

SQUEALER'S USE OF EUPHEMISM AND DOUBLESPEAK IN GEORGE ORWELL'S *ANIMAL FARM*

Chinyere Alozie-Onumadu

Girls' Secondary School Ikenegbu, Owerri, Nigeria.

Email: chinyere.alozieonumadu@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper reviewed the various communicative functions of euphemism and the implication of doublespeak. Politeness theory developed by Brown and Levison in 1978, Goffman's theory of face and Steven McCornack's Information Manipulation Theory founded in 1992 were adopted in analyzing Squealer's utterances in Orwell's *Animal Farm*. In describing the communicative functions of euphemism and implication of doublespeak, the descriptive research design and the qualitative method were used to analyze nine utterances from Squealer. From the analysis, the researcher found out that although euphemism and doublespeak are inter-related, the phenomena differ. The study also revealed that doublespeak can be notorious in conversation.

Keywords: Euphemism, Doublespeak, Information Manipulation Theory

Introduction

Euphemism and Doublespeak are closely related. A phrase in doublespeak as well as in euphemism is a roundabout way of saying something. Euphemism has a great effect on people's daily communication. It can make a harsh topic softer and an embarrassing conversation agreeable while adhering to social communicative conventions. In other words, it saves the faces of both sides and enable people to communicate successfully. On the other hand, doublespeak is an expression that deliberately reverses the meaning of words. It may take the form of euphemisms (e.g 'downsizing' for 'layoff'), it primarily meant to make 'the truth' sound palatable. The phenomena also play the part of showing politeness, concealing feelings and deceit (www.cliffnotes.com).

Broadly speaking, 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 whereas doublespeak is almost always intended to confuse and deceive people. It is the complete opposite of plain and simple truth; It distorts words and phrases in order to bury a truth (Allan and Burrige, 35).

Weaver II and Hybels (96) define euphemism as an inoffensive word or phrase that is substituted for other words that might be perceived as

unpleasant. They claim that sometimes government agencies or other institutions create euphemisms to cover up the truth. When euphemism is created by an institution, they are often referred to as doublespeak. Doublespeak is seen in the character of Squealer in *Animal Farm* (AF) by George Orwell. Squealer is highly skilled delivering making speeches to the other animals. He is described in the book as a brilliant talker and persuasive who confuses the other animals by twisting the truth. This can be seen when he teaches the sheep to bleat “Four legs good, two legs better!” (AF, 92)

All who use language should be concerned whether statements and facts agree and whether language is, in Orwell’s words, ‘largely the defense of the indefensible’. Although doublespeak is a form of euphemism, they differ. In order to differentiate the two phenomena, in order to cover the research gap, this study will therefore throw more light and emphasis on the difference(s) between doublespeak and euphemism by answering these research questions:

- a) To what degree is the use of doublespeak/euphemism notorious in conversation?
- b) To what extent are doublespeak words used to denote the opposite of their actual meaning?
- c) To what extent is the use of euphemism in expressing oneself?

Conceptual Clarification

The Concept of Euphemism

One communication strategy used by speakers is called ‘euphemism’. Euphemism is derived from the Greek phrase ‘euphemismos’ meaning ‘to sound good’. Various scholars define euphemism in different ways: According to Hudson (261), euphemism is the extension of ordinary words and phrases to express unpleasant and embarrassing ideas. Rawson (1) on the other hand sees euphemism as ‘a powerful linguistic tools that are embedded so deeply in our language that few of us, even those who pride themselves on being plainspoken, never get through a day without using them. Mashak et al (202) say euphemism is an international concept but it is conveyed according to the conventional norms of certain societies. Leech (45) on the other hand, defines euphemism as ‘the practice of referring to something offensive or delicate in terms that make it sound more pleasant. Sanderson (259) also states that euphemism ‘can be used as a way of being vague and unclear or to cover up the truth or reality of a situation.’ Lutz (348) claims that euphemism can also be a tactful word or phrase which avoids directly mentioning a painful reality.

Euphemisms are often used in everyday speech to soften difficult situations. Here are a few examples of euphemism:

- a) Dan, we have to let you go.

To 'let someone go' is to sack/fire someone. This is euphemism that sounds much better and nicer than the harsh truth of the situation.

b) She is a curvy woman.

'Curvy' is often used as a euphemism for 'overweight'

According to Wang (152), there are two kinds of euphemism: Traditional euphemism and stylistic euphemism. Traditional euphemism refers to those related with taboo language such as birth, illness, death, sex and so on. If it is expressed directly, people may have the feeling of vulgarness, crudeness, harshness and rudeness and that is taboo language. On the contrary, if it is expressed indirectly, people may have the feeling of elegance and politeness and that is euphemism. Stylistic euphemism has nothing to do with taboo and it is actually flattery and praising. Rawson (3) on the other hand, divided euphemisms into two general types: Positive and negative. The positive euphemisms inflate and magnify, making the euphemized items more important than they really are. The negative euphemisms deflate and diminish. It is defensive in nature. The negative euphemisms replace language that people prefer to avoid using. Examples include 'harvesting' in place of 'killing'.

The Effect and Function of Euphemism

A good knowledge of euphemism can make us keep a good relationship and promote effective communication among our humans. Euphemism as one of the most useful forms of devices exists in all kinds of languages and plays very important and practical roles in various aspects of our lives. It is a universal phenomenon used in language by human beings. Keyes (8) says in his book *Euphemania: Our Love Affair with Euphemism. Little Affairs* that euphemism has important social functions. It can maintain the use and efficiency of the words of taboo. As a part of politeness principles, euphemism has found its wide application in various kinds of works including George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

There are many euphemisms in *Animal Farm*. The most emotional one is when Boxer grows ill after working so diligently without questioning anything. When he literally works himself to sickness, the pigs did not take care of him but sent him away to be slaughtered. Three days later it was announced that he had died in the hospital at Willingdon, in spite of receiving every attention a horse could have. Squealer came to announce the news to the others. He had, he said, been present during Boxer's last hours. 'It was the most affecting sight I have ever seen!' said Squealer, lifting his trotter and wiping away a tear. I was at his bedside at the very last. And at the end, almost too weak to speak, he whispered in my ear that his sole sorrow was to have passed on before the windmill was finished. 'Forward, Comrades! He whispered. 'Forward in the name of the Rebellion, Long live Animal Farm I

Long Live Comrade Napoleon! Napoleon is always right' those were his very last words, Comrades'. After this, Squealer tried to explain away. 'Yes, Boxer died but he died well in a hospital (AF, 85). However, Boxer's last words were euphemistic because they were to press on with the rebellion.

Euphemism plays two important functions:

- a) Politeness function: This function respects others, keep them from being hurt, avoid presumption and indecent assault in communication and make them accept some bad things pleasantly. Euphemisms are used in general, to show one's politeness and respect.
- b) Functions of building and maintaining a good relationship: euphemism is a big part of politeness principle and is used extensively in commercial correspondence. Vague language, affective words, gentle verbs and interrogative and conditional sentences are all manifestation of euphemism. Euphemism functions effectively in saving face.

The Concept of Doublespeak

Doublespeak is the abuse of public language to influence people's opinion based on partial or incorrect information. According to Gibson and Lutz, the term 'doublespeak' was coined in 1972 and comes from the fusion of two terms that Orwell used in his novel *Nineteen-Eight-four* newspeak and doublethink. The vocabulary of Newspeak is reduced to ambiguous terms which make the citizens of Oceania indifferent to the government's policies, powerless against inappropriate activities and unable to think critically. On the other hand, doublethink means a type of thinking that can hold 'simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them' (Orwell, 22).

Lutz (347) says "doublespeak is a very conscious use of language as a weapon or tool by those in power to achieve their ends at our expense". Chopra (1) agrees with Lutz by saying doublespeak refers to the use of language that purposefully disguises the meaning of words in order to make it more bearable to the recipient. He went further to say that the majority of the users of doublespeak are the political entities. This can be seen in the role played by the pigs especially Squealer in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. The researcher agrees that doublespeak is an expression deliberately constructed to cover its actual meaning and it makes the bad seem good and the negative appear positive. Moreover, it is hard to spot and identify at a first glance.

Lutz also gave at least four kinds of doublespeak. The first is the euphemism, an inoffensive or positive word or phrase used to avoid a harsh, unpleasant or distasteful reality. However, when a euphemism is used to mislead or deceive, it becomes doublespeak. A second kind of doublespeak is jargon, the specialized language of a trade, profession or similar group such as that used by doctors, lawyers, engineers, educators etc. jargon can serve an important

and useful function. Within a group, jargon functions as kind of verbal shorthand and allows members of the group to communicate with each other clearly, efficiently and quickly. But jargon, like the euphemism can also be doublespeak. It can be pretentious, obscure terminology used to give an air of authority and prestige to speakers and the subject matter. Jargon as doublespeak often makes the simple appear complex. In this sense, it is used not to express but impress.

The third kind of doublespeak is gobbledygook or bureaucratese. Such doublespeak is simply a matter of piling on words, of overwhelming the audience with words, the bigger the words and the longer the sentences. Sometimes gobbledygook may sound impressive but when the quote is later examined, it doesn't even make sense. This is evidence in Squealer's speech to other animals in the farm.

The fourth kind of doublespeak is inflated language that is designed to make the ordinary seem extraordinary, to make everyday things seem impressive; to give an air of importance to people, situations or things that would not normally be considered important; to make the simple seem complex. He furthered says that doublespeak is dangerous because it can affect and eventually destroy the function of language, which is communication between people and social groups. The corruption of the function of language can be serious and have far reaching consequences (Lutz, 348).

Euphemism Versus Doublespeak

As mentioned before, there is a close relationship between euphemism and doublespeak in which the latter is considered as one category of euphemism. As a point of similarity between the two phenomena (euphemism and doublespeak) both of them use good words to hide bad words. Meanwhile, the main point of difference euphemism and doublespeak is that euphemism is used in a well-mannered way with good intentions associated with it and with deception but when a euphemism is used in a deceitful way in hope of misleading people; it becomes doublespeak Rawson (2). Lutz (152) agrees with Rawson when he mentioned that when a euphemism is used in a negative way, it becomes doublespeak.

In fact, doublespeak is the complete opposite of plain and simple truth. It distorts words and phrases in order to bury a truth whereas euphemism attempts to make certain situations seem more palatable.

Squealer's Role in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*

Squealer is seen as the official mouthpiece of dictator Napoleon. He is known by the other animals as a 'brilliant talker'. His reputation is that of one who 'could turn black into white' (AF, 6). He possesses the innate ability to turn

the other animals' arguments around with wordplay that have them agreeing with issues that just moments ago had them enraged. This is seen most notably with the mystery of the missing milk. The animals in the farm had assumed that the extra milk will be shared equally (AF, 14) but Squealer convinced them that the milk will be used to supplement the pigs. He explains to the other animals by overly complicating his language thereby taking advantage of the poorly-educated animals that have difficulty following complex argumentative strategies. Squealer aligns himself with the other animals by pretending to be more interested in their well-being than his own. He effectively gains their total agreement by subtly suggesting that if the pigs aren't well fed that they will be unable to protect the other animals, possible this will lead to the return of the hated Mr. Jones. On hearing this, the animals agree to reserve all extra milk and apples for the pigs' sole consumption, an opposite opinion to the one they had prior to listening to Squealer's doublespeak.

Squealer's talent lies in his ability to manipulate language to suit the particular demands of his audience and the situation. When he wants to hide his intentions or the truth, he uses overly complex words and ideas to intimidate the other animals and make them feel intellectually unequipped to join in the discussion. One example of this is Squealer's claim that Napoleon has been behind the decision to build a windmill all along. Squealer is also guilty of oversimplifying language when it suits his purposes. He manipulates the sheep by teaching them the phrase 'four legs good, two legs better' (AF, 51) so that the sheep might try it out at the appropriate moment to silence any voice that might arise from the other animals when they see the pigs walking upright in direct contradiction to the original maxim of Animalism "Four legs good, two legs bad" (AF, 12).

Through the character of Squealer, Orwell demonstrates the danger of doublespeak in manipulating the other animals to the point where they are no longer able to recognize the truth.

Theoretical Framework

The study is guided by politeness theory, the concept of face and Information Manipulation Theory (IMT). Politeness theory and the concept of face were developed by Brown and Levinson in 1978, building on Goffman's theory of identity and facework. The linguists' major goal was to find out why people do not tend to use simple and direct language in a conversation but rather complex and sometimes indirect phrases especially if a hearer has to be motivated to do a particular act. For instance, Squealer often used euphemism to convince the animals of the merits to ridiculous policies – 'Once again all rations were reduced, except those of the pigs and the dogs. For the time being, certainly it had been found necessary to make a readjustment of

rations' (AF, 77). Squealer often used words such as 'reduction' for 'adjustment' was an attempt to suppress the complaints of other animals about hunger. It works because reduction means 'cutting' the food supply while readjustment implies changing the current amount of food.

There are two types of face – negative and positive faces. As Brown and Levinson state, a distinction has to be made between negative and positive faces, which are both treated as perpetual wants. Positive face wants are defined in two ways: On one hand, they refer to a person's desire to be accepted and approved of in a certain group and on the other hand to the appreciation of the self-image by others. This also means that a speaker's goals in a conversation have to be accepted by or even desirable to other speakers in order to fulfill the positive face wants (cf. Thomas 169). This is evident in the roles played by Mollie and Boxer in *Animal Farm*. Negative face, on the other hand, highlights a person's independence and possibility to act on one's own (cf. Verschueren 45). This is also evident in the characters of all the animals in Manor Farm owned by Mr. Jones who rebelled to get their freedom. The roles played by Napoleon and other pigs are also seen as negative face.

Another relevant theory the researcher used for this study is Steven McCornack's Information Manipulation Theory (IMT) founded in 1992. IMT is a theory of deceptive discourse design. The theory suggests that deceptive messages function deceptively because they covertly violate the principles that govern conversational exchanges. Given that conversational discussants possess assumptions regarding the quantity, quality, manner and relevance of information that should be presented, it is possible for speakers to exploit any or all of these assumptions by manipulating the information that they possess so as to mislead listeners.

In the novel *Animal Farm* written by George Orwell, the pigs especially Squealer used their eloquent ability in language to manipulate other animals. Manipulative speech is used to try to control others for selfish ends. In chapter five, after Napoleon has his dogs chase Snowball off the farm, he decrees there will be no more Sunday debate over farm policy. A committee of pigs will make the necessary decisions. When some of the animals protest this policy, Squealer makes a manipulative speech in which he depicts Napoleon's blatant power grab as a burdensome sacrifice the leader makes for the good of the other animals. Squealer also uses fear against the animals, warning them that any misstep could bring Farmer Jones back. He states, 'One false step, and our enemies would be upon us. Surely comrades, you do not want Jones back'. (AF, 38)

In chapter six, Napoleon announces that Animal Farm will start doing business with neighbouring farms. As this is a complete violation of the founding principles of Animalism, the animals are again disturbed. As usual, Squealer is brought out and raises manipulative questions to confuse them, he asked: ‘Are you certain that this is not something that you have dreamed, comrades? Have you any record of such a resolution? Is it written down anywhere?’ (AF, 44).

However, this study used qualitative and descriptive methods. Nine utterances from Squealer were drawn from George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* to find out among other things how euphemism/doublespeak is notorious in conversation. Given the limited time frame and space for this study, the researcher used only one novel for the analysis. The data for the research were collected from the literary text and the documented sources were books written by renowned linguists. The utterances were analysed based on the importance of euphemism and the dangers of doublespeak.

Having looked at the various views of linguists on the phenomena euphemism and doublespeak, this section analyses the Squealer’s utterances drawn from the novel *Animal Farm* by George Orwell. The data were used to answer the research questions that guided the study.

Ex. 1 ‘Comrades, do you know who is responsible for this? Do you know the enemy who has come in the night and overthrown our windmill? SNOWBALL!

Boxer claimed that they saw Snowball bleeding during the battle. Squealer is quick to cast doubt on their version of events.

Ex. 2 ‘The plot was for Snowball, at the critical moment, to give the signal for flight and leave the field to the enemy. And he very nearly succeeded – I will even say, comrades, he would have succeeded if it had not been for our heroic leader, Comrade Napoleon’ (55).

For Squealer, language is no longer linked to truth; it no longer has any purchase on reality. He constructs a parallel universe with a language all of its own, a language that exaggerates, distorts and ultimately destroys what is truly real. When the windmill collapses due to a storm, Squealer immediately blames it on the long-gone true hero of the Animalist Revolution – SNOWBALL.

Ex.3 ‘Comrades!’ he cried, ‘you do not imagine, I hope, that we pigs are doing this in a spirit of selfishness and privilege? Many of us actually dislike milk and apples. I dislike them myself. Our sole object in taking these things is to preserve our health. Milk and apples...we pigs are brain workers. The whole management and organization of this farm depend on us...Do you

know what would happen if we pigs failed in our duty? Jones would come back! Yes, Jones would come back...Surely there is no one among you who wants to see Jones come back? (AF 24)

Squealer's physical 'skipping from side to side' during such explanations parallels his 'skipping' words. Also, Squealer makes the animals feel guilty yet again when he says, 'it is for your sake that we drink that milk and eat those apples. He backs this up with evidence; 'Many of us actually dislike milk and apples. I dislike them myself. Our sole object in taking these things is to preserve our health'.

Ex.4 'You have heard, then, Comrade,' he said, 'that we pigs now sleep in the beds of the farmhouse? And why not? You did not suppose, surely, that there was ever a ruling against beds. A bed merely means a place to sleep in. A pile of straw in a stall is a bed, properly regarded. The rule was against sheets, which are a human invention. We have removed the sheets from the farmhouse beds, and sleep between blankets. And very comfortable beds they are too! But not more comfortable than we need, I can tell you, comrades, with all the brainwork we have to do nowadays, you would not rob us of our repose, would you, Comrades? ...Surely none of you wishes to see Jones back? (AF 47)

When the pigs moved into the farmhouse, Squealer makes the first substantial change in the commandment: he adds with sheets to the injunction against sleeping in a bed. Squealer uses two techniques here: first, he outright lies and pretends that the addition was always there. By making the alternative seem seditions, he convinces the others that the commandments were not changed, but that they just 'don't remember' the addition. Second, he argues semantics, acting as if the original commandment still applies.

The data in Extracts 1-4 answer the research question 1

a)To what degree is the use of doublespeak/euphemism notorious in conversation?

Ex.5: It is no longer needed, 'comrades... Beast of England was the song of the Rebellion. But the Rebellion is now completed. The execution of the traitors this afternoon was the final act. The enemy both external and internal has been defeated. In 'Beast of England,' we expressed our longing for a better society in days to come. But that society has now been established. Clearly this song has no longer any purpose' (AF 60-61).

After witnessing the execution of other animals by Napoleon, Clover and the other animal sitting around her sang the "Beast of England" three times. Shortly after singing the song sorrowfully, Squealer approached them and announced that by a special decree of Comrade Napoleon, 'Beast of England'

had been abolished, the animals were taken aback and Muriel asked why. Squealer explains that the Rebellion has now ended with the slaughter of the unfaithful and that, being a song of the Rebellion, 'Beast of England' has no further purpose. The animals are now to sing Mimimus's anthem which begins with the lyrics:

Animal Farm, Animal Farm,
Never through me shall thou come to harm! (AF 61)

Ex.6: In his speeches, Squealer would talk with the tears rolling down his cheeks of Napoleon's wisdom, the goodness of his heart and the deep love he bore to all animals everywhere, even and especially the unhappy animals that still lived in ignorance and slavery on other farms (AF 63).

In chapter 8, Napoleon is given numerous prestigious titles such as *Father of All Animals*, *Terror of Mankind* and *Protector of Sheepfold, Ducklings' Friend* and the like. Squealer even shed tears as he publicly praises Comrade Napoleon for his wisdom and benevolence. Ironically, Napoleon is responsible for the terrible living conditions on the farm and continually reduces food rations, leaving the majority of the animals malnourished and starving.

Ex.7 Boxer: What is that gun firing for?

Squealer: To celebrate our victory!

Boxer: What victory?

Squealer: What victory, comrade? Have we not driven the enemy off our soil, the sacred soil of Animal Farm?

Boxer: But they have destroyed the windmill. And we had worked on it for two years!

Squealer: What matter? E will build another windmill. We will build six windmills if we feel like it. You do not (appreciate, comrade, the mighty thing that we have done. The enemy was in occupation of this very ground that we stand upon. And now thanks to the leadership of Comrade Napoleon we have won every inch of it back again!

Boxer: Then we have won back what we had before.

Squealer: That is our victory (AF 72).

The destruction of the windmill marks Animal Farm's final, irrevocable turn for the worse. As the windmill earlier symbolized the hopes of Snowball and a future of leisure, its explosion at the hands of Frederick symbolizes the absolute impossibility of Snowball's dreams. The battle of the Windmill is bloody and less effective than the Battle of Cowshed. A cow, three sheep and two geese were killed and nearly everyone was wounded. Squealer's logic in proving that the battle was a victory is an incredible display of political doublespeak. Boxer cannot conceive how Squealer can all the battle victory,

until the pig explains, ‘the enemy was in occupation of this very ground that we stand upon. And now thanks to the leadership of Comrade Napoleon we have won every inch of it back again!’

The data in extracts 5-7 answer the research question 2

b) To what extent are doublespeak words used to denote the opposite of their actual meaning?

Ex.8 ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL
BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE
EQUAL THAN OTHERS (AF 92)

This contradictory phrase is a euphemism for saying that all animals, which are not pigs, are less privileged than the pigs, of the ruling class. Old Major’s original idea was to create an egalitarian society ruled by animals, where every animal was equal and voted on policies that affected the farm. However, Napoleon immediately usurped power and began to rule the farm as a ruthless tyrant while simultaneously creating an aristocracy of pigs, who enjoyed special privileges and made every significant political decision. Squealer manages to alter each commandment to corroborate with Napoleon’s political agenda as the pigs become more and more powerful while they continue to oppress the other animals. The phrase more equal implies that some animals, namely pigs, have more privileges than other animals. The other animals are essentially considered second-class citizens while the upper-class pigs enjoy luxurious lives. Logically, the phrase more equal does not make sense but successfully conceals the true nature of the commandment. Squealer’s ability to manipulate language and confuse the animals into passively accepting their fate is embodied in the last remaining commandment (www.enotes.com).

The data in extracts 8 answers the research question 3

c) To what extent is the use of euphemism in expressing oneself?

The findings from the analysis were discussed in accordance with the research questions. For research question 1, the analysis showed that doublespeak exaggerates, distorts and destroys what is truly real. Based on research question 2, the researcher found out that doublespeak can be ironical. Squealer’s utterances in extracts 5-7 denote the opposite of their actual meaning.

Finally, the research shows that although euphemism and doublespeak are inter-related the phenomena differ. This is evidence in extract 8. Research question 3 shows that euphemism makes a harsh comment/situation softer and agreeable while doublespeak deliberately reverses the meaning of words.

Conclusion

Euphemism and doublespeak as phenomena of language, is observed everywhere in all human societies and it is used in all human interactions especially in politics (for doublespeak). It is predictable that euphemism will gain more publicity and respectability unlike doublespeak. As a matter of fact, euphemism is penetrating every corner of the world through the main channels as music, books, media houses etc. Should we say same for doublespeak?

The important of euphemism can only show itself when they are used in communication. Since euphemism is so important in this world, more research should be done to find out other functions of this phenomenon other than its communicative function. Also, researcher should find out if doublespeak as its positive effect on communication.

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