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وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي
جامعة الأنبار



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مجلة جامعة الأنبار للغات والآداب

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تعنى بدراسات وأبحاث اللغات وآدابها

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Euphemism in Arabic and French in Formal and Informal Situations: A Contrastive Analysis

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This research examined the potential similarities and differences between Arabic speakers and French speakers in how they employ euphemisms in different formal and informal situations. Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs), designed for both languages, were used to collect data. The DCTs included three main situations: death, cancer, and bodily functions, and each situation had three scenarios with different statuses. The sample consisted of 30 Algerian PhD students enrolled at the University of Jordan and 30 native French speakers working at the French Cultural Institute in Al-Luweibdeh, Amman, Jordan. Both were consistent (i.e., 15 males and 15 females). The collected data were analyzed and interpreted based on some classifications of euphemistic expressions. The French data were first translated into English, allowing researchers to apply Warren's (1992) classification and additional strategies proposed by Allan and Burrige (1991). Results showed that participants used more understatement when the taboo topic was cancer in formal situations. Conversely, overstatements were divided between situations involving reporting about the illness or requesting permission from a higher-status audience to go out. Figurative expressions were used in contexts involving the death of a relative or a friend, especially in the Arabic data, where they appeared more often than in the French data, since Arabic is a rhetorical language. In the French data, it was observed that not all strategies were used and that taboos are less restricted subjects to discuss. In other words, Arabic speakers used direct communication rather than indirectness, unlike their French counterparts, who preferred indirect approaches.

Keywords: Arabic, French, Euphemism strategies, Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs), Contrastive analysis.

التعبير الملتف باللغتين العربية والفرنسية في المواقف الرسمية وغير الرسمية: تحليل مقارنة

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المستخلص

تناولت هذه الدراسة أوجه التشابه والاختلاف المحتملة بين المتحدثين باللغة العربية والمتحدثين بالفرنسية في كيفية استخدامهم للعبارات الملطفة في المواقف الرسمية وغير الرسمية المختلفة. تم استخدام اختبارات إكمال الخطاب (DCTs)، المصممة لكلا اللغتين، لجمع البيانات. تضمنت (DCTs) ثلاث حالات رئيسية: الوفاة والسرطان ووظائف الجسم، وكان لكل حالة ثلاثة سيناريوهات بحالات مختلفة. تكونت العينة من ٣٠ طالب دكتوراه جزائري مسجلين في الجامعة الأردنية و٣٠ متحدثاً أصلياً للغة الفرنسية يعملون في المعهد الثقافي الفرنسي في اللوييدة، عمان، الأردن. وكانت كلتا العينتين متطابقتين (١٥ ذكرًا و١٥ أنثى). تم تحليل البيانات المجمعَة وتفسيرها بناءً على بعض تصنيفات التعبيرات الملطفة. تمت ترجمة البيانات الفرنسية لأول مرة إلى اللغة الإنجليزية، مما سمح للباحثين بتطبيق تصنيف وارن (١٩٩٢) والاستراتيجيات الإضافية التي اقترحها آلان وبوريدج (١٩٩١). أظهرت النتائج أن المشاركين استخدموا قدرًا أكبر من التقليل من أهمية الموضوع عندما كان السرطان هو الموضوع المحظور في المواقف الرسمية. وعلى العكس من ذلك، تم تقسيم المبالغت بين المواقف التي تتطوي على الإبلاغ عن المرض أو طلب الإذن من جمهور أعلى مكانة للخروج. استخدمت التعبيرات المجازية في سياقات تتطوي على وفاة قريب أو صديق، خاصة في البيانات العربية، حيث ظهرت أكثر من البيانات الفرنسية، حيث أن اللغة العربية لغة بلاغية. وفي البيانات الفرنسية، لوحظ أنه لم يتم استخدام جميع الاستراتيجيات وأن المحرمات هي مواضيع أقل تقييدًا للمناقشة. بمعنى آخر، استخدم المتحدثون باللغة العربية التواصل المباشر بدلاً من التواصل غير المباشر، على عكس نظرائهم الفرنسيين، الذين فضلوا الأساليب غير المباشرة. الكلمات المفتاحية: العربية، الفرنسية، استراتيجيات التعبير الملطف، اختبارات استكمال الخطاب (DCTs)، التحليل المقارن.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Al-Hussaini (2007), the origin of the word "euphemism." is "euphemos," which means (good) which is derived from Greek. This word is used to replace another word that should be used politely.

Within any society, people employ language as a means of communication to convey successful messages. Any successful communication in turn entails appropriateness, i.e., the use of the appropriate utterance with the appropriate person at the appropriate time and place. Therefore, people in a given society cooperate to achieve coherent communication without being rude or offensive. People cooperate to deliver comprehensible messages and ensure they are understood without falling into communication breakdowns (AlQbailat et al., 2025). Thus, each speaker takes turns assuming roles and listening to what the other is saying without violating Grice's Maxims of the cooperative principle (quality, quantity, relation, and manner). In this way, a person should provide only the necessary information, being as brief as possible, and stating related true things to the topic. However, by violating the maxims, one can be judged rude or impolite. In this vein, Brown & Levinson (1987) defined politeness in relation to the notion of face: "a public image that every member wants to claim for himself." (p. 61).

Euphemism in Arabic and French can be examined based on a figurative perspective. The latter indicates that the cultural knowledge represents the speech community members. Therefore, euphemism can be clarified in different kinds of discourse, namely, linguistic,

political, social, and religious contexts. Because of its widespread use and significance in these spots, euphemism needs careful study. It performs as a linguistic instrument that gives speakers a chance to convey their ideas in an indirect way, which is familiar in present-day communication. In the mass languages, euphemism is utilized to sway the listener from the emotional impact. This occurs by digging out words or expressions that may be causing someone to feel deeply upset or angry with more acceptable words Al-Azzeh (2010).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Euphemism in English

Not all topics are approached in the same way during discussions or conversations. For example, some sensitive topics are handled more gently by speakers of a given language to avoid offending or hurting others. One of the core indirectness strategies that are utilised in such contexts is "euphemism." Euphemism is employed to avoid taboo words that are not acceptable in certain polite speech communities (Tobbi, 2024). Beckman & Callow (1986: 120) define euphemism as "a metaphorical or metonymic use of an expression in place of another expression that is disagreeable or offensive." Leech (1983: 53) expands on this idea, stating that euphemism is the act of referring to something unpleasant or sensitive in a way that makes it seem more acceptable or polite than it actually is. He notes that this technique involves replacing a word with negative connotations with one that does not directly mention the unpleasant aspect of the subject. Our current study uses the classification framework proposed by Warren (1992) to analyze the French data after translation. This classification comprises the following categories:

- (1) Word formation devices contain the following sub-categories: a-compounding (e.g., comfort station); b-derivation (e.g., sanguinary); c-blending (e.g., brunch); d-acronyms (AIDS, a disease for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome); and onomatopoeia (e.g., quak-quak for ducks).
- (2) Phonemic modification is another way of making offensive utterances euphemized. It contains subcategories as well, such as: a-phonemic replacement (such as gad, gosh, and golly for "God"); b-back slang words (such as *epar* instead of "rape"); and c- and rhyming slang phonemic similarities (such as darn instead of "damn").
- (3) Borrowing is another way of using euphemisms.
- (4) The last category, according to Warren, is the category of 'semantic innovation', which deals with the semantic base of the origin of euphemisms and includes the following:

1-particularization; 2-implication; 3-Metaphor; 4-Metonymy; 5-Reversal; 6-Understatement and 7-Overstatement.

2.2. Euphemism in Arabic

Euphemism in Arabic serves three functions. The first is using socially acceptable and face-saving expressions instead of unpleasant or socially unacceptable ones. The second is that Arabs often address each other by their euphemistic surnames instead of their first names, as these names boost the individual's honor and respectability. For example, they might say, 'أبي الحسن' [Father of Al-Hasan] or [Al-Husseini] instead of the person's first name. Arabic speakers also tend to employ euphemism in order to exaggerate the meaning of certain words by implying them indirectly rather than stating them outright (Al-Husseini,

2007, p. 365). For instance, they might say [He is well-connected] to imply someone has influence or power without directly stating it.

To achieve euphemism, Arabic employs four main devices: figurative expressions, circumlocutions, remodelling, and antonyms, a classification proposed by Farghal (1995).

Since euphemism relates to politeness and is a way of maintaining harmony and good relationships between the speaker and the listener, or the writer and the reader, it has attracted the attention of many researchers to study this concept in fields like pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and contrastive linguistics. However, this study falls within the scope of contrastive linguistics because many scholars have examined the use of euphemized expressions across different cultures and languages to identify similarities and differences, and here, French and Arabic are compared.

2.3. Related Studies

Researchers Rabab'ah & AlQarni (2012) carried out a quantitative study comparing how Saudi and British students at the secondary level used euphemisms in relation to sensitive topics like death, lying, and bodily functions, with a focus on gender differences. The study involved 150 students from King Saud University's Faculty of Arts - 75 males and 75 females - and 150 students from Hull University's Faculty of Arts - also 75 males and 75 females. The research instrument used consisted of two open questionnaires given to both groups, one in Arabic and the other in English. The results revealed that both groups used taboos for death and lying topics but not for bodily functions. In addition, the analysis showed no relation between the use of euphemism and gender, and Saudi respondents used much more euphemistic expressions than their British counterparts.

However, in a different field of study, the research conducted by Ekrema and Abdul (2014) examined the role of context in choosing translation strategies when translating from Arabic into English. Eleven Arabic euphemistic expressions were taken from five literary masterpieces written by the Egyptian writer Najib Mahfouz, along with their English translations. It was concluded that some situations require the use of euphemism in a social context, while no such requirement was found in the target language. In this regard, keeping the original Arabic euphemisms in the English texts could lead to misunderstandings and might strip the source language (Arabic) of its cultural traits. Moreover, this study showed that context has a significant influence on the use of euphemistic expressions. Additionally, in Arabic, sex terms were often euphemized, whereas in Western culture, talking about sex is not offensive but rather direct. Regarding death topics, it was found that translating them into English would produce dysphemism, while translating English death expressions into Arabic would result in euphemism.

Ghounane (2014), in a different context, explored euphemistic strategies and linguistic taboos in Algerian society using a questionnaire and personal interviews to gather data. The interviews included questions about participants' views on taboo language related to death and sex. The results showed that euphemistic language and taboo words are nearly the same. Additionally, it was found that Algerian people tend to approach death topics with great care, and sex topics remain the most taboo, typically discussed only within single-sex groups in Algerian society.

On the other hand, Bani Mofarrej & Al-Abed Al-Haq (2015) studied the use of euphemistic expressions about death in Jordanian society. They investigated how factors such as gender, age, and region constrained the way people used these expressions. The study included 130 randomly selected Jordanians from Irbid and Mafraq, who completed a questionnaire. The findings showed that social variables played a role in how people used euphemistic expressions.

In a similar study, Al-Azzam et al. (2017) examined the use of euphemism in speakers of Arabic in Saudi Arabia in order to demonstrate how some linguistic expressions are mainly constrained by cultural and social variables. To achieve this goal, examples of the most commonly used euphemistic expressions in Saudi Arabic were categorized. The results showed that the relevant variables significantly influenced the creation of euphemistic expressions.

In a pioneering study, Almufawez et al. (2018) offer insights into cross-cultural variations by examining different types of euphemisms used in English and Arabic. The participants included 20 individuals from Saudi Arabia and America with diverse educational backgrounds, who completed a questionnaire covering nine topics in both Arabic and English. The findings showed both similarities and differences. The similarities can be summarized into two main points: both groups used euphemisms alone or with polite expressions, and when they could not use euphemisms, they chose dysphemisms with polite expressions. Differences were observed in the use of religious phrases by Saudi participants to deliver bad news. Additionally, when discussing disability, Saudis tended to use euphemistic expressions to avoid hurting others, while their American counterparts would state the bad news directly.

Hazaymeh et al. (2019) aimed to investigate the use of specific English and French words as euphemisms in Jordanian Arabic from a social and linguistic perspective. The study used an analytical approach, collecting data from multiple locations through the researcher's own efforts, as well as from family members, informants, and relevant studies. According to the study findings, Jordanian Arabic speakers have modified numerous English and very few French terms to mitigate the impact of using Arabic direct words, which can be particularly challenging for individuals when describing others or things. It also revealed that English and borrowed loanwords were employed in various euphemistic contexts.

Al-Jabri et al. (2021) studied the strategies used by two different media outlets when subtitling taboo phrases from English into Arabic. The study aimed to determine whether each outlet uses a distinct subtitling approach to handle taboo terms, considering the social and religious constraints expected in Arab society. To fulfill this aim, the study examined two different Arabic translations of forbidden terms from the American sitcom *How I Met Your Mother*. One version was translated by the Arabic TV channel MBC4, and another by Netflix, a subscription-based streaming service. The researchers used euphemistic tactics proposed by Williams (1975), Warren (1992), and Al-Adwan (2015) to analyze the subtitles from each media outlet. Research found that the Arabic subtitles from the satellite TV station used more polite language, often opting for straightforward expressions and polite euphemisms to steer clear of potentially offensive or embarrassing words. Additionally, the results indicated that the Netflix subtitles used fewer euphemism techniques overall, reflecting the typical content style of the streaming service. The main method identified for addressing face-threatening language in the first group of taboos was widening. For the second group, which involved same-sex-related phrases, omission was the preferred strategy. Ultimately, the subtitles employed widening, metonymy, and omission to depict private body organs.

Researchers Juraeva & Beshimova (2023) explored the connection between taboo and euphemism in French through a qualitative review of linguistic research and historical examples. Their study revealed that taboo acts as a broad social and cultural ban, while euphemism provides acceptable substitutes for restricted words. For example, *diantre* and *le malin* replace *le diable* (devil), and expressions like *elle attend un bébé* or *dans une situation intéressante* soften references to pregnancy.

In the same year, Sahari (2023) examined how private body-part taboo words from Hollywood movies are translated into Arabic subtitles. The study explored the euphemistic strategies subtitlers use and how English obscene terms are handled. A mixed methods

approach was adopted to analyze 75 Hollywood movies released between 2000 and 2018 and their Arabic subtitle versions. The researchers selected only the private body parts that appeared more than 150 times in the corpus. The results showed that about 5% of these taboo terms are preserved in Arabic subtitles. Around 45% are toned down, 42% are neutralized, and 8% are omitted. The researchers identified seven strategies, including widening, metaphorical transfer, implication, metonymy, semantic misrepresentation (e.g., replacing taboo words with other body parts), and preservation.

Subsequently, this article examines the use of euphemism strategies in Arabic and French to address a gap in the literature, as no previous study has explored euphemistic expressions in these languages from a contrastive perspective.

3. Methodology

The current study explored the use of euphemism strategies in both Arabic and French. It also sought to identify which strategies are most commonly employed and whether there are differences between the two languages. To fulfil this aim, the study addressed the following research questions.

The current research attempted to answer the following questions:

- (1) Are there any similarities or differences in how euphemism is used in both Arabic and French?
- (2) What are the most used euphemistic strategies in French and Arabic?

This article examined the possible similarities and differences between the use of euphemism in both French and Arabic. In this respect, the data for this investigation were collected using Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs).

3.1. Discourse Completion Tests (DCTS)

Discourse completion tasks (DCTs) are a type of production questionnaire where speech acts are gathered in writing through a situational description (Billmyer & Varghese 2000). DCTs prompt responses based on a situation, but the nature of the prompt, the details of the event or context, and the expected answer can vary. For example, a researcher might use a specific kind of DCT that provides detailed context in different ways: one offers comprehensive data to identify social constraints, while another supplies a rejoinder (or predetermined response to the strategy given by the DCT participant) that immediately demonstrates understanding of the relationship between participants. Other types of DCTs, on the other hand, may allow the writer more freedom to interpret the scenario and balance this with options that give the respondent additional choices.

The convenience provided by DCTs is undoubtedly their greatest strength and, possibly, the reason for their widespread adoption. It can be difficult to find genuine, naturally occurring conversation. Typically, this is due to issues with access. Even when data is available, there's a risk that the expected speech acts or interactions won't happen. DCTs, on the other hand, are straightforward and easy to use, don't require a lengthy or expensive transcription, and responses can be sorted quickly and easily. Another key aspect of DCTs is that they're carefully planned and tailored to capture the desired data; thus, variables like relationship, power, status, gender, and age differences can be controlled, unlike natural speech (Yuan 2001). Organizing also allows participants to fully understand the research goals and implications, and gives them consent for their responses to be used, making DCTs much less complicated than spontaneous talk or field recordings in terms of meeting ethical guidelines for data collection.

3.2. Participants

The DCTs in this study are of two types: one is in Arabic, distributed to 30 Algerian PhD students enrolled at the University of Jordan, and the second is in French, aimed at 30 native French speakers working at the French Cultural Institute in Jabal Al-Luweibdeh, Amman. Both were consistent (i.e., 15 males and 15 females). Each type of DCT includes nine different situations covering the topics of death, cancer, and bodily functions. Participants were randomly selected, and the reason for choosing PhD students is that they are familiar with technical terms like DCTs and euphemisms, which made data collection easier by eliminating the need to explain these terms. However, it is worth noting that such terms were explained beforehand to ensure more accurate and valid results.

3.3. The Analytical Framework

Table 1 below lists the classifications adopted from Warren (1992:134) and used to analyze data from both languages in this study.

Table 1. Warren (1992:134) classification for euphemistic expressions.

<i>The Main Strategy</i>	<i>The Sub-strategies of each Main Strategy</i>
Word formation devices containing the following sub-categories:	compounding (e.g., comfort station); derivation (e.g., sanguinary); blending (e.g., brunch). acronyms (AIDS, a disease for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome); and onomatopoeia (e.g., quack for ducks).
Phonemic modification is another way of making offensive utterances euphemized. It contains as well subcategories as:	Phonemic replacement (such as gad, gosh, and golly for "God"). back slang words (such as epar instead of "rape"); And rhyming slang phonemic similarities (such as darn instead of "damn").
Borrowing is another way of using euphemisms. Words such as "lingerie" are from French and other Latin languages.	
Semantic innovation deals with the semantic base of the origin of euphemisms and includes the following:	Particularization refers to choosing a specific term for an offensive expression that is meant to be "destined to be a gentleman); Implications can have secondary meanings, whereas particularization doesn't have that ability: if/then, "one does one's duty." ; Metaphor

	<p>Metonymy (e.g., <i>bathroom</i> used for <i>WC</i>) is used for WC</p> <p>Reversal (refers to alternating the impolite meaning with its opposite; they are context dependent);</p> <p>Understatement (understatements (litotes) Understatement (including understatements like litotes) usually happens when undesirable features are minimized. For example, "drug habit" is used instead of "drug addiction." "</p> <p>Overstatement (overstatements (hyperboles) Hyperboles occur when desirable features are exaggerated. For example, [flight to glory] is used instead of [death].</p>
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Along with Warren's (1992) euphemism categories, Table 2 presents the classification of euphemism strategies in Arabic as adopted from Farghal (1995), which were used to analyze the data collected in Arabic.

Table 2. Arabic Classification of Euphemism Strategies by Farghal (1995).

<i>The Main Strategy</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Figurative expressions are the most commonly used way to soften meaning in Arabic, especially regarding death, bodily functions, marriage, sex, and similar topics.	These casual human experiences are very often a common target for euphemism in everyday speech [He transferred to the mercy of God the afterlife, the home of eternity, the supreme comrade], <i>انتقل الى رحمة الله تعالى</i>
Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of the intended word.	Some examples include [healthy] <i>معافى</i> for [sick], [sighted] for [blind].
Circumlocution, which is the use of paraphrasing to avoid taboos or socially objectionable vocabulary.	Some examples of circumlocutions include <i>لم يحالفه الحظ</i> [Luck did not ally with him] instead of <i>فشل</i> [He failed], <i>اعتداء جنسي</i> [sexual assault] for <i>اغتصاب</i>
Remodelling, for their part, mainly pertains to vernacular Arabic and involves altering the phonological structure of existing taboo expressions to serve euphemistic purposes.	Examples of expressions such as: [Damn your...] <i>يلعن حريشك</i> instead of <i>يلعن حريمك</i>
Ellipsis is when the speaker falls short of uttering the complete taboo expression.	Examples of expressions such as <i>اخو ال.....</i> [Brother of...]
Understatement, the Arabic word <i>نكسة</i> 'setback' for <i>هزيمة</i> 'defeat'.	
Overstatements or hyperboles.	An example is <i>حرب الخليج الثانية</i> for <i>أم المعارك</i>
Use of foreign expressions	[toilet] for <i>مرحاض</i> <i>مكوافير</i> for [hairdresser]
Formulaic expressions used to ease the	Examples of this may include: <i>لا سمح الله ولا قدر</i>

discomfort of mentioning sensitive or taboo topics, like death, betrayal, failure, and things people find objectionable.	[Lit. May not God permit nor predestinate this]
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3.1. Procedures

The data from this study were discussed and interpreted based on various classifications of euphemistic expressions. These are the ones mentioned in the section on the analytical framework. First, the researchers distributed the DCTs to the participants, explaining generally what the aim of this research is. Additionally, the researchers clarified to the participants what to do and how to complete the DCTs. After collecting the data, the French data were first translated into English so that researchers could apply the classification proposed by Warren (1992) to identify the most common strategies and examine similarities between Arabic and French. Regarding the Arabic data, no translation was needed, as the framework suggested by Farghal (1995) is applicable to them.

4. Results

In this section, results were analyzed separately for each group, i.e., the PhD Algerian students in the Arabic department at the University of Jordan and the native French speakers. The analysis focused on the frequency and percentage of each strategy used in three main situations: death, cancer, and bodily functions. Additionally, this article aimed to explore whether gender and the degree of formality, i.e., formal or informal, influence the learners' responses.

4.1. Euphemism Strategies Used by Algerian PhD Students

4.1.1. Death

Table 3. Euphemism strategies used by Algerian PhD students talking about *death*.

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Females</i>				<i>Males</i>			
	<i>Formal</i>		<i>Informal</i>		<i>Formal</i>		<i>Informal</i>	
Figurative expressions	-	-	13	38.23%	-	-	8	44.44%
Antonyms	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Circumlocution	3	18.75%	1	2.94%	3	30%	-	-
Remodelling	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ellipsis	2	12.5%	5	14.70%	1	10%	-	-
Understatement	4	25%	-	-	3	30%	-	-
Overstatement	1	6.25%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Borrowings	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Euphemizers	4	25%	13	23%	-	-	7	38.89%
Direct (taboo)	2	12.5%	2	5.88%	3	30%	3	16.67%
Indirect (deletion)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	16	100%	34	100%	10	100%	18	100%

Based on the data presented in the table, the most commonly used strategies concerning the tabooed topic of death are figurative expressions used by both males and females, especially in informal situations, with a rate of 38.23%, 44, and 44%. In addition,

males used this strategy more than females, as the following data from the questionnaire showed:

‘أسف جدا يجب ان اخبرك بامر محزن صديقك قد وافته المنية’

Farghal considered the euphemized expression *وافته المنية* as a figurative expression used instead of saying [he died] "مات".

‘للصراحة انا آسف ولكن فلان انتقل الى جوار ربه تعالى’

The second strategy is circumlocution, which is used more by females in formal contexts (18.75%) than informal ones (2.94%). However, males used it less frequently in formal contexts (30%).

‘اريد ان اخبركم بشأن صحة ابنكم للصراحة هي غير جيدة’

‘ابنكم متعب و بحاجة للعناية’

In these two examples, the respondents were supposed to imagine themselves as doctors and tell the patients about their serious illnesses. Thus, they tried to soften the effect of this information by opting for this strategy. Following this comes the understatement of a ratio of 25% used only in informal contexts. After that, participants used the taboo word [died] directly, but there is something to mention: participants did not use such a taboo word alone; instead, they supported it with some soft words like *...لا تحزن، انا اسف لاختبارك بهذا*. On the other side, euphemizers, such as *انا لله و انا اليه راجعون ، عفاك، لا سرح الله* were high in scale (38.89%) produced by males in informal contexts, contrary to their female counterparts (23%). Overall observation reveals that Jordanian females used more strategies than Jordanian males, and it was also noticed that females tended to be more verbose than males. Moreover, some strategies were not used at all, like antonyms, remodelling, and borrowings.

4.1.2. Cancer

Table 4. Euphemism strategies used by Algerian PhD students talking about *cancer*.

Strategies	Females				Males			
	Formal		Informal		Formal		Informal	
Figurative expressions	-	-	1	3.57%	-	-	8	44.44%
Antonyms	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Circumlocution	4	16.67%	10	35.71%	4	50%	4	26.67%
Remodelling	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ellipsis	1	4.17%	1	3.57%	-	-	3	20%
Understatement	10	41.67%	4	14.28%	1	12.5%	-	-
Overstatement	1	4.17%	2	7.14%	-	-	3	20%
Borrowings	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Euphemizers	2	8.33%	3	10.71%	3	37.5%	5	33.33%
Direct (taboo)	4	16.67%	5	17.85%	-	-	-	-
Indirect (deletion)	2	8.33%	2	7.14%	-	-	-	-
Total	24	100%	28	100%	8	100%	15	100%

The second situation in this study is related to cancer, i.e., how one acts when he/she learns that one of their relatives has been diagnosed with a serious illness. Thus, in this line, the above table shows that only Jordanian females, with a scale of 3–57% and only in informal contexts, used figurative expressions. In contrast, males did not use it at all. Consider the following instance of an example:

‘أسف لسماع هذا الخبر، ولكن علمت ان أحد اقاربك مصاب بذلك المرض’

The researchers consider this to be an implied meaning when talking about cancer. As for understatement, it was the most formal strategy employed (41.67%), but in informal cases it scaled slightly lower (14.28%), followed by circumlocution (35.71%) in informal contexts, and direct tabooed words related to this illness with a scale of (16.67%) in relation to formal scenarios and (17.85%) in informal situations. Data also showed that participants combined euphemizers almost in each situation with the particle [sorry] ‘أسف’, like in the following instance:

‘اسمعت بقريبك، يقال انه مريض بالمرض الخبيث عفك الله’

‘اعتقد ان الورم لديك خفيف ويمكن علاجه لا تقلق’

For research purposes, several strategies were added in addition to Farghel’s classification, such as deletion and taboos. In these cases, subjects choose to state the facts as they are, without trying to soften their statements. Moving to males, who used much more circumlocution in both formal and informal contexts (50%/26.67%), then comes the use of euphemizers in second place (37.5%/33.33%).

4.1.3. Bodily function

Table 5. Euphemism strategies used by Algerian PhD students talking about bodily functions.

Strategies	Females				Males			
	Formal		Informal		Formal		Informal	
Figurative expressions	-	-	1	4%	-	-	1	5%
Antonyms	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Circumlocution	-	-	1	4%	-	-	4	20%
Remodelings	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ellipsis	1	6.25%	2	8%	-	-	1	5%
Understatement	3	18.75%	1	4%	-	-	-	-
Overstatement	2	12.5%	7	28%	-	-	1	5%
Borrowings	-	-	3	12%	-	-	-	-
Euphemizers	1	6.25%	2	8%	-	-	-	-
Direct (taboo)	7	43.75%	6	24%	7	63.64%	9	45%
Indirect (deletion)	2	12.5%	2	8%	4	36.36%	4	20%
Total	16	100%	25	100%	11	100%	20	100%

This type of taboo topic can be a bit embarrassing for some people. Therefore, females in formal situations used taboos, such as direct statements of الحمام (43.75%), while the most common strategy was understatement (18.75%). هل يمكن ان نتوقف للحظات، لان المسافرين تعبوا قليلا.

Deletion or overestimation (12.5%), like [I need to leave] *يجب ان اذهب* or *انه امر طارئ يجب ان* [it is really urgent], was also frequently used. Borrowing from other languages was also observed in this data, as seen with the term toilet. While males were either direct in both contexts or simply avoided mentioning taboo words (63.64%, 45%) to convey a message about them, or their meaning could be inferred from the context where the speech occurs, as shown in the following example:

"عفوا، هل يمكنك التوقف للحظة انا مستعجل قليلا"

"إذا سمحت اريد الذهاب الى الحمام"

4.2. Euphemism Strategies Used by Native Speakers

This section presents the euphemistic strategies that were employed by the native speakers when addressing topics like death.

4.2.1. Death

Table 6. The euphemistic strategies employed by the native speakers when addressing *death*.

Strategies	Females				Males			
	Formal		Informal		Formal		Informal	
Compounding	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Derivation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Blends	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Acronyms	11	47.82%	-	-	3	42.85%	-	-
Onomatopoeia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Back slang	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rhyming slang	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Phoneme replacement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Abbreviation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Particularizations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Implications	4	17.39%	2	4.65%	-	-	-	-
Metaphors	-	-	12	27.90%	-	-	-	-
Reversals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Understatements	3	13.04%	1	2.32%	1	14.28%	1	9.9%
Overstatements	3	13.04%	-	-	1	14.28%	-	-
Part for whole	1	4.34%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Taboos	1	4.34%	23	53.48%	-	-	7	63.63%
General for specific	-	-	1	2.32%	2	28.57%	-	-
Deletion	-	-	4	9.30%	-	-	3	27.27%
Total	23	100%	43	100%	7	100%	11	100%

The first thing to highlight is that almost half of the strategies were not used. To meet the research goals, additional strategies were incorporated into the investigation, including part for whole, taboos, general for specific, and deletion. Data showed that acronyms are at the highest level, with a rate of (47.82%, 42.85%) distributed almost equally between males and females in formal settings, as shown in the following example:

Alors comme je suis médecin, je ne peux pas mentir, mais votre fille peut avoir une AVC.
[Well, as I am a doctor, I cannot lie to you, but your daughter might have hemiplegia.]

Implications and metaphors were used only among female participants in formal and informal cases, as shown in the following example:

Bonjour, je suis le médecin de votre fils. Il faut être patient. Je suis obligé de vous dire la vérité de la maladie de votre fils.

[Good morning, sir. I am the doctor in charge of your son, and I am obliged to tell you the truth concerning his medical situation.]

Moreover, understatement and overstatement were similarly used in formal settings among Algerian females and males (14.28%, 13.04%), as illustrated in the example below:

Je suis désolé, mais son cas est très grave.

[I am sorry, but his health issues are really very serious.]

Taboos, on the other hand, are more frequent among males in informal situations than female responses (63.63%, 53.48%), as shown in the example below:

Je suis très désolé, je devrais te dire une chose triste que ton ami est mort.

[I am very sorry to tell you such a painful thing, but your friend died.]

Moreover, results showed that males and females also use deletion more, as illustrated in the example below:

Oh mon dieu, je suis désolé, toutes mes condoléances

[I am really sorry. My sincere condolences]

4.2.2. Cancer

Table 7. The euphemistic strategies employed by the native speakers when addressing cancer.

Strategies	Females				Males			
	Formal		Informal		Formal		Informal	
Compounding	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Derivation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Blends	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Acronyms	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Onomatopoeia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Back slang	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rhyming slang	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Phoneme replacement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Abbreviation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Particularizations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Implications	4	13.79%	2	5%	2	25%	3	37.5%
Metaphors	1	3.44%	-	-	-	-	-	-

Reversals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Understatements	11	37.93%	4	10%	2	25%	1	12.5%
Overstatements	1	3.44%	4	10%	1	14.28%	-	-
Part for whole	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Taboos	11	37.93%	24	60%	3	37.5%	3	37.7%
General for specific	1	3.44%	5	12.5%	1	1.25%	-	-
Deletion	-	-	1	2.5%	-	-	1	12.25%
Total	29	100%	40	100%	8	100%	8	100%

Tabooed terms are not sensitive topics in French culture. Therefore, data reveal that in almost all informal cases, they were spelled out, even in formal ones, with a frequency that is high to some extent in comparison to other strategies (37.93%, 60%) used by females in both formal and informal settings, and an equal proportion of (37.5%, 37.5%) in the two different cases. The example below illustrates this finding:

Il est mort.
[He died.]

Implications and understatements receive high proportions as well (37.5%, 93%). The example below represents this feature:

Alors, je te conseille de faire plus d'analyse parce que je doute que tu as une tumeur.
[Well, I advise you to do more tests because I doubt that you have a tumour.]

As shown in the two tables discussed earlier, nearly all strategies, including implications, taboos, and understatement, are the most employed ones. It is also important to note that even in the French data, participants used some euphemisms when speaking frankly or stating facts; that is, they could not directly say the tabooed word but instead combined it with other statements to soften the impact.

4.2.3. Bodily function

Table 8. The euphemistic strategies employed by the native speakers when addressing bodily functions.

Strategies	Females				Males			
	Formal		Informal		Formal		Informal	
Compounding	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Derivation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Blends	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Acronyms	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Onomatopoeia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Back slang	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rhyming slang	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Phoneme replacement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Abbreviation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Particularizations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Implications	6	25%	10	23.25%	2	33.33%	4	33.33%

Metaphors	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	8.33%
Reversals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Understatements	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Overstatements	1	4.16%	1	2.32%	-	-	1	8.33%
Part for whole	-	-	2	4.65%	-	-	-	-
Taboos	4	16.6%	17	39.53%	1	6.56%	3	25%
General for specific	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deletion	13	54.16%	13	30.23%	3	50%	3	25%
Total	24	100%	43	100%	6	100%	12	100%

Moving to the last situation related to bodily functions, the same remark could be mentioned in this regard, as almost all strategies were not used. However, deletion received the highest rate (54.16%, 50%) in formal situations employed by females and males. Accordingly, these rates (30.23%, 25%) were recorded in the informal context by both females and males. The example below illustrates this feature:

Je reviens

[I will be back.]

Implications were also marked as (25%, 23.25%) for informal and formal situations used by females and (33.33%) by males. The following extract can illustrate for a better understanding:

Vous pouvez attendre une minute, je ne me sens pas à l'aise.

[Can you stop for a second? I do not feel good.]

[Is it possible for you to return to the nearest station if that is possible]

[Is it possible to stop at the closest gas station, please?]

Taboos also received considerable attention (39.53%, 16.67%) in informal settings, especially among females. The following extract can illustrate for a better understanding:

Je dois aller aux toilettes, je reviens

[I have to go to the toilet. I will be back.]

Je dois aller à la salle de bain.

[I need to go to the restroom.]

5. Discussion

First of all, the number of female participants is significantly higher than that of males in both groups being studied in this investigation. Regarding the first group, i.e., Algerian PhD learners of Arabic language at the University of Jordan (12 males vs. 18 females), the second group also showed an even greater disparity (9 males vs. 21 females). Therefore, the gender imbalance observed in the data might influence the results, as females employ more strategies than males. However, almost all participants from both genders used the same strategies in a similar manner. The study employed two different frameworks: Warren's (1992) model for analysing translated French data into English, and Farghel's classification of Arabic euphemistic expressions. As a result, highlighting similarities is somewhat

challenging. Although some strategies - such as taboo deletion, which has equivalents in the Arabic data as direct and indirect strategies, along with strategies related to overstatement, understatement, and figurative expressions - were included, we can generally say that almost all participants used understatement when the tabooed topic was cancer in formal situations. Accordingly, taboos and deletion strategies were employed in informal contexts, like conversations among friends, to ask for permission to go to the bathroom. Additionally, taboos were also used in combination with euphemizing expressions such as [I am sorry to say this, but...] or [Excuse me, can I just tell you something?] In contrast, overstatements were used in situations involving reporting facts about the illness or occasionally asking a higher-status audience for permission to leave.

Unlike Rabab'ah & AlQarni's (2012) study, which revealed that both groups used taboos for death and lying topics but not for bodily functions, the current study indicated the reverse. That is, figurative expressions, on the other hand, were also spread in contexts reporting the death of a relative or a friend, especially in the Arabic data, where they appeared more than in the French data, since Arabic is a rhetorical language.

As for the French data, it was noted that not all the strategies were used, and taboos are not very restricted subjects to talk about. That is, native speakers were direct in almost all situations and did not like to go around the bush, unlike their Algerian counterparts, who tried their best and preferred indirect ways, notably when addressing sensible topics like death or cancer. These results are in line with Ghounane's (2014) study, which indicated that Algerian people tend to treat death topics with much care, and sex topics remained the most tabooed topics that are discussed only amongst single sex groups in Algerian society.

Similarly, Al-Jabri et al. (2021) study's findings revealed that the Arabic subtitles created by the satellite Arabic TV station represent a higher level of politeness, with the subtitles plain, using euphemisms as a polite approach to avoid impolite and embarrassing terminology. In addition, the results indicated that the Netflix version included fewer euphemism methods based on the content generally provided by the video streaming service. These results prove once again how Eastern countries, mainly Arab and Muslim ones, are indirect and careful with taboo topics and terms, unlike their Western counterparts.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to contribute new insights to the field of contrastive linguistics by examining the use of euphemism in both Arabic and French through a contrastive analysis. It aimed to significantly enhance the understanding of the similarities and differences between Arabic and French in how euphemistic expressions are managed in specific situations. The analysis revealed that both French and Arabic speakers share some similarities in the use of euphemisms, but the main differences arise from language variations and diverse cultural backgrounds that shape each speaker's identity. The researchers believe that future studies could expand on this by using a larger sample that better represents the entire population. They also recommend considering other variables like age, education level, cultural background, and place of residence.

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