

# THE SEMANTIC CHANGE IN ENGLISH AND ARABIC: A CONTRASTIVE STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

Semantic change refers to the way in which the meaning of a word changes over long or short stretches of time. It can be internally or externally motivated. The equivalent to the paradigm in morphology is, in semantics, the word field in which words and their meanings stand in a network of relationships. The alteration of meaning occurs because words are constantly used and what is intended by speakers is not exactly the same each time. If a different intention for a word is shared by the speech community and becomes established in usage then a semantic change has occurred.

This study is divided into three sections, the first is devoted to semantic change in English, while the second is going to discuss it in Arabic; however, the third section will shed light on some samples chosen from the two languages to show how semantic change practically takes place across their history. The aim of this research is to state the stages of those two languages' development, types of semantic change, reasons and processes of word formation in each language. The following conclusions are shown:

1. Semantic change is, just like other types of linguistic change, continuous, not sudden but gradual and universal.
2. Gaps in the historical record between the identifiable stages called for the loss of the middle stage of Arabic, on the one hand, and produced the illusion of discontinuity between Anglo-Saxon and Middle English and between Middle English and Modern English, on the other hand.
3. Causes of semantic change are either linguistic or extra-linguistic.
4. As far as these two languages are concerned, they have passed different stages and were subject to different political and social factors, yet they have almost the same types.

## 1. Semantic Change in English :

### 1.1 A Brief History of English :

Gardiner (1919:7) states that the language which is called English was first brought to the north sea coasts of England in the 5th and 6th centuries A.D., by seafaring people from Denmark and the northwestern coasts of present day Germany and the Netherlands. These immigrants spoke a cluster of related dialects falling within the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family. Their language began to develop its own distinctive features in isolation from the continental Germanic language, and by 600 A.D. had developed into what linguists call Old English or Anglo Saxon.

The Danes who invaded England and settled there in the later 9th century, destroyed libraries and books of the Anglo – Saxon. What is known about it survives in writings such as Beowulf (Eckles, 2009 : 2).

Kemmer (2005 : 1) thinks that the Norman Invasion and Conquest of 1066 was a cataclysmic event that brought new rules and new cultural, social and linguistic influences to the British Isles. The Norman French ruling minority dominated the church, government, legal and educational systems for three centuries. The Norman establishment used French

and Latin , leaving English as the language of the illiterate and powerless majority . During this period England adopted thousands of words from Norman French and from Latin , and its grammar changed rather radically . By the end of that time , however , the aristocracy had adopted English as their language and the use of French gradually faded . There were different dialects in Old English , just as there in Modern English today . Each dialect changed over time , as languages are wont to do , and there were four main dialects in total : Mercian , Northumbrian , Kentish and West Saxon ; West Saxon was , arguably , the most enduring . Generally speaking , the dialect became the most commonly used for official documents .

The period from the conquest to the reemergence of English as a full – fledged literary language is called Middle English . Geoffrey Chaucer wrote his masterpiece , The Canterbury Tales , in Middle English in the late 1300s. McArthur (1998 :21) deals with the influence of French upon the lexicon , claiming that this influence continued throughout this period , the loss of some inflections and the reduction of others , many changes took place within the phonological and the grammatical systems of the language .

As far as the Modern English is concerned , linguists specially Kemmer (2005:4) and Hollmann (2007:52) believe that it extends from the sixteenth century to our own day . The first printing press in Britain at the end of 15th century and the arrival of printing marks represent the point at which the language began to take the first steps toward standardization and its eventual role as a national language . The period from 1500 to about 1650 is called Early Modern English , a period during which notable sound changes , syntactic changes and lexical enrichment took place . Word order becomes more fixed in a subject – verb – object pattern , and English developed a complex auxiliary verb system in addition to the rush of new vocabulary from the classical language were borrowed .

Shakespeare wrote prolifically during the late 1500s and early 1600s and by the 1700s almost all of the modern syntactic patterns of English were in place and the language is easily readable by modern speakers . Colonization of new territories by the newly United Kingdom of Great Britain spread English to the far corners of the globe and brought cargoes of still more loanwords from those farflung places . At this point English began to develop its major world dialectal varieties , some of which would develop into national standards for newly independent colonies . By the 21st century , as the language of international business , science and popular culture , English becomes the most important language on the planet . (ibid.)

## 1.2 Definitions

Sheard (1966 : 12) defines semantic change as the change in the meanings of words with the passage of time , it is the development and change of the semantic structure of a word which is always a source of qualitative and quantitative development of the vocabulary .

Generally , it is stated by Lyons (1981:179) that scholars are aware that language changes with time . They also know that many of the modern languages of Europe were descended from more ancient languages . For instance , as it has been mentioned above , English has developed out of Anglo – Saxon , and that what is now referred to as the Romance Languages French , Spanish and Italian all have their origin in Latin . However , until the principles of historical linguistics were established it was not realized that language – change is universal , Continuous and regular .

Semantic change is just as common as other types of change , phonological change , morphological change and syntactic change , English words have been changing their meaning for centuries , and words are still changing their meaning today . For instance , there

was a clear difference in meaning between uninterested and disinterested : the first meant ' apathetic ' , while the second meant ' having nothing to gain or lose from any outcome ' .( Trask , 1996 : 37 – 8 )

### 1.3 Semantic Change and Processes of Word Formation

New words are constantly coming into use , and not only new words , but also new pronunciations and even new grammatical forms . At the same time , old words , old forms and old pronunciations are gradually dropping out of use . Undoubtedly , the most conspicuous type of semantic change is the appearance of new words . For instance , acid house , chunnel , glasnost , floppy disc , laser , etc. These new words have been pouring into English throughout its history , and today the language is acquiring many new words every year . One of the major tasks faced by lexicographers in preparing new editions of their dictionaries is to collect the thousands of new words which have appeared since their last edition . ( Hollmann , 2007 : 15)

In fact , many different ways of acquiring such new words , some of them exceedingly common , others rather unusual . English gets new words by means of easily defined process employed by users of English . Such processes are listed as follows : ( Traugott , 1982 :121)

- A. Derivation** , The forming of new words by combining derivational affixes or bound bases with existing words , as in **deplane** and **teleplay** . ( ibid.)
- B. Invention** , The process in which the words are totally invented , for instance , **nylon** and **Kodak** . ( ibid.)
- C. Clipping** , The process in which a new word is formed by cutting off the beginning or the end of a word , or both leaving a part to stand for the whole , as in **math** and **mike** . ( ibid.)
- D. Blending** , The fusion of two words into one , usually the first of one word with the last part of another , as in **gasohol** , from **gasoline** and **alcohol** . ( ibid.)
- E. Acronymy** ,

A word is formed from the initials or beginning segments of a succession of words . For instance , NATO which refers to North Atlantic Treaty Organization .( ibid.)

#### **F. Borrowing** ,

It is added by Sheard ( 1966 : 43) that the simplest and most obvious source of all is the process of Borrowing . English has been a prodigious borrower of words from other languages throughout its history , and an ample number of borrowed words are now in it . This has come about through invasions , immigration , exploration and trade . English speakers have long been among the most enthusiastic borrowers of other people's words on earth . For instance , sherry from Spanish , Kangaroo from the Guugu – Yimidhirr , language of Australia , algebra from Arabic , etc.

#### **G. Combining :**

Another way of exploiting foreign languages is to pillage their vocabularies in order to extract morphemes which can then be imported and used as building blocks for constructing words in another language . Such building blocks are called Combining Forms , and English does this on a massive scale in order to create technical and scientific terms with combining forms extracted from Greek and Latin . Thus , Greek thermos ' heat , and metron ' measure , provide the combining forms for the word thermometer , literary ' heat – measure ' . (ibid. 44)

## 1.4 Types of Semantic Change

Stokwell and Minkova (2001:5) state that there are four basic types of semantic change:

### A. Generalization

It is the spread of meaning from a narrowing to a broader class of things . Here a word increases its range of meaning overtime . For instance , in Middle English *bridde* was a term for small bird , later the term *bird* came to be used in a general sense . Also the word *dog* once denoted only a particular type of canine , but now it is a generic term for all canines . (Trask , 1996 : 42 )

However , it is mentioned by Henning (1995:9) that generalization can be subclassified into three other types , they are Metonymy , Metaphorical extension and Radiation . The following discussion will deal with these types respectively :

Metonymy , is a figure of speech where one word is substituted for a related word ; the relationship might be to that of cause and effect , container and contained , or part and whole . For instance , the Greek word *doma* originally meant *roop* . In the same way English speakers metonymically use *roof* to mean *house* . (ibid.)

Metaphorical extension , As far as this type is concerned , it can be defined as the extension of meaning in a new direction through popular adoption of an originally metaphorical meaning . It is a transfer of name based on the association of similarity and thus is actually a hidden comparison . it presents a method of description which likens one thing to another by referring to it as if it were some other one . In addition to this , it may be based up on different types of similarity . For instance , similarity of shape ; *head of a cabbage* or the *teeth of a saw* . This similarity may also be based on a similarity of function , the transferred meaning is easily recognized from the context . For instance , *the key of a mystery* . The similarity may be supported by position . For instance , *foot of a page* , or a *behaviour and function* . For instance , *bookworm* and *wirepuller* . (ibid.)

Radiation , finally , radiation is defined by Henning ( 1995 : 11 ) as the metaphorical extension on a grander scale , with new meanings radiating from a central semantic core to embrace many related ideas . For instance , the words *heart* , *root* and *head* .

The latter which has many radiated meaning . Originally it refers to the part of the human body above the rest . Since the top of the nail , pin or screw is , like the human head , the top of a slim outline , that sense has become included in the meaning of *head* .

### Specialization or Narrowing

It is pointed out by Trask (1996 : 42 ) that specialization is the opposite of generalization . For instance , formerly *girl* meant ' a young person ( of either sex ) , but now it denotes only a young female person . The word *deer* once meant ' animal in general ' but can now be applied only to a cervine animal . The word *meat* meant food , ( as it still does in the archaic phrase ' *meat and drink* ' ) , but otherwise it now means only *flesh food* . Curiously , Specialization appears to be far more frequent than generalization .

### A. Shift

Stokwell and Minkova (2001:6) mention that shift occurs when the sense of a word expands and contracts , with the final focus of the meaning different from the original . Sometimes it is called *Shift in Markedness* , the marked element becomes unmarked and vice versa . Originally , a *jet* was a special type of airplane , marked item in the semantic sense , now it is the norm ( semantically unmarked ) and the *propeller machine* is regarded as the

special kind . Shift can be further divided into Amelioration , pejoration , semantic reversal and contronyms .

Amelioration , as far as this type is concerned , it refers to the improvement in the meaning of a word . The term nice is derived from Latin nescius , ignorant and came at the time of its borrowing from Old French to mean silly , simple and stupid , later developing a more positive meaning as pleasing and agreeable (ibid.) .

Pejoration , is the opposite of amelioration , it is the disapproval in the meaning of a word . The term Knave , meant originally (old English ) ' male servant ' from boy but deteriorated to the meaning of base or coarse person , having more or less died out and been replaced by boy Villain developed from inhabitant of a village to scoundrel . The word peasant is used now for someone who shows bad behavior as the word farmer has become the normal term . In official contexts , however , the term peasant is found for small and / or poor farmers .(Trask , 1996 :42)

- **Semantic reversal** , generally refers to the way in which a word shifts so far from its original meaning , that its meaning will nearly reverse . The word **manufacture** , originally meant **to make by hand** (Henning , 1995 : 14) .

- **Contronyms** , a contronym is like a word that has undergone semantic reversal , but here the word still preserves its original meaning , along with a contradictory meaning . For instance , the word **cleave** ( meaning ' **to split** or **separate** ' or ' **to adhere** or **cling** ' ) is actually two different words , both from the Old English , but by changes in pronunciation , these words have evolved the same current form . ( ibid.)

#### **B. Meaninglessness :**

The nadir of semantics is meaninglessness . The final semantic change or the death of meaning . For instance , the word sigor is Old English for ' victory' . It is now meaningless to almost all English speakers , except for those familiar with old English or with German . ( ibid. 15 )

### **1.5 Causes of Semantic Change :**

Traugott (1982:9) believes that the causes of semantic change may be grouped under two headings , linguistic and extralinguistic ones . The first group deals with changes due to the constant interdependence of vocabulary units in language and speech , such as differentiation between synonyms , changes taking place in connection with ellipsis and with fixed contexts and changes resulting from ambiguity in certain contexts . Semantic change due to the differentiation of synonyms is a gradual change observed in the course of language history . For instance , the word twist , in Old English , was a noun , meaning a rope , whereas the verb thrawan ( now throw ) meant both hurl and twist . Since the appearance , in the Middle English , of the verb twisten , the first verb lost its meaning . Fixed context may be regarded as another linguistic factor in semantic change , For instance , token , when brought into competition with the loan word sing , it became restricted in use to a number of set expressions such as love token , token of respect and so became specialized in meaning .

As far as ellipsis is concerned , the qualifying words of a frequent phrase may be omitted . For instance , Sale comes to be used for cut – price sale . Propose for to propose marriage and to be expecting for to be expecting a baby . On the vice versa , the kernel word of the phrase may seem redundant . For instance , minerals for mineral waters . Due to ellipsis starve which originally meant die came to substitute the whole phrase die of hunger or suffer from lack of food . ( ibid.10) .

It is stated by Sheard ( 1966 : 48 ) that the extralinguistic causes are determined by the social nature of the language , they are observed in changes of meaning resulting from the

development of the notion expressed and the thing named and by the appearance of new notions and things . In other words , extra linguistic causes of semantic change are connected with the development of the human mind as it moulds reality to conform with its needs . Languages are powerfully affected by social , political , economic , cultural and technical changes .

More commonly , however , three principles of semantic change are proposed by Trask ( 1996 : 38 ) , one of these is merely the occurrence of change in the world , for instance , the word tennis denoted a racquet – and – ball game played on an enclosed court . In the late nineteenth century , another racquet – and – ball game was invented which was played in an open grass court , and this was dubbed lawn tennis . Within few years , the new game had become vastly more popular than the old , and was quickly shortened to tennis . Today , any English speaker hearing the word tennis , immediately thinks of the new game , and he is obliged to use a new name real tennis to refer to the older one .

The second principle is change in the linguistic context . This includes the case of taboo . In English taboo subjects include sex , reproduction , excretion , death and human body , since taboos prohibit the use of plain language . Speakers are constantly forced to resort to euphemisms . These euphemisms are pushed into contexts in which they did not formerly occur , while older terms became relegated to undeniably vulgar contexts . (ibid.39)

The third principle is change resulting from Borrowing ( See 1.3 ) .

More interesting , perhaps , is the recent work of Traugott (1982 : 105 ) , in which three tendencies in semantic change are suggested , slightly reworded here :

Tendency I : external description of reality become internal descriptions of perceptions and evaluations . Cases like the semantic shift of boor ' farmer , to oaf illustrate this tendency , as does the observation that English feel which once meant only touch now denotes the perceptions of the person doing the touching . (ibid.)

Tendency II : external and internal description become textual meanings , that is , they acquire meanings that give overt structure to discourse . English while formerly meant only period of time , as it still does in cases like : ' wait for a while ' . But it eventually acquired the discourse function of the period of time (during which something happens ) as in : While my wife was a way , I lived on Pizza . Later still , it acquired the more abstract discourse function of although : while she's very talented , she's somewhat careless . ( ibid.106) .

Tendency III : meanings become increasing based in the speaker's subjective beliefs and attitudes . For instance , the word apparently originally meant ' openly in appearance . It then acquired a weak sense of evolution : ' to all appearances ' In the nineteenth century , it acquired the strong sense of evaluation of evidence which it now has , as in : she is apparently determined to pursue this . ( ibid.)

Indeed , what all three tendencies have in common is a movement a way from the external and the objective toward the discourse – internal and the subjective . These observations suggest that such movement is a pervasive force in semantic change (ibid.)

## 2. Semantic Change in Arabic

### 2.1 A Brief History of Arabic

On the basis of the detailed researches by زيدان (1969) and باقر (1980) and by applying the so called comparative method , that was developed in the classical period of historical linguistics between 1820s and 1870s , it was decided to divide the history of Arabic into two periods – Old Arabic ( the Old Akkadian language ) and Modern Arabic ( the Language of the Glorious Quran and the Standard Arabic of our days ) .

It is pointed by السامرائي (1987:31) that the transmission of Old Arabic into Modern was not sudden , but unfortunately , this language has lost so many stages of its development . However , it is difficult to argue about the identity of the Middle stage . The reason why such stage is lost is simply due to many extralinguistic factors ; the first relates to certain social points of view , that the Arabic life changed from the life of states and kingdoms into that of the small illiterate tribes which used to move from place to another looking for the grassy lands . The second factor relates to the political points of view , such as the long wars in the region , being subject to the different occupations for long stretches of time and the continuous delegation to the two great empires , at that period , Rome and Persia . Hence , the speakers in that mysterious stage , linguistically speaking , did not consume their chance to record what they spoke .

For these reasons the investigation of the Middle stage of Arabic has turned out into far more complex researches . باقر ( 1980 : 22 ) perceives that because of the gaps in the historical records between Akkadian and Arabic , work should tend to depend upon the precise linguistic excavation of the ancient texts to conclude information that is connected with different formulae of nouns and verbs , types of the sentence , the construction of the plural and the forms of inflections . Thus , it was only after a great deal of detailed work that scholars came to a better understanding of the relation between the Old stage and the Modern one .

As far as the Akkadian is concerned ; it is an old language that was spoken by people in Iraq , ( 2000 – 612 B.C. ) , in fact , linguists such , as زيدان ( 1696 :72 ) , base their assumptions that this language is the origin of the present Arabic for various reasons :

- 1-One of the most efficacious reasons is that Akkadian ketp الحركات الاعرابية , the Parse inflections : dhamma , fetha and kesra.
- 2- The order of the elements of the sentence was similar to that in Arabic . It starts with the verb , the verbal sentence الجملة الفعلية . However , after being affected by the Sumerian Language , will be discussed in some detail later , the verb was put at the end of the sentence , ( باقر , 1980 : 27 ) .
- 3-Similar to Arabic , in the sense that the compound words are rare .
- 4- The base of most of its verbs are triple , just like Arabic . ( ibid.)
- 5- In the Age of the City States عصر دول المدن and the Age of the Early Dynastic عصر فجر السلالات in Akkad , the capital of these kingdoms , the names of the famous kings were Arabic . For instance , Sharru - gina the Akkadian سرجون الاكدي , which meant the strong king , ( زيدان , 1969:54)
- 6-The Akkadian has been classified as the origin of Arabic because it kept the ancient Semitic sounds , الأصوات السامية , especially Throaty sounds أصوات الحلق such as /h/ هـ , ح , but this language was recorded by the Mysmaric Script الخط المسماري which lacked the suitable symbols to write these sounds down. ( باقر , 1980 : 28)

Some linguists , زيدان (1969:92) and السامرائي (1987 : 42 ) have argued for the investigation of the origin of Arabic by applying the comparative method , they point out that Arabic was descended from more ancient language and it had its origin in what is traditionally recognized as Semitic Family , whose best known members are Arabic , Hebrew and Syriac . To say that two or more languages belong to the same family is to say that there

are many related words across languages can be put into systematic correspondence in terms of their phonological and morphological features and in much of their vocabulary .

The following example brings together for comparison of the forms of the personal pronouns across the three Semitic languages intentioned above :

### Hebrew Syriac Arabic

انكي	إنا <sup>1</sup>	انا	I
أته	أنتَ	انتَ	You
ات	انتِ	انتِ	You
هوا	هو	هو	He
هيا	هي	هي	She
انخو	حنين	نحن	We
اتم	انتون	انتم	You
إين	انتين	اتن	You
هم	هنون	هم	They
هن	هنين	هن	They

(زيدان , 1969 : 115)

The classification of the Semitic languages that is given by باقر (1980 : 12 ) can be shown as follows :

(1) The Eastern languages includes Akkadian and its two dialects : Assyrian and Babylonian . Both, beside the Sumerian language , were used as the language of scholarship , administration and literature .

As far as the Sumerian language is concerned , it was spoken by people living in Iraq and represented the most ancient population in it . Their origin is unknown . Linguists failed to trace this language to any common family . Mysmaric script was used to record some

<sup>1</sup> The examples of Hebrew and Syriac have been written in the Arabic alphabet since the Hebrew and the Syriac are unavailable .

other languages , such as Akkadian , what is known about it survives in writings such as the Epic of Gelgamish . ( ibid.)

(2) The Western languages includes

- Al Kana'ania .

- Al Ammuria .

- Al Aramia , it has two dialects ; Syriac , which is the most important one among the others , since it is the language of the Bible , the old Testament , and the other dialect ; Kyldanic . However , both were spoken in the north part of Iraq and Bilad Al Sham . (ibid. 14)

-. Hebrew .

It is noticed by عبد التواب (1983 :72) that no precise attitudes are adopted to determine when Arabic , in its modern form , came into being or , when it came to be recognized as an independent language that could be used for literary purposes .

السامرائي (1987 :31) states that Arabic , known in our days is not totally different from the language of the age that preceded the emergence of Islam but the available sources lack any texts that show the starting point of Arabic in this form . He adds that it seems difficult to believe that this language started by the well written poems that were known as Al Mu'alaqat , since these poems give the reader such a high level of the excellent ability to express the different concrete and abstract senses . In this respect , انيس ( 1989 :53) sees that the perfect form of Modern Arabic is found only in the language of the Glorious Quran , especially that linguists , in the different ages , saved no efforts to study , search and analyze its language . In recent years , Arabic has been further accelerated by speed of international communication , since it has been appointed by UNESCO as one of the important international languages .

## 2.2 Definitions

According to عبد التواب (1983 : 110) semantic change refers to the way in which the meaning of a particular word changes over long or short stretches of time . Every language that is spoken continues to change not just century by century , but day by day . In fact , most people do not notice the language changing at all . On the basis of the fact that the list of words is definite , but the senses conveyed by these words are infinite it has been shown that the most spacious type of language change is the semantic one . Undoubtedly , this phenomenon is based on different linguistic and non – linguistic factors .

It is defined by باقر ( 1980 : 23 ) to express the way in which a particular word is traced during the passage of its history .

## 2.3 Semantic Change and The Processes of Word Formation

Arabic gets new words by means of definable processes employed by users of this language . It is to these that will be given the attention below :

Borrowing الاستعارة

Generally , السامرائي (1987:176) thinks that the Glorious Quran used so many strange words that were unknown even by the educated speakers . The truth of the matter is that the language of the Glorious Quran employed so many borrowed words from other old languages , especially Hebrew and Syriac . For instance , سَجِينٌ , تسنيم , and الرقيم , none of the linguists was able to give a literal translation to these words . They tended to explain their meaning according to the way the ayah , in which these words occur , was interpreted .

For 'الطور' , in

"ورفعنا فوقكم الطور..." (البقرة/ ٩٣)

...and caused the Mount to tower above you... ( P.14) 1

Linguists were confused by its meaning , until it was realized that it is a Syriac word meaning the mountain . Another word is 'الصراط' way it was hardly traced to its origin Latin, however , it entered the western Semantic language , Al Aramia , in the form of ' صراط , and from that was borrowed into Arabic . It has been used in the Glorious Quran in : ( السامرائي , 1987:177)

"الفاتحة ٦/ "اهدنا الصراط المستقيم"

( Show us the straight path ) (P.1)

In addition to these , there are , 'القسطاط , balance , 'الفردوس ' heaven, and الجن fairies, ( السامرائي , 1987 : 178 )

1. All the translations of the quranic instances suggested in this study are Pickthall 's (1996).

#### A. Production and Invention التوليد والاختراع

Words are totally produced to find their way into the common vocabulary . For instance , words that are known in the poetry of the ' Pauper , الصعاليك , such as ' سحالييل ' , the little hyena, صغار الضبع as in :

سودٌ سحالييلٌ كأنَّ جلودهم ثيابُ راهبٍ

(ibid.179)

#### B. Synthetic Words الكلمات الموضوعة والمصطنعة

This process refers to the words that were unknown before a particular occasion . However it is different from the previous one since the words formed here seem to be difficult to pronounce and very rare . For instance , المرطنق refers to a particular ' arch ' . ( ibid. )

#### C. Arabicization التعريب

It is a modern way , it refers to the formation of a common noun , a verb or an adjective from the name of a foreign term . Hence , a vast number of borrowed words are used by the Arabic speaker in his/her everyday language .For instance , theme , it has been noticed that the word is used as ثيمة which itself may be translated as موضوعة . ( انيس , 1989 :103)

#### D. Blending النحت

It is the fusion of a particular sentence into one word , in this sense the resulting word will stand for the whole . However , there is no clear rule to do so . ( زيدان , 1969 :105)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ for بِسْمَلَةَ

In the name of God the most Gracious and Merciful

لا آله الا الله for هيللة

There is no god but God ( ibid)

### 2.4 Types of Semantic Change

There are different types of semantic change which will be discussed presently :

**(1) Generalization** التعميم

In generalization the meaning of a word widens over the time . For instance البأس ' power , 'Pravery , was used to refer to the situation of ' war' but now it expresses strength and courage (انيس , 1989 :152)

**(2) Specialization** التخصص

In specialization the meaning of a word narrows over the time . For instance الحج hajj , pilgrimage was used to mean the travels to any place , but after Islam , it has only one particular meaning which is the intention to go to Kaaba .(ibid.)

**(3) Semantic Shift** التحول الدلالي

It refers to the way in which the sense of a word changes and differs from its original meaning . For instance , that shift which is based on similarity between two aspects , such as ' صوت عذب ' a nice voice ' 'عذب' is basically used with ' water to express its purity , thus , it is used with ' voice ' , in the expression above , to express its beauty . ( ibid. 154 )

Shift can be based on metaphor and the hidden comparison , such as ' شتاء ' 'winter' to refer to 'مطر' rain . (ibid.)

Here are more examples

الحائط , meant the orchard and now it means ' الجدار ' wall'

الصلاة ' prayer , the general invocation , but now it refers to that particular support of Islam.

السيارة ' car , previously , meant caravan as in : ( ibid.)

(يوسف/١٩)(..وجاءت سيارة فأرسلوا واردهم فأدلى دلوه...)

... and there came a caravan ,and they sent their water-drawer... ( P.237)

In this respect , عبد التواب(1983:116) mentions that amelioration and pejoration are two subdivisions of the semantic shift . For instance , قماش cloth had the reference to food or things that fall down on the ground , while now it means " the well woven textile " .

So the sense of this word has been improved or , ameliorated , however . The example that shows the sense of pejoration is ثور ox , this word had a respectable sense , since it referred to the god of power and courage . it was a matter of pride for a gentleman to be described as الثور , while now , any Arab person can recognize the negative indication of this word,(ibid.)

**2.5 Causes of Semantic Change**

Several theories have been adopted to deal with semantic change in the course of time . Scholars , like انيس ( 1989: 172) classify the factors of this type of linguistic change as intentional and non-intentional . For the intentional factors , on the one hand , the changes are applied when the linguistic conventions or the scientific institutions intend to change a particular term and to prescribe another one to indicate a particular sense . The non – intentional factors , on the other , can be considered differently . However , it is عبد التواب (1983 :111 ) who classifies the none – intentional factors into linguistic and extralinguistic .As far as the linguistic factors are concerned , it has been stated that the ambiguous context and misunderstanding are two of the most general factors of semantic change . Hence , they call for the use of the term in the wrong way . There are certain situations in which a word is

heard for the first time , therefore , the hearer tries to elucidate the whole sentence indirectly depending upon the context . For instance , مدقع Severe is especially used in a particular context such as 'الفقر المدقع' , 'severe poverty' . However, البخل المدقع , 'severe miserliness ' or المرض المدقع , ' Severe sickness ' are unacceptable .

Generally, the extralinguistic causes are connected with the social , cultural and political development. This , for instance, includes certain indecent terms connected with sex and human body , or these terms refer to death and diseases . For instance, sometimes people tend to keep away from uttering the word سرطان cancer by saying that disease , ذلك المرض (ibid. 112)

### 3. The Analysis of Historic Text Samples .

#### 3.1 The English Samples

The first sample is taken from the first lines of the Epic Poem Beowulf .

Old English :

- {1} Hwæt! We Gar – Dena in gear – dagum ,
- {2} Ðeod – cyninga – Þrym gefrunon ,
- {3} hu ða & þelingas ellen fremedom

A semi – fluent translation in Modern English has been given by Earle (2005 : 12 )

Lo! We have heard amajecty of the spear – Danes , of those nation – kings in the days of yore , and how those noblemen promoted Zeal .

First of all , there are three unfamiliar letters in the passage . These letters were used by the Anglo – Saxon scribes but later dropped out of use . (Ð) ' thorn , and ( ð ) ' eth , were used to write the sounds spelled ' th , in ' think , and then , . However ash (&) used to spell the vowel sound in ' cat , ( ibid. )

One is to notice how What is used by the poet where a word like Lo or behold would be expected , both express a surprise and represent a call to attention . The following list gives the meaning of some words used by the Poet :

Cyninga ~ king

Gar ~ spear

Ðeod ~ native people

hu ~ how

ð a ~ those

&þelingas ≈ nobleman (ibid.)

Generally , the following words have their origin in Old English

that ~ Þ&t	one ~ an
here ~ her	two ~ twa
there ~ Þ&r	three ~ þrie
I ~ ic	four ~ feo wer
mine ~ min	five ~ fif
you ~ Þu	six ~ syx , six
he ~ he	seven ~ seofon , syo fn
she ~ heo	eight ~ eahta

it ~ hit her ~ hire his ~ his	nine ~ nigon ten ~ tien , tyn
-------------------------------------	----------------------------------

(ibid.14)

Middle English :

Here is a passage from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales , published in the Fourteen Century . The letter thorn is still in use here , (Baugh and Cable , 1993 : 271 ) .

A yong man whilom called Melibeus myghty and riche bigat vp on his wif , Pt called was prudence a doghter , which P1 called was sophie . Vpon a day bifel P1 he for his desport is went into the feeldes hym to pleye . His wif & eek his doghter , hath he laft inwith his hous , of which the dores weren faste yshette . There of his olde foos , han it espied , & setten ladders to the walles of his hous , and by wyndowes ben entred , & betten his wif , & wounded his doghter with fyue mortal wounders in fyue soudry places . This is to seyn , in hir feet , in hir hands , in hir erys , in hir nose and in hir mouth , and leften hir for deed & wenten a wey .

The reader can cope with such unfamiliar spellings as yong , riche , feeldes , pleye , thre and dores . Only a few of Chaucer's words are now unfamiliar : Whilom ' formerly , or here ' perhaps ' , Once upon a time , in with ' inside , and eek , also , while desport is now simply sport . The verbs bigat ' begat , and bifel ' befell , are now rather archaic . (ibid.273)

- **Early Modern English**

By the time of Jhon Milton and William Shakespeare , the language had become clearly recognizable as modern English . Even if the reader has not read any piece which belongs to this period , however , he can understand almost all of it with little difficulty . The following sample is taken from Paradise Lost by Milton , 1667 : ( Earle , 2005 : 25 )

Of man's first disobedience , and the fruit  
of that forbidden tree , whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world , and all our woe ,  
with loss of Eden , till one greater man  
Restore us , and regain the blissful seat  
sing , Heavenly . Muse , that on the secret top .

In this respect , it can be shown that the main difference between Early Modern English and Late Modern English is vocabulary . However , the latter has many more words , rising from two principle factors : firstly , the industrial revolution and technology created a need for new words ; second , the British Empire at its height covered one quarter of the Earth's surface , and the English language adopted foreign words from many countries . (ibid.)

- **Late Modern English :**

The form of English here , presents the English we use now , which can be easily understood . Here is a sample from Oliver Twist 1838 , by Charles Dickens , (ibid.)

The evening arrived , the boys took their places ; the master in his cook's uniform stationed himself at the copper ; his pauper assistants ranged themselves behind him , the gruel was served out , and along grace was said over the short commons . The gruel disappeared , the boys whispered each other and winked at Oliver .

### 3.2 The Arabic Samples

- **The Old Arabic**

As far as the Arabic samples are concerned , the history of old Arabic provides some examples of analyzing words that have roots in the Akkadian Language :

### 1. Names of the Months :

Akkadian	Arabic	English
كيسليمو	كانون	January
شباطو	شباط	February
أدارو	آذار	March
نيسانو	نيسان	April
آيارو	آيار	May
سيوان	حزيران	June
تموزو	تموز	July
آبو	آب	August
اولولو	ايلول	September
تشرينو	تشرين	October

### 2. A short text has been chosen from a message sent to the King Shelmenser the third , in the Third Century B.C. ,

" إنشي گم – مالي شاشراني عربي كاليشينو "

گمالي means الجمال , the camels ,

شاشراني means ملوك , the kings ,

عربي refers to العرب , Arab ,

كاليشينو refers to كلهم ' all of them ,

However , the translation will be as follows :

" جمال ملوك العروب " أو " جمال الملوك العرب كافة "

The camels of all the Arab kings ( باقر , 1980 : 62)

### 3. Three lines that are taken from a famous poem written in Akkadian by anonymous poet :

اليماء الى تيلاني لا بروتي إتالاك

آمور گلکلیتی آرکوتی او بانوتی

آیو بیل لیموتی آیو بیل یوساتی

The meaning of some words will be given in the following list .

الیمما أعلُ go up

ألی علی Over

آرکوتی المتأخرین the late people

بانوتی الماضین the past people or the ancestors

أو و And

گلکلیتی جماجم Skulls

(ibid : 73 )

The singular of the word گلکلیتی is کلتو , it basically refers to القلعة which means the ' top of every thing , for instance , the human body , the following translation is suggested to the whole three lines given above .

أعلُ فوق الاطلال القديمة وتمشَ علیها

وأنظر الی جماجم المتأخرین والماضین

فایهم الاشرار وایهم الصالحون

Go up over the ancient remains and walk on them ,  
Look at the skulls of the past and the late people ,  
Which of them are the evil and which of them are the good ?

(ibid.)

#### 4. The fourth sample will be represented by a list of different words chosen from different texts and obelisks

A) حنطة - wheat – أظتو

This word is basically حنطیتو , but it is noticed that the word gradually lost the sound ' حاء ' since this throat sound is not available in the Mysunatic script ( see 2.1. above ) , the following example shows the same idea .

B) قیمو - wheat – قمح

At the beginning it was ' فمحو ' , but the loss of ' الحاء ' is also noticed .  
( ibid . 74)

C) شلاطو , شلطو and شلطي all refer to سلطان Sultan

Here , an important point is to be clarified , which is the phenomenon of the exchange of sounds between the relative languages , in which the ' ش , /ʃ/ is changed into ' س , /s/ as in the example above . (ibid . 101 )

The same point is going to be reflexed in the following example :

#### D) سفينة – سببنتو ship

This word shows how the /p/ is changed , by the passage of time , into /f/ .

Also there is the word ' رصبو ' which means ' رصيف ' pavement , in which the Akkadian sound /p/ was changed into the Arabic ف /f/ . ( ibid . 90 )

### •Modern Arabic :

As it was mentioned before , the Modern Arabic is that form that is used in our everyday language and the perfect form of which is shown in the language of the Glorious Quran that seems clear to most of the Arab .

( الحمد لله رب العالمين .الرحمن الرحيم ) ( الفاتحة ( ١-٢ )

(Praise be to Allah , Lord of the Worlds. The Beneficent , the Merciful) (P.1)

### CONCLUSIONS

The meaning of a word can change in the course of time ,such transfer of the meaning is called semantic change or semantic shift. Changes of lexical meanings can be proved by comparing contexts of different times . Investigators of changes in meaning have established a set of semantic types , such as generalization , in which the meaning and reference of a word widen over the years (pigeon once meant a young dove and now means all members of the family columbae ) ,and specialization ,in which the meaning of a word narrows over the years (deer once meant any four –legged beast and now means only members of the family cervidae ) , shift and semantic reversal are considered as the additional types of semantic change.

The causes of this phenomenon are either extra-linguistic or linguistic .For instance , the change of the lexical meaning of the noun pen was due to extra –linguistic causes . Primarily , pen comes back to the Latin word penna ,a feather of a bird ., As people wrote with goose pens the name was transferred to steel pens , which were later on used for writing .On the other hand , causes can be linguistic. For instance ,the meaning of a word can change due to ellipsis , and new words can be added due to borrowing ,combining ,clipping , and blending .

The study infers that the two languages are similar ,it was because of the similarity in the general classification of types and causes of semantic change in English and Arabic .Thus ,it is concluded that this linguistic phenomenon is universal . A valuable point is added in this respect , that the transformation of one stage of a language into another is not sudden , but gradual ,that is why linguists of both languages tend to divide the history of each into identifiable stages. The other point to be made here is that the gaps in the historical record between the main stages is the reason behind the loss of the middle stage in Arabic , and the production of illusion of discontinuity between the three stages of English.

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### الخلاصة

#### التطور الدلالي في اللغتين الانكليزية والعربية دراسة مقارنة

- يشير التطور الدلالي إلى الظاهرة التي يتغير فيها معنى الكلمة خلال فترة قصيرة او طويلة من الزمن . تعد هذه الظاهرة ظاهرة تغير لغوي دارجة شأنها شأن بقية ظواهر التغير اللغوي الأخرى مثل التغير التركيبي .ان ما يكافئ سلسلة الصيغ الصرفية في علم الصرف هو نطاق الكلمة في علم الدلالة،حيث ان الكلمات ومعانيها تكون موجودة داخل شبكة من العلاقات يعزى سبب التغير في المعنى الى عملية استخدام الكلمات من قبل افراد المجتمع اللغوي الواحد ،حيث ان مايقصده احد المتكلمين قد لا يكون مطابقا تماما لمتكلم آخر ، وعليه اذا تم استخدام المقصد المختلف من قبل اكثر افراد ذلك المجتمع وتم تثبيبت الاصطلاح الجديد وتداوله بشكل مستمر يكون التطور الدلالي قد حدث .  
 تقسم هذه الدراسة الى ثلاثة اقسام ،يكرس القسم الاول لمعالجة التطور الدلالي في اللغة الانكليزية بينما يناقش الثاني هذه الظاهرة في اللغة العربية وتكون مهمة القسم الثالث تسليط الضوء على نماذج من النصوص المختارة من اللغتين لمعرفة كيفية حدوث التطور الدلالي عبر تأريخ كل من اللغتين بشكل عملي .  
 يتلخص هدف البحث في تحديد مراحل التطور في اللغتين بالإضافة الى تعيين انواع واسباب الظاهرة المذكورة وكذلك ابرز عمليات تكوين الكلمات الجديدة في الأنكليزية والعربية . يمكن لهذه الدراسة ان تشير الى الاستنتاجات الاتية :  
 ١ . ان ظاهرة التطور الدلالي هي ظاهرة مستمرة وتدرجية و شاملة .  
 ٢ . ان الفجوات الحاصلة في عملية التوثيق التاريخي بين مراحل التطور المعروفة للغتين ادت الى ضياع المرحلة المتوسطة بالنسبة للغة العربية وفي نفس الوقت الى فكرة عدم الاستمرارية بين الانكليزية القديمة والوسطى من جهة والانكليزية الوسطى والحديثة من جهة اخرى .  
 ٣ . ان اسباب التطور الدلالي اما ان تكون لغوية او غير لغوية .  
 ٤ . مر كل من هاتين اللغتين بمراحل معينة ،وتأثر كل منهما بعوامل سياسية واجتماعية مختلفة ولكن على الرغم من ذلك فإن لكل منهما الأنواع ذاتها .