

## CHAPTER 2

### FRAMEWORK OF THE THEORIES

This chapter consists of theoretical framework that discusses doublespeak, its kinds: euphemism, jargon, gobbledygook or bureaucratese and inflated language as in Lutz (1989) theory as well as euphemism types by upgrades, downgrades, deception and obfuscation: circumlocution, understatement and overstatement or hyperbole as in Allan (2012) theory. The final subchapter is the literature review that contain previous researches that are used as guide and reference for this term paper.

#### 2.1. Doublespeak

Doublespeak is a term coined by William Lutz from concepts *doublethink* and *newspeak* from the seminal novel of George Orwell "1984" that is language that is pretends to communicate which is carefully constructed to make what is said and reality incompatible (Lutz, 1989; Walker et al, 2021). In other words, Lutz (1989) explains:

Doublespeak is language which pretends to communicate but really does not. It is language which makes the bad seem good, something negative appear positive, and something unpleasant appear attractive, or at least tolerable. It is language which avoids or shifts responsibility, language which is at variance with its real meaning. It is language which conceals or prevents thought. Doublespeak is language which does not extend thought but limits it. (Lutz, 1989)

Such misleading use of language is common even at the highest level of government discourse (Tsvetkov and Amudzhieva, 2013). Barack Obama made a press statement on February 15, 2011 that annual spending on the United States national budget would match its annual revenues, thus not adding more to the national debt, comparing to personal credit card default. Later, the former president was forced to admit, following a question by a journalist, that he excluded national debt interest while saying not adding more to the national debt.

The case in the preceding paragraph is an example of doublespeak, which its nature is deceptive and thought-shaping, that can have dire effects in a society

that elect high-ranking officials and contribute to public policy decision (Walker et al, 2021). Walker et al also explains that doublespeak involves words that are carefully chosen to deliberately deceive, not accidental misuse of language, and truth that are stretched in ways to impart a most desirable reality of the speaker, not making objectively false claim.

Doublespeak is one of the more subtle form of language manipulation. With other forms of deceptive language, such as lying, which is the most obvious, that comes with high risk, there are severe punishments for those who caught doing it, yet the more subtle use of deceptive language such as doublespeak voids the risks that is associated with lying while sway opinions of other people; hence it become an alternative of lying by describing truth in self-serving manner strategically (Walker et al, 2021).

## **2.2. Kinds of Doublespeak**

There are at least four kinds of doublespeak: euphemism, jargon, gobbledygook or bureaucratese and inflated language (Lutz, 1989). It is important to note that euphemism and jargon exist outside the realm of doublespeak, meaning both has original intended usage before deception. Therefore, euphemism and jargon have to be explained much more extensively than gobbledygook and inflated language. Explanations of each kind are as follows:

### **2.2.1. Euphemism**

Euphemism does not have common, agreed definition. However, this term paper would present some perspective on expert verdicts about what euphemism is and what counts as euphemism. Allan and Burridge (1991 as cited in Fitriani, Syarif and Wahyuni, 2019) define euphemism as an expression intended by the speaker to be less offensive, disturbing or troubling to the listener than the word it replaces. In the other hand, Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2007, p. 479) define euphemism as a word or phrase that replaces a taboo word or serves to avoid frightening or unpleasant subjects.

Comparing two preceding definitions, both refer to more pleasant expression that is used to replace less pleasant expression for various reasons. The

second definition canvasses on cultural taboo. The first definition, however, does not limit what euphemism is able to do outside to hide unpleasant fact as in the first. In addition, the word "euphemism" in English is etymologically derived from Greek words *eu* that means "good" and *phemeoo* that means "speak;" hence "euphemism" means "to speak favorably" (Kiling and Jurianto, 2016; Pan, 2013).

Lexicographers are also making collegiate entries for euphemism as "the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive for one that many offend or suggest something unpleasant" and "an indirect word or phrase that people often use to refer to something embarrassing or unpleasant, something to make it seem more acceptable than it really is" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary online, 2021; Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary online, 2021). Definitions in the dictionary entries are also generally speaking about inoffensive words or phrases that replace offensive words or phrases alongside the definition of Fromkin et al (2007).

Concerning on the cultural taboo first, taboo words in this context relates to sex, sex organs and natural bodily functions that are culturally taboo in many cultures. To mention a few, English words *penis*, *vagina* and *feces* simply exist as the softer replacements for *cock*, *cunt* and *shit* in Anglo-Saxon. There is no linguistic reason exists to explain why *vagina* is cleaner and *cunt* is dirty or *cock* is taboo and *penis* is part of male anatomy (Fromkin et al, 2007, pp. 478-479). If a word is attached psychologically with unpleasant elements, people try to find other words to avert its unpleasant fact; thus, it is only natural for euphemism to be used to soften an offensive or unpleasant expression (Pan, 2013).

Outside of simple explanation on euphemism as an inoffensive substitution for offensive things which is made because of unwillingness to express them explicitly, Burridge (2012) explores six functions of euphemism which brief explanations are as follows:

First is to shield and avoid offense, or the protective euphemism. It is created when people face tricky problem to talk in different context about things that for one reason or another would not have preferred to be spoken unstrainedly in the prevailing context. Topics such as private parts, bodily functions, sex, anger, dishonesty, drunkenness, madness, disease, death, dangerous animals, fear, God, et cetera in response to social taboos.

Second is to mystify and to misrepresent, or the underhand euphemism. It is not used to conceal offense, but to deliberately disguise and deceive. Examples such as politicians turning the word *death* into *a substantive negative patient care outcome* or *a diagnostic misadventure of the highest magnitude* makes the term euphemism misunderstood as value-laden and deliberately obfuscated language for some people.

Third is to talk up and inflate, or the uplifting euphemism. It is used as an alternative to designate something in a favorable light for expressions which are preferred not to be used in a given occasion. In Clause 28 of Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme, for example, the phrase *accommodation of stationary vehicle* is used because the author believe that it has more favorable connotation. Instead of using *parking place* or *car space*, the phrase is more preferred simply because it has bureaucratic flair.

Fourth is to reveal and inspire, or the provocative euphemism. Politically correct euphemism is used to, instead of disguising or conceal unpleasant reality, compel its audience to go beyond the simple content of the message and challenge prejudices embodied in language in order to help remove the stigma of negative social stereotypes. Phrase *African American* is advocated because it emphasizes the historical origin of the black community of the United States instead of their skin color, therefore bringing the phrase into other minority groups with examples of *Japanese American* and *Italian American*.

Fifth is to show solidarity and help define the gang, or the cohesive euphemism. Hospital staffs who have to manage diseases and death on a daily basis use euphemism to disguise unpleasant reality as a mean to bear their job. Euphemism become sort of in-group trademark in this context, while at the same time reinforce and display group identity. A notable example is the word *plus* which is used by frontline healthcare workers in *Rumah Sakit Umum Daerah Duren Sawit*, East Jakarta when referring to dying coronavirus patients who were previously hospitalized (Narasi Newsroom, 2021).

Sixth is to have fun and entertain, or the ludic euphemism. Phrases such as *person with hard to meet needs* for *serial killers* and the *differently pleased* for *sado-masochist* is invented for the sole purpose of comedy. Language manipulation

that speakers display at some times is remarkably inventive, making extraordinary uses out of ordinary words and phrases (Allan, 2012).

Euphemism can also be used to doublespeak, since Burrige (2012) considers that mystifying and misrepresent thus deceiving is one of the functions of euphemism while at the same time doublespeak is part of deception. Lutz (1989, p. 5) argues that euphemism when is used out of sensitivity for the feelings of someone or out of the concern of cultural taboo with the phrase *pass away* to refer *death* when protecting a grieving person as an example is not doublespeak, but it becomes doublespeak when it is used to mislead or deceive.

Phrase *unlawful or arbitrary deprivation of life* is used to replace what previously referred as *killing* in 1989 annual report on the status on human rights by the United States Department of State, claiming it is more accurate. Thus, the United States Department of State would be able to avoid discussion of government-sanction killing which is an embarrassing situation. The preceding use of language constitutes doublespeak since it is designed to mislead and cover up the unpleasant. Its real intent is different than its apparent intent; the designed language to alter perception of reality.

### **2.2.2. Jargon**

Fromkin et al (2007, p. 475) states that jargon is used by different professional and social groups which used extensively and has very obscure meaning. It is defined by Yule (2010, p. 259) as special, technical vocabulary associated with a specific area of work or interest. Moreover, lexicographers make collegiate entries for jargon as "the technical terminology or characteristic idiom of a special activity or group" and "words or expression that are used by a particular profession or group of people, and are difficult for others to understand" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary online, 2021; Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary online, 2021).

It could be determined from explanations above that jargon has following properties: technical, used by certain groups of people and difficult for other people outside those groups to understand. This term paper has mentioned several jargon



terms, namely *doublespeak*, *government discourse* and *euphemism*; even the word *jargon* itself is a linguistic jargon.

Brown and Attardo (2005, p. 118) refer jargon as occupational varieties, giving example that postal service workers need developed special terms which are specific, clear, specialized and unambiguous for them to talk about their job. Every profession is the same, even booklets that collect such terminology exist. More established professions such as doctors, lawyers and computer programmers has extremely developed jargon.

Besides providing unambiguous terms for certain groups of people, jargon is also used in not letting others understand, showing off and establishing in-group membership (Brown and Attardo, 2005, p. 118). For example, the word *rhinoplasty* is just a jargon for nose bone plastic surgery to fix its appearance used by doctors. It is jargon that the fact which people who has same occupation converse about their work using words that other people outside of the occupation difficult to understand. Brown and Attardo also state that the two functions are not exclusive, meaning both are achieved at the same time.

However, there are many jargon terms which spread out from a narrow group until used and understood by a large segment of population, passing into the standard language (Fromkin et al, 2007, p. 475). Since technology is more accessible to the general population, computer jargon is use widely today. It seems that everyone knows what *modem*, *bit*, *byte*, *random-access memory* and *central processing unit* mean. Even recent terms such as *cloud storage*, *artificial intelligence* and *cryptocurrency* become increasingly mainstream.

For scientists, it is necessary to use scientific jargon as a mental tool to draw in on the course of their work, particularly, a timely developed set of useful symbols used to aid scientists by representing mental schemes, conceptualizing new facts or discoveries and communicating ideas with peers effectively (Grupp and Heider, 1975; Jucks, 2007; Schulte-Löbbert and Bromme, 2007 as cited in Sharon and Baram-Tsabari, 2014). When communicating science to the public, however, Sharon and Baram-Tsabari suggest scientists to use unfamiliar words minimally and not to use jargon as a mean of making science and scientists viewed positively for the purpose of ensuring clarity.

Outside of the aforementioned functions, jargon can be used in doublespeak when communicating with people outside the group while knowing that the people who are being talked to do not understand the language. Phrase *involuntary conversion of property* for example, it is legitimate for lawyers to use when discussing the loss or destruction of private properties caused by theft, accident or condemnation, since it is expected for the professional group to understand the term. The same phrase can be used by a commercial airline to refer a crashed airplane, killing three and injuring twenty one passengers in an accident during takeoff, which its insurance value is higher than its book value.

The airline company earned profit of three million dollars by the insurance claim of the crashed airplane and has to report the profit without explicitly refer to the crashed airplane, hence "involuntary conversion of a [Boeing] 727" was used in a footnote of the company's shareholder annual report. The phrase is a legal jargon which most shareholder and indeed general public do not understand (Lutz, 1989). Thus, its use in the preceding context constitutes doublespeak.

### **2.2.3. Gobbledygook or Bureaucratese**

Lutz (1989) states that gobbledygook is a matter of piling on words, of overwhelming the audience with words, the bigger the better. The following passage is an example of gobbledygook:

It is a tricky problem to find the particular calibration in timing that would be appropriate to stem the acceleration in risk premiums created by falling incomes without prematurely aborting the decline in the inflation-generated risk premiums. (Philadelphia Inquirer, 1974 as cited in Lutz, 1989)

Stated by Chairman of the United States Council of Economic Advisers Alan Greenspan before a senate committee, it is not assured whether what he was saying is understood by his audience or explains anything. It is language that pretends to communicate but does not.

### **2.2.4. Inflated Language**

Lutz (1989) states that inflated language is designed to make the ordinary seem extraordinary, the common, uncommon, to make everyday things seem impressive, to give an air of importance to people, situations, or things which would

not normally be considered important, to make the simple seem complex. It is often unnecessary and humorous with phrases such as *car mechanics*, *elevator operators* and *used cars* which become *automotive internists*, *vertical transportation corps* and *experienced cars*.

### **2.3. Types of Euphemism**

Allan (2012) explores categories on types of euphemism, one of which is by upgrades, downgrades, deception and obfuscation in which how euphemism that is used to deceive, therefore doublespeak, is formed. There are three strategies that would be used in this term paper in this category: circumlocution, understatement and overstatement which each explanations are in this subchapter.

#### **2.3.1. Circumlocution**

Circumlocution is to use more words than necessary to express or describe the not preferred (Kiling and Jurianto, 2016). Phrases *those on the lower end of the ability scale* and *educationally disadvantaged groups* are used to refer *intellectually disabled children*, thus avoiding the associated unpleasant feeling.

#### **2.3.2. Understatement or Litotes**

Understatement or litotes is affirmative expression which expressed by negating its contrary: *not unintelligent* is an example that refers *stupid*. Burrige (2012) argues that understatement is the most used by bureaucrats. Allan (2012) also considers ironic hedges, which uses ambiguity instead of straightforwardness, as another kind of litotes with phrase *criminal sexual assault* which understates *rape* as an example.

#### **2.3.3. Overstatement or Hyperbole**

Overstatement or hyperbole is the opposite of understatement (Kiling and Jurianto, 2016). For example, phrases *fight to glory* and *villa in a premier location by the bay* overstate *to die* and an *artisan villa*.



## 2.4. Literature Review

This term paper would not be possible without prior researches that function as guidance and reference. The first is conducted in the term paper by Sutantri (2018) titled "Doublespeak in 'La La Land' Movie" that answers three research problems: (1) what kinds of doublespeak used in La La Land movie; (2) what was the most dominant kinds of doublespeak occur in La La Land movie and (3) why did the most dominant kinds of doublespeak occur in La La Land movie using descriptive qualitative method in analyzing the transcript of the movie. It is founded that "La La Land" uses all kinds of doublespeak as in Lutz (1989) theory: euphemism, jargon, gobbledygook and inflated language with euphemism as the most dominant kind (47.22%). The author explains why euphemism is dominant: because of the environment where character Mia and Sebastian live requires the use of a more formal language.

The second prior research is conducted in the term paper by Astuti (2014) titled "Euphemism Used in the Jakarta Post Newspaper" that answers three research problems: (1) what are the types of euphemism used in the Jakarta Post newspaper; (2) what are the styles of euphemism used in the Jakarta Post newspaper and (3) what are the functions of euphemism used in the Jakarta Post newspaper using qualitative method in analyzing text taken from headlines, sports, people, world, lifestyle, business headlines, national, life, opinion and reader's forum section in the newspaper. It is founded that the text in the newspaper has seven out of thirteen types of euphemism as in Allan and Burridge (1991) that includes metaphor, idiom, circumlocution, acronym, hyperbole, metonymy and synecdoche while the rest types which are general-for-specific, hyperbole, litotes, learn terms, denial, euphemistic dysphemism, synecdoche and associative engineering are not present.

The third prior research is conducted in a journal article by Fitriani, Syarif and Wahyuni titled "Euphemism Used by Men and Women in 'Indonesia Lawyers Club' TV One Show: A Language and Gender Perspective" that analyzes types and functions of euphemism on the mentioned television show. Types of euphemism that are used in the journal article are: metaphor, initialism, learn terms, figurative expression and acronym. While functions of euphemism that are used in the journal article are: as shield to avoid taboo and offence, as uplifting tools, as doublespeak,

deceive the reader or listener, or politically correct expression, as tool to define group or show solidarity and as tool to entertain. The result of the research found that the most frequent types of euphemism delivered by men is understatement (11%) while learn terms (17%) is most frequently delivered by women and the most common function of euphemism is doublespeak or politically correct expression which is delivered by both men and women, 19.4% on men, 25% on women, 32% in total.

The reason why these three researchers are selected as literature review is that both use the same and similar theories as this term paper. The first research uses doublespeak theory in Lutz (1989) that distinguishes its kind into four: euphemism, jargon, gobbledygook and inflated language. The second research uses types of euphemism theory in Allan and Burridge (1991) that distinguishes its types into thirteen: metaphor, idiom, circumlocution, acronym, general-for specific hyperbole, litotes, learn terms, denial, euphemistic dysphemism, synecdoche and associative engineering. Finally, the third research uses the same types of euphemism in Allan and Burridge (1991) while stating that one of its usage is doublespeak.

This term paper only uses the euphemism kind of doublespeak while make further explanation on how it is used to sway thought of other people based on its types using upgrades, downgrades, deception and obfuscation category (circumlocution, understatement or litotes and overstatement or hyperbole). Its categorization is done by Allan (2012) from Allan and Burridge (1991).

It is unknown why the authors of the journal article of the third prior research make doublespeak and politically correct expression in the same category when analyzing function of euphemism. However, it can be inferred that frequency in the function of euphemism as doublespeak or politically correct expression used by men, which are fourteen, is likely combined from circumlocution (two), understatement (eight) and overstatement (four) with fourteen in total; meaning that men do not use euphemism as politically correct expression. It explains why Allan (2012) considers circumlocution, understatement and overstatement as one category named upgrades, downgrades, deception and obfuscation.