

# **Livin' La Vida Gloca'**

**English language use by the young  
'glocal' middle class in Cairo**

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## **Abstract**

This paper uncovers the complexities of a specific 'glocal' middle-class youth 'habitus' in Cairo. Within this cosmopolitan city, globalised cultural orientations can be constituted and reconstituted through the everyday practice of learning English. The so labelled 'disenfranchised' display a unique ability to negotiate overarching cultural discourses and in the process carve out an innovative cosmopolitan existence. English is simultaneously appropriated as a mechanism for raising status through connecting to global cultural flows, and as a tool through which to authenticate these flows within localised structures and codes. Through possessing the ability to intertwine the local and the global, they develop the mastery of 'inbetweenness'.

## **1. Introduction**

*"If we stop dreaming, we'll die  
If we insist, we'll be able to pass  
If we cross once, it's done  
If we shy back, all will be lost.  
A bit of endurance, a bit of enthusiasm  
And the dream will have colour and sound"*

(Muhammad Mounir 'If We Stop Dreaming,  
We'll die' 1994; translation by de Koning,2009;1)

This research explores the problematic of how constructions of 'modernity', the 'West', and 'Egypt' are perceived in peoples lived realities. It will uncover how young low-income Cairenes rework these overriding narratives through the complex cultural politics produced through speaking and learning the English language. They relate to and choose to learn English in order to facilitate a connection to 'modern' global culture - through music, film, people, and spaces previously considered exclusive to the 'elite' - and in the process exercise 'modern' youthful claims for 'individuality, independence, spontaneity and fun' (Bayat,2009:138). But rather than representing a choice between the 'West' and 'Egypt', the act of learning English enables a reworked, contextual understanding of this relationship that establishes a balance between the local and the global.

The research will bring together debates on the youth and consumption with theory on globalization, liquid modernity and cultural hegemony in order to conceptualise the orientation of a specific youth 'habitus' in Cairo. By habitus I refer to the emergence of opportunities of fluidity in cultural orientations that arise out of a constant balancing act between 'local' and 'global' cultural flows. I define the participants as a 'glocal status-group' as they exist between

the globally connected ‘upper-middle class’ and the distinctly localised ‘popular classes’ that de Koning (2009) and Peterson (2011) map out. They are publically educated, have relatively low-income parents and cannot afford to conventionally consume the ‘cosmopolitan spaces’ of private schools, universities, hospitals, restaurants, shopping malls, and coffee shops. However they saw themselves as distinct from a locally orientated ‘uneducated’ lower-status populace and aspiring towards globally connected elites through innovative inclusion. The research contributes to existing debates on the geographies of Egyptian youth identities, cultures of consumption, and ‘cosmopolitanization’ of habitus. It is also important to present the voices and everyday realities of people whose actions are too often ignored or conceptualised within generalising discourses. The conclusions will ultimately contribute to tackling the ‘illusion that the world is divided into a cosmopolitan elite and leaden-footed, local, and culturally immobile subaltern group’ (Jeffrey & McFarlene, 2008; 423). Through the ‘practice’ of learning English, these young Cairenes have the ability to carve out an everyday cosmopolitan existence and begin living the glocal life.

### **1.1 Research Question**

How do young ‘glocal’ middle-class Cairenes negotiate local and global cultural flows through English language learning?

#### *Sub-questions*

- Within a cosmopolitan environment of domestic and global cultural forces, what role does English language play in getting connected?
- How do young ‘glocal’ Cairenes interpret and balance this connectivity in association to relations with state, religion, society and family?

## **1.2 Contextualising the Youth in Cairo**

Young people (15-24) in the Middle East make up 20% of the population. While there is 25% unemployment amongst this age group, the vast majority are educated to at least secondary level, thereby inducing aspirations and accessibility to global discourses (Osman,2010). It is vital to understand the complexities that shape perceptions and choices of a frustrated yet globalised populace. Popular representations present young Arabs either as potential subjects to stimulate neoliberal development, or as 'essentially religious or ideological beings with either politically radical or benign tendencies' (Herrera,2010;127). Their abilities to create intricate spaces for self-expression and identification are often disregarded through the lens of a West-Islam binary. In contrast, this research will present a grounded understanding of a specific cultural practice that may otherwise be dismissed as irrational, inexplicable or ignored altogether. Youth more generally are romanticised for their future potential, thereby undervaluing their lives in the present, as social actors, as 'beings' in their own right (Qvortrup et al,1994). This research develops knowledge of how youth conceptualise the world and its cultures through consumption of English and in so doing, help this largely misunderstood populace represent the complexities of their youthful agency.

The 2011 Revolution, which brought millions out onto the streets against economic stagnation and denial of rights, was heralded in the West as an 'awakening' to freedom and democracy. However this Orientalist interpretation misses how young Egyptians, long before the 'Arab Spring', were establishing ordinary pursuits of everyday self-expression to subvert overriding cultural forces (Bayat,2010;Herrera,2010). Cultural commodities, Facebook being an obvious example, can be applied in the largest scale political action, but they also carry huge importance in the individual ability to control symbols and their cultural meaning (Willis,1990). English is

one commodity through which youth produce such complex cultural subjectivities. It cannot simply be seen as a form of western hegemony or cultural homogenisation. Language is manipulated for the formation of youth subcultures that are established on the basis of hybrid identification.

Cultural Geography has a vital role to play in presenting youthful experiences and thereby challenge the narrative of fear and control that misreads, criminalises, and ignores their desires. Previous research has sought to address the absence of youth experiences in public discourse by presenting how young people form and manipulate intricate everyday spaces for cultural production, thereby subverting negative stereotypes and challenging barriers to participation (Evans,2008). This research illustrates how young middle-class Egyptians simultaneously 'localise' and 'cosmopolitanise' specific spaces to construct complex cultural identification.

## **2. Cultures and Capital in Cosmopolitan Cairo**

This literature review will begin by unravelling the changing nature of culture in a globalising everyday life and how consumption represents a prime site for the formation of cultural subjectivities. It will then investigate how previous research has considered these tendencies in the context of a young Cairene habitus. Finally, it will explore the position of English language as a mechanism through which cultural exploits can be constituted.

### **2.1. Cultural Consumption in a Globalised Modernity**

A culture entails the customs, practices, languages, values and world views that define social groups such as those based on nationality, ethnicity, region or common interests (Crystal,2000). 'Culture is now able to focus on fulfilling individual needs, solving individual problems and struggles...the individual is now the chief manager of 'life politics' and its sole executive' (Bauman,2011:20). To parallel the post-Nasser breakup of Egypt's nationalist middle-class, Bauman (2011) describes how - in 'liquid modernity' - progress has moved from a discourse of shared improvement to one of personal survival: culture as a basic tool of endorsing a 'self-sufficient, self-reproducing and self-balancing' nation has disintegrated (Bauman,2011:16). It now consists of 'offers, not prohibitions' that seduce consumers into a false sense of satisfaction in their increasingly individualised everyday lives, only for these cultural forms to be quickly replaced by equally impermanent forms. The unremitting quest for fulfilment shapes the choices of everyday life.

A reoccurring conflict manifests itself between the safeties of belonging versus a desire for the freedom of being distinct from the masses (Bauman,2011). Safety without freedom amounts to



captivity, freedom without safety instils chronic uncertainty and thus the two are mutually dependent. The intrinsic ambivalence is an 'inexhaustible source of creative energy and obsessive change' (Bauman,2011:18). This conflict will be applied in the context of a specific middle-class Cairene habitus where a fundamental desire to free self-identity from the constraints of a particular place and a requirement to be locally situated requires a continuous renegotiation of coexistence (Fairclough,2006).

Global cultural flows have become vital trappings for the negotiation of this existence. Globalization represents a 'transformation in the spatial organisation of social relations and transactions...generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power' (Held et al,1999:16). It is not just the result of a super-national social process, but of specific agents situated in specific places pursuing ambitions through strategies involving appropriation and re-contextualisation of commodities, persons, technologies, or ideas (Giddens,2002). Global events add to the extension of the individual's life-world: people include transnational processes more routinely in their perceptions of what is significant for their own lives with an ever broadening horizon of relevance in their routine experiences (Tomlinson,1999). How different social and cultural groups create 'globalization' as they actively take part in individual social change by incorporating transnational flows into their lives and localities is integral to understand and integral to this research.

The defining feature of 'reflexive modernity', according to Beck (2006) is that cosmopolitanism has entered individual reality. The previous approach to sociological study of 'methodological nationalism' analysed societies on the assumption of a system of nation-states and corresponding national sociologies that define them. Cosmopolitanism illuminates the emergence of multiple identities within a specific locale:

*'the modest, familiar, local, circumscribed and stable, our protective shell is becoming the playground of universal experiences; place becomes the locus of encounters and interminglings or, alternatively, of anonymous coexistence and the overlapping possible worlds and global dangers, all of which requires us to rethink the relation between place and world'* (Beck,2006;10).

This ability of individuals to 'construct a model of one's identity by dipping freely into the Lego set of globally available identities' (11) is paramount to everyday living.

All locales are 'contact zones' in which people encounter, appropriate, negotiate, resist, and manage cultural flows (Peterson,2011). Within this globalising modernity, 'cosmopolitans' are able to welcome and embrace cultural complexity (Giddens,2002). The ability of many individuals to modify their 'habitus' through the 'localisation' of global cultural flows into social relationships is often underestimated and unexplored. This process produces locality by contrasting things that are 'local' with those from elsewhere (Peterson,2011). Within Cairo, notions of global culture are incorporated into class dynamics by signifying a sense of elite status, which will be elaborated on below.

Consumption is a prime site where 'cosmopolitanization' occurs. It is a cultural practice, an act through which people relate their experiences to socially learnt codes, a means of expressing and realizing fundamental cultural principles about how the world is constituted (Bourdieu,1984). Which commodities are considered 'modern' reveals how people interpret modernity and its place in the cultural universe. Commodities construct people's identities within social fields that enable and constrain their lives – at home, school, within peer groups, faith communities, and the media. Cairenes fulfilling their socially constituted taste for western styles do not always know or care whether these commodities and consumption practices accurately map the flows of global goods (Peterson,2011). They construct indexical associations

between goods and other places to conceive their value as social and cultural capital (Peterson,2011). Investigation must 'tease out which connections apply to which commodities and practices...by paying attention to ways people work the meanings of signs through public debates that attempt to contextualise, negotiate, and articulate the meanings of indexical signs' (Peterson,2011:14).

There is no such thing as an autonomous commodity capable of printing its own intrinsic values on human sensibility (Willis,1990). This conclusion adopts a crude Marxist emphasis on production. People bring varying identities, experiences, and feelings to sites of consumption (Willis,1990). The commodity undergoes a process of vernacularization where the user produces individualized cultural meaning. Symbolic creativities 'transform the cultural commodity into a cultural resource, pluralize its meanings and pleasures, evade or resist its disciplinary efforts, fracture its homogeneity and coherence' (Willis,1990:28). Thus, the basis of a theory of everyday life is not the products or the system that distributes them, but the specific uses they are put to.

Danny Miller (2011) illustrates this framework through his analysis of Facebook in Trinidad. The universal Facebook brand develops its own cultural genres and expectations as it becomes subject to processes of localization that makes its appropriation distinctive (Miller,2011). Rather than representing cultural homogenization, it becomes a source of cultural diversity. We cannot assume that when a young Egyptian speaks English, drinks Coca Cola, or buys Nike trainers, that they import the original symbolic denotations of the commodity. To do this marginalizes the primacy of local constructions of meaning. Blind adoption of western culture has never been an unambiguous or uncontested feature in Egypt (Armbrust,1996): 'every society appears to bring to these popular forms its own special history and traditions, its own cultural stamp, its own quirks and idiosyncrasies' (Appadurai & Breckenridge,1988:5). This research stresses the multitude of ways in which young people use, humanize, decorate and

invest with meanings their immediate life spaces and social practices (Willis,1990). Processes of symbolic creativity are open, contested and unstable and identities are constantly lived and experimented with.

## **2.2. The Youth Habitus in Contemporary Cairo**

'Habitus' encompasses a set of learnt dispositions, skills and ways of acting, which are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life (Swartz,1997). Young people extend their 'habitus' through ways of being, feeling and carrying oneself; they are constructed as 'prime practitioners of fun, embodying a tendency toward experimentation, adventurism, idealism and drive for autonomy, mobility and change' (Bayat,2009;139). They fashion new social norms, religious practices, cultural codes and values without structured organisation, leadership or ideology (Bayat,2010;Khosravi,2008).

Young people's lives are full of expressions, signs and symbols through which they seek creatively to establish their presence, identity and meaning (Fiske,1989). As Willis (1990) states: 'the life stage of youth is where people are formed most self-consciously through their own symbolic activities, where they form symbolic moulds through which they understand themselves and their possibilities for the rest of their lives' (7). Young people experience the social condition of youth: an unwilling dependence on parents, uncertainty regarding future plans, and lack of control over immediate circumstances (Willis,1990). They are imposed with institutional and ideological constructions which project certain readings of what young people should do, feel or be (Willis,1990). However they possess the ability to find cultural avenues and spaces through which to subvert these impositions.

This process of pluralisation of identification has been applied to the Cairo context before. This 'multi-layered, polysemic' city is marked by juxtaposing images of Egypt and the West, the local

and the global, tradition and modernity (Peterson,2011). Cairo's 'young professionals' that have become increasingly 'connected' to global cultural flows through the consumption of exclusive commodities, spaces, and styles have been a focus for recent research (de Koning,2009;Peterson,2011). However, the 'disenfranchised' populace that have seemingly been left behind in Egypt's neoliberalisation have been understudied. De Koning (2009) conducted a study on Cairo's 'young professional upper-middle class' who work in MNCs, consultancy firms, NGOs, marketing agencies and attend private language schools - thus becoming fluent in English. This group possesses the ability and resources to become familiar with cosmopolitan tastes through their position in the domains of education, the labour market and leisure spaces (de Koning,2009).

The background to this study is Egypt's post-Nasserite 'open door' to global economic and cultural forces. The rise of an explicitly 'global' Cairo produced changing class configurations and increasingly disparate urban geographies and modes of inhabiting and consuming the city (de Koning,2009). This social polarization particularly impacted the middle-classes, which prior to the 1980s had represented nationalist aspirations. Since neoliberalization they have apparently been broken up into a 'locally rooted middle-class' and cosmopolitan elite (de Koning,2009). An increasingly concentrated upper-middle class becomes 'able to negotiate (Egypt's) new relationship with the global economy in both cultural and economic terms' (Fernandes,2006:91). They develop cosmopolitan capital as they become familiar with western repertoires and standards. Private schools, institutes, universities, hospitals, restaurants, shopping malls, and coffee shops become the 'new public spaces for First World belonging' (de Koning,2009:23). Claims of connection to the 'outside' (West) have become markers of modernity and sophistication, whereas rootedness, locality, and authenticity serve to identify the popular classes (de Koning,2009).

Transnational popular culture has become an important form of cultural capital through which the class system replicates itself: 'facility with foreign languages, not only spoken but languages of dress, bodily comportment, brand names, technological familiarity, and current events' (Peterson,2011;11). The financial ability to consume particular media, attend a defined set of schools, acquire languages, consume goods, become familiar with particular spaces forms an identity that separates elites from lower and middle-classes.

The Egyptian educational system in particular is a primary field for the 'production of new sociocultural divisions and distinctions' (de Koning,2009;16). The middle-class in Egypt has become divided between those who can afford to pay for private arrangements, and others who have to resort to often neglected public counterparts. This reality leads to varying educational, cultural and social capital that differentiates those able to participate in cosmopolitan circuits of consumption and production from those who can't (Peterson,2011). However, both studies create a simplistic dichotomy between 'diasporic elites' and their working-class counterparts who are confined to 'local ghetto identity' (Friedman,1997:84). The ability of all young Cairenes to act upon their dreams of connection should not be underestimated. The fields of struggle are open to the 'disenfranchised' who exercise a 'simulacra of inclusion in privileged spaces' and refuse to resign to an excluded and localised life (Abaza,2001).

There is a developing body of work within human geography and anthropology that has identified how marginalized people may engage in forms of cosmopolitanism to manage situations of economic uncertainty and challenge dominant class formations (Ferguson,1999; Jeffrey et al,2008). Large sections of the world's poor are now cosmopolitan in the sense of possessing an ability to signal at a symbolic level their capacity to traverse boundaries and appreciate cultural diversity (Jeffrey & McFarlene,2008).

Bayat (2010), Khosravi (2008) and Osman (2008) provide three examples of ethnographic research that uncovers everyday cultural production of non-elites. Khosravi (2008) displays how young middle-class Iranians form defiant subcultures in the context of 'draconian social control' and subvert the authority view of a youth pious, strict and dedicated to Islam. Through the establishment of creative centres for imagination and expression, such as shopping centres and coffee shops, young people exercise opposition to official cultures and parental dominance (Khosravi,2008). Osman (2010) and Bayat (2010) investigate how young Egyptians escape everyday constraints in a context where they are increasingly deprived of diversity and vital breathing space through the conservatism and religiosity of society. However, this does not represent a complete rejection of localised culture. Young Egyptians continue to be at once pious, devout Muslims and 'global citizens' through listening to pop or rock music, drinking, engaging in romance and partying (Bayat,2010). They re-define Islam and restrict it to specific spaces and temporalities in order to maintain desires for individuality, fun, and 'sin' (Bayat,2010).

Mona Abaza (2001) also illustrates how the 'wretched' can exercise inclusion in cosmopolitan circuits through a study into the rise of the leisure and consumer shopping complexes in Cairo. Less than 20% of all Egyptians can afford the 'ordered' and 'stylish' malls. However many low-status youth who live in ashqa'iyat (slums), 'once in these walled-off, exclusive spaces, can imitate a higher social status through their dress and mere presence' (Abaza,2001;216). It encourages the feeling that one can 'participate in a better world' (Abaza,2001;218). However the question remains as to how far this can appease unrealized global dreams. This research will look at a similar process with regards to learning the English language, an equally appropriable indexical commodity to which I shall now turn.

### **2.3. A Global Resource or Cultural Hegemonization?**

Global networks and connectivities depend on particular forms of communication in order to facilitate their flow. English has become a prime means of such global transfers. It has developed into a multi-billion pound world commodity and the lingua franca of the 'modern' world (McCallen,1989). English remains a dominant language of research, business, media, politics, and youth culture (Philipson,1992), possessing an estimated speakership of around 1.5 billion people (Crystal,2000). Its spread is unprecedented in terms of its geographical reach and depth of penetration due to the economic, political, intellectual and social forces that have propelled it forward. English is now globally entrenched, as a result of an unprecedented rise in global communication, international education, multi-national business and because 'English is the language of the USA, a major economic, political and military force in the contemporary world' (Philipson,1992:23). In an age in which knowledge of English has become a globally valued commodity, it's teaching and learning can no longer be seen simply as an academic activity but as a 'potential way of enabling the disenfranchised to gain access to social and economic power' (Hussein et al,2009:6). For better or worse, to have a competent knowledge of English is often seen as a useful prerequisite for social mobility.

Within Egypt, English has an equated status with progress and prosperity. It serves as means of communication in medicine, higher education, sciences, tourism, popular advertising, television, clothing, and music (Schaub,2000). It has developed a social stratificational function, having significant influence on educational and career prospects (Nour,1992). Thus its pull is remarkably strong, not just among elites but also the popular classes who recognise it to provide 'material and social gain' (Kachru,1985;Imhoof,1977): private employers increasingly require its competence (Nour,1992). How English is manifested as a key representative of elite status must be explored.

Language is the primary instrument we use to communicate: the 'highest ordering of our sensuous impressions of the world and the ultimate basis of our hope and capacity to control it'



(Willis,1990;284). It remakes our world as we make and find our own place and identity within it. As an intrinsic expression of culture - a means of communicating values, beliefs and customs - it fosters feelings of group identity and solidarity and enables culture to be conveyed and preserved within it (Pennycook,1994).

Language is not merely a method of communication; it is a mechanism of power (Swartz,1997). Different linguistic uses tend to reiterate a person's respective position in a field or social space. Linguistic capital encompasses 'traits of speech differentially valued in a specified field or market' and it can be created, adapted, assented and re-evaluated through linguistic encounters (Collins,1993;118). A speaker's feelings of competence regarding the 'official' language within a linguistic market will vary as a function of class experience. A 'subjective tension' arises as the linguistic habitus increases with distance from the dominant code.

Within Egypt, Arabic is exalted as the language of religion, print and government, but the upper-classes possess a different capital – namely knowledge of English. English has a significant role in the reproduction of class divisions and thus develops a dominant code status (Haeri,1997). Demand for the language is motivated by notions of economic gain, social prestige and self-valorisation (Bourdieu,1991). It has come to suit cross-class individual claims to modernity and global culture, whereas Arabic remains the predominant form of localised communication (Schaub,2000). Thus the 'subjective tension' arises within the middle-classes in their quest for global consumptive and productive connection.

It is important to understand the fundamental nature of cultural hegemony in the context of English utilisation. Gramsci stated that hegemony is achieved when a class is able to articulate the interests of other social groups by means of ideological struggle: this dominant ideology must not only determine united economic and political objectives but also intellectual and moral unity, thus producing a 'genuine national popular will' (Mouffe,1979;182). The English

language may be capable of articulating the interests and desires of an increasingly educated and globalised Egyptian youth.

Philipson's (1992) call for critical applied linguistics 'because language teaching that refuses to explore cultural and political aspects of language learning has more to do with assimilation, not empowerment' (21) must be taken seriously. Presenting language as a neutral vehicle of international communication, above social conflict masks the social and ideological struggles attached to it. English imperialism is the means by which the 'dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural (institutions, financial allocations) and cultural (attitudes, pedagogic principles) inequalities between English and other languages' (Philipson,1992:47). People develop the common sense that English represents a gateway to better communications, education, and higher standard of living. It provides a key medium through which Anglo-culture can develop global reach. Linguistic imperialism 'permeates all other types of imperialism' (Philipson,1992;48): relations of domination and subordination saturate the whole substance of lived identities and relationships.

English is projected into people's everyday lives via mass communication; it possesses the potential to reshape individual and collective cultural aspirations within citizenries of 'peripheral countries' orientating their gaze towards the 'modern' West and away from their own cultural knowledge, values and linguistic heritage (Rassool,2007:109). Mazrui (1975) concludes that English leads to a degree of Westernization: 'naturally, when people learn English...they acquire something of the flavour of our culture, our institutions, our ways of thinking and communicating' (Phillipson,1992:11). However, neither identity nor language use is a fixed notion; both are dynamic, depending upon time and place (Norton,1995). How we perceive ourselves changes with our community of practice, allowing us multiple identities through our lived experience.

Linguistic globalization cannot simply be assumed as homogenizing (Giddens,1984). The possibilities are there for fracturing power based definitions by 're-interpreting, repositioning meanings, and inserting them into alternative discourses centred on empowering individuals or groups within everyday living' (Rassool,2007:115). To strictly adhere to an understanding of language as centralizing, disciplinary and hegemonic ignores the dynamic and living qualities of everyday culture and symbolic creativity. An approach is required that makes language central to global relations but also allows for struggle, resistance and appropriation, thereby opening space for different meaning-making practices (Pennycook,1994). Humans use language to represent the world as they wish to, producing realities as well as reflecting them. The English classroom becomes a site of cultural politics, a place where different visions of how the world is and should be are struggled over.

### **3. Methodological Approach**

There was no prior intention to undertake this research before travelling to Egypt in July 2011. A chance meeting with a group of students from an English language school facilitated the establishment of the research. The interest in the implications of English language learning came from spending time with the students in and outside of the classroom. This unintentionality adds strength and validity to this research. The research question was born out of direct observation of particular behaviours and attitudes displayed by the participants.

I employed an ethnographic approach, entailing participant observation and un-structured interviews over a period of one month in July and August 2011. This approach offers a deeper understanding of identities, cultures and ambitions of young people and social conditions that shape choice (Herrera,2010). Participant observation opened up a 'world of stories, gossip, social performances, implicit knowledge and codes' (de Koning,2009) and interviews enabled the establishment of focused information encompassing the reasons behind wanting to learn English and its implications. The participants were a group of thirty male and female members of a cheap private English language centre located in Dokki, a district close to downtown Cairo. They were aged between 14 and 30 and predominantly lived in the relatively poor outer-suburbs of Cairo. They were publically educated, and either still in education or in low-paid service employment. Parents were generally in public or insecure private-sector employment.

My ethnographic accounts were centred on four English lessons of three hours each, in which I took part in the activities of the class. These consisted of debate exclusively in English and questions to me as the 'foreign guest'. I observed and recorded - with approval - the class content and behaviour of the students. I was also invited to an Egyptian music event which provided further opportunity to converse with the students. Outside the classroom I spent many

hours with a group of eight students, eating and drinking together, going to the mall and their family home for 'iftar' (breaking the fast). This contact time amounted to a total of 40 hours. The ethnographic approach was integral in order to illuminate the everyday experiences of the participants in their negotiation and interpretation of cultural codes. It provides a mechanism through which to observe behavioural processes and unwrap particularised cultural perspectives (Cole & Knowles, 2001); but interpretation of actions and responses must be sensitive to my own cultural subjectivities. Furthermore, this represents exploratory research only; it must be recognised that more time would have enabled me to go deeper into ideas, initial discourses and their contradictions.

The observations and conclusions relied on the informality of the meetings. I was able to learn from informal discussions, fleeting comments, trips to different parts of the city, and personal talks. I spent one month in Cairo in order to develop sustained access to the group subculture. Forging ties of friendship was crucial for obtaining intimate knowledge of their lifestyles. The research was conducted predominantly in English, with an interpreter used in some instances for clarity of meaning. The participants insisted on *only* speaking English as part of their cultural experience in every contact situation, thus illuminating their 'quest for connection' – within the class there was a fine if Arabic was spoken.

Reflexivity in terms of understanding why researchers frame and investigate issues in particular ways, and how such approaches lead to particular solutions and theories is integral to explore: in other words, I must 'interpret my interpretation' (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). Because researchers and researched are rarely social/economic equals (community, age, gender, class) the risks of reproducing relations of exploitation or disempowerment must be kept in mind. In this research positionality is particularly important to sensitise due the tendency of participants to form cultural orientations through interacting with *me*. I came to represent of the 'West' and an access point to the economic, social and cultural opportunities of global culture.

As a result of a particular 'habitus', my cultural identification has been influenced by embedded constructions of what the 'West', 'Egypt' and the 'youth' represent. This affects impartial interpretation of particularised identities of the participants; it is important to recognise this in order attempt to move beyond it. My 'habitus' is particularly implicated in the conclusions of the research. It gave me a distinct advantage of becoming an intricate part of their quest for connection, thus illuminating the process. However, it impairs my ability to be an impartial observer. I must recognise the effects of my presence on the display of 'everyday activities' and perceptions. Care must be taken as to the ability to generalise the activities they engage in as opposed to when I am absent.

The unstructured nature of the research meant that they decided when and where to meet, and I tried, as much as they would allow, to let them control the time that we spent together. Their agency forms a fundamental observation point for analysis. I wanted to experience how they manipulate their public and private lives to balance local and global cultural codes. The spaces where the meetings took place become extremely important in understanding how they access global culture, but maintain local affiliations. The classroom - the space which transcended the local and the global - was where the majority of the observations were conducted. Outside the classroom, cosmopolitan public spaces were frequently used - a shopping mall, coffee shop, restaurant, park - while others represented localised culture, as at a music concert. Finally, the private space of the household was opened up to global cultural representations - namely myself as a 'Westerner'. Within such contested spaces, the conversations become vital to understanding how hybrid identity is secured and coexistence achieved within a milieu of cultural flows. The topics of conversation include specific cultural activities (music, film, clothes, social media), discussions about aspects of explicitly local and cosmopolitan culture, and plans and dreams for the future. The material gathered was coded into topics that covered references to 'western' cultural forms (whether positively or negatively), explicitly 'localised' codes, and

when both were compared and contrasted. Finally, confidentiality and anonymity are important aspects of social research ethics and they were both ensured to every participant.

#### **4. To be at once Cosmopolitan and Egyptian**

*‘The ‘real’ representatives of the Egyptian youth are those who belong to the middle-income social class, who have been educated in public schools and universities, and are exposed to the different lifestyles of both the upper-income social class and lower-income social class. Those who study day and night with the aim of bettering their life, yet graduate to accept whatever form of jobs that come their way. Those who are most loyal to the country yet have lost faith completely in its development’.*

May El-Khishen, Campus Mag, 2004

This chapter presents the findings of my time spent with members of this ‘middle-income social class’ and uncovers their unique ability to be at once ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘Egyptian’. Cosmopolitanism describes the ‘capacity to manage the coexistence and juxtaposition of different cultures and to make that capacity part of one’s identity’ (Beck,2006:11). This reality is not closed to the lower and middle-income classes who have the ability to ‘globalise’ their habitus through intricate means. Exposure to global culture also leads to a contestation of localised culture which they remain extremely attached to. Their ability to finally negotiate local and global cultural codes will be illuminated.



#### **4.1 Dreaming Beyond the City**

*'All of these students have a dream to study abroad and get a good job, they do not want to stay in Egypt'* (Leila, teacher)

This analysis must begin by exploring the specific dreams of the students for the future. When in the company of three of them, the topic was raised. A female student, Ayat (19) said that she wanted to *'own a restaurant, a chain as big as McDonalds, travel, and be with (her) family'*. Her brother, Eslam (18), said that he wanted to *'own an electronics company and move to Japan, Korea, the US, or Germany'*. The third student, Ahmed (16), simply wanted to be *'famous, maybe by any method'* and travel to the West. These responses all encompass global dreams and aspirations. When asked why they were learning English, the majority of the students responded with answers that encompassed access to private-sector employment and the opportunity to move abroad. These practical reasons should not be dismissed lightly and provide a fundamental manifestation of global desires; however it is important to look further into the role English plays in accessing global cultural flows.

One student proclaimed he was learning English *'to be able to communicate with (me), to speak with (me), exchange information'*. Through this usage, language develops into a discourse, a social tool through which to understand and access 'western' culture (Fairclough, 2006). Linguistic capital facilitates exposure to other representations of that culture, such as tourists, music, film, social media, and news. Practical concerns of future employment and opportunities to move abroad were certainly central to learning English. However, when asked why he wants to learn English, Hatem responded that he wanted to be able to *'understand the words of western music'* and talk to *'English'* people: learning is *'fun and exciting'*. He is not just using English as a practical tool of social advancement, but also as a mechanism through which to immerse himself in western cultural exports and express youthful desires.

The ability that English provides to converse with 'Westerners' creates a feeling of being 'connected' to the cosmopolitan culture that Peterson and de Koning consider exclusive to the upper-classes. Despite the precarious situations that this group overwhelmingly find themselves in – declining wages, uncompetitive public qualifications, insecure private and public sector employment, and limited command of English – they have the ability to dream and get connected. They use cheap means of accessing global culture - music, film, language, clothing, urban spaces, and tourism - that fits within the realms of their limited buying power.

In the quest for cosmopolitan cultural forms, particular spaces - shopping malls, coffee shops, urban parks - come to explicitly represent global identification. Following iftar at their home, a group of four students took me to 'City Stars' shopping mall: just one example of the Americanised consumer complexes - shops including McDonalds, Zara and H&M - that continue to spring up to satisfy the cosmopolitan desires of Cairo's elite. The students could not afford much in the mall, apart from a Coca Cola, and one of the male students was in fact employed in a Café inside. However, as Abaza (2001) has previously illustrated, 'once in these walled-off, exclusive spaces, (young low-income Egyptians) can imitate a higher social status through their dress and mere presence' (9). The ability to be present in this global space - in the company of 'Westerners' - encourages a sense that one can participate in the cosmopolitan lifestyle: *'I like hanging out in the mall, it is really cool isn't it? We come here often to look at the shops or just to get a coffee'* (Muhammad). Other spaces similarly provide cheap forms of global connectivity: for example Azhar Park provided an accessible public space to fulfil youthful desires for individuality, spontaneity and fun by simply *'hanging out'* and meeting foreigners. This is a space that the students wanted to spend time in on many occasions, away from the glaring eyes of *'strict'* parents and localised cultures where they could fulfil their cosmopolitan aspirations.

The coffee shop Cilantros provides a contested public space for this low-income group. It is recognised as a cosmopolitan space for the elite to hang out in and 'get connected' (Peterson,2011). When I met there with a group of students, it soon became evident that they were not as comfortable as they were in McDonalds or the shopping mall. The prices within the coffee shop were simply out of reach and thus the space was not open to their mere presence and appropriation. This represents a glass-ceiling of their cosmopolitan cultural integration due to financial limitations. However, to dismiss their ability to get connected altogether disregards the other mechanisms and spaces through which they realise their global aspirations.

The topics of conversation while located within 'global' spaces are particularly illuminating regarding their cultural connectivity. They actively wanted to discuss global cultural flows to prove connectivity, whether that is sport, music, film, or politics. Western music was often talked about; with questions such as *'are you a fan of Eminem, Coldplay, or Muse, I really like American music'*; and western songs were repeatedly played to me. Films were also a big topic as they expressed particular movies and actors they liked and asked me about mine. When I responded with *Egyptian* films and music, I was quickly told that they were looking for *'American movies'*. Another area where they wanted to express their extensive cosmopolitan knowledge was politics; with one question asking *'what is your opinion about the current British Prime Minister, David Cameron, who is forty three years old, and the youngest Prime Minister ever'*. Debates were also had about football – the English Premier League being *'the most important league in the world'*. These commodities and information have become representatives of the 'West' and its culture. The conversations, along with the spaces where they occur and the people they are with - namely me as a 'Westerner' - create a globalised habitus by localising 'western' commodities and information. The openness and fluidity of English facilitates this cosmopolitanization of habitus, providing access to various cultural forms. English as a commodity enables these youth to develop the symbolic capital associated with the cosmopolitanization of everyday life (Beck,2006). Language offers an open practice that is

widely accessible and provides a cheap means for the participants to get connected to global cultural commodities, which will be further illuminated in the section below.

#### **4.2 Securing the Dreams**

Young Egyptians do not simply passively consume global cultures. These glocals are situated at the heart of a conflict between a defence of local identification - which views global culture as morally suspect - and wanting to prove their connectedness to global flows - thereby viewing localised culture as inhibiting. A key site of the modern-authentic conflict is the English class, which develops into a hybrid space for the students to balance the 'connectivity' to global cultural norms with local religious, societal, and familial codes. Peterson (2011) argues that 'global spaces' such as art galleries, coffee shops, jazz clubs, restaurants, and shopping malls become 'touchstones of modernity'. They are ascribed with labels of local or global, whereas anthropologists view them as hybrid constructions. However the English class and ultimately such 'global' spaces develop a hybrid quality where they become simultaneously spaces for connectedness and authenticity. They are neither wholly foreign nor wholly local. In the English class in particular multiple social and cultural borders exist simultaneously, thereby increasing the slipperiness of identity.

Due to its relatively cheap price (££200 per month (£20)), the English class was accessible to those from middle and low-income backgrounds. It provided an informal mechanism through which 200 public university and school students, low-waged employees, and unemployed could learn English. The majority of students lived in relatively poor outer-suburbs of Cairo in apartments with their parents and siblings and travelled into the English class five days a week, three hours a day. The students were able to attend this often as it was the summer holiday between school and university semesters, but some balanced the class with full/part-time jobs as well. Obviously, when I analyse the interactions within the English class, I must be aware

that observations are based on 'foreigners' being present and that the dynamics may change when they are not there. However, according to Leila: *'a lot of foreigners come to class to speak with them and go out with them'*. Thus the presence of 'Westerners' becomes a significant part of the learning process.

In the first class, a question was asked that immediately illuminated this conflict between the local and the global, namely: *'how can we be more like the West'*. This prompted a vigorous debate between different members of the class. The immediate response from Nesma, a female student was that *'we have a great culture, and history, we are always together, warm. We have mistakes, but they also have mistakes'*. She then went on to say that most Egyptians have only seen western culture from *'movies and foreigners, you can't judge their culture from this'*. This instigated criticisms about the morally suspect culture of the West:

*'America is not paradise, unemployment, every country has something good, and something bad' (Muhammad)*

*'There is a lot of crime in Europe; it is very dirty in places' (Ahmed)*

*'In the West you just work and drink, people live a very bad life there...drugs are legal in Holland for example' (Mo'men)*

*'The West is not free and fair, not like you imagine, some people think they want to change culture to be like the West'. (Nesma)*

Through this criticism, the perceived 'moral looseness' of cosmopolitan lifestyles is illuminated. The students' embeddedness in local cultural codes produces scepticism of globalised cultures. However, there still remained a strong sentiment that the West was the place where *'dreams can*

*be achieved'* through employment and prosperity. The sense of inferiority between western and Egyptian culture and society was prevalent. One exchange about the British '*riots/revolution*' in the summer of 2011 highlights this sentiment. The initial question was '*why is there a revolution in England? Everything is perfect...you have democracy, scholarships, freedom, jobs*':

*'Civilisation in England is different to civilisation in Egypt: England is a country where they all the time express in a peaceful way. You are more cultured and civilised so why can't they demonstrate in a peaceful way?'* (Eman)

I then asked; '*why do you think the West is better*'. Leila responded that the students '*underestimate themselves always*'. However, this stimulated passionate responses from certain members of the class who consider the dichotomy between a civilised West and uncivilised Arab World to stem from western representations: '*you put this idea about us, but I don't believe it*'. One student then remarked that he had seen '*many American movies; all of our people riding camels, horses...carrying swords*' which portrayed an inferiority of Arabs. This awareness represents the heart of their conflict between localised cultural codes and global connectivity. The students reinterpret global cultural codes, and do not just digest them uncritically. The exposure to western culture has led to a reaffirmation of pride in localised culture and a critique of global cultures. There was a general sense that the revolution had for the first time facilitated positive coverage of Egyptian society. There was a feeling of pride and hope for the future that the Egyptian people could '*build up our country, and build a strong community*' in the years to come.

The English class also provides a quasi-public space in which localised cultural codes can be called into question:

*'It is easy to leave culture instead of fixing it; you are part of your culture. You can fix your culture, you can't change your identity, but you can fix your culture'*  
(Leila).

One example of this was Egyptian class dynamics. Leila instigated the discussion by stating that *'in the West people respect every job, here we look down on manual labour jobs'*. *'Respectable'* occupations - an engineer - demanded a marriage with people of similar status. The majority of the students admitted that they would not marry *'uneducated'* people in lower-status occupations such as a waitress, butcher, or cleaner, thus illuminating an *'insulting class divide'* in terms of the way people are spoken to and *'dealt with'* in lower-status occupations (Eman). There were a few students who stated that they would not judge on job prestige or education, but on personality. However, this rebuttal was outnumbered by the majority who would *'refuse to let their son be a mechanic or cleaner'*. Leila, the teacher then said that *'for me we are all humans...I don't think about prestige, do we understand each other, and have chemistry'*. Some of the students then responded in agreement to this sentiment: Eslam stating that *'everyone has a task'*. This discussion illuminates how the class unlocks locally accepted cultural norms to questioning.

Leila then asked, in the context of *'discovering one of us is Israeli, then are we still judged as humans?'* After one response exclaiming that *'I love you without knowing your country'*, the majority stated that *'I can't listen a word from you'*. Although the sentiment during this discussion was overwhelmingly anti-Israeli, the fact that it was opened to discussion and questioning by the teacher, other students, and foreigners present in the class, illustrates how this space can act as a mechanism through which to challenge accepted norms and balance both local and global culture through the contestation of both.

Another discussion that opened up accepted norms to debate surrounded the custom of marriage. Following a story from a female member about being forced into marriage, a debate was initiated about the ethics of this. Most of the girls in the class recognised the patriarchy they had to live with, however there was a general unwillingness to change it, despite the fact that women are '*not trusted to choose a partner*', often prevented from education, and have to stay with the family until marriage. '*Here we are dominated by the man*' proclaimed Ayat, a female student. However, when questioned as to why she accepts it, she assertively responded: '*it is my religion, I have to*'.

Ayat provides an interesting life-story to explore further. She is nineteen years old and cannot be in the company of another man without a brother or parent present. She is sad about not having the ability to go out alone, and says she does not want to be '*controlled*' by men. However, when questioned, she responds with a stoic acceptance of her situation, and a love for her family and nation. She appears to *me* controlled through religious, familial, and societal norms, and economic circumstance. However, she is able to negotiate these cultural constraints while experiencing the connection and '*freedom*' that she desires through language learning. She has a desire to travel, and is learning English in the hope of one day leaving Egypt. No matter how likely these dreams are to be realised, Ayat is presently able to fulfil those desires while maintaining a love for local culture within the English class and other spaces that have come to embody an intersection of the local and the global.

A paradox develops between using the class to connect to global flows - through language, contact with 'Westerners', and discussion of western culture - and using it to reinterpret and reaffirm localised norms. The questioning of local culture arises through the discussion of local cultural issues, such as marriage, religion, class dynamics, and family politics. The reasons for attending the course go beyond a means to improve employment prospects or migrate to the 'West'. It is the feeling of status and connectivity in being able to discuss cultural norms in a



'global' language that provides a feeling of immediate *'freedom'* and *'hope'* for the future (Ayat). Whether this will lead to any concrete improvements in life chances is open to question, but this is not really the point.

It is also possible to view this exposure to critical thinking and western culture as reaffirming cultural norms. This was evident in the class in terms of an acceptance of patriarchy, a strong, pan-Arab stance on Israel, scepticism of certain western values and customs, and a passionate post-revolution debate about political and social reform. A reaffirmation of localised identification creates a definite and steadfast national and cultural pride in being Egyptian, Arab and Muslim.

One topic that released particular pride in localised culture was that of Ramadan. In Ramadan Muslims become *'more active, praying, help people more, double effort in Ramadan, not minimise it'* (Eslam). I was asked for my opinion about Ramadan and then: *'what about Ramadan in your country? Do you feel it?'* This question has the effect of taking an aspect of explicitly local culture and attempting to globalise it. It is an interesting reversal of global cultural flows. Due to their attachment to local cultural forms, their transgression between the local and the global entails an attempt to globalise the local. The same ambition was projected about other cultural forms, with many attempts to introduce me to Egyptian songs, film and religious practices, as at the Sufi music concert.

The students' fluidity between the local and global also enables the private space of the household to be unlocked to global cultural codes. I was invited by three students to iftar at their house in Ain Shamz, a poor outer-suburb of Cairo. Their father was a public school teacher and their mother a housewife; neither could speak English and had not met Westerners before. This explicitly localised space was exposed to representations of cosmopolitan culture through me as a 'Westerner'. It became a site of interaction between the local and the global, which has

been facilitated by English. The *'best of Egyptian culture'* was on display and the pride in showing this to 'foreigners' was evident. By contrast, de Koning (2009) found that public and familial lives become separated for the elite. Private lives were never a topic of conversation in order to ensure complete cosmopolitan immersion in public life. The relationship is more fluid in the glocal middle-class who maintain strong and open ties between localised and global culture. Family life and social background become topics of conversation in the most cosmopolitan of spaces and the household is less distinguished from their globalised public lives. They display a greater ability than elites to forge a truly cosmopolitan existence between the local and global.

This analysis illustrates the possibilities for challenging power-based definitions of a commodity by 're-interpreting, repositioning meanings, and inserting them into alternative discourses centred on empowering individuals or groups within the processes of everyday living' (Rassool,2007:115). English is used to further the ambitions and conquests of these glocals. Yes, they use it to get connected to global cultural flows, thus it could be labelled as a homogenising force. However, to do so misses the specifically local uses that English is put to. It is used to interrogate global culture, and reinterpret and reaffirm localised cultural codes. This group create vernacular cosmopolitanisms through the establishment of 'living multiplicity' (Singerman and Amar,2006). Whereas elites have a tendency to separate spaces of 'connection' and spaces of 'authenticity', this group openly negotiated and intertwined the two discourses. Their processes of symbolic creativity are open, contested and unstable and identities are constantly lived and experimented with (Willis,1990).

## **5. Conclusions**

This research has looked at English language – a key marker of elite identity in Cairo – to illustrate how this middle-class group is able to access it within the realms of their limited buying power. The ‘practice’ of learning English represents the establishment of an urban life where the ‘glocal’ youth move beyond a ‘modern-traditional’ binary to craft individualised cultural frameworks which accommodate both discourses. They are able to globalise their habitus, using English to facilitate access to other forms of global culture – films, music, tourists, urban spaces, news – that have been considered exclusive to upper-classes. For some, the global lifestyle is morally suspect, for others it is an aspiration, and for many it is both. Selfhood and identity are constantly reconstituted through spaces of struggle between the local and global. This group sits at the heart of the conflict of how to be at once cosmopolitan and Egyptian, modern and Muslim, Western and Arab, liberated yet feminine.

According to Peterson (2011), for tens of millions of Egyptians outside the elite, the world of extraordinary luxury they see on television, films and billboards will always remain unattainable. However, this amorphous group is too easily labelled as ‘disenfranchised’, constrained, and powerless to make change. The ‘wretched’ are agents in a ‘dynamic, structurally violent, but ultimately open fabric of power in which nuanced, crafty cultural politics is possible and necessary’ (Fanon in Singerman, 2009:33). The glocals are able to engage in a ‘daily struggle to appropriate what they perceive as positive aspects of modernity and avoid what is considered negative’ (Ghannam, 2002:133). Whereas elites face the danger of inauthenticity when they globalise everyday experiences (Peterson, 2011), the glocal middle-class openly inject the modern and global with local authenticity. They do not replace the local with the global, but global cultural codes become localised by being situated in a social matrix that transforms them. The simple binary between modern and global communities that deem Egypt to be ‘backward’ and traditional communities that deem global styles to be morally suspect is broken down by these ‘inbetweeners’ who accommodate aspects of both.

The 'everyday of class entails situational performances of superiority and deference, and senses of belonging and non-belonging' (de Koning,2009:11). Particular class performances determine in which parts of the city you feel at home and how one is seen and treated in different spaces on Cairo's class-segmented map (de Koning,2009). The young glocals possess an ability to use the spaces and experience the culture previously thought exclusive to the elite. These spaces and commodities do not represent clearly distinguished segments or mutually exclusive realities. They produce an amalgamation of local and global cultural forces that creates a constant need for balancing both discourses. In some instances, such as the coffee shop, this balance is broken by financial limitations or class-infused societal codes, and thus the balance must be renegotiated. However, they display an innovative ability to do just that and to carve out a uniquely cosmopolitan habitus.

Young Egyptians increasingly integrate transnational experiences outside the framework of a national interest. Post-Nasser, organised religion, trade unions, schools, and public broadcasting no longer supply solid values to help structure the passage into adulthood (Cohen,2004). Young Cairenes must forge new resistant, resilient and independent subcultures to survive in and find alternatives to impoverished roles proffered by state bureaucracies and fragmented industry. For these young Cairenes, the quest for personal survival shapes their desires to find a liveable balance within the local-global matrix.

English as a commodity becomes appropriated by the people using it and its meaning becomes integrated within localised contexts and structures. Yes, the language has been used to experience 'western' cultural forms, but it has also been used to criticise these forms and to defend localised cultures. English, as a commodity like any other, can be manipulated by consumers, and this group display a unique ability to do it. As De Certeau (1988) states the producers of cultural discourses are 'cumbersome, unimaginative, and over-organised, whereas

the weak are creative, nimble and flexible' (27). Young Egyptians can take English and use it to further localised claims, which include aspirations to get connected as well as to retain the safety of being locally bounded. Humans use language to represent the world as they wish to, producing realities as well as reflecting them. Any future research must look not just at the commodity itself and the intrinsic meanings invested within, but the uses it is put to. It must also recognise that, although cultural standardisation has been a part of globalisation, a more profound effect is to produce greater local cultural diversity (Giddens,2002).

There exist a number of limitations in a single-site ethnographic study of linguistic consumption. The inability to speak Arabic fluently was an impediment in understanding the everyday lives of students, but the insistence of the participants to speak English is important to recognise. Secondly, my own position as a 'Westerner' is imperative to note in terms of how representative their 'everyday activities' are, but the way they used *me* to connect became integral to understand. The research was conducted under particular time constraints, with only one month in which carry it out. The conclusions drawn are specific to the particular English class and thus care must be taken in generalisation. However, the study represents an attempt to better understand the open opportunities for a modern and globalising middle-class habitus in Cairo.

Young people's lives are full of expressions, signs and symbols through which they seek creatively to establish their presence, identity and meaning (Fiske,1989). Any future research that helps this misunderstood and marginalised populace to represent their multiple, entangled identities promises to be extremely valuable. However, future research must also focus on the production origins of cultural commodities and how they influence a consumer's choices and constraints. Particularly with language, its social, economic and cultural status and the teacher have real and significant influences on the ability of learners to create individualised cultural subjectivities. It is vital to assess the mode of English's assimilation into the social fabric and the

manner in which language is used in class formation and privilege. However, this research has illustrated that language - as a dynamic and dialectic force - can be used for many purposes; it is contested even as it is spoken and can stimulate antagonism and opposition. The cultural politics produced by English language learning in Cairo illuminates the possibilities for fluid traversal of everyday cultural geographies. This group of young Cairenes really are 'Livin' La Vida Gloca'.

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## **Appendix**

### **Sample Transcript, Class One: 21/07/2011**

- Some believe that Mubarak still has his grip on power.
- Good things Mubarak did-subway, cleaning streets
- 'we don't need revenge' want judgement-he did not do what he should have done in 30 years (not about democracy)
- Cared about rich people in Mohandiseen, Dokki, not all of Egypt.
- 'Now we are divorced from America'?-under control of US
- Need now to work to build up our country, not go out and protest anymore (PE)
- Democracy takes time, police had too much power, everyone must care about the business of others, build a community (PE)
- Egyptians like authority, need to know people to get a job
- If touched before marriage-she is refused, 'here we are dominated by man'
- £10, 000 to buy a bride, need a flat, gold important, don't generally force but don't trust a girl to choose, prevented from education, stay with family until marriage-acceptance of patriarchy (NE)
- Family culture in Egypt, every culture has good and bad things, behave like we want people to behave to us, live a bad life in the west, want to be like people in west, find work, dreams achieved (PE, NW, PW)
- 'Ahmed where are you, are you here?'-Here to be silent?
- You can fix your culture, can't change identity-fix culture
- Question-'How can we be like you?'-easy to leave culture instead of fixing it, part of your culture (PW)
- Response-girl-we have a great culture, history-always together, warm. We have mistakes, but they also have mistakes-only saw movies and foreigners, can't judge their culture from this. (PE)
- America-not paradise, unemployment, every country has something good, something bad (NW)
- Lola-problem is you, part of bad things you are suffering from-example of rubbish – throwing rubbish out window-problem is you.
- -You are in English-where is your sharing, love-should speak.
- Lola-'suffering from silent people'-just say the bad things about Egypt-not good things-Eslam
- Crime in Europe, very dirty in places, (NW)
- Suffer from absence of police after revolution-unsafe

- 'I think you should be very proud of being Egyptian-best thing is people
- 'Welcome to Egypt'-warm welcome
- Lola-chance comes to you only one time to speak to foreigners.
- Asked question about difficulties of travel abroad-restrictions. After Sept 11, if you want to travel, have to be rich, demands (PW)
- Ayat-Lola makes us happy all the time, change our lives all the time
- Yesterday in events, some mistakes-acceptable.
- Lola-give them chance to show responsibility
- Asked us how organised the event was'-history, language and entertainment.
- 'What about Ramadan in your country' (PE)
- -only Muslims have Ramadan, do you feel it? Not a big event.
- 'Most people think Muslims are terrorists?'-perceptions of Muslims in Britain (NW)
- Lucia-people thought Islam and terrorism was one -we know Islam is different-people afraid
- Point of view of Europeans who don't travel-ignorant.
- Have to separate government and media from people
- Lola-people in the east should make good views about Egypt, saw advertisement on CNN for terrorism.-should project ourselves-change ourselves as persons and image.
- Middle East coverage in the West, had to justify perceptions of Egypt in the West.
- Good coverage after revolution-'want to be free, fair and equal' (PE)
- West not free and fair-not like you imagine, some people think they want to change culture to be like the West. (NW)
- Religious guy-just work and drink, bad perception of the West. (NW)
- 'All our dreams will be achieved there' -find work, wanted to change mind after revolution. (PW)
- Nice people in Europe and visiting in Egypt. (PW)
- Asked about drugs in Holland-some legal (NW)
- Girl-imagine the West is better than here.
- Lola-here washing the dishes is bad-no one will look at them-class system. (NE)
- 'In West people respect every job., here we look down on manual labour job, respectable job-engineer-can you marry a waitress, butcher-general answer no, educated people-perception of no class system in West (PW)
- Girl says she doesn't want to marry uneducated people. Other girl says personality important, not prestige

- Worries about job same everywhere, Lola-divide here greater, insulting class divide. Way they deal with them-we don't treat them different-speak with them in general way.
- Not everyone thinks like this-Ayat trying to say she would not judge on job or education- Lola disagrees-Lola-for me we are all humans, Eslam-everyone has a task (PE)
- Lola-I speak about the majority of people-that is a rule'-if your son told you I want to be a mechanic, majority would refuse-one said she would let him choose-outnumbered.
- Lola-I don't think about prestige-do we understand each other, chemistry-people here think like this
- Lola-good nature would vanish-if they found out partner was a mechanic
- Lola-discovering one of us is Israeli, then are we still judged as humans?
- Response-'I love you without knowing your country'
- Majority-'I can't listen a word from you'-'no communication between Jews and Arabs-many Israelis live here. Jewish ok, just Israeli.
- Lucia-how do you judge Israelis as one-a lot of contradictions-they take our land.
- Eslam-don't do anything bad for my country, my people-judge Israelis as humans.
- If someone comes to take your house-we are Arabs-citizen not government.

### **Focused coding System**

- Positive references to the 'West' and its cultures (PW)
- Negative references to the 'West' and its cultures (NW)
- Positive references to Egypt/Cairo and its cultures (PE)
- Negative references to Egypt/Cairo and its cultures (PW)

Name	Age	Inhabitancy	Occupation	Hobbies	Observation
Muhammad	19	Alomrania	Student (University of Cairo)		
Ahmed	23	Ain Shams	Waiter (City Stars Mall)		
Eslam	16	Ain Shams	State school (Ain Shams)		
Ayat	19	Ain Shams	Student (University of Cairo)		
Nesma	17	Elzeyton	State school		

			(Elzeyton)		
Eman	24	Embaba	Teaching Assistant (State school)		