

# The Euphemistic Value of Some Romanian Neological Phraseologisms

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**Abstract:** This paper investigates Romanian neological phraseologisms used euphemistically, which are analysed from the viewpoint of the sources and fields of use in Romanian.

Our approach started from a few theoretical observations regarding the semantic possibilities of neologisms, with special reference to the expressivity of the phraseological neologisms with euphemistic value. The first part of the paper deals with the stylistic markers of phraseological euphemisms, as well as with the internal and external strategies through which phraseological neologisms were borrowed into Romanian. Occasional phraseological neologisms pertaining to the journalistic discourse have then been made the major focus through the analysis of the combinatorial techniques within the euphemization process.

The second part of the paper analyses the phraseological representation of inherently euphemistic neologisms, generated by the taboos referring to character flaws, reprehensible behaviour, social condition, as well as the stylistic markers of some phraseological neologisms with euphemistic value pertaining to scientific terminologies like economy, medicine, and the military.

**Keywords:** euphemism, phraseology, neologism, expressivity, discourse.

## 1. Introductory Notions

1. The definitions given throughout time to the term *euphemism* in various linguistic spaces brings to the fore the fact that it was generally assimilated to the field of stylistics without ignoring aspects that pertain to the social, linguistic or pragmatic side. In the Romanian linguistic space, the term under discussion is

mentioned especially in stylistics research papers or in general dictionaries where it is defined as “word or expression that replaces an offending, unpleasant or obscene word or expression in order to tone down the unpleasant effect while preserving the meaning <sup>1</sup>” (Micul Dicționar Academic); “word or expression, which in speech or writing, substitutes an unpleasant, offending, indecent or obscene word or expression, while preserving the meaning parallelism” (DEX (Romanian Explanatory Dictionary), 2016: 396); “a figure of thought used in the following situations: a) to avoid trivial, raw or impudent expressions; b) to avoid insulting expressions or which might be interpreted as such; c) in social or religious taboos, with an onomastic value” (DLS, 2001). The same perception is present in French lexicography, which acted as a model for the Romanian one, or in the English one, or Italian one. Mention must be made, however, that the perspective of the classical rhetoric is supplemented, in more recent works, by the taking into account of the pragmatic perspective: “figure de pensée par laquelle on adoucit ou atténue une idée dont l’expression directe aurait quelque chose de brutal, de déplaisant.” (*Le Trésor de la langue française informatisé*), “figure of speech that consists in the substitution through a word or expression with less favourable implications or less pleasant evocations compared to the proper word, less harsh or offensive, which would designate precisely what it means to say” (*The Oxford English Dictionary*: 1992, apud Seiciuc, 2011: 24), “figura retorica qui consiste nel sostituire, per scrupolo religioso o morale o per riguardi sociali o per altro, l’espressione propria e usuale con altra di significato attenuato” (*Dicționarul Treccani*)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Translations from Romanian into English are always mine.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/eufemismo/>.

Irrespective of the field to which it is assimilated (rhetorical, linguistic or pragmatic) and the criteria taken into account to describe it, all definitions of the term have in common the idea of avoiding/attenuating a negative rendering of a reality (mostly directed at the social meaning) obtained through a change of meaning. In other words, the semantic content of the message harnesses, in the case of the euphemism, linguistic means and discursive techniques subordinated most of the time to the metaphorical language, with the aim of establishing an agreeable communication between the participants in the communicative act. From the point of view of linguistic interaction, we find ourselves on the grounds of positive politeness, of sending a (disagreeable) message without altering the content and offending the recipient, by respecting many principles and rules named by Lakoff (1977) *the rule of formality, hesitation and equality* and, respectively, *the rule of positive politeness* by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987).

## **The Expressivity of the Neologism**

2. As regards the semantic possibilities of the neologism (our understanding of the term is in keeping with Cristian Moroianu's classification, namely that category which includes "[obsolete] words (cultivated terms, socio-historically dependent terms), modern words – standard literary terms, terminology, age dependent and fashion dependent words etc.), recent words – circumscribed to the latest stage of language evolution (as of 1990)", we can notice that this part of the vocabulary, which reflects most vividly the vocabulary dynamics, resorts to set constructions which bring up to date, in a given context, different euphemistic values. A special category of neologisms is represented by *phrasal neologisms* or neo-phrasal terms, defined

by Cristian Moroianu as “phrasal units which, no matter the manner of entering the vocabulary or the manner of formation, belong, chronologically, to the modern age and imply, through their origin or stylistic affiliation, a certain cultural level”.<sup>3</sup>

As regards the difference between phrasal neologisms with euphemistic value and phrasal neologisms proper, the main difference between the two types results, according to Oxana Chira, from the toning down function which they actualize in discourse “determined by observing certain communicative norms which derive from the ethical norms of the social environment, function which is not characteristic of phrasal neologisms proper.”<sup>4</sup>

2.1. Although, in general, neologisms are marked as nil on a stylistic level, “many of them becoming unmarked euphemistic terms in allophonic synonymic series (neutral euphemisms)” (Seiciuc, 2011: 121), there are many situations (as we shall see hereinafter) in which neologisms have either retained the connotations from the original language or developed, within the language, other connotations, as Stelian Dumistrăcel pointed out (2010: 79). As a matter of fact, the classification according to the degree of represented expressivity has led to the identification of more types: *neutral euphemism* or *nil degree euphemism* (Burrige, apud Seiciuc, 2011: 34), *proper euphemism* “neutral from an affective point of view” (Seiciuc, 2011: 34), *poetic euphemism*, “enriched with stylistic meaning”, *ironic euphemism* “stylistic value and positive-ironic connotations” (Seiciuc, 2011: 35), *pseudo-euphemism* “which substitutes a word situated under language interdiction because of an explicit taboo such as socio-political taboos, civic, ethical etc., non-traditional and

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.academia.edu/34714650/Neologismele\\_limbii\\_romane](https://www.academia.edu/34714650/Neologismele_limbii_romane).

<sup>4</sup> [https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag\\_file/13.Despre%20eufemisme%20frazeologie.pdf](https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/13.Despre%20eufemisme%20frazeologie.pdf).

unstabled taboos, subjected to change simultaneously with society dynamics” (Seiciuc, 2011: 35).

Starting from these theoretical observations, we shall carry out in this paper an analysis of the *phrasal neologisms*<sup>5</sup> used with a euphemistic value from the perspective of the source and their usage domains in the Romanian language.

## **Phrasal Neologisms with a Euphemistic Value. Sources and Means of Euphemisation**

2.1.1. As a general observation regarding the way dictionaries indicate register, we have noticed that there are very few permanent traditional euphemisms, marked with the *euf.* abbreviation in Romanian lexicographic works and these are based on sexual-physiological taboos. In most cases, however, the euphemistic value is updated by the context, with the stipulation that, in discursive practice, speakers may often display a limited perception of this value. This fact is due to the usage extension of the term *euphemism* not only to situations in which a prohibited sign is referred to but it also extends to other situations which aim at the ethical code established in a historically constituted community.

The analysis of phrasal constructions that contain neologisms which we selected from various lexicographic works highlighted that:

a) there is a category of neutrally affective neological phrases that are not marked stylistically (set phrases from

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<sup>5</sup> Oxana Chira,  
[https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag\\_file/13.Despre%20eufemisme%20fazeologice.pdf](https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/13.Despre%20eufemisme%20fazeologice.pdf).

scientific terminology, lacking any connotations), which can develop euphemistic values in context;

b) there are neological set phrases marked stylistically and the uses are to be found especially in the informal style: colloquial style, slang, or familiar register. In the second case, the ironic, pejorative, offending connotations etc. have to be linked to the touch of “exoticism” brought by the neologism.

Such connotations are augmented, as we shall see, by the status granted by the affiliation to a relatively limited lexical stock, insufficiently known to speakers, to which a contribution may be brought by a particular sonority brought by the substituted word that belongs to the neologic vocabulary. As proof, there is the expression *colegă de iatac* [chamber-mate], meaning “wife” or “mistress”, discussed by L. Seiciuc (2011: 222) who cites Ștefan Munteanu; the expression is used with the purpose of embellishing the utterance, the resulting comic effects being the outcome of joining together “unusual combinations between archaisms and neologisms”. As regards the stylistic register, it can be noticed that in the colloquial style the prevailing neological phrases include structural terms which belong to the outdated and modern layer while the specialized languages have been enriched with borrowed and lexically copied structures which contain recent neologisms, some not fully adapted by the receiving culture.

2.1.2. As regards the sources whereby the neological phrases with a euphemistic value enter the Romanian language, we highlight as a particular device the negation of a term through antonymic structures: for example, *prost*, *stupid*, *dobitoc* [twat, stupid, dullard] etc. are replaced by the expression “*lipsit de inteligență*” [lacking intelligence], “*bătaie*” [beating/thrashing] is substituted by “*acțiune disciplinară*” [disciplinary action]. In other cases, the development of the phraseological family is called on by resorting

to synonyms which belong to different stylistic register, but these will be selected in speech according to the context: “familie săracă” [poor family – “familie vulnerabilă” [(socially) vulnerable family]. Another internal device of generating euphemisms is, as L. Seiciuc mentions (*op. cit.*, 211), the hypotaxis involving either a genitive, as in “Prințul Întunericului” [the Prince of Darkness], “Fiara Apocalipsei” [the Beast of the Apocalypse], or a direct object, as in “a face o întrerupere de sarcină” [to terminate a pregnancy], or “a schimba apa la canar” [to change the water for the canary] (i.e. “to urinate”).

The discursive technique of euphemism frequently generates occasional euphemisms in the public discourse, which is also mirrored in terminology: *political euphemism* (Andrei Cornea, Rodica Zafiu), *politeness euphemism* (Rodica Zafiu) and *subversive euphemism for identification/justification purpose* (Dumistrăcel, 2010: 85). In relation to the last type, Stelian Dumistrăcel points out that this can designate any class of “malhonnête” euphemism and offers as example some ‘portraits’ of some neologisms used as euphemisms in three functional language registers (employed with subversive intentions): from the political discourse “as discourse of institutionalized authority” (terms such as *exploatație* [exploitation], *arierate* [arrears], *remaniere* [reshuffling]), from the legal-administrative one (*eutanasiere* [mercy killing], *toaletare* [dressing up]), from advertising (adj. *etnobotanic* [ethnobotanical]).

Regarding the deliberate means of achieving euphemisation by resorting to phrasal constructions, our selection concentrates on the journalistic discourse as one that has a decisive role in spreading and imposing opinions. If, from a technical point of view, we can observe that most often euphemisms are obtained by substitutions at lexical level, based on a semantic and phonetic compatibility between the lexemes

from the structure of the stable unions, from the perspective of the frame of reference the political domain is best represented: Victor Ponta, “un *necrofil* de școală nouă” [a new-age *necrophiliac*] (AC, no. 33/2012, pg. 4), “*Pedagogi* de taxă nouă” [*New-tax* tutors] (AC, no. 23/2005, pg. 14) instead of “Un pedagog de școală nouă” [*New-age* tutors]; “Ministerul fără *portofel*” [The Minister without *pocketbook/wallet*] (AC, no. 50/2000, pg. 9) instead of “ministru fără portofoliu” [The Minister without *portfolio*]; “Ministrul *Intestinelor*” [minister of *inner affairs / intestines / innards*] (AC, no. 45/2011, pg. 6) instead of “ministrul Internelor” [minister of *internal affairs*]; “Ministerul de *Externări*” [minister of *discharge affairs*] (AC, no. 16/2000, pg. 4) instead of “Ministerul de Externe” [ministry of external affairs].

Although there are in the Romanian language, as Rodica Zafiu observed, „some very subtle and transparent euphemistic substitutions” (for example *cocoa* in the expression *a se face de cacao* – translated as *to embarrass oneself/to make a fool/arse of oneself*) – (Zafiu, 2010: 82), quite often the euphemisation process attained through several combinative ways (addition, substitution, suppression, permutation) results, at the same time, in both positive and negative connotations.

We present some examples in which the change of the canonical statement leads, by resorting to paronyms, to the introduction of a neologism with a diagnostic role in the newly achieved statement: *Erori au fost, erori sunt încă* [*Errors* have been, *errors* are still] (AC, no. 8/2010, pg. 10) instead of “*Heroes* have been, *heroes* are still”; *Bonele intenții* [the baby-sitting intentions] (Cațavencii, February, 2017) versus “the noble intentions”; *Toxina Boxelinică* [Boxelinic toxin] (Cațavencii, December, 2019) instead of “Botulinum toxin”, *Fruetul poprit* [*the foreclosed fruit*] (Cațavencii, September, 2019) versus



“Fructul oprit” [the forbidden fruit], *Carasul din mânecă* [the bass up one’s sleeve] (*Cațavencii*, April, 2019) versus “The ace up one’s sleeve”. Sometimes, the euphemistic meaning is achieved through adhering to the structure of the phrasal expression (for example, „ce puii mei”), through “the segmentation of the sound chain” reaching the structure “celularu’ meu” (*cf.* what my cell (phone) – an expression used by a comedy group from Romania.)<sup>6</sup>

2.1.3. As regards the external source, this is represented by set constructions in which we find expressions, phrases, collocations etc. which entered the language as a result of loans at various times, especially from French and English. In respect of the euphemistic value, this is updated by the context: *tabula rasa* (< lat. *tabula rasa*), *foc prietenesc* (<engl. *friendly fire*) “weapon fire coming from one’s own side that causes accidental injury or death to one’s own forces”<sup>7</sup>, *axa răului* (<engl. *axis of evil*), *pauză bio* (<engl. *bio break*) “a break for a short time in a meeting, conference etc. so that people can go to the bathroom”; *fratele cel mare* (<engl. Big Brother)<sup>8</sup>, *pierderi colaterale* (“victim inocente” i.e., innocent victims) (<engl. *collateral damage*), *țări în curs de dezvoltare* (<engl. *developing countries*), similar to the range of „third-world countries” meaning *underdeveloped countries*, expressions which are loan translations or calques from English.

Referring to loan translations and the influence of the French language over the Romanian language, Theodor Hristea

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<sup>6</sup> Constantin-Ioan Mladin, *O perspectivă sociolingvistică asupra primului nostru dicționar urban. Reflecții lexicologice și aprecieri lexicografice*, p. 206. [http://old.upm.ro/facultati\\_departamente/stiinte\\_litere/conferinte/situl\\_integrare\\_europeana/Lucrari2/Constantin-Ioan%20Mladin.pdf](http://old.upm.ro/facultati_departamente/stiinte_litere/conferinte/situl_integrare_europeana/Lucrari2/Constantin-Ioan%20Mladin.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.lexico.com/definition/friendly\\_fire](https://www.lexico.com/definition/friendly_fire).

<sup>8</sup> Apud Oxana Chira, *Eufemismul în limbajul actual*, [http://dspace.usarb.md:8080/jspui/bitstream/123456789/3343/1/Chira%20autor\\_eferat.pdf](http://dspace.usarb.md:8080/jspui/bitstream/123456789/3343/1/Chira%20autor_eferat.pdf) p. 15)

points out the existence of a particular type of loan translation used metaphorically and gave as example the rich euphemistic range for „old man” (Rom. *bătrân*): “vârstă venerabilă, persoană în etate/cu experiență de viață/de vârstă respectabilă” [of respectable age, elderly/aged person, life-experienced person] are ways of referring to the age of a very old man, the expression “încărcat de ani” [ridden/loaded with years] is formed after the French model *chargé d’années* (Stanciu-Istrate, 2006: 242). Of the phraseological neologisms with the status of loan translation mentioned by Marian Stanciu-Istrate we retain the following: noun phrases – *sexul slab* i.e., *the weaker sex* (<fr. *le sexe faible*) for “woman”; *stoarcere de bani* i.e., *extortion* (<fr. *extorsion d’argent*); adjective phrases – *de prost gust* i.e., *bad taste* (<fr. *de mauvais goût*); verb phrases – *a cădea în apatie* – *feel the blues* (<fr. *tomber dans l’apathie*), *a cădea în tristare* – *become saddened/downhearted* (<fr. *tomber dans le malheur*), *a da semne de oboseală* – *become exhausted* (<fr. *donner des signes de fatigue*) etc.

### **Phrasal Neologisms with a Euphemistic Value. Fields of Use**

2.2. Regarding the field of use for phrasal neologisms, these do not have any restrictions being easy to locate both in the private speech (and in its categories) and in the institutionalized public one (see the distinctions established by Stelian Dumistrăcel, 2006: 31-51), regardless of whether their foundation is a (religious, sexual, physiological) taboo or they are generated by a ethical-social code imposed by the community. We offer next some examples: *awareness-raising campaign* (Rom. “campanie de sensibilizare”) for *propaganda*, *absent parents* (Rom. “părinți absenți”) for “parents who have abandoned their children”, *deficit in trade-mark image* (Rom. “deficit al imaginii de marcă”) for

“bad reputation”, *to go to play poker* (Rom. “[a merge la poker](#)”) for “to steal”, *hearing impairment* (Rom. “[deficiente de auz](#)”) for “deafness”, *conviviality space* (Rom. “[spatiu de convivialitate](#)”) for “café, *to top it all off/to add salt to it all* (Rom. “(ultima bomboană (de) pe colivă” (fig.)), *employee of the sanitation service* (Rom. “angajat la serviciul salubrității”) for “refuse collector”, *love child* (Rom. “copil natural”) for “bastard child/illegitimate child”, “child born outside of marriage”; *opinion changer* (Rom. “schimbător de păreri”) for “large baseball bat held in the car”, *to send someone to the basement* (Rom. “a băga la subsol”) for “to murder”, *mobile set of teeth* (Rom. “dantură mobilă”) for “dental prosthesis”, *local baron* (Rom. “baron local”) for “person in an important public office at local level who uses his/her power to gain improper benefits or to do unlawful businesses”, *price deregulation* (Rom. “liberalizarea prețurilor”) for “price increase”, *to have more metres on the bill* (Rom. “a avea mai mulți metri pe factură”) for “to have many years of imprisonment”, *mountain resort* (Rom. “stațiunea de la munte”) for “prison cell”, *experienced sly dogs* (Rom. “șmecheri cu legitimație”) for “dreaded crooks”.

2.2.1. In respect of the taboos referring to the religious field we record the following examples from the rich series of phrasal neologisms with euphemistic value relating to the end of life (i.e., death): “a trece în neant” [to pass away], “a plăti tributul morții (sau naturii)” [to pay death (or nature) its due] for “to die”. Others are based on the fear taboo and have to do with avoiding to utter the name of the devil: *Prințul întunericului* [the Prince of Darkness].

2.2.2. The sexual taboo perceived as a generator of aversion knows also phrasal representations in which we encounter neologisms, especially in slang: “a naviga în strâmtoarea Dardanele” [to sail through the Dardanelles], “act de iubire” [love

act] for “to have sexual relations” (Volceanov, 2006: 173), “damă de consumație” [a lady of pleasure] for “prostitute”, “taxi girl” for “a prostitute waiting for clients in a taxi-cab”, “a face trotuarul” [to walk the streets], “a atrage clienți pe stradă” [to pick up clients], “vechitură abandonată” [aged broad] for “prostitute”.

Analyzing the matter of stylistic affiliation, G. I. Tohăneanu notices that many neologisms originate in metaphors : “neologisms constitute, in a large number of cases , a ‘cemetery’ of images” (1995: 5-7). We also note in the field under discussion the case of the neologism “pelvis” which, in Latin, had the meaning “washbasin, basin, bucket” or “penis”, which meant “brush”, for which, in slang, neological euphemistic constructions are generally used – *cometă cu coadă* [comet with a tail], *flautul fermecat* [the magic flute], or, for the collocation “erect penis” it is being used the euphemistic term *schimbător de viteze* [joy stick]. To the same lexical family of the word “penis” and for the same usage register belong, as Bălă Laurențiu pointed out in the discussion about some failed euphemisms in the contemporary Romanian language, some expressions with the basic lexeme “pix” [push-button pencil / pen] that occurs in expressions both with indefinite and definite article: “mă doare-n pix” with the literal meaning of “I have got a pain in my pen” but the figurative meaning “I couldn’t care less, I could not be bothered” and “du-te-n pixul meu” with the literal meaning “go (in)to my pen” but the figurative meaning “go away”, “sod off”, “go to hell”<sup>9</sup>. In other cases we witness, as the above author notices, the substitution of an expression such as “toilet room”, which initially

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<sup>9</sup>[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327891426\\_Despre\\_unele\\_eufemism\\_e\\_ratate\\_ale\\_limbii\\_romane\\_de\\_azi](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327891426_Despre_unele_eufemism_e_ratate_ale_limbii_romane_de_azi))

had a euphemistic value, with other collocations that have lost this value: *water closet* and then *rest room*.<sup>10</sup>

Structures referring to sexuality can be used with a similar value, for example those referring to the reproductive functions: *the tender days* (Rom. “zilele delicate”) for “menstruation”, *Abyssinian medal* for “undone zipper” (not recorded in dictionaries). To this category belong also the types of taboos and neological set phrases that come from the physiological domain, referring to physiological excretion – “a duce anaconda la apă” [to take the snake to the water], “a sta pe tron(ul lui David)” [to sit on the throne of David] for “to defecate”, or some xenisms<sup>11</sup> such as *in vitro*, *coitus interruptus*.

2.2.3. Human flaws, reprehensible behavior, being based on taboos generated by tact (Stephen Ullman, 1962), have also been subjected to mitigated, euphemistic expressions in which some unpleasant situations are avoided and that is why many of them have an expressive value and are often marked by humor without lacking criticism. The lexical material recorded in dictionaries highlights the fact that most phrasal neologisms with euphemistic value belong to folk speech, colloquial speech, familiar speech and slang. These have the function of attenuating, disguising, and assessing as R. Bugadov, quoted by Oxana Chira, noticed “they

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<sup>10</sup> There are situations in which we witness semantic changes from the literal meaning to the figurative meaning: incapacitated person/handicapped person/debilitated person/person with limited mobility, which initially designated “a person with a physical deficiency” has come to signify “an idiot, an imbecile, a retard) (Stephen Ullmann, apud Seiciuc, 2011: 234).

<sup>11</sup> The term xenism is a rare synonym of *foreignism* (<http://www.glottopedia.org/index.php/Xenism>). A *foreignism* is a loanword that has not been adapted and integrated into the recipient language at all and that is not (yet) perceived as belonging to it fully (<http://www.glottopedia.org/index.php/Foreignism>).

enter the literary language and enrich the vocabulary, extend the polysemy, enrich the number of homonyms”<sup>12</sup>.

From the range of phrasal neologisms with euphemistic value we mention the following categories that refer to: *physical flaws* – *nas acvilin* [aquiline nose, hooked nose]; *moral flaws* – lie: *a o da în S.F.-uri, a tăia la crampoane* (fig.) [to talk Sci-Fi, to cut studs (fig.)] for „to tell lies”; *drunkunness* – *amicul lui Bachus, a fi șifonat nițel, a avea grade* [Bachus’s friend, be slightly crinckly, to have some extra percentage]; *stupidity* – *unghi obtuz* [blunted angle] (fig.: about people) stupid, dim-witted, empty-headed; *a avea lilieci la mansardă* [to have bats (birds) in the attic] for to be stupid or insane; ”; *a se uita ca mâța (sau pisica) în calendar* [to stare at the calendar like a cat] for „to look unknowledgeably at something”; *hypocrisy* – *a vărsa lacrimi de crocodil* [to shed crocodile tears, to have a false cry]; *arrogance* – *a-și da talente* [to show off, to be conceited, full of oneself]; *fury* – *pachet de nervi* [a bundle of nerves, an angry person who is continuously wired up/edgy]; *laziness* – *a arde gazul degeaba (sau de pomană), a sta ca frigiderul la vânzare* [to waste fuel, to be like a fridge on sale, to do nothing]; *loss of control* – *a-și pierde busola* to lose one’s compass [to get confused, to lose one’s right mind, to lose the sense of balance]; *theft* – *a umbla cu mega* [to be dishonest, to be involved in illegal business]; *thief* – *mecanic de buzunare* [pocket mechanic]; *dissimulation* – *a se face chinez sau (mai adesea) a (o) face pe chinezul* [to pretend to be Chinese (fam.), to pretend not to understand/not to know anything/not to have an idea what it is about]; *importunity* – *a călca (pe cineva) pe bombeu sau a turti bombeul (cuiva)* [to trouble/to annoy someone, to step on someone’s toes];

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<sup>12</sup> *Stable euphemisms vs. occasional euphemisms*,  
<https://old.upm.ro/gidni3/GIDNI-03/Lds/Lds%2003%2066.pdf>.

*indifference* – *a i se tăia maioneza* [to be indifferent/careless]; *deceitfulness* (prisoner slang) – *a băga texte, a duce cu papagalul* [to produce fiction, to take someone in, to deceive/to scam]; *denunciation* – *a băga melodii, a compune melodii mari* [to play music, to write great songs].

Other phrasal neologisms whose euphemistic (neutral, ironic) value is updated by the context and point to the speaker's positive attitude refer to social situations or emotional states such as: *poverty: a rămâne (sau a fi) pe jantă* [be on the rim] (1. to have a flat tire. 2. (colloquial) to become broke, stone-broke), *sărăcie cu lustru* [utter impoverishment/abject poverty, beggary, destitute, impossible to live with]; *emotional states: a fi rău (sau prost) dispus* [to be in a bad mood; to be in low spirits]; *stare considerativă* [meditative state: meditation and observation state]; *complex de inferioritate* [inferiority complex; a psychological state of mind or feeling that one is inferior to others in some way and persecuted].

2.2.4. Specific to the field of economics there are some structures referring to unpleasant situations such as *layoffs, price rise, salary cut*, and the structures, most of them politically correct euphemisms, are characterized by semantic obscurity: *a recurge la dispobilizări/ restructurări/optimizări* [lit. to resort to dismissal/staff optimization] for “to make redundant”, *evoluție negativă* [negative evolution] for “reduction, degradation, demonetization”, *deprecierea monedei* [lit. currency devaluation] for “inflation”; *bursă neagră* [the underground stock exchange] “illegal trade”, *inginer financiar* [lit. financial engineer] for “scam perpetrator/large-scale swindler”, *a da (sau a cădea etc.) la rebut* [lit. to produce a factory rebut] for “to declare or be declared a reject”, *taxă de urgență/fondul școlii* [lit. emergency tax/school fund] for “bribe”, *refugiat economic* [lit. economic refugee] for “clandestine employment”; *dubla contabilitate* [lit. double

accountancy] for “tax evasion crime”, *economic falimentară/economie în regres, deformare profesională* [bankruptcy/regressive economy]; *professional deformation* or *job conditioning* (<fr. deformation professionnelle) for “situations in which professionals debate practices of deceit”, *oameni marginalizați economic* [economically excluded/disadvantaged people], *strategie de restructurare, plan de comasare* [restructuring strategy, merging plan].

2.2.5. Another category of phrasal neologisms is represented by the medical jargon. A well-represented category is that of scientific synonyms for various diseases, the advantage of using such opaque, connotation-free, precise, somber constructions is actually a manner of expressing alterity, of indirect expression of compassion and solidarity. We provide next some examples of phrasal neologisms which are based on taboos generated by tact (St. Ulmann): *febră aftoasă* [foot and mouth disease]: “an acute contagious febrile disease especially of cloven-footed animals which is marked by ulcerating vesicles in the mouth”; *agalactie contagioasă* [contagious agalactia] “is a amycoplasma disease of dairy sheep and goats and is characterized by an interstitial mastitis leading to a loss of milk production, arthritis, and infectious keratoconjunctivitis”; *anemie pernicioasă* [pernicious anaemia]: “a severe megaloblastic anemia that is marked by a progressive decrease in the number of red blood cells”; *angină difterică* [*diphtheric angina*], “an infectious disease generally characterized by proliferation of the bacteria in the upper respiratory tract, formation of a pseudomembrane first white, then yellow, cough, pallor and dizziness”; *angină pectorală* [angina pectoris], “a disease marked by brief sudden attacks of chest pain or discomfort caused by deficient oxygenation of the heart muscles usually due to impaired blood flow to the heart”; *carență marțială* [iron deficiency], “a food deficiency which



causes anemia – a condition in which blood lacks adequate healthy red cells”; *terapeutică marțială* [iron deficiency therapy], “treatment for iron deficiency anemia”; *friguri palustre* [marshy colds] for “malaria”; *tifos murin* [murine typhus], “a form of typhus transmitted by rodents of the Muridae family”; *Sindromul Ierusalim* [the Jerusalem syndrome], “a group of mental phenomena involving the presence of religiously-themed obsessive ideas, delusions, or other psychosis-like experiences that are triggered by a visit to the city of Jerusalem”; *Sindromul Paris* [the Paris syndrome], “a form of severe cultural shock”; *Sindrom Stockholm* [the Stockholm syndrome], „the victim’s empathy for his/her kidnapper (psychological response wherein a captive begins to identify closely with his or her captors); *Sindromul Alice în țara minunilor* [the Alice in Wonderland syndrome], “a neuropsychological condition that causes a distortion of visual perception”; *Complexul lui Oedip* [Oedipus complex] (rivalry towards the opposite-sex parent)<sup>13</sup> etc. With euphemistic intention we retain, from the same field, the use in the slang register of the neological phrase *academia ghindă* [lit. acorn academy] meaning “psychiatric hospital”. In the last case, we also notice a transfer of meaning by figurative extension on the basis of an analogy relationship set up between the root lexeme and the designated reality.

2.2.6. Phrasal neologisms with euphemistic value from the military language, adapted to Romanian language or borrowed from other languages and used as such, actualize especially a mitigation function: *lichidare fizică* [lit. physical liquidation] for “war”, *coloana a cincea* [the fifth column] for “group of traitors

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Petrovan (David), Ioana, *Valoarea eufemistică a unor structuri fixe cu nume proprii*, în <http://www.diacronia.ro/ro/indexing/details/A30198/pdf>.

in the service of the enemy, which organize diversions, sabotage acts etc. in order to disorganize the back of the front line”, *țintire cinetică* [kinetic targeting], “launching a bomb from a plane”, *operațiunea RYAN* [operation RYAN] for “nuclear missile attack”, *evoluție anormală* [abnormal evolution], *dispensare de energie* [energy dissipation] etc.

## **Conclusions**

The analysis of the phrasal neologisms with euphemistic value, which we have selected from the press and from various lexicographic works, indicated that the tendency to circumvent some less pleasant aspects of reality is to be found in many fields of knowledge being nowadays the result of a mutation which the euphemism has undergone by overcoming “the area of old taboos [...] and the orientation towards realities from the social field” (Dumistrăcel, 2010).

Thus, we have identified a category of phrasal neologisms with neutral euphemistic value or limited from an affective point of view, which belong to scientific terminologies (medical jargon, economic jargon, army jargon) and which can be drawn into the public discourse, the result being not only the toning down of or nullifying some negative observations but also making the text equivocal.

The other category of phrasal neologisms with euphemistic value is stylistically marked, their uses being encountered especially in the informal style: colloquial, slang, familiar. These common phrasal expressions have got various expressivity degrees, contribute, through their complimentary connotations which they develop in relation to the context, through the figurative or secondary meanings that they bring up to date, to the enrichment of the synonym series of words.

To these two categories, one can add that of the occasional neological phrases encountered in various types of public discourse (journalism, politics, etc.) which belong to the persuasion strategy of the public, embellish the discourse, have a short-lived status and have a contextually dependant euphemistic value.

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