# THE USE OF EUPHEMISM
# IN RISHI SUNAK'S FIRST SPEECH AS UK PRIME MINISTER

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study delves into the use of euphemism in Rishi Sunak's inaugural speech as UK Prime Minister, specifically examining the types and functions of euphemisms in political discourse. By conducting a linguistic analysis of the speech delivered outside Number 10 Downing Street in London on October 25, 2022, a range of euphemistic expressions such as metonymy, substitution, dysphemism, acronym/abbreviation, and synecdoche were identified. The research highlights the strategic deployment of euphemisms to convey sensitive or unpleasant ideas in a socially acceptable manner, showcasing their pivotal role in shaping discourse and managing perceptions. Through an exploration of the nuanced nature of euphemisms in political communication, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how language is wielded to uphold integrity and professionalism in public speaking. By examining euphemisms in different cultural contexts and their impact on communication, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the evolution and influence of euphemisms. The findings underscore the significance of euphemistic language in political contexts, offering valuable insights into the complexities of language use, sociolinguistics, and semantics. Overall, this analysis provides meaningful implications for language learners, researchers, and individuals interested in unraveling the intricacies of political rhetoric and communication strategies within the realm of public discourse. The findings underscore the importance of studying euphemisms in political discourse, international diplomacy, and formal speeches, showcasing their role in conveying positive connotations, neutralizing unpleasant words, and maintaining formal decorum.

*Keywords*: *Euphemism, Political Discourse, Rishi Sunak, U.K. Prime Minister*

**INTRODUCTION**

Every individual employs various strategies to communicate messages politely, including the use of figurative language, idioms, and euphemisms. Euphemisms serve as alternatives to dislike expressions, aiming to avoid potential loss of face for oneself, the audience, or third parties. This study focuses on analyzing the types and functions of euphemisms in Rishi Sunak's first speech as the U.K. Prime Minister, delivered with the promise of integrity, professionalism, and accountability. The research aims to shed light on the significance of euphemistic language in sociolinguistics, semantics, and realistic communication, providing insights for language learners and researchers in these fields. Another function of using euphemism is to respect the other and help people to express the difficult term in direct way (e. g. using "Bankrupt" sounds better than "Failed" as "correctional facility" rather than "jail". Moreover, Friedman (2004:10) states that euphemism usage will be more interesting when it is used for specific purpose in a certain communication. It is not only prominent for certain groups of people, but also involves all levels of society to use euphemism to avoid losing face. By exploring euphemisms in political contexts, particularly in addressing economic crises and international affairs, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how language is used to convey nuanced meanings and maintain diplomatic decorum.

Likewise, euphemism used as a form of certain reason to communicate language used to as an armament to attack, in fact to fascinated someone similar as in politics. The term of euphemism also used by public figure, politician employs to convey the ideological persuasion and manipulation objects. Euphemistic language used to abuse in political speeches, it uses for a makeup of their speech. We'll see as a doublespeak (Lutz 1987 pp20- 21) doublethink (Gonzales 1991p. 51, 90) and official euphemism (Abrantes 2005: 88). Those are ways, to answer the kind of euphemism expressions are used for public speaking subject in political effect. Thus, there is limited study which investigates the style of euphemism used by Rishi Sunak in first speech as U.K. Prime Minister in the government's agenda speech. Since, those previous studies didn't analyze euphemism in the current issue. Hopefully, the recent study can examine the types and forms of euphemisms and their functions completely.

Moreover, euphemisms are "expressions used in place of words or phrases that otherwise might be considered harsh or unpleasant" (Annan-Prah, 2015). Euphemism words and expressions allow us to talk about unwelcome goods and neutralize the unpleasantness, similar as the subject

of death and dying, severance and crime. They also allow us to give markers to unwelcome goods and jobs in an attempt to make their sounds nearly seductive. Euphemism is aboriginal in our society. The glorification of the common place and the elevation of the trivial, we're constantly renaming thing and replacing them to make them sound better (Wardhaugh, 1986: 231). Generally speaking, bad situations have greater effects on behavior than positive ones, and because of adaptive learning, others readily tend to pay almost attention to hard information than happy information (Baumeister et al. 2001; Rozin & Royzman 2001).  Allan and Burridge (1991:14-19) describe the type of a Euphemism is by looking at the form (as it can be included in figurative, flippancy, remodeling, circumlocution, clipping, acronym, abbreviation, omission, hyperbole, understatement, borrowing, indirection and abstraction).

1. Metaphor

   Metaphor is a type of language that indicates objects different from factual senses, such as BTS's rise. It is persuasive in everyday life, making unimplied comparisons between two unlike basics with at least one characteristic in common. Euphemistically, metaphor can compare unwelcome ones to pleasant or less pleasant ones.

2. Idiom

   Idiom is a single expression with meaning that cannot be determined from its parts. Examples include Indonesian metaphorical idioms like "press the flesh" and "political hot potato" and English or American euphemisms like "put one's foot in one's mouth" and "hurry". Many idioms are used as euphemisms for uncomfortable situations.

3. Circumlocution

   Circumlocution is a rhetorical device used to express complex ideas or views in a nebulous or paradoxical way. It is often used when a speaker cannot choose the right words to express reality, to avoid using obnoxious words, in politics and law, and in poetry and verses to create a regular cadence. Circumlocution can also be used to express mental challenges, special needs, visual impairments, hearing impairments, or complaints for deaf individuals. It is a nebulous and paradoxical way of expressing ideas or views.

4. Acronym

   The fourth type of acronym is a proper word created from the original letter, while abbreviation is a sound or string of letters pronounced in a specific order. Examples include SNAFU (situation is not normal, all fouled up) and MoU (Memorandum of

Understanding). Abbreviations are shortened or contracted forms of words or phrases, while acronyms merge words to form a name, like SNAFU for situation normal and COMMU for complete monumental military fuck up.

5. Substitutions

The text outlines five types of euphemisms: one-for-one substitutions, general-for-specific strategies, and part-for-whole euphemisms. One-for-one substitutions, such as bottom for 'arse' and casket for 'coffin,' illustrate meaning extensions and are figurative. General-for-specific strategies, like person for 'penis' and nether regions for 'genitals', use general-for-specific strategies. Part-for-whole euphemisms are rare.

6. Hyperboles

The text highlights the use of hyperboles, euphemisms, and understatements in bureaucracies. Hyperboles are used to convey meanings, while understatements are used to convey meanings. These rules are based on the rule that longer titles lead to lower ranks, and are used to upgrade lower types.

7. Litotes

Litotes is a form of understatement that uses negative form to express the contrary, often with the intention to emphasize. It can vary depending on intonation and can be created by replacing a word with its negative expression, such as "not bad" or "organizing records is no small task."

8. Jargon

The eight types of euphemism are technical jargon, medical terms, and colloquial euphemism. Technical jargon uses specialized terms to differentiate objects, while colloquial euphemism uses day-to-day terms. Colloquial euphemism is focused on familiar terms and can be included in other types of euphemism, but it is more focused on familiar terms.

9. Denial

Denial is a statement or preposition used to conceal the true meaning of information. There are twelve categories of denial: background information, text processed information, second denials, and unfulfilled expectations. Denials can prevent erroneous inferences, correct ideas, express unfulfilled expectations, contrast items, apologize, refuse, comment, thanks, condition, alternative, and correction. Denial and refusal can be neutral or

euphemistic, with neutral responses being neutral and euphemistic responses being euphemistic. For example, President Richard M. Nixon used euphemistic refusal in a press conference, instead of neutral "I am not a crook."

10. Euphemistic dysphemism

Euphemistic dysphemism is a type of euphemism classified into four types with sub-types. The first type is word formation devices, which include compounding, derivation, blends, acronyms, and onomatopoeia. The second type is blend, which involves compounding and clipping to combine two words into one word. Onomatopoeia refers to the sound of 'things' hitting together during a sexual act, like bonk for 'sexual intercourse'. Warren (1992) and Linfoot-Ham (2005) further explore these types of euphemism.

11. Metonymy

The eleventh is metonymy. It refers to the way of mentioning partial part of the whole, such as the inventor of the owner since the meaning is closely related. It also defined as a substitution of cause for effect, proper name for one of its qualities, etc. For example: He reads Pramudya Ananta Toer Pramudya Ananta Toer, refers to the author of some books and the meaning is actually he reads Pramudya Ananta Toer's book.

12. Synecdoche

The twelfth type is synecdoche, it is meant general to specific and specific to general. General for specific, for example some people voted Rishi Sunak in general election. "Rishi Sunak" refers to certain person that follows in general prime minister election. And specific to general, for example "becoming democratic country is not only in the hands of government but also people who live in that society". "In the hands" means the responsible of.

13. Associative engineering

Associative engineering refers to the relationship between language expressions and various worlds and events, including historical, fictional, and imagined ones. Connotations of words or expressions are semantic effects arising from encyclopedic knowledge, experience, beliefs, and prejudices about the context in which they are used. Leech (1974) identified six types of associative meanings: connotative meanings, stylistic meanings, affective meanings, reflective meanings, colloquial meanings, and conceptual meanings. Connotative meanings refer to the meaning of what is referred to, stylistic meanings to the

social condition, affective meanings to the feeling and attitude, reflective meanings to the associated thing, colloquial meanings to the meaning associated with other words, and conceptual meanings to the definition of the denotative meaning.

Beside of the theory above, Burridge (2012: 67) describes the protective function in terms of the intent "to shield and to avoid offense". Euphemism protects language users from touching verbal taboos or topics that are unspeakable. Vailed and indirect references to taboo topics such as death, sex, incest, disease, private parts, and private bodily functions universally serve this purpose. In addition to unive
rsal euphemisms of death itself, death-related objects have euphemistic names as well. In many languages, the name of the place where bodies of the dead are kept makes no direct reference to death. Burridge also defines the uplifting function of euphemisms as a way to elevate non-prestigious social roles. Examples include the word "engineer" which can be combined with modifiers to describe various social roles. Technician is an all-purpose label for upgrading job titles. In Saudi Arabia, a prostitute is referred to as a "seller of love." The uplifting function of euphemisms often involves a shift of focus, such as the use of curvy to describe women of size, which inspires confidence and body acceptance in a culture influenced by body image concerns.

Language is more than a tool of communicating ideas. One aspect of language that is ubiquitous but often overlooked is the joy and jocularity that words afford us. David Crystal (1998) refers to the ludic function of words as "language play". Euphemisms can be ludic and playful. The double entendre of the Camera Song mentioned previously certainly has a tongue-in cheek whimsicalness to it.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a qualitative research design to analyze the types and functions of euphemisms used in Rishi Sunak's first speech as the U.K. Prime Minister. The qualitative method is chosen to describe and explain the euphemistic language in the speech, focusing on categorizing data based on euphemism types and functions. The data source for this research is the text of Sunak's speech delivered outside Number 10 Downing Street in London on October 25, 2022. The data collection process involves watching the video of the speech, selecting relevant euphemistic words or phrases, and classifying them based on their types and functions. The main instrument for data collection and analysis is the researcher herself, with note-taking used to document and

categorize euphemistic expressions. The analysis of the data will be conducted through the lens of euphemism theory, interpreting the findings to draw conclusions about the use of euphemisms in political communication. This research methodology aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how euphemisms are utilized in formal speeches and their impact on audience perception and communication effectiveness.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In analyzing Rishi Sunak's first speech as the U.K. Prime Minister, several types and functions of euphemisms were identified, shedding light on the strategic use of language in political discourse. The speech encompassed euphemistic expressions such as metonymy, substitution, dysphemism, acronym/abbreviation, and synecdoche, each serving a specific function in conveying the intended message. For instance, the reference to "Buckingham Palace" as a metonymy symbolized the government and leadership, showcasing a strategic choice of words to evoke certain connotations. Additionally, the use of euphemistic language to address the economic crisis and global events like Putin's war in Ukraine demonstrated a blend of protective euphemism and directness through dysphemism, highlighting the complexity of political communication. These findings underscore the nuanced nature of euphemisms in shaping perceptions, managing discourse, and navigating sensitive topics in public speaking. The discussion delves into the implications of these findings for understanding the role of euphemisms in political rhetoric, emphasizing the importance of linguistic analysis in decoding underlying messages and rhetorical strategies employed by public figures. This study contributes to the broader discourse on language and society, offering insights into the intricate interplay between language, power, and persuasion in political communication.

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Table 1. The Percentages types of Euphemism

| No. | Types of Euphemism | Frequency | Percentages (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Metaphor | 0 | 0 |
| 2. | Idiom | 0 | 0 |
| 3. | Circumlocution | 2 | 6 |
| 4. | Acronym/ abbreviation | 4 | 12 |
| 5. | Substitution | 3 | 8 |
| 6. | Hyperboles | 2 | 5 |
| 7. | Litotes | 0 | 0 |
| 8. | Jargon | 1 | 3 |
| 9. | Denial | 1 | 3 |
| 10. | Euphemistic Dysphemism | 10 | 29 |
| 11. | Metonymy | 2 | 5 |
| 12. | Synecdoche | 8 | 24 |
| 13. | Associative Engineering | 1 | 3 |
| | **Total** | **35** | **100** |

As the result, the use of euphemism in Sunak's speech, the most frequently occurring euphemisms were euphemistic dysphemism (29%), synecdoche (24%), acronym/ abbreviation (12%), substitution (8%), hyperboles & metonymy (5%), and followed by jargon, denial, also associative engineering (3%).

The use of euphemisms in Rishi Sunak's first speech as British Prime Minister has a significant role in political communication. Various types of euphemisms such as metonymy, substitution, dysphemism, acronym/abbreviation, and synecdoche are used with a specific purpose in conveying the intended message. The use of euphemisms shows intelligence in choosing words to convey sensitive or unpleasant ideas in a more socially acceptable manner. The analysis also reveals the complexity of political communication, where the use of euphemistic language can reflect integrity and professionalism in public speaking. The findings provide an in-depth understanding of how language is used to influence audience perceptions and shape political discourse. In addition, this study provides valuable insights for language learners, researchers, and individuals interested in political rhetoric and communication strategies.

**4.2.1 The Types of Euphemism in Rishi Sunak's first speech: UK's Prime Minister Datum 1**

*Good morning,*

*"I have just been to <u>Buckingham Palace</u> and accepted <u>His Majesty the King's invitation to form a government in his name</u>. It is only right to explain why I am standing here as your new prime minister."*

The sentences above is categorized into Metonymy, because "Buckingham Palace" is represented a government, the leader of a country and an institution in this situation. And the "*<u>His Majesty the King's invitation to form a government in his name</u>" is Substitution, because It use other pronoun to avoid the repetition. The function of euphemism in the sentence is protective euphemism, because the sentence is using soft words and good.*

**Datum 2**
*"Right now our country is facing a <u>profound economic crisis</u>. The aftermath of <u>Covid</u> still lingers. <u>Putin's war</u> in Ukraine has destabilized energy markets and supply chains the world over*."

The Data is taken from Rishi Sunak's first speech, it is Euphemism Dysphemism, because the sentence contains of good words directly. The sentence also has Acronym and Synecdoche, because it contains of shorten words, Covid, it is Corona virus disaster." The function of the euphemism in this statement is provocative euphemism, because the sentence contains of provocative words to blame others.

***Datum 3***
*"I want to <u>pay tribute to my predecessor</u>, Liz Truss. She was not wrong to want to improve growth in this country — it is a noble aim — and I admired her <u>restlessness</u> to create change."*

The sentence using overstatement or amplification to make an idea or concept sound more dramatic or powerful than it actually is. Speakers can emphasize the importance of an idea or event, giving the impression that it is truly remarkable or critical. The use of synecdoche can provide an interesting style of language or frame a concept in a different way. It can give a special color or nuance to an expression and provide a more specific explanation by detailing certain parts of a whole.

**Datum 4**
*"But some mistakes were made — not borne of ill will or bad intentions, quite the opposite, in fact — but mistakes nonetheless. And I have been elected as leader of my party, and your prime minister, in part, to fix them. And that work begins immediately."*

The sentence can be considered an example of circumlocution. In the sentence, the writer uses exaggerated words or involves more details than may be necessary to convey the idea. For example, the term "not borne of ill will or bad intentions, quite the opposite, in fact" can be

considered a circumlocution as it puts excessive emphasis on good intentions or incompetence through a more elaborate sentence. In this context, the writer could have expressed failing or mistakes more directly, but they chose to engage in circumscription to emphasize good intentions or the contrast between mistakes and supposedly positive intentions. The euphemism function is Underhand and Provocative Euphemism, because it stimulates reacts the emotional and intellectual of the reader.

**Datum 5**
*"I will place economic stability and confidence at the heart of this government's agenda. This will mean difficult decisions to come. But you saw me during Covid, doing everything I could, to protect people and businesses, with schemes like furlough."*

The sentence can indeed be considered to have an element of euphemism as it uses more neutral or positive words or phrases to convey a concept or idea. In the sentence, the expression "at the heart of" metaphorically refers to placing the economy and trust as the core or main focus in the government's agenda, and the choice of words can be interpreted as a euphemism to highlight the importance of these concepts in a more subtle and positive way.

**Datum  6**
*"There are always limits, more so now than ever, but I promise you this: I will bring that same compassion to the challenges we face today."*

The sentence can be considered as an example of the use of euphemism or euphemism. In this context, the expression "bring that same compassion" is used to convey the idea that one would bring the same sense of care or compassion into facing the current challenges. Euphemisms are sometimes used to convey ideas or messages in a more positive or gentle way, and in this sentence, the use of the words gives a positive feel to the commitment to face the challenge with pre-existing concern or compassion.

**Datum 7**
*"The government I lead will not leave the next generation, your children and grandchildren, with a debt to settle that we were too weak to pay ourselves."*

The word "debt" is not considered a dysphemism. Dysphemism is the use of harsh, abusive, or demeaning words to refer to a concept or object. Instead, "debt" is a neutral term used to describe a financial obligation or an amount of money that must be repaid.

**Datum 8**
*"I will unite our country, not with words, but with action."*

The sentence can be considered a euphemism, especially in the context of political rhetoric. While the sentence does not specifically use softer words or disguise meaning, the use of "not with

words, but with action" can be interpreted as emphasizing strong and tangible actions, as if to suggest that actions are more important than words. In this context, euphemism may lie in the use of more positive or powerful words to convey a message, highlighting the intention to unite and act in a more direct and powerful way. While euphemism can be a more direct disguise, in this case, it is more related to the choice of words to create a positive impression.

### Datum 9
**"***I will <u>work day in and day out </u>to deliver for you.***"**

The phrase "I will work day in and day out to deliver for you" can be considered a euphemism in the context of political rhetoric or work commitments. While literally stating the intention to work hard, the choice of words such as "day in and day out" can be considered a euphemism that reinforces or highlights dedication and perseverance, giving a positive impression of the commitment.

### Datum 10
*"This government will <u>have integrity, professionalism and accountability</u> at every level."*
The term "accountability" falls into the category of jargon. Accountability is a term that is less commonly used and has a meaning that few people understand. It refers to the obligation or responsibility to explain or give account for actions or decisions. Jargon, on the other hand, is specialized terms or specialized language used by a group of people who have specific knowledge or expertise. These terms may be difficult to understand by people who are not familiar with the particular field or profession.

### Datum 11
*"<u>Trust is earned. And I will earn yours</u>."*
The sentence "Trust is earned. And I will earn yours." falls under the category of euphemism. Euphemisms involve the use of softer or positive words or phrases to refer to concepts or objects that might be considered less pleasant or harsh. In the sentence, the terms "Trust is earned" and "I will earn yours" use direct and emphatic language without demeaning or disguising the concept being talked about.

### Datum 12
**"***I will always be grateful to <u>Boris Johnson for his incredible achievements as prime minister,</u>
and I treasure <u>his warmth</u> and generosity of spirit.***"**

The data is categorized as a substitution, because the underlined word such as "Prime minister" represent his, it is used to reject the repetition in a sentence. It is stated as a euphemism because it's used good words.

**Datum 13**
*"And I know he would agree that the <u>mandate</u> my party earned in 2019 is not the sole property of any one individual, <u>it is a mandate that belongs to and unites all of us.</u>"*
  In the context of the sentence, where "mandate" is used to refer to a responsibility or job, there is an element of partial representation to represent the whole. In this case, the expression "mandate" is used broadly to encompass responsibilities or duties related to the elections in 2019. With this additional explanation, the sentence can be considered to have an element of synecdoche, as there is a partial use of the concept (mandate) to represent the whole (responsibility, job, etc.). So, in this context, the sentence includes the element of synecdoche.

**Datum 14**
**"***And <u>the heart</u> of that <u>mandate</u> is our manifesto. I will deliver on its promise: a stronger <u>N.H.S.</u>, better schools, safer streets, control of our borders, protecting our environment, supporting our armed forces, leveling up and building an economy that embraces the opportunities of <u>Brexit</u>, where businesses invest, innovate and create jobs."*
  The word of the heart is represented about the euphemism dysphemism because the word is too deep, the N.H.S is as an abbreviation, because it is first initial of each word, and synecdoche because the word "mandate" represents many things.

**Datum 15**
*"<u>I understand how difficult this moment is</u>."*
  In the sentence "I understand how difficult this moment is," the expression "this moment" is used figuratively or connotatively to refer to a certain situation, state or condition, not just to literal time. In this context, "this moment" can be considered a broader form of metaphor, where the aspect of time is used to symbolize or represent the situation or condition being experienced. While not a classic use of synecdoche, it shows how language can often contain layers of meaning and interpretation.

**Datum 16**
*"After the <u>billions of pounds it cost us to combat</u> Covid, after all the dislocation that caused in the midst of a terrible war that must be seen successfully to its conclusions, I fully appreciate how*

*hard things are. And I understand, too, that I have work to do to restore trust after all that has happened.”*

The sentence can be considered to contain an element of circumlocution. Circumlocution involves the use of excessive words or excessive details to convey an idea, often in a convoluted or indirect way. Although it provides details, it can be expressed more simply. It shows a way of delivery that involves periphrasis or excessive details that are indirect to convey an idea.

**Datum 17**

*“All I can say is that I am not daunted. I know the high office I have accepted, and I hope to live up to its demands.”*

The sentence is concluded as a metonymy, because the sentence “the high office” represents some context, such as position in an institution, and the word od “demand” it refers to euphemism dysphemism because the speaker actually can use the better word, service or task.

**Datum 20**

*“Together we can achieve incredible things.*

By involving the word "things" in the sentence, we can see that there is an element of synecdoche called "pars pro toto" (a part that represents the whole). In this case, "things" can encompass a wide variety of endeavours, projects, or goals that can be considered as part of a whole of things that can be achieved together. So, in this context, we can consider the use of "things" as an example of the use of synecdoche, where a part of the concept (concrete things or specific goals) is used to represent the whole (everything that is possible to achieve together).

The study reveals a high frequency of euphemism use, averaging three times every hundred words in various communication contexts. These euphemisms serve to avoid conflict and discomfort, protecting feelings. There are thirteen main euphemisms, ranging from hiding unpleasant events to detailing sensitive topics without offending. The context of communication significantly influences euphemism selection.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis of Rishi Sunak's first speech as the U.K. Prime Minister, it can be concluded that euphemisms were strategically employed to navigate sensitive topics and shape the discourse. The study identified a variety of euphemistic expressions, including metonymy, substitution, dysphemism, acronym/abbreviation, and synecdoche, each serving specific functions in conveying the intended message. These euphemisms played a significant role in enhancing the

formal and diplomatic tone of the speech, allowing the speaker to address challenging issues such as the economic crisis and global events with tact and precision. In terms of frequency, the analysis revealed that metonymy accounted for 5% of the euphemisms used, followed by substitution at 8%, dysphemism at 29%, acronym/abbreviation at 12%, and synecdoche at 24%. This distribution highlights the strategic diversity in euphemistic language employed by Sunak in his speech, showcasing a nuanced approach to communication in the political sphere. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of linguistic analysis in understanding the complexities of political rhetoric and the role of euphemisms in shaping public discourse.

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