



Translating of English Euphemistic Expressions into Arabic: Political Speeches as A Case Study

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Abstract

The study investigates the complexities faced by translators when rendering euphemistic expressions from English political speeches into Arabic. It explores the diverse strategies employed by translators, categorizes these euphemisms, and identifies specific challenges encountered in the process. This research aims to propose solutions to bridge these translation gaps, emphasizing that translators often grapple with contextual misunderstandings and cultural differences, leading to potential inaccuracies in translation. The findings underscore the importance of translators gaining a deeper understanding of political euphemisms and cultural contexts to ensure accurate and effective translations from English to Arabic.

Keywords: Translation, euphemism, Political discourse, Culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

The essential problem of the current research is English euphemistic Expressions in political speech have rarely been handled in terms of how to deal with it in a suitable manner, and how to express and present it in translation. In addition, translators frequently fail to understand the context of political euphemisms. Since translators face unique difficulties in determining the correct meaning of political euphemisms and establishing equivalence between them.

The current study is hypothesized that translators sometimes find difficulty in translating euphemistic expressions in political speech when translating from English into Arabic. The failure in understanding the euphemistic expressions of both languages could lead translators to translate inappropriately. Translators frequently fail to understand the context of political euphemisms. Translators face unique difficulties in determining the correct meaning of political euphemisms and the cultural differences and how to establish equivalence between them.

The present study will be of a great value to translators in the field of translation. It is hoped that this study will prepare students, specialists in translation and researchers interested in translation studies with valuable theoretical and practical information about the euphemistic expressions faced by translators in political speech from English into Arabic, contributing to the development of strategies, guidelines, and best practices specific to this context.

Eclectically speaking, eclectically speaking, different models are applied here to demonstrate that the translation of euphemisms in political speech. For Nida's formal vs. dynamic translation, House's covert vs. overt translation (1977), Newmark's communicative vs. semantic translation (1989), skopos, Baker's pragmatics, along with different techniques and strategies of translation used in data analysis in order to tackle the difficulties and problems of translating euphemistic expressions in political speech from English into Arabic.

1.1 Various Definitions of Translation

Newmark (1981:7) defines translation as it "is a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/ or statement in one language by the same message and/ or statement in another language". He also defines translation theory

as "the body of knowledge that we have and still to have about the process of translating" (ibid: 19). Bassnet (2002: 2) postulates that "what is generally understood as translation involves the rendering of a SL text into the TL text so as to ensure that: The surface meaning of the two languages will approximately be similar; the structure of the SL will be preserved as closely as possible but not so closely that the TL structure will be seriously distorted".

According to Hatim and Munday (2004:3) that translation is an extremely wide concept that can be understood in numerous ways. For instance, one might refer to translation as a process or a result, and define forms such as literary translation, technical translation, subtitling, and machine translation; while the phrase often refers to the transfer of written texts, it can also encompass interpretation. Nida and Taber (1974:12) argue that translation is about finding the closest natural equivalent of the source text in the target text, both in terms of content and style. Nonetheless, translation is seen as a search for equivalent rather than sameness of meaning.

1.2 Political Texts and Translation

Translation involves the communication between two languages and/or cultures, encompassing various fields to facilitate linguistic and cultural interaction. Schäffner (2004) defines translation as the production of text, retextualizing a source language text based on target language conventions. Nida and Taber (1969) describe translation as achieving the closest natural equivalence of the source language message in both meaning and style, while expressing it in the receiver language.

Bell (1991) adds that translation is the articulation in a target language of what has been expressed in a source language, maintaining semantic and stylistic equivalences. According to Catford (1965), translation is the substitution of textual material in one language (source language) with equivalent textual material in another language (target language).

According to Schäffner (1997: 131-132) Political texts are highly delicate, and their sensitivity is influenced in part by linguistic factors. These texts encompass various genres and serve different purposes based on diverse political activities. He convincingly explores the sensitivity of political text and discourse, emphasizing the translator's need to exercise extra caution in handling such material. Even a minor error could lead to severe consequences, impacting relationships between countries, states, parties, and even individuals or cultures. To illustrate, consider the phrase "The troops must withdraw from the occupied areas," originally in English. When translating this sentence, meticulous attention to every linguistic detail is crucial, as any inaccuracy or omission could result in a significant political dilemma (ibid).

Hence, the appropriate translation for this sentence is:

على القوات الانسحاب من الاراضي المحتلة"

," but it should not be translated as

"الانسحاب من اراض محتلة"

The former translation includes the definite article "the," specifying particular "occupied" areas, while the latter omits the article, referring to unspecified occupied areas. Failure to include "the" would not compel the enemy to withdraw from all occupied areas, only certain ones. Thus, overlooking or removing a linguistic element like "the" alters the meaning from specific to general, inevitably leading to a political issue. Gagnon (2010: 252-256) also addresses this concept, highlighting that in the study of political translation, one must consider both the translation of political texts and translation as a political statement.

1.3 The Concept of Euphemism in Translation Studies

The concept of euphemism defined differently according to different perspectives. For example, Rawson (1981:1) defined euphemism as "powerful linguistic tools that are embedded so deeply in our language that few of us, even those who pride themselves on being plainspoken, never get through a day without using them". The Merriam Webster on line Dictionary (2015) also defined euphemism as "the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant". While the Oxford Dictionary (2015) illustrates that a euphemism "Is a mild or indirect word or expression substituted for one considered to be too harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing".

Other definitions include, "A euphemism is the substitution of a mild, indirect, or vague expression for one thought to be offensive, harsh, or blunt" (Word Reference, 2015). Sanderson (1999:259) says that euphemism "can be used as a way of being vague and unclear, or to cover up the truth or reality of a situation". Blackwell (1981 :45) states that euphemism as "the practice of referring to something offensive or delicate in terms that make it sound more pleasant". In

the same respect, Larson (1984:116) says that “euphemism is used to avoid an offensive expression or one that is socially unacceptable”.

Allan and Burrige (1991:14) say that “euphemisms are alternatives to expressions, and are used to avoid possible loss of face. The expression may be taboo, fearsome, distasteful, or for some other reason has too many negative connotations to felicitously execute speaker’s communicative intention on given occasion”.

When it comes to translation, Larson (1984:116) states that “Euphemisms will often need to be translated by a comparable euphemism in the receptor language. The important thing is for the translator to recognize the euphemistic nature of the source language expression and then translate with an appropriate and acceptable expression of the receptor language whether euphemistic or not”.

Holder (2007: vii) argues that “in speech or writing, we use euphemism for dealing with taboo or sensitive subjects. It is therefore the language of evasion, hypocrisy, prudery, and deceit”. Therefore, before discussing euphemism, we need to review what Halliday proposed in (1978) in order to connect these categories to the political speech that has a political euphemism. This will help text receivers, and translators, to understand the purpose of the speech and that of the euphemism itself.

He classified the context of a situation with respect to discourse into three categories: field, tenor, and mode. According to Halliday, field indicates the nature of the social action taking place, tenor of discourse indicates the nature of the participants, along with their status and role, while mode indicates how language provides and achieves the participants’ goals and interests in a specific situation.

The language components known as euphemisms are rich with cultural connotations. Their cultural appropriateness stems from the fact that they mimic idioms and terminology. Consequently, miscommunications may result from incorrectly rendering such phrases. Schmidt (2021) argues that euphemisms are problematic because they avoid making clear references to certain subjects. Instead, it’s a cover for other, less attractive subjects. Hence, it is defined as unsavory, disrespectful, and pejorative. Because of this, the original cultural and terminological meaning of these idioms may be negatively impacted by improper translations. Wang (2020) states that translating euphemistic terms allows readers to have a deeper understanding of the culture and thought processes of the original language speakers, which in turn allows them to acquire new euphemistic expressions.

1.4 The Importance of Euphemism

In regard to the need for euphemism and its influence in the language are subject for controversy, some users will count it healthy and inevitable, others will not. Since some writers have negative points of view or evaluations for euphemism through considering it as the enemy of plain talk. In this sense, Lanham (1991 :84) views it as a form of linguistic obfuscation which becomes as pervasive as pollution. In the same line, Anderson and Stageberg (1975 :140) comment that " much contemporary speech still hides behind that traditional enemy of plain talk, the euphemism ". then they further address it as " a necessary evil ". It seems that they have neglected the positive side of euphemism which is not intended to deceive or conceal the reality but rather it contributes to making easy-going of life.

By the same token, Ridout (1960, p. 104) considers euphemism as a sin since it helps politicians to hide the truth, but he later remarks that euphemism in certain circumstances may be necessary in order to spare a person's feelings. Howard (1984 :100) also states that "euphemism is the British vice ... just as hyperbole is the American “. these comments on negative evaluations of euphemism's role and function, has probably been ascribed to the excessive indulgence in manipulating the use of euphemism. But if the euphemism is to be employed moderately " as you would use spices on cooking ", then it will be a necessary tool to make life easier (Grunner, 1983: 92).

On the other hand, many writers assert the positive evaluation that euphemism preserves as a necessary linguistic device. Burchfield (1985, p.3) maintains, "A language without euphemisms would be a defective instrument of communication ". Likewise, Ayto (1993 :1) acclaims that since euphemism is a figure of rhetoric which finds its existence through its elegance and adequacy for the public taste. Besides, Enright (1985:3) states that "without euphemisms, the world would grind, unoled, to a halt, universal animosity covering all".

The significance of euphemism generally ranges from substituting the taboo of various types to the desire to placate a painful subject to the intention not to offend the addressee, to the motive to say a thing out of longing for refinement, imposing (Enright,1985, p.3). To Stern (1965, pp. 334- 335) affirms the significance of euphemism is realized either by the speaker who attempts to adjust his words in order to have the intended effect on his interlocutor or by the implication which might be felt by the avoidance of certain negative connotation.

1.5 Functions of Euphemism

Euphemism serves several functions in language, as outlined by Burrige. These functions help in maintaining social harmony and smooth communication, particularly in situations where offensive or taboo words might be used. The functions of euphemism include protective, underhand, uplifting, provocative, cohesive, and ludic (Burrige, 2012).

A-The protective function of euphemism: Which acts as a shield against direct offense. It covers up inappropriate expressions related to taboo subjects such as body functions, God, diseases, and death. Euphemisms provide alternate names for these topics to make them more socially acceptable and easier to discuss (Burrige, 2012).

B-Underhand euphemism: also known as doublespeak, is used to camouflage a topic rather than hide unpleasant expressions. It is often used in politics or military jargon to disguise or make lies sound truthful (Halliday, 1978: 171).

C-Uplifting euphemism: Which involves using alternative words or expressions to avoid using unpleasant terms. Speakers aim to "talk up and inflate" by using euphemisms to present negative things in a more positive light (Burrige, 2012).

D-Provocative euphemism: Which is used to reveal and inspire. It is often employed by authors discussing sensitive topics, such as criticizing political situations, to speak freely about taboo subjects (Burrige, 2012).

E-The cohesive function of euphemism: Which helps to maintain solidarity within a society by using euphemisms as a sign of cohesion. Different groups within a society, such as teachers or friends, may use euphemisms to create a sense of identity and solidarity (Throne, 1964).

F- ludic euphemism: Which serves the purpose of amusing. It involves playing with sounds and words for entertainment, from childhood to adulthood (Ayto, 1999). Examples include using terms like "hoot" or "belly laugh" to indicate laughing loudly.

1.6 Types of Euphemism

Kaosa-Ad (2009) classifies euphemisms into five types, each with its own subcategories (2009:15-21).

A-Shortening: Which is divided into five types: Abbreviation, which combines the initial letters of words to create new terms (e.g., S.O.B = son of a bitch) (Meyer, 2009:181). Backformation, the formation of a word by removing affixes (e.g., burglar = burglary) (Fromkin, 2003:97).

B-Diminutive, achieved by adding a suffix and shortening the word (e.g., hind end = buttock) (Kaosa-Ad, 2009:16). Omission, done by omitting letters and replacing them with dashes (e.g., bi*ch) (Kaosa-Ad, 2009). Clipping, which involves deleting parts of words (e.g., nation = damnation or gee = Jesus) (Kaosa-Ad, 2009).

C-Circumlocution, a phonological modification using many words to explain a meaning that has broadened (e.g., postconsumer secondary material = garbage) (Allen & Burrige, 2006:128).

F-Remodeling is divided into three types: Phonological distortion, where speakers change the original pronunciation (e.g., heck = hell) (Burrige, 2005: 125). Blending, combining two or more words to form a new word (e.g., God rot = drat) (Kaosa-Ad, 2009:17). Reduplication, the repetition of letters or syllables (e.g., Jesus Christ = jeepers creepers) (Booij, 2007: 35).

G-Semantic Changes are divided into three types: Semantic shifts, including general-for-specific and part-for-whole substitutions (e.g., chest = breasts; we spend a penny = go to the lavatory) (Kaosa-Ad, 2009: 17). Metaphorical transfer, combining a taboo topic with a pleasurable notion (e.g., old age = twilight years) (Prayogi, 2008: 8). Elevation, replacing a taboo word with a more pleasing one (e.g., standard = average) (Kaosa-Ad, 2009:20).

F-Borrowing is divided into two types: Internal borrowing, borrowing from sub-languages (e.g., luetic disease = syphilis). External borrowing, using words from other languages as euphemisms (e.g., perspire = sweat) (Kaosa-Ad, 2009:20).

H-Euphemism and Taboo have a close relationship, with euphemism often serving to make taboo topics more acceptable. Euphemism has been used historically to mask offensive expressions, dating back to ancient Athens where it was used to refer to inappropriate expressions with more temperate terms. Taboo, on the other hand, is considered dangerous to society and individuals, associated with bad connotations and censorship, and is the opposite of euphemism in many respects (Thomson, 1999).

1.7 Data and Methodology

The analysis in this chapter is based on some selected examples of political euphemisms that are taken from different sources such as political speeches, websites, newspapers articles, and editorial. The speeches were delivered by political figures such as Speeches of Barak Obama (2013) and Donald Trump (2020) . Each example is discussed along with its Arabic translation. The examples are examined and analyzed to give insight into the translation decisions and outcomes of the translation method.

Sample no. (1)

ST: “We have destroyed ISIS”

TT:

1. لقد سحقنا تنظيم الدولة الإسلامية
2. قد أسقطنا تنظيم الدولة الإسلامية
3. تم تدمير تنظيم الدولة الإسلامية بواسطتنا
4. قد دمرنا تنظيم الدولة الإسلامية
5. قد قمنا بتدمير تنظيم الدولة الإسلامية
6. تم تدمير تنظيم الدولة الإسلامية على يدنا
7. قد قضينا على تنظيم الدولة الإسلامية
8. تم تدمير تنظيم الدولة الإسلامية بواسطتنا
9. نحن من أزاحنا تنظيم الدولة الإسلامية
10. قد وضعنا تنظيم الدولة الإسلامية تحت السيطرة

Translation Analysis

Here, Trump even opted for a substitution of the term "to kill" as it was deemed offensive and unsuitable. Moreover, the selection of the verb "destroy" carries connotations of urgency and aggression, likely to evoke a sense of pride among those who opposed the actions or goals of ISIS. In a complete statement.

In this case, the translator should bear in mind all elements, linguistic and metalinguistic, to provide a proper translation of the euphemistic expression. The translation of such a political euphemism was offered in a direct way, i.e. literally, through conveying the metaphoric and euphemistic expression by subjects no. (3,4,5,6,8,10). The translators adopted a literal translation strategy to transmit the euphemistic expression, which did not provide the proper rendition of the expression. Furthermore, literal translation leads to opaqueness in Arabic since it cannot include the embedded implicature and is incapable of representing the proper rendition of the utterance.

In order to translate such a political euphemism, the translator should employ the proper approach to demonstrate the intended meaning of such a euphemism. Therefore, "destroy " in this context means "to kill". Through considering the surrounding elements in the text, applying the right approach and adopting proper translation strategies, the translation of such a euphemistic expression would be appropriately conveyed.

Therefore, subjects no. (1,2,7,9)) provided appropriate translation. The translators apply a communicative theory approach, a proper equivalence relation such as functional, connotative, or pragmatic, to produce an effect on the reader that is as close as possible to what was originally intended. The also adopt a proper dynamic equivalence of the political euphemism which makes sense, conveys the deep meaning of the original text, and produces a similar response from the target receiver or reader, i.e. one that can be clearly understood by the receiver.

Subjects	Translation Strategy	Accuracy	Translation Strategies		
			Type	Freq.	Percentage
1	Dynamic Equivalence	+	Dynamic Equivalence	4	40%
2	Dynamic Equivalence	-			
3	Literal	-			
4	Literal	-			
5	Literal	+	Literal	6	60%
6	Literal	+			
7	Dynamic Equivalence	+			
8	Literal	-			
9	Dynamic Equivalence	-			
10	Literal	-			

Table (1): Frequency of Translation Strategies

Suggested Translation:

لقد اسحقنا تنظيم داعش الارهابي

Sample no. (2)

ST: The destruction of innocent life and **the spilling of innocent blood** is an offense to humanity and a crime against God

TT:

1. تدمير حياة الأبرياء وإراقة دماء الأبرياء جريمة ضد الإنسانية وجريمة ضد الله.
2. إتلاف الحياة البريئة وسفك الدم البريء هو جريمة ضد البشرية وجريمة في حق الله.
3. هدم حياة الأبرياء وسفك دماؤهم البريئة يُعتبر انتهاكاً للإنسانية وجريمة ضد الله.
4. تكسير حياة الأبرياء وسفك دماؤهم الظاهرة يُعتبر جريمة ضد الإنسانية وجريمة ضد الله.
5. تدمير حياة الأبرياء وسفك دماؤهم البريئة يعد اعتداء على الإنسانية وجريمة في حق الله.
6. تحطيم حياة الأبرياء وسفك دماؤهم البريئة يُعدّ جريمة ضد الإنسانية وجريمة ضد الله.
7. تدمير الحياة البريئة وإسالة الدم البريء هو انتهاك للإنسانية وجريمة ضد الله.
8. تدمير حياة الأبرياء وتسريب دماؤهم البريئة هو جريمة ضد الإنسانية وجريمة ضد الله.
9. إبادة حياة الأبرياء وإراقة دماؤهم البريئة يعتبران اعتداء على الإنسانية وجريمة في حق الله.
10. تدمير حياة الأبرياء وسفك دماؤهم البريئة يُعدّان جريمة ضد الإنسانية وجريمة ضد الله.

Translation Analysis

It is worthwhile to note that Trump used this euphemistic expression as it carries religious implications, incorporating a Christian-oriented tone into his speech. Hence, translating such a euphemistic expression cannot be translated literally. It is apparent that subjects no. (1,3,4,5,6,9,10) accurately translated the euphemistic expression "spilling the innocent blood" into Arabic. They resorted to the strategy of covert translation. This indicates their comprehension of the intended meaning rather than a literal translation. However, subjects no. (2,7,8) failed to translate this euphemistic expression effectively, resulting in a loss of meaning. employed a literal translation strategy.

Subjects	Translation Strategy	Accuracy	Translation Strategies		
			Type	Freq.	Percentage
1	Covert	+	Covert	7	80%
2	Literal	-			
3	Covert	+			
4	Covert	+			
5	Covert	+			
6	Covert	+	Literal	3	30%
7	Literal	-			
8	Literal	-			
9	Covert	+			
10	Covert	+			

Table (10): Frequency of Translation Strategies

Suggested Translation

سفك دمانهم الزكية

Conclusions

In light of what was mentioned above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

It can be concluded that the applicability of different strategies and techniques that are suggested by House and Newmark are highly noted within the selected euphemistic expressions in the political speech during the process of translation from English into Arabic. The strategies of translation which are suggested by House (1977) can be the most effective factors in the process of translation of euphemistic expressions from English into Arabic.

Moreover, the context plays an important role in determining the intended meaning of euphemistic expressions in the political speech during the process of translation from English into Arabic. It is clear that subjects resorted to literal translation when translating euphemistic expressions from English into Arabic. In this respect, translating euphemistic expressions cannot be translated literally due their complex cultural differences and implied meaning behind these expressions. Some subjects failed to their job in translating these expressions accurately to Arabic due to their lack of knowledge in understanding these expressions and most of them couldn't take the context into considerations when translating these expressions onto Arabic.

It is important to note that the covert strategy is the best commonly used strategy in the data analysis. Hence, the translation of euphemistic expressions should be covertly reflected in order to present the euphemism embedded in the words and achieve the functional equivalence as a re-contextualization process, since covert translation deals with the deep meaning of the euphemistic expression in the political speech.

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