

EUPHEMISMS IN JORDAN KLEPPER'S SEGMENTS ON *THE DAILY SHOW* YOUTUBE CHANNEL: A SEMANTIC APPROACH

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze euphemisms in Jordan Klepper's monologues on The Daily Show YouTube Channel using a semantic approach. This study analyzed transcripts from ten episodes broadcast between January and June 2025. The analysis process was carried out using a thematic approach according to Braun and Clarke (2006), and referring to the theory of types of euphemisms by Allan & Burridge (1991) and the theory of euphemism functions by Burridge (2012). The research found 34 euphemisms, divided into seven types. The most common type was "understatement," at 26.5%, followed by "flippancy" at 23.5%, and "figurative expression" at 17.6%. Based on their function, ludic euphemisms appeared most dominant (50%), followed by provocative functions (29.4%). Meanwhile, no euphemisms were found to function coherently. These findings suggest that Klepper's use of euphemisms not only serves to soften speech but also serves as a semantic strategy to convey humor, provoke critical reflection, and strengthen the effectiveness of satirical communication in digital media.

Keywords: Euphemism, Semantic Approach, Jordan Klepper, The Daily Show, Youtube

INTRODUCTION

Language plays an important role in human life, as the main tool of communication. As a means of communication, language conveys the thoughts and feelings of its users in social interactions, adapting to the conditions of the social environment. Sapir (1921) defines language as a unique human method for conveying ideas and desires through voluntarily produced symbols. Since birth, humans naturally develop the ability to communicate, and language is the basis for interaction Kuswoyo (2016). Communication continues to develop and adapt to various social and cultural environments Qadriani & Wijana (2020). In addition to conveying messages, language also plays an important role in forming relationships and maintaining social harmony.

As a branch of languages, semantics looks at how words and phrases are used to convey meaning. Allan (2019) defines semantics as the study and representation of meaning in every linguistic unit, from individual words to whole discourse. Similarly, Saeed (2003:3) defines semantics as the study of meaning communicated through language. However, Leech (1981) suggests that semantics, as the study of meaning, becomes a more and more crucial factor in social organization, changing a word that might be offensive or unpleasant to a nicer phrase changes how people understand the word.

A euphemism is a way of saying something that makes harsh, offensive, or unpleasant words or phrases sound nicer and more acceptable. Allan and Burridge (1991) say that a euphemism is a word or phrase that the speaker means to be less rude, annoying, or insulting to the listener than the

word or phrase it replaces. For example, saying "passed away" instead of "died". Euphemisms make communication smoother and prevent misunderstandings or conflicts that might arise from direct language.

Most people communicate today through social media. One important thing to consider is how euphemisms are used to discuss sensitive topics, maintain civil conversations, and change people's minds. Social media is a computer-mediated tool that allows users to create, share, and exchange information, concepts, and images/videos in online groups and networks (Adinda et al., 2021). Social media platforms include Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter), Youtube, and WhatsApp.

According to (Budiargo, 2015: 47) YouTube is an online video whose main purpose is to use this YouTube site as a medium for searching, viewing and sharing original videos from all over the world via the web. All of this is intended to improve the user experience and make things easier. A lot of people know about The Daily Show on YouTube. The Daily Show often uses euphemisms to talk about sensitive social and political issues in a way that is easier for people to understand. Jordan Klepper, host of The Daily Show on YouTube, frequently uses humor to discuss political issues. He is known for his wit, delivering sharp yet engaging political criticism.

Previous research, as presented in this study, indicated that euphemism regularly occurs in many forms of media. by Iswara and Sastaparamitha (2020), which examined the use of euphemisms in online hoaxes. In this study, they demonstrated how euphemisms are used to diminish the significance or disguise the true meaning of information. Both studies illustrate that, in both written and digital contexts, euphemisms are intentionally used as an effective communication strategy to convey ideas clearly yet politely to the public.

Previous studies have shown that euphemisms are widely used in social media, television, and other media to soften criticism and maintain politeness. However, this research focuses specifically on the use of euphemisms in Jordan Klepper's segments on The Daily Show YouTube channel. The research questions are: (1) What types of euphemisms are most commonly used by Jordan Klepper? and (2) What are their functions in the show?

METHODOLOGY

This study examines the use of euphemisms in "The Daily Show," qualitative research design, textual analysis by Smith (2017) to recognize and analyze the trends of euphemistic language in some episodes of the show. Data were collected through the purposeful selection of appropriate segments dealing with current social and political issues.

The data in this study were collected from monologues structured, uninterrupted segments in which the host delivers satirical news directly to the audience that contain euphemisms identified in 10 videos of *The Daily Show*. All of data on shows aired in January, and June 2025, with one of the

hosts of The Daily Show, Jordan Klepper, was recorded specifically. The euphemisms were identified from the transcripts of the monologues. Classification of euphemism types used Allan and Burridge's (1991), while the analysis of euphemism functions by Burridge's (2012).

FINDINGS

1. Analysis of Types and Functions of Euphemisms

The following thematic analysis segments the different types and functions of euphemisms in Jordan Klepper's monologue on The Daily Show, published via YouTube. As a basis for the analysis, the definitions of euphemism types from Allan & Burridge (1991) and euphemism functions from Burridge (2012) I identify a total of 34 euphemistic utterances which encapsulated 7 types and 5 functions.

Table 4.1. Frequency and Percentage of Euphemism Types Based on Allan and Burridge's (1991) Classification

No.	Types of Euphemism	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Figurative Expression	6	17.6%
2.	Flippancy	8	23.5%
3.	Circumlocution	5	14.7%
4.	Understatement	9	26.5%
5.	Colloquial	4	11.8%
6.	Jargon	1	2.9%
7.	General for Specific	1	2.9%
Total		34	100%

The analysis established that the most common kind of euphemism was understatement (26.5%), then flippancy (23.5%) and figurative expression (17.6%). This shows that Klepper often uses euphemisms to soften or reframe controversial issues in a more humorous way, especially when dealing with sensitive political or social topics.

2. Functions of Euphemism in Jordan Klepper's Segments on The Daily Show

The table below presents the frequency and percentage of euphemism functions found in 34

expressions from Jordan Klepper's monologues on The Daily Show. Based on Burridge's (2012) six-function classification, the analysis shows how euphemism is used not only to soften language but also to enhance the show's satirical style.

Table 4.2. Frequency and Percentage of Euphemism Functions Based on Burridge's (2012) Classification

No.	Functions of Euphemism	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Protective	4	11.7%
2.	Underhand	2	5.9%
3.	Eldating	1	2.9%
4.	Provoking	10	29.4%
5.	Ludic	17	50%
Total		34	100%

From the table, the most dominant function of euphemism is Ludic (50%), indicating that Klepper frequently uses euphemisms to entertain and enhance the humor in his satirical monologues.

1. Figurative Expressions

This euphemism type uses figurative, imaginative or metaphorical language to present sensitive or controversial content in an indirect and more artistic way.

Data :

"Trump's still totally good to eat those documents. And I know some of you haters are going to make fun of him, but Trump didn't drop the papers by accident. **It was a 4D chess move to check out the British prime minister's badonadunk.**" (*The Daily Show* eps segment Trump Ignores GOP Advice Against War With Iran: "Not in the Mood for Negotiating")

Klepper responds to the allegation that Trump mishandled or consumed classified documents. The act is described as a **"4D chess move,"** and further exaggerated by attributing the act to Trump trying to ogle the British PM's behind, humorously referred to as **"badonadunk."** This is a **figurative expression** uses symbolic and metaphorical language to turn legal concern into a comic scene. The **function** is **Ludic**, as the euphemism relies on wordplay and comedic imagery to entertain while pointing out the

absurdity of the situation.

2. Flippancy

Flippancy is a type of euphemism that uses humor, silliness, or absurdity to convey sensitive, taboo, or vulgar content. It is usually not intended to conceal, but to indirectly laugh at something.

Data:

“You traded a cybercrime kingpin for public school teacher Mark Fogle. This is like if the Dallas Mavericks traded Luka Doncic for public school teacher Mark Fogle. I mean at least the teacher we got back is the cool teacher, he smokes weed and he’s been to jail. You know he’s showing movies in fourth period.” (*The Daily Show* eps segment Trump Makes a Mess of Russia-Ukraine Peace Talks & Gets "Hot" for Kennedy Center)

This phrase criticizes an unreasonable decision through metaphorical comparison. The phrase **“You traded a cybercrime kingpin for public school teacher Mark Fogle. This is like if the Dallas Mavericks traded Luka Doncic for public school teacher Mark Fogle”** is a form of euphemism that obscures the original meaning of a statement criticizing a political choice or action. Classified as **Flippancy**, it avoids serious conversations by using humor or a playful demeanor, comparing politics to sports. This functions is **Ludic** euphemism, as sarcasm and comedy make the political criticism more accessible and helping the audience receive it without defensiveness.

3. Circumlocution

Circumlocution is a euphemism type where indirect or roundabout expressions are used to refer to sensitive or uncomfortable topics.

Data:

"President Trump said, quote, "I just had a lengthy and highly productive phone call with President Vladimir Putin of Russia. We discussed Ukraine, the Middle East, energy, artificial intelligence, **the power of the dollar, and various other subjects.**" (*The Daily Show* eps segment Trump Makes a Mess of Russia-Ukraine Peace Talks & Gets "Hot" for Kennedy Center)

This statement comes from a political monologue commenting on how Trump describes his conversation with Putin. The phrase **“the power of the dollar, and various other subjects”** avoids explaining sensitive topics like military aggression, sanctions. This is a clear example of Circumlocution, where indirect language is used to avoid explicitly naming sensitive issues. The euphemism serves a **Protective function**, as it

shields both the speaker and the audience from the discomfort of addressing geopolitical conflict directly.

4. Understatement

Understatement is a type of euphemism that downplays or minimizes the severity of a situation or concept.

Data:

“Desi, transparency is important. We need to know the extent of his **drinking problem**. Oh, we need to know the extent of his drinking problem? Come on, you really think that learning more about Pete's past is going to actually stop his confirmation?” (*The Daily Show* eps segment Pete Hegseth Grilled on Cheating, Corruption, & Women in Combat in Senate Hearing)

This segment discusses a political figure's alleged alcohol issue. The phrase “**drinking problem**” is used in a dismissive tone, downplaying the seriousness of substance abuse. This is an example of **Understatement**, where a potentially damaging behavior is made to seem trivial or irrelevant. The function is **Provoking**, as it uses minimization to satirically criticize how scandals are routinely ignored in political appointments.

5. Colloquial

Colloquial is a euphemism that originates from informal language or everyday slang.

Data:

“Lawmakers across the country are facing anger and outrage from their constituents at town hall meetings. And the primary source of the blowback is Elon Musk. 'What are you doing to stop the activities of unelected and unconfirmed Elon Musk?' Elon Musk has conflicts of interest **out the wazoo**.” (*The Daily Show* eps segment DOGE Protestors Turn Their Focus on Tesla & Delayed NASA Astronauts Make It Home)

This line features public criticism toward Elon Musk's increasing influence in public and political affairs. The phrase “**out the wazoo**,” is a highly informal, idiomatic expression that exaggerates without sounding overtly aggressive, making the issue sound casual and entertaining. This is a **Colloquial euphemism** that presents a serious or controversial topic in a less confrontational way. The euphemism performs a **Ludic** function using humor and informality to softening the critical commentary and ensuring the message remains both entertaining and thought-provoking.

6. Jargon

Jargon is a technical or professional term used in a particular field and is often used as a euphemism to disguise a more harsh or controversial meaning.

Data:

“Trump has another plan to convince the haters: a **charm offensive**. It's a war-torn area, **we're going to take it, we're going to hold it**, we're going to cherish it.” (*The Daily Show* eps segment Pete Hegseth Grilled on Cheating, Corruption, & Women in Combat in Senate Hearing)

The phrase "**charm offensive**" is military-political jargon describe a diplomatic strategy that relies on persuasion, soft power, or charisma rather than direct confrontation. The speaker continues with phrases like "**we're going to take it, we're going to hold it**," which are also militaristic in tone, exaggerating the idea of charming opponents as though it were a conquest. This is a clear case of **Jargon**, where technical or professional terms—normally used in military and political spheres—are applied euphemistically to disguise or soften the underlying message. The function is **Ludic**, as the absurd juxtaposition of charm and military conquest serves to entertain while subtly mocking the emptiness or theatricality of political communication.

7. General-for-Specific

General-for-Specific is a type of euphemism in which a general word or phrase is used to hide or replace an action or event that is actually very specific or serious.

Data:

“I know. They said it couldn't be done. Excuse me. They said it shouldn't be done, but now it has happened. So you can now **add employment to the list of things he's tested positive for**. But let's move on to a **big development in the war in Ukraine**. Remember, during the campaign, Donald Trump made some big promises about how quickly and easily he was going to end that war.” (*The Daily Show* eps segment Trump Makes a Mess of Russia-Ukraine Peace Talks & Gets "Hot" for Kennedy Center)

This excerpt contains the phrase "**big development in the war in Ukraine**," a vague description that avoids specifying the actual event. This euphemism fits the type **General-for-Specific**, in which a general label is substituted for a specific, often more troubling, term. The function is **Protective**, serving to gloss over uncomfortable realities and allowing the speaker to address sensitive issues diplomatically without inviting

backlash.

The findings of this study reveal how euphemisms are strategically used in Jordan Klepper's monologues on *The Daily Show* YouTube segments to support satirical commentary. The use of euphemisms in satire is not simply to avoid offensive or taboo language, but also to shape meaning, frame criticism, and enhance comedic delivery. The most dominant type is Understatement (9 of 34 data; 26.5%), which downplays the seriousness of issues like political scandals or public health to sound less confrontational while still exposing absurdity. Following this are Flippancy and Figurative Expression (6 data; 17.6%), which appear as metaphorical or imaginative phrases that make political ideas vivid and humorous. Circumlocution (5 data) softens criticism through indirect language, while Colloquial euphemisms (4 data) such as “out the wazoo” use informal tone to maintain humor. Jargon and General-for-Specific each appear once, functioning to frame political and bureaucratic topics diplomatically.

In terms of function, Ludic is the most dominant (17 instances; 50%), using humor to entertain while addressing sensitive issues indirectly. Provoking follows (10 instances; 29.4%), encouraging critical thought and exposing hypocrisy. Protective (4), Underhand (2), and Elating (1) also appear, while Coherent is absent (0%). These show that euphemism in satire is not merely avoidance but a flexible rhetorical tool for humor and critique. Overall, euphemisms in Klepper's segments serve both linguistic and ideological purposes—linguistically softening taboo topics, and ideologically criticizing through humor. Compared to prior studies such as Purba et al. (2018) and Ningsih & Ardi (2020), which focus on political or Indonesian contexts, this study adds a new perspective by showing how euphemism functions creatively in Western comedic news to construct humor, critique, and subtle political commentary.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study explores the types and functions of euphemisms used by Jordan Klepper in *The Daily Show* segments on YouTube. By applying the theoretical framework of Allan and Burrige (1991) for euphemism types and Burrige (2012) for euphemism functions, the study analyzed 34 euphemistic expressions drawn from Klepper's monologues. Seven of the sixteen types of euphemisms were found to be common. The most common was understatement, which accounted for 26.5% of all cases. Flippancy came in at 23.5%, and Figurative Expression made up 17.6%. The most common was Ludic, with a 50% share, followed by Provoking (29.4%), Protective (11.7%), Underhand (5.9%), and Elating (2.9%). These results show that euphemisms in Jordan Klepper's comedy are used not only to soften language but also to entertain, provoke thought, critique politics with tact and humor.

Based on the study's findings and analysis, Future researchers are suggested include more

data by including other parts or hosts from The Daily Show or other satirical shows like it. Media use of euphemisms, particularly political satire, is a fantastic topic for language and meaning buffs. Moreover, discourse analysts and teachers can train their students to be diplomatic, articulate, and use the application of rhetorical devices, particularly when they are discussing politic or sensitive topics.

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