UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

*STRATEGIES FOR TRANSLATING EUPHEMISTIC EXPRESSIONS
FROM AFRICAN ENGLISH INTO ARABIC IN "A GRAIN OF WHEAT"*

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**STRATEGIES FOR TRANSLATING EUPHEMISTIC EXPRESSIONS
FROM AFRICAN ENGLISH INTO ARABIC IN "A GRAIN OF WHEAT"**

By

SAMEERAH JABBAR ANBER

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti of
Putra Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts**

November 2016

DEDICATION

Finally, a thesis for;

My ever extremely helpful supervisors, Dr. Syed Nurulakla Bin Syed Abdullah and Dr. Nik Farhan Binti Mustapha,

for their patience, guidance, encouragement and long hours that helped in

fostering and carrying out this research.

My ever understanding husband, Ali Hussein Ali,

who without him this work would never have come to completion.

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who offered an endless stream of love and affection throughout my Master journey.

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for their constant prayers and invaluable support.

STRATEGIES FOR TRANSLATING EUPHEMISTIC EXPRESSIONS FROM AFRICAN ENGLISH INTO ARABIC IN "A GRAIN OF WHEAT"

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November 2016

Chairman : Syed Nurulakla Bin Syed Abdullah, PhD
Faculty   : Modern Language and Communication

This study examines the strategies for translating euphemistic expressions from African-English into Arabic. Euphemism is a figure of speech which conceals unpleasant or sad ideas. This study aims to fulfill two main objectives; to identify translation strategies, and to examine the influence of sociocultural differences in translating euphemistic meanings in "A Grain of Wheat" from English into Arabic. Euphemism poses a significant problem in translation as it requires an accurate equivalence in the receptor's language as well as competence of the translator in interpreting and rendering the meaning of euphemistic expressions. Inadequate translation of euphemistic expressions leads to distortion of the intended meaning and may cause inaccuracy, ineffectiveness and dysphemism in the target language. The analysis was carried out on 24 sets of euphemistic expressions taken from 136 expressions that include 49 items for death, 62 items for sex, 15 items for human body and 10 items for bodily function collected from Ngũgĩ's novel "A Grain of

Wheat" and its translations into Arabic by Abdul-kareem Mahfouz (1983) and Salman Hassen Al-Aqidi (1987). "A Grain of Wheat" was chosen because it is Ngũgĩ's influential work that proves its mettle in realising how writing could be an instrument to progress. The novel is loaded with euphemistic expressions and cultural nuances. This study is qualitative in nature and adopted the model of Allan and Burridge (1991) on four topics encompassing death, sex, human body, and bodily function. The study employed textual analysis method based on the strategies proposed by Leppihalme (1997) and Unseth (2006). The findings showed that the rendering of euphemistic expressions seemed to be discrepant between both Arab translators. Both translators used three strategies, namely literal, omission and structure change to preserve the SL flavour and integrity. Both translators also strived to keep the meaning in the source texts sound natural by transferring the SL's structure. Omission and literal strategy employed by the translators frequently may not express euphemistic words functionally. The findings also revealed that both translators attempted to translate semantically the euphemistic expressions but at the expense of rendering them adequately into the target culture. While the researcher found similarities and differences in the employment of

translation strategies in translating the euphemistic expressions, the Syrian translation is apparently better delivered than the Iraqi translation. The findings also suggested that knowledge and competence of the translators in handling sociocultural differences as well as the employment of effective strategies such as those proposed by Leppihalme and Unseth are indispensable tools for solving the problems of translating euphemistic expressions.

STRATEGI PENTERJEMAHAN UNGKAPAN EUFEMISTIK DARIPADA BAHASA INGGERIS AFRIKA KE BAHASA ARAB DALAM NOVEL "A GRAIN OF WHEAT"

Oleh

SAMEERAH JABBAR ANBER

November 2016

Pengerusi : Syed Nurulakla Bin Syed Abdullah, PhD
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Kajian ini meninjau strategi penterjemahan ungkapan eufemistik daripada bahasa Inggeris Afrika ke bahasa Arab. Eufemisme merupakan satu bentuk bahasa kiasan yang berusaha menyembunyikan idea yang menyedihkan atau kurang menyenangkan. Kajian ini menetapkan sasaran untuk memenuhi dua objektif utama; untuk mengenal pasti strategi penterjemahan, dan untuk meninjau pengaruh perbezaan sosiobudaya dalam penterjemahan makna eufemistik dalam novel "A Grain of Wheat" daripada bahasa Inggeris ke bahasa Arab. Eufemisme menampilkan cabaran yang ketara dalam penterjemahan memandangkan ungkapan sedemikian memerlukan persamaan yang tepat dalam bahasa penerima dan juga kecekapan penterjemah dalam mentafsirkan dan memindahkan makna ungkapan eufemistik. Penterjemahan ungkapan eufemistik yang lemah akan mencetuskan gangguan terhadap makna yang dihasratkan dan menyebabkan ketidaktepatan, ketidakberkesanan dan disfemisme (ungkapan kasar) dalam bahasa sasaran. Analisis dilaksanakan terhadap 24 set ungkapan eufemistik yang diambil daripada 136 ungkapan yang mencakup 49 item ungkapan berkaitan dengan kematian, 62 item ungkapan berkaitan dengan seks, 15 item ungkapan berkaitan dengan tubuh manusia dan 10 item ungkapan berkaitan dengan fungsi tubuh manusia yang dikumpul daripada novel yang dihasilkan oleh Ngūgī "A Grain of Wheat" dan terjemahannya dalam bahasa Arab oleh penterjemah Syria, Abdul-kareem Mahfouz (1983), dan penterjemah Iraq, Salman Hassen Al-Aqidi (1987). Novel "A Grain of Wheat" dipilih untuk kajian ini kerana novel ini merupakan karya Ngūgī yang berpengaruh dan membuktikan keupayaannya dalam merealisasikan bagaimana penulisan dapat menjadi satu instrumen kemajuan. Novel ini penuh dengan ungkapan eufemistik dan nuansa kebudayaan. Kajian ini merupakan kajian kualitatif yang mengaplikasikan model Allan dan Burridge (1991) yang mencakup kematian, seks, tubuh manusia, dan fungsi tubuh manusia. Kajian ini menerapkan kaedah analisis tekstual berdasarkan strategi yang dicadangkan oleh Leppihame (1997) dan Unseth (2006). Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa hasil penterjemahan ungkapan eufemistik adalah berbeza antara kedua-dua penterjemah. Kedua-dua penterjemah menggunakan tiga strategi, iaitu literal, pengabaian (*omission*) dan perubahan struktur untuk mengekalkan cita rasa dan makna SL. Kedua-dua penterjemah juga berusaha untuk mengekalkan makna yang terdapat

dalam teks sasaran dalam nada yang semula jadi dengan memindahkan struktur SL. Strategi pengabaian dan literal yang digunakan secara kerap oleh kedua-dua penterjemah tidak dapat mengungkapkan frasa eufemistik dengan sewajarnya. Dapatan juga menunjukkan bahawa

kedua-dua penterjemah berusaha untuk menterjemahkan secara semantik ungkapan eufemistik namun usaha yang demikian itu menyebabkan penterjemahan yang secukupnya ke dalam bahasa sasaran tidak berjaya dilaksanakan. Meskipun pengkaji menemukan persamaan dan perbezaan dalam penggunaan strategi penterjemahan untuk menterjemahkan ungkapan eufemistik, terjemahan oleh penterjemah Syria dihasilkan dengan mutu yang lebih baik berbanding dengan terjemahan oleh penterjemah Iraq. Dapatan kajian juga mencadangkan bahawa pengetahuan dan kecekapan penterjemah dalam menangani perbezaan sosiobudaya selain penggunaan strategi yang berkesan seperti yang dicadangkan oleh Leppihalme dan Unseth merupakan alat yang penting untuk mengatasi masalah penterjemahan ungkapan eufemistik.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 28 November 2016 to conduct the final examination of Sameerah Jabbar Anber on her thesis entitled "Strategies for Translating Euphemistic Expressions from African English into Arabic in "A Grain of Wheat" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Arts.

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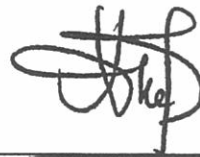**Pabiyah Hajimaming @ Pabiyah Toklubok, PhD**
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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.
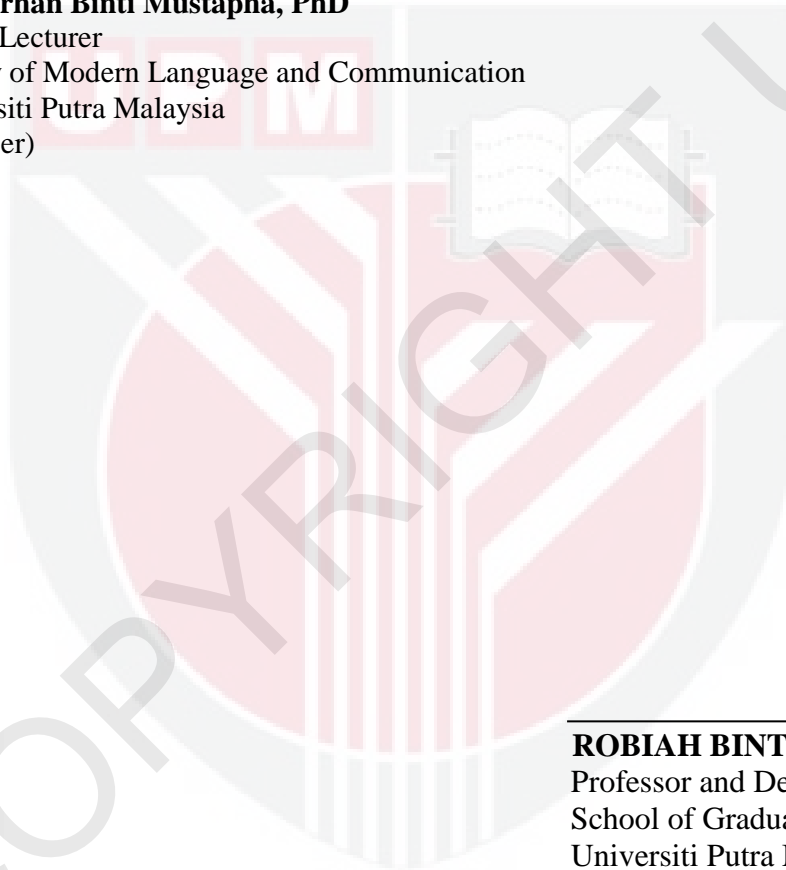
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Signature:	
Name of Member of Supervisory Committee:	Nik Farhan Binti Mustapha, PhD.

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TL	Target language
SL	Source language
ST	Source text
TT	Target text
SC	Source Culture
TC	Target Culture
SLT	Source language text
ART	Arab Radio and Television

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

Translation from English into Arabic is usually fraught with countless obstacles. It has become more complicated by the variation of both languages, stocks of vocabularies and writing styles (Al-Hamad & Salman, 2013). Al-Hamad and Salman (2013) add that the prominence of the role of translation lies in universal and cross cultural communication. Translation is judged adequately by most readers. In the absence of any linguistic or stylistic particularities, translation seems obvious and gives the form that it reproduces the intention of the foreign writer or the essential meaning of the source text (Venuti, 2004). While translation has been given widespread definitions by different scholars, the brief definition proposed by Hatim and Munday (2004, p.6) offers a comprehensive definition of the translation process:

1. The process of transferring a written text from SL (Source Language) to TL (Target Language), conducted by a translator, or translators, in a specific sociocultural context.
2. The written product or TT (Target Text), which results from that process and which functions in the socio-cultural context of the TL.
3. The cognitive, linguistic, visual, cultural and ideological phenomena which are an integral part of 1 and 2.

In the view of Munday (2009), the third definition has attracted the attention of countless researchers in the discipline of translation. Translation does not only involve understanding the common meaning of the message but also calls upon the ability to understand the culture accompanying the message. To translate a total meaning of a message, its own cultural context should be understood. Under those circumstances, euphemism poses a significant problem in translation involving different addressees, societies, settings, and cultures. It is agreed that the translation of the lite

Euphemisms constitute a great problem in translation. Its translation necessitates replacement and substitution with accurate equivalence that would give meanings to the target readers. Allan and Burridge (1991, p.14) explain euphemism term as "alternative to dis-preferred expression, and is used to escape possible hurt of face. The dis-preferred expressions may be taboos, awesome, distasteful, or for some other reasons have too many negative connotations to felicitously achieve speaker's communicative purpose on a particular situation".

Gross (2012) states that, translators exercise euphemisms to explain sensitive expressions established in the source texts. By translating a source work, a novel, for

instance, countless people in their mother language can read the novel so that the content of the novel could be understood by them (Watt, 2000, p.22). In translating a novel from the SL to TL, reduction, omission and alteration strategies are often necessary (Shifa, 2013). In this regard, Unseth suggests four applicable strategies that include use of plain, literal translation, rendering the source using unlike euphemism and employing a mixture of two tactics in translating euphemistic expressions.

The current study is in general concerned with the strategies of translating euphemistic expressions in the "A Grain of Wheat" novel "Habaa Al-Qamh". This study examines the strategies for translating the euphemistic expressions from African-English into Arabic. This study will benefit translators in terms of selecting the appropriate strategies to render the connotative meaning of the euphemistic expressions and avoiding the use of taboo or dis-preferred words in their translation.

1.2   Background of the Study

It is a well-known that, the language used by people in the daily lives to convey their ideas can be simply used, but it is sometimes complex and complicated (Cho, 2014). Some expressions seem unpleasant or sensitive if openly spoken, which often make the communications not interactive. With the purpose of erasing the harshness of taboos or the sting of unpleasant words explicit, the demand for euphemism has been raised (Rabab'ah & Al-Qarni, 2012). Euphemism has the ability to formulate people's discourses more poetic, and adds amount of complexity to make them sound more suitable (Goris, 2015 as cited by Kabara, 2015).

Euphemisms should be exercised flexibly in accordance with social and cultural contexts. Gregory and Susanne (1978, p.4) describe that "language events do not occur in isolation from other aspects of human behavior; rather they operate within the manifold complex of human social behavior and mutually related to it".

On the other hand, translation plays an important role in the creation of literary texts and it is central to our understanding of these texts (McRae, 2012). Translation is at the heart of our concern with foreign works. Good translation conveys the meaning of the original texts, nothing more, nothing less; great translation makes the readers think they are the original texts (Hatim & Mason, 2014, p.193). When translators translate literature, they are writing it, and the texts of the translation should adhere to the main standards of literary works. Most cultures are not equal when it comes to translation (Wolf, 2014, p.180). Some literary works are translated by choice and others by obligation. Translation is the key to the protection of most languages, cultures, thoughts and traditions.

Furthermore, languages cannot be understood apart from contexts. Similar languages forms which are used in dissimilar contexts possibly will have dissimilar connotations, and the similar connotations possibly will be conveyed in unlike languages forms. Thus, to practice euphemisms properly, people should constantly pay attention to social contexts (Halliday and Hassan, 1985).

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It is strongly recommended that people be polite in their communication with those they do not know very well therefore people feel accepted as a member of a social group. Mills (2003, p.6) said that, politeness is the speakers' intention to reduce the face threats toward another. In this context, politeness is a worldwide phenomenon. All cultures and languages have their particular strategies of performing respect, saving face, avoiding taboo words as well as reducing the unwelcome consequence result

Allan and Burridge (2006, p.30) say that euphemism arises from conscious or unconscious self-censoring. The proper employment of euphemism makes the relationship between persons more comfortable and carries out the social communication in an effective manner. This device intertwines the social and cultural contexts.

Rawson (1981, p.1) points out that even those who satisfy on being explicit spoken, their day never pass without employing euphemistic expressions. Euphemisms are frequently employed in every day languages of people (Lim, 2012 quoted by Hojati, 2012) Euphemistic words fulfill two functions, harmonising in the nature of impending unpleasant effects through which people require communicating and neutralising harmful nuances connected with unpleasant entities (Hojati, 2012).

In addition, taboo topics, such as sexuality, human parts, death and other topics are common in diverse cultures (Trinch, 2001, p.251). As such, euphemism has the function of politeness, beautification and is also useful to widen communication. In line with this, euphemisms are mirrors that reflect the politeness principles and their actual representation.

Thuy (2011) views that periphrastic expressions are linguistically common features, such as universality, national, indirectness, localization, obscurity, sense of humor, and figurative feature. Below figure (1.1) illustrates the most common features of euphemism.

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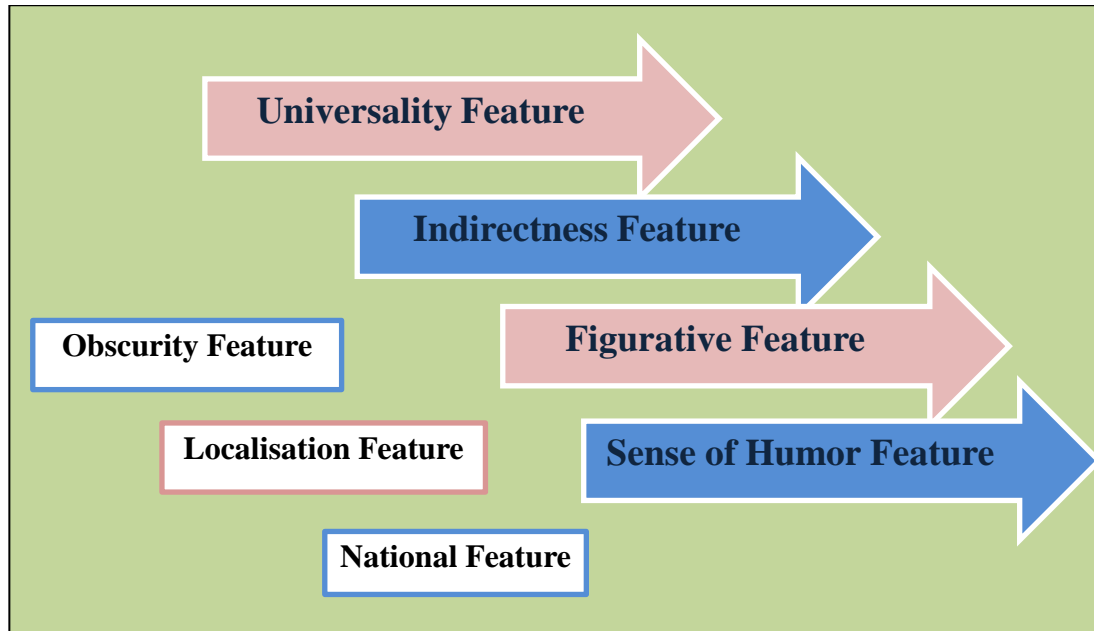
Figure 1.1: The Most Common Features of Euphemism (Thuy, 2011)

1.3   Problem Statement

Euphemisms are figures of speech which cover unpleasant and dejected ideas under some terms that are not typical of those ideas. Euphemism is a mask and is apparently more amusing, less dreadful or honest expressions as required (Dumarsais as cited in Charaudeau et al, 1998, pp.241-242). Euphemism poses a significant problem in translation especially in translation involving different audiences, societies, environments, religions, races and cultures (Shehab, E., Qadan, A., & Hussein, M., 2014).

Different researchers paid attention to euphemism with regard to other languages, aspects, forms, classifications, and functions. They obtained their data from movies, presidential inaugural address, political debates and speeches in newspapers, comedies and novels. For example, Prasetyo (2015) focused on the use of euphemism in political debate used by Obama in Presidential Debate of the United States (2012). Dhika and Gede (2014) classified the types of euphemistic and dysphemistic expressions in "Remember Me" movie. Cardova Efendi, Rusdi Noor Rosa, Delvi Wahyuni (2013) analysed the types and forms of euphemism used in online mass media. On the other hand, Laura Samoškaitė (2011) examined theoretical approaches and studied the concepts and features of euphemisms in today's English Newspapers (county) while Musfiroh (2014) studied euphemistic expressions used by Barak Obama in his inaugural address. However, to date, no published studies have extensively examined the strategies for translating euphemisms proposed by two scholars Leppihalme (1997) and Unseth (2006).

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While there are a number of studies on euphemism, studies on euphemistic expressions related to strategies applied to the translation of literary works from African-English into Arabic are still insufficient. Euphemisms used in the source text are related to elements of translation which include culture, society, and religion. There is a significant problem in interpreting the source of euphemistic expressions that requires choosing appropriate alternatives to express the hidden meanings found in the original text.

Some Arab translators, mainly in Iraq and Syria, employed the methods that alter the original meanings and ruined the beauty of the expressions. For example, the author of the source text used in the novel (p.103) the euphemistic expression "The Whitman would silence the father". Mahfouz rendered this expression (p.195) euphemistically: **"سيعمد الانسان الابيض لاخراس الاب"** (The Whiteman would intentionally silence the father). However, Hassen was dysphemistically and literally translated (p.170) the same expression into: **"سيقضي الرجل الابيض على الاب"** (The Whitman will kill the father).

A number of authors in Iraq and Syria, such as Basim Mohammed (2015) Abdul Jabbar Mohsen Al-Rubaiy (2014), Omar Talib (2014), and Mourice Abu Nazer (2014) state that the reality of literary translation in Iraq is full of uncertainties and not encouraging. The present Iraqi translators are untrained and therefore they are not competent enough to convey the accurate meanings of the texts. Translation has been faced with countless obstacles. Therefore, translation has been suffering negative impacts in terms of the acceptance of readers abroad and at home who tend to read the original text more than its translation. This situation also leads to cultural, religious and social confusion and misunderstanding.

The two Arabic translations of this novel are selected because they represent great examples of translating the euphemistic expressions; shedding light on the risks of using improper translation strategies. The two Arabic versions of the original novel are selected because they constitute the only full translation texts available. Therefore, the researcher leverages on both Arabic translations to carry out this study. Both Arab translators are distinguished translators with significant contributions as well as leading publications and they have translated several major literary

The existence of this challenging phenomenon and the employment of inadequate translation strategy of euphemisms demands choosing the effective strategies as proposed by Leppihalme and Unseth to address the problem. Due to this, an analysis of the translation of euphemistic expressions is significant in order to gain understanding and insights into how to overcome this problem amongst English-Arabic translators.

1.4   Research Objectives

Based on the problem statement and literature review illustrated above, the current study intends to achieve two objectives:

1- To identify the translation strategies employed in the novel 'A Grain of Wheat' by both Salman Hassen Al-Aqidi and Abdul-kareem Mahfouz.
2- To examine the influence of sociocultural differences in translating euphemistic meanings in 'A Grain of Wheat' from African-English into Arabic.

1.5   Research Questions

In tandem with the objectives, this study suggests two research questions:
1- What translation strategies are used by Salman Hassen Al-Aqidi and Abdul-kareem Mahfouz to convey the euphemistic expressions in 'A Grain of Wheat' from English into Arabic?
2- How the sociocultural differences affect the translation of the euphemistic meanings in "A Grain of Wheat" from English into Arabic?

1.6   Significance of the Study

This study attempts to provide contribution to the field of research in translation especially in dealing with the issues of translating euphemism. It seeks to increase awareness among rendition practitioners on the significance of applying appropriate translation strategies. Strategies are procedures that help translators to find solution to the unsolved challenges. Euphemism, as one of these challenges, requires choosing the suitable strategies to tackle its problems in translation, render its connotative meaning and avoid the use of taboos. Lepihalme's and Unseth's strategies can contribute towards overcoming various challenges in translating the euphemistic expressions.

The study would also contribute to explore new inputs and insights into translation and the problems of conveying euphemistic meanings from African-English into Arabic. It is noteworthy to consider how fixed expressions, euphemistically organised in African-English original, are dysphemistically put in Arabic words. Not least, this study is expected to educate and inculcate the awareness of the difficulties of translating euphemism amongst future translators of African-English into Arabic translation and disseminate appropriate translation strategies for handling euphemistic translation issues.

With regard to the significance of the current study, there are four important aspects. First, the current study would provide contribution to the field of research in

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translation, especially in dealing with the issues of translating of euphemism. Second, this study would also be interesting to translation practitioners in their efforts to obtain new inputs and insights into translation and the problems of conveying euphemistic meanings from African-English into Arabic. Third, it would contribute to the education and inculcation of the awareness of the difficulties of translating euphemism amongst future translators of African-English into Arabic translation. Four, this study would also be able to disseminate appropriate translation strategies for handling euphemistic meanings in African-English into Arabic translations.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The current study is limited to the examination of the mistranslation of euphemistic expressions in the novel "A Grain of Wheat" by the Kenyan celebrated novelist Ngūgī Wa Thiong'o published in 1967 and translated by Abdul Kareem Mahfouz (1983) and Salman Hassen Al-Aqidi (1987).

The English euphemistic expressions to be examined are limited on four topics: death, sex, human body and bodily function.

Ngūgī is an eminent African novelist and play writer, has won several prizes and has been nominated frequently to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. His critical and political writing has focused ever more sharply on issue of culture and language. "A Grain of Wheat" novel's time is the four days leading up to Kenya's liberation from colonialism. It signifies his latest work published in English due to the negative attitude that was taken by its author to this language. Furthermore, "A Grain of Wheat" novel won the acceptance of most Arab people and the proof is that it has been translated twice by two Arab translators within the same decade. Consequently, Arab trslators to the selected novel are chosen as they represent an example of translating the euphemisms; shed light on the risks of insisting on using improper translation strategies. The two Arab translators are eminent translators. This study goes to identify the translation of twenty four euphemistic expressions related to death, sex, human body and bodily function topics in the Arabic versions of the said novel. Hence, this research examines only the textual analysis and its translations; and does not include the author of the novel and the two translators.

In this vein, euphemisms in Arabic are used more comprehensively since they cover more different aspects than what are expressed in English. The differences in using euphemistic expressions in English and Arabic in certain occasions are related to cultural differences in terms of politeness. This cultural mismatch associated with euphemisms is very much marginal and limited as compared to the common ground euphemisms in Arabic and English have, mainly when sex-related, death and body part euphemisms are involved. Culture of the Arabs is highly reflected in their language to the extent that the readers of Arabic literature and language encounter difficulties in mastering the use of expressions in daily life. Arabic euphemisms

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constitute pragmatic choices language users tend to opt for at certain points of interactions via flouting one or more maxims of conversations (Farghal, 1995).

Similarly, English people use euphemistic language to replace unpleasant or inappropriate words and to express politeness by making direct references to taboos topics, namely, sex, death, and so on. Euphemisms convey many pragmatic functions such as beautifying speeches, drawing the addressees' attentions, hiding facts in politics, especially those facts that should not be exposed publicly, offering advice, particularly in religious discourse, among other functions.

1.8   Definitions of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding of the terms used in the current study, certain definitions are provided as follows:

Euphemism: an effortless method to state oneself in a pleasant way without hurting someone. It is still utilised in all places when talking about sex, bodily function or topics that are considered as improper in the public (Ávila-Cabrera, 2015)

Dysphemism: refers to words with deliberately unpleasant connotations; it is the semantic opposite of the more familiar euphemisms (Coomber, 2016, p.80).

Translation Strategies: the method that the translator follows to translate the ST into TT for instance, literal translation and paraphrasing translation (Al-Saidi, 2013; Baker, 2011).

Sociocultural: the all-cultural norms which portray a specific society (Jackson, 2014).

Cultural meaning: the meaning that includes a cultural sign represented by expression, sentence, phrase or word (Jackson, 2014).

Metaphor: a figure of speech in which a phrase or a word implies comparison between two unlike things that actually have something in common (Al-Ali, El-Sharif & Alzyoud, 2016).

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