

Strategic Soft Talk: A Pragmatic Analysis of Euphemistic Expressions in the Sonas of President Bongbong Marcos

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE DETAILS
This qualitative research utilized content and pragmatic analysis to examine the use of euphemistic words in the State of the Nation Addresses (SONAs) of President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. during 2022-2024. Two hundred twelve (212) euphemisms were detected and categorized based on Allan and Burridge's Theory of Euphemism and Dysphemism. Most frequent was circumlocution, figurative language, technical vocabulary, understatement, one-for-one substitution, metaphorical euphemism, general-for-specific euphemism, hyperbole, colloquialism, and flippancy. As of functions, protective euphemisms ranked first, followed closely by uplifting euphemisms, and underhand euphemisms, while cohesive, provocative, and ludic euphemisms ranked lower, respectively. The study focused on six subjects where President Bongbong Marcos' SONAs used euphemisms to soften inauspicious or contentious issues: economic hardship; political and government unrest; foreign employment and labor issues; modernization and digitalization; foreign capital and privatization; and tourism and economic rebuilding. KEYWORDS: Pragmatic Analysis, Euphemism, Euphemistic expressions, Strategic soft talk, pragmatics	Published On: 19 October 2025 Available on: https://ijiissh.com/

INTRODUCTION

In the world of political language, words are not just tools for communication but also instruments of influence. Euphemism is a linguistic technique that is used to soften, obscure, or replace direct, potentially offensive expressions with more acceptable or polite alternatives (Allahverdiyeva et al., 2021). In political discourse, euphemisms may function as rhetorical tools that allow speakers to reframe sensitive, controversial, or unpleasant topics in a more favorable or less confrontational light (Golubeva, 2023). These expressions can be employed to influence public perception, to minimize criticism, and to maintain a composed or friendly facade (Crespo-Fernández, 2020). Euphemisms sometimes appear as figurative language, abstraction, or omission, shaped by sociocultural norms and political motives (Thapliyal, 2024).

In the local aspect, political leaders commonly use euphemisms to maintain a diplomatic tone and promote a positive image. The study of euphemism in different aspects has been rampant. One is according to Barus (2022), who found out that Anies Baswedan's speeches used euphemisms to avoid direct criticism and foster goodwill (Barus, 2022). Likewise, Purba et al. (2024) showed that The Jakarta Post used euphemistic language to soften controversial topics and influence readers' opinions. Setyawan and Khuzaini (2025) have also shown that Retno Marsudi's speeches relied on euphemisms to uphold formal diplomacy. These studies may have revealed a trend in which euphemisms are used to manage sensitive political discourse, similar to how Filipino politicians communicate in public addresses.

International studies also show that euphemisms are powerful rhetorical tools in political speech. Charteris-Black (2014) emphasized their role in shaping political identity, while Crespo-Fernández (2020) explained how euphemisms mask difficult realities such as war, economic crisis, and political failure. Fairclough (1995) highlighted their ideological impact through Critical Discourse Analysis, and Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory described euphemisms as performative acts that shape reality through language. These global perspectives offer theoretical foundations for analyzing how euphemisms operate in high-stakes political communication like presidential speeches.

While there is research on euphemisms in political discourse, there is limited scholarly work specifically focused on Philippine presidential speeches, especially using pragmatic lens. Most local studies focused on political language in media or general speeches,

Strategic Soft Talk: A Pragmatic Analysis of Euphemistic Expressions in the Sonas of President Bongbong Marcos

overlooking the nuanced rhetorical choices in SONAs. This gap limits our understanding of how Philippine presidents use euphemisms to shape public perception, construct political identity, and manage national issues through language.

Addressing this research gap is essential, as SONAs are influential texts that shape how citizens perceive government performance and national challenges. Euphemisms do more than convey politeness—they help manage public emotions, soften criticism, and frame policy in a favorable light. By analyzing the euphemisms in President Marcos Jr.'s 2022–2024 SONA speeches through Allan and Burridge's (1991) classification and Pragmatics Theory, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how political language is strategically constructed in Philippine public discourse.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to identify the euphemisms in the SONA speeches of President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. during 2022–2024

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the types of euphemisms present in President Marcos Jr.'s SONA speeches?
2. What are the functions of the identified euphemisms in the speeches of President Marcos Jr.'s?
3. What role do these euphemisms play in framing sensitive or controversial issues?

Theoretical Frameworks

This study is grounded on the theory of Euphemism and Dysphemism of Allan and Burridge's. It explains how language functions both a shield and a weapon in communication. The theory highlights that speaker chooses euphemistic or dysphemistic expressions depending on social context, intention, and the need to either maintain politeness, avoid taboo, or exert power. By categorizing euphemisms into types (such as metaphor, understatement, borrowing, or abbreviation) and functions (such as politeness, concealment, and avoidance of offense), Allan and Burridge provide a framework for understanding how people use language to manage meaning, protect face, and influence perception in social interaction.

The Theory of Euphemism and Dysphemism is useful to understand how language presents meaning beyond the literal level, especially in context-sensitive communication. Researchers were able to analyze the intentions behind utterances, the implied meanings, and how speakers strategically use language to influence their audience. This theory may help uncover how euphemisms function to soften, obscure, or frame sensitive issues in a way that shapes public perception in the context of political speeches like President Marcos Jr.'s SONA. By applying pragmatic analysis, this study can reveal the subtle power of language in political discourse, showing how meanings are negotiated between speaker and listener. Lastly, it would allow readers and observers to understand the role of language in persuading in the field of politics.

Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on Pragmatic Analysis and Allan and Burridge's (1991) Theory of Euphemism and Dysphemism. The framework identifies 16 types of euphemisms that categorize strategies for softening or concealing sensitive issues.

This framework is relevant to the study because it helps categorize the different types of euphemisms used in President Marcos Jr.'s SONA speeches, providing a systematic way to analyze language choices. Understanding these types allows the researcher to uncover how sensitive topics are softened or framed. It also reveals the speaker's strategies in managing public perception and addressing controversial issues diplomatically. By applying this framework, the study gains clarity in interpreting the speech's underlying meanings beyond the literal words. Ultimately, this contributes to a deeper understanding of political communication and its pragmatic functions.

According to Allan and Burridge (1991), euphemisms serve six functions: protective, underhand, uplifting, provocative, cohesive, and ludic, each explaining the different purposes for which euphemisms are strategically employed in discourse.

Pragmatic Analysis served as the framework for addressing question number three, as it focuses on how language is used in context to convey meaning beyond the literal words. This approach is particularly relevant in examining how euphemisms in President Marcos Jr.'s SONA speeches are employed to frame sensitive or controversial issues in ways that are socially and politically acceptable. By analyzing the speaker's intentions and the situational context of the speeches, the study reveals the strategic function of euphemisms. Through this lens, the research identified specific controversial issues mentioned in the speeches and analyze the euphemistic expressions used to soften, conceal, or reframe them (Thaker, 2020). These expressions were then categorized based on the types and functions of euphemisms from Allan and Burridge's framework to reveal their communicative and rhetorical functions.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative research design utilizing content analysis and pragmatic analysis. Content analysis is a qualitative technique used to systematically classify codes and identify themes or patterns within data (Berkovic, 2023). Pragmatic analysis examines how meaning is constructed and interpreted in context by identifying implied meanings, varied expressions, and lexical

Strategic Soft Talk: A Pragmatic Analysis of Euphemistic Expressions in the Sonas of President Bongbong Marcos

ambiguities, thereby providing a systematic way to analyze discourse (Munir & Yavuz, 2024). To support the qualitative findings, the study also used frequency counts and percentage distributions to quantify the occurrence of euphemistic expressions across the speeches. Together, these approaches provided the framework for analyzing euphemistic expressions in President Marcos Jr.'s SONA speeches from 2022 to 2024, revealing how they frame sensitive or controversial issues in socially acceptable ways.

Source of Data

The primary data for this study consist of the full official transcripts of President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.’s State of the Nation Addresses (SONAs) delivered in 2022, 2023, and 2024. These speeches, publicly available through official government sources such as the Official Gazette and the Presidential Communications Office, were selected through purposive sampling due to their relevance, richness, and strategic use of political language. The transcripts serve as a reliable linguistic corpus for identifying euphemistic expressions within the context of high-level political communication. Each instance of euphemism is examined in its immediate and broader textual context to uncover pragmatic meaning, communicative intent, and rhetorical impact.

Data Collection

First, the official State of the Nation Address (SONA) speeches of President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. from 2022 to 2024 were collected from relevant and authoritative sources, such as the Presidential Communications Office and the Official Gazette, to ensure accuracy and authenticity. The transcripts and recordings were downloaded, saved with consistent filenames, and archived for organization and traceability.

Second, the speeches were carefully listened to while following along with the transcripts to verify accuracy, ensure completeness, and capture the correct pronunciation, emphasis, and context of euphemistic expressions. Any discrepancies between the transcript and the audio were noted, and the cleaned, verified transcripts were prepared for further processing.

Third, the verified transcripts were segmented into sentences or clauses, and line numbers or identifiers were added to facilitate tracking and referencing of euphemistic expressions. This segmentation ensured that each excerpt could be precisely located within the speech, making the extraction process more systematic and organized.

Fourth, a structured extraction sheet was created to systematically record each euphemistic expression, including the year, excerpt, immediate context, issue or topic, and additional notes. A pilot extraction was conducted on a portion of one speech to refine the inclusion criteria and ensure consistent recording. Following the pilot, all relevant euphemistic expressions across the three speeches were identified and entered into the extraction sheet.

Fifth, additional metadata such as the issue or topic and situational notes were added to each entry to support interpretation. A quality check or second review of a sample was conducted to verify accuracy and consistency of the data. Finally, the completed extraction sheet was archived as the master dataset with version control, ensuring that all collected data were properly organized and ready for use in the study.

Data Analysis

To address Specific Question 1, which aimed to identify the types of euphemisms, the study employed qualitative content analysis. Euphemistic expressions were identified through close, contextual reading. These expressions were categorized using Allan and Burridge’s (1991) typology, which includes 16 types of euphemisms:¹Figurative Expressions, ²Metaphorical Euphemism, ³Flippancy, ⁴Remodeling, ⁴Circumlocution, ⁵Clippings, ⁶Abbreviations, ⁷Acronyms, ⁸Omissions, ⁹One-for-One Substitution, ¹⁰General-for-Specific, ¹¹Part-for-Whole, ¹²Hyperbole, ¹³Understatement, ¹⁴Technical Jargon and ¹⁵Colloquialism. The researchers initially coded the data, which was then reviewed and verified by three intercoders to ensure consistency and accuracy. The results were tallied and presented in a table, showing the frequency and percentage of each euphemism type.

Specific Question 2 focused on identifying the functions of the euphemisms found in the speeches. The analysis was guided by Allan and Burridge’s function-based framework, classifying euphemisms into six functions: ¹protective, ²underhand, ³uplifting, ⁴provocative, ⁵cohesive, and ⁶ludic. Each euphemism was analyzed in light of its communicative intent and socio-political context. The same three intercoders verified the functional classifications to ensure the credibility of the results. A separate table was generated to show the tally, frequency, and percentage of each euphemism function.

Specific Question 3 examined how the identified euphemisms were used to frame sensitive or controversial issues. This was addressed by synthesizing the data gathered from the analyses of euphemism types and functions. Through pragmatic and contextual analysis, the study explored how euphemisms served rhetorical purposes such as framing contentious topics, softening negative information, or shifting blame. This integrative approach highlighted how euphemistic language in the SONAs contributed to shaping public perception and sustaining a favorable political image.

Ethical Considerations

This study upheld ethical standards by ensuring social value, justice, transparency, researcher qualifications, and adequacy of facilities. It contributes to public discourse and language awareness by critically examining the use of euphemistic language in presidential speeches, informing citizens, educators, and researchers about rhetorical strategies that shape public perception and national identity. Justice was maintained by applying consistent analytical criteria across all selected SONAs, ensuring fairness and

Strategic Soft Talk: A Pragmatic Analysis of Euphemistic Expressions in the Sonas of President Bongbong Marcos

unbiased representation of data. Transparency was achieved by clearly outlining the research objectives, methodology, and analytical framework, allowing readers to assess validity and replicate the study if needed. The research team possessed academic training in linguistics and qualitative research, ensuring methodological rigor and ethical responsibility, while digital resources and online access to official government transcripts provided sufficient facilities for thorough data gathering and analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

On Examination of the Evident Types of Euphemism in the SONA Speeches of President Marcos Jr.

As shown in Table 1, a total of 212 euphemistic expressions were identified. Out of the 16 recognized types of euphemism, only 10 were present in the data, while the remaining 6 types were not observed. Circumlocution emerged as the most frequently used type, appearing 51 times (24.06% of the total). This was followed by figurative expressions with 35 instances (16.51%) and technical jargon with 32 instances (15.09%). Understatement was recorded 28 times (13.21%), while one-for-one substitution occurred 25 times (11.79%). Both metaphorical euphemisms and general-for-specific euphemisms were noted 12 times each (5.66%). Hyperbole appeared 8 times (3.77%), colloquialism 5 times (2.36%), and flippancy was the least frequent, with 4 instances (1.89%).

Table 1. On Frequency Count and Percentage of the Evident Types of Euphemism

1.1. Type of Euphemism	1.2. Frequency	1.3. Percentage (%)
1.1.1. Circumlocution	51	24.06%
1.1.2. Figurative expressions	35	16.51%
1.1.3. Technical jargon	32	15.09%
1.1.4. Understatement	28	13.21%
1.1.5. One-for-one substitution	25	11.79%
1.1.6. Metaphorical euphemisms	12	5.66%
1.1.7. General-for-specific euphemisms	12	5.66%
1.1.8. Hyperbole	8	3.77%
1.1.9. Colloquialism	5	2.36%
1.1.10. Flippancy	4	1.89%
Total	212	100%

Realization of the Evident Types of Euphemisms in Exemplified below:

Extract 1: Types of Euphemism in the Aspect of Circumlocution

"Expenditure priorities will be realigned"

It can be noted that the extract shows the evidence of the use of circumlocution, a type of euphemism that employs indirect or roundabout language to soften politically sensitive statements. This is exemplified in the phrase "Expenditure priorities will be realigned," which masks the harsher reality of budget cuts by presenting it as a neutral adjustment. By abstracting specific budget cuts into vague terms like "expenditure priorities" and "realigned," the language downplays the impact on affected sectors and maintains a tone of optimism.

A study related to this is by Jaganegara et al. (2020), who found that circumlocution is often used in political discourse to replace direct or harsh terms with softer alternatives to make issues more acceptable to the public (Jaganegara et al. , 2020). Furthermore, this indirect language strategy serves to manage public perception and maintain confidence in political speakers when delivering potentially unpopular messages. Barus (2022) explains that political figures frequently rely on circumlocution to obscure uncomfortable realities and reduce public resistance by using extended and indirect expressions. In the context of Extract 1, circumlocution helps preserve the speaker's image and soften the message about austerity measures, aligning with broader economic agendas focused on recovery and efficiency (Barus, 2022).

Extract 2: Types of Euphemism in the Aspect of Figurative Expression

"Ang mga hanapbuhay na ito ang unang pinadapa ng pandemya at ang pinakahuli namang makakabalik sa normal".

(These livelihoods were the first to be devastated by the pandemic and will be the last to return to normal.)

The extract above demonstrated the use of figurative expression as a type of euphemism. Phrases like "unang pinadapa ng pandemya" (first to be brought down by the pandemic) and "ang pinakahuli namang makakabalik sa normal" (the last to return to normal) soften the harsh reality of widespread job loss and prolonged economic struggle. Instead of directly referencing unemployment or business collapse, the metaphor "pinadapa" evokes the image of someone falling, implying a temporary setback rather than permanent failure. Framing the issue this way downplays the severity of the crisis while preserving empathy and

Strategic Soft Talk: A Pragmatic Analysis of Euphemistic Expressions in the Sonas of President Bongbong Marcos

optimism. This approach is especially effective in the context of the creative industry, where the speech simultaneously highlights the sector's cultural value and its vulnerability, thus shifting the focus toward recovery and national pride rather than trauma.

This use of figurative euphemism aligned with Barus (2022), who noted that metaphorical language in political speech is often used to mask distressing realities while still acknowledging them. Figurative expressions, by nature, allow audiences to emotionally process complex or painful issues through symbolic imagery, without being overwhelmed by blunt or negative language. In this case, the metaphor of being "brought down" subtly communicates the weight of economic hardship, while suggesting that recovery is possible. This helps maintain a resilient tone, reinforcing the speaker's goal of inspiring unity and collective perseverance during a national crisis (Barus, 2022).

Extract 3: Types of Euphemism in the Aspect of Technical Jargon

"Green-lane certified"

It can be noted that the extract showed the evidence of euphemism in the form of technical jargon. The phrase "green-lane certified" exemplified how specialized language is employed to present expedited processing in a neutral or positive light, thereby masking the implications of privilege or preferential treatment. Instead of explicitly stating that certain companies receive fast-tracking benefits, the term reframes this action as efficient and reform-driven, which helps avoid public scrutiny over fairness or transparency. A study related to this is by Thapliyal (2021), who featured the use of technical language in political and official contexts as a euphemistic strategy to obscure controversial or biased procedures. This strategic use of technical jargon functions not only to convey information but also to shield decision-makers from critique by normalizing potentially contentious actions, such as bypassing regulatory steps or favoring certain investors. The extract illustrated how such euphemisms maintain an image of progress and competence, thus serving as tools for political control and communication. Thapliyal's study reinforces the idea that technical euphemisms have a dual role in both informing the public and protecting authorities from accountability (Thapliyal, 2024).

Extract 4: Types of Euphemism in the Aspect of Understatement

"...we were constrained to temporarily implement mandated price ceilings on rice."

It can be distinguished that the passage shows the evidence of understatement euphemism, which is used to purposely give a little weight to the severity and argument of a government policy. The phrase "we were constrained to temporarily implement mandated price ceilings on rice" lessen the impact by turning responsibility to outside factors and framing the policy as a hesitant and important measure. This type of euphemism controls public reaction by avoiding harsh or direct language that might aggravate criticism or negative thought.

A study related to this is by Yuliana et al. (2020), who noticed that political language frequently employs softening words to reframe argumentable policies as logical and favorable. This is reflected in the extract, where the euphemistic phrasing directs attention away from the confining nature of price ceilings and toward a narrative of responsible administration. The use of understatement euphemism strategically preserves public trust and lessen criticism by presenting economic mediation as temporary and inevitable, reinforcing a controlled and positive public image of government action (Yuliana et al., 2020).

Extract 5: Types of Euphemism in the Aspect of One-for-one Substitution

"Eight out of ten graduates of TVET ultimately land decent jobs."

It can be displayed that the excerpt shows the evidence of one-for-one substitution euphemism, where a general, positive term replaces a more specific and probably undesirable one. The phrase "decent jobs" is an example of a one-for-one substitution euphemism, where a general, desirable term replaces more specific and probably unappealing descriptors like "low-wage," "manual," or "entry-level." In this case, the word "decent" heightens the anticipated quality of employment outcomes for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) graduates without providing thoroughness about job nature, salary, or stability. This euphemism created an impression of dignity and success, framing the TVET program as effective and commendable while strategically avoiding negative connotations. It shifts focus away from possible labor inequalities or underemployment and promotes a positive, policy-supportive narrative.

This is supported by Jaganegara et al. (2020), who found that one-for-one substitution is a frequent euphemistic strategy in political and media discourse. Their study shows that neutral or positive terms are often used to obscure fewer desirable realities while preserving the message's overall positivity. In this case, the substitution of "decent" masks potential concerns about job quality or career growth for TVET graduates. It allows the speaker to highlight employment statistics and reinforce a theme of national development without inviting criticism or deeper inquiry. As with many political euphemisms, the goal is to maintain control over public perception by using language that emphasizes success while avoiding uncomfortable specifics (Jaganegara et al., 2020).

Extract 6: Types of Euphemism in the Aspect of Metaphorical euphemisms

"Gagawin natin ito sa pamamagitan ng pag-aalis ng red tape..."(We will do this by cutting through red tape...)

Strategic Soft Talk: A Pragmatic Analysis of Euphemistic Expressions in the Sonas of President Bongbong Marcos

It can be noted that the extract shows the evidence of metaphorical euphemism. The phrase “pag-aalis ng red tape” serves as a metaphorical euphemism, where the term “red tape” metaphorically stands for bureaucratic inefficiency and administrative obstacles. Instead of directly criticizing slow or flawed government processes, the euphemism frames the issue in softer, more constructive terms. This allows the speaker to call for reform without assigning blame or triggering defensive reactions from agencies or officials. The metaphor also resonates with the public as a familiar image of frustration, making the critique more accessible and less confrontational. It promotes a forward-looking narrative centered on improvement and efficiency while masking institutional shortcomings.

This use of metaphorical euphemism is supported by Crespo-Fernández (2020), whose study emphasizes how metaphors in political discourse not only soften language but also reflect broader ideological and persuasive aims. Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Crespo-Fernández explains that metaphor helps frame complex or negative realities in terms that are easier to accept. In the case of “pag-aalis ng red tape,” the metaphor subtly conveys the need to fix systemic inefficiencies without directly accusing any entity. This aligns with the study’s findings that metaphorical euphemisms are effective in political communication for guiding public perception, minimizing resistance, and promoting policy reform in a more palatable way (Crespo-Fernández, 2020).

Extract 7: Types of Euphemism in the Aspect of General-for-specific

“Mga malalayo at liblib na mga pook.”(Distant and remote places.)

It can be showed that the extract shows the evidence of General-for-specific. The phrase “mga malalayo at liblib na mga pook” exemplifies a general-for-specific euphemism, where broad and non-specific language is used to refer indirectly to marginalized, impoverished, or underserved communities. Instead of explicitly naming regions associated with poverty or underdevelopment, the speaker uses a vague, neutral phrase that avoids invoking political controversy or negative emotions. This euphemism helps soften the reality of regional inequality and reframes it within a context of inclusivity and national outreach. By generalizing the reference, the speaker can address infrastructure expansion and digital access in a manner that maintains optimism and avoids public discomfort or defensiveness.

This rhetorical approach aligns with the findings of Al Qahtani (2020), who explains that general-for-specific euphemism is frequently used in sensitive discourse—such as religious or political texts—to replace explicit terms with broader expressions. The study highlights how this type of euphemism minimizes offense while preserving the speaker’s intent. In the context of the president’s speech, “mga malalayo at liblib na mga pook” serves to indirectly acknowledge social and infrastructural gaps without assigning blame or emphasizing inequality. This linguistic strategy allows the speaker to promote inclusivity and government responsiveness while deflecting scrutiny from long-standing regional neglect, thereby preserving a tone of unity and progress (Alqahtani & Rajkhan, 2020).

Extract 8: Types of Euphemism in the Aspect of Hyperbole

“...the National ID system... will fundamentally change the lives of each Filipino.”

It can be noted that the extract shows the evidence of hyperbole. The phrase “fundamentally change the lives of each Filipino” demonstrates a hyperbolic euphemism, where exaggerated language is used to present the National ID system in a dramatically favorable light. While the system may indeed offer important benefits, such as easier access to public services or streamlined identification, the claim that it will transform every citizen’s life is clearly overstated. This use of hyperbole functions as a rhetorical strategy to generate excitement and support by inflating the policy’s significance. It shifts focus away from potential limitations—such as implementation delays or privacy concerns—and instead paints an idealized picture of progress and modernization.

This use of exaggerated euphemistic language is supported by Jaganegara, Arvian, and Norvatin (2020), whose research shows that hyperbole in political speech is often employed to magnify the impact of policies and achievements in order to sway public perception. Their findings suggest that such overstatements help leaders appear visionary and transformative, even when the real outcomes may be modest or uncertain. In this case, describing the National ID system as fundamentally life-changing elevates its symbolic value and aligns with broader digitalization goals. This strategic use of hyperbole reinforces the administration’s narrative of innovation while minimizing attention to any accompanying challenges. (Vlasova, 2021).

Extract 9: Types of Euphemism in the Aspect of Colloquialism

“Utang-tagging”

It can be noted that the extract shows the evidence of colloquial euphemism, where informal, culturally embedded language is used to soften the impact of a socially sensitive issue. The phrase “utang-tagging” is a clear example of a colloquial euphemism, where informal, culturally embedded language is used to soften the impact of a socially sensitive issue. Commonly used in Filipino online discourse, “utang-tagging” refers to the practice of indirectly calling out individuals who owe money by tagging them in social media posts. Instead of using harsh or formal terms like “debtor” or “delinquent,” the phrase injects humor and familiarity into the conversation, reducing confrontation and public embarrassment. In the speech, the use of this colloquial term allows the speaker to

Strategic Soft Talk: A Pragmatic Analysis of Euphemistic Expressions in the Sonas of President Bongbong Marcos

address financial stigma among teachers in a more empathetic, relatable, and socially acceptable way.

This technique is supported by Aytan et al. (2021), who emphasize that colloquial euphemisms in political discourse help make controversial or emotional issues more accessible and less threatening. Their study highlights how informal language lowers emotional intensity and builds rapport with the audience by reflecting everyday communication styles. In the case of “utang-tagging,” the use of a familiar slang term resonates with public experiences while softening the stigma around debt. This aligns with the study’s conclusion that colloquial euphemisms are effective in presenting reform messages with sensitivity and cultural resonance, allowing the speaker to maintain public support while addressing problematic social practices (Aytan et al., 2021).

Extract 10: Types of Euphemism in the Aspect of Flippancy

“Bloodless war on dangerous drugs”

It can be noted that the extract shows the evidence of Flippancy. The phrase “bloodless war on dangerous drugs” exemplifies a flippant euphemism, where casual or light-sounding language is used to describe a deeply serious and controversial issue. By labeling the anti-drug campaign as “bloodless,” the speaker downplays the violent history of the drug war, particularly under the previous administration. This euphemism strategically reframes the ongoing crackdown to appear more humane, procedural, and reform-driven, despite still involving mass arrests and strong enforcement. The use of “bloodless” minimizes the emotional and moral weight of the issue, allowing the speaker to assert progress while distancing the current administration from the brutality associated with past efforts.

This rhetorical strategy is supported by Iswara and Sastaparamitha (2020), who highlight that flippancy in euphemistic language functions to soften the perceived severity of controversial topics. Their research demonstrates that flippant euphemisms reduce emotional impact and allow speakers to address sensitive matters in a way that feels less confrontational or alarming. In this case, describing a nationwide drug operation as “bloodless” masks its seriousness through ironic understatement, aligning with the study’s conclusion that such euphemisms are used to shape public perception, avoid criticism, and manage the tone of political messaging (Iswara and Sastaparamitha, 2020).

On Examination of the Evident Functions of the Identified Euphemisms in the Speeches of President Marcos Jr’s.

As shown in Table 2, a total of 212 euphemistic expressions were classified according to their communicative functions. Among the six identified functions, protective euphemisms were the most frequently used, appearing 69 times (32.55%). Uplifting euphemisms followed closely with 64 instances (30.19%), while underhand euphemisms occurred 58 times (27.36%). Less frequently observed were cohesive euphemisms with 10 occurrences (4.72%), provocative euphemisms with 6 (2.83%), and ludic euphemisms, which were the least used, with 5 instances (2.36%).

Table 2. Frequency Count and Percentage of the Evident Functions of Euphemism

2.1. Function of Euphemism	2.2. Frequency	2.3. Percentage (%)
2.1.1. Protective	69	32.55%
2.1.2. Uplifting	64	30.19%
2.1.3. Underhand	58	27.36%
2.1.4. Cohesive	10	4.72%
2.1.5. Provocative	6	2.83%
2.1.6. Ludic	5	2.36%
Total	212	100%

Realization of the Evident Functions of Euphemisms in Exemplified below:

Extract 1: Function of Euphemism in the Aspect of Protection

“Former adversaries are now partners in peace”

It can be exemplified that the extract shows the evidence aspect of protective euphemism through the strategic use of language that reframes past hostilities into a narrative of peace and reconciliation. The phrase “former adversaries are now partners in peace” reframes a violent past involving groups like the MNLF and MILF into a more positive and reconciliatory tone, highlighting transformation and unity while shielding the public from the emotional and political discomfort of historical conflict.

This function aligns with the findings of Purba et al. (2024), who identified protective euphemisms as tools frequently used in political language to downplay emotionally or politically charged issues. Their study emphasized that such euphemisms help minimize public discomfort and foster unity by replacing harsh realities with more hopeful or neutral terms. In this case, calling rebels “former adversaries” and framing them as “partners in peace” protects the audience from revisiting painful histories and supports the speaker’s goal of presenting a stable, peaceful, and forward-looking administration (Purba et al., 2025).

Strategic Soft Talk: A Pragmatic Analysis of Euphemistic Expressions in the Sonas of President Bongbong Marcos

Extract 2: Function of Euphemism in Delivering Uplifting Messages

“Nanunumbalik na ang sigla sa pamayanan.”(The vitality in communities is returning.)

It can be seen that the extract shows evidence of an uplifting euphemism through the phrase “Nanunumbalik na ang sigla sa pamayanan.” Instead of explicitly referencing prior crises—such as economic downturns, health threats, or social disruption—it focuses on the positive: the resurgence of community energy and life. The phrase reframes adversity as recovery, shifting public perception toward hope and collective renewal. This linguistic choice uplifts the audience by promoting a message of progress and restored normalcy, serving the function of motivating and encouraging public sentiment.

A study related to this is Setyawan and Khuzaini (2025), who found that uplifting euphemisms in political discourse function as rhetorical tools to inspire confidence and perseverance during difficult times. The extract’s use of “Nanunumbalik na ang sigla sa pamayanan” reflects this strategy by promoting a narrative of resilience without detailing specific struggles. As their study shows, such euphemisms help authorities maintain public morale while carefully managing how reality is framed in official communications (Setyawan & Khuzaini, 2025).

Extract 3. Function of Euphemism in Implying Underhand

“...the unpaid salaries and other related claims are now being processed.”

It can be noted that the extract shows the evidence aspect of how euphemism is used to underhand, obscure failure, and delay in governmental action. The phrase “the unpaid salaries and other related claims are now being processed” subtly hides the serious and prolonged issue faced by approximately 14,000 OFWs in Saudi Arabia. Instead of acknowledging the delay, suffering, or government inaction, the statement implies that progress is occurring, thereby creating an illusion of control and responsiveness. This linguistic framing shifts the focus away from immediate injustices and accountability, and instead projects optimism, distracting the public with vague assurances about future resolutions.

A study related to this is that of Jaganegara and Wijana (2023), which analyzed Indonesian obituaries and found that underhand euphemisms are commonly used to soften harsh realities or delay acknowledgment of unpleasant truths. Their research highlights how euphemisms function as tools to manage emotional responses and institutional image. In political contexts, such language—like “are now being processed”—plays a crucial role in shaping public perception, often masking inaction or failure behind a façade of ongoing effort (Jaganegara & Wijana, 2023).

Extract 4: Function of Euphemism in Promoting Social Cohesion

“Broad Band ng Masa”

It can be exemplified that the extract shows the evidence of the function of cohesive euphemism in promoting social cohesion. The phrase “Broad Band ng Masa” replaces technical or bureaucratic terminology with inclusive and emotionally appealing language that frames the broadband initiative as a project for all. By emphasizing service “for the masses,” the euphemism fosters a sense of unity and shared benefit, especially for those in marginalized sectors. This choice of words creates a perception of government responsiveness and inclusivity, transforming a complex infrastructure plan into a socially empowering mission that brings citizens together under a common goal.

A study related to this is the work of Waso et al. (2022), which explores how cohesive euphemisms in the Bajawa language are used to foster unity and inclusion. Their research found that such euphemisms promote social cohesion by using culturally resonant terms to reduce division and strengthen group identity. Similarly, “Broad Band ng Masa” goes beyond functional description and adopts a unifying tone that presents digital connectivity as a right and shared opportunity for all (Waso et al., 2022)

Extract 5: Function of Euphemism in Suggesting Provocation

“This will send a strong message that we mean serious business.”

It can be seen that the extract shows the evidence of the function of euphemism in suggesting provocation. The phrase “This will send a strong message that we mean serious business” uses assertive yet measured language to imply consequences and enforcement without explicitly issuing threats. By avoiding direct references to punishment or force, the euphemism projects authority and seriousness in a more controlled and diplomatic tone. This rhetorical choice subtly provokes compliance and signals firm intent, particularly when paired with statements about destroying contraband and jailing violators. It allows the speaker to maintain professionalism while instilling urgency and deterrence.

A study related to this is the work of Setyawan and Khuzaini (2025), who examined the use of diplomatic euphemisms in an international political context. Their findings revealed that provocative euphemisms were commonly used to express strong political stances and warn of consequences while avoiding overt aggression. Much like the phrase “send a strong message” in the current extract, such language strategies help leaders assert control and policy direction without escalating conflict or appearing hostile (Setyawan & Khuzaini, 2025).

Extract 6: Function of Euphemism in Expressing Ludic Intent

“revenge travel”

Strategic Soft Talk: A Pragmatic Analysis of Euphemistic Expressions in the Sonas of President Bongbong Marcos

It can be noted that the extract shows the evidence of a ludic euphemism through the phrase “revenge travel,” which infuses humor and playfulness into political language. Rather than directly stating that citizens are resuming travel due to lifted pandemic restrictions, the term frames this return as an act of personal vengeance against the limitations imposed by COVID-19. This anthropomorphic and lighthearted language helps make a serious issue—economic and emotional recovery—more entertaining and palatable. By reframing tourism as a spirited, almost rebellious act, the euphemism uplifts public morale, fosters resilience, and subtly supports the government's recovery agenda without invoking the harsh realities of the crisis.

A study related to this is by Ridwan, Santoso, and Yuliana (2020), who emphasize the rhetorical strength of ludic euphemisms in political communication. They assert that although ludic expressions are less common than other euphemism types, they effectively reduce the emotional weight of serious issues and enhance audience engagement through creativity and levity. In this case, “revenge travel” functions not only as a mood-lifter but also as a persuasive tool that strengthens the public’s emotional connection to post-pandemic policies (Ridwan et al., 2020).

On Examination of Euphemisms Used to Frame Sensitive or Controversial Issues

The study has identified six areas where euphemisms were used in President Bongbong Marcos’ SONAs to soften sensitive or controversial issues. These include economic hardship, governance and political conflict, overseas employment and labor issues, digitalization and modernization, foreign investment and privatization, and tourism and economic recovery.

Economic Hardship

Euphemisms were used to reframe economic challenges such as poverty, inflation, and job loss in a softer, less alarming tone. Terms like “economic headwinds” or “temporary price ceilings” downplay the severity of financial strain faced by ordinary Filipinos. Rather than addressing rising prices or shortages head-on, these phrases suggest that difficulties are external and temporary, minimizing perceived failure or mismanagement. By using such language, the administration presents economic problems as manageable and under control, which helps maintain public confidence and avoid panic or criticism.

Governance and Political Conflict

The government used protective euphemisms like “former adversaries are now partners in peace” to reframe past armed conflict, rebellion, or political hostility into a narrative of reconciliation and progress. This phrasing avoids direct mention of violence or division, instead emphasizing transformation and unity. Similarly, bureaucratic inefficiencies or delays are softened with language that implies cooperation or transition rather than failure. Euphemisms in this context help promote a peaceful image of the administration while preventing the reopening of historical wounds or controversy.

Overseas Employment and Labor Issues

Underhand euphemisms were employed to downplay unresolved labor concerns, especially the delayed compensation of OFWs. Phrases like “the unpaid salaries and other related claims are now being processed” mask the ongoing neglect and hardships faced by thousands of displaced workers. Instead of admitting fault or delay, the language gives an impression of bureaucratic action and forthcoming resolution. This deflects criticism and shifts public focus from past government inaction to future promises, softening the gravity of the issue while attempting to maintain public trust.

Digitalization and Modernization

Cohesive euphemisms such as “Broad Band ng Masa” were used to portray infrastructure projects in an inclusive, people-centered light. Instead of technical or exclusive language, the phrase appeals emotionally to the public, suggesting that digital access is a right for all, especially marginalized communities. It reframes complex technological policies as unifying national missions. This use of euphemism helps soften potential concerns over unequal access, costs, or rapid changes by making digital modernization feel familiar, empowering, and broadly beneficial.

Foreign Investment and Privatization

The easing of restrictions on foreign investment, as allowed by laws like the Public Service Act, is framed using euphemisms that stress progress and economic opportunity rather than loss of local control. Terms like “opening the doors” and “welcoming overseas players” emphasize optimism and growth while avoiding direct references to privatization or foreign dominance. This language downplays potential nationalistic concerns or fears of exploitation, instead casting liberalization in a positive, forward-thinking light that aligns with global competitiveness.

Tourism and Economic Recovery

The term “revenge travel” functions as a ludic euphemism that adds humor and excitement to the serious topic of post-pandemic economic recovery. Rather than simply reporting increased travel or economic rebound, the phrase playfully implies that Filipinos are enthusiastically “getting back” at the pandemic by traveling again. This light-hearted framing distracts from the deeper emotional and economic toll of the crisis, instead emphasizing joy, resilience, and a renewed sense of normalcy. It also subtly boosts morale and promotes support for the revitalized tourism sector.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

Strategic Soft Talk: A Pragmatic Analysis of Euphemistic Expressions in the Sonas of President Bongbong Marcos

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

It is apparent in the results of the study that euphemisms are a fundamental feature in the speeches of President Bongbong Marcos. His use of various euphemistic strategies serves to soften the delivery of politically sensitive and potentially controversial issues. Whether discussing budget realignment, economic hardships, or government policies, the president consistently employs indirect and carefully crafted language to present difficult topics in a more palatable way. This approach helps to avoid alarming or alienating the audience, ensuring that the messages are received with less resistance or negativity. The extensive use of circumlocution, understatement, and one-for-one substitutions highlights a communication style that values tact and subtlety over bluntness.

The study identified a wide range of euphemistic types used throughout the speeches, including figurative expressions and metaphorical euphemisms, which add emotional resonance and relatability to the discourse. By using metaphors like “pag-aalis ng red tape” and figurative phrases describing economic struggles, BBM humanizes complex issues and evokes empathy without directly exposing the harsh realities. This method also fosters optimism by framing setbacks as temporary or surmountable, which is important in maintaining morale and national unity. At the same time, technical jargon and hyperbolic language emphasize the administration’s progress and reform-driven agenda, painting government initiatives in a forward-looking and innovative light.

Moreover, the use of colloquial and culturally embedded euphemisms, such as “utang-tagging,” demonstrates BBM’s ability to connect with his audience in a familiar and approachable manner. This informal language softens social stigmas and sensitive topics, making them easier for the public to accept and discuss. Such a strategy enhances rapport with listeners and conveys a sense of empathy and shared experience. This blend of formal and informal euphemistic techniques reflects a speaker who is both politically savvy and culturally aware, able to adjust his tone to suit different contexts and audiences.

Analyzing these euphemistic strategies revealed that BBM is a calculated and diplomatic speaker who prioritizes maintaining a positive public image and managing perceptions carefully. His speeches reveal a leader who understands the power of language to influence emotions and opinions, choosing words that promote reassurance, hope, and unity. Rather than confronting problems head-on with harsh or alarming language, he prefers to frame challenges as manageable and part of a collective effort toward national progress. This careful balance between transparency and tact suggests a leadership style that seeks to build trust and minimize public dissent, especially when addressing sensitive or divisive issues.

In conclusion, President Bongbong Marcos’s speeches illustrate a sophisticated use of euphemism as a core communicative strategy. Through various types of euphemisms, he is able to soften difficult realities, foster empathy, and highlight government achievements without provoking strong negative reactions. His speaking style is marked by careful diplomacy, cultural sensitivity, and an emphasis on optimism and unity. This study underscores the significance of euphemism in political communication and demonstrates how BBM effectively employs it to navigate complex social and political landscapes while maintaining public confidence and support.

RECOMMENDATION

In the light of the foregoing conclusions, the following recommendations are offered.

Politicians may use euphemisms carefully to craft messages that are persuasive yet transparent, avoiding language that misleads or obscures the truth, as this can damage public trust and credibility. Clear and honest communication strengthens the relationship between leaders and their constituents and fosters a more informed citizenry.

The general public may benefit from developing critical listening and reading skills to better recognize and interpret euphemisms in political discourse. Being aware of these language strategies helps citizens understand the real issues, enabling more thoughtful engagement and informed decision-making.

Students are encouraged to further study euphemisms in political speeches, as this enhances critical thinking and provides valuable analytical tools useful in linguistics, political science, communication, and media studies.

Researchers may broaden their focus by examining euphemisms in political speeches across different cultures, languages, and historical contexts. Comparative studies like these offer deeper insights into the global use and evolution of euphemistic language in politics.

Future researchers expand may their study beyond political speeches to include various contexts and speakers. Applying different approaches, frameworks, and methodologies across fields such as advertising, media, and corporate communication will deepen understanding of euphemisms and their role in shaping public perception and communication strategies.

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