A STUDY IN VIOLENT LANGUAGE

by J. Aquilina

Words can be either emotionally neutral or emotionally charged. A word is emotionally neutral when it conveys the meaning without any involvement of the emotions and emotionally charged when the meaning thereof is coloured supersegmentally. Every single word in the dictionary is thus emotionally neutral but only insofar as it is no more than a lexeme or morpheme made up of a number of consonantal and vocalic phonemes strung together according to a recognisable semantic pattern. These lexical units become emotionally charged when they occur in contexts and situations charged with feelings of which there is a whole gamut from the very mild to the excitable and explosive. Single words can also be emotionally charged whenever the lexical unit arouses in the mind of the reader a series of provocative associations with past or present experiences or apprehensions of the uncertain and the unknown. Such are words like death, God, love and scores of others. In fact, every associated word can be emotionally charged by the nature of its content. The word aeroplane, for instance, can trigger off mental pictures from a wide range of possible associations (travelling, air pockets, crashing, beautiful stewardesses, fears of hijacking and so on).

Let us, as an example, take the following seven words, first singly, unassociated words in their alphabetical order as they appear in the dictionary and then regrouped in an emotionally responsive situation:


As lexical units these words are just unsaturated verbal records without a living context. One has to know their unassociated meaning either from personal knowledge of the language into the context of which they fit sequentially or look them up in a dictionary to establish their semantic identity together with their morphological and syntactic features if the usage thereof is illustrated by examples (words in action). Each one of them as a lexical unit out of
context is emotionally neutral, naturally only so long as they do not trigger off associated mental pictures in the reader’s mind. Take, for example, the word President (we might take other examples from the list). The dictionary explains it as (1) head of a temporary or permanent body; or (2) person presiding over a meeting and proceedings; or (3) the person presiding over the meetings of academy, literary or scientific society; or (4) the elected head of Government in the USA. This list of meanings is no more than a plain record of its semantic range. But the word President can become emotionally charged if, for instance, used in meaning no. 4, it recalls in the reader’s mind John Kennedy or Abraham Lincoln, the two famous Presidents of the USA both of whom were assassinated. In this context, the emotion is generated by a series of mental pictures recalling the two ill-fated Presidents by a process of sheer associations of ideas spread out in time. But in connected speech, association which generates emotion is possible only when the word-sequence creates a number of ideas that not only link up with one another as so many links in one chain and merge into a semantic unit, but also radiate a series of concentric associations which one could compare to the many ripples produced by a stone thrown into a pond.

The seven isolated words, as given in their alphabetical order, do not impinge on one another contextually, and, therefore, they do not generate, much less radiate, emotion. But when these words are so arranged in connected speech as to impinge on one another forming an intelligible sequence of connected morphemes, then we have situationally created emotions the intensity of which depends on one’s degree of personal involvement in the event or situation and reaction is often a matter of personal temperament one way or the other. Emotion can be stirred by likes, dislikes, love and sex in general, hatred, pleasure, fear, suspicion and other movements of the human psyche, the so-called ‘passions’. Naturally, the degree of intensity is higher (more deep seated) when one is personally involved than when one is not. Death in one’s family, for instance, generates greater personal sorrow than that in another man’s family.

The list of seven unassociated words can be redistributed as follows: He killed the President of America while he was addressing the people. One who reads this statement can read it either
unemotionally as a mere historical chronicle (a statement of facts) as most of us do when we read the daily news, or with a feeling of grief and anger if one feels that the murderer of John Kennedy did him (the victim) and America an irreparable wrong. On the other hand, one can experience indifferent, or even pleasurable, emotion if one feels that the murdered president was not the right president for the USA and that his violent removal was not therefore the tragedy that it was made out to be. This must be the feeling of those who engineered his assassination—a political situation that repeats itself in so many political assassinations.

The ambiguous usage of the 3rd person he might also affect the reader’s sense of emotion-charged curiosity to know who really killed the president and who was addressing the people. This question would not be in the mind of one who knows the facts of the murder—how it happened and who killed whom. Emotion does not constitute a value-judgement. For this reason, it can be either ethical or unethical, or morally neutral. Law-abiding citizens and violent anarchists form different value judgements about the same social situation and speak and act accordingly. Both draw upon a reserve of reasons for or against conviction by self-persuasion.

In everyday speech, at home or in society, in our letter-writing, articles to the press and indeed in any form of self-expression, we use words always more or less charged with emotion. The absolutely neutral, unemotional language is that of the sciences, some of which, mathematics and chemistry for instance, deal more in figures and formulae than in words. This is unemotional computer language. Every human passion charges words with a high, or low, degree of emotion very much as we charge the battery of a car when setting it in motion. Such emotional charging is higher in religious communication (the Psalms, the Koran, the Vedas, etc.), poetic and rhetorical writing (old style Demosthenian or Ciceroan oratory, for instance), love (Dante’s treatment of the adulterous love of Francesca da Rimini and Paolo in Canto V, Inferno [amore]) and hatred (Dante’s treatment of Count Ugolino in Canto XXXIII Inferno [odio]). These and other very powerful ingredients of human passions charge words with a high emotion of the human psyche.

In this short article, I am going to deal with the emotionally charged vocabulary of anger or hatred and in-between feelings or emotions which take single parts of the human body as their tar-
get, the target they shoot their hurting arrows at in impatience and anger.

The list I am giving includes only a selection of sadistic or violent threats which provide material for a comparative study in verbal sadism and violence in six languages.

But before I do so, I must make clear another point which concerns the nexus between Sound and Meaning, Threats and Intention in minatory language. While in ordinary speech, when we think carefully, before we speak to convey a specific meaning unambiguously, Sound and Meaning, bound together, identify each other for the purposes of self-communication, in cases of highly emotional language, the Sound/Sense process very often disintegrates completely in such a manner that while the words we use literally mean one thing, emotionally they are no more than emphatic expressions set loose from their literal meaning. For instance, when a loving mother in an angry moment tells her naughty son that she will kill him if he does not behave, she certainly has no such intention and she would be horrified if she even suspected that she really meant what she said. The same may be said of the many rude words, including swear-words, obscene words and minatory expressions which, uttered in highly emotional situations (impatience, anger, etc.) become more or less sadistically colourful expressions, very interesting and also revealing as material for the comparative study of the different word-pictures used by different peoples in their minatory and explosive temperamental language.

With some exceptions, Maltese minatory expressions are of Sicilian or Italian origin. One notes that minatory expressions are comparatively more sadistically worded in Italian and other European languages than in Arabic, at least as far as those referring to the human body are concerned. But verbal sadism need not indicate a more sadistic strain in the people who use it than in another people who do not use it at all, or use it in a comparatively mitigated form. These verbal sadistic expressions may be more the outcome of an explosive temperament than of a really sadistic strain which may, in some cases, be more deeply ingrained in other peoples, some of whom intellectualise their sadism in intellectually refined cruelty, while others express it in emotional outbursts. It is often a case of the silent dog being more dangerous than the barking dog that seldom bites.
I need hardly point out that the supply of examples is inevitably limited being no more than what the informants themselves could remember.

**RAS** (<Ar. رأس /

1. **Inhabbatlek (infarraklek, inkissirlek) rasek mal-hajt, I'll smash your head against the wall.**
   Arabic: حنيط راسك في الحيط [ha-nilkať rásak fil-ḥīṭ]  
   Italian: Ti sbatto la testa contro il muro.  
   English: I will bash your head against the wall.  
   American: Cp. I will smash your head with a brick, hammer, etc. (i.e. with instruments).  
   German:  
   French:  

2. **Niftahlek rasek ktiēb, I will open up your head (like a book).**
   Arabic: حفتحلک راسک (دماک) [ḥa-ftahlak rásak (dimāk)]  
   Italian: Ti apro la testa come un libro.  
   English: I'll split your head open.  
   American:  
   German:  
   French:  

3. **Naqsamlek rasek, I will break your head.**
   Arabic: حکمرک راسک [ha-kṣidak rásak]  
   Italian: Ti rompo (ti spacco) la testa (il cranio)  
   English:  
   American: I'll crack (clonk) you on the head.  
   German: Ich schlage dir den Schädel ein.  
   French: Je te fendrai le cerveau.  

4. **Inhabbatkom ras ma' ras, I will knock your heads together.**
   Arabic: حنيط (حنيط) راسکم في بعض [ha-nilkať (ha-kbat) rás-kum fba'd]  
   Italian: Vi faccio sbattere la testa insieme.  

33
**English:** I will bang your heads together.
**American:** I will knock your heads together.
**German:** —
**French:** —

**Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:**
**English:** I will bash your head in; I will knock your (bleeding) block off (also American but without the word 'bleeding').
**American:** I will knock some sense into his head — I will bite his head off (i.e. to give him a sound talking) — I will bash your skull (head, brain) in.
**French:** Je te ferai une tête au carré — Je te ferai une tête comme un bec de gaz — Je te mettrai la tête en compteur à gaz — Je te mettrai la tête entre les deux oreilles.

---

**XAGĦAR (<Ar. شعر > عشّر)/Hair**

1. **I innittiflek xaghrek sufa sufa,** I will pluck out your hair one by one.

**Arabic:** أنتنملك شعرك شعرا شعرا ['antifik ša'raša'ra ša'ra]
**Italian:** Ti strappo i capelli ad uno a uno.
**English:** I'll tear your hair out (to a woman).
**American:** I will pull every hair out of your head.
**German:** Ich reisse dir die Haare aus.
**French:** —

---

**GĦAJNEJN (<Ar. عينان)/Eyes**

1. **Nixroblok l-abjad ta' għajnejk,** I'll drink up the white of your eyes, i.e. I'll drink your eyes out of their sockets.

**Arabic:**
**Italian:** —
**English:** —
**American:** —
**German:** —
**French:** —
2. Naqlaghlekk ghajnejk (u naghtiwlak f'idejk), I will pull out your eyes (and give them to you in your hands).

Arabic: حا لملك عينك (عنيك) [ha-qla'llak 'eynak ('eynēyk)]
Italian: Ti cavo gli occhi e te li faccio mangiare.
English: I'll gouge your eyes out. or She'll scratch her eyes out (woman's minatory language).
American: (My informant says that he "has heard it once or twice from immigrants to America".)
German: 
French: 

3. Nifqaghlek (naqlaghlek) ghajnejk, I'll split your eyeballs open.

Arabic: حتف (حفت) عينك (عنيك) [ha-fqa' (ha-fqet) 'eynak ('eynēyk)]
Italian: Cp. Ti brucio gli occhi.
English: 
American: 
German: I chkrzte dir die Augen aus.
French: 

4. Indahhalek subghajk f'ghajnejk, I'll thrust your fingers into your eyes.

Arabic: حك صح في عينك صوابي في عنيك [ha-ḥuṣ subṭi fi 'eynak/sawabṭi fi 'eynēyk]
Italian: Ti caccio un dito in un occhio — Ti caccio due dita negli occhi — Ti do una ditata in un occhio.
English: I'll gouge your eyes out.
American: Cp. I'll poke you in the eye or I'll poke her (ladies to each other especially) — I'll scratch her eyes.
German: 
French: 

5. Nimlielek ghajnejk bil-bżar, I'll fill your eyes with pepper.

Arabic: 
Italian: Ti riempio gli occhi di pepe.
English: 

35
American: Cp. Here’s mud in your eye.

German:  

French:  

6. Niblakkalek ghajnejk, I’ll give you a black eye.

Arabic:  

Italian: Ti faccio un occhio nero.

English: I’ll give you a black eye.

American: I’ll give you a black eye, i.e. I’ll make you look like a rakoon.

German: Ich haue (schlage) dir ein blaues Auge.

French: Je te ferai un oeil au beurre noir.

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

English: I’ll shit in your eye; Here’s one in the eye for you.

American: May God blind him. (My informant believes this expression is of Irish origin. In Maltese one hears also the imprecation narrak taghma, may you go blind).

French: Tu as qu’à crever la gueule ouverte, les yeux plein de fourmis, le nez plein de mouches.

**WIDNEJN (Ar. دُرَّانَ / Ears**

1. Nikollok il-qarquca ta’ widnejk (inqamičlek widnejk), I’ll eat the lobe of your ears.

Arabic: حناكْر أُرمْشَكْ ودنكّ / حناكْر أرمشك ودنكّ [ha nākul qarqūšit widnak or ha nqarmišlak widnak]

Italian: Ti mangio il lobo degli orecchi.

English:  

American: Cp. I’ll bite your ear off.

German:  

French:  

2. Naqaghlek widnejk, I’ll pull off your ears.

Arabic: حنأَلْع ودناك / ودنكّ [ha-naqla' widānak/widnak]

Italian: Ti stacco gli orecchi (e te li faccio mangiare).

English: Cp. I’ll pull your ears for you (i.e. reprimand).
American: Cp. I'll pull off your ears.

German: Ich ziehe dir die Ohren lang or Ich schneide dir die Ohren ab.

French: Viens que je te tire les oreilles.

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

English: I'll box your ears.

American: I'll give you a cauliflower ear; or I'll bat you on the ears.

German: Du kriegst eine Ohrfeige or Ich gebe dir eine Ohrfeige.

French: Je te mettrai la tête entre les deux oreilles.

HALQ (<Ar. حلق, throat)/Mouth

1. Naghtik daqqa ǧo halqek, I'll give you a blow on your mouth.

Arabic:

Italian: –

English: I'll give you a smack in the mouth.

American: –

German: –

French: –

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

English: I'll smash you in the kisser (mouth) – or I'll wash your mouth with soap (mother to child) or shut your gob (mouth) – I'll bash you in the cake hole (bughole=mouth) – I'll give you a split lip.

American: I'll wash your mouth with soap.

LSIEN (<Ar. لسان)/Tongue

1. Naqlaghlek (nahraqlek) ilsienek, I'll pull out (burn) your tongue.

Arabic: صرحلك لسانك بظاهر [ha nehraqlik lisānak bin-nār]

Italian: Ti strappo la lingua.

English: No equivalence for Maltese expression, but cp. dogerell "Tell-tale tit, your tongue shall be split, and every little dog in town (puppy dog) shall have a little bit (school children to a tell-tale)."
American: I'll pull out your tongue. Cp. also I'll bite your tongue off.

German: —

French: —

2. Li kien Allā jahraqlēk (inixxīlekk) illsienek, would God burn your tongue.

Arabic: رَبِّ يَحْرُ أَمْلِك (يَا طِعَّ نَكِ) لِسَانَك

Italian: Dio ti faccia seccare la lingua (che ti si secchi la lingua).

English: —

American: Cp. May you burn your tongue (to a greedy eater).

German: —

French: —

3. Naqtqaglek il-hajta ta’ illsienek, I'll cut the thread under your tongue.

Arabic: —

Italian: Ti taglio il filo della lingua.

English: —

American: —

German: —


4. Nirrah ilsienekk bejn snienek, May your tongue get stuck between your teeth.

Arabic: —

Italian: Ti si secchi la lingua (tra i denti), (chiaccherona).

English: —

American: Cp. May your tongue get stuck to the roof of your mouth or May you bite your tongue. (In Maltese igdem illsienek is a warning to someone who does not think before he speaks).

German: —

French: —

5. Nirrah illsienek jinxef, May your tongue dry up or wither away.
IMNIEHER (<Ar. مَنِيْحَر >)/Nose

1. Nidimleker imniehreb u nobżoqholn l'wiċċek, I'll bite your nose and spit it in your face.

Arabic: –
Italian: Ti stacco il naso e te lo sputo in faccia.
English: –
American: –
German: –
French: –

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

English: I'll punch you in the nose – I'll give you a bloody nose – I'll biff you on the boko (girl) – I'll stot you on the beak (Scots).

American: I'll punch you in the nose – I'll give you a bloody nose – I'll twist (tweak) your nose; You'll get your nose caught in the door (to eavesdropper).

German: Du kriegst einen Nasensüber.

French: Je te ferai le nez comme une tomate – Tu as qu'à crever la gueule ouverte, les yeux plein de fourmis, le nez plein de mouches.

SNIEN (<Ar. أسنان >)/Teeth

1. Infarraklek snienek, I'll smash your teeth.

Arabic: حـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَ~

Italian: Ti spacco (ti cavo) tutti i denti.

English: I'll smash your teeth in.
American: Cp. I’ll kick your teeth in.
German: Ich schlage dir die Zähne aus.
French: –

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

Italian: Ti faccio saltare i denti ad uno a uno.
English: I’ll give you a mouthful of teeth.
American: How would you like some free dental work? – I’ll give you a mouthful of bloody chicklets.
French: –

\\/Face\\

1. Nobżoqlokk l’wičček, I’ll spit in your face.
Arabic: حَطَحَتْ فِي شَبْكَة [ḥa-tifṭu fwiʃšak]
Italian: Ti sputo in faccia.
English: –
American: Cp. I’ll fling mud in your face.
German: –
French: Je te crache à la gueule.

2. Nikollokk wičček, I’ll eat your face.
Arabic: –
Italian: Ti mangio la faccia – ti spacco la faccia – ti spacco il muso.
English: –
American: –
German: –
French: –

3. Inkissiżek wičček, I’ll smash your face.
Arabic: –
Italian: –
English: I’ll smash your face in.
American: Cp. I’ll step on your face.
German: Ich haue dir eins in die Fresse.
French: Je te casse la gueule.

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

English: I'll push your face through the back of your neck (head) - I'll spoil your beauty (by slashing a girl's face with a razor).

American: I'll kick you in the face - Wipe that smile off your face or I'll wipe it off for you; I'll grind your face in the dirt.

French: Je te chie sur la gueule - Tu veux mon poing sur la gueule - Ferme ta gueule.

GEDDUM (<Berber udem, face)/Chin

1. Inkissirlek geddumek, I'll smash your chin.

Arabic: -

Italian: Ti rompo il mento.

English: Cp. Split him to the chin.

American: I'll smash (box) your chin.

German: Du kriegst einen Kinnhaken - Ich gebe dir einen Kinnhaken.

French: -

2. Niqaghllek ix-xedaq, I'll smash your jaws.

Arabic: -

Italian: -

English: Cp. I'll break your jaw.

American: -

German: Ich haue dir die Schnauze voll.

French: -

GHONQ (<Ar. ُنَقُ) /Neck

1. Naqlaghlek ghonqok, I'll dislocate your neck.

Arabic: حَلَّمْلُك (حلmaal) (حلمال) رأيتك

Italian: -

English: Cp. I'll break your neck, to which cp. Maltese ksir il-ghonq, Italian rompi collo, for a 'trouble maker'.
American: I'll break your neck.
French: –
German: –

2. Nilwilek (il-ġewża) ta’ ghonqok, I'll twist your neckbone.
Arabic: حلويلك رأيك [ḥa-I-wilak raqabtak]
Italian: Ti rompo l’osso del collo – ti torco il collo.
English: Cp. I'll screw your neck round.
American: I'll punch in your Adam’s apple – I'll wring your neck – I'll strangle you.
German: –
French: Je te tordrai le cou.

3. Norbotlok mażżra ma’ ghonqok, I'll tie a millstone to your neck.
Arabic: –
Italian: Ti lego una pietra al collo e ti butto nel pozzo (in mare o in un fiume, che viene nominato [p.es. “in Arno”]).
English: –
American: –
German: –
French: –

GERŻUMA (Ar. حرقونة) /Throat

1. Naqlaghlek gerżumtek, I'll pull out your throat.
Arabic: –
Italian: –
English: –
American: –
German: –
French: –

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:
Arabic: حاكلزوك [ṣ-ha-akul zūrak]
Italian: Ti taglio, or ti sego la gola.
English: I'll slit (cut) your throat.
American: I'll cram it down your throat - May it stick in your throat (so you choke to death).

ID (Ar. ٖ٣ٓ/Hand

1. Naghtük daqqa ta' ponn u nherrik (nhasil, infarkek), I'll strike you with my hand and main you (cripple or smash you).
   Arabic: حَآَتَّاَكُ بِيُريِدَيِّ حَتَّ [ha-qatta'ak bi-riddi hitad]
   Italian: Ti do una manata e ti faccio a pezzi.
   English: I'll break your arm.
   American: -
   German: -
   French: -

2. Inbićčrek bid-daqqet li naghtük, I'll give you such a hard blow that I'll bruise you all over (lit. butcher you).
   Arabic: -
   Italian: Ti carico di botte.
   English: -
   American: -
   German: -
   French: -

3. Naghtük daqqa ta' fenek, I'll strike you as one strikes a rabbit. i.e. I'll give you a blow on the nape of your neck.
   Arabic: -
   Italian: Ti ammazzo come un coniglio.
   English: I'll give you a rabbit-punch.
   American: -
   German: -
   French: -

4. Jaqta' idu, He makes the sign of cutting his arm half way by slapping the right hand right across between the upper and the lower part of the arm. This is a vulgar custom of Sicilian origin. The gesture, accompanied by the words Naghtük dan "I'll give you this", is supposed to represent the penis (phallic symbol).
According to my informant, this gesture, followed by Ti vado in ..., which is considered very vulgar, occurs in Sicily and Italy.

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

I'll twist your arm (metaphorically: put pressure on you).

Tu veux mon poing sur la gueule.

SIDER (Ar. صدر) / Chest

1. Nifqaghlek il-kaxxa ta' sidrek, I'll smash in your chest (lit. the box of your chest).

Ha kassadak 'adm sidrak

Ti sfondo il torace.

Cp. I'll kick you in the ribs - put the boot in (i.e. kick him in the ribs or the body).

Je te défoncerai.

ŽAQQ (Ar. جبنة, wine skin) / Belly

1. Naqbkhek u nifqaghlek żaqqek, I'll seize you and burst your belly.

Ha-tallak batenk (masarinak) barra

Ti piglio e ti brucio la pancia - Ti apro la pancia e ti cavo le budella - Ti cavo le budella.

I'll give you a punch in the bread-basket.

I'll kick you in the belly.
French: Tu veux que je t'étripe?

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

English: I'll have your guts for garters—hit him below the belt (metaphorically for dirty trick).

SIEQ (Ar. ًة) / Foot

1. Daqqa ta' sieq (fuq sormok) u niftghihek 'il barra, I'll give you a kick (on your buttocks) and throw you out.

Arabic: حضرتك شلوت أطللتك برو [hya-drabak šallut 'atala'ak barral]

Italian: Ti caccio fuori con un calcio nel sedere.

English: –

American: –

German: Ich trete dich vors Schienbein.

French: Je tefourrai dehors avec mon pied au cul.

Other Examples of Violent Wishfulness different from Maltese:

English: Hey, hold your foot up (stop! from a dog urinating (?) — I'll tear you limb from limb — I'll tear your limb from Warburton (origin unknown — Cheshire dialect?).

French: Tu vas aver mon pied au cul. (also Maltese)

FWIED (Ar. ًة) / Liver

1. Fwiedek nikohlulek, I'll eat your liver.

Arabic: –

Italian: Ti mangio il fegato.

English: –

American: –

German: –

French: –

SOME GENERIC THREATS

1. Nimsah (niknes) l-art bik, I'll wipe (sweep) the floor with you.
1. **Inkisser jew infarrak kulma hawn bik**, I'll lay my hands on you and smash everything with you.

   **Arabic:** —
   **Italian:** Ti piglio e ti spacco tutto.
   **English:** —
   **American:** —
   **German:** —
   **French:** —

2. **Trid nurik il-qamar fil-bir? (Malajr nurik il-qamar fil-bir)**, Do you want me to show you the moon in the well? (I'll soon show you the moon in the well).

   **Arabic:** —
   **Italian:** Ti faccio vedere la luna nel pozzo (in the sense of "to cheat someone").
   **English:** —
   **American:** —
   **German:** —
   **French:** —

3. **Infarrak das-siğgu fuq rasek**, I'll smash this chair on your head.

   **Arabic:** حكرِ الكرسي على راسك [حا-كاسر il-kursi 'ala rāsak]
   **Italian:** Ti rompo questa sedia sulla testa.
   **English:** —
   **American:** I'll smash this chair on your head.
   **German:** —
   **French:** —

4. **Nirra tmut zobtu**, May you die suddenly (drop dead).

   —
6. **La ma jihdok x imqar sa kwarta ohra**, If only God would take you away (kill you) at least within the next quarter of an hour (but not more).

   **Arabic:** 
   
   **Italian:** Se Dio ti faceesse sparire almeno per un quarto d'ora.

   **English:** 
   
   **American:** 
   
   **German:** 
   
   **French:** 

7. **Li kien Alla jeblisni minnek**, I wish God would help me get rid of you (generally a death-wish).

   **Arabic:** 
   
   **Italian:** Vorrei che Dio me lo levasse di tomo (me lo togliesse dai piedi).

   **English:** 
   
   **American:** 
   
   **German:** 
   
   **French:** 

8. **Naghmiek trab bis-swat li naghtik**, I'll beat you so hard that I'll turn you into dust.

   **Arabic:** 
   
   **Italian:** Ti riduco in polvere.

   **English:** 
   
   **American:** 
   
   **German:** 
   
   **French:** 

---

47
French:  Je te réduirai en miettes (en poussière).

9. Inpatihielek minn hawn jew minn hemm, In one way or another, I'll pay you back.
Arabic:  –
Italian:  In un modo o nell’altro te la faccio pagare.
English:  I’ll get my own back.
American: In one way or another I’ll pay you back.
German:  Cp. Das kriegst du wieder.
French:  –

10. Naghmilhielek jien, I’ll teach you a lesson you’ll never forget.
Arabic:  حورّيكم [ḥa-warrik]
Italian:  Me la pagherai.
English:  Cp. I’ll teach him a lesson.
American: –
German:  –
French:  –

11. Issa nurik x’naf naghmel, I’ll show you what I can do (what I am capable of).
Arabic:  حورّيكم حمستك له [ḥa-warrik ḥa-’millak ṭy]
Italian:  Ti faccio vedere io quel che ti faccio.
English:  –
American: I’ll show you what I can do.
German:  –
French:  –

12. Stenna ftit ha tara xi nsarraf, You wait and see what I am capable of (i.e. I’ll show you how I can cut you down to size, pay you back etc.).
Arabic:  استمتع عليّ وشوف [stanna ’alayya wi-šūf (+gesture)]
Italian:  Aspetta e vedrai che cosa sono capace di fare.
English:  –
American: You wait and see what I am capable of doing.
13. Inbewlu tahtu daqs kemm inbeżżghu, I’ll frighten him so much that I’ll make him wet his trousers.

Arabic: حملّيك تحشّي ملّي روحك [ḥa-kallīk tušuqk 'ala rūḥak]

Italian: Gli farò una paura tale da fargli riempire i pantaloni.

English: He’ll be so scared he’ll pee his pants.

American: Cp. I’ll beat the shit out of you – I’ll frighten him out of his wits.

German: 

French: 

14. Trid tinţel gharkubttejk (quddiem) biex ċ kellimni, You’ll have to get down on your knees to speak to me.

Arabic: 

Italian: Per padare con me ti dovrai inginocchiare.

English: 

American: 

German: 

French: 

15. Nivvindikak daqs tazza ilma, I’ll avenge myself on you as easily as I drink a glass of water.

Arabic: 

Italian: Con te ce la faccio come bere un bicchier d’acqua.

English: 

American: 

German: 

French: 

16. U aqqas jekk naf li nehel ghomri l-habs għax inpatt Illustrated, I’ll pay him back even if I get a life imprisonment.

Arabic: [ḥa-ʔkud fik sitt ʃur ʃiːn]

Italian: Gliela faccio pagare a costo di beccami l’ergastolo.

English: —
17. **Nqidok jekk ma taghmiwk kit qed nghidlek**, I'll kill you if you do not do as I tell you.

**Arabic:** دين متمتشري وزليماك أتلاقك

**Italian:** T’ammazzo, se non fai quel che ti dico.

**English:** –

**American:** I'll kill you if you do not do as I tell you.

**German:** Ich schlage dich tot.

**French:** Fais ce que je te dis ou je te tue.

18. **Inhallik tal-kolp tkun fejn tkun**, I'll strike you (kill you) on the spot wherever you may be.

**Arabic:** –

**Italian:** Ti piglio e t’ammazzo dovunque ti trovi.

**English:** –

**American:** –

**German:** Ich schmeisse dich um.

**French:** –

19. **Nidob is-sahta ta’ Alla fuqek**, I invoke the curse of God upon you.

**Arabic:** رَبَّنا يُضْحِكَ [rabba’nna jisheetak.]

(This expression is used also in a flattering sense to express admiration.)

**Italian:** Tu sia maledetto – Dio ti maledica.

**English:** –

**American:** –

**German:** –

**French:** –

20. **Njeghddek fil-frisk**, I’ll make things hot for you (=I’ll make you regret it, make trouble for you, i.e. things difficult for you).
21. **La ma taqbedex fetha**, I do wish you have a bout of diarrhoea!

**Arabic:** إن شالله يجليلك إسهال

**Italian:** Ti venisse la diarrea — Ti venisse quindici giorni di correre sottointesse (alla toilette), (un’espressione veneta.)

22. **La ma tiksirx saqajha hi u gejja** (ittajjarha karozza), I do hope she breaks her leg as she comes; or (a car runs her over).

**Arabic:** إن شالله تفرك عريبة

**Italian:** Vorrrei che si rompesse una gamba o che una macchina lo mettesse sotto.

**English:**

**American:** Break a leg. (It is very curious that, according to my informant, this is said to actors going on stage as a means of wishing them good luck!)

23. **Inqaxrek (mieklok) haj**, I’ll skin (eat) you alive.

**Arabic:**

**Italian:** Ti spello; ti scorcioco; ti mangio vivo.

**English:** I’ll skin you (him) alive.

**German:** Ich ziehe dir das Fell über die Ohren.

**French:** J’aurai ta peau.
24. Ngħattmek taħt saqajja, I’ll crush you under my feet.
Arabic: جنح ودك تحت حقيبة [ha-ndūsak taḥt riġleyya]
Italian: Ti schiaccio sotto i piedi.
English: –
American: –
German: –
French: Je t’écraserais.

25. Naqsmek (fi tnejn), I’ll split you (into two).
Arabic: حناصرتك نصبين [ha-nqaṣṭa'ak nasṣibyn]
Italian: Ti spaccho in due pezzi – Ti faccio a pezzi.
English: –
American: I’ll break you into two.
German: –
French: –

26. Nitrah jaqaghlek (u mqr jiġborhulek kelb), May it fall down (genital organ) and a dog pick it up for you.
Arabic: –
Italian: Ti taglio i coglioni e li do a mangiare al gatto.
English: –
American: –
German: –
French: –

Other Generic examples unknown in Maltese versions:
Italian: Ti strappo le unghie.
English: Get your finger out (also American) – I’ll stamp on your fingers – I’ll put you on your back (knock you down) – I’ll give you a kick up the arse (also American) – Up your flue (= V sign gesture with 2 figures) – I’ll tan your backside – Kick his arse, in the crutch (crotch), on the slims, on the kneecap – Tap his ankles – Blood in the eye (Hungarian for jealousy) – Fee fi fo fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman, Be he alive, or be he dead, I’ll grind his bones to make my bread – I’ll brain
you – I’ll beat your brains out – I’ll give you a piece of my mind.

American: I’ll tear your heart out (and serve it for dinner) – Up yours or Up your jiggly with a ten foot pole, the famous Sicilian gesture and its American diminutive performed with the middle finger ‘Go screw yourself’ cp. English (above) Up your flue – I’ll shit on you – I’ll rub shit in your face – Have some compat for dinner – I’ll kick you in the balls – I’ll bite your prick off – Let him cry his guts out until his tongue dries up (Jewish) – May he rot in hell – I’ll pound you one – I’ll turn you into pulp – I’ll slice it off for you (genitals) – I’ll chew his ass out – I’ll bite off his balls – I’ll stuff shit up your cock – I’ll shove it down your throat – I’ll tie his tongue in knots – I’ll chew him out.


These and similar expressions are not to be taken in their literal sense. They are, as I have already said, expressions of intense feelings of anger or irritation. Taken in their literal sense, they would indicate a criminal or violent type of mind, but in the emotional context in which they are uttered, they are no more than vulgar expressions of anger or irritation completely detached from the literal sense of the words used, as in the case of some Latin words used in Maltese as emphatics in a sense completely different from
the literal. An example would be ghamel ta’ lawdemus, “it rained heavily” or “it rained cats and dogs”. Here ta’ lawdemus, which stands for Latin Te Laudamus, “We praise thee” becomes an expression of mere verbal intensity. The same can be said of nobis (literal Latin meaning for us), in tah xebgha nobis. Here nobis is used as an emphatic equivalent to English sound in a sound thrashing. Father Confessor, who may be shocked by such blasphemous expressions, will be less shocked if he understands the semantic function of these expressions as mere emphatics or expletives which are vulgar but not necessarily blasphemous. We have such expressions also in English as e.g. zooms (God’s wounds) and bloody (= by our Lady) which in today’s English are considered as mere emphatics. In Maltese and other languages, swear-words or obscene or blasphemous utterances can be no more than shock words with a meaning quite different to their literal meaning. Pent-up emotions frequently release themselves in violently worded expressions, sometimes uttered with a torrential escalation corresponding to the rise (degrees of irritation and anger) in temperature, which, in a literal sense, would be considered merely vulgar, obscene, irreligious and often sacrilegious.