Semantic Change-Induced Misunderstanding in the Qurʔân and Ḥadîth

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Abstract

This study explores misunderstanding that results from the semantic change of some Qurʔânic and Prophetic words via investigating the causes and types of that change. Besides, theories that best account for this phenomenon such as the prototype theory, the referential theory, and the theory of qualia have been discussed and multimodality has been proposed as a therapeutic approach that may rectify the misconceptions caused by semantic change. To conduct this study, the various usages and meanings of some misunderstood words of the Glorious Qurʔân and Noble Ḥadîth have been examined and compared with the modern usages to show how far the change has affected the perception of the religious texts and flag its potential repercussions in the long run. The study has revealed that the causes that led to the semantic change are either linguistic such as calque, false friends, polysemous and homonymous overlapping, or extralinguistic like the loss, change, or development of the possible referents and the prototypes of these words. As for the types of change such as restriction, degeneration, and elevation, they are the most frequent and significantly contribute to widening the gap between the classical and contemporary meaning of such words that may have the Muslim layperson partially or fully misunderstand them. The study has also found that the semantic change is remarkably high in nouns and verbs. In the end, a conclusion has been drawn and some recommendations have been made regarding the words under discussion.

Keywords: Semantic change, Classical and Modern Arabic, Qurʔân, Ḥadîth.

الالتباس الناتج عن التغير الدلالي في القرآن الكريم والأحاديث النبوية

مستخلص الدراسة

عادل رفعت محفوظ
مدرس اللغويات
قسم اللغة الإنجليزية
كلية الألسن
جامعة المنيا

تستهدف الدراسة تبيان أثر التغير الدلالي في فهم عامة المسلمين لبعض آي القرآن الكريم والأحاديث النبوية. من أجل ذلك، دون الباحث بعض الآيات القرآنية والأحاديث النبوية التي تحتوي على بعض تلك الكلمات -التي ناقش بعض العامة في معانيها من خلال التواصل المباشر والملاحظة الدقيقة - وذلك لتحليلها تحليلًا لغويا منهجيًا من حيث رصد الظاهرة ووصفها وتحري أسبابها واستخلاص نتائجها وذلك من خلال بعض النظريات مثل نظرية "الكيفيات المحسوسة" والتي توضح كيف أن العامة يتوهمون أحاسيس غير موجودة نتيجة لفهمهم الخاطئ لبعض الأفعال الواردة في بعض الآيات مثل "لمس" و"قطع" و "أسف" وكذلك نظرية "النموذج" حيث أدى اختلاف النموذج الذي تشير إليه المفردة قديما وحديثا إلى وقوع اللبس وقد يثور اللبس أيضا لدى العامة من تغير "المرجع" الذي تشير إليه اللفظة قديما وحديثا. وأقترح الباحث تطبيق مفهوم "الأنماط المتعددة" في شرح وتفسير الآيات التي تحتوي على كلمات ذات دلالات حسية لتجنب اللبس. كما بينت الدراسة نوع التغير الدلالي الذي طرأ على كل كلمة من كلمات الدراسة وكان "لتخصيص الدلالة " القدح المُعَلى وهناك أيضا "رقي الدلالة" وهناك أيضا "انحطاط الدلالة" مثل "عصابة" و"عامل". و"تعميم الدلالة" لتسمية بعض الاختراعات الجديدة و"انتقال الدلالة عن طريق المجاز كلفظة "كافر" أما عن أسباب فشو تلك الظاهرة في عامة المسلمين فيمكن إرجاعها لأسباب لغوية وأخرى غير لغوية كالتطور الاجتماعي والتقني والاقتصادي أما الأسباب اللغوية فهي تجسيد الأسباب غير اللغوية فالنسخ من اللغات الأجنبية وشيوع حقل دلالي معين للمفردة الواحدة وحلول المتشابه اللفظي مكان اللفظة الأصلية وانتشار بعض المترادفات الزائفة في اللهجة المصرية. وأوصت الدراسة بتبيين تلك الفروق عن طريق توزيع مسرد وعلى يد المعلمين والوعاظ.

الكلمات الرئيسة: التغير الدلالي، اللغة العربية الفصحى والحديثة، القرآن، الحديث

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Introduction

As a matter of fact, language is an embodiment of the zeitgeist of a particular era. In turn, language, as Bowan (1969) simply puts it, "is constantly subject to semantic change, for there is no such thing as the fixed meaning of a word. Meaning is determined by usage, and usage may vary from individual to individual, from group to group, from generation to generation" (p.1).

In the same vein, Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Vanhove & Koch (2007) state that "the lexicon of a language is, of course, a dynamic and constantly changing complex structure where new words emerge, old words disappear or change in one or another way" (p.159). One of the immediate consequences of semantic change is lexical ambiguity. It arises, as Bowan (1969) claims, because the listener/reader's perception of the different senses of a word will be affected to some degree by the time and place in which they live.

The question is: How could today's ordinary speakers understand a fourteen centuries' old text considering that meaning is a sine qua none of understanding a piece of language?

Muslim clerics, Arabic linguists, and Arabic educators may not find it difficult to understand the ancient religious texts because they can easily differentiate between the early and later senses of words without consulting dictionaries. This study, thus, is chiefly concerned with the impact of the semantic change on the non-specialists' understanding of the texts of the two holy sources, viz., the Glorious Qurʔân and Noble Ḥadîth.

It is worth noting that the semantic problems that the translators of the Qurʔân or the foreign

audience may face during handling the Islamic texts fall out of the scope of this study because many studies have been done suggesting solutions or recommending specific meanings for such issues. This study, therefore, is targeting the Egyptian layperson who is left befuddled when the Qurʔânic verses and Prophetic Ḥadîth are blurrily understood due to the lack of linguistic knowledge and religious culture.

One might argue against this study claiming that it is based on delusion as dictionaries provide speakers of a particular language with the different senses of words listed in alphabetical order as entries and they represent the encoded resources of form and meaning of lexis that speakers acquire and use unconsciously. Moreover, the structure of the sentence may have the layperson rethink the bewildering words.

One can refute this claim when we know that Arabic dictionaries are rarely consulted by the layperson who individually experiences the different entries when they are in use. Furthermore, the responses that the researcher received from the laypersons when the words under study were discussed with them are a vivid example of how speakers develop words over time and reload them with new meanings and then interpret old texts according to the new usages. In some cases, grammar, and anaphora can assist well-educated Muslims to reject the blurred proposition of sentences and have them consult their dictionaries for the correct meaning of words that raise confusion. Unfortunately, the layperson cannot benefit from that due to the lack of linguistic knowledge.

The question now is: What linguistic theories can account for the semantic change and its impact on the layperson's apprehension of the religious texts? The semantic change that affected the words under discussion can be accounted for via some semantic and cognitive theories as it is various, graded, and multidimensional.

The researcher claims that the theory of qualia may adequately describe the mental state of the

layperson when dealing with a religious text that contains any of the words of the study as qualia, as defined in *the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, "are the subjective or qualitative properties of experiences." Pustejovsky (1995) argues that qualia are thought to give "aspects" or "faces" (viz., different ways of seeing a specific object).

According to Tye (2021), the term "quale" was first introduced into philosophy by C.S. Peirce in 1866. In 1929, C.I. Lewis linked the term with the sense-datum theory.

The term 'qualia', as Tye (2021) states, "is restricted to sensory experiences by definition, while on other occasions it is allowed that if thoughts and other such cognitive states have phenomenal character, then they also have qualia." Tye (2021) lists four mental states that have qualia which are:

a) Perceptual experiences such as seeing green, hearing loud trumpets, tasting licorice, smelling the sea air, and handling a piece of fur.

b) Bodily sensations like feeling a twinge of pain, feeling an itch, having a stomachache, feeling hot, feeling dizzy.

c) Felt reactions or passions or emotions, for example, feeling delighted, lust, fear, love, feeling grief, jealousy, or regret.

d) Felt moods, for example, feeling elated, depressed, calm, bored, tense, or miserable.

Moreover, according to Tye (2021), Strawson (1994) included other mental states on the list as he claimed that "there are such things as the *experience* of understanding a sentence, the *experience* of suddenly thinking of something, of suddenly remembering something, and so on" (p. 78).

As a result of the long-established misinterpretation of some words in the religious texts based on individual and subjective experience, when some noun phrases or verbs in a Qurʔânic verse or Ḥadîth are heard or recited, the layperson is subjected to a different mental image-like

representation of the state of affairs of those noun phrases or the meaning of the verbs. For example, when they hear words such as *jânn*, *qaṣrun mashîd, ʔazwâj,* or *maṣâniç*, they think of different states of affairs. Moreover, when he or she hears the derivative of the verb *ʔâsifa,* they imagine different moods and emotions of the speaker and when they hear or read the restricted meaning of the verbs *yaqatç* and *yalmas,* a different bodily sensation is conceived. This difference, one claims, occurs because the introspection, the way they constitute beliefs about their mental states, has not been compared to the beliefs of other Muslims to be proven true or false. Furthermore, as stated in *the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, "the beliefs that we acquire through introspection seem epistemically special […] an individual's introspective belief is said to be *incorrigible* when no one else can have grounds for correcting it; an individual's introspective belief is said to be *indubitable* when she herself can have no grounds for rejecting it."

This means that the subjective understanding, feelings, emotions, moods, and experiences that strike the laypersons' minds when they read or hear these words prove that the laypersons' mental states have qualia.

One thinks that the introspection that forms the layperson's beliefs is based on the incorrect physical and non-physical inputs resulting from the semantic change. These incorrect inputs, one might argue, are either modified or new states of affairs. So, when the layperson hears or reads a predicate that designates a set of states of affairs, he or she picks out the one that is most frequently used. In other words, the layperson narrows the spectrum of the potential states of affairs.

Since states of affairs, as Pollock (1984) claims, "contain objects as direct constituents" (p.53), the layperson thinks of the representation of the new states of affairs that the words under study signal. The representation may be new or modified properties of the nuclear predication. This

means that reference, which is, as defined by Hurford, Heasley& Smith (2007), "a relationship between part of an utterance and a thing in the world" (p.60), has altered due to the semantic change of the predicating expressions embedded in the utterance. Accordingly, two different universes of discourse have been created. Hurford, Heasley& Smith (2007) define the universe of discourse for any utterance as "the particular world, real or imaginary (or part real, part imaginary), that the speaker assumes he is talking about at the time" (p.62).

For instance, words such as *kâfir* lit. *farmer, Al çafu* lit. *surplus,* and *jaib* lit. *bosom,* when introduced in a religious text, would not be perceived within the same universe of discourse. If two participants, one is a specialist and the other is a layperson, discuss a religious text that contains any of these words, they will be talking about two different worlds, and this leads to communication breakdown as they are assuming two different entities.

One claims that the prototype theory could give a plausible explanation for why the layperson might assume different objects when the words under study are read. According to the prototype theory, in a normal situation, one understands that in uttering *computer,* for example, one is not referring to *a boy watching a movie* because the speaker retains in his mind a connection between the expression and its potential referent. In the case of semantic change, one may ascribe the layperson's misunderstanding of some words in religious texts to the gap that exists between the reference and sense of those words. In other words, there is a misconnection between the expression and its potential referent either due to polysemous overlapping of the first or the modification of the latter. The intensions of *qaṣrun mashîd, jaib, çâmil,* and *maṣâniç,* for instance, which are the all-inclusive concepts of *qaṣrun mashîd, jaib, çâmil,* and *maṣâniç* do not accord with their extensions, i. e., the real infinite number of examples of *qaṣrun mashîd, jaib, çâmil,* and *maṣâniç*. The intension-extension disagreement, one claims, occurs because some examples are more central than others in the layperson's

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mind. This salient position of some examples of the same category, which are the most typical of the kind of the extension of an expression, can be interpreted via the prototype theory developed by psychologist Eleanor Rosch in 1971. According to this theory, any specific concept in any language has an actual instance, viz., *a prototype* that best denotes this concept. This prototype, however, is variable according to time, place, and culture even among the speakers of the same language who use words of shared prototypes. Hurford, Heasley& Smith (2007) explain that in English-speaking countries, as a one-language community, "there are problems with this idea of prototype, due to cultural differences between various English-speaking communities" (p.88). If time is added to culture, the situation will get worse. The prototypes of the seventh-century *qaṣrun mashîd* and *çâmil* in Arabia, for instance, are completely different from the prototypes of the twenty-first *qaṣrun mashîd* and *çâmil* in Egypt. Thus, one can argue that the prototype variability, namely, the elevation of the former and the degeneration of the latter is that which causes confusion. To avoid such confusion, the prototype of a predicate should be understood in the frame of its spatial and temporal context in order to retain the original capture of the expression. This can be attained by defining concrete predicates ostensively to the layperson. In other words, the multimodality notion here could be a remedial technique that may help illuminate the vague meaning of the words that have been affected by the semantic change. According to Adami (2017), "multimodality is a concept [that] accounts for the different resources used in communication to express meaning." (p. 454) It focuses on the combination between different modes such as images and written/spoken language. The multimodal representation of concrete nouns helps the layperson understand the words that have undergone a semantic change. Books of hermeneutics and textbooks of religion courses could be equipped with images to disambiguate words that refer to physical entities such as *jânn* lit. *snake, sayyâra* lit. *caravan, jaib* lit. *bosom.* Moreover, this

approach preserves the spatial, temporal, and sociocultural domains of such words. An image of a fourteenth-century years old palace located in Arabia is different from other palaces located in ancient Egypt or Rome and totally different from today's palaces. Images of the prototypical professions such as farmers and governors can easily eliminate the confusion that *kâfir* and *çâmil* may raise.

Statement of the problem

The Glorious Qurʔân and Noble Prophetic Ḥadîth are of great importance to Muslims as they constitute their faith. Consequently, a perfect understanding of the religious texts is the path to perfect faith. These two sources of guidance and faith have been introduced in a lofty language and the wording of these texts has never altered since the emergence of Islam. Thus, knowing Classical Arabic, particularly words, is the mainstay of understanding the old Islamic texts. However, the meaning of some words, which the holy texts are composed of, has partially or totally changed over time. Due to the paucity of linguistic knowledge, particularly semantics, the Muslim layperson interprets the religious texts according to the modern usage of those words. As a result, they either misunderstand or partially comprehend the propositional content of the text because, as Neiloufar (2008) states, "the meaning of the whole is motivated by the meaning of the parts" (p.159).

Review of the literature

In 2016, Mirhaji & Ghanbari conducted a study in Arabic on the semantic change of three Qurʔânic words, i.e., *tasbîḥ* lit. *praising*, *khushûç* lit. *reverence*, and *rasûl* lit. *messenger.* The researchers made a comparison between the different meanings of the three selected words in the Glorious Qurʔân and in the pre-Islam era to prove that the Glorious Qurʔân did not use new words but new hues of meaning were added to some words that the pre-Islam Arabs used in their poetry and daily communications. They concluded that extension and restriction are the

types of semantic change that influenced *tasbîḥ* lit. *praising* and *khushûç* lit. *reverence.* As for the meaning of *rasûl* lit. *messenger*, the Glorious Qurʔân has elevated it.

Most research on the semantic change in the Glorious Qurʔân has focused on the linguistic problems that the translators of the Qurʔân and *foreign* readers might encounter. In other words, the foci are on how they can determine the correct meaning of the polysemous words. For instance, in 2012, Kenevisi, Sharifabad & Sepora tackled the ambiguity in the Glorious Qurʔân and its English translations. In their study, they classified the various types of ambiguities such as phonological, lexico-semantic, and conjugational structural ambiguities. Then they assessed and criticized the strategies employed in translating the ambiguous verses. In the end, they opined that "there are many linguistic ambiguous verses in the Holy Qur'ān that may cause a trouble for a translator" (p.345).

In the same vein, Sadiq (2008) conducted a study on some semantic, stylistic, and cultural problems of translating the Glorious Qurʔân. In his study, he gave some examples from the Glorious Qurʔân and attempted to find solutions for such issues. He used four different translations for his study as "the Glorious Qurʔân examples necessitate offering different translations of their meanings" (p.37). He concluded that the semantic problems "need much readings on semantics and etymology so as the translator can overcome them. Most of these problems, especially semantic change, are not clear-cut ones. So, they may drag the inexperienced translator to mistranslate and, hence, miscommunicate" (p.54).

Unluckily, after trawling through many pieces of research, studies, and books on the semantic change that measure the ability of the Muslim layperson to understand the religious texts, one could find no similar topics.

The objectives of the study

a) To provide a systematic analysis of and an account for the semantic change of some Qurʔânic

and Prophetic words.

b) To sound the bell that many Muslims cannot understand some Qurʔânic verses and Prophetic

Ḥadîth due to semantic change.

c) To avoid the potential pitfalls of misunderstanding religious texts.

d) To fill a lacuna in the field and open the doors for further intensive studies.

Questions of the study

The study attempts to address the following questions

a) What are the causes that led to the semantic change of the words under discussion?

b) To what extent does semantic change impede the understanding of Islamic texts?

c) What types of semantic change do greatly affect the understanding of Islamic texts?

d) What type of speakers are affected by that semantic change?

e) Which part of speech is most affected by the semantic change?

Data collection and methodology

To collect the data for this study some ambiguous words, whose meanings have drastically

changed, have been traced and collected from the Glorious Qurʔân and Noble Prophetic Ḥadîth.

The basis upon which these words have been chosen is scrutiny and the incorrect interpretations

given by some laypersons during immediate contact with them. The Qurʔânic verses or the

Prophetic Ḥadîth in which these words are introduced have been written in Arabic first, then

transliterated, and finally followed by an English translation. The translation of the Glorious

Qurʔân adopted in this study is that of Muhammad Taqiud-Din Al-Hilali and Muhsin Khan.

The earlier and later usages of each word have been analyzed and the type of change that

rendered the text ambiguous has been shown. It is worth mentioning that these words are a

mere sample for the study.

Analysis

Qurʔânic nouns

/Al ҫafu/العفو/old usage: beyond one's needs, surplus, erosion, pardoning or forgiveness of

sins by Allah. Modern usage: pardoning or forgiveness of sins by Allah.

"surplus" and "forgiveness" are homonymous whereas "erosion" and "forgiveness" are

polysemous in Arabic. However, the word has been restricted in Modern Standard Arabic to

the religious meaning, i.e., forgiveness. So, wherever the word *ҫafu* is mentioned, particularly

if the context is religious, the layperson interprets the word according to its religious meaning.

(وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ) (سورة البقرة: الآية 219)

Wa yasʔalûnaka mâthâ yunfiqûna qulil ҫafu (Sûrat Al-Baqarah, verse 219)

"And they ask you what they ought to spend. Say: "That which is beyond your needs.""

/Jânn/جان/ old usage: snake or jinn. Modern usage: jinn only.

(فَلَمَّا رَءَاهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَأَنَّهَا جَآنٌّ وَلَّىٰ مُدْبِرًا وَلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ) (سورة النمل: الآية 10)

Falammâ raʔâhâ tahttazu kaʔnnahâ jânnun wallâ mudbiran wa lam yuҫaqqib. (Sûrat An-

Naml, verse 10)

"But when he saw it moving as if it were a snake, he turned in flight, and did not look back"

The loss of one of the two meanings, along with the frightening atmosphere depicted by the

verse that can apply to the two meanings, i.e., snake and jinn, makes the layperson think of the

meaning of the word as jinn, not a snake. The two referents of the referring expression *jânn*

neatly fit the description made by the combination of predicates included in it. In other words,

the misunderstanding of the verse, one claims, occurred owning to a referent shift in the

layperson's mind. Syntactically speaking, one notices that the verb phrase cannot alone

determine the nature of the agent. Moreover, it gives rise to subject alternation possibilities.

/Qaṣrun mashîd/قصر مشيد/old usage: High stone-walled building tiled with gypsum. Modern

usage: Luxurious palace.

(فَكَأَيِّنْ مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ فَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا وَبِئْرٍ مُعَطَّلَةٍ وَقَصْرٍ مَشِيدٍ)(سورة الحج: الآية45)

Fakaʔaiyin min qaryatin ʔahlaknâhâ wa hiya thâlimatun fahiya khâwiatun çalâ çurûshihâ wabiʔrin muçaṭṭalatin wa qaṣrin mashîd. (Sûrat Al- Ḥajj, verse 45)

"And many a township did We destroy while it was given to wrong-doing, so that it lies in ruins (up to this day), and (many) a deserted well and lofty castle"

Although the core meaning is implied in the two usages, the prototypes of the old and modern usages are greatly different. In other words, due to elevation, when the layperson hears or reads *qaṣrin mashîd*, he or she recalls the modern prototype of a palace.

/ʔasaf /أسف/old usage: sadness or anger. Modern usage: feeling sorry, regret, an expression of apology, and an expression of angry refusal.

"ʔasaf" is a noun derived from the triliteral verb root "ʔasifa" lit. *he felt sorry, he got angry* and *ʔâsif* is an adjective derived from the same root. Although these two meanings are stated in the different Arabic dictionaries, they are rendered archaic because they are neither used in Modern Standard Arabic nor Colloquial Egyptian Arabic. One cannot confirm when the loss occurred or when the new meanings of the word emerged. One might claim that misunderstanding might occur because the meaning of the word *ʔasaf* has been filled with different calqued meanings. In the verses below, the meaning of the word is *sad* or *angry* according to the context.

(وَتَوَلَّىٰ عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَا أَسَفَىٰ عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ وَابْيَضَّتْ عَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ) (سورة يوسف: الآية 84)

Wa tawallâ çanhum wa qâla yâ ʔsafâ çalâ Yûsufa wa biyaḍḍat çaynâhu min al ḥuzni fa huwa kathîm (Sûrat Yûsuf, verse 84)

"And he turned away them and said, "O, how sorrowful am I for Yûsuf! And his eyes whitened with grief that he was constantly repressed (with sorrow)."

(فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَفْسَكَ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ إِنْ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا) (سورة الكهف: الآية 6)

Falaçallaka bâkhiçun nafsaka çala âthârihim ʔin lam yuʔmimû bihâthal ḥadîthi ʔsafâ (Sûrat Al-Kahf, verse 6)

"Perhaps, you would kill yourself (O Muhammad) in grief, over their footsteps (for their turning away from you), because they believe not in this narration (the Qur'ân)"

(فَرَجَعَ مُوسَىٰ إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ أَسِفًا) (سورة طه: الآية 86)

Farajaça Mûsâ ʔilâ qawmihî ghaḍbâna ʔsifâ (Sûrat Ṭâ-Hâ, verse 86)

"Then Mûsâ (Moses) returned to his people in a state of anger and sorrow"

(فَلَمَّا آسَفُونا انْتَقَمْنا مِنْهُمْ فَأَغْرَقْناهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ) (سورة الزخرف: الآية 55)

Falammâ âsafûna intaqamnâ minhum faʔghraqnâhum ʔjmaçîn (Sûrat Az-Zukhruf, verse 55)

"So, when they angered Us, We punished them, and drowned them all."

The original meanings of the word are lost in modern usage. The word has been reloaded with new meanings. Some of these new meanings, as the table below shows, are English calques. It goes without saying that, as Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Vanhove & Koch (2007) claim, "the lexicons of most languages show different layers of origin with many words coming from "outside" – as direct loans, loan translations, etc." (p.161). The negative side of claque is that it may replace the original meaning and lead to misunderstanding of the Islamic texts. The table below shows the different old and new uses of the word and how the layperson and the specialists might feel when he or she hears utterances that contain the word *ʔâsif*.

Table (1): Different uses of âsif/sorry in Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic

Old and new meanings of ʔâsif	Classical Arabic	Modern usage
Used to show sadness آسف لوفاة أبيك.	√	X

Âsifun liwafâti ʔbîka. I'm sorry to hear about your father.		
Used to show anger آسف لتجاهل شكواي Âsifun litajâhuli shakwây I am angry that my complaint is not heeded	√	X
Used to show apology آسف على التأخير يا دكتور. Âsifun çala ʔattaʔkhîri ya doktûr. I'm sorry for being late, doctor.	X	√
Used to show politeness when refusing آسف، لا أستطيع فعل ذلك Âsifun lâ ʔstaṯîçu fiçla thâlika I'm sorry. I can't do that.	X	√
Used to show regret آسفة جدا على كل دقيقة قضيتها معك. Âsifatun giddan çala kulli daqîqatin qaḍaytuha maçka. I'm so sorry for every single moment I spent with you.	X	√
Used to show angry refusal	X	√

تريدني أن أسامحك بعد كل ما فعلت؟ آسف جدا. Turîdunî ʔan ʔusâmiḥaka baҫda kulli ma faҫalta? Âsifun giddan! Do you want me to pardon you after all what you have done? Never ever!		
Used to show the feeling of pity or sympathy أنا آسف، يا له من حظ سيء ʔna âsifun. Yâ lahu min ḥathin saiyiʔin I am sorry. What a bad luck!	X	√

/*ʔazwâj*/أزواج/*old usage: peers, companions, or spouses. Modern usage: husbands only.*

This word is polysemous, but modern usage restricted it to mean husbands.

(احْشُرُوا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَأَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ) (سورة الصافات: الآية 22)

Uḥshuru al-lathîna thalamû wa-ʔazwâjahum wamâ kânû yaҫbudûn (Sûrat Aṣ-Ṣâfât, verse 22)

"Assemble those who did wrong, together with their companions (from the devils) and what they used to worship."

According to this restriction, the layperson might think that husbands are meant in the verse above. This misinterpretation contradicts the divine rule '*no bearer of burden will bear the burden of another*'.

/*Khiṣâm*/خصام/*old usage: dispute. Modern usage: estrangement (mainly slang).*

(أَوَمَنْ يُنَشَّأُ فِي الْحِلْيَةِ وَهُوَ فِي الْخِصَامِ غَيْرُ مُبِينٍ) (سورة الزخرف: الآية 18)

Awa man yunash-shaʔu fil-ḥilyati wa-huwa fil-khiṣâmi ghayru mubîn (Sûrat Az-Zukhruf, verse 18)

"(Like they then for Allah) a creature who is brought up in adornments (wearing silk and gold ornaments, i.e., women), and who in dispute cannot make herself clear?"

One thinks that this word has been broadened in Egyptian Arabic to include *hajr* lit. *estrangement* as it is a potential outcome of a dispute. However, the loss of the original meaning of the word triggered the slang meaning, which has been deviated from the original, to replace it. As a result, the propositional content of the whole verse is negatively affected by this replacement.

/Kâfir/ كافر/old usage: unbeliever/peasant or tiller. Modern usage: unbeliever only.

This word is polysemous as the origin of the two meanings is the triliteral verb *kafara* lit. *he covered*; the farmer covers seeds with soil and the unbeliever covers Allah's oneness with paganism. That is to say, the specialized meaning is derived from the literal meaning of *kâfir*. Although the literal and figurative meanings of the word were simultaneously used in the early Islamic era, Arabs had clear intuitions that helped them recognize the various senses of the word.

But in modern times, the literal meaning was lost and the figurative/specialized one survived so when the word is heard, the specialized meaning immediately is activated in the modern Muslim layperson's mind. What worsens the situation is that the literal meaning in the verse below is used in a religious context.

(كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ ٱلْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُه) (سورة الحديد: الآية 20)

Ka-mathali ghaythin ʔçjaba al-kuffâra nabâtuh (Sûrat Al-Ḥadîd, verse 20)

"(It is as) the likeness of vegetation after rain, thereof the growth is pleasing to the tillers"

/Maṣâniç/ مصانع/ old usage: luxurious palaces. Modern usage: factories.

(وَتَتَّخِذُونَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُونَ) (سورة الشعراء: الآية 129)

Wa tattakhithûna maṣâniça laçallakum takhludûn (Sûrat Ash-Shuçarâʔ, verse 129)

"And do you get for yourselves places (fine buildings) as if you will live therein forever?"

Although the word refers to different types of buildings, the disappearance of the Qurʔânic usage of the word above in the secular writings gave way to the most frequent calqued meaning, i.e., factories to replace it. As a result, there are two potential referents for the word.

/Sayyâra/سيارة/ old usage: a caravan of travelers. Modern usage: a vehicle.

(وَجَاءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ فَأَرْسَلُواْ وَارِدَهُمْ فَأَدْلَىٰ دَلْوَهُ) (سورة يوسف: الآية 19)

Wa-jâʔat sayyâratun fa-ʔarsalû wâridahum fa-ʔadlâ dalwahu (Sûrat Yûsuf, verse 19)

"And there came a caravan of travelers and they sent their water-drawer, and he let down his bucket (into the well)."

The word *sayyâra* lit. *car* has been modeled after the word *sayyâra* lit. *caravan of travelers* because, as Vicente (2018) claims, "lexical words encode atomic concepts" (p.3). In other words, both of them move, used in traveling and carrying goods. Syntactically speaking, although the third-person pronoun "they" in *they sent their water-drawer,* which is an anaphor of the caravan of travelers, can help disambiguate the meaning resulting from the modern usage replacement of the word *sayyâra,* the feminine third-person inflectional morpheme [-t] in the one-place predicator *jâʔat* lit. *it cam*e, which is a co-predicative verb used with the two hues of the meaning of the argument *sayyâra ,i.e., car and the caravan of travelers,* makes the layperson think of the modern usage. Moreover, the frequent use of the modern usage of the word, which has been extended by the lexicographers due to the similar semantic domain of the old usage, and the loss of the old meaning, make the layperson tend to interpret it as *car*. This is because, one claims, when these noun phrases are extended to cover new states of affairs, the old and new states of affairs are referred to by the same noun phrase. Consequently, when one of the states of affairs is abandoned or lost, the noun phrase refers to the survived state of affairs. One claims that this word has undergone some types of change, i.e., *extension*

to cover the new state of affairs, i.e., car and *restriction* due to the *elevation* of the prototype of

the original.

/Jaib/ جيب /old usage: bosom. Modern usage: pocket.

(وَأَدْخِلْ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ) (سورة النمل: الآية 12)

"wa-ʔadkhil yadaka fî jaibika takhruj bayḍâʔa min ghayri sûʔ" (Sûrat An-Naml, verse 12)

"And put your hand into your bosom, it will come forth white without hurt."

Although any relatively long opening in garments is called *jaib*, it has been restricted to *pocket*

in modern usage. In addition to the abandonment of the old usage, the unlimited nature of the

verb senses in the verse above, which are used with the two meanings of the word *jaib*, makes

the layperson understand the verse according to the modern usage of the word, i.e., *Moses put*

his hand into his pocket.

/Rabb/ رب / The Lord, caregiver, sponsor, owner, sustainer. Modern usage: head of the

family (when used with the word family), employer (when used with the word work).

(وَقَالَ لِلَّذِي ظَنَّ أَنَّهُ نَاجٍ مِنْهُمَا اذْكُرْنِي عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ فَأَنْسَاهُ الشَّيْطَانُ ذِكْرَ رَبِّهِ فَلَبِثَ فِي السِّجْنِ بِضْعَ سِنِينَ) (سورة يوسف: الآية 42)

Wa qâla lillathî thanna ʔannahu nâjin minhuma ʔuthkurnî çinda rabbika fa-ʔansâhu ash-

shaiṯânu thikra rabbihi fa-labitha fis-sijni biḍça sinîn (Sûrat Yûsuf, verse 42)

"And he said to the one whom he knew to be saved: "Mention me to your lord (i.e., your king,

so as to get me out of prison)." But the *Shaiṯân* (Satan) made him forget to mention it to his

lord. So (Joseph) stayed in prison a few (more) years."

As the different meanings of the word suggest, one might claim the word is polysemous.

However, the different meanings of the word have been restricted to mean *The Lord*, *the head*

of the family, or the employer. But since the context in which the word is introduced is religious,

rabb lit. *The Lord* "Allah" may strike the audience's mind and confusion may arise.

/Şalawât/ صلوات old usage: synagogues or prayers. Modern usage: Prayers.

(وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ لَّهُدِّمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذْكَرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا) (سورة الحج: الآية 40)

Wa lawlâ dafuʕu Allâhi ʔannâsa baʕdahum bibaʕdin lahuddimat ṣawâmiʕu wa biyaʕun wa ṣalawâtun wa masâjidu yuthkaru fîhâ issmu Allâhî kathîrâ (Sûrat Al- Ḥajj, verse 40)

"For had it not been that Allâh checks one set of people by means of another, monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, wherein the Name of Allâh is mentioned much would surely have been pulled down."

Although the four words in the verse above refer to the houses of worship of the heavenly religions' followers, the word *ṣalawât* lit. *synagogues* may raise confusion because it is homonymous with the word *ṣalawât* lit. *prayers*. One may argue that the homonymous overlapping occurred because *ṣalawât* lit. *synagogues* is never used in Modern Standard Arabic and its hypernym *maʕâbid* lit. *temples* is used instead. Syntactically speaking, Spalek (2015) argues that "these changes in the semantic type of the theme argument contribute very decisively to influencing a change in the meaning of the overall result of the verb phrase" (p.39). The change of the meaning of *ṣalawât* from a concrete noun phrase *synagogues that is the physical entity that receives the action destruction* to an abstract noun phrase *prayers* led to the change of the state of *yahdim* lit. *pull down* verb phrase from a verb that denotes an action that causes a change in the physical state of an entity to a verb that describes the end of an activity, i.e., *to abolish.*

/Qurûn/ قرون old usage: generations, horns, bods. Modern usage: centuries, horns, bods.

(قَالَ فَمَا بَالُ الْقُرُونِ الْأُولَى) (سورة طه: الآية51)

Qâla famâ bâlul qurûni alʔûla (Sûrat Ṭâ-Hâ, verse 51)

"Firʕaun (Pharaoh) said: What about the generations of the old?"

According to the specialty and educational level of the listeners/readers, three different meanings are activated in the minds of three different types of Muslims; illiterate people might understand *qurûn* as horns or bods, non-specialists may interpret it as centuries, and Arabic linguists and clerics perceive it as generations. This varied understanding of the word, one claims, results from the loss of *qurûn* lit. *generations* and the utilization of the term in the word-for-word translation of *centuries*. One thinks that *qurûn* lit. *centuries* has not been used in early Arabic. The Glorious Qurʔân and Noble Ḥadîth use *a hundred years* in lieu. In the verse below, for instance, '*a hundred years*' is used twice.

(أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا قَالَ أَنَّى يُحْيِي هَذِهِ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا فَأَمَاتَهُ اللَّهُ مِائَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهُ قَالَ كَمْ لَبِثْتَ قَالَ لَبِثْتُ يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ قَالَ بَلْ لَبِثْتَ مِائَةَ عَامٍ) (سورة البقرة: الآية 259)

ʔaw ka-allathi marra ςlâ qaryatin wa-hiya khâwiyatun ςlâ ςurûshihâ qâla ʔannâ yuḥyî hâthihi il-lâhu baςda mawtihâ fa-ʔamâtahu Allâhu miʔata ςâmin thumma baςathahu qâla kamm labithta qâla labithtu yawaman ʔaw baςda yawmin qâla bal labithta miʔata ςâm (Sûrat Al-Baqarah, verse 259)

"Or like the one who passed by a town while it had tumbled over its roofs. He said, "Oh! How will Allâh ever bring it to life after its death?" So Allâh caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him up (again). He said, "How long did you remain (dead)?" He (the man) said, "(Perhaps) I remained (dead) a day or a part of a day". He said, "Nay, you have remained dead for a hundred years."

/jawârî/جوار/old usage: ships. Modern usage: Female slaves. /ʔςlâm/أعلام/ old usage: mountains. Modern usage: flags.

(وَلَهُ الْجَوَارِ الْمُنْشَآتُ فِي الْبَحْرِ كَالْأَعْلَامِ) (سورة الرحمن: الآية 24)

Wa-lahu al-jawârî al-munshaʔâtu fil-baḥri kal ʔaςlâm (Sûrat Ar-Raḥmân, verse 42)

"And his are the ships going and coming in the seas, like mountains."

Misunderstanding occurs because *jawârî* lit. *ships* and *ʔaçlâm* lit. *mountains* are rarely used in Modern Standard Arabic. On the other hand, their homonyms *jawârî* lit. *female slaves* and *ʔaçlâm* lit. *flags* are frequently used. The layperson might interpret the verse as *"female slaves are like flags"*

Qurʔânic adverbs

/Rijâl/جال/old usage: men or pedestrians. Modern usage: men only.

The similar plurality of the word *rijâl* lit. *pedestrians* rendered it homonymous with the word *rijâl* lit. *men*. Although the word *rijâl* in the verse below is used as an adverb of manner and it occupies the slot of an adverb, there is still potential for confusion to arise because most laypersons chiefly depend on the lexical meaning in understanding the verse, not grammar or syntax.

(وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَى كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ) (سورة الحج: الآية 27)

Wa-ʔath-thin fin-nâsi bi-lḥajji yaʔtûka rijâlan wa-çalâ kulli ḍâmir (Sûrat Al- Ḥajj, verse 27)

"And proclaim to mankind the *Ḥajj* (pilgrimage). They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel."

/Qâʔilûn/ قائلون lit. nap takers, sayers.

(وَكَم مِّن قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا فَجَاءَهَا بَأْسُنَا بَيَاتًا أَوْ هُمْ قَائِلُونَ) (سورة الأعراف: الآية 4)

Wa kam min qaryatin ʔhlaknâhâ fajâʔha baʔsunâ bayâtan ʔaw hum qâʔilûn (Sûrat Al-ʔaçrâf, verse 4)

"And a great number of towns (their population) We destroyed (for their crimes). Our torment came upon them (suddenly) by night or while they were taking their midday nap"

Although the noun *qailûla* lit. *nap* is used in Modern Standard Arabic, the active participle *qâʔil* lit. *nap taker* is rarely used. As a result, its homonym substitutes it. The syntactic order of the verse does not help disambiguate the phrase because both meanings can occupy the slot

of the adverb of manner.

Qurʔânic verbs

There has been a heated debate amongst linguists about verb meaning since the meaning of a verb, as Spalek (2015) claims, "determines the range of situations in the world that it can be used to describe" (p.36).

Semantic change has a profound effect on verbs because verbs, which act as predicators in declarative sentences, make the main contribution to the sentence meaning. In other words, when the predicators, which describe the state in which the arguments are involved, have different senses, the layperson might pick out the sense that he or she knows and in such a case the whole sentence is misunderstood.

Moreover, confusion increases when the verb acts as a predicator for the old and new meaning of the argument which means that the sentence could be construed in either of the two ways. Thus, the incorrect interpterion of the verbs below ruins the propositional content of the entire sentence because, as Spalek (2015) states that

> each predicate places type presuppositions on its arguments, which makes the predication much more restricted than in the normal setting and which allows non-consistent semantic type applications to be ruled out without assuming any meaning postulates. Verbs, for example, are not interpreted over one single domain of entities but rather can be functions over any variety of subdomains. (p.49)

/Yaqataʕ/يقطع/ old usage: To slightly cut or cut off. Modern usage: To cut off.

(فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ أَرْسَلَتْ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مُتَّكَأً وَآتَتْ كُلَّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِّنْهُنَّ سِكِّينًا وَقَالَتِ اخْرُجْ عَلَيْهِنَّ ۖ فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُ أَكْبَرْنَهُ وَقَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا هَٰذَا بَشَرًا إِنْ هَٰذَا إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ) (سورة يوسف: الآية 31)

Falammâ samiçatt bimakrihinna ʔarsalat ilayhinna waʔaçtadat lahunna mutakaʔan wa-âtat

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kulla wâḥidatin minhunna sikkînan waqâlat ʔukhrujj çalayhinna falamma raʔainanhu ʔakbarnnahu wa-qaṭṭaçna ʔaidyahunna wa-qulna ḥâshâ lilâhi mâ hâthâ basharan ʔin hâthâ ʔilla malakun karîm (Sûrat Yûsuf, verse 31)

"So, when she heard of their accusation, she sent for them and prepared a banquet for them; she gave each one of them a knife (to cut the foodstuff with), and she said [to Joseph]: "Come out before them." Then, when they saw him, they exalted him (at his beauty) and (in their astonishment) cut their hands. They said: "How perfect is Allâh (or Allâh forbid)! No man is this! This is none other than a noble angel!""

The verse hints that some refreshments were catered for the social gathering hosted by Al-çazîz's wife and while they were cutting food with knives, Joseph's stunning beauty had them unconsciously injure their hands. Since food was not directly mentioned in the verse, the layperson might think that the *knives were* given to the guests to cut off their hands with. Though the verb *qaṭaça* can denote cutting off a whole organ of the body, a gash, or a minor cut of the skin, the semantic domain of the verb has been restricted to mean *to cut off* in Modern Standard Arabic. As for the other shade of meaning, i.e., *to cut*, its synonym *yajraḥ* lit. *to wound* is used instead. Moreover, the use of the verb as *to cut off* in the Qurʔânic verse below,

(وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوا أَيْدِيَهُمَا جَزَاءً بِمَا كَسَبَا) (سورة المائدة: الآية 38)

Was-sâriqu was-sâriqatu faqaṭaçû ʔaidiahuma jazâʔan bimâ kasabâ (Sûrat Al-Mâʔidah, verse 38)

"And (as for) the male thief and the female thief, cut off (from the wrist joint) their (right) hands as recompense for that which they committed.", made the layperson certain that the verb has one meaning, i.e., *to cut off*.

Vicente (2018) describes this situation as follows:

It has been observed that lexical words do not always contribute with the same

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conceptual meaning to propositional constructions. In some cases, this is because the word is overtly context-sensitive. For instance, an adjective such as *tall* will express a different conceptual meaning when the standard of tallness is placed at one point of the scale of height than when it is placed at another point. But in many other cases, words are not overtly context-sensitive, and yet they fail to express the same conceptual meaning on all occasions. For instance, the word *mouth* can denote the whole mouth, its outside part, a part of its inside part, its whole inside part, an aperture (such as in *the mouth of the cave*), the part of the river that opens into an ocean (*river mouth*), a whole person (*I have two mouths to feed*), a person who speaks too much (*big mouth*), etc. (p.1)

/Jâbu/جابو/ old usage: They hewed out. Modern usage: (Mainly slang) they brought.

(وَثَمُودَ الَّذِينَ جَابُوا الصَّخْرَ بِالْوَادِ) (سورة الفجر: الآية 9)

Wa-thamûda al-lathîna jâbû ṣṣakhra bil-wâd (Sûrat Al-Fajr, verse 9)

"And (with) Thamûd (people), who hewed out rocks in the valley (to make dwellings)?"

The literal meaning of the word, i.e., *to disconnect the integrity of physical entities with a tool* is no longer used in Modern Standard Arabic. As a result of the absence of the original meaning of the verb, the Egyptian Arabic false friend which means *to bring* is used by the layperson to fill the gap. Moreover, the effect of the argument on the interpretation of the verb phrase is obvious, i.e., the argument, as a physical entity, can be cut, carried, and brought from one place to another, namely, the misinterpretation of the verse above is a manifestation of the interaction between the false sense of *jâbu* lit. *they brought,* and the rich lexical information given by *aṣṣakhr* lit. *rocks.*

/Yalamas /يلمس/ old usage: To seek or touch. Modern usage: to touch only.

(وَأَنَّا لَمَسْنَا السَّمَاءَ فَوَجَدْنَاهَا مُلِئَتْ حَرَسًا شَدِيدًا وَشُهُبًا) (سورة الجن: الآية 8)

Wa-ʔannâ lamasna assamâʔa fawajadnâhâ muliʔat ḥarasan shadîdan wa shuhuba (Sûrat Aj-Jinn, verse 8)

"And we have sought to reach the heaven; but found it filled with stern guards and flaming fires."

In Modern Standard Arabic the variant *iltamasa* is used for the verb *seek*. As a result, the layperson erroneously believes that the verb here means *to touch*. This incorrect understanding is also furthered by the verb-object combination, i.e., the rich meaning of the verb *lamasa* as predicator and its argument *assamâʔa*.

/Yathunnu/يظن old usage: To feel doubt, be unsure, or be certain. Modern usage: To feel doubt.

Although the two verses below describe the belief of two different types of people, the same verb is used in the two cases because it is a contronym. Early Muslims, as well as clerics and specialists, could easily differentiate between the two opposite meanings.

(إِنَّهُ ظَنَّ أَن لَّن يَحُورَ) (سورة الانشقاق: الآية 14)

ʔinnahu thanna ʔan lan yaḥûr (Sûrat Al-ʔinshiqâq, verse 14)

"Verily, he thought that he would never come back (to Us)."

(الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُم مُّلَٰقُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رَٰجِعُونَ) (سورة البقرة: الآية 46)

Allathîna ythnnûna ʔannahum mulâqû rabbihim wa-ʔannahum ʔilayhi râjiçûn (Sûrat Al-Baqarah, verse 46)

"(They are those) who are certain that they are going to meet their Lord, and that to Him they are going to return"

In modern usage, one of the features that forms the meaning of *yathunnu* has faded away. As a result, the remaining feature is used to interpret the verses in which the verb is stated.

/Yusâhim/ يساهم old usage: to throw lots. Modern usage: to contribute.

(فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ ٱلْمُدْحَضِينَ) (سورة الصافات: الآية 141)

Fasâhama fakâna min al-mudḥaḍîn (Sûrat Aṣ-Ṣâfât, verse 141)

 "Then he (agreed to) cast lots, and he was among the losers."

Although the verb *yus-him* lit. *to contribute* is different from the verb yusâhim lit. *to throw lots*, the layperson erroneously uses the two verbs as *to contribute.* Due to this wrong use, confusion occurs.

Ḥadîth words

/Ḥamu/حمو/old usage: husband's relatives, including father-in-law. Modern usage: father-in-law only.

This term has been restricted in Modern Standard Arabic to mean *father-in-law*. The Prophet in the Ḥadîth below warns the husband's relatives except for the fathers-in-law of mixing with women in seclusion. Due to the restriction that affected the meaning of the term, the layperson's understanding of *ḥamu* is antithetical to the meaning intended in the Ḥadîth. i.e., they may understand it as "all the husband's relatives are permitted to enter upon women save the fathers-in-law."

وَعَنْ عُقْبَةَ بْنِ عَامِرٍ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: " إِيَّاكُمْ وَالدُّخُولَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ: يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ أَرَأَيْتَ الْحَمْوَ؟ قَالَ: ﴿الْحَمْوُ الْمَوْتُ﴾

Waʕan ʕuqbata ibn ʕâmirin qâl: qâla rasûlullâhi ṣalla Allâhu ʕalaihi wasallam: "ʔiyâkum wadkhûla ʕala annisâʔ faqâla rajulun: yâ rasûlallâhi ʔraʔaital ḥamu? Qâla: "Al-ḥamu al-mawt" 'Uqba Ibn 'Amir reported God's Messenger as saying, "Avoid going in where women are." A man said, "Messenger of God, tell me about the relatives of a woman's husband," to which he replied, "The relatives of a woman's husband are death."

/Makhmûm/مخموم/Old usage: someone who has a pure heart. Modern(slang): fool or duped.

The positive meaning of the word in the Noble Ḥadîth below is not used in Modern Standard Arabic. As a result, a false friend in Egyptian Arabic that has a negative meaning may be used in lieu. So, due to the loss of the original meaning, the word has acquired degeneration. However, the layperson may be baffled because the context in which the word is used refers that the word is ameliorative although the word is pejorative in their dialect.

"قِيلَ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ أَيُّ النَّاسِ أَفْضَلُ قَالَ " كُلُّ مَخْمُومِ الْقَلْبِ صَدُوقِ اللِّسَانِ"

Qîla lirasûlilâhi ?ayyunnâsi ?afḍalu qâla kullu makhmûmi al-qalbi ṣadûqi al-lisân

"It was said to the Messenger of Allah: 'Which of the people is best?' He said: 'Everyone who is pure of heart and sincere in speech."

/yasta ҫmil /يستعمل /old usage: to employ, name or appoint as a governor or agent. Modern usage: to use or utilize.

وعن أبي حميد عبد الرحمن بن سعد الساعدي رضي الله عنه قال: استعمل النبي رجلاً من الأزد يقال له: ابن اللتبية على الصدقة، فلما قدم قال: هذا لكم، وهذا أهدي إلي، فقام رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم على المنبر، فحمد الله وأثنى عليه، ثم قال: "أما بعد فإني استعمل الرجل منكم على العمل مما ولاني الله، فيأتي فيقول: هذا لكم، وهذا هدية أهديت إلي"

Waҫan ?bî ḥamîd ҫabdir raḥmân ibn saҫd as-sâҫidî raḍial lâhu ҫanhu qâla: ?istaҫmala annabiyu rajulan min al?zd yuqâlu lahu ibn al lutbiyyah ҫala aṣ-ṣadaqah falamma qadima qâla: hâthâ lakum wa hâthâ ?uhdia ?ilayy faqâma rasûlul lâhi ṣallal lâhu ҫalayhî wasallama ҫalal mimbari faḥamadal lâha wa?thnâ ҫalayhî thumma qâla: ?ammâ baҫdu fa?innî ?astaҫmilu ar-rajula minkum ҫalal ҫamali mimâ wallâni Allâhu fa-ya?taya fayaqûla hâthâ lakum wa hâthâ ?uhdia ?ilayy.

Abu Ḥumaid bin Saҫd As-Saҫidi (May Allah be pleased with him) reported:

The Prophet employed a man from the tribe of Al-Azd named Ibn Lutbiyyah as collector of Zakat. When the employee returned (with the collections) he said: "(O Prophet!) This is for

you and this is mine because it was presented to me as gift." Messenger of Allah rose to the pulpit and praised Allah and extolled Him. Then he said, "I employ a man to do a job and he comes and says: "This is for you and this has been presented to me as gift?"

Misunderstanding occurs as the layperson thinks of the verb as *to use*. Moreover, the derivative of the verb *yastaçmil* is the active participle *çâmil*. In the ancient Islamic era, the word meant *governor*, *agent*, or even *employee*. This meaning is no longer used in Modern Standard Arabic. The new meaning of the word is identical to the English meaning of the word *worker,* which means *ʔajîr* in classical Arabic. *Cambridge dictionary* (n.d.) defines the word *worker* as "someone who works for a company or organization but does not have a powerful position, owns little or no property and has to work, usually doing physical work, to get money". One claims that the modern usage of the word is calqued from foreign languages and replaced the original whose meaning shifted to some different words such as *muḥâfith* in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Kuwait, *ʔamîr* in Saudi Arabia, or *wâlî* in the Sudan, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. The word meaning has degenerated because *çâmil = worker* substituted *çâmil = governor*. This degeneration, one might argue, resulted from the referent shift.

/çiṣâbah/ /عصابة/old usage: a band, a company, or a group of people. Modern Usage: a gang, a group of thieves, bandits, kidnappers, or burglars.

The degeneration that affected the meaning of this word in the Ḥadîth below makes the Muslim layperson perplexed; although they are certain that the Prophet and his companions are not members of a gang, they cannot fully understand what is meant by the word in that context.

وَعَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ سَمُرَةَ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: ﴿لَنْ يَبْرَحَ هَذَا الدِّينُ قَائِمًا يُقَاتِلُ عَلَيْهِ عِصَابَةٌ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ حَتَّى تقوم السَّاعَة﴾

Wa-çan jabiri ibn samurata qâla: qâla rasûlu Allâhi ṣalla Allâhu çalayhî wa-sallam "lan yabraḥa hâthâ ad-dînu qâʔiman yuqâtilu çalayhî çiṣâbatun min al muslimîna ḥatta taqûma as-

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sâçah.

Jabir Ibn Samura reported God's Messenger as saying, "This religion will not cease to endure with a company of the Muslims fighting on its behalf till the last hour comes."

Causes of semantic change of the words under discussion

The causes that might lead to semantic change could be classified into two categories: Extralinguistic and linguistic. Both are interrelated and eventually lead to change. Nevertheless, these causes cannot be generalized to the different Arab communities because their impact on semantic change is regionally, socially, and culturally bound. The word *ḥût*, for instance, still means *fish* in Tunisia although it has been specialized in the rest of the Arabic-speaking countries to mean *whale*. Accordingly, the Tunisian layperson fully understands the meaning of *ḥût* in the following verse, whereas the layperson of the other Arabic-speaking countries may interpret it as *a whale*.

"فَإِنِّي نَسِيتُ الْحُوتَ" (سورة الكهف: الآية 63)

Faʔinnî nasîtu al-ḥûta (Sûrat Al-Kahf, verse 63)

"I indeed forgot the fish"

Similarly, the homonymous overlapping of *qiṭṭ* in the verse below is curbed in Al-Ḥijjâz region as it is understood as *a portion or share of something*, whereas the other meaning, viz., tomcat may be activated in the other Arab communities.

" وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا عَجِّلْ لَنَا قِطَّنَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ" (سورة ص: الآية 16)

Wa-qâlû rabbanâ çajjil lanâ qiṭṭanâ qabla yawmi al-ḥisâb (Sûrat Ṣâd, verse 16)

"They say: "Our Lord! Hasten to us *Qiṭṭanâ* (i.e., our Record of good and bad deeds so that we may see it) before the Day of Reckoning." As for the false friend *makhmûm* in the Ḥadîth above, one thinks that it is only activated in Egypt.

Extralinguistic reasons

There are various extralinguistic reasons for semantic change; the social, cultural, technical, and economic development in a given community may be directly reflected in the most flexible and sensitive part of the language, i.e., words. In other words, some words are neologized, new derivations are created, and some meanings are shifted, lost, or emerged to cope with that multidimensional development.

Linguistic reasons

In fact, the linguistic causes of semantic change are the actual representation of the extralinguistic reasons. Through the analysis of the data above, one can deduce that the linguistic causes that fueled semantic change in the Muslim community of Egyptian could be formulated in the following.

Calque

Although calque is not an immediate cause of semantic change, the frequent use of the calqued words results in waning the original meaning of the word. This, in turn, leads to confusion. According to Garnier & Saint-Dizier (2009), "calque effects cannot easily be reduced to the violation of a few grammar rules of the target language: they need an analysis of their own" (p.19).

False friends

The loss of the original meaning of some words gave rise to some false friends, words in two different dialects or languages that have the same spelling and/or pronunciation but their meaning is partially or totally different, in the Egyptian Arabic to replace them.

Polysemous overlapping

Polysemy, which is defined by Vicente (2018), as "a word that has various different but related meanings" (p.5), is a linguistic feature in all natural languages that is hard to perceive from a cognitive perspective. For some social, cultural, and regional reasons, some shades are more

frequent than others. So, the layperson unconsciously uses the frequent hue in interpreting the other shades of meaning. Furthermore, overlapping takes place when the figurative meaning of a polysemous word is frequently used and the literal one has faded away.

Polysemy-homonymy overlapping

Due to the high frequency of a homonym in a given speech community, the neutrality of context, and the semantic harmony of the homonymous word with the other lexical units of the sentence, the layperson unconsciously adopts the homonym in understanding the sentence. In addition, as Falkum (2011) states, "homonymy also includes those instances of things called by the same name that have partially overlapping definitions" (p.10). In this respect, most Arabic dictionaries are not designed to disambiguate the homonyms; all the polysemous and homonymous meanings of a word are introduced in one entry.

Types of semantic change

The different types of semantic change that mainly affected the words under study are restriction, elevation, and degeneration. However, it is noticed that some words have undergone more than one type, namely, they are included in one another.

Restriction

As the analysis showed, restriction is the key type of change that marred the understanding of the religious texts. As a result of the specialization of some words in Modern Standard Arabic, the other meaning possibilities of those words are blocked. This is the basis adopted in this study to call a word restricted because, as Ponomaryova (2016) argues, "semantic restrictions can be predetermined both by the presence and by the absence of definite semes in a semantic structure of a word" (p.37).

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Degeneration

Degeneration or pejoration takes place when a word acquires a negative meaning by the passage of time. Words such as *makhmûm, çiṣâbah,* and *çâmil* are examples of this type of change; *makhmûm* is overlapped with a pejorative word in the Egyptian dialect, *viz, fool*, and the pejorative sense of *çiṣâbah* lit. *a gang* is arbitrarily acquired. As for *çâmil,* its calqued meaning is dominant now.

Elevation

Elevation or amelioration is the opposite of degeneration. It refers to words that the status of a person or a thing they refer to is elevated; *sayyâra* lit. *caravan of travelers,* for example, has been raised to mean a vehicle, namely, the means of transportation has been modernized. Furthermore, *qaṣrun mashîd* has been elevated from a stone-walled building tiled with gypsum to a modern luxurious palace.

Conclusion

This study illustrates that Arabic, like many other dialects and languages, has gone through change over time. As a result, speakers use some Qurʔânic and prophetic words to refer to things differently. This change negatively affected the layperson's understanding of the Glorious Qurʔân and Noble Prophetic Ḥadîth. It took various types such as restriction, degeneration, and elevation. The semantic change is also caused by calque, polysemous and homonymous overlapping.

Semantic change has a malign effect on classical Arabic and contemporary Arabic alike as it widens the gap between the Muslim layperson and their Holy Writ.

One of the consequences of some words which have a neutral context is that the new meaning is reversed without loss of acceptability.

In the end, one hopes that this study may open the door wide for further studies on lexical-

semantic change that impedes the understanding of old texts in general and religious texts in particular. More studies are required to find out whether the pan-Arab Muslim laypersons are affected by this phenomenon or not. Moreover, the semantic change that greatly affected the long-established Arabic loanwords that constitute a considerable portion of the Turkish, Urdu, and Persian lexicons should be measured to see how the non-Arab Muslims understand the Islamic texts.

Recommendations

Although the semantic change of some Arabic words is fait accompli, its negative impact on understanding the religious texts can be alleviated. In addition to the multimodal approach proposed above, teachers of Arabic and religion should illustrate the semantic change that some Qurʔânic and prophetic words have undergone to their students since schools are the first places in which children meet Standard Arabic. The study also proposes that Arabic dictionaries should be updated to differentiate between the current usages by the masses and the old usages. Thus, Arabic lexicographers could recognize the dynamic nature of languages and at the same time, the archaic meanings of the *religious* words are foregrounded. To help disambiguate the religious texts, a glossary of the ambiguous words that might raise confusion and impede the understanding of the religious texts should be compiled by Arabic lexicographers and handed out to people from all walks of life. The luminaries of hermeneutics and Daçwah who appear on the T.V. and are followed by millions on the social media ought to propagate the right meaning of these words as well.

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