

A Sociolinguistic Comparison of Euphemisms in English and Arabic

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Abstract. This study aims at a sociolinguistic comparison of euphemisms in English and Arabic. Euphemisms address culturally sensitive areas and this is why they have not received a lot of academic attention from applied linguists in general and sociolinguists in particular. English and Arabic are not linguistically, geographically and culturally related. It is found that English and Arabic euphemisms are mainly couched in three figures of speech: metonymy, synecdoche and circumlocution. Metonymy, by definition, is the basic figure of speech of euphemisms and is the most difficult one in teaching, learning and translation in English or Arabic as a nonnative language. Also, both languages borrow from other languages for euphemisms, but it is not difficult in teaching, learning and translation. The basic difference is that the degree of politeness in euphemisms in Arabic is higher than in English. The study results show that euphemisms are useful for textbook writers, teachers, learners and translators for nonnative languages, especially English and Arabic.

Introduction

Language is not simply a formal system of sounds, words and syntactical structures. Language is also a way of communication by human people within their beliefs, attitudes, customs, behaviors, social habits, etc. and this is what is meant by culture. Each language society accumulates rules according to which concrete statements are interpreted abstractly and which are valid through common usage (Osterloh, 1986: p. 77). Some words and phrases in languages live longer than others. Some have a short or a very short life, others longer, and others more permanent. This shows that language is subject to continual change and development. This change and development reflects that languages are the best records for the history of people. Such change and development have linguistic, social and psychological reasons, as well as influence from other languages (Almubarak, 1981: pp. 211-216). The psychological reasons are connected to euphemisms (Almubarak, 1981: p. 215). The euphemism which comes from a Greek word meaning "good-sounding" is defined in dictionaries as a rhetorical device. In Concise Oxford Dictionary (1982), for example, the euphemism is defined as a "substitution of mild or vague or roundabout expression for harsh or blunt or direct one." Wilson

(1993) defines euphemisms as "words with meanings or sounds thought somehow to be nicer, cleaner or more elevated and so used as substitutes for words deemed unpleasant, crude or ugly in sound or sense." Allan and Burridge (1991: p. 14) define euphemisms as "alternatives to dispreferred expression, and are used in order to avoid possible loss of face." Similar meanings are found for euphemisms in Arabic with the Arabic root *luṭf*¹ and its derivative *laṭāfah* which are "to be kind, friendly, thin, fine, delicate, dainty, graceful, elegant, nice, amiable, etc., to make mild, soft, and gentle, and to mitigate, alleviate, ease, soothe, moderate, to treat with kindness", etc. (Cowan, 1976). The English term "euphemism" is also translated into Arabic with *luṭf attaʿbi:r* "kind expression" (Al-Khuli, 1982) and *ḥusun attaʿbi:r* "nice expression". English euphemisms are exemplified with pass away "die", intimacy "sexual intercourse", underprivileged "poor", made redundant "dismissed", black "Negro", senior citizen "the old", urban renewal "slum clearance and freedom", and terrorists "fighters". The examples of Arabic euphemisms are: *kullu man ʿalajaha: fa:n* "whatsoever is on it (the earth) will perish" (Al-Hilālī, 2005: p. 731) = everyone will die, and *nawman ha:diʿan lilaṭʿa:l* "quiet sleeping for children" = do not bring children to wedding parties.

Euphemisms are generally divided into positive and negative types (Rawson, 1998: p. 492). Euphemisms are employed positively in considering general social mores and expressing solidarity with the addressee or the referent. Positive euphemisms are exemplified in English with fancy occupational titles, such as environmental engineer instead of garbage men, and dustmen instead of garbage collectors. In Arabic, *muqim* "resident/non-citizen" or *wafid* "comer" instead of *ḍajnabi*: "foreigner" and *ṣāḡḡa:lah* "a working lady" instead of *xa:dimah* "a female servant" are used. A further example of a positive type of euphemism may be seen with "mental hospital" instead of "madhouse" in English compared to *aṣṣiḥah annafsijah* "healthy spirit" in place of *mustafa lamja:ni:n* "mad people hospital" in Arabic. Euphemisms are employed negatively in preventing face loss by erasing from the language everything that people prefer not to deal with directly and straightforwardly. It appears that most euphemisms in English and Arabic are utilized negatively. For instance, in both languages, poverty in English and *fagr* in Arabic is euphemized with low-income in English and *daxl maḥdu:d* in Arabic.

It is also notable that all euphemisms are used either unconsciously or consciously (Rawson, 1998: p. 493). Unconscious euphemisms are conventionally developed as euphemisms and it is difficult to recall their original motivations. Conscious euphemisms in the course of a speech come across intelligibly in a figurative manner as in political language and advertising. For instance, the government spokesman says "redeployment of troops" meaning withdrawal. Politicians in general select words with care to make lies truths and seem respectable. Consequently, these individuals often have the reputation of speaking in a very diplomatic way because of their use of euphemisms. Briefly, "euphemisms are in a constant state of flux. New ones are created almost daily. Many of them prove to be nonce terms-one-day wonders that are never repeated. Of those that are ratified through reuse as true euphemisms, some may last for generations, even centuries, while others fade away or develop into unconscious euphemisms, still used, but reflexively, without thought of their checkered origins" (Rawson, 1998: p. 495). However, all dispreferred statements are expressed freely in different societies in terms of their science and religion.

Euphemisms are an important part of every language since "a language without euphemisms would be a defective instrument of communication" (Burchfield, 1985: p. 29). Euphemisms can be

categorized as "what the user of language should avoid, what he should not say, or write" (Akhmanova, 1976: p. 99). A speaker or writer of any language can subtly alter his language for better (i.e. euphemistic) or for the worse (i.e. dysphemistic) if he/she wishes. The euphemism, in this study, is a linguistic politeness strategy and conveys a social attitude. Mazid (2004) maintains that the study of euphemisms has concentrated on culturally sensitive areas and this is why they have not received a lot of academic attention. The analysis of euphemisms in Arabic is scattered in linguistic and literary references. This study aims to highlight euphemisms in English and compare them sociolinguistically with Arabic, since many Arabic speakers are in need of learning English, which is an international language. The Arabic language is also required to be learned as a nonnative language because of its being one of the basic world languages and its importance and necessity for Muslims all over the world. Hence, the study entails the main figures of speech of euphemisms in both languages and their general linguistic and cultural resemblances and distinctions.

It is, however, an established reality that English and Arabic are not linguistically, geographically and culturally related. English is an Indo-European language, but Arabic is a Semitic language. English is an European language in Britain, but Arabic is an Afro-Asiatic language. English became the native language in the United States of America and Australia and it is used internationally all over the world. While English is used within industrialized countries, Arabic is used in Third World countries in which the communicative structure is mainly determined to a high degree by Islam. The Islamic and cultural rules impose a great sanction on the deliberate use of Arabic words and phrases in different subjects of life. This means that the English native speakers can freely use and even adopt things from other languages and cultures, but Arab native speakers are religiously and socially determined. Therefore, English is free to borrow from any language; thus, borrowing is one of its word-formation processes. Arabic is a language of derivation and it prefers neologization to direct borrowing (Al-Qadi, 2003). This reflects how the English language is open and how the Arabic language is conservative. However, Farghal (2003) correctly observes that a quick look at the colloquial Arabic all over the Arab world shows how its forms have been developing in areas such as tautology, politeness, euphemism, dysphemism, etc. in order to meet the social and psychological needs of its native speakers. In the diglossic situation in the Arabic

language, there are standard, modern standard and colloquial varieties. All varieties have euphemisms, but the standard one is more prestigious and denotative in nature (Al-Katib, 1995). This study tries to sociolinguistically analyze the modern standard English-Arabic varieties, i.e. what is used in mass media, education, and public speech. It is hoped that the predicted linguistic and cultural similarities and differences between English and Arabic can play a significant role in textbook writing, teaching, learning and translating English and Arabic as nonnative languages for their learners.

Structure of Euphemisms

Euphemistic metonymies

Euphemisms are structurally and basically employed in both languages in metonymy as a linguistic device and a figure of speech. Metonymy is a word or a phrase that is substituted for another depending on some actual relation between the things signified (Lexicon Website Dictionary, 1981: p. 601). Euphemistic metonymies contain common subjects in languages and they may vary from culture to culture, and accordingly from language to language. This includes taboos since they are of major importance in euphemistic metonymies. Leech (1983: p. 45) considers death, disease, crime, punishment, sex and the excretive process of the body as the common subjects of euphemisms. Other euphemistic subjects, which have developed over past centuries, are war, politics, birth, fornication, bodily functions like excretion, reticence, social rank and other social relations (Burchfield, 1985: p. 28). Bertram (1998: p. 314) in the NTC's Dictionary of Euphemisms in English attached in the appendix the following thematic index of euphemisms: advertising, age, alcohol, birth, body parts, body processes, business, class, crime, death, disability, drugs, education, fat, gender, hedge word, intelligent, lying, medicine, mental illness, military, mock swearing, money, political correctness, police, politics, psychology, race, religion, sex, swearing, underwear and violence. No Arabic dictionaries were found for euphemisms. Arabic euphemistic items and phrases are collected from linguistic and literary references.

Subjects

Death, urination, defecation, sex and their relations are richly euphemistic in English and Arabic. They are illustrated with a number of common examples from English first and initiated with the symbol (●), and Arabic second and initiated

with the symbol (◆). The examples may not refer to equivalent contents.

Death:

- pass away / expire / depart / go to a better place or world / breathe one's last = die.
- the hereafter / the great certainty / land of no return = death.
- happy release = death - especially after a painful illness.
- at peace / at rest = dead.
- *intaqala ʔila: jiwa:ri rabbih* "He moved to become near his Lord." = died.
- *intaqala ʔila: rahmati rabbih* "He transferred to the Mercy of Lord." = died.
- *arra:ħa lʔabadijah* "permanent rest" = death.

Urination and defecation:

- a comfort station / the necessary = a toilet.
- ease for oneself = to defecate / urinate.
- make or pass water = urinate.
- pay a visit = urinate / defecate.
- pass gas or wind / back talk / make a rude noise etc. = release intestinal gas through the anus.
- *dawrata lmija:h* "the water-circuit" = a toilet.
- *bajt arra:ħah* "a house of rest" = a toilet.
- *ri:ħ* "wind" = release intestinal gas through the anus.

Sexual intercourse:

- make love = have sex.
- playboy = having sex with many women.
- have a roving eye = be interested in having sexual relations outside marriage.
- a lady of evening / a call girl / a fancy woman / a light woman / = a prostitute.
- gay = homosexual.
- *hunna liba:sun llakum waʔntum liba:sun lahunna* "They (wives) are body covers for you (husbands) and you are body covers for them." (Al-Hilālī, 2005: p. 38) = have sexual relations.
- *waṭ* = "tread" used especially by Islamic scholars refers to "sexual intercourse."
- *aw la:mastum annisa:* "or touch women" (Al-Hilālī, 2005: p. 114) = Or you have been in contact with women (by sexual relations).
- *jana:mu maʔa zawwjatih* "He sleeps with his wife" = sexual intercourse.
- *ʔala:qa jinsijah* "sexual relation" = sexual intercourse by fornication.
- *ʔuħu tana:suli:* "propagative organ" or *qaħi:b* "bar" = penis.

Occupations

Both English and Arabic show the euphemistic metonymies in mitigation for the force of bad connotations. Accordingly, many low occupations have got nice titles. The titles become grand and very pleasant to the ear. These titles are exemplified in English first and initiated with the symbol (●), and Arabic second, and initiated with the symbol (◆):

● sanitary engineer = garbage man	◆ landscape architect = gardener
● tonsorial artist = barber	◆ prison officer = jailer
● meat technologist = butcher	◆ law enforcement officer = policeman
● domestic engineer = servant	◆ house maker = housewife
● hearing-impaired = deaf man	◆ housekeeper = maid
● flight attendant = steward/ess	◆ secretary = typist

- *ca:milah manziliyah* "female home worker" =
xa:dimah "female servant."
- *ca:mil naʒa:fah* "a cleanliness worker" =
zabba:l "trashman."
- *fa:qida labaṣar* "loser of eyesight" = *ca:ma:*
"blind."
- *aṣṣarf aṣṣiḥḥi:* "healthy drainage" = *almaja:ri:*
"drains" or "urine and stool drainage."

Taboos

"Some words undergo pejoration because of a taboo against talking about the things they name; the replacement of a taboo term is a euphemism" (Pyles and Algeo, 1982: p. 248). Such euphemisms are metonymies and they, as avoidance of taboos, are widely employed in languages since taboos occur in most languages (Trudgill, 2000: p. 18). The taboo is the prohibition or avoidance in any society of behavior believed to be harmful to its members. Taboos vary from one culture to another, and accordingly from one language to another (Lehmann, 1973: p. 216). For instance, the Arabic sex euphemisms tend to be more decent, while the English ones are more explicit. Sex in Arabic is dealt with in the Holy Qurʾān in a very euphemistic and decent manner such as *alḥarḥ* "tilth" (Al-Hilâlî, 2005: p. 48), *almula:masah* "being in contact" (Al-Hilâlî, 2005: p. 114), and *alcafaḍa:* "going into each other" (Al-Hilâlî, 2005: p. 109). No Arabic terms, Islamic or non-Islamic, exist about sex that are not euphemistic in one way or another. This is due to

the power of Islam as the dominant religion in the areas where the Arabic language is spoken as a native language. On the other hand, sex in English, and also other European languages, "throughout history has perhaps been on most people's minds, but in this century it has increasingly been on almost everyone's tongue as well" (Epstein, 1985: p. 57). Also, "sex is a secret no longer. The unspeakable is nowadays speakable-and spoken" (Epstein, 1985: p. 57). This explicitness about sex is also in writing since "today one can say anything one likes of a sexual kind in print" (Epstein, 1985: p. 62). This has been due to the fact of the sexual revolution, the women's liberation movement, the loss of the power of religion against promiscuity and the newer methods of contraception which are taking place. All this has led to a number of older sexual euphemisms to fade away and new sexual euphemisms have been utilized instead (Epstein, 1985: p. 60). The English examples are as gay or homosexual, lesbian, sugar daddy, spouse equivalent, open marriage, etc. Therefore, nowadays there are various journals and TV channels which deal with sex in a plain and/or profane manner. Some of them go beyond candor and beyond indiscretion.

Sometimes, a taboo goes through a fast change since it is replaced by another term and that term is again replaced later. For instance, English has got the terms privy, W.C., lavatory, toilet, bathroom, etc. (Palmer, 1976: p. 12). On the other hand, Arabic has been using the terms: *bajt arra:ḥah* "a house of rest", *dawrata lmija:h* "the water-circuit", *ḥamma:m* "bathroom" and *tawali:t* as a loan word of the English word "toilet." The replacement is sometimes not due to a taboo, but to be a real citizen as in the following English example and for more respect and love as in the subsequent Arabic example. Some non-white American people want to be called African-American, which has replaced Afro-American, which replaced the term black, which replaced Negroes (Gramley and Patzold, 1992: pp. 22-23). In reference in Arabic to *zawjah* "wife" is sometimes replaced by *um alcajal* "mother of sons— with which sons refers to both sons and daughters." Or she is called by her eldest son as in *um muḥamad* "mother of Mohammad", and if she does not have a son by her eldest daughter as in *um xadi:jah* "mother of Khadijah". Also, some taboo and unpleasant words in English and Arabic are substituted in speech by pronouns such as private bodily parts, e.g. that, what,

etc. In the writing of both languages, euphemistic substitutions may include symbols like asterisks, dashes or others, replacing, for example, an explicit sexual word. Such an intended word or phrase and its meaning can be induced for the context (Burchfield, 1985: p. 17).

Rhetorical communications and ambiguity

The euphemistic metonymies have different rhetorical communications, such as respect in avoiding saying in public something horrible or impolite as in the case for urination, defecation and sex, optimistic for what would be the situation in the case of death, and allusion as in the case of wars or political language in announcing something which is not completely meant (Alhashimi, 2001: p. 278). Metonymy is actually the most delicate figure of speech and it looks as if it is really formed in languages for euphemisms. Metonymy is also the most ambiguous figure of speech in languages. Such ambiguity comes from the difficulty of achieving the signifying relationship between the word or phrase and its substitutes, as well its rhetorical communications. However, the metonymic words are easier in comparison with the metonymic phrases since the phrases may be idiomatic expressions which are not easily translated from one language to another. The meanings of the idiomatic expressions cannot be worked out from their individual parts since they depend on more than one factor including story of expression, social and cultural contexts, and the history of speakers. For example, in English, "it was raining cats and dogs" means literally "the sky was raining cats and dogs" and figuratively "heavy rain" (Khalil, 1988: p. 167 and p. 175). In Arabic, *fula:n cari:ḍ lwisa:dah* literally means "somebody has a wide pillow" and figuratively "he is stupid." Also, *xa:nahu attaḥbi:r* means literally "his expression was dishonest" and figuratively "a liar." This shows that the translation of euphemistic metonymies from English into Arabic or vice versa may not be successful in expressing the intended degree of politeness in the source language. Therefore, "the priority of the translator is to invest a well-developed bilingual sensitivity and bicultural sensitivity in weighing the complex or competing factors of the translation process, such as the multiplex relations between word-meanings and text-meanings in light of cultural difference" (Beaugrande, 2003).

Euphemistic synecdoches

Euphemisms are structurally formed in a linguistic synecdoche. The linguistic synecdoche is a figure of speech and it is euphemistically employed by metaphor (Abu Zaid, 1988: p. 49), which is where a word or a phrase has both "literal meaning" and one or more "transferred meanings" (Palmer, 1976: p. 66). In other words, "an expression which means or describes one thing or idea using words usually used of something else with very similar qualities without using the words *as* or *like*" (Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture, 1993). Such transferred meanings can be utilized as euphemistic expressions as in English "to spend a penny" means to urinate, the lady may declare in public with humor "my friend has come" referring to her monthly period, and to compare the need of urination or defecation to "the call of nature." In Arabic, the examples are *aljjidra:n laha: a:ḍa:n* "walls have ears" means be careful in your speech, i.e. somebody may be listening, *jabi:ḥ ḍami:ruh* "he sells his conscience" refers that he is dishonest, and *likulli jwa:ḍin kabwah* "for each race horse there is a fall" signifies that each very important person may commit an error.

The synecdoche is also euphemistically employed by homophones with which items have the same pronunciation but differ in meaning. The meaning is a real or concrete meaning and a figurative one. The figurative meaning and the real meaning are related to one another by one semantic feature. For instance, an eye is a synecdoche for a spy, and the spy uses his eyes in his job. In English and Arabic, some unacceptable descriptions and jobs are euphemized by body parts or animals' names or others as follows:

▶ an eye / <i>ʿajn</i> = spy	▶ an ear / <i>ʿuḍun</i> = accepting defamation
▶ a camel / <i>jamal</i> = patience	▶ fox / <i>ḥaḥlab</i> = deception and cunning
▶ fly / <i>ḍuba:bah</i> = coward	▶ ostrich / <i>naḥa:mah</i> = coward
▶ butterfly / <i>fara:ḥah</i> = a changeable ma	
▶ locusts / <i>jara:d</i> , ants/ <i>naml</i> = abundance	
▶ glass / <i>kaḥas</i> = alcohol	

Euphemistic linguistic synecdoches are so deeply embedded in English and Arabic that they are not abundant in comparison with other types of euphemisms. The homophonous items are also few and almost similar in both languages and they are easily understood and translated from English into Arabic and vice versa.

sorry to say" and "Excuse my language" since English lacks these euphemistic formulas (Farghal, 2005). The Arabic euphemistic formulas have high usage because of the conservative property of the language. Their usages tend to be used in speech more than in writing. As shown in their English translations, the Arabic euphemistic formulas should be carefully learned and used in their right contexts by native speakers of English.

Euphemistic borrowing

Euphemisms are not structurally restricted to figures of speech. Euphemistic substitutes are also loan words in both languages. In English, "it is permissible for speakers and writers ... to express almost any thought they wish, as long as the more risqué parts of the discussion are rendered in another language, usually French or Latin" (Rawson, 1998: p. 497). English borrows from French, for example, *liaison* for "illicit sexual intercourse" and *brassiere* for "a bra", and from Latin, *halitosis* for "bad breath." Arabic occasionally borrows a few words from English like "tragedy" instead of *maḍsa:h* "consolation", and "comedy" instead of *mallha:h* "amusement" (Ghinim, 1990: p. 65). The English language has been open to borrowing and it is one of its word-formation processes; hence, English people can easily adopt words from other languages to euphemize in different subjects. On the other hand, Arabic is conservative and does not easily allow borrowing. However, educated Arabs, who are able to use the English language, as a language taught in their countries because of its international function, tend to use code-mixing and code-switching among each other as a strategy of euphemism (Al-Katib, 1995). Both codes are mostly employed in speech in a form of a temporal usage. However, loan-words or phrases in a form of plain borrowing or a temporal usage carry the form and the meaning of the source language; thus, they are not difficult in teaching, learning and translation (Farghal, 2005).

Euphemisms Contrasted

Euphemisms are universal since they exist in every language and no human communication is without euphemisms. What are the similarities and differences between the use of euphemisms in English and Arabic languages? This is definitely an exciting and rewarding question. This tends to pave

the way for exploring the two languages in depth. In addition, the investigation of the resemblances and distinctions motivates teachers, learners and translators of both languages to discover how the influences of English and Arabic cultures are portrayed in euphemisms. English and Arabic euphemisms are similar in:

1. Euphemisms are mostly employed in both languages in the three main figures of speech: metonymy, synecdoche and circumlocution. Metonymy is the basic figure of speech since it is primarily formed in languages for euphemisms.
2. Both languages have in general similar euphemistic subjects such as death, urination, defecation and sex. They also elevate low occupations to get nice titles. This is an indication that the two cultures share the same common values about different subjects and occupations. However, it should be noted that the study's comparison was done on the basis of the common subjects and occupations and not at all at the specific item or phrase level, i.e. a certain item or phrase is euphemized in one language but not necessarily in the other.
3. Both languages use pronouns in speech and asterisks and dashes in writing as substitutes for taboos.
4. Both languages have social attitudes, changes and pruderies in euphemisms, especially taboos. For instance, at all times in English, there are items for prostitutes such as call girl, fallen woman, hostess, lady of easy virtue, model, moll, pick-up, street-walker, and woman of the town (Burchfield, 1985: p. 23). This is also found in Arabic for the same item such as *ba:ḍicat alhawa:* "seller of love" and *bana:t allajl* "night girls."
5. English and Arabic euphemisms can be seen positively and negatively. Negative euphemism in English and Arabic are far more than the positive ones. This is expected since they reflect the main function of euphemisms. In both languages, euphemisms are also formed either unconsciously or consciously. The conscious euphemisms, like in the diplomatic expressions in all languages, may develop into unconscious ones.
6. Both languages have euphemistic synecdoches and circumlocutions. The former euphemisms are few in general and the homophonous items are almost similar in both languages; therefore, they are not problematic in teaching, learning and translation. The latter ones as lengthy expressions are also easy.

7. Loan words, for the purpose of euphemisms in both languages, are easy in teaching, learning and translation since they mostly carry the form and meaning of the borrowed language and are easily translated into the borrowing language.

We can see that English and Arabic are different in the following aspects:

1. English has an ever-growing number of euphemisms as compared with Arabic ones. This is noticed by the fact that English has a number of specific dictionaries for euphemisms, but Arabic does not. This may be connected with English as being an international language and its abundance of reference books, researches and so on.
2. The degree of politeness in euphemisms is more in Arabic than in English since English is overt while Arabic is covert. English euphemisms tend to be more explicit, while Arabic ones are more decent. When talking about sex in English, for example, nothing is unmentionable and inexpressible. On the contrary, expressing sex in Arabic is cautiously done in a very decent and euphemistic manner. Also, Arabic has a number of euphemistic formulas, but in English it is rare. This shows that learning English euphemisms may be easier for Arab learners, but learning Arabic euphemisms may cause difficulty for English learners. In addition, the translation of euphemisms from Arabic into English should be carefully considered to achieve the intended level of politeness.
3. It should be noted that the euphemisms in languages are different from one generation to another. This is controlled by the mode of the native speakers or the mood of the age (Burchfield, 1985: p. 28). This can be achieved by the help of historical linguistics in comparing earlier and later forms of a language and then by comparing English and Arabic. However, this is not the research interest here, even though it appears that there are differences between English and Arabic because of the openness of English and the conservatism of Arabic through their histories. This observation deserves to be investigated by linguists.

Educational Implications

Euphemistic synecdoches, euphemistic circumlocutions as lengthy expressions, and euphemistic loan words or phrases are easier in teaching, learning and translation of English or

Arabic as a nonnative language to the native speakers of the other language. Euphemistic metonymies are abundant in comparison with others and they are the most difficult one in teaching, learning and translation of English or Arabic as nonnative languages. Arabic euphemistic metonymies in particular should be carefully considered in translation into English to achieve the intended level of politeness. Furthermore, Arabic euphemistic formulas should be carefully learned and used in their right contexts by English learners. Moreover, euphemisms are generally better to be learned and translated by advanced learners and those who are studying the nonnative language as a major. These nonnative learners will most likely be able to manipulate the nuance of differences between the native and the nonnative language in euphemisms in general and metonymic ones in particular. In addition, euphemisms as sensitive areas may not be needed by elementary and intermediate learners. The definition and knowledge of the technical linguistic terms as metonymy, synecdoche, circumlocutions and also euphemism itself are not part of nonnative language usages. These technical terms should be known by the nonnative language majors as part of their foreign language acquisition. The euphemistic similarities and differences between English and Arabic work as guidelines for textbook writers, teachers, learners and translators in their duties. It is to be noted that textbook writers, teachers and translators should make efforts in making sociolinguistic comparisons at the subject level in general and at the word or phrase level specifically since what is euphemized in one of the two languages is not necessarily euphemized in the other.

Conclusion

"The chief purpose of a euphemism is to present a situation, a person or an object in a more agreeable, more reassuring or politer light than would be afforded by the hard glare of reality or by crude, direct definition" (Cobb, 1985: p. 72). The study's aim is realized in English and Arabic through the present sociolinguistic comparison. Both languages couch euphemisms mainly in three figures of speech: metonymy, synecdoche and circumlocution. Also, both languages borrow from other languages as a euphemistic process. Metonymy is the basic figure of speech of euphemisms and it is mainly formed in both languages for the sake of euphemisms. English and Arabic euphemisms have more resemblances and less distinctions. This shows that euphemism is a universal phenomenon in natural languages and it is

expected that most of similarities and differences between English and Arabic may possibly be found among other natural languages. Moreover, the study discussed the educational implications of euphemisms in terms of what is easy and what is difficult and to whom euphemisms are taught. Thus, the study's comparison, as well as its educational implications, may make the job easier for textbook writers, teachers, learners and translators of English and Arabic as nonnative languages in particular and other languages in general.

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مقارنة لغوية اجتماعية للطف التعبير في اللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية

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ملخص البحث. تهدف هذه الدراسة اللغوية الاجتماعية إلى مقارنة لطف التعبير في اللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية؛ ولطف التعبير يُستخدم عادة في موضوعات ذات حساسية اجتماعية لهذا لم يأخذ حقه في البحث الأكاديمي من قبل علماء علم اللغة التطبيقي عامة، وعلماء علم اللغة النفسي خاصة، واللغتان الإنجليزية والعربية لا تتطابقان من حيث المنشأ اللغوي والموقع الجغرافي والثقافة. وقد أظهرت الدراسة أن لطف التعبير يُصاغ في اللغتين بثلاث صور بلاغية رئيسة هي الكناية والمجاز والإطناب؛ وتعتبر الكناية بطبيعتها الصورة البلاغية الأكثر استخداماً للطف التعبير، والأكثر صعوبة في التدريس والتعلم والترجمة، كما أن اللغتان تقترضان من اللغات الأخرى تحقيقاً للطف التعبير. والاختلاف الأساسي بين اللغتين في لطف التعبير هو في درجة التأدب حيث إن اللغة العربية تتفوق بذلك على اللغة الإنجليزية. وعليه، يأمل الباحث أن تكون نتائج الدراسة مفيدة للطف التعبير في اللغات الأجنبية عامة ولكل من اللغة الإنجليزية واللغة العربية خاصة.