



Food euphemisms: Psychological and social aspects

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Abstract. The article drew attention to the importance of studying euphemisms that are actively used in the production and processing of livestock products to conceal or mitigate information that may cause negative associations among consumers. The purpose of the study was to investigate the psychological and social aspects of the use of euphemisms in the field of production and consumption. The study used descriptive-analytical, comparative, lexical-semantic and discourse methods to analyse euphemisms in the context of their structural, functional, cultural and communicative features. The article focused on how euphemistic language influences consumers' perception of products, promotes the formation of positive associations and allows avoiding ethical and moral issues related to production processes. The mechanisms of influence of euphemisms on psychological comfort, risk perception and decision-making were described. The social factors that contribute to the spread of euphemisms in marketing communication, including social norms and the desire for emotional protection, were analysed. The article described approaches that include linguistic analysis, cognitive and socio-psychological methods that allow to study the role of euphemisms in shaping consumer perception and decision-making. Particular attention was paid to the methods of corpus analysis of texts, experimental surveys and analysis of consumer behavioural reactions to certain euphemistic expressions, such as “ecological”, “useful”, “recycling” and “premium”. The article highlighted the role of euphemisms as a tool for manipulating and influencing consumer decisions, as well as their impact on the ethical responsibility of producers

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who are both directly and indirectly involved in concealing ethical and environmental problems related to production. An analysis of the effectiveness of these language strategies and their impact on consumer perceptions of food products is proposed, which is of practical importance for improving communications in the field of production and marketing

Keywords: behaviour; correctness; manipulation; roundabout expressions; interpretation; association

Introduction

Food production and consumption, being deeply intertwined with Ukraine's agricultural economy, make euphemistic language a strategic tool for promoting products both domestically and internationally. Euphemisms often serve to reduce negative perceptions associated with food industries or practices, making them more acceptable to the public. This is particularly relevant due to their impact on consumer perception, marketing strategies, and ethical considerations. Social aspects reflect society's cultural attitudes and taboos. Linguistic strategies in this case influence consumer behaviour by shaping decision-making. Ethical norms, in turn, help to alleviate emotional discomfort by distancing individuals from distressing topics, avoiding cognitive dissonance and framing food in ways that make it more mentally and emotionally acceptable to consumers. Understanding the various aspects of euphemism usage provides valuable insights into their impact on communication and decision-making processes. Ukrainian and foreign researchers have been working on this issue. The origin of euphemisms and the process of euphemisation stem from human nature and can be traced back to evolution, as reported by S. Naumenko & M. Kryvonis (2023). The tendency to soften language is typical of human nature and continues to evolve. Thus, when discussing the process, it is important not to exclude its cultural aspect, which cannot be separated from social and psychological dimensions. V.B. Velykoroda (2017) highlights the structural and semantic characteristics of euphemisms within

the Ukrainian language and examines the ways euphemisms are created and integrated into the language. However, their nature and functions vary significantly depending on cultural and linguistic contexts. Despite existing research, a comparative analysis of euphemistic practices across different languages and cultures could offer deeper insights into universal and culture-specific features of euphemism use. According to A.C. Walker *et al.* (2021), it is crucial to comprehend the effects of linguistic manipulation in both high- and low-ambiguity situations to enhance understanding of how language can strategically influence people's perceptions of significant and highly controversial actions. People generally assess the reliability of information only when it challenges their existing beliefs or when they have a specific motivation to do so, in the opinion of D.M. Lazer *et al.* (2018).

In most other cases, they are inclined to accept information without critical evaluation. This creates opportunities for producers to manipulate information, as noted in the article. Yu.V. Yelovska (2017) focused on the cultural and linguistic aspects of euphemisms in the Ukrainian language and categorised taboos into those related to verbal communication and those associated with general human behaviour, providing insights into ethnospecific features. Ch. Felt & E. Riloff (2020) focused on identifying euphemisms and dysphemisms, noting that euphemisms are used to make less desirable foods seem more enticing, while dysphemisms may help avoid or discourage

certain perceptions. Euphemisms serve to soften or obscure the true nature of a situation, making it more palatable or less uncomfortable. In contrast, dysphemisms are intended to intensify negative perceptions. By examining linguistic strategies, K. Burrige (2012) highlighted how language preserves the dignity of individuals and reflects cultural perceptions. The article underscores the influence of psychological and societal factors on the development and use of euphemisms. F.S. Tsai & X.W. Wen (2021) emphasised how language and communication strategies influence perceptions of food safety and consumption practices. This is also discussed in the article, particularly regarding how euphemistic expressions are used in food advertising and everyday communication to shape consumer perceptions and cultural norms around food consumption. The research aimed to explore how language shapes perceptions and behaviours around food through the following tasks:

- to understand how euphemisms influence consumer behaviour;
- to analyse the functions and methods of euphemism formation in the English language;
- to identify the areas of their use in everyday consumption discourse and examine the psychological and social factors regulating the choice of alternatives.

Materials and Methods

The descriptive analytical method was used to identify and describe the structural and functional characteristics of euphemisms based on their theoretical features. This approach was employed to analyse how these expressions are constructed and how their forms differ depending on cultural or linguistic contexts. It proved effective in understanding the role of euphemisms in shaping consumer perceptions, masking undesirable qualities of food products, and adhering to social norms of politeness and marketing strategies. Linguistic manipulation in food was identified through ingredient lists,

packaged food labels, menus across cuisines, marketing campaigns, and social media posts. Terms commonly found across multiple materials, specifically related to food discourse and consumer communication, were analysed for their reflection on cultural norms, traditions, or trends in food consumption. These served as the primary criteria for analysis.

Additionally, the research employed the comparative method, which highlights cultural attitudes and values associated with food, allowing the study to compare euphemisms across languages, cultures, or historical periods to identify both similarities and differences in their pragmatic functions. These ranged from mitigating negative connotations to enhancing appeal. Cultural differences in food naming reflect cultural attitudes towards products and preferences across different demographic groups. Terms that reflect unique cultural values, traditions, or differences in meaning, function, or emotional impact across languages or regions were used as criteria for selection to gain a better understanding of communicative functions.

The lexical-semantic method focused on the lexical and semantic features of food euphemisms and examined the relationships between words, their meanings, and how these meanings shift depending on context or culture. Connotations and terminology were collected from dictionaries, cookbooks, thesauri, advertising materials, and online reviews. The criteria for analysis were based on the discourse method, which studies communication and how language achieves effects in specific contexts. Euphemisms were analysed not only as linguistic phenomena but also as tools that influence and reflect human interaction and societal norms.

Results and Discussion

The term “euphemism” first appeared in 1656 in Thomas Blount’s book *Glossographia*. It originates from the Greek word *euphēmismos*, meaning “of good omen”. From an etymological perspective, euphemisms are closely associated

with taboos and traditionally involve substituting an original term, deemed offensive or unpleasant, with a less direct or softer alternative. Euphemisms are often described as a “veil” or “shroud” placed over the original meaning to obscure it or make it less uncomfortable for the speaker. This is particularly evident in practices such as doublespeak, where language is intentionally softened or disguised.

According to Merriam-Webster’s (2023) online dictionary, the term “euphemism” refers to “the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant” as well as to “the expression so substituted”. The “veiling” subtype aligns closely with Merriam-Webster’s definition, describing expressions – often related to religion, mentality, health beliefs, cultural norms, and similar areas – that are avoided because they are considered taboo within a particular speech community. In contrast, the “concealing” subtype refers to euphemisms intentionally used by a speaker to influence or, in some cases, manipulate the listener. While traditional linguistic research on euphemisms has largely focused on the “veiling” subtype, the “concealing” subtype is particularly significant in the context of studying economic and business language.

Human nature is inclined to prefer hearing positive or agreeable things, even if they are not entirely truthful, as long as they do not cause offence. People tend to reject information that contradicts their beliefs, as they strive to remain in a state of cognitive comfort. As a result, individuals naturally gravitate toward hearing or seeing what aligns with their desires and expectations. Euphemism, being both a psychological and social phenomenon, serves as a means of softening communication, helping speakers avoid causing discomfort or embarrassment to their audience through directness. Euphemisms are universally present, found in nearly every language, speech community, and social class, as most cultures have concepts or

topics that people prefer not to address explicitly. As observed, humans can accept information that coincides with existing beliefs or desires. Euphemisms can affirm positive or neutral views toward something that might otherwise seem negative, allowing individuals to avoid confronting unpleasant truths. People tend to seek emotional comfort and often place trust in positive figures. A combination of psychological factors, such as deviation from objective reality, emotional needs, social expectations, and trust in authority, leads to collective acceptance. From a psychological perspective, fear is a basic emotional response to a perceived threat or danger. It may also contribute to feelings of disgust, as suggested by studies investigating reactions to certain products. In this context, euphemisms are used to disguise the purpose of something, particularly when it is an unpleasant or uncomfortable topic. This could be because the speaker wishes to avoid causing offence or distress or because they do not want to draw attention to the subject. Euphemisms can also be employed by businesses to make their actions appear more acceptable or palatable to customers – in other words, more tasty, appetising, and visually appealing.

Euphemisms highlight an intriguing aspect of human psychology: the willingness to accept a form of deception that provides emotional comfort and preserves social harmony. Through euphemistic language, individuals can avoid difficult conversations, protect their selfimage, and signal social awareness. However, the use of euphemisms can be a double-edged sword; while they soften harsh realities, they may also obscure the truth, creating a false sense of security. Ultimately, the human preference for euphemisms reflects a desire for balance – between honesty and compassion, directness and sensitivity, clarity and comfort.

In the opinion of some researchers, the social factor refers to the set of ethical principles, values, and beliefs that guide an individual’s behaviour and decision-making processes.

Moral constraints act as internal regulations that shape how a person perceives right and wrong, influencing actions and interactions with others. Social conformity can lead individuals to identify certain areas or topics they believe may provoke discomfort or conflict, creating a personal taboo zone. The concept of unacceptability implies the presence of a negative characteristic that causes negative associations. Negative associations can arise from various factors that influence an individual's perceptions and emotional responses to certain stimuli, ideas, or experiences. In turn, the paradox of euphemisation in the business environment is that euphemisms, as a form of masking facts of reality, can simultaneously act as markers of "problem" zones, often highlighting the absence of social welfare. The types of food consumed by one culture may be regarded with contempt by another, reflecting the increasing prominence of ethnic preferences (Allan & Burrige, 2006).

Z. Kunch (2022) provides a comprehensive view of euphemisms as dynamic linguistic tools that help individuals navigate social interactions, reflect cultural values, and manage potentially sensitive topics. Her study emphasises that euphemisms are not merely linguistic devices; they are deeply intertwined with cultural norms and social strategies. By studying euphemisms, author shed light on the ways language evolves to serve complex communicative needs, showing that euphemistic language reflects society's shifting sensitivities and values. Her research contributes significantly to the understanding of how language can both conceal and reveal deeper social and cultural truths, particularly focusing on their role in communication, cultural norms, and social contexts. Her article explores how euphemisms function as linguistic tools that allow speakers to navigate sensitive topics, reflect on social aspects, and represent collective values and beliefs. By examining various contexts of euphemisms, Z. Kunch's research provides insights into how

language serves as a solution for uncomfortable or taboo subjects and as a means of indirect expression. Her research also demonstrates how euphemisms align with social norms of politeness, particularly in cultures that value indirect communication. Euphemisms serve as an effective communication tool, enabling speakers to convey difficult messages in a polite and non-offensive manner. By using such expressions, speakers can avoid causing emotional discomfort, demonstrate respect for differing perspectives, and maintain a tactful and diplomatic tone. As a form of figurative language, euphemisms substitute terms with negative connotations for alternatives that are more neutral or even positive. The use of euphemisms is closely tied to cultural norms, reflecting the values and practices of a particular society. Typically, euphemisms are employed in speech or writing for three key purposes: achieving rhetorical effect, softening the impact of statements, and avoiding sensitive topics altogether.

Following this, food euphemisms can take many forms, from humorous phrases to more serious substitutions. For example, calling a dish "*gourmet*" instead of "expensive" or referring to a calorie-dense dessert as "*indulgent*" can change the perception of the food experience. These euphemisms allow individuals to navigate social situations more comfortably, particularly in contexts where food choices may be scrutinised. For instance, the word "*cook*" traditionally refers to the process of preparing food but avoids direct connotations of "killing", which may deviate from usual culinary imagery (Holder, 2008). Food and restaurant euphemisms reveal much about how language shapes dining experiences, aligning with cultural values, culinary trends, and consumer psychology. By rephrasing dishes, ingredients, and techniques, the food industry can not only make dishes sound more appetising but also enhance their perceived value while aligning

with health-conscious trends. These euphemisms play a crucial role in making dining an experience that goes beyond the food itself, appealing to emotions, ideals, and the desire for a positive experience.

There are many means of perceiving euphemisms used to attract customers, such as visual, oral, mental, and auditory, which include how an individual recognises and interprets sensory information. This process may occur in five stages: stimulation, organisation, interpretation-evaluation, identification, and recall. In the food industry, advertising plays a vital role. Consumers become an integral part of euphemism formation. In other words, most brands saturate consumer consciousness with various myths oriented towards motivational needs, thereby enhancing personal esteem (Kravchenko & Shanaieva-Tsymbal, 2023). In the research, the euphemism “Golden Age” is a mythological expression that relates to the name of a jewellery brand used in Ukraine, as well as a company producing food products. In advertising, this expression is presented in a manner that sounds mysterious and particularly pleasing to the senses. Some businesses use it to evoke positive associations with a time of great happiness, success, harmony, and stability. However, if the listener knows the true meaning, it could create confusion and be perceived as a form of dishonesty, since the phrase “golden age” traditionally refers to old age or a past period of imagined prosperity.

According to research, when examining food euphemisms, they often invoke something sacred or euphemistic, making them more intriguing and symbolic. Euphemisms function as a ritual of meaning transformation, reflecting how societies create and maintain sacred and profane spheres, and how these distinctions influence collective identity and cultural values. L. Huang (2019) focused on the use of food euphemisms in specific cultural contexts, observing that such terms often carry deep symbolic meaning. For example, Huang observed that

words like “longevity noodles” or “dragon fruit” are rooted in tradition and mythology. This suggests that euphemisms are not only linguistic tools to soften or obscure the meaning of certain concepts but are also deeply tied to the speaker’s intentions and cultural heritage.

Polish sociologist P. Sztompka (2008) has made a significant contribution to the understanding of *sacrum* and *profanum* within the social sphere. His study examines how the sacred (*sacrum*) and secular or profane (*profanum*) influence social structures, public behaviour, and culture. P. Sztompka argues that trust is an essential component of social cohesion, as it allows individuals to cooperate and engage collectively. The connection between sacred values and social trust is evident. By contrast, profane elements, though essential to daily life, do not command the collective respect and emotional investment associated with the sacred. In this context, euphemisms are defined as *sacrum* and trust-inducing, often due to their nuanced and mysterious descriptions, accompanied by covert intentions to influence people. L. Marino (2017), a semi-otician and cultural theorist, argued that food operates as a system of signs and viewed food language as a reflection of cultural values, where euphemisms symbolise social codes and personal identity. Therefore, the use of food euphemisms reveals deep-seated cultural attitudes towards morality and social status. In modern society, understanding the psychology of consumption is a key factor for successful business. Customer behaviour is a crucial psychological factor influencing choice, desire, and decision-making. Research has shown that consumers are more likely to purchase products that are framed positively. For example, labelling a food item as “*premium*” rather than “expensive” can shape consumer perception, making the product seem more desirable. By using euphemisms, marketers can create a favourable context that encourages consumers to overlook potential drawbacks or negative

attributes of the product. The language used to describe food products has a profound impact on decision-making and serves to soften the message, making products more palatable to potential buyers. This article discusses how euphemisms function in the food industry and their implications for consumer behaviour. Euphemisms play a crucial role in framing food products in ways that appeal to consumers' emotions and preferences. For instance, terms like "artisanal" or "handcrafted" suggest quality and uniqueness, while "all-natural" evokes a sense of healthfulness and purity. Such language can elevate a product's perceived value and attractiveness, even if the actual product may not differ significantly from others in the market. Similarly, within the service industry, euphemisms hold significant importance in shaping consumer perceptions, enhancing the appeal of dishes, and maintaining polite communication. By substituting straightforward terms with more pleasant or appealing language, restaurants and food brands can make dishes sound more luxurious, exotic, or healthy, influencing customers' expectations and dining experiences.

Euphemisms have also permeated the food and restaurant industries. Few restaurants would risk admitting a "cook" prepares the food; instead, the "cuisine" is invariably crafted by a "chef". It is notable how unusual it sounds when phrases like "lunch solutions" are used rather than the simple word "menu". Some restaurants even opted to rebrand "prunes" as "dried plums" after research revealed that women in their thirties responded more positively to the latter term. While this shift might not resonate with everyone in this demographic, businesses prioritise their profits above all else. A similar rebranding occurred with chickpeas, which were formerly referred to as garbanzo beans, possibly due to a perception that "garbanzo" sounded overly whimsical. Likewise, Chinese gooseberries were rebranded as "kiwifruit" for marketing purposes, and rapeseed

oil was renamed "canola oil", likely to avoid associations that might deter certain consumers. Even seafood has not been exempt – Chilean sea bass became far more popular after its original name, "Patagonian toothfish", was replaced. The trend continues with products like "macaroni", which was rebranded as "pasta", partly to distance it from any offensive stereotypes associated with Italians. This rebranding strategy enables businesses to market identical products under new names, creating an impression of variety and sophistication.

Language in the food and restaurant industry is carefully crafted to entice, reassure, and sometimes even disguise less pleasant realities. From renaming ingredients to evoke exotic flavours to rebranding cooking techniques for elegance, euphemisms are tools that help restaurateurs and marketers present their offerings in a more appealing light. They serve as linguistic strategies for shaping customer perceptions, often invoking luxury, health, or novelty. Euphemisms in this context do more than just make dishes sound appetising; they help create a complete sensory experience that aligns with the image a restaurant wants to convey.

This kind of creativity arises whenever consumption habits are constrained. For instance, during periods of strict prohibitions on alcohol, euphemisms such as "Mr. Johnny Walker from the Scotch Office" or "Mr. Smirnoff" were often used in press reports. Similarly, carbonated mineral water has been referred to by various names over time, including seltzer, soda water, club soda, and, more recently, the euphemistic "yuppies' sparkling water". Today, labels on sparkling water may describe it as "lightly carbonated", a phrase intended to appeal to a more discerning audience. Non-carbonated water was also rebranded; since "noncarbonated" seemed too plain, trendier restaurants adopted terms like "flat water" or "still water" to elevate its image. It's a subtle change, but one that underscores the intentional decision-making in beverage marketing.

Euphemisms can also mitigate consumers' concerns about specific ingredients or processes. Terms like "humanely raised" or "sustainably sourced" aim to reassure consumers worried about animal welfare or environmental impact. By using such language, companies create a positive association with their products, encouraging purchases from consumers who prioritise ethical considerations. The meat industry, for example, separates consumers from the harsh realities of production by locating slaughterhouses in remote areas, employing marketing tactics that depict animals in idyllic farm environments, or using vague language to imply humane treatment.

Admittedly, the food industry relies on complex and often controversial processing techniques. Euphemisms serve to mask potentially unappealing realities, presenting food items in a more favourable light. These terms soften the perception of processed products, making them appear less artificial and more natural. Phrases such as "natural flavours", "all-natural", and "no added sugar" frequently appear on ingredient labels, giving an impression of healthiness. However, "natural flavours" are often laboratory-created and can closely resemble artificial flavours in their production. The term simply indicates that the compound is derived from plant or animal sources, without necessarily guaranteeing a purely natural origin. Such linguistic tools enable manufacturers and marketers to present products as safer, more appealing, and even ethically sound, often masking details that might otherwise discourage consumers or negatively impact purchasing decisions.

Companies that regularly employ positive language in their marketing can foster a sense of reliability and integrity among consumers. For example, in the context of farming, euphemistic terms like "processing" or "ventilation shutdown" are used instead of more emotive words such as "slaughter" or "death". Farmers argue that emotionally charged language can discredit the animal farming industry and erode

public trust. Using euphemisms allows the industry to shield consumers from the realities of animal treatment, enabling them to maintain psychological distance from the process. The animal agriculture sector has long relied on euphemistic language to influence consumer perceptions and obscure realities. For instance, the term "livestock" reduces animals to commodities, framing them as products to be bought, sold, and profited from, effectively stripping them of individuality. Similarly, "bacon", often perceived as a harmless or appetising term, is a euphemism for sliced pig flesh with layers of fat. By objectifying animals and using different terms for them when alive versus when dead, the industry enables consumers to avoid confronting the discomforting reality of slaughterhouses. The term "poultry" provides another example, broadly referring to bird species such as chickens raised for farming. This generalised language distances consumers from the animals themselves, making it easier for the food industry to obscure the processes involved. Euphemisms like these not only desensitise consumers but also make the entire system appear less morally or emotionally complex.

Researchers J.R. Kunst & S.M. Hohle (2016) investigated a phenomenon known as the "Meat Paradox". This paradox refers to the conflict experienced when individuals desire to eat meat but simultaneously hold no intention to harm animals. This moral conflict often leads to cognitive dissonance, which meat-eaters must find a way to reconcile. One of the most common strategies for addressing this discomfort is the mental separation of meat from the animals it originates from. The researchers also examined the role of euphemisms in creating psychological distance from meat animals. They found that framing industrial meat production as "harvesting" instead of "killing" or "slaughtering" reduced empathy among participants. Moreover, substituting "beef" or "pork" with "cow" or "pig" on restaurant menus increased both empathy and disgust,

leading to a lower willingness to consume meat and greater openness to choosing vegetarian dishes. This highlights the essential role euphemisms play in mitigating or managing psychological discomfort.

Language not only reflects but also reinforces cultural norms around meat consumption. Consequently, meat is rarely perceived as flesh because euphemistic terms for meat have become normalised, facilitating the disassociation between food and animals as an ingrained part of language and culture. This process reduces the cognitive conflict associated with meat consumption, as the linguistic framework supports a meat-eating lifestyle. Kunst and Hohle explored whether distancing meat from its source animal could alleviate this cognitive dissonance. Social scientific insights bolster their investigation. Their study revealed several key findings. Participants presented with processed meat exhibited less empathy toward slaughtered animals compared to those exposed to unprocessed meat. Furthermore, participants who viewed lamb chop advertisements featuring images of live lambs showed increased empathy and a decreased willingness to consume the meat. This underscores the significance of visual representation in shaping consumer attitudes (Kunst & Hohle, 2016). The use of euphemistic language in labelling and describing meat products is particularly noteworthy. However, it remains an often-overlooked factor in the context of cognitive dissonance. These strategies enable individuals to create mental separation, minimising the association between food and the animals from which it is derived. Euphemisms function as psychological tools that ease cognitive dissonance, allowing individuals to consume meat while maintaining moral beliefs about animal welfare. By obscuring the reality of meat production and consumption, euphemistic language upholds cultural norms and reinforces the acceptability of meat-eating. The implications of this research

extend beyond individual psychology, offering insights into how language influences social attitudes toward animal welfare and environmental sustainability. Ecolinguistics examines the intersection of language and ecological issues and explains that euphemisms are not merely alternative terms but serve a crucial social function. Euphemistic language plays a significant role in facilitating moral disengagement, a concept thoroughly documented in human social dynamics and attitudes towards animals. A. Bandura (2011) explains that one of the mechanisms of moral disengagement includes “using sanitising and convoluted language that disguises the harm being done”. Moral disengagement refers to the psychological tactic that allows individuals to justify and participate in unethical behaviour. From the perspective of the authors of this research, euphemisms significantly contribute to the process of moral disengagement, fostering negative attitudes and even violence towards animals.

When consumers encounter terms like “cage-free” eggs, they often imagine hens freely roaming across lush green fields, a perception reinforced by imagery commonly displayed on egg cartons. However, in reality, hens on these farms typically spend their entire lives confined within overcrowded sheds. Similarly, the term “harvest” is strategically employed to evoke positive associations with plentiful crops, conjuring images of fruits and vegetables. In the context of animal agriculture, however, this term serves as a euphemism for slaughter, a word that starkly conveys violence and bloodshed. Such euphemistic language and misleading labels obscure the harsh realities of industrial animal farming, creating a sanitised narrative that minimises negative imagery and ethical concerns for consumers. Euphemisms such as “*sausage*” and “*fillet*” make the consumption of animal products more appealing by eliminating direct associations with the animals from which they originate. These terms

foster psychological distance from the source of the food, concealing the reality that these products consist of processed and combined animal body parts. Similarly, the term “fresh food” conveys a sense of health, while “fresh meat” refers to the muscle tissue of recently slaughtered animals, which is far removed from the pleasant, appetising imagery these terms are intended to evoke.

The primary function of such euphemisms is to soften the harsh realities of food production and reduce any negative emotional response or aggression from consumers. Language, in this context, serves as a key mechanism of ideology and power dynamics. It functions as a tool to shape perceptions and manipulate representations of reality to align with the ideological interests of the speaker or industry. Euphemisms are linguistic expressions that soften or mask harsh realities, often used to navigate sensitive subjects such as social issues. T.A. van Dijk (2008) highlights the importance of understanding how language influences cognition and shapes public attitudes, providing valuable insights into the intricate relationship between language, thought, and social context. In essence, while some people clearly recognise euphemisms as manipulative, others may only sense their influence subconsciously. An individual’s response to euphemisms often depends on their knowledge and prior experiences. In the context of food, euphemisms address ethical, emotional, and environmental concerns, reflecting broader societal attitudes towards consumption. D.J. Enright (1985) examines the linguistic and cultural roles of euphemisms, arguing that understanding these mechanisms uncovers how language shapes perceptions, reduces cognitive dissonance, and facilitates communication. Moreover, in a globalised world, studying euphemisms is crucial for understanding cross-cultural communication, consumer behaviour, and the evolving dynamics of societal values.

According to research, businesses familiar with marketing tactics recognise that euphemisms can make products seem more appealing, healthier, or less controversial than they actually are. For example, terms like “*enhanced water*” for sugary drinks or “*processed meats*” labelled as “premium cuts” can be identified as euphemistic and manipulative. The ability to detect such manipulation often depends on an individual’s familiarity with a particular subject. This confirms that euphemisms are not neutral words in terms of their impact on perceptions (Farrow, 2021). In areas such as food or nutrition, more knowledgeable consumers tend to be quicker to recognise and understand the intent behind euphemisms, while those less familiar may accept the language without question. Even when people do not consciously realise they have been influenced, euphemisms can still subtly affect perception and decision-making. For instance, phrases like “*natural ingredients*” or “*wholesome foods*” often evoke positive associations, even if consumers do not actively consider whether these terms are regulated or clearly defined. Research on food-related euphemisms reveals significant psychological and social functions. These expressions often mask the reality of consumption or production processes, addressing discomfort associated with certain foods or practices. Euphemisms serve to soften language, reduce emotional tension, and align with cultural taboos or dietary norms. Psychologically, their role is to provide a coping mechanism for consumers, distancing them from unpleasant associations. This study highlights how language adapts to mitigate emotional unease, reflecting deeper societal attitudes toward food and consumption practices. Previous research on food-related euphemisms produced similar results, confirming that euphemisms are primarily driven by cultural taboos and the psychological need to distance individuals from unpleasant aspects of food production and

consumption. Compared to earlier research, the present study places greater emphasis on consumer emotional regulation and the avoidance of cognitive dissonance in food choices.

In summary, the use of euphemisms in food production and marketing allows businesses to subtly influence consumer perceptions, often framing products in a more favourable light than they might objectively deserve. This demonstrates the persuasive power of euphemisms to shape opinions and drive purchasing decisions, even when their influence goes unnoticed. Understanding this dynamic underscores the importance of critical thinking and media literacy in empowering consumers to make informed choices and resist manipulation through language.

Conclusions

To some extent, euphemisms in the food industry enhance appeal, mitigate discomfort, align with trends, and foster inclusivity, making them a vital part of effective food marketing and consumer engagement. In contemporary communication, euphemisms are often crafted not merely to sound polite but to appear more persuasive. To fully grasp the significance of euphemisms, it is essential to analyse them within specific discourses. Therefore, a more contextual approach is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of their role. Language continues to evolve, and those in positions of influence have increasingly refined the linguistic strategies they use to shape public perception, influence opinions, and guide behaviour. Euphemisms significantly influence consumer behaviour in the food industry by shaping perceptions, enhancing appeal, and guiding dietary choices. Through carefully crafted language, marketers can create favourable associations and foster brand loyalty. However, ethical considerations regarding transparency and honesty must be addressed to maintain consumer trust. Understanding

the impact of euphemisms on consumer behaviour is essential for both marketers and consumers, enabling more informed decisions in the marketplace. Doublespeak poses a significant threat to society, as it already impacts people's actions and thoughts by distorting reality. It achieves this through the use of contradictions, misleading language, and unnecessary complexities, thereby creating false communication. However, euphemisms, in contrast, are often seen as a tool that enriches the English language and contribute to its evolution and development over time. In conclusion, as businesses continue to grow and evolve, the strategic use and manipulation of euphemisms in professional contexts appears to be increasing, and their role will be vital in the food industry. Entrepreneurs consistently devise innovative methods to influence consumer behaviour and maximise profits. Research indicates that euphemisms can effectively shape individuals' perceptions, particularly when integrated into language that frames the desired context. Moreover, there is evidence suggesting that euphemisms are often employed more to protect the speaker or source than to safeguard the audience's sensibilities. As communication becomes more globalised and intercultural, investigating euphemisms across different languages and cultures takes on greater importance. There is a need to better comprehend how euphemisms reflect and influence human behaviour. Ultimately, enhancing both theoretical understanding and practical applications in linguistics, psychology, and sociology requires a focus on bridging gaps, with particular attention to the emotional and cognitive impacts of euphemisms.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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Евфемізми їжі: психологічний та соціальний аспекти

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Анотація. У статті звертається увага на важливість дослідження евфемізмів, які активно використовуються у сфері виробництва та переробки продукції тваринництва для приховування чи пом'якшення інформації, здатної викликати негативні асоціації у споживачів. Метою дослідження було вивчення психологічних та соціальних аспектів використання евфемізмів у сфері виробництва та споживання. У дослідженні використано описово-аналітичний, порівняльний, лексико-семантичний та дискурсивний методи для аналізу евфемізмів у контексті їхніх структурних, функціональних та культурно-комунікативних особливостей. У статті акцентувалась увага на тому, як евфемістична мова впливає на сприйняття споживачами продуктів, сприяє формуванню позитивних асоціацій та дозволяє уникати етичних і моральних питань, пов'язаних з процесами виробництва. Описано механізми впливу евфемізмів на психологічний комфорт, сприйняття ризиків та прийняття рішень. Проаналізовано соціальні чинники, які сприяють поширенню евфемізмів у маркетинговій комунікації, зокрема соціальні норми та прагнення до емоційного захисту. Описано підходи, що включають лінгвістичний аналіз, когнітивні та соціально-психологічні методи, які дозволяють досліджувати роль евфемізмів у формуванні споживчого сприйняття та прийняття рішень. Особлива увага приділялась методам корпусного аналізу текстів, експериментальним опитуванням та аналізу поведінкових реакцій споживачів на певні евфемістичні вирази, такі як “екологічний”, “корисний”, “переробка” та “преміум”. Стаття висвітлює роль евфемізмів як інструменту маніпуляції та впливу на споживацькі рішення, а також їхній вплив на етичну відповідальність виробників, які як прямо, так і опосередковано причетні до приховування етичних та екологічних проблем, пов'язаних з виробництвом. Запропоновано аналіз ефективності цих мовних стратегій та їх впливу на сприйняття споживачами харчових продуктів, що має практичне значення для вдосконалення комунікацій у сфері виробництва та маркетингу

Ключові слова: когнітивні функції; поведінка споживача; коректність; маніпуляція; не прямі фрази; інтерпретація; асоціація