

ANDEEL'S FULL AND FRANK CARTOONS. A STUDY OF LANGUAGE AND REGISTER VARIATIONS

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In recent years, Andeel's audacious caricatures for the independent Egyptian online newspaper Madà Maṣr have become quite famous among upper class millennial Egyptians. Despite the potentially boundless space of his cartoons, Andeel mostly uses the Colloquial Egyptian Arabic. Nevertheless, he often code-switches and alternates the Colloquial with Modern Standard Arabic and English. Starting from a brief introduction to the author, the medium of transmission (the web) and the linguistic situation today in Egypt, this paper will focus on some of Andeel's cartoons to show how the different languages and registers exploit wider possibilities to create comics and satire.

This paper aims at illustrating Andeel's uninhibited use of language in his satirical cartoons for the independent Egyptian online newspaper *Madà Maṣr*. Starting from a brief introduction to the author's works, the medium of transmission (the web) and its specific features in terms of censorship and audience and the linguistic situation today in Egypt, this study will focus then on a selection of eight of Andeel's cartoons to show how the different languages (Arabic and English) and registers (Colloquial Egyptian Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic) are voluntarily mixed to underline the social divide in Egypt or simply to exploit wider possibilities to create comics and satire.

Andeel, Censorship and the Web

Born in 1986, Mohamed Andeel (Muḥammad Qindīl)¹ has a long career as a cartoonist. He started drawing for several newspapers when he was still in high school, which made him one of the youngest cartoonists in Egypt. In 2011, he cofounded, together with other Egyptian political cartoonists, the comics magazine *Tōk Tōk*² and in October 2013 he quit the important privately-owned newspaper *al-Maṣrī al-Yawm* to collaborate with *il-Birnāmig*

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¹ For the explanation of the name, see further on.

² *Tōk Tōk* is a quarterly comic magazine founded by the five Egyptian political cartoonists Shennawy (Muḥammad Šinnāwī), Makhlof (Salīm Maḥlūf), Andeel, Hicham Rahma (Hišām Raḥmah) and Tawfik (Aḥmad Tawfiq). Information about their project is provided on their website: <https://www.toktokmag.com/info>. The magazine is available also in the e-book format and it can be purchased from its website: <https://www.toktokmag.com/work>.

(*The Show*), an Egyptian news satire program hosted by the famous showman Bassem Youssef (Bāsim Yūsuf)³. Since 2011 he has worked as a cartoonist for the independent Egyptian online newspaper published both in Arabic and English, *Madà Maṣr*⁴. For *Madà Maṣr*, Andeel has also written and enacted short satirical sketches titled *Aḥ kabīr* (Big Brother), for a total of more than 280 contributions in the newspaper⁵. Andeel's production also includes some illustrated stories available on his Bēhance profile, one inspired by the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (Andeel 2013).

Based in Egypt until May 2018, Andeel spent five months in Lebanon, before moving to France, where he continues to draw his cartoons for *Madà Maṣr*. His satire does not spare anyone (al-Ḥūrī 2018) and it is not overtly political. Instead it deals with daily life in Egypt, which can be challenging (Hills 2014), focusing on how authority engages in indoctrination (Guyer 2017). According to Guyer (2017), Andeel is one of Cairo cartoonists who «have expanded the red lines of acceptable discourse by forging work-arounds and challenging official censorship»⁶.

During recent years, despite a prohibition on insulting the President in the press, after the 25 January 2011 revolution, cartoonists have even started to draw first President Mohamed Morsi and then Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (‘Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Sīsī)⁷. In a country like Egypt, where censorship is implemented by

³ Bassem Youssef, a cardiac surgeon, created his satirical show on Youtube in March 2011. Following its success, it turned into a popular TV talk show, first on ONTV (2011-2012), then on CBC (2012-2013), during the short-lived rule of President Mohamed Morsi (Muḥammad Mursī) and the Muslim Brotherhood, who were the main target of Bassem Youssef's humour. After the July 2013 coup and the army's crackdown on the media, his talk show was suspended, first temporarily (October 2013), then permanently (June 2014). Youssef left the country shortly afterwards (Jacquemond 2016: 357).

⁴ On *Madà Maṣr*, see Dean 2017 and Pacifico 2020. Notice that the site's designer, Phil Gribbon, chose the cartoons of Andeel to frame the *Madà Maṣr* site (see Dean 2017). Born on the Internet, *Madà Maṣr* is published both in English – to reach an international audience – and in Arabic (the Modern Standard variety) – to avoid elitism – while most of the cartoons are in the colloquial Egyptian (see Pacifico 2020, 74). On Egyptian cartoonists, see Guyer 2017.

⁵ Andeel's contributions for *Madà Maṣr* are available on the website: <https://www.madamasr.com/ar/contributor/اندييل/>. However, his cartoons are neither accessible in a chronological order nor can be found by their title or by date. Andeel has also written a few articles in the section *Ra'y* (Opinion), a space dedicated to self-expression, where journalists and commentators can freely express their opinion about any matter.

⁶ On Andeel, see also the information provided on *Madà Maṣr* website: <https://www.madamasr.com/en/contributor/andeel/>. On censorship and culture in Egypt, see for example Stagh 1993; Jacquemond 2006; Mehrez 2010 and Pepe 2020 for a case study.

⁷ An archive of songs, literature, plays, cartoons and visual art influenced by the 2011 Egyptian Revolution drawing on research by Nicola Pratt (University of

law, the indirect messages conveyed by a cartoon have been traditionally used as a strategy to bypass censorship's reaction (Guyer 2014) and, in most cases, that trend has led to no major consequences. However, the consequences of satire can sometimes be serious (Guyer 2013; Kingsley 2014). For instance, in 2015, a 22-year-old student was sentenced to three years in jail for posting on his Facebook page a photoshopped image of President Sisi with Mickey Mouse ears (MEMO 2015). That image still circulates on the net and it might not be a coincidence that in September 2018 the governor of Qalyūbiyyah decreed that cartoon images of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck on the walls of pre-schools must be replaced by «famous Egyptians and military martyrs» (Ḥālid 2018). That decree, however, disregards the fact that Mickey Mouse is part of Egyptian culture since the character was adapted and integrated into the Egyptian context about 75 years ago (Guyer 2017a).

When Andeel was working for *al-Maṣrī al-Yawm*, sometimes his cartoons were accepted for the website, but not for the printed newspaper. According to Andeel, *al-Maṣrī al-Yawm* posted the image on its website but declined to print it «because they don't want people to feel bad [...] I was working for a newspaper that was very highly distributed, reaching out to millions of people every week, – says Andeel – I could have used that channel with its possible limitations to sneak in my opinions and my values» (Guyer 2014). Instead, he decided to quit working for an online newspaper. Certainly, the authorities put more effort into curbing broadcast media that reaches millions than into curbing online news that reaches thousands. And so, cartoonists must choose between free expression or mainstream distribution, since in Egypt a broad readership is more usually guaranteed by a printed magazine than the Internet (Guyer 2014).

In general, state censorship is much more difficult to implement on the Internet. However, authors are nonetheless vulnerable and exposed to restrictions. Up to May 2020, Amnesty International documented 37 cases of journalists being detained. Many had been charged with «spreading false news» or «misusing social media» under a broad 2015 counterterrorism law, which has expanded the definition of terror to embrace all kinds of dissent, including questioning official statistics in relation to the spread of COVID-19 on one's personal Facebook page. In the past few years, following the 2017 crackdown on websites, at least five media outlets have been raided or shut down and hundreds of websites have been blocked (Amnesty 2020 and Associated Press 2020). It remains unclear how *Madā Maṣr* has survived in a climate that has crushed so many other outlets and organizations. Maybe the newspaper has benefitted from the arbitrariness of the state's operations that could be a government strategy to foster self-censorship (Dean 2017).

Warwick), Dalia Mostafa (University of Manchester), Dina Rezk (University of Reading) and Sara Salem (previously, University of Warwick) is available at <https://egyptrevolution2011.ac.uk/>.

What seems essential for the Web 2.0 in the Arab public sphere is that, in addition to lowering or even eliminating costs for publishers and readers, on-line written content offers greater opportunities to bridge geographic distances and circumvent censorship, allowing (greater) independence from authorities and the establishment as well as providing a platform for readers' responses (Winckler 2018: 39). As a matter of fact, Andeel works from France and his platforms are increasingly popular. In 2015, his Facebook page (under the name "Mohamed Andeel") counted 50,000 followers, while today, only 5 years later, he has more than 123,000 followers. His Twitter account ("_Andeel_"), more irreverent than his Facebook page, has around 28,000 followers; his Bēhance account ("M. qindeel"), where many of his drawings are collected, has about 2,000 followers, and more than 38,000 project views. Judging by the content he posts and the people who react, we can assume that his audience are mostly left-leaning Egyptian millennials.

Adab, Qillat Adab and Diglossia

As the Internet has become a symbol of progress and reform, empowerment, or even democratization, linguistic usage since its advent has involved experimentation with language as regards lexis, syntax, spelling as well as loans from other (mostly Western) languages (Winckler 2018: 31).

In Egypt which, like all Arabic-speaking countries, is characterized by a state of diglossia (Ferguson 1959), there is a great deal of overlap and interplay between the variety generally called *fushà* or Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and the colloquial language (CEA), usually called *'āmmiyyah* at all levels, and accordingly MSA and CEA are generally not really mutually exclusive categories (Wilmsen; Woidich 2009: 10).

Authors of Arabic and Egyptian literature have followed different trends in terms of linguistic choices. Mastery of language and verbal skill defined the literary canon, at least until well into the nineteenth century, when the idea that literature should reflect and indeed change social reality influenced also the language writers used (Badawi 1995: 5). Writing in CEA was important for the emergence of Egyptian nationalism in the early 20th century (Fahmy 2011). Nevertheless, it has always remained a marginal practice, and the Arab renaissance (*al-Nahḍah*) in the 20th century together with the pan-Arab ideology reinforced a linguistic orthodoxy in which there was little acceptance for written dialect, so that CEA became even more marginalized (Mejdell 2017; Brustad 2017).

And so, until the 20th century the CEA had been considered an inferior language, not fit for use as a vehicle of "serious" literature, which according to the prevailing norms should be written in MSA only. During the 20th century, and especially after the 1952 revolution, the CEA began to receive recognition as a written language (Rosenbaum 2000: 68)⁸. Increasingly used in

⁸ Rosenbaum (2000) identifies a written style, utilizing the alternation of both the stand-

written genres in Egypt, CEA has become a second written Arabic language in addition to MSA (Rosenbaum 2004: 281) and it is being used quite widely in Egypt in advertisements, popular magazines, short stories, novels and poetry (Doss 2006: 57-62; Mejdell 2006). The richest and most sustained phase of prose writing in CEA started in the 1990s and continues until the present (Davies 2006: 599-600).

In contemporary Arabic literature the choice of linguistic variety is often dictated by political protest against the “officialised” culture and language (Dransfeldt; Christensen 2018: 228), or against a foreign dominant culture and language (Sabih 2018: 221-225), or even by the desire to impact the official language in order to disrupt language conventions. Nevertheless, recent Arabic literature has also seen different developments both in the use of the high register and of foreign languages, as El-Ariss (2013: 147-148) explains for the case of English: «A new generation of Arab writers relates to English not as a foreign language, but rather as the language that is constitutive of their cultural landscape and their subjectivities. From blogs and websites to satellite TV, films, and literature, global culture is pervasive in contemporary texts. In this landscape, a new generation is arising from a cultural experience that can no longer be understood in terms of neatly organized binaries of resistance/imperialism, East/West, and tradition/modernity».

From a linguistic perspective and for its entertaining scope, “non-serious” literature is close to Andeel’s political cartoons and, in terms of diglossia, it deserves a separate mention. Anonymous popular literature, like *Alf Laylah wa Laylah* (The Arabian Nights) and the *siyar ša biyyah* (popular epics), especially during the Middle Ages, comes in Middle Arabic, an intermediate, multiform variety, characterised by the interference of the two poles (Classical and Colloquial) on the linguistic continuum and by some other specific features (Lentin 2004: 434)⁹. Despite being well known by a large audience and presenting fine aesthetic qualities, popular literature has traditionally been studied by folklorists and literary studies focus on a comparatively small number of monumental products (Marzolph 1998).

From a linguistic point of view, Egyptian drama has also generally followed different trends from “serious” literature. Indeed, a great number of the first Egyptian comedies were in CEA, imitating naturalistic speech, but also serving

ard and the non-standard codes as a stylistic means and calls it *fuṣḥāmmiyyah*. Høigilt and Mejdell (2017) provide recent case studies confirming Rosenbaum’s theory.

⁹ Middle Arabic was used especially during the Middle Ages as a versatile and familiar means of expression suitable for literature without great intellectual aims and facilitated access to written culture for both writers and readers (Lentin 2008: 216). In its being an intermediate variety stands the particularity of Middle Arabic which presents a set of possibilities allowing some shifts from one to the other pole of the linguistic continuum. For an overview on Arabic literature in the colloquial register, see Davies 2006.

a humoristic purpose. Between 1871 and 1872, the political satirist and playwright Ya'qūb Ṣanū' (also known as James Sanua, 1839-1912) authored and performed in colloquial many sardonic social comedies. The new generation of Egyptian writers and actors that started to emerge in the second decade of the 20th century wrote many plays, mostly comedies of manners, in CEA (Badawi 1988: 43-67). "Boulevard" comedies, of whose texts little trace remains, were all performed in CEA, as Nağīb al-Rīḥānī's *Kiškīš Bak 'Aḍw fī 'l-Barlmān* (Kishkish Bey, Member of Parliament, 1929) shows (Ruocco 2010: 70-71). From the Thirties on, state-promoted theatre was mainly in MSA, until a new need to legitimate Egyptian theatre pushed playwrights to write in CEA. A famous example of this trend is Yūsuf Idrīs' *al-Farāfir* (The Flipflaps, 1964)¹⁰. The dominant role of the CEA in theatre was maintained in the writings of major playwrights in the second half of the 20th century (such as 'Alī Sālim, Nağīb Surūr) and continues until today¹¹. Andeel's cartoons share some common features with the *adab sāḥir* (satirical literature), a genre often disregarded by critics because it is «too hybridized to interest the folklorists and too 'low' to retain the interest of the legitimate criticism» (Jacquemond 2008: 155) that has its roots in Medieval times, but has seen recent developments in Egypt after the 2011 uprising (Jacquemond 2016). According to Richard Jacquemond, the *adab sāḥir* has «an uncertain status somewhere between fiction and nonfiction, journalism and literature, and writing and orality» (Jacquemond 2008: 155). Recently, its language is mostly CEA sometimes mixed with MSA (Håland 2017)¹².

As Richard Jacquemond notices, Egyptian culture is permeated with humour and expresses it in many ways: «The oral *nukta*, satiric poetry, comedy as a main genre in both Egyptian cinematic and theatrical output, press caricature, are, along with *adab sāḥir*, the main forms of expression of this culture of derision the Egyptian people usually associate with the need for *tanfis*,

¹⁰ On the language of *al-Farāfir* see Suriano 2018: 32-37.

¹¹ Alfred (Alfrīd) Farağ (1929-2005) may be considered an exception to this trend. Only 3 out of the 29 plays he wrote are in the colloquial code and the linguistic divide does not depend on the years the plays were written. As a matter of fact, his last play (*al-Amīrah wa 'l-ṣu 'lūk*, The Princess and the Pauper, 2002) is in MSA. The translation of his masterpiece ('Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi 'uhu Quffah, 'Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī and his servant Quffah, translated into English as *The Caravan*, 1968) into CEA in 1991 (*Itmīn fī 'uffah*, Two in a Bag) was not as successful as the original version (Amin 2008: 19). For a discussion on Farağ's language, see Potenza 2018, 278-297. Notice also that the most prolific Egyptian playwright (and the most known in the West), Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm (1898-1987), wrote only three plays (out of eighty) in CEA. The author even tried to create a third code (*al-luḡah al-ṭālīḡah*) to diminish the gap between CEA and MSA that he used in his play *al-Ṣafqah* (The Deal, 1956) (see al-Ḥakīm [1956] 1988: 107 and Montaina 1973).

¹² For an overview on *adab sāḥir*, see Jacquemond 2016 and Van Gelder 1998, who does not agree with the translation of *sāḥir* as "satirical".

that is, to vent one's anger or frustration» (Jacquemond 2016: 356-357; Branca; De Poli; Zanelli 2011).

We can also qualify Andeel's production as *qalīl al-adab* (rude, impolite). Tarek El-Ariss has recently applied the idea of *qillat adab* (lit.: lack of *adab*) to the works of Wael Abbas (Wā'il 'Abbās, b. 1974), a human-rights activist and citizen journalist who founded in 2004 the blog *al-Wa'ī al-Miṣrī* ("Egyptian Awareness" or "Egyptian Consciousness"). El-Ariss plays with the meaning of *adab* (civility, propriety, manners, literature, culture)¹³ and its tendency to discipline the subject confronted with a subversive behaviour that is amplified by new media technology and results then in a *qillat adab* (El-Ariss 2019: 58-87). *Qillat adab* is a feature of satirical political cartoons, whose effrontery is the source of the comics; however, it is a peculiar trait of all Andeel's works. Suffice it to say that, in *Gaḥīm 'Aggūr, 'iṣṣah muṣawwarah* ('Aggūr's Hell, an Illustrated Story), commissioned from Andeel by the Danish Egyptian Dialogue Institute (DEDI) and the Embassy of Denmark to celebrate 200 years since the birth of Søren Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher finds himself in a contemporary Cairo where, misunderstanding his name, a taxi driver will call him 'aggūr (a green melon common in Egypt), hence the title of the novel (Andeel 2013: 6). The philosopher keeps a serious behavior and speaks MSA, while the people he meets (the taxi driver, a woman who falls in love with him, street vendors and policemen) speak to him in CEA and are chaotic. Neither Cairo nor the philosopher are spared from satire, the city being depicted with all its contradictions, and Kierkegaard as a man unable to adapt to his surroundings.

Finally, it must be mentioned that, across languages and cultures, popular political magazines presented articles in the high variety, while the text accompanying the political cartoons were in the low variety – and this was Ferguson's source of inspiration for the idea of diglossia (Ferguson 1991: 54). Egypt was no exception to this trend. The political cartoon appeared together with the popular press in the late 19th century. The first magazine produced by an Egyptian, *Abū Naẓẓārah Zarqā'* (The Man with the Blue Glasses, 1877 to at least 1882) was edited and mostly written by Ya'qūb Ṣanū', who railed against the Khedive and the British largely in colloquial (and French) (Davies 2006: 598). Magazines could also be written in MSA, but humorous topical dialogues in CEA became a standard feature of a series of magazines establishing a tradition that continued up to the end of the third decade of the 20th century (Davies 2006: 599; De Angelis 2007).

Based on a paraliterary genre using the Internet as a medium, Pepe's study of recent Egyptian blogs shows that different trends co-exist. While several bloggers imitate the stylistic trend prevailing in print literature, others use the high linguistic variety only if their texts are printed and others, instead, opt for the lower variety, choosing «to remain minor and keep blogging an independent, revolutionary literary movement» (Pepe 2019: 117).

¹³ On the idea of *adab*, see for example Cassarino 2017.

It is clear that, in the Web 2.0 era, a distinction between oral and written production does not suffice to understand the use of language, but one should also consider the special position of online texts, which can enjoy more freedom than the printed texts. As we will see, Andeel's cartoons seem not to suffer from the distinction between written and oral form that has affected almost all written production in Egypt, including recent blogs. In his Facebook profile, his name is written in Latin letters (Mohamed Andeel), however, he specifies under it, in Arabic (language and letters) “أنديل”, meaning that his name has to be read “Andīl”, with the Egyptian pronunciation, instead of “Qindīl”, as the standard pronunciation rules. In an interview, the author explains that he transcribes the effective pronunciation of his name (al-Ḥūrī 2018).

Some Notes on the Approach

The eight cartoons here examined appeared on *Madà Maṣr*, in the section *Kārtūn* (in the Arabic version of the site, and *Cartoon*, in the English version)¹⁴ between 2014 and 2018 and have been selected for their linguistic variation. When there is a title, I provide it. Usually it appears within the cartoon, but sometimes it is given outside the frame. As I have mentioned earlier, generally, Andeel's cartoons for *Madà Maṣr* are in CEA, in the Cairene dialect, but in some cases, he also uses MSA and English. Several of Andeel's cartoons have been translated into English. In those cases, the translation appears in the English version of *Madà Maṣr*. Since Andeel collaborated in the translation into English (he told me in an interview, 24 January 2019), these translations are used here as a tool to better understand the linguistic choices in the original texts.

Unlike oral performances, where code variations occur on the spot and are the result of instant decisions taken while conversing, written texts – like Andeel's cartoons – are characterized by an intentional style that is planned and that is preserved even after possible re-edits¹⁵. It follows that common phenomena involving code-switching in a conversation, such as accommodation, are not covered by this study¹⁶. I apply a distinction between code-mixing and code-switching: «code-mixing suggests the speaker is mixing up codes indiscriminately or perhaps because of incompetence, whereas the switches are very well-motivated in relation to the symbolic or social meanings of the two codes» (Holmes; Wilson 2017: 43) and distinguish interference (a feature of “parole”) from borrowing (a feature of “langue”), consid-

¹⁴ *Kārtūn*, in *Madà Maṣr*, <https://www.madamasr.com/ar/cartoon/> (last accessed 02/04/2020). In most of Andeel's cartoons meaning and humour are produced both via the verbal and the visual mode, so a text is generally present.

¹⁵ I adapt Rosenbaum's considerations for his studies on *fuṣḥāmiyyah* in Arabic literature (Rosenbaum 2000: 71).

¹⁶ Linguistic accommodation is the process by which participants in a conversation adjust their accent, diction, or other aspects of language according to the speech style of the other participant. On linguistic accommodation, see for example Giles 1974.

ering the one as individual and contingent; the other as collective and systematic (Mackey 1970: 569).

Andeel's cartoons are a commentary on the events of the day. As the unsaid is needed to complete the meaning, every cartoon is contextualised before being discussed from a linguistic perspective.

Common Expressions, Quick Understanding: This Means 'Āmmiyah

In the cartoon *Aktar ḥāgah b-yḥibbihā al-Sīsī* (Andeel 2015)¹⁷ that appeared on 7 June 2015, namely during a period marked by disorders and deaths caused by ISIS and Egyptian police, President Sisi sits on an enormous bomb and sadly he says:

Text

Aktar ḥāgah b-aḥibbihā fī 'l-masriyyīn... al-sabr

My all-time favourite thing about Egyptians would definitely be... patience

Lit: My favourite thing about Egyptians is... patience

As a mark of Andeel's manifest use of Colloquial Egyptian Arabic, even when the lexicon coincides with Modern Standard Arabic, the author preserves the spelling system to transcribe the Egyptian pronunciation, regardless of the "correct" writing (in MSA). And so, the emphatic sound "ṣ" is transformed into the plain one (s), as is signalled in the Arabic writing, where we find letter *sīn* instead of *ṣād*; similarly, in the word *aktar*, the *tā'* is written as a *tā'*, which is its proper sound if the word is read with the Cairene pronunciation.

Speech bubbles with onomatopoeic sounds explained at the bottom of the cartoon suggest that Sisi is half-sleeping, indeed his eyes are closed. Such a ridiculous representation of the President acquires more meaning if we compare it to the cultish caricatures of the President that appear in the mainstream, official media and big posters in the streets. The cartoon is clearly satiric since the bomb, symbolizing the country, is about to explode. Instead of taking measures to avoid that, the President appreciates his people's patience, which underlines his passivity regarding the country's problems. The accent of the President reproduces reality, as Sisi mostly speaks in colloquial Egyptian Arabic, even in official talks.

Ha-ni 'mil fīk ēh? (Andeel 2016a) dates from February 6, 2016, just three days after Giulio Regeni's corpse had been found.

Title

Ha-ni 'mil fīk ēh?

What are we going to do with you?

¹⁷ The English translations appear in the English version of *Madà Maṣr* site. In this case, «Sisi's favorite thing», 07/06/2015. <https://www.madamasr.com/en/2015/06/07/cartoon/u/cartoon-sisis-favorite-thing/> (last accessed 02/04/2020).

The cartoon's title, with its future tense rendered through the prefix *ha-*, the interrogative form with the typical construction where the interrogative adverb is in the same position in the sentence as the item it asks for (Woidich 2009: 327), and the use of a common Egyptian expression (*'amala fī šahs*, where the *fī* stands for the *fuṣḥà ma'a*, see Badawi; Hinds 1986: 600) is unambiguously *'āmmiyyah*. Its English translation is quite literal, but in this case as well, it dampens the colloquial connotation the Egyptian dialect carries and so it diminishes the cartoon's semantic meaning.

Text

wi-Ba'dēn

What are we going to do with you?

Lit.: And then? / That's quite enough!

The English translation of the saying within the bubble is the same as the title, while in Arabic we find *wi-ba'dēn*, an expression in *'āmmiyyah* literally meaning «And then?», but which is commonly used to scold children, with the meaning of «That's quite enough!» (Badawi; Hinds 1986: 86). *Wi-ba'dēn* has roughly the same meaning as the title (*Ha-ni'mil fīk ēh?*), but its context of use (with children) adds a note of familiarity to the discussion, which is between Sisi and a man who looks like Ibrahim Metwaly Hegazy (Ibrāhīm Mitwallī Ḥiḡāzī), the first lawyer seeking to find the true causes of Regeni's death. The language helps to convey that this is a one-to-one discussion, underlining how Sisi's approach to his people does not respect the distance expected between a leader and his people; however, the lawyer deals with the President in the same way. The Cairo skyline stands behind, with its sand coloured buildings – reminiscent of Cairo's several unfinished constructions – with satellite dishes on top of them. This is also an icon of contradictions in the Egyptian capital.

Sisi is also the protagonist of *Lovely to have you* (Andeel 2016b), a cartoon that has no title in the Arabic version. The title in English is used also to translate the text within the bubble, originally saying:

Text

Minawwar

Lovely to have you

Lit.: I am enlightened by your presence

Minawwar is said by a poor family to Sisi while he is sitting at their table. The saying generally expresses conventional compliments to a guest (Badawi; Hinds 1986: 891), however the family is not happy to see the host, we can see that from their faces and from the father's closed fist on the table. On the contrary, Sisi cheers. The President is oversized and dresses elegantly, while the family surrounding him is in poor clothes. Moreover, he is the only one who has a dish in front of him, implying that the family has given all their food to him. One can easily deduce that Sisi takes the poor

people's possessions, but also that despite the reality of the facts, people accept that and behave according to the custom; however, they do so begrudgingly. The commonly used Egyptian expression directly associated with the happiness of welcoming typical of Egyptian culture contrasts here with the sad expression of the family, making the scene sadly ironic.

To be fully understood, this cartoon has to be related to its context, mid-August 2016, when Prime Minister Sherif Ismail (Šarīf Ismā'īl) began lobbying support for the preliminary deal between Egypt and the International Monetary Fund and a few days before proposed reforms benefitted the wealthy at the expense of the poor, exacerbating Egypt's crisis and saddling it with unsustainable debt ("Ahram Online", 14 August 2016).

Title

il-Ḥiml il-ti'īl illī b-yifriḍ nafs-u 'aleek w-inta miš 'āwiz-u ašl^{an} ḥāliṣ 'alā fikrah w-Allāhi

[No English translation provided]

Lit.: The heavy burden that oppresses you and you absolutely don't want it basically, at all, by the way, by God.

il-Ḥiml il-ti'īl illī b-yifriḍ nafs-u 'alēk w-inta miš 'āwiz-u ašl^{an} ḥāliṣ 'alā fikrah w-Allāhi (Andeel 2018a) dates from 22 March 2018, just a few days before the 2018 Egyptian presidential elections were held. Incumbent President Sisi was running for a second and final term. Its title's size is longer than average titles, the text within the bubble is a short reflection partly coinciding with the title and it does not have an English translation. The protagonist is again Sisi.

Marks of *'āmmiyyah* can be seen both in lexicon, syntax and orthography, which transcribes the Egyptian pronunciation (*tā'* instead of *tā'* in the word *ti'īl*). *Illī* and *'āwiz* are Egyptian items not used in the high variety, as well as the *b-* prefix and the negation particle *miš*.

The sequence *ašl^{an}*, *ḥāliṣ*, *'alā fikrah* and *w-Allāhi* lends emphasis and plays with the different etymology of the synonyms, literally meaning «(1) originally, initially; (2) basically, fundamentally» (avv. *ašl^{an}*, Badawi; Hinds 1986: 25), «be finished, complete» (*ḥāliṣ*, Badawi; Hinds 1986: 260), «by the way, incidentally» (*'alā fikrah*, Badawi; Hinds 1986: 666) and «by God» (*w-Allāhi*, a mild oath used to lend emphasis to a request, statement or question, Badawi; Hinds 1986: 34).

As for the text within the bubble:

Yuuuuuuuuuuuh ēh il-ḥiml il-ti'īl dah ba'ā... uuuuuuuuf!

Lit.: Yuuuuuuuuuuh what is this heavy burden then... uuuuuuuuf!

For its multiple meanings, *ba'ā* ("so, then, now, very well", but also "however, on the other hand", Badawi; Hinds 1986: 92) is a *passee-partout* word. Together with the expression *w-Allāhi* and *ḥāliṣ*, *ba'ā* is maybe one of the

most peculiar expressions in Egyptian Arabic. An oversized Sisi comments the title with a question introduced and concluded by onomatopes reproducing mouth sounds giving vividness to the expression, asking himself what is that heavy burden mentioned in the title. We have also to say that the expression *il-ḥiml il-ti'īl* is commonly used in Egypt to mean the government of the country. The syntax, with *ēh* at the beginning of the interrogative sentence gives emphasis to the doubt as in the Egyptian dialect the interrogative marker normally comes at the end of the question. The demonstrative adjective (*dah*) follows the name it is referred to. Once again, the orthography mirrors the Egyptian pronunciation of a word existing also in *fushḥà*, but it is written differently (*tā'* instead of *tī'* in the word *ti'īl*).

In sum, at the end of his four-year mandate and a short time before his re-election, the Egyptian President has still to understand what “the heavy burden” is and naively interrogates himself in a low linguistic variety that is further desacralized by reproducing mouth sounds. On the other side, his figure is oversized, suggesting that he himself could be a heavy burden for others.

Most of Andeel's cartoons come in CEA, like the ones we have studied, but there also exist a few cartoons using MSA, and this happens for specific reasons, as in the following examples.

Fuṣḥà is formal

Title

al-Baḥt 'an al-mutanāqīdāt

[No English translation provided]

Lit.: Searching for contrasts

Text

al-Baḥt 'an al-tanāquḍāt

[No English translation provided]

Lit.: Searching for incompatibilities

Both the title and the text within the cartoon *al-Baḥt 'an al-mutanāqīdāt* (Andeel 2017b) are in *fushḥà*. However, this time, the protagonists of the cartoon are four youngsters: a girl with an extravagant haircut, a boy with a red t-shirt resembling Andeel himself, a man dressed as a Muslim Brother and a blonde girl with sunglasses. The first three are inspecting the one next to him or her as if they were looking for lice. They all seem wealthy and have a serious expression. There is not a specific event the cartoon refers to, but it comes from a thought the author had at that time¹⁸. This time, the text within the scene is not a speech, but a title, as suggested by the graphic, recalling the elegant plaque of a picture. Formality provided by the frame and the

¹⁸ Interview with the author, on Facebook, 6 April 2020.

fushà variety of the language is enhanced by the *ḥarakāt* added to the writing, that embellish the image and make the language more strict, so that, because of its formality, the text seems to represent an official or an academic statement. However, the formality of the writing contrasts with the action depicted in the cartoon, where people are looking for lice.

The high linguistic variety chosen for this cartoon is a tool that enhances the contrast between the ridiculousness of the reality and the seriousness of its presentation. The linguistic choice is the source of the cartoon's irony.

In *al-Sīsī yas`alu wa 'l-šabāb yuġību* (Andeel 2014), an older cartoon dating from 21 May 2014, only a few days before Sisi won the presidential election, talks and encounters were organized to discredit the revolution and promote the July 2013 coup. Above the cartoon, its title is reminiscent of these encounters, it is in MSA and contrasts with the speech, delivered in CEA.

Title

al-Sīsī yas`alu wa 'l-šabāb yuġību

Where is daddy?

Lit.: Sisi asks and the youngsters answer

Text

Bābā mawġūd..?!

Where is daddy?

Lit.: Is daddy there...?!

The English translation provided in the journal is the same for the title and for the bubble. The cartoon reverses the expected situation as the formality of the title, provided in MSA and mirroring the title of the talk-shows, contrasts with the President's reaction and the language he uses. Indeed, the President should be answering, not asking. Similarly, his speech should be official, as the title of the TV program of which he is the guest, but instead, he talks as if he was dealing with children, asking the boy and the girl about their *bābā* ("daddy") and so switching to CEA.

At the same time, from the President's expression, we can see that he is smiling but is fearful. Clearly, the President prefers to deal with an older person instead of the youngsters who participated in the 25 January revolution (as their t-shirts show), so he uses a familiar tone to invite them to call their father. In the title, the linguistic choice mirrors the reality and creates a shift from the language of the bubble, whose choice mirrors also the language the President uses, but in this case, it is ironic because of the situation. The alternating use of the two codes simultaneously exacerbates the conflicts of the situation.

Is this English?

The "25 JAN" writing on the t-shirts brings us to another question: should we consider these as English words (interferences), or as borrowings, and so

belonging to the CEA? This question arises because many are the cases when Andeel inserts English words in his cartoons¹⁹. As for the answer, it is not easy to determine as the limits between the two categories are not always clear and, for sure, we cannot generalise. In an article about English loan-words in the *Encyclopaedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, Atawneh (2007: 29) makes it clear that in the Arabic case, where diglossia is the norm, borrowings are easier and occur in the colloquial or the low language to fill a lexical gap or for reasons of prestige (Atawneh 2007: 30).

Title

il-Mafrūd in kidah 'ādī?

[No English translation provided]

Lit.: Should this be normal?

Many characters people *il-Mafrūd in kidah 'ādī?* (Andeel 2018b) and there are many texts, in different linguistic varieties. A wealthy girl, accompanied by a longhaired and muscled blond guy, is scolding a veiled woman walking with her husband. She shouts at the woman:

Text

Baṭṭalī ba'ā inṣiyā' li-l-nizām il-abawiyy. al-Ḥaqīr dah... Gat-ik il-'araḡ

[No English translation provided]

Lit.: Stop the compliance with this patriarchal system. This is despicable... You are disgusting!

The girl uses a high variety of *'āmmiyyah*, as we can see from the words *inṣiyā'* (compliance) that is MSA and *ḥaqīr* (despicable), which exists both in *fushḥā* and in the *'āmmiyyah*, but is marked by Badawi and Hinds (1986: 215) as «restricted to *'āmmiyyat al-muṭaqqafīn*», namely to a high variety of the *'āmmiyyah*²⁰. The older couple, instead, speak *'āmmiyyah*, as one could expect:

Text

Fīh ēh yā ablah ḥaddīnī

[No English translation provided]

Lit.: What's happened, miss, you scared me

Imṣi yā Monā'

[No English translation provided]

Let's go, Monā'

¹⁹ See, for instance, Andeel 2019, 2020.

²⁰ Badawi (1973) defined five “levels” of spoken Arabic in Egypt, ranging from more or less “pure” *fushḥā* to illiterate colloquial, gradually shading from one level to the next. His mid-level, *'āmmiyyat al-muṭaqqafīn* is considered as the spoken variety of the cultured/well educated/intellectuals, a level where standard and colloquial variants are combined with nearly equal distribution.

Behind the girl there are three people supporting her. Some signs inform us about who they are. The blond boy is:

Text

il-Abusive Boyfriend illī bi-yifakkirnī bi-dādī

[No English translation provided]

Lit.: The Abusive Boyfriend that reminds me of daddy

«Abusive Boyfriend» comes in Latin letters, while both words are preceded by the Arabic article (*il-*). The writing of “abusive” in Latin letters directly recalls the script «ABUSE» from the boy’s t-shirt, where we can read “I”, then a heart and “ABUSE” (I love abuse). One can also consider the other option, which is the rendering of the two words with Arabic characters. For many reasons, the result would be complex and confusing: first of all because of the lack of the sound “v” in Arabic, but also because *abū* would recall the word “father” and the transcription of the long word “boyfriend”, with so many vowels, would be anything but immediately comprehensible.

The word “daddy”, instead, despite being English, is written in Arabic letters and appears in eight texts out of the eleven in the cartoon, establishing its centrality on a recurrence generated also on the graphic level. The word “daddy” appears almost exclusively (seven times out of eight) on yellow frames, which simulate street signs and supply the reader further information on the context of the scene.

The businessman and the policeman are «daddy’s acquaintances» and send their regards to «daddy», while the word also appears elsewhere on other yellow signs, indicating that daddy owns the many banknotes spread on the ground, the tiny car (*‘arabiyyah šuğannūnah*, both typically Egyptian words – Badawi; Hinds 1986: 569, 504), the American University in Cairo, the apartment in the posh neighbourhood of New Cairo, a chalet in the renowned seaside resort of Ain Sokhna. The boyfriend, the businessman and the policeman are all related to daddy.

The explanation behind the use of “daddy”, instead of the CEA *abb* (father)²¹ or the more familiar *bābā* (daddy, father), is in all these signs indicating the wealth of the girl’s family and also the link her father has with the AUC, the prestigious independent English language university in Cairo. As a result of both their status and the university system, most of its students are bilingual in English and Arabic and outside the university, they naturally mix English with *‘ammiyyah* (Atawneh 2007: 35)²². “Daddy”, then, is the word

²¹ In MSA the word is spelled *ab*. However, in CAE, Badawi and Hinds (1986: 2) report it with double “b”.

²² Note that «the main motivation for borrowing English according to informants is prestige, which appeals to the younger generation. Users believe that English is an international language and, therefore, they are encouraged to use it in borrowing. Females seem to be more sensitive to prestige than males and thus they use

one could expect in the girl's mouth to call her father. However, its abundance, contrasting with the background of the communicative situation (a street, presumably in Cairo), where the girl's words are misplaced, the word "daddy" sounds ironic. Causing much criticism of its author, accused of being against feminism (al-Ḥūrī 2018), the cartoon answers to its rhetorical title, «Should this be normal?», maintaining that it is not normal that an Egyptian woman depending on "daddy" teaches women in the streets to behave like her.

Andeel even plays with Arabic and English mixing both languages in the same word. *Izā atā-k al-pānīk att.tāk* (Andeel 2017a) dates from 5 March 2017, when protests against a cut in bread subsidies were brutally repressed (Michaelson 2017).

Title

إذا أتاك البانيك أتاك

Izā atā-k al-pānīk att.tāk

[No English translation provided]

Lit.: If the panic attack comes to you

Text 1

al-Pānīk att.tāk

[No English translation provided]

Lit.: The panic attack OR the panic comes to you

The spelling in the drawing is more precise than in the title as we find three points under the letter *bā'*, rendering the sound "p" in the transcription of the English word "panic", appearing both in the title and within the picture, on the dog's forehead. The word "attack" is transliterated into Arabic characters and the two "t"s of the English word graphically correspond to two *tā'* in the Arabic transcription, even though the Arabic system would render a doubled sound through a *šaddah*. Written in this way, within the picture, the word also recalls the item *atā-k*, a combination between the Standard Arabic verb *atā* and the Colloquial Egyptian suffix pronoun *-ak* meaning together "comes to you", which is mentioned in the title. The writing of the words is well studied, so that on the dog's forehead we can read both "the panic attack" and "the panic comes to you".

If the alliteration between an English and an Arabic word was not enough, another alliteration appears in the picture. The second text, «SIT. SHIT», plays on the sounds of the two English words and on the inversion of the norm, as one would expect that a person says "sit" to a dog, not vice versa. The big black slobbery dog gritting his teeth and facing a small human being is a symbol of one's fears.

Not only Andeel must be fully bilingual in English and Arabic, but he also considers his readers bilingual and so he perceives English as a language that is part of his landscape and subjectivity and he can comfortably play with the two

more English loans than males» (Atawneh 2007: 35).

languages, this time without revealing or accentuating any contrasts, but always to bring a smile where normally there is none. If in the cartoon *il-Mafrūḍ in kidah 'ādī?* (Andeel 2018c) the word “daddy” enhances the social distance between the girl and the couple, interfering with the linguistic context, here the term “panic attack” is fully integrated in the CEA sentence and appears as a loan.

Concluding Remarks

In Andeel’s cartoons, language and register alternation seems to take advantage of diglossia characterizing the linguistic situation in Egypt to generate irony and satire. That observation results from the cartoons we have examined, but it was also shown by Andeel himself in an answer to my question about his linguistic choices. Kindly, the author quickly answered (we were on Facebook Messenger):

I use *'āmmiyyah* because the characters in the cartoons are usually Egyptian people talking to each other like how Egyptians would do in *'āmmiyyah*. Even though I really like the playfulness and endless tricks *'āmmiyyah* possesses. Sometimes I play on the readers’ expectation of the “stereotypes” casted in the cartoon by making people talk in a language they wouldn’t naturally use and slip in a couple of deliberately overly sophisticated *fushà* expressions, hoping it’d trigger a certain awareness of the class and education divide in Egypt and highlight the strengths of both languages – if we can recklessly describe *'āmmiyyah* as a language – by putting them in such contrast (Andeel, interview on Facebook, 24 January 2019)²³.

Indeed, Andeel is a real lover of the Arabic language and culture. He wrote to me: «I believe that art in general depends on this grey area between the author and the receiver where the ambiguity opens endless possibilities for interpretation which instead of being off putting or alienating it [the grey area] becomes very captivating. With the very important role language plays in Arabic history I can see a lot of these games that people play with contemporary language which is a huge source of inspiration for me» (Andeel, interview on Facebook, 31 January 2019).

Confirming and affirming some recent literary and paraliterary trends in Egypt, in his cartoons, Andeel mixes languages and code-switches registers in a total freedom enhanced by the medium of transmission (the web) and by the (paraliterary) genre to reproduce reality and to show or to exacerbate its inner contrasts, in line with the tradition of the *adab sāhir* and in a manner that we can define as *qillat adab*. Desacralisation and deterritorialization are at the basis of Andeel’s uninhibited use of language that then can freely express his impactful satire.

²³ I have modified the writing of the words *'āmmiyyah* and *fushà* so that they conform to the transcription adopted in this article.

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