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Variation in the Use of Euphemisms
in Jordanian Arabic

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by

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate euphemised expressions of death, sickness, mental illness, cancer, and excretory function in Jordanian Arabic. More specifically, this study seeks to:

a. identify the expressions which are used in Jordanian Arabic to euphemise each of the topics in question.

b. point to the euphemised expressions which are shared by all groups of Jordanians and which are group-specific.

c. mark the expressions which are more, and those which are less, frequently used to euphemise the above-mentioned topics.

d. examine the correspondence between certain factors, particularly, age and social background of the users and their use of euphemisms.

This thesis consists of four parts:

- Part one presents the background of the study. It introduces the study by reviewing the definitions of taboo and euphemism, reviewing the literature, elucidating the need for the study and showing its purpose.

- Part two is methodology. The population of the study consists of adult native speakers of Jordanian Arabic, and the sample of the study consists
of 160 males and females chosen from different parts of Jordan. Two instruments have been adopted to collect the data: a questionnaire and personal observations.

Part three is results and discussion. Results of the data related to the topics in question have been set out in thematic sections and discussed accordingly.

Part four is the conclusion of the study and recommendations for further research.

The study shows that the use of some euphemisms of death, sickness, mental illness, cancer, and excretory function might vary from one group to another due to differences in: age, whether the informant is above or under 40, and in social background, whether he comes from an urban area or from a rural area. It reveals that only some of these euphemisms are employed by all groups of Jordanians. The study also shows that such euphemised expressions are unequal in Jordanian Arabic in terms of frequency; rather some of them are more frequently used than others.