

EUPHEMISM USED BY DONALD TRUMP AND HILLARY CLINTON IN THE 2016 POLITICAL DEBATE

Roaini Shaunaa, Nurul Chojimah, Eni Sugiharyanti
Universitas Brawijaya

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CORRESPONDENCE

E-mail: shaunaaroini@ub.ac.id

A B S T R A C T

This study aimed to investigate the types and functions of euphemism expressions used by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in a political debate text, and also to reveal the differences between men and women in the use of euphemisms under the theory of language and gender. This study used descriptive qualitative. The data of this study were the words, phrases, clauses, and sentences uttered by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in a political debate and were collected by transcription technique. The data then were analyzed in the form of euphemism guided by Warren's (1992) model of euphemism and the functions of euphemism by the theory of Ryabova (2013). The result found 25 data of euphemisms. There were 10 euphemism expressions used by Donald Trump and 15 euphemism expressions used by Hillary Clinton. The result showed that women used euphemistic expressions more frequently than men because women prefer to be more polite and less direct directives than men.

Introduction

Language is a key tool to communication. The existence of language helps people in communicating or expressing their opinions (Poole 1999, p.8), he states that “Our utterances have a variety of functions in addition to communicating facts; we may speak to express our emotions for example or to reinforce a relationship with somebody”. In relation to the study of language, since the 1960s, the study of gender differences in language use has been an important topic in the field of sociolinguistics. According to Tannen (1990: 85), males and females have different ways of communication, males prefer to use language to acquire status, while females use language to negotiate proximity and intimacy. Lakoff (1975) argues that certain linguistic disparities are produced by gender differences and reflect real social inequality between men and women.

However, in the realm of language and communication, not all types of language can be spoken in public. There are some parts of language such as words, phrase, or sentence that cannot be spoken which is called taboo words that include some subjects such as sex, death, excretion, bodily function, politics, and religious matter (Wardhaugh, 2006, p.238). Taboo words usually used when people want to show their annoyance, astonishment, hatred, etc (Alfarisi et al. 2019). Hence, euphemism emerges to make words, phrases, or sentences more acceptable to society. According to Allan and Burridge (1991), a euphemism is an expression intended by the speaker to be less unpleasant, distressing, or troubling to the listener than the word or phrase it replaces. Allan & Burridge (1991) then divided types of euphemism into several categories, they are metaphor, hyperbole, circumlocution, initialism, acronym, omission, general for specific (hypernym), understatement, colloquial, jargon, and figurative expression. Moreover, Ryabova (2013) explained that euphemism have several functions such used to disguise names that have frightening or frightening connotations or meanings, to replace unpleasant words with disgusting referential meanings, to describe situations or

phenomena that are considered unpleasant, indecent, or unsocial at the time, to avoid using the direct name for fear of offending the listener or a third party, to soften or obscure the true character of things, and to designate non-prestigious professions and jobs in order to elevate their status.

Furthermore, due to the existence of stereotypes of language and gender in society, men and women employ euphemistic expressions in different ways, despite women being more expressive and having more motives to utilize euphemisms than men (Fitriani, M., Syarif, H., & Wahyuni, D., 2019). Euphemism is utilized not only by ordinary people but also by public figures, whose language is constantly scrutinized by society, particularly by world leaders. According to a recent study conducted by Crespo (2014), politicians employed euphemisms to offer a positive perception of a controversial topic.

There were several studies about euphemisms that have been conducted, such as the study by Faoziah, M. F. (2017) which studied Donald Trump's speech on Afghanistan. The study found that the euphemistic expression was formed by combining words to refer to indirectly terrible terms since the speech talked about soldiers fighting to defend America. Another study also analyzed euphemism and its correlation to the study of language and gender, which is the study from Fitriani, M., Syarif, H., & Wahyuni, D. (2019). The study found that the use and function of euphemisms differ between men and women; where women used euphemisms more frequently than men, 39 times versus 33 times. In addition, women used a euphemism to show their social position to adjust to the expectation of women to be polite; while men used euphemisms mainly to show firmness and dissatisfaction in their speech.

Despite the insightful findings from the previous studies, several issues need to be addressed and elaborated more. Inevitably, several crucial questions are left glossed over by the previous articles. In the study from Fitriani, M., Syarif, H., & Wahyuni, D. (2019), the researchers conclude the types and function of euphemism yet do not explain in depth the relevant theory about the correlation between euphemism and the study of language and gender. Therefore, the present study tries to fill the gap by addressing the types and functions of euphemism and its relation to language and gender in a political debate text between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. The present study chooses a political debate text because it is utilized by political public figures on an important occasion and contains a lot of euphemism expressions. The study adopts the Warren (1992) model of euphemism and the functions of euphemism by the theory of Ryabova (2013) to reveal the types and functions of euphemisms used in the political debate. In addition, the theory from Tannen (1990) and Holmes (1992) also applied to analyze the differences in the use of euphemisms between men and women.

This study aimed to investigate the types and functions of euphemism expressions used by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in a political debate text, and also to reveal the differences between men and women in the use of euphemisms represented by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton under the theory of language and gender from sociolinguistics approach.

Research Method

The present study used a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to analyze political debate samples between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton from the official website of TIME. The research was descriptive because the data were in the

form of text which was analyzed descriptively based on gender distinctions. The research aimed to describe the types and functions of euphemisms and how men and women use them represented by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. The debate transcript was analyzed in the form of euphemism guided by Warren's (1992) model of euphemism and the functions of euphemism by the theory of Ryabova (2013). In addition, the study of language and gender under the sociolinguistics approach was also applied to analyze the differences in the use of euphemisms between men and women using the theory of Tannen (1990) and Holmes (1992).

The researcher collected the data from the the official website of TIME (<https://time.com/4508768/presidential-debate-trump-clinton-transcript/>) on September 27, 2016. The researcher transcribed the political debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton to identify euphemistic expressions. The euphemistic expressions were selected from the political debate transcript based on the purpose of the study, after the elimination of some irrelevant text manually.

The present study focused on the theory of Warren's (1992) model of euphemism and the functions of euphemism by Ryabova (2013). These theories were applied to uncover the types and functions of euphemism expressions found on the political debate transcript of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. To identify euphemisms, after finding the data, those euphemistic expressions were classified according to the types of euphemism by using Warren's model of euphemism (1992) and categorized according to their functions by using Ryabova's theory (2013). Furthermore, to elaborate on the findings with the theory of language and gender, the present study adopted the theory of Tannen (1990) and Holmes (1992) to analyze the language and gender contribution to the choice of euphemisms used by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

Result and Discussion

In this study, there were 25 data of euphemisms were found. The data were then classified into two categories, euphemism delivered by Donald Trump and euphemism delivered by Hillary Clinton. The researcher found 5 types of euphemisms, such as particularisation, implication, metaphor, understatement, and overstatement.

No.	Types of Euphemism	Genders				Total	
		Donald Trump		Hillary Clinton		Freq	%
		Freq	%	Freq	%		
1.	Particularisation	6	24%	3	18%	9	
2.	Implication	1	4%	0	0	1	
3.	Metaphor	1	4%	6	36%	7	
4.	Understatement	1	4%	5	30%	6	
5.	Overstatement	1	4%	1	6%	2	
Total		10	40%	15		25	100%

Table 1. Types of Euphemism from Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton

Based on the data found in the table above, there were 10 euphemism expressions used by Donald Trump and 15 euphemism expressions used by Hillary Clinton. The most frequent type of euphemism that appeared was particularisation, with the amount of emergence 9 times in the political debate. Next, metaphor appeared 7

times. Followed by an understatement that occurred 6 times. Then, overstatement emerged 2 times. The least frequent type of euphemism was an implication that only occurred once during the political debate. Based on the language and gender theory, the data showed that women, represented by Hillary Clinton, used more types of a euphemism than men, represented by Donald Trump.

In this study, there were 4 out of 6 functions of euphemisms were found in the political debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

No.	Functions of Euphemism	Genders				Total	
		Men		Women		Freq	%
		Freq	%	Freq	%		
1.	To disguise names that have frightening connotations or meanings.	4	16%	3	12%	7	28%
2.	To describe situations or phenomena that are considered unpleasant, indecent, or unsocial at the time.	1	4%	2	8%	3	12%
3.	Etiquette euphemisms used to avoid using the direct name for fear of offending the listener or a third party.	4	16%	3	12%	7	28%
4.	To soften or obscure the true character of things.	1	45%	7	28%	8	32%
Total		10	40%	15	60%	25	100%

Table 2. Functions of Euphemism from Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton

Based on the data found in the table above, the most frequent functions of euphemism from the man represented by Donald Trump were to disguise names that have frightening connotations or meanings and etiquette euphemisms used to avoid using the direct name for fear of offending the listener or a third party with the percentage of 16%. Meanwhile, the most frequent function of euphemism from women represented by Hillary Clinton was to soften or obscure the true character of things with a percentage of 28%. The least frequent functions of euphemism from man represented by Donald Trump were to describe situations or phenomena that were considered unpleasant, indecent, or unsocial at the time and to soften or obscure the true character of things that occurred 1 time during each function. Meanwhile, the least frequent function of euphemism from women represented by Hillary Clinton was to describe situations or phenomena that were considered unpleasant, indecent, or unsocial at the time.

1. An Analysis of Types and Functions of Euphemism Used by Donald Trump

The data of this study were euphemistic expressions used by Donald Trump in political debates.

Datum 1. It's a *defective* agreement.

Defective was used to replace disabled. It was a euphemistic expression since using disabled sounded unpleasant especially when talking about the agreement that has been

made by the government. It was included in a particularization type and its function was to change terrifying names.

Datum 2. No wonder you've been fighting ISIS your *entire adult life*.

Entire adult life meant a very long time. It was included in the metaphor. Its function was etiquette euphemism to avoid using the direct name for fear of offending the listener or a third party.

Datum 3. The taxes are so *onerous*.

Onerous meant complicated. It was included in particularization. Its function was etiquette euphemisms to avoid using the direct name for fear of offending the listener or a third party.

Datum 4. *Typical* politician.

Typical generally meant unique or particular. But, in this context, Donald said this to indirectly criticized the other politician so it was included as an implication, which led to another interpretation. Its function was etiquette euphemisms to avoid offending the listener or a third party.

Datum 5. We're in a *bubble* right now.

A bubble was used to refer to a place that was isolated from reality. It was included as an implication because it required another interpretation. It was utilized to soften or obscure the true character of things.

Datum 6. And the reason I say that is not in a *braggadocios* way.

Braggadocios meant boastful or arrogant behavior. It was included in a particularization type and its function was to change unpleasant names.

Datum 7. Because it's been *squandered* on so many of your ideas.

Squandered meant waste (something, especially money or time) recklessly and foolishly. It was included in a particularization type and its function was to change unpleasant names.

Datum 8. Because African-American communities are being *decimated* by crime, *decimated*.

Decimated meant destroyed. It was included in a particularization type and its function was to change indecent names.

Datum 9. These are *felons*.

Felons meant criminals. It was included in a particularization type and its function was to change terrifying names.

Datum 10. *She doesn't have the stamina*.

Donald said these sentences were intended to judge Hillary as a weak person since she was a woman and she did not have the strength or ability to lead a nation. Its understatement and its function were etiquette euphemisms to avoid offending the listener or a third party.

2. An Analysis of Types and Functions of Euphemism Used by Hillary Clinton

The data of this study were euphemistic expressions used by Hillary Clinton in political debates.

Datum 1. I call it *trumped-up trickle-down*

Trumped-up trickle-down," used by Hillary alluded to Ronald Reagan's so-called trickle-down economic policies of the 1980s. According to economist Heinz Arndt, the expression "trickle-down" implied a vertical flow from rich to poor that happened of its own accord. Hillary used this term to describe Donald Trump's tax plan, it was included

in metaphor. Its function was to describe situations or phenomena that were considered unpleasant, indecent, or unsocial at the time.

Datum 2. *I don't buy that*

The term “I don't buy that” was used when someone did not accept an idea or argument. It was included in metaphor and its function was to describe situations or phenomena that were considered unpleasant, indecent, or unsocial at the time.

Datum 3. *took their eyes off* of Wall Street

Hillary used the term “took their eyes off” to explain that someone lost interest in wall street. It was included in understatement and its function was to soften or obscure the true character of things.

Datum 4. and created *a perfect storm*

A perfect storm here referred to a very bad or chaotic storm, it was included in hyperbole. Its function was to soften or obscure the true character of things.

Datum 5. And \$13 trillion in family wealth was *wiped out*.

Wiped out meant destroyed. It was included in a particularization type and its function was to disguise names that have frightening connotations or meanings.

Datum 6. Now, we have come back from that *abyss*.

Abyss was one of the metaphors for hell. It was included in metaphor and its function was to disguise names that have frightening connotations or meanings.

Datum 7. Well, I think you've seen another example of *bait-and-switch* here.

Bait-and-switch referred to an act of promoting goods that appeared to be a good deal to replace substandard or more expensive goods (usually illegal). It was included in metaphor and its function was to soften or obscure the true character of things.

Datum 8. I have met a lot of the people who were *stiffed* by you and your businesses, Donald.

Hillary used the word stiffed to tell implicitly that a lot of people were unable to do anything because of Donald and his businesses. It was included in understatement and its function was to disguise names that have frightening connotations or meanings.

Datum 9. We just don't want to see it *creep back up*

Creep back up meant to approach something slowly. It was included in metaphor and its function was to soften or obscure the true character of things.

Datum 10. So he tried to *put the whole racist birther lie to bed*

Hillary said these sentences referred to the racism issue in Donald Trump's political career. It was included in metaphor and its function was to soften or obscure the true character of things.

Datum 11

And I would also do everything possible to *take out* their leadership.

Take out here meant to take over or defeat the leadership. It was included in understatement and its function was to soften or obscure the true character of things.

Datum 12. He actually advocated for the actions we took in Libya and urged that Gadhafi be *taken out*,

Taken out meant to be removed. It was included in understatement and its function was Etiquette euphemisms to avoid offending the listener or a third party.

Datum 13. And that's something that Donald has been very *dismissive* of

Dismissive could be meant to underestimate. It was included in particularisation to soften or obscure the true character of things.

Datum 14. And, in fact, his *cavalier attitude* about nuclear weapons is so deeply troubling.

Cavalier attitude referred to the arrogant attitude of Donald Trump. It was included in metaphor and its function was Etiquette euphemisms to avoid offending the listener or a third party.

Datum 15. *So a man who can be provoked by a tweet should not have his fingers anywhere near the nuclear codes*, as far as I think anyone with any sense about this should be concerned.

Hillary said these sentences to imply that Donald Trump should not handle the nuclear codes. Its understatement and its function were Etiquette euphemisms to avoid offending the listener or a third party.

Based on the findings above, there were 5 types of euphemisms found in the political debate transcript from the first presidential debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton on September 27, 2016. They were particularization, implication, metaphor, understatement, and overstatement. The most frequent type of euphemism delivered by Donald Trump was particularization. Men applied euphemism using a general term, which was required to be 'particularized' within the context to make sense such as using the word '*felons*' instead of '*criminal*'. Meanwhile, women mostly used metaphors when delivering euphemisms. A multitude of metaphorical euphemisms was used by Hillary Clinton to refer to another thing, such as when she used the term "Trumped-up trickle-down," which referred to Donald Trump's tax plan. In addition, men tended not to have a variety of types of euphemisms. This showed in the study where Donald Trump used other types besides particularization such as implication, metaphor, understatement, and overstatement each of which occurred only once in the entire debate. On the other hand, women used different types of euphemisms.

The next discussion was on the functions of euphemisms, there were 4 out of 6 functions of euphemisms found in the political debate. They were to disguise names that have frightening connotations or meanings, to describe situations or phenomena that were considered unpleasant, to avoid using the direct name for fear of offending the listener, and to soften or obscure the true character of things. The most frequent functions of euphemism used by Donald Trump were to disguise names that have frightening connotations or meanings and etiquette euphemisms. In this study, men used a euphemism to conceal frightening or unpleasant words and to avoid offending others. Meanwhile, women mostly used a euphemism to soften or obscure the true character of things. These functions of euphemism were mainly used in the political debate because both candidates argued and tried to attack each other within reasonable limits and not crossing the boundaries.

Next, based on the theory of language and gender, the study showed the differences between men and women using euphemisms in the political debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. After conducted the research, it can be concluded that women used euphemistic expressions more frequently than men because women prefer more polite and less direct directives than men (Holmes, 1992). Meanwhile, men used fewer euphemisms because men tend to use more direct and frightening conversations than women (Tannen, 1990).

Conclusion

Based on the present study of euphemism between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, some conclusions can be drawn. First, there were 5 types of euphemisms found in the debate, they are particularisation, implication, metaphor, understatement, and

overstatement. The most frequent type of euphemism used by Donald Trump is particularisation and metaphor is mostly used by Hillary Clinton. Next, based on functions of euphemism, there were 4 out of 6 functions of euphemisms were found in the political debate. The most frequent functions of euphemism used by Donald Trump are to disguise names that have frightening connotations or meanings and etiquette euphemisms. Meanwhile, the most frequent function of euphemism used by Hillary Clinton is to soften or obscure the true character of things.

Based on the theory of language and gender, the study found that women used euphemistic expressions more frequently than men because women prefer more polite and less direct directives than men (Holmes, 1992). Meanwhile, men used fewer euphemisms because men tend to use more direct and frightening conversations than women (Tannen, 1990).

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