



'Discourse on the Go': Thematic Analysis of Vehicle Graffiti on the Roads of Egypt

Mohamed El-Nashar

Language and Translation Department, College of Language and Communication, Arab Academy for Science,
Technology and Maritime Transport, Egypt
E-mail: Melnashar68@gmail.com

Heba Nayef (Corresponding author)

Humanities Department, College of Language and Communication, Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport, Egypt
E-mail: hnayef@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper investigates graffiti drawn on vehicles in Egypt as an expression of their authors' social values, religious ideologies and political affiliations. Little research has been done in Egypt on these meaning-loaded messages. This paper gives further evidence that graffiti are a very powerful mode of expression for groups that feel disenfranchised by the wider society. The data comprise (614) written graffiti taken from both highway and in-city vehicles from different parts of Egypt. This paper employs Fairclough's (1995) post-structuralist model of discourse analysis which extends the concept of discourse from the traditional and natural 'language in use' to be a social practice *per se*. One of the aims of this study is to explore the various discourse domains of vehicle graffiti in Egypt through thematically analyzing their patterns of usage. For this aim, the authors have devised a four-pronged thematic classification of such graffiti. The paper also tackles some of the lexical features of graffiti and addresses the language and language variations used. Results show that religious expressions constitute more than half the data. It is also shown that graffiti about the self or car are positive whereas statements about 'the other' are negative. The analysis reveals a strong positive inclination in the social and philosophical expressions with almost nonexistent political graffiti.

Keywords: Graffiti, post-structuralist model, Discourse Analysis, discourse domains, Egypt

1. Introduction

In the ancient city of Hierakonpolis, modern Aswan, in Upper Egypt, Egyptologists found one of the oldest graffiti tableaus on which the king has inscribed his name 'Scorpion' and the story of his victory over the king of Naqada, modern Qena, also in Upper Egypt, which led to the unification of the south under one ruler (Hendrickx Darnell & Gatto, 2012). Following in their ancestors' footsteps 5,250 years later, drivers of vehicles rolling the streets of Egypt write on their cars messages that vary in nature but, like those of their pre-dynastic ancestors, are expressions of their social, religious and political identities and beliefs.

The purview of this paper will be confined to messages printed on stickers, written or drawn on the vehicle, not for a commercial purpose but as an expression of the individual's social values, religious ideologies and political affiliations. Such statements are in themselves a very powerful mode of expression for groups that essentially feel disenfranchised and marginalized by the wider society (Farnia, 2014). Through running a qualitative and quantitative analysis of (614) of these vehicle graffiti, this study attempts to discern the thematic categories of vehicle graffiti in Egypt and study the lexical features of this type of 'mobile discourse' (Bloch, 2000:48).

1.1 Literature Review

The term 'graffiti' is derived from the Italian word 'graffito'. It is used to refer to "any form of writing or images on the walls or surfaces of public buildings, parks, toilets, buses or trains, usually bearing some political or sexual contents, a lover's pledge, proposition, or obscene words" (Chiluwa, 2008:274).

Language is an institution that does not belong equally to everyone (Cameron, 1985) and is rather dominated by a symbolic elite (van Dijk, 2006) who control public discourse and from whom we learn our prejudices and beliefs. Such 'symbolic elite', represented in journalists, media persons and politicians, set for us what is important and what is to be disregarded, what to be accepted and what is to be rejected. Through their text and talk they produce and reproduce ideologies and beliefs (van Dijk, 2001). Graffiti, as scholars tend to regard them, are the means to strike, or rather redress, the balance of such discourse, thus constituting a challenge to this form of domination and injustice. It is viewed as an egalitarian means of expressions, giving voice to the marginalized, helping them to speak the unspeakable (Best, 2003; Bloch, 2000; Gadsby, 1995; Moonwomon, 1995; Obeng, 2000b). Some scholars claim that graffiti,

especially those that are available to a large audience as it is the case with vehicle graffiti, are not just the marginalized individuals' expression of themselves but they also serve as a stimulus for the public to engage in a public discussion of issues (Nwoye, 1993).

Yet, there is another point of view that sees graffiti as dominant rhetoric which does not allow other people to give responses to them. As such, graffiti are not viewed as egalitarian, for they do not offer chances for prospective audience to engage in a dialogic discourse with the graffiti owners who do not care how their graffiti sound and how they are received (Basthomi, 2009). This controversy of whether graffiti are egalitarian or authoritarian in nature does not deny the fact that graffiti in general, and vehicle graffiti in particular, serve as a platform for social communication in various societies (Caribbean, Best, 2003; Egypt, Gröndahl, 2012, Lennon, 2014; Ghana, Obeng, 2000a, 2000b; Greece, Kalerante & Mormori, 2005; Indonesia, Basthomi, 2009; Iran, Farnia & Tohidian, 2013; Farnia, 2014, Sheivandi et al. 2015, Mirzaalikhani, 2011; Israel, Bloch, 2000, Hanauer 2004, Salamon, 2005; Kenya, Yieke 2003; Mexico, Grider 1975; Nigeria, Nwoye, 1993, Chilwa, 2008; Poland, Jankowska 1999, Szpila, 2003, 2012; Spain; Bunting, 2012; Sri Lanka, Peiris & Jayantha 2015; United States, Case, 1992, Hunt, 1996)

Over the past forty years, the universality of graffiti has attracted the attention of scholars from various disciplines. Gadsby (1995) recognized nine main approaches to studying graffiti: Cultural, gendered, folkloric, quantitative, aesthetic, motivational, preventative, popularization and linguistics. (For more details, see Gadsby, 1995). Scholars adopting the linguistic approach have different aims while conducting their research work. They view graffiti as a linguistic phenomenon that involves both form and content and makes use of discourse to mean something other than itself (Gross et al. 1997; Mwangi 2012). One of the earliest studies of graffiti from a linguistic approach was done by Grider (1975) in which she investigated the cultural and linguistic functions of *con safos* graffiti within the Mexican-American community. Some other scholars studied graffiti as political discourse (Obeng, 2000a, 2000b; Bloch, 2000; Case, 1992; Salamon, 2005), while others viewed them as a gendered discourse (Moonwomon, 1995; House, 2007) as a means of language learning (Mwangi, 2012) or as discourse of religious identity (Chilwa, 2008). In addition, Adams and Winter (1997) studied graffiti as a discourse genre that sets the identity of gang members and mark the boundaries of the gang as a social community.

Some scholars tend to acknowledge two types of graffiti: Public and private (Basthomi, 2009; Emmison & Smith 2000), while others, like Gadsby (1995), recognized six different types: Latrinalia, public, tags, historical, folk epigraphy, and humorous (For a more detailed discussion, see Gadsby, 1995). Public graffiti are those writings that are done in open areas where there is greater possibility for the writer to be seen and known (Reisner, 1971). The more public the graffiti are, the more adherent to the norms of public discourse they are, with fewer obscenity and pornography. To this public type belong vehicle graffiti.

Scholars studying graffiti or stickers on various vehicles used a variety of terms to refer to this phenomenon: Bumper stickers (Bloch, 2000; Case, 1992 Salamon, 2005, House, 2007) vehicle stickers (Chilwa, 2008), truck graffiti (Basthomi, 2009; Farnia & Tohidian, 2013) or car written manuscripts (Divsalar & Nemati, 2012). It is worth noting that the term 'bumper stickers' was used by Rains et al. (2009) to refer to sayings that are included in an e-mail signature file following personal identifiers such as one's name, phone number, and postal address. For the purposes of this study, we opt for the term 'vehicle graffiti'.

1.2 Objective of the Study

Through running a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data, this paper addresses three analytical points. The first point is to determine the various discourse domains of vehicle graffiti in Egypt through analysing the content and patterns of usage of messages on vehicle graffiti. The second point tackles some of the lexical features displayed in the data under investigation. The third point addresses the form, which means here the language and language variation used in vehicle graffiti in Egypt in various discourse domains. The study investigates these points by providing a thematic analysis of the data using the post-structuralist model of discourse analysis framework which will be discussed in the following section.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The data are analyzed within the framework of the post-structuralist model of discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995). Fairclough (1989, 1995) extends the concept of discourse from the traditional, spontaneous and natural 'language in use' (Brown and Yule, 1983) and a tool to understand the intentions of the speaker (van Dijk, 1985) to be in itself a social practice (Chilwa, 2008). Discourse is looked upon as an agent in the hands of political and social groups aiming at influencing and dominating other political and social groups. It is both part and product of social practices. Adopting this model, this paper studies vehicle graffiti in Egypt as a social practice, that is, the product of discursive and other practices in the Egyptian society on both the individual and institutional levels. Viewed as discursive tools in the hands of their authors, such texts are in fact the product of a complex system of social and institutional practices which produce and reproduce them with a view to maintaining their continuous existence (Fairclough, 1995). These graffiti texts, which serve as a discursive social practice, provide a clear image and profound understanding of the various political and social changes in the society.

2. Methodology

2.1 Data Collection and Sampling

The data were collected from different locations inside Egypt from July, 2015 till January, 2016. The first set of the data was collected from highway locations; namely, Cairo-Alexandria highway, Cairo-Fayoum highway and Cairo-Sinai highway. Highway vehicles under investigation fall into three main categories: Huge, medium-sized and small trucks. They are all privately owned. The second set incorporates in-city locations which are: a) In the capital Cairo, El-Helmeya microbus terminal (east Cairo), El-Asher microbus terminal (east Cairo), Makram Ebeed microbus terminal (east Cairo), Moneeb microbus terminal (south Cairo) and Ahmad Essmat microbus terminal (east Cairo); b) Alexandria, Raml Microbus terminal; c) In the village of Shakshouk, Fayoum governorate, south of Cairo; d) Rad Sudr city, South Sinai. Vehicles under investigation in this set of locations all served as privately-owned means of public transportations and fall into three categories: Taxi cabs, minibuses and Tuk-tuks (or, rickshaws), (very small three-wheeled cars that are used instead of taxis in the narrow streets of Egypt's poor areas or inside villages).

For each vehicle one picture or more was taken from all sides. These pictures were then examined and the graffiti thereon recorded. Messages were gathered from bumper stickers, car rears, window decals, as well as personalized license plates. Commercial messages were then excluded. Written texts were then classified into a set of categories that will be discussed in section 2.2 below.

In Egypt, vehicle graffiti take two main forms: Pictorial and written. For the purpose of this study, we shall focus on the written graffiti. It is worth noting, however, that written graffiti far outnumber pictorial graffiti, as will be discussed in section 3. below.

All Arabic graffiti have been translated by the first author, except for the Quranic citations, which are taken from Ali's (1975) translation of the Glorious Quran. Such Quranic citations will all be put between double inverted commas.

2.2 Categories and Classification

This section discusses the thematic classification of the graffiti with reference to some lexical features as well as the language (either Arabic or English) and language variations detected in the data under examination.

2.2.1 Thematic Classification and Discourse Domains

We have proposed four discourse domains to be used to classify vehicle graffiti in Egypt: Religious expressions; identity expressions; social and philosophical expressions and finally political expressions. We then sub-classified these domains so as to discern the way vehicle graffiti in Egypt function as a dynamic means of social communication in the Egyptian society. Following is a brief exposition of the proposed categories and subcategories in this first level of analysis:

Table 1. Thematic classification of graffiti in Egypt

	Category	Sub-category
I	Religious Expressions	Reaffirmation of faith
		Protection against envy
		Preaching
		Invocations
II	Identity expressions	Self- and Car identity
		Identity of 'the other'
III	Social & Philosophical Expressions	Contentment
		Motivational expressions
		Love
		Wisdom
		Complaints
		Threats
IV	Political Expressions	Patriotism
		Political criticism

In terms of discourse domains, although categories are sometimes bound to overlap, some features are given to distinguish one sub-category from the other. In 'religious expressions', for instance, while 'reaffirmation of faith' is dedicated to messages in which the author re-asserts his belief in God, 'preaching' involves messages from the author to the audience, the onlookers, exhorting them to abide by God's teachings. 'Invocations', on the other hand, are messages from the author to God asking for support, help, patience, etc.

2.2.2 Language and Language Variation

If identifying the discourse domain of vehicle graffiti in Egypt is the first level of analysis, we propose a second level which deals more with the form than with the content; that is, the language used as well as the language variation, or language map. As a diglossic language, Arabic has three variations used freely by its speakers. In Egypt, the three levels of Arabic used are: Classical Arabic, which is the language used in the Quran and classical Arabic literature; Modern Standard Arabic or *FuSHa*, which is the language used in written texts (i.e. the press and formal settings) and finally vernacular Arabic or colloquial Arabic, which is the language used for everyday conversations (For further details, see Younes, 2006; Ferguson, 1959). Standard English is also used, though on a much smaller scale, and thus we included it in our taxonomy as shown below.

3. Results and Discussion

The data yielded a total of (614) written graffiti; 284 from highway vehicles and 330 from in-city vehicles. Also detected were only (11) pictorial graffiti, which lie beyond the purview of this study. As mentioned earlier, the study has three points of analysis: the identification of thematic classification and discourse domains, some salient lexical features that are displayed in the study, and the identification of the language and language variation used. In the following sections, the results of each analytical point are discussed.

3.1 Thematic Classification and Discourse domains

3.1.1 Religious Expressions

Religious expressions accounted for 328 (53.42%) graffiti, more than half the number of all graffiti messages detected in the data under investigation. The remaining graffiti occurrences (286, 46.57%) belong to the three other discourse domains.

3.1.1.1 Islam and Christianity

Egypt is largely a Muslim community with roughly (90%) of the population Muslims and 10% Christians (See the World Fact Book, Central Intelligence Agency at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-worldfactbook/geos/eg.html>). Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued reports (Among which was a report released on August 21, 2013 headlined "Egypt: Mass attacks on churches") that Coptic Christians were the subject of vandalism, destruction and murder especially after June 30th revolution, as Muslim Brotherhood supporters blamed Christians for being behind the ouster of their Islamist president Mohamed Morsi. This explains the barely extant occurrence of Christian expressions in the data, only (11) graffiti (3.35%) against 317 cases (96.64%) for Islamic expressions (See Figure 1 below). It is worth noting that those (11) occurrences of Christian expressions were all spotted outside Cairo, (7) in Alexandria and (4) in Cairo-Sinai highway.

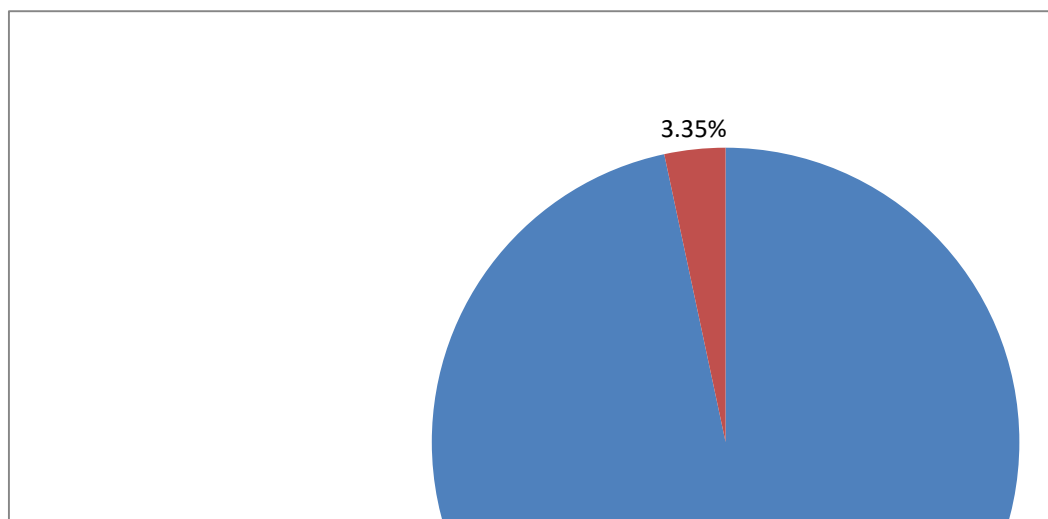


Figure 1. Islamic & Christian vehicle graffiti

3.1.1.2 Types of Religious Graffiti

3.1.1.2.1 Reaffirmation of Faith

The majority of the religious expressions in the data under investigation fall under the category of 'reaffirmation of faith', accounting for 176 occurrences (53.66%). The authors used a variety of discursive tools to reaffirm their faith. Three main tools were recognized: Quranic citations, religious sayings and personal declarations. While Quranic citations are confined to direct quotations from the Quran, religious sayings are not cited from the Quran and are subcategorized into: Common religious sayings, God's Names (99 Names according to Islamic tradition), and Names of Prophet Muhammad, Jesus and Christian saints. Personal declarations, on the other hand, are the graffiti author's thoughts reflected in a dialogic discourse with God or the Prophet.

Authors used Quranic citations in the majority of cases as a tool to reaffirm faith. They either cited a whole Quranic verse or part of it. There were no recorded biblical citations in the data. Authors also employed other religious sayings (i.e. non-Quranic, non-biblical): Quoting common religious Islamic/Christian sayings; writing God's Names, writing

names such as those of Prophet Muhammad, Jesus and Christian saints. There were also numerous citations of Islamic *shahadah* (i.e. testimony where a Muslim bears witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger).

Table 2. Discursive tools of Reaffirmation of Faith

Discursive tool	Example	Translation
Quranic citations	"ولسوف يعطيك ربك فترضى"	"And soon will thy Guardian-Lord give thee [that wherewith] thou shalt be well-pleased."
	"وما بكم من نعمة فمن الله"	"And ye have no good thing but is from Allah"
	"بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ"	"In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful"
	"فإن الله خير حافظاً وهو أرحم الراحمين"	"Allah is the best to take care, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy!"
	"ربي أوزعني إن أشكر نعمتك"	"O my Lord! so order me that I may be grateful for Thy favours"
Common religious sayings	لا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله	There is no might or power but in Allah!
	الله جل جلاله	Allah is Exalted and Majestic
	الملك الله	Reign is Allah's
	مارجرس نزل بحصانه هز الدنيا بإيمانه	Mar Guirguis came down on his horse, shaking the world with his faith
God's Names	الله	Allah
	المؤمن	The Guarantor
	السلام	The Peace
	الرحمن	The Merciful
	محمد	Muhammad
Names of Prophet Muhammad, Jesus & saints	Jesus	Jesus
	أم النور	<i>Um El-Nour</i> (Lit. Mother of Light, i.e. Mary)
	مارجرس	Mar Guirguis
Personal Declarations	ربنا موجود	Our Lord exists
	بحبك يارب	I love you, Lord!
	حبيبي يا رسول الله	My Love, Oh, Messenger of Allah!

3.1.1.2.2 Protection against envy

One of the dominant characteristics of Egyptian society past and present is the inherent fear of the supernatural power of envy. Egyptians believe that only a higher power can ward off the evil eye. Language is a mirror that reflects and sediments dominant beliefs in a society. It is the product of the ideology of the society and it reproduces these ideologies. Thus, we find in the data under investigation that vehicle graffiti not only mirror societal beliefs and ideologies but also propagate them. We have found that almost a third of vehicle graffiti texts that fall into the religious domain address this 'anti-envy' belief (92 graffiti, 29.27%). As in the previous subcategory, authors express this through employing two of the discourse tools mentioned earlier; namely, Quranic citations and citation of common religious sayings. The data reveal a heavy use of Quranic verses that tackle envy as against citations of common religious sayings. Below is a table that illustrates the occurrences of Quranic citations as against common religious sayings.

Table 3. Discursive Tools of Protection against Envy

Discursive Tool	Example	Translation
Quranic citations	"فإن الله خير حافظاً وهو أرحم الراحمين"	"Allah is the best to take care, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy!"
	"وزيناهم للناظرين وحفظناها من كل شيطان رجيم"	"and made them fair-seeming to [all] beholders. And [moreover] We have guarded them from every cursed devil."
	"قل أعوذ برب الفلق"	"Say: I seek refuge with the Lord of the Dawn"
	"ومن شر حاسد إذا ومن حسد"	"And from the mischief of the envious one as he practises envy."
Common religious sayings	بسم الله ما شاء الله	In the name of Allah, 'Allah's will [be done]!
	الحارس هو الله	The Guardian is Allah
	العين صابتني ورب العرش نجاني	The evil eye hit me, and the Lord of the Throne saved me.

3.1.1.2.3 Preaching

The data yielded (32) occurrences that fall within the preaching category (9.76%). It is inherent in the teachings of the Quran that preaching and sound behavioral guidance is not only the duty of religious institutions but of every Muslim as well. Such preaching is enjoined in the Glorious Quran: "كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ" ("Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah," (Sura Al-Imran 3:110).

Vehicle graffiti reflect these beliefs in assuming the role of a preacher. Trucks, small or big, taxis, small buses roll in the streets of Egypt carrying on their vehicles messages urging everyone who reads them to follow the accepted code of conduct. Table (4) below shows the most salient exhortations in this discourse domain.

Table 4. Most Salient Preaching Exhortations

Example	Translation	Type of exhortation
يا عم يلى إنت مش مالك دع الملك للمالك	You are not the Master, so let the reign to the Master (i.e. Allah)	Do not be intrusive
"وبشر الصابرين"	"Give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere"(Al-Baqara, or The Heifer, 2:155)	Be patient
الفتاحه للنبي	(Read) <i>Al-Fatihah</i> (or, the Opening Chapter of the Quran) in praise of the Prophet	Be righteous, Remember God
وحد الواحد	Proclaim that (Allah) is the One	Remember God,
أكثر الدعاء	Say many invocations (to Allah)	Be righteous, pious
مهما تكبر الله أكبر	However great you become, Allah is greater.	Be modest, do not be arrogant or oppressive
إذكر الله	Remember Allah	Be righteous, observe religious teachings

3.1.1.2.4 Invocations

The least common category of religious expressions in the data was found to be 'Invocations' graffiti. The analysis reveals only 24 instances (7.31%). For a graffiti to be classified as falling under this category, it has to include a personal appeal, request or prayer to God. Invocations are exemplified in the following table.

Table 5. Most Salient Invocations Graffiti

Example	Translation
احفظها يا رب	Lord, keep it! (i.e. the vehicle)
معانا يا رب	Lord, be with us!
استرها يا رب	Lord, save us!
محتاجك يا رب	Lord, I need you!
اللهم أني أسالك نفس مطمئنة تؤمن ببقائك وترضي بفضائك وتقتنع بعطائك	Lord, I ask you to bestow upon me a righteous soul that believes in meeting you, is satisfied with your fate and content with your offering.
يا بركة أم النور	May the blessing of <i>umm El-Nour</i> (Lit. Mother of Light, or Mary) be bestowed upon us.

Figure 2 below shows the percentage taken by each type of the religious graffiti:

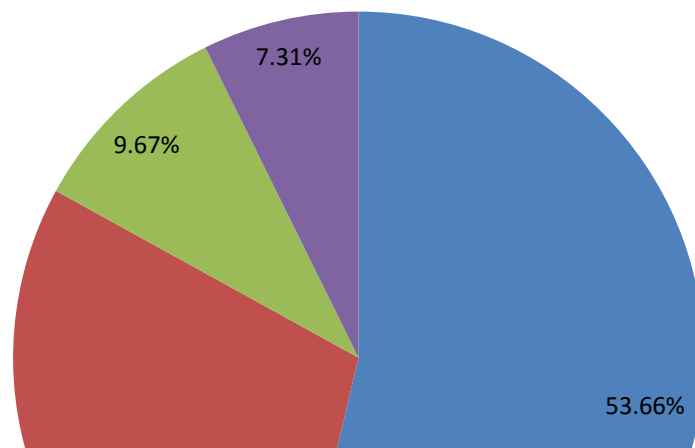


Figure 2. Types of Religious Graffiti

3.1.1.3 Forms of Religious Graffiti (Quranic & Non-Quranic)

It has been found that out of (328) graffiti representing all categories of religious discourse domain, Quranic citations accounted for (121) occurrences as against (207) instances of other religious graffiti expressions (See Figure 3 below):

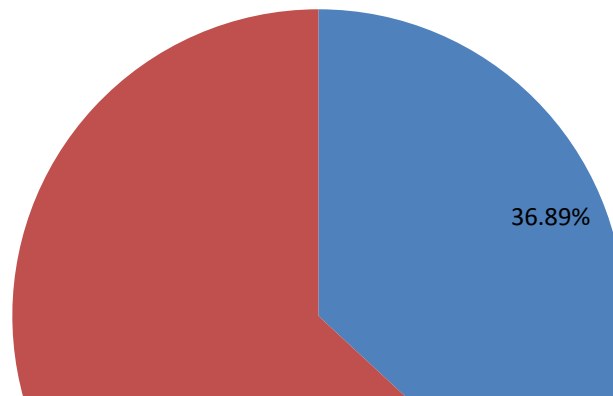


Figure 3. Quranic Citations & Other Religious Graffiti

3.1.2 Identity Expressions

The discourse domain that constitutes the second largest number of occurrences in the data is the identity expression graffiti, scoring 193 occurrences (31.43% of the data under investigation). Identity expression texts are those graffiti phrases that deal with self-/car identity or focus on the identity of 'the other'. The former includes names, nicknames, family and statements about self or driving habits. The latter includes any text that contains a reference to, or description of, 'the other' as illustrated by Table (5) below. The analysis reveals that vehicle graffiti authors are obviously more engaged in talking about themselves, their families or their cars, i.e. the first category, (147 instances, 76.16%) than about 'the other', the second category, (46 instances, 23.83%).

It has also been found that the frequency of using phrases and words with positive connotations is much higher in the self- identity graffiti than it is in those dealing with 'the other'. Thus, in self-identity graffiti, authors used a significant number of names, nicknames and family names (104 occurrences, 70.75%) in a discursive move that implies pride in self and esteem of family ties. This pride is further proven by statements about self or car, involving phrases and words that carry positive connotations (See Table 5 below):

Table 5. Types of Self-/Car Identify Graffiti

Type	Example	Translation
Names/ Nicknames/ Family	أبو أحمد	<i>Abu Ahmed</i> (Lit. Ahmed's father)
	الأميره نورا	Princess Nura
	رودي	Rudy
	حُمص أخو آيه وبسمله	<i>Hommos</i> , brother of <i>Aya</i> and <i>Basmala</i>
	الكينج	The King
	شيخ العرب	(Lit. The Sheikh of Arabs)
	ملك الجبل	King of the mountain
	ملك الأسفلت	(Lit. King of the asphalt), i.e. a very skillful driver
Statements about self	هو ده الدبور	(Lit. This is the wasp), i.e. this is fearsome man
	يا جبل ما يهزك ريح	(Addressing himself) Mountain, the wind cannot shake you (i.e. I can endure pain, hardships stoically; steadfast)
	التقدير خسرنا كثير	(Our) appreciation of others made us lose a lot
	King of the road	King of the road
Statements about car	الحوه نغناعه وكايده الجماعه	Sweetie car, makes others turn green
	الأصليه	Original (Car)
	عسليه والعين عليا	So cutie it leaves people staring
	الأسفلت مولع ليه النصر ماشي عليه	Why is the asphalt on fire? Coz <i>al-Nasr</i> (i.e. a local car) is rolling on it.
	الدلوعه	(Lit. the pampered girl)

The analysis also showed that all of the (46) instances referred to 'the other' in a negative tone, whether 'the other' is a friend, the other sex (women) or the community, as shown Table (6) below:

Table 6. Types of 'the Other' in Graffiti

Type	Example	Translation
Friend	اللي بصاحب راجل يا بخته	How lucky he is who befriends a man (i.e. an honest, reliable person)!
	لو صاحبك خاتك اعتبره دخاتك	If you're betrayed by your friend, consider him your smoke (i.e. worthless)
	الناقص بناقص منه	You won't need a villain
	مفيش صاحب يتصاحب	There's no one to befriend
	ميستهلوش - معلمين بالأونطه	They don't deserve. Only fake masters!
	يا عم ياللي جي تدينا نصائح داننت كلك فضايح	Mr. Disgrace, don't give us advice
	العيب مش في الحديده العيب في السواقين الجدیده	The new driver, not the car, is to blame
The other sex (women)	وارء كل مديون إمراة	Behind every indebted man there is a woman
	الشيطان أستاذ الرجل وتلميذ المراه	The devil is the master of man and disciple of the woman
The community	كنت عصفور أكلوني عملت أسد صاحبوني	(Lit. I acted like a sparrow, they ate me; I acted like a lion, they befriended me) Or: When I was timid, I was overpowered; when I became bold, they befriended me.
	الحوه نغناعه كايده الجماعه	Sweetie car, makes others turn green
	الكل شمال	All are bad

Thus while authors in the statements about self or car used lexical items like 'King', عسليه ('cutie'), الأصليه ('the original'), الدلوعة ('the pampered girl'), الحلوه ('sweetie'), الدبور ('the fearsome man'), drawing a very positive image of themselves as steadfast, faithful, respectful, right etc., they draw a very negative image of "the other" who is unfaithful, nosey, incompetent (driver), spendthrift, disgraceful, dishonest etc.

3.1.3 Social and Philosophical Expressions

There were (87) vehicle graffiti in the social and philosophical discourse domain. For the purpose of this study, we merged the two graffiti categories as we found them overlapping in the majority of cases. This social and philosophical domain has six sub-themes, four positive and two negative. The positive sub-themes are contentment (13), motivational expressions (7), love (17) and wisdom (30), with a total of (67) cases representing (77.01%). On the other hand, the negative social and philosophical expressions are represented in complaints (14) cases and threats (6) cases with a total of (20) cases (22.98%). This is illustrated in Table 7. below.

Table 7. Types of Social & Philosophical Expressions

Type	Example	Translation
Contentment	كده رضا	This is satisfactory
	مش طمعان في لعبه زهر	I don't long for a stroke of luck
	علمت أن رزقي لن يأخذه غيري فاطمان قلبي	I knew that my sustenance would not be taken by any other person. So, my heart has rest assured.
	القناعه كنز لا يفني	Contentment is a treasure hard to find
Motivational Expressions	مربوحه إن شاء الله	(My car is) profitable, if God wills
	بنات أيه يا عم أكل العيش أهم	What do you say? Girls? Breadwinning is more important.
	إصبر تنول	Be patient and you will get (what you want)
Love	لو مش نصيبي هيفضل حبيبي	If she is not my lot, she'll remain my love
	هب هب كله بالحب	It all comes when you fall in love
	الغيرة مرة	Jealousy is bitter
Wisdom	احترام الكبير واجب	Respect of the older people is a must
	امتلك ما شئت سترحل كما جئت	Possess what you want, you will (eventually) leave as you (first) came
	مش بالساهل تلقى اللي يستاهل	It's not easy to find someone who is worthy
	نصيبك هيصيبك	Your destiny is inevitable
	الدنيا رخيصه على الغالي وغاليه على الرخيص	Life is cheap for the noble and dear for the mean
Complaints	يتوب علينا ربنا	We repent to our Lord
	رميت همومي في البحر طلع السمك يلطم	I threw my cares into the sea, the fish leapt out of water, wailing
Threats	هتحكها هاجيبك تحتها	You scratch it (i.e. the car) and I'll put you under it
	احنا غلابه بس وقت الشر بنتغابى	We're docile, but, at evil times, we act stupid

3.1.4 Political Expressions

In a society that witnessed two revolutions over the past five years; namely, January 2011 and June 2013, it was expected to find political graffiti on vehicles as it was the case in wall graffiti in Egypt in 2011 and 2013 (See Gröndahl, 2012; Lennon, 2014). The data, however, reveal considerably few graffiti phrases that can be classified under this discourse theme (7 cases only). Four of such occurrences express patriotism and three carry a criticism to the government.

Table 8. Types of Political Expressions

Type	Example	Translation
Patriotic Expressions	بحبك يا بلادي	We love you, our country
	ابن النيل	Son of the Nile
Political Criticism	يا حكومه سييوني أعيش	O, government, let me live!
	من جد وجد ومن تخرج قعد	Whoever works hard, will reap the fruits, and whoever graduates will remain jobless
	لو سألوني عن العدل في بلاد المسلمين قل مات عمر	If they ask me about justice in the Muslim countries, say, Omar (i.e. the Muslim Caliph known for justice) died.

Figure 4 below shows the map of discourse domains of Egyptian vehicle graffiti as illustrated in this study.

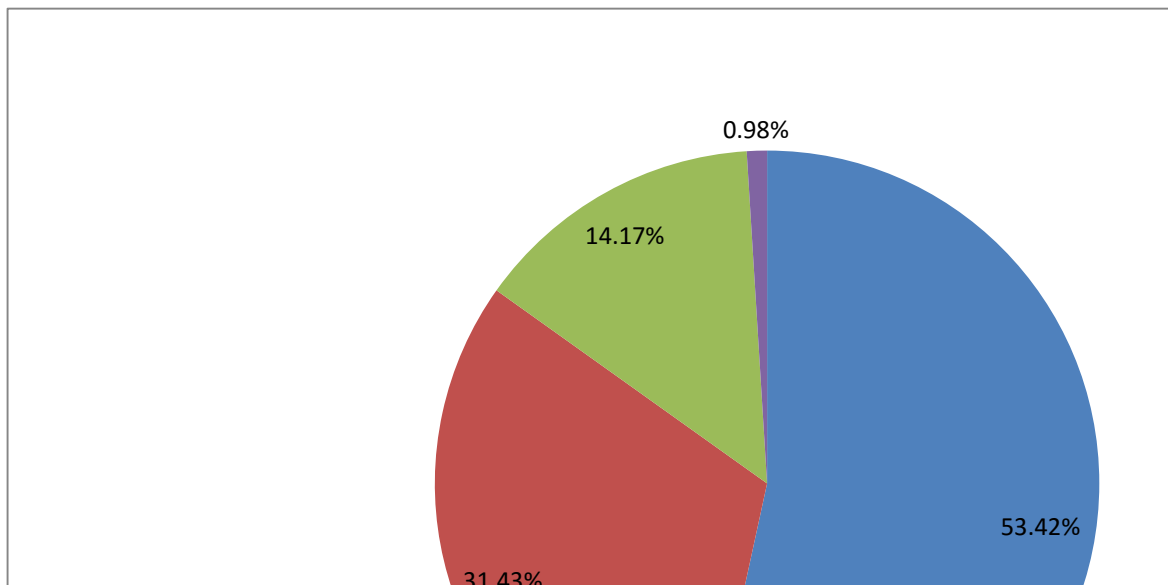


Figure 4. Map of vehicle graffiti discourse domains

3.2 Language and language variation

Vehicle graffiti authors used both Arabic and English for the graffiti. It is worth noting that as the source of data was mainly trucks and buses, the authors are expected to have a limited scope of education with modest knowledge of the English language. This was reflected in the very few occurrences of English language graffiti (20 cases only out of 614). Up to 15 of such instances are Arabic names written using English orthography and only (5) English statements. As for Arabic graffiti, the analysis showed 594 cases: Classical Arabic 290, Standard Arabic (75) and Colloquial Arabic (229), as shown in Figure 5 below.

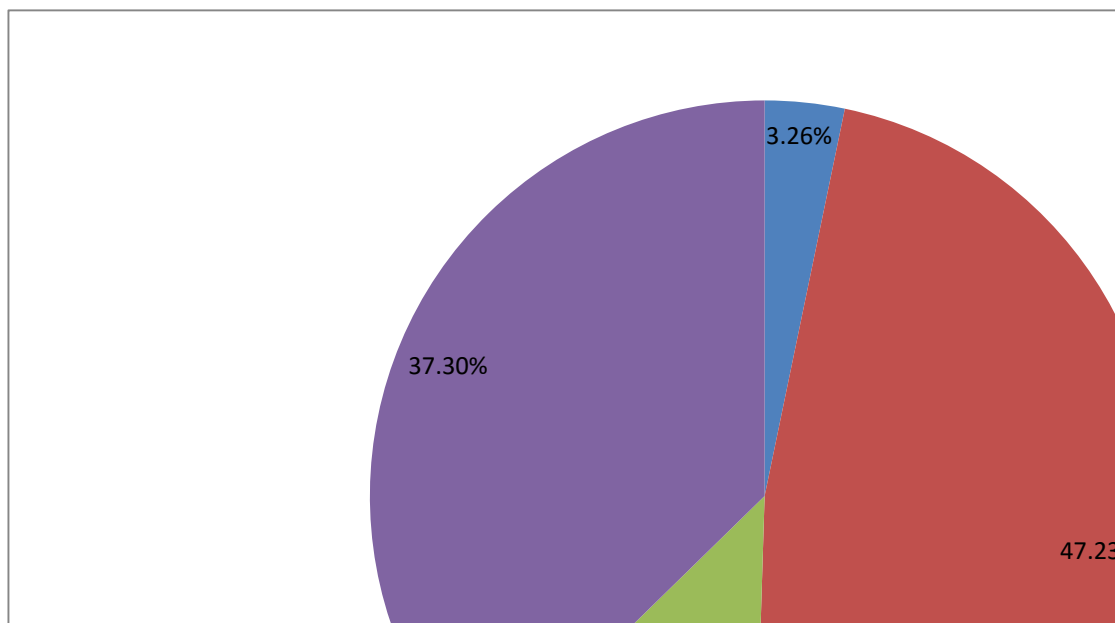


Figure 5. Language map of vehicle graffiti

4. Conclusion

Whether viewed as egalitarian or authoritarian in nature, graffiti in general and vehicle graffiti in particular is a means of communication that give voice to the marginalized groups of society. As this study has shown, vehicle graffiti are not merely a reflection of individuals' thoughts and feelings, but are in themselves a social practice as well as a product of the practices of various institutions. This study has attempted to investigate vehicle graffiti in the streets of Egypt from a linguistic approach, adopting Fairclough's (1995) post-structuralist model of analysis. Through running a quantitative and qualitative analysis of (614) vehicle graffiti, the study showed that with regard to thematic classification, the majority of vehicle graffiti lie in the religious discourse domain. The sweeping majority of Islamic expressions and rare occurrences of Christian expressions show how such discourse genre reflects social and religious power relations in the Egyptian society.

The majority of religious expressions fell in the category of 'reaffirmation of faith' (53.66%). Such reaffirmations were largely made through citations of Quranic verses with no occurrence of biblical citations. Graffiti authors also reaffirmed their faith using citations of Islamic/Christian sayings; God's Names as well as the name of Prophet Muhammad, Jesus and some Christian saints. The analysis also showed that Quranic citations constitute a significant portion of religious expressions (36.89%) against (63.11%) for the rest of religious expressions. The study also revealed a strong fear of envy that was reflected in the data (29.27%) along with the appeal to God for protection against this supernatural power. In addition, the institutional preaching role of the mosque and Islamic community is apparent in the data under investigation with (9.76%) of religious data taking the form of a one-sided dialogue in which the author preaches the society about various religious instructions. Personal invocations had the smallest number of occurrences in religious expression graffiti, scoring (7.31%).

It is also shown from the analysis that in the identity expression graffiti, expressions of the self far outnumber those dealing with 'the other'. Two sharply contradicting images were drawn: a very positive self-image and a very negative image of 'the other'. The humorous and optimistic nature of Egyptians (Nayef & El-Nashar, 2014) is also apparent in the data as the majority of the (87) social and philosophical graffiti are positive expressions (77.01%) against (22.98%) negative statements. Yet, if political graffiti were popular in Egypt after the two revolutions in 2011 and 2013, vehicle graffiti collected by the authors in 2015-2016 showed a scanty (0.98%) belonging to this discourse domain – a point that is worth studying *per se* in future study.

As far as language and language variations are concerned, the data revealed that vehicle graffiti authors who are mainly truck and bus drivers with a modest level of education used the classical and standard variations of Arabic more than they did the colloquial variation. This can be explained by the heavy dependence on Quranic and religious citations, which typify classical and standard Arabic respectively.

The study shows that vehicle graffiti should not be regarded only as a platform of communication for the underprivileged social and political groups. They are proved to be an ongoing discourse that is the product of various institutions that constantly influences, and is influenced by, them. In either case, vehicle graffiti will always stand out as 'the chants of the silent' (Eweis, 1971/2000).

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