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From *dašš l-ġōš* to *dašš twitar*: Semantic Change in Kuwaiti Arabic*

Abstract

This study presents a lexical semantic investigation of the dialectal verb *dašš* – one of the most common verbs in the dialects of eastern Arabia – on the basis of its usage in conversational circumstances. I analyse the polysemy of *dašš* and its uses by native speakers in Kuwait City with the aim of establishing whether and to what extent linguistic and social factors condition and constrain the emergence and development of new senses. The paper is based on the results of an analysis of audio-recorded conversational data gathered from local social gatherings in more than ten locations and in four different governorates in Kuwait between 2012 and 2013. Most of the speakers were educated men aged 24 and above who have received formal education and enjoy white-collar occupations. The results of the semantic analysis indicate that meaning is both contextually and collocationally bound, and that verbs' different meanings are activated according to the context in which they are used.

Keywords

Kuwaiti Arabic, Diachronic Semantics, Polysemy, Collocations, Semantic Change.

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1. Introduction

The meanings of words are constantly changing, and the factors that trigger such changes are varied and diverse. In this study, I consider the semantic behaviour of the verb *dašš* in Kuwaiti Arabic (KA). Over the last century, it has acquired a range of meanings, some of which have remained while others have disappeared, while others again have undergone internal development. In addition, *dašš* was selected because of its range and frequency of occurrence in my corpus. I argue that *dašš* can inform us about the language change that is taking place in Kuwait. Arguably, the changes seen in *dašš* over the past century remain unprecedented, as will become apparent below.

In the literature, changes in word meanings are classified into two types of study: semasiology and onomasiology. The former asks the question *what changes did the meaning of dašš undergo?* while the latter asks, for example, *how has the way we talk about dašš changed?* We will consider both questions eventually but our focus will be more on the former.

Dialect change in a community has never before been examined in considerable detail over a period of time as long as one hundred years. I had the opportunity to gather data from elderly speakers as well as very young speakers whose speech repertoire demonstrates the range of meanings that are understood to be associated with the key verb under investigation. Therefore, the statement of the problem may be situated in the fact that Kuwait has witnessed phenomenal change in the last hundred years. In this study, I report on a two-year ethnographic study that tracked the social dynamics of indigenous Kuwaiti speakers aged between eighteen and ninety.

The aim of this study, however, is not only to give an account of the meanings conveyed by *dašš* in the dialect but also to present a number of constantly emerging verb senses. There are at present two major research gaps which will be addressed in the present study: (i) the extent of the polysemy has only been partially documented; and (ii) the verb under investigation has not yet been studied in a systematic way.

The paper is arranged as follows. Section 2 briefly defines *dašš* in terms of its semantics, phonology, and etymology. Section 3 sheds light on the formal and morphological characteristics of *dašš*. Section 4 presents the analysis of the research results by reporting the senses, uses, and contexts of *dašš*. Section 5 reveals further evidence for dialect change. The concluding remarks are given in Section 6.

2. Getting to know *dašš*

The trilateral verb *dašš* is among the most frequently used verbs in the Kuwaiti dialect. It is prototypically a verb of change of location, which entails that an animate moving entity changes location during the process: for instance, *daššēt d-dīra* ‘I went to (Kuwait) town’ (Maṭar 1969: 94).

In KA, a verb that ends with two identical consonants, such as *dašš* ‘to enter’, *madd* ‘to stretch’, *fačč* ‘to open’, *taxx* ‘to calm down’ is called a ‘doubled’ verb. These simple doubled verbs are characterised by a final double consonant in the stem with the second and the third radicals being the same (Qafisheh 1977: 41, 1979: 6). By normal rules, the basic form of the verb from this root would be *dašaš*; this, however, is ‘an inadmissible verb form in Arabic, and we find *dašš* instead’ (Holes 2010: 119).

In terms of pronunciation, words with two-consonant clusters occur frequently in KA. A final double consonant *šš* in *dašš* is not pronounced differently from a final single consonant, i.e. final *š* in *dašš* is the same as final *š* in *frāš* ‘bed’ as far as the sound itself is concerned (Qafisheh 1977: 22). Notice that the basic form of the past tense of doubled verbs is always CvCC (where C = consonant, and v = vowel).

Regarding its etymology, it has been observed by Khalaf (1988: 170) that *dašš* is not etymologically Arabic nor does it occur in the Holy Qur’ān. However, Behnstedt and Woidich (2014: 73) have come up with a possible explanation that *dašš* is typical of some parts of the Arabian Peninsula though undetectable in Classical Arabic. They suggest that *dašš* may be formed via contamination of *dass* ‘hide’ and *xašš* ‘hide, enter’. This also related to *andassa* ‘enter’ in Chadian Arabic (Jullien de Pommerol 1999: 156).¹

3. Formal and morphological characteristics of *dašš*

Verbs in KA are inflected for gender and number in the perfective and imperfective aspects and the imperative. Plural verb forms are of common gender.² However, we find feminine plural forms occurring only in a few fixed expressions in the Kuwaiti dialect (Johnstone 1967: 50), which do not occur in my material. According to Qafisheh (1975: 98) and Holes (2010: 155), the imperfect tense in Gulf Arabic (and in Kuwaiti) describes the following: (i) habitual or ‘timeless’ actions, (ii) general truth value, (iii) progressive, and (iv) future actions or intentions to act. That is to say, the imperfective aspect in KA denotes the past, present, or future tenses (al-Najjar 1984: 119). In the same way, al-Najjar (1984: 16) defines the perfective aspect of KA verbs as follows: ‘the primary use of the perfective is to denote past actions, i.e. it describes a complete action or situation that took place prior to the moment of speaking’. The imperative verb has three different forms, reflecting differences in number and gender, i.e.

¹ Cf. Iraqi *xašš* ‘enter’ and Mi’dān (‘Marsh Arabs’) *dašš* ‘enter’ (Altoma 1969: 101; Ingham 2000: 127). In Egyptian Arabic, *xašš* also means ‘to enter’ while *dašš* is glossed as ‘to mash, pound, shatter’ (Badawi and Hinds 1986: 289).

² In Oman and parts of the United Arab Emirates, ‘there are feminine plural forms for the 2nd and 3rd person when one is talking about a group that is purely composed of women’ (Holes 2010: 79).

it occurs only in the second person masculine, feminine and common plural (Holes 1990: 199).

As will be shown below, doubled verbs do not require a prefix; a Kuwaiti speaker may simply use the present tense form for the imperative (Holmes & Samaan 1957: 33). The conjugation of the perfect, imperfect, and imperative of the representative verb *dašš* is given below (cf. Qafisheh 1977: 57, 1979: 10).

a) *Perfect:*

3 rd pers. masc. sg.	<i>dašš</i>	‘he entered’
3 rd pers. fem. sg.	<i>daššat</i>	‘she entered’
3 rd pers. pl.	<i>daššaw</i>	‘they entered’
2 nd pers. masc. sg.	<i>daššēt</i>	‘you entered’
2 nd pers. fem. sg.	<i>daššētay</i>	‘you entered’
2 nd pers. pl.	<i>daššētaw</i>	‘you entered’
1 st pers. sg.	<i>daššēt</i>	‘I entered’
1 st pers. pl.	<i>daššēna</i>	‘we entered’

b) *Imperfect:*

3 rd pers. masc. sg.	<i>yidišš</i>	‘he enters’
3 rd pers. fem. sg.	<i>tidišš</i>	‘she enters’
3 rd pers. pl.	<i>yidiššūn</i>	‘they enter’
2 nd pers. masc. sg.	<i>tidišš</i>	‘you enter’
2 nd pers. fem. sg.	<i>tidiššīn</i>	‘you enter’
2 nd pers. pl.	<i>tidiššūn</i>	‘you enter’
1 st pers. sg.	<i>adišš</i>	‘I enter’
1 st pers. pl.	<i>ndišš</i>	‘we enter’

c) *Imperative:*³

2 nd pers. masc. sg.	<i>dišš</i>	‘enter, go in!’
2 nd pers. fem. sg.	<i>diššay</i>	‘enter, go in!’
2 nd pers. pl.	<i>diššaw</i>	‘enter, go in!’

Holes (1990: 223–34) reports that Educated Gulf Arabic ‘has a number of inherently directional lexical verbs but does not morphologically mark directionality’, thus *dišš* ‘come/go in!’ In KA, two participles are prominently associated with the verb – the active and the passive. The active⁴ and passive

³ Holmes and Samaan (1957: 33) give the forms *diššī* ‘enter (f)!’ and *diššūu* ‘enter (pl.)!’ for KA, which do not occur in my material.

⁴ From the grammatical point of view, Holes (2010: 197) states that ‘active participles behave partly like adjectives and partly like verbs’.

participles of *dašš* are *dāš* (m.),⁵ *dāšša* (f.), and *dāššīn* (pl.) ‘entering, having entered’ and *madšūš* (m.), *madšūša* (f.), and *madšūšīn* (pl.) ‘x is/was entered’, respectively. As stated by Johnstone (1962: 82), ‘the active participle is used with verbs of motion to describe present continuous and, by extension, future actions’. Class VII of the verb, which is formed from transitive Class I verbs by prefixing *n-*, is also attested: *ndašš* ‘to be entered’ (Qafisheh 1979: 55). Often, the Kuwaiti imperfective passive carries a gerundive meaning loosely rendered by *-able* as in *hal mawqi‘ mā yindašš lah min ġēr mā tašbik* ‘this website cannot be accessed without an internet connection’ (cf. Brustad 2000: 334–5). This sentence is in fact a variant of *mā yindašš lah hal mawqi‘ min ġēr mā tašbik* ‘in which the impersonal nature of the verb is clearer’ (Holes 1990: 183).

Concerning consonant clusters, Holes (2007: 611) elaborates that ‘CCC clusters that arise via suffixation, where the first two consonants are the same, are usually reduced’ – for instance, *dašha* ‘he entered it’ (< *dašš* + *ha*). In terms of assimilation, it is noticeable that /t/ in *ti-* verbal prefixes of various kinds is assimilated (i.e. regressive assimilation) by some Kuwaiti speakers to /t, t̤, t̥, d, d̤, ɖ, ɕ, ʒ, s, ʃ/ as a consequence of the deletion of unstressed /i/ in open syllables, e.g. *(i)ddišš* ‘it/she enters; you (m.s.) enter’ (Qafisheh 1997a: 14; Holes 2007: 612). As a matter of fact, the earliest attested example of use was first noted for Kuwait in the Kuwait Oil Company handbook (1951: 127) as follows: *ba‘ad mā ddišš* ‘after you enter’.

4. Senses, uses, and contexts of *dašš*

This section presents the analysis of the research results by reporting the senses, uses, and contexts of *dašš*. I went through the following stages to find word senses in my material: (i) I provisionally identified senses in my spoken data; (ii) I analysed examples in the corpus and identified distinct contextual features of each sense; and then (iii) I refined and finalised the inventory of senses. It was found that there is greater polysemy in the Kuwaiti dialect than has hitherto been demonstrated in the lexico-semantic tradition. The evidence I uncovered suggests that *dašš* is highly polysemous yet its context of use gives it particular specificity.

My material contains a total of 130 tokens collected from 18 social gatherings. All of the examples were transcribed phonetically and translated idiomatically. As a participant observer, I was in a legitimate and trustworthy position from the point of view of research. This enabled me to gain an intimate familiarity with the groups by way of intensive involvement with the speakers and their cultural milieu. In fact, the actual task of idiomatic translation highlights

⁵ Notice the contraction in the active participle (cf. Qafisheh 1997a: 39). In the Kuwaiti dialect, the common expression *dāšni hawa* means ‘I caught a cold’ or ‘I am experiencing diarrhoea’.

the extent to which I was relying on my pragmatic competence to make an inference about what is being meant because semantics deals with the description of meanings while ‘pragmatics deals with the uses made of those meanings’ (Cruse 2006: 136).

Further analysis showed that the main senses of the verb have many uses and instantiations that are given sharper reference by virtue of their collocations and contexts. In modern colloquial English, Firth (1957: 194) shows that part of the meaning of certain words can be interpreted by collocation. However, he (ibid. 195) argues that ‘[i]t must be pointed out that meaning by collocation is not at all the same as contextual meaning, which is the functional relation of the senses to the processes of a context of situation in the context of culture’. Indeed, context contributes to the shaping of identity and social relationship of the informants in the speech situation. We will see that interpreting an utterance mostly relies on the context. Collocations are also important in identifying the specificity of meaning and they are linguistically predictable to a greater or lesser extent. As Murphy (2003: 37) argues, ‘[s]emantic relations are not arbitrary ... they are predictable, and therefore rule based’.

While there is growing research interest in this subfield of linguistics, systematic studies of collocations in Arabic are conspicuously lacking, despite widespread evidence of the phenomenon in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and modern dialects alike. Even though collocations have been dealt with lexicographically, they however ‘have been dealt with in a rather intermittent and modest way’ (Santillán Grimm 2009: 22). As a result, previous studies have reported that studying aspects of meaning in terms of words’ combinatorial properties and restrictions ‘has received little attention in historical semantics’ (Meinschaefer 2003: 136). As I delve into the material, we will notice that some of the uses of the key verb are contextually determined, e.g. *daššēt l-ḥīn bass nāṭir flūsi tithawwal ḍnlāyn* in example (21) below does not translate into ‘I have entered now, but I’m waiting for my money to be transferred online’, but rather, ‘I have invested now...’ Most likely, the speaker will have one reading in mind, and the hearer will be expected to recover that reading on the basis of contextual clues.

The dictionaries compiled by Qafisheh (1997b), Holes (2001), and Maamouri (2013) served as good models for organising the senses. I have categorised and interpreted the meanings and uses of the key verbs according to these sources. The first senses listed in these dictionaries are the primary or ‘common core’ senses. Cruse (2011: 116) observes that some senses have default status in the sense that they will be the preferred reading in the absence of contextual clues, ‘while the other requires some contextual pressure’. For instance, Holes (2001: li) organises his compendious glossary as follows: ‘The most general senses of words are listed first, the more specific or technical last. However, where the commonest sense of a word is a localised one, this is listed first’.

I will follow Holes' (2001) approach in organising my senses because in each case, the most general uses and senses of the verbs are presented first.

Before I begin presenting the research findings, it is sensible to present the attested senses of *dašš* in KA. What we know about *dašš* comes from observations of and accounts by local publishers. Based on some published material on the Kuwaiti dialect, AlBader (2015: 76–87) reports the following meanings of *dašš*, organised in order of frequency of occurrence:

1. to enter, go in, go in for
2. to go to, embark on
 - a. to join
 - b. attend (a wedding)
 - c. work at sea
 - i. put to sea
 - ii. embark on a sea voyage
3. to come into someone's presence
 - a. marry, consummate a marriage
4. to insert into
 - a. to kick a ball into the goal (i.e. to score)
5. to interfere
6. to begin (a month)

Table 1. Senses of *dašš* in my data

Senses of <i>dašš</i>	Occurrence
1. enter, go in, go in for a. to enter [23] b. to get in [18] c. to arrive at (place) [1] d. to board (tram) [2] e. to invade (country) [1] f. to try (restaurant) [6] g. to visit (webpage/place) [6] h. to log in (online) [4] i. to access (mobile applications) [2] j. to browse an iPhone® App [1]	64
2. go to, embark on a. to attend school [5] b. to join (company, gym) [2]	7
3. come into someone's presence a. to drop in on someone [5] b. to barge in [3] c. to introduce (a word into a language) [3] d. to send a message (electronically) [1]	12

Table 1. (cont.)

Senses of <i>dašš</i>	Occurrence
4. bring in, insert into, enter something or someone into a. to kick a ball into the goal (i.e. to score) [10] b. to fit (size) [1] c. to penetrate; to put X into the anus [1]	12
5. obtain, get in (money) a. to invest [6] b. to reach a certain level [4] c. to get a financial support/to obtain money [2] d. to break a record (to enter Guinness World Records) [1] e. to negotiate a deal [1]	14
6. interfere a. to be involved in/with X [5] b. to intervene [1]	6
7. begin a. to start (school, season) [2] b. to get to know somebody (to start a conversation) [1]	3
8. change in character or condition; alter in function or nature a. to become an MP [3] b. to be elected [1] c. to stand for election [1] d. to specialise in [2] e. to enter a critical phase [1] f. to act as [1] g. to reach adolescence; to hit puberty [1] h. to have a particular skill [1] i. to fall into a coma [1]	12

Table 1 presents all of the senses and uses of *dašš* discovered in my data. The verb occurs 130 times with eight different senses and multiple uses, and was recorded in 14 social gatherings out of 18. What is noticeable is that for each main sense given in numbers (e.g. 1, 2, 3 etc.), we find three categories according to use: sub-senses, uses, and single instantiations given in letters (e.g. a, b, c, etc.). It is striking that the majority of the senses and uses of *dašš* appearing in my data have not been attested in KA dictionaries (AlBader 2015: 76–87). Therefore, strong evidence of semantic innovation and change was found when examples of *dašš* were analysed systematically.

Sense 1 ‘to enter, go in, go in for’ is the most frequently used sense in my data and is the first sense given in all of the Kuwaiti dictionaries surveyed in AlBader’s (2015) study. This observation implies that ‘to enter, go in, go in for’ is the default, prototypical sense for *dašš* in both my data and in the KA dictionaries. However, it should be stressed that the sub-senses and uses within

sense 1, e.g. ‘to try a restaurant’, ‘to visit (webpage/place)’, ‘to log in (online)’, etc. are innovative uses. These uses and others have not been recorded in the local dictionaries. In other words, within the standard uses, we have all of these creations and modern uses that are highly contextually determined.

Before I continue, I believe it is important here to discriminate between ‘sub-senses’ and ‘uses’. According to Hartmann and James (1998: 133), a sub-sense (also ‘sub-meaning’, ‘semantic subdivision’) is one of ‘the distinct meanings of a polysemous word, often marked in dictionaries by means of numbered sub-entries’. Cruse (2006: 163), however, explains the meaning of ‘sense’ as follows: ‘We can say of a polysemous or homonymous word that it “has several senses”. Here, the word refers to distinguishable meanings, as they might appear in a dictionary’.

Regarding what is meant by ‘uses’, Evans (2009a: 294) demonstrates that ‘[p]olysemy emerges from the interaction between language use and contexts of use’. We will look at how new contexts of use give rise to meaning extensions or new specifics of meaning. In what follows, I wish to give examples of each of the standard and the innovative uses to distinguish between the two angles.

4.1. Sense 1: ‘to enter, go in, go in for’

The most standard uses of *dašš* are those which describe the activity of coming or going into a place. This can be exemplified with senses (1a) ‘to enter’, (1b) ‘to get in’, and (1c) ‘to arrive at’. In other words, this is the ‘generic’ meaning of *dašš* which can be used in any number of contexts. For instance, consider examples (1–4):

1. *bass ħarakta mū ħilwa, **dašš** d-dīwāniyya wala ysallim wala šay^(sense 1a)*
 ‘But what he did was unacceptable; he **entered** the *dīwāniyya* without greeting us or anything.’
2. *yit ‘awwar gōlčī⁶ ingeltra fa **ydišš** lik⁷ wāḥid min s-sikyuriti^(sense 1a)*
 ‘England’s goalkeeper gets hurt, and someone from the security guards **enters** (the soccer field).’

⁶ This is a rather unusual yet common word combination. It is a hybrid noun that consists of the English ‘goal’ attached to the Turkish suffix *-çi* that Kuwait shares with Iraq (cf. Malaika 1963: 23; Al-Ayyūb 1982: 17; Mansour 1991: 46, 91; Erwin 2004: 170–171). Words ending in *-çi* or *-çi* are used for ‘denoting agents, occupations and professions. Several refer to persons who have a certain type of character or engage in habitual activities. A few relate to persons who are members of the indicated noun’ (Masliyah 1996: 295). For instance, *mṭayyirči* ‘pigeon fancier, man who raises and trains domesticated pigeons’, *kalakči* ‘trickster, tricky person, smooth operator’, *bančarči* ‘tyre repairman’ (< ‘puncture’ + *-çi*), *kahrabči* ‘electrician’, etc. A relatively recent Egyptian borrowing is *balṭači* (< Turkish *baltacı* ‘pioneer’), now used in the sense of ‘gangster, rowdy, bouncer’. The pejorative term *ixwanči* ‘member of the Muslim Brotherhood’ is also common in political speech, and it has found its way into the *Oxford Arabic Dictionary* (Arts 2014: 9).

⁷ The so-called ETHIC DATIVE (otiose 2nd person pronoun) is frequently used in narrative as a means of involving the listener. See Holes (2016: 435–437) for similar examples from Bahrain.

3. *mādri āna ams rāyih l-fanār, b-adišš l-mašāfiṭ zaḥma*^(sense 1b)
 ‘I have no idea. I went to al-Fanār (mall) yesterday. I was going **to get in** the parking lot (but it was already) full.’
4. *gaḃil lā adišš l-ṁanṭaqa daggēt ‘alēk*^(sense 1c)
 ‘Before I **arrived at** the area, I phoned you.’

The remaining uses (1d–1j) within sense 1 are new uses in my data. Take examples (5–11):

5. *l-trām mfawwil. ṣidaf wiyānna āxir bāb iṭṭa ‘aw maḡmū ‘a, daššēna. daššēna iḥna xalās*
 ‘The tram was really busy. Luckily, a group (of passengers) got off from the last door, (so) we **boarded**. We (finally) **got on**.’^(sense 1d)
6. *awwal mā ṣār intixābāt l-xwān ‘isrā’īl u b-ndišha u b-nšigha, w-ḥna b-nsawwi, u l-šisma*⁸
 ‘As soon as elections started, the Muslim Brotherhood were like, “We’ll **occupy/invade** Israel, and we will destroy it, and we’ll do the what-do-you-call-it”.’^(sense 1e)

Although Arabic is rich in terms of the lexicon of warfare, we notice in example (6) the absence of such pan-Arab terms such as *niḥtalha* ‘we will occupy it’, or *naḡzīha* ‘we will invade it’. Instead, we find the pan-Gulf form *ndišha* ‘we’ll occupy/invade it.’⁹ Arguably, the impact of the Gulf War on the spoken dialect of Kuwait is evident. My hypothesis is that following the Iraqi invasion, *dašš* developed a new use in the sense of ‘to invade’ in the late 1990s, or the Iraqi invasion simply helped revitalised this specific use. In example (7), the complete meaning of *dašš* is contextually determined:

7. *wala maṛra daššēta. l-yāḥāl rāḥaw yidiššūn yirūḥūn, āna wala maṛra daššēta*^(sense 1f)
 ‘I **have** never **tried** it. The kids went and **tried** it; (however) I **have** never **tried** it.’

⁸ *šisma* or *šisammūna* (lit. ‘what its name’) is an extremely common phrase when someone cannot remember the name of something.

⁹ It is interesting to note that for Dathina colloquial Arabic, Landberg (1920: 787) glosses *dašš* ‘demolish’ and gives the following example: دثوا البلاد بدافع *ils ont démoli le pays avec des canons*. Landberg’s example is, to some extent, similar in usage to the Kuwaiti *dašš* in the sense of ‘invade/occupy’. Piamenta (1990: 150) also glosses *dašš* ‘to demolish’ for (Judæo-) Yemeni Arabic.

By saying *wala maṛṛa daššētah* ‘I have never tried it’ in sense (1f) above, it does not mean that ‘I did not enter the restaurant through the door’. What is meant is that ‘I did not have the chance/time to visit it’ or ‘to try a specific recipe’. The speaker here is allowing his hearers to infer not that he has not been able to try this particular restaurant because he is not interested but because he has not had the chance to eat there. He allows the implication that there is an underlying intention to do so at some point.

Examples (8–11) revolve around the domain of the internet and technology. These uses appear in new contexts which acquire additional and specific meanings. On first use, one might argue that there is no problem understanding the ‘webpage’ to be a virtual location as in example (8). However, this sense of ‘entering a virtual location’ gives rise to senses (1h) to (1j), illustrated in examples (9–11), i.e. they are innovative instantiations of example (8).

8. *āna yaybat lik hāḍa čūd¹⁰ tidišš ‘ala l-haḍōl^(sense 1g)*
‘I brought this (visa application) for you, hoping you could **visit** those (Schengen Visa webpage and apply online).’
9. *dišš twitar tlāgīh hāt nafsā^(sense 1h)*
‘**Log in to** Twitter, you’ll find him posting himself.’
10. *lamma ddišš mā yilga šay li’anna āy anlāykā^(sense 1i)*
‘When you **access** (his Instagram account), he won’t find anything (i.e. any mention of me) because I unliked (his photos).’
11. *taxayyal daššēt ‘alēh ga¹¹ ašūf šwarra^(sense 1j)*
‘Can you imagine, I **browsed** his (Instagram) account to look at his photos.’

4.2. Sense 2: ‘to go to, embark on’

Sense 2 is also about coming or going into a place, but this time into a ‘specific’ place. In addition, some of the uses of this sense are attested in KA dictionaries but with different settings. In her analysis of the French noun *discours*, Meinschaefer (2003: 139) shows that ‘an innovative usage of a particular term can arise in the language of any speaker but this usage will vanish from the language if it is not adopted by a larger community of speakers’. By comparing

¹⁰ A modal particle with epistemic force used throughout the Gulf and Najd and possibly connected etymologically with the Classical Arabic *yakūdu* ‘to almost do something’ (Holes 2016: 277–278).

¹¹ *gā’id* (lit. ‘sitting’) is a common auxiliary followed by an imperfect to indicate the present continuous (Johnstone 1967: 144). In rapid speech, *gā’id* becomes morphologically defective (it loses the morphological distinctions for gender and number) and phonologically reduced, cf. al-Najjar (1984: 125); Tsukanova (2008: 448).

my data with the available KA data, I noticed the disappearance of several uses of *dašš* related to old occupations and local customs and activities, namely, ‘to work at sea, put to sea, embark on a sea voyage’ and ‘to marry, consummate a marriage’ (see Section 5 below). Although some of them have dropped out of use, these ‘nautical’ uses of *dašš* are still attested in KA dictionaries and some (older) speakers know them. However, my data includes examples related to ‘going to school’ and ‘going to the gym’ as against ‘going pearl-diving’. In the Arabic dialect of Central Arabia, Kurpershoek (2005: 90) records the following example: *dašš dawām* ‘he went to his work at the office and spent his working hours there’. Therefore, the identification of the ‘place’ (or location) will determine the nature of this sense by virtue of collocation. For instance:

12. *awwal mā dašš l-ġām* ‘a... *awwal mā dašš l-ġām* ‘a¹² *ubūh axaḍ lah šisma esel kašf*
 ‘As soon as he **attended** university ... As soon as he **attended** university, his father bought him a convertible (Mercedes-Benz) SL (Class).’^{?(sense 2a)}
13. *lo fīh xēr čān mā dašš nādi*^(sense 2b)
 ‘If he has a spark of decency, he would not have **joined** the gym.’

Consequently, *dašš* collocates with *l-ġām* ‘a’ ‘university’ in example (12) and with *nādi* ‘gym; club’ in example (13). Within the same meaning of ‘going to, embarking on’, Qafisheh (1997b: 219) notes a similar use in Abu Dhabi in the sense of ‘to enlist in the army’ whereas Holes (2001: 175) glosses the sense ‘to send to school’ in Bahrain, which is also noted by Johnstone (1967: 186) in his Bahraini material in the following example: *zēn, iw-daššēt il-mádrase?* ‘Good. And you went to school?’

4.3. Sense 3: ‘to come into someone’s presence’

In sense 3, *dašš* is usually followed by the preposition ‘*ala* with a pronoun enclitic in this specific sense, and it usually indicates ‘location on’ or ‘movement onto’.¹³ The syntagmatic grammatical relation between *dašš* and ‘*ala* is an

¹² The repetitive phrase *awwal mā dašš l-ġām* ‘a...*awwal mā dašš l-ġām* ‘a is an example of the so-called narrative technique BACK-STITCHING which ‘has the psycho-social function of slowing down the transmission of information, and of giving the narrator time to plan the transition to the next part of the story’ (Holes 2016: 448). This technique regularly occurs in my data in the speech of young men; see also examples 18, 21, and 23.

¹³ In the context of marriage, the expression *dašš/daxal ‘alēha* ‘he went into her’ is used in Kuwait and Bahrain to describe the groom ‘going into’ (the bedroom) to meet his bride to consummate their marriage, which clearly has a sexual connotation. Cf. the Egyptian Arabic example: *bi-yxušš ‘al-‘arūsa lēlit id-duxla* ‘he has intercourse with the bride on the wedding night’ (Badawi and Hinds 1986: 251). Additionally, a similar usage is recorded in Chadian Arabic: *al arīs andassa lē martah* ‘Le marié est

example of what Siepmann (2005: 422–423) calls ‘collocations of verbs with locative prepositional phrases’. It is attested in KA dictionaries but with different contexts of use. Examples (14–17) below bear connotative meaning; ‘the entering’ is not necessarily permissible, it has a pragmatic force. It has arguably evaluative force as part of the speaker’s attitude to what is being talked about. Hence, we can argue that verbs are not concrete; they do not attach to objects but to activities, mental processes and communicative processes.

14. *taxayyilay uxūč yidišš ‘ala sālīm*^(sense 3a)
‘Imagine that your brother **drops in on** Sālīm.’
15. *nzēn, tsawwūn lah mufāḡa’a? indišš ‘alēh l-klās w-nyīb lah čīs barrid bu-šārūx?*
‘Alright, how about we surprise him? We **barge into** his class and we bring a bag of rocket ice lolly?’^(sense 3b)
16. *fī muṣṭalahāt rāḡat. w-fī muṣṭalahāt misākīn uhma ham daššat ‘alēhum*^(sense 3c)
‘There are terms which have disappeared. And there are terms, poor guys, that have **entered into** them (= their language).’

Notice the ‘virtual’ use of *dašš* in example (17):

17. *maṛṛa nšidamt, dāš ‘alēy wāḡid kām wiyāy bil madrisa pākistānī*^(sense 3d)
‘I was once shocked; a Pakistani guy **messaged** me (on Facebook) who attended school with me.’

Example (14) signifies that X is visiting Y without prior notice, while example (15) implies that X is walking into a classroom without being invited. Example (16) denotes that a term is starting to become involved in a language, whereas example (17) indicates that someone is interrupted by something. Moreover, we can see from examples (14–17) that the combination *dašš ‘ala* sometimes denotes that someone enters a place or joins a group of people rudely or without an invitation. For example, this is construed in the presence of such words as *maṛṛa* ‘once’ which connotes ‘once upon a time’ in example (17). The word *maṛṛa* is usually used as a rhetorical attention-seeking device, especially when describing events of what happened to somebody or of how something happened. Moreover, notice the use of *maṛṛa nšidamt* ‘I was once shocked’ in

entré dans la chambre de sa femme’ (Jullien de Pommerol 1999: 156); see also Kaye (1982: 24) for Nigerian Arabic. Landberg (1920: 717) also records the following sense for *daxal* in south-eastern Yemeni (Dathīnah) Arabic: *alors il l’épouse et consomme le mariage*. In KA, the expression *lēlat id-dašša* means ‘the wedding night (lit. the night of the entering)’, but Daniels (1971: 155) records *lēlat id-daxla* ‘the wedding night’ for Kuwait.

example (17) followed by *dāš* ‘*alēy* ‘he messaged me (on Facebook)’ and the use of the verb *taxayyilay* ‘imagine that’ in example (14) followed by *uxūč yidišš* ‘*ala sālim* ‘your brother drops in on Sālim’. This construction is also noted by Ingham (1982: 152) for Khūzistān in the following basic sense *dašš* ‘*alie* ‘to come in’, by Qafisheh (1997b: 220) for Abu Dhabi, and by Holes (2001: 175) for Bahrain.

4.4. Sense 4: ‘to bring in, insert into, enter something or someone into’

The highly specific meaning of *dašš* in the sense of ‘to kick a ball into the goal (i.e. to score)’ has been recorded for Kuwait by al-Sab‘ān (1989: 124) only. In my data, I recorded ten tokens of this sense. The semantic domain of sports seems to be productive and a factor in the spread of innovative senses that generates a number of interesting examples of *dašš* collocations. In eastern Arabia, it has been reported that English is ‘a prime source for sports vocabulary’ (Smeaton 1973: 51). It is evident that Kuwaiti speakers who talk about football, irrespective of age, sex and education, tend to use the English loanword *gōl* ‘goal’ rather than its Arabic counterpart *marmā* or *hadaḡ*. Hence, *dašš* frequently coexists with *gōl* in that particular situation.¹⁴ And so the ‘score’ sense gains primacy in the football domain. An example from my data includes:

18. *l-hīn āna bil-findiḡ b-ḡurfiti ḡā ‘id aṡāli ‘l-mubārā, yidišš gōl hni, l-manṡaḡa kām̄la hhhhh čīḡi, šrāx, šrāx, okē, čān yidišš gōl s-suwēd ‘alēhum, u dašš gōl s-suwēd t-tāni*
 ‘Now, I’m at the hotel watching the match; whenever a goal is **scored**, the whole area goes mad, okay. Then Sweden **scores** a goal, and Sweden **scores** another goal.’^(sense 4a)

It can be argued that the phrase *dašš gōl* ‘score a goal’ is directional and very precise, because *dašš* co-occurs with the noun *gōl*. Therefore, the regularity with which *dašš* collocates with *gōl* establishes not just *score a goal* but that it is a *goal*, is directional and denotes a sense of achievement. The other uses illustrated in examples (19–20) include ‘to fit (size)’, and a ruder sense ‘to penetrate; to put X into the anus (to enter someone’s buttocks)’, which are not recorded in local KA dictionaries.

19. *talbis-hum haḡēla mustahīl yidiššūn ‘alēk li’anna lārḡ āna ‘alēy šwayy fīṡ*^(sense 4b)
 ‘Do you wear those (shirts)? They hardly **fit** you, because they look large on me, they look a little tight.’

¹⁴ English borrowing: ‘goal’. In KA, *gōl* also means ‘saying’. This type of meaning variation has been called COINCIDENTAL HOMONYMY (Murphy 2010: 94).

20. *ṣagīr mā yabīni akallim, dišš b-tīzi*^{15(sense 4c)}
 ‘Ṣagīr doesn’t want me to call (her). (I say, why don’t you) **get into** my arse!’

There is an important distinction to be noted here. Sense (4a) is different from senses (4b) and (4c). The latter two senses are single occurrences of *dašš*. Sense (4c) shows a pejorative (denotational) change of meaning, which is ‘a diachronic semasiological process’ (Geeraerts 1997: 99). Sense (4a) is used almost as a fixed phrase which is often heard in football commentaries; it has become conventionalised and perfectly well established, while senses (4b) and (4c) are conventionalised but also sociolinguistically restricted. Senses (4b) and (4c) are not fixed phrases. Instead, they exist by virtue of being used in a specific context with a particular group of people where the meaning is easily retrievable.

4.5. Sense 5: ‘to obtain, get in (money)’

None of the uses found under sense 5 are found in KA dictionaries. These uses are mostly related to the realm of business transactions and to the sense of achievement. The most productive of these uses are in the sense of ‘investing money (online)’. The use of *dašš* in the sense of ‘to invest, to get a financial support/to obtain money’ is interesting. This sense of *dašš* is particularly accompanied by numbers, figures, statistics, or any collection of information discussed in numbers. Holes (2001: 176) notes a similar use of *dašš* in the sense of ‘to obtain money’ as spoken by uneducated Bahrainis aged forty or over in the mid-1970s as follows: *arba ‘ta ‘šar*, ‘*ašrat ayyām yidišš fīh arba ‘in rabbiya* ‘in a fortnight or ten days, he would pull in forty rupees’. I will present one example from each context of use.

21. *āna l-ḥīn daššēt, daššēt l-ḥīn bass nāṭir flūsi tiṭhawwal ḍnlāyn*^(sense 5a)
 ‘I have now **invested**, I have **invested** now, but I’m waiting for my money to be transferred online.’

Example (21) is contextually-conditioned. The expression *daššēt l-ḥīn* simply means ‘I (have) entered now’. There is no collocation here, per se. However, words like *flūsi tiṭhawwal ḍnlāyn* ‘my money to be transferred online’ contribute to the language context. Example (21) suggests that the context supplies and disambiguates between simply ‘depositing’ and actually ‘investing’ money. Example (21) is extracted from a dialogue between two male speakers chatting about investing US dollars online. Therefore it is not just the use of the expression

¹⁵ In Gulf Arabic, Holes (1990: 287) glosses *ḥīz* ‘anus’ as vulgar. Issa (2002: 69) states that the phrase *bi-xišš ḥīzō* ‘to enter one’s anus’ occurs in the Lebanese dialect and is of Syriac origin.

but the broader context of use that provides the means to understand what is going on. As Evans (2009b: 152–153) reminds us, ‘[t]he semantic contribution of a given word is always a function of a situated interpretation in a unique context of use’. In contrast, examples (22–25) are collocationally determined:

22. *min yidišš d-dōr l-arba ‘a, mā ‘inda šay xaḷāš*^(sense 5b)
 ‘When it (= football club) **reaches** the fourth league, he (= coach) has nothing to offer.’
23. *daššat ‘alēhum flūs. daššat ‘alēhum flūs, flūs*^{16(sense 5c)}
 ‘They (= Egyptian Government) have **gained** lots of money; they have really **gained** lots of money.’
24. *dašš mawsū‘at ginis hal masyad*^(sense 5d)
 ‘This mosque **entered** the Guinness (World Records).’
25. *dāššīn biš-ṣafqa mānčister u yuventus u siti*^(sense 5e)
 ‘Manchester (United), Juventus, and (Manchester) City are **negotiating** a deal.’

The collocations noted above are the following: *yidišš d-dōr l-arba ‘a* ‘to enter/join/dominate stage four’, *daššat ‘alēhum flūs* ‘to receive (easy) money’, *dašš mawsū‘at ginis* ‘to set/hold/break the Guinness World Records’, and *dāššīn biš-ṣafqa* ‘to agree on/close/ink a deal’. Although these collocations are not encountered in KA dictionaries, they are, however, semantically compatible and grammatically well formed. In other words, they are becoming widespread in this speech community because I have evidence from social networking websites to suggest their currency and prevalence among contemporary speakers.

4.6. Sense 6: ‘to interfere’

Sense 6 concerns the act of intervening in unnecessary situations. In example (26), the collocation *dāš bis-siyāsa*, which has not been reported for Kuwait, suggests that the individual ‘who entered into politics’ is becoming active, engaged, or immersed in politics. The collocation *dašš ‘arḏ* in example (27) was only reported by al-Rashaid (2012: 247). What we understand from that is that the collocation *dašš ‘arḏ* ‘to interfere’ is probably a relatively recent addition to the Kuwaiti lexicon because it was first recognised in 2012.

¹⁶ Another example of the so-called narrative technique BACK-STITCHING. Notice the repetition of the word *flūs* ‘money’ three times in one narrative signalling large sums of money.

26. *inta ka raḡul dīn lēš dāš bis-siyāsa?*^(sense 6a)
 ‘You, as a religious figure, why do you **get involved** with politics?’
27. *iḏa hāḏa hōmaway, u hāḏa l-fāyiz yibārīh hōmaway uḥamad bi-dišš* ‘arḏ
hōmaway, āna mita iyīni d-dōr^(sense 6b)
 ‘If this game is home-and-away like, and the winner is home and away, and
 Ḥamad will **interfere** home and away-like, then when’s my turn (to play
 PlayStation)?’

Arguably, some speakers might find the act of someone who *dāš bis-siyāsa* obnoxious and interfering. In example (27), the very common expression *dašš* ‘arḏ is firmly established and fixed because its meaning is unpredictable by simply looking at the meanings of the individual words it contains. Hence, the literal meaning of *ḥamad bi-dišš* ‘arḏ is easy to understand: ‘Ḥamad will enter into an honour’, but it also has a common idiomatic meaning, i.e. ‘he pokes/shoves/sticks his nose into something’. In addition, we could substitute the human subject *Ḥamad* with an animal: *l-ḡaṭwa daššat* ‘arḏ ‘the cat interfered’ in the sense of the cat gets in the way. Also, we could substitute the subject with an inanimate entity as in: *s-sayyāra daššat* ‘arḏ ‘the car got in the way’, meaning a car prevents someone from turning.

4.7. Sense 7: ‘to begin’

Sense 7 is listed in some KA dictionaries such as al-S‘aydān (1971: 577) and Khalaf (1988: 169–170). It mainly refers to temporal activities and is the least occurring sense in my data. For instance:

28. *āna šahar tis’a badišš nšālla, qaddamt*^(sense 7a)
 ‘In September, I will **start** attending (the Arab Open University), hopefully, as I already applied.’ [Inferred meaning: school starts in September.]
29. *yigūl lik iḏa gidart t’arif haḡḡ n-nās, tigdarr ddišš lah*^(sense 7b)
 ‘They say if you can understand people better, you’ll be able **to get to know** him.’

4.8. Sense 8: ‘to change in character or condition; alter in function or nature’

From examples (30–38) below, it can be observed that most of the uses within sense 8 are related to the sphere of politics due to the presence of common political terms such as: *maḡlis* ‘parliament’, *intixābāt* ‘elections’, etc. However, we also find other uses related to change in character or condition. It is worth mentioning that all the examples noted within this sense are considered modern examples of use because they have not been attested in KA dictionaries.

30. *āna yōm sa ‘di inna hāda mā yiṭla ‘, mā ydišš l-maḡlis*^(sense 8a)
‘He will make my day if he doesn’t **become** a Member of Parliament.’
31. *‘ayal b-šigg t-ṭanṭāwī awwal mā ydišš hāda mursi, ha?*^(sense 8b)
(I hear) Mursī will get on al-Ṭanṭāwī’s nerves once he **gets elected**, eh?’
32. *mā ydišš l-maḡlis wala ydišš l-ntixābāt, ma ‘āy?*^(sense 8c)
‘He **becomes** neither an MP, nor does he **stand for election**. Are you following?’
33. *ḥamad ṣaḥḥ dišš muḥāsaba fīha kādar*^{17(sense 8d)}
‘Right, Ḥamad (why don’t you) **major** in Accounting; you’ll be entitled to the Accountants’ Allowance.’
34. *ydišš s-sūg, bidāyat šisma istiṭmār. ‘āš b-fatra, sawwa mablaḡ, dašš b-marḥalat l-xaṭar*
‘He **gets in** the (stock) market, at the beginning of what-do-you-call-it investment. He lived for a while, made some money, and **went through** a critical phase.’^(sense 8e)
35. *yuba*¹⁸ *hāda ga ‘ ydišš bristīḡ wiyā-hum yā ḡimā ‘a*^(sense 8f)
‘You know what guys; he is **acting** in a prestigious manner with them.’
36. *ī balaḡ ḥēl, ḥēl, hāda b-‘unf dašš r-riḡūla b-awsa ‘ abwābah*^(sense 8g)
‘Yeah, he reached adolescence/hit puberty very quickly; he **became** a man all of a sudden.’ [Inferred meaning: he’s not acting his age because he developed early.]
37. *almānya yaxi*¹⁹ *maḥḥad yigdar ywaggifhum. dāššīn karf čīdi, čīdi*^(sense 8h)
‘No one can defeat Germany (football) my friend. They **are** superbly **trained**.’
38. *sawwa ‘amaliyya u dašš b-ḡaybūba*^(sense 8i)
‘He underwent an operation and **fell into** a coma.’

¹⁷ English borrowing (via French): ‘cadre’, noted for Kuwait by al-S‘aydān (1971: 1027).

¹⁸ *yuba* literally means ‘my father’, but it is used here as the so-called MONOLEXIC BI-POLAR term that involves the use of a senior kin-term to address the junior. For more examples, see Yassin (1977a); Holes (2016: 437–447).

¹⁹ *yaxi* ‘my brother’ consists of the vocative particle *ya* + kin-term for ‘brother’ *ax* + 1cs possessive (post-consonantal) pronoun *-i*. This term of address is used within the family to address siblings, but it may also be applied to intimate age-mates outside the family. Friends of the same age are addressed exactly as brothers are, by an appropriate kinterm which may be prefixed or followed by personal names (Yassin 1977b: 130).

Examples (30–38) contain meaning variation. They show incipient semantic change, i.e. spontaneous references that are co-created by the informants. They have not been encountered or codified in any of the KA dialectal dictionaries. The matter of translation suggests that key choices made about pragmatic force and connotative meanings are clearly supported by the contextual material. It also entails a judgment about the specificity, tone, and attitude of the utterance. For instance, examples (30–32) are given in the context of regional politics and the ‘Arab Spring’, while example (37) is quoted out of the sports context. However, example (38) is both contextually and collocationally conditioned, whereby the noun *ġaybūba* ‘coma’ normally co-occurs with *dašš* in the sense of ‘to fall into’, ‘go into’, ‘lapse into’, ‘sink into’, ‘slip into’, and the relevant context provided. Nonetheless, the collocation *ydišš s-sūg* in example (34) does not necessarily refer to the stock market but rather to any market in general. It is the social setting and the nature of the communication that provided me with enough contextual clues in order to arrive at the meaning that we have now.

5. Further evidence for dialect change

Despite the variety of senses of *dašš* listed thus far, the single most striking observation to emerge from the data was to discover the disappearance of some conventional senses of this verb from my data, viz. ‘to set sail, embark on a sea voyage, dive into water’ (i.e. verbs designating motion in water or the so-called ‘aquamotion verbs’). These particular senses are very typical of littoral Gulf dialects, and were reported in Kuwait some seventy years ago (see, for example, al-S‘aydān 1971: 578; Khalaf 1988: 169; al-Shamlān 1989: 371; al-Ayyūb 1997: 222; al-Rashaid 2012: 247). According to Koptjevskaja-Tamm and colleagues (2010: 316), ‘the domain of AQUAMOTION is complementary to TERRA-MOTION (motion on land) and to AERO-MOTION (motion in the air)’. As evidenced in Holes’ (1995: 271) study, urbanisation is one of the social forces that drives the engine of linguistic change in the Middle East. It is therefore important to realise that Kuwait changed in two decades from a near-medieval sheikhdom to a modern welfare state when its first oil well gushed into being in 1938. Noticeably, enormous changes have occurred in the lifestyle and occupations of the people of Kuwait, which have had implications for their language. For example, the replacement of maritime occupations following the discovery of oil has had dramatic implications for the lexicon of KA. In the wider Gulf, Holes (2001: xxxviii) reports that:

There has been large-scale semantic extension of vocabulary brought from Arabia to meet the different circumstances of sedentary life on the coast. The vocabulary of the sea – in particular of pearl-diving – gives many examples of terms used

in the central Arabian dialects (and CLA) which acquired a specialised nautical meaning, and sometimes lost their original senses.

Consequently, I noticed that the above aquamotion verbal senses are mostly recognised by older Kuwaiti speakers. According to Holes (2011: 132), during the pearling trade in the era before oil was discovered in the mid-1930s, ‘there was a whole language and lore which related to the practice and financing of diving’. This observation was strongly supported by Johnstone and Muir (1964: 299) when they interviewed Kuwaiti sailors and shipbuilders/shipwrights (*gaḷālīf*) in 1958; they observed during the course of their work that ‘younger people no longer know much of the traditional Kuwaiti lore of the sea, and that this knowledge will have disappeared almost entirely within a few generations’. As a matter of fact:

Most Kuwaitis have forgotten the names of boats from lack of use and lack of need of them. They no longer remember [nautical] terms such as *yamluh* ‘the rail at the poop’ ... The names of parts of cars have replaced them (al-Shamlān 2000: 67).

This is not to say that this sense of *dašš* has disappeared from ordinary conversational speech. Rather, as it seems to me, it is still known to native speakers who were born in the 1980s and before. This sense has also been attested in central, eastern, and south-eastern Arabia (Ingham 1994: 177; Qafisheh 1997b: 220; Holes 2001: 175). However, in his dictionary of obsolete words in Saudi Arabian dialects, al-‘Ubūdī (2002: 288) lists *dašš* in the sense of ‘to set sail, dive into water’ as no longer being in current use.

Furthermore, while explaining the meaning of *dašš*, Khalaf (1988: 169) mentions the geographical distribution of the word and points out that it is particularly used in Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula. This is also confirmed by Behnstedt and Woidich (2014: 71–74) in their semasiological word atlas while providing the translations and realisations of ‘enter’ in modern Arabic dialects. Khalaf (1988: 170), however, adds that *dašš* is nowadays used to refer to the landing of an aeroplane, e.g.:

1. *daššat ṭ-ṭayyāra*

‘The plane is approaching (the airport)’ (i.e. ‘aero-motion verb’).

The foregoing discussion implies that pearl diving was the mainstay of the economy of Kuwait and eastern Arabia (ceasing altogether in 1959) and that the senses related to this occupation were particularly active before the oil boom in the region. It is reasonable to suppose that a core sense of *dašš* is ‘enter’ and, given the particular historical, demographic, and socio-economic conditions, it

would be localised as ‘dive into water’ in the context of seafaring occupations. So the sense ‘dive into water’ would have been primed in that particular environment. Consequently, I wish to propose a possible scenario for the synchronic process of this meaning extension (adapted from Cruse 2011: 260). First of all, the verb *dašš* has established a literal sense₁ designating motion in water ‘to set sail, etc.’ Creative people then occasionally use *dašš* in a figurative sense₂ ‘to enter’. Now, ‘to enter’ becomes established and catches on (i.e. becomes entrenched in the mental lexicons of members of the speech community as an entry), so that *dašš* becomes polysemous between ‘to set sail, etc.’ and ‘to enter’. Then, ‘to set sail, etc.’ is still seen as literal, while ‘to enter’ is figurative. ‘To set sail, etc.’ accordingly begins to become obsolescent. ‘To enter’ begins to be identified as literal, and ‘to set sail, etc.’ as figurative. Finally, ‘to set sail, etc.’ is lost, at which point the sense of *dašš* has immediately transformed from ‘to set sail, etc.’ to ‘to enter’.

In fact, within these aquamotion senses of *dašš*, we may distinguish between two nautical activities: self-propelled motion of the animate figure (‘dive’) and the motion of vessels and the people onboard (‘sail’),²⁰ (cf. Koptjevskaja-Tamm et al. 2010). The following example is noted in Kuwait for the ‘dive’ sense by al-S‘aydān (1971: 578) and al-Ayyūb (1982: 53, 1997: 222):

2. *dašš/daššēna l-ġōṣ*
 ‘He/we went pearl-diving.’

While the following example is noted by al-S‘aydān (1971: 578), Khalaf (1988: 170), and al-Rashaid (2012: 247) for the ‘sail’ sense:

3. *daššēt/daššēna l-baḥar*
 ‘I/we put to sea.’

and the following sense is noted by Khalaf (1988: 169) and al-Roumī (2005: 185):

4. *daššat s-saḥfina*
 ‘The ship set sail.’

The sense of *dašš* as ‘to embark on a sea voyage’ is also recorded for Kuwait by al-S‘aydān (1971: 578) and al-Ayyūb (1997: 222):

²⁰ In English, the verb ‘dive’ is categorised within the semantic field of SEARCH VERBS, while ‘sail’ is considered a MOTION VERB, or VERBS THAT ARE NOT VEHICLE NAMES (Levin 1993: 198, 268). In contrast, Koptjevskaja-Tamm and colleagues (2010: 316) label verbs such as *dive* and *sink* as IMMERSION VERBS.

5. *dašš/daššēna s-sifar*
 ‘He/we embarked on a sea voyage.’

Other local writers have merely listed the items *dašš* (m. sg.) and *daššaw* (pl.) indicating ‘a sea voyage’ as if it is the sole meaning of *dašš* (al-Shamlān 1989: 371; al-Roumī 2005: 185).²¹

Last but not least, the verbal noun *dašša* (lit. ‘the entering, going in’) occurs in Kuwait, as elsewhere in eastern Arabia, with the meaning ‘the beginning of the pearling season proper’, giving a firm indication as to the establishment of *dašš* as meaning ‘to set sail, embark on a sea voyage, pearl dive’ (al-S‘aydān 1971: 578; Khalaf 1988: 169–170; al-Shamlān 1989: 371, 2000: 178; al-Bakr 2000: 72; al-Roumī 2005: 185).²²

6. Conclusion

The principal objective of the study was to explore the lexical semantic behaviour of *dašš* and to detect the semantic innovation and change in it. This study set out to test the hypothesis that changes never occur in isolation; explicit links between socioeconomic and language change are evident in my data. Therefore, the most interesting finding was that the majority of the senses of *dašš* are deemed innovative and creative from a historical semantic perspective as I encountered meaning developments in the key verb which have yet to be attested in KA dictionaries. Within each particular sense, we find new uses and instantiations. New uses were also found to be associated with technological innovation. For instance, *dašš* previously denoted ‘enter’ whereas in the wake of technical progress, *dašš* has extended to ‘log in’, ‘browse online’, etc. However, we have also observed that traditional senses of *dašš* are dying out, especially those related to old occupations. In addition, studies have shown that ‘[s]emantic change is often considered to stand in close relation to socio-cultural and intellectual as well as to technological development’ (Meinschaefer 2003: 135–6).

Furthermore, the status of these uses is that we see them attested in conversational settings; a number of senses are encountered in the dictionaries. But then we see a great deal of innovation, some of which is created on the

²¹ Sowayan (1992: 264) glosses *dašš* ‘to wade’ for the Arabic dialect of the Šammar. Hava (1899: 197) lists *dašš* as meaning ‘to travel in (a country)’ which could possibly be a homonym rather than a polyseme.

²² Noted by Ḥanḍal (1998: 242) for the UAE and by Holes (2001: 176, 2005: 2) for Bahrain, in addition to *ir-rakba* ‘the setting out’. In present-day Kuwait, *dašša* also means ‘entrance’ as in *daššat l-maṭḥaf* ‘the museum entrance’. However, al-Ḥanaḥī (1964: 133) records the unusual form *al-madašš* ‘entrance’ for Kuwait which is not recorded elsewhere.

fly and some of which is pragmatically conventionalised. Any (contemporary) native speaker of KA knows that *dašš* means ‘enter’. However, this study has shown that *dašš* is polysemous, requiring particular contexts of use for its disambiguation. Additionally, polysemy is seen as a potential source of lexical ambiguity. Nonetheless, context is critical in avoiding ambiguity and solving potential vagueness. I completely concur with Hanks (2013: 73), who said: ‘Do meanings also exist outside the transactional contexts in which they are used? I would argue that they do not’. We have seen that some words have many meanings, or more precisely, that the same word can have different ‘readings’ and can make different contributions to the meaning of a text or an utterance. Context disambiguates because it includes domain, variety, setting, syntactic behaviour, and collocational preferences.

These findings further support the idea that verbs are infinitely extendable and that their uses can be highly ephemeral. It is possible to make a contribution about semantic change and polysemy by looking at the relationship of highly abstract conceptual core elements, and how they are attenuated and adjusted whenever there are specific lexical expressions that collocate with them. For instance, I was able to account for the ways in which simple lexemes combine in collocation to form highly complex meanings that are only recoverable in a particular context. A typical example would be the very common expression *dašš* ‘arḏ ‘He pokes his nose into something’ in example (27). This expression is learnt as one block of words rather than two separate lexical units because ‘arḏ habitually collocates with *dašš* in order to arrive at the idiomatic meaning.

Finally, the empirical findings in this study provide evidence to support the fact that language change is still occurring and will continue to occur as long as this speech community is exposed to external and cultural influences. In this day and age, language change is inextricably connected with scientific progress. I conclude this study with the following statement of fact: ‘Innovation and change are not conceptually the same thing: an innovation is an act of the speaker, whereas a change is observed within the language system. It is *speakers*, and not *languages*, that innovate’ (Milroy 1992: 169).

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