



## Euphemisms and dysphemisms as language means implementing rhetorical strategies in political discourse

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### Abstract

Providing the development of modern society, great attention is paid to the implementation of rhetorical strategies in almost all public spheres. The aim of the article is to consider the specifics of rhetorical-strategic functioning of English euphemisms and dysphemisms as the linguistic means in political media discourse. The multidimensional nature of euphemisms and dysphemisms and their dynamism is the reason for the wide variety of their lexical and grammatical forms, emotional and stylistic coloring. High variability of euphemisms and dysphemisms also leads to a lot of research on this topic, which again proves the theoretical and practical significance of these phenomena. Here, euphemisms and dysphemisms are examined as the linguistic embodiment of strategies of veiling and discrediting in newspaper texts which deal with political issues.

*Keywords:* rhetorical strategy; euphemism; dysphemism; strategy of veiling; strategy of discrediting

## 1. Introduction

A politician's public speech is a special type of discourse aimed at convincing the audience of the correctness and importance of the information presented in the message. Thus, the main goal is to influence the audience, expect a certain reaction and/or action based on the following functions of the political discourse:

- Drawing attention.
- Ideological function (problem-solution).
- Convincing the audience of the correctness of the problems posed and the ways proposed to solve them.
- Mobilizing the audience, responding to proposals.

Actually, these functions are part of one of the political goals of manipulation. It can be argued that for the implementation of these functions, political discourse requires the use of certain linguistic means. Accordingly, it presupposes the presence of a vocabulary that includes a set of common words that name the phenomena of the political sphere, which is an area for the widespread use of

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euphemisms and dysphemisms, used depending on the objectives of political discourse. The frequency of the use of both euphemisms and dysphemisms can always be explained by the existing complexity of relations between states and citizens, or states and states.

In political discourse, the successful choice of rhetorical strategies and the achievement of their adequacy completely depend on different characteristics inherent in the sides since “The language behavior cannot be studied beyond its underlying social background because its meaning is governed by some outside embedded social and cultural variables, such as aspect of who speaks, to whom, the speech form, aim, situation context in which the interaction takes place.” (Giyoto et.al., 2020, p. 166). In contrast to the socio-political text, public speeches are distinguished by the presence of “factors of social context”, that is, not only the content of a politician’s speech predetermines the success of their speech, but also the very situation of verbal interaction with people; purpose, time and place of the communication act, as well as the socio-psychological characteristics of the audience – “In modern rhetoric, the canon of style is very often inveigled into the socio-political intent of the message.” (Zeynalova & Allahverdiyeva, 2017, p. 48).

Dealing with the speeches of politicians, taking into account their goals and motives, it is easy to guess that the main "weapon" is language – the words, which perform the primary function - manipulation. Appeals addressed to politicians, leaders, whose words are of considerable value to the people, require the speaker to be especially careful in the use of vocabulary touching upon topics of delicate nature (race, age, low standard of living of certain segments of the population) and military orientation (weapons, terrorist acts, migration, hostilities). Reinforcing people with promises of stability, prosperity, well-being, political leaders in their speeches embellish reality by hiding negative facts, phenomena that cannot be ignored, but which can mitigate and avoid the attention that might otherwise be focused on them. It is assumed that such materials of political speeches contain a huge number of veiled concepts that politicians resort to out of necessity.

Thus, political discourse, on the one hand, needs a tolerant attitude towards other cultures, ideas, aspirations, which allows us to talk about the increasing likelihood of using the means of realizing political correctness - euphemisms; and on the other hand, aggressiveness, a tough attitude, and decisiveness to gain and retain power, the desire for personal targeting for creating a trusting and supportive environment, which will be a prerequisite for the use of dysphemisms in public speeches.

The prepared speech of the politician contains many rhetorical-strategic means for successfully influencing the consciousness of the masses, however, the focus of our attention is directed to the use of euphemisms and dysphemisms by politicians in their speeches.

### *1.1. Literature review*

Political discourse is a form of institutional discourse which has its own sublanguages (vocabulary, phraseology), i.e., it uses a certain system of professionally oriented signs. (Karasik, 2004). Baranov and Kazakevich define political discourse as the sum of all speech acts, used in political discussions as well as the rules of public policies sanctified by tradition and tested by experience (Baranov and Kazakevich, 1991). This definition reflects a very broad approach to the content of this concept including the forms of communication, in which at least one of the components relates to the sphere of politics: addressee, subject, or content of the message.

As is known, we live in the age of rapid media development, alongside with rapid development of the language of impacts and influences. Language, media, and society are in constant mutual growth - language influenced by media is also an important tool to comprehend political phenomena. Modern Media perceives information war differently which can be far from real hostilities and violence, and which is very often beneficial for politicians. According to Jankowicz, manipulations in mass media

are carried out consciously: "Russia's disinformation campaigns operate on an undeniably human level, often employing local actors to cast a spell of plausible deniability and increase the authenticity of their message." (Jankowicz, 2020). There is often substitution of concepts, i.e. a hidden influence on the cognitive and behavioral activity of politicians who employ linguistic means. Euphemisms and dysphemisms hold the leading place in the list of these means.

In terms of politics, the effect of language impact is manifested at a very high level and has a huge impact on mass consciousness as a means of achieving social consent and shaping massive political views (Demyankov, 2002). In other words, the task of political speech does not consist of simply describing what is happening, but also convincing of fidelity of the words uttered, inducing masses into the "right" action since it is very important for a politician "to touch the right string" in mass consciousness.

This broader comprehension of political discourse, which is public in nature, also embraces the growing influence of media, the expansion of globalization processes, the development of new communication technologies, and of course the process of commercialization of political communication. In a narrower comprehension, political discourse is "a verbal communication" in a specific context in which the sender and the receiver endow certain social roles according to their life performance which is the subject of communication (Maslova, 2001).

## *1.2. Research questions*

Euphemisms and dysphemisms strongly affect the perception of information in political discourse. Depending on the choice of this or other means, audiences receive not only information but also emotional message. Therefore, the study of these phenomena in media texts is relevant and reveals the potential for manipulation and imposing opinions. Euphemisms and dysphemisms are widespread in various discourses, including political discourse. Hence, the study of Euphemia and dysphemia in political discourse are becoming more and more important. These means of speech also penetrate media discourse and form new models of speech.

Dysphemia is the opposition of Euphemia which primarily focuses on negative speech exposure and negative assessment of denotatum - dysphemisms serve to intentionally replace neutral words and phrases to express hatred, neglect, or irritation (Krysin, 1994). The process of dysphemia is most often a non-literary form consisting of designating the subject, action, or phenomenon into a more harsh, vulgar, or taboo word or expression. As Kovshova states, dysphemisms can have a negative impact on the performance of communicative tasks, as they are quite sharp and indecent words (Kovshova, 2007).

In political speech, dysphemisms are used to express disapproval, to render a pejorative effect on the recipient, provoking his/her reaction. The speaker represents the situation or characteristics of the interlocuter in a negative light, and an emotionally charged expressive value. Generally, means of speech of negative evaluation contribute to the expression of frustration, sarcasm, discontent, indignation, or threat. The pejorative connotation of dysphemisms yields negative emotions, negative ratings, disapproval, and contempt in political speech. However, the dysphemisms, very often used in the journalistic style, especially in political discourse, aimed at drawing the attention of the audiences to specific problems, or affecting, influencing them to form a certain opinion. Thus, the use of dysphemisms in political speech is primarily a means of expression of mostly negative emotions which is used as a language tool of influence and impact.

Concerning this, we observe the substitution of concepts thanks to the use of certain means of language that carry out manipulation of consciousness - the hidden effects on cognitive and human behavioral activity. As is known, language is a system of signs used to denote really existing objects,

and the words used to create the images that reflect the objective reality. However, between the images and the real state of things, there may arise discrepancies when massive manipulation of consciousness allows precisely the symbolic essence of language in political discourse.

## 2. Article structure

### 2.1. Goal of euphemizing process

In addition to the function of mitigating unpleasant and rude semantics (Partridge, 2012; Katsev, 1988), the importance of social motives of Euphemia is also being noted (Krysin, 1994; Eysfeld, 2016; Lawrence, 1995). Tyurina characterizes euphemisms as words or expressions which are mild and permissible, reclamative-allegorical, and sometimes simply more acceptable for one reason or another. They are used instead of the words or phrases that speakers are forbidden to use - indecent, unacceptable from the point of view of moral norms accepted in society, or even just rude and tactless (Tyurina, 1998). According to us, the definition which reflects the main functions of euphemisms can be formulated like this - euphemism is a substitution of any undesirable or inappropriate word or phrase by the more correct and acceptable one in order to avoid causing negative emotions in audiences, as well as to disguise certain facts of reality.

Certain cultural norms require a person to find or create in language new words and expressions that serve to replace such designations that appear undesirable to the speaker are not entirely polite under certain conditions, too harsh. In linguistics, such words and expressions are called euphemisms, the basis of which is the desire not to offend or hurt human feelings (Ter-Minasova, 2000). The main goal of the euphemizing process is to avoid communicative conflicts – to veil the bitter reality to create a mild effect. In addition, euphemisms in various spheres of human life and society pursue various tasks – “The fact that it varies according to the user and it is not entirely lexical indicates that euphemism is a linguistic process that is open to instant formations.” (Funda, 2021, p. 1118). Particularly, in the political sphere, euphemisms are language tools to veil or intentionally distort information about real events or facts, “trick public opinion and express something unpleasant in a more delicate way” (Galperin, 1977). In the article, on the one hand, we deal with the role and function of euphemisms in political media, as George Orwell put it, the most horrendous of political language fraud is used for “the defense of the indefensible.” ([www.orwellfoundation.com](http://www.orwellfoundation.com) › ... Notes on Nationalism)

Words such as *active defense* or *protective action* instead of attack, *rescue mission* instead of invasion, *peacekeeper* instead of a missile, *recession* instead of negative growth, and *operation sunshine* instead of nuclear experiment densely entered English political vocabulary to cover the true nature of political rhetoric. A large number of this group of words and phrases acquire euphemistic ennobling properties contextually. For example:

But long before Trump, Pompeo, and Co. sought a Chinese scapegoat for the president's gross and willful incompetence, researchers understood that the possibility of laboratory escape of the pathogen was a plausible, if unproven, possibility. It is most definitely not a *conspiracy theory*. (Did the SARS-CoV-2 virus arise from a bat coronavirus ... [thebulletin.org](http://thebulletin.org) › 2020/06 › di... By Milton Leitenberg, June 4, 2020).

The expression *conspiracy theory* here is used as the euphemistic alternative of the expression solidary oppressive intention and functions as the tool of substituting one notion by means of another.

### 2.2. Goal of dysphemizing process

The process of euphemizing is opposed to the process of dysphemizing in terms of its purpose and nature. Dysphemizing is the process of designating any subject, phenomenon, or action with a more vulgar or rude word or expression. Dysphemisms in opposition to euphemisms based on evaluative connotation are a means of giving a greater degree of negative assessment staining of denotatum and oriented to negative speech impact on the interlocutor.

Dysphemism is defined by us as the deliberate use of a taboo linguistic form or words of a reduced style, as well as neutral vocabulary carrying a negative assessment that does not correspond to the given situation of speech for the purposes and for solving the set communicative task. From a semantic point of view, dysphemism is the process of negative naming of a denotatum. The main principle of the semantic mechanism of dysphemizing in the work is the paraphrase or renaming process when the speaker makes a conscious choice, using not a neutral or euphemistic word, but dysphemism itself

However, for dysphemism, a characteristic feature is the preservation of the denotation, that is, the process of change occurs in the connotative component. In the process of dysphemization, the concept can be a negatively or neutrally assessed denotatum which was initially assessed by society as pejorative. Such concepts include death, illness, human downsides, etc.

Thus, this kind of relationship within dysphemistic transformations can be defined as an intensification of negativity, a priori character of the denotation - neutral denotation. The concepts inherent in political dysphemisms refer to the neutral designations of the nationality of individuals, the names of some government agencies, positions or professions, body parts, as well as many items of everyday use. Due to sociopsychological attitudes, speakers need to use dysphemistic expressions, thanks to which negative connotation is added to neutral denotatum to illustrate the very phenomenon of dysphemism. The uniqueness of this process lies in the fact that the denotatum remains the same, as in the previous case, but the assessment with a minus sign comes into play via the play of language. For example, a possible dysphemism for the concept of “church” can be the slang “a ring-ding God box”, which, if used, will undoubtedly bear a negative assessment, express the speaker’s disdain for religious institutions. There are also known cases of using the slang “fuzz” in the meaning of “the police”, or “collateral damage” meaning “killing civilians”.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Sample

In the language of politics, the impact of verbal communication is very high. The main task of political texts does not simply consist of describing what is happening but that of convincing audiences of fidelity of the words used and encouraging them to the "right" action. Political discourse does not concern only politicians involved in politics, but also is a matter of mastering language, having a broad knowledge about human nature, psychology, and politico-social trends at a certain point in history to manage to manipulate with minds. When we talk about political discourse, it should be borne in mind that the impact of speech aimed at forming the "right" opinion becomes the main goal of communication. Thus, the choice of linguistic means focuses on the achievement of this particular goal. Mass media plays an extraordinarily important role in the realization of this goal. There is a great need for truth and responsibility on the part of mass media, especially when there is a real, daily struggle with COVID-19 in all public spheres nowadays.

#### 3.2. Instruments

The practical part of the study was carried out by such methods as the analysis of vocabulary definitions, the descriptive method, the method of sampling online newspapers, the method of

contextual analysis. The materials for the study were selected from the articles of such daily or weekly high-circulation newspapers as The Guardian, The Sun, Daily Mail, The Times, The Sunday Times based on continuous selective sampling.

### 3.3. Data collection and analysis

The theory of mass communication revealed the active development of individual methods and the degree of effectiveness of the impact of media on audiences, which resulted in certain ratings when transmitting information (Makarov, 2003). Media play a big role in the political domain to skillfully manipulate public opinion by using euphemisms. From the standpoint of speech exposure, an important role is played by newspapers. We consider that the impact of newspapers in the political domain is more powerful because it is based on the combination of a deliberate choice of language means and speech acts to achieve the author's communicative goals. Thus, the informative function of such political texts becomes secondary and the task of the impact comes to the fore, which aims at impressing the addressees, manipulating their role in the assessment of events, and forming a positive or negative attitude of the audience to actions, phenomena, subjects or objects of a topic. In political newspaper texts, this function is realized through the use of speech strategies and tactics (Parshina, 2004).

Owing to the analysis, a powerful dysphemistic strategy is implemented through the tactics of discredit which expresses reproach, reduction of social status, threat, insult, accusation, or mockery. At the language level, the author of the defamatory speech expresses his negative emotional state through nominations with pejorative stylistic coloring, i.e. through dysphemisms, and is aimed at exposing and denouncing actions of an opposite side. This task performs the tactics of accusation. For example:

The slightly confusing “Phase 3” *regime* was confirmed as Ms Sturgeon voiced “cautious hope and optimism” that the virus is getting under control north of the border. (<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8507011/Nicola-Sturgeon-announces-lockdown-easing-Scotland.html> By James Tapsfield, Political Editor for Mailonline, 09 July 2020)

In this passage the word *regime* is used dysphemistically, meaning an authoritarian or unfriendly administration, which expressed accusation. In Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English *accusation* is defined as “a statement saying that someone is guilty of a crime or of doing something wrong” ([www.ldoceonline.com](http://www.ldoceonline.com)). Here the word expresses accusation towards the government which misleads (as it is represented in the article) the population and sets a task to denounce the activity of the government.

However, both euphemisms and dysphemisms can be used as fallacies to mislead the audience without being cognitively or literally counterfeit. If used in such contexts, these words or phrases can be called misnomers – names that are inaccurate related to what they refer to. Since this cognitive-linguistic event is name-calling in the main, it cannot be accepted as the alternative for sound argumentation. Although dysphemisms and euphemisms maintain the degree of cognitive accuracy, this misleading effect may, sometimes, represent a disconnection between objective reality and connotations. Let's consider another example with the use of *regime*:

Dominic Raab, UK foreign secretary, will on Monday name the first foreign citizens to face visa bans and asset freezes for alleged human rights abuses under Britain's new post-Brexit sanctions *regime*, with Russians and Saudis among those expected to be targeted.

(<https://www.ft.com/content/cdf08481-7387-46f4-b69f-078b7f2f3df1> Financial Times. The UK imposes sanctions on Russians and Saudis over human rights. George Parker, 6 July 2020)

Like other anti-Brexit powers, the article aims at reducing the social and political status of the new body and codes this message by using the word *regime*. The barefaced reflection of the discrepancy

between the word connotation and objective reality makes the article bias-based. This explains the fact that direct nominations of bias and malevolence not only returned to the active media dictionary but also began to be replaced by words and expressions with a sharply negative assessment.

In some cases, completely neutral lexical units which as a result of changes in the connotative aspect, contextually have undergone changes in the denotative plan, can also acquire dysphemistic properties. Such units acquire negative appraisal in the context. In the example below, we observe two dysphemisms expressed by neutral lexical units:

Rishi Sunak vowed to “protect as many jobs as possible” today as he prepares to unveil another package *to bail out the stricken* UK economy.

(<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8501461/Rishi-Sunak-unveils-mini-Budget-avert-coronavirus-meltdown.html> Daily mail. By Lee Boyce for Thisismoney.co.uk, 08 July 2020)

*To bail out* usually denotes to abandon a harmful or difficult situation, or to withdraw from an obligation or commitment. *Stricken* is used mainly to mean suffering severely from the effects of something unpleasant. However, in the example above *to bail out* is used to mean to heal, *stricken* is used to mean morbid. The choice of the mentioned verbal and nominal lexemes as dysphemisms can be related to the aim of the author to accuse incapability of the legislative bodies of Great Britain to pass the bills fast and precisely.

The following examples also use the strategy of discrediting against the government of Great Britain through the lexical units possessing dysphemistic properties:

However, although the extraordinary *cash splashing* has broad support for the moment *to limit the fallout* from the worst recession in 300 years, there is growing anxiety about the scale of the debt being racked up by the government.

(<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8501461/Rishi-Sunak-unveils-mini-Budget-avert-coronavirus-meltdown.html> By Lee Boyce for Thisismoney.co.uk, 08 July 2020)

*Cash splashing* has a negative connotation meaning spending an excess amount of money on unnecessary things. *Fallout* is also used here to connote negation as the adverse consequence or result of a situation or action.

In the following example, the noun *blow* has acquired the negative connotation of an unexpected, harmful impact, thus used dysphemistically:

The chief executive of the Scottish Tourism Alliance, Marc Crothall, welcomed the further clarity, but said excluding Spain from the list of air bridges was “a *blow* to the aviation sector and our tourism industry”. He said that airlines had to abandon plans to restart Spanish routes could lead to mass redundancies.

(<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jul/08/scotland-to-keep-14-day-quarantine-for-travellers-from-spain> Scotland to keep 14-day quarantine for travelers from Spain. Libby Brooks, 8 July 2020)

In political media discourse, the tactic of mockery is a variation of prosecution aimed at negatively presenting opponents, at destroying their reputation. Ironic euphemisms and dysphemisms are very often used as the tools of mockery tactics (Khlopunov, 2019).

In the following examples we witness the use of both dysphemistic and euphemistic irony as the hallmark tactics of mockery:

Britons talk a good game when it comes to social distancing but research suggests that many of us are somewhat *economical with the truth*.

(<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/29-of-britons-admit-breaking-lockdown-when-its-anonymous-gw5rq5st2> Matthew Moore, May 11, 2020, The Times)

By means of the ironic euphemism *to be economical with the truth*, the author of the article draws attention to the fact that anonymous surveys show that many Britons lie admitting breaking COVID-19 lockdown.

Why on earth American soldiers cannot come home? He was brutal and coarse in his frustration, but cannot soldiers be both? What happened to their *cojones*? The dispassionate reader is left wondering not so much whether *the president has lost his marbles* but whether *the troops have lost their balls*. A bit of both, perhaps.

(<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/a-very-stable-genius-by-philip-rucker-and-carol-leonnig-review-uncouth-unhinged-but-holding-on-pxsq99r9s> Justin Webb, January 23, 2020, The Times)

Both the phrases are used in non-serious contexts in English which means to go insane ("to lose one's marbles") and to suffer stagnation ("to lose one's ball"). In this context, they are used as ironic euphemisms.

Another tactic widely used in nowadays political media discourse is humiliation. The tactics of humiliation are usually represented by dysphemisms which are realized mainly through colloquialisms, more definitely, through vulgarisms and swear words, slang words, and jargonisms in the lexical level. On the other hand, political discourse can be humiliating by using neutral vocabulary and even achieve a greater effect. Humiliation can be direct - aimed at the object of speech, or indirect - through evaluation of the actions of the object. Let's consider examples:

Amparo said Bolsonaro's "*disgraceful*" reported remarks sent a dangerous message to Brazilian society that LGBT phobia was acceptable.

(<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/08/bolsonaro-masks-slur-brazil-coronavirus> Tom Phillips in Rio de Janeiro, 8 July 2020)

In the example, the tactics of humiliation are represented through the description of the politician's activities. According to the article, the president of Brazil is widely criticized for allegedly using homophobic language to chaff the enjoyment of face masks to protect against COVID-19. The president called face masks the "homophobic slur" ("*coisa de viado*") which is interpreted as "for fairies". The word *disgraceful* instead of shameful, functioning as a dysphemism, attaches dysphemistic character to the whole utterance and can be evaluated as humiliation since the author makes use of the word with vulgar meaning. Since this dysphemism is based upon the evaluation of the actions of the object, we call it indirect dysphemism.

Let's consider another example:

The growing boycott and *damning* audit are just two expressions of a hardening consensus that Facebook is no agent of social progress, but rather an *impediment* to it.

(<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/jul/10/facebook-ad-boycott-mark-zuckerberg-activism-change> Julia Carrie Wong in San Francisco, 11 July 2020)

In the given example, the tactics of direct humiliation are expressed by means of two linguistic units. Firstly, through the invective unit - vulgar word *damning*, which bears negative connotation in its content and that is why expresses humiliation. Secondly, through the word "impediment" is used as a dysphemism instead of a "regressive social net" which can be considered more insulting by the audience, especially by active Facebook users.



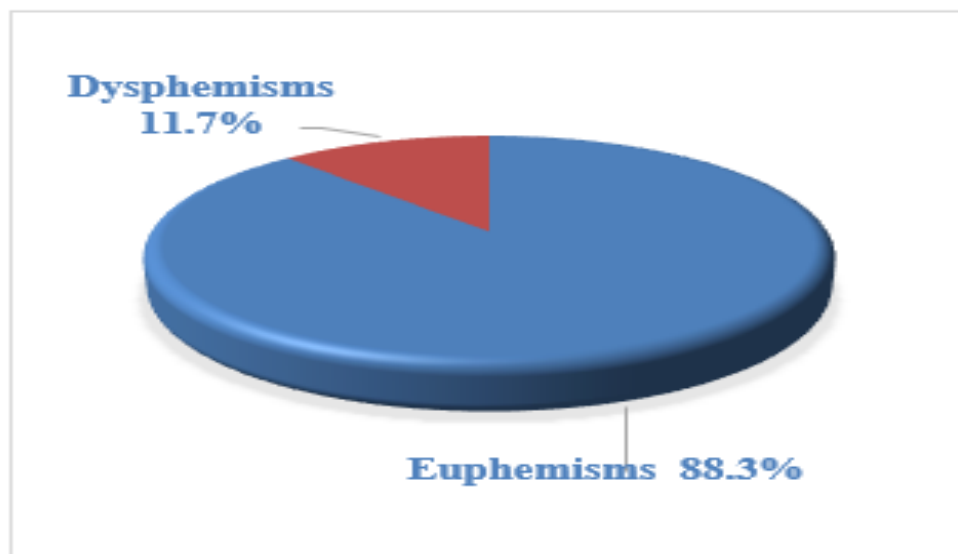
#### 4. Results and discussion

Since in the article, we dwell on the linguistic features of political newspaper discourse, we mainly focus on the play of words expressing different concepts based on press vocabulary with a positive or negative connotation and introducing neutral vocabulary instead.

In the articles, selected on politics and political issues there are revealed 393 euphemisms and dysphemisms altogether. We took 393 samples as 100 %.

**Table 1.** Number of the euphemisms and dysphemisms

Euphemisms Dysphemisms	Total number of euphemisms and dysphemisms	Separate numbers of euphemisms and dysphemisms	In percents (%)
Euphemisms	393	347	88.3%
Dysphemisms		46	11.7%



**Chart 1.** Percentage of the euphemisms analyzed and dysphemisms analyzed

As it is obvious from the table and chart above, the euphemisms exceed the dysphemisms in number. There are several reasons which cause this phenomenon.

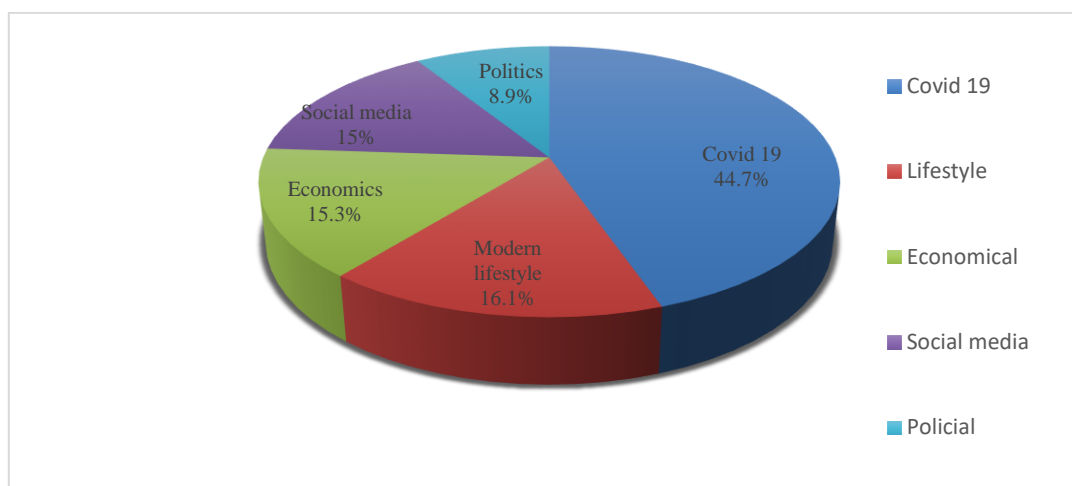
First of all, dysphemisms express the subjective point of view of a speaker and unlike euphemisms, they serve to give a pejorative assessment of denotation. Dysphemisms suggest the presence of stigmatized (the act of treating someone or something unfairly by publicly disapproving them) denotation. However, again unlike euphemisms, no softening process takes place, on the contrary, dysphemisms violate existing taboos. Secondly, by using euphemisms, a politician can pursue a wide

range of goals like covering conflict situations between the states, or the disagreements in the relationship between politicians. Thus, euphemization helps to avoid escalating conflict or hide the truth from audiences to reduce the risk of public unrest. Another reason is that the use of euphemisms in characterizing the state of affairs within the country can be motivated by the desire to influence the masses, cause them to have a positive attitude towards the current regime. Moreover, euphemisms are widely utilized by the politicians who are motivated by political correctness in order not to insult any citizen, and softening of expressions becomes an integral tactic when covering controversial events in the country with the aim of impact on the consciousness of the society, as well as to avoid division and panic among the population.

Having analyzed the correlation of the frequency of euphemisms in political media discourse, we identified their following thematic groups:

**Table 2.** Thematic groups of the euphemisms analyzed

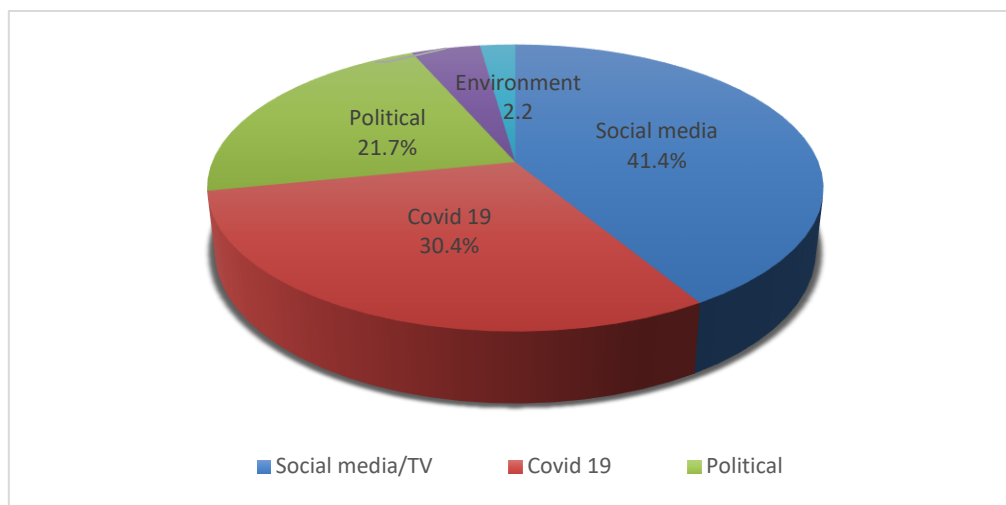
Thematic groups	Total number of euphemisms	Number of euphemisms in each group	In percents (%)
Covid 19	347	155	44.7%
Modern lifestyle		56	16.1%
Economics		53	15.3%
Social media/Show business / TV		52	15%
Politics		31	1



**Chart 2.** Percentage of the thematic groups of the euphemisms analyzed

Thus, we can conclude that the theme describing the course of main political issues nowadays is Covid-19, the frightful source of infinite contagion and deaths. Euphemisms successfully veil or minimize the hints of death and massive contagions. Massive contagions and deaths cannot be avoided yet; however, it is possible to avoid mentioning it by using euphemisms. Thus, there is a clear tendency to justify and veil these unwanted results by using euphemisms.

We also calculated the correlation of the thematic frequency of dysphemisms in the political media texts analyzed:



**Chart 3.** Percentage of the thematic groups of the dysphemisms analyzed

**Table 3.** Thematic groups of the euphemisms analyzed

Thematic groups	Total number of dysphemisms	Number of dysphemisms in each group	In percents (%)
Social media/Show business/ TV	46	19	41.4%
Covid 19		14	30.4%
Politics		10	21.7%
Economics		2	4.3%
Environment		1	2.2%

As it is seen from the table, dysphemisms, like euphemisms, can formally convey the same information, only with a different evaluative interpretation. These language units are a means of imparting negative evaluative coloring and focusing primarily on a negative impact of speech. Forming a negative attitude towards the subject of speech, actions and phenomena is the main task of dysphemisms. Through tactics of humiliation and accusation, dysphemisms implement the strategy of discrediting in newspaper articles on political issues. As it is obvious from the chart above, social media/show business/TV is still the leading thematic group for unfavorable criticism in English press in relation to Covid-19.

## 5. Conclusions

Euphemisms and dysphemisms are tactical linguistic means widely used in political media discourse by which the desired pragmatic effect of the speech act is achieved. They are also a way to target impact on massive audiences in political newspaper texts, which is implemented through speech strategies, above all, the tactics of discredit. The objective of these tactics in political texts is to mock or humiliate a target of discredit, to expose true activities of political figures and government which

can be realized both through dysphemisms and euphemisms. In this context, dysphemisms can be represented by means of English words and expressions with negative meaning, as well as the completely neutral English words or expressions which acquire negative evaluation in context. What concerns English euphemisms and dysphemisms representing the tactics of mockery in political media discourse, they are ironic in nature.

According to the analysis employed, we can also conclude that within the same text both the patterns (dysphemistic and euphemistic irony) can be used to create rhetorical contrast - euphemism creates a more neutral impression of the situations described, dysphemism, on the contrary, serves to create a negative assessment of actions or events.

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