

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Media is one of the most important tools that establishes and maintains interaction with society (Kalotong 2020). In delivering the information, the media has authority and influence in determining people's knowledge of a particular event and attitudes toward it (Ryabova 2013). Therefore, the media holds position of control by classifying what kind of information that will be presented or not and how the information will generate the people's knowledge and opinion toward a particular issue (Fog 2013).

Media utilises certain language expressions to precisely deliver the information that may provoke attention and enthusiasm of the readers, such as euphemism and dysphemism. Euphemism and dysphemism are effective language devices to frame news on media as means to control and provoke people's perspective and reactions toward certain topics (Crespo-Fernández 2013; Ryabova 2013). The presence of euphemism and dysphemism is significant as it helps the media to deliver news based on its designated motives, such as to downgrade or upgrade the denotatum, to show approval or disapproval regarding a particular issue (Allan and Burrridge 1991). It is related to the characteristic of euphemism and dysphemism because it provides alternatives of which one is written, which one is not, which one is explicitly expressed, and which one is concealed (Allan and Burrridge 1991). Therefore, the use of euphemism and dysphemism is common in

the media, including newspapers (Maulana, Aziz, and Daud 2020). The language expressions hold a significant role in attracting the readers' interest and precisely delivering the topic in desirable terms, that means to avoid conflicts (euphemism) or as means to criticize or offend something or someone (dysphemism) (Allan and Burridge 1991).

Euphemism and dysphemism are expressions in which the study belongs to the field of pragmatics. Because in determining whether the expression is an euphemism or dysphemism, the context in which the expression is embedded is significant as a contextual aspect in determining politeness or appropriateness (Allan and Burridge 1991). Euphemism is a language expression that is preferred as an alternative in expressing unpleasant, taboo, and offensive terms in a way that is inoffensive, mild, and more polite (Allan 2012). In this term, Allan (2012) defines that the main focus of euphemism is to fend off the potential offensiveness to be more polite. Furthermore, Kate Burridge (2012) defines euphemism as an expression that sounds sweet or polite in expressing taboo or inappropriate terms and avoided in a certain communication context (Burridge 2012).

Based on its purposes, Kate Burridge (Burridge 2012) categorised euphemism into six functions, namely protective euphemism, underhand euphemism, uplifting euphemism, provocative euphemism, cohesive euphemism, and ludic euphemism. Rawson (1981) added that euphemism is not merely used to soften the derogatory terms but also to disguise the fact that is terrifying or sensitive, such as topic about death and sensitive facts such as sex. Therefore, euphemism is often considered

dishonest or misleading for its function to disguise the true fact by concealing the unpleasant or unfavourable truth to avoid negative connotations (Burridge 2012).

Dysphemism is the counterpart of euphemism, in the means of confronting, insulting, or exaggerating something or someone (the denotatum) (Allan and Burridge 1991). Dysphemism is used to refer to the terms in a more offensive or non-neutral way. It is described as a strategy of ‘speaking offensively’ that functions as an insult, humiliation, or overstating a certain condition or situation in addressing either the denotatum or the audience (Allan and Burridge 1991; 2006). Allan (2012) added that dysphemism may display intimacy by using it in a non-dysphemistic way. Furthermore, Allan and Burridge (1991) state that the functions of dysphemism are to downgrade the denotatum, characterise the identity of a certain community, show anger, accentuate a state or condition, represent the bad situation, show intimacy, and express something astonishing. Furthermore, Crespo-Fernandez (2013) added that dysphemism also functions as a persuasive approach in a manipulative way by controlling society and directing ideological or political attitudes.

The phenomenon of euphemism and dysphemism is found in the context concerning public communication such as the media. Hence, the use of euphemism and dysphemism in discussing the topic of COVID-19 is inevitable concerning that the situation has a global impact. Language choices in expressing particular terms, especially sensitive issues such as the circumstance of COVID-19 pandemic is important (Olimat 2020a). In discussing the information about the pandemic that massively affected the major aspects of the world, the choices of appropriate

language are necessary due to the effects that might mentally or emotionally agitate the interlocutors (Olimat 2020a). The pandemic has created a major impact that has affected major parts of life and given mentally traumatic experiences to the majority of people who suffered physically, psychologically, or even economically (Abdullah 2020; Pitoyo, Aditya, and Amri 2020). Therefore, people tend to be more attentive in discussing COVID-19 and utilise certain language expressions in discussing the topic, especially in front of the public (Olimat 2020a).

The study attempts to examine the use of euphemism and dysphemism in The Jakarta Post online news articles about COVID-19 in Indonesia. Online media is chosen as the object because the pandemic highly limits people's mobility and changes people's habits significantly in multi-dimensional aspects of life, including social interaction and activities which change into online activities (Siste et al. 2020). Therefore, people tend to use more online platforms, including to access news and information. Furthermore, The Jakarta Post is developing significantly on its digital platform, and its readers have increased over the last three years, both nationally and internationally, according to *Kastara.id* news ("Pemred The Jakarta Post Pastikan Korannya Tetap Terbit" 2020). Furthermore, The Jakarta Post is one of the leading English online newspapers in Indonesia (Eklöf 2003; Sukendar and Budi 2020). The Jakarta Post is also one of the most influential and famous news media in Indonesia (Avrianti 2014). It is a part of the Asia News network, and the media which targets readers from both Indonesian and international citizens, has now increased its visibility through digitalised content (Tarrant 2008).

The Jakarta Post is chosen because it is known as a famous English news media in Indonesia and has framed news about the COVID-19 pandemic, such as good news related to the pandemic (Hutabarat et al. 2020). In order to attract the reader's interest, the media utilises variative styles of language expression, such as euphemism and dysphemism (Winita and Ermanto 2019). The euphemism is used to deliver desirable information that may arouse the readers' attention by avoiding negative connotations about the topic of COVID-19. The news media also utilised dysphemism as the means to refer to a particular term in a more non-neutral and explicit way, which is used to explicitly denote the situation of COVID-19 In Indonesia.

The data is in the form of words and phrases that are expressed as either euphemism or dysphemism in the news articles of The Jakarta Post. Several examples of dysphemism found in The Jakarta Post are "*War on Coronavirus*", "*lethal virus*", and "*grim result*". These are hyperbolic dysphemisms used to exaggerate and represent the terrible situation caused by the pandemic and the danger of the novel coronavirus itself. Allan and Burridge (1991) define hyperbole as a dysphemistic expression if it is aimed to exaggerate and speak blatantly about a sensitive topic. Furthermore, some examples of euphemisms found in The Jakarta Post Online are "*to welcome*" and "*gear up*". These euphemisms are a kind of verbal play that positively depicts the state of government's readiness and the situation in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Allan (2012), verbal play euphemism involves the use of metaphorical and figurative language to express something that is unpleasant or unfavourable.

Based on the explanation, the study aims to analyse the use of both euphemism and dysphemism in the news articles about the COVID-19 pandemic. Several scholars have conducted previous studies on euphemism and dysphemism in different contexts of media and also studies related to the COVID-19 pandemic. A related study by Adilah (2020) studied the use of euphemism and dysphemism in political news in newspapers entitled *The Euphemism in 'US and North Korea Summit' News Articles of the New York Times Online*. It investigated the types and the functions of euphemism in the news article about the US and North Korea Summit from the *New York Times Online Newspaper*. The previous study about dysphemism related to the topic of COVID-19 is study by Olimat (2020b) entitled *Words as Powerful Weapons: Dysphemism in Trump's Covid-19 speeches*. It examined the use of dysphemism and interpreted the dysphemism found in verbal discourse uttered by Donald Trump in his speeches about COVID-19. Previous study about the use of euphemism and dysphemism in discussing the topic of COVID-19 is a study by Olimat (2020a) entitled *COVID-19 Pandemic: Euphemism and Dysphemism in Jordanian Arabic*. In the study, Olimat (2020a) studied the communication discourse within Jordanian society and investigated the use of euphemism and dysphemism while discussing the topic of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Among the previous studies, none of the studies analyse the use of both euphemism and dysphemism within news articles in regard to the topic of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study attempts to analyse both euphemism and dysphemism in the news articles about the COVID-19 pandemic in The Jakarta

Post. The research object of the present studies are news articles written by Indonesian media in English language. The study attempts to analyse how euphemism and dysphemism used to discuss the topic related to the COVID-19 pandemic within news articles. It reveals how non-English natives use euphemism and dysphemism, particularly in news media in reporting about the sensitive issue. In this regard, Indonesian journalists in using English euphemism and dysphemism to talk about particular topics related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis on both euphemism and dysphemism may open the perspective that these language devices are inseparable in public writing, such as in news media. Due to the influence on what fact and truth that is approvable or unprovable to be presented to the public.

1.2 Statements of The Problem

Based on the description of the background, the statements of the problem are formulated in the form of two research questions below:

1. What are the types of euphemism and dysphemism used in the Jakarta Post online news articles about COVID-19 in Indonesia?
2. What are the functions of the euphemism and dysphemism used in the Jakarta Post online news articles about COVID-19 in Indonesia?

1.3 Objectives of The Study

Based on the statements of the problem, the study aims to accomplish two objectives below:

1. To identify the types of euphemism and dysphemism used in the Jakarta Post online news articles about COVID-19 in Indonesia.
2. To analyse the functions of the euphemism and dysphemism used in the Jakarta Post online news articles about COVID-19 in Indonesia.

1.4 Significance of The Study

The writer expects that the study will provide both theoretical and practical benefits. The result of the study is expected to give a contribution of knowledge in the branch of linguistics, particularly in the fields of pragmatics and discourse analysis. Theoretically, the study may contribute to the development of understanding euphemism and dysphemism in news discourse by providing analysis of these language devices in the textual context as the basis in analysing the news discourse. Likewise, it is expected to provide more knowledge as literature for future researchers in analysing euphemism and dysphemism, particularly in the news articles.

The study also is expected to be practically beneficial to the content writer of news media, such as journalists. By understanding general knowledge of euphemism and dysphemism in the news articles, the journalists will be able to choose proper language expressions in delivering information such as determining what expression should or not should be used in writing news, especially about sensitive topics such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the study will provide knowledge to the people in comprehending the meaning of news language, specifically when it talks about a major issue such as a virus pandemic.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

Euphemism	: The term that is preferable as an alternative in expressing sensitive, taboo, or offensive topic in a way that is mild, more polite, and pleasant (Allan 2012).
Dysphemism	: The term that is used to express the word in more offensive manner to confront, insult, or exaggerate the addressee or the audience (Allan and Burrige 2006).
COVID-19	: A contagious disease caused by novel coronavirus, namely severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Weissleder et al. 2020).
The Jakarta Post	: Online platform of the news that is known as leading English online newspaper in Indonesia (Eklöf 2003).