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## The usage of euphemisms in modern British and American press

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The present research is devoted to euphemisms. In modern linguistics euphemisms are approached from different angles and frequently studied in terms of semantics, stylistics, pragmatics, culture, rhetoric, semiotics and cognitive science. What we are aiming at is to reveal the role of euphemisms in today's rapidly changing world of media and newspapers.

The overall goal is to note changes of euphemism's usage in newspapers and provide the necessary explanation.

This study was carried out by identification and examination of a number of euphemisms employed by English-speaking media, mainly quality newspapers.

Nowadays the usage of euphemisms and euphemistic phrases is very common and we do not even notice them. The brightest examples will be the following:

- “Where's **the ladies room?**”(toilet) ,
- “Quite a **vintage** lamp you got” (old),
- “What do you do?” - I'm **in between jobs**” (unemployed).

Motives for euphemizing are varied. Ruth Walker makes a general distinction between an “**instinctive euphemism**” and a “**strategic euphemism**”. The “instinctive” group may include

- avoiding religious terminology and swearwords (e.g. replacing “oh my god” with “*oh my gosh*”)
- careful choice of words when not wanting to hurt or offend someone, (e.g. a dumb student is called a “*slow student*”)
- avoiding embarrassment when mentioning body parts and functions which is closely related to the topic independent of time, place or culture - sex, ( e.g. “*Answer the call of nature*” for go to the toilet, body parts are called “*Privates/Private parts*”).
- followed by more recent political correctness (e.g. calling the “blind” people “*visually challenged*”).

What would belong to the “strategic” group of euphemisms then? This group would encompass the widely criticized political doublespeak. As Rawson (1981, p. 3) suggests that political doublespeak is an attempt to hide inconvenient truths in public discourse.

Thus we can guess that newspapers may employ the so-called “strategic euphemisms” in their own interests. However, bearing in mind the exact nature and purpose of quality newspapers which is to objectively inform public and project unbiased opinion it is possible to assume that newspapers will avoid using any kind of doublespeak in their articles.

Since quality newspapers came to be associated with a high-minded approach to the dissemination of news, and with an upscale readership we may also assume that the “instinctive” group of euphemisms used in the investigated newspapers will prevail.

Having analyzed a number of articles we have realized that our assumptions have been partly true.

The research has shown that “instinctive” euphemisms are used quite rarely compared to the usage of a direct word or subject. For example:

1. **The Talk** - to talk about sex and sex related topics.

It was a shock, but not as much as it might have been. I'd tried **to have The Talk** with Laura but hadn't managed very well, hampered by excruciating memories of my own mum trying to do the same when she suspected I was **having sex** at around the same age.

2. **To be on the Pill** - to take contraceptives.

What I did when I discovered my 16-year-old daughter **was** secretly **on the Pill**

It's never comfortable to think of your child being introduced to **sex**. But 16 is the age of consent and it's also the average age for first **sex** these days, according to the Family Planning Association.

3. Britain's first-ever guide horse has been given to a **blind** journalist as campaigners battle for the animals to be allowed on planes and in restaurants.

4. **Visually impaired** - unable to see well.

Digby, an American miniature horse, is being trained as an assistance animal for Mohammed Salim Patel, 23, a journalist for the BBC, who is **visually impaired** and afraid of dogs.

It has also been noticed that some phrases, that are considered overly euphemized, are often quoted and not used directly as if the authors of the paper want either to ridicule this euphemism or a person/organization that used that euphemism, or show how ridiculously some euphemisms sound in real life situations, which has become a common means of entertainment.

Here are a couple of examples:

1. **Collateral damage** - “during a war, the unintentional deaths and injuries of people who are not soldiers, and damage that is caused to their homes, hospitals, schools, etc.”

· The young son of the British jihadist Sally Jones was considered as part of the “collateral damage equation” when the CIA carried out a targeted drone strike on the so-called White Widow, sources said last night.

· The family of a former producer and studio executive who killed herself say that she became “collateral damage” in the scandal engulfing Harvey Weinstein.

2. **Friendly fire** - “during a war, shooting that is hitting you from your own side, not from the enemy”

· The inquest into Lance Corporal James Brynin's death was halted after six days of evidence last year amid fears the fatality, which was initially suspected to have been caused by "friendly fire", may have been a homicide.

3. **Complications** of psychotic disorder - “an extra medical problem that makes it more difficult to treat an existing illness”

· The newspaper had previously identified a 2011 case in which an inmate died of “Complications of psychotic disorder” after staffers turned off the water in his cell

Therefore, these facts give rise to the important conclusion that quality newspapers of the British and American press tend to use direct speech and call things by their proper names.

However, we still do not have a comprehensive investigation of this issue. Such an investigation requires a detailed study, which is the subject of the present research.

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