

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of The Study

Media is in the center of a struggle for power and control in any society (McChesney 2004). Media also has much potential to influence public's attitudes and bring much attention to guide public's opinions (Dickson 1992). Media producers determine their influence; they have the power to choose which facts or stories are included or excluded, how events are presented, and how viewers are positioned as the subject of the media. Thus, the primary function of media is framing the information in a desirable ideological perspective, and the producers emphasize this power in media appropriately by using precise language devices such as euphemism, the most effective control for power in the media (Ryabova 2013).

As Orwell stated in Ryabova, "...political speech and writing are largely the defenses of the indefensible. Political language consists largely of euphemism, question-begging, and sheer cloudy vagueness" (Ryabova 2013). This statement relates to the definition of euphemism mentioned by Brekle (1989), euphemism is a sort of semantic camouflage and an instrument to frame the mindset or the ideology of the mass (Brekle 1989).

Originally, euphemism is derived from Greek roots, it is made up of *eu-* which means good, and *pheme*, which denotes speech, voice, utterance, or speaking (Šebková 2012). In a broad definition, Burrige (2012) considered euphemism as a sweet or at least harmless alternative to phrases that speakers or

authors prefer not to use in the execution of a specific communicative purpose on a specific occasion (Burrige 2012). Rawson (1981) also stated that euphemisms are certain words that are considered subtle, indirect, and well suited in order to be used in replace to the rude, outrageous, and abusive words. As in the news broadcast, about the development of nuclear weapons can be delivered differently by using different word choices (euphemism). It can be reported as the news about technological development (Ryabova 2013). Therefore, how a topic is presented can bring different influences to public's attitude towards the topic depending on the words used.

Allan (2012) in his journal article classifies 11 types of euphemism formation; Remodeling; Contractions; General-for-specific; Part-for-whole euphemism; Upgrades, downgrades, deceptions, and obfuscations; Substitution; Appearance-based metaphor; Color-based metaphor; Sound-based metaphors or onomatopoeia; Smell, taste, and touch-based X-phemism; and Verbal play. Along with the types of euphemism formation, Allan and Burrige also state that there are two significant euphemism functions in order to maintain a low profile, which are to obscuring and disguising disagreeable reality and to seek more attention by doing something humorous with language. Further, Burrige (2012) classifies six functions of euphemism. Those are protective, underhand, uplifting, provocative, cohesive, and ludic euphemism.

The use of euphemism is not limited to only a domain of life as it appears in almost every area. In media, euphemism is used as a tool to comply, manipulate, avoid humiliation, and avoid offensive or harsh words (Takoua 2015). Euphemism

is also beneficial to exaggerate the meaning and status of subjects or events. It is even used to relieve and enhance the effects of occurrences or facts, such as wife-beating, which refers to *domestic violence* or *spousal abuse* (Takoua 2015). In political and military situations, euphemism found in the events that are morally and legally unwanted. It is used as a mollified tool to make words harmless-- for example, political and military expression *collateral damage* refers to shedding the blood of innocent and unarmed people in war (Takoua 2015).

Study of euphemism is known among the researchers in linguistic areas, both in oral communication and written media, such as newspapers. Euphemism in newspaper is used to avoid unpleasant words and makes it easier to be accepted by society since euphemized terms tend to be politer or proper (Burrige 2012). The journalists of newspapers also use language tools to make the news look more appealing while providing facts and analysis. In this study, the writer chooses to analyze the euphemism in the political scope of the *World* section in the *New York Times* online newspaper and focuses on one event, namely the US-North Korea Summit. The choice for this scope is determined by the fact that media pay close attention to the political issues, and the news about political developments often figure prominently (Roşcan n.d.).

The *New York Times* online newspaper was chosen because it is a well-known US newspaper owned by a publicly-traded media company. As a public company, the *New York Times* online newspaper is supposed not to relate to any political party directly. However, according to a 2007 survey conducted by Rasmussen Reports, as stated in the *All Sides* website, 40% of survey takers

believed the *New York Times* had a liberal bias (AllSides n.d.). Trump also criticized the *New York Times* by calling the newspaper as having ‘fake news’. As written in one of his tweets, ‘... the FAKE NEWS @nytimes is still lost!’ (Morin 2017). Moreover, Dean Baquet (a top editor of the *New York Times*) said that the primary focus of the *New York Times* is more to investigate Trump’s racist character rather than focus on the storyline of the news reporting about the Trump-Russia connection (Feinberg 2019). Through this study, the writer is exploring the euphemism used in the *New York Times* online newspaper when delivering the Summit news focusing on Trump. From the analysis, it might show how the US people depict their president, Donald Trump, using euphemism in media mass, notably indicated by journalists.

Language used in newspapers is recognized as a particular variety of styles that is characterized by a specific communicative purpose and its system of language (Goumovskaya 2007). This study focuses on the content of news articles to look more on how euphemism is being used in the news articles for specific communicative purposes. As a part of news articles, news headlines are also studied because, according to Kuiken et al. (2017), the aim of news headlines is more than to give readers a clear idea of the content of news articles. News headlines use to catch readers’ attention and to lure them into the story. By studying online news headlines, we can demonstrate how even just a few words chosen by the journalists could attract attention to a particular piece of content, hide ideological meanings, regardless of whether the ideologies uncovered demonstrate a direct correlation to the corresponding article. (Lombardi 2018). One example of news headlines which

use a particular linguistics style to create a catchy word, in this case, euphemism, was found in the *New York Times* online newspaper. Two examples of euphemism used in the *New York Times* online are *Vague on Details, Trump Is Betting on 'Special Bond' With Kim to Deliver Deal*. The words *betting* and *special bond* are used to hyperbole the journalist's depiction of Trump's decision in the Summit and the relationship between the US and North Korea President.

In US-North Korea Summit, the two main actors were President of the US, Donald Trump, and President of North Korea, Kim Jong-Un. However, this study only focuses on one actor, Donald Trump, who is known for his straight and offensive talk. He harshly spoke about broke up trade deals, criticized allies, and praised enemies. Moreover, he criticized opponents, religious groups, the disabled, and women (Kow 2015). Despite his speaking style, his popularity grew well all around the world. This odd phenomenon triggered the writers to look a little bit more about how the media depict Trump himself. This study also focuses on how euphemism is used about Trump and the US-North Korea Summit on the news articles of the *New York Times* Online.

Many studies about the use of euphemism in media discourse have been conducted. One of those was the study conducted by Avrianti (2014). In her study entitled *An Analysis of Euphemism Found in the Political Issues News of the Jakarta Post Online Newspaper*, she analyzed the euphemism in the *Jakarta Post Online Newspaper* using the theory of euphemism types by Warren and the theory of euphemism motives by Ullmann. In another study entitled *English Euphemism in Political Discourse: A Politeness Strategy or Deception*, Takoua (2015)

examined the excessive use of euphemism in political discourse; its features, functions, and the role it plays in altering peoples' ideologies in Obama's speeches.

Other researches entitled *The Use of Euphemism in Dr. Oz Indonesia TV Show* conducted by Kiling (2016) and *Euphemism Used by Anies Baswedan and Sandiaga Uno Candidate Pair in the First Round of Jakarta Gubernatorial Election Debate 2017* conducted by Ardhan (2018). Both studies investigated types of euphemism and its function using the theory types of euphemism formation by Allan and the functions of euphemism by Burrige. Kiling (2016) examined the classification of euphemism formation for death and sickness and sexual terms in Indonesian medical TV show, Dr. OZ Indonesia, while Ardhan (2018) examined the euphemism used by gubernatorial candidates in the first round of Jakarta Gubernatorial Election Debate 2017.

In brief, there are several reasons why the writer chose to study the use of euphemism in the *New York Times* online newspaper when delivering the news about US-North Korea Summit. First, euphemism as the linguistic tools is considered as, perhaps, one of the most effective tools to control power in media. Through this study, the writer wants to look more at the euphemism used based on types and functions. Second, the use of euphemism is being categorized from the way it functions in a sentence. Thus, this study used to find out which function is used by the journalist in the US-North Korea Summit news and the purpose of the *New York Times* online newspaper using the euphemism. Third, the *New York Times* online newspaper as the object in this study has ever been accused by Trump as having fake news (Morin 2017). Thus, this study tried to analyze the way *New*

York Times reported the US-North Korea Summit event in terms of euphemism in their news articles. Fourth, Donald Trump, as the current US president, has a controversial explicit speaking style and traits which often become the talks in the media. Thus, the writer interested in analyzing the euphemism used in the US-North Korea Summit news articles to describe Trump.

Lastly, in several previous studies mentioned above, three out of four studies tried to find Indonesian euphemism used in the object of their studies since the object of the previous studies is written in Indonesian. Meanwhile, this study conducted to find English euphemism since the object of this study is written in English. In terms of the types of the object used, this study similar to the one study analyzing *The Jakarta Post* news, which is an online newspaper with the political scope news. However, observing and analyzing types and functions of euphemism in the *New York Times* online newspaper, which is a US newspaper, might provide different findings since it has a different political spectrum comparing to *The Jakarta Post*, Indonesia newspaper. Moreover, this study also used different theory from the one which analyzing *The Jakarta Post* news; the previous study used the theory of euphemism types by Warren and the theory of euphemism motives by Ullmann. In contrast, this study uses the theory of types of euphemism formation by Allan and the functions of euphemism theory by Burrige.

1.2. Statements of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, the statements of the problem are formulated into the questions below:

1. What are the types of euphemism formation found in the US and North Korea Summit news articles of the *New York Times* Online Newspapers?
2. What are the functions of euphemism found in the US and North Korea Summit news articles of the *New York Times* Online Newspapers?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Concerning the statements of the problem above, this study attempts to:

1. Describe the types of euphemism formation found in the US and North Korea Summit news articles of the *New York Times* Online Newspapers.
2. Identify the function of euphemism found in the US and North Korea Summit news articles of the *New York Times* Online Newspapers.

1.4. Significances of the Study

The result of this study is expected to give benefit to the readers and provide some contributions to the linguistic field, especially in discourse analysis. Theoretically, the writer expects that this study may develop an understanding of euphemism used in the newspaper and give knowledge for the students who want to study the use of euphemism in the news discourse.

Practically, the result of this study may benefit the content writer of the media fields in how to use proper euphemism in the newspaper and what expression should be used when discussing the political issue. Moreover, this study may also benefit for people to understand the news and the underlying meaning of words used in the news articles.

1.5. Definition of Key Terms

1. ***Euphemism*** : The preferred terms and the substitution of mild on the inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant (Allan 2012)
2. ***Euphemism Formation*** : Linguistic strategies that lead to the creation of new forms in the language by promoting new expressions, or new meanings which motivated by a speaker's want to express something more preferred and avoid harsh words (Allan 2012)
3. ***Functions of Euphemism*** : Tasks that euphemism performs which bearing on the types of euphemism used and on their career span. (Burridge 2012)
4. ***New York Times Online Newspaper*** : The electronic publication of the New York Times, which contains most of the news and feature articles from the current day's printed newspaper, classified advertising, reporting that does not appear in the newspaper, and interactive features including the newspaper's crossword puzzle (Lewis 1996)
5. ***US-North Korea Summit*** : The meeting between President Trump of the United States and President Kim Jong-un of North Korea to discuss North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, as well as the establishment of a new relationship between the two countries (Manyin, et al. 2019)