

Republic of Iraq  
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research  
University of Babylon – College of Education  
Faculty of Educational and Psychological Sciences



# **Iraqi EFL Learners' Recognition of Euphemistic Expressions**

A Thesis  
Submitted to  
the Council of the College of Education,  
University of Babylon  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Education  
in Methods of Teaching English  
as a Foreign Language

by

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا

زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا فَلَمَّا تَغَشَّاهَا حَمَلَتْ حَمْلًا

خَفِيًّا فَامْرَتْ بِهِ فَلَمَّا أَثْقَلتْ دَعَوَا اللّٰهَ رَبُّهُمَا لَنْزِ

أَتَيْنَا صَالِحًا لَنْكُونُوا مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ

صَدَقَ اللّٰهُ الْعَظِيمِ

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# Abstract

Euphemism is considered, in its existence, as a universal phenomenon used to avoid sad, unpleasant or shocking ideas with softer and nicer expressions. The present study deals with euphemism as a problematic area for EFL learners. It aims at: (1) presenting material about euphemistic expressions with their various types and uses which can be helpful in arriving at an overall view of the role of such expressions in language, (2) identifying Iraqi EFL learners' recognition of euphemistic expressions, and (3) accounting for learners' errors and their sources.

To achieve these aims, it is hypothesized that: (1) most Iraqi EFL learners fail to distinguish the meaning of euphemistic expressions, (2) the learners' recognition of euphemistic expressions and their meanings in context is expected to be better than their recognition of them out of context, and (3) a good recognition of euphemistic expressions is not achieved by Iraqi EFL learners during their four-year study of English as a foreign language.

These hypotheses have been verified through adopting an achievement test of three questions. The test has been applied to a sample of eighty Iraqi EFL fourth year students, Department of English, College of Education, University of Babylon during the academic year 2007 – 2008.

The findings arrived at are: (1) the learners' recognition of the meaning of euphemistic expressions is unsatisfactory since the rate of the learners' incorrect responses (68.84 %) is higher than that of their

correct ones (31.16 %), **(2)** the learners' recognition of euphemistic expressions in context (the rate of their correct responses 69.17 % and that of their incorrect ones 30.83 %) is much better than their recognition of them out of context (the rate of incorrect responses 84.06 % and that of correct ones 15.94 %), and **(3)** the majority of Iraqi EFL learners face difficulties in recognizing euphemistic expressions and their meanings due to the low rate of their correct responses (38.76 %), in comparison with the total rate of their incorrect ones (61.24 %). These findings validate the above-mentioned hypotheses. The reasons beyond the subjects' unsatisfying achievement can be ascribed to the following factors along with their percentages:

I- Context of learning: (57.8 %)

II - Communication strategies: (36.8 %)

III- Interlingual transfer: (5.4 %)

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## Appendix IV

### Occupation and Work Euphemisms

*layoff*  
*downsize*  
*rightsized*  
*headcount adjustment*  
*RIF (reduction in force)*  
*realignment*


**mass firing of employees**

*counseled out*  
*made redundant*  
*let go*  
*dismissed*  
*terminated*  
*services are no longer required*


**firing in general**

***job flexibility*: lack of job security where job security means an actual or implied promise of continued employment**

***outsource*: firing local employees to hire cheaper labor elsewhere**

***replacement workers*: scabs or strikebreakers in labor disputes**

***reliability enhancement*: fix for a software bug**

***escort from premises*: kicked out/thrown out of building**

***job seekers*: the unemployed**

*sales advisor*: shop assistant

*customer service representative*: a title given to today's bank tellers

*comfort women*: prostitute

*servicing the client*: a prostitute having sex for money with somebody

*efficient*: profitable

*CD quality sound*: an MP3 that's not true CD quality sound

*resource implications*: costs

*the gaming industry*: gambling

*creating jobs*: starting a profit-making venture

*non-performing assets*: a failed business venture

*recycled books*: used books

*pre-owned vehicles* or *experienced vehicles*: used cars

*sanitary landfill*: garbage dump

*custodian* or *janitor*: doorman

*sanitation worker* or *sanitation engineer*: garbage man or dustman

*administrative assistant*


*clerical assistant*

*executive assistant*

*personal assistant*

secretary

*supervisor*  
*executive*  
*director*  
*manager*



**boss**

*domestic assistant*: cleaner (UK)/maid (US)

*chauffeur*: driver

**Note:** All euphemistic expressions mentioned above are cited  
from <http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-a-euphemism.htm>

## Appendix V

### Law Enforcement Euphemisms

*following a suspect:* stalking

*investigation, search:* invasion of privacy

*gain access:* trespass, breaking and entering

*confiscate, seize assets :* police or government steals

*arrest*

*imprison*

*incarcerate*

*take into custody*

*contain*



police or government kidnaps/abducts

*pacify:* beat

*contempt of court:* opinion

*subpoena:* force to talk

*harboring a criminal:* to allow a friend to live or hide who is wanted by  
police

*unsavory character:* criminal (or, more specifically suspected criminal)

*enhanced interrogation:* torture

*concentration camps:* prison

## **Government / Espionage Euphemisms**

*classified:* secret

*unclassified:* not secret

*declassified:* secret Information which had at some point been classified as secret, but has since been released to the public.

*intelligence:* information and sources of information (spies and spying)

*human intelligence:* information from spies and interrogated prisoners, and other information from human sources (such as weather reports or economic studies) used by a secret or military agency

*asset:* a secret agency's recruited (foreign spies)

*wet work:* assassination

*physical persuasion or physical pressure:* torture

**Note:** All euphemistic expressions mentioned above are cited

from <http://www.answers.com/topic/euphemism>

## Appendix VI

### Military Euphemisms

*defense:* war

*neutralize or service:* to kill or disable a target

*friendly fire:* being mistakenly attacked by your allies

*collateral damage:* unintentional killing or damage; bystander deaths  
and injuries

*area denial munitions:* landmines

*incontinent ordnance:* bombs which kill civilians

*preemptive war:* to invade a foreign country

*pre-hostility:* peace

*secure an area or mop up:* kill remaining enemy soldiers

*aerial ordnance:* the use of bombs or missiles by air

*asymmetric warfare:* local violence or unrest, suicide bombing; contained  
violence.

*casualty:* death or injury

*engage:* to fight the enemy head on

*engagement:* a small battle, a brief firefight

*projectile:* anything that can be fired at the enemy, such as bullets,  
artillery shells and rockets

***terrorist:* criminal or rebel - Criminals are usually jailed, while terrorists are often shot or bombed.**

<p><i>treasonist</i></p> <p><i>criminal</i></p> <p><i>terrorist</i></p> <p><i>unpatriotic</i></p>		<p><b>often names for rebel, revolutionary, or folk heroes, especially by oppressive governments</b></p>
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***extreme prejudice:* kill without mercy**

***regime change:* dethroning the current government/dynasty**

***surgical strike:* bombing attack by plane**

***psychological deterrent:* the largest (non nuclear) bombs, such as the Hellfire missile**

<p><i>tough love</i></p> <p><i>tough decision</i></p> <p><i>good vs. evil</i></p> <p><i>ethics</i></p>		<p><b>key words used to justify war through moral reasoning</b></p>
--	--	---

***involuntary conversio or nunplanned landing:* plane crash**

***differently abled:* disabled**

***visually impaired:* blind or nearly so**

***spontaneous energetic disassembly:* explosion**

***transfer tubes:* body bags**

*exfiltration:* military retreat

*redeployment:* withdrawal of our troops

*servicing the target:* killing enemy soldiers

*preemptive counterattack:* to attack first

**Note:** All euphemistic expressions mentioned above are cited  
from <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/?qid=cq1J>

## Appendix VII

### Political Euphemisms

*urban*: African American

*counter culture*: lifestyles different from the mainstream

*final solution*: The Holocaust (extermination of the Jews)

*concentration camp*: labor/death camp

*ethnic cleansing*: genocide

*freedom fighter*: armed political rebel (positive term)

*taxpayer*: citizen

*internment facility*: prison

*protective custody*: imprisonment without due process of law

*intervention*: invasion

*executive action*: assassination

*campaign contribution*

*donation*

*fund raiser*



bribery of public officials

*budget surplus*: profit

*advertising*  
*self promotion*

propaganda

***cult: religion***

*special interests*  
*foreign interests*

representatives and lobbyists of businesses dealing  
 in oil, diamonds, gold, and other profitable  
 resources abroad

*disturbing the peace*  
*noise pollution*  
*slander*  
*defamation*  
*treason*  
*inciting a riot*  
*public speaking without a permit*

free speech

*public donation*  
*shared sacrifice*

taxes

***progressive: leftist***

***piracy: copyright infringement (copying a copyrighted work without permission/license)***

*family values* — when used by conservatives, generally suggests some combination homophobia, heterosexism, and/or patriarchy (and the political goals of oppressing homosexuals and women)

*pro-family* —

*developing country*: poor or undeveloped countries (third world countries)

*asylum seekers*: refugees

*suspected illegal entrants* or *illegals*: used when asylum seekers is considered to grant too much legitimacy

*illegal alien*: illegal immigrants

*senior citizen*: old person

*revenue enhancement through user's fees*: taxes

*strategic misrepresentations*

*stretching the truth*

*exaggerations*

*sell statements*

lies

**Note:** All euphemistic expressions mentioned above are cited

from <http://profmulder.home.att.net/languageemotive.htm#>

euphemism

## **Appendix I**

### **The Letter Given to the Jury Members**

University of Babylon  
College of Education  
Department of Educational  
and Psychological Sciences /  
Higher studies

#### *To the jury members*

*Dear Sir / Madam,*

I am conducting an M.Ed thesis on "Iraqi EFL Learners' Recognition of Euphemistic Expressions", and attempting to identify the performance of those students in using euphemistic expressions.

Attached is a test designed for this purpose. It contains three questions all of which aim at measuring the students' ability at the recognition level. The first question consists of 15 items in which the students are asked to identify each euphemistic expression in each item. The second question consists of 15 items with a list of 15 euphemistic expressions and the students are required to choose the most suitable one for each item to fill in the blank. The third question consists of 2 columns each of which contains 20 expressions and the students are asked to choose the letter of the matching expression from column B that describes each euphemistic expression in column A. The test is designed to involve the fourth year students Department of English, College of Education University of Babylon.

I would be grateful if you could advise me on the validity of the test to achieve the above aims. Your modifications of the items will be greatly regarded.

*Thank you for your kind assistance*

Hayder Mohammed Jawad  
M.Ed student / Methods of Teaching  
English as a Foreign Language

## The Test

**Q1/ Underline the euphemistic expression in each of the following sentences.**  
**( 15 Marks )**

**Example:**

Q/ An extra \$ 10 million in foreign aid has been promised to be given to countries in difficult situations.

A/ An extra \$ 10 million in foreign aid has been promised to be given to countries in difficult situations.

1. Please contact my personal assistant to make an appointment.
2. To say the truth, Frank's remarks about the project were ill-advised.
3. The museum has special facilities for partially sighted visitors.
4. A man was arrested by the law-enforcement officer and held for questioning.
5. Mary was less favoured by beauty.
6. Someone borrowed money without asking from my purse.
7. Christine's driving ability had plenty of room for improvement.
8. The government plans to increase the public donation by 5 per cent over the next year.
9. The smell made me want to lose my lunch.
10. Darn it! I've lost my keys!
11. We had to stop at a rest room on our trip.
12. My parents are now at their final rest.
13. A new programme to get the long-term job seekers back to work is suggested by the government.
14. Upon close inspection, she noticed a few character lines on her face.
15. Many car dealerships now are selling pre-owned vehicles.

**Q2/ From the list of euphemistic expressions given, choose the one which is most suitable for each blank. Write only the letter of the correct expression in each blank. Use each expression once only. ( 15 Marks )**

- |                                 |                               |                                     |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>A.</b> an engagement         | <b>F.</b> classified          | <b>K.</b> in the family way         |
| <b>B.</b> welfare               | <b>G.</b> wet the bed         | <b>L.</b> make love                 |
| <b>C.</b> collateral damage     | <b>H.</b> internment facility | <b>M.</b> an unplanned landing      |
| <b>D.</b> downsized             | <b>I.</b> underprivileged     | <b>N.</b> developing countries      |
| <b>E.</b> an unsavory character | <b>J.</b> physical pressure   | <b>O.</b> escorted off the premises |

1. .... has been detained for questioning.
2. People in the ..... are free of forms of cancer that are common in the West.
3. The pilot was forced to make ..... because of the great damage in the plane.
4. The criminal's wife went to the..... to visit her husband.
5. The general tried to avoid ..... with the enemy.
6. It is quite common for small children to .....
7. Police were called for Tom to be .....
8. 200 workers at the factory have been .....
9. Congratulations! I have heard that your wife is .....
- 10.The government is still the main provider of the child's .....
- 11.This information is highly .....; only the president can see it.
- 12.The murderer confessions were made under.....
- 13.It is illegal to .....to a person under the age of 16.
- 14.The government denied that there had been any ..... during the bombing raid.
- 15.International aid agencies try to provide food and shelter for the .....

**Q3/ On the line next to each euphemistic expression in Column A, place the letter of the matching expression which it describes in Column B. Answers in Column B should be used only once. ( 20 Marks )**

<u><b>Column A</b></u>	<u><b>Column B</b></u>
_____1. Senior citizen	A. Profitable
_____2. Funeral director	B. Bombing attack by plane
_____3. Comfort woman	C. Coffin
_____4. Sales adviser	D. Vagina
_____5. Taxpayer	E. Garbage man
_____6. The big C	F. A lie
_____7. Surgical strike	G. Menstruation
_____8. Area denial munitions	H. Citizen
_____9. Human intelligence	I. God
_____10. Sanitation engineer	J. Shit
_____11. Access controller	K. Prostitute
_____12. Cunt	L. Death penalty
_____13. Casket	M. Undertaker
_____14. Period	N. Information from spies and interrogated prisoners
_____15. Categorical inaccuracy	O. Old person
_____16. Efficient	P. Cancer
_____17. Wet work	Q. Shop assistant
_____18. Capital punishment	R. Doorman
_____19. Defecate	S. Landmines
_____20. Gosh	T. Assassination

## **Appendix II**

### **The Test's Possible Answers**

Q1/

1. personal assistant.
2. ill-advised.
3. partially sighted.
4. the law-enforcement officer.
5. less favoured by beauty.
6. borrowed money without asking.
7. had plenty of room for improvement.
8. the public donation.
9. lose my lunch.
10. Darn it!
11. rest room.
12. at their final rest.
13. job seekers.
14. character lines.
15. pre-owned vehicles.

**Q2/**

**1. E**

**2. N**

**3. M**

**4. H**

**5. A**

**6. G**

**7. O**

**8. D**

**9. K**

**10. B**

**11. F**

**12. J**

**13. L**

**14. C**

**15. I**

**Q3/**

**1. O**

**2. M**

**3. K**

**4. Q**

**5. H**

**6. P**

**7. B**

**8. S**

**9. N**

**10. E**

**11. R**

**12. D**

**13. C**

**14. G**

**15. F**

**16. A**

**17. T**

**18. L**

**19. J**

**20. I**

## **Appendix III**

### **Names of the Jury Members**

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1 The Problem

According to Rowley (1971: 165), learning a foreign language is a difficult task for all learners who find difficulties in how to select the appropriate words whose symbols accurately represent the concept which they have in their minds. Acquiring vocabulary is one of the most tedious learning tasks confronting language learners. The tasks are difficult not only because of the large number of words that must be mastered, but also because of the little attention given to the problem of making the learner's job easier.

In English, unpleasant associations of vocabulary items are unavoidable in dealing with such subjects as death, disease, crime, punishment, war, money, government, human body and sex. As a result, euphemistic expressions are used in order to avoid mentioning such matters directly. Euphemism can be defined as 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 to make it less troublesome for the speaker (Rivers, 1981: 139).

Mey (1993: 318) asserts that when a phrase is used as a euphemism, it often becomes a metaphor whose literal meaning is dropped. Euphemisms may be used to hide unpleasant or disturbing

ideas, even when the literal term for them is not necessarily offensive. This type of euphemism is used in public relations and politics, where it is sometimes called doublespeak. Sometimes, using euphemisms is equated to politeness. Some euphemisms are considered to be superstitious, based (consciously or subconsciously) on the idea that words have the power to bring bad fortune for example, not speaking the word **cancer**. Other euphemisms are considered to be religious euphemisms, based on the idea that some words are sacred, or that some words are spiritually imperiling for example, not speaking the word **damn**.

The problem of such a topic lies in that most of Iraqi EFL learners do not have a good recognition of euphemistic expressions and their meanings. Therefore, this study is devoted to investigating the extent to which Iraqi EFL learners are able to recognize these expressions and their meanings.

## 1.2 Aims of the Study

The study aims at :

1. Presenting material about euphemistic expressions with their various types and uses which can be helpful in arriving at an overall view of the role of such expressions in language.
2. Identifying Iraqi EFL learners' recognition of euphemistic expressions.
3. Accounting for learners' errors and their sources.

### 1.3 The Hypotheses

In view of the preceding aims, it is hypothesized that:

1. Most Iraqi EFL learners fail to distinguish the meaning of euphemistic expressions.
2. The learners' recognition of euphemistic expressions and their meanings in context is expected to be better than their recognition of them out of context.
3. Such learners have not achieved sufficient mastery of euphemistic expressions during their four-year study of English as a foreign language.

### 1.4 The Procedures

The following steps will be followed in the course of fulfilling the aims of this study:

1. Presenting a comprehensive material about euphemistic expressions including their different types and uses.
2. Selecting a sample of Iraqi EFL learners as subjects for conducting a test to investigate their recognition of euphemistic expressions.
3. Identifying the learners' errors then classifying them according to their sources.

## 1.5 Limits of the Study

The sample of the present study is confined to learners of the fourth year in the Department of English/College of Education/University of Babylon during the academic year (2007-2008). This level of learning has been selected to apply the test as the fourth-year is the most suitable stage for the present study.

## 1.6 Value of the Study

It is hoped that the findings of this study will be useful in the theoretical side through providing some information about euphemistic expressions that might be of benefit to researchers for further study and for learners alike. The practical side can be of importance to teachers in providing them with insight on how to teach such expressions.

This study can also be of some help to syllabus designers in providing them with better grounding for their material designing work as it can serve as a basis for the preparation of remedial teaching programmes.

## 1.7 Definitions of Basic Terms

In this study, some terms need to be defined for the purpose of clarity and accuracy:

- **Recognition:** It refers to "the act of remembering or of identifying what something is" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, 2005).

- **Euphemism:** It is "an indirect word or phrase that people often use to refer to something embarrassing or unpleasant" (Ibid).
- **Doublespeak or doubletalk:** It refers to the "language that is intended to deceive people, or that can be understood in two different ways" (Ibid).
- **Difficulty:** It is a problem or a situation that is hard to deal with (Ibid). It is also defined as "a situation in which someone has to make a difficult choice between two or more things" (Ibid).
- **EFL learners:** They are learners who study English as a foreign language as their major subject in Departments of English in Iraqi universities.

# Chapter Two

## Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Introduction

In all societies, there are certain words and acts which are unacceptable for social or cultural reasons because they are considered taboo words. Such words and acts reflect the particular customs, beliefs, attitudes and views of the society. In addition, some words may be used in certain circumstances and not in others (Allan and Burridge, 1991: 16).

Words which have religious connotations are, in certain societies, considered profane if used outside the formal or religious ceremonies. Another type of words which are related to death, sex and natural bodily functions form a large part of the set of taboo words in many cultures. Therefore, people employ euphemism in order to adapt their words to the effect which they wish to make on their addressees (Ibid).

According to Wilfred (1998: 75), the need for euphemism stems from the fact that we are apt to use words with affective connotations that are most appropriate to our feelings. When we love somebody or at least sympathize with him, we tend to use the mildest way of talking to or about him. Prudery is yet another reason for employing euphemism. Taboo words as well as abusive words are generally euphemized in polite discourse (Ibid).

Jespersen (1967: 230) thinks that in order to avoid mentioning "the real name of what is thought to be indecent or improper", people use innocent words. As for Palmer (1972: 323), the reluctance to use the direct term for an unpleasant object or situation gives rise to what is called euphemism.

## 2.1 The Concept of Euphemism

The word euphemism, according to (Holder, 2003: 65), comes from the Greek word **euphemo**, meaning 'auspicious/good/fortunate speech/kind' which in turn is derived from the Greek root-words **eu** 'good/well' + **pheme** 'speech/speaking'. The **eupheme** is originally a word or phrase used in place of a religious word or phrase that should not be spoken aloud; etymologically, the **eupheme** is the opposite of the **blaspheme** or evil-speaking (Ibid).

Generally speaking, euphemism is the substitution of an agreeable or less offensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant to the listener; or in the case of doublespeak, to make it less troublesome for the speaker. It may also be a substitution of a description of something or someone rather than the name, to avoid revealing secret, holy, or sacred names to the uninitiated, or to obscure the identity of the subject of a conversation from potential eavesdroppers (Ibid).

Euphemism has been defined and viewed differently by different writers. Bolton and Crystal (1969: 190) state that the main concern of euphemism is either to adorn or drop any avoidably ugly thing. Vallins (1960: 52) has the same view about the aesthetic nature of euphemism. He (Ibid) says that euphemism is "pleasant or decorous

speech". By the same token, Fowler and Fowler (1973: 22) define euphemism as "slurring over badness by giving it a good name". Bolinger (1975: 255) says that euphemism is a denaturing process. According to Robertson (1954: 245), euphemism is the "widespread tendency in language to avoid the direct word by employing a pleasant, neutral or even meaningless substitute". Marckwardt (1958: 122) is of the opinion that euphemism is the verbal prudery or the avoidance of unpleasant words. Pyles and Algeo (1970: 201-2) define euphemism in a similar manner saying "euphemism is any term that replaces a taboo word in a language". Anderson and Stageberg (1975: 140) state that euphemism "is, at worst, a necessary evil; at its best, it is a handy verbal tool to avoid making enemies needlessly, or shocking friends". Mey (1993: 317) defines euphemism as "talking about something in terms that are deliberately chosen to prevent any negative reaction on the part of the receiver".

On the other hand, Beckman and Callow (1974: 120) define euphemism as " a metaphorical or metonymic use of an expression in place of another expression that is disagreeable or offensive". Leech (1990: 53) states that "euphemism is the practice of referring to something offensive or delicate in terms that make it sound more pleasant than it really is". He adds that this technique consists of replacing a word which has offensive connotations with another expression, which makes no overt reference to the unpleasant side of the subject, and may even be a positive misnomer.

It is believed that most of these avoided words and phrases are central to our life, but they cannot be uttered publicly because they are

felt to give actual realization to what they refer to. Thus whenever there is a taboo against speaking about certain subjects, it is certain that such prohibited subjects are difficult, important, and central to our lives (Householder, 1971: 319).

## 2.2 Euphemism and Taboo

The existence of taboo words or ideas stimulates the creation of euphemisms. It is often necessary to mention some taboo subjects in formal situations, therefore euphemism represents an acceptable way to refer to taboo things; i.e. it makes a socially unacceptable topic mentionable (Ullmann, 1957: 43-4).

Once speakers recognize whether a notion is considered taboo, taboo language can be addressed by speakers in a number of ways based on the effect that they are trying to create within the situation. Speakers avoid taboo language because of particular situational norms that warrant careful circumlocution of the tabooed term such as when the death of a loved one is referred to as *passing on*. Speakers deal with taboo language in other situations by using a direct reference to the taboo term such as a white calling a black a 'nigger' in order to start a fight (Ibid).

When speakers realize that a taboo notion is unacceptable based on the specific context, often times they engage in euphemism creation in order to indirectly refer to the taboo notion. Euphemism is "used as an alternative to a dispreferred expression, in order to avoid possible loss of face; either one's own face or, through giving offence, that of the audience, or of some third party" (Allan and Burrige,

1991: 11). Therefore, inferred in this definition is the effect created, or in this case avoided by using euphemism.

Euphemisms often evolve over time into taboo words themselves, through a process described by W.V.O. Quine, and Steven Pinker the "euphemism treadmill". This is the well-known linguistic process termed as pejoration (Ibid: 15).

Words originally intended as euphemisms may lose their euphemistic value, acquiring the negative connotations of their referents. In some cases, they may be used mockingly and become dysphemisms (Ibid). For instance, the term *concentration camp*, to describe camps used to house civilian prisoners, is used by the British during the Second Boer War, primarily because it sounds inoffensive. However, after the Third Reich the expression is used to describe **death camps**, the term gains enormous negative connotation. Since then, new terms have been invented as euphemisms for them, such as *internment camp*, *resettlement camp* and *filtration camp* in the Chechen War to "filter out terrorists". In addition, in some versions of English, *toilet room*, itself a euphemism, is replaced with *bathroom*, *water closet* which are replaced with *restroom* and *W.C.* These are also examples of euphemisms which are geographically concentrated: the term *restroom* (*a / the ladies' room* and *a / the Gents*) is rarely used outside the U.S.A. and *W.C.* (*a / the ladies'* and *a / the gents*), is very popular in Britain (Pyles, 1971: 91).

Connotations easily change over time: *Idiot*, *imbecile* and *moron* are once considered to be neutral terms for an adult of toddler,

preschool, and primary school mental age. Now that is considered rude and used commonly as an insult of a person, thing, or idea. As a result, new terms like the following have replaced **retarded**: *developmentally disabled*, *mentally challenged*, *with an intellectual disability* and *special needs*. Although in that case the meaning is also broadened (and hence is narrowed with adjectives, which themselves are euphemized); a dyslexic or colourblind person is not to be termed **crippled**. Even more recent is the use of person-centric phrases, such as *person(s) with disability*, *dyslexia*, *colourblindness* which ascribe a particular condition to those previously qualified with the aforementioned adjectives (Turner, 1973: 115-16).

### 2.2.1 Taboo and Derogatory Expressions

In many languages, there are certain words of affective connotations which are not used in polite discourse and they are known as taboo words (Hayakawa, 1978: 65). The term **taboo** is of Polynesian origin (Nida, 1997: 185). Bolinger (1975: 369) defines taboo as a kind of language that is "devalued to the point of complete suppression".

Taboo, which is regarded as unspeakable, varies from language to language. Depending on the offence, taboos can generally include prohibitions on:

"fishing or picking fruit at certain seasons,

food taboos that restrict the diet of pregnant women,

talking to or touching chiefs or members of other high

social classes,  
 walking or travelling in certain areas such as forests,  
 and various taboos that function during important life events  
 such as birth, marriage, and death" (Encyclopaedia  
 Britannica, 2007).

The words that indicate tabooed objects or ideas are constantly changing because of the need for euphemism or because of the desire to give them a different appearance and complexion. The result is more ingenious synonyms (Bolton and Crystal, 1969: 193). The term **four-letter word** has become a designation of impolite words. But, **four-letter words**, which we think of as the real words for certain tabooed things or activities, may have been euphemisms themselves.

It is to be noted that words are more commonly restricted through taboo to certain contexts that led to extinction. It is true that taboo words have very powerful emotional associations and are at the right end of the good-bad scale; however, uttering taboo words provides us with a relatively harmless verbal substitute for going berserk and smashing furniture. The use of terms of abuse is tackled by Jay (2000). He (Ibid: 259) states that there are "neurological, psychological and socio-cultural forces" that compel a person to use them.

Derogatory expressions (expressions showing a critical attitude towards somebody) are of negative associations and are not preferable. Mencken (1962: 58) mentions that the word *Yankee* is

used derogatorily to refer to an **American**; *Hun* is used offensively to mean a **German**.

Many languages consistently use the words of **country dwellers** as terms of reproach, since the country-men are thought to be clumsy and boorish, and the city dwellers are polished and courteous (Palmer, 1972: 325).

We should differentiate between using terms of abuse abusively and using them to express friendship (Stern, 1965: 323):

First youth: Hullo, *congenital idiot!*

Second youth: Hullo, *you priceless old ass!*

The existence of taboo and derogatory expressions can be subdivided into:

### 2.2.1.1 Superstition

It includes superstition taboos and religious interdictions. Such taboos stem either from the idea that speech has a mysterious power and that the name affects the thing or from the desire to glorify certain names (Robertson, 1954: 246).

Occasionally, the invention of euphemisms is ascribed to superstition reasons. Many speakers, for instance, do not refer to an imminent death by saying **if he dies** or **if he should die**. It is believed that pronouncing the word or the phrase itself brings about the dreadful possibility. As a result, they use: *if he should not recover*, *if he should not come back* and *if anything should happen to him* or any other phrases that allude vaguely to the meaning intended (Ibid).

Primitive people still believe that words have power over things. It needs no divine intelligence to say that the word is a symbol and it has no direct relation with the referent except through the image in the mind of the speaker. The primitive confusion of the word or the symbol with the thing is manifested, in some parts of the world, in the belief that the name of a person is part of that person and to know someone's name is to have power over him. This is the reason why some primitive people give a child two names at birth. The real name is known only to the parents and never used; the second is used by the whole society in public (Hayakawa, 1978: 670). Palmer (1972: 323) points out that some primitive people do not use the name of a dead person nor name another person after a dead one. Luckily, such taboos are confined to primitive people.

Superstition euphemisms, as Wakelin (1972: 79) claims, are especially prevalent in fishing communities. The name of any land animal seems to be taboo for such notoriously superstitious communities. This gives rise to a variety of circumlocutions for each animal. Wakelin (Ibid) also claims that it is held unlucky for the same fishing communities mentioned above to see a 'nun' or a 'priest'. They even think that 'church' brings bad luck.

Superstition, as Hayakawa (1978: 67) says, affects the employment of the names of gods and evil spirits. He says "there is a feeling that names of gods are too holy, and the names of evil spirits too terrifying to be spoken lightly". Jespersen (1967: 227-8) states that **God** is dropped in favour of *goad* and *gosh*, and *deuce* is used for **devil**.

### 2.2.1.2 Enhancing the Prestige of Something

The desire to enhance the prestige of the thing or idea we are talking about is another reason for euphemizing things (Anderson and Stageberg, 1975: 139). According to Barker (1981: 83), a **used car** is called a *pre-owned car*. The desire to enhance the value of something is mainly achieved by employing hyperbole.

### 2.2.1.3 Delicacy

Delicacy is a general human tendency to avoid the direct reference to unpleasant subjects as in the case of terms associated with **death** and **burial** (Ibid).

### 2.2.1.4 Propriety

Propriety is connected with the correctness of moral behaviours. Words associated with love-making, pregnancy, and places of defecation are examples in which propriety is manifested (Ibid: 84).

## 2.3 Euphemism and Dysphemism

According to Allan and Burridge (1991: 26), the term euphemism is well-known and has wide currency, Whereas ‘dysphemism’ does not. Dysphemism is used precisely for the opposite reason that a euphemism is used. When speakers want to create an unsettling effect in their audience, they may directly use the taboo language to address the taboo notion. This strategy, or dysphemism, is defined by Allan and Burridge (Ibid) as "an expression with connotations that are offensive either about the

denotatum or to the audience, or both, and it is substituted for a neutral or euphemistic expression for just that reason."

Sagarin (1962: 106) describes why speakers might employ the process of dysphemism: "In his anger, man seeks terms to express frustration. He resorts to forbidden words because they are inherently stronger in their pejorative character by virtue of their being proscribed". Sagarin's analysis of taboo language is based on the notion that this kind of language has historically been located in covert spheres of dialogue, and by directly addressing taboo language in an overt way, speakers are able to create a strong effect on their audience.

Although Sagarin does not define the nature of the effect, by looking at examples of taboo language in use, this effect can be established. For instance, if someone is to call the priest and leave the message: 'hey *shitbag*, get back to me' the relationship between the priest and the caller would deem that this message is inappropriate. Based on this dysphemism concerning the use of *shitbag*, the priest might think that the caller is subconsciously requesting a 'soul cleansing' or exorcism. Similarly, if a professor is to say to a noisy class: *shut the fuck up* as opposed to the euphemistic 'please be quiet', the class would understand that the professor is very serious and possibly upset because of his direct reference to the tabooed language. When speakers choose to directly address taboo language, they make this choice based on the effect they are trying to produce in their audience (Ibid).

Dysphemism, according to Bolton and Crystal (1969: 188), is a reaction not only against stiffness and pretentiousness, but also against nobility and dignity in language. It seeks to keep language at a low level on the one hand and displays good humour on the other. Dysphemism substitutes dignified and normal terms for more vulgar, familiar and joyous ones. An example of dysphemism is the pejorative suffix 'ious' as in 'robustious' (Ibid).

Bolton and Crystal (Ibid) differentiate between euphemism and dysphemism saying that dysphemism is opposed to euphemism. Dysphemism is pitiless, mocking and brutally frank; whereas euphemism is indulgent, kind and discreet. Their aims diverge: dysphemism tries to stimulate and irritate the person addressed; euphemism tries to minimize the impact on the part of the recipient or to beautify the ugly face of an expression. In short, euphemism is sedative and dysphemism is irritative.

In language, both dysphemism (from the Greek **dys** = non and **pheme** = speech) and cacophemism (in Greek **cacos** = bad) refer to the usage of an intentionally harsh word or expression instead of a polite one; they are rough opposites of euphemism (Allan and Burridge, 1991: 26). **Dysphemism** may be either offensive or merely humorously disapproval, while **cacophemism** is usually deliberately offensive. (More recently, the linguist Kate Burridge has coined the term **orthophemism**, to refer to a neutral name or expression.) Dysphemism is related to "blasphemy," but is less focused in scope, and therefore not directly synonymous. Examples of dysphemism include *dead tree edition* for the paper version of an online magazine,

or the American military personnel's use of *shit on a shingle* for their common breakfast of creamed chipped beef on toast (Ibid).

Many of the same subjects can be dysphemized as euphemized, such as sex and death—a respected dead person may be said to have *passed away*, a disrespected one to have become *worm food* or, less negatively, to have *kicked the bucket*. Oddly, some humorous expressions can be either euphemistic or dysphemistic, depending on context, because terms which can be dysphemistic can also be affectionate. For instance, *pushing up daisies* can be taken as either softer or harsher than **died** (Holder, 2003: 66).

A complementary 'dysphemism treadmill' exists, but is more rarely observed. One modern example is the word *sucks*. *That sucks* began as American slang for 'that is very unpleasant,' and is shorthand for 'that sucks cock,' referring to fellatio along with the exactly synonymous phrase *that blows*. It is developed over the late-20th century from being an extremely vulgar phrase to near-acceptability (Akmajian et al, 1997: 289-90).

## 2.4 Is Euphemism: Sweet Talking or Deception?

According to Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1991), euphemism is "the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant". On the other hand, "there is a particular kind of euphemism that involves using language in a perverse way to conceal thought. This is called doublespeak" (Katamba, 2005: 192).

Euphemism, in the sense of sweet talking substituting for taboos, impoliteness, profanity or maintaining one's face, goes back to "primitive people and their interpretation of tabooed objects as having demonic power that shouldn't be mentioned or touched" (Allan and Burridge, 2006: 11).

According to Trask (1996: 41), the idea of sweet talking is coined to replace taboos which are demonic, offensive, forbidden or impolite depending on the taboo and culture of the people who interpret them. In certain cultures, taboos are believed to have demonic power on people who touch or mention them. In certain cases, euphemism has a damaging impact on language. To illustrate, in all native Australian languages, when a member of a community dies, the members of his community are forced not to mention his/her name or, even, any word that is similar in pronunciation to his/her name since these words are taboos and must be replaced (Ibid).

#### 2.4.1 Sweet Talking

Yule (1996: 60) states that each culture has its own values, habits, customs and taboos. Euphemism, henceforward referred to as sweet talking, is used to be polite in impolite situations or to maintain one's face. Face means "the public self-image of a person. It refers to the emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognize".

Maintaining one's face is common between the speaker and, at the same time, the hearer. While we are in an interaction, we are expected not to be offensive or be offended by others. This mainly

depends on the level of formality and social status between individuals (Ibid).

## 2.4.2 Politeness and Face

When someone uses sweet talking, he/she tries to maintain his/her face and the others', as well. For illustration, most people usually refer to toilet as *restroom*, *powder room*, *loo* or *bathroom*. It is important for the speaker to be polite and not to offend the hearer. However, referring to the toilet as the *loo* between close friends may be interpreted as a joke or, even more seriously, as being childish because of using children's terminology. If someone at a formal meeting with his / her employer says:

**Excuse me! I have to go to the shithouse.,**

he/she will be regarded as impolite and, at the same time, offensive to the hearer since he/she does not maintain both faces. So sweet talking maintains not only the speaker's face but the others', as well (Levinson, 1997: 72).

According to Bolinger (1975: 360-9), sweet talking is used to refer to disabled people in a suitable way in order not to hurt their feelings. In this case sweet talking is not motivated by taboo, but rather offending others (face saving). The disabled are referred to as *handicapped*, *differently –abled*, *mentally challenged* or *people with special needs*. Every time one tries to address them in an inoffensive way, he/she fails. For example, the sweet talking expression *differently-abled* still refers to them as being different from us which is still offensive to them. "Unfortunately, when we use euphemism,

the unpleasant associations eventually catch up with the new word" (Katamba, 2005: 190). This makes it difficult for us to use standard sweet talking to refer to people with special needs since the association of the word is always present (Ibid).

### 2.4.3 Profanity

Profane words and expressions in the English language are often taken from three areas: religion, excretion and sex. While profanities themselves have been around for centuries, their limited use in public and by the media has only slowly become socially acceptable, and there are still many expressions which cannot be used in polite conversation (Crystal, 2003: 172-3). He (Ibid) points out that one vantage point into the current societal tolerance of profane language is found in the frequency of such language on prime-time television. The word **damn** (and most other religious profanities in the English language) has lost its shocking value, and as a consequence, euphemisms for it (e.g., *dang*, *darn-it*) have taken on a very stodgy feeling. By the same token, excretory profanity such as **piss** and **shit** in some cases may be acceptable among informal and usually younger friends while they are almost never acceptable in formal relationships or public use; euphemisms such as: *Number One and Number Two* may be preferred for use with children. Most sexual terms and expressions, even technical ones, either remain unacceptable for general use or have undergone radical rehabilitation (Ibid).

### 2.4.3.1 Religious Euphemisms

Crystal (Ibid) mentions that religion is an area in which sweet talking is used. Religious sweet talking is used to show respect to religion. It is mentioned in the Ten Commandments (www.bibletext.com) that the name of God should not be mentioned in vain.

" Thou shalt not make the name of the Lord thy God in Vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

Do not use my name for evil purposes, for I, the LORD your God, will punish anyone who misuses my name".

Sweet talking is used to replace profanity, blasphemy and swearing. There are many techniques used to substitute such profanity, blasphemy and swearwords by sweet talking. Audio censorship is used in television and radio programmes by replacing profane words with a beep sound or showing an icon with a beep sound on the mouth of the speaker which is applicable only to audio-

visual broadcasting (Long, 2004). Remodeling is widely used in sweet talking; for example: *gosh* instead of **God**; *heck* instead of **Hell**; *sugar*, *shoot*, or *shucks* instead of **shit** and *darn* or *dang* instead of **damn** (Allan, 2001: 162).

Likewise, religious Jews use the term 'God' in written English. They write it as 'G-d' leaving out the vowel in order not to mention the name in plain words. They believe that " the law given to Moses is a prohibition against transcribing the name of God, because they feel that if God's name is recorded into a piece of paper, there is a possibility that the name will be disrespected or destroyed in some way" (Ibid).

It is motivated by respect for religion rather than taboo, for many people, to use sweet talking when referring to religious concepts (Long, 2004). Moreover, sweet talking is used in an orthographic way by printing the first letter of a swearing expression and omitting the rest of it: *F----(fuck)* or even full omission of the word: what the *\*\*\*\*(fuck)* are you doing here?

Euphemisms for God and Jesus, such as: *gosh* and *gee* are used by Christians to avoid taking the name of God in a vain oath, which would violate one of the Ten Commandments (Ibid).

When praying, according to Katamba (2005: 192), Jews typically use the word "Adonai" for God. However, when in a colloquial setting, this is deemed inappropriate, and so typically one replaces the word 'Adonai' with the word 'HaShem', which literally means, 'The Name'. It is notable that 'Adonai' is itself a word that

refers to the Jewish God's name, the pronunciation of which is unknown and often mistakenly thought to be Jehovah, but is not the name itself. Traditionally, Jews have seen the name of God as ineffable and thus one that must not be spoken (Ibid).

Euphemisms for **hell**, **damnation**, and **the devil**, on the other hand, are often used to avoid invoking the power of the adversary. For demonstration, in the Harry Potter books, the evil wizard Lord Voldemort is usually referred to as "He Who Must Not Be Named" or "You-Know-Who" (Ibid: 193).

Swearing expressions such as **shit** and **fuck** are discussed in this section (Religious) rather than in section 2.4.3.2. and 2.4.3.3. (Excretory and Sexual Euphemisms) because these swearing expressions can be viewed from two different perspectives: semantic and pragmatic. The semantic aspect (referential) is dealt with in section 2.4.2. in which **shit** is replaced by *faeces* and **fuck** for *copulate*, *make love* or *go to bed with somebody* (Rawson, 1981: 73).

Rawson (Ibid) asserts that the pragmatic aspect of these two words cannot be related to what these words mean or refer to; but it refers to the speech act that these words convey when said to express emotional reaction to different situations ranging from surprise, anger, doing something wrong to receiving unexpected news. one cannot think of any situation where one of these two swearing expressions should be used in favour of the other; i.e. they can be used interchangeably (Ibid):

**Shit (Fuck)!** I have cut my hand.

It is unacceptable to use sweet talking instead of these two words when used in the pragmatic aspect as shown in the two following sentences:

*Faeses!* I have cut my hand.\*

*Sexual intercourse!* I have cut my hand.\*

However, they can be replaced by sweet talking when used in the semantic (referential) aspect as shown in the following sentences to replace **fuck** and **shit**, respectively (Ibid:74):

He was watching them while they were *having sexual intercourse*.

*Faeses* are the solid waste excreted from the body of a human or animal through the bowels.

As stated before, these profane words can be replaced by sweet talking by remodelling: *sugar*, *shoot*, or *shucks* for **shit** or printing the first letter and omitting the rest (F---!). Four-letter words; such as: *Dick*, *Piss*, *Fuck*, *Cunt*, *Shit* and *Wank* are generally regarded as profane and offensive depending on the level of the formality between the speaker and the hearer. These obscene words are not regarded as offensive when used between close friends (Ibid).

#### 2.4.3.2 Excretory Euphemisms

While **urinate** and **defecate** are not euphemisms, they are used almost exclusively in a clinical sense (Allan, 2001: 163). The basic Anglo-Saxon words for these functions, **piss** and **shit**, are considered vulgarities and unacceptable in general use, despite the use of **piss** in the King James Bible (in Isaiah 36:12).

The word **manure**, referring to animal feces used as fertilizer for plants, means 'worked with the hands' (manu meaning hand) and alludes to the mixing of manure with earth. In several zoo markets, the byproduct of elephants and other large herbivores is called *Zoo Doo* or *Zoopoop*, and there is a brand of chicken manure available in garden stores under the name *Cock-a-Doodle Doo* (Allan, 2001: 163). Also, a brand of sheep manure is called *Baa Baa Doo*. Similarly, the abbreviation *BS*, or the word *bull*, often replaces the word **bullshit** in polite society. The term **bullshit** itself generally means lies or nonsense, and not the literal 'shit of a bull', which is making it a dysphemism (Ibid).

There are many numbers of lengthier periphrases for excretion used to excuse oneself from company, such as to *powder one's nose*, to *see a man about a horse* (or *dog*) or to *drop the kids off at the pool* (this latter expression could actually be regarded as a dysphemism) (Ibid).

Sweet talking arises when referring to tabooed bodily functions and effluvia from the organs of sex, micturition and defecation (SMD organs) (Allan and Burridge, 2006: 144). The language we use when referring to those tabooed parts and functions is usually figurative. *Lose your lunch* instead of **vomiting** is a sweet talking idiom used figuratively in British English to avoid mentioning bodily effluvia.

Allan and Burridge (Ibid) argue that there is a strong connection between magic and bodily effluvia, and the connection and

practice are not only a primitive ritual, but it is also still practised in the twenty-first century. In hoodoo tradition which refers to the 'magic healing and control, especially in African-based folk medicine in the United States and the Caribbean', there are many instructions for women on how to use tabooed bodily effluvia such as menstrual blood to capture the sexual attention of a man by adding it to his tea or coffee (Lutz, 1996: 75).

According to the Old Testament documents in Leviticus 15: 1, 19

"1 The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying...

19 And if a woman have an issue, and her issue in flesh be blood, she shall be apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even."

We can find the sweet talking here 'a woman has an issue' is used to replace the tabooed phrase menstruation woman. It is used figuratively to keep the reference of tabooed bodily effluvia away. Another sweet talking to refer to a menstruating woman is '*the cavalry's come*' in which it is used metaphorically in the sense that the cavalry wears red clothes compared to the colour of blood. Other examples of figurative expressions are (Mencken, 1962: 656):

<i>beat the bishop</i>	}	masturbate
<i>juice the sluice</i>		
<i>pull the pope</i>		

In addition to figurative language, there are other ways that sweet talking is used to refer to bodily effluvia and sex reproductive organs. Loanwords, especially from Latin, are used because these are not familiar to many people: *copulate*, *vulva*, *faeces*, *defecate*, *genitals* and *effluvia*. Being unfamiliar to many people, these loanwords serve the function of sweet talking. Another way is focusing on the location rather than the process: *going to bed with somebody* instead of **having sex**; in which the focus is drawn on the location 'bed' rather than the process **having sex** (Ibid).

By the same token, it is applicable when it comes to toilet where we focus on the place where the process takes place rather than the process itself (Ibid: 657).

### 2.4.3.3 Sexual Euphemisms

Both the Latin term **pudendum** and the Greek term (*aidoion*) for the genitals literally mean **shameful thing**. **Groin**, **crotch**, and **loins** refer to a larger region of the body, but are euphemistic when used to refer to the genitals, (Marckwardt, 1958:123).

In pornographic stories, the words *rosebud*, *balloon knot* and *starfish* are often used as euphemisms for **anus**, generally in the context of anal sex. The 'Baseball metaphors for sex' are perhaps the most famous and widely-used set of polite euphemisms for sex and relationship behaviour in the U.S., with terms like (Long, 2004):

*hitting it off* for a good start to relationship

*striking out* for being unlucky with a love interest

*hitting a home run* for sex during the first date

*batting both ways* to describe bisexuality

*batting for the other team* to describe homosexuality

*pinch hitter* being a last-minute or sudden new love interest

*making it to first/second/third base* for various levels of sexual activity from kissing to petting, itself a euphemism for manual genital stimulation

*stealing bases* by initiating new levels of sexual contact

without invitation

all of which are short of **scoring** or **coming home** and **sexual intercourse**.

Euphemisms also abound for the equipment; *bat and balls* are a common reference to the **male genitalia**, while *glove* refers to the **female anatomy** (Lutz, 1996: 76). There are many euphemisms for birth control devices, sometimes even propagated by the manufacturers:

**Condoms** are known as: *rubbers, sheaths, love gloves, diving suits* and *raincoats*.

**The birth control pill** is known simply as *The Pill*

There are also many euphemisms for menstruation, such as: *having the painters in*, being *on the rag, flying the flag* (originally a euphemism for hanging out the bed sheet after a wedding night as a testament to the woman's virginity) and *that time of the month* (Ibid).

#### 2.4.3.3.1 Houses of Prostitution

Mencken (1962: 656) states that there are many disarming names for a **house of prostitution**. The fact that *sport* is employed to stand for the word **prostitute**, brings us to the conclusion that *sporting house* is coined from 'sport'. **Sporting house**, which is merely a *gambling house* in England, is finally applied to a *brothel* in America. *Crib* also reflects the same transition from a *gambling house* to a **house of prostitution**. Among such terms that are used at one time or another are *assignation house, cat house, fancy house* and *call house* (Ibid).

There are other terms to use on more dignified levels including *house of ill-fame* and *disorderly house* that is mostly used at law courts (Marckwardt, 1958:125).

### 2.4.3.3.2 Names of Animals

Mencken (1962: 654-5) says that names of male animals must not be mentioned in the presence of women. Such words as **bull**, **boar** and **cock** are absolutely taboo. The word **cock** in particular is avoided since it is used to designate the **genitals**. People feel shy at such surnames as Cox, Hitchcock and the like, because these names resemble the taboo word **cock**.

### 2.4.4 Euphemisms for Death

According to Holder (2003: 68), the English language contains numerous euphemisms related to dying, death, burial, and the people and places dealt with death. The practice of using euphemisms for death is likely to have originated with the magical belief that to speak the word 'death' is to invite death; where to 'draw Death's attention' is the ultimate bad fortune—a common theory holds that death is a taboo subject in most English-speaking cultures for precisely this reason. It may be said that one is not **dying**, but *fading quickly* because the end is near. People who have **died** are referred to as having *passed away* or *passed* or *departed*. *Deceased* is a euphemism for **dead**, and sometimes *the deceased* is said to have gone to a better place, but this is used primarily among the religious with a concept of Heaven. Some Christians often use phrases such as *gone to be with the Lord* or *called to higher service* (this latter expression being particularly prevalent in the Salvation Army) to express their belief that physical death is not the end (Ibid: 69).

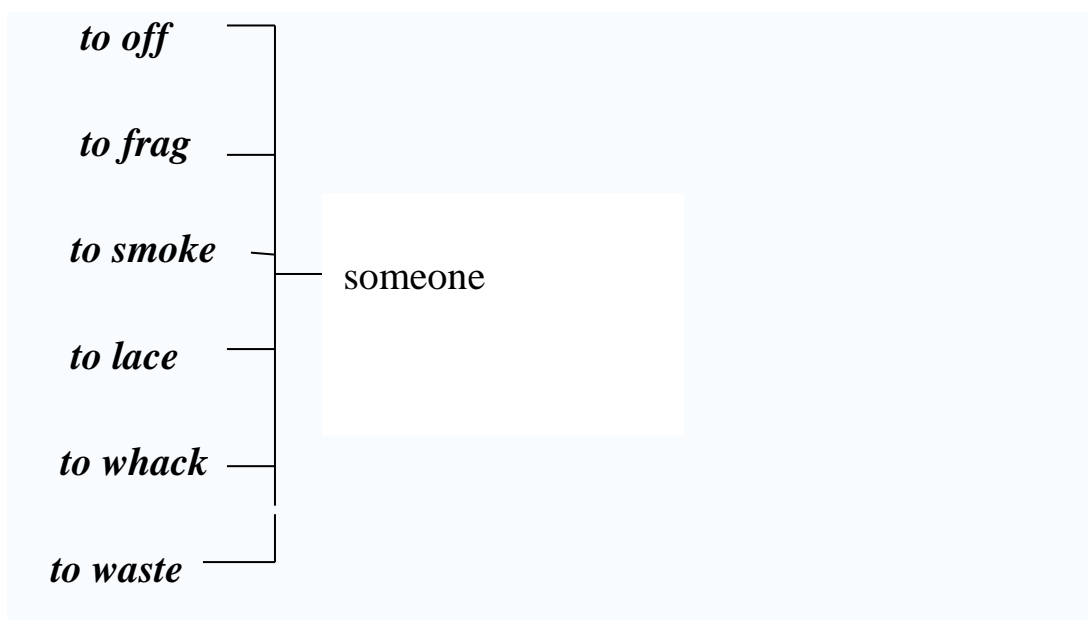
There are many euphemisms for the dead body, some are polite and some are profane, as well as dysphemisms such as *worm food*, or *dead meat*. Modern rhyming slang contains the expression *brown bread*. **The corpse** is once referred to as *the shroud* (or *house* or *tenement*) of *clay*, and modern funerary workers use terms such as: *the loved one* (title of a novel about Hollywood undertakers by Evelyn Waugh) or *the dear departed* (They themselves have given up the euphemism funeral director for grief therapist, and hold arrangement conferences with relatives). Among themselves, mortuary technicians often refer to the **corpse** as the *client* (Crystal, 2003: 384). A recently dead person may be referred to as: *the late John Doe*. The terms *cemetery* for **graveyard**, *cremation* for **burning the dead body as part of a funeral ceremony** and *undertaking* for **burial** are so well-established that most people do not even recognize them as euphemisms. In fact, undertaking has taken on a negative connotation, as undertakers have a devious reputation (Ibid).

According to Crystal (Ibid), contemporary euphemisms and dysphemisms for death tend to be quite colourful, and someone who has died is said to have: *passed away*, *passed on*, *checked out*, *bit the big one*, *kicked the bucket*, *bitten the dust*, *popped their clogs*, *pegged it*, *carked it*, *turned their toes up*, *bought the farm*, *cashed in their chips*, *croaked*, *given up the ghost* (originally a more respectful term, cf. the death of Jesus as translated in the King James Version of the Bible Mark 15:37), *gone south*, *shuffled off this mortal coil* (from William Shakespeare's **Hamlet**), *Run down the curtain and joined the Choir Invisible*, or *assumed room temperature*. When buried,

they may be said to be *pushing up daisies*, *sleeping the big sleep*, *taking a dirt nap* and *checking out the grass from underneath* or *six feet under*.

**Euthanasia**, as Allan (1986: 207-11) argues, also attracts euphemisms: *put one out of one's misery*, *put one to sleep*, *have one put down*. The latter two expressions are used primarily with dogs and cats that have made their final visit to the veterinarian. These terms are not usually applied to humans, because both medical ethics and civil law deprecate euthanasia (Ibid).

Furthermore, there are a few euphemisms for killing which are neither respectful nor playful, but rather clinical. Some examples of this type are (Allan and Burrige, 2006: 16): *terminate*, *wet work*, *to take care of one* or *to take them for a ride*, *to do them in*,



*to cut loose* and *open up on* someone, means to shoot at with every available weapon.

On the other hand, there are many dysphemisms, especially for death, which are dysphemisms for other unpleasant events and thus are unpleasant in their literal meaning, used to generalize a bad event. The following terms: *having your ass handed to you*, *being raped*, *ass-raped*, *left for the rats*, *toasted*, *roasted*, *burned*, *pounded*, *fucked*, *bent over the barrel* and *screwed over* commonly describe death or the state of imminent death, but also are common in describing defeat of any kind such as a humiliating loss in a sport or video game, being unfairly treated or cast aside in business affairs or being badly beaten in a fight. To *terminate with prejudice* generally means to **end one's employment** without possibility of rehire (as opposed to lay off, where the person can expect rehire if business picks up), but the related term to *terminate with extreme prejudice* now usually means to **kill**. The adjective extreme may occasionally be omitted (Bolinger, 1975: 371).

#### 2.4.5 Insanity and Euphemism

According to Robertson (1954: 247-8), Words associated with insanity constitute a very fertile field in euphemism. Tackling the euphemisms associated with foolishness and insanity, he (Ibid) illustrates many words that are employed by the English, but are of various origins. The Renaissance euphemism *insane* is used instead of **mad**. Then comes *crazy*, which is a jocose metaphor equivalent to 'cracked'. The Modern English word *silly* comes to mean 'innocent' first and finally *feeble-minded* or *half-witted* which are themselves euphemistic softenings for some other more direct terms. The word *fool*, as Allan (1986: 212) points out, is an English borrowing from the

French ‘fol’ which is in turn a slangy application of the Latin ‘folis’. Among the other words that belong to this group is the word *idiot*, which is coined from a Greek word, meaning ‘private person’. Of late, the word *mad* comes to refer colloquially to ‘anger’ rather than ‘insanity’.

Semantically, the two words ‘obtuse’ and ‘stupid’ have the same denotation. Their connotations, however, are likely to be different. *Obtuse* is a fairly cool label; while ‘stupid’ is of considerable violence and it carries some emotional overtone (Sledd, 1959: 322).

#### 2.4.6 Occupation and Euphemism

Mencken (1962: 587) states that occupational euphemism is flourished to a great extent in America. The purpose behind this flourishing is that the Americans are a good deal more ashamed of their trade than Englishmen. He (Ibid) illustrates the following examples: **Garbageman** is called *Sanitary officer*, and *hired-man* is a euphemistic term for the bare one **servant**, but it is now abandoned. The present universal designation of a ‘female servant’ is the word *maid*. In this regard, the word *help* is once used euphemistically for both a female servant and a male one (see Appendix IV). Brook (1973: 73) on the same line, points out that people do not advertise for a **servant**, but for a **helper**.

Our tendency to show lowly vocations more dignified is manifested in endowing them with names presumed to be dignified. The tendency to disguise lowly vocations is without end (Ibid).

### 2.4.7 Money and Euphemism

Hayakawa (1978: 65) mentions that money is another theme about which communication is in some way inhibited. To inquire about people's financial affairs is considered unacceptable. The open discussion of salaries must be kept secret. In this respect, Steele (1975: 98) states that the "discussion of salaries is to be kept secret and is also a taboo". When creditors send bills, they almost never mention money, although it is what they are writing for (Ibid).

Brook (1963: 179-80) asserts that in financial writing, certain circumlocutions are used for direct terms so as not to shock the reader. On the one hand, he (Ibid) states that phrases such as: *went up*, *moved up*, *regained some ground* and *edged higher* are employed to stand for 'rose' in the phrase 'the prices rose'. On the other hand, the idea of cheapness is also avoided.

### 2.4.8 Illness and Euphemism

Mencken (1962: 646) points out that in order to avoid the direct reference to ills and diseases, people use circumlocutions and abbreviations in order not to show the ills and diseases plainly: *certain disease* for *syphilis* and *condition* to allude to any kind of diseases (Ibid).

### 2.4.9 Untruthfulness and Euphemism

People have developed new ways for calling a man a **liar**. Greenough and Kittredge (1961: 305-6) maintain that to say 'you lie' is an insult, and there are various other ways of calling man a **liar**:

*You are distorting the facts.*

*You are not making an accurate statement.*

*You are stretching the truth.*

#### 2.4.10 Drunkenness and Euphemism

According to Morris et al. (1978: 748), there are many euphemisms for the plain word **drunk**. Among the expressions that allude to alcoholic saturation are: *sodden*, *stewed*, *soaked*, *oiled*, *soused* and the like (Ibid).

#### 2.4.11 Deception

Moving to euphemism in the sense of deception, one may find it completely different. **Deceive**, according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (2005), means, "to cause to accept as true or valid what is false or invalid" or "to give false impression". In political propaganda and doublespeak, there is nothing unpleasant, taboo, forbidden or offensive to hide as stated by Hugh Rawson in the Dictionary of Euphemism and Other Doubletalk:

"...when speakers and writers seek not so much to avoid offense as to deceive,...we pass into the universe of dishonest euphemisms, where the conscious elements of circumlocution and doubletalk loom large." (Rawson, 1981: 70).

Moreover, William Lutz, the former editor of the *Doublespeak Quarterly Review*, provides different definitions of doublespeak (deception) such as: misleads, distorts reality, pretends to communicate, makes the bad seem good, avoids or shifts responsibility, makes the negative appear positive, creates a false, verbal, map of the world, limits, conceals, corrupts, prevents thought, makes the unpleasant appear attractive or tolerable and creates incongruity between reality and what is said or not said (Lutz, 1996: 77).

It is merely a way of deceiving others; the recipients. It is a relationship between two parties: one who has direct access to information and the other who receives it through the first one's version (Allan, 2001: 168). The latter is usually the public because they have no access or, sometimes, knowledge about the topic that the former party is trying to hide.

Euphemism, henceforward referred to as deception, is generally referred to as doublespeak, even the term doublespeak is a euphemistic term for deception, which can be found in three main categories of discourse: law enforcement (see appendix V) and military (see appendix VI), political (see appendix VII), and nuclear (Lutz, 1996: 78).

Doublespeak is a language deliberately constructed to disguise or distort its actual meaning, often resulting in a communication bypass. What distinguishes doublespeak from other euphemisms is its deliberate usage. Doublespeak may be in the form of bald

euphemisms such as: *downsizing* for **firing of many employees** or deliberately ambiguous phrases such as: *wet work* for **assassination** and *take out* for **destroy** (Ibid).

Rawson (1981: 77) states that doublespeak is in turn distinguished from jargon in that doublespeak attempts to confuse and conceal the truth, while jargon often provides greater precision to those that understand it (while potentially confusing those who do not). An example of the distinction is the use by the military of the word: *casualties* instead of **deaths**. What may appear to be an attempt to hide the fact that people have been killed is actually a precise way of saying personnel who have been rendered incapable of fighting whether by: being killed, being badly wounded, being captured in battle, being psychologically damaged , being incapacitated by disease, being rendered ineffective by having essential equipment destroyed or having been disabled in any other way (Lutz, 1996: 78). *Casualties* is used instead of **deaths** not for propagandistic reasons or reasons for squeamishness, but because most casualties are not dead. Bureaucracies such as the military and large corporations frequently produce euphemisms of a more deliberate nature. Organizations coin doublespeak expressions to describe objectionable actions in terms that seem neutral or inoffensive (Ibid).

Military organizations kill people, sometimes deliberately and sometimes by mistake. In doublespeak, when it happens deliberately, it may be called *neutralizing the target* or *collateral damage*. Violent destruction of non-state enemies may be referred to as *pacification*.

Two common terms when a soldier is accidentally killed (*buys the farm*) by his own side are *friendly fire* and *blue on blue* (Holder, 2003: 70).

*Execution* is an established euphemism referring to the act of putting a person to death, with or without judicial process. It is originally referred to the execution, i.e., the carrying out of a death warrant, which is an authorization to a sheriff, prison warden or other official to put a named person to death. In legal usage, execution can still refer to the carrying out of other types of orders; for example, in U.S. legal usage *a writ of execution* is a direction to enforce a civil money judgment by seizing property. Likewise, *lethal injection* itself may be considered a euphemism for putting the convict to death by poisoning (Ibid).

Industrial unpleasantness such as pollution may be toned down to *outgassing* or *runoff* (descriptions of physical processes rather than their damaging consequences). Terms like **waste** and **wastewater** are also avoided in favour of terms such as *byproduct*, *recycling*, *reclaimed water* and *effluent*. In the oil industry, **oil-based drilling muds** were simply renamed *organic phase drilling muds*, where *organic phase* is a euphemism for **oil** (Rawson, 1981: 78).

The main techniques used in deception are circumlocution and jargon. Circumlocution, according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (2005), means "evasion in speech". It is a deliberate dishonest roundabout way of using words, phrases or expressions to make the bad seem good or, at least, tolerable. On the

other hand, Jargon means, according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (2005), "words or expressions that are used by a particular profession or group of people, and are difficult for others to understand".

Saddam Hussein, when he has been forced to withdraw the rest of his soldiers from Kuwait after most of them have been wounded, captured or killed in the bombing of the coalition forces, addressed the public "we just lost a battle; however, we did not lose the war". In this example, the first party has direct access to the whole situation and he does know that he lost most of his troops in Kuwait and he actually lost the war not a battle. He does not use euphemism, but rather deceived his people, who received it through the regime's version (Rooij, 2002).

Another example is that when Afghanistan is under the Russian occupation in the 1980s, the Afghani fighters, from the American perspective, are referred to as *freedom fighters*. Later in the late 1990s, the freedom fighters become "terrorists" depending on the political interpretations that make the same term change, within less than twenty years, from sounding good *freedom fighters* to sound bad (terrorists). Moving to Africa, during the apartheid regime in the Republic of South Africa, the agency which is responsible for the assassination of political opponents is called the "Civil Cooperation Bureau" (Katamba, 2005: 192). It is an obfuscatory way that politicians use language to serve their needs, propaganda and goals.

Moreover, police jargon is full of deception, too. When someone is imprisoned without legal justification, it is described as *preventive detention*. Examining the circumlocutory expression; *preventive detention*, one can find two contradictory images that refer to the same situation. The first image, which is the plain truth, is that there is someone who is imprisoned without legal justification. The second deceiving image is that this person is imprisoned because he/she can be a threat to the law and order of the society which is clear from the adjective *preventive*. It is a two-contradictory-image phrase, in which the fact is manipulated by circumlocutions to deceive others by hiding the truth. As the term **doublespeak** implies, there are two contradictory images referring to the same situation. It is an abfusatory way of changing facts; showing the victim as dangerous whom should be prevented from harming others for the benefit of society (Rooij, 2002).

We can find the same deceiving expressions and phrases in military jargon, too. When an army is almost defeated and should withdraw to save the troops, it is described as *strategic withdrawal*. Hearing this circumlocutory expression, one may be deceived that the army is controlling everything and it is just military tactics that may lead to victory; which is exactly the opposite of the truth (Ibid).

The genocide of the Jewish people (the **Holocaust**), during the Nazi reign, which is one of the most awful crimes against humanity of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is referred to as *the final solution* (McFee, 1999), as if the Nazi regime tried all the possible solutions (to

a problem) and these solutions did not work; therefore, they were forced to take the *final solution* to solve the problem.

The writer Paul de Rooij, under the title *Abused Terms*, gives many examples concerning (the Israeli Propagandists') language that obfuscates and exculpates Israel's actions against a basically defenceless population (the Palestinians):

*Man of Peace* instead of **War Criminal**

*throwing rocks* (instead of **stones** to show that Palestinians are dangerous) at soldiers in tanks and armoured vehicles and soldiers

*bilateral negotiations* instead of confiscation of land

*caught in crossfire* instead of deliberate killing

*closed military area* instead of a demarcation for the press and observers in order to stay out so that they will not witness the depredation of the occupation force

*disputed territories* instead of occupied territories (Rooij, 2002).

## 2.5 Devices for Euphemism Formation

Euphemism is used when a speaker realizes the potential 'face-threatening act' of referring directly to a taboo notion through the use of taboo language, and chooses to avoid creating a face-threatening environment. Generally speaking, euphemism can be created by speakers in a number of ways (Allan and Burridge, 1991: 15).

Figurative expressions, one of the most abstract strategies for creating euphemism, rely heavily on the metaphorical significance of the taboo notion (Ibid). For instance, when speaking with her male boss about why she needs to go home sick, a female employee may tell him that she is having problems because her '*monthly visitor* is here' instead of saying that she is cramping due to **menstruation**. In this case, the taboo notion, **menstruation**, is being avoided by figuratively referring to the fact that it occurs on a monthly cycle. Here, by using a figurative expression instead of referring directly to the symptoms of menstruation, the female employee is avoiding a potentially embarrassing moment for her boss, and is consequently creating a calming effect by euphemizing menstruation.

Holder (2003: 72) states that euphemism is also created through a process of remodelling. Remodelling occurs when either the onset or rhyme of the dispreferred term is matched with that of a semantically unrelated word. Remodelling occurs with the substitution of *shucks* for **shit**. When a young child first learns the word **shit**, the mother may tell him that it is a 'bad' word, and to use *shucks*, or possibly *sugar* instead. By indirectly exposing the child to the process of remodelling, the mother is teaching her child a way to euphemize taboo expressions. However, it will be up to the child to understand when **shit** is appropriate, and when, as his mother explained, it is taboo (Ibid).

Not surprisingly because of their reputation for not understanding the contexts of the taboo, children, as Allan (2001: 78)

points out, are also exposed to other strategies of creating euphemism. To demonstrate, circumlocution, or paraphrase, is first introduced to children with the expression *little girls'/boys' room* in place of the *bathroom*. While this expression is sometimes lost in adulthood, adults use circumlocutions to produce the same effect as children. In many contexts, notions of death are considered taboo. When people retire at the age of sixty-five, they are granted the status of the circumlocuted *senior citizens*. By using the term *senior citizen* as opposed to **old people**, speakers are able to avoid referring to the relationship between old age and death. Circumlocuting **old people** creates an heir of respect for the elderly, and consequently avoids a potentially face-threatening situation (Ibid).

Allan and Burrige (2006: 20) assert that speakers also euphemize through creating acronyms or abbreviations for the taboo referent. For instance, when describing the result of a recent car accident to his colleague, a professor may say that his car is *FUBAR* as opposed to saying that it was **fucked up beyond all recognition**. Likewise, when describing the driver who caused the accident, the professor may refer to him as an *SOB* as opposed to calling him a **son of a bitch**. As with the other strategies for creating euphemism, acronyms and abbreviations serve to detach the speaker from the situation and create a calming effect on the audience (Ibid).

While the strategies addressed above are by no means an exhaustive account of how euphemism is created, they serve to illustrate the variety of ways that speakers are able to avoid using taboo language in order to create an environment of calm, polite and

morally acceptable speech. However, speakers do not always choose to create this effect between themselves and their audience (Rawson, 1981: 80).

Warren (1992: 130) deals with how euphemisms are formed. Warren's model is based on the idea that "novel contextual meanings", i.e., new meanings for words in a particular context, are constantly created in language. This creation is rule governed and the acceptability of new meanings depends on, for example, the strength of ties between the novel term and its referent, whether the novel term is considered to be of lasting value, i.e. the referent has no other name, or if the novel term is a "desirable alternative" (Ibid). It is this latter situation that results in the creation of euphemistic terms.

In her theory, Warren (Ibid: 135) gives four devices for euphemism formation. To organize the wide variety of euphemisms that exist, these categories are divided into sub-categories of formation devices as represented in Figure 1.



To help clarify this diagram, examples of each type of euphemism and the method of formation are given and described below.

### 2.5.1 Word Formation Devices

As seen in Figure 1, Warren gives five ways to form euphemisms using this mechanism.

#### 2.5.1.1 Compounding

The combining of two individually innocuous words forms a euphemism for an unacceptable term: *hand job* for **masturbation** (Ibid: 136).

#### 2.5.1.2 Derivation

The modification of a Latin term (fellare, to suck) to form a printable modern English word *fellatio* for **oral sex** (Ibid).

#### 2.5.1.3 Acronyms

*SNAFU* **Situation Normal All Fucked Up**, a military euphemism for a possibly catastrophic event (Ibid).

#### 2.5.1.4 Onomatopoeia

*Bonk* for **sexual intercourse**, here the sound of *things* hitting together during the sexual act is employed to refer to the act itself (Rawson, 1981: 75).

## 2.5.2 Phonemic Modification

The form of an offensive word is modified or altered (Warren, 1992:136), such as

### 2.5.2.1 Back Slang

The words are reversed to avoid explicit mention:

*enob* for **bone/erect penis**, Rawson (1981: 88)

*epar* for **rape** (Warren, 1992:136).

### 2.5.2.2 Rhyming Slang

*Bristols* for **breasts**, a shortened, and further euphemised, version of *Bristol cities* [**titties**] that becomes a "semi-concealing device," (Burchfield, 1985:19).

### 2.5.2.3 Phonemic Replacement

One sound of the offensive term is replaced: *shoot* for [**shit**], which Rawson (1981:254) terms "a euphemistic mispronunciation".

### 2.5.2.4 Abbreviation

*Eff* as in *eff off* for **fuck (off)** (Ibid).

### 2.5.3 Loan Words

Durrell (1968: ix) states that most, if not all, the banned words seem to be of Saxon provenance, while the euphemisms constructed to convey the same meaning are of Latin-French. Some examples of this include:

#### 2.5.3.1 French

*Mot* for [**cunt**] (Allan and Burridge, 1991: 95)

*affair(e)* for [**extramarital engagement**] (Ibid: 96)

*lingerie* for [**underwear**], (Stern, 1931: 103).

#### 2.5.3.2 Latin

Aside from typical motivations for euphemism, Latin is often favoured as the uneducated and the young cannot interpret the meanings (Allan and Burridge, 1991: 19). However, "often such substitutions are just as vulgar if one understood the meaning of the latinate" (Liszka, 1990: 421)

*faeces* for [**excrement**]

*anus* for [**ass-hole**]

#### 2.5.3.3 Other Languages

*Cojones* for [**testicles**] is Spanish (Nash, 1995: 65), and *schmuck* for [**penis**] in Yiddish literally means **pendant** (Adams, 1999: 85).

## 2.5.4 Semantic Innovation

In this case, a "novel sense for some established word or word combination is created," (Warren, 1992: 136). Examples of Warren's seven categories of semantic innovation are:

### 2.5.4.1 Particularisation

A general term is used, which is required to be 'particularised' within the context to make sense. Both *satisfaction* for [**orgasm**] and *Innocent* for [**virginal**] require contextually based inference by the reader/listener to be comprehensible (Ibid).

### 2.5.4.2 Implication

In this case, several steps are required to reach the intended meaning: *loose*, which implies **unattached**, which leads to the interpretation **sexually easy/available**. Warren warns against possible misinterpretation of this type of euphemism (Adams, 1999: 85).

### 2.5.4.3 Metaphor

A multitude of colourful metaphorical euphemisms surrounding menstruation, is centering around red: *the cavalry has come* a reference to the red coats of the British cavalry, *it's a red letter day* and *flying the red flag* (Allan and Burridge, 1991: 82). Other metaphorical euphemisms include: *globes*, *brown eyes* and *melons* for **breasts** (Rawson, 1981: 38). *Riding* for **sex**, which is common to

many languages, including English, Greek and Middle Dutch (Allan and Burridge, 1991: 82).

#### 2.5.4.4 Metonym

Sometimes called 'general-for-specific', this category includes the maximally general *it* for **sex** and the contextually dependent *thing* for **male/female sexual organs** (Ibid).

#### 2.5.4.5 Reversal or Irony

Both *blessed* for **damned** (Stern, 1931: 57) and *enviable disease* for **syphilis** (Ibid: 58) enable reference to something 'bad' by using opposites.

#### 2.5.4.6 Understatement or 'Litotes'

Examples like the following fall into this category: *sleep* for **die**, *deed* for **act of murder/rape** and *not very bright* for **thick/stupid** (Adams, 1999: 86).

#### 2.5.4.7 Overstatement or Hyperbole

Instances include *fight to glory* for **death** and those falling under Rawson's (1981:11) "basic rule of bureaucracies: the longer the title, the lower the rank.": *visual engineer* for **window cleaner** and *Personal Assistant to the Secretary Special Activities* for **cook** (Ibid: 12).

## 2.6 Euphemism in Certain Fields of Knowledge

Euphemism is employed in all types of texts, but it is used more frequently in the following texts (Bolton and Crystal, 1969: 225):

### 2.6.1 Euphemism in Politics

Using political euphemisms is a wicked way the press uses to disguise some ugly and nasty military assaults. Political speech and writing, nowadays, consist largely of euphemism. (Ibid).

The dropping of the atom bombs on Japan can only be defended by a tricky means. Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, their inhabitants are driven out into the countryside and the huts are set on fire with incendiary bombs. This is called *pacification*. People are imprisoned for years without trial or sent to die of scurvy in Arctic camps. This is called *the elimination of unreliable elements* (Ibid). Hayakawa (1978: 64-5) illustrates some pairs of sentences that have the same denotations but different connotations:

French armies in **rapid retreat**.

*The strategic withdrawal* of the French forces to previously prepared position in the rear was accomplished briskly and efficiently.

During the Boer war, the Boers are described by the British press as **sneaking and skulking behind rocks and bushes**. But when the British forces learn how to employ tactics suitable to the veldt warfare, they are described as *cleverly taking advantage of cover* (Ibid). Bolinger (1975: 225) states that ordinary non-commercial and

non-political euphemisms try to "cover our nakedness and other shortcomings", whereas political euphemisms "gloss over facts".

Palmer (1972: 327) states that "it is particularly in politics where the arousing of mass emotion is more effective than any appeal to reason". Politicians are apt to say, for instance

*We shall be murdered in our beds* rather than the bare expression of **We shall be killed**, when talking of an inevitable military assault against their country (Ibid).

### 2.6.2 Euphemism in Advertising

Mencken (1962: 592) asserts that advertisement writers are the source of a continuous flow of euphemisms. For advertising purposes, department stores frequently use euphemisms. Such an expression as *simulated* is used for **artificial** as in *simulated pearls*. However, advertisers differ in their tendency of using euphemistic expressions; some advertisers resolve to tell the truth; therefore, they employ **fake pearls** (Ibid).

The second group of advertisers, namely those who prefer to use direct terms, are after effectiveness. Words with unfavourable connotations are thought to be more effective, sounding and charged emotionally (Ibid).

### 2.6.3 Euphemism in Sports

According to Lehmann (1962: 20), the technical dialects of sports are widely exploited in English. Many sport expressions have been metaphorically transferred to general use and some of these

expressions have served as euphemisms. When the former meaning is still the more prominent, one may call such transfers metaphors.

Robertson (1954: 262) mentions that in the course of time, the new meaning may prevail and cause the metaphor to fade. For instance, *foul play* is used by the press to allude euphemistically to ‘a murder’. Examples that illustrate how a certain expression is used in a literal way in its original use become metaphorical when given a wider application are *to hit below the belt* (taken from pugilism) and *it is up to you* (taken from poker) (Ibid).

#### 2.6.4 Euphemism in Medicine

As Lehmann (1962: 250) states, many people believe that much of the doctors’ curative powers lie in the words they use. Sometimes, writers try to give a sense of importance and mystery to something which is already abnormal by imposing Latin and Greek names which serve as euphemistic expressions. These foreign names play upon people’s fears associated with the unknown. Among such euphemisms is the Latin ‘conjunctivitis’ which is used instead of ‘sty’ (Ibid). In addition to employing borrowed scientific terms from other foreign languages, as in *maniae* for **madness** and *perspiration* for **sweat**, initials are also employed euphemistically: *M.D.* for **mentally deficient** (Brook, 1973: 72) and *G. B. H.* for **grievous bodily harm** (Greenough and Kittredge, 1961: 306).

# Chapter Three

## The Test

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to describe the procedures used in the test of the present study and shows how the aims of this study can be achieved. It deals with the statement of the objectives of the test with respect to the hypotheses of the study tackling such relevant issues as material selection, test design, and the sample of the study. It is also concerned with the discussion of the test virtues in terms of its reliability and validity through the use of mathematical means. Finally, the present chapter describes the pilot and the main administration of the test along with the scoring scheme adopted.

### 3.2 Objectives of the Test

Tests are needed in order to provide information about the achievement of groups of learners without which “it is difficult to see how rational educational decisions can be made” (Hughes, 1996:4). A good test therefore helps to locate the precise area of difficulty encountered by a group of learners or by the individual learner. It is essential for the teacher to diagnose his learners’ weaknesses and difficulty and for the learner to get the opportunity to “show his ability to recognize and produce correct forms of the language” (Weir, 1990: 2). For a language teacher, the test includes any means of checking what students can do with the language and what they cannot do with

it. Therefore, language testing is used to test hypotheses in relation to our understanding of language and language learning (Alan, 1990:30). Moreover; we test a learner's language skill in order to establish what he can do with the language and to assess how successful our teaching in adding to his linguistic achievement (Wilkins, 1983:81).

Brown (1987:219) states that "a test is a method of measuring a person's ability or knowledge in a given area." Due to this fact the present test is constructed primarily to investigate the extent to which Iraqi EFL university learners recognize the euphemistic expressions. It is an achievement test that aims not only at assessing the learners' recognition of such expressions, but also the reasons behind their errors so that appropriate remedial suggestions and recommendations can be proposed depending on the findings of the test.

The test of this study is designed in such a way that it assesses the learners' recognition level of euphemistic expressions. It is worth mentioning that such learners do not study this topic as a separate one; rather they tackle this topic indirectly during the four-year period of EFL learning whether in linguistics or literature. The test includes three questions, all of which assess the subject's responses at the recognition level.

### 3.3 Test Design

The test constructed for this study has been designed to assess the learners' recognition of euphemistic expressions. This test consists of fifty items distributed over three questions. The first one comprises fifteen sentences in which the learners are asked to identify the euphemistic expression in each sentence by underlining it.

The second question consists of fifteen items, each of which has a missing euphemistic expression, with a list of fifteen euphemistic expressions and the learners are required to choose from the list the right expression.

The third question has twenty matching items. It consists of two lists. List A with twenty euphemistic expressions and list B with twenty expressions that stand for the euphemistic ones. In this question, the learners are asked to choose from list B the expressions that match with those in list A (see Appendix I).

The present test is designed to cover, as far as possible, the different types of euphemistic expressions and their forms. Some of these types have been taught indirectly to the learners through their courses of study and some of them are not; yet, learners are, to some extent, familiar with these types because they are used in dialogues and daily conversations.

### 3.4. Material Selection

The majority of the items of the test have been selected from a number of the papers, books and websites adopted in Chapter Two. It is supposed to cover most of the forms of euphemistic expressions. The selection of the test items has been approved by a jury committee of eleven experienced university lecturers (see Appendix III).

### 3.5 Data Collection

The test data consists of a fifty-item achievement test administered during the second term of the academic year 2007-2008 to the fourth year Iraqi EFL learners at the Department of English, College of Education, University of Babylon.

### 3.5.1 The Sample

The sample of this study consists of eighty subjects of the fourth academic year (2007-2008), Department of English, College of Education, University of Babylon. These learners are native speakers of Arabic who have a similar EFL background.

The fourth year students have been chosen to apply the test because they are the most advanced and qualified undergraduate learners. In addition, the topic of the test under investigation has been taught indirectly during their four year study of English.

## 3.6 Test Virtues

Good tests are characterized by two main virtues: reliability and validity. These two points are discussed in the following two subsections.

### 3.6.1 Reliability

Gronlund (1981:102) states that reliability refers to the consistency of assessment scores and it shows the statistical methods used to establish consistency of students' performance within a given test or across more than one test. It is generally confirmed that reliability is a necessary prerequisite of good tests. A reliable test is one that produces essentially the same results consistently on different occasions when the conditions of the test remain the same (Lado, 1962: 330). In other words, reliability means the consistency with which a test measures the same thing all the time (Harrison, 1983: 11).

The reliability of the test can be achieved through using different methods: test-retest, two equivalent forms, split-half, and Kuder-Richardson method, (Heaton, 1988:163-164)

One widely used estimate of test reliability is that of Kuder-Richardson Formula:

$$R = 1 - \frac{M(n-M)}{ns^2}$$

where M is the mean, n is the number of the items in the test, and s is the Standard Deviation.

The application of the formula above requires calculating Standard Deviation first. By Standard Deviation (Henceforth: SD) is meant the extent to which each particular test score deviates from the test's mean (Baker, 1989: 45). In this test, SD has been calculated using the following formula:

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{\sum d^2}{N}}$$

where 'd<sup>2</sup>' is the squared value of subtracting the test mean score of the upper group from the lower group, and 'N' is half the number of subjects, (Harrison, 1983: 124). The application of the formula above to the test has yielded the SD of 14.39.

On applying Kuder-Richardson Formula above to the scores of the test, one gets the following figures:

$$36.3 \times (50 - 36.3)$$

$$R = 1 - \frac{\text{-----}}{50 \times 207.07}$$

$$R = 1 - \frac{497.31}{10353.5}$$

$$R = 1 - 0.048$$

$$R = 0.9519$$

$$R = 95.19 \%$$

The reliability estimate above shows quite acceptable test ratio which confirms its consistency.

### 3.6.2 Validity

Validity is concerned with relevance (Bell, 1981: 198). According to Harris (1969: 19) and Oller (1979: 4), the validity of a test means the extent to which the test measures what it is designed to measure and nothing else. Every test must aim to provide a true measure of the particular skill which is intended to measure (Heaton, 1988: 159). Alderson et al. (1995: 170) define validity as the appropriateness of a given test or any of its component parts as a measure of what it is supposed to measure. For Bell (1981:192), validity is concerned with the truth of the test and its relations to what it is intended to test.

In order to have a valid test, it should possess two criteria: content validity and face validity.

Content validity, on the one hand, refers to the extent to which a test adequately covers the topic to be tested and this, in fact, should

be based upon a careful analysis of the subject (Heaton, 1988:160). The present test is designed to cover as far as possible the various types of the topic under investigation with their different forms as mentioned earlier in Chapter Two.

Face validity, on the other hand, refers to the way the test looks to the specialists or in general to educators (Alan, 1990:23). In this regard, the test has been approved by a jury of specialists and experienced university instructors (see Appendix III).

### 3.7 Pilot Test Administration

A pilot test was administered to a random sample of ten students from the fourth year of the Department of English, College of Education, University of Babylon on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2008, two weeks before the final administration. The aim behind the administration of the pilot test is to specify the time required for the main test, to see whether the items of the test and the test instructions are clear to the subjects, to check which of them needs modifications, and to analyze the items to determine their effectiveness in terms of item difficulty.

Each subject was given a copy of the test after informing the subjects of the purpose of the test and the way to answer the items. The pilot study revealed that some of the test items needed to be modified for either they were very easy or they were very difficult for the learners. In addition, the pilot test showed that the time needed to the final administration of the test was one hour.

### 3.8 Final Test Administration

The final test was carried out on the 5th of May, at University of Babylon during the academic year 2007-2008. The time allowed for answering the test was one hour. The instructions for each question were given to the subjects. They were instructed to answer on the same test sheets in order to save time and effort. The students were asked not to write down their names on the test sheets in order not to be embarrassed as well as the test is purely for study and research purposes and has no concern with their names. The process of marking the test has been done by the researcher using the scoring scheme presented in the following section.

### 3.9 Scoring Scheme

The scoring scheme is an important device to test the objectivity and reliability of the test. The test has been scored out of 100. The distribution of the scores is as follows: two scores for each correct answer and zero for the incorrect one as well as for the items that are left without any answer.

The scoring scheme adopted for the present test can be illustrated in the following table:

*Table (1) Distribution of the Scores of the Test*

<b>No. of Question</b>	<b>No. of Items</b>	<b>Scores</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>I</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>II</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>III</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Chapter Four

## Data Analysis

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter is mainly concerned with data analysis and the description of the test items through presenting their discrimination indices and facility values with the aid of mathematical tables. It starts with the analysis of the selected data to find out the types of errors that the subjects made in recognizing euphemistic expressions and their reasons. These errors are identified and tabulated mathematically.

Moreover, this chapter attempts to provide a presentation and discussion of the results with reference to the aims and hypotheses of the study.

### 4.2 Item Analysis

Two types of item analysis are discussed below: facility value (how difficult the test items are) and discrimination index (how well the items sort out the better students from the poorer ones).

#### 4.2.1 Facility Value

Facility value (FV) or facility index is simply the percentage of the subjects who give the correct answer and it shows how easy or difficult that a particular item proves to be in the learners' answers. This index can be calculated by using the following formula:

$$\text{Item FV} = \frac{\text{correct responses}}{\text{total responses}}$$

For example, if twenty out of twenty-five testees answer an item correctly, the item's FV will be:

$$\text{Item FV} = \frac{20}{25} = 0.8 \text{ or } 80\% \quad (\text{Harrison, 1983:128 and Heaton, 1975:172-3}).$$

All the following tables (2, 3 and 4) show each test item and its FV in Questions I - II and III respectively:

***Table (2): Facility Value of the Items of Question I***

<b>Item Number</b>	<b>FV%</b>
1	88.75
2	68.75
3	50
4	87.5
5	93.75
6	70
7	23.75
8	78.75
9	72.5
10	63.75
11	68.75
12	97.5
13	78.75
14	36.25
15	58.75
<b>Mean</b>	<b>69.17</b>

*Table (3): Facility Value of the Items of Question II*

<b>Item Number</b>	<b>FV %</b>
1	35
2	41.25
3	28.75
4	26.25
5	23.75
6	57.5
7	21.25
8	18.75
9	33.75
10	31.25
11	27.5
12	42.5
13	42.5
14	23.75
15	13.75
<b>Mean</b>	<b>31.17</b>

*Table (4): Facility Value of the Items  
of Question III*

<b>Items Number</b>	<b>FV %</b>
1	12.5
2	20
3	23.75
4	23.75
5	13.75
6	30
7	11.25
8	17.5
9	10
10	11.25
11	12.5
12	10
13	11.25
14	11.25
15	17.5
16	11.25
17	10
18	18.75
19	15
20	27.5
<b>Mean</b>	<b>15.93</b>

The facility values of the test items presented in the mathematical percentages mentioned in the tables above range between (10%) and (97.5%). The reasons behind this wide distribution of facility values can be attributed to the learners' different levels.

#### 4.2.2 Item Discrimination

The discrimination index of an item shows “the extent to which the item discriminates between the testees, separating the more able testees from the less able”, (Heaton: 1988, 173). Therefore, the most difficult items are expected to be answered by the good learners rather than the reverse. Accordingly, the correct responses to the most difficult items are related to those learners with the highest scorers while the incorrect responses to the same items are related to those learners with the lower scorers. The following formula has been used to find out the item discrimination power:

$$D = \frac{\text{Correct U} - \text{Correct L}}{N}$$

where D= the index of discrimination

U= upper half

L= lower half

N= number of the learners taking the test

After carrying out this formula, the discrimination power has been found to range between (-0.075) and (0.5). The following table shows the discrimination index of each item.

*Table (5): The Discrimination Index of the Items of Question I*

No. of Q	No. of Item	D
1	1	-0.025
	2	0.175
	3	0.25
	4	0.1
	5	-0.075
	6	0.075
	7	0.175
	8	0.125
	9	0.325
	10	0.125
	11	0.275
	12	0.05
	13	0.2
	14	0.175
	15	0.125
	Mean	0.138

**Table (6): The Discrimination Index of the Items of Question II**

No. of Q	No. of Item	D
2	1	0.5
	2	0.375
	3	0.3
	4	0.275
	5	0.325
	6	0.45
	7	0.2
	8	0.175
	9	0.175
	10	0.275
	11	0.4
	12	0.5
	13	0.45
	14	0.475
	15	0.275
	Mean	0.343

*Table (7): The Discrimination Index of the Items of Question III*

No. of Q	No. of Item	D
3	1	0.225
	2	0.25
	3	0.275
	4	0.325
	5	0.225
	6	0.275
	7	0.15
	8	0.25
	9	0.2
	10	0.125
	11	0.2
	12	0.125
	13	0.175
	14	0.075
	15	0.25
	16	0.225
	17	0.1
	18	0.275
	19	0.1
	20	0.25
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>0.203</b>

*Table (8): The Collective Mean for the Whole Test Items*

No. of Q	Mean
I	0.138
II	0.343
III	0.203
<b>Mean of Mean</b>	<b>0.228</b>

The tables above show the following statistical means and rates:

1. Not all test items have positive discrimination indices since items (1 and 5) in Question I have negative discrimination indices of (-0.025) and (-0.075) respectively.
2. There are no null-discrimination indices.
3. Each test item has a certain discrimination index which ranges from the lowest rate of (-0.075) to the highest rate of (0.5).
4. The items in Question II have the highest discriminatory mean (0.343). On the other hand, the items in Question I have the lowest one (0.138).
5. In general, the collective mean for the whole test stands at (0.228) which is quite satisfactory.

## 4.3 Discussion of Results

In this section, the researcher tries to present the results of the subject's performance on each question of the test presented with regard to the recognition level. The degree to which the subjects recognize the euphemistic expressions is determined by their correct responses that are important to verify or refute the hypotheses proposed in Chapter One.

### 4.3.1 Subjects' Responses of the First Question

The first question has been constructed to assess the subjects' responses. It tests the subjects' ability to identify the euphemistic expressions when they occur in context. The following table shows

the results obtained from analyzing the subjects' performance on each item in this question.

*Table (9)*  
*Subjects' Responses of*  
*Question I*

No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
1	71	88.75	9	11.25
2	55	68.75	25	31.25
3	40	50	40	50
4	70	87.5	10	12.5
5	75	93.75	5	6.25
6	56	70	24	30
7	19	23.75	61	76.25
8	63	78.75	17	21.25
9	58	72.5	22	27.5
10	51	63.75	29	36.25
11	55	68.75	25	31.25
12	78	97.5	2	2.5
13	63	78.75	17	21.25
14	29	36.25	51	63.75
15	47	58.75	33	41.25
Total	830		370	
Mean		69.17		30.83

Table (9) summarizes the results as follows:

The total number and the percentage of the correct responses are (830, 69.17 %)

The total number and the percentage of the incorrect responses are (370, 30.83 %).

From the results above, it has been noticed that the subjects' performance of the first question is considered to be good since most of the subjects were able to identify most of the euphemistic expressions in each sentence. This is due to the high number and percentage of the correct responses which equal (830, 69.17 %) which is better than the total number and percentage of the incorrect responses which equal (370, 30.83 %). Thus the researcher concludes that identifying the euphemistic expressions in context is easier than identifying them out of context. Only a few subjects were unable to identify most of the euphemistic expressions given in this question. This can be attributed to the fact that not all the subjects are at the same level.

In addition, the subjects lack adequate knowledge about such topic. These results verify the first part of the second hypothesis that reads " The learners' recognition of euphemistic expressions and their meanings in context is expected to be better than their recognition of them out of context".

### 4.3.2 Subjects' Responses of the Second Question

Question Two is designed to assess the subjects' recognition of the meaning of euphemistic expressions and putting them in the right blank to make meaningful sentences. The following table shows the results obtained from analyzing the subjects' responses of each item in this question.

**Table (10)**  
**Subjects' Responses of**  
**Question II**

No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
1	28	35	52	65
2	33	41.25	47	58.75
3	23	28.75	57	71.25
4	21	26.25	59	73.75
5	19	23.75	61	76.25
6	46	57.5	34	42.5
7	17	21.25	63	78.75
8	15	18.75	65	81.25
9	27	33.75	53	56.25
10	25	31.25	55	68.75
11	22	27.5	58	72.5
12	34	42.5	46	57.5
13	34	42.5	49	57.5
14	19	23.75	61	76.25
15	11	13.75	69	86.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>374</b>		<b>826</b>	
<b>Mean</b>		<b>31.16</b>		<b>68.84</b>

Thus, table (10) gives the following results:

The total number and the percentage of the correct responses are (374, 31.16 %).

The total number and the percentage of the incorrect responses are (826, 68.84 %).

As a result, the total number and the percentage of the incorrect responses (826, 68.84 %) is higher than the total number and the

percentage of the correct ones (374, 31.16 %). The responses given by the subjects were unsatisfying since most of these responses have been chosen incorrectly. It seems that most of the subjects have responded to the items of this question depending on guessing. This in turn reflects clearly that the subjects face difficulty in recognizing the meaning of the euphemistic expressions in this question which verifies the first hypothesis: "Most Iraqi EFL learners fail to distinguish the meaning of euphemistic expressions".

### 4.3.3 Subjects' Responses of the Third Question

The third question assesses the subjects' ability to recognize the euphemistic expressions by matching those expressions with their original meaning. The following table shows the subjects' responses to each item in this question.

*Table (11)*  
*Subjects' Responses of*  
*Question III*

No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
1	10	12.5	70	87.5
2	16	20	64	80
3	19	23.75	61	76.25
4	19	23.75	61	76.25
5	11	13.75	69	86.25
6	24	30	56	70
7	9	11.25	71	88.75
8	14	17.5	66	82.5
9	8	10	72	90

10	9	11.25	71	87.75
11	10	12.5	61	87.5
12	8	10	72	90
13	9	11.25	71	88.75
14	9	11.25	71	88.75
15	14	17.5	66	82.5
16	9	11.25	71	88.75
17	8	10	72	90
18	15	18.75	65	81.25
19	12	15	68	85
20	22	27.5	58	72.5
Total	255		1345	
Mean		15.94		84.06

Table (11) presents the following results:

The total number and the percentage of the correct responses are (255, 15.94 %).

The total number and the percentage of the incorrect responses are (1345, 84.06 %)

Taking these results into account, the researcher concludes that the total number and percentages of the incorrect responses (1345, 84.06 %) are higher than those of the correct ones (255, 15.94 %). This clearly reflects the subjects' inability to recognize the exact meaning of each euphemistic expression. Accordingly, this conclusion once more verifies the second hypothesis of the present study which states that "The learners' recognition of euphemistic expressions and their meanings in context is expected to be better than their recognition of them out of context".

#### 4.3.4 A Survey of the Subjects' Responses on Euphemistic Expressions

To sum up the whole results of the present test, Table (12) is designed to give a clear picture of the results obtained at the recognition level:

*Table (12)*  
*Subjects' Total*  
*Responses of Questions I, II and III*

No. of Question	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
I	830	69.17	370	30.83
II	374	31.16	826	68.84
III	255	15.94	1345	84.06
Total	1459		2541	
Mean		38.76		61.24

Table (12) reveals that more than half of the subjects have given incorrect responses. The total number and percentage of the subjects' incorrect responses are (2541, 61.24 %), whereas those of the subjects' correct responses are (1459, 38.76). This means that the number of the subjects' incorrect responses is higher than that of the correct ones which indicates that Iraqi EFL learners face difficulty in recognizing euphemistic expressions. Therefore, this verifies the third hypothesis of the present study which reads as follows: " Such learners have not achieved sufficient mastery of euphemistic

expressions during their four-year study of English as a foreign language ".

## 4.4 Error Analysis

### 4.4.1 Sources of Errors

Error analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors that the learners make. It involves a comparison between the errors made in the target language and the system of that target language itself. Researchers are interested in errors because they are believed to contain valuable information about the strategies that learners use to acquire a language, (Taylor, 1975: 74).

In this respect, Falk (1973:361) considers the area of error analysis as "one of the chief contributions of linguistics to the field of foreign language learning". Moreover, Nickel (1971:6) views error analysis as "a means of finding a shorter way to diagnose the learner's difficulties in foreign language learning". These errors can be of great help to the learners in order to specify the points of weakness since the making of errors can be regarded as a device the learner uses so as to learn (George, 1971:88). According to Corder (1974: 132), error analysis has two objectives: one theoretical and another applied. The theoretical objective serves to "elucidate what and how a learner learns when he studies a second language", while the applied objective serves to enable the learner "to learn more efficiently by exploiting his/her knowledge of his/her dialect for pedagogical purposes".

This section is concerned with identification of the strategies learners use in learning the foreign language (FL) through the analysis of their errors. In accounting for learners' errors, Brown (1987: 178) states that "errors made by the learners can be attributed to four factors: interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, context of learning and communication strategies".

As for the Intralingual errors, they are attributed to many factors related to the L2 rules. They may be attributed to either overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, false concepts hypothesized, or to incomplete application of rules.

Intralingual transfer can be one source of errors in the topic under investigation, but since this thesis deals only with EFL learners' recognition level and since such kind of errors can best be manifested at the production level, thus such errors attributed to intralingual transfer may not be distinguishable.

#### 4.4.1.1 Interlingual Transfer

Ellis (1994) states that the term "interlingual transfer" refers to the differences and similarities between the native language of the learner and the target language. Many Errors of foreign language learners can be attributed to the influence of the mother tongue resulting from the negative interference of the rules of the native language (L1), Arabic in this case, on second language (L2) acquisition (i.e. English). Usually, interlingual errors (or interference) take place when the already learned patterns of the native language interfere with the acquisition of new and different

patterns of the target language ( Ibid: 48).

It is worth mentioning that Dulay and Burt (1982:138) indicate that interlingual problems depend, to a great extent, on the linguistic differences between L1 and L2 which are traditionally known as “interference problems”. For Ellis (1994:48), interlingual errors or interference take place when the patterns of the L1 differ from those of the L2.

The cause of such interlingual transfer is related to the fact that before being familiar with the system of the second language, the learner resorts to his native language as the only linguistic system upon which he/ she can rely (Brown, 1987:177).

Part of the errors displays clues of the influence of the native language. The learner depends on his/her native language to solve problems of the foreign language (FL) because of the deficiencies of his/her knowledge of the FL. Some of the subjects’ responses to items (7), (13) and (15) in Q I can reflect this influence:

Item (7):

\* Christine's driving ability had plenty of room **for improvement**.

قدرة كرسيتين على السياقة يوجد فيها مجال كثير للتحسن.

In the item mentioned above, the expression "**for improvement**" in Arabic, is used euphemistically to denote that Christine's driving ability is bad. Therefore, some of the subjects underlined this expression thinking that it is a euphemistic one.

Item (13):

- \* A new programme to get the **long-term** job seekers back to work is suggested by the government.

يُقدِّم برنامج جديد لإعادة طالبي الأعمال بعيدي المدى للعمل من قبل الحكومة.

As for the item above, some of the subjects have identified and underlined the expression "**long-term**" as euphemistic expression because in Arabic, in order to euphemize the expression '*permanent unemployed people*' the speaker uses "long-term" to indicate the word permanent.

Item (15):

- \* Many **car dealerships** now are selling pre-owned vehicles.

العديد من وكالات بيع و شراء السيارات الآن تبيع المركبات المملوكة سابقا.

In item (15), the expression "**car dealerships**" has been identified and underlined by some of the subjects as a euphemistic expression because in Arabic, "**car dealerships**" is used euphemistically for 'car shops'.

Most of the subjects' errors which are related to interlingual transfer can be traced back to the fact that, in Arabic some expressions are used euphemistically while in English are not used in the same way. Interlingual transfer has been found to explain only (137, 5.4 %) of all the subjects' errors which is the least frequent cause in the data in contrast with the other two sources of errors. In this regard, interlingual transfer occurs mainly in the early stage of

learning a foreign language because in this stage the learners depend on their native language system as the only factor upon which they can rely. As the learners progress in foreign language learning, their reliance on their native language decreases (Brown,1987:177). That is the reason behind the least rate of learners' errors attributed to interlingual transfer.

#### 4.4.1.2 Context of Learning

The word “context” refers to the classroom with its teacher and its material. There is a logical relationship between what goes on in the classroom and the preparation of syllabuses and teaching material. The ease or difficulty of learning is not simply related to the nature of the task but has components of motivation, intelligence, aptitude and quality of teachers and teaching materials (Corder, 1973:140).

Some learners' errors can be traced back to the negative influence of the situation of learning (the classroom), the teacher and misleading explanation, i.e., inadequate teaching throughout the learning period and/or poor syllabus design and material sequencing i.e., the textbook writer who, for one reason or another, neglects some aspects of the target language. All these factors can negatively influence the learning of the target language in that they can create gaps in the learners' knowledge of this language (Brown, 1987: 179).

One of the theoretical objectives in error analysis is the explanation of how errors come about. This is a psychological

explanation in terms of the learner's strategies and the process of learning (ibid). The most obvious cases which reveal the influence of the context of learning on the subjects' responses are shown in items (2) and (7) in Q. I:

Item (2):

\* **To say the truth**, Frank's remarks about the project were ill-advised.

Item (7):

\* **Christine's driving ability** had plenty of room for improvement.

In the items mentioned above, the underlined expression in each has been chosen by some of the subjects which indicate the inadequate knowledge about such expressions.

Also items (3), (4), (9), (10), (11), (14) and (15) in Q. II indicate the influence of the context of learning on the subjects' responses. The expressions written in bold in the following items express the insufficient knowledge of the subjects about the meaning of euphemistic expressions due to the fact that the syllabuses do not cover a good deal of such a topic:

Item (3):

\* The pilot was forced to make **an engagement** because of the great damage in the plane.

\* The pilot was forced to make **downsized** because of the great damage in the plane.

Item (4):

- \* The criminal's wife went to the **collateral damage** to visit her husband.
- \* The criminal's wife went to the **downsized** to visit her husband.
- \* The criminal's wife went to the **developing countries** to visit her husband.

Item (5):

- \* The general tried to avoid **collateral damage** with the enemy.
- \* The general tried to avoid **internment facility** with the enemy.

Item (6):

- \* It is quite common for small children to **make love**.

Item (7):

- \* Police were called for Tom to be **in the family way**.

Item (8):

- \* 200 workers at the factory have been **classified**.

Item (9):

- \* Congratulations! I have heard that your wife is **an unsavory character**.
- \* Congratulations! I have heard that your wife is **underprivileged**.

Item (10):

- \* The government is still the main provider of the child's **physical Pressure**.

Item (11):

- \* This information is highly **underprivileged**; only the president can see it.

Item (12):

- \* The murderer confessions were made under **internment facility**.
- \* The murderer confessions were made under **collateral damage**.

Item (13):

- \* It is illegal to **wet the bed** to a person under the age of 16.

Item (14):

- \* The government denied that there had been any **internment facility** during the bombing raid.
- \* The government denied that there had been any **underprivileged** during the bombing raid.
- \* The government denied that there had been any **physical pressure** during the bombing raid.

Item (15):

- \* International aid agencies try to provide food and shelter for the **welfare**.
- \* International aid agencies try to provide food and shelter for the **developing countries**.

In addition, subjects' responses to items (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8), (10), (11), (12), (13), (14), (15), (16), (17), (18), (19) and (20) in Q. III reflect the influence of the context of learning:

Item (1):

- \* garbage man for *senior citizen*
- \* menstruation for *senior citizen*

Item (2):

- \* death penalty for *funeral director*
- \* coffin for *funeral director*

Item (3):

- \* vagina for *comfort woman*
- \* assassination for *comfort woman*

Item (4):

- \* doorman for *sales advisor*
- \* vagina for *sales advisor*

Item (5):

- \* old person for *taxpayer*
- \* profitable for *taxpayer*

Item (6):

- \* Information from spies and interrogated prisoners for *the big C*

\* shit for *the big C*

Item (7):

\* assassination for *surgical strike*

\* menstruation for *surgical strike*

\* God for *surgical strike*

Item (8):

\* vagina for *area denial munitions*

\* Information from spies and interrogated prisoners for *area denial Munitions*

Item (10):

\* doorman for *sanitation engineer*

\* bombing attack by plane for *sanitation engineer*

In general, learners have failed to distinguish the meaning of many euphemistic expressions in Question III (see 4.3.4) where Table (12) shows that the general result of learners' correct responses in Question III is less than that of Question I and Question II. The following are other examples of the items of Question III with some incorrect responses:

Item (11):

\* God for *access controller*

\* cancer for *access controller*

Item (12):

\* citizen for *cunt*

\* shit for *cunt*

Item (13):

\* God for *casket*

\* landmines for *casket*

Item (14):

\* shit for *period*

\* doorman for *period*

Item (15):

\* Information from spies and interrogated prisoners for *categorical inaccuracy*

\* menstruation for *categorical inaccuracy*

Item (17):

\* shit for *wet work*

\* bombing attack by plane for *wet work*

\* doorman for *wet work*

Item (18):

\* assassination for *capital punishment*

\* garbage man for *capital punishment*

Item (19):

\* landmines for *defecate*

\* coffin for *defecate*

Item (20):

\* profitable for *gosh*

\* bombing attack by plane for *gosh*

Learners' disappointing results in Question III are caused by their background knowledge about the meaning of euphemistic expressions and that some of these expressions might not be studied in their courses of study. The total number of errors that are possibly due to the context of learning and their percentage are (1469, 57.8 %) of the total number of the subjects' errors.

#### 4.4.1.3 Communication Strategies

Communication strategies indicate the actual use of language (verbal, nonverbal contact) in order to communicate a thought when the exact linguistic forms are not available to the learner during the process of communication (Brown, 1987:91). They illustrate the way by which we express our messages. They are potentially conscious plans used by the learner to find an answer to what presents itself as a problem in reaching a very specific communication goal (Farch and Kasper, 1983: 14).

When the EFL learners try to communicate, they may encounter difficulty because their foreign language is not well

developed. In this respect, the learner may anticipate such a problem and modify what he intends to say. If he/she engages in speech, he/she must try to find an alternative way of getting the meaning across. His/Her way of facing the situation is called communication strategy (Littlewood, 1984: 83-4).

In this section, the researcher states some of the communication strategies that the learners use:

**1. Avoidance:** The learner tries to avoid the item which presents difficulty because he has no information to solve it (ibid). This strategy has been adopted by the subjects, especially in Q. III to respond to items (7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18) as stated below:

Item (7) * .....	bombing attack by plane
Item (8) * .....	landmines
Item (12) * .....	vagina
Item (13) * .....	coffin
Item (14) * .....	menstruation
Item (15) * .....	a lie
Item (16) * .....	profitable
Item (18) * .....	death penalty

Such errors are caused by learners' failure to interpret the items of Question III correctly to the given items. They do so to fill the gap of their knowledge. The total number of errors that are possibly

attributed to this strategy and their percentages are (188, 7.4 %) of the total number of the subjects' errors.

**2. Guessing:** When learners are in doubt about the correct answer, they begin to guess. Learners can use guessing to their advantage to guess the meaning of a word, guess a discourse relationship, infer implied meaning or guess about the cultural reference (Brown, 2001: 309). This strategy has been used in the subjects' responses, especially in items (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8), (9), (10), (12), (13) and (14) of Q. I:

Item (1):

- \* Please contact my personal assistant to **make an** appointment.
- \* **Please contact** my personal assistant to make an appointment.

Item (2):

- \* To say the truth, Frank's remarks about **the project** were ill-advised.
- \* To say the truth, Frank's **remarks** about the project were ill-advised.

Item (3):

- \* **The museum** has special facilities for partially sighted visitors.

Item (4):

- \* A man was **arrested** by the law-enforcement officer and held for questioning.

Item (5):

- \* Mary was less favoured by **beauty**.

Item (6):

- \* Someone borrowed money without asking from **my purse**.

Item (7):

- \* **Christine's driving** ability had plenty of room for improvement.
- \* **Christine's** driving ability had plenty of room for improvement.

Item (8):

- \* **The government plans** to increase the public donation by 5 per cent over the next year.
- \* The government plans to increase the public donation by **5 per cent** over the next year.
- \* The government plans **to increase** the public donation by 5 per cent over the next year.

Item (9):

- \* **The smell** made me want to lose my lunch.

Item (10):

- \* Darn it! I've **lost** my keys!
- \* Darn it! I've lost **my keys**!

Item(11):

- \* We had to stop at a rest room on **our trip**.
- \* We had to **stop at** a rest room on our trip.

Item(12):

- \* **My parents** are now at their final rest.

Item (13):

- \* A new programme to get the long-term job seekers back to work is suggested by **the government**.

Item (14):

- \* Upon close inspection, she noticed a few character lines on **her face**.

Also this strategy has been adopted by the subjects in answering all the items in Q. II.

Item (1):

- \* **make love** has been detained for questioning.
- \* **wet the bed** has been detained for questioning.

Item (2):

- \* People in the **in the family way** are free of forms of cancer that are common in the West.
- \* People in the **underprivileged** are free of forms of cancer that are common in the West.

- \* People in the **an unplanned landing** are free of forms of cancer that are common in the West.

Item (3):

- \* The pilot was forced to make **classified** because of the great damage in the plane.

Item (4):

- \* The criminal's wife went to the **an engagement** to visit her husband.
- \* The criminal's wife went to the **physical pressure** to visit her husband.
- \* The criminal's wife went to the **wet the bed** to visit her husband.

Item (5):

- \* The general tried to avoid **developing countries** with the enemy.
- \* The general tried to avoid **classified** with the enemy.

Item (6):

- \* It is quite common for small children to **an unsavory character**.
- \* It is quite common for small children to **in the family way**.

Item (7):

- \* Police were called for Tom to be **developing countries**.

Item (8):

- \* 200 workers at the factory have been **welfare**.

\* 200 workers at the factory have been **collateral damage**.

Item (9):

\* Congratulations! I have heard that your wife is **classified**.

Item (10):

\* The government is still the main provider of the child's **escorted off the Premises**.

\* The government is still the main provider of the child's **wet the bed**.

Item (11):

\* This information is highly **developing countries**; only the president can see it.

\* This information is highly **an unplanned landing**; only the president can see it.

Item (12):

\* The murderer confessions were made under **classified**.

Item (13):

\* It is illegal to **classified** to a person under the age of 16.

Item (14):

\* The government denied that there had been any **wet the bed** during the bombing raid.

\* The government denied that there had been any **developing**

**countries** during the bombing raid.

Item (15):

\* International aid agencies try to provide food and shelter for the **physical pressure**.

From the responses given above, it has been noticed that most of the subjects who commit such errors have picked up the choices randomly and without thinking. Such errors as putting an expression starting with (an) in a blank preceded by the article (the) or putting an expression starting with a verb in a blank preceded by a noun with possessive ('s) represents a good indicator for guessing. Some of the subjects' responses to items (1), (3), (4), (5), (8), (9), (10), (11), (13), (16), (17), (18) and (19) in Q. III reflect the guessing strategy:

Item (1) \* citizen for *senior citizen*

Item (3) \* garbage man for *comfort woman*

Item (4) \* a lie for *sales adviser*

Item (5) \* a lie for *taxpayer*

Item (8) \* old person for *area denial munitions*

\* a lie for *area denial munitions*

\* profitable for *area denial munitions*

Item (9) \* doorman for *human intelligence*

\* undertaker for *human intelligence*

\* garbage man for *human intelligence*

Item (10) \* a lie for *sanitation engineer*

\* undertaker for *sanitation engineer*

\* Information from spies and interrogated prisoners for  
*sanitation engineer*

Item (11) \* prostitute for *access controller*

\* a lie for *access controller*

Item (13) \* a lie for *casket*

\* prostitute for *casket*

Item (16) \* undertaker for *efficient*

\* assassination for *efficient*

\* garbage man for *efficient*

Item (17) \* shit for *wet work*

Item (18) \* a lie for *capital punishment*

\* landmines for *capital punishment*

\* shop assistant for *capital punishment*

Item (19) \* prostitute for *defecate*

\* landmines for *defecate*

The total number of errors that may be related to using such a strategy and their percentages are (747, 29.4 %) of the total number of the subjects' errors.

Communication strategies account for (36.8 %) of all errors, which reflect the learners' incompetence in responding to euphemistic expressions.

#### 4.4.1.4 Sources of Errors: Summary

The discussion of the sources of errors above can be summarized in the following points:

1. The highest cause of error in the data is the context of learning which accounts for (57.8 %) of all subjects' errors. These errors may be associated with learners' textbooks which do not give due attention to euphemistic expressions.
2. The second-highest rate of error cause is the communication strategies which accounts for (36.8 %) of the total errors. These errors could be due to the subjects' unfamiliarity with euphemistic expressions.
3. Interlingual transfer is the least-frequent error source which accounts for (5.4 %) of all learners errors resulting from the negative interference of the rules of the native language with the second language acquisition. Below is a table which outlines the results above according to the arrangement of sources of errors:

*Table (13) Sources of Errors*

<b>Error Source</b>	<b>%</b>
Interlingual Transfer	5.4
Communication Strategies	36.8
Context of Learning	57.8
<b>Total Rates</b>	<b>100</b>

# **Chapter Five**

## **Conclusions, Recommendations and Suggestions**

### **5.1 Introductory Note**

This chapter summarizes a number of conclusions based on the general findings of the present study. The chapter also ends with a set of pedagogical recommendations and some suggestions for further studies.

### **5.2 Practical Conclusions**

In the light of the preceding survey and analysis, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. The majority of Iraqi EFL learners in the fourth year have been found to face difficulties in identifying euphemistic expressions and their meanings at the recognition level. This can be confirmed by the low rate of their correct responses throughout the test (38.76 %), which are quite unsatisfactory, in comparison with the total rate of their incorrect ones (61.24 %). This reflects the fact that the achievement of most Iraqi EFL learners in the fourth year throughout a four-year period is not satisfactory enough to make them attain the advanced level they are supposed to and they encounter difficulties in recognizing euphemistic expressions. This verifies the third hypothesis of the study that reads " Such learners

have not achieved sufficient mastery of euphemistic expressions during their four-year study of English as a foreign language ".

2- It has been found that the learners' achievement in recognizing and distinguishing the meaning of euphemistic expressions is unsatisfactory since the rate of learners' incorrect responses in this respect which is (68.84 %) is higher than that of their correct ones which is (31.16 %). The reason behind such an unsatisfactory achievement can be attributed to the fact that textbooks studied during the four-year period do not tackle the subject 'euphemism' directly; i.e., as a separate topic. This validates the first hypothesis of this study which states "Most Iraqi EFL learners fail to distinguish the meaning of euphemistic expressions".

3- It has been noticed that the learners' achievement in identifying euphemistic expressions in context is much better than identifying them out of context. This is indicated by their good achievement in the first question as the rate of their correct responses (69.17 %) is higher than that of their incorrect ones (30.83 %) as well as their unsatisfying achievement in the third question as the rate of their incorrect responses (84.06 %) is higher than that of their correct ones which is (15.94 %). These rates verify the second hypothesis of the present study that reads "The learners' recognition of euphemistic expressions and their meanings in context is expected to be better than their recognition of them out of context".

4. The reasons beyond the subjects' unsatisfying achievement can be ascribed to the following factors arranged hierarchically according to the percentages of errors attributed to each:

I. Context of learning: Euphemistic expressions have not been given enough attention in teaching textbooks. Errors attributable to the context of learning have been found to be the most influential negative factor behind subjects' errors, accounting for about (57.8 %) of all errors.

II. Communication strategies: When an EFL learner tries to communicate, he/she may encounter difficulty because his/her foreign language is not well developed. In this case, the learner may ignore the item or tries to guess the answer. These errors form the second influential negative factor which caused subjects' errors, due to the subjects' unfamiliarity with euphemistic expressions. The rate of such errors is (36.8 %) of all subjects' errors.

III. Interlingual transfer: Here, the learners resort to their own native language in an attempt to bridge the gap of deficiencies of their knowledge of the target language. The rate of interlingual errors is (5.4 %) of all subjects' errors.

### 5.3 Recommendations

With reference to the conclusions arrived at in this study the researcher propounds the following recommendations:

1. Euphemistic expressions in English require special attention in curriculum design. One way to perform this task is to introduce the concept of euphemism to teaching textbooks during the four-year study period at the university. Essentially, this topic need to be taught more extensively at the university level extending from first year of study onwards.
2. It is recommended that teachers and syllabus designers present the material with enough examples from real situations and sufficient exercises.
3. An extensive coverage of the different types of euphemistic expressions and their meanings are helpful in developing learners' mastery of such expressions.
4. All EFL learners are recommended to do their best to use euphemistic expressions if they want their English to be improved. In addition, they ought to know that euphemistic expressions are necessary for understanding the native speakers of English. Otherwise, they have difficulty in understanding and communicating with them.
5. Iraqi EFL learners are recommended to listen to British radio and television channels and to watch films because such speakers always use euphemistic expressions in their speech and this helps

the learners to acquire such expressions and use them naturally in their speech.

## 5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

The following studies can be conducted for further investigation:

1. A contrastive study between English and Arabic can be carried out to investigate the similarities and differences between the two languages in using euphemistic expressions.
2. A similar study can be conducted to investigate the Iraqi EFL learners' recognition of dysphemistic expressions.

I certify that this thesis, entitled “**Iraqi EFL Learners' Recognition of Euphemistic Expressions**” has been prepared by “**Hayder Mohammed Jawad Salih**” under my supervision at the College of Education, University of Babylon, as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Methods of Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

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Abstract in Arabic	أ- ب

*to*

*my family*

## الخلاصة

تعد التعبيرات التلطفية من الظواهر اللغوية العامة التي تستخدم لتفادي الأفكار المحزنة، والمفردات غير المؤدبة أو التي يأنف منها الذوق العام بأخرى أرق وألطف وأكثر إستحياءً. تتناول هذه الدراسة إستخدام التعبيرات التلطفية كونها أحد العمليات التي يواجه متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية صعوبة في تعلمها. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى: (1) تقديم مادة علمية حول التعبيرات التلطفية، أنواعها وأستعمالاتها المختلفة التي تساعد على الوصول إلى نظرة شاملة عن دور مثل هذه التعبيرات في اللغة، (2) التعرف على أداء الطلبة العراقيين متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية في تمييز التعبيرات التلطفية، (3) تفسير أخطاء المتعلمين و مصادر تلك الأخطاء.

لتحقيق الأهداف أعلاه تتقدم الرسالة بالفرضيات الآتية: (1) أن معظم الطلبة العراقيين متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية يخفقون في تمييز معاني العبارات التلطفية، (2) يتوقع أن يكون أداء المتعلمين في التعرف على العبارات التلطفية ومعانيها ضمن سياق الكلام أفضل من أدائهم في التعرف على هذه التعبيرات بمعزل عنه، (3) إن تمييز هؤلاء الطلبة لهذه التعبيرات خلال مدة الأربع سنوات الدراسية لم يكن موفقاً.

جرت برهنة مصداقية هذه الفرضيات من خلال تبني اختبار تشخيصي مؤلف من ثلاثة أسئلة. نُفذ الاختبار على عينة مؤلفة من ثمانين طالباً من طلبة الجامعة العراقيين دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية في السنة الرابعة من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية التربية، جامعة بابل، أثناء العام الدراسي 2007-2008 وقد أعطى التحليل النتائج الآتية:

(1) كان أداء المتعلمين في التعرف على معنى العبارات التلطفية غير مرض إذ كانت نسبة الإجابات الخاطئة للمتعلمين والبالغة (68.84%) أعلى من نسبة إجاباتهم الصحيحة البالغة (31.16%)، (2) كان أداء المتعلمين في تعيين العبارات التلطفية ضمن سياق الكلام كما يلي (نسبة إجاباتهم الصحيحة 69.17% في حين كانت نسبة إجاباتهم الخاطئة 30.83%) أفضل بكثير من أدائهم في تعيين هذه العبارات خارج سياق الكلام (إذ أن نسبة الإجابات الخاطئة 84.06% في حين كانت نسبة الإجابات الصحيحة 15.94%)، (3) يواجه أغلب هؤلاء الطلبة صعوبات في تمييز العبارات التلطفية ومعانيها بسبب النسبة الواطئة لإجاباتهم الصحيحة البالغة (38.76%) مقارنة بالنسبة الكلية لإجاباتهم الخاطئة (61.24%). أن هذه النتائج تثبت صحة الفرضيات المذكورة آنفا. ويمكن أن يعزى أداء المتعلمين غير المرضي إلى العوامل الآتية مع النسب :

ا - سياق التعلم : (57.8%)

ب- استراتيجيات الاتصال : (36.8%)

ج - تأثير اللغة الأم : (5.4%)