. Ideologically, it was a slogan that imply a necessary, and clean break from the previous era (the past) by framing it as uniformly oppressive to the future or by framing it as a democratic project.

f- الاحتلال vs. التحرير (Occupation vs. Liberation): This pair is probably the most ideologically loaded duo. Depending on the word you choose, you are very likely to figure out what side the speaker is on: Do they support resistance or the coalition? It is as if the speaker through his/her word choice is framing whether the post-2003 presence is violent and illegitimate or safe and legitimate.

g- قوات التحالف (Coalition Forces): The primary user of this term is the US government. It ideologically implies legitimizing military actions as many-sided, and obscuring the invasion as one-sided. Some Arab media as Al-Jazeera used قوات “*occupation or invasion forces*” whereas in Saudi Arabia the term “*coalition forces*” was mostly used.

h- التصفيات التأسيسية (Foundational Purges): This term denotes the series of brutal sectarian bombings and targeted assassinations of prominent intellectuals, key professionals, and security officers of the state during (2005-2007) with the goal to destroy the state by hollowing it from such personnel and reorganizing the society as weakly-based entity.

i- اجتثاث البعث (De-Ba’athification): This term originally denotes a deeply-ideological technical measure. What started as a policy to remove only the top party members turned into a mechanism of mass exclusion, political vendettas, and the marginalization of Sunni Arabs, which resulted in a fundamental transformation of the administrative and military elites. This term was introduced through (relexicalization)

j- الحرية / الديمقراطية (Democracy / Freedom): Both terms were used as main reasons for the invasion by suggesting liberation as a shared benefit. Later, these terms kicked off debate among Americans legitimizing the war. In Arab media, “*freedom*” refers to freedom from foreign control. Theoretically, these ideas were claimed by the US government to be applied globally. Later on, a contrasting perspective is constructed through using such terms referring to negative attitudes conducted by certain individuals and this reflect a semantic shifting of these terms (Kak, 2012)

2. 2. Vocabulary of Identity and Sectarian Demography

The sectarian and ethnic identities were institutionalized and reified by some terms as the primary social categories.

- a- الطائفية السياسية (Political Sectarianism): This term is a critical one used by opponents critically to name the system because it labeled the new power-sharing as the political activation of sectarian identity, not as “*democracy*”.
- b- المكونات (The Components): This term replaced “مواطنون” (citizens) referring to the taxonomy of population into collective, ethnic-sectarian groups (Shiite, Sunni, Christian, Kurdish, Yazidis, etc.). Thus, it is the most ideologically-loaded term since it emphasized identity as essential and made the basis of political power-sharing by eroding individual citizenship.
- c- الاقليات (The Minorities): This term refers to more detailed groupings with their political use of groups like Christians, Yazidis, Turkmen, and Shabaks. Their vocabularies showed their weakness but, at the same time, made them political pawns in a wider ethno-sectarian bargaining. Hence, this term, as well as the former one “المكونات” (the components), reveals an overlexicalization in their use among politicians.
- d- المناطق المختلطة (Mixed Areas): It refers to a new demographic category pointing out neighborhoods or cities with mixed Sunni / Shiite populations. They also tragically became a battlefield vocabulary during the sectarian civil war (2006-2008), as these areas experienced extreme violence and eventual “unmixing” strategies.
- e- المثلث السني (The Sunni Triangle): This term has gained ideological weight from its geographic and demographic basis. It turned into a conceptual weapon when it depicted the Sunni Arab heartland as a homogeneous bloc that could potentially lead an insurgency and subsequently be potentially sidelined.
- f- الرافضة (Rafidha): This term was basically used by sectarian actors (anti-Shi’a). It has the ideological implication that Shi’as are framed as religious rejecters and they should be placed outside the Muslim community. This term mark a deep sectarian discourse and it was shifted from عجم (Ajam) as ethnic/foreign otherness in pre-2003 to Rafidha as doctrinal heresy in post-2003. Relexicalization is clearly applied here.
- g- الهوية الجعفرية (Ja’afari Identity): This term came to existence as a way to describe a political Shia identity associated with political Islam and المرجعية (religious authority) in Najaf. It was a signal to change identity from a primarily religious one to a socio-political one.
- h- المحاصصة (Quota System): It has been used by Iraqi political elite and academics. It transformed from a descriptive term to one with pejorative overtones, a symbol of corruption and untrustable resource allocation, the source of state

weakness. Ideologically, it implies that the political power-sharing is institutionalized on the basis of ethno-sectarian identity. It was the principle vision for post-2003 state.

i- الاعتراف الطائفي (Sectarian Apportionment/Recognition): This term refers to the sectarian/ethnic division-based formalization of politics (e. g., المحاصصة الطائفية – Sectarian quota system). These terms transformed sectarianism from just a social phenomenon into an official and institutionalized principle of governance. Overlexicalization is evident in this term with the former one.

j- قوات الشيعة (Shia Forces): This term was basically used by academics and media as a sect-coding of state institutions; delegitimizing the national army as a Shia entity. This value judgment was inaccurate since it delegitimizes the state whereas the Iraqi forces were affirmed by its existence (Stansfield, 2007).

2. 3. Vocabulary of Conflict and Armed Groups

The rise of invasion actors introduced a new lexicon of militancy, resistance, and terrorism. Some of the related vocabularies are:

a- (داعش) الدولة الاسلامية (The Islamic State): There is an intensively deep ideological decision behind choosing this label. داعش (An Arabic acronyms) used pejoratively by Arab governments and opponents to deny the group's "statehood" or legitimate "Islamic" status. Referring to it as (الدولة الاسلامية) presupposes some degree of acceptance or recognition of its claimed status.

b- الميليشيات (The Militias): It is the generic pejorative term for Shiite Islamic armed groups (e. g. Badr, Mahdi Army). According to their supporters, their alternatives were: الفصائل المسلحة (armed factions), الفرقة الذهبية (The Golden Squad) or الحشد الشعبي (popular mobilization), but their opponents label them as ميليشيات (militia) connoting criminality, illegitimacy, and Iranian influence. Apparently, all these terms are classified under overlexicalization .

c- قوات الحشد الشعبي (Popular Mobilization Forces- PMF): At first, this term categorized the most Shiite militias initially sanctioned by state and backed by Iran to fight ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq & Syria) after 2014. The ideology behind this term aimed to nationalize and legitimate these groups in spite of the fact that these militias remained different in ideology and operations from the official armed forces of the state. The term الحشد is meant to recall voluntarism and the will of the populace, making it sound more positive as a militia.

d- الفرقة الذهبية (The Golden Squad): The division is the US-trained counter-terrorism force of Iraq. The name alone, given by the state, conveys the ideology that the members are the elite, national heroes who fight against terrorism.

- e- المقاومة (The Resistance): This term is mainly used by media, certain nationalist armed groups, and the Sunni Arab groups to label their armed confrontation to US invasion. It held a legitimizing patriotic ideological justification by framing these groups fighters within a broader historical anti-colonial context and legitimizing violence against any foreign troops as national liberation. The US and the newly established government categorized these groups as ارهابيون (terrorists) or بقايا النظام السابق (remainders of the previous regime) with a direct ideological counter to frame the attacks on US troops as an act of rebelliousness. Hence, this term underwent a semantic shifting.
- f- الصحوة (Sahwa' – Awakening): is a word, which refers to the military local armed groups of the west part in Iraq that were created to oppose Al-Qaa'da in 2005. It happened, six years later, a kind of awakening of conscience among members of these local groups which had emerged after American invasion in 2003 (Jaber, 2012: 29). This word involves multistage of borrowing from Standard Arabic and derivation undergoing relexicalization.
- g- الارهاب (Terrorism): Primarily, the state used it mostly for Sunni Jihadists (Al-Qa'eda, ISIS) but now it has become flexible label. Some Sunni communities employed it to characterize the indiscriminate violence of the state and militias. Quite frequently, the term was used as a weapon to de-legitimize all forms of armed opposition framing conflict as part of “war against terror”. It contrasted with “resistance fighters, Jihadists, or militiamen” used by Arab media. Apparently, overlexicalization is witnessed through using this term
- h- التكفيريون (The Takfiris): It refers specifically to groups of Salafi-Jihadists who accuse other Muslims of being apostates. This term was broadly used by Shia politicians and media to interpret the conflict ideologically as “Nationalists/true Muslims vs. Extremist outsiders, rather than as Sunni vs. Shia (Stansfield, 2007).

2. 4. Vocabulary of Geographical Alignment

- a- التدخل الإيراني التركي Iranian/Turkish Interference: This word is frequently used in media and political discourse to highlight the notion of losing sovereignty and how Iraqi nationalism was challenged by adjacent nations. It is famous in medias nowadays.
- b- المحال الإيراني (The Iranian Axis): This phrase is employed to recognize the vast political, economic, and military influence of Iran. Generally, its usage suggests the resistance of the speaker towards any loss of national independence.
- c- المحور الاقليمي (The Regional Axis): This term is used to characterize the frequently-compelled poisoning of Iraq with either Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah as “Axis of Resistance” or with Saudi Arabia, UAE, others as “Moderate Arab Axis”. This vocabulary reveals how Iraqi political dialogue became implanted in wider ideological disputes across the region.

d- الرؤية الامريكية (The American Vision): This term is used for describing the US-based plan as a dictated policy to be connoted with naivete or imposition (Ahmed & Mohammed , 2024).

2. 5. Vocabulary of Corruption and Illegal Activities

a- حواسم (Hawasim - (the Finalists) refers to all situations of occupation, corruption, theft, and destruction. This word has never been used before because it has no sense in Iraqi Arabic. This word is originally used by Saddam Hussein (the former president of Iraq) when he called the last battle 'Al-Hawasim' referring to his war against the United States as being 'final' (Stansfield, 2007: 194). Based on the use of this word in everyday conversation, Jaber (2012: 13) raised a logical question that *"no connection or semantic relationship exists between the word or its sense - being final - and its reference, namely, the things to which the word refers (i.e., theft, corruption, and occupation)"*.

Hawasim was clearly borrowed from Standard Arabic as a plural or singular word or used as an adjective to express putting an end to a certain issue. After 2003, Al- Hawasim war between Iraq and the United States put an end to the future of Iraq because it has been destroyed and became a scene for theft and crime which both refer to anything illegal (Jaber, 2012: 14). Consequently, Hawasim refers to illegal actions such as theft (especially from banks and the governmental institutions), breach of law, patronage (favoritism), financial corruption, reckless driving, plagiarism, inefficiency, incompetence, and the under qualification of a person in doing a certain job. Later, this word underwent a semantic shifting indicated by the fact that it referred to 'theft' substituting the word 'Ali Baba' as a generic name.

Denotatively, hawasim refers to the very poor shelter in government buildings occupied by poor people to live in after the collapse of Baghdad. This word has been emerged when the collapse of Baghdad led to the fall of most government institutions such as ministries, police stations, courts, and other legal institutions that are responsible for keeping order and protecting people.

Today, different forms of 'hawasim' are derived, such as 'hawsama' (a noun referring to doing illegal things) and 'hawsamchi' (a noun referring to the person who does the illegal actions). Indeed, using the word 'hawasim' demands a social understanding between the speaker and listener; therefore; it is peculiar to other people rather than the Iraqis (Jaber, 2012: 14).

b- 'قفاص' (Qaffas) is another new word which is originally derived from the word 'قفص' (meaning : box or cage where birds are kept in) (Wehr, 1976). It was used to

denote anyone who traps, tricks or cheats others by using certain tactics (Al-Bazi, 2006: 78). This word has undergone a semantic shifting as indication of institutional corruption since it is popular to describe corrupt government workers who demand bribes

c- 'العلاس' is derived from the old local word 'علس' meaning '*chewing food*', which is borrowed from Standard Arabic (Wehr, 1976). Recently, its meaning has been changed to refer to someone whose duty is similar to that of a spy who gathers information about someone and participates in the crime. 'العلاس' has the intention to guide victims indirectly to a terrible unknown fate in order to take a ransom from the their families or take revenge upon those victims (Al-Bazi, 2006: 78). This word has undergone a semantic shifting.

d- 56 (Sittah wa Khamsin – Fifty six): it refers to Iraqi penal code 456 for Fraud / Scam. Code language became slang for criminal activity. In Iraqi dialect, it is a slang term for a con person or scam shady criminal. The tag originated from Article 456 of the Iraqi Penal Code that was designed to counteract actions of swindling and getting property claiming to be another. Gradually, 456 was shortened for 56 and it became a tag for a swindler or a con artist (Haddad, 2020: 81). It has a wider occurrence in Iraqi Arabic of legal article numbers functioning as nicknames or colloquialisms for certain criminals, with the number eventually achieving a meaning separate from the legal code. This term has undergone a re-lexicalization.

2. 6. Vocabulary of Social Phenomena

a- حشاش is a word that appeared in the Iraqi society from outside the country as a painful phenomenon to destroy the youth by having the hashish. Recently, this word has a new denotation referring to any unstable manner behaved by any individual. Furthermore, 'Tahshish' is derived from 'Hashash' to refer to the ability of using fragments of sentences in particular combination to cause laughter to the audience (Al-Bazi, 2006: 46). The ideology behind deriving 'Tahshish' from 'Hashash' is because those people, when they take hashish, use fragments of sentences and words so illogically that they cause laughter. This word is created by derivation process revealing relexicalization.

b- نكري (pickpocket) has a certain implicit ideology analogical to the act of birds' having food. The word is derived from the rapid movement of birds' beaks in picking up food, referring to the high speed in the movement of pickpockets in stealing things. It implies that those people do their theft so quickly that no one can notice (Al-Bazi, 2006: 48). Thus, this word is created by derivation undergoing relexicalization.

c- ورقة (paper) has two-poled newly-emerged meanings other than its original meaning as a white sheet used for putting down information. The first one is positive since it is an abbreviated reference to the currency used globally in financial transactions (100 dollar). The amount of 100 paper of 100 dollar equals 10000 dollar and it may be called 'شدة'. In the Iraqi context, it is called 'دفتر' resembling it to the 100-paper copybook used by students in school.

The second meaning is negative because it refers to the terrible situation when terrorists send a letter (paper) to threat a particular family or people and make them leave their place or possessions or make them carry out something (sometimes a bullet is enfolded within the letter referring to death threatening in case of resistance to achieve what is required or in case of informing authorities) (Jaber, 2012: 32). Thus, this word has undergone semantic shifting.

d- حاتة (Hatta) is a slang word in colloquial Iraqi language for a very young woman who is considered very beautiful and very attractive. Usually, teenagers and young women can be referred to as "" if they are around 15 to 25 years old and they wear a modern or fashionable style of clothing. Per linguistic research, the term is semantically opaque. This means that the meaning of the word cannot be inferred from the Arabic root or the lexical source of the word. It seems to be a fairly recent word creation in Iraqi Arabic and the origin of the word remains a mystery. Some academics claim that the word does not distinctly represent social or cultural values of the Iraqi community as other slang words that have clear semantic motivations do. In some Iraqi city where the urban language is spoken, the word (muzza) has been used to mean the same thing; Yet, "muzza" is mostly thought to be a borrowing from Egyptian Arabic and Egyptian media that is popular (Al-Khazaali, 2011: 62).

3. Methodology and Analysis

Halliday, 1978; Hock & Joseph, 2009; Fowler et al., 1979) stated units of analysis that serve the purpose of the current study due to their manipulation of new terms evolved to societies.

'Relexicalization', 'semantic shifting', and 'overlexicalization' are types of units of analysis that refer to the ways languages encode, alter, and highlight meaning through vocabulary. These terms are associated with different scholars in linguistics and discourse analysis

3. 1. Relexicalization

Roger Fowler and Gunther Kress with their colleagues in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) mainly developed the concept. In the book called "Language and Control" which was published in 1979, Fowler Kress, Hodge, and Trew talked about relexicalization as the process of changing vocabulary or inventing new ones to communicate a new ideology or point of view. The goal was to switch one lexical item (word, phrase, etc.) for another while keeping a similar underlying idea or function. It is more about alterations in the picks of vocabulary than the original meanings themselves. Sometimes it is a result of loanwords, language contacts, social changes, ideologies, or stylistic innovations. The meaning is preserved largely but the linguistic expression is different.

The analysis is important because it is a kind of language history that can help us understand social and political changes through the ways language itself changes. It is one of the tools for analyzing discourse and the development of language over time. In that case, the social role has not changed much, but the word form was changed.

Examples: "Stewardess" → "Flight attendant"

"Chairman" → "Chairperson"

3. 2. Semantic Shifting (Semantic Change)

Semantic shift study is actually much older than CDA. It remains an important topic that historical linguists have been discussing for a long time. Michel Breal is often credited with the initiation of systematic research on semantic change, as his work in the 19th century laid the foundations for semantics as a discipline.

It was in this work, *Essai de smantique: science des significations*, published in 1897, that the term "semantics" was first used. Semantic shift is the gradual transformation of a word's meaning as it is used over time. The main idea is that the meaning of a word may develop with time or in different contexts. The word form stays unchanged, but the meaning alters. It could include broadening or generalization, narrowing or restriction, amelioration or upgrading, pejoration or downgrading, metaphorical extension, etc.

As reasons for analysis, it indicates how ideas transform in a community of speakers. It is fundamental in historical semantics and cognitive linguistics.

Examples:

"Mouse" at first referred only to an animal; nowadays it can be a computer device as well.

"Awful" meant "inspiring awe" a long time ago; now it is mostly used as "very bad."

3. 3. Overlexicalization (or Overwording)

Roger Fowler and others too, in fact, drew from the ideas of M. A. K. Halliday. This phrase captures the occurrence of using an excessive number of nearly synonymous terms for a subject that is either given great ideological prominence or that is the locus of a dispute in a culture or discourse. It is, at its core, an excessive use of words or expressions to delineate a particular concept or domain. This shows that the culture, community, or discourse really focuses on that area of experience. Hence, a concept is given extra lexical distinctions than what would be thought normal.

Examples: Quite a few English words are used to denote the different stages or qualities of intoxication: drunk, tipsy, wasted, plastered, hammered, and so on. Professional jargons (law, medicine, computing) are highly specialized.

Analytical significance: Such cases point to cultural prominence, ideology, or social significance. Critical discourse analysis often leverages this to uncover the areas which constrain or value the society the most.

In One Sentence: 'Relexicalization' is basically a re-labeling exercise, 'Semantic shifting' is a change of meaning, and 'Overlexicalization' is when new words are created for different parts of a meaningful domain.

4. Results and Discussion

The abovementioned three categories show how Iraqi post-2003 political and social discourse changed words to code ideological positions. Here is what each one really means:

4.1. Relexicalization (coining new or repurposed terms to mark a distinct ideological worldview). These words form a special language for the group that contains hidden messages of judgment:

A- اجتثاث البعث (De-Ba'athification): The word "" (uprooting/eradication) is deliberately chosen instead of a neutral one to depict the process as a complete eradication, leading to make exclusion a policy.

B- الرافضة (Rafidha): A sectarian slur that redefines a religious group as if it were a "rejection". Because of this, hostility is coded into the very act of naming.

C- **الصحو** (Sahwa/Awakening): Gives a political armed struggle almost spiritual/salvation meaning making it positive and legitimate.

D- 56 (Sittah wa Khamsin – Fifty six): Example of street coinage characterizing opponents with negative descriptions by comparing them to criminals or deviants.

4.2. Semantic shifting (existing words retained but their meaning altered by context). Existing words are stripped of their old meaning and given new meaning:

a- (Democracy/Freedom): Are often figuratively used to mean disorder, foreign control, or sectarian quota politics instead of their ideal meanings depicting a state of disenchantment.

b- (Resistance): According to the speaker's loyalty it will mean either "legitimate struggle" or "terrorism"; in other words, the word itself is a battleground.

c- **ورقة / حواسم / نكري / حشاش / علاس / قفاص** : Simple and slang words used in everyday context being modified as labels of deception actors ; in particular **حواسم** which (before being linked to the "decisive" or final battle of 2003) has come to mean looted goods and looters, a powerful ironic counter to official discourse.

4. 3. Overlexicalization (the too frequent use or the repetition of the same word or related words to the same concept, either denoting fixation or dispute).

المحاصصة (Terrorism), الارهاب (Minorities); & الاقليات (Components) المكونات المليشيات (Sectarian Recognition); الاعتراف الطائفي (Sectarian Quota System) الطائفية (The Golden Squad), الفرقة الذهبية (Armed Factions), الفصائل المسلحة (The Militia), الحشد الشعبي (Popular Mobilization). The constant repetition and the strong emphasis of these words clearly reflect a deep ideological fear which is yet hidden.

Overall, language is not a neutral medium but a battlefield where naming, redefining, and over-emphasizing words matter a lot in constructing sectarian and political identities as is clearly visible by these three strategies together. Being not neutral, the new vocabulary of post-2003 Iraq is ideologically a battlefield through:

A- **Naturalizing and legitimizing institutions:** When non-state or sectarian actors are institutionalized by terms like المليشيات (Milicias), الحشد الشعبي (The popular Mobilization), الفرقة الذهبية (The Golden Squad), الفصائل المسلحة (The Armed Factions), المقاومة (Resistance), الصحو (Awakening), and قوات التحالف (Coalition Forces). The most crucial aspect of the analytical debate is whether or not it is appropriate to describe the national institutions by sectarian labels. For instance, the term قوات الشيعة (Shia forces) is often used to refer to the Iraqi army. Those who are against the use of “sect-coding” argue that labeling the army in this way is not just

a neutral description but a political one that delegitimizes the state. Calling an army “Shia forces” suggests that it is only the army of one sectarian community, which in turn leads to the denial of its national character and creates the justification for the alienation of other communities. The phrase delegitimizes and de-nationalizes the state, portraying the state as a party player rather than the national judge. This contrasts with the Western media attitude about never talking of the Israeli military as “Jewish forces”, despite the fact that Israel is explicitly a Jewish state. This choice of language will obviously have political judgments.

B- **Fragmenting & Constituting identity:** terms like الشيعة (a religious group) is shifted to الهوية الجعفرية (a political bloc). The new vocabulary (e. g., المكونات – components) helped create a sectarian worldview which turns a country into little pieces and through this way, sectarian division is not only made normal but is also seen as the natural order. In addition, الاقليات (Minorities), الطائفية السياسية (Political Sectarianism), المحاصصة (Quota System) reflect the new political and social realities to describe as power-sharing entities.

C- **Imposing:** Some vocabularies resulted from top-down political engineering (e. g., العملية السياسية - political process), while others have arisen from the grassroots of conflict (e. g., نقاط تفتيش checkpoints, controlling specific weapons or conditions).

D- **Legitimizing/de-legitimizing Factors:** Through choosing between المقاومة (Resistance) and الارهاب (Terrorism) to legitimize or criminalize resistance, the biggest ideological fight concerned who should be given the label of armed actors. Drowning the discourse in "الارهاب" serves to both justify security measures and delegitimize dissent. The US and later Iraqi government portrayed the use of force to the new order as the work of “terrorists” and “Al-Qa’eda”, thus making the conflict in Iraq part of the global “War on Terror”. Such a discourse aimed to discredit the opponents politically.

On the other hand, a large part of the Arab media and public opinion called these same people “Resistance Fighters”, legitimizing their actions as a national struggle against the foreign occupation. This duality “terrorist vs. resistance” was a major fault line in understanding the conflict.

الدستور الدائم (Permanent Constitution) reflects finality and legitimate order as compared to *Transitional Administrative Law* which preceded 2005. Finally, the terms ورقة / علاس / قفاص have the factor of illegitimate actions. From another standpoint, the terms التدخل الإيراني التركي (Iranian & Turkish Interference) and المجال الإيراني (Iranian Axis) describe the state’s losing sovereignty and national independence respectively, which is illegitimate according to international traditions of state patriotism.

E- **Shifting from ethnic to doctrinal sectarianism:** The post-2003 period brought about a radical change in the mode of expression of sectarian hatred. A

scholarly work by Fanar Haddad has extensively studied and demonstrated how the usage of the word عجم (Ajam- non-Arab or Persian) declined whereas the term رافضة (Rafidha- rejecters- a disparaging term used against Shi'a Muslims) increased.

F- Contesting the nature of the state: The vocabulary relating to the new political order reflected the challenge of defining the Iraqi state. المحاصصة الطائفية (the Sectarian Apportionment) was the main principle of vision through which the political field was viewed. The very word conjures images of a state organized on ethnic and sectarian quotas, a system that gave the power to politicians who persuaded the electorate on a communal basis. Gradually, political contention moved away from the محاصصة system as a whole to fighting over one's share in it, that is, from inter-sectarian (طائفية) to intra-sectarian (حزبية) competition.

The use of the term "State" as an honorific before the name of a prime minister (like "State Al-Sudani) was borrowed from Lebanese political culture. Its widespread and unquestioning use by the Iraqi media has been criticized as an effort to create the illusion of grandeur and stability at the expense of showing the true weakness and corruption of the institutions. This is a kind of "parrot media" that reproduces empty phrases without any reference of their basis in reality.

Moreover, deep ideological rifts are revealed through the counterpart or opposition of each new term (e. g., مقاومة – resistance vs. ارهاب – terrorism, الحشد الشعبي – popular Mobilization vs. ميليشيات – militias).

5. Conclusions

The study reveals that the subsequent political and societal upheavals in Iraq post-2003 were profoundly mirrored in the people's language. Politicians from various groups, mass media, and even common people coined new vocabularies through different manners like borrowing words from other languages, semantic shifts, and lexical enrichment.

These new terms not only depicted reality but also helped to shape people's views and identity. The study finds out that a lot of the terms that came into use after 2003 were actually quite handy for their users. To show us how Resistance/Terrorism, Popular Mobilization and Militias work as terms, the paper gives us an example of how different sides of the conflict used language to support themselves and undermine the other side. The same for the naming of groups and organizations. Actually, this is a very important factor in the construction of political authority and influencing public perceptions of state legitimacy.

Besides, the appearance and use of terms like' Components / Minorities / Sectarian Quota system / Political Sectarianism led to the break-up and reassembly

of collective identities. Increasingly, language depicted Iraq as a patchwork of sectarian and ethnic communities rather than a single nation. Consequently, communal divisions became the norm in political discourse.

More than that, the paper suggests that the forms of sectarian expression have changed as well. Labels that were mostly ethnic at first later incorporated doctrinal and religious differences as well, mirroring major ideological and political changes. Still, the terms of the new political order were also a battleground for citizenship, sovereignty, national identity, and the nature of the Iraqi state itself.

In fact, this study really highlights that language in Iraq after 2003 is very far from neutral. It is a kind of symbolic battlefield where words are cleverly made, changed in meaning, and reiterated to push a certain ideology. Because of this, these linguistic changes are not only interesting but are also a very important key to the power struggle, sectarian relations, and identity issues that are characterizing Iraq today.

As for what lies ahead, scholars may wish to look at how the use of such words is continuously changing in the media, political institutions, and everyday communication, and how the public's attitudes toward national unity and democratic development are being shaped by such interactions.

The above linguistic reconstruction mirrors and strengthens the intense ideological divisions, making the battle over words so much a part of the battle over the future of Iraq. Therefore, looking at this vocabulary through an ideological lens is crucial for understanding not only what happened in Iraq after 2003, but also how Iraqis experienced, interpreted, and continued to navigate the new- and often violent- meanings that were imposed on their national life.

To sum up, as an answer to the study question “What concept or reality do the new vocabularies try to label, de/legitimize?” , the new vocabularies that came into Iraqi community after 2003 were essentially the weapons used in the ideological warfare. Through the binaries of: Terrorism/Resistance, Occupation/Coalition, Popular Mobilization/Militias to the institutionalization of Muhasasa as well as the rise of sectarian hate speech with the term رافضة (Rafidha-rejecters), the language reflected and influenced the great changes, conflicts, and disputes over legitimacy that made up the new Iraq.

The “ideological analytical reference of terrorist vocabulary” in post-2003 Iraq was a highly controversial. It was a struggle to put reality into words. The American paradigm of a worldwide “War on Terrorism” collided with the regional

framework of a localized “War against Occupation”. The language used to convey the brutality was not merely reporting on the war. It was part and parcel of waging war.

Relevant to the study question “How does this battlefield of vocabulary reshape identity?”, the core of Iraq’s political structure since 2003 is to split power by community. Thus, the system of المحاصصة الطائفية (Muhasasa Ta’ifia,- Sectarian Apportionment) is the most dominant ideology in Iraq after 2003. It does not just assign seats, rather it defines how authority flows in the country. That is, no more unified nation under one banner, instead of one people sharing a common identity, the state organizes itself around the major ethno-sectarian groups of Sunni, Shi’a, and Kurds, etc. to split political power and state resources among them.

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