The Semantic Shift of Some Arabic Lexemes in Egypt after January 25 Revolution

Adel Refaat Mahfouz

1 Faculty of Al-Alsun (Languages), Minia University, Minia, Egypt

Correspondence: Adel Refaat Mahfouz, P. O. Box 30057, postal code 41477, Medina, Taibah University, Saudi Arabia. E-mail: adelrefaat56@yahoo.com

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Abstract

This study attempts to defend the claim that politics is a linguistically constituted activity, and to show that the terms that inform political beliefs and behavior have historically mutable meanings that have undergone changes related to real political events. Namely, these terms correspond to the experiences which package the semantic material into them i.e. verbal and situational context yield the shift in meaning. This issue is, however, much more complex and it requires a truly integrating approach, where morphological and semantic criteria are all relevant, as well as psycholinguistic considerations (holistic storage and processing), and sociolinguistic and pragmatic factors.

To support the claim above, this study aims to explore the semantic change of some Arabic words after January 25 Revolution in Egypt. It is an attempt to trace evidences of semantic shift in words used during and after the January 25 Revolution through the Egyptian newspapers and social sites. It is concerned with terms used by the pro and anti-revolution activists to name themselves and their opponents. Through this study, the researcher expects that the findings may be useful to enrich the knowledge about the semantic change in Egyptian Arabic in general and to give a better understanding of the meaning shifts and changes that occurred to some lexemes as a result of January 25 Revolution in particular. Moreover, the result of this study is hoped to be used as reference and comparison to other studies in order to make better analysis for further research in semantic change (broadening, Narrowing, Amelioration, Pejoration, Weakening, and Semantic Shift). The study, then, is limited to the purpose of analyzing the semantic changes. The analysis of the collected data represents the semantic change in some Arabic words after January 25 Revolution.

Keywords: semantic shift, Arabic lexis, January 25 Revolution, Egypt

1. Introduction

The linguistic system of any living language has a tendency to change over time as languages are always in the process of change. This change may be explained in phonetic, syntactic and semantic terms. New words, novel meanings, different pronunciations, deviant grammatical forms are continuously coming into use replacing the older ones. Although semantic change does not only concern words, the term labels words as they are the most “sensitive” part of language; lexemes respond most readily to every change in the human activity in whatever sphere it may happen to take place. Namely, unlike other areas of linguistic change, semantic change is linked to change in culture and society (Trask, 1994).

The semantic content of a lexeme can change in the course of time. Changes of lexical meanings can be tested by comparing contexts of different times as they occur regularly and systematically. In the present paper, the researcher attempts to shed light on the different meanings that some words acquired due to the radical political change that took place in Egypt after the Revolution of January 25, 2011 which had erupted in order to create a new society based on freedom, dignity, and social justice. One of the first tasks of those who are creating that new society is to create a new and distinct identity. This identity cannot be fully created unless a new language becomes part of the new identity. Thus, appropriate semantic changes must occur in order for the new social and political construction to be meaningful. On the other hand, Arabic is prized for its plasticity Whereas this plasticity in meaning ensures both the referential power of a language.

In order to invoke anger or support, new language becomes necessary; the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
(SACAF) (the ruler of the transitional phase Feb.11, 2011–July 1, 2012) as well as the former ruling party (Freedom and Justice Party, the political organ of Muslim Brotherhood), for instance, do not see things the same as the protesters do. The latter think that the former is acting against the revolution whereas the former consider themselves the safeguards of the revolution. Thus, language is employed by each party as a weapon against the other. This “language” is sometimes consciously created as a social and political alternative to the language of the society-at-large, and at other times is a spontaneous outgrowth of situation. However, this “language” does differ from the Egyptian Standard Arabic; not so much in syntax or phonology, but in semantic content of the vocabulary.

This paper will not focus on the origin of the words nor make a comparison between the earlier and the new meaning of the given words except so far as is necessary to clarify the semantic change; what different meanings can be expressed by one and the same lexeme or by words derivationally related to each other.

For the purposes of this paper, “the revolutionists” /’ath-thuwâr/ is defined as the various groups and individuals of different political orientations who desire to bring about radical, immediate change of direction in the social, political, or economic orientation of Egypt by peaceful means. The members of these loosely cohesive groups are primarily young. They are really working to give the power back to the people. The term “protesters” /’al mutathâhirûn/ is an alternative term used interchangeably in this paper. Nevertheless, the establishment of the semantic changes of the lexemes under discussion is unpredictable. Questions such as “Will the collective mind of the Egyptian people keep them and call them up when necessary? Will the new meaning be vague, provisional, subject to further adjustments?” are beyond the scope of the study as it is too early to judge them and because the current study is a descriptive one.

Eckardt (2006, p. 13) claims that “Speakers use the newly emerged words, constructions, or phrases with great confidence and conciseness. …[new meanings] generally do not evoke a feeling of uneasiness in those who use them.” However, one thinks it is difficult to evaluate to what extent these questions have been approached and answered in the research up to now. Such hypothetical questions can never be answered at the moment.

2. Causes of Semantic Change

Studying causes of semantic change is of pivotal importance as it may lead eventually to a clearer explanation of language development. Such causes can be extra-linguistic and linguistic; the changes of a referent depend altogether on factors outside language and the speech activity. Language only registers the change since languages are powerfully affected by social, political, economic, cultural, and technical change. The influence of those factors upon linguistics proves that social factors can influence even semantic content of words. Words, as Traugott and Dasher (2003, p. 25) write, “may change due to the decision by certain communities to reclaim for positive purposes of group identification or pride a word that has been used in pejorative ways against them.” Namely, the alteration of meaning takes place as lexemes are constantly used and what is intended by speakers is not exactly the same each time.

3. Types of Semantic Change

Semantic changes have been classified by different linguists. The most complete classification was suggested by the German linguist and lexicographer Herman Paul (1846-1921) in his book “Prinzipien des Sprachgeschichte” “Principles of the History of Language”. It is based on the logical principle. He distinguishes two main ways where the semantic change is gradual (specialization and generalization), two momentary conscious semantic changes (metaphor and metonymy) and also secondary ways: gradual (elevation and degradation), momentary (hyperbole and litotes).

3.1 Widening/Extension

Range of meanings of a word increases so that the word can be used in more contexts than were appropriate before the change

- *dog* => 1) specific powerful breed of dog => all breeds or races of dog

- *cupboard* => 1) table upon which cups or vessels were placed, a piece of furniture to display plates => closet or cabin with shelves for the keeping cups and dishes => AE: small storage cabinet

3.2 Narrowing (Specialisation, Restriction)

Range of meaning is decreased so that a word can be used appropriately only in fewer contexts than before the change

*meat* => ‘food’ in general
3.3 Metaphor
-involves relationship of perceived similarity
 *hound => OE hound ‘dog in general’ => species of dog (long eared hunting dog);
 *wife => OE ‘woman’ => ‘woman of humble rank or low employment’ => ‘married woman, spouse’
 *girl => ME ‘child or young person of either sex’ => ‘female child, young woman’

3.4 Metonymy
-inclusion of additional senses which were originally not present but which are closely associated with word’s original meaning
 *tear => ‘drink’ => ‘evening meal accompanied by drinking tea’;
 *cheek ‘fleshy side of the face below the eye’ < OE: ‘jaw, jawbone’

3.5 Synecdoche
-kind of metonymy, involves part-to-whole relationship
 *hand ‘hired hand, employed worker’;
 *tongue ‘language’

3.6 Degeneration / Pejoration
-sense of a word takes on a less positive, more negative evaluation in the minds of the users
 *knave ‘a rogue’ < OE: cnafa ‘a youth, a child’ > ‘servant’;
 *spinster ‘unmarried woman’ < ‘one who spins’;
 *silly ‘foolish, stupid’ < ME sely ‘happy, innocent’ < OE sælig ‘blessed, blissful’
 *disease ‘illness’ < ‘discomfort’ (cf. dis+ease)

3.7 Elevation / Amelioration
-shifts in the sense of a word in the direction towards a more positive value in the minds of the users
 *pretty < OE: prættig ‘crafty, sly’
 *knight ‘mounted warrior serving a king’ ‘lesser nobility’ < OE cniht ‘boy, servant’ > ‘servant’ > ‘military servant’;
 *dude ‘guy, person’ < in 1883 a word of ridicule for ‘man who affects an exaggerated fastidiousness in dress, speech and deportment’, a dandy

3.8 Taboo Replacement and Avoidance of Obscenity
 *ass ‘long-eared animal related to a horse’ => donkey;
 *cock ‘adult male chicken’ => rooster;
 *bloody nose => blood nose/bleeding nose
 *toilet: WC, bathroom, lavatory, restroom, loo, john

3.9 Hyperbole
-shift in meaning due to exaggeration by overstatement
 *terribly, horribly, awfully ‘very’

3.10 Litotes
-understatement for rhetorical effect, especially when achieved by using negation with a term in place of using an antonym of that term, as in “She was not a little upset” for “She was extremely upset.”
 A figure of speech consisting of an understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by negating its opposite, as in “This is no small problem.”
4. Methodology and Data Collection

Since it is impossible to cover all the words and expressions used during and after the January 25 Revolution in one paper, the methodology used in this paper is to cite as many representative uses of a given word as possible, then to arrive at a definition, or definitions. The next step will be to give the current usage of the word in the Standard Egyptian Arabic. The last step will be to determine the kind of shift the word has undergone. The final section of the paper will be an attempt to arrive at a general formulation of semantic shift in the terms of January 25 Revolution.

To investigate why they do the semantic change of the terms, and how they do it, the researcher has collected some terms and examples of usage from newspapers. Comments are made below these terms and examples to show the differences between usages. This paper depends chiefly on the basis of electronic material used by and for the political activists. The researcher added some photos to document the time and event of the new use of some Arabic lexemes and to create a mental image of how they are used.

5. Discussion

Up to this point, the current study focuses on the causes and types of the semantic change. Still to be dealt with is the question of how these linguistic innovations are used. This section is concerned with the analysis of the new meanings that the lexemes have acquired during the revolution.

أخوانة

This term is newly coined by the political opponents of the Muslim Brotherhood Group following the winning of the last presidential elections. The term is politically invested to show that Muslim Brotherhood is anti-pluralism and accuse them of obsessing the important posts of the State. The aim is to continue broadening the movement.

What is the “Brotherization” of the state? And why do we fear it? (Bahaa’ Eddin, 2012)

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The origin of this term is Turkish. It is composed of two morphemes; the root morpheme (balta) >> (ax) and the suffix (جي ji) >> (maker or user). The Turkish loanword, therefore, means (ax maker or ax user). Gradually, the root of the loanword acquired the meaning of “long knife”. Since outlaws used to carry long knives during committing illegal actions, a shift in meaning results from the subsequent action of generalization over time: the loanword has extended into a new area then undergoes narrowing to exclude its original meaning and the new sense has become included in the meaning of “baltagiya” “thugs”. The stereotype of a thug in Egypt is a young man about 20 years of age carrying stick, long knife or Molotov cocktail. He is not wearing any shirts. He usually wears slippers in his feet and bandage around his head. During the last decade of Mubarak’s era, “thuggery” was politicized and became a job; Rakha (2011) asserts that those “systematically marginalized and abused but also regularly deployed, slave-like, by the police, and electoral candidates” are often labeled baltageya, especially by the middle class. These so-called “baltageya’, he adds, have often been recruited by the regime. After January 25 Revolution, the term extended to others and was politically utilized; the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) has ruled Egypt since the ouster of Mubarak. It claimed it was safeguarding the revolution, gradually its members lost support as they began to suppress opposition, using increasingly
violent tactics. The SCAF and pro Mubarak’s regime used to call protesters “thugs”

“The youth of Tahrir are thugs.” said Abdalla Kamâl, ex-editor –in-chief of Rose Al-Yûsif magazine. (Al-Berry, 2011)

Therefore, the term is derogatory for anyone who protests against the SCAF. Being hostile and uncooperative toward the protesters when they demand an end to army rule and angered by rough police tactics, protesters describe the SCAF and the police as “thugs”

Thugs get out of the army vehicles in Al-Abbâseya incidents (Gamal, 2012)

Nevertheless, protesters picked up the pejorative term “thugs” and mocked it via Twitter comments and Facebook statuses and then they reloaded it with a laudatory content. As it is evident from the excerpt below, the term is used in a mocking and laudatory sense.

Nellyalli (2012) writes: “Here’s to the thugs that nursed us in Tahrir that day, those who protected the entrances on other days and who were at the front lines every time. The world would be a much better place if it were full of people like you.”

![Protesters hold banners with Arabic words that read “Open strike till retribution” “I’m a thug” ridiculing official accusations](photo2.jpg)

**Photo 2. Protesters hold banners with Arabic words that read “Open strike till retribution” “I’m a thug” ridiculing official accusations**

**ثورة SA/thawra/ CA/sawra/ revolution**

Apart from the dictionary meaning of the term, the term “revolution” in the collective mind of the Egyptians is closely related to the revolution of July 23, 1952. However, the semantic content of the term was changed after January 25, 2011 to refer to the fall of Mubarak’s regime after 18-day protest. So, when the term “revolution” is mentioned without modification, people think of January 25 Revolution and July 23 Revolution takes a back seat. So, the meaning of the word “revolution” is specialized to mean January 25 Revolution although both semantic contents refer to the sudden radical change and the same somewhat vague future state to be brought about by the actions of the people. To the protesters, the revolution is a positive thing and it is, therefore, a laudatory term.
Photo 3. The slogan of January 25 Revolution

Remnants

Remaining residual (Oxford English Reference Dictionary)
Something left over; a remainder (American Heritage® Dictionary)
The defeated (Standard Arabic Academy Concise Dictionary)
This term applies generally to any member of Mubarak’s regime, and specifically to any member of the disbanded National Democratic Party (NDP)
It is well-known to members of the downfall regime of Mubarak and to non-members alike. The present meaning of the word apparently surfaced shortly after the dissolution of NDP. Perhaps due to nation-wide radio, television, and newspaper coverage, the word gained immediate popularity in and acceptance of the Egyptian society. Every Egyptian newspaper uses it, with variations, in almost every issue.

Financial Times warns of the return of the Remnants to the parliament (Gheryyan, 2015)

In the above example, the term, originally used as a noun, services as an adjective, which Stern (1965) calls “analogical change”. This change, one might argue, comes to assure that Mubarak’s regime figures are called Remnants even though they are not stated. From the quotation above, it is apparent that “remnant” is perceived as an equivalent to one of Mubarak’s regime figures. Namely, the term has undergone a sense extension.

The prison of the remnants—the enemies of the revolution—centers Tahrîr Squire (AlArabiya.net, 20112)
The pejorative term has undergone a process of widening in meaning to include the opponents of the revolution.

Photo 4. A banner shows the rejection of the National Democratic Party remnants

million-strong protest
Many of the words used by the protesters are familiar to the general public and others are innovations of the revolution activists. The word /milyûniyyah/ “million-strong rally” was coined by the protesters to label their rallies. This female adjective which is derived from the word “million” seems to be used to have strong impact on the value of the modified term “rally” to threaten the ruling power.

الملحق /’almunhâl/ disbanded or dissolute

Naguib Sawiris: Not all the “dissbanded National Democratic party” members are corrupted. (Ramadan 2015)

الملحق /’almunhâl/ disbanded or dissolute

Although the term “dissbanded” is neutral term and echoes the legal status of the “National Democratic Party (NDP)”, it is used by the pro-revolution activists in derogatory sense. This derogatory meaning is reached through polysemy; the word “dissbanded” and the word “dissolute” are polysemous in Arabic. The specialized usage of the term evidences an example of what Stern (1965) calls “intentional transfer” that is, the speaker perceives an association between /’almunhâl/ (disbanded) and /’almunhâl/ (dissolute), and uses the term to present his feelings toward the NDP and its members and to show them as if they were acting immorally, not illegally.

الشعب /’ash-sha’b/ people

The people want to topple the regime (Al-Khedr, 2011)

(Ketchley, 2013) ‘The army and the people are one hand’

Another word of the Revolution diction is “people.” This word, like the others tackled above, involves a specialization of meaning; the word is narrowed to refer to two meanings; the first one is the possibility of influence from socialist ideology as the slogan raised by “the people” during the revolution, is “bread, freedom, human dignity, and social justice”. The protesters aligned themselves with the farmer, the poor and, in general, with the working classes. The protesters proposed a totally different life style based on equality and freedom. The second one is that the meaning of the word “people”, chanted during the 18-day protest, has been specialized to include the connotation of opposition to the non-democratic government of the National Democratic Party and consequently to all the figures of Mubarak’s regime. It also indicates some unity between the various groups. Namely, what is considered the opposite of “the people” seems to be anything repressive, corrupted, and generally referred to in vague terms such as the regime, the ruling gang, or the system. Apparently, then, the protesters, who were in Tahrîr Squire, see themselves as representatives and a part of the mass of the community. Thus, the meaning of the word is not changed substantially; the referent is mainly altered to exclude the former “ruling class” of Egypt. The term “people” is decidedly laudatory as it serves to
contrast “the people” with “the former regime.”

المجلس الأعلى للقوات المسلحة SA /'al-majlisu 'al-'a 'ala lil-quwât 'al-musallaha/ the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF)

This formal title is used by the pro-SCAF in ameliorative sense. This ameliorative use is intended to show support and solidarity. Theoretically, expressing solidarity by using formal title might seem odd; Brown and Gilman (1972) claim that a superior addressee should receive V (V here represents the formal title) and the two semantics (power and solidarity) call for the opposite choice. In order to eliminate this conflict, Scoton and Zhu (1983) developed the concepts of Brown and Gilman; they distinguished both solidarity and familiarity from power and from one another. As Fasold (1993, p. 32) explains, “solidarity is a common characteristic that cannot be denied, such as kinship, nationality or party membership. Familiarity refers to a history of voluntary encounters between individuals; basically, they choose to be friends” Thus, the solidarity relationship here seems to be not a relationship between a speaker and addressee but between the addressee and the Egyptian people represented by the SCAF. The choice of a certain form of address echoes the speakers’ political attitudes of other forces.

المواطنون الشرفاء /'al-muwâţinûn 'ash-shurafâ'/ honorable citizens

This expression is the form of address that the SCAF used when addressing its supporters. They are viewed positively by the SCAF and consequently a laudatory term. While anti- SCAF activists consider the term derogatory as they see the “honorble citizens” as those who betrayed the revolution. According to the political activist and novelist Alaa’ Al-Aswani (2012), honorable citizens “are seen by the Military Council as those who agree at all what it does, support its plans to abort the revolution, and disregard all the brutal crimes for which it is responsible politically and criminally.”

الاستقرار /'Al-' istiqrâr/ stability

The term, which has undergone an extension of meaning, changed from a laudatory to a derogatory term when it is used by the protesters and pro-revolution activists as they interpret it as a euphemism for subverting the revolution and maintaining the status quo or in best cases “stability via Mubarak’s regime” which is completely different from the “stability” revolutionists call for i.e. achieving freedom, dignity, and social justice. The dictionary meaning of the term, therefore, took a back seat and both parties use the term politically. Pro Mubarak’s regime consider January 25 Revolution a threat to the country’s stability whereas the revolutionists see Mubarak “stability” is a preservation of the status quo

موقعة الجمل SA/mawqi'atu aljamal/ CA /mawqi'at egamal/ the battle of the camel

Historically, the battle of the camel occurred at Basra, Iraq in November 7, 656 AD when the forces of the fourth Caliph Ali ibn Abî Tâlib, faced the forces led by the mother of the believers 'Â'ishah (a widow of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to ask Ali to arrest the third Caliph Uthmân ibn 'Affân's killers, not to fight Mu'âwiyyah. The battle is seen by historians as the first Islamic civil war. The battle named “the battle of the camel” because 'Â'ishah was riding a camel during the battle.

After over 14 centuries, particularly on Wednesday, Feb. 2, 2011, the collective mind of the Egyptians recalled...
“the battle of the camel” when Pro-Mubarak thugs on horses and camels attacked protesters arrayed in Tahrir Square. The media extended the historical term to include the political event.

Photo 6. The battle of the camel

\textit{\'ayādi khafiyah} Hidden hands

This is another equivalent of \textit{\'asalafiyûn} a few number of infiltrators”. “Synecdoche” is the type of semantic shift of that equivalent

\textit{EGYPT: Hidden Hands Stoke Sectarian Strife} (Morrow, 2011)

\textit{Hidden hands of old regimes did not go away} (Cockburn, 2013)

\textit{Salafists Are the Wild Card of Egypt’s Referendum} (Trager, 2014)

The Arabic loanword “salafists” (sometimes, the Salafi movement, the Salafi group, or the salafî methodology “\textit{\'Al-Manhaj 'As-Salafi}”) describes an Islamic sect that take its name from the word “salaf” which means predecessors of the companions of Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him). They concerned themselves with the Islamic Call (Da’wah). After January 25 Revolution, Salafists played a political role and established a party so the term extended to mean “politician with Islamic reference”

\textit{Salafists Are the Wild Card of Egypt’s Referendum} (Trager, 2014)

The Rise and Fall of the \textit{Salafi al-Nour Party} in Egypt (Brown, 2013)

Egypt in Turmoil: \textit{Salafists} Gain Strength amid Political Chaos (Salloum, Steinvoth, & Windfuhr, 2013)

\textit{\'Ad-Dawlatu 'Al- 'Amîqa} \textit{Ed-Dawla El-'Amîqah} deep state

This term is a calque of the Turkish term “derin devlet”. It refers to the high administrative bodies of the state that oppose any positive change in order to preserve the acquired privileges they got during the former regime. This term was loaned by activists to describe those who reject democracy and human rights.

\textit{\'hizb el-kanabah} lit. Sofa party (silent majority)
Although the term is known in Egypt before January 25 Revolution as “‘Al-‘Aghlabiyyah As-Sâmitah” a calque of the English term “silent majority”, another synonym of the term was coined after the eruption of January 25 Revolution to describe the people who are not concerned with the public affairs or/and those who do not belong to any of the political parties that were formed after January 25 Revolution. The new synonym

mustashfa maydânî/ Field hospital

As Tamm (2008:6) states, “the lexicon of a language is, of course, a dynamic and constantly changing complex structure where new words emerge, old words disappear or change in one or another way.” The established meaning of the word-group “field hospital” has been extended to mean “a tent where volunteer physicians treat injured protesters during protesting and at the place of protesting”

A hospital established on a temporary basis to serve troops in a combat zone.


Tahrir field hospital saves hundreds of lives (Al-Ghazawy, 2011)

ash-shuhadâ'/ martyrs

The classical meaning of “Martyrs” is soldiers who are killed by the enemy on the battle field but after January 25 Revolution the meaning of the word extended to be applied as description of the protesters who were killed during the revolution. Being “Martyrs” in the sight of Allah is controversial as no one, except Allah, can confirm how their status is. One might argue that the word is used hyperbolically to act as a euphemism of “dead” or “deaths”

CA /'ilward 'illi fattah fi ganâyen masr/ roses which opened up in gardens of Egypt

Another equivalent of the word “martyrs” is the metaphor created by the Egyptians following January 25 Revolution “roses which opened up in gardens of Egypt” This type of shift in meaning is called “metaphor”. Traditionally, metaphor has been viewed as a typical instance of creative language of literary texts, particularly poetic texts. To create this metaphor, which is a rhetorical device to present a given content in a striking impressive, colorful way, the pro-revolution writers adapted another semantic shift type, i.e. synaesthesia where the senses of eyesight and smell are mingled with the youth who were killed during the revolution to set up a relationship between irrelevant semantic elements. using “opened up in gardens” for “passed away and buried in graves” to represent glory ads a divine dimension to the metaphor. The aim of the semantic shift here is laudatory .i.e. to praise the victims of the 18-day Revolution.

احرکت سیتا ابریل/ April 6 Movement

As is evident from the quotation, the term is used in a laudatory sense. It signifies those who supported the revolution. The word “movement,” in this context, may be defined as “supporting, actively or passively, the revolution and street activities”. The definition that may be extracted from the above is as follows: “a groups of young men working together toward the general goal of the restoration and preservation of civil liberties.”

CA /'îsh/ bread

Economic causes are obviously at work in the semantic development; one of the slogans that protesters raised during the rallies was “bread” to mean “the improvement of the economic circumstances of the poor and creating more jobs for young men”. The meaning of the word has extended to include the process that enables people to get a loaf of bread. Synecdoche -kind of metonymy, involves part-to-whole relationship- is the type of shift.
6. Conclusion

The above lexemes have all been examples of semantic change. All are terms which are common and current in standard Egyptian Arabic, but which, through specialization of meaning, have a primary meaning in revolutionary diction which is different from the primary meaning in dictionary meaning.

Along with these terms there are many which have undergone a process of widening in meaning. Though extension of meaning is less common than restriction, there are several examples of this kind of change in the pejorative and laudatory terms. This study proves that, as Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2008) states, “the lexicon of a language is a dynamic and constantly changing complex structure where new words emerge, old words disappear or change in one or another.”

Since natural languages are characterized by their plasticity, and since arbitrary political factors can give rise to highly unpredictable semantic changes, protesters are looked at as language builders as much as language consumers and this ensures the referential power of a language which is used as a weapon in the tension between opposing forces, namely, each force can load the same lexeme with positive meaning when describing its members but when describing the opposing force, the lexeme will be negatively loaded.

Tackling the various types of semantic shift is important not only because of the interest the various cases present in themselves but also because a thorough knowledge of these possibilities helps one to understand the semantic structure of Arabic words used by the Egyptian people at the present stage of their long history.

The table below illustrates the Laudatory and Pejorative meanings that some lexemes have acquired after January 25 Revolution.

Table 1. The Laudatory and Pejorative meanings that some lexemes have acquired after January 25 Revolution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The term</th>
<th>Users of the term</th>
<th>Target of the term</th>
<th>Laudatory for the target?</th>
<th>Pejorative for the target?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ﻓَﻞ pl/ ful pl / ﻓُﻠُﻞ pl/ fulfillment remnants</td>
<td>Pro-January 25 Revolution</td>
<td>Pro-Mubarak’s regime</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ﺍﻻﺳﺘﻘﺮاﺭ / istiqār/ stability</td>
<td>The SCAF Pro-January 25 Revolution</td>
<td>Pro- The SCAF</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ﻣﻠﻴﻮﻧﻴﺔ / milyûniyyah/ million-strong protest</td>
<td>Pro -January 25 Revolution</td>
<td>The SCAF</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ﻓَﻠ / pl/ ﻓِﻠْ / fal pl /Falil</td>
<td>Pro-January 25 Revolution</td>
<td>Pro-Mubarak’s regime</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ﺍﻟﺸﻌﺐ / ash-sha’b/ people</td>
<td>Pro-January 25 Revolution</td>
<td>Mubarak’s regime</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ﺣُرَاء / thawra/ CA SAWRA/ revolution</td>
<td>Pro-January 25 Revolution</td>
<td>Pro-Mubarak’s regime</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ﺍﻟﻤﻨﺤﻞ / almunhal/ disbanded or dissolve</td>
<td>Pro-January 25 Revolution</td>
<td>National Democratic Party</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ﺍﻟﻤﺴﻠﺤﺔ / maglis ‘al-i-qiwât al-musallah / the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF)</td>
<td>Pro-Mubarak’s regime June 30 supporters</td>
<td>the SCAF during the transitional phase The SCAF after June 30</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ﺍﻟﺸﺮﻓﺎﺀ ﺍﻟﻤﻮاﻃﻨﻮﻥ / al-shurafâ’ al-muwâtinûn</td>
<td>The SCAF</td>
<td>Muslim Brotherhood when they were in office</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ﺍﻻﺳﺘﻘﺮاﺭ / istiqār/ stability</td>
<td>The SCAF Pro-January 25 Revolution</td>
<td>Pro- The SCAF</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>الميليونية / milyûniyyah/ million-strong protest</td>
<td>Pro -January 25 Revolution</td>
<td>The SCAF</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
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References


### Appendix A

#### Table of Symbols and Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Cairene Arabic</td>
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<tr>
<td>colloq</td>
<td>colloquial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lit</td>
<td>Literally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pl</td>
<td>plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Standard Arabic</td>
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<tr>
<td>sg</td>
<td>singular</td>
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### Appendix B

#### Transcription of Arabic Sounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[']</td>
<td>Voiceless glottal stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[b]</td>
<td>Voiced bilabial stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[t]</td>
<td>Voiceless alveolar stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[θ] = th</td>
<td>Voiceless interdental fricative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[dʒ] = j</td>
<td>Voiceless interdental fricative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[g]</td>
<td>Voiced velar plosive CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[h]</td>
<td>Voiceless palatal fricative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[x] = kh</td>
<td>Voiceless velar fricative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[d]</td>
<td>Voiced alveolar stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[t]</td>
<td>Voiceless alveolar fricative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[r]</td>
<td>Voiced alveolar trill</td>
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<tr>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>Voiceless alveolar fricative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ʃ] = sh</td>
<td>Voiceless palato-alveolar fricative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>Voiceless alveolar emphatic fricative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[d]</td>
<td>Voiced alveolar emphatic stop</td>
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<tr>
<td>[t]</td>
<td>Voiceless alveolar emphatic stop</td>
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<tr>
<td>[ʃ] = th</td>
<td>Voiceless interdental emphatic fricative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[b]</td>
<td>Voice pharyngeal fricative</td>
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<tr>
<td>[g] = gh</td>
<td>Voiced uvular fricative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[t]</td>
<td>Voiceless labiodental fricative</td>
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<tr>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>Voiceless uvular stop</td>
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<tr>
<td>[k]</td>
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<td>[l]</td>
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<td>[m]</td>
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<td>[n]</td>
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<td>[i]</td>
<td>Short high front unrounded vowel</td>
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<tr>
<td>[il]</td>
<td>Long high front unrounded vowel</td>
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<tr>
<td>[a]</td>
<td>Short low central unrounded vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a]</td>
<td>Long central unrounded vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[u]</td>
<td>Short high back rounded vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ū]</td>
<td>Long high back rounded vowel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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