



## Investigating the Strategies of Translating Euphemism: The Case of Iraqi Students of Translation

\*Hala Ghanim Mohammed

Ahmed Qadoury Abed

Mustansiriyah University College of Arts Translation Department

[h.mohammed@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq](mailto:h.mohammed@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq) [dr.ahmed\\_qadouriy@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq](mailto:dr.ahmed_qadouriy@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq)

### Abstract

This paper investigates the strategies of translating English and Arabic euphemism to both languages of Arabic and English used by Iraqi students of translation. It also addresses the directionality of languages in this context by determining whether the subjects of the current study find it more challenging to render Arabic euphemisms into English or vice versa. The paper defines the types of euphemism and outlines strategies for translating them, using extracts containing euphemistic and non-euphemistic expressions on topics such as death, work, impairment and lavatories, collected from 55 students. The conclusion is that literal translation was the most common strategy in translating Arabic and English euphemistic expressions for death and lavatory. Again, literal translation is popular for rendering work and impairment euphemistically into English, while substitution is used for translation into Arabic. Direction of the language played a role in choosing different strategies, while switching from English into Arabic in terms of translating euphemistic expressions for lavatory, work and impairment; however, it had no impact on translating euphemistic expressions for death. Translating work and impairment euphemistically are challenging because of a lack of knowledge about commonly used soft expressions in either culture. The same applies to English expressions for lavatory; raising knowledge is therefore needed. The statistical analysis confirmed the use of non-euphemistic expressions as a direct translation of source text euphemism.

**Key words:** Arabic, Language Direction, Euphemism, Iraqi Students of Translation, Translation strategies

## الخلاصة

يهدف هذا البحث الى دراسة الاستراتيجيات التي يتبعها طلاب الترجمة في ترجمة التعبيرات الإنكليزية الملوطة الى العربية وبالعكس. فهو يسلط هذا الضوء على دور اتجاه اللغة المترجم إليها أو منها وذلك بتحديد فيما إذا يشكل اتجاه ترجمة العبارات التلطيفية العربية عائقاً عند نقلها إلى اللغة الإنكليزية وبالعكس. يستعرض البحث أنواع التلطيف ويحدد استراتيجيات ترجمتها وذلك بتطبيق عملي لترجمات ٥٥ طالباً لمجموعة من العبارة الملوطة وغير الملوطة لموضوعات مثل الموت والمراحيض والعمل والإعاقة. توصل البحث في ختامه إلى أن استراتيجية الترجمة الحرفية هي الأكثر شيوعاً في ترجمة العبارات التلطيفية العربية والإنكليزية لموضوعي الموت والمراحيض. وتعد الترجمة الحرفية كذلك الأكثر استخداماً لترجمة موضوعي العمل والإعاقة عند الترجمة إلى الإنكليزية بينما استراتيجية الاستبدال الأكثر اعتماداً في الترجمة إلى اللغة العربية. ويؤدي اتجاه اللغة المترجم منها أو إليها دوراً واضحاً في اختيار نوع الاستراتيجية المعتمدة اثناء التنقل في الترجمة بين العربية والإنكليزية لترجمة تعبيرات تلطيفية في موضوعات مثل المرحيض والعمل والإعاقة. بينما استراتيجية الترجمة الحرفية هي المتبعة في ترجمة التعابير التلطيفية للموت وللغتين. وتشكل ترجمة مصطلحات العمل والإعاقة تحدياً وذلك لقلة خبرة الطالب بضرورة استخدام تعابير ملوطة في كلتا الثقافتين: العربية والإنكليزية. وينطبق الأمر نفسه على المصطلحات الإنكليزية المرتبطة بالمراحيض فإن الطالب كذلك بحاجة إلى زيادة معرفة بالتعابير الملوطة المستخدمة في ترجمتها. ويؤكد التحليل الاحصائي الى لجوء عينة البحث الى اعتماد الترجمة غير التلطيفية كاسلوب مباشر لمثيلاتها في النص الأصلي.

## 1. Introduction

The main aim of using euphemisms is to soften words for recipients or to avoid hurting people (Katamba, 2005); they are therefore used in circumstances that require the speaker or writer to render information genteelly or to avoid taboo words (Huang, 2005), and euphemism in turn is "closely related to culture, tradition, mentality, and social community" (Hysi,2011, p.380). Wardhaugh (2006) adds that euphemisms can be found in unpleasant topics, such as death and crime, which require neutral expressions. However, Alkire (2002) argues that euphemism may sophisticate the text, citing the choice of attorney over lawyer. Euphemisms can also be found in topics such as sex, employment, death and crime. However, the intimate connection between euphemism and culture may explain why a topic in one culture might not require a euphemism in another. The literature is controversial concerning the terms used to address euphemistic expressions. Alhussaini (2007) examines euphemism in English and Arabic from a contrastive perspective concluding that both languages tend to have euphemism "in the attempt to avoid either fearful, offensive or unpleasant subjects or the use of usually less exactbut less harsh language

...in place of these required by truthfulness and accuracy"(p.342). Al-Qadi (2009) mentions that 30 topics can be listed in euphemisms such as alcohol, body parts, body processes, crime, death, drugs, military, politics, religion, sex; moreover, expressions involving disabilities and disorder need much attention as they may hurt people or their families. Alhamadani (2017) differentiates between types and uses of euphemism. He cites eleven figurative, semantic and morphological devices as types of euphemism, like metaphor, hyperboles, clippings, etc. On the other hand, relatively similar to Al-Qadi, Alhamadani mentions 22 uses of euphemism, like connected with old age, with occupation, pregnancy, swearwords, religion, etc. Moreover, AlQahtani (2017), citing Nichol (2011), affirms the existence of seven types of euphemism, like abstraction, mispronunciation, modification, etc. Respectively, in terms of their actual uses, euphemistic expressions are existent in both spoken and written language, although Crystal (2003) argues that written language, which has fewer euphemisms than spoken language, does not have to contend with slang expressions in massive need of softening.

When it comes to two languages, different both linguistically and culturally, translating euphemisms becomes difficult. Sofer (2002) confirms that "there are vast cultural differences between a Western language such as English and a Semitic language like Arabic. One cannot translate these languages without paying attention to these cultural differences" (2002, p. 5). Again, Hai-long (2008) mentions that language and culture connect to each other, euphemism holds culture mark.

With reference to the available literature, Euphemism has been studied in linguistics and in translation studies by Arabs researchers (Khadra & Hadjer (2017); Al-Hamad & Salman (2013), Mohammed (2007), but no light has been shed on difficulties in its translation or on whether language direction plays a role. Moreover, the current study attempts to answer the following questions which is more challenging to render Arabic euphemisms into English or English euphemisms into Arabic? Respectively, AlQahtani (2017, p. 237), confirming the importance of socio-cultural aspects in the directionality of translation, states that

to translate euphemistic expressions accurately, it is important to examine how speakers are subject to social constraints, norms, an appropriateness. Every society in the world prohibits certain kinds of behaviour and certain taboo words. Speakers of a language conform to the norms and adapt to unwritten conventions.

Among the related studies in translating Arabic- English euphemism, Farghal (2005) investigates the translatability of Arabic Euphemism into English, concluding that some expressions are difficult to translate, and the translator's job is to find out other resources to cope with lack of correspondence and translation strategies. Al-Shawi (2013, p.123) "investigate(s) and studies how Grice's Implicature Theory (Cooperative Principles and Maxims) and Relevance Theory could assist a clear interpretation of euphemisms (capitals are original)." Anber & Swear (2016) examines the differences from a socio-cultural perspective in rendering euphemistic expressions in 'A Grain of Wheat' from English into Arabic. Al-Hamad & Salman (2013) deals with translating 23 euphemistic examples in the Holy Quran. Althawabeyeh (2017) investigates in his MA thesis the translation of euphemism in selected political texts, concluding that translators "may not be limited to a particular strategy or approach; s/he may choose what is most suitable, the sole criterion being whether the orientation is in favor of the receiver or reader to clear the intended meaning" (p.47). Alahj & Omer (2017) examines "through analysis and comparison, the incongruities and the disparities of meaning and style in translating the Quranic euphemistic expressions into English" (p.104).

Because of the importance of euphemism in language in general and in translation in particular, and because the available literature, to the best knowledge of the researchers, has been drawn to clarifying the difficulties of euphemism in Arabic/English translation, this paper attempts to answer two questions:

1. What are the more challenging strategies in translating euphemism?
2. Does directionality play a role in the difficulty of translating euphemism?

## 2. Types and Strategies of Euphemisms

Before discussing the strategies used by translators to render euphemisms, there is a need to discriminate between the types of euphemism. Nichol (2011) suggests seven types: abstraction, indirection, litotes, mispronunciation, modification, personification, and slang.

Abstraction means distancing people from embarrassing and unpleasant facts. To clarify this term, the euphemistic expressions snatched from us and departed this life are used instead of died. Furthermore, instead of saying blind, the euphemistic expression visually challenged is preferred, and ethnic

cleansing is a euphemism for racial genocide. Similarly, the soft expression for unemployment is gardening leave. Indirection replaces an obvious description of an action. For example, passing gas is used as a euphemism for fluctuation and gone to Heaven for die. Litotes involves the use of a double negative to soften or minimize the force of an idea. For example, the double negation not bad carries the idea of being good, he is no more means that he is dead and a short person can be described as being of restricted growth. Mispronunciation, another type of euphemism, is an adjustment to the pronunciation of a word. One example is the alteration to Jeez in the pronunciation of Jesus Christ. Modification is the changing of an offensive word to an adjective. For instance, instead of saying a communist outright, one could say someone with communist leanings. Personification is the use of a personal name for a word that cannot be said candidly. It can also be the application of the third person, a plural or any other grammatical form to refer to the word to be avoided. For instance, Arab mothers, trying to teach their children to use the toilet, will use do you have that thing? to mean are you desperate for a pee? Similarly, Teachers of science use the Talk to refer to the explanation of sexual reproduction to children in their classes (the birds and the bees covers the same topic). Slang varies from one country or region to another. Slang is used to cover taboo words. If somebody asks for pop when offered a drink, they may mean beer, vodka or any other spirit beverage. Similarly, the euphemistic expression Dear John is a reference to a message announcing a breakup.

Knowing the strategy used in rendering euphemism from one language to another is very important as it will be the theoretical base for the practical part of this paper. Unseth (2006) suggests four strategies to translate euphemism: literal translation, substitution, plain language, and combination of two strategies. Literal translation can be applicable when the source and target language have close or similar euphemistic expressions. This means that topics, or more specifically expressions, common to two languages can easily be translated literally because they will be understood by the target language readers. For example) انتقل الى رحمة الله (passing to God), can be rendered literally, as the main idea of death and transition to eternal life is available in both Arabic and English cultures. Unseth (2006) urges translators to use substitution when they cannot find the equivalent euphemistic expression for the source language, substituting the original euphemism for one that is understood by the target readers. For example , كريم العين (somebody with one eye) can be translated into English as one with visual

impairment. Likewise, she is wearing her apron high is a reference to a pregnant woman, so when we want to render this euphemistic phrase into Arabic, we can use) تنتظر مولود في الطريق (she is awaiting a new coming baby in the way). The Plain Language strategy renders the euphemistic expressions in the source language into plain language in the target. However, Unseth (2006) mentions that this strategy cannot be used unless the translator knows the intention of the author and the readers. Lose your lunch is a euphemistic expression that is usually rendered into Arabic as) تقيأ (vomiting). As the fourth strategy, the translator's job is to preserve the meaning of the source language, so they may tend to adopt two strategies to render a euphemism into the target language, for example by adding an expression or word to the literal translation. In the context of a body and a ceremony, the euphemistic word procession can be rendered into Arabic as) مراسم التشيع (the ceremony process); here the word) مراسم (process) is added to be a clear, natural-sounding Arabic euphemism to its readers.

### 3. Methodology

The methods used in this paper are qualitative and quantitative. Eight paragraphs from different texts were distributed to 78 students in the Department of Translation, Mustansiriyah University, on December 2019. Although 23 participants either rejected participation or did not complete the translation of all euphemistic examples, 55 responded positively. Based

No.	SLEuph	TLEuph	Euph or not?	Strategy	Fre q	%
1	Passed away	توفاه الله/توفيت (Allah took her soul)	✓	Substitution	33	60
		فأرقت الحياة (she departed life)	✓	Combination of strategies	7	12.7
		رحلت (she moved)	✓	Literal	1	1.81
		انتقلت الى مئوآها الأخير (she moved to her last resting place)	✓	Combination of strategies	8	14.54
		وأفأها الأجل/وأفأتها المنية (draw last breath)	✓	Combination of strategies	2	3.63
		ماتت (died)	✗		3	5.45
		انتقلت الى رحاب ربها (she moved to god's place)	✓	Combination of strategies	1	1.81
2	Unable to walk or speak	غير فادرة على المشي أو الكلام/عدم القدرة (unable to walk or speak)	✓	Literal	31	56.36
		عأجرة عن المشي أو الكلام (disable to walk or talk)	✗		9	16.36
		فقدت القدرة على المشي أو الكلام (she lost her ability to walk or speak)	✓	Literal	4	7.27
		أعدمت قدرتها على المشي أو الكلام (her ability is lost...)	✓	Literal	3	5.45
		ليس بوسعها المشي أو الكلام (she is unable to walk or speak)	✓	Literal	1	1.81
		لا تتمكن من المشي أو الكلام (she is unable to walk or speak)	✓	Literal	1	1.81
		لا تستطع النطق أو الحراك (she cannot talk or move)	✓	Literal	4	7.27

		مشلوله الحركة (crippled)	x		1	1.81
		يتعذر عليها المشي او الكلام (she is unable to walk or speak)	✓	Literal	1	1.81
3	Death/ die	موت (death)	x		24	43.63
		وفاه (pass away)	✓	Substitution	22	40
		رحيل (departure)	✓	Substitution	3	5.45
		وافها الاجل/وافتها المنية (she passed away)	✓	Combination of strategies	3	5.45
		انتقالها الى الحياة اخرى (moved to another life)	✓	Combination of strategies	1	1.81
		غادرت الحياة (departed this life)	✓	Combination of strategies	2	3.63
4	Passing	وفاه (passing away)	✓	Substitution	26	47.27
		مات/موت (death)	x		11	20
		رحيل (leaving)	✓	Literal	16	29.09
		مغادرة الحياة (departed this life)	✓	Combination of strategies	1	1.81
		انتقال الى عالم اخر (moved to another world)	✓	Combination of strategies	1	1.81
5	Impending death	موت وشيك (on the edge of death)	✓	Literal	32	58.18
		موت حتمي/موت حتمي (waiting death)	x		9	16.36
		على حافة الموت (on the edge of death)	✓	Combination of strategies	4	7.27
		وفاه مرتقبة (waiting death)	✓	Literal	5	9.09
		سكرات الموت (death throes)	✓	Substitution	2	3.63
		موت دان/قريب (death is very close)	✓	Literal	3	5.45
6	سكرات الموت (death)	Death throes	✓	Literal	24	43.63
		Moment of death	✓	Substitution	3	5.45

	throes)	Death signs	✓	Substitution	19	34.54
		About to die/dying	✓	Substitution	5	9.09
		The moment of pain	✓	Substitution	2	3.63
		Impending death	✓	Substitution	1	1.81
		Death agonies	✓	Literal	1	1.81
7	بالبيكاء والنواح (Crying and mourning)	Crying and wailing	✓	Literal	23	41.81
		Crying and mourning	✓	Literal	21	38.18
		Crying and grieving	✓	Literal	11	20
8	بقلوب يعصرها الآلم (with hearts in pain)	Hearts with deep pain/in pain	✓	Literal	24	43.63
		Hearts filled with/full of pain	✓	Combination of strategies	9	16.36
		With deep sorrow/sadness	✓	Substitution	12	21.81
		With heartbreaking/broken hearts	✓	Combination of strategies	7	12.72
		With hearts aching	✓	Literal	2	3.63
		With horror	✗		1	1.81
9	الصبر والسلوان (Patience and fortitude)	Patience and fortitude	✓	Literal	37	67.27
		Bearing and solace	✓	Substitution	6	10.90
		Peace and comfort	✓	Substitution	5	9.09
		Faith and patience	✓	Substitution	7	12.72
10	حادث مشؤوم (ominous accident)	Ominous accident	✓	Literal	20	36.36
		Fateful accident	✓	Substitution	12	21.81
		Disastrous accident	✓	Substitution	10	18.18
		Unfortunate accident	✓	Substitution	6	10.90
		Deadly accident	✗		4	7.27
		Cursed accident	✗		3	5.45



on Al-Qadi's classification of euphemism, an introductory survey was done, where the study subjects asked to select the most common types/ topics of euphemism. Four topics were selected, namely death, work, impairment and lavatories. A week after, eight paragraphs were selected to translate from different English and Arabic TTs; particularly they were taken from an OHCHR report "Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)", the Disability Benefits Center website, the Facts and Details project, true stories and the Al-Karkh University of Science declaration (see the Appendix). The selected extracts included 40 English and Arabic euphemistic and no-euphemistic expressions; however, only 22 samples were chosen to be presented in this paper because they all concern the topics mentioned above. The other 18 instances are repetitions and of those out of the study concern. Each topic is presented separately in the tables below, each table includes the source language euphemistic expressions, the target language euphemistic expressions, whether a euphemism exists or not, the strategy adopted in translation and the percentage of each expression. SL Euphemism (henceforth SLEuph) means the euphemistic expressions in the source texts, whereas TL Euphemism (henceforth TLEuph) means the subjects' translation; a back translation in brackets is added for clarifying the Arabic meaning. Frequency (henceforth Freq.) refers to the number of similar translations done by the subjects.

### 3.1 Results

3.1.1 Euphemistic and Non- Euphemistic Expressions Related to Death in English & Arabic

Table (1): Death Euphemistic Expressions in Arabic & English

3.1.2 Euphemistic and Non- Euphemistic Expressions Related to Lavatory in English & Arabic

Table (2): Lavatory Euphemistic Expressions in Arabic & English

No.	SL Euph	TLEuph	Euph or not?	Strategy	Freq	%
11	Toilets	مراحيض (toilets)	×		39	70.90
		دورات مياه (water closets)	✓	Substitution	13	23.63
		مرافق صحية (Health-care facilities)	✓	Substitution	3	5.45
12	Sewage	مياه المجاري (sewage)	✓	Literal	43	78.18
		الصرف الصحي (waste water)	✓	Substitution	12	21.81
13	Waste-water	مياه الصرف الصحي (wastewater)	✓	Literal	40	72.72
		مياه قنطرة (stinky water)	×		5	9.09
		مياه ثقيلة (heavy water)	✓	Substitution	2	3.63
		مياه مجاري (sewage water)	✓	Substitution	3	5.45
		مياه مستعملة (used water)	✓	Substitution	4	7.27
		مياه أسنة (stagnant water)	✓	Substitution	1	1.81
14	مراحيض (toilets)	Toilets	×		41	74.54
		Water closet	✓	Substitution	4	7.2
		W.C	✓	Substitution	3	5.45
		Restroom	✓	Substitution	7	12.72
15	النفائيات البرازية البشرية	Human faecal waste	✓	Literal	35	63.63
		Human stool waste	×		8	14.54
		Human discharge	✓	Substitution	2	3.63
		Human excreta	✓	Substitution	4	7.27
		Human waste	✓	Substitution	5	9.09
		Human litters	✓	Substitution	1	1.81
16	دورات المياه	Water closet	✓	Literal	11	20
		Toilets	×		15	27.27
		Bathroom	×		16	29.09
		Restroom	✓	Substitution	4	7.27
		W.C	✓	Substitution	7	12.72
		Public toilets	×		2	3.63

### 3.1.3 Euphemistic and Non- Euphemistic Expressions Related to Lavatory in English & Arabic

Table (3): Work & Impairment Euphemistic Expressions in Arabic & English

No.	SEuph	TLEuph	Euph or not?	Strategy	Frew	%
17	Disability	عجز (disability)	x		16	29.09
		إعاقه (hindering)	x		34	61.81
		عدم مقدرة (inability)	x		2	3.63
		شلل (paralysis)	x		2	3.63
		احتياجات خاصة (special needs)	✓	Substitution	1	1.81
18	Blind	اعمى (blind)	x		32	58.18
		كفيف (blind)	x		12	21.81
		بصير (sightless)	✓	Substitution	4	7.27
		فقد البصر (losing sight)	x		4	7.27
		صرير (blind)	x		3	5.45
19	Quit ... job	ترك الوظيفة (leave the job)	✓	Substitution	22	40
		استقالة/يستقيل من الوظيفة (quit from the job)	✓	Literal	26	47.27
		طرد من العمل (fired from the job)	x		5	9.09
		تخلي عن العمل (abandoned from work)	✓	Substitution	2	3.63
20	ذوي احتياجات خاصة (people with special needs)	Disabled people	x		18	32.72
		People with special needs	✓	Literal	35	63.63
		Handicapped people	x		2	3.63
21	إعاقه بصرية (visual impairment)	Visual/sight/optical disability	x		33	60
		Visual impairment	✓	Literal	15	27.27
		Vision loss	x		2	3.63
		Blindness	x		5	9.09
22	طرد من العمل	Kicked out of work	x		13	23.63

(kicked out of work)	Fired from work	x		27	49.09
	Dismissed from work	x		3	5.45
	Expel from work	x		6	10.90
	Suspended from work	✓	Substitution	3	5.45
	Driven out of work	x		1	1.81
	Removed/released from duties	✓	Substitution	2	3.63

These three tables indicate the actual frequencies of TLEuph, whether it is Euphemism or not, and strategies adopted. The issue of regarding non-euphemistic expressions as an actual strategy used will be examined later in Tables (5) and (6). The percentage of Freq is derived by dividing the number of instances identified over the total of instances. The summary of these three tables is revealed in Table (4) below.

Table (4): Total Performance

No	Types		Death	Work & impairment	Lavatory	Total
	Strategies					
1	Substitution	No	174	62	75	311
		%	55.9	19.9	24.2	25.7
2	Literal	No	265	50	129	444
		%	59.6	11.2	29.2	36.6
3	Combination of Strategies	No	46	---	---	46
		%	100	---	---	3.8
4	Non-Euphemistic Expressions	No	65	218	126	409
		%	15.8	53.3	30.9	33.9
Total			No	550	330	330
			%	45.4	27.3	27.3

For strategies used, this table reveals that the highest number of instances were in literal strategy with 444 out of 1210, with 36.6%. 311 instances with 25.7% and 46 with 3.8% were recorded for substitution and combination of

strategies, respectively. On the other hand, the study subjects tended to use non-euphemistic expressions in 409 instances with 33.9 %. This clearly indicates its importance as an additional strategy students use when choosing an euphemistic one; it may lead to unpleasant results or be unable to find suitable equivalents. No instance of plain language strategy was recorded; a question needs further investigation. Moreover, no instance of combination of strategies was recorded in texts related to work & impairment and lavatory. This entails another question, especially the majority of instances recorded revealed an additional word used. For text type, death was with the highest number of instances where 550 were found, with 45.4% of the total number 1210. Work & impairment and lavatory were with equal numbers of instances where 330 instances, with 27.3% were recorded in each. The possible justification is the frequent use of death euphemism over the other two types. More than one important point can be stated here. The highest number of euphemism instances in death was recorded in substitution, literal, and combination of strategy, with 174, 265 and 46 instances, respectively. Respectively, the highest number of euphemism in work & impairment was recorded in non-euphemistic expressions, where 218 instances out of 409, with 53.3%. For lavatory, the highest number was recorded in literal where 129 instances out of 444, with 29.2 %.

### 3.2 Discussion

A careful look at the numbers in the tables above reveals the most common strategies used by students in the Department of Translation as they translated euphemistic expressions. It can be seen that some expressions were rendered euphemistically while others were not. These tables therefore need to be integrated into another table and some charts to reach the goal of the paper. Consequently, each topic will be investigated deeply in the following sections by comparing the strategies of translating euphemistic and non-euphemistic expressions for death, lavatory, work and impairment.

#### 3.2.1 Death Expressions: Strategies & Directionality

The two pie charts show the strategies in detail and compare the effects of direction on the strategies the students used when trying to render expressions concerning death.

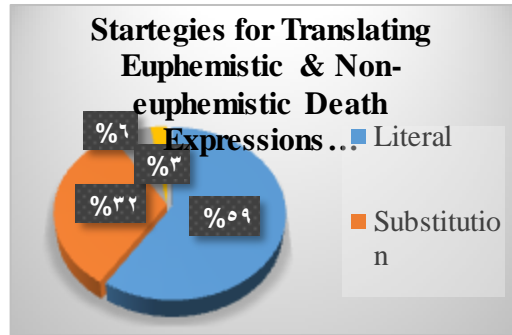
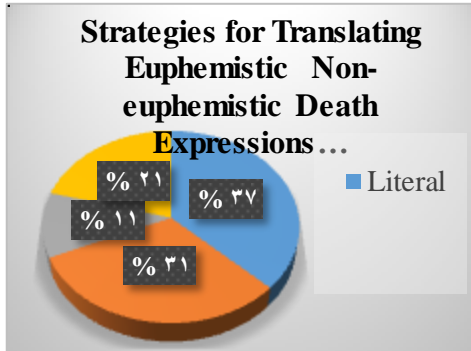


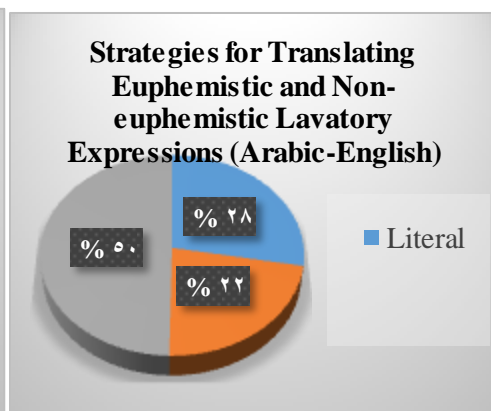
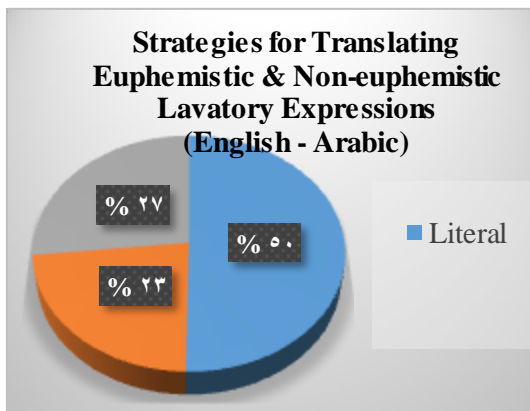
Figure (1) Death Expressions (English -Arabic)

Figure (2) Death Expressions (Arabic- English)

Figures (1) and (2) both show that the literal strategy is the one most commonly used to translate euphemistic and non-euphemistic expressions for death, (English–Arabic 37%, Arabic–English 59%). Substitution ranked second (English–Arabic 31%, Arabic–English 32%). Third was a combination of strategies (English–Arabic 11%, Arabic–English 6%). Finally, 21% translated English euphemisms for death into non-euphemistic Arabic, while 3% translated Arabic euphemisms for death into non-euphemistic English.

### 3.2.2 Lavatory Expressions: Strategies & Directionality

Figures (3) and (4) make the same comparisons of strategies as those shown in Figures (1) and (2), but this time between those used by students in the Department of Translation when translating euphemistic and non-euphemistic expressions concerning lavatory.



Figure(3) Lavatory Expressions(English/Arabic)  
Expressions(Arabic/ English)

Figure(4) Lavatory

Percentages in Figures (3) and (4) show that, once again, the literal strategy dominated when the students rendered euphemistic words concerning lavatory; however, language direction played an obvious role in increasing the percentage of literal strategy (50%) when translating from English into Arabic, but only half of this percentage (28%) when translating from Arabic into English. Substitution was the second-commonest strategy in both directions, with very similar ratios (English–Arabic 23%, Arabic–English 22%). In both Arabic-speaking and English-cultures, lavatorial expressions are in daily use. Surprisingly, however, half of the students (50%) were unable to translate Arabic lavatorial expressions into English euphemism, while more than a quarter of them (27%) had the same difficulty in the opposite direction, from English into Arabic.

### 3.2.3 Work & Impairment Expressions: Strategies & Directionality

Figures (5) and (6) display the most common strategies used by the students dealing with euphemistic and non-euphemistic expressions for work and impairment; they also clarify the connection between language directionality and the rendering of euphemistic words.

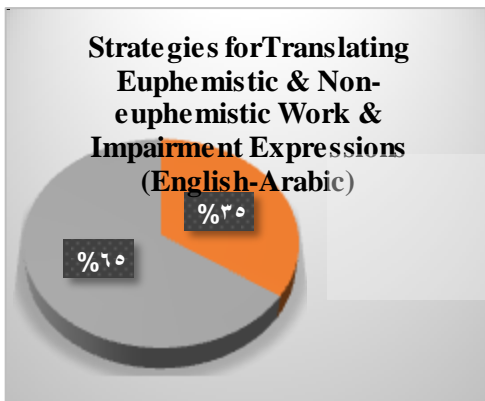


Figure (5) Work & Impairment Expressions  
(English /Arabic)

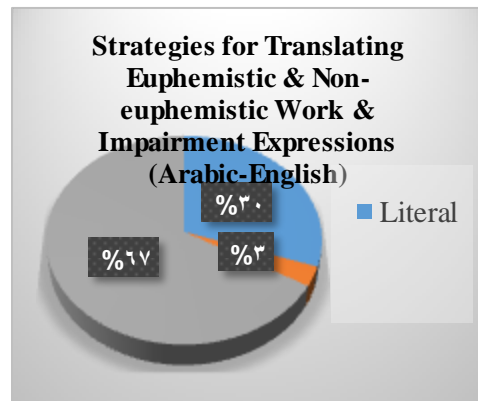


Figure (6) Work & Impairment Expressions  
(Arabic / English)

As shown in the two pie charts, the strategies differed according to direction of translation. Substitution was favoured by 35% to render euphemistic and non-euphemistic expressions concerning work and impairment into Arabic

(35%), while literal was the most common strategy when translating into English (30%), with substitution scoring only 3%. Most students did not use euphemism at all in their translations (English–Arabic 65%, Arabic–English 67%).

Statistically speaking, it is important to examine whether the interaction among these strategies is normally distributed, of course with significance value less than 0.05, or not. Based on SPSS, version 24, and with Two –Way ANOVA (see Cronk, 2016), two relevant hypotheses are proposed:

- i- Null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ): where (1) non-euphemistic expressions is regarded as another strategy used by Iraqi students of translation and (2) means of these strategies are equal. Therefore,  $H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 = \mu_4$ , where  $\mu_1$ ,  $\mu_2$ ,  $\mu_3$  and  $\mu_4$  are the strategies appeared in Table (4) above, respectively.
- ii- Alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ): where (1) non-euphemistic expressions is not a strategy used by Iraqi student of translation, but a direct translation for ST euphemism, and (2) means of substitution, literal and combination of strategies are only counted statistically, of course with different mean values. Therefore,  $H_1: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2 \neq \mu_3$ , where  $\mu_1$ ,  $\mu_2$  and  $\mu_3$  are the strategies of substitution, literal and combination of strategies appeared in Table (4) above, respectively.

Table (5): Two-Way ANOVA for Null Hypothesis

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: C\_Strategies

Source	Type II Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	38853.333 <sup>a</sup>	5	7770.667	1.284	.380
Intercept	125665.333	1	125665.333	20.764	.004
Strategies	29412.667	3	9804.222	1.620	.281
Types	9440.667	2	4720.333	.780	.500
Error	36313.333	6	6052.222		
Total	200832.000	12			
Corrected Total	75166.667	11			

a. R Squared = .517 (Adjusted R Squared = .114)

Table (6): Two-Way ANOVA for Alternative Hypothesis

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: C\_Strategies

Source	Type II Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Model	127178.333 <sup>a</sup>	5	25435.667	16.876	.009
Strategies	24788.667	2	12394.333	8.224	.038
Types	27860.667	2	13930.333	9.243	.032
Error	6028.667	4	1507.167		
Total	133207.000	9			

a. R Squared = .955 (Adjusted R Squared = .898)

Table (5) and Table (6) reveal the validity of  $H_1$ , and rejecting  $H_0$  where significance value of  $H_0$  is higher than (0.05) and less in  $H_1$ , particularly (0.09). Besides, in  $H_0$ , no normal distribution can be seen if values of non-euphemistic expressions are added, which indicates that the mean values of the four strategies are equal. On the other hand, in terms of  $H_1$ , mean values of substitution, literal and combination of strategies are different and significantly distributed. Thus, non-euphemistic expressions are used by Iraqi students of translation as a direct translation of ST euphemism.

Table (7) summarises the relationship between the directions of euphemistic and non-euphemistic translation of expressions for death, lavatory, work and impairment.

Table (7) Language Direction & Euphemistic Expressions

Topic	Language Direction	Average of Euphemism in TL	Average of Non-Euphemism in TL
Death	English into Arabic	79.26%	20.74%
	Arabic into English	97.46%	2.54%
Lavatory	English into Arabic	73.34 %	26.66%
	Arabic into English	50.31%	49.69%
Work & Impairment	English into Arabic	34.55%	65.45%
	Arabic into English	33.39%	66.61%

Table (7) shows that more than three-quarters of the students (79.26%) rendered death words euphemistically when translating into their mother

language (Arabic), while only 20.74% failed to use euphemism in their translations. Similarly, nearly all the students (97.46%) succeeded in forming euphemistic words in their English translations, while only 2.54% did not. The tendency to euphemise lavatory words in translation is higher for English–Arabic (73.34%) than for Arabic–English (50.31%). On the other hand, only 26.66% were unable to use euphemism when translating into Arabic, while nearly twice that number (49.69%) could not do so when translating into English. Two-thirds of the students were unable to translate work and impairment expressions euphemistically (English–Arabic 65.45%, Arabic–English 66.61%,) while only 34.55% and 33.39%, respectively, succeeded in doing so.

Combining the numbers gained from the tables and figures recording the rendition of euphemistic and non-euphemistic expressions concerning death, it is evident that literal translation is the most common strategy for such phrases; Unseth (2006) justifies this by saying that literal translation is applicable when both source and target languages have common euphemisms. Nevertheless, Dweik & Abu Shakra (2011) reject the idea of using literal translation, stating that this strategy will definitely lead to incomprehensible text and confuse readers. Plain strategy was not used at all when translating expressions for death in either direction.

The concept of death is very popular in both Arabic and English cultures, and, as translating euphemism is directly connected with culture, as mentioned earlier by Hai-long (2008), this may explain why nearly all the students tried to render expressions concerning death into Arabic or English using euphemism, as shown in table (1). Translating in either direction, students tended to replace any expression for death with a euphemistic expression in the target language. This finding aligns with the discovery of Bani Mofarrej and Al-Abed AlHaq (2015), who concluded in their study that high levels of euphemism are used when trying to address or report issues concerning death. By the same token, Galal (2014) states that expressions for death are euphemised in both Arabic and English, as death carries the bad connotation of leaving in both cultures and has a negative impact on the people. He adds that “the two languages share common conceptual metaphors in euphemizing death” (Galal, 2014, p. 166). This is why, when the researchers deliberately asked the students to translate non-euphemistic words like death and die, less than half (43.63%) rendered them literally and did not use euphemism, as table (7) shows, while more than half (57%)

followed other strategies and did euphemise them into Arabic; this result confirms Galal's statement.

In translating euphemistic and non-euphemistic lavatorial expressions, the tendency to adopt a literal translation strategy was as obvious as it was for expressions concerning death; this was true for both directions of translation, especially when rendering into Arabic. This result is in harmony with Anber & Swear (2016), who depended also on Unseth (2006) strategies and prompted the adaptation of the literal strategy to render the English word lavatory into Arabic. Two of the strategies suggested by Unseth (2006), combination of strategies and plain, were not used here. The numbers in Table (7) reveal that more students tend to euphemise while translating into Arabic (73.34%) than into English (50.31%). This means that Iraqi students, acquainted with their own culture, succeeded in softening lavatorial expressions when translating into Arabic. On the other hand, their knowledge of English culture regarding lavatorial terms is poor and needs improvement. Again, the researchers intentionally inserted the non-euphemistic expression toilet and its Arabic equivalent مراحيض to see whether people would try to render it euphemistically, finding that (70.90%), and about three-quarters of the students (74.54%) used a literal strategy rather than euphemism for translating toilet and its Arabic translation، مراحيض as Table (2) shows.

People all around the world are very careful to select euphemisms when addressing people with special needs, either orally or in writing; thus, many euphemistic expressions concerning impairment are available and common in both Arabic and English cultures. However, in translation studies, expressions related to impairment & work have not been investigated in depth by Arab researchers in terms of applying euphemism to their translations. This may be the reason why nearly two-thirds of the students did not try to soften and euphemise expressions related to work and impairment when they appeared in the text.

This issue applied to translation in both directions, which means that students' knowledge about euphemistic expressions concerning work and impairment is very limited. The idea of euphemising words appertaining to work is not popular in Iraqi culture because of the nature of employment there (most people have fixed governmental jobs, so that nobody will fire them until they retire). Cordesman's (2015) study, The Employment Crisis in Iraq, which depends on statistics from the Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies, states "government employment is a job for life as almost nobody is ever fired or made redundant, rather they are moved from one department to

another, even if they are incompetent” (Cordesman, 2015, p. 108). The use of euphemism is strongly bonded to culture; this may better explain why students failed to render euphemistic expressions about work, as their knowledge of leaving jobs is very limited. As they had done for expressions concerning death and lavatory, the researchers added two non-euphemistic expressions related to impairment and work, blind and طرد من العمل (kicked out of work), to see how the students would deal with them euphemistically. More than half of the students (58.18%) translated blind into Arabic literally, so they were not able to produce a euphemistic translation for the non-euphemistic word. The percentage is much greater for طرد من العمل (kicked out of work), as 89.07% rendered this non-euphemistic Arabic expression into its non-euphemistic English version because the students’ adoption of other strategies (mainly literal, partly substitution) led to euphemism loss.

Knowing the author’s and readers’ intentions is the condition prompting the adoption of the plain strategy in translation (Unseth, 2006). In our case, the intention of the readers is not obvious to the translator and the intention of the translator is not obvious to the readers; this may explain why students did not apply this strategy at all in their translations of expressions for death, lavatory, work and impairment.

Directionality of the language has a direct impact, as the strategies differed in the lavatory, work and impairment topics; English–Arabic translation strategies differ from those used for English–Arabic translation. On the contrary, the direction of the language did not play any role in translating euphemistic expressions for death; this confirms the assertion of Hatim & Mason (1990) that being bicultural is essential, even more important than being bilingual.

#### 4. Conclusions

As agreed by earlier researchers, the strong direct link between euphemism and culture obviously affects the translation of euphemisms as indicated below:

- Of all the strategies used to translate English expressions concerning death into Arabic euphemistically, the literal strategy is the most dominant, followed by substitution and then a combination of strategies; the same order applies when translating into English. This reflects the students’ full understanding and awareness of using euphemism to soften these expressions, so that only a few could not euphemise death expressions.

- In both languages, the literal strategy ranked first in translating lavatorial expressions euphemistically, with substitution second; the combination of strategies was used in neither Arabic nor English. Although the sequence of the strategies is the same in Arabic and English, the direction of translation influences the number of expressions that were not euphemised; the tendency to apply euphemism while translating into Arabic was nearly double the tendency shown when translating into English. This means that students have sufficient knowledge about their Arabic culture in terms of lavatorial words but they are in need of more information about softening them in English.
- Translating euphemistic expressions concerning work and impairment is somewhat challenging, as the idea of leaving work is missing in Iraqi culture; the majority of the students (around two-thirds) failed to render these topics euphemistically into Arabic or English. Among those who could use euphemism in their translations, only substitution was used when translating into Arabic, while translation into English involved the literal strategy first, followed by substitution.
- The plain strategy was not used or applied at all for translating euphemism in any of the topics surveyed; this may be due to the condition of applying that strategy, which is knowledge of the readers' and author's intentions.
- Combined strategies were used only when rendering expressions concerning death; this may reflect the students' mastery of all such expressions in both languages, enabling them to employ this strategy in their translations.
- All the added non-euphemistic expressions were rendered non-euphemistically, as the students followed the literal strategy; this may be due to the students' fidelity to the source expression.
- The direction of translation has a direct effect on euphemistic translations of expressions concerning lavatory, work and impairment; that effect does not appear when dealing with the death topic.
- All the added non-euphemistic expressions were rendered non-euphemistically, as the students followed the literal strategy; this may be due to the students' fidelity to the source expression. The statistical analysis revealed the difficulty of regarding non-euphemistic expression as a strategy used by Iraqi students of translation; on the contrary, its values validates its being as a direct translation of ST euphemism.
- Finally, it is hoped that this paper will help those interested in translating euphemism in general and in Arabic-English translation in particular to know the more challenging strategies in translating euphemism and the role of directionality in the difficulty of translating euphemism; we wish to

encourage translation students and lecturers to focus more on translating euphemistic words concerning work & impairment. Due to the limitation of the study, the researchers did not investigate deeper to find why students tend to prefer literal translation. Is it because of their fidelity and loyalty to the source words or is there another reason? This gap may encourage other researchers to dig in and discover the real reason.

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### Appendix

No.	The Text
1	<p>Most paramountly, my mother passed away when I was 36. She had a brain tumor and died seven weeks after diagnosis. My children were small, and I watched her deteriorate from living a full life as an involved grandmother to unable to walk or speak, to a death, all in under two months. I experienced complicated grief for months, if not more than a year, after her death.</p> <p>A year ago, I lost my dear friend, Carrie, to breast cancer. It was powerfully heartbreaking and high honor to be part of a circle of women whom she entrusted to process her feelings about her impending death and to establish a plan to support her husband and kids following her passing. (I was asked to give her daughter advice about love and relationships.)</p>
2	<p>لما حضرت هارون الرشيد الوفاة، وإشتدت عليه سكرات الموت، نادى إلى حاشيتة أن يأتو إليه بجيوشة وحراسة، فجاؤوا بسيوفهم ودروعهم وأسلحتهم، وكان عددهم يكاد ألا يحصى عددهم إلا الله كلمهم تحت قيادته، فلما راهم هارون الرشيد أخذ يبكي ويقول: يا من لا يزول ملكة إرحم من قد زال ملكة، وأخذ يبكي حتى مات.</p>
3	<p>موسيقار الأجيال يعود من الموت</p> <p>لحسن حظنا لعل أطرف هذه القصص هي قصة عودة موسيقار الأجيال الراحل محمد عبد الوهاب من الموت، وهي قصة لا يعرفها الكثيرون، وقد حكاها بنفسه في أحد التسجيلات</p>

	<p>الإذاعية القديمة، عندما قال متذكرا إنه عندما كان يبلغ من العمر سنتين حدثت له وعكة صحية أفقدته الوعي، فظنت عائلته أنه قد مات، وامتلاً منزل الأسرة بالبكاء والنواح، لكن فجأة وأثناء غسل الطفل محمد عبد الوهاب عاد إلى وعيه باكياً، فتحول الحال في منزل الأسرة إلى سعادة وضحك بالطفل الذي عاد من الموت قبل جنازته بدقائق.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>بقلوب يعتصرها الالم تنعى عمادة واساتذة ومنتسبو وطلبة كلية التحسس النائي والجيوفيزياء – جامعة الكرخ ضحايا ابناء محافظة الموصل الحبيبة اثر حادثة العبارة المشؤوم ..... سائلين المولى القدير ان يسكنهم فسيح جناته ويمن على اهلهم وذويهم بالصبر والسلوان والشفاء العاجل لجميع المصابين ..... انا لله وانا اليه راجعون</p>
<p>5</p>	<p><b>Work and Disability Benefits</b> If you cannot work due to a disability, you may be able to receive disability benefits through the Social Security Administration (SSA) to help you pay for medical bills and everyday living expenses. Although you may think you need to quit your job to qualify for disability benefits, this is not the case. In fact, if you quit your job during your application process, you need to prove to the SSA that this decision was due to your disability and not so that you could lower your income to qualify for benefits.</p> <p><b>Income Limits</b> If your disability benefits are based on Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), which is determined by work history and how much you pay in employment taxes, then your work limits are determined by your substantial gainful activity (SGA). Your SGA is any work that brings in an amount of income determined by the SSA that shows you are not disabled and can compete in a national economy. For 2020, the SGA income limits are: 60 per month if non-blind 10 per month if blind</p>

6	<p>المدة ١٥ عاماً.. موظف يخفي عن رب عمله أنه أعمى فقد ساليا كاهوات بصره أثناء دراسته وتعثر بذلك حلمه في أن يصبح عاملاً في حانة (barman) أو في مطعم. رغم ذلك أصر ساليا على تحقيق هدفه حتى حصل على عمل في حانة تابعة لأحد الفنادق المرموقة لكنه لم يخبر صاحب العمل أنه يرى فقط بنسبة ٥ %.</p> <p>وعن سبب إخفائه لمشكلته، يقول ساليا إن أصحاب العمل لا يرحبون بتوظيف الناس ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة لأنه يصعب في ما بعد طردهم من العمل، في حال تقصيرهم فيه. وفي فترات الفراغ، كان ساليا يتدرب في الحانة على تحديد نوع الشراب من شكل القنينة وتمييز الكؤوس بواسطة اللمس والإحساس.</p> <p>ورغم الإعاقة البصرية ارتقى ساليا في مسيرته المهنية بالحانة، لكن الخوف من كشف حقيقته ظلت تشغل باله ما تسببت له بالإكتئاب. وبعد تغلبه على هذه الأزمة قرر ساليا تأليف كتاب عن مسيرته المهنية بعنوان: “موعد أعمى مع الحياة”. واليوم يشغل منصب مشرف إداري في مدينة هامبورغ الألمانية.</p> <p>وفي تصريح خاص لـ DW قال ساليا: “بغض النظر عما يحدث في الحياة، في المقام الأول هو موقفك تجاه هدفك”. وأضاف: “لم أشعر أبداً إنني معاق ولكن إمكانيات جسدي محدودة”.</p>
7	<p><b>Lack of Toilets and Sanitation in the Developing World</b></p> <p>squatting in the Andes Two out of every five people in the world have no access to safe toilets. Rather than using flush toilets they use open pits or latrines that flush waste into the streets or simply go in a nearby field. Places with sewers often have no waste-water treatment facilities and sewage is dumped directly into water supplies from which people draw their water.</p>
8	<p>وعادة ما يرتبط العمل في الصرف الصحي بالوصم، ويتعرض الأشخاص الذين يضطلعون بهذه الوظائف إلى التمييز. ويشير هذا الوصم في شتى أرجاء العالم، لكنه الأوضح في جنوب آسيا حيث يتخذ العمل في الصرف الصحي شكل (التنظيف اليدوي للمراحيض). ويعني التنظيف اليدوي للمراحيض أن على الناس إزالة النفايات البرازية البشرية من دورات المياه الجافة باليدين وحملها في سلات مفتوحة إلى أماكن التخلص منها. ويجب التفرقة بين ذلك</p>



العدد الثامن والثلاثون  
الجزء الأول/ شباط / ٢٠٢٠

جامعة واسط  
مجلة كلية التربية

<p>والعمل في الصرف الصحي عموماً بسبب الروابط المتأصلة بين هذا النشاط وأحد أسوأ جوانب النظام الطبقي، وأغلب من يضطلع بهذه الوظيفة من النساء اللاتي ينتمين إلى الطبقات المسجلة التي كانت ولا تزال تخضع للتمييز في جميع مناحي الحياة.</p>
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