

“very informal, sometimes offensive, language that is used especially by people who belong to a particular group, such as young people or criminals”

Almost all lexicographers agree that slang is casual, sometimes insolent, speech used within a certain human class, mostly teenagers or outcasts. What matters in the formation of slang is not the component terms, but how such words and phrases function; speaking in slang helps a person “to be creative, clear and acceptable to a select group” since “sharing and maintaining a constantly changing in-group vocabulary aids group solidarity and serves to include and exclude members” (Eble 1998: 19, 119).

II. Methodology: Translation Strategy

The translations presented in this paper are based on an ontological analysis. In other words, the source texts have been gathered by means of continuous observation of, and listening to, slang speech currently used in Egyptian down-to-earth settings, media, television dramas, movies, literary writings as well as blogs and internet chatting rooms. The study neither entails standard Arabic interpretations of the concerned slang samples, examines the impact of Egyptian slang on target text readers, nor refers to cultures other than that of modern Egypt.

The strategies employed in this analysis mark the functional role of translation by means of trying to reach a compromise between the non-identical source language (S L) and target language (T L) (Schjoldager 2008: 67,71). Henrik Gottlieb identifies several strategies for translating slang dialogues: Expansion, Paraphrase, Transfer, Imitation, Transcription, Dislocation, Condensation, Decimation, Deletion, Resignation (Gottlieb 1992;1994). The glossary prepared in this study is chiefly based on the paraphrase strategy that “alters a non-visualised expression in the ST such as a language-specific expression so that the TT conveys the same function with a significantly changed form” (Gottlieb 1992: 75). In items (5) and (21) below, the transcription strategy is used as it is “employed when facing anomalous speech such as nonstandard speech such as dialect or a pronunciation with a specific emphasis on a syllable” (1992:76); a pictorial illustration is also used in (5) to explain a culturally-based gesture. Imitation is taken in (25) “*inta herkleez?*” to transfer a proper noun. In (27), “*ad-ak el-fanous*” is rendered into English by depending both on paraphrase and expansion that explains a cultural allusion; literally it means “scratch the lamp” (to refer to ‘Alaa eddin’s Lamp’ in the *Arabian Nights*). This also applies to “*mab-ye’rafsh*” (30) which literally means “He never knows”, but its reference to sexual impotence has been first used in cinema, in the late 1990s. The expressions “*ya man*” (13), “*muz-za*” (29), “*systemak?*” (32) and “*ya-prens*” (35) are Arabic transcriptions of “....., man!”, “Ms”, “your system?” and “....., Prince!” respectively.

Translation of Slang Examples

Many slangy expressions and terms emerged in today’s Egypt (from about 2000 to 2010, and a little afterwards); much of this jargon has been invented, and widely used, by and among young people; they come from various cultural environments. Their casual expressions are usually spread by the media as well as by bloggers on Facebook or Twitter. Each group of youth may have their private spoken code which they may or may not share with other teenagers and young men; hence, a word or phrase could lead to more than one interpretation. Here follows an attempt to translate these modern Egyptian vernacular words and phrases into English. Here, current Egyptian vernacular phrases or words are followed by Cairene transliterations, then by English translations.

1 – “انت بتشتغلني؟” / “ده بيشغللك” / “دي بتشتغلك” / “اشتغله/ اشتغليه”

“*inta betishtaghalni?*” / “*da beyshtaghalak*” / “*di betishtaghalak*” / “*ishtaghaluh*” / “*ishtaghaleeh*”

1 – “You bluff me?” / “He’s bluffing you.” / “She’s bluffing you.”, “Bluff him (to a male).” / “Bluff him (to a female).”

2 – “فكك” / “يا عم فكك” / “فككى منك/ منه/ منها” / “فكك منه/ منها”

“*fokkak*” / “*ya am fokkak*” / “*fokkeni minnak/minnuh/minha*” / “*fokkak minnuh/ minha*”

2 – “Don’t care about it.” / “Man, don’t care about it.” / “I care don’t about what you say or do/ he says or does/ she says or does.” / “Don’t care about what he/she says or does.”

3 – “انت فصلتني” / “انت فصيل موت”

“*inta fasaltteni*” / “*inta faseel moat*”

3 – “ You took me out of mood.”/ “ You always take me out of mood.”

4 – " انت هتسيحلي؟"/ " سيحله/ سيحيله"

“ *inta hatsaiahli ?* ”/ “ *saiahluh/ saiahiluh* ”

4 – “ You’re disclosing my (shameful) secret? ”/ “ Disclose his (shameful) secret (to a male)/ Disclose his (shameful) secret (to a female). ”



5 – " ده كده"/ " دى كده"

↗ ↗
“ *da kida* ”/ “ *di kida* ”

5 – “He/ It is very good”/ “ She/ It is very good”

6 – " ده فيص"/ " دى فيصت"

“ *da fai-yas* ”/ “ *di fai-yasit* ”

6 – “ He’s exhausted(dead)/ It’s broken down”/ “She’s exhausted(dead)/It’s broken down”.

7 – " قفش على"/ " قفشت عليه/عليها"/ " شكله (ده) قافش"

“ *afash alai-ya* ”/ “ *afasht aleih/ aleiha* ”/ “ *shakluh (da) afesh* ”

7 – “ He got angry with me”/ “I got angry with him/her”/ “He seems angry”

8 – " ياعم ده بطيخ"/ " ده عايم فى ميه البطيخ"

“ *ya am da battikh* ”/ “ *da aiem fi maiet el-battikh* ”

8 – “He’s an idiot(stupid) ”/ “He understands nothing”

9 – " دا احنا اتزنجفنا فالأمتحان النهارده"/ " زنجفة"/ " عزمنا فلان عندنا و زنجفنا مشاريب"

“ *da ihna itzangifna fil imtihan en-naharda* ”/ “ *zangafah* ”/ “ *azamna flan andina wi zangifna meshareeb* ”

9 – “We’ve suffered from that difficult exam today”/ “ demotic impudence (usually in public) OR “elite impudence (usually indirect) ”/ “We were hospitable hosts, (offering good drinks)”

10 – " الحال (ده) مقشفت"

“ *el-hal (da) me-ashfat* ”

10 – “ We’ve no ... ”/ “I’m/ He’s moneyless”

11 – " هنضرب"/ " هنضربلى حاجه"/ " انا لسه ضارب فول عالصبح"

“ *hanid-rab* ”/ “ *had-rably haga* ”/ *ana lis-sa darib fool a’ sobh* ”

11 – “Let’s start nobbling”/ “ I’ll have something (food or drink or smoking) ”/ “ I’ve just had beans for breakfast”

12 – " انا هروح أظرفلى سندوتش فول"

“ *ana harooh azrufli sandwich fool* ”

12 – “ I’ll go and have a bean sandwich”

13 – " قشطه"/ " قشطه عليك/ عليه/ يمان"

“ *ishta* ”/ “ *ishta aleik/ aleih/ ya man* ”

13 – “It’s wonderful”/ “ You’re (He’s) lucky”/ “Great work (idea)”

14 – " مهيس"/ " ده تهيس"

“ *mihai-yis* ”/ “ *da tah-yees* ”

14 – “ He’s hallucinating/ a hallucinant”/ “ It’s hallucination”

15 – " روش/ روش طحن/ روشنة"

“ *rewish/rewish than/ rawshahah* ”

- 15 – “ He’s cheerful/ a casual (easy-going OR casually dressed)/ He’s such a casual/ “casual dressing or behavior/ cheerfulness “
 16 – “هنفخك”/ ده هينفخنى”
 “ hanfukhak”/ “da ha-yunfukhni”
 16 – “ I’ll punish you “/ “He’ll punish me”
 17 – “دى كوسة”
 “ di koasa”
 17 – “ It’s favouritism (unfair/ unjust/ inequality) “
 18 – “هرتلة”/ ده بيهرتل”
 “ har-talah”/ da biyhar-tel”
 18 – “ It’s a heresy/ nonsense”/ “ He’s saying a heresy OR nonsense OR babbling”
 19 – “ده ببسقط”/ “انت بتسقط؟” / “ ده باينله مسقط”
 “ da bi-ysa ’at”/ “inta bit-sa’at?”/ “da bainluh bi-ysa ’at”
 19 – “He misses words while speaking/ He’s had a drop too much”/ “ You miss utterances?”/ “ He seems drunk and is dropping off “
 20 – “احلقله/ نفضله/ ادلقه” / “ كبر (الجمجمة)(الجي)”
 “ eh-la’luh/ naffadluh/ udlu’uh”/ “kab-bar (il-gumguma) (ej-ji)”
 20 – “ Drop what he says (Don’t care about what he says” / “ Put your mind at rest / Take it easy / Don’t care about this”
 21 – A: “ Do you agree/ You’re OK?” B: Yes, Ido/ It’s all right”
 21 – A: “أ: 21- “قشطة”؟ ب: “قشطة”
 “ ishta?” “ ishta”
 22 – “ تطنيش/ تسقيع/ حلاقة/ تكبير/ قلب”
 “ tat-neesh/tas-ee’a/ hi-la’a/ tak-beer/alb”
 22 – “ indifference”
 23 – “ أدارجى/ قبضاي”/ “ مفتح/ مطرطق”/ “ واكلها والعة”/ “أرن/ متأرنن”
 “ adargi/ abadai”/ “mifat-tah/mit-tarta’ “ wakilha wal ‘a”/ “aran/ mit-arnan”
 23 – “thug”/ “ cautious, clever”/ “ cunning, greedy”/ “ arrogant (conceited)”
 24 – “ أمبلايز” / “ سكة”/ “باشكا”/ “ أوس”
 “ amblayez”/ “sik-ka”/ “bashka”/ “a-aw-wis”
 24 – “ in vain”/ “unlawful solution(way)”/ “ (your) cards are on the table”/ “ (I) study”
 25 – “ استكانيس” / “ مستكنيس” / “ انت هر كليز؟”/ “ حبشكانات” / “ شخلفة”
 “ estikanayis”/ “mestikanyas”/” inta herkleez?”/ “habash-takanat”/”shakhlafa”
 25 – “ a time of rest”/ “ having a rest”/ “ You’re Hercules?(irony)”/ “ talking sophisticatedly or in standard style” / “ gaily enjoying one’s time”
 26 – “ فى الأستخبس (فى الخباسة)” / “ عامل دماغ”/ “ هارش ...؟”/ “ مانتخ/ أنتخة”
 “ fi el-ostukhebs (fil-khabasa)”/ aamil dimagh”/ haresh ...?”/ mi-antakh/ antakha”
 26 – “ secretly”/ “ drugged (drunk)”/ “You understand ...?”/ “ workless / worklessness”
 27 – “ ادعك الفنوس (زق عجلك)”/ “ اركب الفرد” / “ ايه الأساتك؟”
 “ ad-ak el-fanous (zoa’ agalak)”/ “erkab el-fard”/ “eih el-asatik ?”
 27 – “ Off you go / go away”/ “ Get ready to leave at once”/ “ What’s going on?(How are things?)”
 28 – “ طيب أنا ههلب على (مكان) و أشق”/ “ أنا هر كب فرد بقه حالا و أهوبء على بره”
 “ ta-yeb ana hahlib ala (makan) wa ashooa”/ ana harkab fard ba’a halan wa ahboa’ ala bar-ra”
 28 – “ I’ll go [place] and be back quickly”/ “ I’m going to go out now”
 29 – “ مزة (أوزى)”/ “ المزة بتاعتى” / “ دى بقت مزة”
 “ muz-za (ouzi)”/ “elmuz-za beta’ti”/ “di ba-it muz-za”

29 – “a girl who is pretty and buxom”/ “my beloved or girlfriend”/ “She’s grown into an adorable teen girl”

30 – “الدماع فصلت /فاصل/ ”أنا فصلت خلاص/ ”مبيعرفش/ ”حاجة شمال”
 “*ed-dimagh fasalit/ fasel/ ana fasalt khalas*”/ “*mab-ye’rafsh*”/ “*haga shimal*”

30 – “I’m (He’s) no longer on drugs [in bad need of doing drugs / I’m not able to concentrate or go on”/ “He’s impotent”/ “something unlawful”

31 – “انزل من على ودنى/ ”فاصل/ ”نركب رجلينا/ ”بستفة/ انا بستفته”

“*inzel min ala wedni*”/ “*fasel*”/ *nerkab reglaina*”/ “*bastafa*”/ “*ana bastiftoh*”

31 – “Stop talking about it”/ “insane/ drunk/ drugged”/ “Let’s walk”/ “rebuke / I rebuked him”

32 – “دا انا هاخرتأك/ خرتأه/ انا خرتأت فلان/ اتخرتأ”/ “انت ايه سستمك؟”

“*da ana ha-kharta’ak/ kharta’ah/ ana kharta’at folan/ itkharta*”/ “*inta eih systemak?*”

32 – “I’ll beat you/ beating/ I beat somebody/ He was beaten [often in video games]”/ “What’s your attitude or reaction?/ How will you act?”

33 – “كل واحد يلم تعابينه و يلعب قدام بيته عشان هنر شرش ميه”/ “منفض”/ “فاصل”

“*kull wahed yel-lem ta’abeenuh wi-yel-ab ud-dam baituh ashan han-rashrash may-yah*”/ “*minaf-fad*”/ “*fasel*”

33 – “Let’ stop working (it’s time to go home, everybody)/ Mind your own business, everybody[threat]”/ “being in a state of caring about nothing”/ “careless , clumsy”

34 – “شهيصنى/ ”انا هارسيك عالحوار كله/ ”ياعم رووش”

“*shahayasni*”/ “*ana haras-seeek ‘al- hiwar kul-luh*”/ “*ya am raw-wish*”

34 – “Please me”/ “I’ll tell you the whole(true) story”/ “Enjoy yourself/ Take it easy”

35 – “اخر حاجة/ ”قصر”/ “شغال (بطل) لكلك لكلك”/ “انت هتزيط؟”/ “زيط يا برنس”

“*akher haga*”/ “*as-sar*”/ “*shagh-ghal (bat-tal) luk-luk luk-luk*”/ “*inta hatzeet?*”/ *zeet ya-prens*”

35 – “extremely”/ “cut it short”/ “You’re (stop) talking too much”/ “You’re making a mess(breaking the rules)?”/ “Enjoy yourself, guy”

36 – “ده واد سيس/ دول عيال سيس”

“*da wad sees/ doal e-yal sees*”

36 – “He’s a soft, impotent guy/ They’re soft, impotent guys”

37 – “ده منفسن/ ”بطل (بطلى) نفسنه”

“*da minafsin*”/ “*bat-tal(bat-tali) nafsannah*”

37 – “He’s jealous/ spiteful”/ “Stop this jealousy/ spite”

III. Conclusion

In conclusion, slang – as well as colloquial speech – is often determined by socio-political and economic and cultural changes that take place at any given real setting (Newmark 1998:37-8). The dialect items above, which are rendered into English, obviously reflect all aspects in the Egyptian arena during the pre- 2011- Revolution era. This will open gates for scrutinizing different discourses, through cinema, media, literature , etc., in Egypt and other ‘Arab Spring’ countries.

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