



**Վ. ԲՐՅՈՒՍՈՎԻ ԱՆՎԱՆ ՊԵՏԱԿԱՆ  
ՀԱՄԱԼՍԱՐԱՆ  
ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ  
ИМЕНИ В. БРЮСОВА  
BRUSOV STATE UNIVERSITY**

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**ԼԵՂՎԱԲԱՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ ԵՎ ԲԱՆԱՍԻՐՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ**

**ЛИНГВИСТИКА И ФИЛОЛОГИЯ**

**LINGUISTICS AND PHILOLOGY**

**1 (58)**

**Վ. ԲՐՅՈՒՍՈՎԻ ԱՆՎԱՆ ՊԵՏԱԿԱՆ ՀԱՄԱԼՍԱՐԱՆԻ  
«ԼԻՆԳՎԱ» ՀՐԱՏԱՐԱԿԶՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ**

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ANALYSIS OF EUPHEMISTIC STRATEGIES FREQUENTLY USED IN  
ADVERTISING DISCOURSE

SYUZANNA STEPANYAN

**Keywords:** *euphemistic strategy, advertising discourse, marketing, manipulation*

In the creation of advertisements marketologists make use of various linguistic devices and techniques, one of which, that is the euphemism, is the focus of our study. Euphemism appears to be one of the most potent linguistic tools that reinforces the persuasive power of the modern advertising discourse. Complying with the rapidly changing societal standards, movements and trends euphemisms help to shape the desired image of the product. The consumers often do not even realize what game they are drawn into, how skilfully they are tricked by marketologists. Meanwhile, this “game of euphemisms” stimulates the growth of consumerism.

With the consideration that marketing strategies are influencing global perspectives on advertising, within the framework of this study we have also tried to briefly draw parallels with certain Armenian advertising techniques and analyse the impact of globalisation on the Armenian approach to marketing strategies. Hereafter, we will introduce advertising slogans, logos or brand names from a variety of spheres with an attempt to analyse the main euphemistic strategies applied in advertising discourse and the ultimate functions that those strategies help to perform. We will mainly focus on terms



Picture 1

created to mislead consumers, or at least to lessen the negative impact of the actual undisguised terms.

When I first saw a similar sign as presented in picture 1 on a price tag 20 years ago in the USA I was more intrigued than bemused. The idea struck me with its novelty. But bemused I should have been, for similar representation of a price was destined to soon appear in Armenia and everywhere around the world deceiving everyone but marketing specialists with this ingenious marketing “life-hack”.

Even though the analysis of the obviously euphemistic technique disguised under the sign “5.99” should be reserved to the study of signs, that is semiology, the motive behind the sign unequivocally performs one of the basic functions of euphemisms, specifically that of covering-up and misleading, as in the mind of an ordinary consumer the number “5.99” is designed to arouse an association with the number “5” rather than the number 6. And, thus, we can assume that the number presented through a euphemistic sign is meant to distort the reality creating an illusion that we pay less. This creates a void between the sign and the signifier which is filled with an illusion that is the euphemism.

The same misleading strategy is often applied in verbal advertising, in advertising slogans, logos and brand names. But functions that euphemisms perform in advertising and marketing discourse are not restricted to the one mentioned above. And the ultimate objective of this study is to unveil them.

In the modern world we are exposed to advertising like never before. Ads don't only appear on billboards, public transport, on TV or the food packages in supermarkets, they constantly pop on the computer screen like some unwanted guests we have nowhere to escape from. Even though it might seem like purchasing or reacting to an advertisement is a personal choice, research shows that the way we process information lies outside of our conscious control of awareness (Sedivy & Carlson 2011:577). This gives advertisers great advantage when attempting to persuade with an advertisement; whether or not the advertisement is noticed as an advertisement or not it will still be processed in the receiver's mind as information.

Goddard supports this claim by stating that “for adverts to work, they must use our commonly shared resources of language in ways that affect us and mean something to us” . Her position is that advertisements are forms of discourse which make powerful contribution to how we construct our identities, and that advertising texts can be seen as potentially involving notions of audience, where readers have to work hard to decode messages and understand different address relationships (Goddard 1998:4-10).

Williamson likewise claims that advertisements reflect social developments and it has become commonplace to assume that modern advertisements have become more sophisticated, since its audience is more knowing than those of the 1950s (Williamson 2002:1).

Euphemism has numerous definitions based on various functions that it may perform. Nevertheless, what is emphasized in most definitions is the idea that a certain term is used euphemistically if it helps to disguise or soften discourses.

According to the British author Geoffrey Abbott euphemisms are units of secondary denomination used to mitigate unseemly or unpleasant information, or downplay the details that might be perceived as transgressing the rules of speech etiquette (Abbott 2010:51-52). However, even the more mainstream euphemisms in advertising discourse often do more than merely mitigate unpleasant information or help to soften the meaning. Turning into a form of doublespeak, euphemisms in advertising discourse often inflate the meaning and delude the customers by offering them “a better, inflated or augmented reality”. It can be assumed that inflated language goes along with and simultaneously contributes to the so called modern phenomenon of “augmented reality”. “Augmented reality”, which is a synonymous and a relatively new term for “virtual reality” is gradually permeating every sphere of modern life. Meanwhile, linguistic means like euphemisms come to cater to the linguistic representation of “augmented reality”.

Some of the most frequent cases of euphemisation in advertising discourse can be found in advertisements promoting cosmetic products. By analysing advertising texts promoting anti-ageing goods and products it was detected that the adjective “old” despite its being the closest semantically relevant attribute of the very concept of ageing was often replaced by euphemistic adjectives such as “mature” or “ageing”. As Kaur states, euphemisms are used to preserve the positive face of the product and avoid any kind of hostile reaction on the part of the consumer, and most importantly women (Kaur 2013:61). Cosmetic brands certainly keep this in mind when advertising their products, while the tool that helps them avoid adverse reaction from women is the euphemism.



Picture 2

“Body positivity” movements have in their turn contributed to the creation of euphemisms such as “**plus-size**” and “**curvy**” which often appear in advertising discourse to replace the negative associations arising from words such as “plump” or “large”.



Picture 3

The application of euphemistic strategies is not restricted to the sphere of cosmetics and clothes advertisements. Another sphere where euphemisms are widely used by advertisers is the food industry. Moreover, advertising discourse can be considered a rather productive word formation source as we can encounter a new term on a food package almost every day. The euphemistic term “**free range**” which may apply to meat, eggs or dairy farming, refers to the treatment of animals on the farm and can often be seen on food products. What it basically means is that chicken have had some outdoor exposure rather than being confined in an enclosure for the whole day. Interestingly enough, the term “**free range**” in English letters has been detected on Armenian egg packages as can be seen in picture 4. It should also be noted that the armenian translation on the package, which says “*Ֆերմայի ձու*” does not bear euphemistic traits peculiar to the English term.

Apparently, the euphemistic use of the English term on an Armenian product is intended to attract foreign consumers.



Picture 4

Another interesting phenomenon that has been observed is the creation of euphemisms through *distortion of spelling*. In advertising discourse we can witness how ordinary sounds and letters, words and phrases are put into extraordinary uses. In picture 5 we can see the words “**original chik’n**” right in the center of the product package, whereas above it there is a smaller sign that says “plant based” (plant-based-consisting or made completely of plants, or mainly of plants-(dictionary.cambridge.org). According to the US food control requirements if a label says the food is, or contains, for instance, fruit, cheese, crab or chicken, it must indeed contain these things. But if the product is called “froot”, “cheez”, “krab” or chik’n it can contain whatever the food scientists or marketing specialists can come up with. This type of creative spelling can be viewed as a misleading euphemistic technique creating the illusion among customers that they consume a product containing chicken when, in fact, what they eat contains no chicken at all. Thus, the manipulation of the language through the distortion of spelling is aimed at the manipulation of consumers.



Picture 5

Our study yielded interesting results related to the manufacturing and advertising of leather products. Adjectives such as “**ethical**”, “**animal-friendly**”, “**eco-friendly**”, “**cruelty-free**”, “**sustainable**” often feature in the advertisements of leather goods. Ethical leather may imply that byproduct of cruelty-free farms were used in the making of the good instead of using leather obtained from farms where animals are kept solely for the purpose of slaughter.

There is a statement on the website of a leather product manufacturer Parker Clay: “Parker Clay sustainable leather is leather that is a byproduct of local farming and agriculture industries”. It is considered sustainable because the animals are not raised for the express purpose of using their leather for goods, they are primarily farm animals. “**Eco leather**” or “**eco friendly leather**” is a trade term to describe leather that is sourced in various ecologically or animal friendly ways. The website also claims that they prefer the term sustainable leather because it more accurately reflects the Parker Clay set of best practices for ecological, cultural and economic sustainability. Their leather is actual real animal skin, sourced from animals raised locally for food and they stand behind their ethical leather and it’s sourcing because unlike the so-called “eco-leather”, their leather is not derived from plastic, wood fibers, or other non-animal materials that would need to be produced with chemicals and leave behind industrial waste.” (<https://www.parkerclay.com/collections/sustainable-leather>)

A question arises: Why not call it by its actual name that is “**waste leather**”? Apparently, the term “**waste leather**” will fail in its art of persuasion and will not be as popular among consumers as its euphemistic counterparts “**sustainable leather**” or “**ethical leather**” which skilfully disguise the reality of animals being slaughtered no matter they were raised solely for this purpose or they ended up being so. Ethical resonates with customers making them believe that they are kind and somehow more humane than those who prefer authentic leather and do not care where it was obtained from.

The term “**by-product**” can also be considered a euphemism as it subtly covers up the reality of animal waste that is involved in food manufacturing.

Another euphemistic technique that helps to grab customers’ attention is the use of borrowings such as the French word “**faux**” that often appears in advertising discourse related to accessories made of artificial diamonds, pearls or leather. The euphemistic use of the french word “**faux**”, which has a meaning of fake, apparently, does not create such blunt associations of

fakeness as the word “fake” does. fake This euphemistic technique draws on socio-cultural associations connected with the idea of specific refinement peculiar to French products.

The euphemistic use of pronouns was detected in both English and Armenian slogans and messages of banks. As can be seen in picture 6 the pronoun “our” in the phrase “with our credit card, you can ...” may create the illusion among customers that they are spending the bank’s money rather than their own. The use of the pronoun can be considered euphemistic as it helps to cover up the fact that the customer is spending borrowed money. Much in the same way, the slogan “զարգացրեք ձեր բիզնեսը մեզ հետ միասին” in an Armenian bank advertisement is designed to create a “euphemistic effect” through the interplay of pronouns focusing the customer on the “support of the bank” and not on the loan and the interests that the customer will have to pay. Hence, the use of pronouns can be considered as another manipulative euphemistic technique intended to deceive and misguide customers.



Picture 6

According to marketing experts the word that helps most to sell a product is the word “free.” And we see this word standing out on ads, usually in all capital letters, almost wherever a product is sold. However, we often do not realize that this is just another euphemistic technique used by marketing specialists to mislead us and make us believe that we are getting something for free when, in fact, we are charged for it. Simply, the amount of the “free” product is included in the price of the other product that we pay for.

Modern advertising discourse makes abundant use of euphemistic terms disguising the actual use of undesirable materials in the products. The characteristics of the product presented by the term “down alternative blanket” in picture 7 illustrates the use of the aforementioned euphemistic technique helping to cover up the fact that the product is filled with a



synthetic material *polyester* and is not an authentic goose-down blanket. The term “**down alternative blanket**” may create vague associations but it still sounds better than the blunt “polyester filled blanket”.



Picture 7

Politically correct euphemisms have also found their way into ads, particularly in the form of brand names. PC-inspired euphemism is not so very different; it aims not to disguise or conceal unpleasant reality, but to help remove the stigma of negative social stereotypes by compelling its audience to go beyond the simple content of the message and challenge prejudices embodied in language (Allan and Burridge 2006: Ch:4).

Several popular American food brands, including “Aunt Jemima” and “Uncle Ben's”, last year announced about their redesigning and rebranding plans with the purpose of removing the words “aunt” and “uncle” which have acquired derogatory racist connotations. Interestingly enough, this move to change the brand image has been largely in response to the protests against systemic racism and police brutality in the U.S. last summer. It is noteworthy that calls to remove the “Aunt Jemima” imagery, and others like it, were made long before companies acquiesced to public pressure and “**Aunt Jemima**”, which had been the brand’s name for 131 years, is based on the enslaved “Mammy” archetype. Moreover, both titles “aunt” and “uncle” were historically used by people who resisted applying the honorific “Mr.” or “Ms” to a black person. As can be seen in picture 8 the brand’s name “Aunt Jemima” has been replaced by the name “**Pearl Milling Company**” with a small euphemistic slogan on the right bottom corner of the box that says “**New Name Same Great Taste**”.





Picture 8

A similar policy has been introduced by the brand “Eskimo Pie”. The chocolate-covered vanilla ice cream bar is now called “Edy’s Pie” with respect to one of the company’s founders, Joseph Edy. The brand’s original name “Eskimo” was offensive toward native arctic communities as it has long been used by non-native groups to refer collectively to Inuit and Yupik people, according to the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska.

This name is considered derogatory because it was given by non-Inuit people and was said to mean “eater of raw meat”.



Picture 9

Thus, the aforementioned companies have resorted to a euphemistic face-saving strategy out of political correctness consideration and with the purpose of advertising their new and less offensive image. Certainly advertisers and marketing specialists are the fastest to react to social and cultural developments and introduce new techniques in their art of persuasion.

According to the Law of Semantic Change bad connotations drive out good (Allan and Burridge 1991: 22; 2006: 243). The effect of this law is that many euphemisms become tainted over time. As the negative associations reassert themselves and undermine the euphemistic quality of the word, the next generation of speakers grows up learning the word as the direct term. Jespersen describes this as “the usual destiny of euphemisms” — the “innocent word” becomes “just as objectionable as the word it has ousted and

now is rejected in its turn” (Jespersen 1962: 230). Hence, taboo areas of the lexicon perpetually generate narrowing and deterioration of meaning; Steven Pinker’s “euphemistic treadmill” (Pinker: 1997). A similar phenomenon can be observed with regard to euphemisms used in advertising discourse.

In the Armenian hairdresser’s logos introduced in picture 10 we can detect the aforementioned phenomenon of “euphemistic treadmill”. The Armenian word “վարսավիրանոց” can hardly be found on any hairdresser’s window in Yerevan now. Not very long ago one would often see “գեղեցկության սրահ” instead of “վարսավիրանոց” on hairdresser’s windows. Meanwhile, logos like “**beauty bar**”, “**make-up studio**”, “**nail bar**” are relatively new terms but can already be seen everywhere in the city. As the word “hairdresser” for the profession itself has been inflated into “hair-stylist”, “hair and make-up artist”, “**beautician**”, likewise a change has been introduced to the name of the place where these services are provided. The same phenomenon can be observed in Armenian where the word “վարսավիր” has been replaced by an inflating euphemism “վարսահարդար” which in its turn is on the way to be replaced by the newly introduced “**ոճաբան**”, or “**մեյքափի մասնագետ**”:



Picture 10

Simultaneously, another euphemistic marketing strategy is applied here through which a better and more tempting image is created by arousing cultural associations. The English words “bar” and “club” are designed to arouse associations of refinement, chic or luxury. Interestingly enough, when a small survey was conducted among the young females of Brusov State

University, the majority preferred a visit to a “beauty bar” or a “club” rather than “varsaviranoc”. According to the majority of the 40 participants of the survey the words “bar” and “club” evoke associations of contemporariness and entertainment.

With regard to euphemistic strategies applied in the Armenian advertising discourse we have observed the frequent use of the euphemistic technique of meaning inflation. Whereas, in the sphere of banking the euphemistic strategy of pronoun substitution similar to the one used in American banking advertisements, slogans and messages, was detected.

Having analysed brand names, messages, slogans appearing on a variety of products ranging from food to cosmetics manufacturing, we have summarized the basic strategies of euphemisation and the ultimate functions they perform in advertising discourse.

- **use of politically correct language with the purpose of preserving the face (avoiding derogatory racial connotations)**
- **distortion of spelling to delude the customer**
- **enhancement and inflation of meaning to create a more attractive image often drawing on socio-cultural associations (faux diamonds, beauty bar)**
- **downplaying the negative aspect complying with modern social and ethical considerations (environmentally-friendly, animal-friendly, plus size, mature skin)**
- **obfuscation and misleading through obscure messages and use of pronouns (especially spread in banking)**

As a consequence of globalization marketing strategies including euphemisation permeate the globe and similar tactics can be observed in advertising discourse around the world. With this rapid development of consumer societies around the globe in the future we will certainly encounter new euphemistic tricks in marketing and advertising which we will have to decipher as advertisers and marketing specialists are often the fastest to react to social and cultural developments and introduce new techniques in their “art of persuasion”.

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**ՍՅՈՒՋԱՆՆԱ ԱՏԵՓԱՆՅԱՆ - ԳՈՎԱԶԴԻ ԽՈՍՈՒՅԹՈՒՄ  
ՀԱՃԱԽԱԿԻ ԿԻՐԱՌՎՈՂ ՄԵՂՄԱՍՈՒԹԱՅԻՆ  
ՈՒՋՄԱՎԱՐՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԻ ՎԵՐԼՈՒԾՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ**

*Հիմնաբառեր՝ մեղմասութային ռազմավարություն, գովազդի խոսույթ, մարկեթինգ, մեքենայություն*

Հոդվածը նվիրված է անգլալեզու գովազդի խոսույթում հաճախակի հանդիպող մեղմասութային հնարների կիրառման ուսումնասիրությանը: Հիմնվելով գովազդային պաստառներում, կարգախոսներում, ապրանքների անվանումներում և պիտակներում օգտագործվող մեղմասութային վերլուծության վրա՝ փորձ է արվում վերհանել դրանց կիրառման միջոցները, գործառույթներն ու կիրառման նպատակը: Հոդվածում նաև հակիրճ անդրադարձ է կատարվում հայալեզու գովազդի խոսույթում հանդիպող մեղմասութային հնարների առանձնահատկություններին: Ուսումնասիրության արդյունքում կարող ենք փաստել, որ մեղմասութային ռազմավարությունները առավելապես իրացվում են գովազդի խոսույթում քաղաքական պատշաճությանը, ժամանակակից հասարակա-մշակութային որոշակի պատկերացումներին համապատասխանող եզրույթների, անորոշ լեզվական ձևակերպումների, կարգախոսների ընդգրկմամբ: Ուսումնասիրված նյութի հիման վրա կարելի է պնդել, որ գովազդում մեղմասութային հնարների կիրառումը հիմնականում հետապնդում է իրականությունը ուժացնելու, սպառողին ավելի ցանկալի պատկեր առաջարկելու, բացասական զուգորդումները

քողարկելու կամ մեղմելու, ինչպես նաև՝ սպառողին շեղելու և մոլորեցնելու նպատակ:

Ուսումնասիրության արդյունքում պարզվել է, որ գլոբալիզացիայի և մարքեթինգային ընդհանուր միտումների ազդեցության տակ, անգլալեզու գովազդի խոսույթին բնորոշ որոշակի մեղմասութային ռազմավարություններ են կիրառվում նաև հայալեզու գովազդի խոսույթում:

### **СЮЗАННА СТЕПАНЯН - АНАЛИЗ ЭВФЕМИСТИЧЕСКИХ СТРАТЕГИЙ, ЧАСТО ИСПОЛЬЗУЕМЫХ В РЕКЛАМНОМ ДИСКУРСЕ**

*Ключевые слова: эвфемистические стратегии, рекламный дискурс, маркетинг, манипуляция*

Данная статья посвящена исследованию эвфемистических стратегий, часто используемых в англоязычном рекламном дискурсе. Анализируя эвфемизмы, используемые в рекламных девизах, афишах, именах брендов, на их этикетках, делается попытка раскрыть методы их использования, а также функции и конечные цели, которые они реализуют. В статье также кратко рассматриваются особенности эвфемистических средств, присущих армяноязычному рекламному дискурсу.

В результате исследования можно утверждать, что эвфемистические стратегии в рекламном дискурсе в большинстве случаев реализуются при помощи политкорректных терминов, терминов, соответствующих определенным современным социокультурным понятиям, но при этом они содержат неопределенные языковые формулировки. Также можно отметить, что использование эвфемизмов в разных рекламных дискурсах по большей мере делается с намерением “раздуть” содержание рекламы, предложить более желаемый образ потребителю, замаскировать или смягчить негативные ассоциации, а также с намерением ввести потребителя в заблуждение.

Нужно также отметить, что под влиянием глобализации и общих маркетинговых тенденций, определенные эвфемистические стратегии, присущие англоязычному рекламному дискурсу, используются также в армяноязычном рекламном дискурсе.

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**Գրախոսվել է՝ 10.09.2021**

**Երաշխավորվել է ԲՊՀ Անգլերենի ամբիոնի կողմից՝ 27.10.2021**