

Euphemistic Metacognition and Taboo Sensitivity: A Socio-Psychopragmatic Comparative Study of Male and Female Speakers

Nida Tariq¹, Humaira Jabeen²

ABSTRACT

Gendered patterns of language have been investigated by many researchers in terms of prestige, formality and stylistics in general and it has been seen that females tend to be more formal and elaborate than men (Syafriзал, 2020; Ramadhani, 2014). Such studies have not looked specifically into the comparative euphemistic tendencies of males and females, the detailed in-depth specifications of their euphemistic strategies, their conceptual knowledge and awareness of euphemism, the contexts under which they prefer to use or not use it, which is an area that requires thorough exploratory analysis. For this purpose in the present study, a sample of 60 Undergraduate students comprising 30 boys and 30 girls, from two institutes at Mardan was constructed. Concepts from Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory have been used to gauge metacognitive aspects of the study and to explain the findings, which reveal that females are more eloquent in their use of euphemism in that they use a plethora of expressions whenever and wherever needed to be polite and articulate themselves as appropriately as possible compared to males. This, as revealed in the present study, seems to stem from their increased awareness of social taboos and socially sensitive subject matters compared to males and also from their more precise anticipation of negative and positive outcomes of certain expressions. Females have also been found to be more innovative in their use of euphemism as compared to males. This study is helpful in understanding the deeper relationship of gender and language use; context, need and psychological associations surrounding the individuals' use of euphemistic language when dealing with subject matters of certain natures.

Keywords: *Gender and Language, Euphemism, Euphemistic Strategies, Social Cognitive Theory, Metacognition, Politeness*

INTRODUCTION

The study of the Variationist sociolinguistics has recently become of increased importance and interest for researchers in the domain of applied linguistics. It encompasses

¹ Lecturer in English, Government Postgraduate College for Women, Mardan. **Corresponding Author's Email: anakan37@gmail.com**

² Assistant Professor of English, Abasyn University Peshawar

a variety of different relationships of elements of human language and demographics. Within sociolinguistics, the relationship between gender and language has remained the major focus and interest of researchers and has been explored with the main focus on differences between the language of male and female from different angles with different methodologies (Bakhtiar, 2011; Gumperz, 1982; Hysi, 2011) These researches have mainly laid emphasis on the superficial differences in language as used by the genders. The gender factor in language usage, however, is not just a reflection of the differences in language between males and females, but is also a reflection of their differing attitudes and perceptions of language and of their environment (Dong, 2014).

Language always comes in context and depends largely on it whether social political, cultural or any other. Consequently, there are some aspects that affect language including the social structure, the social environment, and values of the society. Keeping in view the said variables, every language has certain words, expressions which are considered highly sensitive and inappropriate by the people. This is because the subject matter that it subscribes to, is considered taboo (Trudgill, 2000). To cope with such matters, and to prevent face threatening and impoliteness, people tend to look for substitutions that can abate the powerful effect of taboos (Tamimi, 2017). These substitutions are called euphemisms. There are different ways within a language in which people can express themselves. One such feature of language is euphemism which is used for many purposes like face saving, politeness and in dealing with sensitive or controversial issues such as taboos.

Problem Statement

While linguistic features like politeness and euphemism has remained the focus of many studies, these have mainly focused surface level analyses of those features often ignoring deeper dimensions of euphemism or the ‘metacognitive’ aspects of euphemism like the recognition of euphemism as a politeness strategy, the consciousness of socially sensitive subject matters that necessitates its use, people’s preference and dispreference in use of euphemism, their ability to anticipate consequences of using and not using it in certain contexts and the innovations in the way euphemism is used are specifically each yet to be seen for males and females comparatively. The present study has sought to fill this gap by comparatively analyzing all these aspects of euphemism among males and females at Mardan, Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa, Pakistan.

Research Questions

The present research has aimed to answer the following research questions.

- i. How do the euphemistic strategies of females differ from those of the males?
- ii. What is the difference in the extent of sensitivity of males and females towards socially sensitive subject matters?

iii. To what extent do males and females recognize and whether or not they consciously prefer euphemistic strategies to abate the taboo effect of certain socially sensitive subject matters?

Significance of the Study

The present study has attempted to shed light on male and female perceptions of taboos or sensitive subject matters and their euphemistic styles when dealing with such subject matters. Studies like the present one help in understanding the social and psychological factors that influence peoples' preferences in the use of language in general. Such researches are aimed at adding new insights to existing theories pertaining to language difference in men and women like Lakoff's theory of politeness and face (1975), Allan and Burridge's Face and Taboo Model (2006) and Levinson and Brown's (1987) concepts of politeness theory, whereby men and women are generalized as having specific speech styles and linguistic habits, by adding a metacognitive aspect to them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several lines of research are relevant to the present study. First of these are the ones that explore euphemistic strategies across different cultures. For instance, Al-Khasawneh (2018) compared Saudi Arabic and American English respondents, finding that Saudis tended to use a certain set of patterns and strategies when dealing with taboos whereas Americans preferred using synonyms at the most as euphemistic strategies and most had no trouble using taboo words. Similar studies have led many authors to conclude that strategy choice of people when dealing with taboos is greatly influenced by culture and religious values, and most even found minimal effect of gender on strategy choice.

Another study similarly compared strategy use across two cultural and linguistic groups (Algerian Arabic vs American English) for subject matters such as death, lying and disease (Jarrah et al., 2022) but gender within each group was not the focus of the study. Thus research on euphemism is abundant but gender as a variable often remains secondary or minimally explored.

As a very recent trend, research that is more directly on gender-linked differences in euphemism or related forms is emerging, for example, a recent research study carrying out a diachronic evaluation of gender asymmetry in euphemism by Kapron-King & Xu (2021), has looked through English corpora to test the hypothesis that women use more euphemisms than men but found no strong evidence of it. Additionally, a Pakistani context study by Chaudhri, Tehseem & Nazir (2022) focused on female-oriented euphemisms in media discourse (Pakistani English newspapers) regarding female physiology and taboo issues. While gender is inherent in the topic, the study does not compare male vs female speakers' tendencies or conscious recognition of euphemism the way the present study has undertaken to do.

Research around euphemism, as discussed above, has each separately addressed how speakers negotiate taboo, sensitive or face-threatening topics by means of euphemism. Since most of such work deals with exploring euphemism in a general sense and barely any studies have systematically explored gender differences in euphemistic usage like comparative choice of euphemistic strategies, use of euphemism in particularized subject-domains, conscious awareness of euphemism, and even fewer of those have combined these important dimensions such in a single study, the present study your work integrates these dimensions in one framework. In sum, the present study compares male and female speakers' euphemistic strategies, their euphemistic tendencies (how often/for which topics they prefer or avoid euphemism), subject-matters for which they prefer or not prefer to be euphemistic, and investigates their conscious recognition of when they euphemistic.

2.2. Theoretical Framework, Research Gap and Working Hypothesis

Euphemism is mainly employed to maintain or save face by being polite and sounding appropriate on occasions owing to the nature of the occasions or the subject matter in question. The relationship between face, politeness, and gender has been a major focus in sociolinguistics and pragmatics, since men and women often use different linguistic strategies to manage politeness. Politeness, as elaborated by Levinson and Brown (1987) is shaped by gender norms, with women's language usually more closely associated with politeness, prestige and formality as compared to that of men's. This is the hypothesis underlying many studies that compare women's language with that of men. This study however goes far beyond comparison of superficial features of men and women's language and politeness; it seeks to find if they:

1. consciously make certain choices like euphemistic language or blunt language
2. are aware how their language choices fit certain descriptions like "polite" or impolite
3. are aware of the consequences of the expressions they use, and whether this awareness is the motivation behind those language choices.

Consciousness of language choices and awareness of what accounts for polite/appropriate and impolite/inappropriate in language is best theorized by Allan and Burridge's Face and Taboo Model (2006). According to them, euphemisms arise from taboo avoidance — managing "face wants" through linguistic substitution. Speakers consciously or unconsciously navigate between the euphemistic dyad: taboo vs. acceptable expression. Thus, Allan and Burridge suggest that people are usually somewhat aware of the language choices they are making, and that implies that not 'all' the people have 'complete' awareness, which applies to the use of euphemism as well. "The" is the hypothesis the present study has worked on. In order to be euphemistic and appropriate, speakers must consciously recognize that a topic (e.g., death, sex, illness) is *taboo* and that direct mention of certain subject matters would violate social norms. Their model thus bridges the cognitive recognition of taboo with linguistic choice.

So, conscious recognition of euphemism emerges from the speaker's awareness of taboo boundaries, which is what the present study has sought to compare for males and females. Awareness and recognition of the socially sensitive subject matter has been termed as aptitude in the present study, which is a concept of Albert Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive theory. Another concept of his theory that the present study has incorporated is that of outcome expectancy. It is defined as the anticipation of the outcome that the use of a certain expression may evoke (Bandura, 1986).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Approach

The present study is exploratory in nature as it explores euphemistic strategies used by males and females comparatively. The data collected through survey method with the help of different types of questionnaires (Appendices B, C, D and E) has been analyzed by using quantitative approach. The data has been tabulated and presented in form of bar charts.

Population and Sampling

Since the target population of the present research was educated and literate boys and girls, the age group of 18 to 22 years was chosen on the basis of the likelihood that this age-group would render many participants to the study to further choose from. Male and female students of BS English from Government Post Graduate College for Boys Mardan and Government Post Graduate College for Women, (GPGCW) Mardan were the participants in the present study.

The rationale behind choosing students at the Undergraduate level of education belonging to Mardan, KP is that there was as good a probability of finding a decent number of boys and girls with English literacy, which is vital for the study. Another reason for choosing undergraduate level students was that at this level, students mostly come from the same district board of education, that is, Mardan Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, so most of them have similar educational and socio-economic backgrounds. This was also necessary so that the differences in the language strategies of such participants may not be accredited to potential confounds like difference in social, economic and/or educational backgrounds which were more or less the same for all the participants. The sampling method was convenience sampling for the present study, that is, the sample for the study was chosen on the basis of ease of approach and access to the participants. Due to this reason, the sample was limited to undergraduate level students of two local colleges.

Size of the Sample

Initially the data collection tools were distributed among 137 participants including 79 female students and 58 male students, but only 40 female students and 34 male students

provided the data without quitting. Thus, the response rate was 64.4 %, so a common number of participants closest to the response rate from each group was selected, i.e., 60 in total.

Data Collection

The tools used for data collection were targeted to explore the difference in frequency, percentage and type of euphemistic strategies of males and females and to explore the variety of these strategies as per requirement of the research objectives. The tools and their specific purposes are listed as under.

Table 1

Data Collection Tools and their Respective Purposes

#	S	Data Collection Tool and its Design	Purpose of the tool
1		Questionnaire #1	To investigate the frequency and choice of euphemistic expressions of males and females
2		Questionnaire #2	(i) To investigate the participants' aptitude in providing euphemistic expressions (ii) To see if they prefer euphemisms in their day to day language (iii) To explore their outcome expectancy and Aptitude regarding euphemism

Development of Questionnaires and Ensuring their Validity

The instruments designed for the present study were reviewed and examined by four research experts at the local institutes. The instruments were updated by incorporating the recommendations for improvement by the experts for the present study.

Reliability of Data Collection Tools

Reliability of a data collection tool refers to the internal consistency of all items on the tool (Dudovskiy, 2018). The reliability or internal consistency of the items of the questionnaire was checked by calculating Cronbach's alpha which came out to be 0.95. The value of Cronbach's alpha must be greater than 0.5 for a research instrument to be reliable (Cronbach, 1951). The calculated value thus satisfies the criterion for reliability.

Division of Data Collection Tools into Subject Matters

To explore the euphemistic strategies of males and females in various subject matters, three Questionnaires that consisted of open-ended and close-ended questions were divided into several subject matters. The purpose of specifying these subject matters was to get a clearer picture of their perceptions of these subject matters in terms of their

sensitivity which was judged from their euphemistic or non-euphemistic responses in those subject matters. Thus subject matters have helped to map the euphemistic and un-euphemistic responses of the males and females to study any uniformity in the participants' language patterns in terms of euphemism. Euphemistic strategies for the above mentioned subject matters have also been studied to check for any recurring subject-specific euphemistic patterns among the males and females.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data Analysis of Male and Female

Analysis of Euphemistic Strategies

The responses of the participants are tabulated in form of euphemistic strategies and in form of either euphemistic or non-euphemistic responses in the section below.

Data Analysis of Questionnaire 1

Table 2 shows the responses of the males and females in Questionnaire 1 have been classified in terms of euphemistic strategies adopted by the respondents.

Table 2

Euphemistic Strategies of Males and Females in Questionnaire # 1.

Q #	Question Asked	Expressions Used	Strategy Adopted		Females	Males
					Frequency of Occurrence	Frequency of Occurrence
1	Someone Who Has Little Spend	Destitute, Deprived, Needy	One Word Substitution	Word	3	6
					Under Resourced, Under Privileged	Two Word Substitution
		Empty handed Economically Challenged Economically Disadvantaged	Political Correction	6		
				Not Rich, Not Well Off, Not Wealthy	Litotes	10
		Poor, Wretched, Broke	Penniless, Non-Euphemistic Responses		4	6

2	Someone Who Does Not Spend On Basic Needs.	Not unwilling to spend, Not extravagant person, unwilling to spend Parsimonious	Litotes	14	4	
			One Word Substitution	1	2	
			Hoarder Implications	3	0	
			Penny Pincher Humorization	0	10	
			Economical Person Political Correction	7	7	
Stingy Miser Non-Euphemistic Responses	5	7				
3	Something Bought For Low Cost.	Not Expensive, Not Costly, Not High Priced, Not Extravagant	Litotes	14	9	
			One Word Substitutions	4	11	
			Within Budget, Reasonably Priced, Low Priced, Less Costly, Left over stuff Cheap	Two Word Substitutions	4	3
			Non-Euphemistic	8	7	
4	Someone Who Is Mentally Instable	Mentally Not Sound, Mentally Not Stable Special Person	Litotes	4	0	
			Glorification	17	0	
			Politically Challenged, Mentally Disparaged, Mentally Ill /Unwell	Political Correction	6	22
			Mad, abnormal, insane	Mental, lunatic, words	3	8
5	Someone Who Scores Low In Studies.	Not Smart, Not Intelligent, Not Bright Below Average	Litotes	11	2	
			Two Word Substitution	8	4	

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		Unintelligent, Inefficient, Struggler, Struggling Student	Implication	10	14
		Weak Student, Poor Student, Poor Performer Dumb Student,	Non-Euphemistic Responses	1	10
6	Someone Who Talks Nonsense	Not Smart, Not Intelligent, Not Reasonable	Litotes	18	4
		Irrational, Headless Unintelligent, Absurd, Dull	One Word Substitution	11	14
		Stupid, Silly, Foolish, Nonsense, Clown, Joker, Pinhead, Dumb, Idiot, Idiotic,	Non Euphemistic Responses	1	12
7	Someone who looks Unpleasant	Not Very Attractive Not Pretty Not Handsome Unique Faced Uniquely Beautiful Unattractive	Litotes	3	0
		Unpleasant Bad faced Ugly Nasty Witch, Nomad	Glorification	24	0
			One Word Substitution	0	9
			Implication	0	10
			Non Euphemistic	3	11
8	Someone who is fat	Curvy Healthy	Implication	13	11
		Big Boned	Two Word	5	0
		Chubby	Slang	8	2
		Overweight Obese, Buffalo Bull, Heavy	Non-Euphemistic Responses	4	17
9	Someone who is bald	Hairless	One word substitution	5	8
		Thin On Top Moon-Headed	Humorization	0	20
		Thin haired	Two words substitution	22	2

Bald	Non-Euphemistic	3	0
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Table 2 has sorted out the responses into the corresponding euphemistic strategies. The female participants have come up with more euphemistic responses as compared to males. The political correction and humourization are the dominant euphemistic strategies used by males. The females on the other hand have preferred litotes and glorification.

Data Analysis of Questionnaire 2

The analysis of Questionnaire 2 involves exploring the participants' euphemistic strategies, their preference and tendency of using euphemistic/non-euphemistic expressions, their outcome expectancies and awareness and recognition of euphemism.

Table 3

Euphemistic Strategies of Males and Females in Questionnaire # 3

Question asked	Expression used	Strategy adopted	Females Frequency Of Occurrence	Males Frequency Of Occurrence
Provide an alternative expression for 1:Housewife	Home Maker	Glorification	18	11
	Home Economist			
	Home Mistress			
	Home flourisher			
2:Domestic servant	Housekeeper	Two word substitution	9	7
	Childrens' mother			
	Child raiser	Non euphemistic	1	10
	Unemployed woman			
	No response		2	2
2:Domestic servant	Helper Attendant Assistant Aaya, Maasi	One Word substitution	17	22
	Domestic engineer	Glorification	9	-

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	Maid	Non-euphemistic responses	4	8
3:Blind	Visually impaired	Political correction	2	9
	Visionless	One word substitution	1	4
	Special people	Glorification	19	4
	Unable to see	Two word substitution	4	2
	Flower eyed			
	Non-Euphemistic		0	0
	No Response		4	11
4:Deaf	Unable to hear, Hard of hearing	Two Word substitution	5	5
	Special person	Glorification	21	7
	hearing impairment	Political correction	4	11
	Non-Euphemistic		0	0
	No Response		0	7
5:Jail	Correction Facility	Political Correction	13	17
	Prison Bars jail	Non-euphemistic	7	13
	No Response		10	0
6.Mental asylum	Psychiatric Facility	Political Correction	8	2
	Hospital for mental patients	Substitution	12	8
	Mental hospital Hospital for mad people Mental asylum	Non-euphemistic responses	2	2
	No Response		8	18

The above table shows that female participants are more euphemistic than males in subject matters of social roles and physical disabilities. Similarly, from their preference to use euphemism it is evident that females showed higher awareness of the sensitive nature

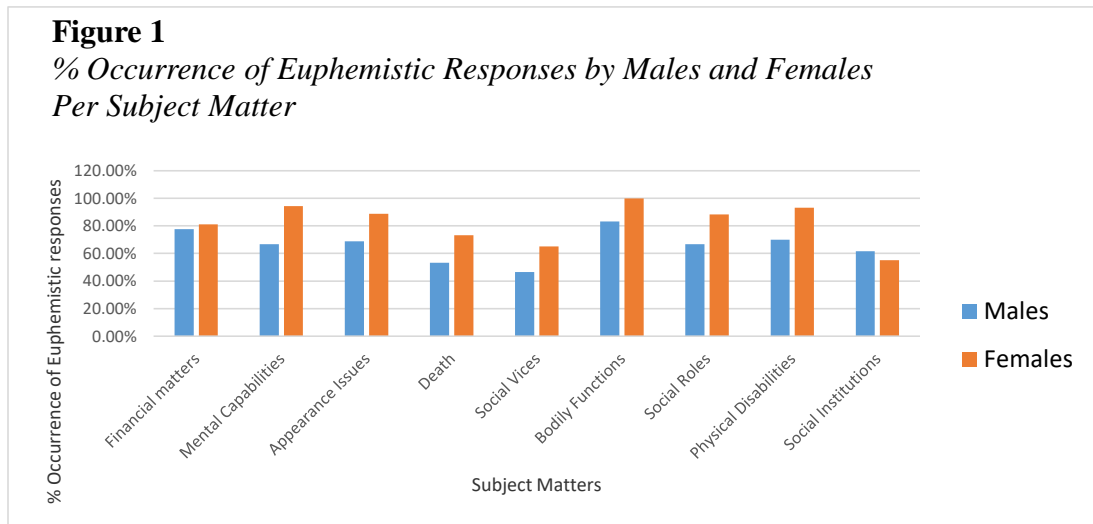
of these subject matters and thus their greater tendency to be euphemistic as compared to males.

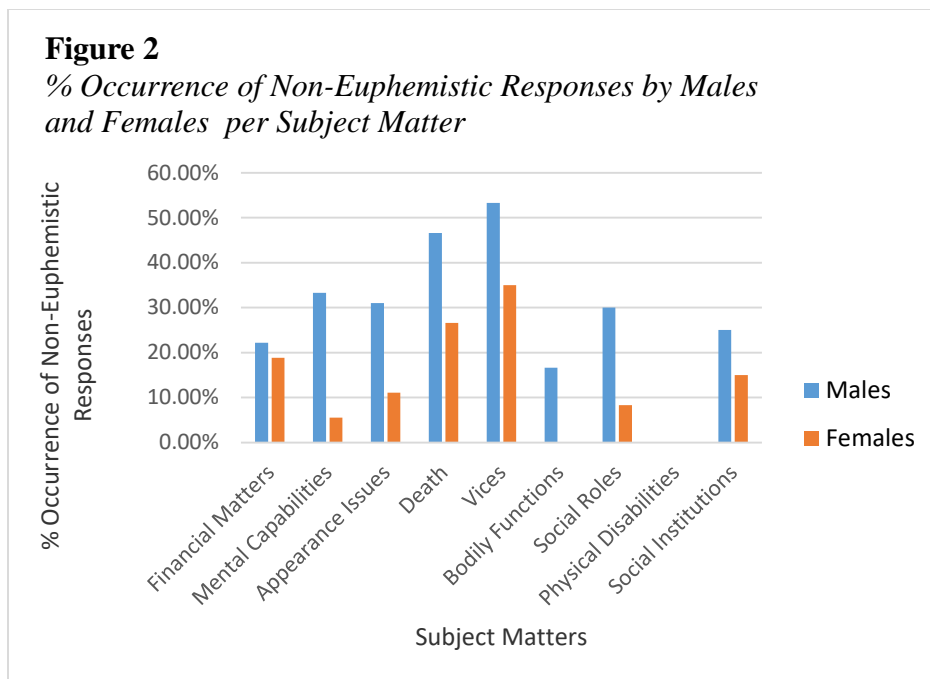
Comparative Analysis of Euphemistic Strategies of Male and Female

This section includes analysis of the data collected from Questionnaires 1 and 2 from different angles like comparative analysis of the euphemistic strategies for different subject matters, comparison of overall euphemistic strategies of males and females, their tendency of using euphemistic or un-euphemistic language for different subject matters and their overall tendency of being euphemistic or un-euphemistic.

Subject Matters for Which Males and Females Use Euphemism More than Others

In order to get a more specific understanding of the tendency of males and females to be more euphemistic, this comparison has been carried out with respect to certain subject matters than others, Table 4.6 has listed all the subject matters and the percentages of euphemistic and un-euphemistic responses to them.





Data analyzed in Table 5 shows that the subject matters for which the participants, males and females are most and least euphemistic are more or less the same. This has been made clearer with the help of figure 1 and 2. Females are seen to be most euphemistic for subject matters like bodily issues, mental disabilities, physical disabilities, appearance issues and social roles, whereas males are most euphemistic about bodily issues, financial issues, physical disabilities and appearance issues. It is seen that where females are more euphemistic about mental incapacities, males are not as euphemistic around this subject matter. Similarly, where males are recorded to be highly euphemistic around financial issues, females have this subject matter among the ones that they are the least euphemistic about. Females are least euphemistic around the subject matters of social institutions followed by vices and death, whereas males are least euphemistic in subject matters pertaining to vices, death, social institutions and social roles. The similarity between males and females in terms of extent of euphemism used for subject matters is that both are highly euphemistic around subject matters of bodily functions, and physical disabilities. They are both least euphemistic towards vices and death. However, in a stark contrast, it is evident that male and females' euphemistic behavior regarding subject matters of financial matters, mental capabilities, and social roles. While females are highly euphemistic towards mental capabilities and social roles, males are not as euphemistic. And while males are among the most euphemistic for financial matters, it is among the least preferred subject matters for euphemism by females.

Overall Preference of Males and Females w.r.t Euphemistic Strategies

To get an insight into male and female' overall preference of euphemistic strategies, figures 3 and 4 have listed the most and least preferred euphemistic strategy by following a decreasing order of their occurrence of females and males respectively.

Figure 4

Euphemistic Strategies of Males in Decreasing Order of Occurance

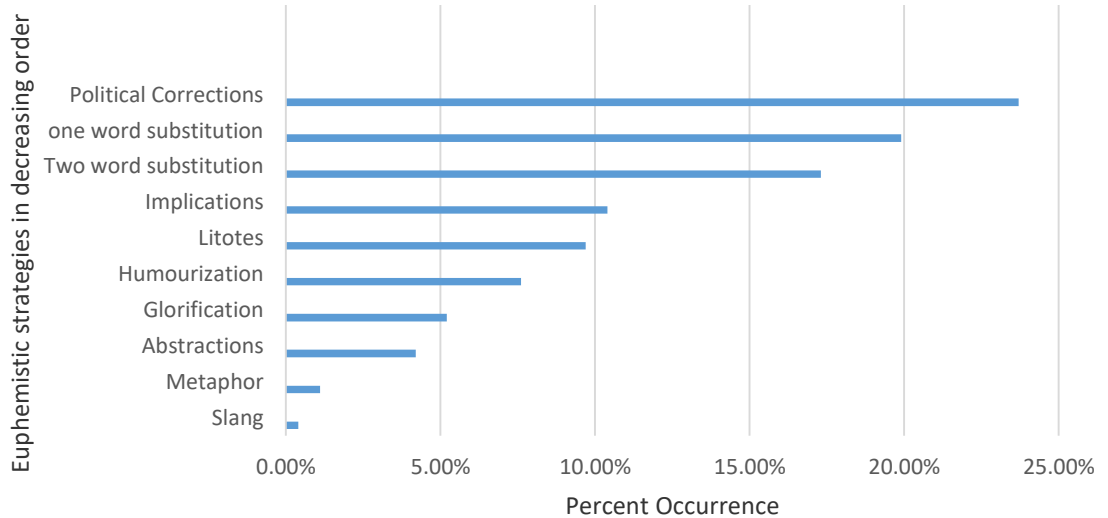
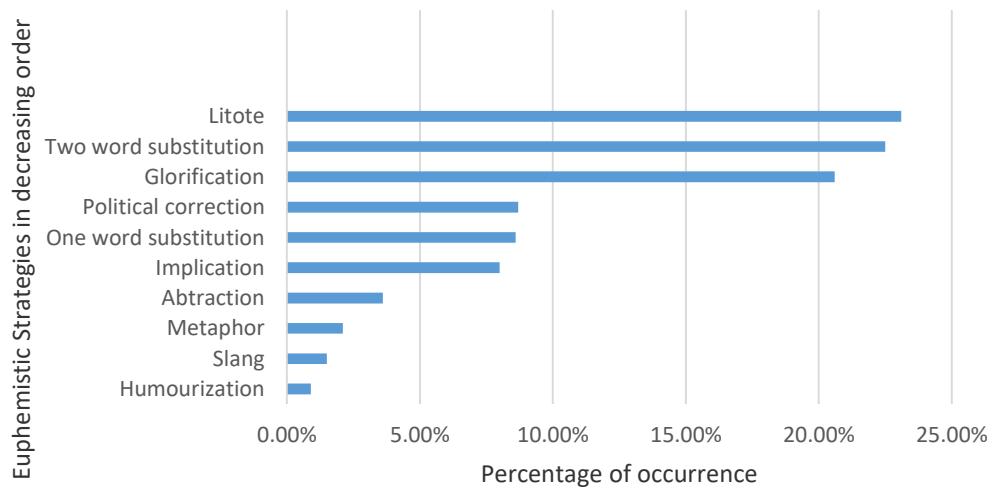


Figure 3

Euphemistic Strategies of Females in Decreasing Order of Occurance



The figures above show that male and females were more or less similar in terms of their use of euphemistic strategies. Females predominantly used litotes followed by multiple word substitution and glorification. Males used political correction as their leading strategy followed by one word substitution and multiple word substitution. Thus, the most used euphemistic strategy for the males was political correction, the same for the females was litotes. If stylistically analyzed, the two strategies are very different. Where political correction is a craftier play of words and a more impressive formation of an expression for the sake of euphemism, litotes are relatively much simpler and involve no complexity of form or vocabulary. The purpose of both is also slightly different in terms of the magnitude of the euphemistic effect they carry. While political correction serves the purpose of lessening the unpleasant effect of a word or reality while acknowledging the reality at the same time, litotes appear to twist the reality in favor of somewhat neglecting the negative aspect of the reality. So, while males used craftier expressions like political correction showing a more realistic approach towards harsh realities, females tended to avoid more direct versions of the reality and preferred the mildest possible expression they could find to state the reality. Females also used political corrections but only moderately. That is, while it was the most preferred strategy by males, it was used considerably less by females. Similarly, while litotes were the most preferred strategy of females, it was one of the least preferred ones for males.

The use of multiple word substitution was almost the same for both male and females, being slightly more frequently used by females than the males. Males used one word substitution/ synonyms more than they used multiple word substitution, whereas female did the opposite of this. Here again, it must be noted that glorification involves warping the reality to some extent since it involves a certain degree of exaggeration. Neutral qualities are portrayed as positive in this strategy. Given males' tendency to stay as close to the reality, they were found to disregard this strategy as one of their least preferred ones.

A major difference in male and females' choice of euphemistic strategies was found to be in the preference of humorization. Males preferred it more than females. Among females, the use humorization was negligible. This implies that males tend to treat harsh realities much more comfortably in form humor than the females.

Quantitative Measure of Aptitude

What made Questionnaire 2 different from questionnaire 1 was that it explicitly instructed the participants to provide "polite" (euphemistic) alternative to the given words. Thus, any euphemistic responses to questions on this questionnaire are counted as high aptitude of the participants in producing euphemism. Similarly, any un-euphemistic response to questions on this questionnaire are counted as low aptitude of participants with respect to euphemism, because aptitude technically means the ability to do something, which in the present case means the ability of produce euphemistic expression for the items specified on the questionnaire. The ability stems from sound knowledge of what's polite

and appropriate compared to what is not. Table 4 shows aptitude of males and females w.r.t euphemism.

Table 4

Aptitude of Males and Females in Producing Euphemism (Based on Responses in Questionnaire # 2)

Female				Male			
Euphemistic Responses		Non Euphemistic Responses		Euphemistic Responses		Non Euphemistic Responses	
Frequency	% Responses with High Aptitude	Frequency Of Occurrence	% Responses with low aptitude	Frequency of Occurrence	% Responses with High Aptitude	Frequency Of Occurrence	% Responses with low aptitude
42/180	1 8.8%	7	1 .7 %	19/180	1 6.1%	6	3 8 %

Note. 6 questions were asked in Questionnaire # 3 from thirty (30) females. A total of 180 responses were received, six from each female. 142 out of 180 responses by females were euphemistic whereas “No Response” option was used by twenty-four (24) females which justifies the deficit of this number in Table 6. Similarly in case of males, twenty-eight (28) out of 180 were found to opt for “No Response” which covers the deficit of responses in Table 4. The rate of euphemistic responses count towards high aptitude whereas that of non-euphemistic responses count towards low aptitude.

The responses of participants on Questionnaire 3 provided a direct measure of their aptitude regarding euphemism. Euphemistic responses on this questionnaire indicated high aptitude and un-euphemistic responses to questions on this questionnaire indicated lack of aptitude of the participants. Table 4 showed that 78.8% of the responses of females and 66.1% of the total responses of males were euphemistic in questionnaire 2 which means that 78.8% females and 66.1% males showed high aptitude w.r.t. euphemism.

Calculation of Outcome Expectancy

Questionnaire 2 also asked the participants of the study whether or not they prefer using the responses they provided on Questionnaire 2 in their daily lives. This question

was meant to evaluate the participants' outcome expectancies regarding euphemism. The following table shows the outcome expectancies.

Table 5

The Outcome Expectancies of Males and Females (based on data in Questionnaire #3)

Females			Males		
Rate of preference of Euphemistic expressions in routine	Rate of non-preference of Euphemistic expressions in routine	Rate of preference of Euphemistic expressions in routine	Rate of non-preference of Euphemistic expressions in routine	Rate of preference of Euphemistic expressions in routine	Rate of non-preference of Euphemistic expressions in routine
Frequency	%Age of responses With High Outcome Expectancy	Frequency	%Age of Responses With Low Outcome Expectancy	Frequency	%Age of With High Outcome Expectancy
1	9	2	8	6	3
39 / 142	7.8 %	.1 %	3/ 119	9.7 %	6 / 119
					0.2 %

Note. 142 responses by Female came out to be euphemistic. 139 out of 142 euphemistic expressions were preferred to be used by them in their routine or day to day language which accounts for the rate of High Outcome Expectancy. 3 out of 142 expressions were not preferred to be used in day-to-day language by them which gives the rate of Low outcome expectancy. 119 responses by males were found to be euphemistic. 36 out of 119 expressions were not preferred to be used in day-to-day language by them which gives the rate of Low outcome expectancy.

Questionnaire 2 asked participants to state whether or not they prefer (to use in real lives) the expressions with which they replied to the questions on Questionnaire 2. The responses were negative or affirmative. Negative responses to this question for euphemistic responses showed low outcome expectancy as did positive responses to un-euphemistic answers. 97.8% females and 69.7% males showed high outcome expectancies on Questionnaire 2.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study reveal vivid gendered patterns in euphemistic behavior, aligning with Allan and Burrige's (2006) theory which posits euphemism as a mechanism for projection of face and avoidance of taboo violation. The overall euphemistic tendency, which is revealed to be greater among females than males, supports the idea that women have higher sensitivity to social and emotional taboos (Rakhmanova, 2019; Holmes, 1995).

Political correctness is a more socially institutionalized strategy among all other strategies. The fact that males favor it the most suggests that male language is guided by social propriety awareness, whereas females' preference is guided by interpersonal awareness which is evident from the latter's preference for litotes and glorification in the subject matters pertaining to human weakness and vulnerability. These differences in male and female preference in euphemism are in line with Leech's (1983) politeness maxims of 'tact' and 'sympathy', reflecting gendered orientations toward relational versus ideological politeness.

Moreover, domain-specific differences such as females euphemizing mental or bodily issues compared to males economic or physical one seems to echo Allan and Burrige's (2006) theory that taboo sensitivity varies by social role, identity and hence gender.

With regards to the metacognitive aspects of the use of euphemism as compared for males and females, the findings reveal that females possess higher outcome expectancies for both polite and impolite language, as well as greater recognition of euphemism. This aligns with Bandura's (1986) *Social Cognitive Theory*, which posits that behavior is influenced by expected outcomes and self-efficacy; in the present case, euphemistic behavior is guided by outcome expectancy or correct anticipation of consequences of our language choice and confidence in oneself in dealing with language choices.

Females' affirmative responses to whether or not they would like to use euphemism when talking about a socially sensitive subject matter in real life, suggest their stronger belief in the positive social impact of euphemistic and polite communication as compared to males. Moreover, their ability and aptitude in providing euphemistic substitutions reflects higher *metapragmatic awareness*, supporting Allan and Burrige's (2006) view that euphemism requires conscious sensitivity to taboo and face concerns. Similar gendered awareness has been observed in politeness research, where women demonstrate greater pragmatic competence and relational orientation (Holmes, 1995; Rakhmanova, 2019). Collectively, these results reinforce that female speakers not only recognize euphemism more readily but also value its social utility more than males, reflecting deeper cognitive and affective engagement with face and appropriateness norms.

Overall, the results affirm that euphemism use is a consciously regulated pragmatic choice shaped by gendered social cognition and differing forms of awareness toward face and taboo.

CONCLUSION

Researchers in the field of sociolinguistics have been involved in numerous gender and age graded researches pertaining to various aspects of language variation with respect to various demographic factors of population, but have scarcely dug into deeper aspects of language use in terms of politeness and euphemism like the psychology and motivation behind it, the nature of preference and dispreference of euphemism, the subject matters and areas in which the language speakers prefer using certain patterns of language and innovation in language to adjust to communicative needs. Based on findings of the present study we see that male and females have different ways of identifying with language and the external world, different ways of using language, different politeness strategies, different perceptions of outcomes, different motivations behind the use of certain language features like euphemism and difference sense of the need to use euphemism.

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