A Contrastive Analysis of Euphemism in Mistaghanimy's The Memory of the Flesh and Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway

دراسة مقارنة لأسلوب الكناية بين روايتين (أحلام مستغانمي في ذاكرة الجسد وفرجينيا وولني في السيدة دكلوي)

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Abstract

The current study tries to investigate the notion of euphemism in English and Arabic .To achieve its objectives, the study illustrates that there are definite points of parallel and variance between the two languages in using euphemisms. The study discusses euphemism: its definition, nature and relationship with certain figures of speech. It has been found that individuals are affected, or even well-ordered, by the moral principles and conventions of society and, as established by the two authors in the two novels , how they react when they are influenced by a situation. The study ends with some concluding remarks pointing out some points of similarity and difference between the two languages.

Keywords: Euphemism, Arabic, English, Metaphor, Dysphemism.

1.Introduction

The word euphemism comes from Greek word "euphemo" which has the meaning good or fortunate speech. Euphemism according to Lakoff (2004:16) is a linguistic phenomenon that is associated with culture, practice, attitude and social community. In order for human beings to survive, they have to co-operate with each other by different ways of cooperation. Thus to cooperate, one needs to communicate by using some way of indicatingattitudes, ideas, intentions, and, so on.

العدد : ٤٢		مجلة الكلية الإسلامية الجامعة ـ النجف الأشرف
No. 42		The Islamic University College Journal

ISNN 1997-6208

Such communication can be achieved by using the languageverbally. Therefore, verbal communication plays a very important role in any society. Individuals of any society should have an ability to use the system of language appropriately as a means of socialinteraction with native speakers since one cannot use some words in every situation. Therefore, languagecan be considered as verbal behavior and one facet of the entire communicative behavior by whichmembers of asocietyinteract.

Within any society, people are organized into groups. These groups can be characterized interms of shared attitudes and beliefs, which are expressed by the accepted behaviour of the membersof the group, including, of course, their language behavior. Thus common attitudes, beliefs, and values are reflected in the way members of the group use language, for example, what they choose to say and how they say it. However, certain words in all societies are unacceptable for social or culturalreasons; they are considered taboo-words. What acts or words are forbidden reflect the particularcustoms, beliefs, attitudes and views of the society. In addition, some words may be used in certain.

Euphemism is a substitute to socially offensive terms. In opposing to taboo words where the signifier and the referent are closely connected, in a euphemism, this distance is much farther. This distance determines the mitigating capacity of a euphemistic expression and the amount of a given word's ambiguity in referring to a taboo area. Ambiguity is a defining aspect of euphemisms as a linguistic phenomenon, a term acts as a euphemism because, in a given context, it is capable of creating an ambiguity which proposes that there may be anunpleasantnotion beneath and consequently it allows the mitigation of the taboo (Fernandez, 2006:16).

It is believed that euphemism in most languages is presented to have an operative emotional influence in a listener's mind. Therefore, euphemism is an expression proposed by the speaker to be less aggressive or disturbing to the listener than the word or phrase it substitutes(Sadock,1993:55).

It also worth stating that euphemism is extensively employed in Arabic literature. The main reference of Arabs and Moslems i.e. the Holy Quran uses euphemism to evade revealingin a straight lineterms or expressions that possibly willresulted in offence or indignity.

1.1.The Problem

Utterers of almost all cultures have problems in mentioning to taboo or

generally limited issues. Furthermore, the characters in literary textsand especially novels,who have numerous social rank; sexual category, age, instructive experience, etc., employ diverse euphemisms of various levels of conventionalism or courtesy at different situations and this is apparent inEnglish and Arabic languages. Therefore, it is indisputably challenging in the natural surroundings and technique of euphemisms assortment throughout cultures.

1.2. Aims of the Study

1. Discovering notions of euphemism(its meaning, strategies, and purposes).

2. Tracing similarities and differences between English and Arabic as far as the notion of euphemism is concerned.

3. Identifying the indication of euphemism in selected literary texts, i.e. in English and Arabic novels.

4. Analyzing data, presenting the results and drawing conclusions.

1.3. Procedures

The following are the steps to be followed in the study:

1. Surveying the notion of euphemism in English and Arabic.

2. Describing English and Arabic data of euphemism

3. Applying the notion of euphemism to English and Arabic liter arytexts, i.e. in English and Arabic novels.

4. Investigating the aspects of similarity and difference of this notion in both English and Arabic.

2.1.Euphemisms, Taboos & Women's Language

The word euphemism comes from Greek word "euphemo" which has the meaning good or fortunate speech. Euphemism according to Lakoff (2004:16) is a linguistic phenomenon closely related to culture, tradition, mentality and social community. Lakoff states the fact that linguistic devices by which women convey ideas, thoughts and feelings, reveal the truth about their social status. Throughout the history, these devices place women in peripheral position, and impose on them rules and regulations.

Rawson (1981:1) asserts the fact that Euphemisms are powerful linguistic tools that are embedded so deeply in our language that few of us, even those who pride themselves on being plain spoken, ever get through a day without using them. Jespersen (1922:246) writes that,

There are great differences with regard to swearing between different nations, but I think that in those countries and in those circles in which swearing is common and it is found much more extensively among women, this is true at any rate and this refers to a kind of differentiation rather than similarity in speech.

Jespersen (ibid :274)stresses the idea that women exercise a good and universal influence on linguistic development through their instinctive shrinking from coarse and gross expressions and their preferences for refined, veiled and indirect expressions. Women's speech was a deviant from the average male speaking patterns. They use lady like language. Jespersen(ibid.) deals with three aspects of language that he contended were related to women: verbal taboo competing language; conversational language and conservative language. He presents these aspects as problems with women's language and that women use limited and less extensive vocabulary and exaggerated the use of adverbs like pretty, nice, very and sweet.

Lakoff (2004:78-81) concludes that there are two items related to taboos and the like 1.Super polite forms, as indirect requests, euphemisms and avoidance of strong swear words .e.g. fudge, my goodness, and 2.Lack of a sense of humor. Women's language will be affected by various   factors, such as gender, experience and status of the speaker. And when it comes to swearing, for instance, men are expected to know how to swear and how to tell and appreciate the telling of jokes. Women are expected to speak properly, and they usually use euphemism to replace off –color or indicate expressions. The fact to be stated is that women are experts at euphemism while men carelessly blurt out whatever they are thinking.

Holmes and Meyerhof (2003:488) emphasize that the study of language over minds as the finest way for understanding the importance of social categories in human behavior. Social categories are also verbal categories whose use supplies insights into the structure and organization of social life in which the development of discursive psychology has been influenced by ethno methodological approaches to the study of social life. This influence is particularly relevant to the topic of gender identity and language.

2.2.Definition and purpose of Euphemism

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 state or define by euphemism. Leech (1974:53) designates euphemism as " groundwork of stating something destructive or inappropriate in terms that mark it appear more agreeable or appropriate than it really is". It is predominantlyp resented to avoid offence that may happen in proposing of a taboo topic, e.g. religion, death, politics or social subjects. To make communication develops smoothly and without encounter (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 employed 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".

2.3.Euphemisms & Dysphemism

Euphemisms are substitutes to dispreferred terms, and are presented to evade, conceivable loss of face. The dispreferred term may be offensive, impressive, unpleasant, or for some other motive have numerous undesirable implications to appropriately execute speaker's communicative aim on an assumed occurrence. Allan and Burridge [1991: 14]

Dysphemism, conversely, is delineated as the opposite of euphemism. At the same time as euphemism is presented for enhancement, dysphemism is used for disapproving or harsh term. Occasionally "the situation entails the indication of indecent terms" [Al-Qadi 2009: 18].

3.1.An Overview of Euphemistic Strategies and Taboos in Ahlam Mestaghanimy'novel:

Euphemism((الكناية)"Al-kinayah" ,as an idiomatic meaning, has been introduced in Arabic by Abu BakrAbd al-Qāhir bin Abdar-Rahman bin Muhammad al-Jurjān(الجرجاني). He describes euphemism as that the speaker wants to prove the meaning of words in which he doesn't mention it verbally , but he states it as a synonymy and he refers to it and makes it as a guide (Matloop and Hassan,2011:358).

Memory of the Flesh is a famousnovel that is presented by the algerian writer Ahlam Mosteghanemi .It was awarded by Naguib Mahfouz Award in 1997. It is issued in 1993 in Beirut . The sale of it is now more than three million copies. The style of Mesteghanimy in this novelis irrational to the point that Nizar Qabbani was stunned by

it and described it with insanity .Arabic language and its diversities are full of euphemistic replacements which are employed in spoken and written procedures. Nevertheless, he suggests, it is more regularly employed in spoken technique. (Ali, 1995: 25-26)

Accordingly, one may note that the spectator is mindful that Mestaghanimy is depictingher own ethicalscope, the one of the heart. More willingly than writing a novel ethicalconcentrated on other standards, she states that she is persistentlystruggling against the burden of other people's moral values and she is using the woman flesh as her battlefield. She is speaking out for gender equal opportunity in her local field, and similarly the right to improve her individual standards in the worldwide realm. Briefly, "The Memory of the Flesh" validates the sexual nature of her novel in several ways: she sees sex as absolutely natural; she desires to resuscitate the Arab traditions; she correspondinglydeliberates that speaking about the body flexibly is a way to interruptobstructions that retain Arab women silent.

Ahlam Mestaghanimy depicts euphemism as a tool for manipulation when she draws this line:

"ارتشفت قهوتك المرة **بشغف** و بمتعة مشبوهة هذه المرة"(٤٢)

"She spied bitter coffee with passion and equivocal pleasure this time" Mestaghanimy introduces the pleasures of the flesh and both of them that carried on a tarried affair as when she says:

"هو الذي يعرف كيف يلامس انثى . تماما، كما يعرف ملامسة الكلمات. بالاشتعال المستتر نفسه"(٣٨).

"He who knows how he comes into contact with a female. Well, as touching words with the ignition of the same flame"

تمتطي اليه جنونها، وتدري: للرغبة صهيل داخلي **رقيق** لا يعترضه منطق. فتشهق، وخيول الشوق الوحشية تأخذها إليه (٤٣).

Her insanity is riding to him, She knows, for desire there is aninternal and **delicate** neigh that could not be interrupted by logic . She inhales , and longing brutal horses takes her to him.

An elegant orientation to a "sensitive" subject: If a woman is in a delicate (orcertain or INTERESTING) state of health, she is pregnant. "Delicate" prospered in as a euphemism for pregnancy.(ibid:73)

وهي مازالت انثى التداعيات تخلع وترتدي الكلمات عن ضجر جسدي. على عجل.

هي ذي عارية الصوت...تكسو كلمات اللقاء بالتردد بين سؤالين.(٢٤)

As it is clear from the literal meaning of the word euphemism 'to speak beautifully', whichever the purpose of euphemism would be, thecrucial incentive is to redecorate the offensive, disagreeable and painful language. No matter the determination is to evade taboos, keep theface of others, cover truth or deliver a better presence to the reference. That is perhaps the only reason that encouraged some of the narrators and even literature analysts to delineate euphemism as a rhetorical device of language.

أريد أن أكتب عن هذه التي ملكتني في العتمة. قصتي مع كشريط مصور أخاف أن يحرقه الضوء ويلغيه، لأن هذه الوردة نبتت في دهاليزي السرية.(٢٧)

I want to write about this , who has owned me in the shade . My story with you is a video that I afraid to be burned by the light and be abolished by it , since this rose grew in my secret galleries.

Here, Mestaghanimydenotes explicitlymale and female by euphemism; practically made of all categories of figurative language containing personification. Accordingly, they have dissimilar implications however the precise euphemistic employment is absolutelypresented by the detail that it should reciprocally assumed by the narrator and the reader. Mention to female (and only among females) can also be done through the deictic expression (this). Mestaghanimy beautifies and redecorating and give emphasis for her speech as in the following:

"الحب أن تسمحي لمن يحبك بأن يجتاحك و يهزمك و يسطو على كل شيء هو
أنت."(٣٦)

"Love is that you let the person who loves youto invade you and defeat you and burglarize everything that belongsto you."

3.2.An Overview of Euphemisms in Virginia Woolf's Novel (Mrs. Dalloway):

Mrs. Dallowayis one of Woolf's best-known novels. It covers one day from morning to night in one woman's life. Woolf addresses the tension between euphemism and literalism in her major novel-Mrs. Dalloway. Woolf tackles tactics thatare in agreement with the feelings of the reader. to avoid taboo as in a "disease" in language. She advocates the abolishment of such restrictions. Her aim was to bring sex back into the foreground and to "break with taboos on sexuality from the past," that had placed the topic firmly within.

"He thought her beautiful, believed her impeccably wise; dreamed of her, wrote poems to her, which, ignoring the subject, she was in a bad heart condition, she corrected in red ink, but nothing is strange when someone in love, you'll never guess what happened!!"

"The pride of giving life to an immortal soul is veryfine . . . perfectly furious as I was to be **caught**"(65)

Caught or caught out: To be made pregnant,- like KNOCKED UP, seldomencountered in the present tense. The usage is not, as one might think, limited to the lower classes. Woolf states the use of euphemism to

She, the Senator's long-time secretary and traveling **companion**, told the authorities last month that she told her that night that he had eaten candy that tasted bitter and that he feared he had been poisoned"(Rawson1981:55).

Woolf tackles the strongest motivation in the creation of new euphemistic expressionas she activates them indirectly when ever the older ones lose their indirectness away to their references. All humans

psychological nature tend not to refer to taboo ordefinition "they [euphemisms] are all beating around the outback" (Wajnryb,2005:47)

Crystal (2004:172) and Rawson (1981:1) view euphemism as the act of 'substituting a mild, indirect term in place of an embarrassing or unpleasant expression'. This implicit characteristic of euphemism enables the speaker in several figurative forms, such as (metaphors, doublespeak, etc.) to avoid revealing personal information and minimizing the effect of face threatening acts. Woolf also euphemize death as in the following:

"I wish **it** to be far away from you! If something happens to you, what should I do?"(42)

"It" in the above sentence refers to death. Metaphors like "death is passing" and "death is a trip" are the bases of most of the euphemisms formed especially in formal contexts; euphemistic metaphors are the linguistic manifestations of the conceptual metaphors. Woolf asserts the use of dysphemism as in the following:

"she always had the feeling that it was very, very, dangerous to live even one day.Virginia Woolf asserts the contrast between euphemism and dysphemism in the following line:

"What does the brain matter compared with the heart **Kicking the bucket**?"(99)

Sampson (2001:1) asserts that if euphemism suggestsmentioning something unpleasant in a tactic that marks it appear less disagreeable, formerly the reverse would be mentioning it in a technique that presents it as extra -unpleasant than it is". "**Kicking the bucket**" is an instance of dysphemism denoting 'death' nonetheless, Sampson argues that he is not certain whether the term 'dysphemism' does not denote phrases like 'kick the bucket'; but then again to an instances of bad-saying things which are not essentiallydisagreeable.

Some dysphemisms are sex-specific. They could be taboo, and thus euphemized among men, not women and vice versa.English speakers speak about such topics flexibly since most of the

euphemistic expressions are sex specific in practice, as in the following:

"It might be possible that the world itself is without meaning without your "**melons**". Come with me for**making love**."(87)

Woolf adopts certain words relating to sexual activity and the associated parts of the bodyas in 'melons' for 'breasts.Euphemism is used in the above lines only to substitute a word which has offensive implications with additional suitable one. Woolf tackles the words or expressions that need euphemisms to reproduce society's values or the estimations of the society. Woolf draws the attention by using 'territory manager' instead of 'salesman'.

"The world of the **territory manager** wavered and quivered and threatened to burst into flames."(76)

4.Summary &Conclusions:

1. To end with, it seems that there are a diversity of tactics in which the outcomes of revisions on the employment of euphemistic schemes and taboos could help not only those attemptingto recognize language, but similarly those struggling with the nature of humankind. Moreover ,the construction of euphemism could be sketched further back in time by means of these texts to increase a goodappreciative of the historical roots of English language namely, or of other languages for comprehension in which satisfactoryindicationis presents. To conclude, This visionillustrates how people are influenced, or even well-ordered, by the ethics and pressures of society and, as confirmed by the two authors, how they respond when they are affected by a situation. Euphemism displays how people translate their models and faiths within societal limitations, but the inquiry of from whom we are hiding our factualbeliefs, and why, persists.

2. Although Arabic Language has a bulky number of euphemisms forgender acts or related issues, Arabic speakers cannot speak about such topics flexibly since most of the euphemistic

expressions are gender specific in practice. They have been created by men's negativeapproach towards women. Consequently, women reject the use of them or be employed for.

3. The organization of euphemism works in English and Arabic as a retrieving system of for the creation and loss of lexical items. In this manner،euphemism isdeliberated as the death pool for the lexical item for the reason that any word that is activated by euphemism will infrequently resuscitate at another time in the future.

4. Arabic is characterized by a unique kind of euphemism which is based not on lexical replacement; but simply, on addition of a phrase or a sentence that is usually mentioned before the context of taboo meaning .

5. The Arabs employed euphemism for diverse tenacities: such as redecorating and give emphasis to speech**.** Euphemism in English is used to interchange an expression with offensive associations with another adequate one.

الخلاصة:

تحاول هذه الدراسة تقصي مفهوم الكناية في اللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية. ولأجل تحقيق اهدافها فأن الدراسة توضح أن هناك نقاط محددة من التشابه والتباين بين اللغتين في استخدام العبارات الملطفة. يتناول البحث الكناية من حيث تعريفها وطبيعتها وعلاقتها بالصور البلاغية. توصلت الدراسة بأن الافراد يتأثرون بالمبادئ الاخلاقية وتقاليد المجتمع كما تم توظيف ذلك من قبل المؤلفتين في روايتيهما. تنتهي الدراسة مع بعض الملاحظات الختامية مع الاشارة إلى بعض نقاط التشابه والاختلاف بين اللغتين.

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