

EUPHEMISM AND DYSPHEMISM IN BLACK PANTHER: A SOCIOPRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF POWER AND IDENTITY

Santosa¹, Masami Permana², Radik Darmawan³, Theresia Mundi Astuti⁴, Bayu Andika Prasaty⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing Technocrat Tangerang, Indonesia

⁵Email: santosotoroh@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Language functions as a strategic tool for regulating social interactions and power dynamics through provocation or politeness. This study investigates the use of euphemism and dysphemism in the film *Black Panther*, focusing on how characters manage sociopolitical tensions. Utilizing Allan and Burridge's (2009) framework, this qualitative research analyzed 12 linguistic items identified within the film's screenplay. The data were categorized through a three-stage analytical procedure: classification, description-interpretation, and theoretical synthesis. The results indicate a significant dominance of euphemisms (8 items or 66%) over dysphemisms (4 items or 34%). Euphemisms primarily function as a "linguistic shield," with metaphor being the most frequent strategy, followed by flippancy and figurative expressions. These strategies enable characters to negotiate political responsibilities and preserve national dignity without confrontation. Conversely, dysphemisms are employed as "verbal weapons," notably through synecdoche and non-verbal gestures, to intimidate opponents when diplomatic boundaries are breached. These findings demonstrate that characters prioritize "face-saving" and political stability, reflecting a sophisticated balance between personal loyalty and survival in high-pressure environments.

Keywords: *Afrofuturistic discourse; Dysphemism; Euphemism; Formalist approach; Qualitative study*

INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a strategic instrument for navigating social interactions, negotiating power, and articulating identity. Within sociopragmatics, these goals are often achieved through the interplay of politeness and provocation, manifested via euphemisms and dysphemisms. Allan and Burridge characterize euphemisms as "shields" polite alternatives employed to mitigate face-threatening acts while dysphemisms function as weapons, utilizing confrontational language to belittle or incite interlocutors. In cinematic discourse, these linguistic choices reflect a character's ideological position and complex social relationships (Bousfield, D. (2008). Allan and Burridge, (2009) define euphemisms as 'shields', polite, less direct linguistic alternatives employed to reduce behaviors that might harm self-esteem, prevent offense, and maneuver through social norms. Conversely, dysphemisms function as 'weapons', deliberately employing harsh, unpleasant, or taboo language to convey intense emotions, incite, or belittle interlocutors. In modern media, especially in movies, the use of euphemisms and

dysphemisms in dialogue is a great way to study how language and society interact. This is because movie scripts deliberately produce dialogue that shows how people really interact and how different cultures and groups of people interact with each other.

Cinematic language conveys cultural traditions, with the selection between a polite euphemism and a controversial dysphemism indicating a character's background, ideological position, and relationships with others. Ryan Coogler's *Black Panther* (2018) provides a rich sociolinguistic landscape for such an investigation, weaving themes of isolationism, globalism, and racial identity. Beyond its narrative success, *Black Panther* presents a deeply layered sociolinguistic landscape where language is not merely a medium for information, but a strategic tool for navigating power and identity. While prior research has focused on the movie's cultural symbolism, this study addresses a significant gap: the simultaneous functioning of euphemism and dysphemism as a 'Shield and Weapon' in Afrocentric political discourse. While prior studies have explored euphemism and

dysphemism in diverse media such as action-comedy films, political speeches, and modern public discourse, a critical synthesis of these works reveals a bifurcated focus. Most research either concentrates on the mitigating nature of euphemisms in formal settings or the offensive nature of dysphemisms in comedic contexts. Furthermore, while *Black Panther* has been scrutinized for its cultural depth, there is a lack of research investigating the simultaneous, strategic functioning of euphemism and dysphemism within its narrative (Strong & Chaplin, 2019; Yuga et al., 2020). The characters in Wakanda, from the honorable King T'Challa to the extremist Erik Killmonger, use different ways to talk to each other. During royal council sessions or family advice, the conversations go from formal, very polite euphemistic language to furious dysphemistic language when there are ideological disagreements or physical fights. The language choices in this movie are not just for style; they also serve important pragmatic purposes, such as showing authority, intimacy, or declaring hostility.

This study utilizes the theoretical framework of taboo and the censoring of language as articulated by Allan and Burridge (2009), which characterizes euphemism as a verbal safety net employed to navigate sensitive subjects, including death and social rage. A study by Dhiaa (2025) explores how euphemism and dysphemism operate in modern public discourse such as the Met Gala, where language is used to mitigate criticism of visual appearance or even attack one's public identity. Technically, euphemism is manifested through diverse strategies, such as figurative language, metaphors, and flippancy (Radjabkulov et al., 2023). This is supported by In line with this, Mberwa (2025) emphasized that the use of euphemisms functions as a crucial face-saving tactic in social interactions to avoid embarrassment and maintain harmonious relationships between speakers. In contrast, dysphemism is analyzed as the 'bad image' of an expression, deliberately intended to produce a negative effect or offensive connotation.

According to Allan and Burridge (2009), Dysphemism acts as a linguistic 'weapon' used to humiliate and degrade an individual. This study's types of dysphemism include numerous types, such as synecdoche, which uses a part of something to insult the whole, and dysphemistic epithets, which commonly use animal names to make the other person feel less human. Recent research by Aziz and Umiera, (2025) corroborates that Characters in environments of rivalry typically employ specific pragmatic strategies to

manage power dynamics and social distance. Their findings indicate that language use serves not merely as a medium for information exchange, but as a strategic instrument for negotiating identity and bargaining power within a hierarchy.

Additionally, the analysis recognizes non-verbal dysphemism, which involves using gestures or physical movements to provoke or insult an opponent without the use of words (Dhiaa, 2025). She further supports by elucidating that calling someone by their first name while they want a professional title (such calling Dr. Smith "Bill") is a smart way to change the power dynamics. The study also looks at cross-cultural dysphemism, which is when some words are insulting in one culture but not in another. By examining these multifaceted categories, ranging from defensive metaphors to offensive synecdoche, this study elucidates the complex interplay between politeness and provocation within the *Black Panther* screenplay. Finally, the study recognizes non-verbal dysphemism, which is employing gestures or bodily movements to insult or incite an opponent (Dhiaa, 2025).

A plethora of studies have investigated the phenomena of euphemism and dysphemism across diverse media. For instance, Sitanggang et al., (2020) analyzed the use of dysphemism in the action-comedy film *Deadpool*, determining that critical language is predominantly utilized to express negative emotions and humor in adult-rated contexts. Aziz & Umiera, (2025) illustrated that action films often utilize positional references and animalistic epithets to highlight power dynamics and interpersonal conflict within the framework of cinematic social hierarchy. Moreover, concerning linguistic mitigation, Mberwa, (2025) found that Haya speakers use euphemisms not only to soften taboos (such as topics of death or sexuality), but also as a pragmatic strategy to avoid embarrassment and maintain harmonious social relationships. He added that without euphemisms, direct communication on sensitive matters would be perceived as a threat to the interlocutor's 'face', which could damage that person's reputation or dignity. This research shows that the use of euphemisms is strongly influenced by cultural norms and respect for others in the community. Culpeper (2011) and Burridge (2012) identified the phenomenon of mock impoliteness in interpersonal relationships, wherein taboo or confrontational language is ironically employed to examine relationship boundaries and enhance solidarity in close contexts.

Notwithstanding the expanding body of literature, a notable research gap persists. Prior

linguistic research often distinguishes the examination of these pragmatic strategies into either concentrating completely on the polite, mitigating characteristics of euphemisms in formal settings or exclusively investigating the offensive aspects of dysphemisms in offensive nature or comedy movies. Moreover, although *Black Panther* has been thoroughly scrutinized for its cultural and semantic depth, there is a lack of research studies investigating the simultaneous functioning of euphemism and dysphemism within its story. The characters in *Black Panther* do not function within a boundary of purely polite or entirely offensive language; they navigate a complex socio-political spectrum where a display of respect can rapidly transition to purposeful provocation based on the ideological considerations involved.

This study addresses this gap by identifying the types of euphemistic and dysphemistic expressions in the *Black Panther* screenplay and analyzing their underlying pragmatic motives. Unlike previous research that treats these strategies in isolation, this study integrates Allan and Burridge's framework with pragmatic theories of face to illuminate how characters utilize linguistic shifts to negotiate power and familial ties. The novelty of this research lies in its dual-focus approach, examining how the strategic variation between shielding and weaponizing language constructs character multidimensionality in an Afrocentric discourse. By integrating Allan and Burridge (2009) Theoretical construct on taboo and censoring language with pragmatic theories of face and politeness, this study illuminates how the main characters utilize semantic shifts to negotiate power, family ties, and political provocation. By investigating these linguistic phenomena, this article ultimately emphasizes how the strategic shift or variation between euphemism and dysphemism constructs the multidimensionality of the characters, reflecting broader real-world ideological negotiations.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design with a focus on content analysis to examine the pragmatic functions of language in Ryan Coogler's *Black Panther* (2018). The primary data source is the official screenplay written by Ryan Coogler and Joe Robert Cole. In regards with the sampling, the researchers employed an exhaustive sampling technique to ensure comprehensive data coverage. The initial corpus consisted of all dialogue lines within the screenplay. These were systematically screened based on Allan and Burridge's (2009) taxonomy

of euphemisms and dysphemisms. A total of 12 linguistic items were identified as meeting the criteria for strategic politeness (euphemism) or provocation (dysphemism). The selection was focused on dialogues involving key sociopolitical interactions to ensure the data remained relevant to the research objectives. (Astuti, et al., 2025), wherein the researchers gathered materials from books, journals, scientific publications, and official film scripts accessible online to ensure the authenticity of the data analyzed.

The primary unit of analysis in this study is the individual utterance or conversational turn within the screenplay that contains euphemistic or dysphemistic expressions. To select the data, a purposive sampling technique was employed (Patton, M. Q. 2015). Out of the initial raw data, 12 representative dialogue exchanges were selected based on specific inclusion criteria: (1) the utterance must occur during a significant sociopolitical negotiation or conflict, and (2) it must explicitly demonstrate a pragmatic function of either mitigating a face-threatening act (shielding) or provoking an interlocutor (weaponizing). Casual dialogues lacking ideological or power-play significance were excluded. The data collection method was carried out through multiple systematic phases. *First*, the researchers conducted cinematic observations by watching the film in every aspect to capture the situational context and interpersonal dynamics in language use. *Second*, the phase continued with text identification through an in-depth study of the film script to determine the level of linguistic relevance and suitability with the applied theoretical framework. *Third*, the researchers applied note-taking techniques to search for, identify, and classify dialogue excerpts containing elements of euphemism and dysphemism based on the categories developed by (Allan & Burridge, 2009). This aligns with the idea asserted by Nasuli, et al (2025) who stated that qualitative research involves collecting descriptive data from written and spoken words and observed behavior to investigate human complexity, including understanding communication.

The data were analyzed using an interactive model of qualitative analysis, consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: data classification, description and synthesis (Miles, et al., 2014). First, the researchers classified the data by categorizing all collected findings into euphemism types, such as metaphor, circumlocution, and flippancy, as well as dysphemism types, including epithets, synecdoche, and dysphemism. Second, the

pragmatic motive behind each expression was analyzed by considering the immediate conversational context and the power relations between the characters. The findings were synthesized to determine how these linguistic choices reflect the broader themes of identity and political tension within the film.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed researcher triangulation and peer debriefing. The data were cross-checked by the research team to reach a consensus on the categorization of euphemisms and dysphemisms, minimizing individual subjectivity. Furthermore, an inter-coder reliability check was conducted during the initial coding phase to ensure consistent application of

the theoretical framework.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis identified a total of 12 representative linguistic items from the Black Panther screenplay that explicitly manifest the strategic use of euphemism and dysphemism in sociopolitical navigation. The findings indicate a significant dominance of euphemisms (8 items) compared to dysphemisms (4 items). This indicates that characters in the Wakanda narrative prioritize mitigating linguistic strategies using euphemism as a 'Shield' and dysphemism as a 'Weapon'. The distribution of these items is summarized in the following Table.

Table 1. Distribution of Euphemistic and Dysphemistic Strategies

Category	Linguistic Strategy	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Euphemism	Metaphor	3	25.0%
	Flippancy	3	25.0%
	Figurative Expression	2	16.7%
<i>Sub-total</i>		8	66.7%
Dysphemism	Synecdoche	2	16.7%
	Non-verbal Gestures	2	16.7%
<i>Sub-total</i>		4	33.3%
Total		12	100%

The distribution presented in Table 1 provides a quantitative foundation for the subsequent qualitative analysis. While the numerical data highlight the prevalence of specific strategies, the pragmatic motives behind these choices require a more nuanced examination within the film's sociopolitical context.

Types of Euphemism: The Linguistic Shield

The data shows that euphemisms account for 66.7% of the total findings. Characters primarily utilize metaphor and flippancy to navigate high-pressure political situations. Metaphors allow for the discussion of sensitive state matters without causing direct offense, while flippancy is used as a social buffer to maintain harmony among peers. These strategies function as shields that protect the speaker's and hearer's face during diplomatic negotiations. Euphemisms in this study are categorized into several primary types that function as a 'shield' to avoid offense and preserve social 'face'.

Figurative expression: Elevating national status and dignity

This category is employed to emphasize or dramatize objects that are regarded as sacred or significant to Wakandan identity. This can be proven from the following excerpts.

Excerpt one: "*The strongest substance in the universe.*"

Excerpt two: "*A plant that granted him superhuman strength, speed, and instinct.*"

The phrase '*the strongest substance in the universe*' functions as a figurative expression using hyperbolic reinforcement. Linguistically, this construction is considered redundant because the superlative 'strongest' already denotes a peak physical property; however, the addition of the spatial scope 'in the universe' serves a strategic pragmatic purpose. In the context of Black Panther, this phrase does not just describe a physical property of Vibranium; it also serves as an ideological shield. The speaker creates a story of Wakanda's immortality by making the substance seem like it is better than anything else in the universe. This aligns with Allan and Burridge (2009) theory on euphemistic elevation, where language is used to 'exaggerate' or 'mystify' a topic to defend national interests and keep threats from outside the country away. Instead of providing a technical or mundane scientific explanation, the figurative choice creates a 'mythos' around the resource, effectively navigating the balance between national pride and defensive denial. Furthermore, the phrase '*a plant that granted superhuman strength*' (excerpt two) is an example of exaggerated figurative language meant to build an ideological framework of Wakandan greatness. This corresponds with Gómez's (2012) claim that euphemisms function as cognitive-pragmatic tools for regulating ideological interpretations.

While figurative expressions serve to enhance the perceived power and sanctity of

Wakandan identity through hyperbolic support, the linguistic shielding is also evident in more nuanced forms of conceptual substitution. Beyond mere exaggeration, the dialogue frequently employs indirect references that rely on shared cognitive relationships to keep sensitive information. This leads to the next category, Metaphor.

Metaphor: Acting as a verbal safety net in political negotiations

The purpose of using metaphors is to hide the actual meaning by making it seem similar to something else. This lets characters discuss complicated or dangerous situations by relating them to things that are easier to understand or less scary. Below are the excerpts taken from the Black Panther Movie.

Excerpt three: *"I'mma take it off your hands for you."*

Excerpt four: *"That's just a taste."*

In the story of Black Panther, metaphors do more than just make the dialogue sound better. They function as a vital "verbal safety net," which makes difficult conversations easier to follow. For instance, the phrase *'take it off your hands'* (Excerpt 4) serves as a 'linguistic shield' (Allan & Burrige, 2009) by framing a heavy political responsibility as a mere physical burden. The speaker can negotiate control without hurting the other person's 'face' by changing the subject from the abstract weight of power to a real object. This strategic indirectness is similar to (Mberwa, 2025) point that being indirect is important for maintaining one's reputation in complicated political circles, in which what is said and what is meant often have to go different ways to keep things polite.

Additionally, sensory metaphors such as 'just a taste' (Excerpt 8) function as creative "cognitive-pragmatic instruments" for framing a specific ideology (Casas Gómez, 2012). By describing the reveal of massive technological secrets as a tiny culinary "taste," the speaker reduces the actual significance of the information being shared. This shift creates a protective shield for the nation's integrity while keeping up a polite appearance of cooperation. Rather than relying on technical explanations that could potentially reveal, this metaphor allows characters to navigate social boundaries with a carefully measured transparency. Ultimately, these linguistic choices demonstrate that metaphors are not merely stylistic; they are strategic tools used to balance the complex tensions between political survival, familial loyalty, and global duty. While metaphors provide a conceptual layer of protection by replacing sensitive meanings, the characters in Black Panther also manage the weight of a situation by adjusting their tone.

Sometimes, the most effective way to handle a tense or serious moment is to take away its formality. This brings us to Flippancy.

Flippancy: Reducing interpersonal tension via informal humor

Flippancy is a strategy that uses casual or even irreverent language to mask negative emotions or downplay the gravity of a situation (Battistella et al., 1993). Below are the details of flippancy taken from the excerpts of Black Panther movie.

Excerpt five: *"It's two Grace Jones looking chicks."*

Excerpt six: *"Young T'Chaka's mood darkens."*

In excerpt five, for example, the informal name 'chicks' is used to characterize the strong Dora Milaje by comparing them to the actress Grace Jones. The speaker makes the threat seem less real by calling elite warriors something informal and pop culture-related. This utilization presents an important contrast to the findings of (Sitanggang et al., 2020), who determined that informal or disrespectful language in films such as *Deadpool* is predominantly utilized for comedic effect and the expression of negative emotions. In the sociopolitical context of Black Panther, this casual humor serves as a purposeful "linguistic shield" (Allan & Burrige, 2006). It allows the speaker to hide their fear and control the power dynamics amongst people without looking weak.

Similarly, stating that an internal state is a *'mood [that] darkens'* (excerpt six) is a softer, more expressive way to write about strong anger. This flippant personification gives the reader some space of emotion instead of a harsh or direct description of King T'Chaka's anger. This directly aligns with Allan and Burrige's (2009) theoretical framework, which identifies euphemisms as a verbal safety net used to navigate and censor sensitive subjects, particularly 'social rage'. Furthermore, by choosing not to describe the King as aggressively losing his temper, the narrative employs linguistic indirectness to protect his elegant reputation. This confirms Mberwa (2025) claim that indirectness is essential in dramatic narratives to prevent actions that could hurt a character's reputation or social 'face'. Ultimately, flippancy in Wakanda is not simply careless talk. It's a practical way to keep things balanced when stress levels rise. Another type of Euphemism emerge is the Circumlocutions. While flippancy controls the mood of a discussion or conversation in the movie, the characters in Black Panther also use a more formal and structured way to hide things. This brings us to the last type of euphemism, namely, circumlocutions.

Circumlocutions: Avoiding directness to maintain

diplomatic formality

This strategy uses indirect or descriptive terms instead of directly mentioning things, especially technical, sensitive, or serious or difficult ones. The data evidences are illustrated below.

Excerpt seven: "*The lens on a surveillance camera at the corner of the room looks on.*"

Excerpt eight: *The head of the border tribe.*"

In the technologically advanced world of Wakanda, circumlocution serves as a vital tool for maintaining professional distance and operational privacy. For instance, rather than using a common term like 'CCTV,' the script describes the device as '*the lens on a surveillance camera at the corner of the room [that] looks on*' (Excerpt seven). By focusing on the 'lens' and the act of it 'looking on', the language shifts from a simple piece of equipment to an omnipresent, almost sentient guardian of the state. This phrase serves as a 'linguistic shield.' (Dhiaa, 2025), navigating the sensitive nature of Wakanda's security systems without revealing its mystery or exposing its technical simplicity to outsiders.

Additionally, referring to a leader as 'the head of the border tribe' (Excerpt eight) instead of using a personal name or a generic title reinforces the kingdom's rigid tribal structure. This selection of language raises the individual's position to a strategic function within the nation's defense system. This focus on functional titles directly echoes the findings of Aziz and Umiera (2025), who argue that cinematic dialogue often meticulously constructs linguistic markers of social hierarchy to underscore the power dynamics within a fictional society. This emphasis on functional titles establishes the character's identity by emphasizing the title over the individual, which reflects their loyalty and status within the state.

This strategy also supports Crespo-Fernández, (2014) who argue that euphemisms in contemporary media are not merely polite substitutions, but sophisticated "cognitive-pragmatic instruments" for ideological framing. It is also consistent with (Mberwa, 2025) emphasis on the necessity of linguistic indirectness in dramatic narratives; by maintaining a formal and indirect attitude, characters maintain a professional manner and 'face' that are appropriate for a technologically advanced society. In the end, these circumlocutions function as a formal barrier, assuring that the narrative's protection of Wakandan life is treated with the respect and privacy it requires.

Dysphemism Type as a Verbal Weapon

Dysphemisms constitute 33.3% of the identified items. These are manifested through synecdoche and non-verbal gestures, which serve

as "weapons" to provoke or intimidate. Such expressions are strategically deployed during moments of open conflict or when a character intends to challenge the established social order, effectively signaling a shift from politeness to provocation. While the different categories of euphemisms illustrate how the characters in Black Panther employ language as a 'shield' to maintain dignity, secrets of the state, and social harmony, the linguistic dynamics in this film extend beyond mere mitigation efforts. This functions as linguistic 'weapons' designed to confront, provoke, or deliberately weaken or even degrade the 'face' of others. Based on the theoretical framework and the data provided, here is the elaboration for the first few categories of dysphemism:

Synecdoche: Reducing rivals' identity to specific negative characteristics

In Allan and Burridge's (2009) In the taxonomy of dysphemism, synecdoche is seen as a linguistic strategy of reducing a person's identity to a particular part or attribute, often to degrade the subject's social or human status. The following are the instances.

Excerpt nine: "Okoye (30s, head of the Dora Milaje)"

In Excerpt above, identifying a character purely by their title or 'head' status, while functional, can act as a synecdoche that subordinates personal identity to a rigid role. This supports the notion that cinematic language often uses these reductions to underscore a 'deeply layered sociolinguistic landscape' where individuals are defined by their utility to the state. The label of Okoye as 'head of the Dora Milaje' serves as a synecdoche that reduces personal identity to functional or occupational identity. Although this may appear to be a technical description, in dysphemism analysis, substituting an individual's name with their role or position is classified as identity reduction. This underscores that within Wakanda's sociopolitical framework, an individual's utility to the state exceeds their personal existence.

This strategy supports Aziz and Umiera (2025) argument that action films frequently employ positional references to individuals to reinforce social hierarchies. Widayanti argues that the affirmation of a character's strategic power incurs a cost: the individual's identity is marginalized, leading the audience to view the character not merely as a person, but as an essential component of the state's military apparatus.

Non-Verbal Dysphemism: Gestures or physical actions to convey provocative, judgmental, or aggressive meanings

While linguistic reductions like synecdoche effectively diminish individual identity

to uphold rigid social structures, the dysphemistic landscape of Black Panther extends far beyond the spoken word. In many demanding or difficult events, the most powerful 'weapons' of defiance are not found in the dialogue itself, but in the silent yet aggressive semiotics of the body. This leads us to Non-Verbal Dysphemism, where provocation is manifested through gestures and bodily movements that signal an intentional violation of propriety or a direct challenge to established power. Below are the instances.

Excerpt ten: "*"A child who scoffs at tradition." / "The entire room scoffs at this".*

Excerpt eleven: "*M'Baku grins and places a wooden gorilla mask over his face*".

In Wakanda's sociopolitics, where tradition and ritual are respected, a simple gesture can serve as a significant insult. For example, the act of 'scoffing' at tradition (Excerpt ten) is an effective nonverbal dysphemism. The characters engage in purposeful provocation by dismissing a sacred ceremony with a sarcastic sound or facial expression, effectively disrupting the formal environment. Furthermore, M'Baku's actions in Excerpt twelve, in which he '*grins and places a wooden gorilla mask over his face*', are a visual offensive on the solemnity of the royal court. Instead of engaging in a verbal debate, M'Baku mocks the current order with his body and a symbolic object.

This finding supports Dhiaa (2025) claim that non-verbal cues in cinematic narratives serve as 'thoughtful strategies to change power dynamics' without the need of dialogue. Miller states that these gestures act as a sudden tear in the 'verbal safety shield' making a structured ceremony into a place of open ideological hostility. This also connects back to Battistella et al., (1993) who describe dysphemism as a weapon. In this case, the weapon is the character's physical presence and their refusal to follow the state's expected rules of behavior.

Affectionate dysphemism: Utilising impolite terms to show intimacy or camaraderie among trusted acquaintances

Dysphemisms are often used as 'weapons' to attack the other person's face, but the script for Black Panther sometimes uses a unique pragmatic phenomenon called affectionate dysphemism (Allan & Burrige, 2009). This strategy happens when a word that is usually inappropriate or harsh is used in a certain situation to show closeness, deep love, or a shared past between characters. In these instances, the sting of the dysphemism is neutralized by the relationship's emotional depth, transforming a literal threat into a profound

affirmation of a bond. An emotional illustration of this can be obviously seen in the following excerpt.

Excerpt twelve: "Would *you kill me, my love?*"

The term "kill" is profoundly dysphemistic, signifying the most extreme act of violence and the end of life. By juxtaposing the harsh verb with the term of affection "my love," the speaker constructs a linguistic contradiction. In the intense conflict between Okoye and W'Kabi, this question does not serve as a literal inquiry regarding murder; rather, it acts as an expression of their mutual commitment.

Allan and Burrige (2009) The theoretical framework posits that affectionate dysphemism or playful abuse serves as an effective emotional support system. It illustrates that the relationship between the speaker and the listener is sufficiently robust to persevere the practice of taboo or confrontational language. This scene employs the term "*kill*" to recognize the tragic nature of their conflicting positions while concurrently using their romantic past to soften the hostility of the situation.

This finding corresponds with Culpeper's (2011) notion of *mock impoliteness* or banter, wherein linguistic strategies typically regarded as offensive are employed to enhance 'positive face' and strengthen group or pair solidarity. Furthermore, this dynamic echoes the research of Burrige (2012), who argues that using taboo language in intimate settings serves to test the boundaries of a relationship. By asking if the person who loves them could also be the one to kill them, the character forces an acknowledgment of their deep connection amidst the chaos of war. In the end, this affectionate euphemism serves a humanist purpose in the story. It puts away the formality associated with military roles and makes the characters face their own truth. It shows that even the most violent words can be used to express a broken heart in Wakanda's sociolinguistic landscape. Even though the words used are cruel (like the word 'kill' uttered by Okoye), it is not used to hurt. Instead, it is used to show how broken their hearts are and how strong their love is amid impossible situations.

The findings of this study reveal a strategic dichotomy in the use of euphemism and dysphemism within the Black Panther screenplay. Unlike previous studies that often focus on these strategies as mere linguistic decorations (Mustofa, M. A, 2022; Radjabkulov, 2023), the current analysis demonstrates their role as functional instruments in sociopolitical navigation. Through this lens, the dominance of euphemism is not merely a matter of politeness, but a deliberate effort to manage 'face' in a high-stakes diplomatic environment. Conversely, the deployment of

dysphemism serves as a calculated verbal weapon to disrupt power structures when diplomatic shielding is no longer viable. Conversely, the use of dysphemisms (33.3%) through synecdoche and non-verbal gestures represents a deliberate breach of politeness to signal provocation. These 'verbal weapons' are utilized primarily by characters challenging the status quo, such as Erik Killmonger. This aligns with Ibrahim and Al-Azzawi's (2024) observation that dysphemism is a tool for delegitimizing an opponent's power. The transition from "shield" to "weapon" occurs when diplomatic boundaries are no longer sufficient to contain existential threats, illustrating a pragmatic shift from preservation to confrontation.

Collectively, the interplay between these strategies suggests that linguistic choices in Black Panther are not merely stylistic but deeply ideological. Characters prioritize euphemistic 'shields' during internal governance to preserve national unity, yet pivot to dysphemistic 'weapons' when facing external or existential threats. This strategic shifting reflects a complex navigation of identity, where language serves as the primary tool for both protection and provocation in an Afrocentric sociopolitical context.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the use of euphemism and dysphemism in Black Panther represents a strategic linguistic dichotomy. Euphemisms function as 'shields' to maintain diplomatic decorum and protect social "face" during internal governance, while dysphemisms act as 'weapons' to challenge power structures and signal ideological shifts. These findings move beyond mere stylistic analysis, demonstrating that linguistic choices are deeply embedded in the sociopolitical navigation of identity within Afrocentric discourse. The results of this study have significant implications for applied linguistics and pedagogy. In the context of English language education, these findings suggest that learners should be exposed to the pragmatic nuances of 'shielding' and 'weaponizing' language. Incorporating cinematic discourse into the classroom can help students understand how politeness and provocation are used to negotiate power in real-world-like scenarios. This encourages a shift from purely grammatical competence to a more critical sociopragmatic awareness, enabling learners to navigate complex intercultural interactions more effectively.

Theoretically, these results strengthen Allan and Burridge's framework by demonstrating that the boundary between politeness and provocation is fluid and dependent on ideological considerations. The practical implications of this

research emphasize the importance of understanding the sociopragmatic context in translating or analyzing complex Afrofuturistic discourse. While this research has comprehensively identified various linguistic strategies, this analysis is limited to film scripts and cinematic observations. Therefore, future research is recommended to explore audience responses to the use of these masking strategies or compare them with films in similar genres to identify universal patterns in provocative and polite communication across modern media or consider a multimodal approach, incorporating visual semiotics and prosodic features to provide a more holistic understanding of how these strategies are performed. Furthermore, as this study was restricted to a single cinematic work, subsequent research could employ a comparative analysis across different film genres or cultural contexts to further validate the 'shield and Weapon' framework in broader sociolinguistic settings.

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