Introduction

Communication is not, in fact, a neutral act of moving content from one person to another, but a complex transaction influenced by numerous factors. Communication research focuses on how people use messages to inform, persuade, manage, relate, and influence each other in various contexts and cultures, using a variety of channels and media. Research in communication is geared toward understanding these processes and promoting their effective and ethical practice. The two figures of speech, euphemisms and metaphors, are so pervasive in political discourse, and thus deserve a close investigation. Euphemizing and metaphorizing function as linguistic bridges to indirectness characterizing human communication in the new world of today. In semiotic terms, euphemisms deal with substitution of one denotation for another, creating desirable conceptual and connotative meanings. Euphemisms, as De Beaugrande (http://www.beaugrande.bizland.com) describes it, became a prominent or salient phenomenon of language usage in modern political culture because of their ability to mask something pejorative behind a mild or manipulated expression. Within this context and since a euphemistic expression might be presented in a metaphorical form, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that the function and essence of metaphors understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.

Euphemism looked at as a communicative strategy, is one aspect of the non-literal language of a political piece of discourse. Hence, the subject of the present paper is this non-literal language as reflected in euphemistic expressions observed in contemporary Jordanian political discourse. The main portion of this paper consists of three sections. In the first part, the notion of euphemism is discussed, while the second part addresses the notion of political discourse and its characteristics. After that, another section is devoted to an analysis of euphemisms, which are prevalent in contemporary Jordanian political language. The textualist tradition of Foucault which focuses on public modes of representation, talk and texts will be followed. Foucault’s (1994) point was to study how certain discourses become authoritative, how they infiltrate mind and character, and constitute the social world. Foucault’s textualist approach means that any reality is mediated by a mode of representation, and that representations are not descriptions of a world of facticity, but are ways of making facticity.

Shapiro (1989) makes a distinction between two kinds of investigations a discourse analyst can conduct: structural and historical. The historical focuses on the emergence of the phenomena in language, while the structural examines how a particular text is put together in terms of the devices, strategies, tropes and rhetoric through which social reality is constructed. In this paper the writers will follow the structural approach in their
investigation of the subject; namely, exploring the euphemistic and metaphoric forms profusely used in Jordanian contemporary political discourse.

Statement and Purpose

As stated earlier, euphemism has become a salient phenomenon characterizing language usage in modern political culture by virtue of their ability to conceal something uncomplimentary behind a softened expression. The available stock of euphemistic expressions in Jordanian contemporary political discourse, as is the case elsewhere due to the free intercultural communication characterizing the modern era, can help reveal the dominant ways of thinking within this society. Besides, because of their proliferation in political written texts and oral talks and sometimes presented in figurative language, the present paper is an attempt to identify, analyze them, and highlight their underlying thematic frameworks, in addition to the challenges posed in their translatability.

More specifically, the paper will address the constellations of euphemistic and metaphoric clusters in Jordanian contemporary political discourse. The induced analysis is an attempt to deconstruct the meaning of such now becoming familiar political euphemistic expressions in the context of their use. It further seeks to show their loaded nature and their social force that guide people’s thinking and shapes their action.

Political Discourse

Political discourse has been described by Chilton and Schäffner (1997: 207) as a complex form of human activity which is based on the recognition that politics cannot be conducted without language. Equally, the use of language in the constitution of social groups leads to what is called “politics” in a broad sense. In other words, the question that arises is what counts as politics, and subsequently as political discourse. The mass media, as is well acknowledged, play a key role in disseminating politics and in occupying a middle position between politicians and the public. The topics which quality newspapers discuss in texts on their front pages, in editorials and comments are therefore considered typical examples of political texts. The term politics represents a rather wide and flexible notion, but seen from a functional perspective, it could be said, as Muntigl (2002) puts it, that any topic can become political or politicized as it depends on the participants in the communicative context.

However, there are some types of texts and forms of talk which are political in a more narrow, or prototypical sense. These refer to texts that either discuss political ideas, beliefs, and practices of a society, or texts that are crucial in constituting a political community or group (e.g. treaties, a manifesto of a political party, and a speech by a politician). Within the broader framework of political discourse, Van Dijik in his research program on the reproduction of racism in discourse and communication analyzed typical political texts and talks about ethnic relations. After a conceptual analysis of denial strategies in interpersonal impression formation on the one hand, and within the social-political context of minority and immigration management on the other, various types of denial are examined in press reports and parliamentary debates. Among these forms of
denial is euphemism in addition to disclaimers, mitigation, excuses, and other moves of defense, and positive self-presentation in negative discourse about minorities. Taking into consideration the participants and the topics or themes in question, political discourse can be associated, for example with dominant group members engaged in discourse about ethnic minority groups. Such discourses, as well as the social cognitions underlying them are likely to be complex and full of contradictions. That is, they can be inspired by general norms of tolerance and acceptance, but contradictorily at the same time by feelings of distrust, resentment or frustration about those minority groups in terms of cultural differences, deviance or competition, as a threat to the country, employment, education, norms, values, etc. These individual and socially shared opinions and representations depicting negative attitudes might be concealed in euphemisms and other discourse strategies. Such prototypical texts of political discourse have been the object of discourse analysis.

From a textualist or poststructuralist view, analysis should emphasize discourse rather than language since the concern should be directed to the meaning and value generating performance in language, rather than addressing the association between utterances and what they refer to. In this regard, Shapiro (ibid) points out that language is dealt with as a translucent tool serving as a medium between thoughts and referents. In a discourse approach, however, language is treated as opaque, and thus motivates a scrutiny of the verbal behavior within which thoughts and ideas are molded. Derrida (1984) who argues that meaning can not be owned, is a leading figure in this field introducing the deconstructive method of critique, a strategy followed later by many linguists as well as philosophers. In light of this, that we can not manipulate meaning is because the meaning of utterances is governed by the place they occupy in a discursive system. Within this perspective, politics is viewed as a process of debating and disputing over multifarious or diverse understandings.

Moreover, adopting a critical method of discourse analysis, Van Dijk (2001) highlights the role and significant input of discourse in the production and challenge of dominance, viewing political discourse as a genre defined by a social domain, though of fuzzy boundaries. Yet, the set of activities politicians involve themselves in can be the main features of this domain. Hence, Van Dijk (ibid) further states that the distinctive character of political discourse can be disclosed through studying its structures in terms of the topics, arguments, coherence, lexical style, rhetorical features, etc.

Chilton and Schäffner (1997: 211) describe the task of political discourse analysis as relating the fine grain of linguistic behavior to politics, or political behavior. Political situations and processes can be linked to discourse types and levels of discourse organization through four strategic functions as an intermediate level. Hence, they propose four functions. These include coercion, resistance/opposition, dissimulation; and legitimization and delegitimization. Research in this field can proceed both prospectively and retrospectively in that an analyst can ask with which linguistic means a specific function can best be fulfilled in a particular context, i.e., the linguistic choices identified in a specific text can be the start and then be related to the strategic functions. The
retrospective analysis can further seek an answer to questions like why a specific word, expression and structure were chosen rather than some other possible ones.

**Euphemism, Translation and Political Discourse**

When used as a euphemism, a phrase often becomes a metaphor whose literal meaning is dropped. Euphemisms are consciously employed to hide unpleasant or disturbing ideas, even when the literal term for them is not necessarily offensive. Euphemistic expressions generally characterize discourse in public relations and politics, where it is sometimes referred to as doublespeak and is equated to politeness. As far as its etymology is concerned, Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia states that the word comes from the Greek word *euphemos*, meaning auspicious or fortunate speech. The *eupheme* was originally a word or phrase used in place of a religious word or phrase that should not be spoken aloud. Etymologically again, the *eupheme* is the antonym of the *blasphem*, which means evil speaking. Moreover, there is some disagreement over whether certain terms are or are not considered euphemisms. For example, sometimes the phrase *visually impaired* (cited in Wikipedia) is labeled as a politically correct euphemism for *blind*. Yet, visual impairment can be a broader term that includes, for example, people who have partial sight in one eye, or even those with uncorrected poor vision, and thus would be excluded by the word *blind*.

Cognitively speaking, euphemisms are used to name things without calling up a mental picture of them and are meant to strike at a person’s imagination. Yet, they do not form complete pictures in the mind, nor do they completely define an event or object. Though euphemizing is now an accepted and established practice, it has acquired a vague connotation in light of its tendency to deliberately disguise actual meanings of words and expressions in political discourse. Addressing the ethical aspect of euphemisms, Lutz (1989) defines them as positive or inoffensive expressions used to soften unpleasant realities. According to him, when a euphemism is meant to deceive, it becomes doublespeak the purpose of which is to turn the powerless into powerful and the unreasonable into reasonable, etc. For example, a popular synonym for euphemism in the American media is “spin” as stated by Mihas (2005, http://ling.wisc.edu/lso/wpl/5.1/LSOWP5.1-10-Mihas.pdf) to mean the deliberate shading of news perception. Taking the Iraqi scene, the Bush administration was accused of putting an optimistic face on the worsening conflict there and was described as “upbeat spins.” War on terror” became a familiar euphemism for the war on militant Islam and the invasion of Iraq was called “liberation”, though it was later defined as an occupation. The euphemistic phrase “prison abuse”, Mihas (ibid) further adds, was coined after the Abu Ghraib prison scandal broke in spring 2004 in order to avoid the word “torture,” which clearly described what some American soldiers and civilian contractors did in one of the most notorious prisons there. “Abuse” is a mistreatment, while “torture” denotes a violent crime which involves an infliction of severe physical pain as a means of punishment.

Euphemism relies heavily on richly loaded metaphoric expressions to produce a wide variety of rhetorical effects. Among these is bringing about entertainment as an
attractiveness tool. That is why politologists, according to Dörner, cited by Schäffner (2004), have used the label “politainment” to describe this recent phenomenon of a symbiosis of politics and entertainment. This refers to the minimization of actual content alongside with the addition of aspects of entertainment to sell politics. In this respect, Schäffner (ibid) mentions a funny and rather satirical example of the main topic in The Times on 12 April 2002 related to the England’s football player David Beckham’s broken foot. The title of the article was “Beckham’s foot becomes Blair’s bone of contention” and the article proceeds to ask satirical questions like who cares about the next budget, as the national obsession is the broken bone in the captain’s left foot, nothing else is more important.

As stated earlier, metaphors as usual vehicles of euphemistic expressions play a central role in the rhetoric of politicians and their subordinates. The translation of such metaphoric and euphemistic constructs might not be an easy task although cross-linguistically political discourse relies on translation. This is so because it is through translation that information is made accessible to addressees of other languages. Besides, the reactions in one country to statements that were made in another country are in fact reactions to the message or the information as it was provided in translated texts. As is known, political discourse analysis associates or links linguistic behavior to political behavior. The linguistic behavior may well reflect evidence of a mediated behavior by translation. Consequently, the central role of translation is worth considering in analyzing political texts. With this in mind, there is widespread agreement in modern linguistics that meanings are not inherent to words, neither are they stable. It is the language users who assign meanings in communicative contexts, and in this process of meaning construction, as van Dijk (ibid) describes it, the information presented in the text interacts with previously stored knowledge and mental models. Political concepts, when emptied in euphemistic and metaphoric moulds, are relative to the discourse of a cultural or political group, and thus can be contestable. Therefore, the experiential and socio-cultural background of language users needs to be handled when it comes to translation.
References


De Beaugrande, Robert. *Figures of speech* [online ms.]. http://www.beaugrande.bizland.com


Abstract

Lexicalization occupies a central place in the developing of the lexicon of languages as it is highly pervasive cross-linguistically. In Jordanian Colloquial Arabic, this linguistic phenomenon is notably self-evident in the formation of new lexical items through borrowing from either the standard variety of Arabic or from an alien source, mainly Turkish. Taken as stems, words from these lending varieties are lexicalized to coin new words and consequently are institutionalized within the everyday use. These include eponyms from the standard variety and nouns from a foreign source. The present article is an attempt to identify these cases and analyze the morphological restructuring in addition to the encoding system they have gone through at the semantic level. Since most of the borrowed names have culture specific implications, they pose a challenge to their translatability, another major concern of the study.