

Graffiti in Public Spaces in the City State of Setif, Algeria

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Abstract

Objectives: The present study aims to discover the themes or categories that characterize graffiti writings in public spaces in the City State of Setif, Algeria. It is worth mentioning that Setif City - the state of Setif - is an eastern city in Algeria; it is near to the state where one of the researchers resides. This fact made data collection an easy task.

Methods: Using photographing, the researchers collected 330 graffiti tokens from public spaces in six townships of Setif City. However, among the total number of graffiti only 191 graffiti works had writings, and thus, they were selected as the study sample. The researchers relied on the qualitative and quantitative content analyses framework for data analysis.

Results: The analysis showed that graffiti in public spaces of Setif City expressed 19 communicative themes or categories, namely society, politics, resistance, peace, education, history, heritage, sports, motherland, art, personal thoughts and sentiments, expressiveness, commerce, prevention, awareness and guidance, embellishment, health, environment, and finally miscellaneousness. Moreover, the study showed that some of graffiti writings have more than one theme or communicative category.

Conclusions: The study concludes that the graffiti of Setif City was used to transmit various messages about many different issues in life.

Keywords: graffiti, public spaces, Setif City, communicative categories, qualitative and quantitative content analyses framework.

الكتابات على الجدران في الأماكن العامة في ولاية سطيف، الجزائر

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ملخص

الأهداف: تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى اكتشاف المواضيع أو الفئات التي تميز كتابات الجرافيتي الموجودة في الأماكن العامة في ولاية سطيف، الجزائر. ومن الجدير بالذكر أن مدينة سطيف -ولاية سطيف- هي مدينة شرقية بالجزائر، فهي قريبة من الولاية حيث يقطن أحد الباحثين. هذه الحقيقة جعلت جمع البيانات مهمة سهلة.

المنهجية: باستخدام التصوير الفوتوغرافي، جمع الباحثون 330 عمل جرافيتي من الأماكن العامة، في 6 بلديات بمدينة سطيف. ومع ذلك، من بين العدد الإجمالي للجرافيتي كان هناك 191 عمل جرافيتي فقط احتوى على كتابات، وبالتالي تم اختيارهم كعينة للدراسة. واعتمد الباحثون على إطار تحليل المحتوى النوعي والكمي لتحليل البيانات.

النتائج: أظهر التحليل أن الجرافيتي في الأماكن العامة لمدينة سطيف عبر عن 19 موضوعاً أو فئة تواصلية، وهي: المجتمع، السياسة، المقاومة، السلام، التعليم، التاريخ، التراث، الرياضة، الوطن، الفن، أفكار وأحاسيس شخصية، التعبير، التجارة، الوقاية، الوعي والإرشاد، التزيين، الصحة، البيئة وأخيراً مواضيع متنوعة. إضافة إلى هذا، فقد أظهرت الدراسة أن بعض كتابات الجرافيتي لها أكثر من موضوع أو فئة تواصلية.

الخلاصة: خلصت الدراسة إلى أن جرافيتي مدينة سطيف استخدمت كوسيلة لنقل رسائل متنوعة حول العديد من القضايا المختلفة في الحياة.

الكلمات الدالة: الجرافيتي، الأماكن العامة، مدينة سطيف، فئة تواصلية، إطار تحليل المحتوى النوعي والكمي



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1. Introduction

People live together in social communities, in that they tend to socialise, interact, and communicate together to transmit their messages and intentions. Their communication takes different forms; by way of explanation, they can communicate face-to-face, via social media (such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc.). Moreover, they can communicate via other means, such as what is known as 'graffiti'. Put differently, human beings are social creatures by nature. This is supported by Sakman (2019:1), who stated that "human beings are typically characterised as social primates". Hence, human beings are influenced by what is around them, especially youth groups with many means of communication (some of them are visual, some are written.). Among modern means of communication used by young people is the art of graffiti, which expresses ideas in their minds through pictures and writings that summarising various topics.

Graffiti is an art that is linked to hip-hop culture. This is reported by White (2018:1), who argued:

"Once considered primitive art form aligned with the seemingly unrooted hip-hop movement, graffiti art has evolved from a street style resigned to the walls of buildings and subways to fine art that graces the walls of the world's galleries and mirrors the contracted murals completed by Mexican artist, Diego Rivera".

Graffiti is an art that expresses ideas, thoughts, opinions, etc. It consists of writings, drawings, or a mixture of them. The same idea was formed by Marpaung (2015:2), who stated that "graffiti are the expressive drawings and writings which have hidden meanings that can be found in communication between the writer and the reader". Graffiti has developed through times because of the development or the coming of new materials; "it is more than the spray-painted arrowed words of teenagers; its artists now employ various styles and mediums" (White, 2018:1). In addition, graffiti has developed because of the development of artists' thoughts and the diversity of their cultures. However, graffiti is usually found in clubs, gardens, stadiums, trains, streets, etc. The place where graffiti is found is selected according to the artist's vision. Bloch and Phillips (2020:84) mentioned that:

"Graffiti writers have particular relationships to the streets temporally, physically, and geographically. They tend to accomplish their work under the cover of night, access elements of street or transportation systems that pedestrians seldom frequent, such as train yards or freeways, and pattern their work in a manner that either reproduces neighborhood segregation or that defies it".

Graffiti can be practiced in such places by both males and females as it is reported by Guthrie (2006) that various preserved Paleolithic pictures were done by both sexes and all age categories. It is practiced by anyone (ordinary people), not necessarily by artists.

White (2018:2) highlighted that "graffiti derives from the Latin, *graphire*, which means 'to write' but is directly linked to Italian *graffito* for inscription or design; the noun literally means to scratch". Graffiti is a social means used to transmit a message about diverse topics that occupy graffiti artists' minds and reflect what occurs in reality. Graffiti is also used as a means of embellishment; on the other hand, it is used as a means of destruction. This idea is reported by Halsey and Young (2002:165) in that they stated that "graffiti is both art and crime. It is also an issue of great significance to local communities, local government, police, public transport agencies, and young people".

However, motivations and factors that push people or artists to write graffiti are numerous, and vary from one person to another according to their age, sex, social condition, etc. For example, these factors might be social in that one can use graffiti to talk about poverty, unemployment, and divorce. Other factors might be related to politics as graffiti writers may talk about elections and presidents. Another factor that might lead to graffiti writing is a psychological one because some writers resort to graffiti to transmit their psychological problems, such as depression and stress. Besides, graffiti writers may use graffiti to talk about economic issues. In this matter, Mwangi (2012:20) emphasized that "most times graffiti is utilized as a means of communication to communicate social, economic, and political messages in society". In fact, what motivates or inspires graffitiists to engage in graffiti writings has attracted the attention of many researchers. To this effect, Farnia (2014:48) highlighted that graffiti "represents the voice of people, in either public or private places, to transmit their anger, instantaneous thought, love declaration, political proclamation, outcry, etc." Put differently, it seems that many things motivate graffitiists to write graffiti. They reflect what is inside graffitiists, their thoughts, dreams, ambitions, anger, etc.

2. Literature Review

This section aims at placing available research in the context of existing knowledge concerning graffiti in the Algerian and Arab contexts.

In the Arab context, Ghouma (2015) explored graffiti in a Libyan context. The researcher found out that the central themes addressed by graffiti in Libya are political (celebrating a new era, constitution, and justice), social (respect, dignity, health, educational and judicial system, freedom of speech, etc.), and economic (rebuilding the country, eco-economic: preserving nature). Furthermore, the researcher showed that graffiti could be employed in teaching and learning second languages in that it can be utilized in the classroom to aid students brainstorm and reflect on ideas and themes. Alshrafa and Aljoofi (2020) scrutinized graffiti in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Specifically, they planned to analyze the communicative categories (the themes) and the syntactic and lexical features of graffiti shown in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The study revealed that graffiti in Jeddah falls under five categories (personal, national, social, ideological and dysphemism (taboo)). These categories were classified into subcategories according to their contents: the personal category was divided into direct and indirect declaration of emotions. The national category was divided into praising kings, confirming identity, and supporting national football teams' subcategories. The ideological category was divided into a reaffirmation of faith subcategory, and the dysphemism category was classified into three subcategories: personal, ideology and sexual taboos. Moreover, the researchers found that simple, creative, and varied linguistic features characterise the graffiti of Jeddah.

Al Karazoun (2021) tackled graffiti in the Jordanian public transport vehicles. The researcher disclosed that graffiti displayed in Jordanian public transport vehicles can be divided into eight categories, namely personal, interpersonal relationship, philosophical, religious, offensive, political, humorous, and sports, in addition to 13 subcategories, which are name and self-identification, self-appraisal, love relationships, familial relationships, philosophical perspectives, the ethics of transport, declining morals, expressions of Islamic faith, declaration of faith, supplications, preaching, protection from the envious eye, and territorial and tribal affiliation. Likewise, Al Karazoun reported that there were several linguistic features that characterize graffiti found inside Jordanian public transport vehicles. Put another way, at the phonetic level, graffiti is characterised by alliteration and rhyme. The graffiti consisted of metaphors, synonyms, and antonyms at the semantic level. At the morphological level, graffiti comprised acronyms. In this regard, the morphological analysis of the study demonstrated that the discourse of graffiti had one feature, that is, the common use of acronyms. At the orthographic level, graffitiists used capitalization, repetition of vowels, and exclamation marks. Finally, Al Karazoun, reported that at the syntactic level, in terms of function, most sentences found in graffiti were declaratives and imperatives. However, in terms of length, they were short.

Ta'amneh (2021) studied graffiti in secondary schools in Jordan. The researcher intended to discover the themes of graffiti writings displayed on the walls and desks of secondary public schools in Irbid City, analyzing the languages, language variations, lexical and syntactic features of graffiti, and knowing the motives of graffiti writings. Ta'amneh found that graffiti transmits three main themes: religious, political, and emotional. The religious theme has three subcategories: holy Qur'anic citations, hadeeth, and supplication. The political theme is divided into three subcategories: patriotism, Arabic nationalism, and internationalism. The emotional theme is divided into five subcategories: love and gratitude; respect; solidarity, loyalty, support; pride; and advice. Ta'amneh also found that graffiti was written in both English and Arabic languages and in both modern standard Arabic and colloquial. Moreover, Ta'amneh revealed that nominal sentences were used more frequently than verbal sentences. Finally, the researcher mentioned that graffiti writings characterized by complete sentences transmit full thoughts, spelling mistakes, and no punctuation marks.

However, the body of research that tackled the issue of graffiti in the Algerian context is rare. Among the studies that examined the topic of graffiti in the Algerian context is that of Nehaoua (2009), written in French, who reported that graffiti of Setif City in Algeria expresses several themes. They are love, sport, hip-hop, culture, religion, political and social events (a. elections, b. social problems, c. illegal emigration, d. Gaza situation), humour, and advertising communication. Another study that explored graffiti in the Algerian context was done by Ouaras (2018). The researcher aimed to identify the function of graffiti in public spaces in Algiers. The main result revealed by the researcher is that the primary function of graffiti

displayed in public spaces in Algiers is to protest against political authorities and civil society. Kasmi and Zoughebi (2019), on their part, analyzed semiotically urban graffiti displayed in Bejaia City. They aimed to discover the meanings of graffiti collected from Bejaia City, recognise the languages that constitute graffiti of Bougiote graffitiists, determine whether the collected graffiti reflects the Algerian identity and whether graffiti is perceived as art or vandalism. Kasmi and Zoughebi demonstrated that graffiti expresses identity, politics, sport, and social issues. In addition, they showed that Bougiote graffiti writers used Arabic, French, English, and Berber in writing their graffiti. The researchers also confirmed that graffiti reflects the Algerian identity. Finally, the researchers pinpointed that graffiti is perceived as an art on one hand, and as vandalism on the other.

As it is already mentioned, there are only a few studies that tackled graffiti in Algeria. Ouaras (2018) emphasised the graffiti of Algiers. Kasmi and Zoughebi (2019) studied that of Bejaia. Nehaoua (2009) studied the graffiti of Setif (the city which is the primary concern of the present study). Still, the difference is that the data in Nehaoua's study differs from the present study's data as they are collected from other places. In Nehaoua's study, there were examples of graffiti collected from trees and tables in classrooms, which is not the case in the present study that focused on collecting graffiti found in public spaces. Hence, the present study fills a gap in the literature and reinforces the research that tackled graffiti in Algeria. To this effect, the present study intended to answer the research question: What are the themes of graffiti found in public spaces in Setif City that are not heavily investigated by researchers interested in studying graffiti?

3. Methodology

This section explains the adopted research design, data source, data collection and sampling, the framework of the study, data verification, classification and analysis.

3.1. Population and Sample

The population of the present study involves most graffiti works in public spaces in Setif City, situated in the east of Algeria. However, the total number of the collected graffiti was 330. It was collected from the following six townships: Setif, El-Eulma, Ain Azel, Babor, Hammam Sokhna, and Bougaa (Cities belonging to the state of Setif). The collected graffiti works from Setif City varied in that some consisted of writings, others of drawings, while others consisted of both writings and drawings. Since the study's main objective is the analysis of the communicative themes or categories of graffiti found in public spaces in Setif City, the researchers selected graffiti works that included writings to be the study sample. Therefore, the researchers had a sample of 191 graffiti works out of 330, which was the total number of collected graffiti tokens.

3.2. Data Collection

To collect the required data for the present study, the researchers started collecting graffiti tokens from the beginning of August 2022 until the end of May 2023. The graffiti was collected from the public spaces of Setif City; more specifically, it was collected from the public spaces of Setif, El-Eulma, Ain Azel, Babor, Hammam Sokhna, and Bougaa Cities of Setif. The researchers selected to examine the graffiti displayed in Setif City in particular; first, in order to be able to collect data quickly. Second, many other cities, such as Jijel, Oran, Algiers, etc., were already tackled by other graffiti researchers. Therefore, the researchers cannot emphasize them. Third, the remaining Algerian cities, such as 'Batna', did not contain enough graffiti to be examined. Accordingly, the researchers chose to shed light on the graffiti of Setif City precisely. However, regarding the data collection method, the researchers relied on photographing in that graffiti works were photographed and saved on a mobile phone. Additionally, the researchers relied on note-taking in that they took notes about the names of the townships and public spaces from where they collected graffiti. The researchers also turned to graffiti artists from Setif City, who set some of their graffiti works to the researchers via Instagram and Facebook. Also, the researchers met with those graffiti artists and asked them where the graffiti works they sent are displayed, whether all the pictures they (the researchers) collected were graffiti, and the themes expressed by the collected graffiti.

3.3. Data Analysis

To conduct the present study, the researchers relied on the qualitative and quantitative content analyses framework because it is more suitable to analyze the data collected for the current research.

“Qualitative content analysis is a technique that is utilized for the sake of describing the meaning of qualitative material in a systematic way. You do this by assigning successive parts of your material to the categories of your coding frame. This frame is at the heart of qualitative content analysis, and it covers all those meanings that feature in the description and interpretation of your material” (Schreier, 2012:1).

In other words, qualitative content analysis enables researchers to interpret the data and categorize it systematically. However, quantitative analysis, including the process of gathering and analyzing numerical data, enables researchers to draw insights and make informed decisions.

The selected graffiti works were classified into **19** communicative categories (themes) based on their content or the message(s) they convey. The content of the message is one way that the researchers can rely on to classify graffiti. Hence, they can achieve what is known as a consistent basis of classification in their study. The researchers relied on the help of the graffitiists who engaged in making the graffiti studied in the present study to understand the content, recognize the intended message of graffiti tokens, and then find the suitable communicative category for each graffiti token. After this, the researchers classified the entire selected sample into communicative categories and gave an explanation or examples about them. The selected graffiti tokens were classified into communicative categories depending on their contents, the previous studies that tackled graffiti, and the assistance of graffiti artists, who are more familiar and knowledgeable about graffiti pictures’ meaning, content, and themes. Moreover, those communicative categories of the graffiti found in public spaces of Setif City were given to three professors of the English language at the University of Jordan to validate them. The researchers asked them to confirm whether the identified communicative categories suit the content of the graffiti works; in addition to this, the latter (the identified communicative categories of graffiti) were also validated by one of the best graffitiists in Algeria, who has practiced graffiti for a long time in Algeria and other countries and who is well known in Algeria by his obsession with graffiti.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the study findings regarding the communicative categories of graffiti in Setif City, Algeria. Some illustrative examples are also explained in detail.

Table (1) illustrates graffiti’s communicative categories (themes) and their corresponding explanations, illustrations, or examples.

Table 1. Communicative categories (themes) of graffiti and their corresponding explanations, illustrations, or examples.

Communicative category	Explanations, illustrations, or examples
Society	Item that refers to smile, optimism, or happiness
Politics	Items that refer to army, people Items such as ethics, help change the world Items on Palestine and Algeria Example: HAGARIN h a g a r i : n
Fight	Item on the name of the country ‘الجزائر’ ?aldzaza:ir
Peace	Items related to peace Items such as peace Items such as ‘together we can’ Example: peace Items such as peace and love Example: la liberté Example: الحرية ?lhurijja
Education	Items related to knowledge
History	Items on originality Items such as ‘LEGACY’ Items on history
Heritage	Items that refer to dialects

Communicative category	Explanations, illustrations, or examples
Sports	Items said during sports match (the Algerian one) Items related to sports Items related to no violence in sports Abbreviations related to the Algerian professional football club based in Setif Items such as sports spirit Items such as peace in football Abbreviation (MCEE) which is related to Algerian club of football (El-Eulma, Setif) Items such as ARTBIRD Abbreviation (ESS) Items on the club Items related to sports such as: Inferno Items on ESS Example: sport Example: we will never give up Example: the black pearl is external love
Motherland	Items from Algerian national anthem Items on motherland Items such as Thank you GRANDPA Items related to motherland Items related to motherland, the name of the country Items on the country Items related to the Algerian Independence Day ‘5 Juillet’ Items such as ‘a new history for our youth’ Items such as ‘independence’ Items related to motherland such as <i>معاً لبناء وطن آمن</i> <i>maʕanlibina:iwaṭanin?a: min</i> Items on national martyr’s day (18 فيفري) 18 fi:vri Example: سنة 60 60 sana Example: <i>المهم الضحكة مترو حش</i> <i>ʔlmuhimddaḥkamatru:ḥʃ</i> Example: <i>رتبة العلم اعلى الرتب</i> <i>rutbatulʕilmi?aʕlarrutabi</i> Example: Real Heroes Items such as: <i>أمانات الأجداد</i> <i>ʔamana:tulʔadʒda:di</i> Example: <i>المواطنة حقي وواجبي</i> <i>ʔlmuwa:tanahaqqiwawa:idʒibi</i> Items related to ‘hope’ Items such as ‘the future’
Art	Items related to club name
Personal thought and sentiment	Items such as ‘keep calm’
Expressiveness	Items such as ‘the king’ Items such as ‘Never forget you’ Items such as ‘تفاعل وابتنسم’ <i>tafa:ʔl wabtasm</i> Items such as ‘stay strong’ Items such as <i>اعتزل ما يؤذيك</i> <i>ʔi ʕtazil ma:ju? ði:ka</i> Items such as ‘النظافة مسؤولية الجميع’ <i>ʔannaða:fatumasu:lijjatuldʒamiʕ</i> Items such as ‘الرياضة تربية وأخلاق’ <i>ʔrriija:datutarbijjatunwa ʔax la:q</i> Example: work out
Commerce	Items related to food and drinks such as crepes, coffee Example: Café Azel
Prevention	Items such as cleanliness Example: <i>على الخير أعوانا</i> <i>ʕala lxajri ʔaʕwa:na</i> Example: <i>النظافة مسؤولية الجميع</i> <i>ʔannaða:fatumasu:lijjatu ldʒamiʕ</i>

Communicative category	Explanations, illustrations, or examples
Awareness and guidance	Example: وزينة الإنسان فمه الثوب كمة الزينة: nati:00 awbikammuhuwazi:natulinsa:nifamuhu Example: حب الوطن من الايمان hubbulwatani minali:ma:n Example: خير الناس انفعهم للناس xajru nna:si ?anfa?uhum linna:si Example: بالعلم تجذب العقول وبالأخلاق تجذب القلوب bil?ilmi tad?dibu l?uqu:la wabil?axla:qi tad?dibu lqulu:ba Example: لا تنسى تاريخك la:tansa tari:xaka Example: تفاعل وابتمس tafa:?!wabtasm Example: Just try
Embellishment	Example: ابتدائية صحراوي بلقاسم ترحب بكم ?ibtida:?!jjat sahra:wibalqa:sam turahhibu bikum Example: Non-A La Violence Example: The Old Quarter Items such as 'تفاعل وابتمس' tafa:?! wabtasm The word 'school' Items on art and smile
Health	Items such as 'stay at home'
Environment	Items such as 'help change the world' Item on environment: ببنتنا bi:?atuna: Items such as 'save mother earth'
Miscellaneousness	Items such as people Items such as peace in football Items such as 'a new history for our youth' Example: المهم الضحكة متروحت ?lmuhimddahkamatru:h? Items such as 'keep calm' Items such as 'الرياضة تربية واخلاق' ?rriija:datutarbijjatunwa?axla:q Example: حب الوطن من الايمان hubbulwatani minali:ma:n Example: بالعلم تجذب العقول وبالأخلاق تجذب القلوب bil?ilmi tad?dibu l?uqu:la wabil?axla:qi tad?dibu lqulu:ba Example: لا تنسى تاريخك la:tansa tari:xaka Items such as 'stay strong' Example: our originality Example: على الخير اعوانا ?ala lxajri ?a?wa:na Example: 'النظافة مسؤوليتي' ?anna?a:fatumasu:lijjati Example: use a reason just to smile Example: 'الجزائر' ?ald?aza:ir Items such as : Espoir Example: 'تفاعل وابتمس' tafa:?! wabtasm

Table (1) shows that the communicative categories of graffiti displayed in public spaces in Setif City are 19 communicative categories. They are listed as follows: society, politics, fight, peace, education, history, heritage, sports, motherland, art, personal thought and sentiment, expressiveness, commerce, prevention, awareness and guidance, embellishment, health, environment, and miscellaneousness. The table also shows how each communicative category is associated with explanations, illustrations, or examples.

Table (2) illustrates the communicative categories of graffiti found in public spaces in Setif City, Algeria in addition to the number and percentage of each communicative category.

Table 2. Number and percentage of the communicative categories of graffiti found in public spaces in Setif City, Algeria

Communicative category	No	Percentage
Society	1	0.52
Politics	4	2.09

Communicative category	No	Percentage
Fight	1	0.52
Peace	10	5.23
Education	2	1.05
History	4	2.09
Heritage	1	0.52
Sports	92	48.17
Motherland	42	21.99
Art	1	0.52
Personal thought and sentiment	1	0.52
Expressiveness	9	4.71
Commerce	2	1.05
Prevention	3	1.57
Awareness and guidance	8	4.19
Embellishment	6	3.14
Health	1	0.52
Environment	3	1.57
Total	191	100

Having a glance at Table (2), it is evident that the communicative category of 'sports' is the most frequent one among all the other categories in that it occurred with a number of 92 (48.17%). This sheds light on the fact that most graffiti tokens of Setif City are about sports; in addition, this highlights that the graffiti artists of Setif City are more interested in Sports. The second communicative category expressed by graffiti of Setif is 'motherland' in that it registered (42) instances (21.99%). This communicative category reflected the idea that 'motherland' is an important subject for graffitiists, who resorted to public spaces and transmitted their personal and inside thoughts, sentiments, and idea etc. about it by means of different words, phrases, sentences, and even pictures. The third communicative category transmitted by graffiti is 'peace'. It occurred ten times with a percentage of (5.23 %). To express this communicative category, graffitiists used terms, such as السلم, الحرية, lahurijja, la liberté. This category displays that graffitiists have an intention to demand peace in Algeria, the Arab world, or the entire world. Another communicative category of graffiti is referred to as 'expressiveness'. It registered nine instances (4.71%). Through this communicative category, graffitiists wanted to express their thoughts about different topics such as cleanliness, optimism, etc.

The other communicative category of graffiti is labelled 'awareness and guidance'. It occurred eight times with a percentage of (4.19%). Through this communicative category, graffitiists wanted to guide people and make them attentive and aware of certain important topics and subjects in life. A further communicative category of graffiti is called 'embellishment'. It occurred six times with a percentage of (3.14%). This category reflects the idea of embellishing and beautifying things, such as schools, quarters, etc. One more communicative category is related to both politics and history. Both occurred only four times with a percentage of (2.09%). This highlights the idea that the graffitiists of Setif City did not focus more on these two topics (history and politics) in their graffiti works. Another communicative category transmitted by graffiti of Setif is linked to both prevention and environment, which occurred only three times with a percentage of (1.57%). Prevention and the environment are two other significant matters in human life. That is why they were chosen by graffitiists. Graffiti transmitted other communicative categories such as education and commerce. They occurred only two times with a percentage of (1.05%). Education is a crucial and serious issue in life that the nation should take care of, especially in modern times. Tackling this issue by the graffitiists elucidates that they did not write or draw useless things. Instead, they wrote and drew graffiti that transmits ideas about influential, significant, and sensitive topics in society. The

communicative category of ‘commerce’ reflects the other side or objective of graffiti: attracting people’s attention towards certain topics, such as buying certain food and drinks. Graffiti tokens of Setif City conveyed other communicative categories or themes. They are listed as follows: society, fight, heritage, art, personal thought and sentiment, and health. All these communicative categories occurred only one time with a percentage of (0.52%). These communicative categories were the least frequently occurring categories in the sample. They attract the researchers’ attention to the idea that there is a variation in the topics and themes expressed by graffiti presented in Setif City.

Table (3) shows the communicative category of miscellaneousness in addition to its number and percentage

Table 3. Number and percentage of the communicative category of miscellaneousness of graffiti found in public spaces in Setif City, Algeria

Communicative category	No	Percentage
Miscellaneousness	17	8,90

Table (3) demonstrates another communicative category ‘miscellaneousness’ of graffiti found in public spaces of Setif City. This communicative category used to show that some of graffiti writings of Setif City have overlapping themes (more than one theme/function). Miscellaneousness communicative category occurred with a percentage of (8, 90%) in that the researchers found only 17 examples of graffiti writings that can have more than one theme in the sample of 191 graffiti tokens.

Discussion of the above-identified communicative categories of graffiti is presented below, along with some illustrative examples in the study sample. It is worth noting that some examples are in Arabic, and this is why they were translated in English as well as transliterated following the IPA style.

1. Sports

This communicative category registered (92) instances with a percentage of (48.17%). It was the most frequently occurring category. It highlighted that sport is an interesting topic in Setif City, and it receives support from graffitiists and supporters. Among the graffiti writings that communicated sports theme, the following can be listed,

1. a. ESS is the nation, the continent, and the world

b. اطلقوا سراح الوفاق

?at_liq-u: sa r a: ĥa lwifa:q
release-2PLM liberty Al wefaq (an Algerian sports club in the City of Setif)
'Release Al wefaq.'

c. حاربوا من اجل كبرياء الوفاق

ħa:rib-u: min ?adʒli kibrija:i lwifa:q
fight-2PLM for the sake of pride Al wefaq

'Fight for the pride of Al wefaq.'

Example 1(a) which is written as follows ‘ESS is the nation, the continent and the world’ revolves around the ESS (the latter is an Algerian professional football club based in Setif). This example reflects the idea that the club (ESS) is everything to its supporters (it is seen as their life and means everything to them). In other words, this example shows that the supporters consider ESS as their own life and world. Example 1(b) ‘release Al wefaq’ is written to express the problems faced by the club (ESS) and address the responsibility of it to solve them. Example 1(c) ‘Fight for the pride of Al wefaq’ is written to send a message for the football players to fight in order to win the competitions. The previously mentioned examples of graffiti writings reflected the idea that the ESS (the Algerian professional football club based in Setif City) is a beloved club that is highly supported by its supporters, who love it so much and defend its existence and survival. Put differently, all the above words are a sign of how much the supporters of Setif admire and adore the team of ESS. Overall, the above graffiti examples reflect the strong affiliation of supporters of Setif to their team.

2. Motherland

This communicative category registered 42 instances with a percentage of (21.99%). It is the second occurred common category. It reflected messages about the country (Algeria). Some of the examples of graffiti writings that transmitted this communicative category are listed below:

2. a. وعقدنا العزم ان تحيا الجزائر
 Wa ṣaqad-na lṣazma ʔan taḥja ldʒaza:ir
and decided.1PL DEF.determination that to live.3SGF Algeria
 'and we determined that Algeria shall live.'
- b. معا لبناء وطن آمن
 maṣan linabna:i waṭanin ʔa:min
together to-build.1PL homeland safe
 'Together to build a safe homeland'

Regarding example 2 (a), وعقدنا العزم ان تحيا الجزائر waṣaqadnalṣazmaʔantaḥjaldʒaza:ir 'we are determined that Algeria shall live', it is taken from the Algerian national anthem and written on a wall. It reflects the Algerian heroes' desire, determination, and persistence in the survival of Algeria. More than this, the example transmits the Algerian fathers' determination to liberate the country and their sons' determination to construct the country. Example 2(b) معا لبناء وطن آمن maṣanlibina:iwaṭaninʔa:min 'together to build a safe homeland', it is written to send a message for others to be together, to help, and put hand in hand in order to achieve a country that is safe. In other words, the writer calls for a safe country or homeland. More than this, Example 2(b) reflects the idea that constructing a safe country is everyone's responsibility. The previous examples tackle one topic, which is the motherland. This highlights that motherland is an important topic for writers who love it and want to have a safe country that will survive forever without problems.

3. Peace

This communicative category registered ten instances with a percentage of (5.23%). It is the third communicative category. This communicative category revolved around peace in general. Examples of graffiti that communicated peace are the following:

3. a. السلام
 ʔassala:m
peace
 'Peace'
- b. Peace and love

The graffiti examples representing the communicative category of peace consisted of one or two words. Example 3(a) السلام ʔassala:m 'peace' consisted of only one word. The writer of this example wrote this word to express what is in his mind i.e., he demands to live in peace, and he wants to attract others and government's attention to the importance of this word and the necessity to realize it in the local country (Algeria) or in the whole world because it is a distinguished civilized method. Example 3(b) (peace and love) consists of two words. It is written by the graffitist to send a message to strive to achieve peace and love in the country especially for the childhood category (children) who are the backbone of any society. Peace and love were taken from the name of a group of Algerian singers in France. The aim here is to transmit what is inside the graffitist mind to peoples who are like him and feel him. The above graffiti examples shed the light on 'peace'. This communicative category transmitted by graffiti writings of Setif City due to the insistence and persistence of people to have peace and liberty. The communicative category of 'peace' indicates that peace ('peace is seemed to be a natural condition that leads to higher national well fare levels' (Ghazahan & Hammoud, 2021:509) is a priority in Algerians' life who strongly demand and defend it.

4. Expressiveness

This communicative category registered nine instances with a percentage of (4.71%). This communicative category

expresses graffitiists' or writers' emotions, opinions, etc. about different topics. Examples about the expressive graffiti are listed below:

4. a. Never forget you.
- b. Stay strong.

Example 4(a) 'never forget you' is a graffiti that was written on a wall in red color. It expresses someone's emotions and feelings towards someone else (a male or a female). Example 4(b) 'stay strong' is also a graffiti written on wall in red color to catch people eye's attention. It transmits a message for people to be strong. The above graffiti examples express emotions, opinions, advice, etc. about certain topics (expressive graffiti). Going deeply in the meaning of those examples helps to realise that their writers are emotional, stronger, and have a big experience in life as it appeared to us the day we met and interviewed them. They wrote those words to reveal what is in their inside and make others benefit from the essence of their writings in life. The expressiveness graffiti category reflects graffitiists' expressions about certain crucial topics that can benefit persons in their life.

5. Awareness and Guidance

This communicative category scored eight instances (4.19 %). As the name indicates, this communicative category (awareness and guidance) reflects graffitiists' desire to guide and make people aware of certain issues in life. Among the examples that expressed the communicative category of 'awareness and guidance', we can list the following:

5. a. خير الناس انفعهم للناس

xajru nna:si ?anfaʕ-u-hum

li-n-na:s-i

best people the most beneficial-NOM-3PL

PREP-DEF-people-GEN

'The best people are those who are the most beneficial to people.'

- b. بالعلم تجذب العقول وبالأخلاق تجذب القلوب.

bi-l-ʕilm-i

tadʒðib-u

lʕuqu:la

wa

bi -l-ʔaxla:q-i

PREP-knowledge.GEN attract.2SG.NOM minds

and

PREP-DEF-morals.GEN

tadʒðib-u

l-qulu:b-a

attract.2SG-NOM

DEF-hearts.ACC

'With knowledge you attract minds and with good manners you attract hearts.'

Concerning example 5(a) xajrunna:siʔanfaʕuhumlinna:si خير الناس انفعهم للناس 'the best of people are those who are the most beneficial to people', it is hadith said by Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him. Due to the importance of its content, the graffitiist copied it on a wall to remind people that the best people for Allah are those who help, serve, benefit, and avail other people in the best and worst situations. With regard to Example 5(b), بالعلم تجذب العقول وبالأخلاق تجذب القلوب bilʕilmitadʒðibulʕuqu:la wabilʔaxla:qitadʒðibulqulu:ba 'with knowledge you attract minds and with good manners you attract hearts', it is a well-known saying that is used by the graffitiist in his graffiti writing in order to make people aware and conscious about the significance of knowledge and good manners in attracting others. The previous graffiti examples that were written by graffitiists on public spaces in Setif City aimed at attracting people's attention to certain important topics in life. This might be because the graffitiist is an artist, who must teach and benefit his public. Awareness and guidance graffiti reflected the positive side of graffiti; that side which aims to send a beneficial message to others to benefit from it and proved that graffiti is not always destructive.

6. Embellishment

This communicative category registered six instances (3.14%). Embellishment is expressed in the graffiti works of the graffiti artists through using some words, phrases, and sentences to beautify quarters, schools, etc. Examples of graffiti writings that are used with the aim of embellishments are listed below:

6. a. art changes you

b. ابتدائية صحراوي بلقاسم ترحب بكم.

ʔibtida:ʔijjat

sahra:wi

balqa:sam

turahhibu

bi-kum

elementary school

surname

given name

welcome.3SG

PREP-you.3PLM.GEN

“Sahraoui Belkacem Primary School welcomes you.”

Example 6(a) ‘art changes you’ was written on a wall in El-eulma (Setif); it is used in order to beautify a wall of a middle school. Example 6(b) ‘Sahraoui Balkacem Primary School welcomes you’ is also an example that is used to beautify a school (primary school) (the front side of the school). The above graffiti examples were used for the sake of embellishment. This might be because graffiti artists wanted to show that graffiti is also an art that can be used as a means of beautifying.

7. Politics

This communicative category registered four instances (2.09 %). This communicative category (politics) transmitted political messages about different topics, such as ‘the Algerian Palestinian issue’. Regarding the graffiti examples that are used by graffitiists to express political themes are rare; graffitiists did not write a lot about politics. Examples that represent the communicative category of politics are listed as follows:

7.a الجيش الشعب خاوة خاوة

l-dzi:ʃ

ʃʃaʃb

xa:wa

xa:w a

DEF-army

the people

brothers

brothers

‘The army the people are brothers.’

b. Help change the world.

c. - ‘De la Palestine a l’Algerie...’

- Resister c’est exister

From Palestine to Algeria...

‘To resist is to exist.’

d. HAGARIN

h a g a r i : n

despicables

‘Despicables’

Example 7(a) الجيش الشعب خاوة خاوة l-dzi:ʃʃaʃb xa:wa xa:wa (the army, the people are brothers) is one of the slogans of Algeria’s protests (2019). It indicates that both army and people are brothers and there is no hate between them. Through this example, the graffitiist calls for unity between the army and the people because they are the sons of the country (Algeria). As far as Example 7(b) is concerned, ‘help change the world’, it is used by the graffitiists to call for doing some important things to change the world such as consecration of democracy, selection of democratic system, youth participation in governance, etc. In relation to Example 7(c), ‘From Palestine to Algeria...’, the graffitiist used it to shed light on the support and endorsement of Algeria to the Palestinian cause. The second example ‘to resist is to exist’ is used to encourage Palestinians to resist in order to exist forever (as the Algerian heroes did during the French revolution and win the competition). Put it simply, Example 7(c) reflects the Algerians’ interest in Palestinian issue in that it is tackled by the graffitiists in their works during one of the Algerian occasions ‘May 8, 1945’. Regarding Example 7(d), ‘despicables’, it reflects peoples’ anger, and it calls for rejecting all the forms of contempt and injustice, etc. The above graffiti examples transmitted political messages (political graffiti). Despite the scarcity of examples of politics graffiti, graffitiists included the political theme in their works because politics is an important issue in the country and in the world as a whole; it occupies the minds of both the young and old people. Political graffiti is a communicative category that was transmitted by graffiti works of public spaces of Setif City. It highlights the strength and courage of graffitiists who transmitted influential and powerful words via graffiti works.

8. History

This communicative category registered four instances (2.09%). History graffiti addressed issues related to history. Examples of history graffiti are listed below:

8. a Our originality

b. Legacy

Example 8(a) 'our originality' was written on a wall in El-eulma City in order to call for preservation of originality and prevent following and imitating the western civilization. Example 8(b) (legacy) was written to send a message to protect and preserve our legacy so that to protect our originality. The communicative category of history graffiti mirrors the significance of history for graffitiists who symbolized it on their walls with the aim of addressing people to appreciate it, be proud of it, and make efforts to maintain it.

9. Prevention

This communicative category registered three instances (1.57%). Prevention graffiti reflected messages that are beneficial to people (for example people's health) such as caring about cleanliness. Examples of prevention graffiti are few. They are listed below:

9. a النظافة مسؤوليتي

?annaḡa:fatu

masu:lijjat-i

cleanliness

responsibility.1SG.POSS

'Cleanliness is my responsibility.'

b. على الخير اعوانا

ʕala lxajri

?aʕwa:na

on goodness

helper.PL.NOM

"Be helpers on the goodness."

Regarding Example 9(a), النظافة مسؤوليتي ?annaḡa:fatumasu:lijjati 'cleanliness is my responsibility', it is a graffiti example that is used by the graffitiist in order to urge cleanliness and remind people that cleanliness is a responsibility of every one. Regarding Example 9(b) ʕalalxajri?aʕwa:na على الخير اعوانا 'be helpers on the goodness', it is used to advise people to help and aid in doing good things. For example, it is used to help cleaners in cleaning roads. The communicative category of prevention was transmitted by graffitiists to remind people that prevention is an important issue that they must consider, and this is the role of the artists which is related to addressing important topics that may benefit humanity.

10. Environment

This communicative category registered three instances (1.57%). This communicative category of graffiti addressed people to take care of environment and earth. Among the examples that represented this communicative category, we list the following:

10. a Help change the world

b. بيتنا

bi:?atuna:

environment.1PL

Our environment

Example 10(a) (help change the world) is adopted to address people to aid in developing and changing the environment in specific and the world in general for the better. Example 10(b) بيتنا bi:?atuna 'our environment' is used to draw people's attention to the importance of the environment and the necessity of making efforts to protect it. Environment graffiti communicative category transmits the idea of necessity to put hand in hand to protect the environment and the world and making efforts to develop it due to its significance in our life.

11. Education

This communicative category registered two instances (1.05%). This communicative category of education graffiti involves a sense of seeking knowledge and the great value of knowledge and education. Only few examples of graffiti that expressed the education theme were provided. They are listed as follows.

11. a بالعلم ترقى الأمم

bi-l-ilm-i

PREP-DEF-knowledge-GEN

'With knowledge, nations rise.'

اقرا وتعلم

?iqra?

read.IPMER.2SG

'Read and learn.'

وقل رب زدني علما

wa

qul

and

say.2SG

rab-bi

Lord-1SG.POSS

zidn-i

increase.3SGM-1SG.ACC

ilmān

knowledge

'And say, 'My Lord, increase me in knowledge'.

Example 11(a) بالعلم ترقى الأمم bil'ilmī tarqal?umam 'with knowledge, nations rise' was written on a wall of a Primary School in El-culma City in order to attract children', children parents', and teachers' attention to the great value of education and knowledge and its advantage to humanity and nations in general. All in all, this example is a sign to encourage students to learn and urge school managers (teachers, the boss, etc.) to make all the possibilities to support learning. With regard to Example 11(b), it consisted of two sentences (اقرا وتعلم ?iqra?wata?allam read and learn, وقل رب زدني علما waqulrabbizidniilmān and say, 'My Lord, increase me in knowledge'). These sentences were written on the same wall. 'Read and learn' is an order directed to students to learn. The second sentence 'and say, My Lord, increase me in knowledge' is used to ask Allah to increase students' knowledge. The education graffiti was used by graffitiists to transmit their message to people about the value of knowledge.

12. Commerce

This communicative category registered two instances (1.05%). This communicative category (commerce graffiti) points to the fact that graffiti has also a commercial aim in that it is used to talk about things related to commerce to attract people's attention. Among the examples of commerce graffiti, we can state the following:

12.a Café Azel

'Azel café'

b. Coffee, crepes

'Coffee, pancakes'

Regarding Example 12(a) (café Azel), it was written on a wall of a café in Ain Azel (Setif City) in order to draw peoples' attention to it and to resort to it to drink coffee. Concerning Example 12(b), it consists of words, two of them are: coffee and pancakes: they are two words that were written to display the store's food and drinks. Commerce graffiti sheds light on the fact that graffiti can help merchants and shop owners to affect customers to buy their products. In addition, commerce graffiti reflects the fact that graffiti artists' messages are not always destructive, instead they can be beneficial like other artists' messages.

13. Society

This communicative category registered only once (0.52%). Society graffiti is rare among the group of communicative categories transmitted by graffiti and found in public spaces in Setif City. This is because graffiti artists gave more emphasis to topics related to sports and motherland. In general, society graffiti deals with social issues or the topics that have a relation with social factors. Only one example of social graffiti was found in the corpus; it is stated in the following:

13.a 'Use a reason just to smile'.

This graffiti example 'use a reason just to smile', is a part of a song about love that means that in order to smile and be happy in life, we should do anything, even the smallest things might make us happy. So, this is a message to create and know the reasons that let people smile and be happy. The graffitist used this example to emphasize the importance of happiness in life and advise people to do anything just to smile.

14. Fight

This communicative category occurred only once (0.52%). Fight graffiti generally tackles issues related to struggles, revolutions, etc. The example provided in the sample about fight revolves around fight in Algeria. It included only one word.

14.a الجزائر

ʔaldzaza:ir

Algeria

'Algeria'

This example of graffiti was classified as fight graffiti. It transmitted the idea that Algeria is a symbol of resistance; in addition, it highlighted the need to fight for Algeria. Fight graffiti was used to reflect bad conditions and problems of Algeria. At the same time, it is used to urge people to fight for Algeria.

15. Heritage

This communicative category occurred only once (0.52%). Heritage graffiti that is utilized by the graffitists in the present study's sample tackled the issue of dialect variations in Algeria. Only one example used by the graffitists to present the heritage graffiti. It is stated as follows:

15. a انا شاوي عربي قبايلي صحراوي

ʔa:na

ʃ a: w i

ʃr bi

q b a: j li

I Shawi (a Berber ethnic group in Algeria) Arab Kabyle (a Berber ethnic group in Algeria)

s_h r a: w i

Sahraoui (a group of people who live in Algeria)

'I am Chaoui, Arab, Kabyle, Sahraoui.'

This example was used by the graffitist to send a message to everyone that there is no discrimination between peoples in Algeria in that even though there is a variation of dialects in Algeria (Chaoui, Arabic, etc.), all are considered sons of one nation (Algeria) and there is no hate or difference between them. Heritage graffiti that tackled the issue of dialect variations in Algeria used specifically to call for non-discrimination between the Algerians despite the variation of their dialects and urge the need to avoid sedition. More than this, the graffitist wanted to send a message that the Algerians are all brothers and belong to only one nation (Algeria) that cannot be separated.

16. Art

This communicative category occurred only once (0.52%). Art graffiti tackles issues related to art in general. The example provided by graffitists of Setif City to express artistic art graffiti revolved around a name of a group that the graffitists belong to and is created for the sake of posting on it their graffiti work. The stated example is as follows:

16. a Lamsa art

This example was used by the graffitists to draw attention to their group. It is written by the graffitists on a wall because they are proud of themselves and of this group. Moreover, it is used to draw other artists' or peoples' attention in general to the fact that this group is the best. Art graffiti communicative category indicates that graffitists are also artists that is why they called their group Lamsa art.

17. Personal Thought and Sentiment

This communicative category occurred only once (0.52%). Personal thought and sentiment graffiti carries with it private and personal thought or idea that is hidden in one's mind. The only example that was used to present the personal thought and sentiment graffiti is the following:

17. Keep calm.

This example was written on a wall. It is an example that can be used in clashes, music, and in messages between people. The writer of this example (keep calm) is not related to a particular political or intellectual orientation. We notice that s/he had particular feelings and ideas which are personal (private) that s/he symbolizes on a wall. They might be addressed to a particular person or a group of persons. Their aim is to transmit a personal idea. Personal thought and sentiment graffiti indicates that graffitiists use graffiti as a means of expressing their personal or private feelings, repressions or what is hidden in them towards people or something else.

18. Health

This communicative category occurred only once (0.52%). Health graffiti is a communicative category that communicates messages about health protection. The example used to illustrate this communicative category is the following:

18. a من دخل بيته فهو امن
 man daxala bajt-a-hu fa-huwwa ?a:min
whoever entered.3SGM house-ACC-3SGM.POSS so-he safe
 'Whoever enters his house is safe.'
 b. Stay at home.

The above example was written on a wall in El-eulma City. It is clear that it was written during Corona period (the year of 2019) in that it sent a message to people to stay at home and avoid going out in order to be safe and healthy. Health graffiti is a communicative category that communicates the idea that graffiti has a positive side (which is to transmit messages that may serve the humanity). It is not always negative or destructive.

19. Miscellaneousness

This communicative category occurred with a percentage of (8, 90%). It is added precisely to show that some of the previously mentioned graffiti examples have more than one theme. Examples demonstrating this communicative category are illustrated in below:

19.a Our originality

b. Use a reason just to smile

Example 19.a 'our originality' is a graffiti writing that can be classified under the theme of history. However, it can also be under the themes of motherland, politics, expressiveness, and embellishment. With regard to example 19.b 'use a reason just to smile', it can be classified under the theme of society. However, it can also be under the themes of embellishment in addition to awareness and guidance

Miscellaneousness category points to the fact that graffiti writings are very difficult to be interpreted in that their interpretation may differ from one person to another. Therefore, they may have more than one function /theme (overlapping themes). Besides, this category sheds the light on the fact that the reader of graffiti must have the ability to read between lines. In other words, he must know how to analyze words and phrases in the case of written graffiti; in addition, he must be intelligent in recognizing the hidden intention conveyed by the graffiti artists. All this leads to deduce that graffiti interpretation and classification into themes / categories is really a challenging task.

All in all, the results of the present study revealed that graffiti of Setif City expressed 19 communicative categories or themes of graffiti. They are society, politics, fight, peace, education, history, heritage, sports, motherland, art, personal thought and sentiment, expressiveness, commerce, prevention, awareness and guidance, embellishment, health, environment, and miscellaneousness. Some

of these themes were also found in the previous studies that tackled graffiti, such as that of Al Karazoun (2021); whereas some of them are new. This may be accounted for the fact that the data of the present study are different. Also, the diversity of these communicative categories might be related to the fact that graffiti artists in Setif City are interested in more topics in their life especially sports that registered the highest number of percentages. Moreover, the findings of the present study pointed out that some of graffiti writings have miscellaneous themes. This may be due to the difficulty of the topic of graffiti and its interpretation.

5. Conclusion

The present study has investigated graffiti in public spaces in Setif, Algeria. It has explored the communicative categories that characterise the graffiti of Setif. The study findings showed that graffiti in public spaces of Setif City expressed the following 19 communicative categories: society, politics, fight, peace, education, history, heritage, sports, motherland, art, personal thought and sentiment, expressiveness, commerce, prevention, awareness and guidance, embellishment, health, environment and miscellaneousness. The researchers conclude that graffiti of Setif City is used as a means of transmitting various messages about issues in life that were hidden in graffiti artists' minds. In other words, graffiti conveyed several themes such as political, social, commercial, etc. The researchers also conclude that graffiti writings can have more than one theme or communicative category. The present study recommends that graffiti in other eastern cities of Algeria be examined to compare the results regarding the communicative themes. In addition, the researchers recommend that future researchers emphasise pictorial graffiti. Finally, the researchers recommend that future researchers use a vast number of graffiti tokens so that we can generalise results.

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