

Form, Function, and Meaning in the Use of Euphemism in the Title of Kompas Daily Newspaper

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Abstract - This study aims to analyze the forms, functions, and meanings of euphemisms used in the news headlines of Kompas online news headlines published between September and October 2024. This topic is important because euphemism is a linguistic strategy employed by the media to convey sensitive information in a more polite, subtle, and socially acceptable manner. The study applied a qualitative approach with a descriptive-semantic method. The data consisted of 15 news headlines containing euphemistic expressions, collected through document analysis, supported by note-taking techniques. The data were analyzed by classifying them based on linguistic forms, communicative functions, and semantic meanings. The findings reveal that the dominant forms of euphemism are loanwords and borrowed terms, followed by metaphors and periphrasis. Functionally, euphemisms are used to soften expressions, maintain politeness, conceal sensitive meanings, and support diplomatic strategies in news reporting. In terms of meaning, two types of meaning were identified: conceptual meaning and associative meaning. Conceptual meaning tends to occur in loanwords, while associative meaning is more frequently found in metaphorical expressions. These findings indicate that euphemism in Kompas headlines functions not only as a linguistic feature but also as a discursive strategy to frame social reality and influence readers' perceptions. Therefore, lexical choices in mass media play a significant role in shaping public opinion in a subtle yet effective way.

Keywords: euphemism, form, function, Kompas daily newspaper, meaning

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Language plays a central role in human communication, functioning not only as a tool for conveying information but also as a medium for constructing meaning and maintaining social relationships. The components that are bound and inseparable in human life are called language (Anitasari et al., 2023). In communicative practice, appropriate language structure is necessary to ensure clarity and mutual understanding. One linguistic strategy frequently employed to maintain social harmony is euphemism. Euphemisms are soft, polite, and pleasant expressions used to replace harsh or potentially offensive ones (Nopiah & Anuar, 2023). Their use aims to provide psychological comfort and avoid discomfort in interaction. This aligns with Bowers & Pleydell-Pearce (2011), who argue that euphemistic language is motivated by emotional regulation and communicative goals to prevent social tension. The use of euphemisms becomes particularly significant in public discourse, including mass media. Newspapers, as a form of print media, function as instruments for disseminating information and shaping public opinion (Alfiyani et al., 2020). Editorial choices in newspapers reflect ideological positioning and institutional perspectives (Dollah, 2014). In this context, euphemistic expressions may serve not only as politeness strategies but also as rhetorical devices that influence readers' perceptions. Social and cultural changes in society also affect language practices, leading to shifts in meaning and the emergence of associative meanings such as connotative, stylistic, affective, reflective, and collocative meanings.

This study focuses on euphemisms in the headlines of *Kompas* newspaper. As one of the largest and most influential national newspapers in Indonesia, Kompas has played a significant role in shaping public discourse for decades. Headlines are strategically important because they represent the first element encountered by readers and function as attention-grabbing devices. The linguistic choices in headlines therefore deserve closer examination, particularly regarding how euphemisms are constructed and what meanings and functions they carry. Conceptually, euphemism is closely related to taboo and politeness. Taboo expressions are embedded within cultural and religious systems (Laksana., 2003). Montagu (2003) classifies swearing taboos into six types: swearing, blasphemy, cursing, swearing (oath), obscenity, and exclaiming. In semantic studies, meaning is understood as the relationship between linguistic signs and what they signify (Chaer, 2013). Euphemism operates primarily within associative meaning particularly connotative, stylistic, and affective meaning (Leech, 1981). Euphemism is not only a politeness strategy but also a discursive tool used to shape public perception and ideological positioning in media discourse (Allan, 2019; Crespo-Fernández, 2017).

Recent studies have increasingly viewed euphemism as a discourse strategy rather than merely a lexical phenomenon. In media communication, euphemistic expressions are frequently employed to frame sensitive social, political, and economic issues in ways that reduce conflict, manage audience reactions, and influence public interpretation. As a result, euphemism functions not only as a politeness device but also as a mechanism for constructing social reality through strategic lexical choices (Crespo-Fernández, 2018; Mironina, 2024). Furthermore, news headlines are particularly significant because they represent the first point of contact between media institutions and readers and therefore contribute substantially to the construction of newsworthiness and audience perception (Bednarek, M., & Caple, 2017).

In contemporary semantic-pragmatic studies, euphemism is understood as a strategic linguistic choice used to mitigate face-threatening or socially sensitive content (Allan, K., & Burrige, 2006). In contrast, dysphemism involves negatively loaded or emotionally charged expressions that convey contempt, anger, or evaluative hostility. Dysphemistic expressions function as linguistic tools to intensify negative evaluation and may serve ideological or rhetorical purposes in discourse (Allan, K., & Burrige, 1991, 2006). Dysphemistic language may appear in words, phrases, clauses, or sentences with impolite connotations (Ayu et al., 2021; Kurniawati, 2011; Laili, 2013; Syahid, A., & Saifullah, 2019). Previous studies have examined euphemisms in various media contexts. Marsuja (2020) analyzed euphemisms in the editorials of *Riau Pos*, identifying forms such as abbreviations, foreign terms, metaphors, and periphrasis. (Oktaviani et al., 2024). Investigated euphemisms in the speeches of presidential candidates broadcast on YouTube Kompas TV and found dominant forms including foreign terms and abbreviations. Lestari & Asnawi (2022), examined euphemisms in crime news editorials and identified semantic patterns in metaphorical usage.

Despite the growing body of research on euphemism in political discourse and media communication, most studies have focused primarily on identifying euphemistic forms. Comparatively

fewer studies have examined the relationship between euphemistic forms, communicative functions, and semantic meanings within news headline discourse. Consequently, a more integrated analysis is needed to explain how euphemistic expressions operate simultaneously at lexical, semantic, pragmatic, and discourse levels (Crespo-Fernández, 2018; Mironina, 2024).

This limitation creates a gap in understanding how euphemisms operate not only as linguistic forms but also as strategic tools for shaping meaning and influencing readers' interpretation in media headlines. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate how euphemisms in *Kompas* headlines, as follows:

1. What linguistic forms of euphemism are used in the news headlines of *Kompas* newspaper published in September–October 2024?
2. What pragmatic and communicative functions do the euphemistic expressions perform in the *Kompas* news headlines?
3. How are the semantic meanings of euphemistic expressions, particularly conceptual and associative meanings, realized within the socio-political context of *Kompas* news headlines?

1.2 Theoretical Framework

1.2.1 Loanword

Loanwords are lexical items borrowed from one language into another and adapted to the phonological, morphological, or semantic system of the recipient language. Wang (2023), states that loanwords undergo linguistic transformation during borrowing, while Jiyoun (2025), explains them as products of language contact and social diffusion. Sujin (2025), emphasizes their semantic and phonological nativization, and Hormigo (2022), highlights grammatical adaptation. Lexical Borrowing Theory argues that borrowing occurs because of globalization, bilingualism, migration, media, and technology. Loanwords are commonly classified into phonological, morphological, and semantic loanwords (Jiyoun, 2025; Wang, 2023).

1.2.2 Absorption Form

Absorption form refers to foreign lexical items that are absorbed into a recipient language through phonological, morphological, orthographic, or semantic adaptation until they become naturalized in everyday communication. Based on Language Contact Theory, Einar Haugen explains that linguistic borrowing occurs when languages interact intensively, resulting in lexical transfer and structural adjustment, while Sarah Thomason and Terrence Kaufman emphasize that borrowed forms gradually integrate into the linguistic system of the receiving language through phonological adaptation, spelling adjustment, and semantic integration. Recent studies also classify absorption forms into several divisions: phonological absorption, morphological absorption, orthographic absorption, and semantic absorption. The Indonesian words such as *telepon*, *komputer*, *demokrasi*, *sistem*, dan *birokrasi* are derived and adjusted from non-Indonesian words 'telephone' (English), 'system' (Greece/English), 'quality' (Latin/English), and 'bureaucracy' (French) (Haugen, 2022; Thomason, S., & Kaufman, 2021).

1.2.3 Metaphorical Expression

Metaphorical expression in euphemism refers to the use of figurative or symbolic language to replace direct, harsh, or socially sensitive expressions with more indirect and acceptable meanings. Within euphemism studies, metaphorical expressions function to soften taboo topics such as death, illness, sexuality, or social conflict through conceptual substitution and semantic reinterpretation. According to Eliecer Crespo-Fernández (2021), euphemistic metaphors operate through conceptual mapping in which unpleasant realities are reframed into less threatening images. Similarly, Miriam A. Locher (2022), explains that metaphorical euphemisms are shaped by sociocultural norms and politeness strategies in discourse. Based on recent cognitive-semantic theory, metaphorical expressions in euphemism can be divided into: (1) conceptual metaphors, which reinterpret abstract or taboo concepts symbolically; (2) indirect metaphors, which obscure explicit meaning through figurative substitution; and (3) cultural metaphors, which rely on shared social beliefs and values. Expressions such as *passed away* for death or *senior citizen* for old person demonstrate how metaphorical euphemisms mitigate social discomfort and maintain politeness in communication.

1.2.4 Periphrasis

Periphrasis refers to the use of a longer, indirect, and more elaborate expression to replace a direct or potentially harsh term, particularly in euphemistic communication (Allan, K., & Burridge, 2023a). In euphemism studies, periphrasis functions as a politeness strategy that minimizes social discomfort and softens taboo or sensitive meanings through lexical expansion (Locher, 2022). According to Allan, K., & Burridge (2023), periphrastic euphemisms are commonly used to obscure unpleasant realities by substituting explicit expressions with indirect descriptive phrases, such as *berkebutuhan khusus* (inclusion/disable) instead of *cacat* (or handicapped), *beristirahat untuk selamanya* (rest in peace) instead of *meninggal dunia* (dead). Recent pragmatic and semantic theories classify periphrasis into several divisions: (1) descriptive periphrasis, which explains a concept indirectly through descriptive wording; (2) honorific periphrasis, used to show politeness or respect; and (3) mitigative periphrasis, aimed at reducing emotional or social offensiveness (Crespo-Fernández, 2021b; Fernández, 2024). These forms demonstrate how periphrasis serves both linguistic politeness and social harmony by avoiding direct confrontation with sensitive realities.

1.2.5 Lexical Substitution

Lexical substitution refers to the replacement of direct, harsh, taboo, or offensive words with softer and socially acceptable lexical alternatives in communication. Within Euphemism Theory, Keith Allan and Kate Burridge explain that euphemism functions as a linguistic strategy to shield speakers and listeners from expressions considered unpleasant, impolite, or socially sensitive (Allan, K., & Burridge, 2023b). In this framework, lexical substitution becomes one of the most common euphemistic mechanisms because it substitutes explicit lexical items with more neutral or refined vocabulary. Recent pragmatic studies classify lexical substitution into several forms, including semantic softening, institutional substitution, and socially mitigative substitution. Examples in Indonesian include *tunawisma* (homeless individuals) replacing *gelandangan* (vagrants), *narapidana* (inmates) replacing *penjahat* (criminals), *difabel* (persons with disabilities) replacing *cacat* (disabled persons), *warga binaan* (inmates) replacing *tahanan* (detainees), and *pekerja informal* (informal workers) replacing *buruh kasar* (unskilled laborers). These substitutions demonstrate how lexical choices are strategically employed to maintain politeness, reduce stigma, and preserve social harmony in public discourse and everyday interaction (Crespo-Fernández, 2021a; Locher, 2022).

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore euphemistic expressions as context-dependent linguistic phenomena. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the analysis focuses on interpreting meanings, functions, and language use within specific sociocultural and communicative contexts, rather than measuring variables or testing hypotheses. The study applies a semantic approach to examine how euphemisms in *Kompas* newspaper headlines convey meaning and function pragmatically. The analysis emphasizes in-depth interpretation of linguistic forms and their contextual meanings, aiming to reveal how euphemistic expressions are strategically used in media discourse.

2.2 Data and Data Source

The data in this research consisted of words and phrases identified as euphemistic expressions in news headlines. These linguistic units were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives, namely analyzing the form, function, and meaning of euphemisms. The data source was *Kompas* newspaper editions published in September and October 2024. Headlines were chosen because they represent condensed journalistic discourse and play a strategic role in shaping readers' interpretations. The data source of this study consists of news headlines published in *Kompas* during September and October 2024. From this corpus, a set of headlines containing euphemistic expressions was selected for analysis. The data were selected using a purposive technique, in which headlines were deliberately chosen based on specific criteria: (1) containing linguistic forms identified as euphemisms, and (2) representing socio-political or public discourse contexts. This selection approach allows the study to focus on relevant linguistic data that can provide in-depth insights into the forms, functions, and meanings of euphemistic expressions in media discourse.

The corpus initially consisted of 486 news headlines published in Kompas Daily Newspaper during September and October 2024. This period was selected because it covered several major socio-political, economic, and public issues following the Indonesian presidential election and governmental transition, which potentially generated extensive use of euphemistic language in media discourse. The headlines were screened through purposive sampling using the following criteria: (1) containing lexical items or expressions identified as euphemistic according to Allan, K., & Burridge (2006) framework; (2) representing social, political, economic, legal, or public-interest issues; and (3) occurring as headline expressions rather than body-text elements. After the screening process, 15 headlines were identified as meeting all criteria and were selected for in-depth analysis. To ensure analytical reliability, the classification of euphemistic forms, functions, and meanings was reviewed independently by two linguistics scholars specializing in semantics and discourse analysis. Disagreements were discussed until consensus was reached.

2.3 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using the observation method. This method includes listening technic where data were obtained by observing language use (Sudaryanto., 2015). The basic technique used was the tapping technique, in which the researcher systematically identified and extracted relevant linguistic data from the selected headlines. Apart from listening technic, the non-participant observation was implemented in which the researcher did not engage in the production of discourse but examined the data objectively as it appeared in the headlines. In addition, recording technique which involved systematically documenting euphemistic expressions identified in the headlines for further analysis was also used. All identified euphemistic forms were recorded, classified, and organized according to analytical categories. All identified euphemistic forms were then recorded, categorized, and organized according to the analytical framework.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data were analysed using content analysis techniques. Content analysis was applied to systematically categorize euphemistic expressions based on:

1. their linguistic forms (e.g., abbreviations, foreign terms, metaphors, periphrasis),
2. their communicative functions (e.g., softening speech, diplomacy, secrecy), and
3. their semantic meanings (conceptual and associative meanings).

The analysis was conducted in several stages:

1. Identifying euphemistic expressions in the selected headlines.
2. Classifying the expressions according to form.
3. Interpreting their communicative function based on contextual usage.
4. Analysing their semantic meaning using a semantic framework.

The results were then described interpretatively to explain how euphemisms function within journalistic headline discourse.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Research Data

Beneath are data taken from Kompas newspaper which consist of euphemism expression. There are only fifteen title of news found in Kompas which are considered to have euphemism phenomenon. The data are considered informative and representative to illustrate euphemism. The data can be observed as follows.

Table 1. Research Data

Data	Euphemism Expression
Data 1	//Tuntaskan Kasus Jenazah di Kali Bekasi// (<i>Solve the Case of the Body Found in the Bekasi River</i>)
Data 2	//Dunia Butuh Dewan Keamanan PBB yang Bergigi// (The World Needs a “Powerful and Effective” United Nations Security Council)

Data 3	//Penyandang Disabilitas Harus Dipenuhi Haknya, Bukan Dikasihani// (persons with disabilities should have their rights fulfilled, not be pitied)
Data 4	//Kabinet Bayangan Mengapa Tidak// (shadow cabinet: Why not?)
Data 5	//Hakim Tetap Gelar Aksi Cuti Bersama// (Judges continue their collective leave action (joint leave protest))
Data 6	//Napi Kasus Asusila Kabur dari Lapas Kupang// (An Inmate Convicted in a Sexual Misconduct Case Escapes from Kupang Correctional Facility)
Data 7	//Siswa Tunanetra dari SLB Pembina Jakarta Manfaatkan Telepon Seluler// (students from a special school in Jakarta utilize mobile phones)
Data 8	//Ada Penyesuaian Harga BBM dalam Waktu Dekat// (There will be a price adjustment of BBM (fuel prices) in the near future)
Data 9	//Pabrik Ban di Cikarang Tutup, 1.500 Karyawan Dirumahkan// (A tire factory in Cikarang closes, 1,500 employees are furloughed)
Data 10	//Dinasti Politik Mewarnai Parlemen// (Political dynasties shape the parliament)
Data 11	//Berkawan dengan Stres// (Living with stress/making peace with stress)
Data 12	//Suara Warga Marjinal Sambut Prabowo-Gibran// (The voices of warga marjinal (marginalized citizens) welcome Prabowo-Gibran)
Data 13	//Operasi Senyap Ungkap Kejanggalan Vonis Ronald Tannur// (A silent operation (covert investigation) reveals irregularities in Ronald Tannur's verdict)
Data 14	//Cleansing//
Data 15	//Diskresi Komisi Yudisial yang Tertolak// (The rejected discretion of the Judicial Commission)

3.2 Results

3.2.1 The Forms of Euphemism Found in the Data

a. Loanwords

Data 12: *Marjinal* (Marginal)

The term *marjinal* (marginal) in the headline “*Suara Warga Marjinal Sambut Prabowo-Gibran*” (The Voices of Marginalized Citizens Welcome Prabowo-Gibran) is categorized as a euphemistic loanword because it replaces more direct expressions such as *orang miskin* (poor people), *kelompok terpinggirkan* (marginalized groups), or *masyarakat kelas bawah* (lower-class communities or lower socioeconomic groups). The expression originates from the English word *marginal* and has been integrated into Indonesian sociopolitical discourse through lexical borrowing. The euphemistic mechanism involves lexical borrowing combined with semantic adaptation, whereby a foreign-derived term acquires a specialized social meaning within the recipient language. Functionally, the expression serves as a refinement strategy because it sounds more neutral, academic, and socially acceptable than explicitly labeling individuals as poor or disadvantaged. Semantically, *marjinal* retains conceptual meaning by referring to groups excluded from social, economic, or political participation. At the discourse level, the expression frames social inequality as a structural issue rather than an individual deficiency, thereby encouraging a more objective and less stigmatizing interpretation.

Data 14: *Cleansing*

The term *cleansing* in the headline “*Cleansing*” is categorized as a euphemistic loanword because it replaces harsher expressions such as *pemecatan massal* (mass layoffs), *penghapusan tenaga honorer* (employee termination), or *pemberhentian pegawai* (layoffs). The euphemistic mechanism involves direct lexical borrowing from English, accompanied by semantic extension in Indonesian public discourse. Rather than referring literally to cleaning activities, the term is employed metaphorically to describe the removal of individuals from an institution. Functionally, the expression softens the negative implications of dismissal and presents the process as an administrative action rather than a punitive measure. Semantically, the term creates associative meaning because readers interpret it through contextual knowledge rather than its literal sense. At the discourse level, *cleansing* contributes to institutional framing by reducing the emotional impact of workforce reduction and making controversial policies appear more acceptable.

b. Absorption Forms

Data 1: *Jenazah* (Corpse/Dead Body)

The word *jenazah* (deceased body) in the headline “*Tuntaskan Kasus Jenazah di Kali Bekasi*” (Resolve the Case of the Bodies Found in the Bekasi River) is categorized as an absorption-form euphemism because it replaces the more direct term *mayat* (corpse/dead body). The expression is derived from Arabic and has become fully integrated into Indonesian. The euphemistic mechanism involves lexical replacement through absorption, whereby a borrowed term is used to convey greater politeness and cultural sensitivity. Functionally, *jenazah* (deceased body) serves as a refinement strategy that reduces the emotional harshness of death-related reporting. Semantically, the term maintains conceptual meaning because it still refers to a deceased human body; however, it simultaneously introduces associative meanings related to dignity, respect, and religious observance. At the discourse level, the expression humanizes the reported event and aligns with cultural expectations regarding respectful references to the deceased.

Data 3: *Disabilitas* (Disability)

The term *disabilitas* (disability) in the headline “*Penyandang Disabilitas Harus Dipenuhi Haknya, Bukan Dikasihani*” (persons with disabilities should have their rights fulfilled, not be pitied) is a euphemistic absorption form derived from the English word *disability*. It replaces older expressions such as *cacat* or *penyandang cacat* (persons with disabilities replacing disabled persons), which may carry negative and stigmatizing connotations. The euphemistic mechanism involves lexical absorption and semantic reframing, through which a borrowed term constructs a more inclusive representation of physical or mental limitations. Functionally, the expression promotes politeness and social equality while avoiding discriminatory labeling. Semantically, it retains conceptual meaning by referring to physical, sensory, intellectual, or mental limitations. At the discourse level, the term reflects contemporary institutional efforts to promote inclusive language and reshape public attitudes toward disability.

Data 7: *Tunanetra* (Blind Persons)

The expression *tunanetra* (blind persons) in the headline “*Siswa Tunanetra dari SLB Pembina Jakarta Manfaatkan Telepon Seluler*” (Visually impaired students from SLB Pembina Jakarta utilize mobile phones) functions as a euphemism because it replaces the more direct term *buta* (blind persons). The euphemistic mechanism involves lexical substitution through an institutionalized and socially accepted term. Functionally, the expression emphasizes respect and dignity while reducing the potential stigma associated with visual impairment. Semantically, both expressions share the same conceptual meaning; however, *tunanetra* (blind persons) introduces more formal and respectful associations. At the discourse level, the expression promotes inclusivity and aligns with educational and social values that prioritize respectful language toward persons with disabilities.

Data 10: *Dinasti Politik* (Political Dynasty)

The phrase *dinasti politik* (political dynasty) in the headline “*Dinasti Politik Mewarnai Parlemen*” (Political dynasties shape the parliament) is categorized as a euphemistic absorption form because it indirectly refers to nepotistic political practices without explicitly accusing individuals of wrongdoing. The euphemistic mechanism involves lexical abstraction and conceptualization, whereby a politically sensitive issue is represented through an analytical term. Functionally, the expression serves a diplomatic role by allowing criticism to be conveyed indirectly. Semantically, it carries associative meaning because readers interpret it through sociopolitical knowledge concerning inherited political influence. At the discourse level, the phrase enables media institutions to maintain neutrality while highlighting concerns about democratic representation.

Data 15: *Diskresi* (Discretion)

The term *diskresi* (discretion) in the headline “*Diskresi Komisi Yudisial yang Tertolak*” (The Rejected Discretion of the Judicial Commission) functions as a euphemistic absorption form because it replaces more direct expressions such as *kebebasan mengambil keputusan* or *wewenang khusus* (Discretion replacing special authority or decision-making freedom). The euphemistic mechanism involves terminological borrowing from legal discourse. Functionally, the expression formalizes and legitimizes institutional authority while reducing possible negative interpretations. Semantically, the term carries conceptual meaning because it refers to discretionary authority exercised by officials. At the discourse

level, the use of technical terminology frames controversial decisions within a legal and professional context, thereby reducing perceptions of arbitrariness.

c. Metaphorical Expressions

Data 2: *Bergigi* (Powerful and Effective)

The expression *bergigi* (powerful and effective) in the headline “*Dunia Butuh Dewan Keamanan PBB yang Bergigi*” (The World Needs a Powerful and Effective United Nations Security Council) is euphemistic because it replaces direct criticism such as *lemah, tidak berdaya, or tidak efektif* (Powerful and effective replacing weak, powerless, or ineffective). The euphemistic mechanism involves metaphorical mapping in which physical teeth symbolize strength and authority. Functionally, the metaphor softens criticism while maintaining persuasive force. Semantically, it creates associative meaning because effectiveness is interpreted through the culturally shared image of teeth as symbols of power. At the discourse level, the expression frames institutional weakness indirectly and diplomatically.

Data 4: *Kabinet Bayangan* (Shadow Cabinet)

The phrase *kabinet bayangan* (Shadow cabinet) is euphemistic because it indirectly refers to an opposition structure. The euphemistic mechanism involves metaphorical substitution, where the concept of *bayangan* (shadow) symbolizes supervision and parallel existence. Functionally, the expression minimizes confrontation and presents political opposition in a more neutral manner. Semantically, the phrase carries associative meaning because “shadow” is interpreted symbolically rather than literally. At the discourse level, it normalizes the role of political oversight within democratic systems.

Data 5: *Cuti Bersama* (Collective Leave)

The expression *cuti bersama* (collective leave) is euphemistic because it substitutes the more direct expression *mogok kerja* (Collective leave replacing strike) The euphemistic mechanism involves metaphorical reframing, where a protest action is represented as a collective leave activity. Functionally, the expression reduces the perception of conflict and preserves institutional professionalism. Semantically, it creates associative meaning because readers understand that the leave represents a form of collective protest rather than ordinary leave. At the discourse level, the phrase mitigates tension surrounding labor disputes.

Data 9: *Dirumahkan* (Furloughed)

The term *dirumahkan* (furloughed) is euphemistic because it replaces harsher expressions such as *dipeecat* or *diberhentikan* (Furloughed replacing dismissed or terminated) The euphemistic mechanism involves metaphorical relocation, where unemployment is conceptualized as being sent home. Functionally, the expression softens the economic and emotional consequences of job loss. Semantically, it creates associative meaning because “home” evokes comfort and safety despite the underlying reality of employment insecurity. At the discourse level, the expression reduces public sensitivity toward workforce reductions.

Data 11: *Berkawan dengan Stres* (Making Friends with Stress)

The phrase *berkawan dengan stres* (making Friends with Stress) is euphemistic because it reframes a negative psychological condition through a positive interpersonal metaphor. The euphemistic mechanism involves personification, where stress is conceptualized as a friend. Functionally, the expression reduces fear and anxiety surrounding mental health issues. Semantically, it generates associative meaning because friendship symbolizes support, familiarity, and adaptation. At the discourse level, the metaphor encourages readers to adopt a more constructive perspective toward stress management.

Data 13: *Operasi Senyap* (Covert Operation)

The expression *operasi senyap* (covert operation) is euphemistic because it replaces more direct expressions such as *operasi rahasia* or *operasi terselubung* (Covert operation replacing secret operation or clandestine operation) The euphemistic mechanism involves metaphorical substitution, where silence symbolizes secrecy rather than the literal absence of sound. Functionally, the expression softens potentially controversial law-enforcement activities while maintaining journalistic appeal. Semantically, it produces associative meaning because secrecy is understood through the symbolic notion of silence. At the discourse level, the phrase enhances dramatic effect while preserving diplomatic language.

d. Periphrasis

Data 8: *Penyesuaian Harga* (Price Adjustment)

The phrase *penyesuaian harga* (Price adjustment replacing price increase) in the headline “*Ada Penyesuaian Harga BBM dalam Waktu Dekat*” (There Will Be a Fuel Price Adjustment in the Near Future) is categorized as a euphemistic periphrasis because it replaces the more direct expression *kenaikan harga BBM* (Fuel price increase). The euphemistic mechanism involves circumlocution, whereby a sensitive concept is expressed through a longer and more neutral phrase. Functionally, the expression serves as a diplomatic strategy that minimizes potential public resistance toward economic policy. Semantically, it creates associative meaning because audiences infer that the adjustment actually refers to a price increase. At the discourse level, the phrase exemplifies policy framing, where language is strategically used to influence public interpretation of governmental decisions.

e. Lexical Substitution

Data 6: *Kasus Asusila* (Sexual Misconduct Case)

The phrase *kasus asusila* (Sexual misconduct case replacing sex crime case) in the headline “*Napi Kasus Asusila Kabur dari Lapas Kupang*” (An inmate in a sexual misconduct case escaped from Kupang Correctional Facility) functions as a euphemism because it replaces more explicit expressions such as *kasus pemerkosaan* or *kejahatan seksual* (sexual misconduct case replacing rape case or sexual crime case). The euphemistic mechanism involves lexical substitution, whereby a broader and less explicit term replaces a socially sensitive expression. Functionally, the phrase reduces shock and maintains public decorum when reporting sexual crimes. Semantically, it creates associative meaning because readers understand the reference through contextual interpretation rather than direct naming. At the discourse level, the expression reflects cultural norms that discourage explicit discussion of sexuality in public discourse.

3.2.2 Discussion of Overall Findings

Table 2. Emergent Frequency of Euphemism

Form	Frequency	Percentage
Metaphorical Expression	6	40.0%
Absorption Form	5	33.3%
Loanword	2	13.3%
Periphrasis	1	6.7%
Lexical Substitution	1	6.7%
Total	15	100%

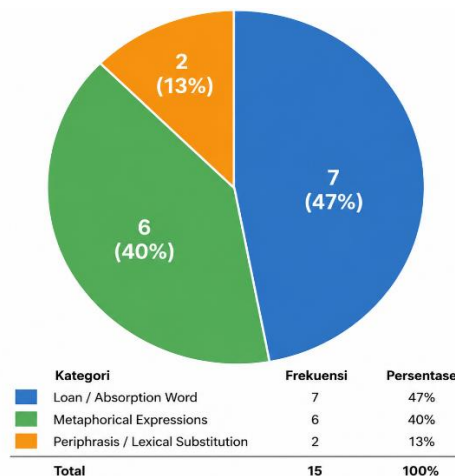
The analysis of fifteen euphemistic expressions in Kompas headlines reveals several recurring linguistic patterns. First, metaphorical expressions constitute the most dominant form of euphemism, followed by absorption forms and loanwords. This finding indicates that Kompas tends to frame sensitive social, political, and economic issues through indirect and figurative language rather than through direct lexical expressions. Metaphors such as *bergigi* (powerful and effective), *kabinet bayangan* (shadow cabinet), *dirumahkan* (furloughed), and *operasi senyap* (covert operation) allow journalists to communicate criticism and controversy while maintaining a neutral and professional tone. Second, the findings demonstrate that euphemisms primarily perform refinement and diplomatic functions. Expressions such as *jenazah* (deceased body), *disabilitas* (disability), and *tunanetra* (visually impaired) soften potentially harsh or stigmatizing references, whereas expressions such as *penyesuaian harga* (price adjustment) and *dinasti politik* (political dynasty) function as diplomatic devices that frame controversial issues in a more socially acceptable manner. This pattern suggests that euphemism serves as a communicative strategy that balances informational accuracy with audience sensitivity.

Third, a relationship can be observed between euphemistic forms and semantic meanings. Loanwords and absorption forms tend to be associated with conceptual meaning because they preserve relatively stable referential meanings. This pattern suggests that different euphemistic forms tend to

generate different semantic effects. While lexical borrowing generally preserves referential stability, metaphorical expressions frequently require contextual inference and sociocultural knowledge to be fully interpreted. Therefore, euphemism should be viewed not merely as lexical substitution but as a semantic-pragmatic process of meaning negotiation (Crespo-Fernández, 2018; Mironina, 2024). In contrast, metaphorical expressions frequently generate associative meanings that depend on contextual interpretation and sociocultural knowledge. This finding supports previous studies that view euphemism as a semantic-pragmatic phenomenon operating beyond lexical substitution.

Overall, the findings suggest that euphemism in news headlines functions not merely as a politeness strategy but also as a discourse mechanism that shapes the presentation and interpretation of social reality. Through lexical selection, media institutions can reduce the perceived harshness of sensitive issues while simultaneously influencing how readers understand and evaluate public events. The dominance of metaphorical expressions supports previous findings that metaphor is one of the most productive mechanisms of euphemistic communication. Through metaphorical representation, sensitive realities can be reformulated into less confrontational and more socially acceptable expressions, thereby reducing communicative tension while maintaining rhetorical effectiveness (Allan, K., & Burridge, 2006; Crespo-Fernández, 2021b).

Figure 1. Form of Euphemism



3.2.3 Distribution of Euphemism Functions

The refinement function of euphemism appears when language is intentionally softened to reduce harshness, emotional discomfort, or negative impressions in public discourse. In the analyzed data, this function is reflected in expressions such as *jenazah* (deceased body) (Data 1), *disabilitas* (disability) (Data 3), *tunanetra* (visually impaired) (Data 7), *dirumahkan* (furloughed) (Data 9), *operasi senyap* (covert operation) (Data 13), and *diskresi* (discretion) (Data 15). These expressions replace more direct or potentially offensive terms such as *mayat* (dead body), *cacat* (disabled person), *buta* (blind person), *dipecat* (dismissed), *operasi rahasia* (secret operation), or *kebebasan bertindak* (decision-making freedom). The refinement function demonstrates how euphemism serves politeness and emotional sensitivity in media communication. By selecting refined lexical items, journalists avoid provoking negative reactions while maintaining professionalism and reader comfort. Therefore, euphemistic refinement reflects linguistic strategies that prioritize social harmony, respectful communication, and audience acceptability in sensitive reporting contexts.

The diplomatic function of euphemism is used to maintain neutrality, reduce confrontation, and frame sensitive political or institutional issues in a more acceptable manner. In the analyzed data, this function is represented by expressions such as *kabinet bayangan* (shadow cabinet) (Data 4), *cuti bersama* (collective leave) (Data 5), *penyesuaian harga* (price adjustment) (Data 8), *dinasti politik* (political dynasty) (Data 10), and *diskresi* (discretion) (Data 15). These expressions avoid direct and provocative wording such as *oposisi pemerintah* (opposition group), *mogok kerja* (strike), *kenaikan harga* (price increase), *nepotisme politik* (political nepotism), or *kebebasan penuh pejabat* (absolute authority of

officials). Through diplomatic euphemism, media discourse becomes less aggressive and more institutionally appropriate. This strategy is particularly important in political and governmental communication because it helps maintain public trust, minimizes conflict, and controls public interpretation. Consequently, euphemism functions not merely as linguistic decoration but also as a strategic tool for ideological framing and policy presentation.

The function of concealing or mitigating sensitivity meaning in euphemism refers to the effort to obscure, minimize, or indirectly express meanings that may cause fear, anxiety, or social discomfort. This function can be found in expressions such as *jenazah* (deceased body) (Data 1), *cuti bersama* (collective leave) (Data 5), *penyesuaian harga* (price adjustment) (Data 8), *dirumahkan* (furloughed) (Data 9), *operasi senyap* (covert operation) (Data 13), and *diskresi* (discretion) (Data 15). These lexical choices conceal the severity of death, labor protest, fuel price increases, unemployment, covert investigations, or political authority. For example, *dirumahkan* (furloughed) sounds less threatening than *pemutusan kerja* or PHK (Employment termination), while *operasi senyap* (covert operation) hides the intensity of secret law enforcement operations. Such euphemisms demonstrate how media discourse strategically manages emotional sensitivity by reducing directness. Thus, euphemistic concealment allows controversial realities to be communicated indirectly while preserving social stability and audience comfort.

The educational framing function of euphemism occurs when language is used to shape positive attitudes, increase awareness, and encourage more inclusive perspectives within society. In the analyzed data, this function appears in the words *disabilitas* (disability) (Data 3), *tunanetra* (visually impaired) (Data 7), and *berkawan dengan stress* (making friends with stress) (Data 11). These expressions educate readers to adopt more respectful and constructive ways of understanding social and psychological conditions. The term *disabilitas* (disability) replaces stigmatizing expressions such as *cacat* (disabled), while *tunanetra* (visually impaired) sounds more humane than *buta* (blind). Similarly, *berkawan dengan stres* (making friends with stress) reframes stress as something manageable and beneficial rather than purely harmful. Through educational framing, euphemism functions not only to soften language but also to transform public perception. Consequently, euphemistic expressions contribute to social inclusivity, psychological awareness, and the development of more empathetic communication practices in media discourse.

The function of avoiding taboo in euphemism is closely related to cultural norms that restrict direct discussion of sensitive subjects such as death, sexuality, disability, or economic hardship. In the analyzed data, this function can be identified in the words *jenazah* (deceased body) (Data 1), *asusila* (sexual misconduct) (Data 6), *tunanetra* (visually impaired) (Data 7), and *penyesuaian harga* (price adjustment) (Data 8). These expressions replace terms considered harsh, offensive, or socially uncomfortable, such as *mayat* (corpse), *pemeriksaan* (rape), *buta* (blind), or *kenaikan harga* (price increase). In Indonesian sociocultural contexts, direct references to sexual crimes, death, or personal limitations are often perceived as impolite or emotionally disturbing. Therefore, euphemism becomes a linguistic strategy to maintain moral decorum and cultural sensitivity. By avoiding taboo expressions, media discourse can communicate delicate issues more politely while still preserving the essential meaning and communicative purpose.

Table 3. Function of Euphemism

Euphemistic Function	Relevant Data	Explanation
Refinement Expression (Softening)	Data 1 (<i>jenazah</i>) (deceased body), Data 3 (<i>disabilitas</i>) (disability), Data 7 (<i>tunanetra</i>) (visually impaired), Data 9 (<i>dirumahkan</i>) (Furloughed), Data 13 (<i>operasi senyap</i>) (overt operation), Data 15 (<i>diskresi</i>) (Discretion)	These expressions soften harsh, direct, or emotionally sensitive meanings. For example, <i>jenazah</i> refines <i>mayat</i> (corpse), <i>dirumahkan</i> (furloughed) softens dismissal, and <i>diskresi</i> (discretion) formalizes “freedom of action.”
Diplomatic Function	Data 4 (<i>kabinet bayangan</i>) (shadow cabinet), Data 5 (<i>cuti bersama</i>) (collective leave), Data 8 (<i>penyesuaian harga</i>) (price adjustment), Data 10	These euphemisms are used strategically in political, governmental, or institutional discourse to reduce confrontation and maintain

	(<i>dinasti politik</i>) (political dynasty), Data 15 (<i>diskresi</i>) (discretion)	neutrality. For instance, <i>penyesuaian harga</i> (price adjustment) diplomatically replaces <i>kenaikan harga</i> (price increase).
Concealing and Sensitivity Meaning	Data 1, Data 5, Data 8, Data 9, Data 13, Data 15	These data conceal or mitigate potentially disturbing meanings. <i>Dirumahkan</i> (furloughed) conceals unemployment severity, while <i>operasi senyap</i> (covert operation) obscures covert investigations through indirect wording.
Educational Framing	Data 3 (<i>disabilitas</i>) (disability), Data 7 (<i>tunanetra</i>) (visually impaired), Data 11 (<i>berkawan dengan stres</i>) (making friends with stress)	These expressions educate readers toward more inclusive, positive, or constructive perspectives. <i>Disabilitas</i> (disability) promotes respectful language, while <i>berkawan dengan stres</i> (making friends with stress) reframes stress positively.
Avoiding Taboo	Data 1 (<i>jenazah</i>) (deceased body), Data 6 (<i>asusila</i>) (sexual misconduct), Data 7 (<i>tunanetra</i>) (visually impaired), Data 8 (<i>penyesuaian harga</i>) (price adjustment)	These euphemisms avoid expressions considered socially harsh, explicit, or taboo. <i>Asusila</i> (sexual misconduct) avoids direct mention of rape or sexual crime, while <i>jenazah</i> (deceased body) avoids blunt references to death.

3.2.4 Distribution of Meaning

The analysis reveals that two types of meaning are realized in the euphemistic expressions found in the headlines, namely conceptual meaning and associative meaning. Conceptual meaning predominantly appears in loan or absorption forms, as these expressions tend to maintain denotative clarity while softening potentially sensitive references. In contrast, associative meaning is more frequently found in metaphorical forms, where interpretation relies on contextual and connotative associations. This pattern indicates that lexical borrowing functions primarily to neutralize meaning at a semantic level, whereas metaphor operates through implied or indirect meaning to shape readers' perception more subtly.

Conceptual meaning refers to the literal, denotative, and dictionary-based meaning of euphemistic expressions. In the analyzed data, conceptual meaning appears in Data 1 (*jenazah*) (deceased body), Data 3 (*disabilitas*) (disability), Data 7 (*tunanetra*) (visually impaired), Data 10 (*dinasti politik*) (political dynasty), Data 12 (*marjinal*) (marginal), Data 13 (*operasi senyap*) (covert operation), Data 14 (*cleansing*), and Data 15 (*diskresi*) (discretion). These expressions convey meanings that are relatively direct and cognitively understood without requiring broad contextual interpretation. For example, *jenazah* (deceased body) directly refers to a deceased human body in a more respectful form, while *disabilitas* (disability) denotes a physical or mental limitation using a more socially acceptable term. Similarly, *tunanetra* (visually impaired), conceptually refers to visual impairment, *diskresi* (discretion) refers to administrative freedom of action, and *cleansing* conceptually refers to systematic dismissal or removal. Although these expressions function euphemistically to refine or soften meaning, their interpretations remain relatively stable, formal, and institutionally recognized. Therefore, conceptual meaning in euphemism emphasizes lexical clarity while still maintaining politeness, neutrality, and sociocultural appropriateness in media discourse.

Associative meaning, on the other hand, refers to implied, figurative, and context-dependent interpretations shaped by social, cultural, and emotional associations. This type of meaning is found in

Data 2 (*bergigi*) (powerful and effective), Data 4 (*kabinet bayangan*) (shadow cabinet), Data 5 (*cuti bersama*) (collective leave), Data 6 (*asusila*) (sexual misconduct), Data 8 (*penyesuaian harga*) (price adjustment), Data 9 (*dirumahkan*) (furloughed), and Data 11 (*berkawan dengan stres*) (making friends with stress). These euphemistic expressions cannot be interpreted literally because their meanings depend on contextual understanding and symbolic association. For example, *bergigi* (powerful and effective) metaphorically symbolizes authority and power rather than physical teeth, while *kabinet bayangan* (shadow cabinet) refers to an opposition structure rather than an actual shadow. Similarly, *cuti bersama* (collective leave) indirectly refers to a labor strike, *dirumahkan* (furloughed) metaphorically conceals unemployment, and *berkawan dengan stres* (making friends with stress) personifies stress as a “friend” to encourage positive psychological framing. The phrase *penyesuaian harga* (price adjustment) diplomatically associates with fuel price increases, whereas *asusila* (sexual misconduct) indirectly refers to sexual crimes by avoiding explicit mention. Thus, associative meaning allows euphemism to function rhetorically and persuasively by softening sensitive realities, shaping public interpretation, and maintaining communicative politeness.

3.3 Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that euphemism in media discourse functions not merely as a linguistic ornament but as a strategic communicative device that shapes public perception and social interpretation. The analysis of fifteen headlines from *Kompas* reveals that loan or absorption forms such as *jenazah* (deceased body), *disabilitas* (disability), *tunanetra* (visually impaired), *diskresi* (discretion), and *cleansing* dominate the data because they provide more refined, formal, and socially acceptable alternatives to direct expressions. Metaphorical expressions such as *bergigi* (powerful and effective), *kabinet bayangan* (shadow cabinet), *dirumahkan* (furloughed), and *berkawan dengan stres* (making friends with stress) also play a significant role in constructing indirect meaning through associative interpretation. Meanwhile, periphrasis and lexical substitution, including *penyesuaian harga* (price adjustment) and *asusila* (sexual misconduct), function to soften sensitive realities and avoid explicit references. These findings support the theory proposed by Keith Allan and Kate Burridge in *Forbidden Words* that euphemism primarily functions to avoid offense, maintain politeness, and manage social taboos (Allan & Burridge, 2006). Furthermore, the dominance of refinement and diplomatic functions indicates that media institutions strategically employ euphemism to construct socially acceptable narratives while minimizing emotional resistance from readers.

The study also confirms that euphemism carries ideological and persuasive dimensions within journalistic discourse. Expressions such as *penyesuaian harga* (price adjustment), *kabinet bayangan* (shadow cabinet), and *cuti bersama* (collective leave), illustrate how lexical choices can frame political and economic realities more diplomatically, thereby reducing potential public tension. This finding is consistent with the argument of Jonathan Charteris-Black in *Politicians and Rhetoric* that euphemism and metaphor are rhetorical instruments used to shape ideology and public cognition (Charteris-Black, 2011). Similarly, the findings align with the study of Emilio Crespo-Fernández, who argues that euphemism in media discourse often serves manipulative and persuasive purposes by obscuring unpleasant realities (Crespo-Fernández, 2017). The use of associative meanings in metaphorical expressions demonstrates that media language frequently relies on contextual and cultural interpretation rather than direct denotation. Consequently, the study indicates that euphemism operates simultaneously as a politeness strategy, a cultural adaptation mechanism, and a discursive tool for framing social, political, and institutional realities within Indonesian media discourse.

The findings of this study have several implications for language teaching, particularly in the areas of semantics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and media literacy. News headlines containing euphemistic expressions can be used as authentic teaching materials to introduce students to the relationship between lexical choice and meaning construction in public discourse. In semantics classes, euphemistic expressions may serve as examples for distinguishing conceptual and associative meanings. In pragmatics courses, students can analyze how euphemisms function as politeness strategies, face-saving mechanisms, and persuasive devices in media communication. Furthermore, the findings can support critical media literacy by encouraging students to examine how journalists strategically frame social and political realities through lexical selection. Such activities may enhance learners' critical reading skills and awareness of ideological meanings embedded in public discourse.

The findings may contribute to language teaching, particularly in semantics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and media literacy. News headlines containing euphemistic expressions can be used

as authentic teaching materials to help students identify how lexical choices shape meaning, construct ideology, and influence public interpretation. Such activities may enhance critical reading skills and encourage learners to examine the relationship between language, power, and media representation (Bednarek, M., & Caple, 2017; Richardson, 2023).

4. Conclusion

This study examined the forms, functions, and meanings of euphemistic expressions in fifteen Kompas news headlines published between September–October 2024. The findings show that euphemisms were realized through five linguistic forms: metaphorical expressions, absorption forms, loanwords, periphrasis, and lexical substitution. Among these categories, metaphorical expressions appeared most frequently, accounting for six out of fifteen data, or 40%, indicating that Kompas tends to represent sensitive social, political, and economic issues through indirect and figurative language rather than direct lexical expressions.

In terms of function, euphemisms primarily served as refinement and diplomatic strategies. They were used to soften potentially offensive expressions, maintain politeness, *reduce potential social tension* or *mitigate sensitive meanings* and present controversial issues in a more socially acceptable manner. This finding suggests that euphemism functions not only as a politeness device but also as a discourse strategy in media communication.

From a semantic perspective, both conceptual and associative meanings were identified. Conceptual meanings were more commonly associated with loanwords and absorption forms, whereas associative meanings frequently occurred in metaphorical expressions and associative meanings were more frequently found in metaphorical and indirect expressions because their interpretation depends on contextual and sociocultural associations. This pattern indicates that different euphemistic forms tend to generate different semantic effects within news discourse. Overall, the findings demonstrate that euphemism in Kompas headlines operates systematically as a linguistic and discursive resource for framing sensitive issues. Through strategic lexical selection, headline discourse can reduce the perceived harshness of information while guiding readers' interpretation of social reality. This study is limited by the relatively small dataset consisting of fifteen headlines from a two-month publication period. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all Indonesian media discourse. Future research may employ larger corpora and comparative analyses across different media institutions to provide a broader understanding of euphemistic practices in Indonesian journalism.

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