

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the introduction to dysphemism as part of a figure of speech, which is the main focus of the study. The introduction consists of seven sections related to the study: the background of the study, previous studies, research questions, purposes of the study, scope of the study, and significance of the study. An explanation of each section is presented below.

1.1 Background of the Study

To communicate meaning between speakers and interlocutors, language plays a crucial role in terms of reflecting the characteristics of an individual. Based on the way individuals use language as a means of communication can reflect their identity toward the addressee through micro aspects, such as their language choices and language acts. This is because language plays a role in influencing social elements of human culture, including religious, political, social, and economic aspects of their identity and beliefs. This foundational understanding is a key reason why recognizing the relationship between a language and its speakers is essential for effective communication, particularly in recognizing the cultural and social forces present in the setting of communication that require the speaker's knowledge to choose language and act carefully, reflecting heavily on the person they are trying to address. (S.Amberg & J.Vause, 2010)

In a linguistic context, the language used is affected by the relations between speakers and interlocutors and their orientation or attitude toward each speaker. Since language is deeply connected to how individuals see themselves, both as

individuals and as members of society: therefore, when an individual speaks, they are expressing their personal thoughts as well as reflecting the values, traditions, and practices of the communities they belong to, such as their families, social circles, or cultural groups. In this way, language becomes a bridge between personal identity and collective identity while also linking individuals to the larger social world around them that affects their identity in the first place (S.Amberg & J.Vause, 2010).

Given this reality of language as a key role in the identity representation of the speaker, in terms of communication, speakers tend to choose the language they use carefully based on the language that conveys the most appropriateness in order to protect their own identity. Speakers who engage in conversations tend to select words that are considered appropriate for a given social context as an effort to avoid undesirable effects towards interlocutors. In a research paper, Dangli (2014) explains this phenomenon of achieving 'appropriateness' through a figure of speech, namely euphemism, which functions as a rich source of lexical synonymy that is designed to prevent offense when addressing taboo topics that is deemed unpleasant to interlocutors, given the context. In this sense, euphemism has a function of synonymy that provides alternative terms with less offensive connotations to replace terms that is embarrassing or harsh.

Conversely, a speaker might select a specific word or phrase with a negative connotation to achieve a particular communicative intention that disregards the norms of appropriateness. Words with unfavorable connotations are widely known by the term "dysphemism.", a specific figurative language with an opposite effect to euphemism. In their book, Allan & Burridge (2006) describe dysphemism as an

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expression that carries offensive and/or unfavorable meaning associations that can be directed either towards the denotatum, the audience, or both. This term is deliberately chosen over a neutral or euphemistic alternative due to its negative connotations, that serve a specific communicative purpose. The motives for a speaker to choose undesirable connotated terms may vary given the context of the dynamic between speakers and interlocutors.

For instance, in the topic of death, phrases such as ‘passed away,’ ‘eternal rest,’ or ‘put to sleep’ are used when a speaker maintains appropriateness in a given social context to minimize offense. These phrases may be used when the speaker attempts to maintain courteous manners with interlocutors, for example, when talking about said death to grieving families and friends. Such attempts at softening words used in sensitive, disagreeable, or taboo topics with respect to social norms are called euphemistic expressions. Conversely, Allan & Burridge (2006) define dysphemistic expressions as a tool to communicate an opposite effect of euphemism, where direct or blunt language with rude references that disregard societal norms may be used, though the referenced meanings are harsh or sensitive. They further explain how language acts as a weapon against ‘enemies’, in which humans will release dysphemistic utterances when they feel hurt, anger, or frustration. For example, phrases such as ‘croaked,’ ‘six feet under,’ or ‘bit the dust’ can intensify expression by making references harsher or more offensive depending on the speaker, addressee, and situation, which are typically perceived as impolite.

This dynamic of language choices is largely influenced by the existing social context at the time of the utterance production. Holmes (2013) argues that while languages provide a variety of options for a speaker to say the same thing of

saying the same thing, the final choice that are evident in the way the interlocutor delivers their message “provide clues to social factors, such as the relationship between the people in the particular situation, and how the speaker feels about the person addressed” (Holmes, 2013). She further states that several social factors drive a speaker’s decision to use language as a communicative tool. Some social factors she mentioned are concerned about the participants of the conversation, the settings or the context of the conversation, the purpose of the interaction, and lastly, the topic of the interaction. The aforementioned social factors may not all be relevant in certain interactions, but by understanding these factors, one can greatly advance sociolinguistic research concerning the interlocutors' manner of speaking.

In order to examine more deeply how social factors shape interaction and influence the interlocutor’s manner of speaking, Holmes (2013) introduces four social dimension scales, each corresponding to a distinct aspect of social relations. The social distance scale measures the degree of closeness or distance between interlocutors, thereby reflecting the nature of their relationship. The status scale also concerns relationships, but specifically evaluates differences in social standing or relative authority between speakers. The formality scale situates the interaction within its contextual setting, highlighting whether the discourse occurs in a formal or informal environment. Finally, the functional scale addresses the purpose of the interaction, distinguishing whether language use is primarily referential or affective. Analyzing dysphemism through these scales is crucial because dysphemistic expressions are not random utterance of taboo language; they are socially situated acts that reveal how speakers negotiate relationships, power, and context.

Dysphemism, which is influenced by social context, societal norms, and the interaction between speakers and interlocutors, can exist in other media. Literary works such as prose, drama, and movie scripts represent expressions of human thoughts and emotions. Particularly, in movie scripts, these expressions of dysphemism are transformed into spoken utterances that drive the progression of the narrative, oftentimes even functioning as a symbol of the dynamic between characters. The movie script, therefore, serves as a valuable source of data because film as a medium conveys its narrative to audiences primarily through the interaction of characters, which is clarified and developed in their dialogues. In this context, dysphemistic language becomes significant. This is because the deliberate use of harsh and offensive expressions by characters reveals their attitudes, dynamics with other characters, and also contributes to characterization. Therefore, analyzing dysphemism in movie scripts allows for a profound understanding of how language choices function as linguistic elements that both entertain and communicate social meaning.

Mawadah (2024) argues that movies can be regarded as a form of literary fiction that mirrors the way society operates and functions. Movies are not merely a source of entertainment; they can also be viewed as a medium through which audiences may be able to gain insight into cultural, social, and even political realities. Positioned within society, film serves as a reflective tool, portraying situations and experiences that resonate with everyday human lives and existence in society. By incorporating dysphemistic language in the dialogue, the filmmakers responsible for producing the script for *Ted* (2012) are able to depict social realities authentically, reflecting the way individuals often resort to impolite speech in

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specific moments. As a result, the presence of dysphemism in movie scripts highlights the film's function as both a mirror of human communication and a narrative device that reflects aspects of language use and how it interacts with the human dynamic.

In this case, the movie script for *Ted* (2012) serves as a valuable resource for examining the intentional use of dysphemism in particular conversational contexts. The film *Ted* is an appropriate corpus for this study because it reflects a recognizable form of contemporary humor that relies heavily on casual conversation and informal social interactions, making it a useful indicator of how language operates in everyday interactions within modern society. Using a mainstream genre of comedy, the film showcases how characters employ dysphemistic expressions to construct humor, signal social closeness, and express attitudes within everyday conversational contexts. Although fictional, the dialogue in the script itself mirrors exaggerated yet culturally grounded patterns in conversational style, especially the use of dysphemistic expressions in comedic settings. This makes *Ted* (2012) a relevant and productive corpus for examining the types and functions of dysphemism and for exploring how such linguistic choices relate to broader linguistic context.

The movie was written and directed by Seth MacFarlane, a figure popularly known as influential in the Hollywood entertainment industry. *Ted* (2012) is an R-rated 'American fantasy buddy comedy film.' The movie gained popularity upon its release, which resulted in the success of a number of awards and nominations, namely Favorite Comedic Movie from the People's Choice Awards (2013), Best Comedy at the Empire Awards UK (2013), the winner of Best Comedy Film from

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the St. Louis Film Critics Association (2012), the nominee of Best Fantasy Film at the Saturn Awards from the Academy of Fantasy, Science Fiction, and Horror Films (2013), a winner of the ASCAP Award for Top Box Office Films from ASCAP Top Box Office Films (2013), and many other awards and nominations.

The movie tells the story of a character named John Bennet, whose cherished teddy bear came to life as a result of a childhood wish. This so-called miracle resulted in the teddy bear, namely Ted, becoming a celebrity overnight as he appeared on various shows and TV programs as a hot sensation. However, this fame fades relatively quickly, and Ted becomes John Bennet's friend who lives in a shared apartment, adopting a 'trashy' lifestyle that includes several R-rated scenes involving drugs and sex. The character Ted has a remarkable distinction of identity with socially obnoxious behavior and language that doesn't follow normal societal norms of appropriateness and politeness.

The linguistic value in Ted (2012) primarily comes from the character's dialogue, which frequently employs dysphemistic language that appears to be intentionally used for conversing with every character he encounters. In the movie, several main characters with their own dynamic and identities are present, namely Ted, John Benett, Lori as John's girlfriend, and Tami-Lynn as Ted's girlfriend. These characters introduced in the movie continue to express utterances with explicit language choices in the dialogue. For instance, dysphemistic terms like "fuck," "asshole," and "bitch" were used in various conversational contexts between characters with varying intentions and purposes. This language phenomenon becomes the main interest of the writer to analyze dysphemism in the Ted (2012) movie script.

Furthermore, there are previous related studies and research to serve as references. Dysphemism, analyzed as a social linguistic phenomenon, has been examined by Afrin and Kamal (2025), who investigated its use among urban university students in Bangladesh, focusing on both social and gendered dimensions. Using a Likert-scale survey and a combined theoretical framework of Tannen's Genderlect Theory (1990) and Allan and Burrige (2006), the study involved 100 male and female students from public and private universities. The results revealed that epithets were the most frequently used type of dysphemism within this population, and that male students employed dysphemism more often than female students. Similarly, Mulya et al. (2021) explored dysphemism among Indonesian high school students, applying Allan and Burrige's (1991) theory to identify the most common forms of dysphemism and their functions in social interaction. Their findings indicated that many students used dysphemism to express amazement.

Dysphemism has also been studied for its standing as a linguistic discipline that can be approached from multiple perspectives. Through a descriptive qualitative method, Laili (2017) demonstrated that dysphemism is inherently multidisciplinary and can be analyzed through various literary and linguistic frameworks. Allan and Burrige's (1991) dysphemism theory, for instance, can be connected to semantics and sociolinguistics as outlined by Brown and Levinson (1987), as well as to Foucault's discourse analysis theory, which situates dysphemism in relation to broader language phenomena. The multidisciplinary nature of dysphemism is further evidenced by Rosadi (2024), who examined dysphemism and euphemism through discourse analysis, applying Allan and

Burridge's (1991) framework alongside van Dijk's discourse analysis model. In the context of online media coverage of child abuse cases on platforms such as Sindonews.com and DetikNews.com, the study revealed how lexical choices framed underage children as vulnerable subjects.

Prokhorova et al. (2019) investigated dysphemism in literature studies by analyzing historical trends in dysphemistic and euphemistic terms using Google Books Ngram Viewer. Their quantitative approach charted the frequency of such terms over time and applied pragmatic and semantic analysis. Drawing on Razanova's (2008) classification of dysphemism as a lexical category, they identified gaps in existing research, noting that many studies focused narrowly on typologies of dysphemistic utterances. Their work proposed a multi-factor classification, arguing that dysphemism cannot be fully understood through lexical or stylistic labels alone, but must also consider pragmatic context and speaker–hearer relations.

In addition, dysphemism has been studied in translation contexts. Qolbi et al. (2026) examined the translation of dysphemistic expressions from Indonesian into English in the film *Agak Laen*. Using Vermeer's Skopos theory (2000), Nida and Taber's translation framework (1959), and Allan and Burridge's (1991) dysphemism theory, the study identified shifts in expression, with some dysphemisms rendered into euphemisms during translation. However, the majority of dysphemistic expressions were retained, demonstrating the persistence of such language across linguistic boundaries.

In a sociolinguistic context, there is also a study that researched the link between speaker-hearer relations in terms of the use of dysphemism. Terry (2020)

observed examples from American TV shows such as House, M.D., Sex and the City, How I Met Your Mother, The Big Bang Theory, and Grey's Anatomy to describe the underlying mechanisms of the linguistic devices. Mainly using the theory of in-between dysphemism and euphemism of Allan & Burridge (1991, 2006), the study observed how it connects to the concept of irony and banter with the theory of Leech (2014) Politeness Principle. The research resulted in confirmation of the hypothesis that dysphemistic euphemism conveys banter, though the result was too vague to confirm the second hypothesis of the link in conveying irony with euphemistic dysphemism.

The role of dysphemism and euphemism in functional and pragmatic contexts in political and journalistic orientation was examined by Sydoruk & Samoilenko (2022). Using a corpus to take examples from articles published by the Guardian in February-August 2022, the research analyzed it using theories of pragmatical function of language, politeness theory, Orwell's doublespeak ideas, and semantic accounts of dysphemization and secondary nomination, which includes analyses of semantic mechanisms (connotation vs. denotation), secondary nomination (indirect naming), and classification of euphemistic/dysphemistic strategies. This resulted in observations of tactical strategies of the usage of euphemism and dysphemism that perform respective roles to the listeners in the context of journalistic orientation.

Dysphemism can also be analyzed within popular media such as television shows, films, and other forms of entertainment in order to identify its functions within a specific corpus and to examine the effects of its use on the characters in the chosen medium of study. One of the studies is a journal article written by

Gorčević et al., (2021) from the International University of Novi Pazar. In their research, they have selected 10 animated films, which are Despicable Me 3 (2017), The Incredibles 2 (2018), The Adams Family (2019), Toy Story 4 (2019), Batman: Hush (2019), How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World (2019), Wolfwalkers (2020), Soul (2020), and the two 2020 episodes of South Park—The Pandemic Special and End of the Pandemic Special. They also selected a secondary corpus of the native language corpus (Corpus of Contemporary American English—COCA) and the Google search engine. The writers chose this topic for their research to address their hypotheses that certain types of dysphemism are exclusive to animated films and cannot be found in native discourse. With their selection of animated films, they identify the dysphemism presented in the primary corpus and attempt to analyze and explain the most intriguing expressions. Utilizing the theoretical framework of Allan and Burridge, they have identified several dysphemisms found in the selected animated films. They cross-checked their findings with their secondary corpus from COCA and Google, which led to a list of dysphemisms identified in the COCA database. This research revealed that all selected primary corpora contained numerous dysphemisms that are ‘unheard of elsewhere,’ with the one corpus that stands out the most being the two episodes of South Park.

To the writer’s knowledge, there are limited prior studies that have specifically analyzed dysphemism through the lens of social dimension scales as undertaken in this research; there are studies that have examined the relationship between informal language, such as slang, and the social dimension scales. Drawing from slang theory by Allan & Burridge (2006) and the social dimension scale

framework of Holmes (2013), the study by Hanafi & Setyowati (2026) analyzed its correlation in the movie Mean Girls (2024). In the end, the findings showed that all five slang types appeared and served different purposes depending on the situation, including establishing group identity and reinforcing friendships. Moreover, the use of slang was not only a reflection of informal speech but also a means of strengthening friendships, gaining control, and maintaining social identity.

Notably, fewer prior academic studies have specifically examined the relationship between dysphemism and Holmes' social dimension framework. Existing research tends to either analyze dysphemism in isolation, focusing on its typology, semantic features, or pragmatic functions, or to investigate other linguistic phenomena, such as slang or informal language, in relation to social dimensions. As a result, there is a significant gap in scholarship that directly connects dysphemistic utterances to the scales of social distance, status, formality, and function. This is also a gap idea that was previously researched by Prokhorova et al. (2019) that was added as previous studies found a tendency toward singular theory and disciplinary research methodologies in the study of dysphemism.

Addressing this gap is crucial because dysphemism, as a socially charged linguistic act, does not occur in a vacuum; its force and meaning are shaped by the relational and contextual factors that Holmes identifies. By situating dysphemism within the social dimension framework, this study highlights how taboo or offensive language both reflects and reshapes interpersonal dynamics, revealing whether speakers reinforce solidarity, challenge authority, disrupt formality, or pursue affective rather than referential goals. Such an approach underscores the importance of analyzing dysphemism not merely as a lexical or stylistic

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phenomenon, but as a sociolinguistic marker that exposes the underlying structures of interaction.

This study aims to understand the underlying mechanism of a linguistic device and its connection to the social dimension that contextualizes its production of utterance. Other study with limited data sources, such as movies, may also lead the researcher to accidentally skip dialogue due to a quick scene change. In contrast, the present study employs Ted's (2012) movie script as its corpus, enabling a more comprehensive analysis of dysphemistic expressions. The selection of a movie script as the data source offers methodological advantages, as they exist in written form and therefore eliminates the need for manual transcription, and as a result, reduces the risk of eliminating or misinterpreting key utterances.

Additionally, prior research has rarely examined dysphemism in R-rated comedy films, where offensive expressions are intentionally used to create humor, develop character dynamics, and shape character identity. The Ted (2012) movie script provides a unique linguistic context in which dysphemism functions not only as a comedic device but also as a reflection of informal and realistic speech. This makes the present research different from earlier studies, as it combines dysphemism analysis with social dimension theory within a comedy film setting. By combining a textual corpus, a contemporary theoretical model, and a movie genre that focuses on humor and taboo language expressions, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how dysphemism operates within society, as reflected by social factors.

1.2 Research Questions

With the focus on analyzing the linguistic elements of dysphemism in the corpus, the writer formulates the research questions as follows:

1. What are the types of dysphemism used by the characters in the movie script Ted (2012)?
2. What are the functions of dysphemism used by the characters in the movie script Ted (2012)?
3. How is the relationship between characters shaped by the use of dysphemistic expressions based on the social dimensions scale framework by Holmes (2013)?

1.3 Research Purposes

Therefore, this research tackles dysphemism in Ted (2012) movie script to accomplish the following aims:

1. To identify the dysphemistic utterances, in the form of a word or a phrase, present within the Ted (2012) movie script, by applying Allan and Burridge's (2006) typology of dysphemism.
2. To analyze the functions of dysphemism utterances applied in the dialogue of Ted (2012) script
3. To explore how dysphemistic language in Ted movie script shapes characters relationship in the operation of Holmes' social dimension scales (formality, status, social distance, function)?

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on identifying dysphemisms in the movie script of Ted (2012), in the form of utterances, words, and phrases, and analyzing these utterances using Holmes's (2013) social dimension scale framework. The writer's main focus of the analysis is the dialogues of the main characters, along with supporting characters taken from the Ted (2012) movie script, which contains dysphemistic utterances.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

The study of dysphemism in the Ted (2012) movie script also has a limitation. In this study, the research strictly focuses on dysphemistic utterances in the dialogues between characters in the movie script. The context or the scene in which the utterance was said was also added as a supplement to the study to help readers understand the context as an attempt to justify and explain the functions of why the utterance was said in the first place. The dysphemistic utterances is analyzed in terms of their frequency along with their speaker and addressee, and are deliberately analyzed in accordance with Holmes (2013) social dimension scale framework; this approach to the data resulted in patterns. However, this study will not analyze other elements present in the movie script, such as narration or other utterances in the script's dialogue that do not contain dysphemistic language.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study provides significance as explained below:

1. Theoretical Significance:

This study provides theoretical significance by filling a gap in sociolinguistic research. While dysphemism has been widely examined in terms of typology, semantics, pragmatics, and translation, no prior research has systematically analyzed its relationship with Holmes' social dimension scales. By situating dysphemism within the framework of social distance, status, formality, and function, this study demonstrates that dysphemistic utterances are not merely lexical or stylistic phenomena but socially embedded acts that reveal how speakers negotiate relationships, authority, and contextual norms. The findings expand the explanatory power of Holmes' framework, showing both its applicability and its limitations in linguistic application. This theoretical contribution enriches sociolinguistics and pragmatics by positioning dysphemism as a marker of relational dynamics.

2. Practical Significance

Practically, the study offers value for teaching, discourse analysis, and understanding the linguistic context of a communication. By analyzing dysphemism in movie script, the research provides accessible examples that can be used in classrooms to illustrate how sociolinguistic theory applies to real discourse. It also highlights how taboo language functions as a communicative strategy, whether to reinforce solidarity, challenge authority, or disrupt formality. For practitioners in translation, media studies, and communication, the findings underscore the importance of considering social dimensions

when interpreting or adapting dysphemistic expressions. Moreover, the study opens paths for applied research in media discourse, where dysphemism often serves narrative, character and relationship-building functions. In this way, the research contributes not only to academic theory but also to practical understanding of language use in everyday and mediated contexts.

1.7 State of The Art

Research on dysphemism has developed across multiple perspectives but remains fragmented. Studies such as Afrin and Kamal (2025) and Mulya et al. (2021) have examined dysphemism among students, focusing on its social and gendered dimensions, while Laili (2017) and Rosadi (2024) emphasized its multidisciplinary nature by connecting dysphemism to semantics, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis. Prokhorova et al. (2019) extended the inquiry to literature, charting historical trends of dysphemistic and euphemistic terms through quantitative analysis, while Qolbi et al. (2026) explored dysphemism in translation, highlighting shifts between dysphemism and euphemism in Indonesian film dialogue.

Despite these contributions, the state of the art reveals a clear gap: dysphemism has not been systematically analyzed through Holmes' social dimension scales. Most existing studies either treat dysphemism as a lexical or pragmatic phenomenon or examine other informal language, such as slang, in relation to social dimensions. As a result, there is limited scholarship that demonstrates how dysphemistic utterances interact with social distance, status,

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formality, and function. This study advances the state of the art by directly connecting dysphemism to Holmes' framework, thereby offering a new lens for understanding how taboo language performs in sociolinguistic expectations.

