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## **Euphemistic Expressions in English and Kurdish**

### **Suzan Aziz Mustafa**

Department of English, College of Education, University of Salahaddin, Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq

[Suzanbarzan8@gmail.com](mailto:Suzanbarzan8@gmail.com)

### **Salam Neamah Hirmiz Hakeem**

Department of English, College of Education, University of Salahaddin, Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq

[Salam.hakeem@su.edu.krd](mailto:Salam.hakeem@su.edu.krd)

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This study qualitatively describes euphemistic expressions in English and Kurdish to analyze the most common types of euphemism related to body excrement, death and sickness, sexual topics, religion, and other relevant subjects, to identify the similarities and differences between English and Kurdish in this respect. In social contexts, humans need to use a range of appropriate expressions to convey their ideas and thoughts properly; therefore, euphemisms are used by the speakers of both languages to replace words and phrases that are considered taboo, as well as to lessen the negative effect of taboo words, whose use may cause harm and humiliation to other people. This study demonstrates that while English and Kurdish languages share various aspects in the use of euphemisms, they also manifest certain distinctions.

## **1. Introduction**

People avoid specific phrases in their conversation to guarantee that their interaction is not interrupted and that they maintain good etiquette. So, they employ euphemisms that are acceptable to others rather than using taboo words that may offend them. Certain emotional, uncomfortable, distressing, and taboo themes are replaced with euphemisms. Enright (1985, p.29) noted that "a language without

euphemisms would be an inadequate means of communication”. For a great many years, euphemism has caught people’s interest. This paper sheds light on the notion of euphemism in British English and Sorani Kurdish in an attempt to identify various similarities and differences in different taboo topics and their relevant euphemistic expressions. This paper is organized into four sections: an introduction, theoretical background, a classification of euphemism, and a comparative analysis of English and Kurdish euphemisms.

## **2. Concept of Euphemism**

The term "euphemism" was founded in the early 1580s by British writer George Blunt, who described it as "a good or favorable meaning of a terrible word" in his *Glossography* (1656) (Holder, 2008, p.65). The word euphemism comes from the Greek term *eu*, which denotes good, and *pheme*, which implies speaking. It actually denotes well talking. A metaphorical term for euphemism is "whitewashing device. Moreover, Hudson (1996, p.260) describes ‘euphemism’ as “the extension of ordinary words and phrases to express unpleasant or embarrassing ideas. The indirectness of the form is felt to diminish the unpleasantness of the meaning”. Additionally, Euphemism is defined by Howard (1985, p. 101) as “the replacement of an offending expression by a milder, more ambiguous phrase, or a periphrastic expression”. Euphemisms may be traced back to Indo-European languages, and there were probably more taboo terms back then than there are now. Whatever the case may be, modern languages in general (such as English, Kurdish and so on) offer a plethora of euphemisms for death, illness, religion, sexuality and others. It is reported that individuals began employing euphemisms because they were afraid of getting into trouble if they talked about different taboo topics. In addition, Allan & Burrige (1991, p.11) state that:

*Euphemisms are alternatives to dispreferred expressions, and are used in order to avoid possible loss of face. The dispreferred expression may be taboo, fearsome, distasteful, or for some other reasons have too many negative connotations to*

*feliculously execute speaker's communicative intention on a given occasion.*

Furthermore, Kenworthy (1991, p. 20) claims that the presence of taboo words causes euphemisms to emerge. He defines a euphemism as “a word or phrase that replaces a taboo word or serves to avoid frightening or unpleasant subjects”. On the other hand, Faraj (2011, p.54) states that ‘Euphemisms’ are all linguistic expressions used by people instead of taboo words which are considered unpleasant expressions in the social and cultural aspect if they are used explicitly. Moreover, Dizayee (2010, p. 175) adds that euphemistic terms are terms that are used instead of certain direct expressions, e.g. *Dacim bo mîzkirdin û gûkirdin* ‘I will go to piss and shit’, is replaced by *Dast ba aw dagaynim* ‘I will reach out for water’.

## **Literature Review**

Fernandez (2008) in his study, “Sex-Related Euphemism and Dysphemism: An Analysis in Terms of Conceptual Metaphor Theory” focuses on the euphemistic and dysphemistic figurative language employed to signify the sex taboo in the context of Lakoff and Johnson's well-known Conceptual Metaphor Theory. He also investigates the role of conceptual metaphors in euphemistic and dysphemistic usage, to determine how a specific interactive domain is more likely to result in verbal prevention or offence, as well as tracing how a given conceptual framework accounts for the understanding of sex-related euphemistic and dysphemistic metaphors. He shows that metaphors have the capacity not just to construct a new reality, as Lakoff and Johnson suggested, but also to change the usage and understanding of existing euphemistic and dysphemistic allusions.

Jawad (2009) in his research, “A Cognitive View to Euphemistic Expressions in Kurdish”, looks at a collection of Kurdish euphemistic expressions for death also through the lens of George Lakoff's Conceptual Metaphor Theory. This involves the conceptualization of death in Kurdish according to seven conceptual mappings (which also include death as a loss, death as a joyful life, death as a rest, death as a reward, death as the end, death as a journey, and death as surrender). Consequently, metaphors are said to make up the bulk of Kurdish euphemism expressions of death.



When the corpus information is studied, it shows that the category of ‘death as a loss’ has the greatest rate of cases in Kurdish (30.18 percent), while ‘death as a pleasant life’ has the lowest rate (only 4 percent).

Faraj (2011) In his survey *Tabû wak Nimunaêkî Paiwandi nêwan Ziman u Kalatur ‘Taboo as an Interconnected Model between Language and Culture’*, describes ‘Euphemism’ as a way of communicating, understanding and dealing among people in a society. In the first part of the survey, he discusses the relationship between language and culture and their influences on human languages and societies. In the second section, he explains the notion of taboo words and their relevant euphemisms from the viewpoint of various Kurdish linguists deeply. The third part examines the sociolinguistic components of lingual taboo and euphemism, as well as how taboo manifests itself differently depending on the three social factors of sex, age, and social standing. The main goal of this study is to manifest the emergence of euphemism as a sociolinguistic strategy used by Kurdish speakers to substitute taboo words, which usually cause embarrassment and sometimes even offense.

Mocanu (2016) in his study *Taboo and Euphemism in the Religious Language* presents a review of the major religious taboos that are special to religious language, as well as an explanation of the pragmatic valences that the euphemistic expression expresses in religious interaction. According to the findings of the religious language study, there are two primary groups of euphemisms used in religious communication: euphemisms with the function of circumventing sacred taboos, and euphemisms derived from politically acceptable language - their goal is no longer to avoid the unpleasant consequences that direct appointment of persons and things could have on the speaker, but rather to mystify and enhance unfavorable social realities.

This paper can be considered as a more in-depth study that seeks to investigate various kinds, topics, and categorization of taboo words and their euphemistic expressions in English and Kurdish in order to identify the most important points of the similarity and differences in various aspects of social and cultural life from the perspective of taboo words and their euphemisms in both languages.

### **3. Classification of euphemistic expressions**

English and Kurdish people resort to the use of euphemistic expressions as a solution to avoid embarrassment when talking about topics that are related to body excrements, illness and death, sex, and so on. These euphemisms will be classified and explained in the following sections.

#### **3.1. Euphemistic expressions in English**

In the English society, there are various euphemistic expressions which the individuals use to avoid taboo words. These expressions have been categorized below.

##### **1. Euphemisms for body Excrements**

The first terms that come to the English native speakers' minds are those that deal with excretions. Keith and Kate (2006, p. 173) state that instead of uttering "defecation" and "urination" explicitly, euphemistic expressions are used, like "answer the call of nature" and "do the needs of one's necessities", but they are commonly used in the hospital. Additionally, Palmer (1983, p. 9) points out several euphemistic terms for the word 'toilet' which are used instead. As a result, more recent English terms emerged like lavatory, W.C., bathroom, and so on. On the other hand, Keith and Kate (2006, p. 162) claim that mentioning menstrual blood in front of people is highly taboo as well as 'Semen' or 'Seed'. Instead, other euphemistic expressions are used, as explained in the table below. Menstruation was inscribed into the Bible:

*The LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying . . . 19 And if a woman have an issue, and her issue in flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even.* Therefore, instead of mentioning menstruation fluid, 'have an issue' was used as a euphemism. But nowadays, it is much more acceptable in England to refer to it as a natural state that women go through every month (Keith and Kate, 2006, p. 173).

Table (1): Euphemisms for body excrements (Keith and Kate, 2006).

<b>Taboo Words of body excrements</b>	<b>Euphemistic Terms</b>
Urination	Answer the call of nature.
Defecation	Do the needs of one's necessities.
Piss	Relieve myself; answer the call of nature.
Shit	Sugar, Shoot, or Shucks.
Menstruation	Have a period, have an issue, and a cycle.
Semen	Spunk, Spooof.
Shithouse	Loo, Lavatory, Bathroom, and W.C.

## 2. Euphemisms for death and disease

On the subject of death, McEnery (2006, p.120) claims that the term "sleep" is frequently used as a euphemism for "death", since death is deemed a taboo that is built on fear. There is dread of losing loved ones; worry of body's degradation and dissolution; dread of death's finality; the horror of what comes beyond death. Similarly, Keith and Kate (2006, p.203) add that 'deep sleep' is used as an alternative for the word death; and this can be seen in this line: *Sleeping peacefully, free from pain*. Also, for severe diseases, people resort to use euphemistic terms, for example, "Cancer" is a severe disease that is referred to as 'Big C' or 'Grows', because sickness has long been associated with dread and superstition. Due to a lack of information of body organs, their functions, and disease states in the past, strange medical ideologies based on fantasy and superstition emerged. (Keith and Kate, 2006, p.225).

Table (2): Euphemisms for death and disease (Keith and Kate, 2006)

<b>Death and Disease Taboo Words</b>	<b>Euphemistic expressions</b>
Death	Pass away, Go home, Resting in peace, Sleeping a big sleep, Go to his or her reward, Kick the bucket and go to heaven.
Diseases, illness	Unwell, under the weather, off-color, out of sorts, in a bad way.
Cancer	Big C, Grows, and prolonged disease.
Pain	Discomfort.
Madness, Crazyiness	Out of or Losing one's mind

### 3. Euphemisms for sexual taboo words

Phrases that are related to anatomy and sex, as well as words that imply anatomical or sexual concerns, have powerful implications. Keith and Kate (2006, p.144) claim that other alternative terms are used instead of uttering words that relate to human genitals. For example, instead of mentioning the word ‘Vagina’, we use ‘Cunt’, and instead of uttering the word ‘Gay’ which is regarded taboo, the word *queer* has been used to as a euphemistic term which is more acceptable in English society. For ‘Masturbation’, a genital stroking for sexual pleasure that does not involve penetrative intercourse, ‘Jerkin the gherkin’ and ‘tweak one’s Twinkie’ are used as euphemistic terms (Keith and Kate, 2006, p.151). Additionally, Wardhaugh (2006, p. 240) argues that in English, euphemisms come in different shapes and sizes, specifically when they relate to terms like ‘sex, coupled with, and have a peak’ as indicated in the table below.

Table (3): Euphemisms for sexual taboo words (Keith and Kate, 2006; Wardhaugh, 2006).

<b>Sexual taboo words</b>	<b>Euphemistic expressions</b>
Vagina	Cunt.
Penis	Cock, Dick.
Have Sex	Make love and sleep together.
Copulate with	Sleep with.
Have a peak	Finish.
Gay	Queer.
Masturbation	Jerkin the gherkin, or tweak one’s twinkie.

### 4. Euphemisms for Religious taboo words

Prohibitions and limits mostly exhibited the taboo, and it was often associated with religious prohibitions, despite the fact that the taboo phenomenon predates any religion. Traditional taboos have accompanied human civilization since its beginnings, and they existed in one form or another in all civilizations across the world forming anthropological universal characteristics, known as sacred taboos. McEnery (2006, p.33) states that the Bible says: You may not abuse the name of God." The so-called blasphemy is when certain words, such as "God, Jesus," are

considered as holy and inviolable by some individuals for religious reasons and can only be used in formal and solemn occasions or under religious circumstances. Additionally, Keith and Kate (2006, p.15) argue that *taking the Lord's name in vain* was banned and later tabooed.

The word divorce is generally avoided in Christianity, and the word *separation* is usually used as a euphemistic term instead. *Adultery* is also taboo, as mentioned in the Bible: He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself, but *cheating or misconduct* is used as euphemistic terms. On the other hand, drinking alcohol is socially tabooed. You may call somebody pickled, pissed, intoxicated or plastered as a euphemism instead of saying a *drunk man* (Keith and Kate, 2006, p.74).

Table (4): Euphemisms for Religious taboo words (Keith and Kate, 2006).

<b>Religious Taboo words</b>	<b>Euphemistic expressions</b>
Christ	Crikey.
Jesus	Gee.
God	Gosh.
Divorce	Separation.
Adultery	Cheating or misconduct.
A drunk man	Pickled, pissed, intoxicate or plastered.

### 1. Euphemisms for taboo words of disrespect

Sometimes physical features are used as abuse, such as *Fatty!! Four-eyes!* Or terms likes, *cripple, paraplegic* (relating to paralysis of the legs), can be scornful of people’s physical capabilities. The speaker may also resort to using offensive words that represent the stigma of mental illness, like *Silly!* (Foolish), *Retard!* (Stupid or silly people), and *Moron!* (A very stupid person) (Keith and Kate, 2006, p.82). Besides, using the names of animals for calling people is considered taboo, because such names are deemed as a kind of insult or humiliation, e.g. ‘Donkey’, which means an obstinate, idiot, or ugly person and ‘Dog’, which might be used to refer to a despised, untidy and unattractive female, as well as a useless and vile man (Keith and Kate, 2006, p. 40). Terms like ‘nigger’ (black person), ‘cripple’ (unable to walk), and poof’ (homosexual) are becoming progressively taboo, and their use is becoming more



alarming, because people grow more attentive to the issue of unequal treatment against individuals depending on the social and physical traits (Trudgill, 2000, p.20).

Table (5): Euphemisms for taboo words of disrespect (Keith and Kate, 2006).

<b>Taboo words of disrespect</b>	<b>Euphemistic expressions</b>
Blind	Sightless.
Crippled	Handicapped, disabled.
Retard	Disabled.
Nigger	Colored/ African American.
Fat	Overweight.
Four-eyes	A Pearson wearing spectacle.
Paraplegic	Special need.
Silly	Eejit.
Moron	Blockhead.
Donkey	Stubborn.
Dog	Obedient.
Poof	Homosexual.

### **3.2. Euphemistic expressions in Kurdish:**

In Kurdish language, people use various euphemistic expressions instead of taboo words while talking about sexual issues, diseases, death, religion and so on. These expressions have been categorized below.

#### **3.2.1. Kurdish Euphemisms for Body Excrements**

Faraj (2011, p. 59) states that it is normal for doctors and nurses in hospital to use *mîz* ‘urination’ and *gû* ‘defecation’ with the patients. But these expressions are considered taboo elsewhere, and instead such expressions as *Dast ba aw dagaynim* ‘I will reach out for water’, *Daçima awdaste* ‘I will go to toilet’, and *tangawim* ‘I feel tense’ are used. Besides, mentioning *çadabûn* ‘Menstruation’ openly is considered taboo in the Kurdish community, so instead *Sûrî mangana* ‘monthly cycle’ is used. Similarly, *çilim* ‘Snot’ and *Lîk* ‘Saliva’ are considered taboo and are substituted by other more acceptable words, as mentioned in Table 6.

Table (6): Kurdish Euphemisms for Body Excrements (Faraj, 2011; Ameen, 2012).

Body excrements Taboo Words		Euphemistic expressions
<i>Mîz</i>	‘urination’	<i>Dast ba aw dagaynim</i> ‘I will reach out for water’ or <i>Daçima awdaste</i> ‘I will go to toilet’.
<i>Gû</i>	‘defecation’	<i>Tangawim</i> ‘I feel tense’.
<i>Çadabûn</i>	‘Menstruation’	<i>Sûrî mangana</i> ‘Monthly cycle’.
<i>çilim</i>	‘Snot’	<i>Pîsaî kapuî.</i> ‘Nose secretion’.
<i>Lîk</i>	‘Saliva’	<i>Tifkird.</i> ‘Spitting’.
<i>Trufis</i>	‘Fart’	<i>ÿazât, Bâpêça</i> ‘Abdominal Gas’.

*Trufis* ‘Fart’ and the process of farting are also taboo, due to the bad smell that it produces (Faraj (2011, p. 80).

### 3.2.2. Kurdish Euphemisms for death and diseases

Death and diseases are regarded as two important topics with which nations have been haunted since ancient times. In this regard, Shilan (2009, p.76) states that in Kurdish community, the term *Mirdin* ‘death’ is not said explicitly; instead, other sweet-sounding words are used such as *xwa lê xoş bît* ‘my God forgive him/her’, *Koçî diwayî kird* ‘He/she made his/her last journey’. Besides, she says that the word ‘death’ should not be mentioned in front of children because it scares them.

Moreover, Faraj (2011, p.77-79) states that there are some dangerous and incurable diseases that we should not mention explicitly among people, though they are normally used by doctors. For example, an ordinary individual may say *Darda pîsaka* ‘malignant disease’ or *Naxoşî dirêzayân* ‘chronic disease’ as euphemistic terms instead of saying *şêrpanca* ‘Cancer’, as illustrated in table 7 below:

Table (7): Kurdish Euphemisms for death and diseases (Faraj 2011; Shilan, 2009).

Death and diseases taboo words		Euphemistic expressions
<i>Mirdin</i>	‘Death’	<i>xwa lê xoş bît</i> ‘my God forgive him/her’ or <i>Koçî diwayî kird</i> ‘He/she made his/her last journey’.
<i>Şêrpanca</i>	‘Cancer’	<i>Darda pîsaka</i> ‘malignant disease’ or <i>Naxoşî dirêzayân</i> ‘Chronic disease’.
<i>Aydiz</i>	‘Aids’	<i>Namanî bargirî laş</i> ‘Immunodeficiency’.

<i>Gari</i>	‘Scabies’	<i>xurişt</i>	‘Itching’.
<i>sil</i>	‘Tuberculosis’	<i>Weram</i>	‘tumor’, <i>Singî la žorê birîndar biwa</i> ‘Intrathoracic wound’.

### 3.2.3. Kurdish Euphemisms for Sexual Taboo words

Faraj (2011, p.81) mentions that it is inappropriate to talk about genital organs among members of society, also uttering words, like female’s breast are regarded taboo, but they are permissible in the medical fields, so instead of saying *çîr* ‘Penis’, we say *çûk*, *Zakar* (they both mean penis), *koandamî nêrîna* (male reproductive organs) and instead of saying *Qûz* ‘Vagina’, we say *Nawlaş*, *Daman*, *Zê* (they all mean vagina), *Koandamî mêyîna* (female genitalia), and instead of saying ‘To’ ‘Sperm’, we say *Aw* ‘water’, and *şahwat* ‘sexual lust’. Faraj also adds that certain expressions are used before uttering taboo words that relate to sexual organs and sexual processes in order to reduce the intensity of taboos meanings, e.g. *Bê la mafîna* ‘without meaning’, *Dûr la ruî canabitan* ‘away from your respectable face’, and *şayib nabêt* ‘not to be a shame’. Furthermore, *Dastbazî* ‘Masturbation’ is the euphemism word for the word *Dastpar* ‘Masturbation’. Besides, Muhamad (2013, p.25) states that there are some linguistic expressions and terms that are seen as indicating the meaning of taboos, because they have been established in the minds of the individuals as taboo words, such as *Têxistin* ‘sticking in’, *Raqbûn* ‘hardness’, and *Siwarbûn* ‘riding’, but in fact they are usual words that individuals in their daily life use.

Table (8): Kurdish Euphemisms for Sexual Taboo words (Faraj, 2011).

Sexual Taboo words		Euphemistic expressions
<i>Çîr</i>	‘Penis’	<i>çûk</i> , <i>Zakar</i> (they both mean penis) or <i>koandamî nêrîna</i> (Male reproductive organs).
<i>Qûz</i>	‘Vagina’	<i>Nawlaş</i> , <i>Daman</i> , <i>Zê</i> (They all mean vagina) or <i>Koandamî mêyîna</i> (Female genitalia).
<i>To’</i>	‘Sperm’	<i>Aw</i> ‘water’, and <i>şahwat</i> ‘Sexual lust’.
<i>Dastpar</i>	‘Masturbation’	<i>Dastbazî</i> ‘Masturbation’.

### 3.2.4. Kurdish Euphemisms for religious taboo words

Faraj (2011, p.76) states that religion is considered an important aspect of people’s life worldwide, and it is well-established and rooted in human thoughts and beliefs. Thus, not believing in God is considered taboo in the Kurdish community; therefore, it is necessary for a Kurd to believe that there is only one God, and so, individuals

should refrain from using words that cause ridicule of God, like ‘*Ba sarî hamû xudayakan*’ ‘by the names of all gods’, or swearing falsely in the name of God. Similarly, Muhamad (2013, p. 48) states that instead of saying *Mulhid* ‘Atheist’, which is considered a taboo word, Kurdish people may say *Bawernabûn ba habûnî xuda* ‘not believing in the existence of God’, which is a relatively more acceptable euphemistic expression.

Faraj (2011, p.77) also mentions that in Islam *Alzîna* ‘Adultery’ is also considered one of the severe taboos that religions generally prohibit men and women from doing because it leads to dismantling the family and the spread of diseases. There are also clear verses in the Quran indicating the prohibition of eating pork. Moreover, drinking alcohol is also taboo, and a drunken person is looked at with contempt by people. So, instead of saying *Şaraqxor* ‘liquor drinker’, people would use *Maşrub xor* ‘drink drinker’.

Table (9): Kurdish Euphemisms for religious taboo words (Faraj 2011; Muhamad, 2013).

Religious Taboo Words	Euphemistic expressions
<i>Kafir</i> ‘Disbeliever’	<i>Bê îman</i> ‘without faith’.
<i>Mulhid</i> ‘Atheist’	<i>Bawernabûn ba habûnî xuda</i> ‘Not believing in the existence of God’.
<i>Alzîna</i> ‘Adultery’	<i>Ancamdanî karî sêksî na şarfî</i> ‘Doing illegal sexual act’.
<i>Şaraqxor</i> ‘liquor drinker’	<i>Maşrub xor</i> ‘Drink drinker’.

### 3.2.5. Kurdish Euphemisms for Taboo words of disrespect

Sometimes language is used to reduce the person's dignity, so the speaker sometimes resorts to the use of several taboo words and unacceptable methods to belittle and disrespect the corresponding person. For example, in Kurdish language, instead of calling someone *Zincî* ‘Nigger’ as a case of mockery, we say *Raş Pest* ‘black-skinned’ as a euphemistic expression. It is disrespectful and taboo to call someone by the names of animals, such as *Kara* ‘Donkey’, *Maymûn* ‘Monkey’, or *Manga* a ‘cow’ (Faraj, 2011, p.86). Moreover, a speaker sometimes uses some strong taboo expressions, like *Şêta* ‘Crazy’, or *Zoc* ‘Simple minded’ for the sake of irritating the addressee. It is also socially taboo to insult a physically- disabled person by calling them *Kora* ‘blind’,

*Kar* ‘deaf’, *Íal* ‘dumb’, and *Şala* ‘limping’, but instead other less harsh words are used as we will see in table 10 below (Faraj 2011, p.87).

Table (10): Kurdish Euphemisms for Taboo words of disrespect (Faraj 2011).

Taboo words of disrespect		Euphemistic expressions	
<i>Zincî</i>	‘Nigger’	<i>Raş Pest</i>	‘Black-skinned’.
<i>Kara</i>	‘Donkey’	<i>Bakar nahênani řaqil ba řewayeki rastû drûst</i>	‘Not using the mind properly’.
<i>Maymûn</i>	‘Monkey’	<i>Ciwan niya la ruxsar</i>	‘Ugly looking’.
<i>Manga</i>	‘Cow’	<i>Qalawa</i>	‘Over weight’
<i>Şêta</i>	‘Crazy’	<i>Kam řaqila</i>	‘Little-minded’.
<i>Zoc</i>	‘Simple minded’	<i>Sadaya</i>	‘Naive’.
<i>Íal</i>	‘Dumb’	<i>Zimanî niye, bê zimana.</i>	‘Without a tongue’.
<i>Kora</i>	‘Blind’	<i>Nabîna.</i>	‘Sightless’.
<i>Şala</i>	‘limping’	<i>Xawan pedawistî taibat</i>	‘People with special needs’.
<i>Kar</i>	‘Deaf’	<i>Nabîsta.</i>	‘Unhearing’.
<i>Awiz,</i>	‘Pregnant’	<i>Dûgiyan</i>	‘Two souls’.

Furthermore, Mohamad (1990, p. 83) states that in the past, the word *Awiz* was used to refer to ‘a pregnant woman’ but is now considered taboo, and instead, the word *Dûgian* ‘two souls’ is used as a euphemistic expression.

#### **4. Comparative Analysis of English and Kurdish Euphemistic expressions**

English and Kurdish share various characteristics in regard to the use of euphemistic expressions, but they also have several differences in this respect, as it will be explained below.

##### **5.1. Euphemisms for human bodily secretions**

Both languages agree that, any expressions referring to bodily excrement are considered taboo and euphemisms are used instead of them. For example, publicly mentioning a woman’s ‘menstruation’ is considered taboo in the English community; instead, ‘period’ is used. Also, in the Kurdish society uttering the word *řdabûn* ‘menstruation’ among people is deemed taboo, and instead *Sûrî mangana* ‘monthly cycle’ is a more acceptable expression to use. Moreover, both languages agree that

“defecation” and “urination” are frequent technical terms that are undesirable when used outside the hospital. Similarly, in Kurdish language, it is common for doctors to use the terms *mîz* ‘urination’ and *gû* ‘defecation’ with the patient in hospitals, but they will be considered taboo if they are spoken in the public.

### **5.2. Euphemisms for death and disease**

The speakers of both languages use euphemistic expressions for death and severe disease, since death and disease are considered taboo topics based on the fear of losing loved ones forever. In English language, the terms ‘Pass away’, ‘Go home’, ‘Resting in peace’, ‘Sleeping a big sleep’ are commonly used as euphemisms for ‘death’, while Kurdish speakers use expressions like, *xwa lê xoş bît* ‘my God forgive him’, *Koçî diwayî kird* ‘He/she made his/her last journey’ instead. As for severe diseases like, ‘Cancer,’ English people use ‘Big C’, ‘Grows’ or ‘prolonged illness’, and Kurdish speaker uses *Darda pîsaka* ‘the dirty disease’ or *Naxoşî dirêzayân* ‘chronic disease’. The phenomenon of death and what comes after death and the state of illness as a result of the doctors’ inexperience about incurable diseases have been relatively reduced in the English community. Contrastively, names of certain diseases, especially cancer, are still avoided in most social contexts within the Kurdish community.

### **5.3. Euphemism for Sexual taboos**

Euphemistic terms are used in both English and Kurdish languages for issues related to the sexual processes and sexual organs. For example, the English speakers use ‘cunt’ instead of ‘vagina’, and ‘cock’ instead of ‘penis’, while the Kurdish people use *Nawlaş* ‘inside of the body’ instead of *Quz* ‘vagina’, and *çûk*, *Zakar* (they both mean penis), or *koandamî nêrîna* (male reproductive organs) instead of *çîr* ‘Penis’. Moreover, the practice of *masturbation* in males and females is regarded taboo in both English and Kurdish languages. In Kurdish language, certain expressions are used before uttering all sex related matters, such as *Bê la meşîna* ‘without meaning’, *Dûr la ruî canabitan* ‘away from your respectable face’, and *Çayb nabêt* ‘not to be a shame’, but we do not see such a case in the English language. However, the English community is gradually getting more open to hearing and using such terms in public.



Furthermore, in the Kurdish language, certain words, like *Reqbûn* 'hardness', *Siwarbûn* 'riding', and *Têxistin* 'sticking in', which are usually used with their ordinary meanings, are sometimes considered taboo in the Kurdish community especially in a mixed-gender gathering, but could hardly notice such a thing in an English community.

#### **5.4. Euphemisms for religious taboos**

Both English and Kurdish languages agree that it is considered blasphemy to disrespectfully use God's name. Therefore, euphemistic expressions are used in most religious contexts. Concerning alcoholic beverages, both the Bible and the Quran condemn drunkenness. However, as an Islamic community, the Kurdish would even condemn someone who would drink moderately, so alcohol drinking is generally considered a taboo topic. Besides, being an atheist is becoming more and more acceptable in the English community, and a person can mention being an atheist in a social gathering without the fear of being criticized or judged. Contrastively, atheism is still a taboo in a Kurdish community, and a person would hardly mention being an atheist in a social gathering because they would normally be treated with suspicion and probably even contempt.

#### **5.5. Euphemisms for taboo words of disrespect**

It is unacceptable in both languages to use certain expressions that refer to the physical appearance of people, such as *Şala* 'Lame', *Qalaw* 'Fat', and *Íalí* 'mute'. So, the speakers of English and Kurdish use euphemistic expressions instead. Besides, speakers of both languages avoid using words that involve racism, such as *Nigger*, so 'dark-skinned' is used as a euphemism in English instead, and in Kurdish, instead of calling a person *Zincî* 'Nigger', people say *Raş Pest* 'black-skinned' as a euphemistic expression. Furthermore, in both languages using names of animals to refer to people is considered offensive and taboo, e.g. *Kar* 'Donkey', *Meymûn* 'Monkey', and *Sag* 'Dog'. In Kurdish, the term *Dûgian* 'two souls' is used for a pregnant woman as a euphemistic term instead of the word *Awiz*, which is mostly used to refer to a pregnant female animal, but in English, there is no euphemism for the word *pregnant*, which is normally used for both female humans and animals.

## 6. Conclusions

Euphemisms are widespread in everyday speech and can assist individuals in creating a pleasant communication environment and establishing appropriate social interactions. Thus, speakers of English and Kurdish have various issues that they do not want to talk about or discuss explicitly, especially those related to sex, sexual activity, religion, death, disease, so they express ourselves implicitly using euphemistic expressions, which soothe the harsh impact of certain taboo words. During our analysis, we have shown that English and Kurdish share various shared aspects in this respect, probably due to general characteristics of human nature, such as fear of death and shyness towards sexual organs and processes. However, the two languages also have a number of variances mostly due to different cultural norms and religious beliefs.

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## جوان دهربرینه کان له زمانی ئینگیزی و کوردیدا

### پوخته:

ئەم لیکۆلینەوه هەڵدەستیت بە شیکردنەوهی جووری و شیوایی بو ئەم (جوان دهربرینه کان) که له زمانی انگلیزی و کوردی به زۆری به کاردیت به مه بهستی شیکردنەوه و پۆلینکردنی ئەو جوورانه که زۆر بهربلاون وهک دهرهاویشتهکانی جهستهی مرؤف و مردن و نهخۆشییهکان، وئهو بابته که په یوه ندی ههیه به بابتهی سیکیسی وئاین و بهم بابته تانهیتر که په یوه ندییان بهم لیکۆلینەوه ههیه بهمه بهستی

دياريكردي رووي ليكچوون و جياوازبوونيان له م دوو زمانه دا له پښگي هه نديك گوڤار و نووسيني جوړاو جوړ كه په يوه سته به پوره وي كومه لايه تي . مرؤف پيويستي به به كارهيڼاني گروپيك له دهربرينه ريكه كانه بو گواستننه وهي مه به سته كه ي به شيويه كي ريك و به م هوپه وه په نا ده بات به به كارهيڼاني دهربرينه جوانه كان له لايه ن قسه كاره كان به هه ردوو زمان بو گوڤيني ووشه كان و پرسته كان كه تاپوونه و بو كه مكرندنه وهي ليكه وته كان ئه م ووشه زبرانه كه ده بيته هوئي ئازاردان يان ره زيل كردني مرؤفي به رانبه ر. ئه م ليكوليئه وه شي هه ل ده ستيت به دياريكردي رووي ليكچوون و جوان بوون كه په يوه نده به زماني ئينگليزي و كوردي دهربارهي ئه م جوان دهربرينانه و له هه مان كات هه بووني جياوازي له هه ردوو زماندا.

ده سته واژه گرینگه كان : جوان دهربرينه كان ، تاپوو ، ئينگليزي ، كوردي.

## الكناية في اللغتين الانكليزية و الكوردية

### المخلص:

تصف هذه الدراسة وبشكل نوعي الكنايات او التعابير المناسبة في اللغة الإنكليزية و الكردية بهدف تحليل وتصنيف الأنواع الأكثر شيوعاً لهذه التعابير ، مثل افرازات الجسم ، الموت والمرض ، والموضوعات الجنسية ، والدين ، وغيرها من الموضوعات ذات الصلة ، لتحديد أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين كلتا اللغتين في هذا الصدد. يحتاج الانسان إلى استخدام مجموعة من التعابير المناسبة لنقل أفكاره بشكل صحيح ، ولهذا السبب يتم استخدام هذه التعابير من قبل المتكلمين في كلتا اللغتين لغرض استبدال الكلمات والعبارات التي تعتبر من التعابير المحظورة ، وكذلك لتقليل آثار الألفاظ المحظورة التي تسبب الأذى وربما الإذلال للشخص الآخر. توضح هذه الدراسة أنه على الرغم من وجود بعض أوجه التشابه بين كلتا اللغتين الإنكليزية و الكردية التي تتعلق بالكنايات ، إلا أن هناك أيضاً بعض الفروقات بينهما.

الكلمات الدالة: الكناية، الكلمات المحظورة ، الإنكليزية ، الكردية