EUPHEMISTIC LANGUAGE IN THE DIPLOMATIC DISCOURSE

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Language can be used to reduce differences or produce violence. It is rarely neutral and often shapes perception and behavior. The present communication is an attempt of studying the use of euphemisms in the diplomatic discourse, as a way of reaching agreement, which combines precision with ambiguity. The skill of finding formulations which avoid offence and are acceptable by both sides are often referred to as a "diplomatic" discourse. The explicit interchange of utterances might be sometimes embarrassing if we do not make use of metaphors or figures of speech. People have always tried to use less disturbing expressions instead of the hurtful ones. The diplomatic use of language is of major importance, since language is not a simple tool of communication or vehicle for transmission the thoughts, but very often mitigates the negative social phenomena.

Therefore, the research that has been presented in this communication provided new opportunities, as well as challenges, for the study of euphemistic usage in the diplomatic discourse and its increasingly complex nature.

Key words: *Language, euphemisms, discourse, communication.*

The main purpose of the human language is to convey the human thoughts and feelings in the most reliable way. The language of a nation is closely associated to the people's personality and is relevant to a certain social community. The modern world is perceived as a 'global village' in which contacts, cooperation, and the exchange of goods, knowledge, experience and information have become widely accepted. Whenever there is contact, an exchange of experience from all walks of life takes place. The way one culture is perceived by another one largely depends on the language and diplomatic competences of the people whose job is to improve relationships between people or groups of people. This job would be impossible without the shared knowledge and experience of the members of different cultures. They serve as bridge-builders between two or more countries. The need for bridge building between cultures is related to the rooted in the history fact that the world consists of different countries. People who live in a certain country are supposed to have a common identity. This identity is something visible to the people themselves and to outsiders and it is rooted in things like a common language or a common religion. The euphemistic expressions that we find in diplomatic discourse illustrates the way how language can be manipulated to add value to certain words or ideas with the aim of masking or alleviating the violence.

The diachronic research on diplomatic language has been directed to assert the quintessence of the information diplomats want to convey. Many scientists have strived to unwind the mystery of diplomats' use of specific language by way of policy or other various purposes. However, the fact that diplomatic language is "goal-oriented" where diplomats choose their speeches consciously and thoroughly with specific aim in mind should never be ignored. It is also claimed that such use of language attenuates the destructive form of communication and reduces the impertinence of political reality by replacing offensive terms with more acceptable ones. This strategy is referred to as "Euphemism". According to the Oxford Dictionary of Euphemism the term "euphemism" refers to polite, indirect expressions which replace words and phrases considered harsh and impolite. It is an idiomatic expression which respects the social code of a certain social layer and paraphrases an acceptable meaning which is less offensive or inappropriate.

Attention in the present communication is directed towards the eloquence and accuracy of diplomats' language and how it can be used both for maintaining relationships and for manipulating events.

A diachronic approach on Euphemisms. The etymology of the word "euphemisms" come from the Greek "eu" – 'good' and "phem" – 'speak'. These are words, phrases and expressions employed in communication when someone wants to avoid the words that do not suit the situation because they have unpleasant, embarrassing or taboo associations, thereby also avoiding possible misunderstandings, conflicts and embarrassments. Speakers employ euphemisms to express everyday realities, while listeners and readers have to decode them to properly understand the discourse. A possible, and very illustrative, definition of what euphemisms are is the following: "Euphemisms are unpleasant truths wearing diplomatic cologne" [3]. The euphemism expresses the speakers' attitudes toward the issue, the audience and the context, but also its linguistic elegance, its appreciation of the right to be different and ultimately perhaps its skill in ideological manipulation: evasion, distortion and falsification of the truth. In his Oxford Dictionary of Euphemisms, Holder [4] claims that "in speech and writing, we use euphemism for dealing with taboo or sensitive subjects. It is therefore the language of evasion, hypocrisy, prudery, and deceit." Thus, euphemisms are used for

manipulation, where the words can inflate or soften the true meaning and mislead the reader. There are a number of factors which have to be considered when deciding what kind of language behavior counts as polite: the audience, the relationship between the participants in communication, the subject matter, the context, place and time.

It is impossible to talk about euphemisms without reference to taboos, which are considered the main cause of euphemisms. According to Allan and Burrige, taboos arise out of social constraints on the individual's behaviour where it can cause discomfort, harm or injury [1]. Any such behaviour is subject to taboo, because of a potential danger to oneself or others, and even an unintended violation of a taboo risks condemnation. It should be noted that there is no absolute taboo. Not all people, in all situations, at all times, recognize the same taboo. It is subject to change due to cultural and social norms, which are community specific, time specific and context specific. A good example would be the word nigger, which, when used by white people, is considered highly offensive, and when used by black people can have a connotation of belonging to the same community sharing the same background, and simply mean "man".
Therefore, euphemisms are directly linked to the customs, traditions and norms of social groups and peoples around the world. If we take into consideration the contexts or fields that employ the euphemisms, we can state that their use is wide and diverse. They spread through private and public communication, and euphemistic expressions seem to be used more frequently than before, perhaps because of the increased care and appreciation in modern society's attempts to show more tolerance in terms of educational, social, racial, ethnic, religious and other kinds of diversity.

Euphemism is a politeness strategy which never stands alone, but rather is related and firmly bound to a set of pragmatic theories that help achieve its aim in all contexts. Regardless of all the ambiguities it creates, its diplomatic function made it the preferable way to approach offensive and unacceptable topics.

Euphemisms contribute to the richness of language. When used thoughtfully in everyday situations, particularly in public or diplomatic discourse, they can uphold interpersonal relationships. Contemporary diplomacy use discourses and practices that blur distinctions between war and peace, between violence and humanity. These discourses provide a fertile ground for linguistic creativity, for finding new evasive and non-violent expressions which mask the violent and unpleasant nature of their referents. Among the whole range of different linguistic tools, euphemisms have become increasingly used, adding new values to words and ideas, being affected by and at the same time contributing to the ever changing perception of modern reality.

Ambiguity versus precision. Using euphemisms to substitute some expressions with those that in a particular community have positive or at least neutral connotations provides a base for stylistic synonymy and the resulting words and expressions enrich the language. Euphemisms are polite, evasive and diplomatically correct expressions, which promote well-being for us and for others. This constant battle of finding the right word leads to language censoring, which motivates the creation of inventive and often playful new expressions, or new meanings for old expressions. Sometimes a synonymous expression may push the other out, making it passive. For example the expression "mentally handicapped child" has been replaced by "a child with learning difficulties", which has itself become pejoratively used among children who call each other LDs as an insult [1]. Thus, we can clearly state that euphemisation is one way of the generators of synonymy in language.

Politeness and political correctness have become a norm in diplomatic discourse and in public institutions, and the terminology inspired by the political correctness is euphemistic. It is of major role to correctly decide what kind of behaviour is subject to sanction and calls for the use of euphemisms. Humans as social beings are members of different groups, starting with gender, family, generation, then friendship, occupation, interest, etc. All of them have unwritten

rules dominating the standards of behaviour, and sanctions for their violation. The result is the self-imposed censoring on the one hand, and the censoring prescribed by an authoritative body within that group on the other. This means that language is constantly subject to proscribing, either by individuals themselves or by those in power, allegedly acting for the common good. An example is the word "chairperson" introduced instead of "chairman", which was considered discriminatory in terms of sex.

A successful diplomat who is engaged in negotiations will often aim to persuade his interlocutors to reach agreement by means of words which combines precision with ambiguity. Diplomats are people who are considered to be bridge-builders because they are either living in or at least dealing with foreign cultures. The success of a diplomat depends on this brinkmanship because, on the one hand, they must remain credible with their superiors back home and, on the other hand, they must have access to the leaders in the country where they are posted. Diplomats socialize in their daily lives with a very mixed group of people. This gives them the opportunity to become communication and diplomacy bridge-builders and cultural experts. They usually tend to choose words to be precise enough to communicate clearly to their interlocutors yet elastic enough to suggest the alternative meanings the diplomat wants to convey. Many critical scholars strived to investigate the diplomatic habit of using ambiguity to create the necessary space for international agreement and room to negotiate politically at home and abroad. The theory of the speech act explains how the international states system was linguistically created, established and maintained by diplomats.

A very significant portion of diplomatic communication is facilitated by the use of euphemism. A diplomatic text should be oriented not only towards giving information but also towards influencing and convincing the recipient. The euphemism which is a powerful device for making comparisons may be used to accentuate certain features of major concepts and to deemphasize the latest ones. It could be regarded one of the most powerful linguistic tools at the disposal of a diplomat. Diplomatic discourse, which is astute and carefully-constructed, may be used to conceal as well as to reveal. It is evident that the euphemism can function as a form of linguistic embellishment, but this embellishment in terms of diplomatic language has a special nature and distinctive functions. The euphemisms used in diplomacy can differ considerably from what they are in other forms of discourse. In the context of our communication paper, to grasp the nature of euphemisms that are so deeply interwoven into political and diplomatic language, we investigate not only what they mean but in what manner they convey that meaning precisely and how we perceive them avoiding ambiguity. In the language of diplomacy it is of special importance to be sensitive to the potentially mystifying nature of language and meaning which euphemisms produce.

In conclusion we can say that when we want to avoid words that have unpleasant, awkward or tabooed associations, and thus avoid possible misunderstandings, conflicts and embarrassing situations, we make use of euphemisms. We tend to be more aware of the words we choose during more formal situation. Due to the ever growing diplomatic relations, euphemisms have become increasingly used, adding new value to the already existing words and ideas. They serve as practical needs of diplomatic discourse and also support the ideological role of the diplomacy, particularly in global affairs around the world. Consequently, they contribute to the ever-changing perception of modern reality.

Diplomatic language does not only involve verbal manifestations, but also a series of non-verbal signs used by diplomats and government representatives to communicate and convey messages to their respective foreign interlocutors. Attention in this communication paper is focused to diplomatic discourse in its linguistic dimension, i.e. the written verbal dimension of the language of diplomacy. This communication paper highlights the influence of national cultures in the process of building a common diplomatic culture and discusses the international

signification of diplomatic discourse. We have also addressed to the problem of the choice of a common working language and the tensions and interests involved in selecting this language.

Through the discussion above, it can be concluded that in order to avoid uncomfortable situations diplomats tend to use the euphemism, as a figure of speech, in their interactions. They are considered to be bridge-builders and communication experts. They usually tend to choose words to be precise enough to communicate clearly to their interlocutors yet elastic enough to suggest the alternative meanings the diplomat wants to convey.

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