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**Euphemism in Translation:
A Socio-cognitive Critical Analysis of the
US War on Terror Discourse and its
Translation in Arabic Media**

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2015

DEDICATION

To my Mother, **Enas Lotfy**, who has spent 35063 hours waiting
for this thesis to come to light.

I finally did it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my supervisor, **Professor Mona Fouad Attia**, for her illuminating comments, patience, and tremendous efforts. I am indebted to her for the time she has devoted to this thesis throughout. I can't emphasize enough how her generosity with material and advice has been of utmost help to me. The support and understanding she has showed me is something I will forever cherish and remember.

Hearty thanks are due to **Dr. Iman Mohamed Shakeeb** for her relentless support and words of encouragement, as well as her careful revision and feedback. I am utterly grateful for her time and effort, along with her high sense of responsibility, commitment and motherly dedication.

Words fail me as I try to express my gratitude for my father Ibrahim Abdel Raouf, my mother, Enas Lotfy, my sister Riham and my brother Mohammad for their love, support and everything else. I can't forget to thank my best friend, Nada Hegazy, for the emotional, as well as professional, support she has showed me throughout the course of the past four years. I also feel deeply touched by all the sincere prayers and heartfelt wishes on part of my extended family, friends and colleagues.

I am truly blessed to have the support and love of all of you. I hope this endeavor will make you proud of me.

ABSTRACT

The title to the thesis at hand is "Euphemism in Translation: A Socio-cognitive Critical Analysis of the US War on Terror Discourse and its Translation in Arabic Media". Hence, euphemism, whether in the source discourse chunks or their translations, is the main linguistic feature that is traced, through the Socio-cognitive framework, under the umbrella of Critical Discourse Analysis. The objectives of the study are as follows: Analyzing the War on Terror discourse of two US administrations; namely those of George Bush and Barack Obama in order to expose their ideologies, investigating the conceptual frames exploited by US administrations for establishing certain notions as facts, in light of Lakoff's notion of Framing, surveying how euphemistic expressions are used as a means of both Framing and introducing a positive self-presentation (PSP) and a negative other-presentation (NOP), highlighting the different linguistic tools used by speakers in the source texts to help create certain conceptual frames, examining how the frames created in the source language are internalized by receivers in the Arabic language after translation, and finally, scrutinizing the Arabic translations of euphemistic expressions coined by English language speakers in the relevant translated Arabic articles. The data under study comprises 13 discourse chunks pertaining to the Obama administration and 5 pertaining to Bush, in addition to

numerous Arabic articles from which the euphemistic lexical items under scrutiny are extracted. The tools utilized in the analysis include The Socio-cognitive Framework, Framing, Euphemism, (Other) lexical choices, Evidentiality and examples, Victimization, Intimidation, PSP and NOP. The most important results for the study are as follows: first, Both of the surveyed US administrations exhibit what could be referred to as the ideology of bias, whereas dominance is the implicit target, while earning a position as a moral world leader is the explicit target. Second, frames play a central role in the policies of the US administrations. They could be considered the foundation upon which all other linguistic policy elements are laid. Third, there are four main frames that US policy-makers rely on. The macro structure of the four frames is more or less preserved as far as the two administrations in question are concerned, but there are changes within the micro structures of each one of them, mainly regarding the extent of reliance on each of the frames, according to the surrounding context at the said time. Fourth, The building blocks of such frames are numerous. The study focuses on tools such as euphemistic expressions, evidentiality and examples, lexical choices, victimization and intimidation. Within each and every one of the said tools, the discursive strategy of PSP (US) and NOP (Arabs/Muslims/enemies) is clearly indicated. The study, however, tends to shed a particular light on the tool of

euphemism, since it is almost omnipresent in all the discourse of the US administrations. Fifth, two approaches are involved regarding the translation of euphemisms. First, there is the neutral approach that is manifested in transferring the whole conceptual frame, from the source language to the target language without any intervention on part of the translator. As for the second approach, it involves modifying the euphemism through a process of translational intervention and hence modifying the entire conceptual frame in the target language through “interpretive frames”.

Keywords: "Critical Discourse Analysis", "Socio-cognitive Framework", "Framing", "Euphemism" "Translation Studies", "George Bush", "Barack Obama", "War on Terror"

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
1. Context of the Study	1
2. Objectives of the Study	2
3. Research Questions	3
4. Rationale of the Study	4
5. Significance of the Study	6
6. Methodolgy	7
6.1 Data Collection	7
6.2 Procedures	10
6.3 Approach and Tools	10
7. Thesis Division	11
CHAPTER ONE: A Theoretical Background	13
1.0 Introduction	13
1.1 Euphemism	13
1.1.1 Definition	13
1.1.2 Motivations and Functions	16
1.1.3 Framing as a Euphemism-based Process	24
1.2 Socio-cognitive CDA	27
1.2.1 Critical Discourse Studies: Going beyond the Linguistic Element	28
1.2.2 The Socio-cognitive Framework (SCF)	29
1.2.2.1 SCF as a more comprehensive alternative to Sociolinguistics	30
1.2.2.2 The Discursive Strategy of Positive Self- presentation (PSP) and Negative Other- presentation (NOP)	32

1.2.2.3	Context as an integral part of CDA	33
1.2.2.4	Mental models as Products of Framing and Euphemism	34
1.2.2.4.1	Intentions as Parts of Mental Models	36
1.2.2.4.2	Mental Models in Translation	36
1.2.2.5	The Influence of Ideology	39
1.3	Framing	40
1.3.1	Definition of Frames	40
1.3.2	Impact of Frames	42
1.3.3	Frames and Cognitive Linguistics	43
1.3.3.1	Framing the "War on Terror" using the Strict Father Model	45
1.3.4	Deep Frames vs. Surface Frames	50
1.3.5	Frames: Medium of Communication and Tools	50
1.4	Translation as a Process of Ideological Reframing, surveyed through CDA	52
1.5	Conclusion	57
CHAPTER TWO: Frames and Euphemisms in George Bush Administration's Discourse		59
2.0	Introduction	59
2.1	Framing	59
2.1.1	The US as a nation led by its high moral values and standards	60
2.1.1.1	Euphemism	61
2.1.1.2	Evidentiality and examples	79
2.1.1.3	Victimization	81

2.1.2The US as a victim of terrorism	83
2.1.2.1Euphemism	84
2.1.2.2Evidentiality and examples	87
2.1.2.3Victimization	88
2.1.3The Arab/Muslim countries as weak nations incapable of deciding and achieving their own good	90
2.1.3.1Euphemism	90
2.1.3.2Other Lexical Choices	94
2.1.3.3Evidentiality and examples	96
2.1.4 The enemy as an evil superpower	100
2.1.4.1Lexical Choices	100
2.1.4.2Evidentiality and examples	106
2.1.4.3Intimidation	109
2.2Translation of euphemisms by Arabic media outlets	111
2.3 Conclusion	118
CHAPTER THREE: Frames and Euphemisms in Barack Obama Administration's Discourse	119
3.0Introduction	119
3.1Framing	119
3.1.1The US as a nation led by its high moral values and standards	119
3.1.1.1Euphemism and Dysphemism	120
3.1.1.2Evidentiality and examples	124
3.1.1.3Other Lexical Choices	128

3.1.2The US as a victim of terrorism	132
3.1.2.1 Euphemism	132
3.1.2.2Victimization	136
3.1.2.3Evidentiality and examples	138
3.1.3 The Arab/Muslim countries as partners	140
3.1.3.1 Euphemism	141
3.1.3.2 Other Lexical Choices	145
3.1.3.3 Evidentiality and examples	150
3.1.4The enemy as a still-existing threat	151
3.1.4.1Euphemism	152
3.1.4.2Evidentiality and examples	155
3.1.4.3Intimidation	156
3.2 Translation of euphemisms by Arabic media outlets	161
3.3 Conclusion	165
CONCLUSION	167
1. Overview of the Study	167
2. Overview of the Findings of the Study	168
3. Limitations of the Study	174
4. Suggestions for further research	174
SUMMARY	176
REFERENCES	181
Primary Sources	181
Secondary Sources	188
ARABIC SUMMARY	-

1. Context of the study

In a world governed by power relations, language plays a key role in expressing hegemony and subjective constructs, often under the guise of objectivity. The discourse of the US administrations is a case in point. It provides a corpus that offers a wide range of examples for exploiting language on the linguistic level to gain factual grounds and to legitimize the unlegitimizable. Euphemism is one of the linguistic devices employed by speakers to mitigate the impact of certain troublesome aspects of their discourse. The translation of euphemistic expressions offers insight into the differences between two cultures, their social realities and their modes of perception and cognition.

As shown in the title to the study, it is concerned with the analysis of the war on terror discourse with a particular focus on euphemistic expressions in both their source and target languages. As surveyed through the practical chapters, there is an abundance in the use of euphemisms by the Bush and Obama administrations, regardless of the particular speaker in each discourse chunk; something that bears witness to the fact that the US political lexicon is not a matter of spontaneity of the speakers, but rather a planned out strategy that has specific tools. Euphemisms, for the critical reader/listener, raise numerous questions pertaining to what they hide vis-à-vis what they are made to highlight, in addition to the relevant frames that are constructed with the help of many building blocks, including euphemistic expressions.

The study covers two US administrations: Bush's (2001 – 2009) and Obama's (2009 – present). Waging the so-called war on terror during Bush's term is an event that has changed world's history and is thus worthy of in-depth analysis, particularly as far as the linguistic aspect is concerned, since the launching of a war is always signaled by a verbal act. Bush's priority is the justification of the war he launches, and it is Obama's as well, yet among other priorities for the latter. After the 9/11 attacks, there is an understandable emotional flare-up on part of the US citizens, and it is used by Bush for a justification and a euphemization of an otherwise unjustified war. As for Obama's agenda, the same applies, yet with a bit of a difference in the approach used. The economic crisis that hit America not long after Obama has taken office is further aggravated by the US involvement in a war on two countries. Hence, the Obama administration agenda has to include other priorities besides the sustained war, and this is the main reason for a change in lexicon and a move forward on the euphemistic treadmill.

2. Objectives of the study:

The study aims at:

- Analyzing the War on Terror discourse of two US administrations; namely those of George Bush and Barack Obama in order to expose their ideologies, using the Socio-

cognitive framework, under the umbrella of Critical Discourse Analysis.

- Investigating the conceptual frames exploited by US administrations for establishing certain notions as facts, in light of Lakoff's (2004) notion of Framing.
- Surveying how euphemistic expressions are used as a means of both Framing and introducing a positive self-presentation (PSP) and a negative other-presentation (NOP).
- Highlighting the different linguistic tools used by speakers in the source texts to help create certain conceptual frames.
- Scrutinizing the Arabic translations of euphemistic expressions coined by English language speakers in the relevant translated Arabic articles, in light of Critical Discourse Analysis.
- Examining how the frames created in the source language are internalized by receivers in the Arabic language after translation.

3. Research Questions:

The Thesis attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How can the Socio-cognitive framework, under the umbrella of Critical Discourse Analysis, be used as a model for analyzing the discourse of the two US administrations and

exposing their ideology, particularly that of the 'War on Terror'?

1.1 How can George Lakoff's concept of Framing be used to interpret the conceptual processes at work on the part of the speakers/writers and the readers/listeners in the course of exporting/receiving a certain version of events?

1.2 How can euphemistic expressions be used as a means of both Framing and introducing positive self-presentation and a negative other-presentation?

1.3 What are the different linguistic tools used by speakers in the source language to help create certain conceptual frames?

2. How is the translation of euphemistic expressions coined by English language speakers in Arabic press be interpreted in the light of Critical Discourse Analysis?

2.1 How are the frames created in the source language internalized by receivers in the Arabic language after translation?

4. Rationale of the study

As maintained previously, the study covers two US administrations; George W. Bush's and Barack Obama's, spanning a total period of 14 years. Chronologically, the material pertaining to the Bush administration starts late 2001 and ends late 2007. As

for the Obama administration material, it spans the period between August 2009 and September 2014. It has to be noted that the selected material does not pertain merely to the presidents of both administrations, but goes beyond them to include other administration personnel, like the vice-president, secretary of Defense, White House Counsel, White House Press Secretaries, assistant to the president and secretary of State.

The socio-cognitive framework, under the umbrella of Critical Discourse Analysis, is used to analyze the English source texts. This framework is adopted due to the significant relation it hypothesizes between cognition, discourse and society. Another major concept utilized within the study is cognitive Framing. Analyzing the selected material within the scope of the said framework and concept gives way to new findings especially regarding the cognitive processes and mental models involved hereunder. This analysis is supported by linguistic tools such as euphemisms, lexical choices, evidentiality and examples, victimization and intimidation, in addition to the governing strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation, which are all extracted from the source material and broken down for further analysis. These tools are chosen due to the fact that through the in-depth analysis they exhibit features that serve to answer the research questions of the thesis. As for the translated lexical items, they are analyzed within the scope of