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Euphemisms in English Everyday Discourse

Eufemismy v anglickém jazykovém prostředí

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Abstract

This thesis deals with euphemisms in everyday English discourse. In the theoretical part, the term euphemism and other related concepts are defined. Furthermore, the ways of forming euphemisms in English and the areas of using these language devices are introduced. The practical part is based on a qualitative analysis of different sources such as newspapers, magazines or online articles containing euphemisms. The aim of this thesis is to analyse the use of euphemisms in everyday English discourse and find out when they are used as a tool of manipulation. On top of that an influence of using euphemisms on the perception of an unpleasant fact is described.

Anotace

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá eufemismy v anglickém jazykovém prostředí. V teoretické části je definován termín eufemismus a další koncepty s ním spojené. Dále jsou uvedeny způsoby tvoření eufemismů v angličtině a oblasti, v nichž se tyto prostředky obvykle vyskytují. Praktická část je zaměřena na kvalitativní analýzu eufemismů z různých zdrojů, např. noviny, časopisy a online články. Cílem této práce je analyzovat použití eufemismů v angličtině vyskytujících se v každodenním diskurzu a zjistit, kdy jsou nástrojem manipulace a jak ovlivňují vnímání nepříjemné skutečnosti.

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INTRODUCTION

In our society, there is a tendency to avoid naming objects and abstract things directly because we do not want to insult others. In order not to hurt someone's feelings we try to soften the potentially negative effect of the expressions through using milder alternatives. It means that whenever we come across a sensitive topic we choose such words which minimize an offensive or harsh impact on listeners. As I have always been incredibly interested in how the choice of words can influence our perception of different situations and facts, I have chosen an issue of euphemisms as the focus of my thesis.

Dealing with sensitive topics while some of them are not only delicate but also tabularised. In other words, it is prohibited to speak about them in public and if we, under different circumstances, have to address them we are obliged to express them indirectly. My primary objective is to define all these taboo areas and words which are used to describe them in order to maintain a verbal politeness.

However, the main purpose of the thesis is to analyse the use of euphemisms in everyday English discourse with the respect to their influence of our perception of unpleasant situation. Additionally, it will be examined when the euphemistic alternatives fulfil their primary function of softening of the meaning and when they serve as an instrument of manipulation.

The thesis is divided into two parts. The theoretical one provides a framework based on the works of Burrige, Allan and Keyes whereas the practical part introduces various examples excerpted from British newspapers, magazines and online articles. The qualitative analysis reveals the use of euphemisms, their occurrence, functions and purposes. As the formality of the euphemistic alternatives differs it will be also discussed if all of them can appear in press or if some of them are used in a spoken discourse only.

1 THEORETICAL PART

The aim of the theoretical part is to introduce the terminology dealing with euphemisms. At the very beginning of the chapter the euphemisms are defined and their formation is described. Since there are lots of ways of euphemizing and categories into which the euphemisms can be divided, I have chosen the classification by Rawson which I found the most suitable for this thesis. Although the euphemisms are understood as stable items of the language they undergo a process of entering and leaving a word stock. This development is also described in the theoretical part and also supported by a number of examples.

Since the euphemisms are used in order to soften a meaning of a word they are usually employed when speaking about sensitive topics. We call them taboos and they are an integral part of the euphemizing. In the theoretical part various types of taboos are defined and exemplify. Only the most common areas such as sex, relations, food, body parts and bodily effluvia, dying and disease are chosen because of their very high frequency of occurring in an everyday discourse. The division of taboo words is based on books by Keith Allan and Kate Burridge.

There are other phenomena which are closely related to the euphemisms and they are briefly described in the thesis since they show us different aims of how a euphemism can be used. One of them is a political correctness, which is in a current society passionately discussed. Being political correct means not to sound abrupt and offensive and choose rather neutral words when describing one's physical appearance, race, religion or sexual orientation. The theoretical part offers different points of view on the relation between euphemisms and political correctness.

This part portrays also a phenomenon of doublespeak which uses euphemisms as well, but for a completely different purpose. It provides a clarification of who the users of doublespeak are, in which realm of life it is applied, how it works and what impact it has as it is a kind of a language game speaker plays with the audience. The sources of information are books and articles written by William Lutz.

1.1 EUPHEMISMS

1.1.1 Definition of Euphemisms

Rawson (1981: 1) states that “the term comes from the Greek *eu*, meaning ‘well’ or ‘sounding good,’ and *phēmē*, ‘speech’.” In fact, euphemisms are linguistic tools which are used to protect the speaker or the hearer from possible offence and impudence. It means that when speaking about a delicate topic we choose indirect, mild and agreeable words in order to soften the potentially negative impact of our expressions on the hearer.

According to Keyes (2010: 8) “euphemizing most often results from an excess of politeness and prudery, but it can also demonstrate creativity and high good humour.” There is a tendency to maintain courtesy and social tact in interpersonal communication. So as to keep a harmony in a conversation the aim is to avoid an argument that our speech can cause. Linfoot-Ham (2005: 228) adds that “in order for communication to progress smoothly and without conflict, accommodations are continually, and often subconsciously, made.” They are rooted so deeply in our language that we use them without knowing it.

Southerland and Katamba (1997: 554) define euphemism as “the avoidance of words which may be seen as offensive, obscene, or somehow disturbing to listeners or readers.” Items which are euphemized are often tabooed. Another point of view on euphemisms is provided by Wang (2013: 156) for whom “euphemism is not only a common strategy in people’s language using, but also a kind of cultural phenomenon.” Wang (2013: 156) adds that “having a great effect on people’s daily communication, it can make a harsh topic softer and an embarrassed conversation agreeable while adhering to social communicative conventions.” The thesis builds on this definition, as it proves to be complex and involves the matter of cultural conventions in an everyday discourse.

1.1.2 Classification and Formation of Euphemisms

There are lots of different ways of euphemizing and several categories euphemisms can be divided into. Rawson (1981: 1) distinguishes “two general types of euphemisms – positive and negative.” The positive ones overestimate euphemized items and make them grandiose. They refer to many fancy occupational titles such as *help* for *servant* or *working girl* for *whore*. On the other hand the negative euphemisms eliminate everything that we do not want to deal with directly, for example *Devil* stands for *Satan* and *striped one* for *tiger*.

Another division Rawson (1981) suggests, deals with the usage of euphemisms either unconsciously or consciously. An example of an unconscious euphemism is a *cemetery* which replaced the word *graveyard*. This change was made long ago and hardly anyone remembers its motivation. In terms of conscious euphemisms their usage shows a great amount of sympathy and togetherness of the speaker. For instance a right selection of words when condoling upon the loss of someone, where *loss* refers to *death*, points out the ingenuity of that person.

According to Rawson (1981) the process of creating euphemisms includes borrowing words from another language, especially from Latin and French because foreign languages sound elegant. For example French word *lingerie* stands for *women's underwear* whereas Latin is used primarily in medical terms, e.g. *urination*, *copulation*, *masturbation* and they are regarded as printable.

Another category Rawson (1981) introduces deals with abbreviations since bad words are not so bad when abbreviated and thus people cannot be offended because a taboo term is not fully expressed. For instance *Big C* stands for *cancer* and *BD* refers to *bondage and discipline*.

Allan and Burridge (1991) add the class of semantic change which might include circumlocutions. It means that we use as long roundabouts as possible in order to evade a direct name. The reason for it is not only the fact that it takes more words to avoid an idea than to express it straightforwardly, but also the Anglo Saxons words which are rather short. An example of circumlocutions might be *little girl's room* which stands for *toilet*. Semantic change may be seen in *do it* which refers to *have sex*, furthermore, there is a significant metaphorical transfer in *the cavalry's come* meaning *menstruation*.

1.1.3 Euphemism as a Barometer of Changing Attitude

Euphemisms are not considered to be stable items in a language because they are created almost daily. Some of them get into the centre of vocabulary and maintain their euphemistic status, but the others enter only the periphery and later on they disappear from our word stock. *Sleep with* or *pass away* are examples of those euphemisms which have been here for hundreds of years and they are still in use. Even some of them were intended to be primarily euphemisms, but in the course of time they became a part of everyday vocabulary and lost their euphemistic value.

“Penis, Latin word for tail, in Cicero’s time was put to work as a euphemism for the male sex organ. Once this term lost its euphemistic cover, others stepped up to take its place, then shape-shifted.” (Keyes, 2010: 13)

An instant changing of euphemistic climate might be seen when speaking about children whose parents did not get married. In the history we called them *bastards* or *children of sin*, later on the term *illegitimate children* was introduced. Nowadays, there is no need for euphemism which would name these offspring because our society does not care about the marital status of the child’s parents.

Language is an open system and undergoes many changes and one of these shifts affects euphemisms as well. Their meaning used to be good, but in the course of time they became bad and good again. A euphemism which was polite yesterday is tomorrow seen as a strait-laced roundabout. Keyes (2010) introduces an example of this euphemistic constant state of flux and thus the word *cherry*. “It was once considered more respectable than *hymen*. Now, just the opposite is true. The former is thought to be vulgar, the latter decent (Keyes 2010: 13).”

According to Rawson (1981) bad meanings or associations of words tend to drive competing good meanings out of circulation. This thesis is supported by an example of the word *intercourse* which used to be a general term and meant *communication*. However, when it reached its euphemistic status, the sexual meaning became dominant and nowadays other senses of this word are hardly ever applied.

Keyes (2010: 11) points out that “today, it is death, disability and discrimination that provide fodder for euphemisms, as we grope for inoffensive terms to designate loved ones who have died, those with physical or intellectual limitations, and members

of minority groups.” Yet, it does not mean that we would be more straightforward and we would be able to express ourselves openly without any inhibitions, but we can speak about certain topics with a greater deal of frankness, however, we still use euphemisms.

1.1.4 Dysphemism and Orthophemism

Dealing with euphemisms, dysphemisms and orthophemisms must be defined because they are on the same semantic scale and differ only in the intensity of semantic meaning. Allan and Burrige (2006) define dysphemism as the counterpart of euphemism. It means that the aim of dysphemisms is not to soften the denotational meaning, but on the contrary to coarsen it. Through the right choice of words and expressions the speaker can harm, humiliate and degrade the listener. However, dysphemisms are not so common in everyday life and they are rather characteristic of certain groups and communities such as political groups or feminists speaking about men.

Allan and Burrige (2006: 33) introduce orthophemism and describe it as “a typically more formal and more direct (or literal) than the corresponding euphemism.” The contrast of these three phenomena might be seen in words *menstruate – have a period – bleed*, where the first item is an example of orthophemism followed by a euphemism and the last word belongs to the category of dysphemism. Orthophemism is understood as a denotative meaning, whereas euphemism and dysphemism are rather connotations with different emotional colouring. The emotional values differ from one community to another and from context to context.

1.2 TABOO

1.2.1 Taboos and Their Origins

The term taboo refers to a prohibition of behaviour that influences everyday life and comes mainly from social constraints. Not taking these restrictions into

consideration can cause harm and discomfort. Thus, this language is found as the subject to censorship and is used to mitigate the potential danger of offence. In fact the existence of taboos arouses language change, especially in terms of semantics and supports the creation of new milder and roundabout alternatives.

New expressions might be produced either by changing a form of the tabooed word or by using figurative language that conceals the direct meaning. Dealing with taboos from a historical point of view they define the forbidden topics in a particular period, which gives us an idea about social restrictions of that time. At the same time analysing taboos provides an extremely interesting insight into the human psyche and observes the reaction of human beings towards the world around.

Allan and Burridge (2006: 2) state that “the English word taboo is derived from the Tongan tabu, which came to notice towards the end of the eighteen century. In the language of Polynesia the word means simply to forbid, forbidden and can be applied to any sort of prohibition.” The term taboo was spread all around the world and usually refers to a topic which is offensive and thus needs to be avoided. Taboos are used not only in an everyday discourse, but it was extended to political and social issues. Basically, every area of life might be tabooed. In order to evade this imprecision a tabooed topic must be in some way harmful or offensive to an individual or to a community. Rawson (2010: 5) points out, that “extraordinary collections of euphemisms have formed around some topics over the years as a result of the continual creation of new terms.”

1.2.2 Taboos Used When Speaking About Sex and Bodily Effluvia

Generally, sexual topics are taboo for public display where speaker uses figurative language, verbal play or euphemisms in order to avoid a direct naming. It is, undoubtedly, that a woman’s body and effluvia are more tabooed rather than the man’s one. This thesis is supported by Rawson (2010: 5) who claims that “there are at about 650 synonyms for vagina, most of them euphemistic, and about half that number for penis.” It follows that speaking about female sexual organ was, in most eras, a subject to censorship, which we cannot say about the male’s organ.

1.2.2.1 Naming Female Sexual Organ

As it is mentioned above, there are hundreds of synonyms for vagina and most of them have its euphemistic nature. The names for it differ according to the age of a woman and the period she lives in. In other words, a little girl would call her vagina in a different way than a teenager or an adult woman. Some names for this female sexual part are created on the base of shape and some are just random words sometimes made up by a woman itself and in comparison with synonyms for penis, these are softer and gentler.

There are also certain areas which serve as a source of inspiration for euphemistic naming vagina. One of these fields is fruit and vegetables that provide words such as *cabbage*, *mushroom*, *split fig*, *sweet potato pie* or *papaya*. Animals and living creatures are another source of names, e.g. *kitten*, *beaver* or *snail*. Little girls usually refer to their vagina as *half penny*, *peepee* or *cooch* whereas adult women prefer to name it with vague euphemisms for instance *down below*, *downstairs*, *middle* or *private parts*. *Intouchit*, *pookalolly pie*, *the love cavern*, *squishi* and *split knish* are euphemisms which were created by women and are naturally more colourful and playful. Nowadays, it is the naming of the female sexual organ that is affected by modern depilation. Thus we refer to it as *wax line*, *bikini line* or *bikini zone*. However a modern term *vag* or *vaj* is becoming more popular and universally acceptable in the society.

1.2.2.2 Menstruation Taboo

From the very beginning of humankind, menstruation was a subject to censorship, which might be seen in some religious communities that considerate a menstruating woman as unclean and there are even rules that allow or forbid a woman to do certain activities while menstruating. These restrictions are currently in our modern and equal society seen as outdated, however, there are still some orthodox groups of followers who practice them and menstruating women are thus strongly disadvantaged. For instance, according to tradition, women are not allowed to sleep with men in a bed during their period or move freely in a community. “Restrictions on a woman’s normal behaviour while she is menstruating are common across communities.

Tabooed behaviour includes: sexual relations with a man and entering sacred places or touching sacred and revered objects” (Allan, Burrige, 2006: 165). Menstruation used to be associated with purifying and blood was believed to be filled with evil spirits. This is the reason why menstruating women were for the period of their menstruation excluded from the society.

Since it is exclusively women’s issues, menstruation is tabooed especially by men and this avoiding of naming it directly led to the development of euphemisms. They are usually based on several characteristics of menstruation, such as a red colour – *the Red Sea’s in, it’s a red letter, flying the red flag* or *red devil*. A direct mention of blood is in expressions – *bloody Mary*. The other euphemisms express an idea of illness or inconvenience – *come sick, cramps, curse, feeling that way, female complaint and disorder* or *indisposed. Bad time, calendar time, full moon, that time, monthly blues* or *wrong time of the month* are euphemisms created on the basis of periodicity. The other euphemistic expressions are through the idea of a visit – *Aunt Flo has come, grandma’s here from Red Creek, little sister’s here. Having the rag on, in the saddle, wearing the manhole cover* or *riding the cotton pony* carries the characteristic of sanitary protection. The last but not least is a group of euphemisms that describe menstruation through sexual unavailability – *ice-boxed, out of this world, today I’m a lady*. Other examples will be introduced in the practical part of the thesis as well as their formality and occurrence in press.

Creating of euphemisms can be dated back to the period of the Norman Conquest, when English became bilingual and there was an attempt to distinguish between a genteel and obscene vocabulary. According to Rawson (1981: 181) “that is why a duchess perspired and expectorated and menstruated while a kitchen maid sweated and spat and bled.”

1.2.2.3 Euphemisms for Man’s Private Parts

Although there are more euphemisms for woman’s body parts we can find quite a lot of names for man’s genitals. The Latin word penis was primarily a euphemism and meant a tail. Currently it is understood as neutral and rather a clinical term for man’s private part. The fact that there are fewer gentle synonyms for penis than for vagina

shows that man's genitals do not undergo tabularization as much as women's private parts. Still, there are some terms and sobriquets that name penis. According to Rawson (1981: 209) "there is an analogy of the penis to a pointed weapon." However, not only the word *weapon* itself refers to penis but also *the gun, the pistol, the short arm, the dagger, the lance, the stake and the sword*. The motivation is based on the fact that all these tools can prick. Another group of euphemisms was created according to anatomical allusions and thus the words – *joint, organ, pizzle* or *member*. Through the process of generalization arouse terms such as – *affair, business, apparatus, equipment, gadget* and *instrument*. In English there are also names for penis with a different source of motivation e.g. *goober, lady delight, manhood, manroot* or *horn*. There is also a category of penis euphemisms which includes baby talk and personal names – *wee wee, wenie, pennie* or *pintle*. However, the most popular terms for penis are *Willy, Peter, Roger* and *Johnson*.

Nevertheless, man's private part is not only the penis but also testicles that undergo the process of tabularization as well. *Marbles, gonads, family jewels* and *nutmegs* refer to this body party as well as a painful area, *cojones*, and *rocks* or *bollixed up* and *prairie oysters*.

1.2.2.4 Doing It – Euphemisms for Sex

Looking back to the history sex has always been an object to a censorship. Since it evokes lots of different emotions, distinct words are required. One can speak about sex tenderly, lyrically, beautifully, but also, roughly, lasciviously and brutally. Since it was not allowed to speak about sex in a polite society people wanted to avoid the direct naming of it and dealt with it by silence. Epstein (1984: 10) points out that "today one can say in print anything one likes of a sexual kind." Only the discretion of editors and publishers stands in the way.

Euphemisms for sex used over the centuries are coition, copulate and intercourse. The word *intercourse* itself used to refer to a conversation between people, however, it took on the erotic charge of the act in the course of time. The most genteel names for sex are *making love* or *lovemaking* that is still in use. There are lots of ordinary words that in a specific context refer to the sex act such as knowing it or in

phrase - *doing it*. The importance of the context when referring to sex with such phrases is discussed in the practical part. Other euphemistic terms might be – *go to bed with, sleep with, on the job, get to it, get at it, fall to it* or *get going*.

Speaking about foreplay one can name it as *a touch, tickle, handle, fondle, rub* or *massage*. Allan and Burrige (1991: 86) state that “there are no true euphemisms for oral sex. The most neutral terms are *fellatio* and *cunnilingus*” Dealing with euphemisms for sex we cannot forget to mention the indirect naming of orgasm. There are only a few terms for this phenomenon and thus – *climax, coming, seminal discharge, come* or *cum*.

The same delicate topic as sex is the matter of masturbation. Since it was understood as something devilish, insane and unhealthy, old euphemisms such as – self-abuse, self-pollution or self-defilement reflected this general point of view. After the WWII people started to be more tolerant in terms of masturbation and new and simpler euphemisms came into existence e.g. *playing with yourself, relieving yourself, jacking off, beating off*. Nowadays the gentle names for onanism are much more playful and innovative – *milk the snake, stroke the chicken, varnish your pole* or *pet the poodle*. *Self-pleasure, finding out alone, touching oneself, self-sexuality* or *sex without a partner* are euphemisms with rather neutral colouring.

1.2.2.5 Bodily Effluvia

Bodily effluvia is a term that names all the substance that come from our body, particularly gases, liquids and solids. In English we refer to them using Latin based words – *urine, faeces, perspire, regurgitate* and *excrement*, which are used rather in medical fields than in the everyday discourse. The choice of vocabulary for naming the bodily secretion reflects our social standing. In a polite society people burp, but not belch, purge or vomit, but not puke.

Fart was originally a euphemism for gases emitting from the rectum, however, in the course of time it took on the vulgar connotations and thus there was a call for other euphemistic synonyms. The new ones are – *passing gas* or *cutting cheese* which is used mainly in children’s talk. According to Keyes (2010: 111) “determining the right words to describe solid body waste and its elimination has always been more problematic than choosing the ones for liquid waste.” The names might differ in terms of professions.

Doctors would use the terms *stools* or *faecal matter*; farmers would call it *manure*, *droppings*, *dog waste*, whereas waste managers would refer to it as *biosolid*. In everyday conversation, we have a word *shit*, which is not regarded as polite and thus there is a need for euphemistic synonyms, despite the fact, that *shit* can function both as a noun and a verb. The euphemisms such as *dung* or *scat* are in terms of politeness convenient, but too prissy and the word *poo* is used especially by children. Thus the best way might be using these names – *business*, *number two* or *diddly-poo* when speaking about people's excrements. Some other examples of naming human secretion and the reasons why we rather use word of foreign origin for it are discussed in the practical part.

Piss used to be an absolutely reputable euphemistic synonym for urinate, but this status changed over the time. Nowadays it is used mainly in phrase e.g. *piss off* and it has a negative colouring. Currently we use euphemisms such as *pass water* or *take a leak*, Men would say – *shake the dew of the Lili* whereas women would call it – *water the roses*. In English word stock, there are also lots of euphemisms in the area of children's talk. The youngest ones would refer to it as – *tinkle*, *piddle*, *wee-wee* or *pee*.

The euphemisms of eliminating body waste differ according to time and place, naturally. However, there are some of them that we have used over the time. *Pick a daisy*, *go visit my uncle*, *call of nature* and *leave the room* are just a few examples. The way of polite and not direct expressing of elimination connects tightly with the naming of a room, where the toilet is. The euphemistic synonyms developed in the course of time and thus one can observe that in the history, people referred to it as – *necessary chair*, *withdrawal chair* or *business chair*. The room used to be called – *a place of general interest* or *where the Queen goes alone*. Nowadays we name it – *the bathroom*, *the restroom*, *the washroom*, *the lavatory*, *the smallest room* or *loo*.

Dealing with liquid bodily effluvia there are some euphemisms for vomiting, which is a rather neutral term. People refer to this uncomfortable state with words – *be sick*, *throw up*, *spew* or *honk*. Last but not least terms, we are going to deal with are euphemisms for perspiration. The word itself is understood as neutral rather than a euphemistic synonym, but there are some with softening meaning – *be hot*, *hot and sticky*, *a little flushed*.

1.2.3 Disease, Death and Dying

One of the greatest areas where euphemisms are frequently used deals with health issues. Since it is a negative aspect of human life, people avoid direct naming in order not to deepen their pain and suffering. It is a long-standing practice using euphemisms when speaking about diseases, death, dying and killing where the main and the strongest motivation is fear.

1.2.3.1 Talking About Diseases

It is almost impossible to speak about our health conditions without using euphemisms. The word disease itself used to be a soft substitution for sickness. Lots of various euphemistic synonyms have developed in the course of time because people do not want to call themselves sick. They rather refer to their health matters as – *unwell, under the weather, indispose, out of sorts, a bit off*. Nowadays we would not admit that we are ill, but that we *suffer a complaint, condition, episode or event*.

Looking back in the history, the disease was generally associated with something supernatural and mysterious. People were afraid of direct naming because they believed that if they express it aloud they would catch it. Thus the word stock was enriched by many euphemisms. A great role in creating substitutional words played ethnical biases. It arises from it, that lots of diseases were named after nations, depending on the political situation of a certain period. Syphilis used to be called *French pox*, influenza as *Spanish flu*, there were also *German measles, Tokyo trots* or *Tunis stomach*. Currently, diseases such as AIDS and cancer are met with the same amount of fear as for example tuberculosis in the past but the principle is the same. What is terrifying is inexpressible. Therefore, cancer received lots of euphemisms – *Big C, CA, a long/prolonged/incurable illness*. To the contrary the abbreviation *AIDS* is understood as euphemism which replaced the original terms *gay cancer, gay plague* or *GRID* that were aimed at the certain group of people and it did not allow the fact that also heterosexual people might suffer from this illness.

However, not only the realm of physical illness is abundant of euphemisms, but also the area of mental illness. Since the origin of the bad mental condition is not usually clearly specified this field is covered in mystery and strongly stigmatized.

People are ashamed of admitting mental problems because physical illness is perfectly acceptable, but not the mental one. Moreover, it is seen as a moral failure and deficiency in person rather than a health issue. As the behaviour of mentally ill people is beyond standard social norm they are usually laughed at. That is why many terms referring to mental problems are associated with funny – *funny in the head, funny farm, wacky*. On the other hand, there are some euphemisms created on the base of fear of losing control over one's thoughts and mind – *out of one's mind, losing one's mind, mad* and *crazy*. Nevertheless the latter mentioned euphemistic synonyms are currently considered not politically correct as well as *lunatic, be mental* or *become a mental patient*, however, they are still used in press, which the practical part of the thesis shows. Some terms such as imbecile, idiot or retard gained pejorative colouring and are understood as vulgar. Currently used euphemistic and not offensive terms are *mentally challenged* and *of unsound mental condition*.

1.2.3.2 Talking About Death and Dying

The main source of motivation for the euphemistic synonyms labelling death is fear. There are various types of anxiety including fear of the loss of our close relatives and friends, uncertainty what comes after death or where our souls go. Humankind had to face these frights and people tried to find the answers over the thousands of years. In the history, there were periods in which speaking about death was tabularised more than an open discussion about sex. On the other hand, there was the era of the Middle Ages in which the symbols of death were seen everywhere and death was an acceptable part of life. Later on the point of view on death started to change and people saw it as a journey and in this sense euphemisms were created – *pass over, go to a better place, go home, go the way of all flesh, go to the happy hunting ground, go to meet one's maker*.

Euphemisms are extremely important when dealing with the issue of death and dying and they provide us a certain protection against the unease connecting with this matter, which is later discussed in the practical part of the thesis. Thus we use – *to pass away, to go sleep, to go away* or *to depart* when speaking about death. Some terms differ according to profession for example euphemisms in a medical sphere are *non-heart-beating donor, losing vital signs* and *negative patient-care outcomes*. Butchers would avoid it using the phrase – *drop off the hook*, actors would refer to it as – *the last*

curtain call. “Boxers take the last count, gourmands lay down their knife and fork, gamblers cash in their chips, computer programmers go off-line (Keyes, 2010: 145).”

After one’s death, funerals and ceremony of burying are another sorrowful experience people have to go through. Thus, this area of language is also covered by soothing word equivalent. Funerals are organized by *funeral services* and *funeral director* and definitely not by mortician or undertaker. When referring to the dead person people use euphemisms such as *loved one*, *dear departed* or *the late Mr./Mrs. X*. Word corpse and the remains have been substituted by the *deceased* or *causality*. The bodies are buried not in a casket, but rather in a *coffin* or even in *alternative containers* when taking new trend in non-traditional funerals into consideration. They *rest in a cemetery*, which used to be a euphemism for graveyard, or their ashes can be *scattered in a garden* or they can *rest in a garden of memories*.

1.2.4 Military Euphemisms

Another area which abounds in euphemisms is a military realm and killing. However, these substitution words are not used in order to evade being offensive or to hurt someone’s feeling. Basically using these types of euphemisms is a certain play with listeners or readers in which the main aim is to cover or even lie about some facts, numbers or events. This highly figurative and innovative language is mainly used by politicians and media and thus this area is extremely favourable to the development of euphemisms.

Therefore, we call our enemies as *aggressors*, *invaders*, *insurgents* or *soft skin targets*. *Collateral damages* refer to the dead civilians killed by our troops and we do not retreat but *undergo a tactical withdrawal*. They have concentration camps, whereas we send people into *pacification centres* and our bombing is just a *protective reaction*. Legal killing is called *execution*, which once used to be euphemism as well as to *terminate* or *silence someone*; nowadays we label it as a *capital punishment*. Also weapons got their euphemistic synonyms such as *the gadget*, *the device*, *the thing*. Some of them were given names of household items – *sewing machine* or *coffee mill*.

1.2.5 Food Taboo

Food and drink is an inseparable part of our life. We eat not only to gratify our biological needs, but also for pleasure. It has its strong social value, it symbolizes hospitality and marks significant occasions such as Christmas Eve or Birthday. Through the food and drink we locate ourselves into a particular social class. It means that meal might serve as an indicator of one's lifestyle and living standard. Naturally, food and drink is tightly connected with our ethnicity and it is our culture and society who dictate food taboos. For example the western countries are disgusted by the idea of consuming dogs as well as Indians by our tradition of eating cows.

Euphemistic synonyms function as distractors from what we are actually eating and they mainly name meat as it is the most tabularised area of food. In fact, we eat *beef, veal, pork, mutton* and *venison* rather than cows, calves, pigs, sheep or deer. The problem of renaming arises in the case of organs of animals. Organ meats, inside meats, offal and appendages do not make one's mouth water. The term *variety meats* was introduced, but it did not catch on with the public. Since French in this case sounds nobly English speakers refer to inner organs as *rogons*. In terms of cooking the way of describing a recipe written in a cookbook has changed as well. We no longer kill, gut, pluck, clean and bone hack or mine, but we *slice, cut, dice* or *peel*.

1.2.6 Money Euphemisms

Generally, the money topic is not considerate as a taboo since we speak about it quite openly, however, not all situations dealing with money must be necessarily positive. When talking about money people might feel uncomfortable. Since it penetrates lots of aspects of our life there is a need for verbal fog and thus for euphemisms. In this case it is a certain manipulation through language devices used mainly by annual reporters, politicians, owners of great institutions, simply by those who have something in common with an extreme amount of money. It sounds definitely better *to leverage purchase* rather than go deeply in debt. If a business has no customers it is in a *start-up mode* and when they shrink it means that they *have negative growth, soft spots* and they *experience a shortfall*. "Such verbal dodges make shady practices

sound positively sunny (Keyes, 2010: 169).” *Gift, donations, commission, rebate, consultant’s fee and the contribution* they all refer to a bribe.

Euphemistic synonyms for money are for example *funds, finances* or *currency* and if you do not have much of them you are no longer broke, but *financially insecure, insolvent, under budget constraints* or you *have limited means* or *cash-flow problems*. Wages became *salaries, compensation* or *remuneration* and *the revenue* is used instead of income. All these euphemisms soften the direct terms that were once commonly used and the practical parts deals with some of them in details.

1.3 DOUBLESPEAK

Euphemisms, political correctness and doublespeak are terms that are tightly connected or they even overlap. Terminology differs in distinction of euphemism and doublespeak. The latter mentioned is understood to be a certain type of euphemisms also known as deceptive euphemism. Basically, doublespeak is a language which turns something negative into positive, bad news are dressed up into good ones and it makes unpleasant facts appear attractive. Doublespeak evades and transfers responsibility and its function of communicating is just to pretend.

Although language is such a powerful tool of building civilization and creating society at the same time it is a device of manipulation, misleading and obscuring. Through language we experience the world around us and thus the right choice of words is the means of shaping our perceptions, thoughts and reactions. Looking back to the history the manipulators and dictators were excellent in giving speeches. The language was their weapon through which they reached the greatest good or the greatest evil. It means that those who can control language can control minds as well as society.

Essentially, if we use substitution words in order not to harm or offend anyone it is the matter of euphemisms. However, in case of covering up some facts or misleading through euphemistic synonyms, it is rather a doublespeak, which is based on incongruity between what is expressed and what it really is. Lutz (1988) divides doublespeak into four kinds. The first one defines using euphemisms as a softening or deceiving alternative. The second type is jargon described as a language of a profession or trade. It enables members of groups to communicate in an effective and clear way.

However, when speaking in jargon on purpose outside the group then there is doublespeak. For example, the term *involuntary conversion of property* means loss or destruction. It would be used in law terminology and it would be understood by all members of this group, but not by the outsiders. Goobledygook or bureaucratese is the third kind of doublespeak based on the idea to overwhelm the audience. It means the bigger the better and it might sound impressive, but dealing with it in depth such phrases do not make any sense. The last type is inflated language that makes the ordinary seem extraordinary, beautifies the everyday things and make common terms sound impressive. Therefore car mechanics are *automotive internists*; employees are no more fired, but *selected out, placed out or released*; stock markets *retreated or eased* but definitely not fell.

We should be aware of the fact that doublespeak is a carefully constructed and designed language that might be difficult to identify and analyse since it is a common part of everyday discourse. However, even if we realise this phenomenon we do not protest or react to it. Doublespeak might be seen as an infection that spreads extremely quickly and its consequences can be fatal in terms of the function of the language. The potential danger lies in the fact that our society depends on informed voters that select the candidates who represent us and decide about public issues. What is more doublespeak might become so omnipresent that we would not be able to identify it at all and would be convinced that the politicians do not lie but misinterpret.

Since language is an open system, and new items can enter it freely, new doublespeak is formed every day. The reason for the creation of substitutional words is not only renaming already existing ones, which is the case of acid rain that used to be referred to as poorly-buffered precipitation and nowadays it is called wet deposition but also the development of new unpleasant phenomena in our society that cause the call for doublespeak. Because of the bad economic situation doublespeak was designed in order to relate to the economic realities indirectly. Easily comprehensible term layoff was replaced by reposition, restructure or reshape. Other languages also contribute to doublespeak. In Japan *hair disadvantage* means baldness, wastepaper baskets are called *user friendly deskside sortation units* in Canada and with increasing degree of freedom in Russia it is allowed to visit *intimacy salons* in other countries known as sex shops.

In order to prove that we are surrounded by doublespeak and that it enters every field of our life I have chosen a few examples that are taken from the book *Doublespeak: From "Revenue Enhancement" to "Terminal Deceive you"* by William Lutz. In the realm of food one should be careful when buying sugar free or sugarless products because they do not contain sucrose but it can contain honey, fructose or any other sweeteners that has the same number of calories as table sugar. The medical doublespeak makes the ordinary appear complicated and thus the treatment that needs counselling is named *cognitive service*. Doublespeak shouts at us out of every advert we come across. It is a natural practice in advertisement industry to play with words, cover up the negatives and highlight the positives of the product they sell. Their only instrument how to address the audience is the language. The right choice of words is extremely important and they are aware of it and thus they use so called powerful words such as help. Literally, it means aid or assist, however, it serves also as *conquer, stop, eliminate, cure, solve, end or heal*. The area of flying and airlines abounds with doublespeak. For example, you are provided with instructions in case of a *non-routine operation* or water landing. For *motion discomfort* there are little paper sacks whereas snack refers to a *package of a few peanuts*. On top of that, your baggage is called *carry-on item* and airplane is rather named *equipment* since it is said to sound more reliable and less frightening. Also the sphere of education contributes with its doublespeak. In a classroom there are no desks but *pupils station* and students do not take just tests but *criterion-referenced testing*. What used to be the Department of Physical Education is now *the Department of Human Kinetics*. Teachers are rather *classroom managers* who instruct *education users*.

All in all doublespeak is a certain form of euphemizing with the concrete aim to mislead, misinterpret, conceal and cover up the unpleasant facts and give the speaker or the writer a good account. On the other hand, the audience should be aware of it that this intention is conscious and they are the objects of manipulation and calculation.

1.4 POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

Political correctness is quite a new phenomenon in our society originated in the late 20th century. It is tightly connected with guilt and shame people feel because of enslaving and marginalising. Since our society is said to be more open and treat all people equally there was an urge for new naming of certain groups which in the past were oppressed and prosecuted. Thus, when speaking about race, ethnicity, religion and sexuality, we find ourselves in a language minefield and we look for the words that do not harm or offend. Another reason of booming of political correctness in the last few decades was the globalisation and the massive flow of tourists, refugees and migrants. The idea of equality brought the need for being nice and that was reflected in the language. Especially editors found themselves under pressure in order to avoid or substitute political and racial definitions of words.

Political correctness is understood as good manners, through which we show our intellectual side, emotional control, censorship and tolerance. However, the linguistic society is divided into two groups. One believes that euphemisms in particular are key players in the realm of political correctness. On the other hand, there is the other party claiming that political correctness is just a call for precise and exact use of language and labelling certain groups by the names they desire. They do not agree with the statement that the political correctness is a matter of euphemism. “Since women can also chair meetings, chairperson is not euphemistic, it’s just accurate (Burridge, 1997: 63).” In contrast to it, when comparing words prostitute and sex worker that denote the same person, the latter term refers rather to a job description than to a moral judgment. Undoubtedly, the need not to be offensive is the motivation for euphemizing and thus these substitution words have positive connotations or at least they try to evade the negative ones.

Although we commonly use euphemisms because of social etiquette, political correctness has become rather a political gesture and effective rhetorical strategy, where the terms are strongly politically loaded, carry more resistance than euphemisms and create a tacit censorship. In fact language serves politicians as a device of manipulation and the right choice of words is crucial for their image and representation of their party. The aim of using political language is purpose-oriented as they want to maintain the support, attract voters and influence their thoughts. Basically, politicians are actors

whose only weapon is a mastery of language and a perfect speech. In order to reach their goals, they need to appear polite and sensitive and at the same time win people's favour and criticise their opponent. Thus, they resort to the use of euphemisms as it is the best way of getting rid of offensive overtones and these euphemisms provide a protection against breaking social conventions.

However, politicians use euphemistic synonyms not only to be polite but also for its function of concealing real facts. In case when substitutional words deliberately mislead audience they are no longer understood as euphemisms as such but as doublespeak or deceptive euphemism. A typical political play with language is the alternation of specific meanings with general ones or replacing subordinates with hypernyms. It means that the more vague the meaning the better, because it solves the problem of choosing appropriate words. Orwell (1946) introduces characteristic phrases such as *militate against*, *make contact with*, *give rise to*, *to be subjected to* or *play a leading part (role) in*. It is crucial to reduce simple words, use rather passive voice than the active one and substitute common conjunctions and prepositions with the complex ones – *with respect to*, *to the fact that* or *on the hypothesis that*. Scientific tone can be reached by choosing words like *phenomenon*, *element*, *effective* or *virtual* whereas elegance and nobility is the value of words – *mutatis*, *deus ex machina* or *status quo*. All in all political euphemisms have some special characteristics and reflect the motivation to conceal the truth and distract the public attention from it. Through using such substitution expression they control the informational transmission as well as people's perception and understanding of the world.

1.5 SUMMARY

As a conclusion, euphemisms have become an integral part of the word stock of a language. Although they are relatively stable items they undergo the process of entering and leaving vocabulary of a language. Moreover, some of the substitutions synonyms were used so much that they went through the procedure of lexicalisation and nowadays their euphemistic origin is not noticeable and cannot be guessed.

However euphemizing is not the matter of the last few decades, but this technique is as old as the language itself. Since it is a general knowledge that words can

hurt there has always been a need for indirect, soft and almost vague terms. Originally, they covered up only few taboo areas such as sexual and dying topics. In the course of time they entered other spheres and at the present time they have already penetrated every single layer of the social life. In fact, euphemisms reflect the period we live in. They are flexible in terms of new inventions and socioeconomic situations.

The increasing number of euphemisms called for its division. Therefore the linguistics started to distinguish between euphemism and doublespeak, which is basically a euphemism but with different intention. The main difference lies in the speaker's or writer's purpose. As euphemisms are used in order to evade an offensive effect in sensitive topics and tend to soften the possible negative impact of the utterance, doublespeak is rather practice when deceiving and hiding unwelcome facts. Doublespeak is predominantly used by politicians, reporters and media as their tool for manipulation and control of people's thoughts, reactions and decisions. Thus the main realms where doublespeak abounded are political speeches, socio-economy, advertisement and topics dealing with war, crime and business.

Political correctness uses primarily euphemisms since this relatively new phenomenon refers to the calling of groups with the names they prefer. Nowadays, political correctness itself is a very fashionable term that gives us an opportunity to present ourselves as tolerable and without any prejudices. However, the reason for this open-minded view of the world around us arises from the history when people were excluded because of their ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical appearance and belief.

2. ANALYSIS

The analysis focuses on euphemisms occurring in various articles published in online newspapers and magazines. To get a larger picture the euphemisms will be excerpted from many different sources: theguardian.com, dailymail.co.uk, bbc.com, metro.co.uk, telegraph.co.uk.

I have set criteria according to which the euphemism will be analysed. They are divided into groups according to the taboo they refer to. The analysis will deal with most of the taboo's areas which were defined in the theoretical part. Only the currently used euphemisms will be analysed as some of the euphemisms have undergone the process of lexicalisation and are no longer understood as euphemisms.

The classification of euphemisms is based on their functions, whether they change exact names and their negative connotations, avoid calling things that are considered impolite, replace repulsive and unpleasant words or heighten the status of non-prestigious phenomena. Further division focuses on the origin of the euphemisms and describes why the foreign words are preferred when forming new euphemistic alternatives. Since the usage of euphemisms might differ according to age and profession, this issue will be also dealt with in the practical part.

Another criterion of my analysis concerns the influence of euphemisms on readers or listeners. It will be discussed in which case it is the matter of softening and when it serves as an instrument of manipulation. This should confirm or disprove the hypothesis stated in the theoretical part, that is, why do we euphemize. The analysis might reveal other reasons for euphemizing.

2.1 SEXUAL RELATED EUPHEMISMS

As it was mentioned in the theoretical part there are many ways of speaking about sexual topics. The subject of sex might be dealt with silence, medical language or with the use of euphemisms. British and American press uses both of these possibilities depending on the formality of the article. Another criterion is the group of readers at which the article is aimed.

2.1.1 Naming of Women's Private Parts

*“Honestly, I was taken aback. I grew up in the UK as part of the Somali diaspora, and I'd assumed the people of Jijiga would not be ready for **vulva** cupcakes.”*
(Hussein, 2017)

*“On 31 January I answered a problem from a reader asking what to call her daughter's **genitals** – something that wasn't too twee, euphemistic or overly anatomical.”* (Barbieri, 2009)

*“Enslar, a successful playwright, was surprised by the contempt with which a menopausal friend talked about her **vagina**.”* (Gardner, 1999)

There are many ways of calling women private parts. One can refer to it by using clinical expressions as in the examples above. These words are usually of Greek-Latin origin and do not soften or conceal the real meaning as it provides the technical terms and therefore they are understood in a neutral or straightforward way.

“Patients round here do use the term ‘privates’ or ‘private parts’ or ‘down below’, but I agree these are more suited to adults than to small children.”
(Barbieri, 2009)

Privates or *private parts* seem to be very popular and commonly used euphemism in press. It is of a foreign origin, and its meaning is rather general as we do not name the organs properly but we use hypernym. The certain amount of avoidance is apparent, but still these euphemisms do not serve as a means of softening or concealing. As they are not too clinical or too twee they occur plentifully in medias or in adult’s conversation at a formal level.

On the other hand, *down below* is purely an English phrase that only stands for private parts and it is rather a general term that evades direct naming. Although we can use it when speaking with a gynaecologist or any other physician it is considered less formal but still without any heavy colouring.

*“On reflection, the fact that he recognised the icing decoration as vulvas was good – many men and women don’t know what women’s genitals look like. I hope he enjoyed eating those red velvet **pussies**.”* (Hussein, 2017)

Another way of referring to the woman's genitals is the use of various animal names when the most common is *a pussy*. The word was derived from a pussycat and the meaning remains the same. Although this term often serves as euphemism it has also its vulgar connotations. Thus, it is extremely important to be careful when using it in order to avoid ambiguity. In this case the function of this euphemistic alternative is to soften the naming and avoid any neutral or even clinical terms. As the connotations of the word are not only gentle but also sexual, pussy is not used in children’s talk when referring to women private parts.

“I am trying to spread the use of the term ‘twinkie’.” (Barbieri, 2009)

“Another good one is the French ‘zizzi’.” (Barbieri, 2009)

“Anne said that her daughter and her friends always referred to what you are discussing as a ‘minnie’ when they were at primary school.” (Barbieri, 2009)

“My mother and her mother, etc. referred to it as a ‘ha’penny’.” (Barbieri, 2009)

In terms of children’s talk there are lots of ways of calling girls’ genitals. These names are more playful and creative. The origin is usually unknown as well as the meaning. Most of such words are made up randomly and its only motivation is gentle, soft and sweet sound. There are some ways of forming these terms. You can either reduplicate words such as zizzi, or the words can undergo a process of clipping for example *ha’penny* made from half penny. Another possibility is to create diminutives for instance *twinkie*. Although there are various discussions that children should call their private parts with the proper names it seems more appropriate when a girl calls in public ‘I have a twinkie’ rather than ‘I have a vagina’.

2.1.2 Naming of Men’s Private Parts

Naming of men’s private parts has certain similarities with the naming of women’s genitals. In both cases there are straightforward, neutral and clinical expressions that come from Greek or Latin. Their aim is not to tone down or hide the meaning, but on the contrary, to provide technical terms without any colouring.

*“When I was at school there was a craze for scrawling **penis** graffiti on the chairs.” (Weaver, 2009)*

*“ZIKA infection could cause lasting infertility and lead to men’s **testicles** shrinking, medical researchers warn.”* (Fernandez, 2016)

Another option when speaking about genitals is the usage of hypernyms. As they are more general one evades specialization and direct naming. The reason for these euphemisms is not to soften its meaning, but rather to avoid some embarrassing situations which the usage of proper names might bring. The terms like *delicates*, *delicate parts*, *bits*, *privates*, *private parts* freely changeable in a sexual context and they all can collocate with female or male, women or men.

*“For hair in around your **delicates**, they state, lift your **delicate parts** to get a clear view of the area you are trimming.”* (Kynaston, 2015)

*“But because so many men today aspire to be, at least in their own bedrooms, porn stars themselves, they have started to shave their **bits** too.”* (Kynaston, 2015)

Other names which are frequently used when speaking about men’s genitals represent the instruments of everyday life. Since these words have usually positive connotations relating to power they are mainly used by men when they refer to their penis. Thus they call it not only *apparatus*, but also *the gun*, *the sword* or *the weapon*. In these examples a shape resemblance is evident. The function is to avoid direct naming rather than to tone down the meaning.

*“Now it’s time to have some fun with guys and their **apparatus**.”* (Bedsider, 2012)

In English there is also a group of more fancy and playful terms for men’s private parts. As they are extremely informal one uses them mostly in a spoken discourse and thus they can rarely be found in press. These names are created on

the basis of physical similarity, function, quality or purpose as in the example below and very often they are called after someone famous such as Don Juan or *Caesar*.

*“Admittedly, some are a bit obscure, but a penis by any name is still a **deep-V-diver**.* (National Coalition for Men, 2011)

Naturally, there are euphemistic alternatives for penis in children’s talk. Their creation is same as in terms for girls’ genitals, it means they are usually made through reduplication, clipping or shortening. In this case the function of euphemism is purely softening. However, we do not tone down in order not to offend the listeners or readers, but because we refer to children’s private parts and we want to call it nicely and gently.

*“This is assonant with **winkie** which is quite a good word for a penis.”* (Barbieri, 2009)

*“If a boy’s **willy** is called a penis, what’s a girl’s thing called?”* (Barbieri, 2009)

2.1.3 Naming the Act of Sex

Since the topic of sex used to be a subject of the censorship lots of euphemistic substitutions have developed in the course of time. Even nowadays this taboo occurs in our society and we do not speak about it openly, although a certain step forward is apparent. There are some terms such as *copulating* or *coition* that are rather technical and primarily used when talking about animals’ reproduction, but we can come across them in some articles. They are considered to be formal words of Latin origin and they maintained their neutral colouring.

These terms, do not soften the meaning, but refer to it rather in a technical way. However, not only the act of sex itself, but also other sexual practices were given Latin names because it sounds more sophisticated and it provides certain distance between the speaker and the content of his speech.

*“Crawley couple caught **copulating** on common.”* (Hartley-Parkinson, 2015)

*“Not to mention that the act of **coition** on demand, with lights on and cameras rolling, is not a skill every man is capable of.”* (Theroux, 2012)

*“So- is **cunnilingus** inherently riskier than **fellatio**?”* (Ball, 2013)

One of the most common words when referring to the sex is *intercourse*. It is of the Latin origin and its meaning has changed in the course of time. It used to be a synonym for conversation and later on it received another connotation and thus the sexual one. It might be pre-modified by adjectives like sexual or vaginal and it is understood as a formal term with rather neutral colouring. Since it is not too technical and also not too colloquial this euphemistic alternative is frequently used in press or in written documents. The reason for the use is mainly the avoidance of direct naming rather than the softening or concealing meaning.

*“Throughout our relationship, he has struggled to reach climax through vaginal **intercourse**.”* (Conolly, 2016)

Another euphemistic alternative that is frequently used in newspaper articles is *carnal knowledge*, which is rather a legal term. The combination of the words is not transparent. Although we can understand the words separately the meaning of the sequence cannot be guessed. The function of this euphemism is to

evade the direct naming and thus it is used mainly in a legal realm, it sounds more sophisticated, technical and at the same time it puts the whole act mildly.

*“The charge against the former accused was that on August 2, 2007, in the County of Demerara, he had **carnal knowledge** of the young girl, who was 14 years old at the time.”* (Stabroek News, 2016)

Furthermore, there are also terms that express the act in a gentle way. As the sexual intercourse is related to love, this theme appears in some euphemistic alternatives. The examples below show that the substitution with love might function as a noun or as a verb phrase. The function here is clearly softening but not the concealing. These kinds of euphemistic names might be seen very often in girls’ or women’s magazines.

*“But **love-making** commonly requires planning to ensure it actually happens in your busy lives.”* (Conolly, 2011)

*“The survey found that 43% of people play music while **making love** – though the percentage skews much higher with younger people.”* (BBC, 2017)

More colloquial terms are in the examples below. The motivation for creating these euphemisms comes from the place where the sex is usually done and thus the bed. Another euphemistic substitution is through the verb *sleep*, which in the specific context might refer to sex. All these alternatives are highly informal and seldom can be found in newspapers where the terms such as *have sex* or *sexual intercourse* are preferred. If these colloquial euphemisms occur in press it is usually women’s or men’s magazines in which the style does not have to be formal.

*“The sheer terror of **going to bed with** a new man after a mid-life divorce”*
(Glaser, 2013)

*“We used to be more creative **in bed** and have sex three or four times a week, until that diminished to once every two months.”* (Conolly, 2014)

*“And, the sooner you **sleep with** a man without building attraction first, the harder it is going to be to develop a committed relationship with him.”* (Wade).

When dealing with euphemisms in a sexual realm there are also some words that stand for orgasm. Since this term is very straightforward with a direct reference to sex there was a need for some evading alternatives. *Climax* is one of these substitutions and as it has a foreign origin it sounds rather sophisticated. On the contrary *come* might also refer to orgasm, although it is an everyday English word. In both cases the context turns the connotations of the words and provides them with a euphemistic shield.

*“Once you can **climax** easily on your own, you’ll find it much easier to have really exciting times with a partner.”* (Weber, 2016)

*“They may not realise their eagerness to make you **come** is making it less likely you will.”* (Boynton, 2015)

The same problem arises when speaking about masturbation. Since this practice used to be considered as unhealthy or even devilish, people wanted to avoid it not only physically but also in their spoken discourse. The source of motivation for forming a euphemistic equivalence was the idea of self-pleasure and thus lots of euphemisms and euphemistic phrases contain this word. As the

masturbation is a kind of play with your own body this notion has also influenced the creation of euphemistic alternatives. Their function is purely avoiding by using the proper name that might sound somehow carnal.

*“In order to learn how to **pleasure yourself** better, you need to find a right masturbation technique and follow certain tips as well.”* (New health advisor)

*“Be sure to try different positions when **playing with yourself**.”* (New health advisor)

2.2 EUPHEMISMS FOR BODILY EFFLUVIA

2.2.1 Naming Menstruation

Since menstruation has always been a subject to censorship and in some cultures it is still understood as something devilish and unclean there are lots of euphemistic words that refer to it. As the connotations differ, there are various motifs that inspire the creation of the euphemistic alternatives. There are some terms that describe menstruation with regard to its periodicity and regular monthly occurrence. The function of the use of such euphemisms is the matter of avoidance rather than the softening of the meaning. The example below shows a term that is used quite frequently in media and it is considered to be relatively neutral.

*“When you become close enough to someone, to not have sex just because of something as mundane as a **period**, just seems stupid.”* (LaFata, 2014)

Another way of naming menstruation might be done through designation of sanitary protection. The usage of such terms is colloquial and one can come across it mainly in spoken language rather than in press. Again, the reason for its occurrence in a text or a speech is purely the avoidance of direct naming.

*“So saddle up, cowgirls. We’re riding off into the sunset, and we don’t need no stinkin’ tampons. **Riding the cotton pony** is so last century.”* (Lopez)

The colour red is another source of inspiration for naming menstruation. The euphemistic terms sometimes contain red colour in its denotative meaning, but sometimes it is either a part of a set expression such as *the Red Sea* or connotations people have with some phenomenon for example *to fall to the Communists*. Since all these alternatives are colloquial they are mostly used in spoken language. They evade of direct naming and sometimes if you do not know that the expression stands for the menstruation you are not able to understand it because some of them are not transparent enough.

*“If you’ve never parted **the Red Sea** like these ladies, perhaps you’re dying to try, or perhaps you’re firmly against it.”* (LaFata, 2014)

The example below shows various ways of referring to menstruation. They all are colloquial and highly informal. One can come across them primarily in spoken language and their function is the avoidance of using proper names. There are terms that express menstruation, as a means of time; another connects it indirectly with the red colour and there is a euphemistic alternative that refers to it through the idea of a visit. A motif of repairs is stated in euphemistic substitution – *closed for maintenance*. Since the euphemistic meaning of all these terms differs from its denotative one it is almost impossible to guess the gist of these euphemisms as they are used metaphorically.

Jen: I'm sorry, I'm just a little bit you know.

Moss: What?

Roy: What?

*Jen: Well, I've got – you know **at the moment** so.*

Moss: What?

*Jen: **I've got Aunt Irma visiting.***

Moss: Do not like Aunt Irma, I've got an aunt like that!

*Jen: It's my term for my **time of the month.***

Moss: What time of the month? The weekend?

Jen: No.

Moss: Does Aunt Irma visit on the weekend?

Roy: Moss.

*Jen: You know, it it's **high tide.***

Moss: But we're not on the coast.

Roy: Moss!

*Jen: **I'm closed for maintenance.***

Moss: Closed for maintenance?

Roy: Moss!

*Jen: **I've fallen to the Communists!***

Moss: Well, they do have some strong arguments.

Roy: "Carrie", Moss, first scene in "Carrie".

Moss: Yeah

*Jen: You know, people tell me I'm not great during **this time**, so I felt I should warn you.*

(IT CROWD, Series 1, Episode 6)

2.2.2 Naming Other Secretion

Naming human secretion has always been taboo, which lasts till nowadays. People feel uneasy when speaking about human excrement, which might be caused by the fact that there is no term that would not be either too medical or too colloquial. The clinical names for human waste are of Latin origin. Thus, they sound too technical one can come across them in scientific oriented articles, rarely in daily press and hardly ever in an everyday spoken discourse. They are formal terms without any connotations that refer directly to its phenomenon.

*“The more than 700 climbers and guides who spend nearly two months on Everest’s slopes each climbing season leave large amounts of **faeces** and **urine**, and the issue has not been addressed, Ang Tshering told reporters.”* (The Guardian, 2015)

However, there is a medical term that is not of Latin origin but it is also used primarily in technical articles or in the medical realm. When speaking with physician about your health they might ask questions using the euphemism - *stool*. This expression is neutral without any colouring, but still too formal to use it in an everyday discourse.

*“We are moving into a new era where we can actually use molecular methods to detect with much more sensitivity the pathogens in **stools**.”* (Davis, 2016)

The example below shows another euphemistic alternative for human secretion. The term is of Latin origin, which makes the word sound more sophisticated. The meaning of the expression is neutral and formal. This is a reason why it is often used in press, but rarely in spoken language.

*“The walls were smeared with human **excrement** and about 15 dirty nappies were strewn on the bare floor alongside dirty plastic drinking cups.”* (BBC, 2017)

Since the words of foreign origin sound advanced and high-level it is popular to use them as euphemisms, because they evade direct naming and at the same time they refer to the tabooed objects with elegance. Such euphemistic alternative can be seen in the example below, in which the word – *biosolids* fulfil its function as an erudite euphemism. However, *waste* is an English euphemistic substitution that refers not only to human but also animal excrements, mainly dog’s ones. The expression is not as technical as the others in examples above, but it is still considered formal and neutral and thus one can see it in newspapers or in some public notice.

*“In the future the potential of this waste could be unlocked by farmers fertilising their land with **biosolids**, a compost made from **human waste**, and the National Grid using the methane produced from anaerobic digestion of sewage sludge to heat homes.”* (BBC)

When speaking about animals, there are different ways of naming their excrements. One can refer to it with the word – *waste* in case of dogs, cats or other pet. However, when naming waste of farm animals or other bigger species we call it *manure*, which is in fact the product from the excrements rather than the excrement itself. The function of this euphemism is to avoid proper names by designating the final product. The expression is quite neutral, but not so formal. Yet it is plentifully used in press and in an everyday spoken discourse.

*“Other renewable resources like landfills, food waste and animal **manure** can also be used.”* (Sevcenko, 2016)

Some euphemisms describing secretion have their softening function. However, the reason for this toning down is not because of the possibility to sound offensive but because children are involved. Children’s talk is based on gentle, playful and euphonic words and thus the euphemisms for secretion were created in this style. Euphemistic alternatives such as *poo*, *poop* or *pee* might be used either as a noun or as a verb. They meet the characteristics of the child's words mentioned above and, moreover, they consist of one syllable and are easy to pronounce.

*“Dog owner in the Spanish capital who do not pick up their pet’s **poo** could be made to work as street cleaners under a ‘shock plan’ unveiled by Madrid city hall.”* (The Guardian, 2016)

*“Human **poop**, however, is not the only waste that produces RNG.”* (Sevcenko, 2006)

*“And if your kid (or you) **have peed** in the water, I don’t really care about that either.”* (Goble, 2017)

Since the connotations of *fart* have changed from neutral to negative, new euphemisms were needed. In the example below, there is a clinical term used mainly in the medical realm. The term is of Latin origin and highly formal thus it is not used very often in a spoken discourse but rather in technical articles. Another term, in the example referring to this phenomenon is neutral and less formal than the other one. The main function of this euphemism is to avoid the direct naming and to be understood as quite an elegant way of calling this

secretion. There are also some colloquial terms, but are considered to be too informal to be used in press.

*“According to Shelth, many red meats and protein contain high amounts of sulfur – so while herbivores may **pass gas** more often, **flatus** from meat eaters may smell much worse.”* (Grush, 2014)

Last but not least secretion our body can produce is vomit. *Vomiting* names the phenomenon directly and is understood as a neutral and formal designation. The clinical term comes from Latin and is widely used in medical realm and in articles dealing with health, but hardly ever one can come across it in a spoken language. It does not soften the meaning, but describes it in the technical way without any additional colouring.

*“One in 10,000 pregnant women has **nausea** so severe that it can, in rare cases, affect the unborn baby’s growth.”* (Williams, 2008)

The examples below provide other ways of naming *vomiting*. Although they both are rather informal they are freely used in media in which their function is to evade direct naming. However, both alternatives might either denote different phenomena or vary in its colouring. Whereas *to be sick* means to vomit in British English, in American English it stands for not feeling very well. On the other hand *throw up* might be a decent description of vomiting, but at the same time it might receive its vulgar tone. It depends on the context and mainly on the speaker or writer of the text, because they provide the expression with gentle or negative colouring.

*“As soon as I stop I can’t control it for long. The worst was at the [2010] Commonwealth Games. It was on telly, wasn’t it? Me **being sick** in a bucket.”*
(McRae, 2012)

*“Whenever I tense, dead hard, it pushes all the acid up and makes me **throw up**.”*
(McRae, 2012)

2.3 EUPHEMISMS FOR DISEASES

One of the most sensitive topics is speaking about diseases because it is not a positive aspect of our lives. No one wants to say it aloud in order not to hurt the audience or deepen the pain and suffering. Since it is almost impossible to speak about diseases without euphemisms, lots of them have been created in the course of time. There are some terms of foreign origin that function as euphemisms when referring to a health condition. Using foreign words is a good strategy because they sound technical, sophisticated and at the same time they express a certain emotional distance. Because of that the possibility of hurting someone is lower.

*“Immediately prior to taking up his position as the new music director of the Royal Northern Sinfonia, Lars Vogt agreed to cover for an **indisposed** pianist at La Scala in Milan.”* (Hickling, 2015)

The example below shows another euphemistic alternative which is in fact a very diplomatic way of saying that someone is ill. Since *health reasons* cover all possible diseases from influenza to terminal illness, one avoids to naming the problem directly and keeps the secret about it. It also implies the lack of information about the issue and therefore it is very often used by the media.

*“Martin Ling has resigned as the manager of Swindon Town due to **health reasons**, the club have confirmed.”* (The Guardian, 2015)

To feel unwell is another euphemism that refers to a current health condition rather than to a long lasting disease. This euphemistic alternative can be understood as a hypernym, it means that it is a general term and it covers all different states of body such as dizziness or nausea. This euphemism implies that it is only a short-term matter and that the affected one will be alright soon. The function emerges from its general nature and it leads to avoidance of direct naming.

*“I had begun to **feel unwell** minutes after leaving the hairdresser and 10 minutes later was covered in large red welts, with very swollen limbs and extremities and a great deal of difficulty breathing.”* (Hughes, 2011)

The examples below provide highly sophisticated and elegant euphemisms. The avoidance of naming the problem specifically is noticeable. The reason for it is not the fear of hurting someone, but in this case it is rather a matter of doublespeak. Since the article is about a North Korean authority, words are chosen carefully and they are almost vague and do not express anything except the fact that the leader is ill. The expressions are extremely evading and covered in foreign terms such as *discomfort* or *uncomfortable physical condition*. Although, a certain play with the audience is the obvious aim of these euphemisms, it is not to reveal any details. Function of these terms is definitely not concealing or lying about some facts.

*“Leader **suffering from discomfort** says documentary broadcast by state media amid speculation over 31-year-old’s health.”* (McCurry, 2014)

*“On Friday, North Korean authorities, in a rare display of openness about their leader’s health, admitted for the first time that Kim was **suffering from an uncomfortable physical condition**, although they did not confirm rumours that the 31-year-old Swiss-educated leader was suffering from gout.” (McCurry, 2014)*

Some euphemisms are metaphorical in their nature. They are based on the fact that they are not so transparent. It means that without knowing the expression itself people are not able to guess what it stands for. The example below shows that the words are not related to the health at all. It provides a great camouflage of what is going on. The term refers to short-term health issues, but one would not use it when speaking about long lasting or terminal illness.

*“Mistakes happen; children **feel under the weather** or have a bad evening beforehand. This does not mean that teachers are not working as hard as possible.” (BBC, 2015)*

As it was mentioned in the theoretical part, people feel uneasy when they speak about diseases. They are afraid of it from various reasons such as hurting someone’s feeling. Also, fear plays an important role. Thus, people choose their words carefully and use euphemism in order to soften such an unpleasant aspect of life. A disease, people currently fear the most, is cancer. The euphemisms in the examples below are based on the uniqueness of the illness and on its features such as inability to cure it at some states and its terminal character. Although the disease is not named directly we precisely know for which illness these euphemisms stand. Both euphemistic alternatives are formal and frequently used in press.

*“But growing numbers of people are still being diagnosed with **the illness**. Traditional chemotherapy kills healthy cells as well as cancer cells – and there is always the possibility the disease will come back.”* (Boseley, 2016)

*“I was intrigued about how they would turn a show about a young mum with an **incurable illness** into a comedy. I have been an oncologist for a couple of decades, so I have seen so many people live their illness with the gamut of emotions and some do introduce a lot of comedy into their situation.”* (Murray, 2010)

Another way of creating euphemisms is through the acronyms. Although we refer to the disease quite directly we do not express the whole word, but just the letters or a connection of a word and a letter. Currently, acronyms are very popular because they are economical in terms of space and pronunciation. In this fashion, this phenomenon affected also euphemizing. Despite the fact, that the euphemisms in the examples below are not very formal they appear quite a lot in press. Their function is to soften the seriousness of the issue; however, these euphemisms might sound as playful nicknames that do not deal with the diseases with respect and humbleness.

*“We’ve gotten way beyond the time when cancer was one thing. But I am not sure that the **big C** has gone away, said Harold Burstein, MD, a medical oncologist at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston.”* (Mulcahy, 2016)

*“Drug-resistant **TB**, which is more difficult and very expensive to treat with combinations of the latest antibiotics, has also risen, to more than half a million cases globally.”* (Boseley, 2016)

Acronyms as euphemisms are also used when referring to another disease which is – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Although *AIDS* is nowadays understood as a common word without any colouring or softening function. Originally it was a euphemism for *gay cancer* or *GRID*, which were aimed at a certain group of people. The acronym AIDS itself went through the process of development and lexicalisation and currently it is fully accepted in the word stock, but still in some technical articles one can come across its shorter version – *A.I.D.* Since the acronym AIDS is understood as formal it is frequently used in media. On the other hand, due to a political correctness the terms such as *gay cancer* and *GRID* disappeared almost completely.

“He says that back in 1981 and ’80, before AIDS was called AIDS, it was called gay cancer.” (Wright, 2006)

“The cause of the disorder is unknown. Researchers call it A.I.D., for acquired immunodeficiency disease, or GRID, for gay-related immunodeficiency.” (Altman, 1982)

Not only physical illnesses but also mental ones are treated with extreme caution. Since we live in an open and tolerant world, it is demanded to use politically correct and gentle terms when referring to people with this issue. Many of these euphemisms denote the problem quite directly since the expressions contain the word *mental/mentally*. On the other hand, the alternatives are rather vague because they do not reveal the exact illness but they describe it rather generally. In addition, some euphemistic substitutions use words such as *issue* or *condition*, which are regarded as hypernyms and they might serve as camouflage terms in almost all realms of live. The function of the euphemisms below is to name the health problem in a softening and politically correct way, which is a result of the historical events when those ill people were excluded from the society.

*“Substandard care that **mentally ill** patients receive for physical health problems results in many of them repeatedly returning to A&E.”* (Campbell, 2017)

*“Homeless people are portrayed as alcoholics, drug users or **mentally unsound**.”* (Allen, 2003)

*“She experienced ongoing physical and **mental health** issues throughout her adult life as a result of the procedure.”* (Young, 2013)

*“Poor physical health care lead directly to patients with **a mental health condition** staying longer in hospital, Srivastava added. “* (Campbell, 2017)

Another euphemism also refers to the problem quite directly and it contains a motif of losing. Since mental issues do not have to be inborn the euphemistic alternative below shows the possibility of *losing mind* due to a difficult life situation or as the result of a disease. As the variant in the example is considered formal, this term is frequently used in press. Its function is to soften the seriousness of the problem and at the same time to avoid being offensive.

*“As the disease progresses, Kathleen will bear witness to the gradual **loss of her own mind**.”* (Hackman, 2015)

Less formal term for being mentally ill is – *go mad*. This euphemistic substitution depends on the context because it might receive negative connotations as well. It is rather a colloquial expression which is mainly used in spoken

discourse, but still one can come across it some articles. Dealing with its positive connotation the term softens the meaning and evades direct naming.

*“One friend once said to me she wished she could **go mad** so she could write interesting books like Sylvia Plath.” (Caster, 2014)*

2.4 EUPHEMISMS FOR DEATH AND DYING

It is incredibly difficult to speak about death and dying because it is always accompanied with pain and sorrow. Since it has always been the saddest part in people’s life they tried to lower their suffering through using softer words when referring to it. The examples below show the most frequently used euphemisms when speaking about death and dying. They all contain a motif of passing and leaving and are understood to be formal. By using these euphemistic alternatives, the speaker turns down the seriousness of the situation and evades the potential negative effect of his or her words. On top of that, these terms sound comforting and express togetherness and sympathy as well.

*“FC Barcelona would like to express its pain and sorrow at the **passing away** of Johan Cruyff, who was both and FC Barcelona player and a coach and who will forever be a legend at the Club.” (Meagher, 2016.)*

*“These two great works were composed at opposite ends of the composer’s life but both are occupied with philosophical ideas of death and the **passing over** to the next world.” (BBC, 2011)*

*“A French company has come up with a novel way to keep people close to their **departed** loved ones: bottling their unique scent as a perfume.” (The Guardian, 2015)*

In English, there are also euphemisms based on metaphors. These terms are difficult to understand because they are opaque, which means that they are not transparent and their meaning cannot be guessed such as *go the way of all flesh*. On the other hand, another figurative expression *meet one's maker* is also highly symbolic, but the meaning might be deduced. As these euphemistic alternatives are metaphorical they cover the denotative gist into symbols which makes it easy to speak about such serious issue.

"We refuse to accept the human and inevitable tragedy of aging, even in the case of contemporary art, which we condemn to an unwanted permanence, despite its attempt to go the way of all flesh." (Allemandi, 1992)

"Horror of debt is particularly marked in the elderly, perhaps out of an ancient feeling that one should not meet one's maker with a negative balance sheet." (Skidelsky, 2016)

There are some euphemisms that are used by people usually of the same occupation. Most of these euphemistic alternatives come from the medical realm because people there have to face the death very often and deal with it in this way. Along these lines, these substitutions refer to the death through naming the failure of the life important body functions. The expressions below are considered as formal as possible and sound sophisticated and technical. They might be seen in various articles, but their usage in a spoken language is not so common. However, euphemisms can be found in other kinds of jobs, which provide another point of view on the problem of death and dying. People working in theatre would refer to death as *a last curtain call*, which shows that the creation of euphemistic alternatives is based on the terminology from the certain occupation realm. Although this term is formal it is not frequently used in press since it is rather a professional jargon that is not understandable for everyone.

“Non-beating-heart donors provide kidneys, livers and other organs, but until now it has not been possible to use the heart because of concerns it would suffer damage.” (Walsh, 2015)

“New Labour, born, remember, in the ashes of Neil Kinnock’s bitter defeat on 9 April 1992, lost vital signs at 1.40 am this morning in Kirkcaldy.” (Hare, 2010)

“But that, it seems, was the maestro’s last curtain call.” (Wood, 2016)

Another painful matter is speaking about the dead people. Since it is extremely difficult to get over the fact that we lost someone, another struggle arises with the referring to them. Naming them with euphemisms such as *loved one* shows deep emotions we have for the person and at the same time sorrow caused by his or her death. Even though this term is highly loaded with emotions it is frequently used in media. On the contrary euphemistic substitution *late* and *deceased* are rather neutral in their meaning. It means that they do not express any particular colouring and thus are plentifully used in press.

“Losing a loved one to suicide can be incredibly painful and it’s a subject that people often struggle to talk about.” (Marsh, 2017)

“Celine Dion pays tribute to late husband on first anniversary of his death with video full of flashback photos.” (Kristen, 2017)

“How could Adelaide’s deceased husband be the informant on her death certificate?” (Rasmussen, 2016)

2.5 EUPHEMISMS FOR ECONOMIC, MILITARY AND POLITICAL PHENOMENA

Euphemisms in economic, military and political sphere are rather the matter of doublespeak. The reason for creating these euphemistic alternatives is to conceal the true facts, in other words, to lie about unpleasant reality. The euphemistic substitutions are the means of speaker's manipulation with the audience. As far as military phenomena are concerned, there are a few terms that designate war enemy. They are usually of foreign origin because it sounds more sophisticated and at the same time it gives a notion that the opponent is the cause of all evil and the only one who provoked the conflict. Using these euphemisms, a speaker evades and transfers responsibility.

*“This simplified narrative tends to cast Serbia as **aggressors**, Bosnian Muslims as victims, Nato as rescuing heroes and Croatia as bemused onlookers.”* (Petkovski, 2010)

*“How boots of first world war troops brought a foreign **invader** to Scotland.”* (McKie, 2014)

*“In 2011 one of two **insurgents** was seriously injured by gunfire from an Apache helicopter sent to provide air support, and the marines from 42 Commando found him in a field.”* (BBC, 2017)

Euphemisms with the misleading and misinterpreting function are very often of foreign origin. Although these words sound more sophisticated, elegant and technical they do not express anything specific. Such terms are only

artificially made expressions that divert away audience's attention. In the example below, collateral damage refers to killed civilians. This noble euphemism for such crime just dresses up the bad news into rather neutral one and accepts the killing civilians as a side effect of any conflict.

“Collateral damage in Afghanistan is unavoidable.” (Zenko, 2009)

On the other hand a retreat of the army is called a *tactical withdrawal*, which makes the whole unpleasant situation appear attractive. As the expression contains a word *tactical*, it gives a notion that the retreating action was planned, however, the opposite is true. In this way, a *tactical withdrawal* is nothing else but an escape from not winning the fight.

“AU forces say they are back in control after taking a tactical withdrawal.”
(BBC, 2015)

The example below shows the euphemism that turns something negative into positive. Since the bombing is understood as bad and definitely not a welcomed fact by the audience, the euphemistic variant *protective reaction* is preferred by the speaker. The expression changes the point of view on who was the initiator of the bombing because *the protective reaction* is just a response of defence caused by the enemies' attack.

“But no details were given and the spokesman declined to clarify the position about protective reaction raids. In the past the US has resumed bombing of North Vietnamese targets in response to threats against or attacks on its reconnaissance flights.” (Jenkins, 1973)

Carefully constructed and designed euphemisms were formed to name legal killing. Again, a use of foreign words is apparent and the reasons for it are the same – elegance, sophisticated colouring and neutralizing of the negative connotation and finiteness. Since the first two examples are abundant in use in media, *silence someone* is rather a metaphorical designation of the act. *Execution* and the *capital punishment* differ in its implementation. Whereas *execution* means to cut your head off, the *capital punishment* is rather a general term for the death penalty and it does not say how it will be done.

*“Saudi Arabia’s **execution** of prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr risks worsening sectarian tensions, the US has warned, joining a chorus of critics from the west and the Middle East who have condemned the killing.”* (McVeigh, 2016)

*“The sharp escalation in the use of **capital punishment** comes as a time when the Islamic regime is fighting to prevent pro- democracy movements similar to those that have been sweeping across the Middle East from taking hold in the country.”* (Dehgham, 2011)

*“Mr Robinson said the group was being fascist for wanting to **silence someone** with a difference of opinion.”* (BBC, 2014)

In economic realm euphemisms serve as an instrument for making unpleasant facts appear attractive or even to turn negative into positive. Most of these expressions are of foreign origin because it sounds more technical and it might be understood as a valid terminology. However, all these euphemisms are just on purpose designed in order to conceal the unpleasant facts. To be deeply in debt is dressed up into a *leveraged purchase* which definitely sounds more sophisticated and it does not reveal your bad financial situation directly.

*“No figures have been mentioned but Thohir is thought to have made money from the deal, having bought his 70% stake in Inter in a **leveraged purchase** for around £250m in 2013.”* (Stone, 2016)

Since in business one can face various problems and it is not advisable to admit them, euphemisms provide them with positive colouring. It means that if a business has no customers it is in a *start-up mode*, in other words, it is at the beginning and it takes some time until the business starts to prosper. However, when business shrinks, it has a *negative growth* or *experiences shortfalls*, which are elegant euphemistic alternatives for this unpleasant issue. As these terms do not sound so fatal the audience is not worried about it and does not pay much attention to it, which is the aim of the speaker.

*“In **start-up mode**, when hires sometimes happen in a hurry to fill critical positions, Atkinson has seen people recruited at a salary 10 times what the position is worth.”* (Dishman, 2015)

*“Italy is already mired in **negative growth**, with high unemployment, especially among younger people and there could be some major bank insolvencies looming.”* (BBC, 2016)

*“There will be at least one time that your business will **experience** some cash **shortfalls**.”* (Business knowledge)

Since bribery is one of the most common crimes in our society and its revelation can destroy one's career it receives lots of different names. In order to protect themselves, people use euphemisms to hide the bribery and transform it into something ordinary and not as bad as it is considered. The examples below show that the euphemistic substitutions are of foreign origin and it makes the

crime sound sophisticated. Very often it is referred to it through the idea of giving money for the sake of help or paying for a certain service. Because of that they are difficult to decode and thus they are usually unnoticed by the audience, which is desirable.

*“His wife Christa is accused of having received tens of thousands of euros disguised as **consultancy fees**.”* (BBC, 2017)

*“Malaysian prime minister had \$700 m of **‘donations’** in bank account.”* (Lamb, 2015)

*“But last week’s Washington Post report that Trump had paid the IRS a \$2,500 penalty for the **‘improper’ contribution** sparked renewed scrutiny quickly followed by a ‘he-said, she-said’ disagreement this week over whether Trump and Bondi had ever actually discussed the affair.”* (Luscombe, 2016)

2.6 SUMMARY

The practical part of the thesis analyses euphemisms used in British and American newspapers. It provides a list of euphemistic alternatives from the most tabooed realms such as sex, diseases, death, dying, economy and military. The examples show different functions of the euphemisms. Since sexuality and everything connected with it is still a subject of censorship, euphemisms serve as an instrument of indirect naming of the sexual issues. They are also used in children’s talk when referring to men and women's private parts. Additionally, in some context they soften the meaning of the sexual phenomena and therefore it makes it easy to speak about it without embarrassment.

The examples in the practical part also show that euphemisms function also as a down toner and by using them we avoid hurting other people or deepen their suffering. The euphemisms with this purpose are applied primarily when

talking about severe diseases, death and dying. Since it is the saddest part of our live euphemisms enable us to talk about it with ease but at the same time with respect.

Moreover, the practical part displays rather a negative function of euphemisms and thus manipulation with the audience. Euphemisms that appear in economic, military and political sphere represent doublespeak. Their function is to conceal the unpleasant facts, mislead and misinterpret. Such euphemisms serve as an instrument for playing with the audience. The examples show that by using euphemistic alternatives the speaker can turn negative into positive and make unpleasant reality look appealing. In higher politics, people take advantage of this powerful function of euphemisms and they reach their goals through it.

CONCLUSION

In our society, there is a tendency to avoid naming things and objects directly because of various reasons. In order to sound politically correct and not to offend listeners, euphemisms have become an inseparable part of everyday discourse. The main purpose of this thesis is to analyse the use of euphemisms in everyday discourse and to find out when they serve as an instrument of manipulation and whether they influence the perception of an unpleasant situation.

The thesis reveals that the functions of euphemisms differ according to tabooed topic they refer to. In other words, not in all cases euphemistic alternatives fulfil their primary role and thus the softening of the meaning. In the sexual realm they rather offer a neutral term accepted by society and thus avoiding of direct naming. On the other hand, their softening function is fully used when speaking about severe and sad aspects of life. Using euphemisms when dealing with death, dying and diseases is natural because people do not want to harm the others, which makes them search for milder and gentle alternatives. The right choice of words definitely influences the perception of the unpleasant situation and enables to handle it with ease because lots of euphemisms express also sympathy and togetherness.

On the contrary, euphemisms have been misused for the political purposes and have become an instrument of manipulation. The concept of evading naming things and objects directly in order to protect listeners from being offended or hurt has been distorted and nowadays in political and economic spheres euphemisms conceal the true facts and reality. Such language game takes the focus of the issue, changes the negative perspective to positive ones, makes unpleasant facts sound appealing and call the common phenomena sumptuously. These euphemisms are very often of foreign origin which gives them a notion of elegance, nobility and professionalism. The effect of it is that they go unnoticed by the audience which is in fact deceived.

Although the theoretical part introduces lots of different euphemisms they all are not used in press because of their colloquial almost slang nature. Such euphemisms are mainly used in spoken discourse. The practical part supports this

fact. The excerpted dialogue from the sitcom *IT Crowd* reflects a real everyday conversation in which the highly colloquial euphemisms are used, but one would not come across them in media. The reason is that the newspapers, regardless if they are tabloids or quality press, have to maintain formality to a certain extent and thus some euphemisms are preferably used whereas the others would not appear there.

All in all, the thesis proves that euphemisms are a powerful language device that enables us to react and handle an unpleasant situation with elegance. However, the speaker only decides in which way the conversation will continue and also what impact his or her words will have. The evaluation of the situation and the speaker's intention plays a crucial role. Since euphemisms are used on purpose, the speaker knowingly manipulates with the audience or softens potential negative impact of their utterances.

RESUMÉ

Eufemismy jsou zajímavou a zároveň rozsáhlou oblastí lexikologie. Jejich používání v běžné komunikaci poukazuje na vyšší jazykovou vybavenost mluvčího. Eufemismy současně slouží jako indikátor jazykové úrovně jedince a jeho emoční inteligence. Tato práce si klade za cíl analyzovat použití eufemismů v angličtině vyskytujících se v každodenním diskurzu a současně zjistit, kdy mohou být nástrojem manipulace, a jestli nějakým způsobem ovlivňují naše vnímání nepříjemné situace. Primární literaturou byla díla od Ralpha Keyese, Kate Burridge a Keitha Allana

V teoretické části je vymezen termín eufemismus i další koncepty s ním spojené. Celá práce vychází z definice od lingvistky Wang, která ve své formulaci zohledňuje i aspekt kulturních zvyklostí. Další kapitoly se zaměřují na tvorbu eufemismů a na jejich klasifikaci. Diskutován je také cizí původ některých eufemismů a zároveň i jejich významová změna. Některé eufemistické alternativy totiž postupem času získaly buďto neutrální zabarvení, nebo se jejich význam posunul od negativního k pozitivnímu a naopak.

Jelikož jsou eufemismy používány především v tématech, která jsou pro společnost tabu, byly tyto oblasti vymezeny a popsány. Zajímavý fakt je ten, že tato témata přetrvávají ve společnosti po staletí a jen v některých oblastech došlo k jejich uvolnění. Jako tabu však nadále zůstává sex a vše s ním spojené, tělní tekutiny, nemoci a smrt.

V teoretické části byla dále stručně charakterizována problematika politické korektnosti, jež úzce souvisí s eufemismy. Tendencí dnešní společnosti je být otevřený, tolerantní a označovat určité skupiny termíny, které nejsou urážlivé nebo ponižující. Práce také krátce pojednává o doublespeaku, jenž je relativně novým fenoménem ve společnosti. V tomto případě však došlo ke zneužití eufemismů, které se staly prostředkem manipulace a lhaní.

Praktická část aplikuje poznatky z teorie a zaměřuje se na kvalitativní analýzu eufemismů. Ty jsou excerpovány z různých zdrojů, především z britských novin, online článků a seriálu.

Tak jako v teoretické části tak i v praktické byly eufemismy rozděleny v závislosti na oblasti, ve kterých se vyskytují a dále se ještě dělily podle konkrétního tabu tématu. Uvedené příklady byly následně zkoumány z hlediska jejich funkce, původu a formálnosti. Pokud v některé oblasti existovaly i eufemismy používané především dětmi, byly také analyzovány. Na těchto příkladech byly uvedeny typické aspekty dětského jazyka z hlediska tvorby slov a jejich zvukomalby.

Praktická část poukazuje na to, jak důležitou roli hraje sám mluvčí, který rozhoduje o dopadu jeho slov. Pomocí eufemismů se tak může vyhnout nepříjemným až trapným situacím, kdy dojde k urážce posluchačů nebo jejich emočnímu zranění. Na druhé straně jsou eufemismy nástrojem manipulace, sloužící k zamlčení pravdivých fakt a přenesení zodpovědnosti. Záleží tak především na mluvčím a jeho záměru, do jaké míry chce své publikum ovlivnit nebo uchránit před nepříjemnou skutečností.

Z praktické části vyplývá, že ačkoliv jsou eufemismy hojně používané v anglickém každodenním diskurzu, některé z nich jsou příliš hovorové až slangové. Bez ohledu na to, zda se jedná o bulvární nebo seriózní noviny, jistá jazyková formálnost je vyžadována, a z tohoto důvodu nemohou být některé eufemismy v psaných článcích použity. To potvrzuje i přepis seriálového dialogu, který je naopak plný hovorových eufemismů, vyskytujících se pouze v mluveném diskurzu.

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