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ADULT DRINKS AND HANKY-PANKY. TYPES OF METONYMIC MOTIVATION IN ENGLISH X-PHEMISMS¹

The present article aims at identifying four types of metonymic mappings: formal, referential, propositional and illocutionary, as described by Bierwiazzonek (2013), in English X-phemisms. The use of X-phemisms in language is strictly connected with the rules of politeness functioning in communication. X-phemisms encompass euphemisms and orthophemisms that are used by language users to avoid dispreferred tabooed words, as well as dysphemisms which assume a deliberate use of a tabooed expression in order to offend, show disapproval or express negative feelings. Although linguists have listed a number of various mechanisms used in the creation of X-phemisms, often including metonymy as one of the rhetorical tools, it will be claimed that metonymy, understood as a conceptual process, may be also identified in other linguistic means applied by English speakers to X-phemism creation.

1. Introduction

The aim of the present paper is to identify types of metonymic motivation in the various mechanisms of X-phemism creation in English. In line with Allan and Burridge (2006), the term *X-phemism* is understood as a common name for the linguistic phenomena of *euphemism*, *dysphemisms* and *orthophemism*. The observation that *metonymy*, especially when understood as a conceptual process, according to the postulates of cognitive semantics, plays an important role in the formation of euphemisms is not a new one, but it can be found, for instance, in the works of Allan and Burridge (1991) or Shi and Sheng (2011). However,

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following the typology of metonymies suggested in Bierwiaczonek (2013), it will be claimed that X-phemisms can be motivated by formal metonymy, referential metonymy, propositional metonymy and illocutionary metonymy. It will be shown that it is possible to analyze a number of various linguistic mechanisms used in the creation of X-phemisms in English as metonymic in nature.

The first part of the article focuses on the notion of X-phemism and the contexts in which euphemisms, dysphemisms and orthophemisms appear. The second section concentrates on the various linguistic mechanisms that are involved in the creation of X-phemistic expressions. The following sections present the theoretical background of the classification of metonymies utilized in this paper, and then the various linguistic mechanisms of creating X-phemisms are analyzed as instantiations of these types of metonymy. All the examples of X-phemisms given in this article come from dictionaries and collections of euphemisms and dysphemisms in English, such as Rawson (1981), Holder (2002) and Ayto (2007).

2. The nature of X-phemisms

The term *X-phemism* comes from Allan and Burridge (2006: 29) and it encompasses the phenomena as *euphemism*, *orthophemism* and *dysphemism*. Etymologically, the word *euphemism* is derived from the Greek words: *eu* (εὖ), meaning 'good, well', and *pheme* (φήμη), which means 'glory, flattering speech, praise'; *orthophemism* is based on the Greek word *orthos* (ὀρθός), meaning 'straight, correct, true, right', while the first element of the word *dysphemism* is the Greek form *dys-* (δυσ-), which means 'bad' or 'ill'. As emphasized by the authors (*ibid.*: 29-31), the presence of X-phemisms in language is strictly connected with the rules of politeness. This means that euphemisms and dysphemisms are not merely formal-linguistic issues, but to a high degree they are pragmatic and socio-cultural phenomena. The notion of politeness in linguistic interaction constitutes one of the topics studied by pragmaticians who include in their research the context of language use and other extra-linguistic factors.

The need for politeness in acts of communication is connected with the presence of the cultural phenomenon called *taboo*. The English word *taboo* derives from the Tongan form *tabu*, which came to notice towards the end of the eighteenth century. Its English use dates to 1777 when captain James Cook visited Polynesia. Cook used the words *taboo* or *tabu* to describe the behaviour of Polynesians towards things that were not to be done, entered, seen or touched (*ibid.*: 2-4). Today, in the English-speaking culture, the most common taboo topics, reflected in the creation and use of X-phemisms, include: (1) the organs and acts of sex, (2) micturition and defecation, (3) diseases, (4) death and killing, (5) naming, addressing, touching and viewing people or (6) sacred beings, objects and places, as well as (7) food gathering, preparation and consumption (*ibid.*: 1).

In pragmatics, the notion of politeness is often defined on the basis of the concept of *face* (Bogdanowska-Jakubowska 2010: 212-213). Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (1987: 61) define *face* as “one’s public self-image”. They distinguish between *the negative face*, which is understood as the need to be independent and free from imposition, and *the positive face*, that is, the need to be connected, to belong and to be a member of a group (ibid.: 61-62). Thus, politeness is mitigating face-threatening acts, which may refer to the hearer’s negative face, for instance, in requests and warnings, or the speaker’s negative face, for example, in expressing thanks or excuses, as well as face-threatening acts that refer to the hearer’s positive face, which may happen in disapproval or criticism, and to the speaker’s positive face, for instance, in apologies. Hence, a euphemism is used as an “alternative to a dispreferred expression, in order to avoid possible loss of face: either one’s own face or, through giving offense, that of the audience, or of some third party” (Allan, BurrIDGE 1991: 11). In other words, a euphemism is used to avoid making oneself look bad in front of others, which saves the positive face of the speaker, to express oneself without restriction, which saves the negative face of the speaker, and to avoid offending the listener, which saves the listener’s negative face.

Like euphemisms, orthophemisms are also used to avoid the dispreferred, tabooed reference. However, while euphemisms can be defined as rather colloquial and figurative, a kind of “sweet talking” (Allan, BurrIDGE 2006: 29), orthophemisms are typically more formal and direct or literal (ibid.: 33). For instance, the words *feces* and *toilet* will be orthophemisms corresponding to such euphemisms as *poo* and *loo*, respectively.

Finally, a dysphemism is a kind of “offensive language” that can be defined as “a word or phrase with connotations that are offensive either about the denotatum and / or to people addressed or overhearing the utterance” (ibid.: 31). As the authors notice, people resort to dysphemism in order “to talk about people and things that frustrate and annoy them, that they disapprove of and wish to disparage, humiliate and degrade” (ibid.). For those reasons, dysphemisms can be found, for instance, in the language of political groups when they describe their opponents, in the language of feminists talking about men, and also in the language of macho men who may talk about women in a dysphemistic way. Among dysphemistic expressions there are curses, derogatory comments, insults and name-calling. Additionally, dysphemisms may be said to be means for alleviating negative feelings and emotions: irritation, frustration or anger. As Allan and BurrIDGE (1991) put it in the title of one of their books, while dysphemisms are linguistic “weapons” that speakers may use to attack others, euphemisms function as “shields” that help people protect either themselves, their hearers or some third party.

It needs to be noted that X-phemisms are very dynamic: words that used to be euphemisms may become dysphemisms. Steven Pinker (1994) calls this phenomenon *euphemism treadmill*. For example, *water closet* became *toilet*, which later became *bathroom*, then *restroom*, and next *lavatory*, or *Negro*

became *black* and then, *African-American*, because the former expressions lost their euphemistic character over time (ibid.).

Moreover, it is also possible to talk about *euphemistic dysphemisms* and *dysphemistic euphemisms* (Allan, Burridge 1991: 30-31; 2006: 39-40). In euphemistic dysphemisms, the locution of the expression is euphemistic, but the illocutionary force is dysphemistic, as observed, for instance, in such expressions as *Shoot!* or *Shivers!* Following John Austin's theory of speech acts (1962), a *locutionary speech act* is the performance of an utterance with its ostensible meaning, while an *illocutionary speech act* has the so-called *illocutionary force*, that is the intended meaning of the speaker. In dysphemistic euphemisms the situation is reversed: the locution of the expression is dysphemistic, but the illocution is euphemistic, as seen when calling a good friend *You old bastard!*

The use of the different types of X-phemisms involves the employment of a number of linguistic tools. The most important of them will be presented in the next section.

3. Linguistic mechanisms of X-phemism-formation

Various lists and examples of the linguistic devices used to create X-phemisms have been provided by the authors studying especially the phenomenon of euphemism (e.g. Burchfield 1986; Allan and Burridge 1991; Warren 1992; Allan 2012). Nevertheless, it seems that none of them have been interested in providing a comprehensive classification of these mechanisms. Perhaps the most detailed taxonomy of the various mechanism of X-phemism formation has been suggested by Bożena Duda (2014: 27-28) who classifies them as structural tools, syntactic or grammatical tools, semantic tools and rhetorical tools.

When it comes to structural tools, it is possible to list the following mechanisms (ibid.: 28-37):

- (1). *Compounding*: the process of putting two words together to form a new lexical item, for example, in *outhouse* meaning 'toilet' or *freedom fighter* meaning 'terrorist'.
- (2). *Derivation*: especially the various negative prefixes function in the formation of X-phemisms, for instance, in *dysfunctional family* used for 'broken home', or *politically incorrect* standing for 'being rude'.
- (3). *Clipping*: the process of shortening a lexical item, as seen in *les* used instead of 'lesbian' or *bra* used for 'brassiere'.
- (4). *Alphabetisms and acronyms*: while alphabetisms occur when the first letter or letters of a group of words are used as a new word, for example, in *to pee* replacing 'to piss', acronyms are also created from the first letter of a group of words, but this abbreviation is pronounced as one word, as seen in *SOB*, meaning 'son of a bitch'.

- (5). *Remodelling*: in this case part of the dispreferred word is matched phonetically with a semantically unrelated word, for instance, in *Oh, shoot!* instead of 'Oh, shit!' or *Cripes* used instead of 'Christ'.
- (6). *Quasi-reduplication*: it is a rhyming expression based on two very similar words, for instance, found, in *rantum-scantum* meaning 'to copulate' or *boy toy* used for 'penis'.
- (7). *Rhyming slang*: this phenomenon has its roots in the Cockney dialect, in which a rhyming word is used to conceal a dispreferred word, for example, *ginger beer* used for 'queer' or *cat and kitties* used for 'titties'.

Next, the syntactic or grammatical tools for forming X-phemisms involve (ibid.: 62-64):

- (1). *Comparative*: this tool is strictly connected with the use of circumlocution, and can be exemplified by such euphemisms as *less able students* for 'stupid students' or *nether regions*, meaning literally 'lower regions', for 'genitals'.
- (2). *Omission or ellipsis*: in X-phemisms language users apply either quasi-omission or full omission. Examples of the former can be found in printed texts, when the taboo term is replaced with dashes (---), a series of points (...), or asterisks (****); in spoken discourse, the use of *mhm* or *ermm* often replaces the dispreferred term. Full omission may be illustrated with the euphemistic saying *I need to go* used for 'I need to go to the toilet' or *What the* for 'What the fuck'.
- (3). *Passive voice*: in this way the speaker avoids pointing directly to the person or thing responsible for something negative, for instance, *I wasn't informed about the meeting* is a euphemistic way of saying the accusatory sentence 'They didn't inform me about the meeting'.

The list of the mechanisms classified as the semantic tools includes the following (ibid.: 37-46):

- (1). *Borrowing*: the use of foreign words gives the impression of elevating the tabooed tone of the word, for instance, the French words *brassiere* or *derrière* replacing the English 'tit-covers' and 'arse', respectively.
- (2). *Technical jargon*: very often Latinate borrowings functioning as learned and serious terms are preferred as orthophemisms to talk about tabooed topics, for instance, *perspire* is used instead of 'sweat', *copulate* replaces 'to have sex', and sexual organs are named by means of medical terms: *genitals*, *vagina* or *testicles*.
- (3). *Eponymy*: this process resides in giving a personal name to something else, for instance, using such names as *willy* for 'penis' and *wilma and betty* for 'breasts'.
- (4). *Flippancy*: this mechanism is based on using an expression that shows a total lack of seriousness and often disregard for a taboo topic; for instance, when

such expressions as *to kick the bucket* or *to bite the ground* are used talk about 'death'.

- (5). *Circumlocution*: these are expressions that aim at levelling down the negative illocutionary force of a dispreferred expression, as found in saying *to be economical with the truth* instead of 'to lie' or calling 'feaces' *human solid waste*.
- (6). *One-for-one substitution*: this semantic mechanism means that a single form replaces a single form that is tabooed; in fact, this mechanism usually co-occurs with other tools of X-phemism creation, for instance, in the cases of eponyms or borrowings.

Finally, Duda (ibid.: 47-62) lists a number of rhetorical tools used to create X-phemisms. As the author claims, although these mechanisms could be classified as semantic tools, they need a special attention since they have been long described with reference to their ornamental or persuasive force. They include:

- (1). *Alliteration*: which is the practice of repeating the same letter, for instance, in *big bird* used for 'penis' or *beef bags* used for 'breasts'.
- (2). *Pleasing rhythms or silly words*: this is a mechanism of verbal play which focuses on the pleasing character of the rhyming expression, often combined with the techniques of quasi-reduplication, alliteration or rhyming slang. Some examples involve *over-shoulder boulder-holders* used for 'bra' or *libido bandido* used for 'penis'.
- (3). *Hyperbole or overstatement*: which resides in an obvious exaggeration, as seen in *extermination engineer* used instead of 'pest controller' or *flight to glory* used for 'death'.
- (4). *Litotes or understatement*: this mechanism assumes saying less or negating something, for instance, in *not bright* used instead of 'stupid' or *a little intoxicated* for 'drunk'.
- (5). *Part-for-whole or synecdoche*: in this mechanism part of something is used to refer to the whole, for instance, when saying *I've got a cough*, the meaning is 'I'm ill and I've got a cough, but also a stuffed-up nose and postnasal drip', or in dysphemistic uses of various words indicating the male sex organs to refer to people, for example, *You prick!*
- (6). *Metonymy*: which can be understood as a conceptual operation of referring to an item by means of something contiguous to it; for instance, in some dysphemisms food is used to refer to a particular nationality: *frog-eater* means 'Frenchman' and *macaroni* means 'Italian'.
- (7). *Metaphor*: this mechanism occurs between two different conceptual domains, for instance 'dying' is described euphemistically as *sleeping* and the object of sex may be referred to as food, which can be found in such examples as saying *cookie* or *sugar* to refer to 'a good-looking person'. Studies devoted to the role of conceptual metaphor in the creation of X-phemisms

have shown that a large number of euphemistic expressions in different languages are actually underlain by metaphorical mappings. For example, Crespo Fernández (2006) studied the conceptual metaphors for death in English Victorian obituaries and Popek-Bernat (2014) analyzed the various metaphorical conceptualizations of sexual acts in Spanish and Polish.

As shown above, metonymy in this typology constitutes only one of the numerous linguistic means for creating X-phemisms in English. However, in the following sections of our paper it will be claimed and illustrated with examples that also some of the other linguistic tools for X-phemisms can be interpreted as metonymic in nature.

4. A classification of metonymies

Following the classic definition of *conceptual metonymy*, the term may be defined as “using one entity to refer to another that is related to it” (Lakoff, Johnson 2003: 35). Another common definition, widely accepted in cognitive linguistics, holds that metonymy is “a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same idealized cognitive models (ICMs)” (Radden, Kövecses 1999: 19-21; Barcelona 2000: 4).

Actually, according to Bogusław Bierwiaczonek (2013), it is possible to distinguish the following four different types of metonymy in language:

- (1) *Formal metonymy*, which is based on a formal relation between the vehicle and the target, and often follows the mapping SALIENT PART OF FORM FOR WHOLE FORM (ibid.: 27). This type of metonymic link is also studied by Antonio Barcelona (2005), who calls it *form-level metonymy*. Formal metonymies may be identified in various linguistic phenomena, such as alphabetisms, for instance, when using *CD* for ‘compact disc’, acronyms, as seen in *AIDS* standing for ‘acquired immune deficiency syndrome’, or clips, for example, in *ad* used instead of ‘advertisement’ (Bierwiaczonek 2013: 61-73). This observation remains in line with Mario Brdar and Rita Brdar-Szabó’s claim that metonymic shifting may occur in the so-called nonconcatentive word-formation processes, which reside in modifying one linguistic item: “conversion, blending, reduplication, clipping, as well as various kinds of shortening would belong here” (2013: 58). Moreover, Bierwiaczonek (2013: 73ff) claims that formal metonymy can be also found in syntactic ellipsis at various levels: in phrases, sentences and discourse; for instance, *a daily* actually stands metonymically for the phrase ‘a daily newspaper’.
- (2) *Referential metonymy*, when one entity is used to stand for another (ibid.: 153). This type of metonymy may be exemplified by the sentence *The ham*

sandwich is waiting to be served, in which *the ham sandwich* represents ‘a human being’, according to the metonymic mapping CONSUMED GOODS FOR CONSUMER.

- (3). *Propositional metonymy*, in which one predication is intended to mean another predication within the same ICM (ibid.: 24-26; 156-169). Actually, the author suggests distinguishing between *sentential metonymy* and *predicative metonymy*. The former subtype of propositional metonymy occurs when the target proposition is accessed by a sentence with a completely different meaning, for example, in the sentence *Mary got some free tickets to the movies* which is given as the answer to the question *How did you spend the weekend?*, the whole weekend is conceptualized through the central event of going to the cinema. The latter subtype can be observed when the propositional metonymy is limited to the predicate, as seen in *She was able to finish her dissertation*, where the actual meaning is: ‘She finished her dissertation’: this change can be explained by the metonymic mapping POTENTIALITY FOR ACTUALITY, described also by such authors as Klaus-Uwe Panther and Linda Thornburg (1999).
- (4). *Illocutionary metonymy*, which usually means that one speech act stands for another speech act, where both speech acts are components of the same speech act scenario (Bierwiazzonek 2013: 26; 169-181). This situation corresponds to John Searle’s theory of indirect speech acts (1979); for instance, a wish expressed in *I would like you to close the window* actually stands for the request ‘Please, close the window’. Also, Barcelona (2013: 38-39) emphasizes the fact that metonymy functions not only at the level of lexicon, but also in grammar and discourse, which includes indirect speech acts.

The following sections of this paper will present the four types of metonymy in the various linguistic mechanisms used for the creation of X-phemisms in English.

5. Formal metonymy in X-phemisms

A number of euphemistic dysphemisms motivated by formal metonymy are provided by Bierwiazzonek (2013). These include especially alphabetisms and acronyms. For instance, using *f* or *sh* in writing for ‘fuck’ and ‘shit’ respectively, is motivated by the INITIAL GRAPHEME(S) FOR THE WHOLE GRAPHEMIC REPRESENTATION metonymy (ibid.: 65ff). In spoken discourse, the use of alphabetisms such as *WTF* for ‘What the fuck!’ follows the chain metonymy ALPHABETIC PHONETIC REPRESENTATION OF LETTER(S) FOR FIRST LETTER(S) OF WRITTEN REPRESENTATION OF WORD(S) OF EXPRESSION FOR FIRST SOUND(S) OF WORD(S) OF EXPRESSION FOR CONCEPTUAL REPRESENTATION OF EXPRESSION. Thus, the alphabetic pronunciation of *WTF* stands for the first letters of the written representation of the words *what*, *the* and *fuck*, which in turn stands for the first sounds of the words of the

expression, which stand for the whole phonetic representation of this expression, which finally stands for the conceptual representation of the expression ‘What the fuck!’ In the case of acronyms, such as *SOB* standing for ‘son of a bitch’, it is possible to identify the following chain metonymy: LETTERS FOR LETTERS OF FIRST SOUNDS OF WORDS OF EXPRESSION, WHICH JOINTLY STAND FOR PHONOLOGICAL REPRESENTATION OF EXPRESSION, WHICH STANDS FOR CONCEPTUAL REPRESENTATION OF EXPRESSION. For instance, in *SOB*, the letters *S*, *O*, and *B* stand for the letters of the first sounds of *son*, *of* and *bitch*, which stand together for the phonetic representation of the whole expression, which in turn stands for the conceptual representation of ‘son of a bitch’.

Additionally, the various types of phonetic modification or mispronunciation used in X-phemisms can be ascribed to the formal metonymy MODIFIED PHONOLOGICAL FORM OF X FOR STANDARD PHONOLOGICAL FORM OF X (ibid.: 70). This metonymy can be identified in such X-phemisms as *Gosh* /gɒʃ/ used instead of ‘God’ /gɒd/, *shoot* /ʃu:t/ replacing ‘shit’ /ʃɪt/, or *What the truck* used for ‘What the fuck!’ Similarly, instances of clipping as a tool for X-phemism formation are motivated by formal metonymy. Here, the metonymy follows the mapping REDUCED PHONOLOGICAL FORM OF X FOR STANDARD PHONOLOGICAL FORM OF X. This pattern can be illustrated with such euphemistic examples as *Jeez* /dʒi:z/ standing for ‘Jesus’ /ˈdʒi:zəs/ or *bra* /brɑ:/ meaning ‘brassiere’ /ˈbræziə/. Also, in the cases of rhyming slang in X-phemisms, it is possible to formulate the metonymic pattern: EXPRESSION (X)Y FOR EXPRESSION Z WHICH RHYMES WITH Y (ibid.: 73). A good example is *ginger* (X) *beer* (Y) which rhymes with ‘queer’ (Z).

Next, the use of ellipsis or omission of certain elements of the dispreferred expressions can be explained by means of formal metonymy. In such cases, part of the structure accesses the whole grammatical construction, as found, for instance, in saying *What the* instead of ‘What the fuck’. Examples of this type of metonymy in X-phemisms may refer to ellipsed clausal elements in sentences, as seen in *I need to go* used for ‘I need to go to the toilet’, or ellipsed objects of sentences, illustrated with the use of the verb *to drink*, which often means ‘to drink alcohol’ (ibid.: 102).

Moreover, also borrowings and the use of technical jargon may be claimed to be motivated by this type of metonymy. It seems that X-phemisms created by means of these tools follow the metonymic pattern FOREIGN WORD FOR ENGLISH WORD FOR CONCEPT, as seen in *derrière* used for ‘arse’, or TECHNICAL ENGLISH WORD FOR CONVENTIONAL ENGLISH WORD FOR CONCEPT, for example, in *anus* used for ‘arse’. Although from the semantic point of view, the denotation of a borrowing or a professional term is usually synonymous with the conventional English word, their unfamiliar-sounding form or serious context of use, which is the case in the mechanism of technical jargon, conceal the offensive connotation connected with the expression they stand for.

Perhaps it may be claimed that a similar metonymic pattern occurs when silly words or rhymes, sometimes combined with alliteration, are used as euphemisms for the sexual act or sexual organs. For instance, such phrases as *hanky-panky*

used for ‘flirting’ or ‘playing around’, *tuzzy-muzzy* used for ‘vagina’ or *ding-dong* used for ‘penis’ are meaningless outside of their euphemistic application. Thus, it seems that it might be possible to formulate the following metonymic chain motivating their use: SILLY EXPRESSION / RHYME FOR CONVENTIONAL ENGLISH WORD FOR CONCEPT. Additionally, as observed by Duda (2014: 36), in the case of reduplication present in certain euphemisms relating to ‘breasts’, such as *chi-chics*, *flip-flaps* or *boom-booms* the repetition of the silly word may iconically refer to the doubleness of breasts.

6. Referential metonymy in X-phemisms

Referential metonymies can be identified in a number of English X-phemisms created with the use of different linguistic tools. For instance, the PART FOR WHOLE mapping may be found in the various synecdochic X-phemisms, such as calling people by means of the names of sex organs. Here, the metonymy can be narrowed down to the pattern BODY PART FOR PERSON, which is common in certain dysphemisms (Duda 2014: 53-56). For example, calling dysphemistically a man *prick* follows the metonymic mapping MALE SEX ORGAN FOR MALE HUMAN BEING, while referring to a woman by saying *cunt* illustrates the FEMALE SEX ORGAN FOR FEMALE HUMAN BEING metonymy. Another interesting metonymic mapping following the part-whole relations can be observed in X-phemisms underlain by the SALIENT PROPERTY FOR ENTITY pattern, for instance, in *the evil one* used euphemistically for ‘Satan’, *badge* or *blue* standing for ‘policeman’, or in the expression *four eyes* used dysphemistically to refer to a person wearing glasses. It is also possible to place in this group the FOOD FOR NATIONALITY metonymy (ibid.: 57), which can be used dysphemistically to talk about people’s nationalities, as seen in the use of *potato-eater* for ‘Irishman’ or *beef-eater* meaning ‘Englishman’ in American English.

However, also the opposite direction of this conceptual mapping, namely, the WHOLE FOR PART metonymy, can be found in X-phemisms. For example, in *nether region* or *groin*, the whole region of the body may stand for its part, ‘the genitals’, and similarly, the words *chest* or *bust* may refer euphemistically to ‘breasts’.

Next, it is possible to identify a number of other referential conceptual metonymies behind English X-phemisms, including USER FOR OBJECT USED, FUNCTION / ROLE FOR ENTITY, GENERAL FOR SPECIFIC, EFFECT FOR CAUSE, FEATURE FOR PERSON ADORNED WITH THIS FEATURE, and MORE FOR LESS. The metonymy USER FOR OBJECT USED can be identified in such X-phemisms as *adult drink* used instead of ‘alcoholic beverage’ or *gentlemen’s club* replacing ‘go-go bar’. The FUNCTION / ROLE FOR ENTITY metonymy underlies the meaning of such euphemisms as, for instance, *feminine protection* used for ‘tampon’, and *Lord* used with reference to ‘God’. Furthermore, some X-phemisms motivated by the referential metonymy GENERAL FOR SPECIFIC include *presence* meaning ‘military

occupation', *equipment* or *organ* used for 'penis', and the circumlocution *human solid waste*, which may replace the word 'feaces'. Additionally, the metonymy EFFECT FOR CAUSE may be said to underlie the meaning of such euphemisms as saying *tired and emotional* or *glassy-eyed* for 'drunk' or when *indisposed* is used instead of 'ill'. Interestingly, Duda (ibid.: 57) sees another conceptual metonymy in these examples: FEATURE FOR PERSON ADORNED WITH THIS FEATURE, since being tired and emotional or glassy-eyed in the case of a drunk person are the characteristics of their appearance or behaviour. Finally, in hyperboles or overstatements it is often possible to find the metonymy MORE FOR LESS, functioning within the same conceptual domain (Bierwiazzonek 2013: 214). This metonymy can be exemplified with some compounds used to talk euphemistically about various unpleasant professions, especially in American English, such as *extermination engineer* meaning 'pest controller', *door supervisor* used for 'bouncer' or with *sanitation engineer* standing for 'dustman'.

7. Propositional metonymy in X-phemisms

It seems that most of the propositional metonymies motivating the creation of English X-phemisms belong to the predicative subtype of this metonymy, when only the original predicate is replaced with a different predicate, but the subject and the whole proposition remain the same.

For example, in some euphemisms, the predicate of the X-phemistic sentence follows the metonymic mapping ONE ACTION FOR ANOTHER ACTION PERFORMED IN THE SAME PLACE or as Duda (2014: 56) puts it, ACTIVITY FOR CONSECUTIVE ACTIVITY. For instance, in (1a) *powder the nose* as a euphemism replaces the dysphemistic 'piss' or 'excrete' in (1b) as both these actions are typically performed in the toilet; in (2a) *sleep together*, functions as a euphemism for 'have sex' in (2b), which is an action typically taking place in a bed.

(1a) *Excuse me, but I need to powder the nose.*

(1b) *Excuse me, but I need to piss / excrete.*

(2a) *Did you sleep together after the party?*

(2b) *Did you have sex after the party?*

Moreover, it is worth noticing that often PLACES themselves are used metonymically instead of ACTIVITIES that are typically performed in them. For instance, *going to bed with someone* may euphemistically refer to 'having sex' and *going to the bathroom* may mean 'excreting'. Bierwiazzonek (2013: 158) identifies here the propositional-metonymic pattern JOURNEY TO A DESTINATION FOR PERFORMING CANONICAL ACTIVITIES IN THAT DESTINATION.

Next, it is also possible to identify the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy in some euphemistic predicates in English used in understatements. For instance, in (3a)

the verb *neutralize* replaces the dysphemistic 'kill' in (3b) on the basis of the cause-effect relationship between the act of killing and becoming militarily neutral.

(3a) *The army **neutralized** the enemy.*

(3b) *The army **killed** the enemy*

Another example of the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy can be actually classified as an instantiation of the sentential propositional metonymy. Namely, in (4a) *losing someone* stands for their death as a kind of circumlocution, as presented in (4b), but to create this euphemism it is necessary to construct a new sentence with a different subject.

(4a) *We've **lost** him.*

(4b) *He's **dead**.*

Furthermore, in other cases of circumlocution, one predicate may replace another predicate on the basis of the MORE FOR LESS metonymy. For example, in (5a) a reference to the subject being *economical with the truth* is used instead of the immoral act of lying (5b).

(5a) *She's **economical with the truth**.*

(5b) *She's **lying**.*

8. Illocutionary metonymy in X-phemisms

Illocutionary metonymies underlying the meaning of X-phemisms can be identified in such examples when the face-threatening speech act, referring to some taboo topics, is replaced with another speech act in order to mitigate its offensive effects. For instance, in (6a) and (7a), the acts of interrogating are used metonymically for the acts of asserting (6b) or commanding (7b).

(6a) *Do you use a mouthwash?*

(6b) *You've got bad breath.*

(7a) *Shall I wipe your nose?*

(7b) *Wipe your nose.*

Also, the act of requesting (8a) may be used euphemistically instead of the act of asserting something unpleasant (8b).

(8a) *Clean your teeth.*

(8b) *You've got bad breath.*

An interesting illocutionary metonymy can be observed in X-phemisms created with the mechanism of litotes or understatement: here, the act of denying replaces the act of asserting something negative or offensive. For instance, in (9a) and (10a) the effect of euphemistic avoidance of the dispreferred expression is achieved by negating its opposite (9b, 10b).

(9a) *I don't think he's right.*

(9b) *I think he's wrong.*

(10a) *It's not true.*

(10b) *It's a lie.*

Finally, it is possible to identify the metonymic replacement of the act of denying, which might be face-threatening to the hearer, with the act of conditional agreeing. For instance, in (11a) the negative meaning of the direct disagreement (11b) is euphemistically substituted with the partial or conditional agreement with the speaker.

(11a) A: "Do you like my dress?" B: "Yes, but it's not my favourite."

(11b) A: "Do you like my dress?" B: "No, I don't like your dress."

9. Conclusions

As it has been shown in the present paper, it is possible to find some type of metonymic motivation in such linguistic tools for X-phemism creation in English as alphabetisms (e.g. the formal metonymy in *WTF* used for 'What the fuck!'), acronyms (e.g. the formal metonymy in *SOB* used for 'son of a bitch'), rhyming slang (e.g. the formal metonymy in *ginger beer* used for 'queer'), silly words and rhymes (e.g. the formal metonymy in *hanky-panky* used for 'flirting'), often combined with alliteration (e.g. the formal metonymy in *boom-booms* used for 'breasts'), sound remodelling (e.g. the formal metonymy in *What the truck!* Used for 'What the fuck!'), clipping (e.g. the formal metonymy in *bra* used for 'brassiere'), ellipsis and omission (e.g. the formal metonymy in *drink* used for 'drink alcohol'), some uses of comparative forms (e.g. the referential metonymy in *nether region* used for 'genitals') and compounding (e.g. the referential metonymy in *door supervisor* used for 'bouncer'), borrowings (e.g. the formal metonymy in *derrière* used for 'arse') and technical jargon (e.g. the formal metonymy in *anus* used for 'arse'), one-for-one substitution (e.g. the referential metonymy in *badge* used for "policeman"), synecdoche (e.g. the referential metonymy in *cunt* used to refer to a woman), circumlocution (e.g. the propositional metonymy in *We've lost him* used for 'He's dead'), hyperbole or overstatement (e.g. the referential metonymy in *sanitation engineer* used for 'dustman'), and in litotes or understatement (e.g. the illocutionary metonymy in *It's not true* used for 'It's a lie').

Furthermore, it needs to be noted that metonymy operates in the formation of euphemisms (e.g. ONE ACTION FOR ANOTHER ACTION PERFORMED IN THE SAME PLACE in *I need to powder the nose* used for ‘I need to piss / excrete’), orthophemisms (e.g. TECHNICAL ENGLISH WORD FOR CONVENTIONAL ENGLISH WORD FOR CONCEPT in the Latinate words *vagina* or *penis* used for female or male genitals) and dysphemisms (e.g. BODY PART FOR PERSON in calling a man *prick*), as well as euphemistic dysphemisms (e.g. MODIFIED PHONOLOGICAL FORM OF X FOR STANDARD PHONOLOGICAL FORM OF X in *shoot* used for ‘shit’). Obviously, some of the metonymy-motivated dysphemisms may be used as dysphemistic euphemisms, depending on the context (e.g. BODY PART FOR PERSON in a friendly addressing a mate by saying *Hi, asshole! How’s it going?*).

To sum up what has been said, it is necessary to emphasize the fact that metonymy seems to be ubiquitous in the creation of English X-phemisms, perhaps even more common than it is often assumed, especially when viewed as a conceptual phenomenon. Moreover, thanks to its features of highlighting certain aspects of a given domain and hiding others, metonymy allows language users to obscure the difficult or unwanted meaning of a dispreferred expression without the loss of the face for both the speaker and the hearer on the one hand, or to attack others deliberately on the other hand.

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