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A Semantic Study of English Euphemistic Expressions and Their Persian Translations in Jane Austen's Novel "Emma"

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Abstract

This qualitative study considered English euphemisms and their translation into Persian from a linguistic and translational perspective. The main aim of the study was to see how Warren's (1992) semantic categories of euphemisms are treated in the process of translation from SL to the TL. The assessment of the translation of euphemistic expressions was carried out by focusing on Newmark's (1981) approaches to translation. By focusing on the translation of English euphemistic figurative devices, and drawing on data from a famous English novel, Jane Austen's *Emma*, the researcher considered in detail the translation of euphemistic metaphors, metonymies, overstatements, understatements as well as reversals (antonyms) in the Persian translations of *Emma*. The results showed that Persian counterparts are not necessarily metonymical and metaphorical and are not necessarily euphemistic. The translations may nonetheless be highly communicative when certain strategies are applied. It was also found that the translator has freedom to translate formally and keep the same force as in the overstatement, understatement and reversal, and in the same vein, the translator has the freedom to translate non-euphemistically.

Keywords: Euphemism, euphemistic, figurative devices, metaphors, metonymies, overstatements, understatements, reversals.

Introduction:

It is commonly accepted that human culture, social behavior and thinking are three interrelated notions that cannot exist without languages. As a means of human communication, every Language conveys its social and national identity as well as the norms of behavior, ethnic and cultural values of the given language community. Without any doubt, ideas, notions and feelings are universal but the way we describe them in different languages is very unique. Therefore, translation plays a crucial role in enhancing better understanding each other, transmitting information, exchanging experiences and getting knowledge. However translating from one language into another language is not an easy task. Translation must take into account a

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number of restrictions, including the context, the rules of grammar of the two languages, their writing conventions, and their idioms. It is of great important that translators have to be honest in relaying the meaning in the process of translation especially from one culture to another.

One of the greatest difficulties that challenge translators is translating taboo words as euphemism in the process of translation. Euphemism that is in close relation to the culture and the society is often employed in communication and reflects the historical, political, economic and ideological situations of a nation with its own characteristics. The translation of euphemism has become more and more important with the development of the inter-cultural communication.

Different writers have tried to define ideas about the forms, types and functions of euphemism. Based on Rahimi and Sahragard's idea (2006) euphemism is universal and not specific to any one language or set of languages. This is because of the function euphemism plays in languages; it deals with human feelings by exploiting the extended capacities of language. The following pairs of non-descriptive terms are found in several definitions: according to different writers, euphemism is the substitution of an acceptable term for unacceptable, mild for harsh, vague for blunt, roundabout for direct, favorable for unfavorable, preferred for dispreferred, less explicit for more explicit, pleasant for unpleasant reality, auspicious for inauspicious, lie for truth, soft-spoken for hard-spoken, nice for nasty, sweet words for dreadful ones, misinformation for information, white lie for black lie, tender for brutal, innocuous for nocuous, polite for impolite, more palatable for unpalatable, agreeable or inoffensive for insidious and offensive.

Many definitions have focused on euphemism as a process of substitution, while others have talked about it as a process of deleting or removing, displacement and replacement. Some writers have talked about it as a process of stretching, tinting and twisting of meaning. Synonymy is the concern of others. And others again look at euphemistic expressions as idiosyncratic codes peculiar to an individual or group.

People use euphemisms chiefly to conceal feared things, for example, death; to conceal the reality of unthinkable crimes; to conceal references to sex, body parts and fluids, and excrement; and to elevate otherwise lowly sounding or derogatory occupational titles and institutional names."

Theoretical basis of research:

Talent management

In case of expressing information or ideas through oral communication, people often use the language freer than formal situations and based on their mood and the situation they are in, they can convey their feelings by nasty and taboo words. However, dealing with taboos in media and writhing texts has been always criticized since it touches the cultural and religious norms of the society and this is why some writers and journalists refuse to show their real name fearing that they will be prosecuted or their work will never be published because the government imposed strict rules on book publication and translation.

This problem even becomes exacerbated in translation process between two different cultures when some concepts exist in both, but have different indicative meanings. For instance, as Vossoughi's (2011) believed, differences in expressive meanings are likely more difficult to handle when the equivalent in the target culture is more emotionally loaded than the source language item. In this vein, homosexuality is a tangible example, though it is not contemptuous in western culture, the equivalent expression is sniffy in east especially in Islamic culture, because Islamic norms does not tolerate all aspects of translated texts from other languages and it will be difficult for a writer or translator to use it in a neutral way without showing strong disapproval.

Staffs' performance

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Despite the interaction of translation and culture, the concept of translation as a norm-governed activity is still under researched and it deserves more and more studies. In general sense, as translators are not allowed to transfer every concept or expression into their language and culture because of boundaries, the translators' creativity in preserving the norms of target culture through appropriate strategies and approaches are very important and critical. The norms are translation of what is wrong or right, what is considered adequate or inadequate.

When it comes to forbidden words and expressions, translator's strategies for coping with censorship specify the norms govern translating taboos. In another words, the governing norms of a culture proscribe something to be mentioned and lead to censorship. Censorship involves the complete elimination of the language unit, including a taboo. Depending on the type and nature of the source language cultural and religious elements, translators may resort to different translation strategies to convey the elements into target culture, such as applying euphemism.

Warren (1992) proposes four ways whereby euphemisms may be constructed. The first, which she calls word-formation, includes devices like compounding, derivation, and acronyms. The second includes imported foreign words, e.g. from French, Spanish, and Latin. The third involves modified or altered words, such as divil, divel (instead of 'devil'), Gad Gosh, Golly (instead of 'God'), fug (instead of 'fuck'), epar (back slang for 'rape'). The fourth way involves "A novel sense for some established word or word combination". The word growth, which is a very good example of lexicalized euphemism, is used to refer to 'tumour', go to the toilet 'defecate and/or urinate', extracurricular activities 'adultery', ecstasy 'amphetamine'.

To organize the wide variety of euphemisms that exist, these categories are divided into sub-categories of formation devices. Warren (1992) proposed framework as a semantic way of forming euphemisms, which deals with how euphemisms are formed is used as the main framework of the current study. For the purposes of this study, however, only the last seven subcategories of semantic innovation will be considered as covered by Warren's model.

This researcher hopes this study will offer some help to the translators when doing the translation of euphemism and assist them to overcome the misunderstandings and barriers during the cross-cultural communication. This study will be helpful for the cross-cultural communication as well as language teaching and learning. By comparative study of the equivalence between Persian and English language systems, the learners can get a better understanding of both the characteristics of English and Persian languages and inherent connection between culture and euphemism.

Research Background

The present work is motivated by the researcher's wish to examine English euphemisms and their translation into Persian from a linguistic and translational perspective, that is, how Warren (1992) semantic categories of euphemisms are treated in the process of translation from SL to the TL. In another words, by focusing on the translation of English euphemistic figurative devices, using data from a famous English novels, Jane Austen's Emma, the researcher considers in detail the translation of euphemistic metaphors, euphemistic metonymies, and euphemistic overstatements, understatements and reversals (antonyms) in the Persian translations of Emma. The present qualitative study will assess the translation of euphemistic expressions by focusing on Newmark's (1981) approaches to translation.

Research methodology

The population, sample and sampling

This study has the following hypotheses:

When translating an English metaphorical euphemism into Persian, the Persian counterpart is typically a metaphorical euphemism as well.

When translating an English metonymical euphemism into Persian, the Persian counterpart is typically a metonymical euphemism as well.

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When translating a euphemistic English overstatement / understatement into Persian, the Persian counterpart is typically a euphemistic overstatement / understatement as well.

When translating a euphemistic English reversal into Persian, the Persian counterpart is typically a euphemistic reversal as well.

Research tools

The present work is motivated by the researcher's wish to examine English euphemisms and their translation into Persian from a linguistic and translational perspective, that is, how Warren (1992) semantic categories of euphemisms are treated in the process of translation from SL to the TL. In another words, by focusing on the translation of English euphemistic figurative devices, using data from a famous English novels, Jane Austen's Emma, the researcher considers in detail the translation of euphemistic metaphors, euphemistic metonymies, and euphemistic overstatements, understatements and reversals (antonyms) in the Persian translations of Emma. The present qualitative study will assess the translation of euphemistic expressions by focusing on Newmark's (1981) approaches to translation.

Warren's model of euphemism is diagrammed as the following (taken from her work):

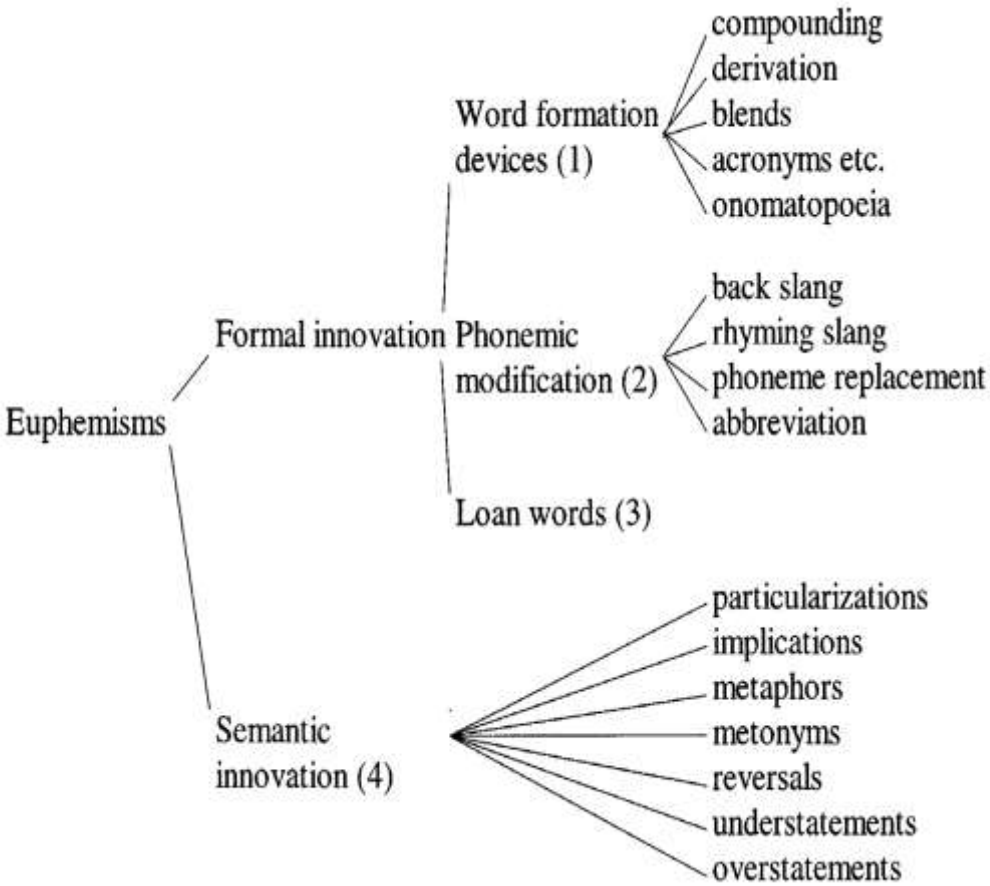


Figure 1: Warren's Model of Euphemisms (1992)

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Overview of Translation and Politeness Theory

Translation studies in general and translation theory in particular have a close mutual relationship, both theoretical and practical, with other fields: pragmatics, discourse analysis, stylistics, literary theory, cultural studies, communication studies, linguistic philosophy, general linguistics, machine translation, artificial intelligence, contrastive analysis, social sciences, and cognitive sciences. This relationship can be represented in the following figure:

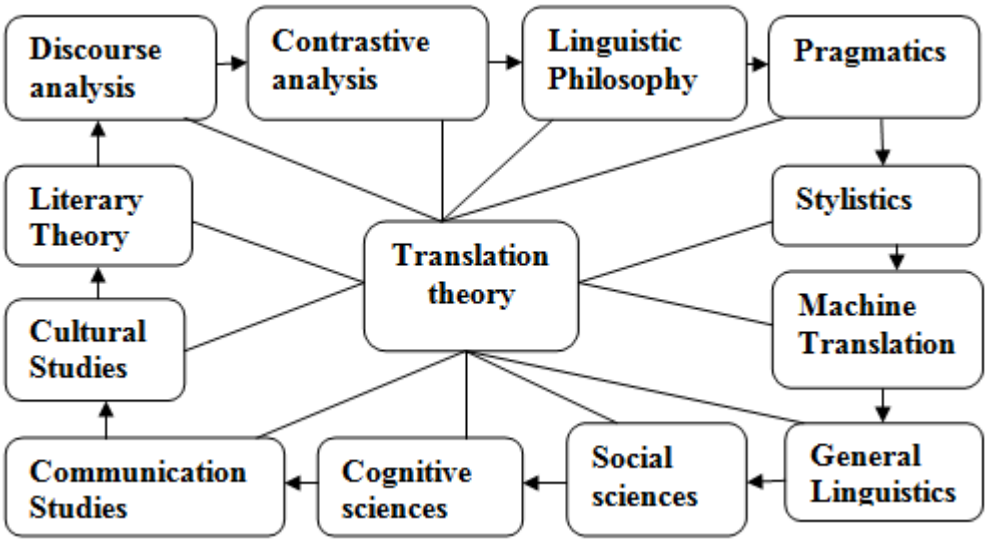


Figure 2: Relationship Between Translation Studies in General and Translation Theory

As seen in Figure 2.2., though translation theory forms the epicentre of this figure, there are obvious connections between not only translation theory and other fields but also between these fields themselves. They form other epicentres themselves. This is not something we need to discover or establish anew.

Casting a glance at the figure above, we realise the important and undeniable fact that in respect of language use none of these fields can function independently. No matter how much attention is given to any particular field, each constitutes an important part in the process of communication and comprehension. The Understanding Process (UP) or translating a sentence or an utterance like "It was better before" does not solely depend only on understanding the basic, literal meanings of the individual parts of the utterance plus the meaning of the syntactic relationships between them: 'it', 'was', 'better', and "before 1 . Rather, involves team work which may in this case be chaired by the theory of 'discourse analysis'; the other team members being for example: semantics, pragmatic, and contrastive analysis. Further members may also join the team such as speech act theory and politeness theory. Let us contextualize the above utterance "It was better before". During an exam, in a classroom, a teacher pulls back the curtains to let the sunlight in. The teacher asks a female student who is sitting next to the window "Would you like me to close the curtain?" The student replies very politely, saying: "It was better before." Then the teacher, without saying a word, draws the curtains back again. The process of analyzing how such a reply is understood starts from theories imposed by discourse analysis and discourse competence. It involves understanding how sentences in spoken or written language form larger meaningful units, and the choice of lexical words as well as so-called grammatical words, such as articles, pronouns, and other meaningful lexical units.

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Baker (1998, p.76) says that the term 'discourse' covers two basic kinds of analysis: "The first of these is concerned with the way texts are put together in terms of product and form, sequential relationships, inter sentential structure and organization and mapping. The second basic sense of discourse is that which concerns the way texts hang together in terms of negotiating procedures, interpretation of sequence and structure, and the social relationships emanating from interaction." Then, it goes down in the hierarchy to deal with issues of semantics and pragmatics. This consists in how the teacher interprets the utterance depending on his or her knowledge of the real world, and on the relationship between sentences, contexts and situations. Understanding an utterance (speech act), from a linguist's point of view, requires first understanding of the prepositional meaning or in other words the locutionary meaning of these particular words in this particular utterance. It then requires understanding that this locutionary act also has an illocutionary meaning or illocutionary

The Analysis of Data

Rahimi and Sahragard (2006) approach euphemism from a critical discourse analysis (CDA), noting a number of uses of CDA, such as "the uncovering of implicit ideologies in texts" (Rahimi and Sahragard, 2006, p. 1). The dichotomy of euphemism and derogatory is according to many writers "one of the very prevalent and effective techniques in naturalization of ideologies" (Rahimi and Sahragard 2006, p. 1). Rahimi and Sahragard argue that euphemism may exist even where it is not initially apparent. For example, "The semantic features of the word 'amazing' give it a euphemistic tone creating feelings of a pleasant surprise at a fascinating or even presumably unparalleled experience" (Rahimi and Sahragard, 2006, p. 7). Mirza Suzani (2006) in his book, Translation of Simple Texts believes that the general use of "حسن تعبیر" means the employment of a non-preferred expression in a context where it acquires pleasant connotations or vice versa. Additionally, Mirza Suzani (1385) talks about translation of euphemism in Persian. He says that "in every culture there are a fair number of words labeled as frivolous, vulgar, or uncaring. Also, there are certain things that are not supposed to be mentioned directly. Such roundabout type of language is known as euphemism in linguistics, which comes in a variety of forms and is used for a variety of reasons". Iranian linguists have referred to this phenomenon as "حسن تعبیر".

Many scholars believe that the purpose of euphemistic expressions is more cognitive than rhetorical. Having in mind the speaker's presuppositions, hidden intentions, knowledge of the extra-linguistic context, lexical knowledge, and knowledge of the speaker's implicit or explicit meanings, one can indeed make an initial judgment that euphemisms belong to the cognitive domain rather than the rhetorical. For instance, Alford et al. (1983) highlight the case of words and referents and the reactions they evoke. They say that "some symbols evoke reactions quite similar to, or even indistinguishable from, the reactions evoked by the referents themselves.

Friend (1881) considers euphemism in Chinese. His argument about the form of euphemisms is based on the premise that "The use of tones in Chinese greatly favours the tendency to euphemisms, but that much of the beauty and force of a pun, if not all, will be in most cases lost to one who knows nothing of the language" (p.72).

Mousavi (1391) says that there are different way of recreating a euphemism as figurative expressions, antonyms, circumlocutions, remodeling, ellipsis, understatements, overstatements, borrowings, and euphemizers as important euphemizing strategies.

Mousavi (1391) considers figurative death-related terms in Hafez poems. Using "پیکر" is a euphemism for "جسد" which is a neutral word and for "لاشه" which is a taboo in Persian culture. The common divider in these death euphemisms is their inherent fatalistic viewpoint, which may be regarded as a hallmark of Muslims culture in general. This fatalistic viewpoint is not tolerated by the unmarked English register. English typically

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"euphemizes death by likening it to a journey" (Farghal, 2005), as exemplified by many expressions, such as: 'He passed away', 'He went to his last home', 'He passed over to the great beyond', 'He answered the last call'. "Therefore, the translator may employ these marked English death euphemisms as functional equivalents for fatalistic death terms when translating religious texts" (Farghal, 2005).

Research Findings

Research Design and Methodology

This part comprises the procedures for the study and the materials. The procedures section deals with the way evaluation is placed on the translated novel. In this chapter, the researcher also considers figurative euphemisms from a theoretical perspective: metaphors, metonyms, overstatements and understatements, and reversals. The material section introduces the book from which the data are selected and explain the procedure used to select the data for showing the application of the presented model to the evaluation of the novel.

Corpus of the Study

The study focuses on the translation of English euphemistic figurative devices, using data from Jane Austen's Emma (1816) with love, romance and sex genre. This novel aims to represent the society of its day, which is crucial for the purpose of the current, pragmatic analysis. This novel was chosen as case studies for four reasons:

- This novel reflects two ear in 19th and 20th century British and world literature;
- The use of a variety of euphemistic forms in this novel;
- The availability of Persian translations of this novel;

The novel is described by many critics as suffering from a "lack of action"; yet it is a perfect reflection of real-life characters. Austen presents lifelike characters in a vivid and peculiar way. This has also been taken as one of the criticisms of Emma. Stafford (1996) says in her introduction to the novel, "in response, perhaps to the long-standing critical emphasis on realism, the 1980s saw a tendency to make Emma independent of place, period and even author, an autonomous text to be treated on its own terms irrespective of contemporary context or the ever-increasing views on Jane Austen." The tendency for Emma to be interpreted by readers and critics alike in realist terms is a reflection of the description of real historical contemporary events. Though she used non-fictional names, Austen's imaginative potential use of the names was never taken for granted.

Data Collection Procedure

In order to find candidate euphemisms for the analysis, every other chapter of Emma were searched for sexual euphemisms. The convincing reason for the random selection of chapters lies in the fact that searching on all fifty five chapters of this novel was not possible here, due to the lack of space and time, and it was decided to narrow down the scope of the evaluation by choosing every other chapter as the data for evaluation. Despite careful reading, the list of euphemisms made no claim to be exhaustive due to the possibility of human error. There were also some entries that were disputed because individual readers interpret euphemisms differently. However, it was not the purpose to list every euphemism but to investigate formation, so this issue need not be addressed further.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data was gathered and classified according to the Warren's model of semantic innovation of euphemisms. In another words, in order to achieve the goals of the study, as its method, this research elaborates on semantic ways of creating euphemism which are metaphors, metonyms, reversals, understatements and overstatement.

Metaphor is not peculiar to one language such as English. It is usual to find both different and similar metaphors in different languages since metaphor is highly dependent on lexical choices rather than any other elements of the language. English may have specific syntactic or structural features which other languages may not have. But if we find metaphors in English we may also find them in Persian for example, and Persian users may opt for similar or different images to express the same meaning or idea.

Results and Discussion

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It is very important to highlight here the fact that figures of speech play a vital role in literary texts. Literariness means that the author has the ability to use his work aesthetically, and artistically. It reflects for example the power an author has over his/her text, the strength and weakness of the work's elements: choice of diction, choice of structures, style, etc., and the author's ability to use existing images or even create new ones. Such images are vital for example in showing the euphemistic face of the text. In many examples, the translator in Emma has opted to reproduce the same image in the TL. Though most of them have achieved the euphemistic beauty the SLT shows, many of translations have violated one or many of the translation criteria: acceptability, accuracy, comprehensibility, naturalness, etc.

Table 1. Expression

English Expression	Persian Translation	Euphemistic meaning
What is warmer and Blinder	چیزهای گرم و نرم و کورکورانه	love/sex
The wound	جراحت	unrequited love
Dance	رقص	Marriage
Music	موسیقی	Courtship
Hymen's saffron robe	جامه بخت	Marriage
Fall in love	عاشق شدن	Love

Conversion of Metaphor to its Sense (Grounds)

Ground is generally defined as the similarities, likenesses, and the relationships that exist between the two main elements, parts of a metaphor: topic and vehicle.

Deletion

. But once he had started her, it seemed only natural for her to come to her own crisis with him. Almost she had loved him for it... almost that night she loved him, and wanted to marry him.

Translation of Reversals in English and Persian

Warren (1992) discusses reversals as one type of connection that yields a sense change. Yet, says Warren, this "would typically be a purely rhetorical device and so only rarely result in novel dictionary meanings." In fact, there are some good examples in English slang of lexicalized ('dictionary-meaning possessing') near-reversals, mostly derived from Black (African) American slang; e.g. 'wicked' or 'sick' for 'very good'. Warren defines reversal as the imposition via the context of a certain referent which involves the reverse meaning "so that huge means (contextually) "unusually small" or early "late."" Reversals can be exploited for many purposes. They can be used ironically where, as with euphemisms, the speaker violates the quality maxim. Another function is as euphemisms, since, says Warren (1992), "they enable the coiner to refer to "something bad" with its opposite. Blessed for "damned" is a good example of this".

Statistical Analysis of Translation Techniques for Euphemisms in Emma

Not all the possible techniques identified in the figures are in fact used by the translator in translating summarized in (below):

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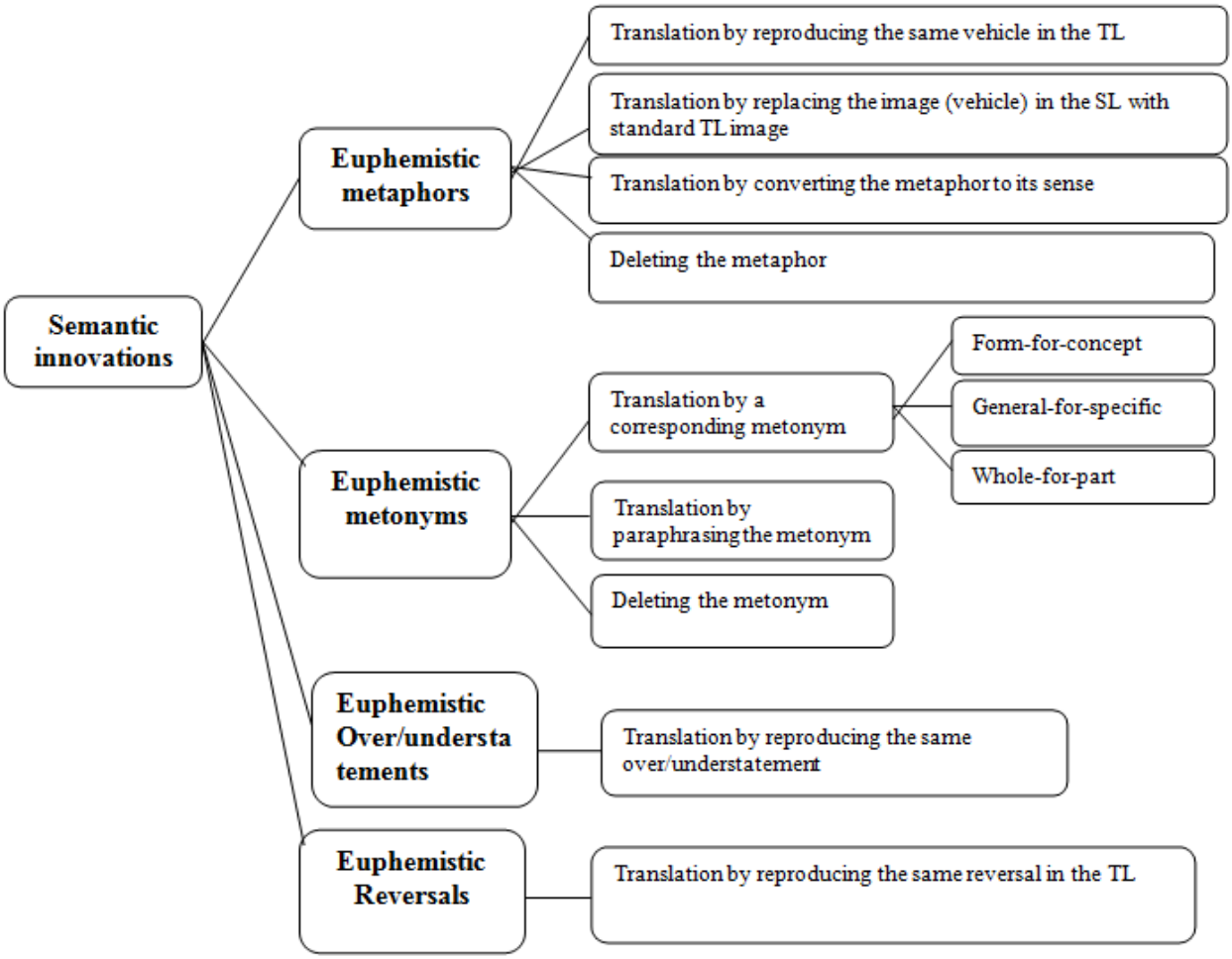


Figure: Techniques Used for Translating Euphemistic Figures of Speech in Emma

Regarding the possible techniques for the translation of euphemistic metonyms, three suggested techniques are manifested by the translator. Regarding the possible techniques for the translation of overstatements and understatements, only one technique is used by the translator. As for the last category, euphemistic reversals, again only one technique out of the three possible techniques is used by the translator.

Table 2: Number and Percentage of Figures of Speech

	Category	**Number of occurrences**	**Percentage**
1	**Metaphor**	**10**	**41.5%**
2	**Metonymy**	**8**	**33.5%**

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3	**Over/understatements**	**5**	**21%**
4	**Reversals**	**1**	**4%**
	Total	**24**	**100%**

Table 3: Statistical Analysis of the Translation of Euphemisms

	Technique	**Number of occurrences**	**percentage**
1	**Reproducing the same image (vehicle) of the metaphor in the TL**	**6**	**25%**
2	**Translation by reproducing the same over/understatements in the TL**	**5**	**21%**
3	**Translation by a corresponding metonymy (replacing)**	**4**	**16.5%**
4	**Translation by paraphrasing the metonymy**	**3**	**12.5%**
5	**Replacing the image (vehicle) of the metaphor in the SL with a standard TL image (vehicle) which does not clash with the TL culture**	**2**	**9%**
6	**Translation by deleting the metonymy;**	**1**	**4%**
7	**Deleting the metaphor**	**1**	**4%**
8	**Converting of metaphor to its sense (grounds) (paraphrasing)**	**1**	**4%**
9	**Translation by reproducing the same reversal in**	**1**	**4%**

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	the TL		
	Total	**24**	**100%**

Table 4: Frequency of Translation Techniques for Different Figures of Speech

	Technique	**Number of occurrences**	**Percentage within category**
	Euphemistic Metaphors		
1	**Reproducing the same image (vehicle) of the metaphor in The TL**	**6**	**60%**
2	**Replacing the image (vehicle) of the metaphor in the SL with a standard TL image (vehicle) which does not clash with the TL culture**	**2**	**20%**
3	**Deleting the metaphor**	**1**	**10%**
4	**Converting of metaphor to its sense (grounds) (paraphrasing)**	**1**	**10%**
	TOTAL	**10**	**100%**
	Euphemistic Metonyms		
5	**Translation by a corresponding metonymy (replacing)**	**4**	**50%**
6	**Translation by paraphrasing the metonymy**	**3**	**37.5%**
7	**Translation by deleting the metonymy**	**1**	**12.5%**
	TOTAL	**8**	**100%**
	Euphemistic Over/understatements		
8	**Translation by reproducing the same over/understatements in the**	**5**	**100%**
	Euphemistic Reversals		
9	**Translation by reproducing the same**	**1**	**100%**

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	reversal in the TL		

Conclusion

This thesis dealt with the translation of English euphemisms into Persian from a linguistic and translational perspective. The study consists of five main chapters. In the first chapter, the researcher introduced the research, and talked about the reasons for addressing this topic as well as the significance and objectives of the study. The hypotheses of the study were introduced too. Hypotheses were addressing the particularities of the research, i.e. the basic analytical categories of the study, such as metaphors, metonyms, etc.

Limitations of the Study

Concerning the limitations of the study, in order to find candidate euphemisms for the analysis, the researcher just went over every other chapter of Emma for sexual euphemisms. The convincing reason for the random selection of chapters lies in the fact that searching on all fifty five chapters of this novel was not possible, due to the lack of space and time, and it was decided to narrow down the scope of the evaluation by choosing every other chapter as the data for evaluation. Moreover, despite careful reading, the list of euphemisms made no claim to be exhaustive due to the possibility of human error. There were also some entries that were disputed because individual readers interpret euphemisms differently.

Suggestions for Further Research

The study opens the door for further research in the same field. It would be useful to apply the model developed by the researcher to other Persian translations of English literary works, in order to see whether the translation techniques for euphemism which are predominant in Emma are also predominant in these works. It would also be interesting to see whether translation techniques which do not occur in the case of Emma also fail to occur in the case of other works. It may be that although a wide range of techniques for translating English figurative euphemisms into persian exist in principle , in practice only a small number of these are typically used. This is interesting both in terms of descriptive translation studies (Toury), and in relation to translation pedagogy: it suggests that in teaching translation we need only concentrate on a relative small number of techniques with respect to figurative euphemisms.

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