

EUPHEMISM ANALYSIS ON THE MAIN CHARACTER IN *LEGALLY BLONDE* FILM

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the use of euphemism in the film *Legally Blonde*, with a particular focus on Elle Woods as the main character. Euphemism is understood as a linguistic strategy used to avoid harsh, taboo, or impolite expressions, making communication more polite and socially acceptable. Through a qualitative descriptive approach, the research examines Elle's utterances by applying Allan and Burridge's (2006) euphemism framework and Palmer's (1976) concept of meaning. The analysis identifies several types of euphemisms, including metaphor, circumlocution, understatement, omission, clipping, acronyms, borrowing, and hyperbole. The findings show that Elle uses euphemistic language not only to maintain politeness and navigate sensitive topics but also to challenge stereotypes and assert her identity in professional environments such as law school. Theoretically, this research contributes to sociolinguistic research by showing how euphemism functions as a form of language variation and politeness strategy. Practically, it provides useful insights for students, educators, and researchers in understanding euphemism in both literary works and real-life communication.

Keywords: Euphemism, Language Variation, *Legally Blonde*, Allan and Burridge, Politeness Strategy

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi penggunaan eufemisme dalam film *Legally Blonde* dengan fokus khusus pada tokoh utama, Elle Woods. Eufemisme dipahami sebagai strategi kebahasaan yang digunakan untuk menghindari ungkapan yang kasar, tabu, atau tidak sopan sehingga komunikasi menjadi lebih santun dan dapat diterima secara sosial. Melalui pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, penelitian ini menelaah tuturan Elle dengan menerapkan teori eufemisme Allan dan Burridge (2006) serta konsep makna dari Palmer (1976). Analisis mengidentifikasi beberapa jenis eufemisme, termasuk metafora, sirkumlokusi, peremehan, penghilangan, pemenggalan, akronim, peminjaman, dan hiperbola. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa

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Elle menggunakan bahasa eufemistis tidak hanya untuk menjaga kesantunan dan membahas topik sensitif, tetapi juga untuk menantang stereotip dan menegaskan identitasnya dalam lingkungan profesional seperti sekolah hukum. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada kajian sosiolinguistik dengan menunjukkan bagaimana eufemisme berfungsi sebagai bentuk variasi bahasa dan strategi kesantunan. Secara praktis, penelitian ini menawarkan wawasan yang bermanfaat bagi mahasiswa, pendidik, dan peneliti dalam memahami eufemisme baik dalam karya sastra maupun komunikasi nyata.

Kata Kunci: Eufemisme, Variasi Bahasa, *Legally Blonde*, Allan dan Burrridge, Strategi Kesantunan

A. INTRODUCTION

Language is more than just a way to share information, it plays a big role in how people understand themselves, others, and the world. Every time someone speaks, they make choices not just about what they say, but also how they say it. These choices help people show their connections, express who they are, and deal with power in different ways. One of the strongest ways people do this is by using euphemisms, using gentler or more acceptable words instead of direct or possibly hurtful expressions.

Euphemisms help keep conversations polite, avoid arguments, and protect both the speaker and the listener from feeling bad or uncomfortable. Matters that are considered off-limits, like death, sickness, sexuality, bodily functions, politics, and religion, are often talked about using euphemistic language. According to Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015), these language choices show what values and rules a community follows. In this way, euphemism shows the "social face" of language, it is about speaking in a way that helps people get along and live happily together.

Researchers like Allan and Burrridge (2006) say that euphemisms are not just for making speech sound nicer, they are practical tools for managing social situations. By making harsh or controversial topics softer, euphemisms help keep things peaceful and reduce possible conflicts. They can also hide power dynamics, letting people criticize, influence, or challenge authority without being too direct. In this sense, euphemism works like both a shield and a quiet weapon, helping people stay polite and gain power in subtle ways, the movie *Legally Blonde* is the most suitable for this. The movie tells the story of Elle's transformation from a stylish sorority president in California to a law student at Harvard. At first, she is looked down on by her classmates and professors, and she has to prove her intelligence in a field dominated by men. Her journey is not just about personal growth but also about how language can influence identity and challenge stereotypes.

Elle's way of speaking offers a great example for sociolinguistic study. She often uses euphemisms to avoid direct conflict, stay polite, and sometimes quietly question the gender roles that are expected of her. For instance, instead of reacting to being rude with strong anger, she often uses soft, indirect language that reduces

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tension while still standing up for herself. Her speech shows how identity, gender, and professional communication are connected, and how the way people choose their words can act as a shield and a way to subtly resist societal norms.

Taking the view that film is a “multimodal text” (Monaco, 2009; Dynel, 2011), this research treats *Legally Blonde* as real linguistic data. Earlier studies (e.g., Dynel, 2011) have shown that well-written film dialogue closely reflects real-life conversations in its use of polite strategies and indirect communication, making it a valuable tool for exploring how euphemism works in everyday situations. By looking at Elle's speech, this research shows how cinematic dialogue can reflect larger sociolinguistic trends in politeness, gender roles, and power dynamics.

This contributes to sociolinguistic research in three key ways: First, it provides real, context-based data for language study, offering a detailed look at how pragmatic language is used in a professional setting. Second, it gives insight into how euphemism can support both politeness and empowerment, enabling speakers to protect their reputation while also influencing others. Third, it challenges social expectations by focusing on a female character in a male-dominated field, revealing how indirect language can question and change gender norms in professional conversations.

This excludes euphemistic terms used by other characters. The research's scope is confined to recognizing, categorizing, and interpreting Elle Woods' euphemisms using Keith Allan and Kate Burridge's euphemism framework. The goal is to investigate how euphemism influences Elle's communication style and social interactions in the film's formal and professional contexts.

The significance of this research goes beyond analyzing a popular movie. It also has broader implications for understanding language variation and how people interact in society. By examining how Elle Woods uses euphemism, the research shows how speakers can shape their communication to navigate and reshape social situations. Words hold real or imagined power in society, shaping how we see the world and interact with others. They can influence relationships, help us navigate difficult situations, and challenge harmful stereotypes. The way we use language can have a lasting effect on social dynamics, showing how deeply words can shape our understanding of each other and the world around us.

Euphemism research, started by Allan and Burridge in 1991 and later expanded in 2006, looks at softened or indirect language as ways to be polite and as tools for managing social power. Later research used their categories like metaphor, circumlocution, understatement, omission, borrowing, and technical terms to look at different kinds of media. In film, Dynel (2011) showed that scripted dialogue can be similar to real conversation, while Crespo-Fernández (2023) explained how metaphorical euphemisms can express social criticism. Looking at movies like *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *American Pie* shows a range of euphemism techniques, from metaphor and hyperbole to clippings and acronyms. But not many researches have focused on a single female character in a professional setting where gender and power are key. Most previous work has looked at comedy films or political and media discussions, like Dewi et al. (2019), leaving gaps in understanding how

euphemisms can be both polite and a form of quiet resistance. This research addresses that by looking at Elle Woods in *Legally Blonde* (2001). Using Allan and Burridge’s framework along with Palmer’s (1976) theory of meaning, it shows how a female law student uses metaphor, understatement, technical terms, and hyperbole to stay polite, express her identity, and challenge stereotypes. This extends euphemism research beyond just politeness to show how it can be a powerful and strategic tool in modern film dialogue.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics looks at how language and society are connected, especially how the way people speak shows and influences social structures, cultural beliefs, and personal identities.

Wardhaugh (2002) explains that language changes depending on the social group and situation people are in. Factors like gender, age, class, and the setting all play a role in shaping how people speak. People often change how they talk, like the way they pronounce words, the words they use, and how they show politeness, to fit in with or challenge social rules. Euphemism, which is a type of language variation, is a good example of this. It helps people talk about difficult or sensitive topics in a way that keeps things peaceful and socially acceptable.

2. Euphemism

The word 'euphemism' comes from the Greek 'euphemismos,' which means 'speaking well.' A euphemism is when someone uses a nicer or less direct way to express something that might be offensive or inappropriate. Allan and Burridge (2006) say that euphemisms help avoid words that could be seen as taboo, rude, or harmful, especially for social, moral, or political reasons. They list several types of euphemisms, such as metaphors, indirect expressions, understated language, omissions, borrowed words from other languages, and technical terms. Other researchers also mention forms like shortened words, abbreviations, and exaggerations, which serve similar purposes by making something less harsh or more polite. Euphemism shows not only how people try to be polite but also how society deals with power, identity, and moral values.

a. Metaphor

Metaphors make uncomfortable or sensitive things simpler to discuss by putting them in more appealing terms. For example, instead of stating "died," a speaker could say "He passed away," which shows death as a gentle transition or journey rather than an abrupt end. Similarly, the phrase "she has skeletons in her closet" is a metaphor for someone having hidden or humiliating secrets. (Allan & Burridge, 2006, p. 33).

b. Circumlocution

Circumlocution is the use of an unnecessarily long or circuitous means of expressing something, usually to avoid naming it directly. Instead of utilizing a

single term, the speaker uses an indirect phrase to refer to the concept. This sort of euphemism uses verbosity and ambiguity to mask the directness of taboo or sensitive topics. For example, instead of saying "She is poor," one could say "She comes from an economically disadvantaged background." This phrase avoids the bluntness of the word "poor" while seeming more professional and socially conscious (Allan & Burrige, 2006, p. 29).

c. Understatement

An understatement is a euphemism approach that intentionally reduces the seriousness or intensity of a situation. Rather than using an excessive or direct depiction, the speaker employs gentler language to reduce the emotional or social impact of the subject matter. This type of euphemism is especially effective for staying cool, avoiding panic, and demonstrating politeness in awkward situations. For example, in the event of a big accident, one can say, "We had a bit of a situation," rather than revealing the full gravity of the incident. Understatements like this help to soften the perceived severity of the message, making it more socially acceptable (Allan & Burrige, 2006, p. 32)

d. Omission

Omission refers to the purposeful removal of forbidden or unpleasant terms from a sentence. This sort of euphemism replaces the harsh words with silence, a pause, or an incomplete word. Omission can be classified into two types: quasi-omission and full omission. In quasi-omission, prohibited words are replaced with symbols, initials, or noises that imply the term without explicitly stating it. For example, stating "What the f---?" or "He dropped the F-bomb" implies the word "fuck" without really uttering it. These omissions serve as a method for navigating topics that would otherwise be deemed unsuitable, harsh, or vulgar in social contexts (Allan & Burrige, 2006, pp. 32–33).

e. Borrowing from Other Languages

Borrowing is the practice of adopting words from other languages, most commonly Latin, French, or Italian, to soften or obscure meanings that would seem harsh or improper in the speaker's home language. Borrowed phrases are frequently seen as more refined, courteous, or distant, making them useful euphemisms in formal or elevated speech. For example, the word *décolletage* is used in English to refer to a woman's neckline or cleavage, it is taken from French and sounds more refined than the more blunt "cleavage." These borrowed euphemisms are prevalent in government, media, and professional settings that value secrecy and courtesy (Allan & Burrige, 2006, p. 35).

f. Technical or Learned Terms

Technical or learned euphemisms use formal, scientific, or bureaucratic jargon to soften the harshness of a more direct or emotionally charged phrase. These are frequently encountered in institutional, judicial, or medical situations when

impersonal and neutral tones are preferred. For example, instead of saying "The patient died," a doctor can say "There was a negative patient outcome," employing clinical language to reduce emotional effect. Similarly, occupational titles such as "sanitation engineer" are utilized in place of "garbage collector" to elevate the profession using formal language (Allan & Burrige, 2006, p. 35).

g. Clippings

Clippings is a strategy for toning down the harshness of explicit terms. Clipping is often contrasted with circumlocution, which uses longer sentences to indirectly explain sensitive topics. Clipping is a type of euphemism formed by changing a word, removing syllables or letters into a phrase that uses its attributes as a basis. For example; "Jeez" for "Jesus". "Jeez" is a clipped form of "Jesus," often used as an exclamation. This clipping removes the direct religious reference, making the expression less overtly sacred or offensive, especially in casual conversation, while still conveying surprise or frustration (Hugh Rawson, 1981).

h. Acronyms

Acronyms is a type of euphemism that creates short form of the phrase it replaces. Acronyms play an important role in euphemistic language because they provide a more tactful and efficient way to discuss sensitive topics. For example, "AIDS" for "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome", It abstracts the specifics of the disease's symptoms and associations, creating a term that focuses on the medical classification rather than stigmatized details (Kate Burrige, 2004).

i. Hyperbole

Hyperbole is often called Overstatements and Exaggerate in euphemism, used to replace the dispreferred word with the exaggerated one. For example; The phrase "I'm so hungry that I could eat a horse" originated somewhere between the late-1700s and 1800s. "I'm so hungry that I could eat a horse" is a hyperbole for "starving". So instead of directly saying "I'm starving," which may sound too dramatic or harsh, the phrase "I could eat a horse" amplifies the feeling of hunger to a humorous or exaggerated degree. It softens the intensity of the original term by using an overstatement that makes the situation sound less severe but still conveys the urgency of hunger (David Crystal, 1997).

C. RESEARCH METHODS

1. Research Design

The data come from the movie *Legally Blonde* and are analyzed using qualitative discourse analysis. This method focuses on understanding the collected spoken parts to address the research questions without relying on numerical data. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) explain that qualitative research aims to understand human experiences by exploring the meanings people give to their lives in social and cultural settings. Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research is flexible and can change as needed, using techniques like observation and analyzing text to

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study complex issues that can't be measured with numbers. This research uses a qualitative approach because the data include words, phrases, and conversations from a literary work.

2. Data and Data Sources

This research looks at the spoken words and specific language used by the main character, Elle Woods, in the movie *Legally Blonde*. These examples show how euphemistic language is used in everyday conversation and are great for detailed analysis. The main data came from watching and listening to the film many times, stopping and replaying parts to find, write down, and check each important euphemistic phrase in its real conversation setting. *Legally Blonde*, directed by Robert Luketic and based on Amanda Brown's book, has a screenplay by Karen McCullah Lutz and Kristen Smith that keeps the character's clever and language-focused personality. Since the dialogue feels natural and comes from real character interactions, the film is a good source for understanding how euphemism is used in modern media.

3. Research Instruments

This qualitative descriptive research used the researcher as the main instrument for gathering and analyzing data by examining and analyzing utterances in euphemism, which aligns with the idea that in qualitative research, the investigator plays a central role in collecting and interpreting information (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Watching the movie *Legally Blonde* scene by scene made it possible to closely observe and write down all relevant dialogue. A coding system based on categories from Allan and Burrige's (2006) work such as metaphor, circumlocution, understatement, omission, borrowing, and technical or learned terms was used, along with additional categories like clipping, acronym, and hyperbole, to help classify the language. To understand the meaning, a context-and-meaning checklist was used, drawing on Palmer's (1976) theory, which highlights the importance of both the literal and the situational meaning of words. These instruments helped consistently identify, sort, and interpret the euphemistic expressions in the film, supporting the research's goal of explaining how euphemism functions as a way to be polite and also as a subtle form of empowerment.

4. Data Collections

Data were collected by watching the film *Legally Blonde* multiple times in detail, following qualitative research methods that involve naturalistic observation and contextual analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Each scene was written down and recorded on an observation sheet along with the exact time stamps, full quote, and the surrounding dialogue. All possible euphemistic phrases were compared with the official script to make sure they were accurate, and then they were grouped into categories using Allan and Burrige's (2006) classification such as metaphor, circumlocution, understatement, omission, borrowing, technical or learned terms,

plus clipping, acronyms, and hyperbole. The meaning of these expressions was interpreted using Palmer's (1976) theory of meaning to understand both the direct and the context-related meanings. This process helped ensure that every euphemistic statement made by the main character was collected in a reliable and organized way.

5. Data Analysis

The collected utterances were subjected to qualitative discourse analysis to reveal the types and purposes of euphemism in *Legally Blonde*. Each expression was initially detected and classified according to Allan and Burrige's (2006) classification: metaphor, circumlocution, understatement, omission, borrowing, technical or learned terms, clipping, acronym, and hyperbole. The meaning of each item was then interpreted using Palmer's (1976) theory, which emphasizes the relationship of literal sense and contextual use. The process iterated from coding to interpretation, revealing patterns of politeness strategy and identity development.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Findings

According to Keith Allan and Kate Burrige (2006), euphemism is a linguistic strategy that avoids expressions that might be taboo, impolite, potential discomfort or offense for social interactions, religious, moral, or political reasons by replacing an appropriate expression with a word or phrase of weaker or soft meaning. Euphemism can be broadly defined as a term that substitutes another term to avoid a specific meaning of an expression.

While this research primarily uses Allan and Burrige's (2006) classification of euphemism types as its theoretical framework particularly categories such as metaphor, omission, circumlocution, understatement, borrowing, and technical or learned terms, it also includes additional euphemism forms proposed by other scholars, such as clipping, acronym, and hyperbole to provide a more comprehensive analysis. This broader methodology enables the analysis to account for the film's vast range of creative euphemism tactics, particularly those not completely covered in Allan and Burrige's taxonomy.

a. Metaphor

A metaphorical euphemism replaces a straight, typically harsh language with a figurative expression that conjures up imagery or symbolic meaning. This form of euphemism works by recasting the taboo subject as something else, usually more neutral, lyrical, or indirect.

Data 3

- Warner** : “Elle! If I’m gonna be a senator, well, I need to marry a Jackie, not a Marilyn”
Elle : “So you’re breaking up with me because **I’m too Blonde?**”

(Robert Luketic, 2001)

This key breakup scene starts off the whole story. Warner says he needs a “Jackie,” which makes him think of Jackie Kennedy’s classy and serious look, instead of a “Marilyn,” which reminds people of Marilyn Monroe’s flashy but often misunderstood image. His words hide a subtle stereotype: he thinks Elle is shallow because of how she looks and acts. Elle replies with “too blonde,” which cleverly shows that stereotype. On the surface, “blonde” is just a way to describe hair color. But in this situation, it brings up the common idea that blonde women are dumb. Palmer’s (1976) theory of meaning explains the word “blonde” gets a different meaning based on the context. In this emotional moment, it is not just about hair color anymore, it shows Warner’s unfair belief that being feminine and stylish means you are not smart. According to Allan and Burrige (2006), this is an example of metaphorical euphemism. Elle does not say something like “You think I’m stupid” or “You think I’m shallow.” Instead, she uses the word “too blonde,” which sounds harmless but actually challenges Warner’s biased view. It also feels like an understatement, because the simple phrase “too blonde” hides a bigger problem like sexism and class-based judgment.

Data 6

- Vivian** : “Nice Outfit”
Elle : “I like your outfit too, except when I dress up as a frigid bitch, I try not to look **so constipated**”

(Robert Luketic, 2001)

This sharp exchange occurs after Vivian tricks Elle into showing up at a non-costume party dressed in a Playboy bunny outfit. When Vivian says “Nice outfit,” it is clear that she is being sarcastic, trying to humiliate Elle. Instead of backing down, Elle responds with a sharp, humorous comeback that mixes wit and metaphor. The phrase “look so constipated” has two meanings. Literally, it refers to difficulty passing stool. But in this social situation, it is used figuratively to describe someone who is emotionally tense, rigid, or overly serious. Palmer’s (1976) theory of meaning explains how context helps listeners shift from the medical meaning to the intended metaphorical insult. Under Allan & Burrige’s (2006) framework, this is a clear example of a metaphorical euphemism. Rather than directly calling Vivian mean or uptight, Elle uses a funny bodily image to express her criticism. The humor serves as a social cushion, making the confrontation less aggressive, entertaining

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the audience, and letting Elle defend herself without using foul language or direct insults.

Data 8

- Elle** : “*Why don’t you offer him a cold beverage, or a neck massage, or something?*”
- Paulette** : “*Oh, come on, what’s the point?*”
- Elle** : “*Trust me. **You have all the equipment, you just have to read the manual***”

(Robert Luketic, 2001)

This conversation happens in Paulette’s beauty salon, a place Elle frequently visits for nail appointments and catching up with friends. Paulette is sharing her worries about flirting and romantic confidence, and Elle gives her an encouraging and confident response. At first, Elle’s suggestions, like offering a cold drink or a neck massage, seem like typical acts of kindness. But when she adds a final line, it becomes clear that the real subject is intimacy and sexual confidence. Elle’s last sentence contains a clear sexual reference, hidden beneath a metaphor. On the surface, “equipment” and “manual” refer to tools and instruction guides. However, in this conversation, “equipment” clearly refers to sexual anatomy, and “manual” represents knowledge or experience in sexual relationships. Palmer’s (1976) theory of meaning shows how context changes the interpretation: the audience moves from the literal meaning to the figurative, adult implication. According to Allan & Burrige (2006), this is a classic example of metaphorical euphemism using a nonsexual, concrete image to soften or hide a sexual topic.

Data 12

- Warner** : “*Oh, Elle. Come on, you’re never gonna get the grades to qualify for one of those spots. You’re not smart enough, sweetie.*”
- Elle** : “*Wait. **Am i on glue** or did we not get into the same law school, warner?*”

(Robert Luketic, 2001)

After Elle has already shown her smart side at Harvard Law, Warner, her ex-boyfriend still does not think she is intelligent. When he sneers, “You’re not smart enough,” Elle responds with a sarcastic question: “Am I on glue?” Her reply is both funny and sharp, showing how much more confident she is becoming and how she will not let him look down on her. The phrase “on glue” literally means someone breathing in glue fumes, which can make someone feel dizzy or see things. But in everyday talk, it is used to mean “Am I going crazy?” or “Am I imagining things?” This shift from a literal meaning to a figurative one is something Palmer (1976)

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talked about. The real idea (using drugs) gets replaced by the actual meaning (acting unreasonable). People instantly know Elle is not talking about drug use, but about Warner’s ridiculous comment. According to Allan and Burrige (2006), this is an example of a metaphorical euphemism. Instead of using direct words like “insane” or “crazy” which can sound harsh or offensive, Elle uses a clever, funny image. The humor helps ease the tension, letting her challenge Warner’s insult without making things worse.

b. Understatement

An understatement is a euphemism approach that intentionally reduces the seriousness or intensity of a situation. Rather than using an excessive or direct depiction, the speaker employs gentler language to reduce the emotional or social impact of the subject matter.

Data 1

Elle : *“Oh, gosh! I have to go shopping. OK. I’ll see you tonight”*

(Robert Luketic, 2001)

This line comes early in the movie, during a phone conversation between Elle Woods and a Delta Nu sorority member. She suddenly realizes she needs to buy a new outfit for an upcoming event and quickly ends the call. Before explaining, she says “Oh, gosh!” a small but meaningful choice. The word “gosh” has its roots as a minced oath, a softened version of “God” that avoids directly mentioning the deity’s name. Instead of saying “Oh, God,” which some people might find too strong or even offensive in casual talk, Elle uses this milder alternative. According to Allan and Burrige (2006), “gosh” serves as an understatement, lessening the impact of her surprise. By choosing this mild expression, she keeps her tone upbeat and polite. Palmer’s (1976) theory of meaning supports this choice. While “gosh” conveys a light surprise, its connection to the word “God” adds depth. The context of a friendly, casual conversation means it’s seen as a simple exclamation, without heavy religious implications.

Data 4

Elle : *“Oh! Two weeks ago I saw Cameron Diaz at Fred Segal, and I talked her out of buying this truly heinous angora sweater. Whoever said orange is the new pink was **seriously disturbed**”*

(Robert Luketic, 2001)

This line comes up when Elle is introducing herself on her first day at Harvard Law, trying to make a good impression on her new classmates. She takes pride in recalling how she convinced actress Cameron Diaz to skip wearing a “truly heinous

angora sweater,” then adds a joke that anyone who thinks orange could ever replace pink was “seriously disturbed.” The story is meant to highlight her social grace and her strong sense of fashion. The key word here is “disturbed.” On its own, it means someone who is mentally ill or unstable, which would be a strong and negative label. But in this context, Elle’s playful tone and the light, fashion-related situation change the meaning to something much softer, more like “wrong,” “confused,” or “lacking taste.” This shows how meaning can change based on context, as explained by Palmer in 1976. The word “disturbed” here is not meant to be taken literally, but as a humorous exaggeration. Under Allan and Burridge’s 2006 theory, this is an example of understatement. The literal meaning is strong, but the joking way it’s presented shows no real insult is intended. Elle’s word choice serves multiple purposes: it adds humor to a formal situation, reinforces her image as a fashion expert, and helps her stand out in a friendly way. Using a dramatic word like “disturbed” in a joking and stylish context turns what might have been a harsh comment into a clever, socially acceptable joke, showcasing both her quick thinking and her ability to use language appropriately.

Data 5

Paulette : “*Is she as pretty as you?*”

Elle : “*She could use some mascara and some serious highlights, but... She's not completely **unfortunate looking***”

(Robert Luketic, 2001)

Elle and Paulette are having one of their heartfelt chats, and Paulette, the kind-hearted manicurist who has become Elle’s close friend, is curious about Vivian, the woman who is now dating Elle’s ex, Warner. Instead of getting upset or saying something harsh, Elle responds with a thoughtful and carefully worded comment. Allan & Burridge (2006) say that this type of speech is called understatement, a kind of euphemism that helps soften negative opinions and keep things peaceful. This idea connects to Palmer’s (1976) idea that meaning comes from context, and in this case, the friendly, laid-back setting of the salon plays a big role. The way Elle phrases her thoughts lets her show a little disapproval without making things uncomfortable. It also helps keep the mood light and friendly. By not making a direct attack on Vivian, Elle is protecting her feelings while also showing off her own calm and elegant nature. So, Elle’s choice of words shows how understatement as a euphemism can work in several ways: it keeps things polite, keeps the conversation fun, and helps her appear smart and sophisticated, even when talking about someone who is her romantic rival.

c. Technical/Learned terms

Technical or learned euphemisms use formal, scientific, or bureaucratic jargon to soften the harshness of a more direct or emotionally charged phrase. These are frequently encountered in institutional, judicial, or medical situations when impersonal and neutral tones are preferred.

Data 7

Elle : “*And for that matter, All **masturbatory emissions** where his sperm was clearly not seeking an egg could be termed reckless abandonment*”

(Robert Luketic, 2001)

In this memorable classroom scene, Elle Woods is engaged in a passionate legal debate about reproductive rights and parental responsibility. She is speaking in a law school setting, so her sophisticated and precise vocabulary helps her come across as professional and credible, matching the academic and legal tone of the discussion. Palmer’s (1976) theory of meaning and context is clearly shown here, the register, legal and medical shapes how the audience interprets the language used. What might seem shocking or taboo in everyday conversation becomes a valid legal argument when expressed with technical language. Elle’s use of this euphemism shows how choosing certain words can both soften sensitive topics and establish intellectual authority. She turns a potentially awkward subject into a compelling legal argument, proving to her classmates and professor that she can engage in serious analysis. This moment not only highlights her intelligence and adaptability but also illustrates a wider idea, the social context and choice of language greatly affect how words are received and understood.

d. Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a figure of speech that emphasizes a particular feature in an apparently unrealistic way, used to replace the dispreferred word with the exaggerated one.

Data 11

Elle : “*I once had to judge a **tighty-whitey** contest for Lambda Kappa Pi. Trust me, I can handle anything.*”

(Robert Luketic, 2001)

Elle is talking with the C.U.L.A Advisor when she announced her intention to attend Harvard Law School. Elle refers to the men’s swim event as a “tighty-whitey contest” to convey her evidence and resilience, assuring her that she is capable of handling difficult and unusual situations, a trait essential for a challenging law

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school experience. Elle uses this absurd word to demonstrate that if she can judge such contest, she can certainly overcome the obstacles and demands of Harvard Law. The phrase “tighty-whitey” is a playful slang term for men’s white briefs instead of directly mentioning underwear in a crude or sexual way, which turns a private garment into a light-hearted competition. Elle’s remark illustrates Palmer’s (1976) claim that context gives words their force.

2. Discussion

The research shows that Elle Woods uses metaphor, understatement, technical terms, and hyperbole to stay polite while standing up for herself. Based on Allan and Burridge’s framework, these are intentional choices that help her handle different situations and challenge stereotypes.

Metaphor is her most powerful tool. Expressions like “too blonde,” “look so constipated,” and “on glue” let her comment on sexism or hostility without being confrontational, using humor to point out stereotypes (Crespo-Fernandez, 2023). Understatement, like “Gosh!” or “not completely unfortunate looking,” softens her opinions and helps everyone keep their social image intact, showing her knack for being polite. When she uses words like “masturbatory emissions,” she adopts the kind of language used in law and medicine, proving her competence and keeping sensitive topics professional (Khaydarova, S. T, 2024). Hyperbole, such as “tighty-whitey contest,” turns potentially crude topics into lighthearted jokes, keeping the conversation playful. (Umarova, L, 2024). The data analysis aligns closely with Allan and Burridge’s classifications, showing how their system can explain the use of euphemisms in modern film dialogue. Each type found in the analysis matches their descriptions of metaphorical, understated, technical, and exaggerated expressions, which supports the usefulness of their framework in today’s media. However, some categories like circumlocution, omission, borrowing, clipping, and acronyms were not present in the data. Their absence indicates that *Legally Blonde* prefers clever and straightforward language along with creative style, which matches the film’s quick-paced conversations and Elle’s confident character.

E. CONCLUSION

This research shows that Elle Woods in *Legally Blonde* often uses euphemism as a clever way to stay polite, keep her relationships strong, and challenge stereotypes about women. Using a detailed analysis based on Allan and Burridge’s (2006) framework and Palmer’s theory about meaning, the research found four main types of euphemism in Elle’s speech: metaphor, understatement, technical or learned language, and hyperbole. Each of these fits the definitions from Allan and Burridge, proving that their system is useful for understanding how people use language in modern films. The fact that other types of euphemism, like circumlocution, omission, borrowing, clipping, and acronyms didn’t appear in the dialogue suggests that the movie prefers a more direct and witty style rather than more complex or indirect speech. This matches the movie’s quick pace and Elle’s confident, funny personality.

In the end, the research shows that euphemism does more than just keep things polite. It also helps Elle empower herself by using language that can ease tension, show she’s smart, and quietly fight stereotypes. These findings support the usefulness of Allan and Burrige’s framework for studying language in today’s media and give a clear example of how words can shape who we are and how we connect with others.

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