

Euphemisms in Conversations about Bullying Issues

A Study of Politeness

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ABSTRACT

Every taboo expression is often avoided by replacing the taboo words with other words considered more polite and refined, serving for the convenience of the speaker and the addressee. Euphemism is defined as a polite or indirect way of saying a taboo term. The purpose of this study is to show types of euphemisms and politeness strategies on the Gritte Agatha's podcast about bullying issues. This study employed a descriptive qualitative method. In this study, the types of euphemism and politeness strategies were used in video recorded interviews on Gritte Agatha's YouTube channel. The data included 3 video recorded interviews from Gritte Agatha's YouTube channel which were transcribed into texts, and then the types of euphemism were analyzed by using the theory of Allan and Burridge (1991) and the politeness strategies were analyzed by using the theory of Brown and Levinson (1987). The results of this study indicate that there were four types of euphemism on Gritte Agatha's podcast related to the issue of bullying, namely, understatement, substitute, metonymy, abbreviations. Meanwhile, the analysis found three types of politeness strategies, namely, positive politeness strategy, negative politeness strategy, and bald on record strategy. From the three data obtained, it can be concluded that the type of euphemism which often appeared is the substitute type and the most used politeness strategy is the negative politeness strategy spoken by the victim of bullying.

Keywords: *Bullying, euphemism, politeness, YouTube.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media are places that can provide convenience in getting various information. Further, the development of social media technology has many varieties. One of the social media YouTube is often accessed by a lot of people. Currently, YouTube content creators flock to create talk show and podcast programs by inviting various resource persons.

It is undeniable that bullying can have huge impacts such as loneliness, adapting difficulty, poor academic achievement, vulnerability to mental emotional disorders (anxiety, insomnia, and depression), and the risk of involvement in criminal acts (Theodore & Sudari, 2019) especially if the bullying is targeted to children or teenagers. There are various types of bullying, such as psychological, verbal, or physical bullying. Psychological bullying, which is invisible, can attack the victim's mental or psychological stated through verbal or physical actions. Verbal bullying includes cursing, insulting, labelling, accusing, spreading gossip, etc. Physical bullying includes slapping, stepping on the foot, spitting, punishing, throwing things.

Euphemism is a style of language that is often referred to as a refinement of a term or word. Allan and Burridge (1991) mentioned that euphemism is an alternative phrase of a disliked expression. Euphemism is a polite way in which an inappropriate, harsh, or offensive word is replaced by a more polite one. The use of euphemism is to avoid losing faces (speaker's face, offending the audience or listener). Li and Lu (2014) states that the use of euphemism is considered more polite, usually utilized to avoid offensive, rude and taboo expressions by using euphemism, bold or direct words can be avoided to make sure that nobody in the conversation gets hurt mentally. Euphemism is considered lubricant applied in coordinating interpersonal relationships.

Allan (2001) states that there are 12 types of euphemisms: 1) Remodeling: the process of reshaping or remodeling a word with a new word, but it has the same meaning, 2) Phonetic Similarity: a pronunciation which is very similar to words considered rude or taboo, 3) Acronyms: an abbreviation which is a combination of letters or syllables and if pronounced they becomes a

natural word, 4) Abbreviations: an abbreviation of a sentence that is pronounced in letters and cannot stand alone, 5) Verbal play: an expression with a rhyme from previous words considered rude or taboo, 6) Circumlocution: the use of substitute words that are considered taboo or rude without mentioning the original word but having the same meaning, 7) Hyperboles: exaggerated expressions, 8) Understatement: extraordinary expressions that seem to be ordinary things, 9) Metonymy: expressing general things into specific things, 10) Substitutes: the use of pronouns based on figurative images, 11) Synecdoche: the opposite of metonymy which expresses specific things into general terms, and 12) Borrowing: borrowing a words from other languages.

The use of euphemism has many functions. Burrige (2012) states that euphemism has six functions: (1) the protective euphemism to shield and to avoid offense, (2) The underhand euphemism to mystify and to misrepresent, (3) the uplifting euphemism to talk up and to inflate, (4) the provocative euphemism to reveal and to inspire (5) the cohesive euphemism to show solidarity and to help define the gang, and (6) the ludic euphemism to have fun and to entertain.

The concept of the face as proposed by Goffman (1967) is a key in conversational analysis, which was later developed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Goffman (1967) said that face means an image of a person's personality which is described in terms of social elements. This concept is related to the social term found in society, namely "losing face" which means feeling ashamed or feeling humiliated. In a communication process, sometimes communication participants say utterances that cause themselves or others to lose their face. Politeness strategies are used to avoid losing face, either the speaker's face or the interlocutor's face. Therefore, in interaction, they must take care of each other's face. The basic of Brown and Levinson's theory is the concept of face. There are two kinds of face, positive face and negative face. Positive face refers to one's self-esteem, while negative face refers to one's freedom to act.

Crespo Fernández (2005) argues that euphemism and politeness are interrelated phenomena, because a polite speech determines the user of the language. Hamrakulova (2020) states that the goal of politeness is to make all of the parties relaxed and comfortable with one another. Politeness can be a means of avoiding conflicts between the speaker and the interlocutor in the communication process (Nurjamily, 2015). From the statement above, it can be concluded that the use of euphemisms greatly affects social relationships to each other in maintaining self-image. Mandala (2015) states that politeness is a universal phenomenon, meaning that the norms of politeness apply to the use of any language in the world. Euphemism works on each of the politeness theories: 1)

responding to the speaker's need to reduce potential social conflicts that might alter the prestige of the interlocutor; 2) controlling ways to minimize threats to the interlocutor. Euphemisms are not only used to avoid unpleasant feelings of the listener, to minimize or even eliminate the potential conflicts, but also to save the face of the speaker or interlocutor.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), there are four politeness strategies: (1) Bald on record, which can be described as a strategy where the speaker is expected to state directly the message that he/she wants the hearer to hear without having an effort to minimize threats to the hearer's face, (2) Positive politeness, which can be used to satisfy the positive face of the hearers, and the desire of being liked and accepted by them as people who have a close relationship with the speaker (interest, sympathy, intensifying interest, using in-group identity markers, seek agreement, avoiding disagreement, presuppose/raise/assert common ground, joke, asserting presupposing, promising, being optimistic, including both speaker and hearer in the activity, giving/asking for reasons, assuming or asserting reciprocity, giving understanding), (3) Negative Politeness, which can be described as the desire to have freedom of action, freedom of imposition and not to be impeded by others (being conventionally indirect, questioning, being pessimistic, minimizing the imposition, giving deference, apologizing, impersonalizing, avoiding the pronouns 'I' and 'you', stating the FTA as a general rule, nominalizing, and going on record as incurring a debt as not indebted), (4) Off record, which can be described as a communicate act which is done in such way that is not possible to attribute one clear communicate intention to the act (giving hints motives/conditions, giving association clues, presupposing, understating, overstating, using tautologies, using contradictions, being ironic, using metaphors, using rhetorical questions, being ambiguous, being vague, over-generalizing, displacing, being incomplete).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The research conducted by Trinch (2001) shows a systematic analysis of the lexical variation around the topic of sexual violence used by Latina women in the law where they tell stories of domestic violence to make official reports. This research employs anthropological and linguistic theory of sociocultural taboos as well as an interactional sociolinguistic approach to frame the analysis. The theory used by Brown and Levinson (1987) as a politeness strategy (Allan & Burrige, 1991) analyzes euphemisms.

Other research by Rabab'ah and Al-Qarni (2012) shows that Saudi Arabia has more ways to express euphemisms. This study also reveals that there is no relationship between the choice of euphemism strategy and gender. The choice of a subtle language, like

language in general, is influenced by the beliefs, lifestyle, and norms of its users. This study aims to determine the similarities and differences in users' attitudes towards euphemisms for death, discussion and body functions of Saudi Arabic and English. In this study, the term euphemism is used to refer to an indirect way or a polite way to express a taboo, the purpose of which is to save the interlocutor. A euphemism study conducted by Lei (2017) focuses on the educational realm. The theory used is based on Leech (1983), and Allan and Burridge's (1991) theory. Through this research, it shows that euphemisms are employed in a certain level of politeness, the use of euphemisms in college English teaching can assist to achieve successful communication in teaching and learning English.

In previous studies, research on euphemism with politeness principles regarding the issue of bullying has not been identified. The abusive behavior received by victims of bullying causes traumatic feeling when they remember their past as victims of bullying. Not many victims of bullying have courage to share their experiences of being bullied is big media. What is interesting is, the style of language used in conversations with the victims of bullying, namely the use of euphemisms and the principle of politeness behind the use of euphemisms themselves.

3. METHOD

This research is a descriptive study with a qualitative approach that aims to describe the problem using words. The problems described are euphemisms and politeness strategies that exist in conversations with the victims of bullying using Allan's (2001) theory for the analysis of euphemism types, and Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory. Since this research is qualitative research, the data collected are words not numbers. Thus, the results of this study contain words which are described in accordance with the research problem.

In this study, the data were in the form of utterances of bullying victims and a podcast host that indicated the presence of euphemistic expressions and language politeness strategies. Research data were collected by using several techniques:

1) Tapping Technique

The tapping technique is a basic technique in listening method. In obtaining the data, it was done by tapping the language use in a dialogue with the bullying victims.

2) Note-taking Technique

The note-taking technique was carried out after the tapping technique. In its realization, the note-taking technique was used to record the dialogue of the bullying victims with the podcast host that would be used to identify the speech.

The data collection procedures carried out in this study are as follows:

- (1) Preparing equipment and media in the form of notebooks and laptops to record the stories of the bullying victims and the podcast host.
- (2) Taking note of the bullying victims and the podcast host's speech which became the research data.

The data that were successfully obtained in the form of words were then analyzed using a descriptive technique. Descriptive technique is a data analysis technique carried out by describing the data according to the problem formulation. The analyzing stages in this research are as follows:

1) Data Identification Stage

The data identification stage was carried out by identifying the data considered as a form of speech containing euphemisms and politeness principles.

2) Data Classification Stage

The identified data were then classified based on the types of euphemisms and the principle of politeness as well as the classification.

3) Data Conclusion Stage

The data which had been analyzed were then concluded in accordance with the formulation of the specified problem. The conclusion of the data was presented in the form of sentence description according to the approach and type of research, namely qualitative descriptive research.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis found the types of euphemism and politeness strategies as shown in Table 1.

First, in Table 1 number 1, the type of understatement euphemism was identified in the form of word, the word *puncaknya* means *berat badan terbesar* (the largest body weight). The sentence belongs to the category of positive

Table 1. Types of Euphemism 1

No	Utterance	Type of Euphemism	Politeness Strategy
1	<i>Nah setelah akhirnya obesitas sampai ketitik 105 plus plus sampai puncaknya dimana dok?</i>	Understatement	Positive Politeness
2	<i>Waktu itu masih kecil ya, ini masih kecil sih masih polos-polosnya gitu jadi ya udah aja terima-terima aja.</i>	Substitute	Negative Politeness
3	<i>Jadi udah turun naik turun naik, berat badan yoyo</i>	Substitute	Negative Politeness
4	<i>Diet tanpa motivasi dan tanpa olahraga zonk banget</i>	Understatement	Positive Politeness

politeness strategy because the host shows his interest in the experience of the resource person by asking personal experiences.

Second, in Table 2, a euphemism type named a substitute was identified in the form of word, the word *polos-polosnya* has a meaning of *tidak tahu apa-apa* (not knowing anything). This sentence is included in the category of negative politeness strategy because the speaker's speech is pessimistic. Based on the description of the sentence, the resource person was bullied since a young age and did not fight back because he did not know anything.

Third, in the example sentence as seen in Table 3, it was identified the existence of a substitute euphemism in the sentence *berat badan yoyo* (yo-yo weight). Yo-yo is a traditional game tool. How the yo-yo tool works is up and down. The sentence *berat badan yoyo* refers to weight fluctuating or in other words an unstable weight. The type of politeness strategy in this sentence is a negative politeness strategy because the resource person was pessimistic when talking about his unstable weight during his diet program. And fourth, the sentence in table number 4 was identified as euphemism, the type of euphemism is understatement. The word identified was *zonk*. *Zonk* is a slang that is often used by young people, *zonk* in this sentence means that *diet tanpa motivasi dan olah raga adalah sia-sia* (diet without motivation and exercise is useless). The sentence "*diet tanpa motivasi dan tanpa olahraga zonk banget*" is included in the category of positive politeness because the resource person gave a reason why diets could fail. That was because there was no motivation and exercise.

Based on Table 2, in sentence number 2, the type of substitute euphemism was in the form of a phrase, the phrase *buah dada* is a figurative picture of the breast. The sentence in table number 1 is included in the category of negative politeness strategy because the interviewee was pessimistic due to a role-playing the character of Cinderella who was getting bullied. Second, in the table there was a sentence identified as an understatement type of euphemism in the form of a phrase, the phrase *kurang ganteng* in the speech means *jelek* (ugly). The sentence in Table 2 is included in the category of negative politeness strategy because the resource person was

Table 2. Types of Euphemism 2

No	Utterance	Type of Euphemism	Politeness Strategy
1	<i>Seakan-akan aku punya buah dada</i>	Substitute	Negative Politeness
2	<i>Punya bekas-bekas yang kurang estetik bagi mereka jadi aku kayak, misal kurang ganteng atau gimana</i>	Understatement	Negative Politeness

Table 3. Types of Euphemism 3

No	Utterance	Type of Euphemism	Politeness Strategy
1	<i>Emang sempat mogok seminggu</i>	Substitute	Negative Politeness
2	<i>Jadi emang buat teman-teman yang kesulitan buat tidur itu harus langsung segera ke ahli</i>	Metonymy	Bald on Record
3	<i>Yang maaf kalau kakak lihat di pinggir jalan seperti itu ODGJ-ODGJ</i>	Abbreviation	Negative Politeness
4	<i>Pengen banget mengakhiri hidup</i>	Understatement	Negative Politeness

pessimistic and felt that his face was ugly plus he had scars due to an accident.

In Table 3 number 1, First, the substitute type of euphemism was identified in the form of word, the word *mogok* is generally used for motorcycles or cars that cannot start so that they stop working. However, the word *mogok* in this sentence is utilized to describe a resource person who quits school. The sentence in table number 1 is included in the negative category because the resource person was pessimistic as he stopped going to school.

Second, in the table there was a sentence identified as a metonymy euphemism. A metonymy is an expression that employs a general word to describe something specific. The word *ahli* in the context of the sentence is a name for a doctor. The sentence is included in the bald on record politeness category because the word *harus* is a stress.

Third, in table number 3 there was a sentence identified as an abbreviated euphemism, namely ODGJ-ODGJ which stands for *Orang Dengan Gangguan Jiwa* (People with Mental Disorders). Abbreviation itself is an abbreviation of words pronounced in letters. The sentence in table number 3 is included in the category of negative politeness strategy, because the interviewee used the word *maaf* (sorry) in the conversation, included in the characteristic of negative politeness strategy 6 because there was an utterance of *maaf* when the speaker would say the word ODGJ. Fourth, in table number 4 there was a phrase identified as an understatement euphemism. The phrase *mengakhiri hidup* is another word for the phrase *bunuh diri* (suicide). Understatement itself is a pronoun expression used to make extraordinary things seem trivial. The sentence in table number 4 belongs to the type of negative politeness strategy because the speech was pessimistic.

5. CONCLUSION

There are 4 types of euphemism identified in the data that have been analyzed. The types of euphemism include substitute, understatement, abbreviations, and metonymy. The type that often appears is the substitute

type that is a simple phrase that acts as a surrogate based on an illustrative or figurative phrases said by the bullies. There are 3 politeness strategies identified in the data. There are, bald on record, negative politeness, and positive politeness. The politeness strategies that often appear are namely the negative politeness principals (be pessimistic) said by victims of bullying. It can be concluded that the informants who were victims of bullying had a pessimistic attitude when considering their past as victims of bullying.

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