Euphemism Strategies in President Buhari's Arise TV Interview

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Abstract
This paper is an attempt to check the use of euphemism in Political Discourse. It features the functions and aim of euphemism, and the role it plays in changing people's ideologies. It tries to give reasons for the use of euphemism as a politeness strategy that tends to be manipulative in effect. For the purpose of answering the research questions, President Buhari's Arise TV interview of 10th June, 2021 was analyzed using Leech's Politeness Principle Maxims to identifying the use of euphemism and its purpose. This study adopts a descriptive qualitative design where excerpts of responses of President Buhari which contains politeness were analysed. The outcome of the analyses shows that euphemism, as used in Political Discourse, is geared towards manipulative tendencies as politicians avoid criticisms, alter the truth, alter people's ideologies for their own good will and show appeal self-image of a civilized person and not a savage under the guise of politeness.

Introduction

People are usually considered good conversants or communicators when they are able to convey the targeted message directly and express themselves clearly. However, in our daily conversations and in certain occasions, people deliberately or indeliberately tend to be indirect and they try to hide the truth from their addressees. So, they would choose euphemisms, and use it depending on several factors, such as the conversation situation, the time of conversation, the purpose of the conversation, the speaker, the hearer and the topic of the conversation. In other words, the conversants might use direct, indirect or normal expressions with each other in their daily communication.

The term euphemism comes from Greek *euphimism(os),* which means the use of words of good omen. The Random House College Dictionary (1980:455) defines euphemism as "the substitution of a mild, indirect, or vague expression for one thought to be offensive, harsh, or blunt." Recently, Allan and Burridge (1991:14) offer this technical definition: "Euphemisms are alternatives to dispreferred expression, and are used in order to avoid possible loss of face. The dispreferred expression may be taboo, fearsome, distasteful, or for some other reason have too many negative connotations to felicitously execute speaker's communicative intention on a given occasion." A close look at the two definitions will show that they both revolve implicitly around the same idea, that is, the intentional utilization of lexical resources in language by interactants to achieve the expression of politeness and demureness in human interaction. Such expression is manifest in the conscious selection of a more polite and demure lexis instead of a less polite one. However, the second definition surpasses the first in two major respects. First, it makes use of the notion of face, which is a key factor to understanding the speaker's intentions and subsequently the lexical correlates in his or her utterances. Face wants, whether they be positive or negative (Brown and Levinson 1987), involve watching one's language, among other things, and are meant to facilitate, smooth, and refine interaction. Second, this definition incorporates the notion of felicity (appropriateness), which plays an important role because the choice between lexical items in interaction by the context of situation. That is to say, the language user's option for a euphemism often emanates (as posed from the first paragraph) from contextual factors such as the social relationship between speaker and addressee or the level of formality induced by the setting.

Euphemism, therefore, constitutes a pragmatic choice by the language user at a given point in interaction. This choice is not arbitrary but an intentional undertaken opted for in light of diversified contextual factors that include knowledge of social role or status, spatial and temporal location, formality level, the medium, subject matter, and register, and among other things (Lyons 1977).

This paper seeks to investigate Euphemistic expressions from the President Buhari's Arise TV Interview since in Political Discourse, politicians resort to the use of Euphemism as a safe way to immobilize opposition and mobilize support. Concurrently, this conventional strategy is used to appear polite and heedful for people's emotions and concerns, yet, it may turn to become obfuscation and deception. Hence, for what particular reason do politicians fall back upon this strategy? It also seeks to elucidate the use of euphemistic strategies in Political Discourse as attenuation, of the events taking place, on the addressee's face.

Statement of the Problem

It has been noticed it may be natural to assume that euphemizing serves good purposes and the speakers use euphemisms with honest intentions, when their aim is not to hurt or offend someone. However, using euphemistic expressions is much more complicated than that. As various articles (e.g., Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Neaman and Silver, 1983; Allan and Burridge, 1991), comments or blogs suggest, people are increasingly sensitive to avoiding naming things directly. Also, it is very difficult to avoid speaking about unpleasant issues completely. That is why people have always felt the urge to find a way to speak about phenomena they feared, disliked, worshipped or considered taboo, while not naming them directly. It is noticed that politicians (especially when they are the incumbent) are not always direct in their communication with the polity; they sometimes try to be indirect, conceal or hide the truth from their addressees. Although this communication behaviour is used for several reasons and motives, it might, however, lead to misunderstanding and misperception of the main idea of the political conversation by the polity. Eventually politicians employ euphemism in conversation by using obscure terms in order to blur inconvenient truths and society's reaction to this form of manipulation. So, the problem this poses is for what particular reason do politicians fall back upon this strategy?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate euphemistic expressions from President Buhari's Arise TV inerview in order to know the purposes behind the common use of euphemism in Political Discourse, and how politicians resort to this strategy as an escape hatch towards saving face. It seeks to know the secret power of euphemism in altering people's ideologies and the way it serves political interests, in general, and politicians' self-image in particular.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it shows the link between figurative language and political discourse, and how politicians resort to the use of Euphemism as a safe way to immobilize opposition and mobilize support. It is significant as it will clearly show euphemism, a common political strategy, in a pragmatic light. This is due to the fact that political language is "goal-oriented" where politicians choose their speeches consciously and thoroughly with specific aim in mind. By this, they dampen the effrontery of political reality, by means of replacing offensive terms with allegedly impartial ones.

Research Questions

1. What are the most frequent strategy of Euphemism used by politicians?
2. From a pragmatic view, could euphemism be used as a politeness strategy to evade face threatening?
3. To what extent does euphemism change the act of persuasion to the act of prevarication and deception in PD?

The Concept of Euphemism

Euphemisms by definition are figure of speech that covered ideas or meaning that does not typically express precisely the meaning of the individual expressions (Anber and Swear, 2016). Euphemisms

are regarded as substitutions of indirect, mild, or vague expressions that are thought to be harsh, offensive, or dishonest (Charaudeau, 1998). The above statements clearly show euphemism from a figurative point of view. In a metaphorical sense, figurative expressions are usually made up of rhetoric code on which understanding them means one is a member of the culture where they are used (Sadock, 1993). This means that euphemism can be studied through various discourses like political, and thus deserves to be studied because of its pervasiveness and weight in the said discourse. Hence, it is a linguistic bridge to indirectness that has overtaken human communication in the present era.

Willis and Klammer linguistically defines euphemism as "a mild or roundabout word or expression used instead of a more direct word or expression to make one's language delicate and inoffensive even to a squeamish person "(1981: 192-193). Abrantes (2005:86) sheds more light by saying that a euphemism is "a word or a phrase used in a specific linguistic and extralinguistic contexts to soften or conceal something unpleasant". These definitions clearly show how euphemism ameliorates a social situation by replacing words that are not accepted with socially accepted words or expressions (Al-shamali, 1997).

Rawson, in *A Dictionary of Euphemism and other Doubletalk*, has this to say about euphemism:

> Many euphemisms are so delightfully ridiculous that everyone laughs at them. They conceal the things people fear the most - death, the dead, the supernatural. They cover up the facts of life - of sex and reproduction and excretion… and they are embedded to deeply in our language that few of us, even those who pride themselves on being plainspoken, ever get through a day without using them (1981:1)

Wardhaugh continues in this line by adding that "euphemistic words and expressions allow us to talk unpleasant things and 'neutralize' the unpleasantness, e.g. the subject of death and dying, unemployment and criminality" (1986:237). This means that euphemism is the best choice when avoiding taboo words or expressions that people do not prefer to discuss.

Lastly, Allan and Burridge (1991:11) provide a definition: "a euphemism is used as an alternative to a dispreferred expression, in order to avoid possible loss of face: either one's own face or, through giving offense, that of the audience, or of some third party". The above definition brings out the prominent function of euphemism, which according to Ham (2005) is to avoid interlocutors' possible offense against each other caused by such taboo topics or by mentioning a subject matter to which one of the interlocutors may be sensitive. One of the classifications of such taboo topics, according to Abrantes (2005), is politeness-based topics as in insults. Another point raised from this definition is the concept of "face" (as postulated by Brown and Levinson, 1987) which is very critical in euphemizing. Euphemisms are achieved when a "face-threatening act" is accomplished by a speaker or writer. This is done as the speaker creates and employs a euphemistic strategy to avoid or reduce a threat. This is one of the reasons for employing a euphemistic strategy apart from avoiding taboo words. Others are serving as a kind of "elegance" to avoid vulgarisms in matters of love, body parts, etc. and "disguise" in politics and economy (Huang, 2005)

Interrelation of Euphemism, Politeness, and Face Theory
It is worthy to note that some pragmatic theories go hand in hand with euphemism strategy as they help to clarify conversational standard and maintain social norms (Takoua, 2015). This means they kick start and permit the use of euphemism in everyday living. They include Politeness Theory, and the Face Theory (also is Grice's Cooperative Principle and Leech's Politeness Maxims; the later will form the basis of euphemism strategy).

According to Janney and Arndt (2003), politeness refers to the rational, rule-governed, pragmatic aspect of speech that is rooted in the human relationships and avoids conflicts. This means that the relationship between the speaker and the listener, the conversation and its context, and the self-image of both interlocutors are studied in line with everyday conversation (Takoua, 2015). Brown and Levinson (1978) support this when they said that politeness is considered as a powerful motive towards the use of euphemism. This means that indirectness is an effective strategy that is employed to decrease the threat to the speaker and hearer's social and self-image. To support this, Lakoff

(1973:297) says that "politeness usually supersedes: it is considered more important in conversation to avoid offense than to achieve clarity".

From the foregoing, politeness helps the speaker not to hurt or discomfort the listener. It is done by sweet-talking especially on areas that are offensive by employing respectful words that will make the hearer to be comfortable. As Takoua (2015:27) posits: "politeness forces interlocutors to sacrifice direct meaning and semantic transparency over being considerate to others' emotions which will trigger a need for euphemism".

It is clear also that tackling a direct speech in a straight forward manner could threaten the social and self-image of both interlocutors in an interactive conversation. This means that most times, passing of information that is meaningful which is the bedrock of communication may not bring satisfaction among interactants. This could even breed and bring confusion in the communicative process. Therefore employing indirectness which is clearly a euphemistic strategy will guarantee the reciprocal respect of face (Takoua, 2015).

Goffman (1967) terms this face theory, which is directly associated to self-image that both parties in a communicative event declare for themselves. Face has two different sides: negative, which is associated with being free and undaunted by others in a communicative event, and positive face, which encourages and allows for acceptance as a member of a social group. Euphemism revolves around these faces especially on the interlocutor's freedom of speech by diminishing threat on his choice of words and lessens the bad language that may injure the hearer's self esteem. So, this concept of face is related to euphemism as Allan and Burridge (1991:11) declared in their definition of euphemism: "it is used as an alternative to dispreferred expression in order to avoid possible loss of face: either one's own face or, through giving offence, that of the audience, or of some third party". Hudson (1980:115) supports this with the following remarks:

> Saving face can be attributed to the mutual interest of participant for feelings and showing collaboration in the communicative situation. Face is firmly related to vulnerability which is construed as strong evidence for this emotional cover that is bound to our face. Due to this, interlocutors always seek to save one another's face using euphemistic strategies or sweet talking as a sub-rule of politeness.

In summary, politeness can be explained by the euphemistic strategies used in a particular context, whereas face can be gauged in conformity with the amount of euphemism used in a social communication (Takoua, 2015).

Political Discourse

Van Dijk (1997) identifies discourse as a way of language use and a kind of social communication, which can be defined as an interactive event in a particular social status. It is concerned with how social interaction and meaning are created and retained in a social group and how people take advantage of language to exercise power and prevail influence (Takoua, 2015) of which a good instance is political discourse. By way of definition, Shiffrin and Tannen (2001:398) introduce two separate points: the first "a discourse which is itself political", and the second, "an analysis of political discourse as simply an example of discourse type, without explicit reference to political content or political context". This means that political discourse or PD is a type of discourse that is derived from politics, controlled by political institutions that are tied to political practices in different contexts.

It should be noted, as we go on, that language plays a decisive role in politics because it is seen to dominate different political outcomes and activities. No wonder Angela Carter (1983:77) sees language as "power, life and the instrument of culture, the instrument of domination and liberation". This means that language gives us a transparent lens through which we see political reality in PD (Takoua, 2015). This goes on to reveal the true nature of political language or interaction to be dependent on impressive language that bends on persuasiveness which results to a supposed political actuality. This also explains the reason for the dependence on conversational tactics and strategies by politicians to completely alter peoples' mind or belief. Orwell (2012:10) explains it this way: "political language - and with variation this is true of all political parties, from conservatives to

anarchists - is designed to make lie sound truthful and murder respectably, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind".

Vital to our discussion is the matter of rhetorics. Charteris-Black (2005:9) sees rhetorics as "the act of communication from the hearer's perspective…hearers are only persuaded when the speaker's rhetoric is successful". Political rhetorics' main concern is the techniques and style used by politicians to deliver their arguments in all political debates. Dryzek (2010:319-339) supports this by saying that "rhetoric facilitates the making and hearing of representation claims spanning subjects and audiences…democracy requires a deliberative system with multiple components whose linkage often needs rhetoric". In conclusion, rhetorics, in politics, is the art of persuasion and a formal means that excavated its way straight through language (Takoua, 2015).

The Link among Language, Power and Ideology in Politics
Politics, as we have said earlier, has the power to transmogrify the affairs of a polity and also, people's ideology. No wonder Fairclough (1989) suggests that anyone interested in the challenges of any society would question the intention of these terms, their merits, and how they convey politics.
Language is a veritable tool in politics as politicians use it (even when they violate it) to accrue power to themselves and gain influence over the people they rule and dissuade resistance in the polity. So, they employ several communicative devices and techniques that shift language from the natural function to its deceptive or complicated functions. The result of this is that they accrue more power through "sympathy and advocacy of their citizens" (Takoua, 2015:11).

This shows that there is probable affinity of language and power with ideology. Therborn (1992:2) sees ideology as "that aspect of the human condition under which human beings live their lives as conscious actors in a world that makes sense to them to varying degrees. Ideology is the medium through which this consciousness and meaningfulness operate". This clearly shows that language is that tool that aids the formulation of thoughts that creates several realities. Fairclough (1989) and Thomas and Wareing (1999) support this by saying that politicians, in their quest to achieve power and dominance, will first create their own ideology which they mirror or bend back on the people to have them sanction or set as satisfactory all they have done or said. In order to do this, they usually use or circumvent several communicative techniques and rhetoric strategies to predominate the people's thought and orient again their own ideologies. In conclusion, language is the toll that shows the supposed power of politicians arguments, who are seeking to transmogrify the people's ideology.

Theoretical Framework
The theory on which this research paper is based on is Leech Politeness Principle. In his words, "politeness concerns a relationship between two participants whom we may call 'self' and 'other'. In conversation, self will normally be identified with S and other will typically be identified with H" (Leech 1983:131). In order to ensure cooperation in a conversation, the self and other have to subscribe to a set of maxims as a strategy to show each other that offensive and bad language or behaviour are parried. This shows that the aim behind this is to restrict the use of obscene language and behaviour that may affect both participants' faces. This clearly is in association with euphemism as they both have the same features.
This principle can be summarized in six main maxims (Leech 1983:132):
a. **Tact Maxim:** its sub maxims are: minimize cost to others; maximize benefit to others. This maxim is critical in politeness principle as it requires not stating the offensive thoughts for others. This means there is a lot of embellishment of unsatisfactory truth to reckon for the awful choices people make. Politicians employ euphemistic expressions to achieve this in order to give credence to their supposed argument and gain the people's support.
b. **The Generosity Maxim:** its subset are minimize benefit to self; and maximize cost self. Here, the speaker uses euphemism to misshape the truth and to be seen as supporting and generous with other. It is similar to the tact maxim.
c. **The Approbation Maxim:** its sub maxims are: minimize dispraise of other; maximize praise of other. This happens to be the most essential part of Leech's Politeness Principle. Here, embellishment

of language and elevated feeling of pleasure for people are employed. Euphemistic expressions aid the linguistic power used in decorating and prettifying what is seen as offensive. Politicians use this as a strategy in gaining praise and support.

d. **The Sympathy Maxim:** its sub maxims are: minimize antipathy between self and other; maximize sympathy between self and other. This maxim has been used in PD to conceal damaging events and facts and to be self aware about others' plight. Politicians use euphemistic strategy to obfuscate a sad and troubling event that may be injurious to their name and mirror unfavourable and negative policies.

e. **The Modesty Maxim:** its subset is: minimize praise of self; maximize dispraise of self. This maxim is used to put interlocutors in an equal status. Here, the accomplishments of the speaker are played down on. Politicians employs euphemism indirectly to tell their good deeds and make a good impression on others while hiding the real meaning of what is said.

f. **The Agreement Maxim:** its sub maxims are: minimize disagreement between self and other; maximize agreement between self and other. In PD, this maxim helps to show the interest and concern between politicians and their audience which should be mutually interchangeable still politicians would use euphemistic expressions to conceal their disagreement with fraudulent promises. They inject people's mind with supposed but doubtful future promise and obligation just to have their trust and votes.

Methodology
This study adopts a descriptive qualitative design. The data consist of interview session of President Mohammadu Buhari on 10th June, 2021 with Arise TV. The choice of interview instead of speech is based on the claim that "political interviews are confrontational, competitive encounters" (Mullany 2002:6). This is based on the framework of politics which is full of smartness, wit, and aggressiveness of participants.

The data for this study are excerpt of responses of President Buhari from the interview. Accordingly, the context of the data was the dialogue and responses of President Buhari which contain politeness.
For the data collection techniques, the researchers adopted the in-depth open ended interview because of the nature of the study which is interview based. To ensure the data is recorded accurately, the researchers watched the interview after downloading it on Youtube, and also downloaded a transcript of the interview while comparing it with the transcript. Lastly, he marked the politeness strategies that President Buhari used in the interview.

For the research instrument, since this study employed descriptive qualitative method, the primary instrument is the researchers who had the responsibility of planning, collecting, analyzing and reporting the finding. The secondary instrument is the data sheet where the researchers noted the politeness strategies deployed through utterances by President Buhari from the interview. The data analyses of this study will be conducted according to Leech's maxims (tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy) that were discussed earlier. Each used maxim will be illustrated with explained extracts from the interview. This methodology will assist in finding out the most used maxims by the president in order to ensure politeness and save people's faces.

Analysis
Tact Maxim:
Extract 1
And we have stopped mining in Zamfara State…**expelled the foreigners**….I was almost overwhelmed with what is happening in the Northwest. But we are treating them as **criminals** now….
He replaced bandits with the expression "foreigners" explaining it was probably non-Nigerians that were involved in the illegal mining hence exonerating the north which people suspect are culprits. Also, his use of the word "criminal" instead of "bandits" as the interviewer used is another clear example of tact.
Extract 2
Two governors from Southwest came to tell me that the **cattle rearers** in some of the forests there have killed farmers while their cattle were eating their crops.

He used the word "cattle rearers" as a euphemism to describe the notorious "Fulani Herdsmen" which has gradually become an offensive word in Nigeria.

Through this euphemism expressions, President Buhari is minimizing cost to others and maximizing benefit to them.

Generosity Maxim
Extract 3
The level of poverty is almost unimaginable so this is our problem. But those who are really keeping in touch with what we are doing would know the difference between when we came in and now. The people of Northeast and South- South are **the best judges of the performance of this administration** because **they know where we were and they know the condition now**.

President Buhari provided a justification for his performance in spite of the insecurity in the Northeast claiming that his administration has done a lot more for the troubled region to ensure security, peace and progress of the region as the people are the best judges of his administration.

Extract 4
How many neighbours do we have? …you have to **cultivate your neighbor** if you are in trouble…if we were not in **a good relationship** with Niger and Chad and Cameroon, Boko Haram would have done worse things to us….Niger has discovered oil too as you know and we don't want them **to go through** the Benin Republic, we want them to **come through** Nigeria…And I believe if you make the infrastructure work, the rail and roads, I assure you that Nigerians would **be very busy**….

Again, euphemisms were employed as a promise of economic gain of building a lot of infrastructure to the Niger Republic as it will encourage imports of goods through Nigeria rather than the Benin Republic that would engage Nigerians in meaningful and viable business opportunities.

Using this strategy, President Buhari is minimizing benefit to self, and maximizing cost to self.

Approbation Maxim
Extract 5
The people of Northeast and South- South are the **best judges** of the performance of this administration because **they know where we were** and they **know the condition now**.

President Buhari praised the people of Northeast and South South as a way to gain their support for his alleged accomplishments in the area in spite of the insecurity and level of poverty that posed a challenge in the area. This he did as a way of justifying the performance of his administration.

Extract 6
I am particularly impressed with the SS Leaders **regarding their stand about Nigeria**. Both their elders and Youths. No one told me what they said, I listened to them myself and their message was clear. God bless them all

President Buhari used the words "their stand" as a compliment to the SS leaders for their support for the unity of Nigeria, and extolled this virtue and patriotism.

With this strategy, he is minimizing dispraise to others and maximizing praise to them.

The Sympathy Maxim
Extract 7
The problem is trying to **understand the culture** of the cattle herders. The governor of Benue said that I am **not disciplining** the cattle herders because I am one of them. I cannot say that I am not one of them. But he is being **very unfair** to me. And I told him, does **the Nigerian cattle rearer** carry anything more than a stick or cutlass they use to cut trees for the cattle to feed. But those **sophisticated ones** are good with AK47. So from all the Sahel areas people rush to Nigeria, Fulani from Mauritania and Central Africa **look the same** so they think they are Nigerian ones. But I assure you that **we** would resuscitate these cattle routes and grazing areas and make them accountable.

Using the sympathy maxim, President Buhari has employed a set of euphemistic expressions to conceal damaging events of Fulani Herdsmen's marauding by blaming it on foreign invaders rather than the alleged Nigerian cattle rearers. By using the expression "not disciplining", he is showing to be self aware about others plight. At the end, he used the pronoun "we" to refer to all Nigerians as united who share the same aim of ending the marauders and making defaulters to be accountable. He

is therefore, maximizing sympathy between self and others and minimizing antipathy between self and others.

Modesty Maxim
Unfortunately, this maxim was not used in the interview by the president.

The Agreement Maxim
Extract 9
And **we** have stopped mining in Zamfara State. **We** expelled the foreigners and **we are talking with** the government. Although he is not in the party of the Federal Government, but **we** want to secure Zamfara, Sokoto and Katsina.

The use of the pronoun "we" shows that the federal government and the governor of Zamfara State share mutual feature which is to secure the state. Though the federal government and the governor are not of the same party, President Buhari showed agreement and minimized disagreement to protect his self image and to keep things stable.

Findings
Through this interview of President Buhari which is about current happening in the nation and how his administration is going about it, the analysis revealed the excessive use of euphemism concerning Leech's Politeness Principle Maxims. It is clear that as politicians use euphemistic expressions, they enjoy the social and pragmatic merits of the phenomenon. They try to guarantee that they are polite and respectful by making exception to their social and self image while guarding people's face from injury or threat. From the analysis, the use of euphemistic expressions are large especially the tact, generosity and approbation maxims to create an appearance of a gratifying self image of a tender, amiable and virtuous man of state. This however does not mean or show that President Buhari is dutiful towards his people and the social norms that hold society, but it is an effective plan of action to change people's ideology and to steer their minds towards what occupies his political objectives.

Also, through the pragmatic and social function of euphemism, politicians need to build a personality of civility and not savagery (which could denote dysphemism, a concept that is antithetical to euphemism). Clearly, politicians depend on euphemism as a superficial tool of the political language knowing full well that political language is laden with manipulative, unforeseen, pernicious and damaging events that tend to make one a savage. To conclude, after discussing euphemism in lieu of the analysis of President Buhari's interview, we can say that the real reason for the use of this strategy by politicians is because of its manipulative role that enables them to have influence over unpleasant events and control the narrative.

Conclusion
From the study, we have examined euphemism in PD from a pragmatic point. It revealed the functions and purposes of the use of euphemism as employed by politicians as a politeness strategy and a manipulative tool which they use to save their image and hide unsatisfactory truth from the people. Clearly, the use of euphemism has manipulative tendencies in PD that uses politeness as a shield.

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