

Language as a Means of Excommunication: An Exploration of the Use of Language to Oust 'Others' in Contemporary Egyptian/Arabic Discourse

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Abstract

One of the most common definitions of language is that it is a means of communication. The present research is, however, interested in quite a different aspect of language use, hence the title: Language as a Means of Excommunication. The term 'excommunication', strictly meaning to "exclude from a church or a religious community" (Note 1), is also used to mean "oust or exclude from a group or membership by decree" (Note 2). This paper deals with the use of language to 'excommunicate' 'others', whether literally or metaphorically, from the membership of a particular group, regardless of its secular or religious nature. The act of excommunication in its broad sense denotes "exclusion from fellowship" (Note 3) (*Merriam-Webster*, 2002) (Note 4). The researcher focuses on informal acts of 'excommunication' practiced by language users who are not authorized to do so in any way. The research is thus an exploration in contemporary Egyptian discourse with an eye on the use of language to oust 'others' as such. Two events have been selected for that purpose: a basically religious one (Note 5) and an originally sports event that has almost turned into a national dispute (Note 6). The paper shall mainly deal with two linguistic tools used for the disqualification of others as members of a given group; the use of particular lexemes that imply rather than state that the 'other' is some sort of 'infidel' or 'traitor', and the resort to direct quotations from and allusions to decontextualized religious texts that would virtually entail the condemnation of the 'other' as an outcast.

Keywords: Language, Communication, Excommunication, Contextomy, Decontextualization, Koranic quotations, Fanaticism, The "other"

1. Introduction, Scope & Objectives of the Research

1.1 Introduction

One of the most common definitions of language is that it is a means of communication. The present research, however, is interested in quite a different aspect of language use, hence the title: "Language as a Means of Excommunication".

Strictly speaking, excommunication is a form of ecclesiastical censure by which a person is excluded from the community of believers, the rites or sacraments of a church, and the rights of church membership, but not necessarily from membership in the church as such. Some method of exclusion belongs to the administration of all Christian churches and denominations, indeed of all religious communities. (Note 7) The term 'excommunication', strictly meaning to "exclude from a church or a religious community". (Note 8), is also used to mean "oust or exclude from a group or membership by decree" (Note 9). This paper deals with the use of language to 'excommunicate' 'others', whether literally or metaphorically, from the membership of a particular group, regardless of its secular or religious nature. The act of excommunication in its broad sense denotes "exclusion from fellowship" (Note 10) (*Merriam-Webster*, 2002) (Note 11). The researcher focuses on informal acts of 'excommunication' practiced by language users who are not in any way authorized to do so.

The research is, thus, an exploration into contemporary Egyptian discourse with an eye on the use of language to oust 'others'. Two events have been selected for that purpose: a basically cultural/religious one, (Note 12) and an originally sports event that has almost turned into a national dispute. (Note 13) The paper will mainly deal with two linguistic tools used for the disqualification of others as members of a given group; (1) the use of particular lexemes that either explicitly state or implicitly suggest that the 'other' is some sort of 'infidel' or 'traitor', and (2) the resort to direct to Contextomy (Note 14), i.e. quotations from and allusions to decontextualized religious texts that would virtually entail the condemnation of the 'other' as an outcast. Contextomy is defined by Matthew S. McGlone in his paper "Quoted out of Context: Contextomy and Its Consequences" as "the excerpting of words from their original linguistic context in a way that distorts the source's intentions" (Note 15). He maintains that it "prompts audiences to form a false impression of the source and contaminates subsequent interpretation when the quote is restored to its original context" (Note 16).

Philosophers have often tended to focus on the epistemological status and nature of religious belief, rather than on religious language as such. In other words, their attention has mainly been centred on the meaningfulness of religious language in general, rather than the linguistic characteristics of such language. (Note 17) Literary approaches to religious language have tended, in turn, to underlie the special semantic status and complexity of poetic 'truth' in its various 'forms'. (Note 18) From a linguistic perspective, the interest in religious language takes various forms, one of which is the linguistic tools employed in religious language to make a convincing argument and persuade the addressee of the credibility of the message concerned as well as present the opposite view and/or conviction as inferior, morally wrong, evil and thus unacceptable. The use of juxtaposing ideas, antonymous adjectives and nouns and strong general statements involving moral judgments are cases in points. Discussions of the State Council resolution against the appointment of female judges show the adoption of the above-mentioned techniques as well as contextomy, or decontextualized quotations from the Koran and Tradition, to support the arguments for and against the resolution. It is more interesting still to examine whether the same techniques, in addition to quoting and/or referring back to religious texts, would also be employed by the readers/commentators of the Egyptian *Ahram* daily newspaper in the case of the sports event too. If the State Council resolution rests purportedly on some strong religious foundations, the sports event cannot be seen to have any such connotations. The religious language of excommunication seems to be growing and acquiring a fashionable status in Egypt, if not in other Arab, societies as well. The excessive and unnecessary use of this language reflects the alarming tendency to reject the other, condemn what is different and lead to feuds and conflicts. This concern is the motivating force for the present research.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

A common and at the same time well established definition of language is that it is "a means of communication in different cultural settings" (Note 19). Communication, however, presupposes some kind of relations between at least two different egos. It also assumes a two-way stream of thoughts, ideas and feelings between two ends. In our case, the use of language under study is more of a typical Harold Pinter's dialogue, with its characteristically failed attempts at communication, psychological cruelty and antagonistic relationships. (Note 20) It is a case of the use of language to exclude the other, condemn the other and in some sense excommunicate the other.

1.3 Scope of the Research

For practical reasons, in consideration of both space and time, the researcher has confined the sample under study to the first fifty comments published on each of the two events in question in accordance with their appearance online.

1.4 Objective of the Research

The research in hand aims at exploring the use of language to oust, exclude and/or condemn the "other" as manifested in the comments of the readers of *Ahram* daily newspaper with reference to the two events under study, i.e. the State Council Resolution and the football game between Egypt and Algeria.

The research is, thus, an exploration of contemporary Egyptian discourse with an eye on the use of language to oust 'others' as such.

2. Data, Findings & Discussion

2.1 Event One

The Refusal of the Egyptian State Council to appoint female judges in 3 successive sessions in February and March 2010.

As pointed out earlier, the researcher has confined the sample under study to the first 50 comments published on each of the two events in question, in accordance with their appearance online.

In the State Council issue, 47 of the first 50 comments unwaveringly supported the resolution of the Council. They regarded *Ahram's* dissatisfaction with the resolution as inappropriate at the very least. As many as 23 out of the 47 comments regarded Al-Ahram's stand as indicating a deviation from religion that would merit the charge of apostasy. Only 3 comments, as much as 6% of the total number, expressed their disapproval of the resolution.

In fact, 7 of the supportive comments of the council were comments on the only 3 readers who criticized the Council's resolution and condemned it as regressive, antifeminist and fundamentalist. The lack of variation in the nature of these comments may have contributed to the relatively slow flow of the comments in this case in comparison with the case of the sports event.

Readers vary in their ways of expression and their styles of writing, as one would normally expect. Yet there are some common features amongst most of the comments presented by the readers who approved of the State Council resolution. These may be summed up as follows.

2.1.1 The use of lexical items and their traditional antonyms when it comes to describing their own convictions versus the views of those readers and/or other writers in *Ahram* newspaper who have expressed their resentment at the State Council resolution. Among the 47 comments that support the resolution, the lexical item *إسلام* "Islam" and the phrase *دين الحق* "the true religion" were used in 39 comments, with the derivative *إسلامي* "Islamic" used 14 times.

On the other hand, the antonymous term *معاد للإسلام* (anti-Islamic) was used 37 times to describe the views and/or attitude of those who criticized the council resolution. It is a white versus black situation, where the supporters of the council present themselves as the good folks and at the same time label their counterpart not simply as different but as downright evil.

2.1.2 In addition to the explicitly hostile term "anti-Islamic" two other terms were used more or less to the same effect. One of them is the term *شيوعي، شيوعييه* (communist) which was used 4 times, all of which in 3 of the 7 comments that addressed the stance and the writings of those *Ahram* writers known as defenders of women's rights such as Dr Rifaat El Saied and Dr Jaber Asfour. The second is the supposedly neutral term *علماني، علمانية* (secularist) which has acquired strongly negative connotations among the public in Egypt as a result of its frequent use by Islamists as a synonym of "Infidel" or "anti-Islamist". The lexical meaning of the term is overshadowed by the negative communicative effect it has over the average Egyptian reader. (Note 21)

Finally, the term *غربي* (western) and the noun *غرب* (west) were also used to refer to the views and/or attitude of the cities of the state council; the terms were used derogatively and were, quite often, qualified and/or modified by clear-cut negative adjectives that involved moral judgments.

The term (west) *الغرب* occurred 34 times, 23 of which in combination with the adjective *منحل* (loose) and three times with the adjective *لا ديني* (non-religious) which is often confused in the minds of the average reader with the term *مناف للدين* or *مضاد للدين* (irreligious or antireligious). The researcher has asked 10 of his acquaintances who are in the habit of reading the *Ahram* daily newspapers in its paper form but who are not particularly involved in cultural activities per se, and, therefore, may be fairly regarded as representative of the average Egyptian reader. The 10 informants consist of 4 fresh University graduates, 2 university students, a lawyer, a chemist, a house wife with secondary school education level and a grocer. None of the 10 informants has particular political affiliations with political parties in Egypt at present, and only one of them may be labelled as sympathetic with the trend of political Islamism as represented by the Muslim Brothers' movement. Yet 7 of 10 pointed out that they normally see no semantic difference between *لا ديني* (strictly speaking meaning non-religious or even a-religious), on the one hand, and *معاد للدين* or *مضاد للدين*, on the other hand (irreligious and antireligious respectively).

Besides, other expressions involving moral judgment whether for or against were also used only a couple of times, such as (pornography *الإباحية*) 2 times, (the collapse of values *انهيار القيم*) only once, and (corruption *الفساد*) 3 times. These were used to describe a hypothetical situation that would have become a reality if the State Council had endorsed the appointment of female judges. At the other end of the spectrum, the expression or rather slogan (The Koran is Our Constitution *الإسلام دستورنا*) was also used 4 times to support the argument presented by the majority of the State Council members. It is worth noting here that the official resolution issued by the council itself does not adopt such a slogan. In fact, the resolution does not reject the principle of appointing women as judges in the Council on the grounds that they are, by nature, incapable of undertaking that kind of job. It

maintains, however, that such appointments in the present conditions of the Egyptian society may be inappropriate. So the refusal to appoint female judges is based on convenience versus inconvenience, and is not indicative of an ideological stand. Yet the readers, who support that resolution, deal with it as an absolute rejection of the idea, grounded in what they believe to be an Islamic perspective. To support or advocate the appointment of female judges is therefore deemed as non-religious or even as anti-Islamic.

But what about the opposite set of comments that criticize the Council resolution? Are they more moderate? Do they use language to postulate some ideas and point out the drawbacks of others? In other words, do they use language as a means of communication or do they also use it only to condemn the opposite views; to excommunicate the "other"?

The only 3 comments that side against the Council resolution used the terms (رجعي regressive) 2 times, (fundamentalist أصولي) 3 times and (Wahhabi وهابي) to qualify the lexical term (فكر thought) 5 times (2 times in the same comment in 2 cases and only one time in another comment). The last two terms are another instance of an originally or, more exactly, historically neutral or even positive term that is used by the language user derogatively. The Arabic noun (أصول fundamentals or true origins) is supposed to have positive connotations when used in collocation with the lexical item (دين faith/religion). Imam Ghazali's famous book *أصول الدين* (*The Fundamentals of Religion*) is a case of point. In the last two decades, however, the adjective (أصولي fundamentalist) has acquired negative associations among the public and has become almost synonymous with the term (متطرف fundamentalist). Thus, (الفكر الديني الأصولي) now, more or less, denotes (الفكر الديني المتطرف) extremist religious thought). It is no longer a positive or even a neutral term. Its use by the critics of the State Council resolution is, therefore, an attempt to condemn the resolution and the underlying thought behind it as extremist. It is quite interesting in this respect that such a description may apply to the trend of thought expressed by the supporters of the resolution more than the resolution itself; the official justification of the resolution does not, explicitly at least, refer to women as inferior to men. And neither does it preclude the possibility of their appointment as judges in the long run on religious grounds.

Both sides of the argument, then, seem to be more concerned with the ulterior-motives of the other side than with what is actually being said. The actual event subject to the dispute acts as a trigger that sets the parties concerned on the starting point of a Black and White verbal fight that may be used as a rich glossary for students of linguistics tracing the types of antonyms and synonyms used by both parties. The two sets of comments, thus, seem to function as a typical Pinter dialogue where communication is substituted by the fear to communicate with other egos.

2.1.3 Contextomy: The use of de-contextualized and/or incomplete quotations;

Another common feature of the comments made by the supporters of the State Council resolution is the use of quotations, whether direct or indirect ones. In both cases, however, all quotations were either incomplete or typical examples of contextomy.

The use of direct and/or indirect quotations is a common strategy used to support the language users' arguments or points of view. According to Halliday (1994) (Note 22), direct/indirect quotations generally come from a third party, knower or authority, and they have strong persuasion for the addressees, so the use of them can effectively increase the authority of the discourse. (Note 23)

On the other hand, it is sometimes the case that a given writer tends to use decontextualized quotations, with no clear indication of the representativeness of the source quoted or the original situation that has given rise to the quotation to start with, only in order to make an otherwise unreliable general statement relating to the point the author wishes to make. Such techniques appear methodologically questionable to the researcher, yet they are often used by the writers/authors of the comments under study.

Generally speaking, direct quotations have an effect on the addressees stronger than that of indirect ones. On the other hand, it is often the case that quotations are abused rather than used to produce an effect that is sometimes quite different from that of the original text. This may be due to one of two reasons: the de-contextualisation of the quotation in question, or the extraction of one part rather than another, i.e., the deliberate use of incomplete quotations, resulting in a different and/or even contradictory impact.

The total number of quotations used is 4. All of them come from religious texts, particularly the Koran and the Hadith or sayings of the prophet Mohamed (PBUH). One of them occurred in all the 47 comments, referring to the Koranic verse (Men are managers of the affairs of women- Sura 4, verse 34 *الرجال قوامون على النساء*) whether directly or indirectly. Thus 27 quoted the previous segment of the verse verbatim, while 20 others referred to it by asserting that the Koran states that men are entitled to manage the affairs of women, without actually quoting

the verse, with 13 of them specifying the Sura (The Women, Sura 4). None of them quoted the whole verse which reads as follows:

الرجال قوامون على النساء بما فضل الله بعضهم على بعض وبما أنفقوا من أموالهم فالصالحات قانتات حافظات للغيب بما حفظ الله واللاتي تخافون نشوزهن فعظوهن واهجروهن في المضاجع واضربوهن فإن أطعنكم فلا تبغوا عليهن سبيلا إن الله كان عليا كبيرا

Men are the managers of the affairs of women for that God has preferred in bounty one of them over another, and for that they have expended of their property.

The Women- Sura 4, Verse 34

It is clear that the part of the quotation that is left out restricts men's entitlement to the management of the affairs of women and makes it contingent on their financial resources. The fact that the missing part of the verse does not support the argument against the appointment of female judges may be the reason it was deliberately left out by the commentators. Yet, in view of the fact that we cannot judge intentions, the effect of ignoring the rest of the verse remains the same, more support of the State Council resolution.

Another verse was quoted only once. By being similarly taken out of context, it was used to support the argument that women should not go out to work at all, let alone work as judges. The verse in question is verse 33 of Sura 33, The Confederates, (Remain in your houses *وقرن في بيوتكن*).

With the Arabic verb conjugation showing the imperative form to address females, the verse seems to be of a general nature, involving a command to Muslim women in general to stay at home. Yet when we go back to verses 32, we find that the command is not meant for all women but only the wives of the prophet Mohamed, for they are told in the very same verses that they "are not as other women" (*ولستن كأحد من النساء*). This limits the divine command to them alone. The verses read as follows:

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ إِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقَلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا (32) *وقرن في بيوتكن ولا تبرجن تبرج الجاهلية الأولى وأقمن الصلاة وآتين الزكاة واطعن الله ورسوله إنما يريد الله ليذهب عنكم الرجس أهل البيت ويطهركم تطهيرا (33)*

Wives of the Prophet, you are not as other women. If you are godfearing, be not abject in your speech, so that he in whose heart is sickness may be lustful; but speak honourable words. Remain in your houses; and display not your finery, as did the pagans of old. (The Confederates- Sura 33, Verses 32- 33)

The two other quotations belong to the verbal traditions of Mohamed (PBUH). The first is the 33 indirect quotations of a Hadith to the effect that women are inferior, both intellectually and religiously *النساء ناقصات عقل ودين* (Note 24).

This saying by the prophet is quite familiar and widely used. Yet presented in this manner, the least that may be said is that it is taken out of context. In fact, the remark of the Prophet (PBUH) comes in the context of juxtaposing or contrasting the great influence women have over the minds of men with the fact that they have a license not to pray or fast during menstruation and the religious rule dictating that the testimony of two women equals that of a single man.

It may be well worth mentioning here that a few Fatwas or Islamic verdicts have been recently made by religious scholars, including the former Grand Shiekh of Al-Azhar, the top Sunni institution in Egypt, explaining the Hadith in question. Their explanation devoid it from any implication that women are by nature inferior to men, which is clearly the point used by the supporters of the Council resolution to justify their refusal to appoint female judges. The researcher is in no position here to discuss the credibility of the above mentioned explanation of the Hadith, nor to judge the authenticity of the Hadith itself per se. The relevant point here is that the use of the indirect quotation focuses only on one possible interpretation of the quoted text, one that would, naturally, support the argument in question. It is the same pattern then used here too. Contextomy or decontextualized quotations are used or rather abused to produce an effect that suits the ends of the writer regardless whether or not that effect is identical with the intentions of the original text.

The fourth quotation used by 13 only of 47 comments is basically a direct one. The comments quote another Hadith that reads as follows:

in 9 cases, and ما أفلح قوم ولوا أمورهم امرأة in 4 cases.

Both texts have been quoted in well-known Hadith books, including Bukhari البخاري and Muslim مسلم. In the case of this saying of the prophet too, the text is taken out of context to indicate that any people that accept to be led

by a woman are bound to fail, with a very general sense of the expression (led by a woman *ولوا أمورهم امرأة*) to include any senior or leading position, even though a few enlightened religious scholars have recently asserted that the Hadith in question is inapplicable in the case of modern states that are governed by institutions rather than individuals. Again this view has been supported by the late Imam Tantawy, the present Shiekh of Al-Azhar Dr Ahmed El Tayyeb and even Dr Zaqzouq. (Note 25)

As for the 3 comments that disagree with the Council resolution, the only quotation was of the first article in the Egyptian constitution, stipulating equality among all citizens, regardless of religion, ethnic origin or gender. It is to be noted that these 3 references to and/or quotations of the Egyptian Constitution are the only secular quotations that occurred within the comments in the sample.

2.2 Event Two

A football game between Egypt & Algeria in the 2010 World Cup Qualifying matches. The competition ended up with two matches in November 2009, on the 14th and the 21st of the same month.

In this case, the first fifty comments appeared within the first four days after the game. This comes in contrast to the case of the temporary rejection of the appointment of female judges where the first fifty comments appeared over the period of eight days,

The difference between the length of time over which the comments under study appeared in the two events may not simply indicate more interest on the part of the readers of the *Ahram* Newspaper in the sports event than in the issue of the refusal of the State Council to appoint females. That may be partly a reason, but most probably not the only one. In the case of the football match, the first 50 comments included Algerian readers/commentators who may have been originally interested in the sport events and not in the *Ahram* paper itself. In other words, they may not be regular readers of *Ahram*, but were driven to read other comments on the match by googling about the game and all relevant issues. On the other hand, the comment on the state council resolution came from regular readers of the Egyptian daily newspaper. Another difference between the nature of the comments on the two events that may have also contributed to the increased number of comments on the sports event and the faster response in its case is the extremely limited variations in the comments on the State Council issue. The first 50 comments on the sports event consist of 34 by Egyptians (or at least so they say) and 16 by alleged Algerians, with a 68% versus 32%. Even within the 34 Egyptian comments, there is some variation too; 26 comments mainly attacked the Algerian team and/or Algerian comments, but 8 of them asserted the need for reconciliation and called upon both parties for calm the situation, representing a 16% of all comments and about 20% of the Egyptian comments. Among the 16 Algerian comments also 2 comments (4% all in all and about 12.0% of the Algerian ones) adopted a rational, pacifying attitude.

2.2.1 The use of lexical items and their traditional antonyms with reference to the writer of the comment versus the other is exemplified in lexical items such as (An Arab *عربي*) employed by Egyptians to describe themselves in contrast with (Amazighs *الأمازيغ*) to refer to Algerians. The two terms occurred in 21 of the 26 hostile Egyptian comments, with a percentage of around 75%. At the other end of the scale, aggressive Algerians comments, 14 all in all, described themselves as (the Muslims of Algeria *مسلمو الجزائر*) who have defeated (the Jews of Egypt *يهود مصر*)! These contrastive expressions were used by 8 of them, representing 50% of the total number of Algerian comments and around 60% of the hostile ones. It is quite interesting that ethnic and religious labels are used as derogatory terms regardless of their otherwise neutral denotations. There is nothing wrong with being an Amazigh, and Amazighs have contributed to the revolution of Algeria against French occupation. Egyptians have appreciated and honoured their struggle for years, and their national anthem in fact was composed by the late Egyptian singer and musician Mohamed Fawzy. But here we are, with the use of Amazigh as an insult, indicating that Algerians are not really Arabs. Ethnic and racial discrimination underlies the use of the terms in question. On the other hand, the totally inaccurate description of Egyptians as the Jews of Egypt is also indicative of religious fanaticism. Both parties agree then on one thing: the rejection of the other. One of the Egyptian comments even used the term (Barbarians *البرابرة*) instead of the Arabic term (البربر) which is simply a synonym of (الأمازيغ Amazighs). One of the Algerian comments also referred to (the Zionists of Egypt *صهاينة مصر*) while another one described the Egyptians as (pro-Zionists *متصهيونون*).

2.2.2 More downright derogatory terms, verging on insults that would be punished by the law were also used. The famous Arab singer Warda, who originally comes from Algeria but who has spent the greater part of her life in Egypt, was described by 4 Egyptian commentators as (a traitor *خائنة*) and twice as (ungrateful *ناكرة للجميل*) simply because she made a statement that she was going to cheer the Algerian football teams! The Algerians were not more generous either; the popular Lebanese singer Nancy Agram was nick-named (نانسي عقرب),

meaning (Nancy the Scorpion), just because she made a point to say she would cheer the Egyptian team. Only 5 comments did so, but then these were the only comments that mentioned her any way.

2.2.3 The use of de-contextualized and/or incomplete quotations is also employed by the readers who commented on the sports event. The total number of quotations including direct and indirect ones is 4, just one less than those used in the comments on the State Council resolution. The 4 quotations this time come from the Koran even though the event is by all means a-religious. The verse 46 of Sura 15 (El-Hijr الحجر) was used in 23 of the Egyptian comments to support the argument that there were no trespasses at all against the Algerian team in Cairo, simply because the verse, which is supposed to refer to Paradise, is employed by commentators to describe Egypt. The verse reads as follows: "Enter you then, in peace and security!" (Sura 15, verse 46) (ادخلوها) (بسلام امنين- سورة 15- آية 46). How and why Paradise is replaced by Egypt is inexplicable, except either as a wilful and conscious attempt at misusing the Koranic text to suit the ends of the quote user or as a result of confusing this verse with verse 99 in Sura 12, which was also used by 7 other comments again to persuade the addressees that Egypt is the land of security and none of its guests could ever be offended! The verse 99 from the Sura of Joseph reads as follows:

**So, when they entered unto Joseph, he took his father and mother into his arms saying,
'Enter you into Egypt, if God will, in security.'**

فلما دخلوا على يوسف آوى إليه أبويه وقال ادخلوا مصر إن شاء الله امنين.

Even with this verse that does mention Egypt by name, the reference is decontextualized and the complete verse is not quoted by any of the 7 readers/writers. They only quoted "ادخلوا مصر إن شاء الله امنين" ('Enter you into Egypt, if God will, in security'), as if it were a divine command from God addressed to all people at all times.

On the other hand, Algerians also resorted to the Koran as a source of reference and reliability in two cases, a direct quotation and an indirect reference to the same well-known Koranic story that could be dealt with as an indirect quotation of a couple of Koranic verses. In both cases the reference was made to the Pharaoh mentioned and indeed condemned in the Koran. Just as in the case of other quotations under study, the quotation is decontextualized and the Koranic reference to Pharaoh is over-generalized so as to encompass all Egyptians, in the past, at present and perhaps in the future too! The direct yet incomplete quotation is verse 75 of Sura 10, Jonah. It reads as follows:

**Then We sent forth, after them, Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh and his Council
with Our signs, but they waxed proud, and were a sinful people.**

ثم بعثنا من بعدهم موسى وهارون إلى فرعون وملئه فاستكبروا وبأياتنا وكانوا قوما مجرمين

and the directly quoted part is confined to *فاستكبروا وبأياتنا وكانوا قوما مجرمين* in two comments and only *وكانوا قوما مجرمين* in 4 others. As for the indirect quotations or references to the Pharaoh story in the Koran to attack 21st century Egyptians, they amount to 7 occurrences, all of which refer to Egyptians and Egyptian football teams as the Pharaohs who are condemned and damned in the Holy Koran. The result is a total of 13 uses of quotations in the 16 comments, with a percentage of 81%. It is amazing how the Algerian comments once condemn the "other/s" as sinful and unjust by quoting a religious text that depicts the Egyptian ruler as unjust in his treatment of the Jews and prophet Moses, while at the same time the very same comments also attack Egyptians by calling them "the Jews of Egypt". And, quite ironically, Egyptians too picked the verse that speaks well of the Jewish prophet Joseph and his family to support their arguments. The analogy with the lack of communication in Pinter's dialogues extends here to verge on the theatre of the absurd. Or the researcher should perhaps feel contented that both parties, the Egyptians and Algerians, agree on something!

3. Aftermath or Injury Time

All in all, one would have hoped with regard to the sports event that the comments might be less hostile and the attitudes of the commentators less aggressive. Unfortunately, however, the dominant atmosphere is that of black and white, of good versus evil, and hardly any room for rational thought. It is, then, the case that the extremist fanatic linguistic discourse is not only authentic but, unfortunately, also representative of a general atmosphere dominating Egyptian and Arab societies as a whole.

Before presenting a summary of this research for discussion in the 19th International Conference on Language, linguistics, Literature and Translation at Yarmouk University, the researcher thought of concluding his summing up with a hopeful note that remarks that the discussion has revealed that the use of language as a means of true communication is still a common practice in our Arab societies, at least among the intellectual elite that would be expected to attend such academic events as the Yarmouk conference. To the researcher's surprise, or perhaps his dismay, the actual discussion of the present research at the conference ended with a note of the session

chairperson (Note 26) arguing that there is no point in doing this research simply because it is natural for opposite parties in an argument or even in an intellectual dispute "to call each other names"! When the researcher exclaimed that it is natural for each party to support its argument as well as attempt to refute the other point of view, but not to call each other names, the answer was that calling others names is quite an acceptable practice. Even when the researcher pointed out that condemning the other as a traitor or an infidel is far worse than "calling each other names" and that it could actually lead to extremely serious results including the assassination of the so called traitor and/or infidel, the counter argument was that sometimes the only means to prove that I am a believer entails labelling the other as an infidel. The point here is that this very discussion has, indeed, functioned as a further display of the use of language as a means of "excommunication" per se and, hence, as an additional justification for doing the present research.

We are not here before a religious phenomenon, where religious rules govern every aspect of life, from judiciary system appointments to the scoring of goals in a soccer game. We are not really here dealing with a religious society, but one that abuses religion for all sorts of non-religious aims. The linguistic discourse we examine is no manifestation of piety and religious devotion but a model of fanaticism.

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Notes

Note 1. wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn

Note 2. Ibidem

Note 3. "the act of excommunicating : exclusion from fellowship; especially : an ecclesiastical censure whereby the person against whom it is pronounced is for the time cast out of the communion of the church"

Note 4. "excommunication." Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged. Merriam-Webster, 2002. <http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com> (23 Jan. 2010).

Note 5. The murder of seven Copts on the Eve of the Coptic Eastern Christmas in Upper Egypt 2010.

Note 6. A football game between Egypt & Algeria in the World Cup Qualifying matches

Note 7. "excommunication." Encyclopædia Britannica. 2010. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 28 Mar. 2010 <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/197846/excommunication>>.

Note 8. wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn

Note 9. Ibidem

Note 10. "the act of excommunicating : exclusion from fellowship; especially : an ecclesiastical censure whereby the person against whom it is pronounced is for the time cast out of the communion of the church"

Note 11. "excommunication." *Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged*. Merriam-Webster, 2002. <http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com> (23 Jan. 2010).

Note 12. The Refusal of the Egyptian State Council to appoint female judges in 3 successive sessions in February and March 2010

Note 13. A football game between Egypt & Algeria in the World Cup Qualifying matches

Note 14. Matthew. (PhD, 1994, Princeton University) is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Texas at Austin

Correspondence to Address communication to McGlone at Department of Communication Studies, University of Texas at Austin, 1 University Station A1105, Austin, TX 78712)"Contextomy: The Art of Quoting out of Context", A paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Dresden International Congress Centre, Dresden, Germany, Jun 16, 2006 <Not Available>. 2009-05-25 <http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p91171_index.html>

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Note 16. Ibid

Note 17. Holt, L.L. (2005) Temporally nonadjacent nonlinguistic sounds affect speech categorization

Note 18. Holt, Ron (2006), "A Socio-linguistic Approach to Religious Language" Australian EJournal of Theology, February 2006 - Issue 6 - ISSN 1448 - 6326

Note 19. English Language and Communication, <http://courses.cardiff.ac.uk/> (Saturday, 10 April, 2010)

Note 20. "Pinter, Harold (Vol. 188) - Introduction." Contemporary Literary Criticism. Ed. Janet Witalec. Vol. 188. Gale Cengage, 2004. eNotes.com. 2006. 21 Apr, 2010 <<http://www.enotes.com/contemporary-literary-criticism/pinter-harold-vol-188>>

Note 21. The researcher has asked 10 of his acquaintances who are in the habit of reading the Ahram daily newspapers in its paper form but who are not particularly involved in cultural activities per se, and, therefore, may be fairly regarded as representative of the average Egyptian reader.

Note 22. Halliday 1994, Halliday, M.A.K. (1994). An Introduction to Functional Grammar (Second Edition). London: Edward Arnold

Note 23. Rebecca Bryant. George Mason University (Iniversip. Personal States: Making Connections between. People and Bureaucracy in "Turkey. Catherine Alexander (NewYork- Oxford University Press)

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Note 24. حدثنا سعيد بن أبي مريم قال أخبرنا محمد بن جعفر قال أخبرني زيد هو ابن أسلم عن عياض بن عبد الله عن أبي سعيد خرج رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم في أضحية أو فطر إلى المصلى فمر على النساء فقال يا معشر النساء تصدقن الخدي قال فإني أرى أرى أكثر أهل النار قتلن وبم يا رسول الله قال تكثرن اللعن وتكفرن العشير ما رأيت من ناقصات عقل ودين أذهب للب الرجل الحازم من إحدائهن قتلن وما نقصان ديننا وعقلنا يا رسول الله قال أليس شهادة المرأة مثل نصف شهادة الرجل قلن بلى قال فذلك من نقصان عقلها أليس إذا حاضت لم تصل ولم تصم قلن بلى قال فذلك من نقصان دينها

Note 25. Dr Zaqzouq is the Egyptian Minister of Religious Endowments.

Note 26. Session 2, 11.30 to 13.00, Wednesday, 28th April, 20210, Chaired by Professor Mohammed Al-Shorafat of Yarmouk University.