

# Euphemisms in Jessica Fellowe's Book “The World of Downton Abbey” and the Television Series “Downton Abbey”

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Anglistika; smjer: nastavnički

**Maja Efendić**

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of Downton Abbey“ and the Television Series  
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Diplomski rad

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Zadar, 2024.



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Zadar, 5. rujna 2024.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language, as the principal method of human communication, is used among people to communicate ideas and express different feelings. Observing how people use certain words and phrases, whether consciously or unconsciously, can help us to improve our understanding of ourselves and gain insight into why we behave the way we do. According to Wardhaugh (2002: 2), language is not just the knowledge of isolated sounds, words, or sentences, but also the knowledge of various rules, principles, and ways of combining those sounds, words, and sentences into a meaningful unit. Through language, people perceive the world that surrounds them and thus form their worldview (Wardhaugh, 2006: 225). The world is what we make of it through the knowledge of our language (Romaine, 1999). Throughout history, words were related to superstitions, myths, social status, and religion. They were and they continue to be extraordinarily strong weapons since words can summon a spirit, or other supernatural beings, and call for revolution and violence. As was stated in Andrews' essay (1996), most English speakers think that the way we use and combine words can make a significant difference. Language use is a ubiquitous and complex phenomenon. It is under the constant influence of a range of factors, whether cultural, linguistic, or social (Verschueren & Östman, 2009).

Most people know when, how, and with whom they need to use different styles of communication. What also needs to be taken into consideration is the closeness of interlocutors, place, and time at which the conversation takes place. It is human nature to speak in a good, acceptable way, without insulting our interlocutor or evoking bad emotions. Sometimes interlocutors may even avoid talking about certain topics which are stigmatized as taboo. Those subjects vary from society to society, but some more common ones include religion, death, politics, and bodily functions. For certain words and phrases that cannot be directly said, people choose to talk about them in very roundabout ways, implicitly often with the feeling of vagueness. In such cases, people resort to euphemisms, to replace existing terms which are stigmatized as taboo or not comfortable to talk about. By resorting to euphemisms, speakers are more likely to protect themselves and the hearers from possible discomfort. The use of euphemisms among people is an indication of excellent communication skills. They are useful as long as they are not overexploited (Allan & Burrige, 1991).

Successful communication plays a key role in our everyday life, and euphemisms contribute to this so that the interaction between people continues smoothly without growing uneasiness. An awareness of the need and role of euphemisms in society dates from ancient

times, and at that time, they aroused interest among philosophers and literary figures (Kuna, 2007). Because of their authenticity in a particular cultural environment and prevalence in everyday life, euphemisms have become the subject of contemporary semantic, pragmalinguistic, and sociolinguistic research. Also, there are already many dictionaries of euphemisms in different languages (Kuna, 2007: 96).

This work will give an insight into euphemisms and will research them more thoroughly through the analysis of the book, as well as the first and the second season of the television show “Downton Abbey”. The first chapter will widen the understanding of the origin of taboo language, what topics were considered taboo in the past and what topics are tabooed today, as well as their connection to euphemisms. The second chapter will give a detailed analysis of the term ‘euphemism’ and various definitions will be proposed. What will be talked about is the use, functions, classification of euphemisms, and their connection to the notion of politeness. In the next chapter, there will be a brief introduction to Jessica Fellowe’s book “The World of Downton Abbey” and the British television series “Downton Abbey” directed by Julian Fellowes. After that, a detailed analysis of euphemisms collected from the book and the first two seasons of the television series will be presented in this thesis, as well as their classification proposed by Allan and Burridge (1991). This analysis will be divided into semantic domains that appeared the most throughout the book and the television series.

Through this detailed analysis, we seek to answer pertinent questions, such as the frequency and types of euphemisms, the specific contexts in which characters employ them, and the primary themes that prompt their use. The results will provide us with new insights into the usage of euphemisms in aristocratic society. It is expected that the mentioned research will provide a clearer picture and improve our understanding of euphemisms.

## **2. TABOO AND ITS CONNECTION TO EUPHEMISMS**

The majority of English speakers are aware of the existence of taboo words and their prevalence in languages. People are conscious that there are rules they need to follow when talking about taboo topics if they do not want to experience punishment of any kind. Taboo is considered “a proscription of behavior that affects everyday life”, and tabooed subjects vary from bodily functions, death, diseases, and so on (Allan & Burridge, 2006: 1). According to Burridge, "what is taboo is revolting, untouchable, filthy, unmentionable, dangerous, disturbing, thrilling - but above all powerful" (2004: 199). This is one of the reasons why taboos are fascinating and intriguing to human beings, as it usually happens with things that are forbidden. Certain things or objects cannot be talked about freely, but only in certain circumstances by certain people (Wardhaugh 2002: 239). Similarly, Hjemlev (1963: 65) said that linguistic taboo refers to the situation in which only certain people can enunciate a word or name presupposing there are special conditions.

Taboos control our life and dictate what kind of behavior is acceptable or unacceptable. Since taboos are present in every language and, therefore, this entails that the punishment for breaking a linguistic taboo may vary from society to society and include death, disapproval, social ostracism, or physical violence. Even if the infringement of taboo was not intended, there is still a risk of being punished, and that is why people avoid taboo topics and consequently censor their language. Some individuals are ready to break taboos and they usually do that intentionally to achieve a desired communicative objective (Allan & Burridge, 2006). The list of taboo topics and their significance undoubtedly change over time. Some of them are not as relevant as they used to be, and some of them may completely disappear. As time changes, new taboos arrive and become more dominant. Undisputedly, some taboo topics, such as incest is, remain dominant in all societies. These topics still provoke fear among the people and, therefore, are not talked about.

All kinds of taboo topics deserve dedication and the same amount of attention, but still, for a lot of people it is not easy to talk about them due to a variety of reasons varying from the fear of judgement, discomfort, social and cultural norms, or just embarrassment.

### **2.1. How Taboo Topics Have Changed from the Past to Today**

Since people are constantly changing, and improving, it is not a surprise that the language goes through the same process. Likewise, something that was a taboo topic in the distant past may no longer be taboo today. This implies that the phenomenon of taboo is



dynamic, and concepts about what people consider to be forbidden change constantly across various cultures (Burridge, 2012). According to this, some old taboos disappeared from the English language or even became archaic and new ones have emerged. The best examples are profanity and blasphemy, which have been prohibited by religious authorities since the earliest times (Jay, 2009: 153). The most recognized group of taboo words refers to obscenities. In the past, American dictionaries of the English language did not print any obscene words as they were considered inappropriate. People were expected not to use them in public in any kind of media (Andrews, 1996: 396).

According to Allan & Burridge (2006), since the 1980s speakers of the English language have shown concern and fear when it comes to talking about those groups perceived to be oppressed in the society. “The new taboos make sexist, racist, ageist, ‘religiousist,’ etc. language not only contextually, but also legally dysphemistic” (Allan & Burridge, 2006: 239). These so-called IST taboos are in the center of attention, and people are apprehensive about how to talk about such topics. According to Hughes (2010: 46), today we understand taboos as words that are “highly inappropriate”, rather than “strictly forbidden”, as they were in the past. They are not avoided because of the fear of supernatural beings or being punished to death, but because they are thought to be inappropriate, embarrassing, or offensive to some speakers, so people often resort to their substitutions (Sytnyk, 2014). Allan and Burridge (2006: 11) believe that human beings, as part of a community, have an unwritten consensus about how to behave and talk in specific situations, and they, at least most of them, follow the rules to avoid being sanctioned.

## **2.2. Euphemisms As a Shield Weapon to Talk About Taboo Subjects**

According to Wardhaugh (2006: 240), the late twentieth century has seen an actual change concerning linguistic taboos as some social restrictions have eased. Freedom of speech is today present in almost every country. Nevertheless, language censorship to a certain extent should not be out of the question as that can help people not to offend others. The appearance of euphemisms in language therefore assists in making certain topics or phrases seem palatable to use in public. When there is a need to avoid saying something in a straightforward manner or using evasive expressions, people resort to euphemisms. Euphemisms serve humans as a shield from being offensive and disrespectful (Burridge, 2012). They have existed throughout history, and they continue to be used every day through interaction with other people, reading newspapers, books, or watching movies. The exchange of unpleasant terms for more pleasant

ones and making the conversation go smoothly and more vivid without causing discomfort to others is what makes euphemisms so unique. They have become deeply ingrained in our language and people use them, most of the time without even realizing it. According to Rawson (1988: 1), even people who express their opinion very directly without worrying whether they may potentially hurt someone tend to practice euphemisms in everyday speech. They are ingrained in our society and will continue to exist to help people avoid offence and impoliteness.

Burridge (1997: 60) claims that the phenomenon of euphemisms can be traced back to the time when language was only in the process of development. Euphemisms are undoubtedly a linguistic phenomenon coined and used daily. What is more, they reflect each society and culture. By studying and, thus, understanding euphemisms, people can have a better insight into the culture of a particular society.

### **3. EUPHEMISMS**

Euphemisms are a figure of speech found in almost every language in the world, and they come to achieve a specific goal in communication, especially context-wise. Different contexts request different vocabulary, particularly when sensitive topics are discussed that may cause pain for some speakers. Therefore, it is crucial to choose words wisely. In other words, to avoid using taboo words while communicating, people employ euphemisms in their speech. If they are used correctly, interlocutors can avoid embarrassment and discomfort. Euphemism, as an important and indispensable part of the English language, has interested many scholars, which led them to put forward different perspectives. Euphemistic expressions grant us smooth interaction with people we know well, but also with those with whom we are not well acquainted. They are endemic in the social milieu as people tend to “dress up” the language they use, to make it sound more presentable and polite (Wardhaugh, 2006: 240). When something cannot be said directly, people resort to euphemisms to achieve their communication goal. According to Pavlenko (2006: 260), one of the crucial functions of euphemisms is to shield speakers from unwanted emotional arousal. These euphemistic expressions are often linked with the notion of politeness - "that which is polite is at least inoffensive and at best pleasing to an audience, and that which is offensive is impolite" (Allan & Burridge 2006: 30). This suggests that verbal politeness is something people pay attention to in order to maintain their self-image. Miller (1999: 177) stated that if new concepts seem too offensive to speak about, then there will always be a need among speakers to find roundabout and indirect ways of referring to those concepts so that they become acceptable in society. Especially today, when people have the urge to talk about everything and discuss all kinds of topics, euphemisms are there to conceal the unpleasant matter but still to talk all the matters through. Therefore, euphemisms can achieve this function by choosing the language that the speaker wants to use and make it less upsetting and more acceptable.

#### **3.1. The Term ‘Euphemism’ and Its Usage**

The term ‘euphemism’ comes from the Greek language, where eu means ‘good, well’ and pHEME ‘speaking’ (Allan & Burridge, 2006: 29). Euphemisms are not a recent phenomenon in linguistics, but we can follow them throughout history, where they were defined differently. For example, some considered them a subtype of metaphor, and some a subtype of allegory. Also, they were classified into figures of speech, periphrasis, tropes, metalogisms, or even litho. However, newer definitions are remarkably similar, and most linguists agree when the definition of euphemism needs to be put forward, as can be seen through the following

examples. Euphemisms can show ulterior motive, but their sheer existence proposes that people can use linguistic facework to encounter and talk about unpleasant topics, if not overcome their inhibitions about them.

According to Bussmann et al., (2006: 388), euphemisms are seen as a pleasant substitution for objectionable words bearing pejorative connotations. Likewise, Cruse (2006: 57) said that this subtype of metaphor is an expression that alludes to something people choose not to bring up to avoid offense, but which reduces the offensiveness by indirect reference. Abrantes (2005: 85-86) puts it similarly by saying that “euphemism is a word or phrase used in a specific linguistic and extralinguistic context to soften or conceal something unpleasant”, and she concludes that euphemism offers a compromise between the necessity to be precise and the wish to eschew offense. According to Kuna (2007: 95), euphemisms are words and phrases used in communication when it is necessary to replace undesirable and inappropriate words that directly refer to the referent and have unpleasant associations. Also, another reason may be that when people use euphemisms, they do it to show their educational background, and the knowledge they possess and, consequently, make themselves feel important (Lacone et al., 2003: 62). While the last observation may be true, most of them agree that euphemistic expressions help express oneself without being offensive and causing embarrassment.

Robert Burchfield (1985: 23) expressed his opinion about the importance of euphemisms by saying that “a language without euphemisms would be a defective instrument of communication”. However, not all linguists agree with his estimation. Their theories are completely the opposite of those listed above. Many of them claim that clarity in communication is infringed if people use euphemisms in their speech. Some of them say that a well-developed society should not use euphemisms at all (McGlone et al., 2006: 276). George Orwell (1946) concluded that euphemisms are a useful tool for politicians who want to defend something impossible to defend. He goes on further by saying that euphemism can be described as a mind controller which is used to “make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind” (Orwell, 1946: 56). Euphemisms used that way could easily control the flow of thought, which is, if used like that, a very negative function of euphemisms.

Despite some differences in opinion expressed by George Orwell (1946) and McGlone et al. (2006) that euphemisms may contain hidden messages, it is widely accepted, as it is visible from the definitions listed above, that euphemisms are considered a linguistic

phenomenon used among people to confront and talk about unpleasant topics. Using euphemisms people, consciously and sometimes unconsciously, save both the speaker and hearer from discomfort and offence. It is of significant importance that people do not exploit euphemisms to an extent where they hide unpleasant deeds, where attacking and killing civilians in war becomes ‘collateral damage’. Not only is this term improper, but it also dehumanizes innocent casualties.

### **3.2. The Functions of Euphemisms**

Euphemisms, as unoffending alternatives for certain expressions that people would rather not use in performing peculiar communicative aims on a given occasion, have numerous functions they fulfill. People resort to euphemisms when they encounter a delicate problem of communicating about things they would rather not be restricted in the current context. In this main function, to tone down the offensiveness of some words and phrases, they are verbal rescues created as a reaction to taboos. These include diseases, private parts, bodily functions, religion, politics, death, and many others (Burrige, 2012: 67). There will always be a difference among cultures, societies, and languages between what is forbidden and what is not, since taboo is a dynamic process, as are euphemisms. Yet, some things, such as incest or death, always remain taboo no matter where we find ourselves. There is unusual fear and uneasiness when such a topic sees the light of the day. Fortunately, euphemisms give people tools to discuss sensitive subjects without having to say directly what they are talking about.

Burrige (2012: 68) points out that all euphemisms can be dishonest in some way, especially when it comes to the medical, political, or military sphere of life, where they come to the rescue and make the intolerable seem somehow tolerable. This can be connected to the aforementioned Orwell’s opinion about euphemisms where he stated how easy it is to manipulate the human mind by using euphemisms. When used like this, euphemism’s task is not to avoid offense, but to show its deceptive nature. Lacombe et al. (2003: 60) stated that euphemisms have the power to hide deceptive messages, which may on the outside look plain and harmless, but the reality is different. According to LaRocque (2000: 192), they are regarded as ‘dangerous euphemisms’. For example, governments are experts in using euphemisms and there are many examples of that both in history and today. For example, during the Gulf War killing civilians was called ‘collateral damage’ to reduce the culpability for horrendous deeds that the military did at that time. Abrantes (2005: 98) emphasized that “collateral damage has a moral side to it, since it does not refer to a naturally caused death, but to death as the result

of a deliberate act of war (even if its primary goal was not to kill civilians, but to aim at military targets)”. According to her, euphemisms such as these, whose function is to conceal the harsh reality, are prone to decrease in power. The term ‘collateral damage’ received multiple criticism, and it was referred to as a main culprit in deteriorating the main purpose of euphemisms (Burridge, 2012: 68). To draw a comparison, today we can see a similar example where the president of Russia, Vladimir Putin, labeled his war against Ukraine as a ‘special operation’. This actively demonstrates how general expressions such as this one glorify something that is in reality gruesome and immoral. These examples show how two words can easily disguise the actual reality to manipulate the situation. Politicians frequently use euphemisms to manipulate their ideas and policies. It is evident from the examples that these linguistic tactics are not a novelty, but rather something that appears to be common in their practice.

Other than that, many speakers do not want to use certain euphemisms on a given occasion simply because everything they say must be in a favorable light. A notable example of this is when certain authors used ‘accommodation of stationary vehicles’ instead of ‘parking places or car spaces’. Burridge believed that this one has more positive connotations. This is thought to be “an uplifting euphemism”, and it can be used “to talk up and to inflate” something. It is usually language connected to trade, or profession (Burridge, 2012: 69). This function of euphemisms can give an upgrade in naming some of the professions so that their position looks more attractive and interesting than it really is.

Allan & Burridge (2006: 96) emphasize that euphemistic expressions are also motivated by the desire to show “in-group identity markers”. Depending on the context, some euphemistic expressions are used among people with similar interests connected with their work or recreation. Therefore, their additional function is strengthening and showing group identity, especially when directed to a person who does not belong to a particular organization or profession. An example of this is the case of nurses and doctors who work in a hospital and who must deal with different diseases, dying, and death every day. Euphemisms manage to make the job easier to handle by disguising unpleasant reality, but also by creating “rapport” (Burridge, 2012: 70-71).

Furthermore, several euphemisms are created to entertain people in creative and playful contexts (Burridge, 2012). Crespo (2015: 85) stated that ludic euphemisms are useful for reducing the seriousness of taboo topics. These euphemisms are part of our everyday verbal

play as we witness how people use ordinary words and phrases and combine them, only to produce remarkable expressions. This is evidence of how the manipulation of sounds and letters, words, and phrases can be inventive at times. For example, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a euphemistic expression ‘miraculous pitcher’ for ‘vagina’ intended to amuse people (Burridge, 2012: 71).

The functions of euphemisms found in literature are believed to be heterogeneous. For example, Moskvin (2001: 62-63) identified six main functions of euphemisms in his work: 1) to replace the exact names of frightening objects and phenomena; 2) to name unpleasant and gruesome objects which we cannot refer directly to; 3) to replace expressions that are indecent or inappropriate at a given moment, epoch, or social group and refer to the thematic area of human physiology and anatomy; 4) etiquette euphemisms – when the speakers wish to avoid direct appointment out of caution so as not to offend either the interlocutor or a third person; 5) to conceal, soften, or diminish the truth or the very being of the marked referent and, unlike previous examples, this type of euphemism is more widespread in public language. Often their role then becomes deceiving the public and even misinforming to express something delicate and sensitive to the speaker; 6) as a substitute for the names of non-prestigious occupations and professions in each society.

### **3.3. The Notion of Face**

Except for fear and prohibition, in modern society, the motivation for the emergence of euphemisms is to consider the feelings of others who are somehow involved in communication. In this regard, in describing euphemisms and their effects, Grice’s (1975: 45-47) principle of cooperation can be applied - a general principle that governs every successful conversation, and which implies the following conversational maxims: quality (truthfulness), quantity (providing enough information, and not more or less than that), relation (speaking in accordance with the subject), and manner (avoiding ambiguity and obfuscation).

In the matter of hiding from taboos and unpleasant topics, a speaker may have two motives: to reduce the threat to the hearer’s face and to reduce the threat to their face. From this position, the use of euphemisms can be connected to politeness employing the notion of face proposed by Goffman ( 1955: 215). There is a general opinion that participants included in an interaction are aware that some principles such as being tactful, modest, and sympathetic toward others are present in society. The notion of face refers to one’s image of oneself in public. That implies the emotional and social part of self that every person has and expects

others to appreciate it. Moreover, politeness can be described as a tool used to display a recognition of another person's face. This leads to the conclusion that politeness is possible to achieve not only when we are close to a person, but also when there is some social distance between speakers. Not only is euphemism an answer to taboo, but also using euphemistic expressions instead of bringing out something directly can be considered polite. Generally, people interact with the thought that their public self-image will be respected at all times. But if one speaker says something that may put another speaker's self-image in danger, then that is described as a 'face threatening act' (Brown & Levinson, 1978). The situation can be saved if the speaker decides to say something which will eventually lessen the potential threat, and this is called, according to Brown and Levinson, a 'face saving act' (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Brown and Levinson (1978) define politeness as the behavior through which participants maintain face in their interaction. When there is a wish to save another's face, we need to give close and thoughtful attention to their negative face wants and positive face wants. A person's positive face is the need to be accepted, loved, and considered as a member of the group, whereas a person's negative face is his or her need for independence and freedom that is not inflicted by others (Brown & Levinson, 1978: 313-314). Similarly, Pasini (2003: 48) concluded that by using euphemisms, we can save someone else's face, and ours as well. By using an inappropriate expression, we are risking the loss of face. Euphemisms play a significant role in mitigating offense imposed by someone. Pasini emphasizes their role in interaction and concludes that in an environment where decency or courtesy is expressed the use of euphemisms is intensified.

### **3.4. Cooperative vs. uncooperative argumentative euphemisms**

When some euphemisms are considered examples of cooperative communication, it is meant that people who take part in a conversation understand that one inappropriate linguistic expression is replaced by another that is more polite and, therefore, accepted among participants so they can refer to unspeakable topics. This kind of euphemism offers a compromise between the want to be precise and the wish to escape the offense (Abrantes, 2005: 85). According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 311), this can be marked as a 'face-saving strategy' where both speaker and hearer collaborate during the conversation; the speaker wants to be inoffensive; the hearer understands the purpose and joins to help to keep a conversation going smoothly. This explicit nature of cooperative euphemisms encourages their approval and "conventionalization in discourse" (Sytnyk, 2014: 120).



On the other hand, argumentative uncooperative euphemisms are purposefully used as a strategy of avoiding an unpleasant reference by hiding or veiling certain aspects of reality that work in someone's favor. The vagueness and impreciseness of such terms do nothing to aid understanding, they only make it harder to recognize them as euphemisms. Speakers use these euphemisms to conceal the actual truth, soften certain messages, and even deceive the hearer. Manipulation is the main function of uncooperative euphemisms (Sytnyk, 2014). Euphemisms that lack any sort of accuracy are the most successful ones because, "the vaguer the better" (Burridge, 2005: 41). According to Lutz (1989: 96), euphemisms that function in a way to deceive and mislead people, are considered "doublespeak". The main motive of doublespeak is to make intolerable seem tolerable and to produce language that has no sinister role at all. Abrantes (2005: 98) concludes that, unlike cooperative euphemisms, uncooperative euphemisms are not expected to have a long existence in the language.

This classification is very similarly elaborated by Rawson (1981: 1), who classified euphemisms into two general groups; positive and negative euphemisms. Positive euphemisms are prompted by the wish to magnify, in order to make euphemized expressions even bigger than they are. Positive euphemisms include "fancy occupational titles" to make them more palatable to the public, and titles and other expressions associated with someone's name. Negative euphemisms mitigate negative values connected with negative phenomena, such as war, crime, poverty, etc. They are less valuable because of their defensive nature.

If we apply Holder's (2002: vi) view about euphemisms that it is "the language of evasion, of hypocrisy, of prudery, and of deceit", then sometimes it may not be easy to recognize negative euphemisms. This means that some meanings may be disguised and completely hide the real and unpleasant truth. This kind of manipulation with euphemistic expressions represents a serious threat because people may fail to comprehend the actual meaning hidden behind words and believe in something which in reality is just the opposite.

### **3.5. Allan and Burridge's Classification of Euphemisms**

Euphemisms may be classified based on their use. A lot of euphemisms are figurative, and many of them are the result of semantic shift. Some are examples of extraordinary inventiveness of figure and form, while some are undoubtedly playful. There are twelve types of euphemisms proposed by Allan and Burridge (1991), and each of them will be tackled one by one. According to Kuna (2007), for understanding euphemisms, it is of significant importance to know the political, social, and historical factors. Although this discussion focuses

merely on the English language, these categories may be applied to other world languages. Also, it is important to highlight, that many examples drawn from the English language can fall into different categories at the same time. For instance, the euphemistic expression ‘the winter of one’s life’ may be marked as metaphorical and hyperbolic at the same time. The euphemism ‘no spring chicken’ can be understood as both a metaphor and an understatement. (Burridge, 2012: 73). There are many more examples like the ones listed.

The first type represented in Allan and Burridge’s book (1991) is metaphor, and it is the most common of these types. This figurative expression is used to make a comparison mostly between two things that are dissimilar but do have something in common. For most people, metaphor is seen as an extraordinary language mostly used in the poetic sense. Moreover, metaphor is seen as “a matter of words rather than thought or action”, and therefore people assume they can manage well without it (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 3). Although this may be a general opinion, it is not true, because metaphor is prevalent in our everyday life, both in thought and action (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). For instance, there are many metaphors that deal with appearance; for body parts and functions that are tabooed (Allan, 2012: 06). Allan & Burridge (1991: 15) gave an example of a metaphorical expression for getting menstruation – ‘the cavalry’s come’ or for die – ‘go to the happy hunting grounds’.

The second type is the idiom, an expression consisting of a group of words that functions as a unit. Its meaning cannot be comprehended if the conjoined elements are observed separately. Allan (2012: 139) concluded in his research that mostly epithets, obscene words, and terms expressing abuse are idiomatic. According to Chaika (1982: 357), idiomatic expressions, when used in the function of euphemism, are often utilized to describe death, for example, ‘kick the bucket’, ‘pass on’, ‘go to rest’, etc.

The third type is called circumlocutions, and it is a way of saying or writing something using more words than is actually needed. The best example of something that can be said in fewer words is ‘those on the lower end of the ability scale’ or simply said ‘educationally disadvantaged’ (Allan & Burridge, 1991: 16). If this method is used, new euphemisms can be created with ease, and because of that, today we have examples like ‘criminal sexual assault’ for rape or a serious offense against a woman (Allan & Burridge, 1991: 16). Such paraphrasing can alleviate the seriousness of the situation. The result of paraphrasing terms is a euphemism, and by using this method many new euphemisms can be produced. People can talk carefully about all kinds of topics because today it seems that the more words, the better. Chaika (1982)

thinks that by using circumlocutions, we are diminishing the meaning and avoiding confrontation with an unpleasant issue. For example, “engage the enemy is weaker than fight” (Chaika, 1982: 358). According to Allan & Burridge (1991), metaphor and circumlocution are pervasive in high style, both in polite society and allegorical literature. Euphemism and style are two different things. Euphemisms may be used to help maintain a specific style.

The fourth one is listed as acronyms and abbreviations. Acronyms are considered to be proper words that are made from one or two initial letters of the words in a phrase and are enunciated like words and not a list of letters, for instance ‘snafu’ meaning ‘situation normal all, fucked up’. On the other hand, abbreviations are shortened forms of a word made from the first letter of each word, and unlike acronyms, they are pronounced as a set of letters, like ‘S.O.B.’ for ‘son-of-a-bitch’ (Allan & Burridge, 1991: 17).

The fifth that follows is general-for-specific (or whole-for-part) and part-for-whole. They are sometimes discussed by using traditional terms ‘metonymy’ and ‘synecdoche’ but the terms listed above are preferred nowadays. A lot of these substitutions include expressions that allude to something that is conceptually connected with something considered taboo. Since vagueness is what speakers wish to achieve in a euphemism, often those replacements entail a prominent level of abstraction (Burridge, 2012: 73). An example of general-for-specific is ‘nether regions’ which would be ‘genitals’. Institutions in which elderly people receive care are described as “homes, houses, residences, and so forth” (Burridge, 2012: 74). Many general-for-specific euphemisms are often seen as understatements. The best example that supports this claim is ‘deed’ for ‘act of murder’ because the act of murder itself is euphemized by the more generic term ‘deed’. Part-for-whole euphemism may be demonstrated in an expression such as ‘spend a penny’ for ‘going to the lavatory’ (Allan & Burridge, 1991: 18). This expression would be appropriate in the past when to use public lavatory people would have to spend a penny so they could gain access. According to Allan and Burridge (1991), the euphemistic expression ‘I’ve got a cough’ is also considered to be part-for-whole, as it ignores watery eyes, nasal congestion and so on. Euphemisms of this kind would have been called synecdoche.

The sixth type is overstatement (hyperbole). By using overstatement speakers are exaggerating the thing being talked about. This is the opposite strategy of an understatement. According to Allan & Burridge (1991), overstatement is a device often used in obituaries, death notices, and epitaphs to help those people who stayed behind to deal with the pain of loss. To prove this statement, ‘flight to glory’ is another expression for death. This is a common

language technique to emphasize the emotional impact of a taboo subject. By making something appear bigger and more significant than it really is, overstatement can be an effective way to draw attention to a topic and make it more memorable. However, Allan & Burridge (1991) conclude that it is important to use overstatement with caution as it can undermine the credibility of the speaker or writer.

The seventh type is litotes, also known as a special type of understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by denying its opposite. By using understatement, the force of the statement is decreasing, as in an example where old age can be expressed 'not in one's first youth' (Burridge, 2012: 74). One example that people may find is 'sleep' for 'die', especially in death notices, where for some people it may be difficult and painful to talk about the recent death of their loved ones. According to Allan and Burridge (1991), many general-for-specific euphemisms are considered understatements as well. For instance, 'act of murder' is sometimes called 'deed', or 'regular sexual partner' is considered as 'a friend, companion or this guy I'm seeing'. Something inappropriate is expressed through understatement in a simple way. Understatement has the power to soften the impact of a serious topic and leave space for positive interpretation which can help to achieve effective communication (Crespo, 2015).

The eighth type of euphemisms refers to technical jargon or learned terms that are used rather than some common terms for example 'senesce' which means 'to age' or 'septuagenarian' for 'seventy-year-old'. An example like this one avoids the actual spelling of a person's real age. Some of them are borrowed from other languages, whereas some of them are constructed from the English language. Many languages have euphemisms based on words or morphs that are borrowed from other languages. For centuries, as far as the English language is concerned, those languages were Latin and French, and those foreign languages helped to hide unpleasant reality and to dress up English with more pleasant expressions (Burridge, 2012: 77). Burridge states that (2012: 77) "learned or technical terms provide ready-made euphemisms". According to Allan and Burridge (1991), the opposite strategy would be using a colloquial term rather than a formal one since that may help those dealing with death and dying daily to cope with their work. The frivolity and easiness of slang expressions can make it more bearable. Nowadays, many women would rather use the term 'period' than 'menstruate'.

The ninth type of euphemisms refers to euphemistic dysphemism. Dysphemism alone is a derogatory term which people use instead of a more positive one. Euphemistic dysphemism

refers to those expressions in which locution is recognized as a euphemism and the illocutionary act is recognized as dysphemistic. For example, the expletive word 'Shit!' usually indicates anger and frustration and, used like this, it is considered a dysphemism. But if speakers use remodeled euphemisms 'Sugar!', 'Shoot!', 'Shivers!' or 'Shucks!', then these expressions are marked as euphemistic dysphemisms (Allan & Burrige, 1991: 30). "By using an expression that is not intrinsically offensive, a speaker's dysphemistic intention can be accomplished euphemistically" (Allan & Burrige, 2006: 39). It is important to be respectful and mindful of language choices when it comes to sensitive topics like religion. To steer clear of blasphemy and profanity, many people choose to avoid directly using the word 'God' and instead opt for euphemistic expletives such as 'Good Lord(y)', 'Lowdy', 'La' (Allan & Burrige, 1991: 49). The only difference between blasphemy and profanity is that blasphemy mocks the deity, whereas profanity uses religious terms, as in this case is the name of God, but without blasphemous intent. The lack of disrespect is included without doubt. A person may want to swear, but at the same time, he or she does not wish to show that kind of harsh and coarse behavior to other people (Allan & Burrige, 1991). In addition, there are also dysphemistic euphemisms. Expressions for menstruation such as 'have the curse', 'woman's compliant', and others are neither dysphemism nor euphemism. They are marked as dysphemistic euphemisms because the locution is dysphemistic, but the illocution is not (Allan & Burrige, 1991). It is important to emphasize and understand that the matter of context is of considerable importance here, as well as interlocutors. For example, if someone calls his good friend 'an old bastard', this would be considered a dysphemistic euphemism. If the interlocutors were not very close friends, then the usage of this term would be considered merely dysphemistic (Allan & Burrige, 2006: 39).

The tenth type is clipping, and it is divided into fore-clipping, which means that one part of the word is removed from the beginning as in archaic 'nation' for 'damnation'. Another type is end-clipping where part of the word is reduced from the end such as 'bra' for 'brassiere' (Allan, 2012: 10).

The next type is called omission, and it is divided into quasi-omissions, that replace non lexical expressions for the unpleasant term, and full-omissions, which seem rare in comparison to quasi-omissions. An example of quasi-omission is 'f\*\*\*\*', which stands for 'fuck' because the rest of the letters are replaced with a non-alphabetic symbol. Also, at the same time, this is an example of end-clipping. Quasi-omissions can be found in the middle of words as well (Allan, 2012: 10). Since full-omissions are not that common, there are still some examples such

as 'I need to go' from which 'to the lavatory' is excluded. One of the most common examples that people encounter every day is 'the ladies/the gents' where 'the lavatory' is again omitted. Spoken equivalent to dashes and asterisks or any other symbol used by the author are words like 'mhm', 'er-mm', and so on (Allan, 2012: 11).

The twelfth type of how new terms may be created is remodeling, which keeps to a greater or lesser extent the phonetic or orthographic similarity between the original term and the new one. To avoid profanity and blasphemy, for example the word 'God' would be remodeled in euphemistic expletives, such as 'Gosh!' or 'Golly!' Another example would be 'basket' for 'bastard'. Remodeling usually becomes one-for-one substitution in which the beginning or rhyme of the unpleasant term relates to that of a semantically unrelated term (Allan, 2012: 7-10). When a speaker or writer remodels their language, active and fluent listener should not have too many difficulties with understanding the actual meaning. It is important to take the context into account and connect the misspelled words with their usual forms.

#### **4. ANALYSIS OF EUPHEMISMS USED IN JESSICA FELLOWES' BOOK "THE WORLD OF DOWNTON ABBEY" AND IN THE TV SERIES "DOWNTON ABBEY"**

The corpus for this analysis was taken from Jessica Fellowes' book "The World of Downton Abbey", and the first and second season of the television series "Downton Abbey", directed by Julian Fellowes. Both the book "The World of Downton Abbey" and the famous television series "Downton Abbey" offer the readers and the viewers an interesting portrayal of the aesthetic, cultural, and social environment of that time. That was the period when the British aristocracy felt that their traditional world was surely challenged, and irretrievably changed. The plot gives us an insight into the lives of both the wealthy Crawleys and their help during the post-Edwardian era, living under the same roof. The numerous accolades that this masterpiece has achieved speak volumes. Euphemistic expressions were carefully extracted from the book and television series after which they were divided according to Allan and Burridge's classification system of euphemisms.

A total of eleven different euphemisms were found in the book. The reason for this figure is in the sole nature of the book which is primarily narrative. However, it is used in this research to give deeper insight of the era by following the filming of Downton Abbey. The euphemisms from the book are, according to Allan and Burridge's (1991) classification system, divided into six types of euphemisms. Throughout the book, some examples that are found fall into different categories, as it was already said earlier that this can happen with euphemisms. The book included four metaphors, one overstatement, three idioms, five circumlocutions, three understatements, and one full-omission.

A total of twenty-two euphemisms were found in the first season. According to Allan and Burridge's (1991) classification system, nine types of euphemisms were found. The first season of the television series, which has seven episodes, included three metaphors, two general-for-specific, one overstatement, four idioms, eight circumlocutions, nine understatements, one full-omission, one remodeling, one fore-clipping. Some euphemisms fall under different categories at the same time. Out of all euphemisms found in the first season, only two euphemisms were repeated ('the late' and 'went'). A total of fifty-eight euphemisms were found in the second season. According to Allan and Burridge's (1991) classification system, eleven types were found. The second season of the television series, which has nine episodes, included six remodelings, twenty-five understatements, ten circumlocutions, one idiom, four overstatements, one technical jargon, eleven metaphor, five general-for-specific,

one full-omissions, one dysphemistic euphemisms, and eight euphemistic dysphemisms. Some euphemisms fall under different categories as well. Out of all euphemisms found in the second season, eight euphemisms were repeated. The euphemism 'lost' was repeated five times, 'gone' six times, 'late' three times, 'mistress' two times, 'for Heaven's sake' six times, 'blimey' four times, and 'Golly' two times. The presented examples enunciate characters from different backgrounds. The character's speech was put into context so that it was possible to extract euphemistic words and recognize their meaning. Each example was explained one by one and divided according to the classification system proposed by Allan and Burridge (1991). The story of Downton Abbey follows the characters from 1912 and gives the audience an insight into the life of the Crawley family. That year was marked by many great and remarkable events that are still of significant importance to this day. Their lives were intertwined with prominent events, such as the sinking of the Titanic, the Spanish flu, and World War One. In England, the following years were accompanied by rapid changes in social structures, which included the rise of the working class and the fall of aristocracy.

#### **4.1. Euphemisms for Death**

Although taboo topics change over time, death still seems to be one of the greatest taboos in all societies. Euphemisms for death help people to soften the difficult reality and to comfort those affected by the situation.

Concerning a major and sensitive topic, such as in the case of the sinking of the Titanic, everyone chooses their words carefully. The sinking of the Titanic was a pivotal moment in history and caused many people to lose their lives. This event is thought to be one of the worst disasters in maritime history in which more than one thousand and five hundred people lost their lives. Along with the sinking of the Titanic, war is also a theme that builds on the theme of death. These two prominent topics prompted characters to produce many euphemisms. It is visible through some examples that all male characters who participated in the war talk with fear about their uncertain comeback from the battlefield and describe it with the phrases 'if I don't come back' or 'if anything happened to him'. For those who died in the sinking of the ship members of the aristocratic family used the euphemism 'put up a stone'. Representatives of both aristocracy and the lower class used euphemisms such as 'gave their life' or 'lost their life' in a war, 'on their way' or 'gone'. Furthermore, the pandemic broke out during the First World War and claimed thousands of lives. Many people contracted the Spanish flu, which also caused the death of a member of aristocratic family, Lavinia. It is important to point out



that regardless of how the characters died, representatives of both classes always refer to them as ‘the late’ which is also considered a euphemism. According to the findings, death is one of the main topics that characters indeed struggle to talk about. Findings confirm that it is one of the most sensitive topics and one that people fear to talk about. A total of thirty-four euphemisms were found that characters uttered to replace the word ‘death’ and dying of a relative. They are divided into twenty-five understatement, twelve metaphors, four circumlocutions, four overstatements, one full-omission, one idiom and one fore-clipping. The above-mentioned euphemistic phrases such as ‘lost’, ‘gone’, and ‘the late’ are some of the most common ones that appeared in the television series *Downton Abbey*, and they are marked as understatement and metaphor. The euphemistic expression ‘the late’ is marked as an understatement and there is a total of five examples found. The euphemistic expression “go” is marked as an understatement and metaphor and there is total of eight examples found. Twelve euphemistic expressions were found for specific representation of death as a journey of their loved ones into the afterlife where hopefully they will reunite once again. They fall under different categories, as follows: eleven metaphors (‘goner’, ‘had been carried off’, ‘on their way to better life’, ‘go’, ‘went’ (2x), ‘gone’ (3x), ‘goes’ (2x)), one circumlocution (‘on their way to better life’), one overstatement (‘on their way to better life’), and nine understatement (‘went down’, ‘went’ (2x), ‘go’, ‘gone’ (3x), ‘goes’ (2x)). Also, death is euphemistically represented as a loss seven times. The euphemistic expression ‘lost’ and ‘the loss’ is marked as an understatement. It was especially understatement that helped on many occasions to express character’s suffering about the death of their loved ones or death in general. That way they created their system of coping with the difficult situation. The usage of the euphemisms ‘to lose’ or ‘the loss’ signifies the unfortunate event over which those who stayed behind do not have control and it depicts the death as an inevitable fate. Characters find it easier when they use euphemisms to express themselves and their emotions when talking about the death of their loved ones, which is why they reach out to them all the time. The first example connected to death is extracted from the book, and from the author’s observation understatement is visible - “... although they formerly enjoyed the shooting season, they no longer can find pleasure in killing birds or ground game, from a new feeling of reluctance *to take life* of any kind” (Fellowes, 2011: 138). The meaning of the expression ‘to take life’ is carefully used since this is the period of war when bringing up these words was done cautiously. Bearing in mind what they went through on the battlefield, the phrase ‘to kill’ would be too

harsh because now it has a completely different meaning and evokes new feelings which may be scary for a lot of men.

The following examples are extracted from the first season, episode one. In the next example, Robert, owner of the estate, found out that the Titanic sank and a lot of people that were on the ship had died. After hearing the tragic news, he utters: “*On their way to better life*”. This is an example of metaphor, hyperbole, and circumlocution. This expression can be connected to the time when people believed in death as a journey into the afterlife and they would bury them with all the fortune they had. Having that in mind, death is often represented as a journey for the dead person to a better place (Allan & Burridge, 1991). The metaphors that emerge from this comprise parting and arriving at the final station with their loved ones who had already departed. Euphemistic expressions like this one help ameliorate unpleasant reality. The pain never goes away, but using euphemisms in these cases helps to cope with the loss. In the next example, Robert and his lawyer are talking about the Titanic accident and the lawyer goes on by saying: “We’ve given them a memorial in London and a memorial here. I gather they’re *putting up a stone* to mark those bodies were never found”. This is an example of fore-clipping because one part of the word is removed from the beginning of the same word. The speaker indirectly uses the word stone instead of tombstone and by choosing this term the atmosphere of sorrow is avoided among people who are dealing with this difficult situation. The word tomb is purposefully left out and by using only the word stone, the whole phrase received softer meaning. Another euphemism pertains to the topic of Titanic. Robert confides in his lawyer how the topic of Titanic bothers him and his whole family: “It’s been our sole topic since the day the ship *went down*”. This euphemistic phrase is an example of understatement, because in a less direct way, the speaker is conveying the sinking of a ship, which leads to a number of people losing their life as well. Understatement helps to avoid harsh language in sensitive context such as this one.

In the third episode, Lady Mary reads a letter from Evely Napier, whose mother recently passed away. Cora knew his mother very well and Lady Mary informs her about her recent death. Then Mary proceeds with a question: “Should I tell him about your friendship with his *late* mother”? The euphemistic expression “late” in this context is an example of understatement and, according to Holder (2002), it is usually used in connection with someone’s recent passing away. Something painful as death, is expressed through understatement in more appropriate and sensitive way. In the following example, William talks about his uncle who passed away in an analogous way as Mr. Pamuk: “I had an uncle who *went*

like that”. The euphemistic expression “went” is an example of understatement, and it is usually used when describing someone who died. By using this expression, death can be understood as a journey for the deceased person and serves as a metaphor as well. People usually fear confrontation with the death, but euphemistic expressions such as these help to respond to that fear. The next example builds on the previous one. William explains to those present in the house how a man can die in the same way as a Turkish diplomat: “I meant you can *go* just like that”. Here, the same verb is used for death but only in the present tense. As already mentioned, this is understatement and metaphor, as it also serves as a journey of a dead person.

The next example is extracted from the sixth episode. In the following example, Carson confides in Cora about the letter he got from someone at the Foreign Office. The letter is about Lady Mary and Turkish ambassador who died in their home: “It seems His Excellency has made him privy to a scurrilous story concerning Lady Mary and *the late* Mr. Pamuk.” As already stated, this is an example of understatement because the word ‘dead’ is avoided, and more sensitive example is used instead. This is used with someone who recently passed away. By using this euphemistic expression, Carson respectfully alludes to the deceased.

The next examples are extracted from the second season which consists of nine episodes. In the first episode, the first scene is with Matthew Crawly on the battlefield surrounded with some wounded soldiers and some of them appear to be dead. He expresses his frustrations about the whole situation: “We’ve bloody well *lost* enough of them for one day”. One euphemism is found in this sentence, and it pertains to dead soldiers. This is an example of understatement. Using this kind of euphemism helps them to cope with the ongoing situation which they cannot escape from. The war is still not over, and everyone seems to fear the unknown. A lot of young men had already died on the battlefield and by seeing their sacrifice, everyone is determined to help in any way they can. Mary is at the railway station waiting for Matthew who is supposed to return back to the front. While they are both terrified, Matthew tells her: “Mary, *If I don’t come back*...then do remember how very glad I am that we made up when we had the chance.” This is an example of both circumlocution and understatement because the speaker uses restrained terms to downsize the matter that is being talked about, in this case, death. By using understatement, the speaker expresses himself in a subtle way to accentuate its unpleasant characteristic.

In the second episode, Mr. Lang is back home from the front. Due to his injury, he could no longer continue his service to the country. He was determined to work in the house, but the

efficiency was not good. Due to the consequences of the war, he expresses his frustration by saying: I'm a *goner*, as far as they're concerned." This euphemistic expression is an example of a metaphor as he is identifying himself with a person who is about to die. By using the expression 'goner', he manages to describe himself as unfit for the job he used to do effortlessly before. In the next example, Lavinia, Matthew's fiancée, is talking with Lady Mary about the uncertainty of the war and what her life would look like without Matthew: "I can't stop thinking what I'd do *if anything happened to him*". The euphemistic phrase 'if anything happened to him' is a substitution for the phrase 'if he dies' and this is an example of circumlocution. Lavinia uses this phrase to express her concerns about Matthew's well-being without explicitly mentioning the possibility of his possible death, considering that he is soon to be back on the battlefield. The next euphemism found in this episode is connected to death as well. Robert is trying to find a way to tell Mrs. Patmore that her nephew is dead. However, according to his facial expression, she quickly becomes aware of the situation and says: "I said so to my sister. I said, "Kate", I said, "He's *gone*, and you'll have to face it." The euphemism 'go' for death is an example of understatement and metaphor. This is often used when people talk about the journey of their loved ones who have tragically passed away.

In the third episode, Mrs. Patmore tells Mr. Lang about her nephew about whose fate viewers found out in the previous episode: "I *lost* my nephew, my sister's boy." This is an example of understatement and considering that death is one of the topics that is difficult to talk about, it is evident that people carefully choose the expressions to touch on this topic. In the next example, Branson tells a story to Lady Sybil about a cousin who is dead: "I *lost* a cousin in the Easter Rising last year." An expression 'lost' would be an understatement for someone who is dead and, according to Holder (2002), this euphemistic expression is especially used when speaking of the death of a relative. In the next scene, Mrs. Patmore cries and talks about her deceased nephew, who had been shot for cowardice, and Mrs. Hughes tries to comfort her: "You remember a fine young man who enlisted before he had to and who *gave his life* for his country, because he'd be alive and well today if he hadn't chosen to go to war." The euphemistic phrase 'gave his life' is an example of overstatement as Mrs. Hughes is trying to emphasize the bravery of the young man who tragically lost his life in an incredibly sad way. That way, she manages to make her point more strongly and without using the verb "to die". In the next example, Matthew tells Robert about the hardships he experiences on the battlefield and tells him about a soldier who recently died of pneumonia: "I've just *lost* my soldier servant

and I haven't managed to replace him yet." Euphemistic expression 'lost' is understatement whose function is to soften the word 'died'.

In the fourth episode and in the following example, there are two euphemistic expressions found in one sentence. Mary received worrying news about Matthew, whom they were not able to find on the battlefield. She expresses her fear by saying: "*Losing* Patrick was bad enough, but now the thought of Matthew *gone*...and the future once again destroyed." Both euphemistic expressions 'losing' and 'gone' are examples of understatement since what is being talked about is the death of a loved one. Again, these examples have the function of softening such a terrible word as 'death'. The euphemism 'gone' can also be understood as a metaphor to describe the journey of a soul to the final resting place. Most of the characters were worried when this topic would be brought up in the conversation, as many of them had someone fighting in a war. Therefore, many destinies were uncertain, and they always talked about death with caution.

In the fifth episode, Mrs. Patmore says to Daisy not to give up on young William now when he is dying, and she manages to do that by using understatement, as well as metaphor: "What matters now is the poor lad knows some peace and some happiness before he *goes*." This phrase is until now used six times throughout the series, which is to be expected considering that it describes the time of the First World War, during which many people lost their lives. In this way, the mentioned phrase 'to go' with the meaning to die, intends to soften the harsh reality and helps the common man to be a little less outspoken. The last example in the fifth episode involves Thomas and O'Brien talking about dying William, who is supposed to get married with Daisy. Although throughout the series, the two of them work against everyone and never show, not even a little, empathy. Yet, when it comes to death, they chose their words: "I won't mind shaking William's hand before he *goes*." Again, this is the same euphemistic expression and type of understatement and metaphor that, until now, has been used seven times. The word 'death' is seldom directly mentioned in the series, even though people were dying daily at this point, still, it was difficult to talk about it. Death was and still is a sensitive topic, which makes people think carefully how to convey a message.

In the following example that was found in the sixth episode, Edith is talking to officer Patrick Gordon, who returned to Downton. He heard that they turned Downton into an officer's convalescent home. He tried to convince Edith that he was their cousin Patrick Crawley, who was supposed to marry Lady Mary. He claimed that he had survived the Titanic shipwreck, but

the trauma he suffered gave him amnesia. After that, he was misidentified and took the name Gordon. Edith cannot believe the words he is saying and cannot even say aloud that Patrick drowned and is dead: “But Patrick’s...”. This is an example of full-omission because at the end of the sentence, the word ‘dead’ is completely omitted. In the further example, John Bates is speaking to Robert, Earl of Grantham, and he informs him about his departure to London in order to settle a divorce with his wife Vera, who seems to be delaying things too many times, especially when she learnt of his relationship with one of the housemaids, Anna. Bates is starting to lose his common sense and continues to talk about her: “I only wish she was the former, milord. Or better still, *the late*.” This euphemistic expression is an example of understatement where the word dead is replaced with the more thoughtful word. Because of its nature, phrases like ‘passed away’, ‘deceased’ and ‘late’ are more suitable in contexts like this one.<sup>1</sup> John Bates uses an interesting choice of words in front of Robert to express his wishes regarding his wife, which will later make an enormous impact on his future. The last scene in the sixth episode shows Robert raising a toast to the end of the war and saying a prayer for all the soldiers who died on the battlefield: “Let us remember *the sacrifices that have been made* and the *men who will never come back* and give them our thanks.” These two euphemistic expressions are an example of overstatement, and it refers to all men who died for their country and defended it heroically. Men had to sacrifice their life and family separations, endure extremely difficult conditions in trenches filled with water and very often with dead bodies inside. Also, it can be considered as a circumlocution because of the paraphrase. The way this paraphrase is used, glorifies the soldiers who died even more.

In the seventh episode, there is a situation where Robert secretly speaks with one of the help, Jane, about the grim reality and all the families that have lost someone: “And the Elkins down at Longway *lost* three out of four sons.” Euphemistic expression ‘lost’ is an example of understatement, and it is one of the most common euphemisms that appear in the series. It is often used for people deprived of a relative or a friend.

In the eighth episode, Cora suffers from the Spanish flu and after seeing her condition, her family fears the worst. Robert, her husband, expresses his worst fear and catastrophic decline in the next sentence: “My whole life *gone over a cliff* in the course of a single day.” The euphemistic expression ‘to go over a cliff’ is an idiom and overstatement. Overstatement is often used when people are coping with the fear of dying, as is evident in this case. In the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://english.stackexchange.com/questions/384034/origin-of-the-usage-of-late-to-mean-deceased>

next example, one of the help, Ethel, had a child outside of a marriage with a soldier who died on the battlefield. His parents came to Downton Abbey to take her child, and their grandson away. In their opinion she will not be able to offer him any bright future as a servant in Downton. They want her to agree with their made-up story that they will tell the public to avoid the shame that she caused them: “Till then, his father had a wartime marriage until he died, and his mother *succumbed to* Spanish flu.” Given the context of the situation and the relationship between Ethel and his prominent family, the expression ‘succumbed to’ can be considered as a metaphor and understatement because of the specific way it is used by Mrs. Bryant. Understatement serves to present an unpleasant topic in a way that is less painful than it really is. ‘Succumbing to illness’ is a euphemistic expression and a type of metaphor which means to stop fighting something and consequently dying from it (Holder, 2002: 392). Another euphemistic expression found in this episode is an example of metaphor and understatement, because Lavinia is seen as departing to afterlife. Lavinia, Matthew’s fiancée, suffers from the Spanish flu and Sir Richard fears that her death may bring Lady Mary and Matthew back together. Lady Mary recognizes that and tells him: “If Lavinia *had been carried off*, you wanted to be here to stop Matthew from falling into my arms on a tidal wave of grief.” According to Holder (2002: 55), this specific phrase is used in cases when someone dies from an epidemic or sudden illness.

In the last episode of the second season, Daisy is talking to Mr. Mason, father of the late William. Even though Mr. Mason showed nothing but love and kindness toward Daisy, she seems to be apprehensive about seeing him because she has always felt guilty about marrying the dying William. She would harbor enormous guilt after each of their encounters. After his wife and son died, she was the sole person he had. Since she was the only one, he could talk to during these challenging times, he tells her how grateful he is that his wife died before their son and that she did not have to witness the horror he witnessed: “I’m only grateful his mother *went* first.” This is an example of understatement and the speaker’s choice of words ‘went’ instead of for example died is a sign of coping with a difficult situation, which in this case is the bereavement of a loved one. He finds comfort in talking to Daisy and through their conversation she realizes that he is the one who helps her find who she is. Also, this is an example of metaphor where the death of William is represented as a journey to afterlife. In the next example, there is the same euphemism as in the sixth episode because John Bates is put on trial and Robert is obliged to testify. This suggests that he had to repeat John Bates’ words about his ex-wife Vera and what he is hoping for: “If only was she the former or, better still,

*the late.*” As previously mentioned, this is an example of understatement, and it is a milder way of saying that someone is deceased. In the sixth episode, it was said that these words will have a significant impact on his future, which in the end turned out to be true because John Bates was sentenced to life imprisonment. In the further example, there are two euphemistic expressions found in one sentence. Thomas Barrow wants to be promoted from the position of the First Valet to the Head Valet. He forges a plan to hide Robert’s dog in a shack, which later he will find, and once again gain Robert’s trust. When they all start searching for the dog, Mrs. Hughes says: “You’d think *the Good Lord* would’ve spared him *the loss* of his dog at a time like this.” The first euphemism ‘The Good Lord’ is an example of idiom because of the meaning that this phrase carries in its regular usage.<sup>2</sup> Also, direct word ‘God’ is avoided which is the common practice in addressing the name of God and Jesus Christ (Allan & Burrige, 2006: 38). These kinds of euphemistic expletives help to avoid accusations of blasphemy and profanity. The second euphemism is an example of understatement which is a milder way to say ‘the death’ of his pet. In the next example, William’s father, Mr. Mason, is talking to Daisy and again mentions the death of his children by using the euphemism ‘gone’: “I think that’s one reason why William married you so that I wouldn’t be alone when all my bairns *gone*.” The word ‘bairn’ is a Scottish word for ‘child’ and the meaning in this context refers to death of Mr. Mason’s children.<sup>3</sup> As was already mentioned before, the euphemism ‘gone’ is an example of understatement and metaphor. Thus far, it is visible through many given instances that using the euphemism ‘go’ for the death of a loved one is helping all the characters to deal with those tragic losses. The following example is one of those that appeared several times so far. Matthew asks Lady Mary if Mr. Pamuk will resurrect every time they quarrel, and he addresses him as the deceased: “And what about *the late* Mr. Pamuk?” This is an example of understatement where the word ‘dead’ is replaced with more appropriate and less harsh term.

According to the findings in the section above, in Downton Abbey euphemisms for death are the most common ones. It was not so easy to talk about death of their loved ones, even when people were dying daily. It reminds us of the fact how fragile and short life really is, and that people have always had both fear and respect for death itself.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/oh-lord?q=good+Lord>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bairn>



## 4.2. Love Relationships and Marriage

When it comes to love relationships and marriage, it is discernible that characters talk with great uneasiness about it. A total of ten euphemisms were found for the topic of love and marriage. These euphemisms are divided into three general-for-specific ('he's got plans', 'unfaithful', 'untrue to me'), four understatements ('unfaithful', 'mistress' (2x), 'have fallen'), four circumlocutions ('friendships that aren't quite appropriate', 'take out together', 'I am ready to travel and you are my ticket', 'inappropriate friendships'), and two metaphors ('I'm ready to travel' and 'you're my ticket'). From these ten euphemistic expressions one euphemism is repeated once; 'mistress'. Based on the findings, the word 'marriage' itself was completely omitted on a couple of occasions. The question of engagement was omitted as well and referred to as 'he has got plans'. Dating was referred to as 'to take out together' on one occasion. The romantic relationship between Lady Sybil and family's chauffeur Tom is described as 'inappropriate friendship'. Her agreement to his proposal is described as 'ready to travel'. In this case, the usage of euphemisms displays solicitude and understanding. The resulting periphrasis functions as euphemism and by using this method, circumlocution, numerous euphemisms are created. This confirms that using circumlocution, many new euphemisms can easily be created and implemented in the speech. Likewise, these expressions become enticing and easily become part of the everyday conversation between characters. As it was the case with the usage of the word 'God', the same conclusion can be applied here. The term 'marriage' is almost never uttered directly as well, and characters would feel too embarrassed to talk about that specific topic. Another interesting euphemistic topic related to the topic of marriage that is found in Downton Abbey is infidelity. Terms like 'unfaithful' and 'untrue to me' are marked as euphemistic because it involves engaging in cheating in marriage. These euphemistic expressions are marked as understatement and general-for-specific as well because they tend to mitigate the meaning of the substituted expressions. It is more convenient to find other substitutions which will help to avoid words considered, at that time, too embarrassing to speak about. All unpleasant situations are communicated in a tactful and considerate manner with the help of euphemisms. Both recipient and sender feel respected and understood and communication goal to avoid causing distress and discomfort is successfully achieved.

Euphemisms for romantic relationships and marriage appear only in the second season, considering that the plot is developing more and more.

In the third episode, Daisy is concerned whether William will propose to her or not. He enlisted in the armed forces and before he is sent to the battlefield, he wants to propose to Daisy. Since he confessed to her that he is in love with her, Daisy has a hunch that he might propose to her very soon. She says to everyone present in the kitchen: “But suppose it’s something more. Suppose *he’s got plans*.” This euphemistic expression is an example of general-for-specific and euphemistic subterfuges such as ‘he’s got plans’ is a substitution consisting of general words instead of more explicit terms, in this case ‘to propose’. Although she does not want to marry him, Mrs. Patmore encourages her to continue their relationship and to keep him under the illusion that they will get married, which may help him to remain hopeful in a difficult situation on the front. In the next situation, Mr. Bates is telling Anna about his soon-to-be ex-wife about whom he discovered dishonorable things that work to his advantage: “You see, I’ve discovered that Vera has been *unfaithful* to me.” This is another example of general-for-specific euphemism and understatement. In this case, the speaker uses generic term for a specific situation as ‘unfaithful’ means having a sexual relationship with other than someone’s regular sexual partner (Holder, 2002: 421). This example confirms that many general-for-specific euphemisms can be understatements, those maximally general ones (Allan & Burrige, 1991: 18). In the next scene, Anna and John Bates are in the bar talking about his complicated relationship with his wife, who is willing to do everything in order to stay with him. However, he is fond of Anna and not Vera. Although he is still married, Anna wants to be with him and she says: “It’s not against the law to take a *mistress*, Mr. Bates.” This is an example of understatement which in other words would mean a man’s regular illegitimate sexual partner. According to Holder (2002: 256), in the past, the meaning of the word ‘mistress’ was “the female head of the household”, but today it is always used in this sense.

In the fourth episode, Mary tries to convince her grandmother Violet that Lavinia was not having an affair with Sir Richard, and she says: “She wasn’t Sir Richard’s *mistress*”. As already stated in the example above, this is an example of understatement and it signifies man’s regular sexual partner, outside of the marriage. In the following instance, Violet, Dowager Countess of Grantham, scolds her granddaughter because of the love relationship with their chauffeur Branson, with whom she fell in love. She tries not to hurt her and carefully chooses the words she will use to express her opinion: “Yes, you see, sometimes in war, one can make *friendships that aren’t quite... appropriate*. And can be awkward, later on, you know.” This is an example of circumlocution through which the speaker manages to avoid direct mentioning of love relationship. Because of the nature of this topic, Violet uses less direct language to point

out mistakes that may cost her her future. In the following example, Mr. Bates explains to Robert that he has found out that his wife had cheated on him: “Since I left Downton, I’ve discovered that she *was...untrue to me.*” This is an example of general-for-specific euphemism where ‘was untrue to me’ in this situation means to copulate outside of marriage. Since this was a taboo topic, the speaker pauses for a moment, as it is difficult for him to admit what had happened and chooses a more generic term to describe a situation in which he found himself. He is embarrassed because of what happened, and as a result, uses an interesting choice of words to cover discomfort. The last example in the fourth episode involves Sybil and Lady Mary, who talk about Sybil’s new romance with their driver: “Then why did she suddenly start talking about *inappropriate friendships* out of nowhere?” By asking this question, Lady Sybil refers to her grandma Violet, who indirectly warned her about her secret romance with their family chauffeur. By saying ‘inappropriate friendships’, they avoid mentioning Sybil and Tom’s love relationship, which was certainly uncommon for that period. This is an example of circumlocution where in a roundabout way, the real meaning can be concealed, which can also save face in front of other people. Since this term obscures the real intention, it makes it easier to talk about it. It was exceedingly rare, almost impossible, especially for a daughter who comes from a noble family to date or marry a man from the working class. For Sybil, this meant receiving no more money from her family if those were really her choices.

In the seventh episode, Lady Sybil, after contemplating life after the war, makes a completely unusual decision for someone who comes from a noble family like hers. She decides to elope with their chauffeur, Branson, who she fell in love with. She explains her decision by using many words for something that could be said more briefly: “My answer is... that *I’m ready to travel...and you’re my ticket.*” This is an example of circumlocution and metaphor as well. She rather used this expression than the one that includes ‘marriage’ directly. The phrase that Sybil used metaphorically represents their life journey together. The war brought the two of them even closer, and the viewer can easily deduce the meaning of Sybil’s words.

In the last episode, the Crawleys are hosting a lavish Christmas party. They welcome Edith’s former admirer, Sir Anthony Strallon. Lady Edith seems indeed happy to see him, unlike him. Although their relationship before the war was controversial due to his age, now he shows her his injured arm, as the repercussion of the war. He continues to persuade her that they cannot be in a relationship, let alone be married. His age and now his injury pose a problem in their relationship, and he explains to her: “You see, I couldn’t bear for you to think that we

might.... *take out together* again when, of course, we can't." This is an example of circumlocution, and it suggests a sincere intention of dating someone, often considering traditional dating practices. Moreover, it is considered as a step closer to engagement. The euphemistic phrase 'to take out together' implies a more formal approach when pursuing a romantic relationship, which is appropriate and expected for a period in which they live. This phrase serves as a subtle way of asking someone on a date without explicitly using the exact word 'date'. Sir Anthony Strallon thinks that he would have been more of a burden than anything else. From Edith's point of view, that is not true, because in reality she is desperate to get married. Another euphemistic expression found in this episode, was used by Lady Mary. She unveiled her big secret to Matthew that may ruin her future. She tries to explain to him why she slept with Mr. Pamuk and in the end says: "I *have fallen*. I am impure." This is an example of understatement, and it dates to history. In the past, this term was used for women who had engaged in sexual relations outside of marriage (Allan & Burrige, 1991: 129). The purpose of this euphemism was to alleviate the judgement and stigma that was connected to such behavior. Still, it is essential to emphasize that this term is outdated and usually regarded as derogatory. This euphemistic expression is also an example of metaphor because in reality it describes a woman who committed a moral sin by engaging in sexual activities outside marriage.

### **4.3. Euphemisms Connected to God**

Another interesting finding is that when it comes to religious words, in most cases, all characters without hesitation employ euphemisms such as 'Blimey', 'Golly', 'Oh Heavens', 'for Heaven's sake' and 'Good Lord'. A total of fifteen euphemisms were found for the topic of religion which are divided into seven euphemistic dysphemisms and six remodellings, The euphemistic expression 'for heaven's sake' was repeated six times. The next one that was repeated four times is 'Blimey', and the euphemistic expression 'Golly' was repeated two times. Remodeling is used to create some of these euphemistic expletives such as Golly and Blimey where the spelling of the unpleasant term is changed into completely different words. The function of these expressions is to replace more offensive language but still manage to show disbelief, surprise, or even excitement. Today, they are recognized as rather quaint and rarely used, but without doubt appropriate for the period in which Downton Abbey is set. Other euphemisms like, 'Oh Heavens', 'for Heaven's sake' are marked as euphemistic dysphemisms because the locution is recognized as a euphemism and the illocutionary act is understood as a dysphemistic. These milder expressions are substitutions for a stronger language but with the

same primary meaning. For example, the word ‘Heavens’ is used instead of a more potentially offensive term ‘God’ and thus falling into a euphemistic dysphemism. Back in the early twentieth century, religion was an important part of everyone’s life in England and that widespread influence of religion is evident through the usage of these euphemistic expressions listed above. To avoid blasphemy and profanity, but still manage to express shock or fear, the word ‘God’ is almost never uttered directly but has been replaced with the above-mentioned euphemistic expletives.

In the first episode of the second season, one of the first euphemistic expression that was found is at the beginning of the episode, where it is visible that staff are preparing a house for the family. Mrs. Hughes gives directions to one of the ladies who works for them: “You can do it when they’ve finished their breakfast. *Oh, heavens*, girl!” The phrase ‘oh, heavens’ is euphemistic dysphemism. The reason why this is considered a euphemistic expression is because in a more direct language this phrase bears the meaning ‘Oh, God’ or ‘Oh, Jesus’ that people use to express surprise or frustration and so euphemistically omit God’s name (Allan & BurrIDGE, 1991: 122). In the following example, Mrs. Patmore tells Daisy what her duties are and is angry because she cannot manage everything on time and says: “*Oh, for heaven’s sake*, get a move on, girl, before they get back from church!” As already stated in the above example, this is an instance of euphemistic dysphemism where God’s name is avoided. Although there is no direct mentioning of God, the message and feelings are clearly conveyed through the expression ‘for heaven’s sake’. In the next example, Lady Mary confronts her sister Lady Edith that she must control her emotions about their cousins who passed away on the ship: “I was supposed to be engaged to him, *for heaven’s sake*, not you, and I can control myself”. As explained in the previous example, this phrase is an example of euphemistic dysphemism, and it helps to ensure that God’s name is not taken in vain. By using this euphemistic expression, characters still manage to express verbally their emotions without being rude and without offending anyone.

An example in the third episode involves Mr. Bates and Robert who talk about the unfortunate event that occurred in their house. Robert is concerned about all the people they welcome in the house and that they must be careful that someone does not poison them, to which Mr. Bates replies that next to Mrs. Patmore that is impossible. Robert realizes that then there is nothing to worry about and utters: “*Blimey*, that’s a thought”. This euphemistic expression is an example of remodeling, and it is used instead of the phrase ‘God blind me’ or ‘Cor Blimey’ (Allan & BurrIDGE, 1991: 49). The word ‘blimey’ serves as a substitution for

potentially offensive or taboo language. First print record of this phrase is found in *A Dictionary of Slang, Jargons and Cant* written by Barrere and Leland in 1886<sup>4</sup>.

In the fourth episode, Lady Sybil is upset about the corset she must wear and says: “*Golly*, my corset’s tight”. To avoid blasphemy, the word ‘God’ is substituted with different euphemistic expletives and one of them is ‘Golly’. This is an example of remodeling. The euphemism Golly was first recorded in 1775 by Gilbert White in his journal as a jolly oath or promise among people of lower status<sup>5</sup>.

In the sixth episode, Mrs. Patmore is making a dessert with Daisy and, as it usually happens with Daisy, she makes a mistake and Mrs. Patmore utters: “Oh, *for heaven’s sake*, hold it steady if you don’t want to start again from the beginning.” The euphemistic phrase ‘for heaven’s sake’ often appears in conversations, and it is an example of euphemistic dysphemism. Expressions like these help people to express their emotions better, and at the same time, they avoid irreverence of the deity. The following example builds on the previous one, where Mrs. Patmore yells at Daisy: “*Blimey*, batten down the hatches”. This is an example of remodeling, and it is used instead of the phrase ‘God blind me’ or ‘Cor Blimey’ (Allan & Burrige, 1991: 49). Towards the end of the episode, Violet finds out that Lady Mary wants to marry Matthew, but before that she wants to tell him everything that happened with Mr. Pamuk and she utters in disbelief: “*For heaven’s sake!* Why?” As explained before, this is a euphemistic dysphemism, and it is used instead of a stronger and more explicit expression – ‘for God’s sake’.

In the last episode of the first season Thomas shows no remorse for Cora’s loss of the child and says: “*Blimey*, if he carries on like this for the unborn baby of a woman who barely knows his name, no wonder he fell to pieces when his old mum snuffed it”. Although Thomas shows what he really is like in front of everyone, still, at the very beginning of the sentence, he uses a euphemistic expression, ‘blimey’, which is an example of remodeling and thus avoids mentioning God’s name directly.

In the eighth episode, Mr. Molesley, one of the family’s valets, must replace the sick Carson during dinner. Ana explains to him the order of the dishes and all the wines he must serve. Realizing how much he must carry up the stairs, he says: “*Blimey*, it’s a wonder they make it up the stairs.” This euphemistic expression is an example of remodeling, and it is a

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/cor-blimey.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.etymonline.com/word/golly>

mild interjection used as a substitution for the phrase ‘God blind me’ or ‘Cor Blimey’ (Allan & Burrige, 1991: 49). These were previously considered offensive expressions, and instead of taking the Lord’s name in vain, people created and used euphemisms such as ‘blimey’. Another euphemistic expression found in this episode includes Robert, expressing his surprise about how quickly time passes: “*Golly*, is that the time?” This is an example of remodeling and using the expression ‘Golly’ helps to avoid blasphemy and at the same time profanity. The last euphemistic expression that was found in this episode involves Lady Mary who gives advice to the newlyweds, John Bates and Anna. She advises them how to sneak out of the room during the night so they can be together: “*And for heaven’s sake*, make sure he gets the right room.” This is an example of euphemistic dysphemism, and the given example is often used instead of a more explicit and stronger expression such as ‘for God’s sake’ (Allan & Burrige, 1991).

In the ninth episode of *Downton Abbey*, which is also the last one in the second season, a number of euphemisms are found as well. The first one is the same as in the previous example. In this scene, the whole family is playing a charade. Lady Mary mimes a book, and her sister, Lady Edith, assumes that she is reading a book. Lady Mary, obviously annoyed, says to her sister: “*For heaven’s sake!* Yes, I’m reading, because it’s a book title.” As already stated in the abovementioned example, this is euphemistic dysphemism. In the next example, Mr. Carson calls out Robert’s name several times and Robert responds: “*What in heaven’s name?*” This instance is euphemistic dysphemism, and it is based on the notion of more explicit expression “for God’s name”. In this situation, euphemistic expression ‘What in heaven’s name’ conveys frustration and urgency.

#### **4.4. Money and Social Status**

Another interesting topic that was mentioned is money. A total of eleven different euphemisms were found. They are divided into four circumlocutions (‘I’ll be generous’, ‘hands as black as yours’, ‘had fallen on hard times’, ‘less fortunate’), four understatements (‘less fortunate’, ‘has no fortune’, ‘be checked out’, ‘I’ll be generous’), three idioms (‘had fallen on hard times’, ‘out of pocket’, ‘have looked down their noses’), two metaphors (‘above and below stairs’, ‘had fallen on hard times’), two full-omissions (‘doesn’t have much’, ‘you always win’), and one overstatement (‘hands as black as yours’). Euphemisms found for this topic are all different expressions. However, three euphemistic expressions fall under different categories. The euphemistic expression ‘hands as black as yours’ is an example of circumlocution and overstatement. The next one is ‘had fallen on hard times’ which is an example of

circumlocution, idiom, and metaphor. Another expression is 'less fortunate' falls under circumlocution and understatement. The state of having no money was euphemistically referred to with expressions such as 'to have no fortune', 'out of pocket', and 'to fall on hard times'. These are instances of understatement and idiom. To give a great amount of money is stated as "I'll be generous" which is marked as understatement. When it comes to taboo topics, the issue of money is always frequent. People are reluctant to talk about how much they earn, how much money they spend, or how much they owe. These euphemisms help to hide financial fragility of a person and assist to talk about their finances. The question of money is always a sensitive issue and that is why more sensitive and thoughtful expressions are chosen.

In the beginning, Jessica Fellowes explains what Downton Abbey is to its residents, and how the estate is being passed on from generation to generation. The author goes on by saying: "So when the question is raised of who will inherit, everyone is affected – *above and below stairs*" (Fellowes, 2011: 12-13). 'Above and below stairs' is an example of a metaphor where aristocracy and the help are compared to the level of the house to show the reader who belongs where. Metaphor is also used here to make the whole sentence more picturesque and add more meaning to it.

The second instance is an example of circumlocution, idiom, and overstatement – "We wouldn't want his lordship's hand *to be as black as your*" (Fellowes, 2011: 32), where the hands of the household staff are described as dirty with the help of the circumlocution and overstatement. The image of hands is paraphrased into longer description to show their social distance with the aristocrats. They must be careful when they touch things which are later presented to the aristocratic family. This comparison is exaggerated to emphasize an attitude towards the help working in the house.

The third sentence is an example of circumlocution, idiom, and metaphor – "...many members of the English upper classes *had fallen on hard times...*" (Fellowes, 2011: 42). In order to keep it a secret that people lost all their money; the circumlocution and metaphor are here convenient to hide unpleasant reality. This kind of expression helps to eschew something that may be face threatening or unpleasant.

In the fourth sentence there is an instance of idiom – "...there were more who would *have looked down their noses* at her too fashionable dresses..." (Fellowes, 2011: 44). Here, it is explained through idiom how Cora's (now member of the aristocratic society) entry to aristocratic society was not an easy one because other people treated her with a lack of respect



and considered her unimportant since she is the one who came from the backwaters of America. Based on the previous discussion, this shows how many idioms are euphemistic when dealing with unpleasant matters.

In the next sentence, there is an example of an understatement – “Any potential husband would *be checked out* by both the family and servants” (Fellowes, 2011: 53). Given that it is an aristocratic society, the phrase ‘check out’ is in reality far more severe, and it means that the husband is scrutinized by everyone in the house, or in other words considered worthy or not for a woman. To marry someone was considered an important event in Downton Abbey and everyone in the family would have to approve of that one person who is entering their lives.

In the sixth sentence there is an example of full-omission - “William *doesn't have much*” (Fellowes, 2011: 87) At the end of the sentence, the word ‘money’ is completely omitted. To the reader, it is clear from the phrase ‘he doesn’t have much’ that it refers to money. The reason he does not have the money is because William is not one of the representatives of aristocratic society. He works for them, and his position is of a second footman.

In the third episode of the first season, the euphemistic expression is uttered by Mrs. Crawley who is supportive of one of the help who wants to step out of her role as a help in the house and become a secretary instead, and she says to everyone present at the dinner: “We must all encourage those *less fortunate*”. This is an example of circumlocution and understatement, where Mrs. Crawley clearly treats all people with respect, regardless of their status in society. With all due respect, she wisely chooses ‘less fortunate’ to express the meaning of ‘the poor’. Circumlocution is thought to be a socially acceptable way to hide the harsh reality of existence, and using this type of euphemism helps to avoid discrimination against the less privileged.

In the fifth episode, Mrs. Crawley accused Violet of controlling the competition for the best bloom in the village. When Violet stated that she thought she usually won the competition because she simply had grown the best bloom, Mrs. Crawley replied: “Yes, but you don’t usually win, do you? You always win!” This type of euphemistic expression can be seen as full-omission because Mrs. Crawley through the whole conversation omits that the competition is under Violet’s control. By using this assertive phrase, she implicated that the whole competition is a setup which she purposefully avoids. This example showed how her position in society helped her to take over events like this one. Also, what is important to emphasize

here is that the words ‘usually’ and ‘always’ are tactfully used. From this example, it is possible to see how by using full-omission, a lot can be said and done.

In the eighth episode, Thomas’ idea of the black market has proved to be a complete failure, leaving him without money and job, and he begs Carson to let him work in the house. He has nowhere to go and not enough money for the life that awaits him. He uses an idiom for expressing the state of having no money: “Trouble is, I’m a little *out of pocket* at the moment.” In the next example, Lady Sybil’s family was opposed to her idea of marrying their chauffeur Branson. Her father threatened to disinherit her, but that did not prevent her from marrying him. Robert implicitly tries to bribe Branson and says: “*I’ll be generous* if we can bring this nonsense to an end.” Instead of direct mentioning of bribe and giving any kind of money, circumlocution and understatement helps to avoid it. Robert indirectly expresses his thoughts and avoids embarrassment and impoliteness toward Branson.

In the ninth episode, Violet is speaking with her daughter, Lady Rosamund, about Lord Hepworth, a man Lady Rosamund is supposed to marry soon. Violet believes that he is an unsuitable spouse for her daughter and that he is simply a fortune hunter. Rosamund refuses to believe that and explains to her mother: “I know *he has no fortune*, if that’s what you mean.” This euphemistic expression ‘he has no fortune’ is another milder way of saying that someone is bankrupt. This is a situation where straightforward language is not appropriate and sensitive topic such as money is, is conveyed in a gentler way. ‘Fortune’ is used here as a substitute for ‘money’ to soften the statement. This euphemistic expression is a type of understatement, where the word ‘fortune’ downplays the hardship of the person’s financial situation. The usage of this euphemism softens the negative connotation associated with not having money.

#### **4.5. Sexual Orientation, Health and Body Parts**

Another taboo topic that will be commented on and that was brought up in Downton Abbey is the question of sexual orientation, health, and body parts. A total number of eleven different euphemistic expression is found. They are divided into five circumlocutions (‘trouble with his legs’, ‘certain change’, ‘properly married’, ‘he’s not a ladies man’, ‘troubled soul’), four understatements (‘I am not well. I am not well at all’, ‘he’s not a ladies man’, ‘unfortunate’, ‘I’m different’), four general-for-specific (‘troubled soul’, ‘I’m different’, ‘unfortunate’, ‘bottom’), and one metaphor (‘reaching its long fingers’). Five euphemistic expressions fall under different categories. The euphemistic expression ‘not a lady’s man’ is an example of understatement and circumlocution. The next expression is ‘troubled soul’ and it is both

circumlocution and general-for-specific. Another euphemistic expression ‘I am different’ is an example of general-for-specific and understatement. An expression ‘unfortunate’ falls under general-for-specific and understatement. The last one is ‘properly married’ which is general-for-specific and circumlocution.

The following euphemistic examples concern sexual orientation. Thomas, who is a footman in Downton Abbey, shows through his behavior that he is homosexual. Not only is he attracted to the members of his sex, but he also shows that very transparently, and everyone in the house seem to know that, except Daisy, who fell in love with him. Other tenants in the house try to open her eyes about his sexual orientation and use the following euphemistic expressions to explain to her his characteristics: ‘a troubled soul’ and ‘not a ladies’ man’. They also use the word ‘different’ to describe him. These expressions employ general-for-specific strategy where taboo topic is softened by employing more general terms that are potentially harmless. By using this strategy, characters can, with broad and less explicit terms, communicate a sensitive topic without losing their face or threatening others. Although Thomas learned to cope with the social stigma against homosexuality, it is visible through these examples that other characters find it hard to express themselves when it comes to this topic. For them it is more acceptable to use these words, which are neither direct nor offensive. Besides, expressions like ‘troubled soul’, ‘not a ladies’ man’, and ‘different’ still manage to express what the speaker implies.

Euphemistic expression on sexual orientation that was found in the book – “He’s *not a ladies’ man!*” (Fellowes, 2011:162) is an example of understatement and circumlocution. The girl is in love with one of the helpers from the house and does not realize that he is interested in men. Her co-worker is trying to wake her up and explain to her his sexual orientation by choosing the right words. Although today expressing themselves like this may be unimaginable for some people, it is important to understand that back then, topics such as this one were still taboo.

The following example is extracted from the fourth episode in which the cook tries to explain to Daisy that Thomas, the footman, whom she is in love with, is interested in men and she states: “Thomas is a *troubled soul!*” These words are neither offensive nor direct, but the implicitness of the speaker is visible. This can be seen as circumlocution and general-for-specific. When a generic term like this one is used, people succeed in avoiding addressing the

actual problem. Ambiguity is one of the main factors here, as it helps to save someone else's face.

In the second season of the series, the first euphemism was found in the second episode. Thomas is talking to and helping a wounded soldier. He expresses his sexual orientation by saying: "All my life, they've pushed me around, just cause *I'm different*." This euphemistic expression can be understood as a general-for-specific and understatement where the speaker uses maximally general term to describe his homosexuality. The uneasiness of the speaker can be sensed by the choice of his words when describing himself, which is hardly surprising, considering the times the series is set in.

Health, especially when it comes to a state such as pregnancy, was something that characters would not openly talk about among others present in the conversation. Characters used indirect expressions that described their health issues. It could be said that these euphemistic expressions can be comprehended when they are put in a certain context.

In the first episode of the second season, Violet opposes the idea that Sybil, as part of an aristocratic family, helps the wounded soldiers who are residing in their house: "You can't pretend it's not respectable when every day we're treated to pictures of queens and princesses in Red Cross uniform, ladling soup down the throat of some *unfortunate*." The usage of the term 'unfortunate' is an example of an understatement and general-for-specific. It can be understood as a way of delicately referring to some more life-threatening injuries without directly using more graphic language. Even though many soldiers are disfigured, in this situation, it would be inappropriate to use that kind of harsh language, especially in front of them when their morale is at their lowest. The term 'unfortunate' is usually used in the context of describing people of lower socioeconomic status; however, in this specific situation it refers to all wounded soldiers regardless of their status.

In the following example, episode seven, the doctor paid a visit to the Countess of Grantham, Cora Crawley, who is pregnant. The doctor explains to her husband Robert how it is possible that she is pregnant at her age by saying: "You understand that women go through *a...certain change*. Well sometimes it can result in a surge of fertility, for want of a better word." The type of euphemism used here is circumlocution, because the doctor avoided saying directly 'menopause' in front of other men. Instead, 'a certain change' was more elegant and appropriate for him to use at that point.

In the second episode, Thomas is sent back to England because he deliberately got shot in his hand so that he could be sent away from all the atrocities he had seen at the front. He is talking with O'Brien, who is cunning enough to understand his intentions with the wounded hand. This can be concluded from the expression she uses: "What about your *blighty*?". The meaning of the term 'blighty' is understood as a serious but not fatal wound and this euphemistic expression is an example of technical jargon. While some expressions are used as euphemisms to hide the unpleasant reality, some of them are used as jargon, understood by people participating in missions such as war, or by simply being part of that period, in this case, the First World War. That implies that by possessing the knowledge of common euphemisms used in a specific field, it can help to easily understand the actual meaning behind the language used, which facilitates communication with others involved in the conversation.

In the fifth episode, viewers found out that a shell landed near Matthew and William. They were brought to the hospital, and everyone was informed about their current health status. The doctor thought that Matthew was paralyzed, and Mary explains that to her father through circumlocution: "Dr. Clarkson thinks... there may be *trouble with his legs*." She uses a more roundabout way to explain to him what his real condition is. Mary chooses the euphemistic expression 'to have trouble with his legs' instead of simply saying 'he is paralyzed'. She does this to soften the painful truth that is hidden behind those words. In the next example, there is a scene with Matthew Crawley, the Earl of Grantham, who, alongside William, was seriously injured in a German shell attack. Unlike William, Matthew managed to survive, but he had lost the use of his legs, as it was previously mentioned. This meant that due to his paralysis, Matthew and his fiancée, Lavinia, would never have children. He wanted to persuade her not to marry him by saying: "We can never be *properly married*." In this sentence, 'properly marry' means 'cannot have children'. This is an example of a general-for-specific euphemism, where specific state is replaced with the more general term. By using this expression, Matthew somehow manages to hide his embarrassment with the help of the euphemism. Also, this can be understood as a circumlocution because it replaces an expression that is obviously too painful to say it explicitly.

In the eighth episode, Anna sees that Mr. Molesley did not take the dishes and wines upstairs for dinner. To justify himself he says: "*I am not well. I am not well at all*." This euphemistic expression is an example of understatement. He is trying to convey something unpleasant, such as flu in this case, and does so in an indirect manner. He succeeds in that by downplaying the seriousness of his illness.

The following euphemistic examples concern body parts. The first one is extracted from the book, and it metaphorically describes how something horrific, in this case war, is coming closer to their homes. Metaphor is used to make the whole sentence more vivid and imaginative – “The war is *reaching its long fingers* into Downton” (Fellowes 2011: 180). This sentence is uttered by Robert, the owner of the estate, who received a telegram about the war. A caring husband and father chose how to convey a message to his loved ones about the beginning of the First World War. The war is approaching their houses and becoming more dreadful than they could imagine.

In the sixth episode of the first season, Lady Sybil shows her interest in politics to her father, who is not pleased at all about the fact that she went on a rally with their chauffeur, Branson. After she returned home with visible injuries on her head, Thomas says to Mr. Carson: “Her Ladyship will have a smacked *bottom* if she’s not careful”. This is an example of general-for-specific euphemism where unpleasant term is changed into more general one. Euphemism ‘bottom’ is more socially acceptable term than any other term that would include a part of a human body.

#### **4.6. Analysis of Euphemisms on Different Topics**

The following euphemisms found in the book and the first two seasons are not grouped into semantic domains, considering that they concern different topics. Ten different euphemisms related to different topics were found. They are divided into five circumlocutions (‘sounds of disagreement’, ‘the bloom is quite gone off the rose’, ‘you would make Sleeping Beauty look alert’, ‘To know more about her interest. Where she goes, whom she sees. What she says to them’, ‘to report your activities to him. Whom you saw, what you said’), one metaphor (‘the bloom is quite gone off the rose’), two idioms (‘to skin a cat’, ‘the bloom is quite gone off the rose’), one remodeling (‘fig’), one general-for-specific (‘business’), one understatement (‘no great champion’), and one euphemistic dysphemism (“fig”). Two euphemistic expressions fall under different categories. The euphemistic expression ‘the bloom is quite gone off the rose’ is an example of idiom, circumlocution, and metaphor. Also, the euphemistic expression ‘I don’t care a fig’ is an example of both remodeling and euphemistic dysphemism.

The first euphemism is extracted from the book – “We need to get her settled before *the bloom is quite gone off the rose*” (Fellowes, 2011: 147). This is an example of idiom, circumlocution, and metaphor. The presented example displays the situation of the eldest

daughter Mary and her marriage. She is approaching a certain point in life where she needs to choose her husband but somehow remains indecisive all the time. As time passes by and Mary gets older, her parents are becoming scared and nervous when talking about her marriage. By using this expression, they are showing their fear about her age and freshness. This is an idiomatic expression because it is used to describe a person, in this case Mary, who lost youth, novelty, or freshness. This is also a vivid example of a metaphor for a person that may not be alluring as they used to be. Circumlocutions are used to paraphrase something that could be said in fewer words, but said like this, it softens the reality.

In the first season, another euphemistic example found in the first episode involves Robert and his mother Violet who appear to quarrel about something. Cora enters the room and asks them: “I hope I don’t hear *sounds of disagreement*.” This is an example of circumlocution, and the speaker chooses ‘sounds of disagreement’ instead of a ‘discussion’ or ‘quarrel’. It is a softer way of describing a situation where there may be different opinions or tensions between people. In the first episode, the last euphemistic expression that was found is uttered by a servant named O’Brien, who wanted to get rid of a co-worker – “There is more than one way *to skin a cat*.” Mrs. O’Brien always does bad things to put those she does not love in danger. This euphemistic expression can be understood as a general-for-specific because O’Brien is slyly avoiding saying how she will deliberately be responsible for the fact that her co-worker got fired.

In the second episode, Mrs. Crawley is talking to the doctor to whom she is proposing new treatments that could save more lives in their hospital. Although the doctor wishes to be more familiar with the treatment, he reluctantly agrees to try it and pronounces: “I have a feeling we will *sink or swim* together”. This idiom was used by the speaker to hide the unpleasant reality of being removed from their positions by the president of the hospital who has power over them. If these two words are used separately, they do not have the same meaning. Here, in this case they are used together, and the meaning can be easily concluded when put into context. Also, this expression can be understood as a metaphor because it actually represents either their failure or success.

In the sixth episode, after showing disagreement and rebellious attitudes toward rules that are imposed on her life, Mary says: “I don’t care a *fig* about rules!” which is an example of both remodelling and euphemistic dysphemism. In this example the locution is recognized as a euphemism and the illocutionary act is understood as a dysphemistic. The remodeled

euphemism 'fig' is used to cover the curse word but for the character to still expresses her anger and frustration. The word 'fig' is commonly used in phrases such as 'not worth a fig' or the one mentioned above, and as a short word starting with consonant f, the word irresistibly reminds of a known inappropriate word<sup>6</sup>.

The next example of euphemistic expression is used by Carson, who describes his behavior toward Matthew that was not very commendable by saying: "I was *no great champion* when he first arrived." This is an example of understatement because, Carson's words 'no great champion' mitigates the force of the utterance. In fact, he was very harsh with Matthew for no special reason when he arrived in the house. The last example of euphemistic expression that was found in the last episode is circumlocution and it is uttered by Mrs. Patmore, who works in the kitchen and who usually has a sharp tongue. Daisy is the one who always makes mistakes in the kitchen and who must endure her lighthearted insults. One of such insults that was directed to Daisy in the last episode was: "You're always dozy, but tonight *you'd make Sleeping Beauty look alert*". According to Mrs. Patmore, Daisy is always lazy and slow in the kitchen, and she is the main reason they cannot succeed in making everything ready on time. By comparing her with Sleeping Beauty, Mrs. Patmore exemplifies to the audience Daisy's clumsiness in a more polite way by using more words than is needed.

In the seventh episode, Thomas is informing Mrs. O'Brien how things are changing with the end of the war and how it would be wise to start looking for a new job and new opportunities: "I'll tell you where I'm going. Into *business*. It's all set up." This is an example of general-for-specific euphemism because the speaker is using a maximally general term for something specific, which is in this case the black market. Thomas embarks on a new journey with the black market, as his way of coping during the post-war period. This is nothing strange for Thomas, since he has always been involved in something illegal during his career in Downton Abbey. In the following example, Sir Richard demands from Anna a report on Lady Mary's actions because he became suspicious of everything she does while he is not present in her home. He expresses his doubtfulness by using a euphemism which is formed through circumlocution: "I would like *to know more about her interests. Where she goes, whom she sees. What she says to them.*" The speaker uses many words and explanations for saying something that could be expressed by using fewer words, in this case, 'to spy Lady Mary', which would obviously be shocking for Anna to hear if it would be said directly like that.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/wordplay/idioms-with-fruit>



According to Crespo (2015), circumlocutions are means that help to avoid direct mention of something considered uncomfortable and face-threatening. The following example is connected to the previous one, where Carson informs Lady Mary about Sir Richard's intentions: "Sir Richard offered Anna a sum of money *to report your activities to him. Whom you saw, what you said.*" The euphemistic expression 'to report your activities' also means 'to spy on Mary', which is an example of circumlocution. As was already mentioned, numerous euphemisms are formed through circumlocution.

#### **4.7. Discussion**

In the chapter dedicated to the research, we provided answers to pertinent questions, such as the frequency and types of euphemisms in *Downton Abbey*, the specific contexts in which characters employ them, and the primary themes that prompt their use.

The corpus for the analysis was taken from the book "The World of *Downton Abbey*", as well as the first and second season of the television series "Downton Abbey". Based on the number of found euphemisms, it can be said that the usage of euphemisms in the first and second season is frequent, which is not the case with the book due to lack of dialogues. The appearing number of euphemisms can be explained by the fact that *Downton Abbey* reflects a historical period, post-Edwardian era, in which people were very respectful toward social hierarchies and customs. This is a period when people, especially members of the aristocratic society, paid special attention to their behavior and the way they expressed themselves in society. It can be concluded that the characters incline towards using euphemisms when it comes to more delicate topics. They find themselves in situations where they are too embarrassed to talk about specific topics, and that embarrassment is followed by worry and anxiety. At that point, euphemisms come to the rescue and help the characters express their feelings and thoughts more freely. These findings confirm Allan and Burrige's (1991) statement that with the help of euphemisms, people achieve their communication goals. Brown and Levinson's (1978) theory about the notion of politeness proves that politeness does not just involve being kind to other people, but it also includes preserving social harmony, showing admiration, and diminishing possible face-threatening acts.

The analysis which was based on the corpus collected from the aforementioned book and the two seasons of the television series has shown that understatement is the type of euphemism that appears most frequently, especially in the television series. After understatement, circumlocution is the second type of euphemism that appears throughout both

the book and the television series. Metaphor is the next one that appears often. Both understatement and circumlocution are characteristic of polite society. Eleven different euphemisms were found in the book. According to Allan and Burrige's (1991) classification system, the euphemisms from the book are divided into six types of euphemisms. Throughout the book, some examples that are found fall into different categories. The book included four metaphors, one overstatement, three idioms, five circumlocutions, three understatements, and one full-omission. In the first season of the television series, which has seven episodes, twenty-two different euphemisms were found which consisted of nine types of euphemisms that are classified according to Allan and Burrige's classification system (1991). The first season included three metaphors, two general-for-specific, one overstatement, four idioms, eight circumlocutions, nine understatements, one full-omission, one remodeling, and one fore-clipping. Some euphemisms fall under different categories at the same time. In the first season, only two euphemisms, 'the late' and 'went', were repeated. The second season of the television series, that has nine episodes, consisted of fifty-eight euphemisms which are, according to Allan and Burrige's (1991) classification system, divided into eleven types. The second season included six remodelings, twenty-five understatements, ten circumlocutions, one idiom, four overstatements, one technical jargon, eleven metaphor, five general-for-specific, one full-omissions, one dysphemistic euphemisms, and eight euphemistic dysphemisms. There are some euphemisms that fall under different categories as well. From all euphemisms found in the second season, seven euphemisms were repeated. Repeated euphemisms are: 'lost' (5x), 'gone' (6x), 'late' (3x), 'mistress' (2x), 'for Heaven's sake' (6x), 'blimey' (4x), and 'Golly' (2x). According to the number of euphemisms collected from both the book and television series, it can be concluded that there are some common topics for which characters constantly used euphemisms to express themselves.

Based on the collected data, the two topics for which the characters most often used euphemisms are death and religion. Death is one of those topics for which characters produced numerous euphemisms and most of them were marked as understatement, metaphor, and circumlocution. It was understatement in particular that helped on many occasions express characters' suffering about the death of their loved ones or death in general. When it comes to religious words, remodeling and euphemistic dysphemism helped create euphemisms that replaced direct mentioning of the word 'God'. According to the findings, it is visible through communication among characters that by employing euphemisms they soften their language and make it easier for them to talk about taboo topics or topics that they feel embarrassed or

scared to talk about. By doing so, they make interactions more polite and thus avoid unwanted emotional arousal from another person who takes part in the dialogue. Also, the way characters interact can be connected to the period they live in. Downton Abbey reflects a historical period, post-Edwardian era, in which social hierarchies were very clearly expressed. The aristocracy lived an easy life, whereas the lower classes had to work hard, and they struggled every day. Unlike the aristocracy who often lived in luxurious houses, the lower classes did not live in such a healthy and comfortable environment. For the upper classes, good manners were very important. Strict rules about how to talk and behave in specific situations were imposed on them, which explains why characters used a number of euphemisms. It was found that understatement, circumlocution, and metaphor were the types of euphemisms that appeared most commonly in both the book and the television series. Allan and Burrige (1991) suggest that circumlocution is one of the most common types of euphemisms that can be found in polite society. Since Downton Abbey is set in the early 20th century, it can be said that the society in that period paid special attention to their behavior and their way of talking to others.

Moreover, the semantic domains containing the highest number of euphemisms are death, love, feelings, and religion. Based on the events that occurred during that time, death is the most common topic, which led characters to produce many euphemisms. Three major events mentioned in the first season and the book were the sinking of the Titanic, The First World War, and the Spanish flu. The very mention of the word 'war' evoked fear and anxiety among people, let alone the number of casualties. One of the most common euphemisms that appeared were "lost" and "gone" to describe someone who died. Characters used these euphemisms to talk about the loss of their loved ones, which helped them overcome the fear of death. All of these euphemistic expressions helped them cope with the situation in that given moment. When it comes to religion, characters never mentioned God directly but instead they used euphemistic expressions that helped them avoid blasphemy and profanity.

Also, it is possible to see that the usage of euphemisms increases when characters talk about status in society, money, pregnancy, health, sexual orientation, romantic relationships, and marriage. Also, several euphemisms on the subject of the black market and certain behaviors were mentioned and included in the research as well.

Some of these topics were still considered taboo and people would talk about them in a roundabout way. On several occasions, characters even completely omitted some of these words because they would feel too embarrassed to talk about them. These are all situations

where euphemisms came to the rescue, and the characters were able to verbally express themselves and their emotions. When expressing themselves, characters would not be offensive or disrespectful towards others, but would remain polite. Brown and Levinson (1978) suggest that when using euphemisms speakers are either trying to avoid the threat to the hearer's face or to their own face. With the help of euphemisms, characters managed to remain polite towards those people with whom there is some social distance as well as with those whom they knew well.

As was mentioned earlier, members of the aristocratic family and their help are clearly divided from the beginning, since they were situated in separate parts of the house and most of the time used different entrances. Besides physical space, language is another important distinction between them, and this can be seen especially in the television series since it is full of dialogues. This does not apply to the book as it is not enriched with dialogues which could otherwise significantly contribute to a number of euphemisms. Through characters' conversations it is visible that almost all of them talk to each other with great respect. However, there is a noticeable difference in the way of communicating among themselves and between the two different classes. Members of the aristocratic family wisely choose their words among their family members, let alone towards others. When it comes to the staff of the household, that is not the case. Most of the time they do not pay attention to the expressions they use among themselves. However, among the members of the Crawley family, they are extremely polite.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper tried to give an insight into euphemisms that can be found in Jessica Fellowes's book "The World of Downtown Abbey" and the first and the second season of the television series "Downtown Abbey". As was established in previous chapters, euphemisms are figures of speech present in almost every language, and they achieve an important goal in communication. The usage of euphemisms enables people to talk about taboo topics or any kind of topic that may be considered sensitive or inappropriate. Previously, taboo topics were avoided due to the fear of supernatural beings or of being punished, but nowadays they are avoided more because they are thought to be embarrassing or offensive to some speakers. By employing euphemisms, people make their communication pleasant for everyone involved. The usage of euphemisms is more present in oral communication rather than in written communication since, when communicating, people are more concentrated on saving someone else's face, as well as their own.

Euphemisms were used by various characters in different circumstances. It can be seen that the members of the aristocratic family always choose their words carefully in the house and outside of it. They pay particular attention to how they express themselves. The household staff seem to pay attention to their speech as well, but without the presence of the upper middle classes, they seem to be a bit relaxed. Other euphemisms were mostly used with topics such as sexual orientation, pregnancy, money, romantic relationships, and marriage. These sensitive topics seem too offensive to speak about, and that is why characters find roundabout and indirect ways to make it easier to express themselves and at the same time remain polite.

People's need to avoid conflicts and unpleasant situations is the cause of the fact that a great number of euphemisms appears in the language. New situations create new euphemisms, and their number continues to grow every day. Euphemisms are a part of language, and they can be considered a useful tool which facilitates communication. If people want to use them correctly, then it is of great importance to invest in our knowledge of euphemisms. This can help us avoid any kind of embarrassment and discomfort when speaking with others.

Language, as a medium of communication, is a complex phenomenon and it is under the influence of various factors. As such, it is subject to change throughout history. This entails that throughout these changes, language is being constantly shaped and improved. Euphemism, as a figure of speech, is equally under constant change. Our responsibility, as well as our task,

is to improve and follow these changes in order to enrich and facilitate everyday communication.

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## SUMMARY

This master thesis deals with euphemisms found in the book “The World of Downton Abbey” and the first and the second season of the television series “Downton Abbey”, and their division according to Allan and Burridge’s (1991) classification system. In each society, there are certain terms that people try to avoid mentioning directly because they are believed to be inappropriate. To be able to talk about inappropriate topics, people usually employ euphemisms in their language to express themselves. The main aim was to analyze the frequency and types of euphemisms, the specific contexts in which characters employ them, and the primary themes that prompt their use. The semantic domains with the highest number of euphemisms are death, love, sexual orientation, and religion. Because of the events that occurred during the period in which the action takes place, death is the most common topic, which led characters to produce the highest number of euphemisms related to that domain. The results have shown that understatement is the type of euphemism that appears most frequently, especially in the television series. After understatement, circumlocution is the second most frequent type of euphemism, followed by metaphor. Both understatement and circumlocution are typical of polite society. The explanation for this is historical time frame of the early 20th century, when the society paid special attention to their behavior and their way of talking to others. In everyday conversation, euphemisms play an important role, so the findings of this paper help to clarify our understanding of euphemisms.

**Key words:** taboo, euphemism, euphemistic expression, types, functions, classification, Downton Abbey

## SAŽETAK

### **Eufemizmi u knjizi Jessice Fellowes “The World of Downton Abbey” i televizijskoj seriji “Downton Abbey”**

Ovaj diplomski rad se bavi eufemizmima u knjizi “The World of Downton Abbey” te u prvoj i drugoj sezoni serije “Downton Abbey” i njihovom podjelom prema Allanovom i Burridgeovom klasifikacijskom sistemu (1991). U svakom društvu postoje određeni termini koje ljudi izbjegavaju izreći direktno jer smatraju da su neprikladni. Kako bi se neometano izražavali o temama koje se smatraju neprikladnima, ljudi najčešće posežu za eufemizmima. Glavni cilj ovog istraživanja je analizirati učestalost i tipove eufemizama, specifični kontekst u kojem ih likovi koriste i primarne teme koje potiču njihovu upotrebu. Semantičke domene sa najvećim brojem eufemizama su smrt, ljubav, seksualna orijentacija i religija. S obzirom na događaje koji su se odvijali tijekom perioda radnje ovog djela, smrt je najučestalija tema koja je navodila likove na korištenje najvećeg broja eufemizama. Rezultati istraživanja su pokazali da se ublaženi izraz, kao tip eufemizma pojavljuje najčešće, posebice u televizijskoj seriji. Sljedeći najčešće upotrebljavani tipovi eufemizama su cirkumlokucija i metafora. Ublaženi izrazi i cirkumlokucija su također i eufemizmi tipični za visoko društvo. Pojašnjenje za navedeno leži u vremenskom okviru ranog dvadesetog stoljeća kada je društvo pridavalo posebnu pažnju ponašanju i načinu ophođenja prema drugima. Eufemizmi igraju važnu ulogu u svakodnevnom razgovoru, stoga rezultati ovog istraživanja pridonose njihovom boljem razumijevanju.

**Ključne riječi:** tabu, eufemizam, eufemistički izraz, vrste, funkcije, klasifikacija, Downton Abbey