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**COGNITIVE BASICS OF EUPHEMISATION IN THE BRITISH
MASS MEDIA**

MASTER'S THESIS

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Abstract

The topic of the Master's Thesis is "*Cognitive Basics of Euphemisation in the British Mass Media*". Cognitive linguistics is a novel trend in linguistic research that deals with studying the relationship between language and mind. Euphemisms are powerful linguistic tools which replace bad or offensive words or expressions with more agreeable and milder ones. Euphemisation refers to the process in which euphemisms are formed. Therefore, it is important to discover what cognitive mechanisms are employed to create euphemisms as well as to understand how euphemisms are categorised and conceptualised in our minds.

We use a descriptive and an analytical method as well as content analysis to investigate how euphemisation is achieved from a cognitive perspective. In order to study euphemisation and cognitive linguistics we present definitions of cognitive linguistics and explain its own approach to the study of language. Regarding euphemisation, we define euphemisms and classify them and also present some mostly euphemised semantic spheres.

20 articles from the most popular British online newspapers were chosen for analysis. We look for euphemisms from extracts taken from these articles and examine what cognitive mechanism is used to formulate them. Moreover, we observe what semantic spheres they pertain to (e.g. politics).

Results show that *Conceptual Metaphor* is more frequent than any other cognitive mechanism because we tend to receive it more frequently than the other ones. Additionally, *Politics* seems to be the most euphemised semantic category in comparison to others. This possibly happens because politics is becoming more and more influential in our daily life as it reshapes our thinking and perception of the outside world.

Keywords: *Cognitive Linguistics; Euphemisms; Euphemisation; Politics.*

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Introduction

Language is a means of communication. People use language to interact and communicate with each other. It has been developing ever since as people tend to be polite when talking and avoid embarrassment, being offensive or being offended by others. This social phenomenon is called "*Euphemisms*" which can be defined socially as "*Sweet Talking*".

This research is vital because it examines and investigates the cognitive mechanisms which create euphemisms. Cognitive linguistics is a novel trend in linguistic studies that deals with the study of the relationship between language and mind. Cognitive linguistics is just a simple part of the general cognition which proposes that all knowledge is cognition. Language is regarded as a cognitive ability since we process the information in our minds before producing them in the shape of spoken or written words or expressions.

Euphemisms is a unique linguistic phenomenon that worth studying as we use them in everyday life situations whether spoken or written. Based on that, it is important to know how euphemisms are formed, used and function.

The purpose of this research is to study the different cognitive mechanisms which formulate euphemisms, to understand the nature of the process of euphemisation from a cognitive point of view as well as the way we categorise and conceptualise them.

To achieve the above mentioned purpose, the following tasks have been set:

- To study the theoretical background of the cognitive approach to the analysis of euphemisms;
- To study the cognitive mechanisms of euphemisation and how they are categorised and conceptualised in our minds;
- To classify euphemisms into their semantic fields in a direct relation to our study, e.g. euphemisms connected with death, religion, political correctness... etc.; and:

- To identify the most productive cognitive mechanisms in the process of euphemisation and to specify the most euphemised semantic spheres.

Our research is based on linguistic methods of investigation. The main method is a descriptive and analytical one in which we describe and analyse the process of euphemisation from a cognitive standpoint. We also use a statistical method to calculate the percentages of occurrences of the cognitive mechanisms and the semantic categories making our study a qualitative and quantitative one.

As for the theoretical resources, our investigation is based on the works of such eminent scholars as K. Burrige, G. Hughes & R. W. Holder.

The research material is 20 articles (18 pages of analysis) which are taken from the most popular British newspapers (e.g. *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian* & *The Sun*) ranging from (2006-2017) and addressing various subjects.

The theoretical novelty of the research is that it provides a brief and a summarised background of the field of cognitive linguistics and euphemisms in general.

The practical value of the research is accounted for by the possibility to use the results of our investigation to help us understand the way journalistic articles are written and aimed for specific linguistic purposes. This offers new insights to understand not only the text but also what is behind the text as well as perceiving the writer's cultural and social background.

Structure of the research. Our research contains 63 pages (excluding the appendix) and consists of an introduction, two main chapters, a conclusion, references and online resources. Each chapter consists of several logically interconnected sections followed by a conclusion where we enumerate the results of every chapter. Our resources consist of 94 references represented by books of Russian and foreign authors, articles from the most famous British newspapers and dictionaries. In the appendix, we gather all the euphemisms we analysed in this study in a table showing their meaning, the semantic sphere they pertain to and the cognitive mechanism associated with them.

CHAPTER I COGNITIVE APPROACH TO THE ANALYSIS OF THE LANGUAGE

1.1 Cognitive Linguistics: The General Notions

According to Ungerer & Schmid (2006: 36, cited in Man, 2004: 3) Cognitive linguistics can be defined as an approach to language which is based on our knowledge of the world we live in as well as the manner in which we observe and recognise it.

Cognitive linguistics, in this sense, includes many fields of study into it: syntax, semantics, phonology and text analysis. It helps us understand how mind affects our use of language, to rely on meaning rather than form (this field of study is also called cognitive semantics). This suggests that cognitive linguistics, as a unique discipline of linguistic studies, does not live or develop by itself away from other fields of study, for instance: psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics ...etc.

Cognitive linguistics, as we may infer, operates with many linguistic sciences as a system of mental processes incorporated into language comprehension in the human mind. The following definition presented by Evans et al. makes our point here more agreeable.

They define cognitive linguistics as a contemporary, current school of linguistic practice and thought which is involved in examining the significant correlation between human language, the mind and socio-physical knowledge (Evans et al., 2007: 263).

It can also be defined as an approach which considers language cognition identical to general cognition and as a result, searching for a clarification of linguistic phenomena in terms of general strategies of cognition such as metaphor, metonymy and iconicity (Janda, 2015: 131).

It is quite obvious that there are many other definitions to such a broad and developing trend of study in linguistics as cognitive linguistics is. Nevertheless, I shall consider any of the above-mentioned definitions as reliable since they all clearly get to the notion of cognitive linguistics in simple words. However, I regard

Evans' definition as the most acceptable one since he is considered to be a well-known author in the field of cognitive linguistic studies for that he has published and edited numerous papers and journals in the domain of cognitive linguistics. He also has conducted much research into this modern flow of investigation to the mind and language. Now let us speak about the history and development of cognitive linguistics since its early beginnings in the 20th century.

Historically speaking, cognitive linguistics dates back to the 1970s and has been active to a great extent since the 1980s. After a quarter century, much research has been conducted into cognitive linguistics, most of which into semantics.

Nevertheless, it is not only semantics that has been dealt with in the domain of cognitive studies: it has also explored other spheres of language study like phonology, language acquisition and historical linguistics (Croft & Cruse, 2004: 1). This implies that cognitive linguistics is novel in its own right and operates on different levels of language as language can be regarded as a cognitive process itself.

However, it is in the 1980s that cognitive linguistics has emerged as an approach to the study of language and mind and it had its own association (*The International Cognitive Linguistics Association*) as well as conferences and journals as of that period of time (Cuyckens & Zawada, 1997). Thus, it is not surprising to consider cognitive linguistics as a significant field of study that has drawn much interest to linguists and others.

Hilferty (2001: 2) believes that cognitive linguistics has emerged, to a huge degree, as a result of the mixture of occurrences and discoveries which happened in the domain of theoretical linguistics in the 1960s and 1970s.

It is no exaggeration, then, if we say that cognitive linguistics came out to the world of language and linguistics as a great victory in the battle between linguists to explore new methods to understand and perceive human language. Apparently, human brain is structured somehow and consequently, the language we use is structured too because when we speak we do not only use our tongue rather than simply organise words and expressions in our mind before saying them out.

Here, it is vital to realise that cognitive linguistics definitely did appear as a response to Chomsky's approach to language study or Chomskyan Generative Grammar (ibid: 3). However, it did not arise as being a refusal, for instance, to Chomsky's Generative Grammar but rather as a new method of understanding linguistic theories and hypotheses now and then.

Sánchez (1997: 8) argues that the major reason behind the rise of cognitive linguistics can be observed in the disapproval of a group of linguists in the 1970s to the generative paradigm which was dominating in linguistics and cognitive psychology. At the moment, we could say that cognitive linguistics places itself more to the study of linguistic semantics into the correlation of language and mind other than to the study of psychology, social and cultural studies in a broader sense.

Cognitive linguistics creates a scope for the coexistence of different methods and descriptions of language phenomenon in which they interact between each other (Bednáríková, 2013: 14).

She goes on to say that cognitive linguistics relates to the system of cognitive sciences having the processes and structures of mental knowledge as the primary topic of study. She states that language is tested as a particular cognitive human capability in which it is contained in other cognitive abilities. Therefore, research into language nature has always been a part of cognitive study (ibid: 16). Then, obviously, language can be regarded as a part of the general cognitive system and that we should not neglect the cognitive aspects of the language as a natural system of communication and delivering meaning to each other.

Evans & Green (2006: 5) mention that there is a significant cause why linguists in the field of cognitive linguistics examine language roots based on the belief that language manifests patterns of thought.

Studying language from a cognitive standpoint would, no doubt, provide us with much knowledge of how we conceptualise and interact with our world. Therefore, in the following pages we shall be discussing the cognitive approach to the analysis of language, namely the methods of cognitive linguistics. To sum up,

we have defined cognitive linguistics and traced it back to its early beginnings in the 1970s up until the modern time.

1.2 Methods of Cognitive Linguistics

Having briefly talked about cognitive linguistics in general, it is useful now to have a look at the cognitive approach to the analysis of human language, i.e. methods of cognitive linguistics. Cognitive linguistics is regarded as a new approach to the study of language in which it expresses the linguistic knowledge as being a part of the general thinking and cognition.

According to Croft & Cruse (2004: 1), there are three main hypotheses into the cognitive approach to the language:

- Language is not an independent cognitive ability;
- Grammar is nothing but conceptualisation; and:
- The knowledge of language comes from its use.

They argue that these three hypotheses show a reaction by cognitive linguistics to the prevalent methods of syntax and grammar at that time. The first assumption contradicts the famous hypothesis of generative grammar that language is an independent, instinctive capability separated from nonlinguistic cognitive competencies. While the second one opposes the truth-conditional semantics in which a semantic metalanguage is judged in terms of truth and falsity related to the model of the world. The last one is in an opposition to the reductionist trends in both truth-conditional semantics and generative grammar in which many semantic and grammatical phenomena are ascribed to the "*periphery*" (the fringe or outer edge).

Based on that, we could say that these three hypotheses imply, at least to some extent, that cognitive linguistics has been opposing generative grammar and truth-conditional semantics. However, cognitive linguistics does not place itself against other linguistic fields of study. It is rather a novel approach of understanding and explaining linguistic phenomena in terms of the correlation between language and mind.

Geeraerts (2006: 23) states that there is an empirical approach of research into cognitive linguistics in which he describes as a manner of thinking that is understood by all humans. He outlines the major characteristics of this empirical approach as follows:

- This empirical research is *data-driven*: it means that conclusions cannot easily be drawn from individual incidents and secluded inspection. The more data that is collected to examine a specific phenomenon, the better the conclusions will be;
- Empirical research includes *quantitative methods*, i.e. statistics, in order to determine whether your research is precise or not;
- Empirical research involves the *formulation of hypotheses* which means that no matter how your data is organised and prepared, it will not be easy to draw conclusions regardless of the results;
- This empirical research needs an *operationalisation of hypotheses*. It is not enough only to think about a certain hypothesis, it should be developed in some way to be tested; and:
- Empirical research includes an *empirical cycle* in which it involves data collecting, testing of hypotheses and analysis of results (ibid: 25).

Building on that, the previous points work out for, let us assume, scientific research and not simply to the domain of humanities. By taking all these steps together, we can arrive at better conclusions in our study.

What we must think of is where cognitive linguistics will be going to in its development? It is unfashionable question just to ask in this century due to the fact that what happens to cognitive linguistics will, undoubtedly, affect linguistics in general as they are inseparable and overlap each other.

Tendahl (2009: 112) believes that cognitive linguistics is usually considered as a great rival to other modern and maybe more traditional approaches to language study, for instance generative grammar and truth-conditional semantics.

This belief is not precise since all linguistics can be regarded as cognitive in their own right. It is no exaggeration, then, if we go far beyond this position and assume that all mental abilities are cognitive in nature.

Croft (2009: 397) implies that cognitive linguistics, along with sociolinguistics, can make a huge leap forward to pave the way into better understanding of the nature of human language.

This is true if we consider language as a cognitive capability embedded in our minds. However, the truth is that: language is not only a cognitive ability but rather than some mental processes, sounds and voices coming out of our mouths. If we agree with that then we would not have uttered a single word and would have used telepathy instead.

Ungerer & Schmid (2006, cited in: Ibarretxe-Antuñano, 2004: 4-5) identify three primary approaches into language analysis. The first one is called the "*Experiential View*" which follows a characterisation that is more empirical and more practical to meaning rather than presupposing objective definitions and logical rules based on theoretical considerations. As the name suggests, this view concentrates on what could be going on in the minds of speakers when they create and comprehend words, phrases and sentences.

The second one, "*Prominence View*", relies on concepts of profiling and figure/ground segregation which is a phenomenon that was first presented by the Danish gestalt psychologist Rubin. It illustrates why we distinguish an object in our environment when we look at it as perceptually an important figure that emerges from the background. This view is useful to the investigation of language.

The last approach which is called "*Attentional View*" considers that what we really show, mirrors those parts of an event which captivate our concern.

Nevertheless, we may infer from these three cognitive approaches to language analysis that our linguistic recognition is just a piece of the general cognition and thinking.

Due to the realisation, or otherwise a fact, that euphemisms and dysphemisms are cognitive processes in their own right; we shall be demonstrating several general ideas concerning euphemisms in the following pages onward. Needless to say that there is an urge to do so because our primary concern is to present euphemisms to the reader since this paper investigates euphemisms in mass media from a cognitive linguistic standpoint.

In a nutshell, then, it is obviously clear enough to realise that cognitive linguistics and its approach to natural language study and analysis affirms the interrelationship of the way we use language and our cognition.

1.3 Euphemisms

It has been noticed that euphemisms and taboos play an important role in developing not only linguistic studies, but also social research into language and its advancement. As we will see in the following pages, taboos and euphemisms worth study in their own right since they are (euphemisms) used to refrain harsh language and taboos are substituted by euphemisms. Hence comes the need to euphemise words and expressions in order to sound more polite.

Etymologically, the English word "*euphemism*" derives from the Greek word "*euphémismōs*" which consists of the prefix "*eu*", meaning "*well*" or "*good*", and the root "*phemi*", meaning "*speaking*". Thus, the two words are combined together to signify the meaning of "*speaking well*" (McArthur, 1992: 387).

Historically, euphemisms can be traced back to the early times of language history as it was a demonstration of mythological thinking of people. At that point, people avoided attaching direct names to God, more specifically in Christianity. In Christian cultures God's name was euphemised into several words and expressions. Examples include: *Cripes* (to refer to Christ), *by jingo* (by Jesus). Interestingly, the Devil was also euphemised as *Old Nick*, *Prince of Darkness*, *Old Gooseberry* (Ryabova, 2013: 37). Apparently, as the above suggests, euphemisms first came to be used for religious reasons. At the moment, to the best of our knowledge, it is normal to address God as God himself and not by any another word or expression in which they are outdated and only exist in historical manuscripts. So is the case with mentioning the evil spirits because they are scary and this is the core essence of the employment of the process of euphemisation.

Samoškaitė (2011: 10) concisely concludes the commonplace features of euphemisms' universality, localisation, contemporaneity, identity or profession and difference in gender, age and context and style.

This suggests that euphemisms are influenced by changes happening to language at a given point in time. They (euphemisms, and taboos also) undergo changes in the same way and to the same extent in response to language change because they are a part of the language. Euphemisms are in a continuous process of

developing and changing, newer euphemisms replace old ones and more euphemisms are attached to the currently used taboos.

Based on that, if we are to think of that correctly, some euphemisms may go far beyond their original meanings attributed to them and denote more meanings in terms of semantic change.

1.3.1 Definitions of Euphemisms

Unsurprisingly, there exist many definitions to euphemisms. Wardhaugh (2006: 239) defined euphemisms as "*the prohibition or avoidance in any society of behavior believed to be harmful to its members in that it would cause them anxiety, embarrassment, or shame*". While Gramley & Pätzold (2004: 35) define them as "*the result, not of changes in the real world, but of changes in the conscience of a society in areas where it feels guilt or is afraid to talk about a taboo subject*".

Burridge (2012: 66) presents another definition. She points out that euphemisms are "*sweet-sounding, or at least inoffensive, alternatives for expressions that speakers or writers prefer not to use in executing a particular communicative intention on a given occasion*".

Another definition to euphemisms is provided by Allan & Burridge (1991: 11, cited in: Pesola, 1999: 3) in which they refer to a euphemism as a substitute to an unwanted word, phrase or expression so that to prevent the loss of one's face or the faces of others addressed. This opens us a door to consider the notion of saving faces as a social instrument that demonstrates the usage of euphemisms.

It is interesting to mention that Babich (2005: 87) calls euphemisms usually in a figurative way as "*whitewashing device*". They add new vocabulary to the current word-stock of the English language.

There are other definitions provided by other researchers as well. However, whichever definition we consider here, in all cases, it is understood that euphemisms are another way of saying or writing harsh or unpleasant words or expressions by speakers or writers in rather a milder way. Any of these descriptions to euphemisms is sufficient enough and rather gives the reader a hint about euphemisms because they are not very different from each other. Definitely, there is always someone

trying to break the rules in order to free themselves from social constraints and in search of (freedom of speech).

Katamba (2005: 192, cited in Epoge, 2013: 2) indicates a specific type of euphemisms which includes the use of language in a contradictory manner to hide thought, it is called doublespeak. This manner is rather a disguise to the truth and is a distortion to the reality that makes the bad looks good, etc.

In light of this, as we have noticed so far, there exist many definitions to euphemisms as a unique linguistic phenomenon. Casas Gómez (2009: 725, in: Sytnyk, 2014: 85) distinguishes several major classes: the extralinguistic, the strictly linguistic and the ones that indicate a differentiation between linguistic interdiction and conceptual interdiction.

However, we are not in a good position to go through this. What is more important here is to understand what does the word "*euphemism*" mean or refer to? I suppose that we have succeeded in doing so though there is a lot to be discussed about the definitions of a euphemism (cf. Casas Gómez, 2009).

1.3.2 Reasons for the Use of Euphemisms

Definitely, there are some reasons behind the use of euphemisms, otherwise we would not have used them in the first place. Therefore, we should search for the reasons behind euphemisation. We should make the reader aware that these reasons have been examined and studied hundreds of times repeatedly. Any language that does not contain euphemisms would be a bad language and its users will fail to save their faces as well as the faces of others.

Alkire (2002) debates that euphemisms could be employed so that a text or speech would sound more refined. However, Linfoot-Ham (2005: 228) argues that the urge to use a euphemism is both an emotional and social one in which it enables us to discuss topics that we try to avoid speaking of directly and without disturbing others. A euphemism functions as a protector to the writer/speaker, reader/hearer or among other interactants.

We may describe a euphemism in an image where it serves as a social tool which cleans the garden of the language of its weeds (bad words).

Greene (2000: 4) states that euphemisms are used to reduce the rudeness of definite distasteful topics. Accordingly, we may talk about a certain subject indirectly rather than addressing it straightly.

Abbas (2015: 15) points out that the usage of euphemisms is not only restricted to the neutralisation of the negativeness of a word, a phrase or an expression or even to hide a proposed message or a definite meaning. It is rather an intentional act done by a euphemiser (a person who performs the process of euphemisation) to achieve a determined purpose. She adds that a euphemism may operate as a substitute to a dispreferred expression or to avoid losing face or upsetting one's audience.

Yule (1996: 60) refers indirectly to the usefulness of using a euphemism in terms of politeness and face-saving, in which both relate to pragmatics. He puts it this way: "*face means the public self-image of a person. It refers to the emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognize*".

This position is further enhanced by Sigfúsdóttir (2015: 9). She indicates that the use of a euphemism, as suggested by other studies (McGlone and Batchelor, 2003; Bowers and Playdell-Pearce, 2011), is not very connected to personal preference but rather more associated with face-saving.

Walker (2014: 6) concludes that if we use the strategy of face-saving when we talk to others, they will definitely use it with us as a common act of showing politeness.

It is interesting to add that euphemisms do not only exist in the English language, they do exist in almost every language even in those ones that are considered not very developed ones. So it is not surprising that we use euphemisms in everyday talk unaware of them due to the fact that we, as previously stated, tend to be polite.

Šebková (2012: 14) implies that the process of euphemisation has a positive merit in which it helps enrich the language and stimulate the inventiveness of its own speakers.

There is also an employment of euphemisms in political situations which we are not going to discuss here but in the coming pages.

In general, however, it seems that the employment of euphemisms in our daily life whether written or spoken derives from the fact that we tend to be polite. It is indeed a social activity in which we talk about topics we usually avoid discussing in public.

Now that we have discussed the reasons behind the use of euphemisms, it is worth considering the classification of euphemisms in the next section into their semantic fields.

1.3.3 Classification of Euphemisms

Definitely, euphemisms are classified according to their semantic fields. However, there are other classifications of euphemisms that do not categorise them according to their semantic fields. It is important here to declare that we are not going to provide our own classification of euphemisms but rather of other scholars in the field.

Rawson (1981: 1) has an interesting classification of definitions. He divides them into two general kinds; positive and negative. A positive euphemism, as he proposed, enlarges and widens in which it increases the significance of the euphemised elements. On the other hand, a negative euphemism decreases and declines. They are protective in their nature and they free the language from every dispreferred topic we avoid to address straightly.

In this section, we are going to talk about the most areas where euphemisms are used and which are in a strong relationship to our study.

Death has been the most taboo subject that euphemisms deal with because of its significance in human life. Though death is regarded as an antonym to life, it does not necessarily have to indicate the end of life. It could denote the beginning of a new life, i.e. the afterlife.

The subject of death in human life is very ancient, it is one of the phenomena that has not been clarified precisely. People could not understand why someone dies but they thought it was caused by a mysterious force. People try not to talk about

death because it reminds them of bad things and the fear that they may lose their families and friends. Examples include: "*be asleep forever*", "*to be brought to one's long home*" (Aubed, 2011: 80).

Allan & Burridge (2006: 222) believe that death is a fear-based taboo. It involves the fear of losing our beloved ones, of anxiety of decomposition and pollution of the body, of what comes after death and the fear of supernatural spirits and entities as well as the fear of the souls of the dead people.

Crespo-Fernández (2006: 102) mentions some conversational cases in which the concept of death is used normally without any unwillingness, it is the official context of obituaries. We read obituary columns in newspapers and sometimes we do not notice the use of euphemisms of death perhaps because we are used to read them everyday and they make no difference to us at all.

Obituaries can be defined as a record or an advertisement of death(s) specifically in newspapers. The word "*Obituary*" is considered as a euphemism itself, it originates from the Latin word "*Obitus*", meaning "*Departure*". It is a general euphemistic expression for death (ibid: 104).

Obituaries do not only tell us about where and when a certain funeral would take place but also make us sympathise with the person(s) who died. They play an important role in developing our reception of the notion of death as a very significant aspect in humans' life.

Death is a taboo that is substituted by sweet talking because people do not want to summon some demonic forces or genies for example by pronouncing their names. We use the expression "*pass away*" instead of "*die*" which indicates that the person associated with it is moving to a new stage (Abu Hammad, 2007: 5). This probably explains one of the many reasons why we avoid mentioning death and use euphemisms to replace those expressions which denote the death of a person for instance.

The notion of death has occupied a great deal in Arabic tradition. Generally speaking, death is regarded as a bridge to the eternal life. In this sense, Muslims do not consider death as a taboo but only because they are afraid of the pain of death

and what will happen to them on the Day of Judgment (Ghounane, 2013: 87). In the Arabic culture, death is not usually talked about; maybe some people have bad deeds that they do not want to be punished because of them in the afterlife when they meet their God.

Nowadays, and due to the technological revolution in almost every aspect of life, especially in medicine, we are able to live as long as possible. Therefore, death is not anymore considered as a normal, an essential and a significant part of life but rather as a foe to us (Kiš, 2014: 129).

Nevertheless, death is still, at least in the general sense, seen as a bridge that transports us to a new life and not as the end of life.

Religion forms a very important part in humans' life, it stems from their spiritual need to feel safe when they are endangered as well as the respect for God (the word "*God*" is a euphemism itself).

The theme of religion has caused taboos to be an indispensable part of our social life due to the fact that religion usually exists in the centre of the majority of communities. This is because taboos are deeply embedded in peoples' beliefs (Duda, 2011: 5).

The concept of religion is related to that of death in the sense that religion provides us with a positive impression of death. Religion portrays death to us as the time when we are finally in rest away from our tiredness and sorrows in our life. Consequently, religion represents a negative feeling of life in contrast to death.

Religion is also employed in terms of "*Sweet Talking*". We resort to sweet talking in order to be polite, keep our faces and avoid harming others' feelings. So, religious sweet talking, as Abu Hammad (2007: 10) names it, is employed as a linguistic tool to show respect to religion and avoid referring to God directly but rather by using expressions such as "*The Lord*".

Overall, it is understood from what has been said that the theme of religion has had a great deal of attention in the sphere of euphemisms. Euphemisms which replace taboos of religion are driven by peoples' intolerance, appreciation and fear of God and some supernatural forces.

Politics has taken much interest in language and, consequently, to politicians who consider language as an important means to deliver their ideas and influence, control and manipulate others. Thus, the usage of euphemisms has been of a significant value to politicians in their speeches.

Crespo-Fernández (2014: 5) holds that politicians employ the use of euphemisms as a cautious manner to treat disagreeable topics and to criticise their competitors without showing any negative effects upon their audiences.

Politicians look like actors when they talk to people. They try to appear as caring for our needs, but they do not do so because they really care for us. They have their own purposes as well because politics is a science of the possible and intended goals.

Therefore, we may understand that the use of euphemisms in politics can be said to be deceiving to the public. This phenomenon is referred to as "*Doublespeak*". It is difficult to differentiate between the euphemisms used in politics and the concept of "*Political Correctness*" which we are going to discuss in the following topic.

Šebková (2012: 27) indicates that presently there appears to be no apparent differentiation between euphemisms, doublespeak and political correctness and that different dictionaries provide various definitions which makes it rather difficult to understand and differentiate among them by speakers.

This suggests, to a certain extent, that euphemisms may not denote a positive meaning but rather a negative one. Still, this does not necessarily have to mean that some euphemisms are of negative denotations, they are positive at least in their core nature.

According to Lakkonen (2014: 1), political correctness can be defined as a process in which expressions are substituted by more appropriate ones. She adds that political correctness is strongly related to taboo language, censorship and verbal hygiene.

Political correctness, as a phenomenon, is too complicated one and includes multiple cultural notions, behaviours and language strategies (Dvořák, 2013: 42).

Hughes (2010: 45) points out that one of the purposes of political correctness is definitely removing or trying to restrain from the public discourse semantically impacted elements of cultural variation which have grown into targets of cruel language or intolerance.

Allan & Burridge (2006: 91) indicate that although there were several previous manifestations, the term of political correctness did not disappear until the American New Left emerged in the late 1960s, which were primarily affected by English translations of Maoist literature.

Nevertheless, Hughes (2010: 18-19) puts the origin of political correctness much earlier. He argues that political correctness first appeared in the Communist terminology as an administrative notion standing for the orthodox part line of Chinese Communism as outlined by Mao Tse-Tong in the 1930s. Following that, it was later adopted by the aforementioned American New Left in the 1960s and in Britain after that.

Although there is much to be said concerning why, when and how political correctness came to be used, it is evident that it appeared as a response to the need of politicians to address issues like religion, ethnicity, race, sex etc. It aims at avoiding to be biased to a group over another or offend others and to be polite.

Scholars regard political correctness as a behavioural and cultural phenomenon not only attempting to deal with discrimination but also attracting our awareness to the linguistic feature of political correctness which includes looking for novel ways of expression (Shemshurenko & Shafigullina, 2015: 130).

Morrice (1993: 32) argues that present-day political correctness appears to be involved with thought and language. The tendency of political correctness aims at sanitising our language from expressions that allow stating politically incorrect values and attitudes.

Political correctness can create a sphere of political culture in the long run if it is to be enforced by politicians in their speeches and so on. This political culture may have negative effects on freedom of speech upon people in which they become

unwilling or cautious when they express their thoughts and opinions in the public (Sparrow, 2013: 3).

This could explain the reason why political correctness is sometimes considered as a kind of camouflage or disguise in which politics try to hide the horrible face of wars, genocides, famine etc.

O'Neill (2011: 290) asserts that one of the most inappropriate influences for the need to employ political correctness is that it stimulates us to create resentment and annoyance in inoffensive circumstances, even if the speaker shows no aggressive intention.

Related to euphemisms and taboos, political correctness is not only about euphemising taboos and being polite broadly speaking; it is rather a process of euphemising the existing euphemisms because they might be considered as offensive to the public in terms of race and ethnicity.

Some examples of a politically correct language are in Table No. 1 (Šebková, 2012: 28):

Table No. 1

Blind	Visually challenged.
White	Caucasian.
Retarded	Mentally challenged; having learning difficulties.

1.3.4 Euphemisms in Figures of Speech

There are many possibilities of expressing euphemisms in figures of speech, mainly by using metaphors. We start by talking about metaphors since they denote euphemisms more often than other figures of speech.

Jačková (2010: 29) states seven possibilities of expressing euphemisms in figures of speech which are as follows:

- Metaphor – It is a very frequent figurative tool employed for euphemistic replacement which is accomplished through analogy, for example "*death*" is replaced by "*depart*".

- Metonymy – Metonymy is defined in terms of replacing words by other words involving one-for-one replacement, general-for-specific replacement and part-for-whole replacements, for instance "*heartburn*" is used for "*jealousy*" (Allan & Burridge, 1991: 14).
- Remodelling – It is often used for the replacement of taboo words and expressions, for example, "*God*" is substituted by "*Gosh*".
- Hyperbole or Overstatement – A figure of speech that overstates the case so it is more used with dysphemisms rather than with euphemisms because they are milder, for instance, "*Flight for glory*" for "*Death*".
- Understatement or Litotes – Warren (1992: 5) defines it as the traditional meaning of a word suits our preferred contextual antecedent given that the extent to which some characteristics of meaning implements are increased, for example "*plump*" for "*fat*".
- Synecdoche – It is a figure of speech which conveys a topic by referring to only one piece of the issue, for instance, "*I've got a cough*" without indicating any symptoms.
- Periphrasis or Circumlocution – It refers to an attempt to show some offensive or sensitive cases without expressing them straightly but rather through indirect phrases (Jačková, 2010: 30).

It is evident from this point that euphemisms exist in the language in many forms, specially in those figurative expressions mainly in metaphors and metonymies.

1.3.5 Euphemisms in Word Formation Processes

Warren (1992: 5) indicates four major methods by which euphemisms can be formed as follows:

- Word formation tools of a given language are employed. Examples contain: "*comfort station*" - compounding, sanguinary "*bloody*" - derivation, SAPFU "*military blunder*" – an acronym of "*surpassing all previous fuck-ups*", etc.

- Loan words (importing foreign words from other languages) for example, "*lingerie*" from French, "*calaboose*", "*jail*" from Spanish "*calabozo*".
- Changing or amending the shape of the disrespectful word according to fixed standards, for instance *divil*, *divel* (instead of *devil*), *Gad*, *Gosh*, *Golly* (instead of *God*), *epar* (back slang for *rape*), *elephant and castle* (rhyming slang for "*arsehole*").
- Constructing a new meaning for a given word or word combination, for example "*to go to the toilet*" means "*to defecate/to urinate*"; "*sanitary engineer*" means "*garbage collector*", etc.

These are the main ways in which euphemisms are created and come to life in the language. In addition to that, there are other ways of creating euphemisms as Warren briefly discusses them (ibid: 7). Nevertheless, it is not the task of this paper to list all the ways in which euphemisms are established because it would rather be longer and away from our main task to achieve.

Therefore, we may conclude that no matter how many ways there are to form euphemisms, it is the listener or reader who decides whether a word, a phrase or an expression can be regarded as a euphemism in terms of conceptualisation and interpretation.

In summary of this part, we have defined euphemisms and set some reasons behind their use. We have also classified them into some semantic fields related to our study. In addition to that, we have briefly discussed the concept of political correctness as well as euphemisms in figures of speech and the ways euphemisms are constructed in language.

In the following topic, we shall be talking about taboos and their relation to euphemisms because they are strongly connected to each other.

1.4 Relationship between Euphemisms & Dysphemisms

Euphemisms and dysphemisms are strongly connected to each other. Dysphemisms are in a continuous process of euphemisation and some dysphemisms fall out of use gradually and become outdated as a result of language development and change over time.

Dysphemisms contain many subjects into them such as taboos, swearing, profanity and blasphemy etc. In the next pages we shall be talking about them in brevity due to their significance to this paper. But let us first define dysphemisms and speak about them briefly.

Gathigia (2010: xii) defines a dysphemism as a statement with insulting implications either about the denotatum (what the word is normally used to refer to) or to the audience or both of them. Because of that, it is replaced by a euphemistic or neutral expression.

He differentiates between a dysphemism and a euphemistic dysphemism by proposing a definition of the latter as an expression whose phrasing is identified as euphemistic even though the illocutionary act may be severely criticised as dysphemistic (ibid.).

Allan & Burridge (2006: 31) define a dysphemism as "*a word or phrase with connotations that are offensive either about the denotatum and/or to people addressed or overhearing the utterance*". They state that people use dysphemisms to speak about other people and things which disappoint and disturb them, to deal with such topics they hate to address and want to deteriorate and weaken them (ibid.).

This suggests that the concept of dysphemism, like that of euphemism, is a social means to talk about people and subjects differently in order to reach a level of achieving social needs by using language. Dysphemisms and taboos are sometimes misunderstood and believed to be referring to the same category which makes it difficult for us to distinguish between them.

Casas Gómez (2012: 48) thinks that the reason behind this evolves basically from the hardship embedded in attempting to begin not really from a forbidden

truth but rather from a basic expression. This may suggest that dysphemisms and taboos must be redefined and approached relying on our perception of these two concepts in relation to our social intelligence.

Euphemisms and taboos are closely related to each other. Euphemisms would not have existed unless there were taboos waiting to be euphemised. Taboos are euphemised in the process of euphemisation which transfers them into more acceptable expressions by the society or community which uses them.

Hughes (2006: xv) defines a taboo as "*referring to human experiences, words, or deeds that are unmentionable because they are either ineffably sacred (like the name of God) or unspeakably vile (like incest)*".

Qanbar (2011: 88) establishes her own definition for a taboo by defining it as any word, phrase or subject that would lead to embarrassment and feeling of shame or aggravates a feel of shock as well as offending others if mentioned in public.

Historically, taboos originated from the Tongan "*tabu*" which first came to be known at the end of the eighteenth century. It was Captain James Cook of the British Royal Navy who was assigned to Tahiti in his first voyage between 1768 and 1771 to notice the passage of the planet Venus across the Sun to use the term "*tabu*" in his third voyage record. He observed the behaviour of some Polynesian women who refused to have dinner with British sailors at any cost because it was something forbidden in their own culture and customs (Allan & Burridge, 2006: 3-4).

Probably, as the above tells us, it could be the strangeness of the Polynesian word "*tabu*" which made it widely used nowadays as it is known that strange words would remain in our minds more than ordinary ones.

Taboos arose and were formed by people who were in old enslavement and feudal communities in order to evade supernatural vengeance or punishment for example to harvest their crops badly (Tse, 2011: 135).

Euphemisms and taboos are linked to each other by many linguists as linguistic phenomena. Taboos appeared as a result of forbiddance of performing definite tasks and discussing prohibited subjects. It is difficult sometimes for people

to decide whether their statements are good or bad. Therefore, Taboos can be regarded as the outcome of the humans' thinking capacity, i.e. cognition (Arif, 2015: 152). Jay (2009: 155) tells us that taboos can be used to accomplish a mixture of personal and interpersonal consequences which might be positive, negative, or insignificant in terms of their effect on others, despite the argument that all uses of taboos are, to some extent, pernicious.

We may observe that taboos in ancient times were not understood by people who were using them, perhaps because they were afraid that if they infringe them they would bring bad consequences for them, their families and friends.

Still, it is the context that decides whether any given word is a taboo or not based on our social intention.

To conclude, it seems that some taboos will disappear and fall out of use and be replaced by others as a result of the change in humans' thinking and nature. Anyway, it is up to the future generations to determine what to use and what not to use in everyday's language.

Vingerhoets et al. (2013: 287) refer to swearing as cursing which is a mode of linguistic activity that employs taboo words and expressions to transfer the expression of tough feelings. The drive for using swearing might probably be because people want to release their anger and feel relieved.

Swearing is mainly regarded as a bad usage of language, an unneeded linguistic characteristic that pollutes the language and gives a sense of unpleasantness and ignorance (Karjalainen, 2002: 24). Still, swear words remain in any given language's word stock despite all these negative features.

Jay & Janschewitz (2008: 267) point out the major intention to use swearing is to express emotions particularly anger and frustration. Relatedly, they define swearing as the use of taboo language with the aforementioned purpose of employing swearing (ibid: 268).

Another prime motive for swearing could probably be to release our anger and free ourselves from being humiliated and suppressed by others. Swearing can be better than attacking others or simply shouting at them which implies to an

extent that swearing is closely related to anger because when we swear we are in mental state of anger (Hagen, 2013: 5-6). This may lead us to the belief that swearing is negative yet powerful in its own nature. Its strangeness comes from its being tabooed and given that tabooed words and expressions are avoided in most situations.

Nevertheless, swearing can lead to negative influences upon the person who swears due to the strong nature of swear words. For instance, swearing may cause the swearer to be socially less supported by others (Vingerhoets et al., 2013: 301).

McEnery (2006: 28-29) claims that males swear more frequently than females in terms of gender. He based his assumption upon studies carried out in the 1970s. He thinks this supposition is not accurate because females may use bad language more repeatedly if compared to males depending on the context/gender of the interlocutor(s). Apparently, gender does not have that crucial role in determining the context in which swearing is likely to occur.

This proposition could be true in the sense of regarding bad language as a social tool to express anger and the need to feel safe within the society. Females can be aggressive in some situations where they are under danger and consequently bad language would then be present in speech.

Jay & Janschewitz (2008: 269-270) highlight that all examples of swearing are conceptualised. They divide them into propositional and nonpropositional ones. Propositional swearing is prepared, intentional and can be polite or impolite or conceivably neither. From the other hand, nonpropositional swearing is unintentional, unplanned and uncontrollable as a sudden burst of emotions as for instance surprise.

Clearly, swearing is an indispensable part of language that will survive as long as we still use it or otherwise be dropped out of use or be replaced by some other linguistic procedures.

Historically, profanity originally derives from the Latin word "*fanum*" which means "a temple" and when these words were inserted into the Middle English they etymologically carried the meaning of opposing the temple or in this case the

church (Hughes, 2006: 362). Blasphemy is defined as "*the contemptuous use of religious symbols or names, either by swearing or abuse*" (ibid: 31). There is a strong relationship between profanity and blasphemy which is unclear.

Hughes (2006: xvii) asserts that the differentiation between profanity and blasphemy is rather complicated and depends mostly on intention. Profanity is often considered as habitual while blasphemy is more evidently intentional or purposeful. However, both profanity and blasphemy are classified as dysphemisms and taboos which must be censored.

Profanity and blasphemy are punished in societies where religion is more powerful upon its followers (e.g. Islam) which leads to a less frequent use of profanity and blasphemy (Jay, 2005: 71). In Britain up until the end of the seventeenth century for example, people were punished by burning them alive if they were found to be talking blasphemously (Allan & Burridge, 2006: 239-240). Religions have a great impact on our life that sometimes we are forbidden to express what is going on in our minds freely and without the fear of being persecuted which poses a grave danger to the freedom of speech.

Admittedly, it is not always the case of profanity and blasphemy being a bad use of language but quite what the interlocutors contextually perceive as bad or good and correlating them to impoliteness and offensiveness.

According to Jačková (2010: 27) pejoration of euphemisms is a linguistic operation in which euphemisms develop to be dysphemisms in the course of time.

Burridge (2012: 78-79) indicates that words can acquire new negative connotations gradually over time as a result of what she calls (semantic pejoration). This suggests that words are developing and might gain new meanings possibly away from their original ones.

Pinker (2002: 212) provides another name for this linguistic process. He calls it "*Euphemism Treadmill*" which he describes as follows: "*People invent new words for emotionally charged referents, but soon the euphemism becomes tainted by association, and a new word must be found, which soon acquires its own*

*connotations, and so on. For example, **undertaker** changes to **mortician**, which changes to **funeral director**".*

This process is contrary to that of euphemisation and apparently it takes a lot of time. It appears that words are in a constant change and words that possess positive denotations may alter to denote negative ones and then back to positive in a closed circle of semantic change.

Relatedly, pejoration as a linguistic phenomenon is opposite to that of amelioration (Borkowska & Kleparski, 2007: 37). Euphemism treadmill can be as a bridge for taboos to survive in the language.

To sum up, the relation between euphemisms and dysphemisms is a strong one. Dysphemisms are euphemised and then become dysphemisms in quite a slow process called pejoration or euphemism treadmill and then they go back to be euphemised and so on.

Results

In the light of what has been stated previously in this theoretical part, we have defined cognitive linguistics as a new trend in linguistics, demonstrated its general concepts and viewed its history and development. Cognitive linguistics studies the relationship between language and mind and since it is thought that all knowledge is cognitive, therefore language is considered as a cognitive ability too.

Needless to say that words are produced in the mind before they are pronounced. Thus, cognitive abilities like thinking for instance should compensate for some distinct linguistic phenomena such as euphemisms for example.

Cognitive linguistics plays a significant role in our understanding of the relationship between language and mind. It provides us with novel methods to realise the correlation between language and mind and how does the mind governs the way we speak and conceptualise the world.

In this theoretical part, we have seen that cognitive linguistics has its own approach into the analysis of language. This approach contains three hypotheses which show to a certain degree that this approach is opposite to the well-known hypothesis of generative grammar proposed by the famous American linguist Noam Chomsky in the late 1950s. Cognitive linguistics is only a small part of the general cognition and thinking.

Since all knowledge is regarded as cognitive, therefore language is seen as a cognitive experience in its own sense. Euphemisms and dysphemisms are seen as a cognitive process in their nature.

Euphemisms and dysphemisms have been defined and explained in brevity. We have talked about some reasons behind the use of euphemisms and classified them into some semantic categories. Some dysphemisms in certain semantic fields have been discussed with examples as they are closely related to our study. Euphemisms have a great influence on our language and they form an important part in the language along with dysphemisms.

The use of euphemisms derives from the need to be polite which relates it with the theory of politeness. Euphemisms employed in political contexts or

political correctness may have negative denotations. Politicians use euphemisms when they talk to the public in order to sound right in front of their audience. Their employment of euphemisms in this regard is negative because they try to hide the facts and distort the truth of war, famine etc. for example.

Euphemisms do exist in the language in many forms but primarily in metaphors and metonymies. There seems to be a close correlation between euphemisms and dysphemisms in the general sense that dysphemisms become euphemisms in the euphemisation process. After euphemising dysphemisms they undergo semantic changes turning them back into dysphemisms again in a linguistic phenomenon called pejoration or as Steven Pinker wittily refers to it as "*Euphemism Treadmill*".

Taboos, swearing, profanity and blasphemy which all fall under the category of dysphemisms are inseparable parts of the language that will survive as long as we still use them everyday as social tools to arrive at certain desired linguistic, or sometimes, pragmatic results.

Being two distinct linguistic phenomena, euphemisms and taboos emerge from the humans' thinking capability, i.e. cognition, which consequently relates them to cognitive linguistics.

After all, it is not our decision to determine what is good or bad to say or write but rather the context, at the meantime, and future generations to choose that.

CHAPTER II COGNITIVE BASICS OF EUPHEMISATION IN THE BRITISH MASS MEDIA

2.1 Methodology

We use a descriptive and an analytical method to examine euphemisms found in the most famous and widespread British mass media newspapers such as *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Mail Online*. We study euphemisms by investigating what cognitive mechanisms (e.g. generalisation, specification, conceptual metaphor, etc.) are used to produce euphemisms and which mechanism is the most productive one. This study is both a qualitative and quantitative one in which different cognitive mechanisms of euphemisation are analysed as well as grouping euphemisms according to the semantic categories they pertain to. It also searches for the spheres that are mostly euphemised, e.g. politics, death and race. We rely on Holder's (2002) dictionary of euphemisms and American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language. The former is a basis in defining euphemisms according to the semantic spheres they belong to.

Many articles hardly contain any euphemisms and they are quite long. It took some time as to find euphemisms despite the fact that reading long pieces of writing would undoubtedly take long periods of time as a result. Nevertheless, the most famous British newspapers have been chosen for the study (e.g. *The Guardian*, *The Sun*, *The Daily Mail Online*, etc.) since they are accessible online and they possess such an international reputation worldwide. The articles ranged from the years 2006 up until 2017 addressing various topics such as politics, race and death.

The whole analysis is based on Boldyrev & Aleksikova's (2010: 5-11) own classification of the process of euphemisation. We have added some new cognitive mechanisms that we discovered while conducting this study (e.g. *Idioms*). They divide the process of euphemisation into two main kinds:

1- Formal: which includes the following techniques:

- Phonetical (e.g. *God* → *gosh*);
- Acronymy (e.g. *Swine Flu* → *H1N1*);

- Paronymy (e.g. *Wisdom* is a paronym of *Wise*); and:
- Borrowings (e.g. *Mumps* → *Parotitis*).

2- Semantic: which consists of three principles of euphemisation:

a) Neutralisation of the negative evaluative components of the concept that includes the following cognitive mechanisms:

- Generalisation (e.g. *Prison* → *Correctional Facilities*);
- Specification (e.g. *Unemployment* → *Downsizing/Redundancies*);
- Conceptual Metaphor (e.g. *Drug* → *Speed/Snow/Grass*); and:
- Metonymy (e.g. *Homeless* → *Shopping Bag Lady*).

b) Decrease of the degree of the negative evaluation which can be divided according to the way the process of decreasing is achieved:

1. Lexically: as in:

- Litotes (Understatement) (e.g. *Stupid* → *Not Very Clever*);
- Synonymy (e.g. *Dead* → *Deceased*); and:
- Perspectivisation (e.g. *Spy* → *Secret Agent*).

2. Syntactically through "*Periphrasis*" as a cognitive tool (e.g. *Die* → *If something happens to me/When the big tuna goes belly up*).

3. Grammatically through two techniques:

- Passive (e.g. *Palestine attacked Israel twice last week* → *Israel was attacked twice last week*); and:
- Modals (e.g. *A nuclear explosion **may** cause heavy casualties among your leaders*).

c) Changing the negative evaluation into positive by using synonyms (e.g. *Garbage Collector* → *Sanitary Engineer*).

2.2 Formal Euphemisation in the British Mass Media

The following example demonstrates the usage of "*Paronym*" as a cognitive mechanism which is taken from an article titled: "Nobel Scientist Snubbed After Racism Claims" (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1566468/Nobel-scientist-snubbed-after-racism-claims.html>) written by Stephen Adams in The Telegraph and dated October 17, 2007:

"His comments have been fiercely attacked by fellow scientists, anti-racism campaigners and politicians".

The article is about a controversial scientist who was accused of making racist comments over his proposition that Africans are less intelligent than the Whites based on his research.

The writer mentions the word "*Racism*" three times, one of them is in the title of the article itself. This word is a euphemism that refers to "*intolerance towards or ill-treatment of those of a different race or nationality*" (Holder, 2002: 326).

In terms of euphemisation, this euphemism has been formed in a formal way where (*Racism* is a *paronym* of *Race*). It is a cognitive mechanism where the euphemism is created by deriving a new word "*Racism*" from an existing one "*Race*". Definitely, it is categorised in its own category of race as we defined it above. From a cognitive point of view, it is conceptualised in the brain to refer to discrimination or differences between people of various colours (hence the naming itself).

It is worth noting that the word "racist" has undergone the process of (*Euphemism Treadmill*) as we previously pointed out in the theoretical part of this research where it once indicated a person who studies differences among races (a positive connotation). However, the word now suggests something negative where it refers to something or someone having a belief of discrimination against different races (a negative connotation).

The following examples illustrate the employment of "*Borrowings*" as a cognitive technique. The first example is taken from an article titled: "PW Botha" written in the obituaries' column in The Telegraph and dated November 2, 2006 (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1532996/PW-Botha.html#top>).

The word "*apartheid*" has been mentioned several times in the article, one of them for instance:

"Within two years Botha had become reviled internationally as the symbol of a regime which tortured women, imprisoned children and shot strikers. In

consequence he added to the pressures that eventually led to the downfall of the apartheid system he had fought so hard to defend".

The article is about the former president of South Africa: PW Botha, who died then aged 90 and about his political career and reforms in this African country.

According to Holder (2002: 10), "*apartheid*" is a euphemism of both race and politics that stands for: "*the suppression of black people by white*". "*Apartheid*" is derived from Afrikaans, the language of Dutch settlers of South Africa (American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language). The cognitive mechanism we encounter here is borrowing from another language. Such a word can be conceptualised as describing one state related to a system of treating black people. It is not only the context that determines the understanding of words but also our conceptualisation of their meanings. As the above instance implies, a euphemism can deceive and distort the truth by establishing another meaning which hides behind it another fact or reality.

The second example is taken from an article written by David Anderson, dated October 9, 2007 in Mirror Online British Newspaper (<http://www.mirror.co.uk/>). The article's title: "Pericard: My Prison Hell", available online: (<http://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/football/pericard-my-prison-hell-717298>). The author writes:

"I was in there with drug dealers, paedophiles, rapists, murderers and people who have attempted to kill. We had the lot".

In this short excerpt, the writer discusses the issue of Stoke football club's striker Vincent Pericard. He was imprisoned for five weeks for providing false information about the identity of who was driving his car when he was caught speeding. If we examine this extract we have the word "*paedophile*" BrE, AmE "*pedophile*". It is a euphemism that refers to a person who sexually abuses children. This word is borrowed from Greek where "*philia*" stands for love and "*pedeiktos*" refers to young children (Seto, 2008: 3).

Here we have a cognitive mechanism which is borrowing where borrowed words compensate for states that are avoided or unmentioned.

It is milder to say "*Paedophilia*" than saying children's rape, though, in some cases, it is not considered to be a process of sexual assault per se. People would conceptualise an idea about children being raped and would formulate a negative notion about it.

2.3 Semantic Euphemisation in the British Mass Media

2.3.1 Neutralisation of the Negative Evaluative Components of the Concept

The following instances show the use of *Specification* as a cognitive mechanism. The first one is taken from an article written by Mirror.co.uk in The Mirror Online (<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/my-million-to-one-black-and-white-twins-234667>) dated July 12, 2010 and titled "My Million to One Black and White Twins!":

"But she was certain it would happen to her. "I was so sure that I nicknamed them Salt and Pepper almost as soon as we discovered they were twins," she says. "I don't know why, I just had a feeling".

The article is about a British wife who gave birth to twin babies of different skin colour, one is white and the other is black. This rare incident possibly happened because of the parents different colours.

The phrase "*Salt and Pepper*" has been mentioned in the article. According to Holder (2002: 346) "*Salt and Pepper*" (*American*) is a euphemism of race which refers to a black and a white person engaged in a sexual intercourse where the male is usually the black one.

Although the definition above may seem unrelated to the issue we investigate here, it is rather connected to it. It is well known that salt has the colour of white and the pepper is black as well. The wife in the above example nicknamed her two different colour babies as "*Salt and Pepper*" to refer to their unusual state of skin colour.

In terms of the process of euphemisation, we can see that this euphemism is created by *Specification*, which is a cognitive mechanism of particularising a more general notion. From a cognitive perspective "*Salt and Pepper*" is conceptualised

mentally to refer to the famous collocation itself of "*Salt and Pepper*" being side by side on any food table or generally to the category of food.

However, what we encounter in this example is far behind this perception. "*Salt and Pepper*" has been particularised here not to mean the collocation itself but rather to refer to two different colours and consequently two different races (since racism is mainly based on differences in colours). Needless to say that racism is being fought on all levels and by many international organisations such as the UN and FIFA hoping to bring this world issue to an end.

The second excerpt is written by John Humphrys in the Daily Mail Online titled "The China Powder Keg: JOHN HUMPHRYS on a Nation That's Either on the Edge of Becoming THE Superpower - or Exploding into Anarchy" (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-1327158/JOHN-HUMPHRYS-China-A-nation-edge-superpower-anarchy.html>) dated November 6, 2010:

"Remember, this is a man who survived the horrors of the Cultural-Revolution and he could not be in his hugely influential job without the approval of senior figures in the Communist Party".

This article addresses the case of freedom of expression and call for political reforms in China under political repression by the government as seen through the eyes of a British correspondent reporting from this economical giant for more than 30 years.

The writer uses the phrase "*Cultural Revolution*" which is a political euphemism referring to "*Mao's Cultural Revolution*" in China (Holder, 2002: 93). This euphemism is formed by *Specification* which is a cognitive mechanism that particularises a general notion into a narrower sense. In terms of cognitive linguistics, this euphemism can be classified into the category of culture which is imprecise if we perceive the text itself here ordinarily. The context here suggests a politically correct language where this euphemism describes the status quo in China.

It is conceptualised to refer to the discipline of culture which is irrelevant based on the context here. Euphemisms can deliver a distorted image where negative concepts are transformed into positive ones such as the example we examined above.

Relatedly, the last example is taken from an article written by Jon Laurence in *The Telegraph* (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/qatar/11171847/How-Qatar-funds-extremists-across-the-Middle-East.html>) titled: "How Qatar Funds Extremists Across the Middle East" and dated October 19, 2014: "*Whatever Qatar's ultimate intentions are, its willingness to provide arms to a range of rebel groups across the region has alarmed both other Middle Eastern states and Western observers*".

The article describes how Qatar is being accused of financially supporting different radical Islamic groups in Syria and other Arabic countries as well. The writer refers to this state as compromising for instance the right of Qatar to host the Football World Cup in 2022 amid these allegations of funding terrorism.

The writer wittily uses the phrase "*Ultimate Intentions*" which is a euphemism of politics meaning "*the killing of all Jews*" (Holder, 2002: 419). As far as the process of euphemisation is concerned, this euphemism is formed by semantically neutralising the negative and evaluative content of this phrase. Its meaning is particularised to refer to a more specific notion using *Specification* as a cognitive tool to create euphemisms.

From a cognitive standpoint, this euphemism is classified under the category of politics, though it has racial implications and can thus be classified under the category of race. If we encounter this phrase, it may not have any hidden meaning and can wrongfully be conceptualised to indicate an ordinary status of final hopes or aims; which is insignificant.

However, the meaning here employed by the writer contradicts this ordinary cognitive conceptualisation. It is a smart manipulation of words by the writer as he indirectly refers to the ongoing feelings of hatred between Arabic countries and Israel over the case of Palestine. Qatar, as an Islamic country, may support extremist Islamic groups in Syria in hopes these groups would create a threat to the state of Israel in the Middle East. There is another interpretation of this situation in which Qatar is trying to eliminate the Assad regime since Syria serves as a bridge from Iran

to Hezbollah in Lebanon. Euphemisms, as we described in the theoretical background of this study, are very powerful linguistic instruments especially in the political discourse or as is known as "*Political Correctness*".

The following instances present *Conceptual Metaphor* as a cognitive mechanism. Let us begin by this excerpt taken from an article written by Alex von Tunzelmann in The Guardian (<https://www.theguardian.com/international>) titled: "Where's Vinegar Tom?" (<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2008/sep/25/1>) dated September 25, 2008:

"The only thing Hopkins did that probably isn't on the menu at Guantanamo Bay was to find and pierce the devil's mark. This was supposedly a teat that witches used to suckle imps, usually concealed as a mole or wart. It was said the mark would not hurt or bleed if pricked with a pin".

The article discusses a horror film called "*Witchfinder General*" as it depicts the process of witch hunting around the 17th century in England. The writer uses the phrase "*The Devil's Mark*" in the above excerpt. According to Holder (2002: 103), "*The Devil's Mark*" is a euphemism of mental illness which stands for congenital idiocy, mainly in a rural use. Though the language of this excerpt is rather difficult to non-natives, the context here suggests that the use of this phrase is primarily related to the describing of wizards, and witches as well, of that period in the history of England as vile and unwanted by others due to their acts of black magic and other practices of wizardry and witchcraft. Then putting this context, and consequently the very phrase we have here, into the microscope of cognitive linguistics can help us understand the cognitive mechanism employed here.

In terms of euphemisation, "*The Devil's Mark*" can be regarded as a *Conceptual Metaphor* in which it refers to people who have made a deal with the devil, often referred to as worshippers of Satan and marked by a spot or a scar on their body. However, regarding the cognitive point of view, this phrase is conceptualised as an indication of sinister powers and supernatural entities. It is our knowledge which draws us a mental, and sometimes a stereotypical, image when we only hear the phrase "*The Devil*". Despite the fact that this euphemism is placed

under the category of mental illness, we still can categorise it under the category of religion & superstition.

As we stated above, it is our mind which builds such previous perceptions rather than comparing the image to the fact before us. In this sense, Lakoff & Johnson (1980: 454) believe that our conceptual system is essentially metaphorical in its own nature in terms of the way we think and act.

Relatedly, let us have a look at another example taken from an article written by Keith Waterhouse in the Daily Mail Online titled: "Back With the Beeb for a Bit of Hoity-Toity" dated February 10, 2008 (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/columnists/article-513469/Back-Beeb-bit-hoity-toity.html>):

"The only good excuse for allowing the Games in Peking - as I persist in calling what is now known as Beijing - is to allow a little light to filter through the Bamboo Curtain".

This article discusses the cons and pros of TV programmes now and then as well as comparing between watching TV at its very beginning in the 20th century and the 21st century we live in now.

The writer uses the phrase "*Bamboo Curtain*" which is a political euphemism referring to the system of censoring in order to restrict any kind of contact or exchanging knowledge with foreigners in China (Holder, 2002: 19).

Regarding the process of euphemisation, here we encounter a *Conceptual Metaphor* to replace rather an unmentioned state of censoring people's acts and speech to foreigners in fear of exposing information or even passing them illegally which can be considered as an act of great treason.

Nevertheless, in terms of cognitive linguistics, we may categorise such a phrase as referring to something related to plants (bamboo) or some interior decorating (curtain) or both as we might think of some curtain made from or has been ornated with bamboo inscriptions; which is completely irrelevant!

What we have here is far from what this phrase literally means. It is not a precise conceptualisation here to relate this phrase to some interior decorating or the

like as we aforementioned, it is a political euphemism used metaphorically to substitute a sensitive case in China. Readers would not bother look for what "*Bamboo Curtain*" means in such a context, they would rather continue reading the newspaper without paying any attention to this phrase or metaphor.

The basic aim of euphemisms is to make words more acceptable. In this sense, let us have a look at an excerpt from an article written by the Daily Mail Reporter in the Daily Mail Online titled: "Winnie Mandela Calls on South Africa to Stand Behind Caster Semenya After Claims the Gender-Row Runner is a Hermaphrodite" dated September 11, 2009 (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1212562/Gender-row-runner-Caster-Semenya-hermaphrodite.html>):

"Mrs Madikizela-Mandela said if the claims about Caster were true, then the runner was learning she was a hermaphrodite for the first time. She added: 'There is nothing wrong with being a hermaphrodite. It is God's creation. She is God's child. 'She did not make herself. God decided to make her that way and that can't be held against her'".

The article is about calls by the former wife of Nelson Mandela, Winnie, who asked the people of South Africa to support their citizen Caster Semenya amid accusations of the 800m champion runner being a hermaphrodite (a person or an animal who has both male and female sexual organs either normally or abnormally).

The article contains the phrase "*God's Child*" (obsolete) which is a euphemism of mental illness referring to "*an idiot*" (Holder, 2002: 170).

Concerning the process of euphemisation we have a here a *Conceptual Metaphor*, "*God's Child*", as a cognitive mechanism of creating euphemisms. It is less offensive to use such a phrase to describe a person who is idiot or has some congenital defects. From a cognitive standpoint, this euphemism can be categorised under the category of religion & superstition where the phrase itself has a religious connotation from the word "*God*". Additionally, it is possible to conceptualise this euphemism as indicating a state of uniqueness or rarity where some people are born with some congenital defects. It is insulting to address these people with such harsh expressions like having some defects despite the fact that these people have no

choice to choose how their bodies are. It is unpredictable how a euphemism can sustain those situations of politeness and verbal hygiene rather more practically than any other linguistic tools in this regard.

The following excerpt is taken from an article written by David Wooding (a Sunday political editor) in The Sun (<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2511412/after-the-most-dramatic-year-in-modern-british-politics-we-take-a-light-hearted-look-back-at-2016-with-all-its-disloyalty-tantrums-sheer-incompetence/>) dated

December 31, 2016 and titled: "NEW YEAR'S GONERS, After the Most Dramatic Year in Modern British Politics We Take a Light-Hearted Look Back at 2016 with All Its Disloyalty, Tantrums & Sheer Incompetence":

"Spin Doctor of the Year: Labour's Keith Vaz for telling two male escorts he was a washing machine salesman named Jim".

The article looks back at some major and interesting events in the UK during 2016 including political changes, funny incidents and other accidents.

The writer mentions the phrase "*Spin Doctor*" which is a political euphemism that refers to "*Aides who carry out the activity of editing, suppressing or correcting of a public speech*" (Holder, 2002: 379).

In terms of the process of euphemisation, we can observe that "*Spin Doctor*" is a *Conceptual Metaphor* – regarded as a cognitive technique – in which the meaning referring to the people described by the definition of Holder above is semantically neutralised of its negative evaluative components. "*Spin Doctor*" here does not necessarily have to mean a doctor who spins or has a spin or anything else related to spins or spinning. It indicates a group of people who are used by politicians to provide a false interpretation of a specific case so that the public opinion may be with or against this very case. Therefore, this context can be considered as relating to the sphere of "*Political Correctness*", as we previously stated several times in this investigation.

Concerning the cognitive standpoint, it is a wrong categorisation we may fall in as we come across such a phrase. It is more likely that our minds would classify this euphemism under the category of medicine which is inaccurate cognition in this

regard. Relatedly, hearing or reading such a phrase can result in an imprecise conceptualisation depending on the mental image drawn in our minds. This can create a distorted perception based on such thinking as a cognitive capacity to analyse various situations.

The last example is taken from an article written by Gabrielle Chan in The Guardian (<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/live/2017/feb/28/essential-poll-malcolm-turnbull-intelligent-hardworking-out-of-touch-politics-live?page=with%3Ablock-58b4d35be4b05f755cc0d116>) under the title: "Report on Free Speech Recommends Fixing Racial Discrimination Act Complaints Process – As It Happened", dated February 28, 2017:

"Just on George. It was obviously the right thing to do. You cannot expect others to stay in line when you are off on a frolic. This will free him up completely to dig in when required from his electorate in Dawson and cross the floor on the banking commission of inquiry".

The article is about the refugees or asylum seekers who risk their lives in the middle of sea to reach the shores of Australia escaping the bad conditions of their homelands in hope of a better life and future.

The writer uses the phrase "*Cross the floor*". According to Holder (2002: 91), "*Cross the floor*" (British) is a political euphemism which means "*to change political allegiance*".

Euphemistically, this euphemism is a *Conceptual Metaphor* which is a cognitive technique to create euphemisms. The meaning is transformed by semantically neutralising its negative content into more appropriate one.

On the other hand, cognitively speaking, this euphemism is wrongfully classified under the category of movement as the usual meaning may suggest though the context here is a political one. Based on that, it is also inaccurately conceptualised to indicate some movement since the verb "*cross*" requires some physical motion as we may infer. Nonetheless, the meaning is far behind this imprecise conceptualisation: it indicates the state of a politician who changes their

political loyalty. This sounds strange if we come across such a phrase and consequently would have a wrong assumption about it.

The following two examples demonstrate the employment of *Metonymy* as a cognitive technique. The first one is taken from an article written by George Walden in the Telegraph under the title: "Barack Obama is Powerless: He Might as Well Bask on the Beach" (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/8711536/Barack-Obama-is-powerless-he-might-as-well-bask-on-the-beach.html>) dated 20 August, 2011:

"His fellow-vacationers tend to be high-worth folk, and some – with an eye to their retirement funds – might respectfully ask the President what the hell he's doing here, golfing and bathing, while the Dow sinks towards Davy Jones's Locker, and when he plans to descend from his plateau of cerebral aloofness, and get a grip".

This article discusses the economical crisis during the term of ex US president Barack Obama where Dow Jones stock market rates dropped rapidly causing economical difficulties and leaving thousands of Americans jobless.

The writer uses the phrase "*Davy Jones's Locker*". It is a euphemism of death which means "*A grave at sea*" (Holder, 2002: 98). It is evident that this euphemism is created by using *Metonymy*, which is a cognitive mechanism, where the phrase "*Davy Jones's Locker*" stands for grave in terms of place.

From a cognitive point of view, this euphemism can be categorised as belonging to the category of superstition or cinema - since most people have watched the famous film series "*Pirates of the Caribbean*" – reminding them of one of the famous characters of the series. Nevertheless, this euphemism is classified under the category of death as we stated above despite the fact that the context here is a political one. This euphemism is better conceptualised to refer to a state of falling which does not alienate it from the notion of death considering that death can be seen as a fall (some death situations involve falling on the ground for instance).

The second example is from an article written by Michael Wilkinson in The Telegraph (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/scotland/1580787/How-the->

[Barnett-formula-works.html](#)) dated April 16, 2015 and titled: "What is the Barnett Formula?":

"If we want to give them some money after devo-max OK, but do it honestly and openly. Not by doing so under the table like this".

The article discusses the Barnett formula which is a method devised in 1978 by Joel Barnett to govern the level of public spending in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland based on their population and other factors as well.

The writer uses the phrase "*Under the Table*" which is a euphemism of bribery meaning "*illegal or surreptitious*" (Holder, 2002: 420). As far as the process of euphemisation is concerned, we can see that this euphemism is a *Metonymy* as a cognitive mechanism of euphemisation. The meaning of "*illegal*" is transferred into this form of metonymy which is rather more accepted than the original meaning associated with it.

From a cognitive point of view, the meaning of "*Under the Table*" is wrongly perceived as referring to something or someone situated under a table in terms of place. This is most likely to occur as our minds are programmed to conceptualise things in this manner. This euphemism can also be classified under the category of place or location based on the mistaken conceptualisation as we explained above. It is worth mentioning that "*Under the Table*" can be found in other languages such as Arabic since the meaning here describes something happening against or away from the sight of law or authorities.

These two instances present *Idiom* as a new cognitive mechanism in creating euphemisms. The first one is taken from an article written by Cassandra Jardine under the title: "If We Died, Someone Would Help Her" dated 25 October, 2006 (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/3656110/If-we-died-someone-would-help-her.html>) in The Telegraph (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/>). In this article, the writer talks about a family tragedy in which a British parent were helpless because they could not cope with the desperation their daughter caused them as she was experiencing a special type of autism since birth. Unfortunately, this situation led the father to commit suicide in Tenerife, Spain. The writer says:

"Essentially it is about a couple coping with a difficult child who became a vast cuckoo in their nest. Their story has resonance for every parent who has wondered where they went wrong. For at its heart are fundamental questions about the roles of nature and nurture in why children turn out as they do".

The writer makes use of the word "cuckoo" in its own sense being part of the idiom "a cuckoo in the nest" which refers to a state where a person is a part of a group but this person is different from and not liked by them. It is a good description on behalf of the writer to describe the couple's struggle with their daughter's illness. The word "cuckoo" refers to "mentally unbalanced" (Holder, 2002: 92).

In terms of cognitive processes, it would be absurd and not understood for non natives reading such a phrase. However, it is well understood on behalf of British readers who would categorise the situation this very idiom describes as a dilemma. The word "cuckoo" here is not conceptualised in our minds to mean the bird itself in general but rather to refer to another thing and consequently to another issue as well.

The second example is an extract from The Telegraph written by Martin Johnson titled: "Andy Murray Negotiates Banana Skin to Progress Past Xavier Malisse at Wimbledon" dated June 27, 2008 (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/tennis/atptour/2304210/Andy-Murray-negotiates-banana-skin-to-progress-past-Xavier-Malisse-at-Wimbledon.html>):

"The atmosphere out there was distinctly lunar, and the only real excitement came from Malisse regularly beating himself with his racket. When he applied the same instrument to the ball, as opposed to his body parts, he was nowhere near as accurate. In fact, the only chance he had of causing an upset would have been if someone had described him to Murray beforehand as a potential banana skin".

The article is about the famous Scottish tennis player, Andy Murray, and his match with Belgian Xavier Malisse in Wimbledon. The writer mentions the phrase "banana skin" twice in the article, one in the title of the article itself and the other at the end of it. What is important here for us is its indication in the above excerpt.

"Banana Skin" is an *Idiom* that refers to "a potentially embarrassing or dangerous situation" (Holder, 2002: 20). It is a euphemism used mainly in politics

though the context here is about sports. In terms of conceptualisation, this idiom can be misunderstood as referring to bananas or to Chinese as they have a yellow skin like the colour of bananas. The meaning here is achieved by using such an idiom "*banana skin*" by the writer to express the state of having an unanticipated situation. Then this idiom is far from being categorised to be classified to anything related to the category of food or even biology or racism.

2.3.2 Decrease of the Degree of Negative Evaluation (Lexically)

Euphemisms can be formed in different ways; one of them is by lexically decreasing the degree of negative evaluation in terms of semantics. The following example clearly shows this manner which is taken from an article in The Telegraph and titled: "Mahmoud Ahmadinejad: US and Israel 'Don't Have The Courage' to Attack Iran" (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/6646115/Mahmoud-Ahmadinejad-US-and-Israel-dont-have-the-courage-to-attack-Iran.html>) which is dated November 24, 2009:

"The age of military attacks is over, now we've reached the time for dialogue and understanding. Weapons and threats are a thing of the past," he said. He added, with a smile: "Those you mention [Israel and the US] don't have the courage to attack Iran. They're not even thinking about it".

The article talks about the ongoing tensions between Iran and USA, Israel and other countries over fears of Iran's nuclear programme during a visit by former Iranian president Ahmadinejad to Brazil.

The article contains this clause "*don't have the courage*" which is a euphemism formed by *Litotes* referring to cowardice. In terms of euphemisms the meaning of cowardice has been understated by using a less harsher expression "*don't have the courage*" indicating the same meaning but rather with a milder and more acceptable one. The context here suggests a language of political correctness where direct words and expressions are avoided in fear of raising anger or tension of the other political, or sometimes, warring side.

From a cognitive point of view, this euphemism is conceptualised in the mind to refer to a more polite usage of language. When we encounter such a clause we would establish a mental picture about the people involved in this meaning as having some fear or cowardice in a narrow sense.

The following example demonstrates this mechanism which is from an article written by Tom Mctague titled: "Serious Voodoo Economics": George Osborne Slammed by Tory Colleague for "Mickey Mouse IOUs" to Meet Debt Targets" in The Mirror Online (<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/george-osborne-slammed-by-conservative-colleague-1428206>) dated November 10, 2012:

"George Osborne is resorting to "Mickey Mouse IOUs" to Meet the Government's Debt Targets, One of His MPs Claimed Yesterday".

The writer talks about a certain financial issue in the UK which needs not to be further elaborated as this is not our main aim here.

The writer employs this phrase "*Mickey Mouse*" as a euphemism of crime, which is according to Holder (2002: 254) means "*Fraudulent*" (deceitful). In terms of the process of euphemisation, we notice that this euphemism is formed by *Hyperbole* or *Overstatement* which is regarded as a cognitive mechanism. From a cognitive standpoint, we may categorise this euphemism into the category of cartoon or animation which anyone will probably do.

This seems imprecise since the meaning of this euphemism "*Mickey Mouse*" has been hyperbolised (or overstated) to deviate from the normal meaning conceptualised in the brain when heard by anyone. It is well known that "*Mickey Mouse*" refers to the famous fictional cartoon character that is loved by children (and sometimes adults!). This character represents good qualities such as happiness and optimism which is in a striking contrast to the context here. The fact that "*Mickey Mouse*" here is classified under the category of crime seems illogical. However, it is the context that decides what words are to mean in a narrow sense which creates a space for deviation from the ordinary meaning words are normally supposed to deliver.

Stealing is also an important issue that euphemisms deal with, the following example presents us a euphemism of stealing. This article is written by Brian Flynn (an investigation editor) in The Sun (<https://www.thesun.co.uk/>) titled: "We're Coming to Britain as It's Easier to Steal and Pickpocket" (<https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/news/324483/were-coming-to-britain-as-its-easier-to-steal-and-pickpocket/>) dated November 10, 2013:

"Pickpocket Ioan Mailat, 46, expects to make £4,000 a month. He said: "I would expect to burgle five houses a week and pickpocket ten people a day. I'm not scared of being caught. Jails in Britain are better than my home".

The article discusses the issue of a gang of Romanian thieves and burglars who intend to move to Britain in order to improve their bad living conditions in Romania.

The writer uses the word "*Pickpocket*" three times in the article, one in the title of the article itself and the other two are in the above example. "*Pickpocket*" is a euphemism of stealing which means "*to steal*" (Holder, 2002: 298).

"*Pickpocket*" is a compound word of the verb (pick) and the noun (pocket). It is worth mentioning that the first one in the example aforementioned is a noun while the second one functions as a verb.

From a euphemistic perspective, this euphemism is formed by lexically decreasing the degree of the negative evaluation through the usage of *Synonymy* as a cognitive mechanism. The word "*steal*" is substituted by a less harsher alternative "*pickpocket*".

In terms of cognitive linguistics, this euphemism is conceptualised in the mind to refer to more acceptable notion than the act of stealing in a general sense. People would not act the same way every time they hear the word "*steal*" and then the word "*pickpocket*". This possibly happens because our mind draws such a mental image that the act of pickpocketing is less harsher than the act of stealing generally speaking. Stealing can refer to taking possession of others' things whether these things are objects (materialistic) or abstract (such as ideas, thoughts, ...etc.).

However, "*Pickpocket*" can only refer to the stealing of money (materialistic objects). Therefore, this feature differentiates this euphemism "*Pickpocket*" from its original dysphemism "*steal*".

The sphere of religion & superstition has also gained much interest in the domain of euphemisms. The following excerpt is taken from the article: "Israel Unveils Its New Weapon in Battle against Iran ... a Business Jet Converted into a Spy Plane", written by the Daily Mail Reporter: (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1034111/Israel-unveils-new-weapon-battle-Iran---business-jet-converted-spy-plane.html>) dated 10 July 2008 in the Daily Mail Online: (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/index.html>). The article is about the ongoing military show of power between Israel and Iran as each one of them wants to submit their power over the other and to get ready for any coming war.

The writer makes use of the phrase "*Black Spy*" in the following excerpt: "*But it doesn't come wrapped in a sleek looking all-black spy plane - the kit has been installed aboard a U.S.-made Gulfstream G550 business jet*".

According to Holder (2002: 31), "*black spy*" is a euphemism that refers to "*the devil*" or "*The Prince of Darkness*". Although the context here is a political one, "*black spy*" has been used here to describe the lethal force of a plane designed by Israel to face any eminent threat from Iran. However, what the context suggests here is that this plane is being likened to the devil who has deadly powers that can terminate any living thing. We have here a dysphemism "*the devil*" which has been euphemised to "*black spy*" by *Perspectivisation* as a cognitive mechanism of euphemisation. From a cognitive point of view, this phrase might be conceptualised in the mind to indicate a person who is very good in the art of espionage. Nevertheless, we can see that this phrase refers to a lethal weapon not a person which changes our view of it and consequently the way we categorise it.

2.3.3 Decrease of the Degree of Negative Evaluation (Syntactically)

The following excerpt is taken from an article written by Ian Gallagher, Barbara Jones, Jessica Jerreat and others in the Daily Mail Online under the title: "'Madiba, We Are Now Burying You': Nelson Mandela is Laid to Rest in His

Childhood Home After Four Hour Service and Full Tribal Burial Rites Including
Guests Drinking Blood of Slaughtered Ox":
(<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2523695/Military-honor-guard-escorts-Nelson-Mandelas-casket-final-resting-place-funeral-takes-place-anti-apartheid-leader.html>), dated December 14, 2013:

"The military here relinquished control of proceedings and the elders took over. Inside Mandela's peach-coloured farmhouse, a centuries-old ceremony was performed. The most senior elder 'spoke to the body' and, to ensure the spirit of the anti-apartheid hero would enter the next world untroubled, apologised for any past disagreements".

This article talks about the death and great funeral of former South African president and the symbol of anti-apartheid Nelson Mandela who died then at the age of 95 after a long battle with illness.

The article contains the phrase "*enter the next world*" which is, according to Holder (2002: 127), is a euphemism of death that means "*to die*". In terms of the process of euphemisation, this euphemism is a *Periphrasis*, "known also as *Circumlocution*, the use of many or very long words where a few or simple words will do" (Cuddon, 2013: 528).

Periphrasis is a cognitive mechanism which involves replacing the meaning of one word or expression by more words. In the example above, we see that the meaning of the word "*to die*" has been syntactically decreased of its degree of negative and evaluative meaning by being substituted by more words "*enter the next world*" in order to sound more polite.

From a cognitive point of view, "*enter the next world*" as a phrase can simply be classified under any other category other than death as in the context we have now. Moreover, when we come to talk about conceptualisation, this euphemism is wrongfully conceptualised to indicate a physical entrance to any world in this case. The meaning of "*next world*" can refer to, let us assume, the 21st century or any human colonisations on other planets in the near future.

As we pointed out in this investigation, euphemisms are very much correlated with verbal hygiene and the theory of politeness as illustrated in the aforementioned instance.

Results

Charts 1 & 2 below illustrate the results emerging from this study:

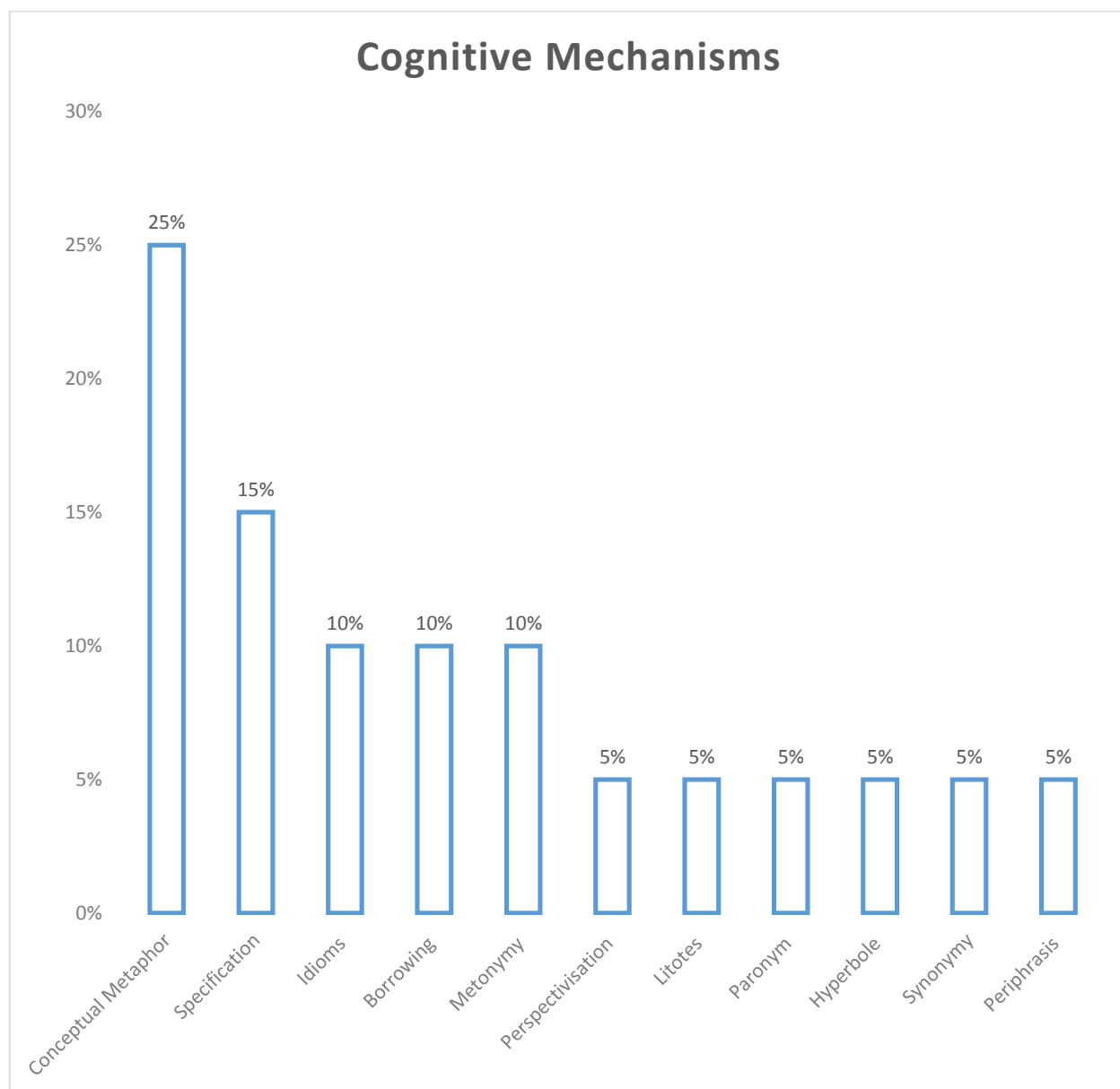


Chart No. 1. Cognitive Mechanisms

After analysing 20 articles, results show that *Conceptual Metaphor* has the biggest rate of occurrence compared to other cognitive mechanisms with 25% (5 articles in total). *Specification* comes second with 15% (3 articles in total), *Idioms*, *Borrowing* and *Metonymy* each have 10% rate of occurrence (2 articles for each in total). Finally, we have *Perspectivisation*, *Litotes*, *Paronym*, *Hyperbole*, *Synonymy* and *Periphrasis* with each of which have 5% rate of occurrence (1 article for each one of them in total).

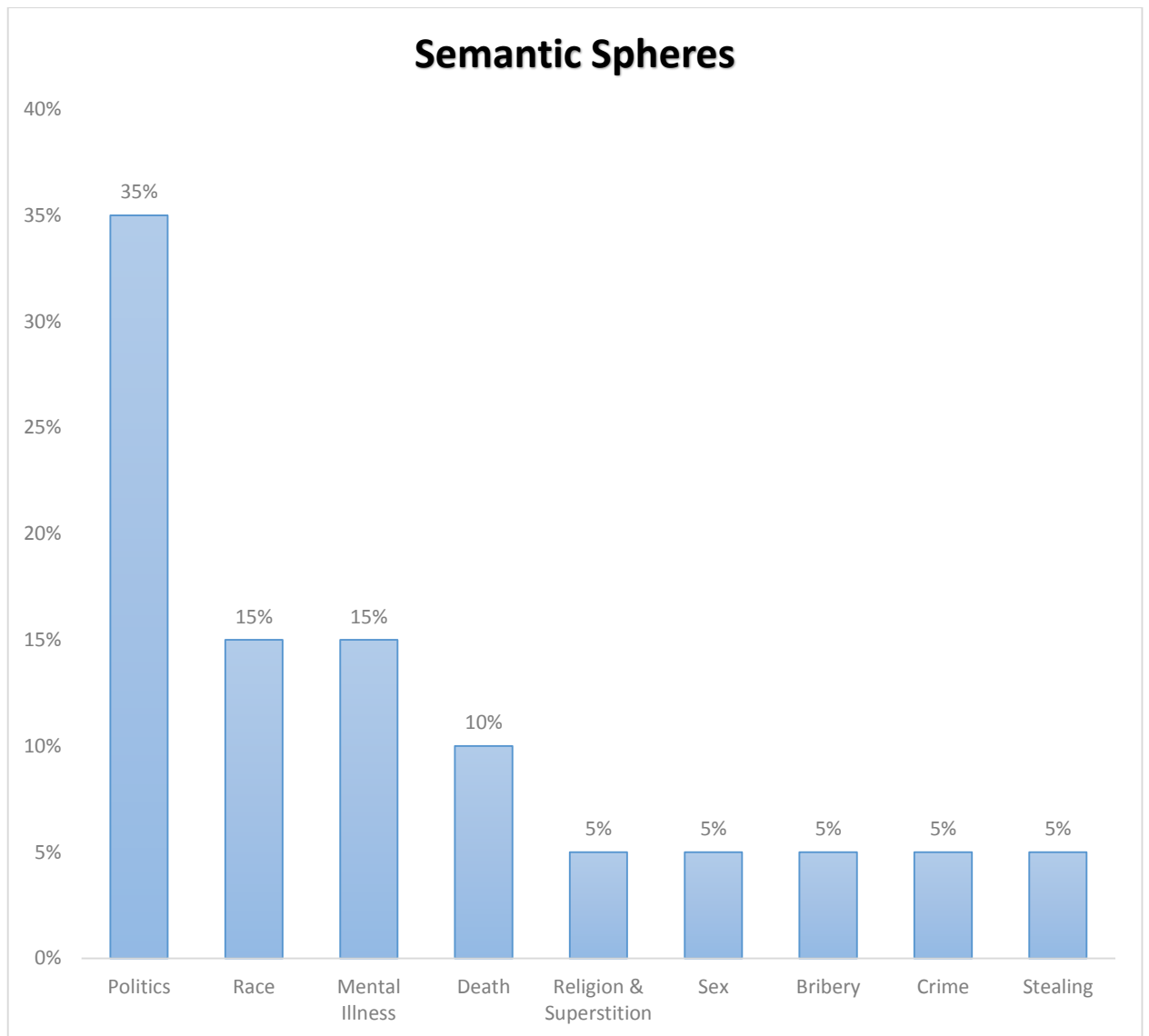


Chart No. 2. Semantic Spheres

Chart No. 2 shows that *Politics* is more frequent than the other semantic spheres with 35% (7 articles out of 20 in general). *Race* and *Mental Illness* each have 15% rate of occurrence (3 articles for each one of them). *Death* comes next with 10% rate of occurrence (2 articles in total). The other semantic spheres (*Religion & Superstition*, *Sex*, *Bribery*, *Crime* and *Stealing*) are the least frequent with 5% rate of occurrence for each (1 article out of 20 articles in total for each one of them).

Conclusions

Based on the results we have already come up with, we have arrived at the following conclusions. In terms of the cognitive mechanisms, *Conceptual Metaphor* – as a cognitive technique – seems to be more predominant than the other cognitive mechanisms. One easy and accepted explanation for this is that people receive metaphors more frequently, and perhaps more differently, than the other cognitive tools.

This can be explained in the sense that *Conceptual Metaphor* has a greater linguistic impact than any other linguistic phenomenon. We tend to perceive it in a way far different as it is conceptualised rather variously and with many semantic connotations (e.g. *Time is Money*).

Concerning *Specification*, it is clear that our minds are programmed to particularise ideas or notions from their general sense into more specific ones. This is likely to happen because it is easier for things to be perceived, categorised and conceptualised in a narrow sense than generalising them.

Regarding the semantic spheres, it is evident that *Politics* occupies such a huge part in our daily life. We have become familiarised with reading political news at the front pages of any famous newspaper. At the moment, politics plays such a key role in shaping the way we look at our world. Therefore, it is neither strange nor surprising that politicians have been paying a great deal of attention to the way they address the public in order to manipulate them.

These results enable us to understand how texts - whether they are articles, political speeches or statements - are written and prepared. So, since we know how euphemisms are created, we can build our own image about the political, cultural and social background of the writer themselves in order to better understand their intentions and motives.

During our investigation, we managed to discover two new cognitive mechanisms (*Idioms & Hyperbole/Overstatement*). We stated that our investigation is based on Boldyrev & Aleksikova's (2010: 5-11) own classification of

euphemisation. This does not make our study similar to theirs because the material here is different as our analysis is more specific than theirs.

Based on that, this study can be further extended to cover, for instance, euphemisms in the American Mass Media as they are more popular than their British counterparts. American newspapers possess such an international reputation which puts them as world number 1 most read newspapers. Therefore, investigating how their euphemisation is achieved from a cognitive perspective is useful to understand how and why they are written in a specific manner. It is likely that we may discover other cognitive techniques other than the ones we have so far if we widen our scope of study to cover other countries with different cultural and social backgrounds.

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Appendix

Euphemism	Meaning	Semantic Sphere	Cognitive Mechanism
Banana Skin	A potentially embarrassing or dangerous situation.	Politics	Idiom
Bamboo Curtain	A strict system of censorship upon foreigners in China.	Politics	Conceptual Metaphor
Do not have the courage	Coward.	Politics	Litotes/ Understatement
Cultural Revolution	Mao's Cultural Revolution in China.	Politics	Specification
Ultimate Intentions	The killing of all Jews.	Politics	Specification
Spin Doctor	Aides who carry out the activity of editing, suppressing or correcting of a public speech.	Politics	Conceptual Metaphor
Cross The Floor	To change political allegiance.	Politics	Conceptual Metaphor
Apartheid	The suppression of black people by white.	Race	Borrowing

Racism	Intolerance towards or ill-treatment of those of a different race or nationality.	Race	Paronym
Salt And Pepper	A black male and a white female engaged in a sexual intercourse.	Race	Specification
Cuckoo	Mentally Unbalanced.	Mental Illness	Idiom
The Devil's Mark	Congenital Idiocy.	Mental Illness	Conceptual Metaphor
God's Child	An idiot.	Mental Illness	Conceptual Metaphor
Davy Jones's Locker	A grave at sea.	Death	Metonymy
Enter The Next World	To die.	Death	Periphrasis
Black Spy	The Devil/The Prince of Darkness.	Religion & Superstition	Perspectivisation
Paedophile	A person who sexually abuses children.	Sex	Borrowing
Under The Table	Illegal or surreptitious.	Bribery	Metonymy
Mickey Mouse	Fraudulent (deceitful).	Crime	Hyperbole/Overstatement
Pickpocket	To steal.	Stealing	Synonymy