



## استخدامات التعبيرات الملطفة في القنوات العالمية

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### ملخص البحث:

تتناول الدراسة الحالية ظاهرة لغوية شائعة تسمى التلطيف حيث تلعب دورًا حيويًا في عملية التواصل خصوصًا في مجال الإعلام. لذلك تسلط الدراسة الضوء على استخدام التعبيرات الملطفة في قناتين إخباريتين عالميتين (فوكس نيوز و بي بي سي). تتضمن البيانات التي تم جمعها مواضيع مختلفة مثل (السياسية و الموت و الجنس و والاقتصاد و والفقر و ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة و عسكرية) وتم تحليل جميع البيانات باستخدام برنامج (الاكسل) لمعرفة أي واحد لديه تكرار أكثر من غيرها. تظهر النتيجة أن بعض التعبيرات الملطفة تستخدم أكثر من غيرها. بالإضافة إلى ذلك يعتمد كثرة استخدام التلطيف اللغوي على مدى تأثيرها على الجمهور.



## The Uses of Euphemistic Expressions in International Channels

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### Abstract

The present study deals with a common linguistic phenomenon called euphemism. It plays a vital role in the process of communication specially in the field of media. Therefore, the study shades light on the frequency of using euphemistic expressions in two global news channels (Fox News & BBC). The collected data includes different topics such as (political, death, sex, economy, poverty, disability and military) and all data were analyzed by using the program (Excel) in order to know which one has more frequency than the rest. The result shows that some of euphemistic expressions are used more than others. Additionally, the percentage depends on how much they effect on the audience.

Keywords: Euphemisms, Political, Linguistics, Media, Fox News, BBC.



## Introduction

Webster (1986:428) clarifies the root of term euphemism "dates back to the ancient Greek civilization, the first part (eu) symbols for bright side, but the second part (pheme) symbols for the speech."

Euphemisms are one of the linguistic aspects of speech that are used in daily life, rather than words that may scratch the recipient's ears. This type of speech is considered material to keep the audience's ears from the harsh words or expressions. It is like using a metaphor to express a situation. There are many reasons for employing this phenomenon in speech, including shyness, etiquette, respect, customs and traditions. Therefore, the phenomenon of euphemism is considered the ideal way to maintain socially unacceptable speech.

William & Shipley (1975:14) point out that "rhetoric is a kind of upgrading the society's culture and language of dialogue instead of using explicit words that might offend or scratch the recipient's ears".

This linguistic phenomenon is important during speech because some concepts that may be socially unsatisfactory, such as death, old age, sex, error and warning. Rawson (1981: 3-5) says that "euphemistic expressions are the process of use a more gentle expression on the ears of the recipient that does not cause any harm". The idea can be conveyed by avoiding certain words in the context of speech that may be somewhat harsh and this is known as kindness of speech. However, the social reasons are very clear in observing the euphemistic expressions in such a situation, but the social situation varies from nation to nation, from environment to environment, and from generation to generation, so perhaps what calls for euphemism in one nation is not called for by another. This linguistic phenomenon plays an essential role in feeding the speech in some vocabularies and expressions, where the meaning is conveyed in the best way. This phenomenon is considered successful and polite style in the field of media and politics to avoid many things that may cause a lack of understanding or may lead to international crises.

In cognitive linguistics, human beings can name things around them without the need of a mental image. Mihas (2005) clarifies the euphemistic expressions, from cognitive view, names the things without needing for mental images. Doublespeak aims to shape the recipient's imagination



which at the same time does not shape complete image in the brain. Thus, the lack of a complete idea leads to the concealment or deception of some facts.

The meaning may be harmful and due to some linguistic differences in the concept of some words for the recipient. Using the language in a sudden and direct way without taking into account the feelings of the recipient is one of the wrong and impolite style. Subsequently, this linguistic concept is an idiomatic expression, which loses its literal meanings and refers to something else in order to hide its unpleasantness. For instance, “kick the bucket” is a euphemism that describes the death of a person.

### 1. The aim of study

The study aims to show the percentage of euphemistic expressions that used in the international media, as well as shedding light on this linguistic phenomenon according to the concept and usage. It also explains the reasons behind the use of this linguistic style.

### 2. Literature review

There are many studies which have consideration to this study; therefore, the literature review will show these studies in detail.

First, Zhi-Hong in (2014) presents a study under the title “A Semantic Study of Modified Expression in British Television.” In his study, Hong focuses on the uses of lexicon that are employed linguistically by the euphemistic aspect. He analyzes the euphemistic expressions in the Downton Abbey series. The study depends on the features of euphemisms in English; additionally, it shows the uses and understandings of euphemistic expressions. Based on Ban's research, the researcher classifies four features such as glorification, implication, historical individuality and cheating.

Second, Mihaela Mocanu in (2017) writes a paper on euphemisms that is entitled “Taboos and Kindness in Religious Language”. In his paper, he deals with a religious taboos. The study recognizes the practical consistency shown by the religious communication through the concept of euphemism. This study focuses on the taboo vocabularies that cannot be used in texts or pronounced in some societies. Pragmatic features overlap with euphemistic expressions for the purpose of concealment of socially unpopular speech. The main reason of using the euphemistic expressions in the religious society is to hide unacceptable taboos in religion.



Third, Ahmad et al. (2013) present a paper deals with taboo in Pashtuns citizens Afghan. The researchers use the politeness theory to achieve the purpose of the study. However, their work focuses on the uses of taboo words consideration to culture of Pashtuns. In fact, they did not deal mainly with euphemisms, but there are a reference to the concept of euphemisms in general within the study. Finally, it concludes different strategies to communicate with each other through the concept of culture: meanwhile, culture has the main role in determining the style or vocabulary within speech in acceptance or rejection.

### 3. Definition of euphemisms

The term euphemistic expressions is one of the linguistic phenomena that is used in a direct or indirect way in everyday language. It can be defined as a figure of speech that means the words do not used literal meaning. However, it is linguistic term used for specific purposes in order to create sound words that fit with attitude to avoid using taboo words and phrases that are considered unpopular and may embarrass the recipient. Therefore, this term can be find in critical topics (Zhu: 1998).

In fact, there are many reasons that prevent people from expressing their ideas directly through the use of specific phrases. Hence, political, religious, cultural and societal norms are considered the main obstacles. So people use alternative phrases or use the concept of allusion in their speech (Wang: 1983). It is employed during speech in order to bring the satisfaction and acceptance inside the people through the use of phrases that refer to the same meaning, but in a different way. This linguistic technique needs someone has ability to play with words and expressions, the speaker uses this technique to form taboo words in less harmful form. For instance using the "Intellectually challenged" instead of "Stupid" and the used "correctional facility" instead of "jail". This method in speech will create suitable language. Simile, metaphor, metonymy and others are considered one of rhetorical devices for euphemism (Zhu: 1998)

In the field of semantics, euphemistic expressions can be defined as a connotation tool used to give smart speech instead of bad one (Leech, 1981: 53). It is worth noting that all the words and expressions that have been changed in line with the principle of euphemism during the speech are existed in the dictionary of the language, but they are replaced in order to save face. According to lexicology, the dictionaries consist of all the vocabularies of the language.



Therefore, this linguistic phenomenon depends on the speaker's awareness and manner of speaking to avoid embarrassing situations. It is described as the culture of dialogue that used for the purpose of reaching specific intended ends.

This strategy is the bright face of the phenomenon of linguistic taboos, as some modern linguists believe that replacing pleasant words with linguistic prohibitions is considered a form of kindness, good expression, or improved pronunciation. The euphemistic expressions is a sociolinguistic concept which significance arose to impose respect in speech with those whom society once viewed with a view of diminution, as well as to avoid expressions known as rudeness, as it reflects the sensitivity of the speaker. The matter may exceed its acceptable limit until it reaches a level of flattery and indecent fawn. It is also related to another sociolinguistic concept, studied by linguists and psychologists under the heading "the linguistic taboo", which means prohibiting the uttering of specific words in certain circumstances and times, and from its fields related to political trends, religious beliefs, as well as sexual expressions, and everything close to them. This is a good metonymy and it is permissible to express it. Linguistically, strategies are the determinants of the context that is an effective elements in the success of the communication process and the achievement of the goal or not. This strategy represents "the appropriate way that followed by the sender to utter his speech in order to express his/her intentions that lead to the achievement of goals through the use of linguistic and non-linguistic signs, according to the requirements of the context. Phenomenon is the term fraud, and they consider it a weapon of the speaker in confronting the addressee in order to reach his policy (Fromkin, 1983: 267).

In general, the source of the influence on the listener is the trick that exists in speech and the concept of trickery is devoid of every negative connotation. The euphemistic expressions are a means of collecting the speaker on the desirable. From the foregoing, it is concluded that the sender is the first active element in choosing the appropriate strategy to express his intentions and influence the addressee. So, the act of apology, for example, is achieved through many contexts, some of which may be influential and the other ineffective, as the amount of influence depends on the expressions of kindness and politeness that the speaker advertises in his speech (Allen and Corder, 1978: 173).



Keyes ( 2010: 12) Indicates that "A euphemistic expressions are often useful to avoid words with strong connotations" that many people find offensive or upsetting - like "passed" for "died", or "bathroom" for "shithouse". A politically correct term is a respectful way of referring to people whom an asshole would consider inferior - like "cerebral palsy" instead of "spastic"; "gay" instead of "queer"; "Jew" instead of "sheeny"

## 5. The Analysis

This section deals with the analysis of the data which is qualitative-quantitative in nature. It starts with description of the data and the procedure of analysis then the analysis itself and the discussion.

### 5.1 Data Collection

To achieve the goal of the study, the researcher collected the necessary data from the news bulletins for international channels, such as Fox News and BBC. The data issued on 1st April 2020 to 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2020. The collected data includes 170 news bulletins divided as the following:

No	Topics	Number of news bulletins
1	Military	30
2	Economy	20
3	Sex	25
4	Poverty	15
5	Death	20
6	Political	28
7	Disability	32
Totally		170

### 5.2 Procedures

In order to collect the data, the researcher uses a new application on the iPhone called (Voice Memos), it is a good application for fast recording with higher-quality. The recorded time period for each news bulletin is 10-15 minute. Data collection period continues from 1st April to 15th June, 2020. All data was collected randomly and for different periods and topics. To analyze the



collected data from news bulletins, the researcher listened to each bulletin several times in order to extract the most frequent euphemisms. The required data was sorted and classified as euphemistic expressions based on the modern sources and dictionaries. Hence, the extracted data is analyzed statistically by (Excel) to find out the percentage of uses of each euphemistic expressions in the news bulletins.

### 5.3 Analysis and Discussion

This section of the study discusses the analysis and results. This study aims to show the percentage of using euphemistic expressions for two international news channel; in addition to that, knowing the most euphemistic expressions used during the news bulletins and the reasons that lead to its high percentage. All data was analyzed by using the program (Excel) in order to know which one has more frequency than the rest.

**Military euphemisms:** The most frequently used euphemisms in military cases are (interrogation techniques, asymmetrical warfare, demilitarized zone and coalition of the willing). In military situations, the euphemism "interrogation techniques" ranked first as the most used, with a percentage of (55%); while, the euphemism of "asymmetrical warfare" ranked second in news bulletins which is (48%). Such high percentage confirms that euphemistic expressions are used in media to avoid words and phrases that are considered rejected in the military context, so they are replaced by phrases used to calm the situation and create a safe atmosphere away from the tension that leads to military conflict. The percentage of frequency use for each one is shown in figure 1.



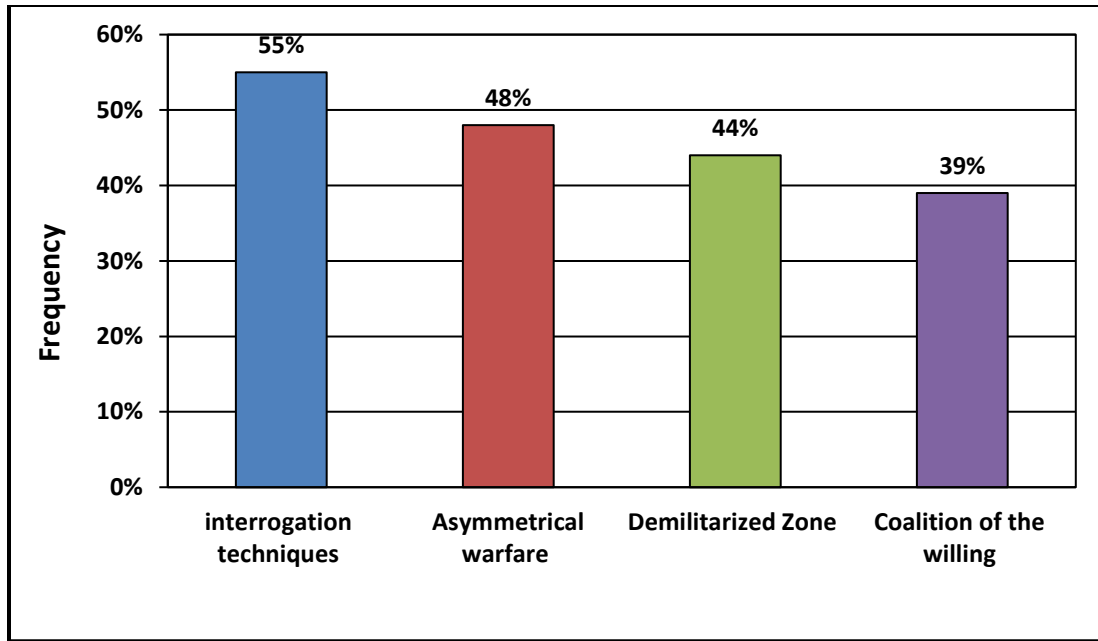


Figure1: Military euphemisms

Euphemism in economy: The euphemistic expressions related to the economy were present in the news bulletins. Twenty news bulletins were recorded, and after analyzing the data, the most used euphemisms appeared are (negative cash, downsized, between jobs and over-employed). The two euphemisms ranked first. The (negative cash) is frequently used (56%), and (downsized) is (53%). This phenomenon is used for the purpose of misleading public's opinion and for commercial cases. The percentage of frequency use for each one is shown in figure 2.

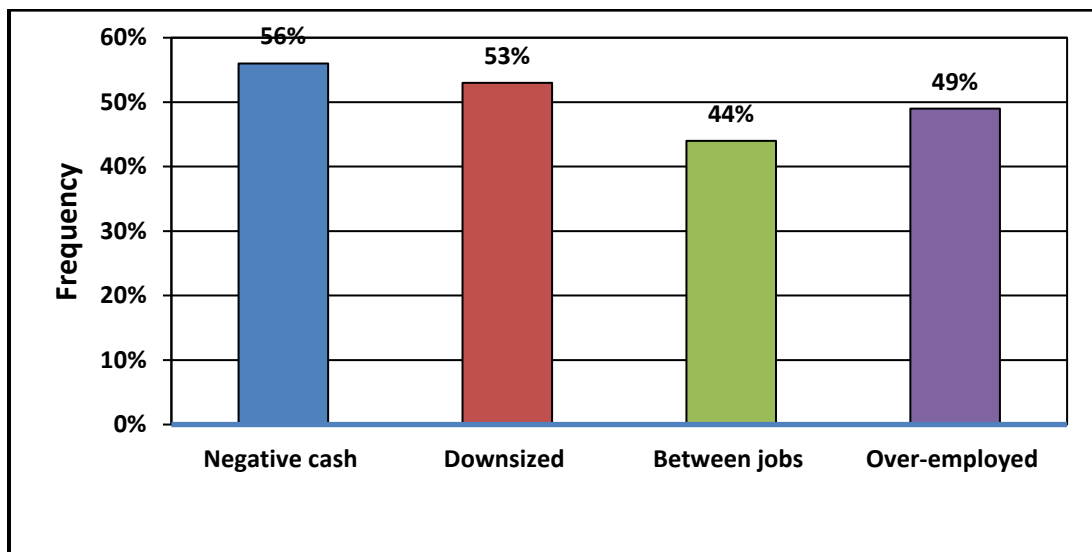


Figure 2: Euphemism in economy

Sex euphemisms: media employs the phenomenon of softening phrases in socially sensitive topics, including sex, so they tend to generalize in the use of phrases. The percentage in the figure 3 shows the euphemism of (seductress) which is considered the highest in the category of sex, it is (49%). The other one is (prostitute) which has reached (47%). The percentage of frequency use for each one is shown in figure 3.

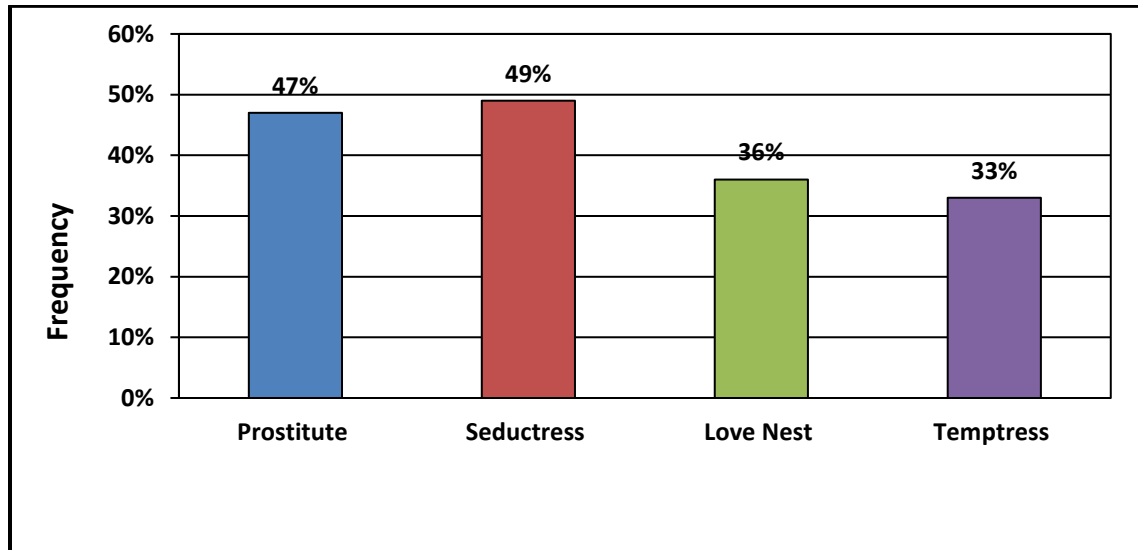


Figure 3: Sex euphemisms

Poverty euphemisms: The euphemistic expressions are used too much in the news bulletins. The euphemism that is related to poverty in the figure 4 shows the frequency of the word "developing countries" that reached to (77%) because of the standard of living in most countries and the economic weakness. In fact, The media inserts euphemistic expression to polish the miserable reality of some countries, so it was used a lot in this field. Hence, the euphemistic expression of "low income" has much frequency that reaches to (68%). The percentage of frequency use for each one is shown in figure 4.

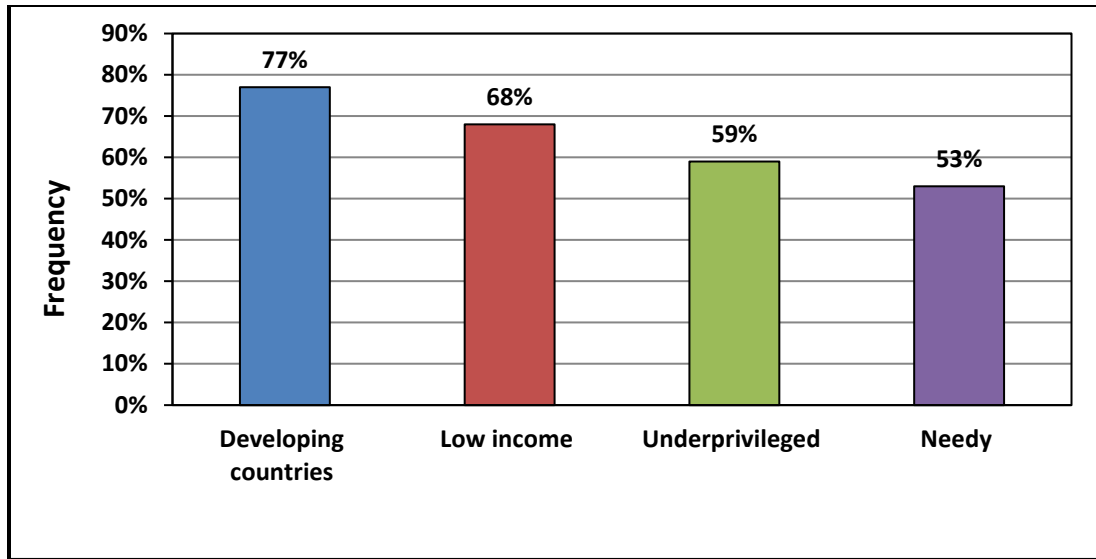


Figure 4: Poverty euphemisms

Death euphemisms: The euphemistic expression function in the matter that is related to the concept of death. In the news bulletins the euphemisms for death are widely used for societal and psychological considerations; according to the figure 4 the "passed over" has percentage (61%) and the "beyond the grave" is (55%). The percentage of frequency use for each one is shown in the figure 5.

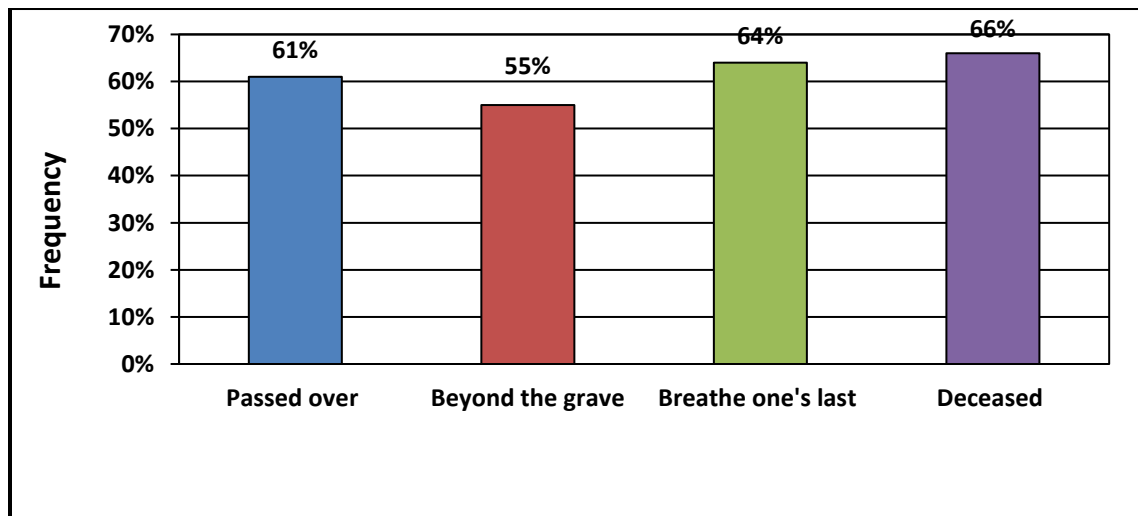


Figure 5: Death euphemisms

Political euphemisms: Euphemisms that are related to politics have a very important role in the political speech; therefore, they are used a lot in the political news bulletins. The euphemism of



"intelligence gathering" has frequency of (69%) whereas the euphemism of "undocumented immigrants" has (60%). These two euphemisms are used in the news bulletins for maintaining the political situation and sometimes to save face or reduce tension.

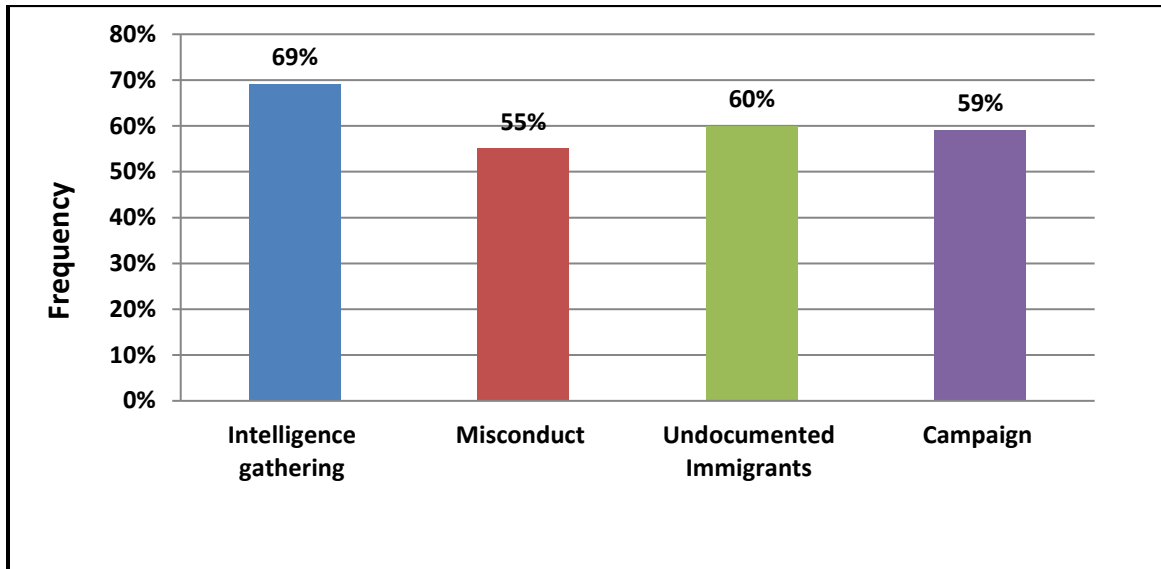


Figure 6: Political euphemisms

Disability euphemisms: the euphemistic expression that are related to the disability appear in the data of the study, the euphemism of "special needs" has a high rate (67%) than others that are used in the news bulletin; while the euphemism of "physically challenged person" has taken the second rank with the rate (62%). The euphemisms of disability are used in media taking into account human and psychological aspects.

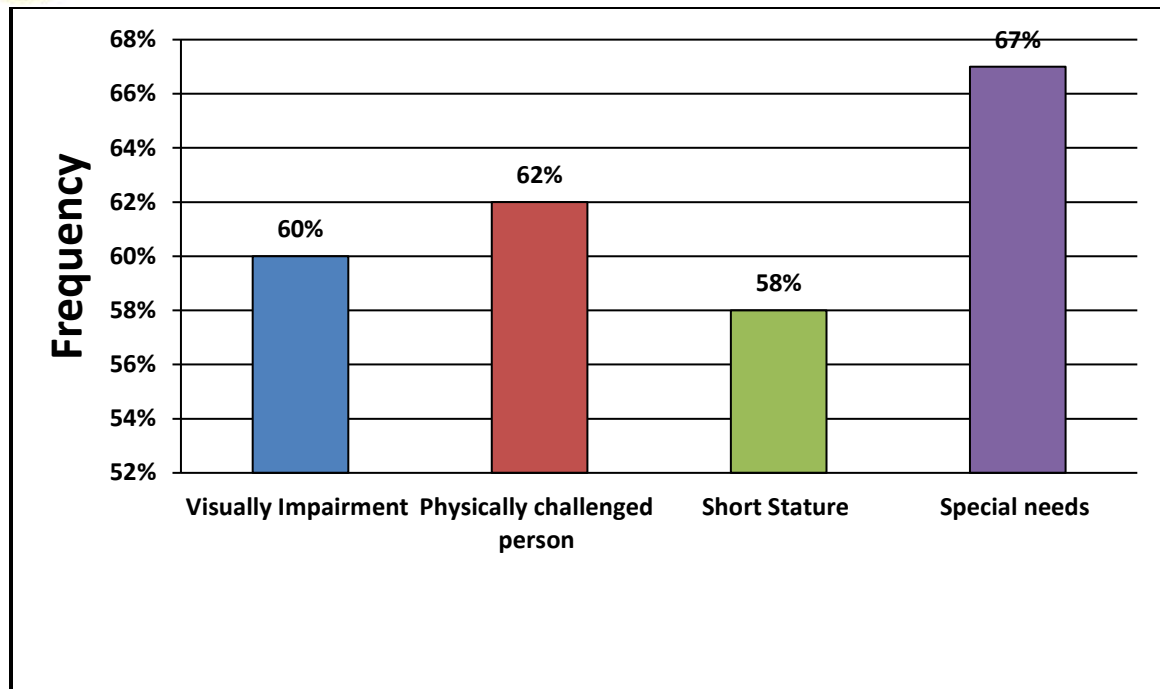


Figure 7: Disability euphemisms

To sum up, figure 8 shows the percentages of all types of euphemistic expression that are used in this study, The uses of euphemistic expressions in the news bulletins display in the figure below.

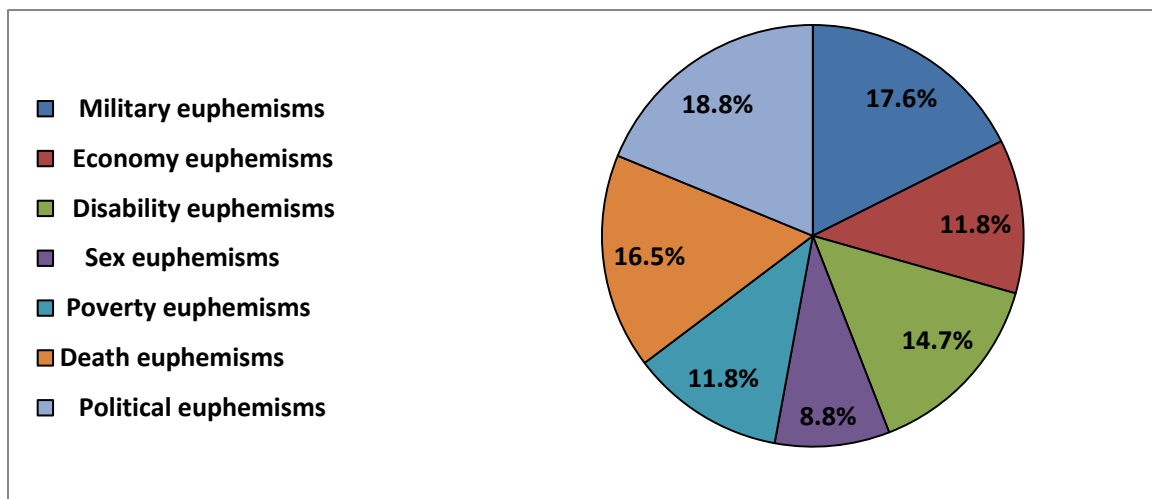


Figure 8: The overall percentage



## Conclusion

This study which is a qualitative-quantitative aims to show the frequency of using euphemisms in two news channels (Fox News & BBC). The statistical results showed that there is a high rate of euphemisms in news bulletins. Therefore, media depends on this linguistic phenomenon to achieve certain messages that may be (political, economic, social, etc.). After analyzing the data, the researcher finds out that some euphemistic words and phrases are used more than others. The percentage of euphemisms used depends on how much they affect the audience. The conclusion of this study shows that this linguistic technique is used to convey a message with a concept that matches the speaker's desire or deception of facts.

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