THE PRAGMATIC ASPECTS OF ENGLISH EUPHEMISMS AND DYSPHEMISM'S OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA POLITICAL DISCOURSE

[a]IRYNA OSTAPCHUK, [b]IRYNA SHULIAK, [c]IRINA SEREBRIANSKA, [d]TETIANA BONDARENKO, [e]NATALIIA SHKVORCHENKO

[a]*Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, Ternopil, Ukraine,* [b]*Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, Ternopil, Ukraine,* [c]*Nizhyn Mykola Gogol State University, Nizhyn, Ukraine,* [d]*National technical university of Ukrain Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnical institute, Kyiv, Ukraine,* [e]*International humanitarian university, Kyiv, Ukraine email:* [a]*irinagumenna@gmail.com,* [b]*i.m.shuliak@gmail.com,* [c]*serebryanska@ukr.net,* [d]*tb.bondarenko@gmail.com,* [e]*nmshkvorchenko@gmail.com*

Abstract: The article aims to gain insight into the pragmatics and algorithms of the use of English euphemisms and dysphemisms in political discourse and promulgated in social media. The research methods are based on the socially-oriented approach to the analysis of discourse, politeness theory, and principles of linguistic pragmatics; the consideration of theoretical aspects involves the use of inductive and deductive methods; the use of semantic-stylistic and semantic-component methods of analysis allows to establish the semantic components of euphemisms and dysphemisms.

Keywords: political discourse, political euphemisms, dysphemism, English language, tropes, social media.

1 Introduction

The political discourse is integral to the successful functioning of social media, as it is the socio-political side of society that correlates with the management, development, and transformation of society. It is presented as a part and variable component of social relations, it puts forward political ideas and programs of action, dictates the policies of social groups, governments of nations, and contributes to the emergence and development of political projects in each society (Pauline et al., 2020; Crespo-Fernandez, 2014).

The political discourse largely depends on the choice and implementation of linguistic strategies and tropes, used within clearly thought out strategies and goals, which are also important tools for making sense of events, situations, and actions. The main goals of politicians, public figures, and entire parties, in general, are to attract as many supporters-voters as possible into their ranks, and this means trying to change, to transform public opinion in their favor, to induce potential voters to sympathy and sympathy. Crespo-Fernandez (2021) notes that a powerful weapon for politicians is rhetoric, the speech manipulation of the mass consciousness. It involves an abundant (but moderate) use of artistic and stylistic means, figurative expressions as tools to achieve ideological goals, realizes the intentions of attracting the audience to their side through the appeal to emotion, evaluation, cultural and national perception.

Euphemisms and dysphemisms are very effective and popular in modern media as elements of manipulation, social media being no exception, their research is relevant and necessary for understanding the trends of modern political discourse and programming of political rhetoric transformations, the pragmatics of social media genre system development.

In modern rhetoric, dysphemisms and euphemisms are quite standard tropes that are used in political discourse to interpret, manipulate the realities of social life and events in the necessary context for the politician, to criticize opponents, discuss controversial issues and comment on complex and unclear events (Ruiz, 2017; Herbert, 2016) the pragmatics of tropes in political discourse is to form a parallel reality, distort facts, events, actions. Euphemisms and dysphemisms are the results of secondary nomination, a tool of persuasion in the structure of manipulation of ideological attitudes (Ruiz, 2017), and the exercise of public control over political processes. The pragmatic purpose of dysphemisms and euphemisms in political discourse is to shape the image of a politician, the image of a political party, or assessments of social and political events, such tropes are often used to enhance the effect of what is said. The intention to use can be the pursuit of several political goals, among which are most often accusations, denunciations, criticism (dysphemism) and influence, uniqueness, relevance (euphemism). It opens up a large field for the implementation of research on the evolution of dysphemisms and euphemisms in political discourse.

The political discourse is a breeding ground for the formation of euphemisms and dysphemisms in social media. Both tropes play an important role in the public space, they illuminate political life, contribute to the formation of positive impressions of politics and negative impressions of opponents and their activities. That is why constant research attention should be paid to the directions of emergence, transformations, and changes in the English-language environment of the corpus of euphemisms and dysphemisms related to political topics and presented in the social media.

Aims. This research was aimed at determining the mechanisms of the formation of English dysphemisms and euphemisms of political discourse, as seen in social media.

In accordance with the aim the following research tasks were planned to be carried out:

- to identify the basic principles of action in the political discourse of ephemeral and dysphemisms mechanisms;
- to establish productive models of creation and frequency of use of dysphemisms and euphemisms.

2 Literature review

The pragmatics of political discourse formation in modern social media has been investigated in linguistics, sociology, and comunicativism in many positions: The idiostyle of individual politicians and their influence on branding development has been analyzed (Tereszkiewicz, 2021) patterns of contemporary English-language political discourse formation and the problem of populism have been determined (Breeze, 2020; Chilton, 2017) presented a cognitive analysis of media texts and political speeches of famous politicians and public figures (He, 2021; Aslanidis, 2016) considered the role of euphemisms and dysphemisms in the formation of medical discourse (Herbert, 2016) the study of trends in the formation and development of artistic and stylistic means, ethical aspects (Bonikowski, Noam, 2016).

Many researchers (Ruiz, 2017; Crespo-Fernández, 2021) interpret political discourse as a form of social interaction, contributes to the legitimization of power, shapes its sociopolitical contexts, and imposes social control involving media, and uses ideological work.

Many definitions of dysphemisms and euphemisms are presented in the scientific literature, but the study relies on those that define the main features of these tropes related to political discourse and social media possibilities. Rawson (1981) described euphemisms as powerful means of linguistic origin, unconsciously and regularly used by speakers and deeply embedded in communicative processes. The Oxford Dictionary (Euphemism, 2016) states that euphemisms are indirect figurative expressions that soften and replace overly harsh and crude expressions and concepts.

Political euphemisms have their own definition, they are defined according to their genre and thematic affiliation (Zhang, Lei, 2019; Pastukhova, 2016) and define language compounds that are intended to form a positive image of politicians, parties and their actions and the like.

The problems of the manipulative influence of artistic and stylistic means on the formation of modern political discourse, constantly influencing public opinion, acting at the level of social media, require further consideration.

3 Materials and research methods

The research uses a comprehensive approach to methodology. The theoretical aspects of the problem under study involve the use of inductive and deductive methods for analysis. The method of interdisciplinary research helps to identify the main trends and specifics of euphemistic and dysphemistic mechanisms formation. The use of semantic-stylistic and semantic-component methods of analysis allows to establish the semantic components of the investigated tropes. The data for the study are taken from speeches, public statements of politicians, articles, reports and interviews published in social media with multimedia function (YouTube, Skype, Livestream) media platforms (YouTube, MySpace), as well as taken from research materials and compilations. The sample covers 8 years (2013-2021), Comprising a total of 114 texts containing video, audio and print texts, in which 265 euphemisms and dysphemisms used in social media are highlighted. We analyzed texts (45 units) where euphemisms and dysphemisms were used. A homogeneous sample was formed for the purpose of thematic and structural unity and to minimize the variants of the variable in the semantic components. We are aware that the study cannot be exhaustive. Small samples, which were taken, does not allow to quantitatively assess the reliability of the data. However, the basic principles of data compilation and their representativeness for analysis were presented, admissible in discourse studies. The sampling of euphemisms and dysphemisms meets the basic requirements of analysis in discourse studies. A decisive parameter in the research is to ensure the thematic homogeneity of the selected units. This sufficient number of units and examples makes it possible to show the main patterns, thematic groups and trends in the formation of dysphemisms and euphemisms.

4 Result

In modern rhetoric and text linguistics, there are a sufficient number of definitions of the concept of "euphemism", and given the pragmatics of its use in modern political discourse, such definitions are multidimensional.

The define political euphemism as a tool to control the transmission of information, the service of political goals, in general, the pragmatic aspects of the existence of euphemisms lie in the possibility of transformation of political discourse. Euphemisms and dysphemisms are used to hide unpleasant and disturbing news, when one wants to embellish the truth, to weaken the effect of the real facts, while dysphemisms, on the contrary, are designed, to create a higher level of sound, to transform public opinion and be a tool for changing public opinion, especially within social issues and political events.

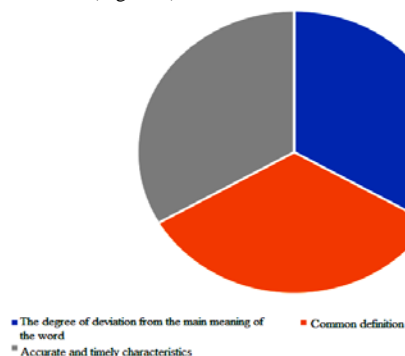In these terms, euphemisms can be presented as a threefold mechanism (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – The euphemistic mechanism
(Author's source)

1. The degree of deviation from the main meaning of the word. The use of a certain trope (dysphemism, euphemism) depends on how much the author of the text wants to avoid its meaning and connotations associated with the main word, fact. For example, this is done to lessen the severity of the problem, the level of tension, and discontent in society. Politicians have often tried to avoid the term "medium-range missile" by referring to it as a "medium-range missile". The American politicians use the euphemism "rescue mission" instead of "invasion" and others. In the Panama military conflict, the name "Operation Just Cause" emerges, and the war in Iraq is referred to as "Operation Iraqi Freedom".

2. The pragmatic use of euphemisms is also dictated by an attempt to soften the impression of what is said, the intention to create a system of hints within taboo or socially acute topics. Thus, "prostitute" from the mouths of politicians speaking on social media becomes "commercial sex worker," "accommodating women. And the topic of military aggression in the air "air attacks," if necessary, becomes "air operations" (Holder, 1996).

3. Labeling and timely characterization can be expressed as either a euphemism or a dysphemism. But this is an important aspect of the creation, successful functioning of tropes of this type. For example, the name genocide is often replaced in social media by "ethnic cleansing," it is recognizable and commonly used. And "killing people on your own side" is often called "friendly fire" in the news media and criminal chronicles.

A dysphemism in the media space is primarily a stylistic figure, which is the opposite of a euphemism. It is associated with the use of pejorative vocabulary, designed to show disdain for the described subject, it is devoid of journalistic correctness of expression vulgar and deliberately colloquial or slang used with the pragmatic purpose of humiliating, show the author's negative attitude, anger, and irritation of the presented and described.

In the media industry, dysphemism is used to express criticism, denial, negative attitude towards a person, phenomenon, or fact. In general, dysphemism is an effective way to create a negative image of a politician, event, public organization, even the state in figurative form, using several different types of tropes, showing the negative aspects, and mocking them.

The purpose of using dysphemisms in media and political communications is to represent a negative, emphasized disdainful attitude towards the object of speech, the desire to brightly highlight its features and comic in behavior, situations, actions. The range of used for this linguistic material is determined by the stylistic breadth and lack of restrictions: it can be both normative lexicon, and colloquial expressions, and slang, and argot, and profanity, in particular. For example, to avoid names of unpopular professions and economic changes, for example: "economic crisis" is replaced by "economic downturn" (Worst Economic Downturn, 2001).

In academic practice, it is common to distinguish a number of functions and pragmatics of the use of dysphemisms as a type of pejorative vocabulary. It is the statement of characteristics that are taboo in normative communication – considered indecent or immoral; the emotional and evaluative effect of dislike, disapproval; a negative view of an individual and its impact; explication of discontent and anger satire on the unacceptability of the existing situation; the depiction of negative aspects of the character, situation; emotion of anger and discontent; amplification of negative in an image or situation; litany as a basis of tropeistic image of low value. For example, "the Fourth World" refers to the world's poorest and most underdeveloped countries; Trump labels the coronavirus as – *foreign virus, Covid-19 is an enemy; an invisible enemy, a dangerous threat, a global battle (*Trump's Covid-19 Speeches, 2020*).

The main function of dysphemism is critical thought about events, persons, satire, deliberate humiliation of the object of criticism, the intensity of anger, frustration and rejection of the existing situation, then negatively assessed by the author of the journalistic work, leads to negative consequences. With a certain amount of irony were

expressed about the activities of the Trump administration at the expense of the expression "un-Bush like program/statement".

As shown in the figure 2, the pragmatics of the presentation of political discourse in social media necessitates the use of dysphemisms. Dysphemistic complexes are presented in social media through a number of models: dysphemism + litotes; dysphemism + comparison, dysphemism + hyperbole, dysphemism + metaphor, dysphemism + personification.
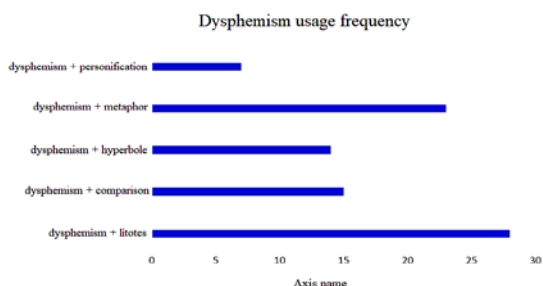

Figure 2 **–** Dysphemism usage frequency (author's note)
(Author's source)

As the research shows, the most popular in political discourse are dysphemisms-metaphors (23 units) and dysphemisms-litotes (28 units). They serve in political discourse to soften and weaken the negative meaning of several problems and the names associated with them. These are, first of all, the themes of unpopular professions, the theme of violence and war. For example, many euphemisms and dysphemisms have been created for the concept of "terrorist" (bomber/attacker/assailants/captors/group/guerrillas/gunmen/extremists/insurgent / militant/misguided criminals/fighters/hostage-taker/radicals/rebels/separatists).

As shown in the figure 3, euphemistic complexes are also used in political discourse. They may consist of the following models: euphemism + litotes (17 units), euphemism + comparison (10 units), euphemism + hyperbole (12 units), euphemism + metaphor (21 units), euphemism + personification (4 units).
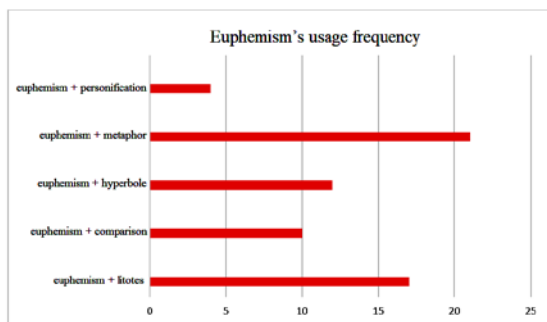

Figure 3 – Euphemism's usage frequency (author's note)
(Author's source)

The formation of the image completeness occurs due to the enhancement of euphemisms and dysphemisms themselves by additional artistic and stylistic means. Tautologies can also be an important part of euphemisms and dysphemisms. Other tropes are not second-hand but are also used in the political discourse of social media.

1. Tautologies are quite popular on Twitter. For example, D. Trump uses them in his expressions: Under the last administration, more than 10 million people were added to the food stamps rolls. Under my administration, 7 million Americans have come off of food stamps... In 8 years under the last administration, over 300.000 working-age people dropped out of the workforce. In just 3 years of my administration, 3,5 million working-age people have joined the workforce.

2. The political discourse is often represented by hyperboles as well.: Our military is completely rebuilt, with its power being unmatched anywhere in the world; reduced state of awareness (Holder, 1996); «Worst economic downturn in 50 years» ('Worst Economic Downturn' in 50 Years); unprecedented effort.
3. The usage of metaphors in the structure of euphemism or dysphemism is also quite regular, e.g., rest in eternal glory; The American patient should never be blindsided by medical bills (it's not allowed to put the eyes down); American leadership.
4. The usage of the comparison in the structure of dysphemisms and euphemisms is also productive: Although he never wound up as a street person, his life was a journey of terror and fear» (Brown, 1991), un-Bush like programme/statement.
5. Dysphemisms and euphemisms + personification. They are designed to denote professions and are also used to express high emotions and pathos. For example, blue-collar boom; our hearts weep for your loss.
6. Litotes are also used to increase the effect, e.g., freedom in our hemisphere (Tweeter); torturous – "alternative procedures" (Bush Jr. authorship) (Mariner, 2006); prison – correctional facilities.

The use of euphemisms and dysphemisms is also very popular in social media. This is dictated by the need to adhere to the rules of political correctness, the requirements for using social media and the need to form a positive image.

5 Discussion

The broad field of euphemisms and dysphemisms leads to several broad interpretations of these concepts proper. Many studies (Keating, 2021; Encarnación, Benítez-Castro, 2021) also perceive abbreviations in certain contexts as euphemistic forms. These are, for example, entities such as AIDS, ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). In our study we did not include abbreviations in the list of euphemistic components, because abbreviations are not products of secondary nomination, they are complex abbreviated words formed from initial (initials) letters, perform only the functions of informative compression and economy in the speech stream.

Pastukhova studied euphemisms in the social and political sphere in English-language political discourse (Pastukhova, 2016) and determined that these tropes are used in significant numbers in political discourse. They are notable for the wide range of issues raised, softening the fervor of discussions in the social sphere, and defining the sharp corners of world development (Chilton, 2017). According to the results of our research, a sufficient number of euphemisms and dysphemisms used in political discourse are also presented in social media. Euphemisms and dysphemisms are characterized by a wealth of forms and mechanisms of influence. Within social media, the issue of violence, death, and torture, and the private lives of politicians, public figures, and politicians are actively subject to euphemization.

As this research shows, the presentation of political discourse in social media demonstrates the tendency for civil society to move closer to the political institution of power.

6 Conclusion

The conducted research shows that in social media the use of euphemisms and dysphemisms is popular, it is an important part of the construction and definition of political discourse. Such tropes act as ways of softening taboo topics and names, careful naming of unpopular professions, occupations, morally condemned social statuses, difficult situations, aggressive actions of politicians – they serve to transform the image positions of politicians and political parties, famous persons, public organizations, projects and the like.

The pragmatics of using dysphemisms and euphemisms is also dictated by their organization, the presence of several productive models that allow for the use of dysphemisms and euphemisms, litotes, hyperbolas, metaphors, personifications, comparisons, as well as tautology in the complex. It primarily contributes to avoiding the use of profanity, violating linguistic standards and the rules of broadcasting. Such tropes mechanisms make the problem search more attractive, more acceptable, or, on the contrary, reinforce the aversion to acute problems, deviations from standards.

In general, politically correct speech contributes to creating a positive impression, fulfilling the main goal of political propaganda – to convince the audience, to make the necessary decisions for politicians, power institutions, political and social currents.

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