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Softboiled Speech: A Contrastive Analysis of Death Euphemisms in Egyptian Arabic and Chinese

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Softboiled Speech: A Contrastive Analysis of Death Euphemisms in Egyptian Arabic and Chinese

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I. INTRODUCTION

Death is a taboo of human beings and inevitable social norm. It signifies completeness of life and the final destination of its journey. It is "a gate of exit from one life and entry into the other everlasting one. It is a good example of a mystery, since it is a phenomenon of which none of the living has any direct knowledge" (Bultinck, 1998, p. 11). In all societies and almost all languages, death is the most sensitive and fearful subject people try to avoid mentioning. It is also "a fear-based timeless taboo in which psychological, religious and social interdictions coexist" (Allan and Burridge, 1991, p. 153). Even in cultures where death is celebrated and embraced, the family of the deceased applies certain restrictions on clothing or food. Human beings have traditionally felt reluctant to deal with the topic of death using straightforward expressions. They prefer not to speak freely about death. This is a "symptomatic of the overall discomfort with the subject of death as a whole" (Fernández, 2006, p. 102). However, there are communication situations in which one cannot evade the notion of death. In this case, 2 language users try to soften the effect of what they wish to communicate. They deliberately avoid the embarrassing expressions of death and replace them

with more moderate ones. To this end, they resort to softboiled words and expressions which provide a way to speak about death. By using these words and expressions, the taboo topic of death is tripped of its most explicit and offensive overtone. Linguistically and culturally speaking, these softboiled words and expressions are called 'death euphemism'. Euphemism, in the sense of softboiled speech 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 should not be mentioned or touched" (Allan and Burridge, 2006, p. 11).

II. THE CONCEPT OF DEATH IN EGYPT AND CHINA

In Egypt, *al-maut*, 'death' has two inseparable meanings related to the two components of a person, that is, to *al-jasad*, 'the body' and to *al-ru:h*, 'the soul'. The first meaning is related to the condition of a person's body when his/her soul separates or departs from it. The body is then described as being *la hayat fi:h* or *la ru:h fi:h*, 'lifeless' or *la haraka fi:h*, 'motionless'. Secondly, death is referred to as a kind of *?intiqa:l*, 'passage' or 'transition' of *al-ru:h*, 'the soul' of a person from this life to another life. Egyptians believe that death is a transition from *da:r ad dunya*, 'this worldly life' to *da:r al a?irah*, 'the otherworldly house of hereafter' or *?a:lam al-raib*, 'the invisible world which is known only to Allah'. Between this worldly life and the other world death is located. In other words, death is conceived by Egyptians as a transitional stage between this world and the hereafter including *yaum ad-di:n*, 'the Day of Judgment'.

In China, the Chinese character 死 (*si le*) 'death' is an inferential ideogram - created by the combination of two pictographic parts that pictorially mimics the intended meaning. The right part of this word represents *a person* and the left *remains*. It also contains two similar meanings. The first meaning is about the description of the dead 残骨, implying that the soul of the dead departs from the body with remains being celebrated by the living relatives. Secondly, the Chinese with folk beliefs, particularly the elders, believe that a

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person has lives in three worlds - the previous existence, this world and the hereafter. Once a person dies, his/her soul is guided by a ghost messenger to the nether world, where he/she is judged from his/her deeds done in this world by Yama - the king of the nether world, either to be sent to the hell 下地狱 or to the Elysium 极乐世界 or go back to this worldly life 转世.. Therefore, death in China serves as a transition as well.

III. DEFINITION OF EUPHEMISM

Euphemisms are expressions which can be used to avoid those words that are considered to be taboo. That is, they are used to avoid unpleasant, hateful or sad words and expressions. They serve as a veil, and they substitute these expressions and words with more pleasant, less shocking ones according to necessity. Neaman and Silver, 1983, p. 4) state that the word 'euphemism' is first recorded in English in Blount's (1969) Glossographia, where it is defined as "a food of favorable interpretation of a bad word." They added that the word 'euphemism' comes from the Greek word *"euphēmē (eu: 'good, well' and phēmē: 'speech' or 'saying'); thus, literally 'euphemism' means "speaking with 3 good words or in a pleasant manner", and can be defined as "substituting an offensive or unpleasant term for a more explicit, offensive one, thereby veneering the truth by using kind words (Neaman and Silver, 1983, p. 1). Kany (1960, p. v) believes that a euphemism is "the means by which a disagreeable, offensive or fear-instilling matter is designated with an indirect or softer term. Euphemisms satisfy a linguistic need. For his own sake as well as that of his hearers, a speaker constantly resorts to euphemisms in order to disguise an unpleasant truth, veil an offense, or palliate indecency." Ullmann (1962, p. 231) describes euphemism as an "inoffensive substitute" introduced to occupy the space left by the prohibited word according to the underlying psychological motivation (fear, courtesy, decency or decorum). Leech (1985), from the semantic point view, holds the view that euphemism makes no overt reference to the unpleasant side of the subject, and may even be a positive misnomer.*

Rawson (1981, p. 1) believes that euphemisms are powerful linguistic tools that "are embedded so deeply in our language that few of us, even those who pride themselves on being plainspoken, ever get through a day without using them." Consequently, euphemisms are functional tools in protecting language speakers from possible effrontery and offence. As for the touchy and the taboo topic of death, euphemisms allow discussion of it "without enraging, outraging, or upsetting other people and help people to avoid the taboo words pertaining to death. They provide "a way of speaking about the unspeakable (. . .). It falls midway between transparent discourse and total prohibition. It is the would be safe area of language, constrained by

decorum" (Asher and Simpson, 1994). Burchfield (1985, p. 29) argues that euphemisms are important part of every language since "a language without euphemisms would be a defective instrument of communication." For Allan and Burrige (1991, p. 14), euphemisms are "alternatives to dispreferred expressions, and are used in order to avoid possible loss of face."

Lakoff (1975, p. 19) writes that "when a word acquires a bad connotation by association with something unpleasant or embarrassing, people may search for substitutes that do not have the uncomfortable effect - that is, euphemism." Along with the same line, Casas Gomez (2009, p. 727) states that "the euphemism consists of the substitution of an unpleasant word by another, pleasant one when the first is to be avoided for reasons of religious fear, moral scruples or courtesy." As examples of definitions of the same type, we can include those of Howard (1986, p. 101), who refers to euphemism as "the substitution of an offensive expression by another softer, more ambiguous expression, or a periphrastic one", as well as Wardhaugh (1986, p. 237) who considers euphemism to be the result of cleaning up certain areas of life in order to make them more presentable. Also, Wilson (1993) believes that euphemisms are "words with meaning or sounds thought somehow to be nicer, clearer or more elevated and so used as substitutes for words deemed unpleasant, crude or ugly in sound or sense. "As for the taboo topic of death, Tarrant (1952, p. 64) states that "in Plato's usage the most frequent verbal equivalent for 'to die' is 'to depart'. By this substitution he expresses his fundamental belief and at the same time adopts a natural and universal euphemism."

Similar meanings for euphemisms are found in Arabic with the Arabic root *luff* and its derivative *laṭa:fah* "to be kind, friendly, thin, fine, delicate, dainty, graceful, elegant, nice, amiable, etc.; to make mild, soft, and gentle; and to mitigate, alleviate, ease, soothe, moderate, to treat with kindness, etc." (Wehr and Cowan, 1994). The English term "euphemism" is also translated into Arabic with *luff attaṣbi:r* "kind expression" and *ḥusun attaṣbi:r* 'nice expression.' Examples of Arabic euphemisms are: *kullu man ṣalajaha fa:n* 'everyone will die'. In Chinese, the meanings of euphemism are displayed by two Chinese characters 委婉 euphemistic: 委 roundabout, indirect, winding and 婉 tactful, polite, and gracious. Euphemism, regarded as a rhetoric device in China, has been commonly used from ancient time to the present day, with a view to avoiding vulgarity, taboo and offence by speaking in a polite, tactful, implicit, mild and indirect way. Examples of Chinese euphemisms are 走了/去了 (*qu le/zou le*) 'went away/departed' and 没了(*mei le*) 'is gone'.

Despite the fact that the specific euphemisms may differ from culture to culture, the main areas where

euphemism are called for are generally the same, mostly taboos such as death, sex, body parts, bodily functions, etc. Death is not only a taboo of human beings and an inevitable social norm, but also it is an irresistible psychological topic. Both Egyptian Arabic (EA, hereafter) and Chinese have a number of euphemistic expressions to substitute expressions for death. The concepts of death in both the two cultures are profoundly influenced by their respective religious belief. In EA, for example, there are many euphemisms for death, including *ʔit-tawaffa/t*, 'he/she pass away'; *ʔintaqala/t iladda:r il-aʔirah*, 'He/she moved to the home of eternity' and *allah yi-rham-uh/ha*, 'May Allah have mercy upon him/her', etc. Similarly, there are lots of expressions of this kind in Chinese. For example, there are euphemisms for "Buddhists' death" such as 圆寂 (*yuan ji*) 'pass away with all virtues entelechial and all vices exterminated'; 坐化 (*zuo hua*) 'die peacefully hunkering like a living person'; etc. While the final purpose that the Daoism pursues is the life athanasy and to become celestial beings thus "death" is referred to 仙逝 (*xian shi*), 仙游 (*xian you*), 仙去 (*xian qu*), etc. As mentioned earlier, euphemism is used to substitute taboos, profanity or for maintaining one's face and not hurting others. It is generally the role of euphemism to function in such a way.

IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF DEATH EUPHEMISM

Having established the definition of euphemism, the next logical question one might ask is what the importance of death euphemism is? The answer is not difficult to explain. Taboos, since the dawn of time, have been used by human societies to regulate behavior and discourse. In all cultures, death is considered a taboo topic and there is hypersensitivity towards it because of its connections with meanings and ideas that people can not mention overtly. The conception underlying death, as a taboo topic, implies a topic that may not be touched, or approached as it is scared and therefore forbidden. Therefore, it is a common human nature to avoid mentioning things that cause pain and unpleasantness as they are exactly the very things people are averse to. Here lies the importance of death euphemism with which language speakers can easily avoid the embarrassing death words and expressions and replace them with more moderate ones. That is, death euphemisms foster harmony in the course of people' social interactions and bridge the hiatus generated from the taboo topic of death.

In all societies, death euphemism is a common norm. People use it consciously or subconsciously. It is a linguistic politeness strategy and conveys a social attitude. In the sense of softboiled speech, death euphemism, substituting for taboos, impoliteness, profanity or maintaining one's face, goes back to "primitive people and their 5 interpretation of tabooed

objects as having demonic power that shouldn't be mentioned or touched" Allan and Burrige (2006, p. 11). As Shipley (1977, p. 153) puts it, "Euphemism, the use of a pleasant substitute for a term with unpleasant or objectionable associations, appears in almost all our talk." The valid reasons for the prevalence of death euphemism include: (1) avoidance of the taboo topic of death (i.e., Saville-Troike (1984, p. 199) says that "attitudes towards language considered taboo in a speech community are extremely strong, and violations may be sanctioned by imputations of immorality, social ostracism, and even illness or death", (2) avoidance of embarrassment (i.e., people in general cannot mention or refer to death directly without embarrassment. To avoid such embarrassment, death euphemism naturally sets in), (3) avoidance of unpleasantness (i.e., death arouses unpleasant or uncomfortable feelings in all societies, therefore, a wide variety of death euphemisms exist which represent death words and expressions in some other terms), and (4) providing softening effect (i.e., death euphemism softens the harsh and sensitive reality of death).

V. AIM AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Having reviewed the available literature, the researches found that the work on euphemisms is vast, and the euphemistic language is pervasive and heavily used in English, both in formal and informal situations. Also, most studies related to euphemisms have been piloted on Western cultures (e.g., British, French and American), but very few studies have been done in EA. The analysis of euphemisms in EA is scattered in linguistic and literary references. Euphemistic expressions in EA, especially these pertaining to the culturally sensitive area of death, have not received a lot of academic attention. Moreover, despite the fact that many researches on death euphemism in Chinese, which are abundant and more complicated due to the deep cultural connotation, have been done by scholars in China, no contrastive study has been done on Chinese and EA death euphemisms. So, the present study aims to highlight death euphemism in EA and contrast it sociolinguistically with Chinese, since many native EA speakers are in need of learning Chinese. The Arabic language is also required to be learned as a foreign/second language, being one of the basic and important world languages. Hence, this study entails death euphemism in both languages and its general linguistic and cultural resemblances and distinctions. It is hoped that the predicted linguistic and cultural similarities and differences between EA and Chinese can play a significant role in textbook writing, teaching, learning and translating Chinese and Arabic as foreign/second languages for their learners.

China and Arab world have similar histories and have had cultural exchanges and mutual influence since the Tang Dynasty. Just as Chinese foreign minister Li Zhaoxing said, in the opening ceremony of the Forum in 2004, that "the Arab world is an important force in the international arena, and that China and Arab countries enjoy a time-honored friendship." In addition, global events and trends leave little room for doubt that China and the Arab world present important opportunities and challenges for tomorrow leaders. As for the Egyptian-Chinese relationship, increased exchanges in a variety of areas between the two countries have encouraged the Egyptians to pay more attention to China and the Chinese language. Besides, many universities in Egypt have regarded the Chinese language as one of the most important languages in the world. For example, the Chinese 6 Language Department at Ain Shams University has taken the lead in teaching and studying the Chinese language in Egypt. Al-Azhar University has also set up a Chinese language department. Similarly, Cairo University has established a similar department. These departments serve to provide the Egyptian community with tour guides for Chinese tourists, and qualified Egyptians who can work to promote economic and trade cooperation, especially following China's entry into the World Trade Organization. Therefore, any studies concerning the two sides will be of great significance to know better of the two great cultures. Besides, learning both to communicate and to understand the values systems of these two cultures is essential as Arabic and Chinese are two languages with a large global presence.

Based on what we previously stated, death euphemism is selected as an initial study on both cultures. Differences in hierarchical views, religions, customs and social and economic life may lead to the distinctions in death euphemism expressions in EA and Chinese. Therefore, the aim of the present study is twofold: (1) an investigation into the euphemized expressions pertaining to death in both EA and Chinese and (2) a determination of the differences and similarities, if any, in the use of death euphemism by native speakers of EA and Chinese. The two languages will be compared to determine if any language specific differences or similarities do exist, reflecting these two cultures. Moreover, the aim of this study is to look for euphemized death expressions used as substitutes for dispreferred one. More specifically, this study seeks to address the following issues :

1. Euphemisms that are used in EA and Chinese to replace the taboo topic of death.
2. Death euphemisms that are more frequently used and those that are less frequently used in both EA and Chinese.
3. Death euphemisms that are mostly used by males and those that are mostly used by females.

VI. LITERATURE REVIEW

Euphemism has been studied in a wide range of disciplines, including pragmatics and sociolinguistics (Allan and Burrige, 1991), psychology (Freud, 1952), anthropology (Frazer, 1980) and sociology (Durkheim and Ellis, 1963). The background of the present study is linguistics. Therefore, the studies reviewed in this section are linguistically and sociolinguistically oriented.

Ullmann (1962, p. 204) argues that euphemism is used to 'substitute a taboo word, and 'in this way taboo is an important cause of semantic change.' Moreover, he believes that some words had at a certain passages of time neutral or positive connotations, but by the constant and incessant use of such words as euphemistic surrogates for tabooed one, they acquire negative implications. Accordingly, he cites the French word 'fillè' which originally meant 'girl', but it came to be used as a euphemism for a prostitute. And nowadays it tends to have undesirable abusive significations; in consequence, 'girl' is translated as 'jeune fillè'.

Robertson and Cassidy (1954, p. 254) state that euphemism is "the substituting, for the ordinary natural word that first suggests itself to the mind, of a synonym that is thought to be less solid by the lips of the common hard, less familiar, less plebian, less vulgar, less improper, less apt to come unhandsomely between the wind and our nobility." They cite some examples of British euphemisms as 'serviette' for 'napkin', 'paying guest' for 'boarder' and 'coal-vase' for 'coal-scuttle'. They also cite some examples of American Euphemisms as 'expectorate' for 'spit', 'chiropodist' for 'corn-cutter', 'custodian' for 'janitor' 'realtor' for 'real estate agent, and 'heating engineer' for 'plumber'.

Bernstein (1965) argues that euphemisms are not fig leaves intended to cancel something, but they are diaphanous veils, intended to soften the grossness. He cites the example of 'toilet' and its transition to 'W.C.', 'wash room', 'lavatory', 'powder room', 'rest room', etc. Moreover, he states that the careful writer resorts to euphemisms for two major purposes: to avoid vulgarity and to skirt the fringes of emotions. He believes that when the purpose of euphemism is to avoid vulgarity, the writer has a legitimate place in good writing. He adds that it may be preferable to write that a man and a woman 'spent the night together' than to set forth in detail just how they spent it. And, when the purpose of a euphemism is to skirt fringes of emotions, the writer will usually be well-advised to veto euphemism.

Jesperen (1956) reports that many absurd names are used to avoid the authentic ones. So, instead of such indecent words, people use some innocent ones. For example, 'privy' is the regular English development of French 'privè', but when it came to be used as a noun for a 'privy place' and in the phrase 'in the privy parts', it had to be supplanted in the original sense by 'private', except in 'privy council', 'privy seal'

and 'privy purse' where its official dignity kept it alive.

Anderson and Stageberg (1966) believe that euphemism may arise to avoid given pain (i.e., 'he is gone' for 'he is dead'), to avoid hypersensitivity or excess of delicacy (i.e., 'white meat' for 'breast', and 'black meat' for 'leg' or 'thigh'), and to enhance prestige (i.e., 'cosmetologist' for 'hair dress', 'pre-owned car' for 'second hand car'). They emphasize that euphemism is at worst "a necessary evil", and at best "a handy verbal tool" to avoid making adversaries or shocking friends. They add that without certain kinds of everyday euphemisms life will be intolerable. For them euphemisms are psychological necessities.

Heatherington (1980) comments on several issues pertaining to euphemism. Discussing women's dialects, he says that women use more euphemisms than men do. He believes that anatomy of women is much more subject to euphemizing than that of men. He also focuses on euphemistic language as used by politicians to manipulate public opinion. Commenting on the relationship between taboos and euphemisms, he defines taboos as "any action that is frightening ... merely those literally forbidden" (Heatherington, 1980, p. 185). He also argues that since dreadful actions or topics are of different degrees, various levels of them are discerned: (1) mild taboos (e.g., money and mutilation), (2) middle level taboos (e.g., death and anatomy), and (3) never-never taboos (e.g., excretion and sex). He adds that the number of euphemisms in sex is greater than that in the subject of death.

Brook (1981) reports that euphemism is provoked by references to parts of the body, giving 'tummy' for 'stomach' and 'anatomy' for 'body'; or to bodily functions, giving 'perspire' and 'expectorate' for 'sweat' and 'spit', respectively. He adds that euphemism covers the avoidance of unpleasant and the pretentious search for imposing words to express commonplace ideas (e.g., a barber may describe himself as a 'hair stylist' or a 'hair specialist'). He also believes that euphemism takes many different types. One type is the use of an entirely different word (e.g., 'shift' which originally meant a 'change of clothes' for 'smock', or 'drawers' for 'underpants' or 'trousers'). Another type or method is the use of a French-loan word (e.g., 'lingerie' for 'underwear' or 'underclothes'). Also, another way is the replacement of a word by the negative of its opposite (e.g., 'insane' for 'mad', 'unclean' for 'dirty' and 'untruth' for 'lie'). He also observes that sometimes initials are used for the same purpose (e.g., 'g.b.h.' for 'grievous bodily harm' and 's.o.b.' for 'son of a bitch').

Rawson (1981) divides euphemism into two general types: positive and negative and calls our attention to another way of classification: conscious and unconscious euphemisms. He gives a thorough description of the meaning, etymology of each euphemism and its relation to other terms in his dictionary.

Willis and Klammer (1981) argue that euphemisms are used to avoid shocking the sensitive or to soften the blow for those who have suffered a loss. They list a number of euphemistic expressions (e.g. 'rely on the work of others' for 'cheat', 'somewhat assertive in social situations' for 'bully', 'discharge' for 'snot', 'halitosis' for 'bad smelling breath', 'emotionally disturbed' for 'crazy person', 'planned withdrawal' for 'retreat', 'educationally handicapped' for 'very dull student', 'senior citizen' for 'old people', 'the disadvantaged' or 'the unprivileged' for 'the poor', and 'inoperative statements' for 'lies'). They add that it might be amusing to know that the Victorian Great Grandparents used the word 'limbs' instead of 'leg' and 'arms' because of the sexual suggestibility of these two words.

Chen (1983) investigates the deep historical and socio-psychological background of the generation of euphemism in China and reveals the social nature of it. He takes death for example. He argues that death is not only an irresistible physiological phenomenon but also an inevitable social phenomenon, for all members of the society will die. Moreover, he points out that in ancient time, controlled by supernatural power, people thought of death as a disaster and mystery. They were afraid of mentioning this word, which became a social habit. They used *他过去了 (ta guo qu le)* 'He passed away', *他走了 (ta guo qu le)* 'He was gone', *他不在了 (ta bu zai le)* 'He was away, etc.', to express their sorrow, respect or praise for the dead. He concludes that the death of people in different social classes or social status and of different ages had corresponding euphemisms, such as *驾崩 (jia beng)* 'demise of the crown' for emperors, *薨 (hong)* 'pass away' for vassals, and *死 (si)*, 'die' for civilians.

In their dictionary, Neaman and Silver (1983), offered a diachronic view on euphemism and culture: "what subjects and what portions of them were acceptable or forbidden have varied both from culture to culture and from one historical period to another within a single culture."

Robinson (1983) reports that euphemism is such a phenomenon associated with some middle-class groups. These groups are frightened of "calling a spade a spade" (Robinson, 1983, p. 23). She lists a number of euphemistic expressions that are used by these groups (e.g., 'under the influence of alcohol' or 'a little merry' for 'drunk', 'educationally sub-normal' or 'educationally deprived' for 'stupid', 'domestic assistant', 'home helper' or 'helper' for 'servant', 'transport facilities' for 'car or bus coach', 'I have a cash-flow problem' for 'I have no money', 'the smallest room in the house' for 'lavatory', and 'senior' for 'old person').

Enright (1985) presents a comprehensive study on the use of English euphemisms in different fields, moving from the largely private realms of sex, bowel

movements, menstruation, money, sickness and natural death to the public sphere in different cultures (Greece, Rome, France, and the United States) and the use of euphemisms with respect to the factors of sex, age and educational background.

Wardhaugh (1986) argues that euphemisms are employed as to avoid mentioning certain matters directly. He claimed that euphemistic expressions allow us to us to give labels to unpleasant tasks and jobs in an attempt to make them sound more attractive. They also allow us to talk about unpleasant things and neutralize their unpleasantness (e.g., the subject of death and dying, unemployment, excretion, bodily functions, religious matters and criminality).

Gorrell et al. (1988) reflect on the role played by euphemisms and doublespeak in distorting our moral values. For example, a plethora of euphemism is produced to create a favorable attitude towards war (e.g., 'air support' for 'bombing', 'strategic withdrawal' or 'mobile maneuvering' for 'retreat', 'pacification' for 'destroying a village', 'protective reaction strike' or 'incursion' for 'any military activity ranging from a raid to an invasion', etc.

Allan and Burridge (1991) describe euphemism and dysphemism as sides of the same coin. They provide a linguistic analysis covering naming, connotation, conversational maxims, metaphors, and speech acts, to name a few. They also expose and explain the indefinite kinds of euphemisms and dysphemisms that people use. They believe that context, motivation and intention are so important to understand how and why people use euphemisms. They argue that people use euphemisms not merely as a response to taboo rather; they deliberately decide to use or avoid using them. They add that dispreferred expressions can be avoided by the use of circumlocutions, abbreviations, or acronyms. They conclude that euphemisms can be accomplished either by the use of technical expressions, or by the use of colloquial terms.

Warren (1992) investigates how euphemisms are formed. She gives four devices for euphemism formation: (1) word formation devices (i.e., compounding: 'hand job' for 'masturbation'; derivation: 'fellatio' for 'oral sex'; blends; acronyms: 'SNAFU', 'Situation Normal All Fucked Up', a military euphemism for a catastrophic event; and onomatopoeia: 'bonk' for 'sexual intercourse', where the sound of 'things' hitting together during the sexual act is employed to refer to the act itself), (2) phonemic modification by which the form of an offensive word is modified or altered (i.e., back slang where the words are reversed to avoid explicit mention: 'enob' for 'bone/erect penis' and 'epar' for 'rape'; rhyming slang: 'bristols' for 'breasts'; phonemic replacement: 'shoot' for 'shit'; and abbreviation: 'eff' as in 'eff off' for 'fuck off'), (3) loan words: the French words '*mot*' for 'cunt' and '*lingerie*' for 'underwear'); (4)

semantic innovation where a novel sense for some established word or word combination is created (i.e., particularization: 'satisfaction' for 'orgasm'; implication: 'loose', which implies 'unattached', for 'sexually easy/available'; metaphor: 'globes', 'brown eyes' and 'melons' for 'breasts'; metonym: 'it' for 'sex' 'thing' for 'male/female sexual organs'; reversal or irony: 'blessed' for 'damned' and 'enviable disease' for 'syphilis, understatement or litotes: 'sleep' for 'die' and 'deed' for 'act of murder/rape'; overstatement or hyperbole: 'fight to glory' for 'death' and 'visual engineer' for 'window cleaner'). Warren (1992) claims that these four devices are account for most euphemism formation.

Furthermore, Warren (1992, p. 129) states that "we have a euphemism if the interpreter perceives the use of some words or expressions as evidence of a wish on the part of the speaker to denote some sensitive phenomenon in a tactful or valid manner." She elucidates this view of euphemism as follows: (1) the referent (e.g., death, crime, sex, etc.) is considered a sensitive phenomenon, (2) the referring expression (euphemism) is thought of as less harsh and/or less direct than some alternatives, and (3) what determines whether an expression is a euphemism or not in the interpreter's perception that the speaker's choice of a word is based on considerations of tact embarrassment with the referent. Grand this point, she concludes that euphemism is in the eye/ear of the beholder despite the fact that there is consensus among language users as to what words are euphemistic.

Ayto (1993) investigates the various ingenious lexical formulas that speakers of English have come up with the tiptoe around conversational danger areas. He points out that a euphemism is more than just words. He maintains that body language is more often used to refer to what someone is too embarrassed to talk about. It might be a sign, an unarticulated sound, a cough and even a glance. It can be expressed via silence, syntax and grammar, and even pronunciation. Also, he argues that a euphemism does not have to be a single word: it can be a phrase, or a whole stretch of discourse. He also offers prima facie examples, as in 'It seems to me that what you are saying does not altogether accord with the truth.' This euphemistic discourse means 'I think you are lying.'

Farghal (1995) investigates the nature of euphemism in Arabic. He points out that speaker of Arabic employ four major devices for euphemizing: figurative expressions, circumlocutions, remodelings, and antonyms. He argues that there is close interaction between Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle and Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle's maxims of conversation. Most importantly, he states that Arabic euphemisms flout one or more of the maxims of conversation, thus giving rise to Particularized Conversational Implicatures. Consequently, floutings are shown to play an important role in lexical choices in addition to their well-established

roles in structural and discursual choices.

Shu and Xu (1995) analyze the existing problems in theoretical research on euphemism. They argue that although different languages may use the same generating devices of euphemism like phonetics, grammar, words and characters, they do have their unique ways to create euphemism. Also, they believe that euphemisms in Chinese are generated by deconstruction of Chinese characters, two-part allegorical sayings, symbolic substitution, elimination method and etc.

Li (2000) conducts a comparative study of euphemisms in English and Chinese from the angle of religion. He points out that language taboo is characteristic of religion as well as class differences. However, English displays more the former while Chinese more the later. Also, he argues that different influence on the growth and change of euphemisms all derives from the religion system which is monistic for the Englishspeaking people but pluralistic for the Chinese people. The monism religion – Christianity has generated numerous English euphemisms concerning death as well as in other domains. For example, "To get sb' goat" means "to irritate somebody" and "holy communion" is the euphemistic expression for "hard drinks". On the other hand, China is a multi-deity-worship country. The main two influential religions are Taoism and Buddhism. To a great extent, China has no common religious belief for the whole nation and each religion has its own followers. Chinese euphemisms coming from religions are far less than that of English. Many of them are more used in the religious groups instead of people's daily communication.

Gao and Wei (2004) analyze death euphemism in both English and Chinese from the angle of cultural anthropology based on the five orientations of Kluckhohn et al. (1961): (1) human nature, (2) relation between human and nature, (3) time orientation, (4) human activities and (5) human social relation. In the case of activities, they argue that the Chinese focus on members' identity, that is, "who are you". Identity is represented by behavior and utterance, especially in ancient China. Therefore, there are different death euphemisms for people at different levels of social status. On the other hand, the western society focuses on "what do you do". Achievement is prior to identity, for every one is endowed with innate rights with no inferiority or superiority among families or colleagues.

Moto (2004) examines the type of language and linguistic expressions which are employed in discussions matters of sex, sexual behavior and HIV/AIDS in the Malawian society. He gives examples of euphemistic words and phrases which refer to body actions such as urination, defecation and sexual intercourse. He argues that the conservative nature of the Malawian society is reflected in a kind of self-censored nature of linguistic use through the

employment of euphemistic expressions. Malawians use euphemism to refer to sexual organs and parts of the human anatomy that are used to extricate human waste. He demonstrates that the Malawian society, which is a generally conservative and male dominated society, finds it difficult to directly express itself lives (i.e. in newspapers) on matters pertaining to sex and HIV/AIDS and often resort to using euphemisms and idiomatic expressions in their discourse on this dreaded disease. More importantly, he points out that the Malawian society's perception of illness and death also surface through the many expressions that have become part of the Malawians' linguistic repertoire.

Linfoot-Ham (2005) argues that the function of euphemism is to protect the speaker/writer, hearer/reader from possible effrontery and offence which may occur in the broaching of a taboo topic (e.g., religion or death) or by mentioning subject matter to which one party involved may be sensitive (e.g., politics or social issues). He examines how very personal linguistic choices are actually products of societal mores and pressures. He believes that how people use euphemism to talk about sex is a direct reflection of these social concerns. In order to examine this sentiment in a diachronic methodology, he uses Over 250 examples of sexual euphemism from three British novels that span 180 years: *Emma*, by Jane Austen, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, by D. H. Lawrence, and *Well Groomed*, by Fiona Walker. Moreover, he examines Warren's (1992) model and testes the categories suggested by this model against euphemisms from the three novels. He concludes that improvements are required of the model in order for it to account for all examples. Therefore, he proposes a modified version of Warren's (1992) model to encompass all of these euphemisms, as well as other examples from notable sources.

Gu (2006) argues that euphemism can be thoroughly examined in its sociocultural and communicational context to explore the interaction between linguistic variables and social variables to reveal the nature of linguistic communication. She reports that in the use of euphemism is not only restricted by national traditions, social structure and collective awareness but also is closely related to the communicational context. She believes that the three elements of communication context, subject and participants as well as social status, gender and age may affect the conversation participants' use of euphemism. She also explains that women use more euphemism than men, so do people with lower social status or less education with the aim of not being looked down upon.

Hughes (2006) investigates euphemism in relation to taboo language and emphasizes that euphemisms are responses to taboos. He argues that the stronger the taboo, the greater the number of

euphemisms. He states that certain euphemistic items are far more developed in the United States than in Britain, and this development could be regarded as "a reflection of the optimistic, positive and progressive ideology of America" Hughes (2006, p. 14). Moreover, he traces the social history of certain euphemisms (e.g., the euphemisms used for 'Jesus' are 'Gis/Jis, 1528', 'Gemini, 1960', 'Jimini, 1830', 'Jimini Crickets, 1848', 'Gee Whillins, 1857', 'Gee Whiz, 1895', 'Jeez, 1900', 'Gee, 1905', 'Jeepers, 1920', 'Jesus Wept, 1922', 'Judas Priest, 1923', 'Judas H. Christ, 1924', and 'Jeepers Creepers, 1934').

Shi and Sheng (2011) point out that many English and Chinese euphemisms are generated in the framework of conceptual metonymy in daily life. They explore the role metonymy plays in the formation of euphemism in English and Chinese. In the case of metonymy the whole for the part, generally, people tend to use euphemism to avoid embarrassment. When referring to body organs, they prefer to broaden the conception of organs, for example, "the chest", "the bosom" are often used for "breast". Concerning sex, people may feel uncomfortable, in this sense, "having sexual relationship with someone" can be replaced by "going to bed with someone". In Chinese, *他在外面有女人 (ta zai wai mian you nv ren)* 'he has a woman outside', which really means 'he has a mistress'. Here the conception of "woman" is broadened, replacing the sensitive word "mistress".

VII. METHODOLOGY

a) *The Egyptian Arabic Data*

i. *Participants*

The EA participants of the present study are native speakers of EA of both genders. They are Egyptian university teachers working at different colleges in Northern Border University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A sample comprising 20 males and 20 females was randomly selected. They were made aware that involvement in the study was completely voluntary. If consent to participate was given, they were asked to complete a questionnaire. To encourage honest responses and avoid self-censorship, participants were assured that their answers to the questionnaire would remain anonymous and confidential.

ii. *Data Collection*

The EA data of this study include euphemistic expressions used by EA speakers replacing tabooed matters pertaining to death. To harvest the required data, the researchers adopted an interviewing method and a questionnaire to gather sufficient and relevant data in a relatively short period of time. Prior to the formal construction of the questionnaire, the researchers interviewed some Egyptians of different social and economic backgrounds, ages, genders, and educational levels to discuss with them the death

euphemistic expressions they usually and frequently use to substitute the taboo topic of death. It is worth noting here that the interviewees also act as advisors in the process of looking at death euphemism that are used in EA. Their responses served as a basis for constructing the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. In the first part, informants were asked to provide some demographic information relating to gender (i.e., either male or female) and their educational level. The second part listed the euphemized expressions of death. Upon receiving the questionnaire, the informants were asked to identify the euphemized expressions they use to refer to the taboo topic of death by putting a tick opposite to it/them. The questionnaire was given to forty adults, twenty males and twenty females.

b) *The Chinese Data*

i. *Participants*

The Chinese participants of this study are native speakers of Chinese of both genders. They are Chinese university teachers and students working or studying in Zhejiang Ocean University in China. A sample comprising 20 males and 20 females was randomly selected. The conduct of the questionnaire followed the same process used in collecting the EA data.

ii. *Data Collection*

The Chinese data include euphemistic expressions used by Chinese speakers replacing tabooed matters pertaining to death. To harvest the required data, the researchers have adopted an interviewing method together with a questionnaire to gather sufficient and relevant data in a relatively short period of time. The questionnaire is constructed after most frequently used death euphemisms have been collected both from interviews and a dictionary of Chinese euphemisms.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. In the first section, informants are asked whether they use 死, 'died' directly. In the second section, they were asked to tick out the euphemistic expressions they frequently use to avoid the word 'died'. Both sections required the informants to provide some demographic information relating to gender (i.e., either male or female). The questionnaire was given to forty adults, twenty males and twenty females.

VIII. FINDINGS

a) *The EA Data*

It was presumed that death euphemistic expressions are shared by all EA participants. It was also stated that these expressions used to euphemize the topic of death may vary in terms of frequency and use due to differences in gender. In this section, the collected data will be analyzed and the findings will be presented.

As we mentioned earlier, death is a universal norm. In all societies and cultures, death is seen as painful and it is usually fear that makes it unnamable in many infelicitous situations. Many people not only shy away from the stark yet dignified word of the norm of death, saying more softboiled words instead but also they say that someone has 'passed away', 'departed his life' among others instead of saying directly 'he has died'. Referring to this point, Allan and Burridge (1991) report that death taboos are motivated by a spectrum of types of fear: fear of the loss of loved ones, fear of corruption and disintegration of the body, fear of what follows death and fear of mischievous and harmful souls of the dead.

It is a universal phenomenon that any violation of the taboos relating to death seems to be undesirable in many societies and cultures. Therefore, people impose taboo bans on the direct reference to death (cf. Bloomfield, 1933; Hayakawa, 1972; Akmajian et. al.; 1984 and Herrick, 1984). In English, for example, instead of saying 'died' many people tend to surrogate it by other flippant expressions that can function as euphemisms, depending on the context, such as 'perished', 'departed this life', 'passed away/on', or 'succumbed'. Sometimes, people resort to certain phrases and collocations like 'kicked the bucket', 'pushed up the daisies', 'propped off' and 'passed in one's checks' (cf. Bernstein, 1977). Also, in English, a 'dead' person is referred to in indirect way as the 'lost', the 'deceased', the 'departed', and 'defunct'. Likewise, 'death' itself is more obscurely referred to by generalized terms and title like 'end', 'decease', 'passing', 'departure' and 'dissolution' (cf. Robertson and Cassidy, 1954; Bernstein 1977 and Gorrel et al., 1988). Such softboiled expressions and phrases are used to downgrade and belittle the fear which is aroused by the event of death.

Similarly and along the same line, the results of the present study make it crystal clear that the emotionally neutral verb *ma:t* 'died' is frequently avoided by most EA speakers when making reference to death. Instead, they speak of it euphemistically. In Egypt, death is considered one of the most euphemized topics. The interview revealed that most of the participants of this study were unwilling to name death directly because they fear it as it is unknown, inexperienced and undesirable. They find themselves reluctant to utter the word *ma:t/it*, 'died'. Therefore, they resort consciously and deliberately to replacing this excruciating and agonizing word by less harmful and more felicitous softboiled expressions. However, the first section of Table (1) shows that the taboo term of death itself, i.e. *ma:t* 'died' is employed directly by some males (3.3%) and females (1.7%). The researchers believe that they may not see it as socially prohibited in the spirit it is used in formal and written language. Also, they may not believe in the superstitions that surround the direct reference to death.

Table (1) also sheds light on the euphemized softboiled expressions which are used by EA speakers instead of the vehement and violent word *ma:t* 'died'. It also shows the frequency and distribution of each expression according to the gender of the participants. As Table (1) indicates, the euphemized expression *tawaffa/t* 'He/she passed away' is the most common expression with a frequency of 43 out of 180 and a percentage of 18.9 followed by *albaʔyyah fi ʔayatak/ik* 'May the reminder (presumably of the life the deceased might have lived) be added to your life' with a frequency of 31 out of 180 and a percentage of 17.2. Next come expressions 4, 5 and 6 with a frequency of 29, 26 and 23 and a percentage of 16.1, 14.4 and 12.8 respectively. Also, the results indicate that expressions 7, 8 and 9 are the least frequent expressions employed by the participants in euphemizing the taboo topic of death with a frequency of 16, 8, and 4 and a percentage of 8.9, 4.5 and 2.2 respectively.

Moreover, Table (1) shows that speaking of death euphemistically varies in terms of use according to gender of the participants. For example, the euphemized expression *ʔit tawaffa/t* 'He/she passed away' is omnipresent among males and females. However, it is quite clear that it is more frequent among females (10%) than males (8.7%). In addition, despite the fact that the expression *albaʔyyah fi ʔayatak/ik* 'May the reminder (presumably of the life the deceased might have lived) be added to your life' recurs more frequently among females and males, it is employed with a frequency of 9% by females, while males use it with a frequency of 8%.

Also, certain expressions are only employed by females but are almost absent among males (e.g., the euphemized expression *faʔat ru:ʔuh/a it ʔa:hirah* 'His/her purified soul has flown out'). Egyptians believe that after death the corpse, which is material, decays and becomes *tura:b* 'dust'. It is completely decomposed, except for the skull and big bones, after one year. Therefore, the EA name for a tomb is *turbah*, which refers to dust or soil. Death is sacred as it is associated with the soul '*ru:h*' that belongs to *ʔa:lam alraib* 'the invisible world' which is known only to Allah. As opposed to the body, which is visible, material, mortal, earthly and profane, the soul is invisible, immaterial, immortal, heavenly and sacred. After being buried in the grave, the dead person, as Egyptians believe, has his/her soul restored for a short time. The deceased is believed to sit up in the grave and to be visited and examined by the tomb's two angels called *Nakir* and *Nakir*. They ask him/her about his/her religion, God, prophet, and faith. If the deceased passes the religious exam, the two angels congratulate him/her saying "sleep in peace till the final judgment of Allah." Then the soul departs the body and ascends to heaven where it is received by good souls, mostly of friends and relatives, and angels. If the

deceased fails the examination, the two angels threaten him/her with punishment. The soul departs the body but it is not allowed to ascend the heaven. Egyptians believe that heavens' gates are closed and armed with powerful angels that keep bad souls away.

Furthermore, females resort sometimes to euphemize the term *ma:t/it* through in/direct reference to religion by using *rabina aḡad wadṣtuh* 'Allah took his trust (soul). Also, they euphemize death through describing it as a movement to a specified destination and through in/direct reference to religion by using *ḡintaqala/t ila:d-da:r il aḡirah* 'He/she moved to the home of eternity' more than males do. It worth mentioning briefly here to what is meant by the word *da:r* in *ḡintaqala/t ila:d-da:r il aḡirah*. The basic meaning of the word *dar* is simply a 'house/home,' both in the sense of a physical structure and of the people who live there. It is utilized by Egyptians to mean a place (visible or invisible) in which people (alive or dead) and other beings (visible and invisible or unseen) exist. For example, the life of this world is called *dar ad-dunya*, which means a low or inferior abode, residence or house. Also, this worldly life is called *da:r a-fanaʔ* or "the house of evanescence." As opposed to this life, there are two *da:rs*: *dar al-maut* which means the house or world of the tomb in which dead people wait until the day of resurrection and *dar al axira* or the otherworldly *dar* which is also described as *da:r al-baqaʔ* or the everlasting abode or house. Accordingly, EA speakers' use of euphemisms for death is metaphorically conceptualized. That is, the use of death euphemism in EA is structurally and basically employed in conceptual metaphors which refer to the understanding of one idea, or conceptual domain, in terms of another.

Based on the previously stated findings, it is clear that death euphemism is structurally and basically employed in EA in metonymy as a linguistic device and a figure of speech. Metonymy is a word or a phrase that is substituted for another depending on some actual relation between the things signified (Lexicon Website Dictionary, 1981, p. 601). It links two things that are somehow connected, physically or factually, or contiguous. Sapir (1977, p. 20) argues that metonymy is "the relationship of two terms that occupy a common domain but do not share common features". Generally speaking, euphemistic metonymies contain common subjects in languages and they may vary from culture to culture, and accordingly from language to language. This includes taboos since they are of major importance in euphemistic metonymies.

To sum up, in the light of the findings of this study, EA speakers used nine euphemized softboiled expressions to substitute the taboo topic of death. The common euphemistic expression which is used instead

of the verb *ma:t/it* 'died' is *ḡit-tawaffa/t* 'He/she passed away'. It is almost shared by all the participants. Besides, these nine expressions are neither equally dominant among males and females, nor are they equal in terms of frequency. That is, when examining the euphemisms of death as they occur and recur in the collected data, these seems to be unequal in terms of frequency, rather, some of them are more or less frequent than others. Moreover, the findings show that there is some sort of correspondence between the use of certain euphemized expressions and gender of the participants in the sense that certain expressions are used more frequently by females (e.g., 8 and 9). Besides, the findings indicate that death euphemism is structurally and basically employed in Egyptian Arabic in metonymy as a linguistic device and a figure of speech. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the term of death itself, i.e. *ma:t* 'he/she died' is violated and is spoken directly. The researchers believes that the informants who use this word persistently are over informative because they mention death directly and do not pretend that death is uncertain despite the fact that it is the only thing certain in life. The only uncertainty is when death makes a death.

b) The Chinese Data

In China, since death is also regarded as the biggest misfortune of human being, people are afraid of being dead, and try to avoid mentioning the word 死 'died', which implies sort of mystery and horror. Therefore, it was presumed that in the real language communications, when people have to refer to 'death', more often than not, they turn to euphemisms; and women tend to be more euphemistic when they talk about tabooed topics. However, the first section of Table (2) shows that this presumption is challenged. Concerning death, women (9.2%) more directly mentioned 'died' than men (8.5%).

The second section of Table (2) displays the frequency and distribution of each expression according to the gender of the participants. The euphemized expression 走了/去了(*zou le/qu le*) 'went away/departed' is the most common expression with a frequency of 32 out of 141 and a percentage of 22.7 followed by another three similar expressions (3,4,5) 去世了(*qu shi le*) 'left the world/passed away' 没了(*mei le*) 'disappeared' and 不在了(*bu zai le*) 'is no more' with a frequency of 24, 22, 20 and a percentage of 16.9, 15.6 and 14 respectively. Next comes expression 6 with a frequency of 9 and a percentage of 6.3. Also, the results indicate that expressions (7, 8, 9, and 10) are the least frequent expressions employed by the participants in euphemizing the taboo topic of death with a frequency of 3, 2, and 4 and a percentage of 2.1, 1.4 and 2.8.

Moreover, this section of Table (2) shows that the use of death euphemism varies with gender of the participants. For example, the most frequently used euphemized expression 走了/去了 (*zou le/qu le*) 'went away/departed' is prevailing among males and females. However, it is quite clear that it is more frequent among females (13.5%) than males (9.2%). The use of euphemistic expression 去世了 (*qu shi le*) 'left the world/passed away' has a large percentage gap between females (12%) than males (4.9%), for this expression in China shows one's respect for the deceased who are of high social status or of senior age. This percentage gap displays that males do not care much about the identity or age of the deceased, while females are more cautious about it when they are talking about the death of a person. In addition, expressions (4 and 5) share the same percentage in both females (7.8%) and males (7.8%). They are used alternatively with expression (2). Expressions (7 and 8) are barely used. The reason lies in the fact that the two have religious connotations. Also, the euphemized expressions (9 and 10) are only employed by males but are almost absent among females.

The previously mentioned findings prove that Chinese euphemisms for death are metaphorically conceptualized (e.g., 'He/She was gone', 'He/She passed away/is away/disappeared/departed/is no more'). Death is viewed as departure. In this conceptual metaphor, the source domain 'departure' is mapped to the target domain 'death'. When one leaves or departs, he/she can never be seen again. There is a great number of such expressions in Chinese besides the above mentioned indicating that death is a kind of departure from which one can never return, such as 辞世 (*ci shi*) 'say goodbye to the world', 离世 (*li shi*) 'leave the world' and 永别 (*yong bie*) 'part forever'. Another basic conceptual metaphor can be found is 死亡是一次有着不同终点站的旅行 (*si wang shi yi ci you zhe bu tong zhong dian zhan de lu xing*) 'death is a journey with various destinations', since one generally departs for a certain destination. As the journey varies, the final destination of this journey also varies. Thus, people have different names concerning different destinations. It might be up in the heaven, or the west, or the hell in the underground. 'Home' is a common and universal destination. So death is regarded as returning or going home. For example, 上天堂了/上极乐世界了 (*shang tian tang le/shang ji le shi jie le*), 'went to the heaven/the Elysium', 见马克思去了 (*jian ma ke si qu le*) 'went to see Marx', 上山了 'went up to the hill', 回老家了 (*hui lao jia le*) 'return to one's last home', 命归黄泉/命赴阴间 (*ming gui huang quan/ ming fu yin jian*) 'go to the Nether region' and the like are more frequently employed in written language.

In Chinese there are many other conceptual metaphors concerning death. One typical example is

死亡是睡觉/安息 (*si wang shi shui jiao/an xi*) 'death is sleep/rest', the source domain is 'sleep' or 'rest', the target domain is 'death'. The cognitive domain 'sleep' is systematically mapped into the cognitive domain 'death'. The inactiveness and inattentiveness of sleep just correspond to the inactiveness of death. However, death is a very special kind of sleep for one never wakes up, and it is always considered to be a good rest. Thus, in Chinese, there are death euphemisms such as 安息 (*an xi*) 'to be at rest/rest in peace' and 长眠, 长寐, 长寝 (*chang mian, chang mei, chang qin*) 'sleep forever'.

Moreover, the findings indicate that death euphemism is structurally and basically employed in Chinese in conceptual metaphors. Conceptual metaphor refers to the understanding of one idea, or conceptual domain, in terms of another. They shape not just our communication, but also shape the way we think and act. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) illustrate how everyday language is filled with metaphors we may not always notice. An example of one of the commonly used conceptual metaphors is 'Argument is War'.

Based on Liu and Chen's (2001) Dictionary of Chinese Euphemisms, it is apparent that Chinese death euphemisms are also generated metonymically. For example, when one dies, he/she will breathe no more, which is regarded as a symbol of death. Thus it is not surprising that people use 断气/气绝/气尽/咽气 (*duan qi/qi jue /qi jin*) 'to breathe one's last or last breath' to refer to death. Other expressions like 闭目/瞑目 (*bi mu/ming mu*) 'close one's eyes', 撒手 (*sa shou*) 'let go one's hold', 伸腿 (*shen tui*) 'stretch one's legs', are also chosen to denote death according to the physical symbol of death. Eyes, hands and legs are all part of body, so the above expressions are euphemized in metonymic way.

Other remarkable findings are based on interviews the researchers conducted before administering the questionnaire. This was really a significant process of finding out what people of different age group with different educational and social background felt and thought about the taboo topic of death. Firstly, almost all of them unanimously mentioned that they would take conversational context into consideration when asked whether they used death euphemisms or spoke of the word 死 'died' directly. When they talked about a person's death with the living family members or relatives of the deceased, in this context, they would use euphemistic expressions to soothe the concerned people. And they would use 死 'died' directly with the absence of relatives. Secondly, the use of death euphemisms also varies with different age groups. Young people of both genders do not think of 死 'died' as a kind of taboo. As shown in the first section of Table (2), 9.2% of female informants use it directly due to the fact that more than half of them are of

21-30 age group. On the contrary, middle-aged, especially elder people, regard 死 'died' as a taboo. Thirdly, most of the interviewees were non-religious, so they seldom used euphemized expressions with religious connotation. Such death euphemisms are abundant in Chinese, which largely results from the pluralism of Chinese religions with Taoism and Buddhism most prevailing. Taoism is a native Chinese religion. Taoists expect to gain longevity or even immortality, so they create such euphemisms for death as 仙去/仙逝 (*xian qu/ xian shi*) 'passed away', 化鹤 (*hua he*) 'became a crane', 跨鹤 (*kua he*) 'rode away on the crane to Elysium'. In Buddhism, there also exists a great number of death euphemisms indicating the death of monks like 归西 (*gui xi*) 'went to Western Paradise', 归真 (*gui zhen*) 'passed into the real world' and 圆寂 (*yuan ji*) 'passed away (of monks or nuns)'. However, these religious death euphemisms never achieve the popularity. They are more often used within the religious groups.

To sum up, in the light of the findings of this study, Chinese speakers used nine euphemized expressions to substitute the taboo topic of death in daily life. The first four expressions in Table (2), in the metaphorical concept Death is Departure, are most frequently and alternatively used by both genders. The use of Expression (3), that includes certain respect, is more frequent among women than men. This reflects the gender difference in preference of death euphemisms. The last four expressions are less frequently employed, structured in conceptual metaphor 死亡是一次有着不同终点站的旅行 (*si wang shi yi ci you zhe bu tong zhong dian zhan de lv xing*) 'death is a journey with various destinations'. Besides, whether Chinese speakers choose to use euphemism to avoid the tabooed topic or not depends on the conversational context. Moreover, Chinese people of elder age group are more likely to use euphemism for fear of approaching death. Finally, Chinese people with religious faith have exclusive euphemisms for death, but confined to their own religious groups.

c) *Contrasting the uses of EA and Chinese death euphemism*

The results of the present study indicate that euphemisms are universal since they exist in every language and no human communication is without euphemisms. Also, the results reveal that death is an extremely tabooed word in the Egyptian and Chinese societies. It is a sensitive and fearful topic EA and Chinese speakers try to avoid mentioning it because they can not feel ease about its gravity and dreadfulness. This section presents the similarities and differences between the use of euphemisms in EA and Chinese to gain a better understanding of its use in EA and Chinese, and to motivate learners, teachers, and

translators to discover how the influences of EA and Chinese cultures are portrayed in euphemisms.

i. *Similarities in the use of EA and Chinese death euphemism*

The findings of this study prove that both EA and Chinese handle the taboo topic of death with care. EA and Chinese speakers are very careful in approaching it since the majority of them do not show any direct reference to death. EA and Chinese death euphemisms are similar in that both regard death as a taboo. They also employ many euphemistic expressions to avoid mentioning it. This indicates that the two cultures share the same common values about the topic of death. Furthermore, death euphemism is structurally and basically employed in EA and Chinese in metonymy as a linguistic device and a figure of speech. Also, Both EA and Chinese employ conceptual metaphor to substitute the taboo topic of death. Besides, death euphemisms in EA and Chinese are formed consciously. Although there are various expressions of death, both people share identical views of death and the bodily experience of death are essentially the same. When this is reflected in people's thinking and languages, it can be easily found out that metaphors in different cultures share a common root. In this sense, it can be safely assumed that the conceptual metaphors of death between EA and Chinese can be identical because different peoples' understanding of death may be rooted in the same physiological experience.

ii. *Differences in the use of EA and Chinese death euphemism*

Chinese has a large number of death euphemisms as compared with EA ones. This is due to the fact that Chinese has a number of specific dictionaries for euphemisms, but EA does not. Consequently, learning Chinese death euphemisms may be easier for Arab learners, but learning EA death euphemisms may cause difficulty for Chinese learners. Besides, EA native speakers tended to euphemize death through in/direct reference to religion, where as Chinese native speakers seldom used euphemized expressions with religious connotation. The reason is that China is a multi-deity-worship country. Taoism and Buddhism and other religions created some euphemisms for death, but different religions explained this natural phenomenon differently. Consequently, the religious euphemized expressions are largely confined to their own religious groups.

IX. CONCLUSION

Through the contrastive analysis of EA and Chinese death euphemisms, it is obvious that euphemism is a linguistic and a cultural phenomenon. EA and Chinese death euphemisms have more

resemblances and fewer distinctions. This shows that euphemism is a universal phenomenon in natural languages and it is expected that most of similarities and differences between EA and Chinese may possibly be found among other languages. Therefore, the researchers believe that further research in cultures other than the Egyptian and the Chinese is required. Linguists need to thoroughly investigate the contrastive scope in the area of death euphemisms. It would be useful to know how far mentioning death is avoided in different cultures and what euphemisms are adopted. In short, a good mastery of the linguistic features of euphemism in the target language and awareness of the differences between the target culture and the native culture would help interpret and use euphemism properly in accordance with social context.

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Table 1: Frequency and distribution of death euphemism used by EA speakers

No.	Section 1: Use of the taboo term of death	M	F	T
1.	<i>ma:t/it</i> 'He/she died'	6 3.3%	3 1.7%	9 5%
No.	Section 2: Death Euphemism	M	F	T
2.	<i>ʔit- tawaffa/t</i> 'He/she passed away'	16 8.9%	18 10%	34 18.9%
3.	<i>albaʔyyah fi ʔayatak/ik</i> 'May the reminder (presumably of the life the deceased might have lived) be added to your life'.	14 7.8%	17 9.4%	31 17.2%
4.	<i>allah yi-rham-uh/ha</i> 'May Allah have mercy upon him'	14 7.8%	15 8.3	29 16.1%
5.	<i>tʔiʔ ʔinta/i</i> 'May you live'	10 5.5%	16 8.9%	26 14.4%
6.	<i>ʔalayh/a raʔmat ʔil- la:h</i> ' May Allah mercy be on him/her'	9 5%	14 7.8%	23 12.8%
7.	<i>rabina aʔad wadʔtuh</i> 'Allah took his trust (soul)'	7 3.9%	9 5%	16 8.9%
8.	<i>ʔintaqala/t ilad- da:r ʔil- aʔirah</i> 'He/she moved to the home of eternity'	3 1.7%	5 2.8%	8 4.5%
9.	<i>faʔat ru: ʔuh/a i t-ʔahirah</i> 'His/her purified soul has flown out'	1 0.5	3 1.7%	4 2.2%
Total		80 45%	100 55%	180 100%

Key : M = Male, F = Female, T = Total of frequency, % = Percentage of frequency

Table 2 : Frequency and distribution of death euphemism used by Chinese speakers.

No.	Section 1: Use of the taboo term of death	M	F	T
1.	死了 (<i>si le</i>) died	12 8.5%	13 9.2%	25 17.7%
No.	Section 2: Death Euphemism	M	F	T
1.	走了/去了 (<i>qu le / zou le</i>) went away/departed	13 9.2%	19 13.5%	32 22.7%
2.	去世了 (<i>qu shi le</i>) left the world /passed away	7 4.9%	17 12%	24 16.9%
3.	没了 (<i>mei le</i>) was gone	11 7.8%	11 7.8%	22 15.6%
4.	不在了 (<i>bu zai le</i>) was no more	10 7%	10 7%	20 14%
5.	老了 (<i>lao le</i>) was old	6 4.2%	3 2.1%	9 6.3%
6.	上天堂了/上极乐世界了 (<i>shang tian tang le/shang ji le shi jie le</i>) went to the heaven/ the Elysium	2 1.4%	1 0.7%	3 2.1%
7.	见马克思了 (<i>jian ma ke si le</i>) went to see Marx	1 0.7%	1 0.7%	2 1.4%
8.	上山了 (<i>shang shan le</i>) went up to the hill	2 1.4%	0 0%	2 1.4%
9.	回老家了 (<i>hui lao jia le</i>) return to one's old home	2 1.4%	2 1.4%	4 2.8%
Total		66 46.8%	75 53.2%	141 100%

Key : M = Male, F = Female, T = Total of frequency, % = Percentage of frequency



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