



مجلة كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية

مجلة علمية فصلية محكمة تصدرها كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية جامعة ذي قار

المجلد الرابع عشر، العدد الأول 2024

ISSN:2707-5672

A Cognitive Stylistic Study of Euphemism in Shaw's Play Candida

Haneen Bander Hussain¹

Asst.prof. Marzooqa T. Raheel^{2*}

Prof.Dr. Ansam A. Flefil Al Hussainaway^{3**}

marzooqa.t.raheel@utq.edu.iq*

dr.ansam-ali@utq.edu.iq**

^{1,2,3}Department of English language, College of Education for humanities,
University of Thi-Qar, Thi Qar, Iraq

Abstract

Euphemism is used daily but remains unnoticed by us because we use it frequently due to our needs as human beings to sustain good social relationships. Since people created the earliest euphemisms to address themes important to their social lives—particularly concerns like death, religion, and other connected topics—they have a social element. Therefore, it did not remain obvious how to create and understand euphemisms, their most crucial factor. A cognitive stylistic investigation of euphemism aims to uncover the mechanisms that facilitate this process and examine how euphemisms are used in everyday language. This study try to achieve its aims by analysing Shaw's play "Candida" to find out the strategies of euphemism production used in the play.

Keywords: Cognitive Stylistics, Euphemism

دراسة اسلوبية ادراكية للتلطيف اللغوي في مسرحية بيرنارد شو كانديدا

حنين بندر حسين¹

ا.م. مرزوقه طعمه رحيل²

ا.د. انسام علي فليفل³

^{1,2,3} قسم اللغة الانكليزية. كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية، جامعة ذي قار، العراق

المستخلص

يتم استخدام التعبير اللطيف يومياً ولكننا لا نلاحظه لأننا نستخدمه بشكل متكرر بسبب احتياجاتنا كبشر للحفاظ على علاقات اجتماعية جيدة. نظراً لأن الناس ابتكروا العبارات اللطيفة المبكرة لمعالجة موضوعات مهمة لحياتهم الاجتماعية - لا سيما مخاوف مثل الموت والدين والمواضيع الأخرى ذات الصلة - فإن لديهم عنصراً اجتماعياً. لذلك ، لم يبق واضحاً كيفية إنشاء وفهم التعبيرات اللطيفة ، وهي العامل الأكثر أهمية. يهدف التحقيق الأسلوبي المعرفي في التعبير اللطيف إلى الكشف عن الآليات التي تسهل هذه العملية ودراسة كيفية استخدام التعبيرات اللطيفة في اللغة اليومية. تحاول هذه الدراسة تحقيق أهدافها من خلال تحليل مسرحية شو "كانديدا" لمعرفة استراتيجيات إنتاج التعبير اللطيف المستخدم في المسرحية

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاسلوبية الادراكية، التلطيف

1. Introduction

A euphemism is a common word or phrase in everyday language and conversation. It allows us to have comfortable conversations without using unsettling language. Allan & Kate (1993:24) define euphemism as an alternative to a dispreferred expression to avoid possible loss of face: either one's face or, through offending, that of the audience or of some third party.

According to today's society, the terminology has been referred to as "dispreferred expressions" or "forbidden terms", often pertaining to taboo subjects. In its original sense, taboo refers to banned behaviour (the term was adapted from the Tongan language, an Austronesian language). It was outlawed because it was seen to be harmful to some people or society. The taboo violations automatically result in the violator's or their compatriots' harm (or death). However, many of the taboo terms we discuss are avoided because their use is considered offensive in a particular social context. They are avoided not out of concern that the speaker or hearer may suffer physical or metaphysical harm but rather out of concern that the speaker does not look good by offending the hearer's sensibilities. Due to the alleged harshness or ugly nature of the taboo phrases, some speakers would argue that using them would hurt their sensibilities. Li(2019:83)

Mcarthur (1992:387) mentioned that the word "euphemism" is derived from the Greek word "euphimismos", composed of "eu", which means "well or good", and "pheme", which means "speaking". The morphological form of the word means "to speak auspiciously or with good omen". Al-Shamali (1997:67) asserted that the usage of euphemisms relies on substituting acceptable words or phrases for socially taboo ones.

Euphemism represents a pragmatic decision the language user makes at a specific interactional juncture. Contextual considerations, such as the social connection between the speaker and addressee or the degree of formality caused by the situation, often influence language users' selection of euphemisms. Euphemisms often result from a language user's wish to avoid terms deemed taboo by the speech community. Typically, this is because what is taboo is repulsive, untouchable, dirty, unmentionable, hazardous, frightening, and fascinating, but above all, potent. (Epstien, 1985:97)

Yule (1996:60) alludes inferentially to the use of euphemisms in terms of courtesy and face-saving, both of which pertain to pragmatics. He expresses it thus: "Face refers to a person's public persona. It refers to each individual's emotional and social sense of self and expects others to acknowledge." However, euphemisms may also be deceptive and misrepresent the truth. Some people may see them as a mask concealing an unpleasant reality. This manifests in what is known as "Doublespeak", a kind of

deception that refers to the deliberate distortion of language and reverses the meaning of words. Both euphemism and doublespeak are related phenomena where something is expressed indirectly. Doublespeak may take the form of euphemism, but euphemism is not the only form of doublespeak. Then, euphemisms are used to attain appropriateness and civility and disguise the stain they conceal. Euphemisms may be categorized based on the semantic domains they pertain to. Furthermore, it is possible to create euphemisms in different ways. Some of these techniques are as follows:

- using long phrases or words to make unpleasant (ex: mentally challenged for stupid, perspiration for stupid)
- using foreign words to replace unpleasant words.(ex: faux for fake)
- using an abbreviation (ex: WC for toilet)

Keyes (2010) claims that "euphemism is a key indicator of increasing complexity of speech, what we mean takes a high order of intelligence. It takes an even higher order to not say what we mean while still conveying our thought."

This study will investigate euphemism production strategies from the conceptual Metaphor Theory and Blending Theory perspective to explain how people produce euphemisms smoothly in their daily lives by mapping through their conceptual system.

2. Strategies of Euphemism Production

According to Allan and Burridge(1991), many euphemisms are metaphorical; many have caused or are causing semantic change; others exhibit exceptional originality in either figure or form; and some are undeniably humorous. Euphemism can be achieved through antithetical means, such as circumlocution and abbreviation, acronym, or even complete omission, as well as by one-for-one substitution; by general-for-specific and part-for-whole substitution(terms we prefer to the more traditional' synecdoche and metonymy'); by hyperbole and understatement; by the use of learned terms or technical jargon in place of common terms; and by the use, Many academic terminology and technical jargon are either derived from or borrowed from another language; in English, these phrases are mostly taken from Latin or Ancient Greek. Most languages have some euphemisms derived from loanwords or morphs.

2.1 Warren's classification

Warren (1992:472), postulated four major processes for euphemism creation. Each euphemism-generating gadget comprises subcategories. Warren(1992) argued that euphemisms can be discussed based on context, and she studied how euphemisms are created. The strategies for creating euphemism will be discussed in detail as the following:

1. Word formation devices: This device contains five methods of euphemism formation:

1.1 Compounding; the practice of combining two or more words to make a new term, such as homework (home + work).

1.2 Derivation: it is used when a foreign term is modified by adding a native prefix to its root.

1.3 Onomatopoeia; is the word that describes and mimics the sound of an object or an action. For example, a dog's bark, a snake's hiss, etc.

1.4 Acronyms: combining the beginning letters of two or more words and pronouncing them as a single word, as in NASA for "National Aeronautics and Space Administration."

1.5 Blending: it is a process of word construction in which the beginning of one word and the end of another are combined to make a new word, such as brunch (breakfast + lunch).

2. Phonemic modification; Warren provides four subcategories of this device:

2.1 Abbreviation: refers to words created by removing one or more syllables from a lengthier word or phrase without altering its meaning, such as flu from influenza.

2.2 Back slang; is the practice of speaking words as though they were spelt backwards (e.g., redraw forwarder).

2.3 Rhyming Slang; creating euphemisms through phonetic rhyme with undesirable coordinates like apples and Pears - stairs: "Let's get you up those apples and pears."

2.4 Phonemic Replacement; refers to the re-modelling of forbidden words by matching part of them with semantically unrelated ones (e.g., sugar and shoot for crap) (Allan & Burridge, 1991, p. 15)

3. Loan Word.

4. Semantic Innovation: This device has seven sub-devices: Particularization, Implication, Metaphor, Metonym, Reversal, Understatement and Overstatement. This study will focus exclusively on semantic innovation devices.

3. The Functions of Euphemism

Euphemism is referred to as "linguistic fig leaves" and "verbal flourishes" by Rawson (1995:167). The former encapsulates the purpose of euphemisms, which is to conceal or conceal anything uncomfortable. This emphasizes the decorative purpose of euphemism in boosting the acceptability of what is communicated. Rawson classifies the first kind as unfavourable because it provides a protective role and the second type as positive because it serves an inflating function.

Allan (2006:98) suggests two primary motivations and purposes for using euphemisms: to substitute taboo word(s) and to hide offensive facts to prevent offending. Meanwhile, euphemisms' roles may be categorized based on how they add to the context.

According to Maziah (2007:20), euphemism serves four functions: to transmit fresh information, determine the writer's perspective, the writer's attitude toward the truth value, and as a discourse signal. Lakoff in Allan (2016) adds to these functions the political euphemisms that indicate a reader's attitude to anything in extralinguistic contexts, including apology, denial, persuasion, curse, request, critique, inquiry, promise, and command.

On the contrary, Burridge (2012:46) identified six categories of euphemisms with sharper functional distinctions: 1) protecting euphemisms, 2) underhanded euphemisms, 3) uplifting euphemisms, 4) provocative euphemisms, 5) socially cohesive euphemisms, and 6) ludic euphemisms. The distinctions between these tasks could be more precise, and one euphemism might serve numerous purposes.

Burridge (ibid:67) defines the protective function as the purpose to "shield and avert offence." Euphemism prevents language users from addressing linguistic taboos or unspoken concerns. Veiled and indirect allusions to taboo issues like death, sex, incest, sickness, private parts, and private body processes generally serve this objective. In addition to universal euphemisms for death, items associated with death also have euphemistic names. In a number of languages, the name of the location where the deceased are stored has no direct allusion to death. Numerous European languages contain versions of the Latin term *mors*, meaning "death," to avoid their local words for death or corpse.

Protection is also recommended when direct and specific remarks may insult or discriminate against certain groups. For instance, euphemisms are often used to describe obese individuals in societies where a thin physique is considered desirable. Big and plus-sized are synonyms for 'fat' in English.(ibid)

Protective euphemisms are prevalent in discourses on politics and policy, marketing, health, and the military when white-washing is the objective. Lutz (2000: 48-49) contends that such "technical, impersonal, bureaucratic, euphemistic language" is a linguistic cover-up for the horror of war. As a result, it "separates the act of killing from

the concept of killing" and provides a "psychological detachment from the tragedy of war itself. He concludes that the first casualty of war is language and, with it, the truth. While underhanded euphemisms are especially prevalent in the military vocabulary because of the chilling facts they are meant to conceal, they may be found whenever the truth is thought to be harsh or inconvenient. Two common euphemisms in the English language are unfavourable health care results for patient mortality and revenue improvement for tax. While the former avoids reality, the latter gives it a good spin. Lutz (2000:230) satirizes such euphemisms as "falsehoods masquerading as the truth" as archetypes of doublespeak.

According to opponents of doublespeak, communication aims to communicate the truth and nothing but the truth, eliminating the necessity for euphemisms (Lutz,2000). However, stating the truth is more complex. The explanation for this is the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, according to Saussure (1959), who emphasizes that there is no inherent relationship between the signifier and the signified. Therefore, the arbitrariness generates a representational loophole that replaces an unpleasant signifier with a less unwanted signifier. Cameron (1995) contends that the "irreducible gap between words and objects" allows for euphemism in developing political positions. In this regard, euphemism is a necessary and helpful framing tool in the sense of Goffman (1974) and a spin device in the sense of Fairhurst and Sarr (1996).

Euphemisms are prevalent. La Cour and Kromann (2011) discovered, through a quantitative analysis of the corporate social responsibility reports of the 50 largest multinational corporations, that euphemisms were widely used to manage the communication of the economic interest vis-à-vis the philanthropic interest while avoiding the charge of hypocrisy. 77% of firms, for instance, employed one or more euphemisms for "employee" to conceal its economic link. These terms included "ambassador," "people," "volunteer," "teammate," "hero," "champion," and "associate." Notably, although remaining mute on the money aspect, a few of these products go the additional mile to highlight the altruism and civic spirit fundamental to the charitable purpose. In this regard, they may be said to provide an elevating role.

Burridge (1991:133) defines the uplifting function of euphemisms as praising or enlarging a subject. This function encompasses a variety of labels used to promote less prestigious social positions. The term engineer is a popular energizer. It may be paired with other modifiers somewhat indexical of the social positions in the issue, such as "domestic engineer" for a stay-at-home parent and "sanitation engineer" for a waste collector. In communist China, instructors were known as *linghn gngchéngsh*, which literally translates to "soul engineers." Similar euphemistic uses of the term "technician" include "debris disposal technician," whose job is to collect trash, and "nail technician," whose job is to do manicures and pedicures. Rawson (1995) defines technician as an "all-purpose word for uplifting employment names" (Al Azzam et al., 2017). Historically reserved for the social aristocracy but later given to commoners as a form

of flattery, address names such as the German Frau and the English lady are instances of talking-up as the original impetus for their semantic expansion through time (Keller, 1990). A change in emphasis is typically required for euphemisms to serve their uplifting effect. In a society obsessed with body image issues, the usage of curvaceous to describe plus-size women (another euphemism) fosters self-assurance and body acceptance.

Under "provocative euphemisms," Burrige (2012) highlights what is popularly known as a double entendre that hides "just as little as to be all the more titillating," such as the sex taboo-bending Camera Song by Grit Laskin. Burrige compares this kind of euphemism to what she refers to as political correctness euphemisms that "address preconceptions contained in language." However, it is important to note that language-based biases tend to be purposely disparaging and offensive. In other words, they often use dysphemisms. If this is the case, positive labels rejecting these preconceptions should be termed anti-dysphemisms rather than euphemisms. For instance, the Chinese feminist neologism shèngni 'triumphant lady' provides a potent challenge to the patriarchal gender system in which young women are expected to marry. It is a lexical repudiation of the homophonous term shèngnu 'leftover woman', a disparaging term designed to humiliate and control contemporary professional women who are highly educated, financially and emotionally independent from men, and who are typically unmarried (ibid).

By exchanging the homophonous morpheme of the first syllable, it stimulates and rejects misogyny and empowers women in their search for independence. Is this euphemism provocative? Insofar as the 'victorious woman' retaliates against a sexist assault on female freedom and self-determination, it is not so much a euphemism as an anti-dysphemism. Anti-dysphemism, which is seen as a euphemism, supports the dominance of the dysphemism it pretends to oppose. Cameron (1995: 145) argues that "simply because one phrase is regarded more polite than other expressions does not inevitably make it a euphemism." Polite language about disability may look provocative and euphemistic to those who mock "politically correct" terminology. Consequently, there is a caveat to the concept of provocative euphemism if we fail to question the position from which a phrase is seen as provocative and euphemistic (ibid).

A cursory examination of institutional norms on disability terminology indicates that there is also a semantic case against classifying polite phrases as euphemisms. Respectful disability language does not achieve its purpose by using "deliberately oblique" and "traditionally inaccurate" "feel-good" terms. The Stanford University Disability Language Guide, for instance, states that the term "those with a disability" is true and does not avoid discussing disability. In this regard, it is fundamentally distinct from euphemisms used to evade a harsh referential reality, such as differently-abled, challenged, and handi-capable. The Guide warns that they are condescending because they "reinforce the sense that disability is something to be embarrassed about" by not

discussing disability. This illustration demonstrates that Euphemisms may be used to foster group cohesion. They maintain group confidentiality in settings involving aberrant behaviour, thereby verging on code language. This is the social cohesiveness function, according to Burrige (2012).

Insofar as some euphemisms are meant to conceal information about illegal acts, they serve a literal protection purpose while also providing an in-group recognition mechanism. Moreover, if these euphemisms improve the prestige of what they allude to, they may be uplifting for the relevant group. Exemplary terms for drugs and drug usage are slang terms. Some marijuana consumers, for instance, refer to themselves as herbalists or herbivores and use the term entrepreneur to describe a distributor or dealer. Burchfield (1985: 29) argued that "a language without euphemisms would be a defective instrument of communication". Given euphemism's many roles in controlling language behaviour and its diverse communication tasks, Burchfield's claim is not exaggerated.

4. Methodology and Data Analysis

4.1 Methodology

The data under analysis is Shaw's Pleasant play "Candida". This study employs a cognitive model. That is, it explicates how to generate euphemisms in everyday life. In this respect, the research employs an eclectic analytical model. It involves the strategies of generating euphemism, precisely metaphor and metonymy, Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff and Johnson(1980) and Blending Theory by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (2002).

The study analyses euphemistic expressions according to conceptual metaphor theory by Lakoff & Johnson(1980), which is one of the most essential terms in cognitive linguistics. It refers to the process of establishing cognitive links, or mapping, between several concepts(conceptual structure) and the blending theory by Fauconnier &Turner(2002), which is a mental or cognitive semantics theory that locates meaning in speakers' mental representations and construes linguistic structure as cues that prompt speakers to set up elements in the referential structure.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson first proposed the Conceptual Metaphor theory in their 1980 book *Metaphors We Live By* 1980, and it has been refined in several later works. Conceptual metaphor theory was one of the first identifiable theoretical frameworks in the cognitive semantics effort. It supplied a significant amount of the early theoretical push for the cognitive approach. The core assumption of Conceptual Metaphor Theory is that metaphor is not only a stylistic aspect of language but also that mind is metaphorical by nature. According to this perspective, conceptual structure is

organized per cross-domain mappings or conceptual domain correspondences. Some of these mappings result from pre-conceptual embodied experiences, whilst others build on these experiences to produce a more sophisticated conceptual structure.

Conceptual Blending Theory is described by Fauconnier and Turner (2002) in terms of "mental spaces,... tiny conceptual packets" coupled to "long-term schematic information termed 'frames'" and "long-term specialized knowledge" (ibid:40). The mental areas are shown by circles, with pertinent information presented either symbolically or in reduced form (see Figure 3). The concept proposes a minimum of four mental spaces:

- Two input spaces
- a generic space containing what the two inputs have in common
- a blended space including components from each input area

The blended space may also include extra components ("emergent structure"), such as new elements recovered from long-term memory or emerging from comparison of elements obtained from distinct inputs or through elaboration on elements in the blended space ("running the blend") (ibid).

4.2 Data Analysis

This section describes the method of analysis followed in this study, which analyzed Shaw's play *Candida* and the strategies of euphemism in that play. Moreover, it measures the frequency of these strategies and analyses them according to Conceptual metaphor and Blending Theory.

5. Conclusions

This study concludes that the concepts one has about the world around him/her significantly affect his/her linguistic behaviour and word choices. Moreover, euphemism production and understanding are not affected by the environment; they are more related to the conceptual system, the way that the person conceptualizes the world around him a that people utter euphemisms as part of their conceptual system.

References

- Al-Azzam, Bakri, Mohammad Al-Ahaydib, Norah Alkhawaiter & Husam Al-Momani. 2017. Social and cultural euphemism in Saudi Arabic: A semantic, a pragmatic and a sociolinguistic analysis. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies* .
- Allan, Keith, and Kate Burridge. 1993. *Euphemism & dysphemism: Language used as shield and weapon*. USA: Oxford University Press.

- Al-Shamali, F. 1997. Facets of Euphemism in Jordan Valley Dialect. Unpublished M.A.Thesis, Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan.
- Burridge, Kate. 2012. "Euphemism and language change: The sixth and seventh ages." Lexis
- Cameron, Deborah. 1995. Verbal Hygiene. London/New York: Routledge.
- Epstein, J. (1985). 'sex and euphemism' in Enright, D.J. (Ed.), Fair of Speech: The Uses of Euphemism.
- Ham, K. (2005),The linguistics of euphemism: a diachronic study of euphemism formation. Journal of Language and Linguistics.
- Hasselgard, Hild. 1999. Glossary of Grammatical Terms Used in English Grammar: Theory and Use. London: Routledge.
- Keith Allan and Kate Burridge, Euphemism and Dysphemism. Oxford University Press, 1991)
- Keyes, Ralph. Euphemania: Our Love Affair with Euphemisms. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2010. Print.
- Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980). Metaphors We Live By. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press
- Lakoff, G., M. Johnson (1980). Metaphors we live by. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Li, K. (2016). The Intentionality Study of Euphemism. Foreign Language Research, 2, 83–87.
- Liu, C. B. (2002). English Euphemism Dictionary. Beijing: The Commercial Press
- Lutz, William 2000. Nothing in life is certain except negative patient care outcome and revenue enhancement. Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy 44(3): 230-233.
- Rawson, H. 1995. Dictionary of Euphemisms and Other Doubletalk (Rev. ed.). New York: Crown.
- Warren, Beatrice. 1992. What euphemisms tell us about the interpretation of words. Studia linguistica (128-172).
- Yule, G. (1996).Pragmatics ,Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 60.16.