

Euphemism in Arabic : Typology and Formation

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ABSTRACT

The study starts with a theoretical review of euphemism in language in general . It presents definition , etymology and purpose of euphemism . It also sheds light on the linguistic and cultural relation of euphemism to other linguistic phenomena such as taboo, double speak and dysphemism. Formation and Classification of euphemism are also highlighted .

In the practical side of the study , some selected related examples of Arabic (standard and colloquial of Iraq and some other Arab countries) are analyzed . The researcher, finally , summarizes, in 12 points, his conclusions about euphemism in Arabic as revealed by the results of the analysis .

تلطيف الالفاظ في اللغة العربية : الانواع والاشكال

يعرض هذا البحث دراسة نظرية لظاهرة تلطيف الالفاظ غير المستساغة في اللغة بصورة عامة من حيث تعريفها ونشأتها واغراضها وارتباطها لغويا " وحضاريا" بظواهر لغوية اخرى معروفة هي الالفاظ المحظورة والمحرمة (taboo) والخداع بأستخدام اللغة (double speak) والاساءة بأستخدام اللغة (Dysphemism) . يتم ايضا" في الجانب النظري القاء الضوء على تشكيل وانواع الفاظ التلطيف . في الجانب العملي ، يتم تحليل مجموعة من الامثلة ذات الصلة بالموضوع في اللغة العربية (الفصحى والعامية من العراق وبعض الدول الاخرى) . في اثني عشر نقطة ، يختصر الباحث استنتاجاته حول ظاهرة تلطيف الالفاظ في اللغة العربية طبقا" لنتائج التحليل.

Symbols of Phonemic Transcription Arabic Sound

Consonants	Transcription	Short vowels	Transcription
ج. ح. خ. د. ذ. ر. ز. س. ش. ص. ط. ظ. ق. ك. گ. ل. م. ن. ه. و. ي. The glottal stop /hamza/	/b/	ـ	/a /
	/t/	ـ	/u/
	/θ /	ـ	/i/
	/ /		
	/ /		
	x		
	/d/	أ	/a:/
	/ /	و	/o:/
	/r/	ي	/i:/
	/z/		
	/s /		
	/ /		
	/ /		
	/ /		
	/ /		
	/ /		
	/f/		
	/ /		
	/k/		
	/l/		
	/m/		
	/n/		
	/h/		
	/w/		
	/y/		
	/		

Euphemism in Arabic: Typology and Formation

1.Introduction

We use language to express ourselves and to understand others. As a means of communication, language is a reflection of the individual, the society and the culture. Language is a very complicated means of expressing our mind which is, in turn , another sophisticated device in which different aspects, elements and factors are interwoven. In any case, we should use language clearly and politely. "Politely" means referring to the bad , the ugly and the unpleasant sides in our life, as educated and civilized, in a way that beautifies them or at least lessens the degree of impoliteness or other sensitivities in them. Arabs whether, educated or not, do their best and make use of the full of their eloquence to show politeness. Definitely , politeness is reflected in what they say. As such, they attempt in all ways to avoid unpleasant words and phrases when referring to affairs, activities, concepts and processes that they need to talk about or refer to whether they like that or not. However, since this part of language cannot be dropped out or put aside, they tend at least to lessen the embarrassment, superstition, shame, etc that may result from it ; and here comes the function and position of euphemism in their language. It also worths mentioning that euphemism is widely used in Arabic prose and poetry. The main reference book of Arabs and Moslems i.e. the Holy Quran uses euphemism to avoid mentioning directly words or phrases that may cause offence or shame.

This paper is an attempt to shed light on euphemism in Arabic. Analysis of the selected data is done in terms of the discussion made in the theoretical side to show the types and forms of the euphemistic expressions in Arabic. Universally, Arabs are humans like speakers of other languages; but specifically they have their own culture that could be similar or

different here or there to or from cultures of others. It is expected that euphemism in Arabic as formation and typology are concerned is not different from other languages. However , Arabic has its own special features as well.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Definition, etymology and purpose of Euphemism

The new Webster English Dictionary (vol.1:30) defines this term as the following : "Euphemism is a figure of speech in which a delicate word or expression is substituted for one which is offensive to good manners or to delicate ears". The verb "euphemize" means to express by euphemism. Leech (1974:53) defines euphemism as " practice of referring to something offensive or indelicate in terms that make it sound more pleasant or [more] acceptable than it really is". It is mainly used to avoid offence which may occur in broaching of a taboo topic, e.g. religion, death, politics or social issues. To make communication progresses smoothly and without conflict, accommodations are continually, and often subconsciously, made (Ham,2001:9). One can say that a euphemism is an expression intended by the speaker to be less offensive, disturbing or troubling to the listener than the word or phrase it replaces, or in the case of doublespeak (which will be discussed later) to make it less troublesome for the speaker. Hasselgard (1999:28) considers euphemisms as ways of referring to something unpleasant so as to make it appear less unpleasant (e.g. pass away=die; relieve oneself=urinate; put to sleep=kill ...etc.). Euphemism is also considered as a pragmatic and sociolinguistic phenomenon. It is widely used in everyday conversations and highly related to certain social aspects especially what is called ' taboo'. Lyons (1981:151) confirms this as he refers to euphemism as "the avoidance of taboo words".

On the linguistic level, Fromkin & Rodman (1993:305) says that "Euphemistic terms have linguistic denotative meanings and connotative meanings, reflecting attitudes, emotions, value judgments and so on. "Euphemisms are also considered as one of the motives for word borrowing. For example, it seems more plausible that terms for sex-related matters were replaced by euphemistic expressions borrowed from Old French in the Middle English period. An example is the replacement of the Old English word (haem) by marriage, adultery, fornication which were of French origin. Gramley, Stephen and Patzold (1992:21) add that euphemisms are "the results of changes in the moral sense of a society in areas where it has a communal bad conscience or is afraid to talk about a taboo subject. These areas have traditionally been the human body, death, crime, sex, war, money and government. Now, they include racial and sexual minorities". So, it can be recognized that a euphemistic term carries positive connotations. This term does the same argumentative work instead of the negative term. What is important is the fact that the evaluation of a word depends on the setting. For instance, "menstruate" is neutral in an academic context but euphemistic in a casual context; "piss" might be neutral in a casual context but rude in a polite context. In addition to that, the evolution of terms "might be different for men and women, different age groups, or other subcultural categories" (Allen and Burridge; 2002:40).

In a given society, if something is regarded as unmentionable, and yet there is an obligation of mentioning it, the naïve becomes the scapegoat for the thing, and euphemism as a substitute is adopted to indicate the forbidden object without naming it. There is a continual succession of words marching to oblivion (or converted to other uses) (Bolinger and Sears, 1981:264). Besides, the form of a word shows the word's nature .i.e. some words just sound ugly (Allen and Burridge, 1991:52).

Moreover, though there are cultural differences in euphemism use, which vary in degree rather than kind, the same parameters universally motivate euphemism. These parameters are so wide, i.e. ranging between death, crime, unpopular, political and military facts, drug abuse, physical and mental defects and so on.

The word euphemism comes from the Greek word *euphemos*, meaning "auspicious/ good / fortunate speech ", which in truth is derived from the Greek rootwords eu (u), "good/ well" pHEME () "speech/ speaking". The eupheme was originally a word or phrase used in place of a religious word or phrase that should not be spoken aloud (See taboo). The primary example of taboo words requiring the use of a euphemism are the unspeakable names for a deity, such as Persephone, Hecate, Nemesis or Yahweh. By speaking only words favourable to the gods or spirits, the speaker attempted to procure good fortune by remaining in good favour with them.

Historical linguistics has revealed traces of taboo deformations in many languages. Several are known to have occurred in Indo-European, including the original Indo-European words for bear, wolf , and deer (originally, hart). In different Indo-European languages, each of these words has a different etymology because of the taboo deformations-euphemism substituted for the original and which no longer occurs in the language. An example is the Slavic root for bear (medu-ed), which means "honey eater".

There are certain purposes for euphemistic terms. Alkire (2002:1) summarizes these as "to soften the reality of what we are communicating to a given listener or reader". All cultures typically use euphemisms to talk about things they find terrifying. Similarly, euphemisms are used "to express taboos on some instinctual level, that the euphemism keeps us at safe distance from the taboo itself" (ibid). Another use of a euphemistic term is" to elevate the status of something (e.g.,

using educator for teacher, attorney for lawyer); but in general, [it is used to] express what is socially difficult ..." (ibid). Euphemisms are often used to hide unpleasant or disturbing ideas, even when the literal meaning for them is not necessarily offensive, e.g., in politics. In this regard we can connect the very use of euphemisms with what is called 'face theory'. Widdowson (1990:109-110) says that "those participating in conversational encounters have to have care for the preservation of good relations by promoting the other's self-image, by avoiding offence". This opinion shows both the motivation behind euphemism, i.e. the preservation of good relations and the idea behind face theory which concerns the preservation of self-image. 'Face' consists of two related aspects: one is 'negative face', or the right to get freedom of action and freedom from imposition; the other is 'positive face', the positive consistent self-image that people have and want to be appreciated by the other people (Brown and Levinson, 1987:61). The motivation involves the pragmatic concerns behind euphemism, i.e. why euphemism is used.

2.2 Euphemism and Taboo

Euphemism is mainly connected with the term 'taboo'. As Pyles and Algeo (1968:201) mention that a word that has much strong associations and that is barred from polite use, is said to be taboo. Many languages have words which are considered dangerous, holy, magic or shocking, and which are only used in certain situations or by certain people. English has three main groups of taboo words and expressions. As mentioned by Swan (2005:564-65), these include:

- a. A number of words connected with the Christian religion. For example, the names 'Christ' and 'God' are considered holy by some people. These people prefer to use such

words only in formal and respectful contexts, and they may be upset or shocked by the 'careless' use of them.

- b. Certain words relating to sexual activity and the associated parts of the body: for example, 'fuck', 'balls' are regarded as shocking by many people. Thirty or forty years ago some of these words could not be printed or broadcasted, and they are still comparatively unusual in public speech and writing. They are usually replaced by 'making love' or 'having sexual intercourse' and 'testicles'.
- c. Some words referring to the elimination of bodily wastes (what one does in the lavatory) and the associated parts of the body, are also regarded 'dirty' or 'shocking' (e.g. piss, shit). They are often replaced by more 'polite' words and with same meaning (e.g. urinate, defecate) or by substitutes (e.g. go to the lavatory, wash one's hands).

Swan (ibid) also adds that swearwords are considered shocking since they express powerful emotions. When people swear, taboo words usually change their meanings completely. For example, 'fuck off' and 'piss off' have nothing to do with sex or urinating. They are simply violently rude ways of saying 'go away' and they have better be avoided as well. Attitudes considering taboo in a speech community are strong, and violations may be represented by imputation of immorality, social ostracism, and even illness or death. No topic is universally forbidden, that is, what cannot be said in one language can in another and vice versa. Linguistic taboos are not arbitrary since they are integrally related to cultural-specific beliefs, practice in religion and decorum and social control (Troike,1982:199).

Depending on the kind of offence suggested by a word, there are three general types of taboo. Profanity, which is concerned with offence against religion, is the first type. The second is obscenity, which is an offence against morals, it involves the

sex-related terms. Finally, vulgarity is an offence against good taste. Taboo words related to excretion and birth are distinguished by being both vulgar and obscene, since they also refer to sex (Pyles and Algeo, 1982:248). Death is another taboo area where there are many approximate synonyms, such as the many words and phrases for 'die': e.g. expire, give up the ghost, pass away, perish, shuffle off this mortal coil, etc. (Stubbs, 2002:370).

2.3 Antonyms of Euphemism

There are three antonyms of euphemism: dysphemism, cacophemism and power word. The first can be either offensive or merely humorously degrading. The second one is generally used more often in the sense of something deliberately offensive. The last is used mainly in arguments to make a point more correct.

Euphemism and dysphemism are two terms which show ways of talking about the evaluative content of language: that part which does not describe a thing in the world, but rather expresses the speaker's attitude towards it. Euphemism is "making something sound better", while dysphemism is "making something sound worse" (Allen and Burrige, 2002:1). Sampson (2001:1) states that if euphemism means talking about something unpleasant in a way that makes it sound less unpleasant, then the opposite would be talking about it in a way that makes it sound more unpleasant than it is". "Kicking the bucket" is an example of dysphemism referring to 'death' but Sampson points out that he is not sure whether the term 'dysphemism' would refer not to phrases like 'kick the bucket'; but to cases of bad-mouthing things or people which are not necessarily inherently unpleasant.

Allen and Burrige (2002:2) make reference to two kinds of "X-phemism" (euphemism and dysphemism):

1. Conventional X-phemisms are the words which are only used to make a reference to a taboo in a polite or impolite way: "shit" vs. "defecate", "prick" vs. "penis" etc.
2. General X-phemisms are ways of describing a situation, event or thing which convey an attitude towards it: "terrorist" vs. "freedom fighter", "henchman" vs. "associate"...etc.

Doublespeak is language that pretends to communicate but really does not; it is language that makes the bad seem good, the negative appear positive, the unpleasant appear attractive or at least tolerable. Doublespeak is language that avoids responsibility, language that is at variance with its real or purported meaning. It is language that conceals or prevents thought. Rather than extending thought, doublespeak limits it... "(Lutz, 1997:187-188). According to them, doublespeak is classified into four categories:

1. The first is the euphemism which is an inoffensive or positive word or phrase used to avoid a harsh, unpleasant or distasteful reality.
2. The second is jargon which is the specialized language of a trade, profession, or similar group, such as that used by doctors, lawyers, engineers, educators or car mechanics.
3. The third is gobbledygook or bureaucratese: Basically, such doublespeak is simply a matter of piling on words, of overwhelming the audience with words; the bigger the words and the longer the sentences, the better.
4. The fourth kind is inflated language that is designed to make the ordinary seem extraordinary, to make everyday things seem impressive, to give an air of importance to people, situations or things that would not normally be considered important and to make the simple seem complex.

What distinguishes doublespeak from other euphemism is its deliberate usage by governmental, military or corporate institution. Doublespeak is, in turn, distinguished from jargon in that doublespeak attempts to confuse and conceal the truth and jargon often provides greater precision to those that understand it (while inadvertently confusing these who don't). An example of the distinction is the use by the military of the word 'casualties' instead of 'deaths'-which may appear to be an attempt to hide the fact that people have been killed. It is actually a precise way of saying "personal who have been rendered incapable of fighting, whether by being killed , being badly injured, psychologically damaged, incapacitated by disease, rendered ineffective by having essential equipment destroyed, or disabled in any other way". "Casualties" is used instead of 'death', not for propagandistic or squeamish reasons, but because most casualties are not dead, but nevertheless useless for waging war. Proper example of doublespeak included taking friendly fire as a euphemism for 'being attacked'. Commentators such as Noam Chomsky and George Orwell have written at length about the dangers of allowing such euphemism to shape public perception and national policy.

2.4 Euphemism Treadmill

Euphemisms can eventually become taboo words themselves through a process called by Steren Pinker as "Euphemism Treadmill". In this case, words that are originally intended as euphemism may lose their euphemistic value and acquire the negative connotations of their referents. In some cases, they may be used mockingly and become dysphemistic. An example is the following: The British used 'concentration camp' during the second Boer war. Then, the Third Reich used the same expression for their death camps. Thus, the term became unacceptable to express the British concept. Therefore,

new terms have been invented as euphemisms for the same concept such as resettlement camps, fortified villages, etc. Also in some versions of English, a 'toilet room' was replaced by 'bathroom' and 'water closet', which were replaced by 'rest room' and 'WC' respectively.

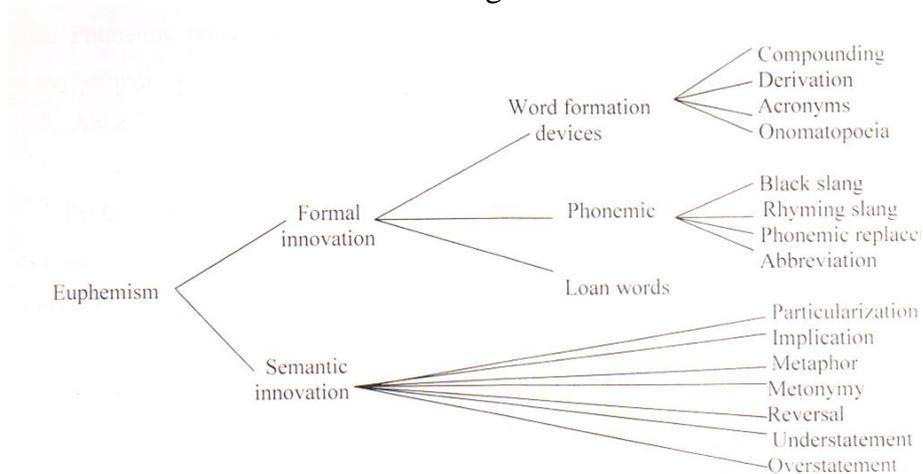
Connotations can easily change over time. 'Idiot' was once a neutral term, and 'moron' a similar one. Negative senses of a word tend to crowd out neutral ones, so the word 'retarded' was pressed into service to replace them. Now, that 'retarded' is considered rude, and as a result, new terms like 'mentally challenged or special' have replaced it. In a few decades, calling someone 'special' may well be a grave insult, and indeed among many young school students, it is already a common term of abuse, if not yet a particularly grave one. A similar progression occurred with crippled handicapped → disabled → differently-abled. Although in that case the meaning has also broadened; 'a dyslexic' or 'colourblind person' would not be termed 'crippled'. This can apply to naming of racial or ethnic groups as well. When proposed, euphemisms become successively "corrupted". For example: Negro → colore → black → African → American.

The euphemism treadmill also occurs with notions of profanity and obscenity, but in the reverse direction. Words once called "offensive" were later described as "objectionable" and later "questionable". A complementary "dysphemism treadmill" exists, but is more rarely observed. One modern example is the word "sucks" which began as American slang for "that is very unpleasant", and is shorthand for "that sucks dick". It developed over the late-twentieth century from being an extremely vulgar phrase to near acceptability.

2.5 Formation of Euphemism

Euphemism may be formed in a number of ways. Periphrasis or circumlocution is one of the most common to "speak around" a given word, implying it without saying it. Over time, circumlocutions become recognized as established euphemisms for particular words or ideas. To alter the pronunciation or spelling of a taboo word (such as a swear word) to form a euphemism is known as taboo deformation. There is an astonishing number of taboo deformation in English, of which many refer to the infamous four-letter words. In American English, words which are unacceptable on television such as 'fuck' may be represented by deformations such as 'freak'- even in child's cartoon. Some examples of Cockney rhyming slang serve the same purpose- to call a person a 'berk' sound less offensive than to call him a 'cunt', though 'berk' is short for 'Berkshire Hunt' which rhymes with 'cunt'. Bureaucracies such as the military and large corporations frequently spawn euphemisms of a more deliberate (and to some, more sinister) nature. Organizations coin doublespeak expressions to describe objectionable actions in terms that seem neutral or inoffensive. For example, a term used for 'radiation leaked from an improperly operated nuclear power plant is 'sun-shine units'. Militaries at war frequently do kill people, some times deliberately and some times by mistake. In doublespeak, the first may be called 'neutralizing the target' and the second 'collateral damage'. A common term 'execution' is an established euphemism referring to the act of putting a person to death, with or without judicial process. Likewise, industrial unpleasantness such as 'pollution' may be toned down to 'out gassing' or 'runoff' descriptions of physical processes rather than their damaging consequences. Some of this may simply be the application of precise technical terminology in the place of popular usage. Beyond precision, the advantage of technical terminology may

be its lack of emotional undertones, the disadvantage being the lack of real- life context. Warren (1992:133) listed two ways of innovating euphemism. They are: 1. Formal innovation 2. Semantic innovation. The two ways of innovation are then subdivided as shown in the diagram below:



The diagram is explained below with some illustrative examples:

1. Formal innovation involves the followings:

(i) Word formation devices: They include five ways (Warren,1992:133). They are:

1. Compounding: The combining of two individually innocuous words (e.g.: 'carcase' for 'corpose').
2. Derivation: The modification of a Latin term to form a printable modern English word (e.g.: 'fellatio' for 'oral sex').
3. Acronyms: (WC for water closet).
4. Onomatopoeia: Here the sound of "things" hitting together during the sex act is employed to refer to the act itself. (e.g.: 'bonk' for 'sexual intercourse')

(ii) Phonemic modification: the form of an offensive word is modified or altered, for example:

1. Back slang: 'enob' for 'bone', (Rawson, 1981:88), and 'epar' for 'rape' (Warren 1992:133). The words are reversed to avoid explicit mentioning.
2. Rhyming slang: 'Bristols' for 'breasts', a shortened, and further euphemized version of 'Bristols cities' (titties) which becomes a "semi-concealing device" (Burchfield, 1985:19).
3. Phonemic replacement: 'shoot' for shit, which Rawson (1981:254) terms "a euphemistic mispronunciation", i.e. one sound of the offensive term is replaced.
4. Abbreviation: 'eff' as in "eff off" for fuck off.

(iii) Loan words: Durell (1968:ix) says that "it has always struck him that most, if not all, the banned words seem to be of Saxon provenance, while the euphemisms constructed to convey the same meaning are of Latin-French". Some examples include:

1. French: 'mot' for 'cunt' and 'lingerie' for 'underwear'.
2. Latin: 'faces' for 'excrement' and 'anus' for 'ass hole'.
Aside from typical motivation for euphemism, Latin is often favoured as the uneducated and the young cannot interpret the meanings. However, often such substitutions are just as vulgar if one understood the meaning of Latinate (Laszka, 1990:421).
3. Other languages: 'cojones' for 'testicles', is Spanish, and 'schmuck' for 'penis' in Yiddish literally means 'pendant'.

2. Semantic innovation: In this kind of innovation, a "novel sense for some established word or word combination is created" (Warren, 1992:133). Warren's examples about semantic innovation are:

1. Particularization: A general term is used, which required to be 'particularized' within the context to make sense, e.g. 'satisfaction' for 'orgasm' and 'innocent' for 'virginal', both of which require contextually based inference by the reader/listener to be comprehensible.
2. Implication: In this case, several steps are required to reach the intended meaning, e.g. 'loose', which implies

'unattached', which leads to the interpretation 'sexually easy/available'.

3. Metaphor: A multitude of colorful metaphorical euphemisms surround 'menstruation', centering around "red", e.g., 'the cavalry has come', a reference to the red coats of the British cavalry, "it is a red letter day" and "flying the red flag" (Allen and Burrige, 1991:62). Other metaphorical euphemisms are 'globes', 'brown eyes' and 'melons' for 'breasts' (Rawson, 1981:38), and 'riding' for 'sex', which is common to many languages (cf. *ibid*)

4. Metonymy (Otherwise called 'general-for-specific'): This category includes the maximally general 'it' (sex) and the contextually dependent 'thing' (male, female sexual organs, etc.).

5. Reversal or irony: Examples like: 'blessed' (dawned) and 'enviable disease' (syphilis), both of which enable reference to something 'bad' by using opposites.

6. Understatement or litotes: Examples like 'sleep' (die), 'deed' (act of murder), (rape) and 'not very bright' (thick/stupid) fall into this category.

7. Overstatement or hyperbole: Instances include 'fight to glory' (death) and those falling under Rawson's (1981:11) basic rule of bureaucracies: 'the longer the title, the lower the rank'. For example, 'visual engineer' (window cleaner) and 'personal assistant' (secretary) (*ibid*).

2.6 Classification and types of Euphemism

Many euphemisms fall into one or more of these categories:

1. Terms of foreign and / or technical origin (derriere, copulation, perspire, urinate, security breach)
2. Abbreviations (SOB for son of a bitch, BS for bullshit, TS for tough shit)
3. Abstractions (it, the situation, go, left the company, do it)

4. Indirections (behind, unmentionable, privates, live together, go to the bathroom, sleep together)
5. Mispronunciation (goldarnit, freakin, shoot, etc.)
6. Plays on abbreviations ('barbecue sauce' for 'bull shit', 'sugar honey ice tea' for shit, 'Maryland farmer' for 'mother fucker', etc.).

There is some disagreement over whether certain terms are or not euphemisms. For example, sometimes the phrase visually impaired is labeled as a polite correct euphemism for 'blind'. However, 'visual impairment' can be a broader term, including for example, people who have partial sight in one eye, a group that would be excluded by the word 'blind'.

There are different types of euphemisms. These include the following:

1. political Euphemism:

The political euphemisms are the most common and familiar examples in which an innocent term is substituted for a wicked one. For instance, 'taking out a city' is used for destroying it. To Murphy (2000:17), political euphemism "is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind". It is usually said that politicians are masters of euphemism. The purpose of euphemism, as Parrot (2003:4) sees, "is to reinvent a leader or refashion an idea. The intent is to subliminally make popular, or alternatively, unpopular, a person, or idea". For example, because 'war' connotes death and destruction, Americans intentionally changed the name of the 'War Department' to the 'Department of Defence' in the forties of the last century.

2. Euphemism for the Profane:

Profane words and expressions are generally taken from these areas: religion, excretion, and sex. While profanities themselves have been around for some time, their limited use in

public and by the media has only in the past decade become socially acceptable, and there are still many expressions which cannot be used in polite conversation. The common maker of acceptability would disappear to be used on prime-time television or in the presence of children.

3. Religious Euphemism:

Euphemisms for God and Jesus are used by Christians to avoid taking the name of God in a vain oath, which would violate one of the Ten Commandments. Euphemism for hell, damnation and devil, on the other hand, are often used to avoid invoking the power of the adversary. Thus, damn (and most other religious profanity) is acceptable, and as a result, euphemism for religious profanity have taken on a very stodgy feeling.

4. Euphemism of Sex:

Sex has a great concern in human life and elicits embarrassment. It is a potent source of euphemism for people of most ages and walks of life. The boundaries of sexual euphemisms are wide, including the sexual act itself, the associated parts of the body, and even clothing that is in direct contact with these body parts, i.e. underwear (Nash, 1995, as cited in Ham,2001:11).

If the size of euphemism collection indicates the size of taboo, as suggested by Rawson (1981:23) ,then the area of sexual taboo is greater than any other one. Allen and Burrige (1991:96)point out that "the degree of synonymy in the vocabulary for genitalia and copulation has no parallel elsewhere in English lexicon, except in the terms for 'whore' ". Fore example, there are 1.200 terms for 'vagina', 1000 for 'penis', 800 for 'copulation', and around 2000 for 'whore'. This huge number of synonyms indicates what Halliday (1970: 165) terms "over-lexicalization", a phenomenon that constitutes a problem

area in language. Psychologically speaking, sexual feelings together with reference to them cause anger and embarrassment, necessitating the use of circumlocution and euphemism (Ham, 2001:15). Most sexual terms and expressions either remain unacceptable for general use or have undergone radical rehabilitation, 'penis' and 'vagina' for example.

5. Euphemism of Excretion:

While 'urinate' and 'defecate' are not euphemisms, they are used almost exclusively in a clinical sense. The basic Anglo-Saxon words for these functions, 'piss' and 'shit', are considered vulgarities, despite the use of 'piss' in the King James Bible (in Isaiah 36:12 and elsewhere). The word 'manure', referring to animal feces used as fertilizer for plants, literally means "worked with the hands" alluding to the mixing of manure with earth. Several zoos market the byproduct of elephants and other large herbivores as 'Zoo Doo', and there is a brand of chicken manure available in garden stores under the name 'Cock-a-Doodle Doo'. Similarly, the string of letters BS often replaces the word 'bullshit' in polit society.

There are lengthier periphrases for excretion used to excuse oneself from company, used as to 'powder one's nose' or to 'see a man about a horse or a dog'. Slang expressions which are neither particularly euphemistic nor dysphemistic, such as 'take a leak', form a separate category. Excretory profanity such as 'piss' and 'shit' may be acceptable in adult conversation. While euphemisms like 'Number One' and 'Number Two' are preferred for use with children.

3. Analysis and Discussion

Some selected examples are presented and analyzed. The analysis involves (1) the taboo instead of which the euphemism is used (2) the non-linguistic reasons behind tabooing the expression (3) formation and type of the euphemism. It worths

mentioning that the data is not exclusive (but roughly enough to illustrate the point under study). The examples are selected either from standard Arabic or from an Arabic dialect (mainly Iraqi Arabic unless mentioned) where necessary. The social, political and religious factors are sometimes highlighted not as an end by themselves; but only to shed more light on the function and role of euphemism. Moreover, the researcher is not, whatsoever, adopting or advocating any of the attitudes that incidentally appear in the analysis. The following is a discussion of the most prominent instances of euphemism in Arabic:

1. / faqi:r , ahha: / poor, starving, beggar.
/ muta afif / chaste

Arabs consider begging as shameful. Poor people may starve to death but never ask for charity or help because of the high degree of their self-esteem. Other people, as a sign of respect to feeling of dignity of those people, never humiliate them and thus hesitate to refer to their need (especially when they want to help them in one way or another) by use of words that semantically, implicitly and not explicitly, show that fact. On the contrary they try to raise their morals and to increase others' respect to them. The same discussion is applied to the following example:

/mu awaq / disabled → / ewi: al ihtiyad a:t al xa: a / (literally: those of special needs)

The disabled or the handicapped in the Arab society are treated with all respect, kindness and encouragement. It is felt that this kind of people have the same rights (if not more) of ordinary people. In our speech, we usually do not want to hurt their feelings and want to lessen the impression that because of their impairment (especially if it is because of war), they are incapable of doing things, equally like others. Meanwhile, we also want to draw others' attention that such people need special

care. Hence, the euphemism used contains this sense. If the impairment results from war, people usually add the sense of honour and the state of heroism and thus they refer to the impairment as / wisa:m al majd/ (Medal of Glory).

It is also interesting to mention that people use the phrase/ al amal wal rad a: / (hope) to name schools and institutes that teach and train the disabled to indicate that physically and mentally they are, like others, able of learning and participating actively in the life of their society.

The above two examples are classified under the type of semantic innovation (overstatement). Overstatement is created by extension where the reference of the word / muta afif / and of the phrase / ewi: al ihtiya: d a:t al xa: a/ are no longer denotative; but rather connotative,

2. / zabba:l / (scavenger) —————> / a:mil baladiya / (municipality serviceman)

Of course, many servicemen can come under this classification, but the use here is mainly referential since it is only understood if related to the situation and person in hand. This euphemism is normally and easily extended to include more of the civil services and works that are considered degrading. In a word , we can say that social (non-linguistic) attitudes cause problems, which language avoids or solves.

This example shows that using taboo words (though the degree here is not high) could be very harmful to the politeness principle (see Leech 1983) and to the cooperative principle and maxims of conversation (see Grice 1975). Particularly, the maxim of "manner" is going to be highly ruined because of the (social) flout that is perceived in the taboo especially if the 'insulted' person is addressed directly. At the same time, we can see the great role that euphemism can play in our everyday life; though, of course, we should put into consideration that taboo or not-taboo is a relative question.

3. / langa / , / ba:la / (loan words, no Arabic equivalent) —→ / ni umur / (half-aged), / must mala / (used), / must x dama / (employed) ... (second-hand)

The first two of these five expressions are loan words whereas the third word and the fourth and fifth phrases are Arabic derivations. The five expressions represent a series of taboo-euphemism that is graded according to the negative effect that the five elements convey. The elements are used alternatively. The taboo / langa / is not always taboo and some people may use it without need for euphemism. This word and the second taboo word / ba:la / are used as jargon (to refer to a certain registrant) in the economic setting. However, socially / langa / and / ba:la / are not so much taboo. It is also noticed that the two taboo words are loan words whereas the euphemisms are Arabic. Mostly, we depend on loan words as euphemisms and not vice versa. (e.g. :/ mara:fiq / (lavatory) is replaced by the loan toilet or W.C.

4. / arata:n / (cancer) —→ / marad xabi: / (malignant disease)

Superstition is the reason behind avoiding the name of the disease (cancer) directly. However, people still feel embarrassed and pessimistic when using the euphemism itself and it seems that we need a new one to do the job. / marad xabi: / itself as a euphemism, has negative connotation and it is likely to be replaced by another one and in this case, we may have an example of what is called "euphemism treadmill".

Arab people are mostly superstitious of certain kinds of diseases where the patients are treated or looked upon as outcasts. The list includes / d arab / (scabies) and / sara / (epilepsy). Moreover, it is not preferred (not necessarily as a result of superstition) to mention words that refer to diseases of the genitals like / sayala:n / (gonorhea).

Superstition is not only connected to diseases. People are also afraid of natural phenomena and use euphemism to name them. Also, it is said that one of the religious sects in the north of Iraq feels superstitious of any word that begins with the sound / ʔ /; merely because the word / ʔaita:n / (devil) begins with that sound and as such euphemism is very highly reliable.

5. Words that express the "dirty" action of eliminating body wastes like / yabu:l / (piss) and / yaxarri: / (shit) are mainly replaced by more polite words. It is noticeable that a slight modification (addition of the sound / t /) to the word / yabu:l / to make it / yatabawal / is euphemistic in that it makes the result more polite. In this case, euphemism can include the place where urinating and defecating take place i.e the lavatory. For example, we say / yaru:h lil mara:fiq / (go to the lavatory), though, sometimes, the words of those places are themselves tabooed and needed to be substituted by euphemism. (e.g.: / mara:fiq / or / xala: / are replaced by 'toilet' or 'W.C.' or simply by / hamma:m / (bathroom).

6. It is evident that words relating to sex (genitals and activity) are mostly offensive and against morals in the Arabic and Islamic world. So, sex is an area of rich euphemization in Arabic. Some sex words are even affecting other areas or subjects. For example, the recently-used word / xaxasa / (privatization) is embarrassing because as a derivation of / xa:s / (private) it resembles phonetically the word / xasawi: / (testicles). The word / xalfiyya / (background), which collocates with other terms like economic, cultural ...etc is a reminder of a part of the body 'buttock'.

Phonemic replacement is sometimes done on purpose to refer euphemistically to some taboo words of sex. (e.g. : / ti:n / (mudd) as a replacement of / ti:z / (buttock), / ki / (sound-play, no equivalent in English) as a replacement of / kis / (vagina). Metathesis is another kind of phonemic modification

that aims at euphemization (e.g.:/hinu:d/(Indians) as replacement of / nihu:d / (breasts). Onomatopoeia (words that reflect the sounds themselves) are, somehow, used to refer especially to taboo sex process. (e.g. :/ t iqt iq / (sexual intercourse).

The following example is also sex-related: / afla:m xala: iya / (prono films) → / afla:m karto:n / (cartoon films) or / afla:m aqa:fiyya / (educational films!).

The euphemism is used, here, to maintain secrecy or to indicate irony or both simultaneously (depending on the context-situation or the speech event). This euphemism comes under reversal (semantic innovation) where the speaker can refer to something bad by using its opposite. Linguistically, there is no figurative use; but conceptually the denotation is reversed by use of a lexeme in the same semantic field. There is a sense of irony and mocking as well.

Some taboo words are sex-specific. They could be taboo, and thus euphemized among men, not women and vice versa. Women may speak freely about / al hai / (menstruation) among themselves but this process is publically referred to by use of the euphemism/ a:da ahriyya / (monthly habit). It is noticed that the translation of the phrase (monthly courses or habit) is used and not the loan word or phrase itself like for example in the case of toilet. Diseases that are related to sex and pregnancy are treated as secrets and not even doctors can use their own words to refer to them.

The sexual intercourse may be euphemized by words that refer to many other actions like sleep, cultivate, enter, ride, do, ruin the dam... etc. / z na / (adultery) is a more legislative term. The process is not prevailing in the Arabic conservative society, so there is no need to think of a euphemism for it. Meanwhile homosexuality exists for a lesser extent. The word / farix / (hen-boy) is used to refer to the homosexual. It means that the male is young regardless of his age. No euphemism is used to replace the

lesbian because very rarely (if not at all) people speak openly about such thing. However, the word / lu:t / and / lu:ti: / are used in the Holy Quran to name the homosexual. But the denotation of this lexeme has changed a lot now (in Iraqi dialect at least). It now means tricky, clever and even smart person i.e. it is no longer an abuse; it is a praise instead and this is another example of treadmill. Masturbation is a highly offensive deed, so the direct taboo / darab t iliq / is not used and a Less offensive euphemism is used which is / a:da siryya / (secret habit). Unfortunately, euphemism is not always there to help us blocking our ears to 'ugly' words like / igtisa:b / (rape) that should be euphemized in one way or another (recently, one of the victims use the word / yitdan a / (come closer).

Among husbands and wives, some euphemisms are used humoursly or to give the sense of romanticism. Here, the euphemisms are personal, secret and specific and not necessarily publicly known as such and it depends on the imagination of the couple. (e.g. ./ hadi:qa / (garden), / ha i: /(grass) as replacement of the pubic hair; / hafla / (party) as replacement of the intercourse). Sometimes the genitals and the parts of the body are named after names of persons; and mostly the odd ones. Finally, publically as euphemisms, orgasm is called / gabra / (storm) and the sperm is called / bezir / (seed).

7. Evaluation of some words (i.e. judging whether they are taboo or not) depends on the setting. For examples / nika:h / (making love) is neutral in legislative or religious context but should be euphemized in casual context. On the contrary, / ma:t / (die) is neutral in casual context but should be euphemized in press and more polite settings. A group of words or phrases are used in this concern like: / tawafa: / (conveyed) , / intaqala ila al rafi:q al a la / (transferred beside Allah), / wadda / (say farewell) ... etc.

8. Figurative language is an important store from which we borrow metaphors, similies, puns... etc to substitute words of different digress of taboo for the many social, religious, political...etc reasons.

Examples:

- / rumma:n / (pomegranates)or / tufa:h / (apples) for the bosom of women.
- / araba:na / (cart) for the buttock
- / xo: wisla / (good piece of fitting) for the pretty woman
- / fa:ltow / (easily seduced to make love to or loose) for bad woman.

Male and female genitals are specifically referred to by euphemism; almost made of all types of figurative language including personification. Metonymically, the phrase / ma:li: / (mine), / ma:lak / (yours) ...etc in general contexts are specially interesting. They have different meanings but the specific euphemistic use is definitely determined by the fact that it should mutually understood by the speaker and the hearer. Reference to male genitals (and only among males) can also be done through the deictic expression / ha: a / (this) in direct communication.

9. / a war / (one-eyed) —————> / sayn kari:ma / (generously-eyed)

Some physical defeciences are not likened by people because they represent certain types of characters of people. For example, they remind us of thieves, murderers, jugglery...etc. But of course, people realize that this attitude cannot always be generalized and such physical defects are quite normal and cannot be connected to any mental or psychological fault in the personality. So, there is an attempt to reduce the bad impression without any irony whether on the hearer or the person himself. Semantically, understatement is helpful in this concern. Other examples of understatement are.

-/ ra wa / (bribe) / hadiyya basi:ta / (simple present) (another sense, of course, is added here which is mostly mocking and irony)

-/ gabi: / (stupid) ———> / dama:ga eqi:l / (heavy-minded) (the same sense of irony is present here as well but the negative effect is still there).

10. / sid in / (prison) ———> / islahiyya / (reformatory)

Socially and politically, this euphemism proves that we need to change our attitude towards prisons, imprisonment and crime in general. Prisoners are guilty but they are not non-human and prisons are not places of outcasts where they are humiliated or even 'tortured'. So officials try to promote euphemism here. This is one of the examples that euphemism cannot always be socially and linguistically successful unless the concept it underlies is socially convincing and not officially or politically imposed. Other examples are the following:

-occupying forces ———> multinational forces, or coalition forces, liberation forces

-cops (policemen) ———> order-keeping forces ———>

-club (as place of dancing and drinking alcohol and not a sport one) ———> cultural centre

-military defeat ———> tactical retreat

The above-mentioned examples can also come under the type of double-speaking.

11. The holy name of Allah (God) is very highly respected. It is mainly replaced by other expressions; not because it is taboo for any of the known reasons (with the mere sense of the word) but because of the utmost degree of respect. However, euphemisms that are used are mostly adjectives that express attributes of Allah which are mentioned in the Holy Quran and which are referred to under the term "The Pretty names of Allah". Arab people try to economize in using the word 'Allah' particularly in

oaths. They prefer to use the word only in very respectful contexts and avoid using it carelessly or arbitrarily.

12. Some words (especially foreign ones) seem ugly sometimes because of their pronunciation that reminds of taboo words in Arabic. The English word 'kiss' is embarrassing for Arab learners of English because phonetically, it is a sound reflection of an Arabic tabooed word that stands for 'vagina'. The same can be said about the word 'zip' which reminds of a word that stands for 'penis' in Arabic.

13. Differences among Arabic dialects, sometimes, result in embarrassment and shyness. The same word (in spelling and pronunciation) may have two different meanings in two dialects; and one of them is taboo. For example, the word /tannah / means 'stare' or 'absent-minded' in Egyptian Arabic whereas it means, in Iraqi Arabic, one of the most shameful positions to make love. It is clear that there is no need for euphemism because the setting is specific, contextual and dialectical. Another example is the Kuwaiti word / gargu:r / (a snare for fishing) which is an exact copy of a word in a variety of Iraqi dialect with the meaning of 'testicles'.

14. What is euphemism in one language should also be translated as euphemism in the target language; especially if the concepts across the two languages are taboo; which is the case, most of the times. However, the translation should not be so literal because the euphemisms are mostly culture-specific. There are also some cases of cultural gaps where the taboo concept (and hence euphemism) is not found or not taboo in the target language and vice versa. (e.g.: oral sex, lesbian love, marriage of the same sex, foodstuff from pigs...etc).

15. In the following are some examples of euphemism from the Holy Quran:

-It is clear that more than one euphemism are used to refer to the sexual intercourse, but with different senses each time. /

la:mastum/ (you touch the women) (see Al-Nis'a verse 43), / ba: iru:henna / (approach your wives to make love to) and / rafa / (make love) (see Al-Baqara verse 187) are used for the legal intercourse between man and woman in marriage. They are used to lessen the effect of the taboo words, though, as it is mentioned, the action is completely legal. To euphemize adultery / z na / (the illegal intercourse between man and woman) the Holy Quran uses / fa:hi a / (sin). The word also euphemizes homosexuality among people of loot when Allah destroyed them because of this sin (see Al-A'araf verse 80). Another sense is added to the word / tama / which also euphemizes making love; but exactly the imagined sex that, in paradise, the male believers will do to the most beautiful virgins as a reward of their faith and resistance of sin. However, this euphemism also replaces the sexual intercourse in our life on earth.

-/ saw a / as a replacement of the names of the genitals of both men and women. (see Al-A'raf verse 20)

-/ al ga: it/: This euphemism stands for the material, the action and the place where we go to eliminate the body wastes (see Al-Nesa' verse 43).

16. Fear, caution and disdain are the main factors that determine the use of euphemism to "speak around" words that are related to politics or the political regimes. People in Iraq were used to replace the name of the American president if they wanted to curse or revile the Iraqi president. Thus, they say something but they mean another that is implied and known, with a kind of relief that they achieve the deep meaning. (e.g.: / la nat alla ala: bo: / (cursed Bush) or / killa min bo: / (all because of Bush). Actually, they do not mean Bush. Also, Iraqi people used to replace / rafi:q / (comrade) by / ga:ris / (stinger) i.e. comrade pinch and cause disease or death for they are spies of the regime. The word / ni a:m / (regime) itself is dangerous to be used even in political setting and it is safe to use euphemism like / qiya:da

/ (leadership) instead. The word / baddil / (change in the imperative) is a kind of warning that the subject under discussion should be changed because a / ga:ris / may be there. The comrades, themselves, describe the intrigues and conspiracies they arrange against each others by the euphemism / tag bil dihin / (fried). Nowadays words such as / hawa:si m /, and / qaffas / are used to refer to thieves and smugglers of oil and of the public wealth. The word / hawa:sim / particularly is ironic because the last president of Iraq used it to describe his last battle with the Americans to mean the decisive battle (i.e., it is intended to have positive sense); whereas after the fall of the regime, it describes looting and stealing that occurred to high extent in Iraq (i.e. it came to have a negative sense).

17. Iraqi Arabic is characterized by a kind of euphemism that can avoid shame or embarrassment without deleting or euphemizing the single taboo words that are concerned. These taboo words can remain in the discourse, but the whole linguistic context is euphemized simply by phrases like / tikram / (with my respect to you) or / mukarram / (you are respected)...etc. The Arabic second person pronoun / t / (you) in the euphemism indicates that it is only workable in fact-to-face conversation. In the sentence:

/ tikram tireit hi a: jidi:d / (with my respect to you, I bought new shoes). The word / hi a: / (shoes) is not deleted or euphemized but the embarrassment of mentioning it (in the face of the addressee is clearly avoided by the euphemistic expression / tikram / (with my respect to you).

4. Conclusions

In the following are the conclusions that are derived from discussing the results of the analysis done in the study:

1. Euphemism is a widespread linguistic phenomenon in Arabic. Speakers of Arabic depend on it heavily in everyday life speech to avoid taboo.

2. Avoidance of taboo in Arabic results from the same universally-known reasons that make such expressions unacceptable for all humans i.e. embarrassment, offence, profanity, fear, shame, superstition, etc.
3. Euphemism in Arabic is dependant on in the subjects that are also related to the same universal non-linguistic domains i.e. religion, sex, politics, excretion and some other sensitive social relations.
4. Euphemism is an apparent technique in the main book of Arabs and Moslems i.e. the Holy Quran. This fact proves how far Arabs adhere to the linguistic and non-linguistic etiquettes which are deeply rooted in their culture (see section 3 point 5).
5. Some euphemisms are combined with senses of irony, mocking and humour; particularly in politics and sex. This means that euphemism is employed not only as a device to avoid taboo as is the general case, but also as a tool of indirect 'bitter' criticism. (see section 3 points 6 and 9).
6. 'Taboo or not taboo' is a relative judgment. This does not mean that it is individual or personal. Some taboo is one hundred percent agreed upon. Other than that, mostly, the linguistic and non-linguistic contexts or situations determine if the expression is taboo or not, and if it is taboo, they determine to what degree it is so 'Jargon' is also one of the determinants. This entails that whether euphemism is needed or not is also relative and graded. Besides, 'once' euphemism does not necessarily mean 'for ever' i.e. the euphemism is no longer helpful because it, itself, has become taboo for one reason or another and it needs to be euphemized. In this case, a treadmill occurs. (see section 3 point 4 and 7).

7. Arabic borrows some loan words as euphemisms. However, on the other hand, some foreign words (that are not taboo in the source language) themselves are embarrassing (particularly in the FLT situation) because incidentally, their pronunciation creates an 'echo' of a taboo word in Arabic (see section 3 point 12).
8. Very rarely, euphemisms are morphologically-formed. They are made in the phonological level to some extent. But they are mainly done in the semantic level (the types of reversal, understatement, overstatement and metonymy).
9. Pragmatically, most of the euphemistic expressions (except the phonologically and morphologically-formed ones) are 'stripped' of their denotative meaning and are fulfilling their function i.e. euphemism; connotatively and only connotatively (see section 3 point 8).
10. Phonological and lexical differences among Arabic dialects result sometimes in taboo which is realized as such either for the speaker or for the listener but not for both of them. Mostly it is taboo for the listener, because if the speaker knows that it is taboo, he will not utter it in the first place. This kind of taboo is not needed to be euphemized because it is not mutually understood as such (see section 3 point 13).
11. To a very lesser extent, taboo and euphemism in Arabic are culture-specific. This could be difficult in translation because of the problem of non-equivalence; especially that euphemism in the SL should be translated as so in the TL as well (see section 3 point 19).
12. Arabic is characterized by a unique kind of euphemism which is based not on lexical replacement; but simply, syntactically on addition of a phrase or a sentence that is usually mentioned before the context of taboo (see section 3 point 17).

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