



A Contrastive Culture and Pragmatics Approach to Euphemistic Terminology in Arabic and English

Lect. Bahaa A. Muslim Al-Zobaigy

University of Kufa Faculty of Education Department of English

ABSTRACT: This exhaustive and detailed analysis penetrates an extremely complex and multidimensional phenomenon, euphemism, in the two tongues of Arabic and English, in a cultural-pragmatic rigorous in-depth contrastive manner. Euphemisms can be considered as an important linguistic weapon, which is often used in order to decrease the face-threatening force of many speech acts, express the morally sensitive or the forbidden, and remain socially harmless during an individual's conversation.

Based on an in-depth examination of a number of euphemistic expressions in the domains of dead, ill, sex and status, interesting differences raise their heads as to the construction, pragmatic usages and socio-cultural motivations of the euphemisms in the two languages. For example, Arabic euphemistic strategies are dominated by relayed religious doctrines, the extended tradition of shame-and-honor system, and a widespread culture of indirection as well, which all play a crucial role in shaping how speakers opt to address sensitive or sensitive topics and how to communicate distressing matters overall.

In contrast, English euphemisms manifest values with a more secular character, a greater emphasis on individualism, and an increased psychological sensitiveness that rules social relationship. The work is competently informed by authentic and current language data from all relevant sources, such as media discourse, political speeches, and literature, and constantly using frameworks such as politeness theory and the cultural dimensions theory. The important and meaningful results reported by this large-scale study have obvious implications for long-term development of cross-cultural communication, professionalisation of translation, and even for the development of theories of second-language acquisition.

Corresponding Author:

Lect. Bahaa A. Muslim Al-Zobaigy

KEYWORDS:

Euphemism, Arabic, English, pragmatics, politeness theory, taboo, cultural linguistics, face-saving, contrastive analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language forms essentially not only an emergent medium for human communication but it also constitutes an essential tool for dealing with the arts and part of the thicket-like thorny undergrowth of social and cultural expectations which brings to bear on the potentials of how we interact with each other every day of our lives. One of the several techniques used to preserve politeness, avoid embarrassment and provide a coherent communication to conversations is the use of euphemisms with style and precision (Hossain, 2024).

These euphemisms serve as euphemistic "cover up" to stigmatized and difficult-to-discuss words in some (but not all) social situations. It is this strategic selection of words that showcases the attentiveness and insight with which we regard the emotional lives of others – those who share our social circles as well as those we encounter in our lives generally. Euphemisms thus stand as versatile and nuanced devices in cross-cultural discussions and exchanges, helping individuals to express delicate matters without being overtly distressing, uncomfortable, or offending to their hearers and conversational partners (Halimi et al. 2021).

But the development, constitution, and application of euphemisms are highly influenced and driven by the different cultural, ideological, and belief systems of the language community, where they are produced and used. Every culture, as an inimitable body, accustoms its people to follow its specific and unique values, norms, and beliefs, which are easily traced in the language of that culture, especially in the field of euphemistic expressions (Aytan et al. 2021). The purpose of this study is to scrutinize, investigate and compare the use of euphemism in Arabic and English, exploring the delicate linguistic patterns and cultural reasons that inspire the formation and continued use of euphemistic expressions in these two rich, diverse, and culturally dynamic languages.

It also explores the crucial and fundamental role of euphemism in social interaction and face negotiation, by investigating in particular the semantic fields dealing with delicate subjects such as death, illness, sex and the intricate concept of social hierarchy which informs both cultures and aspects of the quotidian life. The present comparative approach aims to demonstrate not only the linguistic features but also the broader sociocultural variables that determine how euphemisms are perceived, interpreted, and employed appropriately in different communicative situations and environments.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The basic illustrative function of the euphemism, has received a considerable attention in the alluring and multi-faceted area of linguistic pragmatics, where, a substantial amount of dedicated scholars and researchers have attended to the unraveling of its mysteries. Indeed, some euphemism taxonomies draw a distinction between different parts of speech while others examine a variety of structural features, such as metaphor, circumlocution, abbreviation, etc., as in the extensive typology developed by Allan and Burridge (2006). They also closely observed their functional role in discourse and how these variants have different communication functions.

These functionalizations cover almost all canonical categories including politeness, concealment, avoidance of taboo, etc., covering almost all the aspects needed to understand how euphemisms work in different social situations. Moreover, Brown and Levinson's (1987) theoretically "noble" politeness theory highlights the crucial role euphemism serves in, among other things, the basic endeavors of face threatening acts' (FTAs) amelioration that could be essential to keep social peace, shape community relations, and direct otatorvol benigolam namul motis est the cooperative spirit of people in their daily exchanges.

In the larger field of Arabic linguistics, many other studies have clearly shown the finer intertwined role euphemisms play and their deeper relations to fundamental cultural factors, including, for example, religion, honour, and social reputation. This strong linkage offers a striking illustration of the subtle interplay between this pair of powerful cultural concepts/values shaping societal mores and expects vis-a-vis the use of language in that society (Farghal & Haggan, 2006).

Research, however, that specifically involves euphemisms in English generally emphasises their close link with social taboos and the quest for psychological comfort, especially in the highly charged areas of media discourse and the legal domain. In such highly sensitive domains, careful and strategic communication is often considered to be a prerequisite for successfully dealing with topics, which have the potential of causing embarrassment, anxiety or strong emotions either in audiences or in the interacting individuals (Burridge, 2010). The in-depth study of euphemisms emphasizes their importance in our systems of communication and highlights their necessity for promoting interaction in all sorts of personal and social situations and, consequently, the need for further enquiry pertaining to them.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

An extensive dual theoretical background is applied by the present research, carefully devised in order to better explore the complexity of the phenomena under investigation:

- **Politeness Theory** (Brown & Levinson 1987): Euphemism is a requisite and basic strategy of successful face-saving that functions at different levels, depending on the mode of communication under consideration. They can overtly signal deference in negative politeness, projecting respect for, and positive acknowledgement of, the other's self-image and social standing; or they can attune to solidarity in positive politeness, building ideas of solidarity and shared understanding among participants in interaction. Euphemisms are, however, valuable for helping speakers handle social intercourse of more delicate and tactful kinds, such as talking with others about matters that are charged, dangerous, liable to confrontation, or based entirely on high-stakes chances of going wrong. Language itself, particularly the subtleties and nuances involved, is crucial and paramount in maintaining the precise interpretation of what's being communicated, without losing and or supplementing the mutual respect and courtesy that must be extended one to the other.

- **Cultural Dimensions Theory** (Hofstede, 2001): The cluster of discrete cultural values, such as collectivism and individualism, uncertainty avoidance and power distance, which, being some of the most crucial factors, substantially contribute in determining linguistic choice and euphemistic strategies of any societies within a variety of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic contexts. These dimensions reveal the depth and complexity how cultural background influences not only communication styles but also language use preferences and tendencies. How cultures understand and approach the subtle spectrum of euphemisms can therefore reveal much about the broader social implications of the use of language in various cultural contexts, offering insight into the delicate interplay between language and culture. By taking a look at these dimensions of culture, we may develop a more robust, heart-felt perspective on how language use and language change occurs amidst a vast array of social environments, and thus enhance our understanding of communication as a fundamental component of human experience worldwide.

4. METHODOLOGY

The holistic and thorough research is a qualitative contrastive study with and as a clear and proper way of the task that is carried out through an investigative and systematic method by means of a variety of background source. These sources include:

Media production in Arabic and English, this includes both mainstream international outlets - Al Jazeera, BBC, CNN etc - as well as the "local" media outlets that support a regional perspective, as well as culture and context.

- Any manner of political addresses and discourse as well as very important religious discussions and addresses that might have a big impact and could end up in peer group sanctioning in different communities on the shaping of public opinion – societal norms – and cultural attitudes.

Hundreds of literary works from various types of literature: classic novels, science fiction, fantasy, short stories, humour/ satire, mystery, romance, thriller/ disaster, folklore/ fable, chick-lit and classic romance, etc. A large amount of novel resources both classic works and new works from public media channels, how-to guides, professional news on current hot topics, sport, for teenagers, etc. The latest popular novels, which you are able to search for every day.

Ginger Euphemistic expressions have been gathered exhaustive and were classified systematically, according to several criteria and among others:

- Semantic field (diverse from death and sickness, to sex and class, each whole different set of cultural considerations and taboos which would be with other societies)
- Grammatical forms (figure-of-speech, figure of circumlocution, devise mentis, etc.) built to reflect the various vagaries of human communication.
- Pragmatic aspects (on such topics as face-saving acts, politeness strategies, or efficacious strategies of taboo avoidance, which are instrumental for organised social life, for communicative dynamics, and for social relations among individuals and groups).

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Death Euphemisms

- Arabic: "انتقل إلى رحمة الله" "intaqala ilā raḥmat Allāh" (He has moved to God's mercy), "فاضت روحه" "fāḍat rūḥuhu" (His soul has outpoured)

- English: "Passed away", "No longer with us" in English culture, there are many expressions to describe death, it appears that in Arabic culture most of these expressions revolve around strong religious aspects and put an emphasis on universals like mercy, compassion and an afterlife. "God's mercy has gathered him in / His soul has burst its sheath" are some of the lines that underline the belief in an afterlife, which is one of the core elements of this tradition. These grieving words not only reflect the personal pain of loss, but they also reinforce the communal cultural and religious belief in a life beyond death and the solace of divine mercy for all. By contrast, English euphemisms, such as "Passed away" and "No longer with us," use metaphorical language to soften the brutal message of death as much as possible, perhaps allowing for emotional distance and a gentle way of addressing a difficult topic. In both languages the intention seems to be the same as mentioned previously: it is a matter of softening the blow of loss following death and for alleviating at least seemingly something of the emotional baggage that death may bring with it, but the background of culture and religion is shaping different from these perspectives both the ways of framing and the understanding of death in the same context of daily life and common discussion.

5.2 Illness and Disability

- Arabic: Several considerate expressions can be used while dealing with the topics of sickness and disability: "مبتلى" "mubtalā" (the one who is afflicted) and "يعاني من وعكة صحية" "yu'ānī min wa'kah ṣiḥḥīyah" (suffering from a health crisis). These are not just words and phrases that we use and repeat, they are deeply embedded within cultural and social context from which words and phrases originate which in turn reflects upon the interpretations of a society on health issues and the varied perspectives derived from it. The verbal etiology of Arabic-speakers reflects a complex perception of illness, whose connotations frequently involve ideas of social assistance and collective activity.

- English: Of course, where English has a whole variety of words – special needs, differently abled, under the weather. "The language in question tends to favour the politically correct and illustrates a high psychological sensitivity to the complexity of the life experiences of people experiencing ill health and disability. These differences in vocabulary reflect how, while English tends to favor a form of inclusion which is focused acutely on the individual's identity and self-image, Arabic privileges through its choice of words the principle of divine decree, as well as a broader vein of social empathy, thereby revealing differing value systems in both cultures with respect to the representation of illness. But principally, these variations of expression exist to illustrate the various ways in which society values and venerates the sick and disabled.

5.3 Sexuality and Bodily Functions

- Arabic: Many societies that speak Arabic have strong and ubiquitous taboos against direct talking about sexuality and the body. This silence is frequently accompanied by a euphemistic intention that appears in both the ellipsis and the indirect religious allusions. "These are private matters" is the meaning of the term "مسائل خاصة" "masā'il khāṣṣah", showing just how taboo some of these issues are in various Arab societies. This tactic is an example of the delicate footwork around any conversation potentially construed as to offend personal or social honor and interests, some of the most cherished values of these cultures.

· English: Coded phrases, in contrast, are commonly used in Anglophone cultures in ways that seem to cast yet deeper social patterns. For example, shared phrases to describe intimacy between intimate partners are “make love,” and “use the restroom” is perhaps a quintessential label when talking about human bodily needs and functions in public. This shows a dynamic and flexible management of language, where euphemisms are on one hand a tool meant to maintain good manners and on the other a way to touch delicate subjects with elegance. Sociocultural taboos about modesty and honor are reflected in the use of euphemistic language in Arabic and as a result, speakers tend to select vaguer and more indeterminate linguistic forms that are draped in tradition. By contrast, English speakers frequently use metaphorical and idiomatic alternatives to express similar concepts and to try to keep a comparatively straight face when dealing with these important life themes. This large difference in expression highlights how culture and language are intricately related to the customs, traditions, and standards that govern them.

5.4 Social Hierarchy and Occupation

· The Arabic word “عامل نظافة” “Āmil nazāfah” very precisely states the job of cleanliness, and raises the respectability and dignity for such a significant job. This language sharply differs from the more colloquial “زبال” “zabbāl” for garbage man. In this latter word case, however, it would sound very pejorative without any apparent need, as the high importance of what bus, taxi and train drivers do as their job requires of them due respect.

· In English-speaking countries, we have an alternative title, “Sanitation engineer,” which is often used in lieu of the more plain-spoken “garbage collector.” This is a conscious decision and an intentional move within society to make the role and the work of it and around it that little bit more idyllic. Both languages highlight the fascinating linguistic development of upward euphemism, which attempts to boost job titles and subsequent descriptions to mitigate the social stigma often associated with these essential roles. By re-thinking these roles and titles in a paradigm that sees them as strategically situated positions, we are not only recognizing the vital functions these positions play in the community, but actively entering growing curiosity about and respect for these powerful positions in all of our lives. This only strengthens the worth of the collective members of the community who perform these functions, and draws attention to the many and important forms of community support for public health and safety.

6. FINDINGS

· Arabic euphemisms are much more likely to be formulaic (often people swear on totems such as God, or morality, or on the honor of their social group). These are the inbred concepts in the cultural ethos of the society, going back to centuries and having been shared by the masses. They are not just a communication device, but they reinforce community identity and values’. · Conversely, English euphemisms are typically more lexical and figurative in their composition language and are inclined to use psychological frames or political correctness to negotiate the sensitive subjects they address. This way, people can deal with hard topics and continue being civil and showing respect. The semantic range of English euphemisms; however has often been observed to be wide enough to circumvent these restrictions and to provide scope for witty linguistic play and creative expression which reflects a greater variety of prosodic and contextual nuances. · Euphemisms are deeply embedded in culture: respect for community and “the other” in Arabic culture, strong religious and spiritual beliefs also impact every day language shortcuts. Furthermore, this emphasis on humility and communal harmony colours not only how sensitive topics are engaged but indirect speech is also often employed so as not to cause offence. On the other hand in English-speaking world the individualism is highly valued and personal issues are kept in secrecy. This culture background also results in the preference for legality in language and euphemisms construction so as to make them more personalized when coining (or decoding) awkward expressions. · Furthermore, euphemisms are in themselves intricate to translate requiring sensitive adaptation, knowledge of contextual aspects and an extra sensitivity to meaning. It forces the translator or communicator to look beyond the word, planned for the other word, but to look first at the message itself. The whole process serves to demonstrate the necessity of being aware of cultural meanings, sensibilities, and connotations, for the intention is to translate the euphemism as closely to its depth and resonance in the cultural system in which it is used.

7. CONCLUSION

Euphemisms are not just pure linguistic terms, but also powerful cultural tools, which will cut the ice in all kinds of human relations to a certain extent, express some elements of deeper society morals, and at the same time ease various psychological and other kinds of contradictions in human involvements. This systematic contrastive examination reveals many differences between the Arabic and the English euphemistic systems, and these are found to emerge from a network of differing cultural, religious and communicative traditions which are embedded within the language.

Indeed, these contrasts are not only fascinating but also tell us something about the wider cultural contexts in which they are located. Capture and analysis of these subtleties is of the utmost importance in a wide range of fields such as; Translation Studies Intercultural Communication Language Pedagogy since subtle differences in language use can have a profound effect on, and even a conditioning effect of, intercultural interactions.

And a more sophisticated awareness of euphemisms can make it easier for people from different cultures so speak to each other - thereby increasing sensitivity and respect to different modes of expression. In addition, there is another exciting and interesting

direction for future work that is to explore the evolution and adoption of euphemism in the world of dynamic media, especially in the young generation that is strongly impacted by the dynamic social changes and new technologies, shaping the ways of their instruction and the manner of their conversation. Such research might help us understand emerging patterns of language use that mirror larger trends in society, and how new means of communicating on digital media shape traditional linguistic categories and help to drive further changes in the dynamics of modern euphemism.

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