

COGNITIVE CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF POLITICAL EUPHEMISTIC EXPRESSIONS

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Abstract

This paper discusses political euphemistic expressions from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. It is human to say something naturally and socially acceptable, emotionally not irritating, logically intelligible, and communicatively inter-translatable. Euphemistic expression is a way with which language speakers' experiences can be linguistically and cognitively manifested. As a soft word or expression which is used to denote to things about which people may find disappointing or embarrassing to talk, euphemistic expressions enable to say something impossible possible. Introspection as a deep understanding of any language speaker to his/her language system on any talks is used as the data analyzing method. Research data is taken from online mass media. The research data focuses on politically related euphemistic expressions. The accounts of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) are used to give insights into the cognitive mechanism of euphemistic expressions. Political euphemistic expressions are logically intelligible. The research findings demonstrate that there are two basic motivations of euphemizing political expressions. The two are function and characteristics. The internalization of language speaker to the primordial nature of something to euphemize is the key to understand the way to construct the euphemistic expressions.

Keywords: *characteristics, cognitive linguistics, euphemistic expression, function*

INTRODUCTION

Cognitive linguistics is a relatively new school of thought in linguistics that tries to understand the correlation between language, experience and mind and offers new insights into a better understanding of language. Rao (2021) pointed out that 'cognitive linguistics has developed into one of the most dynamic and attractive frameworks within theoretical and descriptive linguistics'. Cognitive linguistics takes into account the roles of experience and mind as vital components to words meaning processes. Accordingly, word meanings are then logically relatively understandable. Evans, Bergen & Zinken (2007) proposed that

cognitive linguistics can be defined as a contemporary, current school of linguistic practice and thought which is involved in examining the significant correlation between human language, the mind and socio-physical knowledge. Evans & Green (2006) argued that there is an important reasoning process behind the interestedness of linguists in the domain of cognitive linguistics to investigate the roots of language based on the belief that language reveals patterns of thought.

Cognitive linguistics originated as an approach to the study of language, but cognitive linguistics has now had an impact and application beyond the traditional understanding of language (Taylor & Littlemore, 2014). As

a means of making people interacted each other, cognitive linguistics puts the experience of language speaker as something central (Ungerer & Schmid). Experience view denote to knowledge of language speaker to the meaning of words beyond the formal and objective definitions and meanings. Cognitively meaning is conceptualization (Gardenfors, 1999). Conceptualization means the meaning constructing process to which language contributes, hence linguistic units such as words do not 'carry' meaning(s), but contribute to the process of meaning construction which takes place at the conceptual level (Evans, 2007). Because of it, therefore meanings are in the head (Gardenfors, 1999). Meaning is something existing in the mind of language speaker represented in words, phrases, clauses, sentences, or even texts. Meaning functions as something essential in communication.

Communicating something socially possible is one out of several considerations with which humans socialize as the consequence of social beings. Considering that irritating or upsetting someone is something socially and linguistically a must to avoid, knowing the language choices is good to know and practice. Language choice provides language speaker alternatives to communicate. It enables language speaker to mean something properly without making others feel unpleasant. Making others pleasant realized by communicating something softly seems a linguistic norm in which messages are treated in such a way by manipulating words.

Words being manipulated in such a language choice usually refers to words which are socially considered harsh. Reconstructing harsh words with soft and mild words semantically having relatively no different meanings is a communication strategy which is called euphemism. Fowler (in Holder, 1995) formulated euphemism as 'the use of mild or vague or periphrastic expression as a substitute for blunt precision or disagreeable truth'. This formulation has basically identified that euphemism is something to replace and rephrase other things which are taken into account as socially uncommunicable when those things are communicated as the way they are. By this notion, it is obviously evident that euphemism is logically and closely related to taboo words.

Taboo refers to a proscription of behaviour for a specifiable community of one or more persons at a specifiable time in specifiable contexts (Allan & Burridge 2006). Taboo words serving as the source from which euphemisms derive are overwhelmingly available in our everyday life. The presence of this linguistic and communication phenomena bridges language speakers to communicate what they mean socially possible. This social possibility underlies that socially society applies normative rules which are naturally in line with the basic nature of human beings that is goodness. Taboo words when they are communicated as what the words are literally bring about psychological tensions. It is a reason why taboo words must

be replaced by mild and soft words. It is euphemisms. Euphemism has significant role to help language speaker communicate what they mean.

Euphemisms can empirically function as very effective linguistic means used to replace bad, unwanted or harsh words and expressions or socially unacceptable words or expressions by rather more acceptable ones that sound more polite (Oudah, in https://www.academia.edu/33566461/EUPHEMISMS_COGNITIVE_LINGUISTICS). It means that socially acceptable words seem the prerequisite condition to communicate. Gramley & Pätzold (2004) define them as "the result, not of changes in the real world, but of changes in the conscience of a society in areas where it feels guilt or is afraid to talk about a taboo subject ". While Wardhaugh (2006) defined euphemisms as "the prohibition or avoidance in any society of behavior believed to be harmful to its members in that it would cause them anxiety, embarrassment, or shame". Burridge (2012) defines euphemisms as "sweet-sounding, or at least inoffensive, alternatives for expressions that speakers or writers prefer not to use in executing a particular communicative intention on a given occasion". From these definitions, it is clear that euphemism is a unique linguistic phenomenon making language speakers speak things impossible possible.

Political discourses are empirically inevitable to avoid from the use of euphemisms. As its very nature definition,

political discourse is a practical way to control minds of people, logically, euphemisms as a part language is also potential to be used as to the nature of political discourse. Lakoff (1990) claims that politics is language and language is politics. Euphemism or euphemistic expression seems possible to make the meaning of something that has been clear unclear. Political discourses manifested in euphemisms or euphemistic expressions have their own linguistic characteristics. Zhao & Dong (2010) elaborated three characteristics of political euphemism. Those three are greater degree of deviation from its signified; more vague meanings; and strong characteristics of times.

Language in general, and euphemism in particular, have significant roles to make the very nature of political discourses put into practice. Euphemism is very effective to camouflage and manipulate facts which are totally broken referring to the public moral standards. Abuse of power and all its derivatives is very potential to make use euphemism and euphemistic expressions to cover up such scandals. Covering up scandals by euphemizing them is the primordial nature of the use of political euphemisms. It seems that political euphemism or political euphemistic expression resorts in between the language of literature that tends to be romantic and the language of natural sciences which tends to be precise. Covering up socially impossible by employing something socially possible is the nature of political

euphemism. It is clear that political euphemism is motivation-based expressions.

As social creatures people are often interested in trying to influence other peoples' minds (Walker. et.al. 2021). Euphemisms is, to some extent, a strategy in political language of which main intention is to make something clear and easy to understand by people into blur and complicated. Mind controlling is an effect intended by the use of euphemisms. Referring to such an explanation, as there is a close relationship between euphemism and mind, therefore it is suitable to discuss euphemisms from the cognitive point of view.

Logically euphemisms can be discussed and described from a cognitive point of view that uncovers interesting results which help understand the nature of language and how it functions and works in addition that empirically in everyday communication the use of euphemism is something frequent naturally indicating that humans are primordially polite in every possible manner. This paper discusses the logical basis of euphemizing political expressions from the light of cognitive linguistics.

METHODS

Qualitative descriptive method is applied to elaborate the research data. Introspection as the internalisation of language speaker to the meaning of linguistic expression is used to mekae the research data elaborated. Introspection as a deep

understanding of any language speaker to his/her language system on any talks is used as the data analyzing method. It refers to "linguistic introspection is conscious attention directed by a language user to particular aspects of language as manifest in her own cognition" (Talmy in Marquez, et.al., 2007). Online mass media, in this case is Time Magazine and The Jakarta Post are used as the data sources. Sentences consisting of politically euphemistic expressions are used as the research data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Since cognitive linguistics bases its very nature of assumptions on conceptualization and the knowledge of language derives from its use, therefore the use of political euphemistic expressions is logically and cognitively describeable. The following discussions are about the logical and cognitive bases of employing political euphemistic expressions.

Function of Literal Meaning Based Political Euphemistic Expressions.

As the meaning of this basis implies, the relation between the political euphemisitic expressions is based on the function of the literal meaning of words replaced by the political euphemistic expressions. Literal words replaced by euphemistic expressions have function from which the euphemistic expressions as their semantic equivalentents constructed.

The primordial function of the literal words serving as the source and therefore inspires to the emergence of the euphemistic expressions makes both the literal expressions and their euphemistic expressions meaningfully understandable. This meaningful understandability indicates that between the two are not fully arbitrarily constructed, yet they are logically and motivatedly based expressions. There are dimensions of literal expressions by which motives of euphemistic expressions emerge. They basically refer to the very basic and primordial nature of the literal expressions.

Every word or linguistic expression has its own primordial nature of dimensions in which the cordial meaning of the words or linguistic expressions exists. It inspires language speakers to make use it accordingly. It makes mutual understanding between speaker and hearer possible. It serves as the point of view from which mutual understanding derive. It, therefore, proves that instead of its actual meaning, word or linguistic expression has also potential meaning. Euphemistic expression is the realization of this potential meaning. It turns out to be actual once it is empirically practiceable and mutually understandable. It means that words or linguistic expressions have their own complexity to understand.

The elaboration above is representable by this real sentence. (a) A U.S.-installed government led by Hamid Karzai took over and bin Laden and his al-Qaida

cohort escaped across the border into Pakistan.(<https://time.com/6093814/afghanist-an-last-us-troops/>). The words or linguistic expressions written in italic serves as the political euphemistic expressions. They are constructed based on function of literal meaning based political euphemistic expressions. It means that it is the function of the literal word replaced by the political euphemistic expressions that serves as the basis of the motif of euphemizing.

The literal word of the political euphemistic expression empirically refers to 'the doll government'. Why must it be the doll government? Because, empirically, the government installed by other or at least another super strong government tends to serve the main supporter. It means that the real government is not the installed one, yet the installing one. The installed one is no more than a doll for a child. The function of a doll for a child is to entertain the child that the child feels so entertained.

This first logical basis is also exemplified by this datum: (b) The mainstream local media - which has close ties to the government - generally supports the government and state policies even during an election, rights groups say (<https://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2020/07/06/explainer-why-one-party-dominates-singapore-politics.html>). The words which are underlined are actually a euphemistic expression. Something, in this case is media, having close ties to the government seems

periphrastically equivalent with another thing that supports the thing that is close to it without any critical thinking. Having close relation with someone, moreover the one is the authoritative agent, psychologically makes someone uneasy to do as he/she wants to do. Being close to someone whose authority is to officially control others tends to make the one do what the authoritative's policies.

The independence of media tends to be hard to practice once it has been close to the ruling government. Related to media which have close ties to the government, because of it, they cannot stand autonomously, they have been essential parts of the ruling government. Securing the agenda of the party to which they are close is their primary missions. Another party having different stance to the public policy maker will be the target to attack. Therefore, cognitively the political euphemistic expression of 'media have close tie to the government' means partisan media.

Characteristics of Literal Meaning Based Political Euphemistic Expressions.

It is another logical and motivated motif of political euphemistic expressions. This denotes to identifying features of the literal word or linguistic expressions. Identifying features mean the features with which a word or concept can be clearly and distinctly differentiated from other words or concepts. Identifying features guide language

speaker to maximize the actual meaning of words or concepts by developing them.

The development of the identifying features can logically make the potential meanings actual. This actualiation of the potential ones relies on sentential contexts in which the potential meaning includes. As word consists of a bundle of meanings including the potential ones, identifying features also denote to meaning components from which the bundle of meanings composed. Meaning component composition builds word from which every single referent is represented by every single word. It means that characteristics of words or linguistic expressions cover unique linguistic behaviours which specifically belong to the words or linguistic expressions.

Characteristics of literal meaning of words referring to political euphemistic expressions, therefore, include every meaning components or identifying features of the words or expressions. It, then, makes unique meaning coverage without which difference words or concepts cannot be clearly and distinctly differentiated. Characteristics of literal meaning of words as a logical and motivated motif of political euphemistic expressions can be a starting point to trace how literal meaning of words and their euphemistic equivalents cognitively understandable.

The idea stated above is empirically represented by this sentence: (b) *The Afghan army largely collapsed, sometimes surrendering rather than taking a final stand.*

and shortly after President Ashraf Ghani fled the capital, the Taliban rolled into Kabul and assumed control on Aug. 15. (<https://time.com/6093814/afghanistan-last-us-troops/>). The words or linguistic expressions being underlined refer to political euphemistic expressions denoting to the characteristics of military troops. The basic characteristics of military troops are to raid things considered as enemies. Offensive is the nature of military troops when they are in the battle fields. This political euphemistic expression is, then, cognitively understandable that it is periphrastically equivalent with raiding or attacking.

CONCLUSION

Political euphemistic expressions as periphrastic equivalents of words considered harsh when they are communicated as the way they are can empirically be effective to communicate what language speakers mean. The deep understanding of language speaker to the logically and cognitively thinkable of word potential meaning is the actualization of conceptualization in cognitive linguistics. It emerges as the consequence of the language use in everyday usage of words. It entails language speakers to internalize word meaning as they are empirically and correctly applicable in the language system. There is a logical basis with which someone can mutually understand political euphemistic expressions. It refers to the very basic primordial thing of the political euphemistic

expressions. Shortly political euphemistic expressions are logically thinkable. They are purpose-motivated expressions.

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