

# The Study of Euphemism in Social Media: Digital Technology-Based Learning Media Innovation

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This study aims to identify euphemisms used as digital technology-based learning media innovations in social media. The qualitative descriptive method is used to analyse the euphemism data which were described and analysed based on their type and shape. The data were collected using the listening method that was done by listening to the use of euphemisms with description techniques in the form of reading and note-taking techniques. Then those data were analysed using the referential equivalent method and the aggregate method. The results of the analysis were: first, the use of a type of euphemism in social media aimed at smoothing words for a particular purpose, namely figurative expression, circumlocution, hyperbole, and colloquial. Second, the form of euphemism in social media could be used as a digital technology-based learning media innovation. Based on the literature review of previous research, the study of euphemisms in social media as a digital technology-based learning media innovation has never been done by other researchers.

**Key words:** *Euphemism, Learning Media, Digital Technology*

## Introduction

Language as a communication tool is a means to convey the thoughts and feelings of its users in social interaction. Language occupies an important position in human life, namely as a means of communication in accordance with the circumstances of the social environment. Language represents the culture of society which is related to politeness in language related to behaviour in daily life. In this regard, the existence of euphemism is not merely a refinement of language, but

also directly or indirectly as a tangible form of social rules regarding language that may be used and may not be used in society.

Word refinement is used to replace expressions that have a negative connotation towards something or a certain party that is deemed not good, disliked, or not respected in the communication process. Al-Khasawneh defines linguistic courtesy as follows: (1) the use of language related to smooth communication is first realised through the use of a deliberate strategy by the speaker to allow his message to be well received by the recipient; and (2) the choice of speaker expression is adjusted to the expected norms of speech and / or is determined according to the contextual situation in each speech community. In this regard, language has a metafunction, namely exposure, exchange, and coupling of experience or organisation (Al-Khasawneh, 2018).

One of the language forms in communication is the use of euphemisms in social media that has a purpose for smoothing words. Euphemism is the right language adjustment for different situations. Halmari suggests that euphemisms are words or phrases that are used instead of expressions that are not approved in communication. The use of euphemism in social media has a strategic role as a communication medium because it can be accessed by the public (Halmari, 2011).

A research on euphemisms is carried out by Eliya entitled "Euphemism and Disphemism in the Najwa Notes 'Regional Young Women': Patterns, Forms, and Meanings". The object is the speech used in Mata Najwa program which was broadcasted by one of television stations. The results of the study are: (1) euphemisms are more widely used in Mata Najwa program than dysphemism; and (2) referring to the choice of word, euphemism in Mata Najwa program tends to aim at refining words (Eliya, 2017).

Another research on euphemisms is carried out by Puspidalia entitled "Euphemism in Two Novels of Grief for Love as a Form of Language Courage". The object of this research is the use of euphemisms in novels "Roro Mendut" and "San Pek Eng Tay". The results of the study are: (1) euphemisms in the form of words and phrases have the form and function of figurative expressions, one word to replace the other words, the use of absorption words, flipansi, metaphor, idiom, hyperbole, metaphor and hyperbole, as well as metaphor and personification; (2) figurative euphemism is the most used expressive form in the novels; (3) politeness of language used in novels is maxim of generosity (Puspidalia, 2018).

The research on euphemisms by Sabarua entitled "Euphemism as an Alternative Politeness in Language Interaction in Learning in Class" is part of pragmatic studies. The object of this research is the utterances used by teachers and students in the classroom learning activities. The results of the study are: (1) euphemism is used as an alternative to dampen the teacher's speaking or language activities that are nuanced of violence, racism, and harassment in expressions that are not pleasant and have a negative impact on student's development; (2) forms of euphemism are used to replace words about death, sex, illness and disability, excretion, social reality that is

considered bad, bad luck, bad character, and things that cause dangerous conditions (Sabarua, 2019).

Research on euphemism in social media as a learning media innovation based on digital technology has never been done in the previous studies. Therefore, this research is interesting to do because it identifies euphemisms in social media as learning media innovations in schools based on digital technology. Based on this background, the following problems are formulated: (1) what are the types and forms of euphemisms in social media?; and (2) how is the use of euphemisms in social media used as digital technology-based learning media innovations? This research is interesting to do because it is as an innovation in the use of instructional media in schools in accordance with the times that is based on digital technology.

## Literature Review

### *Euphemism*

The word 'euphemism' is etymologically derived from the Greek *euphemismos* with the prefix / eu / which means 'good' and *phemi* which means 'to speak'. Farghal defines euphemism as a mild, indirect, and vague expression for someone considered offensive, violent, or blunt. The meaning of 'euphemism' literally means 'good sign words' or 'good words'. Understanding euphemism in general means knowing how to use indirect words or phrases to replace direct words to be more acceptable to language users (Deng, 2016; Farghal, 1995).

Euphemism is used to manipulate taboo words, immodesty, and dirty words so that they can be accepted by language users. Laili suggests that the existence of euphemisms is to hide ideas or ideas that are not pleasant, even though the conditions are not always painful. Language as an important element in daily life has a figurative form which is used as the most common tool in euphemisation (Laili, 2016). Rabab'ah says euphemisms are used to avoid 'taboo' and express 'politeness'. Universal euphemism is the use of politely expressed language to replace or avoid the use of taboo terms (Rabab'ah & Al-Qarni, 2012).

The euphemism functions to avoid taboo words or expressions, for example the word 'death' is a taboo for some people so that the phrase 'go to heaven' is used. Mualafina relates it to the understanding of the word taboo in English, namely the use of offensive language or that is classified as taboo language related to sex, limbs and functions, as well as curse to others which refers to a number of things that cause discomfort (Mualafina, 2017). Unpopular expressions are taboo, scary, unpleasant, or for other reasons have negative connotations in the communication process. In line with this, Fernández suggests euphemism by referring to the thought of 'face', which is an expression that tends to 'avoid the possibility of the other person losing face by the speaker' because they feel mistreated in the communication process (Crespo Fernández, 2014). Therefore, euphemisms are used as avoidance strategies with a view to improve the situation as an alternative to unwanted expressions and avoiding possible loss of face (Thawabteh, 2012).

### ***Learning Media Innovation***

Learning media innovation needs to be done to achieve learning objectives. Gagne states that learning media is various types of components in the student environment that can stimulate them to think. According to Falahudin, the term media comes from Latin which means 'medium', while literally it means intermediary or introduction. Teaching and learning process is basically also a communication process that can channel information from the sources to the recipients, so that the media used in learning is called learning media. In line with the opinion of Asyhari et al., i.e. learning media is defined as anything that can be used to channel messages, encourage the thoughts, feelings, attention, and willingness of students, so as to encourage and motivate the learning process (Asyhari & Silvia, 2016; Falahudin, 2014; Triyanto et al., 2013).

Forms of instructional media are used to foster learning experiences so that they can be concrete. The main function of learning media is as a teaching aid that also influences the climate, conditions, and learning environment which are arranged and created by the teachers and can be used to clarify the presentation of the message so as not to be too verbalistic (only in the form of words or mere verbal), and overcome the limitations of space, time, and sense power, by using instructional media. The teaching and learning process then becomes more varied and can increase student activity (Hasmiana, 2016).

Therefore, educators must be able to make or determine learning media that is appropriate to the needs and developments of the times. The use of teaching media can help the achievement of learning success (Mahnun, 2012). Social media can be used as an easily accessible learning media because almost all students have social media. One form of language use in the form of euphemisms in social media can be presented as teaching material in the class. The use of euphemism in social media as a digital technology-based learning media innovation will be easily understood by students because it is in accordance with the times.

### **Method**

This study uses descriptive qualitative methods. The data are in the form of euphemisms in social media described and analysed based on the types and forms used as innovations in digital technology-based learning media. Euphemistic data in the form of words, phrases and sentences used in the social media Twitter #bengawanm Call #bengawanmelawan in September 2019, were collected. The object of the research is the types and forms of euphemisms that can be used as innovative digital media-based learning media.

The data collection technique used in this research was listening to the use of euphemisms in Twitter social media, followed by describing them in the form of reading and note-taking (Sudaryanto, 1993). The reading technique was done by reading and observing carefully and thoroughly the data that has characteristics as the type and form of euphemism. The note-taking technique was done by observing the types and forms of euphemisms on Twitter social media.

The data analysis technique used the referential equivalent method and the aggregate method (Sudaryanto, 1993). The referential equivalent method used certain elemental selectivity techniques to find out the different forms of euphemisms referred to and designated by lingual units in the form of words, phrases, or sentences by using mental disaggregation. The distribution method used techniques for direct elements, followed by dressing techniques and expanded techniques, to analyse the forms and types of euphemisms.

## Findings and Discussion

### *Euphemisms in Social Media*

Euphemism in social media Twitter is a form of word refinement which is classified into 4, namely: figurative expressions, circumlocution, hyperbole, and colloquial. The four types of euphemisms are identified based on the opinion of Allan and Burrige (Puspitalia, 2018), namely figurative expressions, metaphors, flipsies, remodelling or reshaping, circumfluence, clippings, acronyms, abbreviations of words into several letters, impingement, one word for replacing other words, general words to specific, some for the whole, hyperbole, the meaning of the word outside the statement apart from the word, jargon, and colloquial.

Forms of euphemism used in social media Twitter are words, groups of words, and sentences. Those are presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Types and Forms of Euphemisms in Social Media Twitter

	Types	Forms
1	Figurative expression	(1) bare handed, (2) the lowest population, (3) middle class, (4) low class;
2	circumlocution	(5) this spirit has not been extinguished, (6) our saved energy decreased and show them, (7) attacks from 12 points of compass;
3	hyperbole	(8) the laying, (9) the power of spells;
4	colloquial	(10) negotiating, (11) conscience, (12) aspiration, (13) go on strike, (14) have common sense, (15) mental illness and disorder.

Based on Table 1 above, the types and forms of euphemisms in Twitter social media are described as follows.

### ***Figurative Expressive***

Smoothness of words in communication on social media can be realised by using symbols or figures of speech. Figurative expression is a form of euphemism as symbolic, like, or figurative (Puspidalia, 2018). The types and forms of euphemisms as figurative expressions are copied from social media on Twitter #bengawanmallip #bengawanmelawan in September 2019 as follows:

(1) @aldiponegoro. "Students' bare hands are confronted with tear gas. Some female students became victims. Very heartless"

The figurative expressive form of euphemism in data (1) is *bare hands* in the form of noun phrases. The meaning of *bare hands* is 'unarmed' (KBBI, 2016). The purpose of using this expression is to symbolise the irony of the situation in the strike that unarmed students are attacked by officers with tear gas. The euphemism function in data (1) is as a symbol of a condition that is 'without resistance' when attacked as shown by the use of 'unarmed'.

(2) @poormanLA. "We the lowest people refuse"

The figurative expressive euphemism in data (2) is *the lowest people*. The purpose of the use of *the lowest people* is the refinement of the word 'poor people', which means that they tend to be rude, they do not have property or their economic groups are weak. The use of these words aims to avoid the use of expressions that tend to mean rude so as not to offend certain parties included in the poor people.

(3) @Baskoroaris\_. "So the next question is ... Can the elements of the public, especially the middle class in Surabaya, continue to struggle to voice demands on the government in a state of momentum that is separated from # Corruption Corruption and #gejayan, calling"

The figurative expressive form of euphemism in data (3) is *the middle class* or *middle income group*. The use of *middle-class* phrases has subtle meanings that is that they are not rich and not poor in which these words seem to be rude in meaningful. The purpose of using *middle class* phrases is to avoid meanings that can offend certain groups in society.

(4) @agilsadid. " Suddenly my hands were shaking when a number of pedicab drivers approaching and saying" thank you, mas, for demonstrating, we small people have been represented "in front of tirtonadi"

The figurative expressive euphemism in data (4) is *small people*. The meaning of *small people* is the commoners who live modestly or poorly which tends to mean rude. The purpose of this euphemism is to avoid the use of meaningful expressions which tend to be rude and not offend certain circles in society.

### ***Circumlocution***

Smoothing of words in communication on social media can be realised by using phrases or sentences whose meanings have a particular purpose. The type of circumlocutionary euphemism

is the use of longer and indirect words (Puspidalia, 2018). The types and forms of circumlocutionary euphemisms are copied from social media on Twitter #bengawanm calling #bengawanmelawan in September 2019 as follows.

(5) @BoisDhik "This spirit is not extinguished"

The form of circulatory euphemism in data (5) is that *this spirit has not been extinguished*. The meaning of the word 'extinguished' is to stop, weak, or despair. This form of euphemism refers to the power of students in going on strike in which they do not despair. The purpose of using euphemisms in data (5) is to provide support to students to remain enthusiastic in doing demonstrations by using subtle sentence choices.

(6) @RamosChaniago "Save our energy down and show" them "that we are never afraid of the oppressors"

The form of circulatory euphemism in data (6) is *Save our energy down and show "them"*. The purpose of using the euphemism is to invite participants to prepare themselves for student demonstration activities. Furthermore, it is used to refine the word 'preparation for demonstration' as a longer choice of words.

(7) @MabacaCommunity. "What's wrong, the #UniversitasGajahMati is really crowded. Is this the fruit of some alumni who harassed #gejayan, called #gejayan, called, then now there are attacks from 12 directions of the compass points"

The form of circulatory euphemism in data (7) is *an attack from 12 directions of the compass points*. The meaning is that it is beaten and tends to have a negative meaning. The purpose of using euphemisms in data (7) is to eliminate negative impressions by using the long form to smooth words in social media.

### ***Hyperbole***

Smoothing of words in communication in social media can be realised by using phrases or sentences that have hyperbole meaning for a particular purpose. Hyperbole or excessive expressions are rhetorical tools used by language users to say or write things that make things sound more impressive than they really are by exaggerating (Puspidalia, 2018; Thawabteh, 2012). The types and forms of hyperbole euphemisms are copied from social media on Twitter #bengawanm calling #bengawanmelawan in September 2019 as follows:

(8) @yopi\_prio "It's too much if the laying men go down the road"

The form of hyperbole euphemism in data (8) is *laying*. This form of hyperbole euphemism refers to the conditions associated with laying people, those who do not like to work, just sleep, or are lazy to move. The condition of the laying is assumed to be a part of moving in demonstrations for the sake of changing the situation of the country for the better. The purpose of using euphemism in data (8) is to smooth out the word 'unemployment' which is identical to laziness which is considered to be rude or seem rude.

(9) @AimanWitjaksono. "Power of Spells"

The form of hyperbole euphemism in data (9) is *the power of spells*. The meaning tends to lead to magical powers in rituals performed by shamans. The purpose of using euphemisms in data

(9) is to avoid using words that tend to have negative values in communication in social media.

### ***Colloquial***

Smoothing of words in communication in social media can be realised by using phrases or sentences that are commonly used in everyday life. Colloquial euphemisms in the form of expressions are used in daily life (Puspidalia, 2018). The types and forms of colloquial euphemisms are copied from social media on Twitter #bengawanm calling #bengawanmelawan in September 2019 as follows.

(10) @ hasmiyanti44. "He said earlier we were allowed to go in but what was the reality was 30 minutes later the police came storming and throwing tear gas at us all, THIS IS WHAT YOU REALLY WANT BY NEGOTIATING WITH US !!!".

The form of colloquial euphemism in data (10) is *negotiating*. The meaning of negotiating is 'bargaining' between the demonstrators and demonstration security officers and this word tends to have a bad meaning. The purpose of using euphemisms in data (10) is to avoid negative meanings by refining words in communication on social media.

(11) @AlvinRidho "When we choose to be quiet. It is questionable "where is my conscience ???"

The form of colloquial euphemism in data (11) is *conscience*. The meaning of conscience is a sense of humanity and this meaning tends to offend others as 'who do not have a sense of humanity'. The purpose of using euphemisms in data (11) is to avoid offending certain parties by refining words in communication in social media.

(12) @agil\_y. "Our peace action was poisoned by provocateurs who are not part of us, sir !! We don't need tear gas but we just want to voice our aspirations ”

The form of colloquial euphemism in data (12) is *to voice our aspirations*. The meaning is to 'protest' which tends to be less polite and seems negative. The purpose of using euphemisms in data (12) is to avoid negative meanings in communication in social media.

(13) @Fatihhaw. "On Tuesday, September 24, 2019, students from various universities in Surakarta gathered at the Surakarta DPRD office to hold an action titled #BngawanMawanawan ... Next, let the photos speak. Do you want to take these photos? Really, don't forget the credit, huh –Photo Thread- ”

The form of colloquial euphemism in data (13) is *to hold action*. It means 'demonstration' which tends to have a negative meaning related to protests that lead to anarchism. The purpose of using euphemisms in data (13) is to avoid negative impressions in communication in social media.

(14) @Tpranawisanty. "Those who still have common sense inshaa Allah can judge, what is the future of this country? Innalillahi "

The form of colloquial euphemism in data (14) is *common sense*. This means not crazy or sane and it tends to have rude meanings. The purpose of using euphemisms in data (13) is to avoid the use of harsh words in communication in social media.

(15) @BadjaNuswantara. "Religion of mental medicine, over dosage becomes mental illness. Those who have mental disorders are not natural. The initial feature, FEEL MOST TRUE. # Let's Fight Radicalism makes a NATIONAL MOVEMENT. In order not to be CRAZY the state of religious overdose is contagious "

The form of colloquial euphemism in data (15) is *mental illness* and *mental disorders*. The meaning of those words are 'crazy' which tends to have a negative impression. The purpose of using euphemisms in data (15) is to avoid negative meanings in communication in social media.

### ***Euphemism in Social Media as Learning Media Innovations***

#### ***Teaching materials***

Learning about euphemisms is a means to direct students towards understanding norms and patterns in communication. This form of euphemism in social media can be utilised as a learning media innovation in Indonesian subjects in accordance with 2013 curriculum which was implemented in IX grade of SMP with KD 3.9 and 4.9 (Permendikbud Number 37 Year 2018). Activities undertaken by students in class are: (1) identifying discussion text information in the form of pro and contra opinions from actual problems; and (2) summarising the contents of ideas, opinions, arguments that support and are against, as well as solutions to actual problems in the discussion text that is heard and read.

A form of euphemism in social media Twitter is used as teaching material in the classroom as a learning media innovation in accordance with the times. Rohati states that teaching materials are all forms of materials used for teachers in carrying out teaching and learning activities. Digital technology-based learning media can be applied in the classroom as innovations that are in line with today's digital era, particularly with regard to the use of social media (Rohati, 2011).

The use of euphemism in social media Twitter can be used as a learning media innovation because language functions as exchanging ideas, thoughts, and views in an open democratic system in today's digital era. The use of euphemisms in social media is part of the information disclosure process because it can be accessed by all users of social media. A form of euphemism in social media Twitter used as teaching material is presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Forms of Euphemism as Teaching Material

	Form	Equivalent
1	bare hand	unarmed
2	the lowest people	poor people
3	the middle class	not rich and not poor
4	Poor people	commoners, poor
5	this spirit has not been extinguished	not hopeless
6	<i>Save our energy</i> down and show them	preparation before protest
7	Attacked from 12 points of compass	Was beaten, beating
8	The laying people	unemployed, lazy, unwilling to work
9	The power of spells	occult rituals, shaman's work
10	Negotiate	bargaining
11	Conscience	humanity
12	Aspiration	protest
13	Go on strike	demonstration
14	Have common sense	not crazy, sane
15	Mental illness and disorder	crazy

The form of euphemism in Table 2 as a word refinement is juxtaposed with its equivalent which tends to be subtle. Teaching material in the form of euphemisms from social media is chosen in order to be easily understood by students. According to Febrianjaya, the use of euphemism and dysphemism has goals, functions, benefits, and effects that affect the psychological state of people, both for the readers or listeners (Febrianjaya et al., 2013). Hormingo places euphemism and dysphemism as 'two variants of the style chosen by the speaker depending on his communicative intention which is to weaken or intensify the taboo' (Hormingo & Tadea, 2012). This form of euphemism and its equivalent is used as teaching material for students presented in the discussion text. Students are directed to find equivalent words that mean less polite, less subtle, or seem rude. Lumbantobing suggests that a system of teaching and learning activities contains a number of components which include objectives, teaching materials, and teaching methods or teaching approaches to achieve the goals set in classroom learning. The purpose of the discussion activities about euphemisms and their equivalents is that students can distinguish between soft and rude words in daily communication activities (Lumbantobing, 2019).

### ***Evaluation***

The form of euphemism as teaching material is an innovation in the use of digital technology-based learning media that is interesting and easily understood by students. Puryadi et al. suggests that the learning model used by the teacher is expected to be able to facilitate the teachers in delivering the material so that students can master the concepts properly and correctly. Euphemism is used as a learning medium so students can use subtle words to replace harsh words in daily life, especially in social media. Forms of euphemism can be used as an example for



students in social media by using polite language (Puryadi et al., 2018).

The evaluation of learning outcomes about euphemisms can be done by the teachers by monitoring the use of appropriate language by students in social media. Students can use subtle choice of words so as not to offend others so that harmonious communication is created. Students can also choose forms of euphemism to express opinions in subtle ways such as offending others, expressing anger, or creating an atmosphere of humor. A culture of politeness in communicating language as a learning goal can be achieved by the use of language and choice of appropriate words in everyday life, especially the use of soft words in social media. The use of forms of euphemism by students in social media can be used as an evaluation material for teachers.

### **Conclusion**

Euphemism in social media is used as a refinement of words in new forms of words, phrases and sentences of meanings that tend to be negative and harsh. Based on a study of the types and forms of euphemisms in social media that are used as digital technology-based learning media innovations, it is concluded as follows:

First, the type of euphemism used in social media Twitter is classified into 4 (four), namely: (1) figurative expressions, namely: bare hands, the lowest people, middle class, small people; (2) circumlocution, namely: this spirit has not been extinguished, save our energy down and show them, attacks from 12 points of the compass; (3) hyperbole, that is: the laying, the power of the spell; and (4) colloquial, namely: negotiating, conscience, aspirations, go on strike, have common sense, mental illness and disorders. Second, the form of euphemism and it's equivalent in social media Twitter can be used as teaching material in the classroom as an innovative digital technology-based learning media.

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