

DYSPHEMISMS IN ANIMATED FILMS

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Abstract: Current research focuses on an observational investigation of dysphemistic words and phrases in contemporary animated films. The language of animated films varies from other genres and styles, and this divergence from conventional language presents an important sociolinguistic problem. The main reason for the study is an assumption that authors and script writers of animated films use dysphemisms in this specific language style, despite the fact that they should be avoided.

The study's methodological foundation is a corpus analysis which deals with three different corpora: the primary corpus – *selected contemporary animated films* (dating from 2017 to 2020) and the secondary – a) *the native language corpus* (Corpus of Contemporary American English - COCA), and b) *Google search engine*. The following goals were pursued in this dysphemism investigation: (1) the selection of animated films for the primary corpus, (2) identification of dysphemisms in the primary corpus, (3) sociolinguistic analysis and explanation of some of the most appealing expressions from the primary corpus, and (4) to cross-check some of the dysphemisms identified in the primary corpus against the secondary corpus. The authors believe that certain number of them are exclusive to animated films and cannot be found in the native discourse. The analysis has confirmed that the language of animated films contains dysphemisms, and that their number and nature vary from film to film. The most common dysphemisms can be found in all animated films, but those containing the most profane language are characteristic only for *South Park*. Further investigation revealed that certain number of dysphemistic expressions identified in the primary corpus can only be found in animated films and not in the natural discourse.

Key words: animated film, COCA, corpus analysis, discourse, dysphemism, English

INTRODUCTION

Euphemism and dysphemism are increasingly imposed in modern linguistics as a subject of research. As sociolinguistic phenomena, they are studied in parallel with language and society. They represent two different sides of the same coin – the confrontation of intellect and instinct in man; euphemism with emotional control, censorship, tolerance and reason, and dysphemism with emotional charge and emptying, hatred, aggression, lack of self-control, intolerance, anger, the side of man that euphemism tries to hide.

The need to study dysphemisms in animated films arises from the fact that the language of animated films differs from other language genres and styles, so this deviation from standard language, in and of itself, is a sufficient motive for the analysis. However, the main reason for the study is our assumption that authors and script writers of animated films use dysphemisms in this specific language style. For young children, watching animated films is a pleasant experience that serves as the foundation for an appealing and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Because of this entertaining appeal and wide range of films, they have become a major source from which children take a great deal of English to communicate with people in their surroundings.

There are a number of reviews in the literature that look at dysphemisms in general, or animated films (see in Tsakona 2009, Gorčević 2014, Soares 2017, Arfan Lodhi et al. 2018, Sajana 2018 among others) but there is a gap in the study of dysphemisms concerning this specific language register due to its complexity and sensitivity.

1. DYPHEMISM AND ANIMATED FILM

Euphemisms replace negatively marked words or dysphemisms and neutral expressions as well. By avoiding the awkward term, the euphemism actually facilitates social discourse (Rawson, 1981: 3). The very essence of euphemism is indirectness, where the main message is actually sent through a hint, through context, and not through precise words or expressions. Euphemism provides symbolic legitimacy that helps to alleviate the perception of unpleasant contents or attitudes by avoiding negatively toned discourse (Gorčević 2016: 126).

Similar to euphemisms, the creation of dysphemisms can be motivated by fear, defiance, or hatred, and people use them when they talk about other people or facts that irritate them, with which they disagree, or which they want to degrade or humiliate (Allan and Burridge 2006: 32). Rawson describes them as the speaker's attempt to offend or antagonise the listener by targeting their humanity (1989). They include swearing, giving derogatory names or any insulting comments at the

expense of others. Dysphemism occurs when an expression that has a neutral or even a positive meaning is substituted by another that carries negative associations. However, dysphemisms are not the last on the scale of negative linguistic expressions because beyond there are expressions which are absolutely undesirable in a linguistic community, culture and society. Profanities and swearing or cursing belong to that group of words. Their use represents a deliberate reaction against a euphemism and involves the deliberate use of strong words, very often with the aim of shocking the audience or people to whom they are addressed (Mott, 2011). They include abusive swearing, giving derogatory names or any insulting comments at the expense of others, and they completely degrade, offend and humiliate the addressee.

Animated film is an extremely interesting area for study from the linguistic aspect, but no less attractive from social, pedagogical or psychological, since it offers an abundance of various sources for analysis. Moritz (21) states that animated films concentrate on using and developing a unique vocabulary available only in animated films positioning it as an experimental or principally avant-garde form of expression, both culturally and linguistically. The way children learn language is based on imitation of what they hear. Sometimes they start using words from an animated film in their speech even before they understand their meaning. If its meaning is negative and has provocative language, the sooner it will become a part of their own vocabulary. Therefore, the way characters communicate and use language in animated films demands harmony and an accurate balance of different language styles - formal, informal, colloquial, jargon, vulgar speech - for animated films are a special type of entertaining program that has educational character and specific target audience (Gorčević 2011, 5).

Colour and emotion are important for the vocabulary in animated films. Emotional charge and discharge exist where expressiveness is a central linguistic function. When using this sort of language, expressions have a strong emotional tone and connotations that trigger positive or negative feelings and reactions in the viewer or listener, and are used to manipulate human feelings. There are mechanisms that emphasize the vulgarity or humour of a word or expression through semantic variations with negative rather than positive connotations.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in order to evaluate the impact of animated films on the English language, i.e. to ascertain whether the language of animated films contains dysphemisms, and if it does, what

their nature is like. The general hypothesis that underpins this study is that dysphemisms are used in the language of animated films to a certain degree which depends on their nature. If it is the case, we raise a subhypothesis that there are dysphemisms specific only for the language of animated films, and that they are not found in the native language corpus.

The methodological approach to this investigation of dysphemisms involved the following objectives – (1) the selection of animated films for the primary corpus, (2) identification of dysphemisms in the primary corpus, (3) sociolinguistic analysis and explanation of some of the most intriguing expressions from the primary corpus, and (4) the assessment to what extent some of the selected dysphemisms, presumably specific only for animated films, are used in the secondary corpora (COCA and Google).

Corpus analysis has been used as the methodological basis for the study. It deals with three different corpora: the primary corpus – animated films and the secondary corpora – the native language corpus (COCA – Corpus of Contemporary American English and the Internet (explored with Google search engine). The selection of animated films criterion was based on the personal judgement and general impression of the authors established on the analysis of available animated films. Ten featured animated films have been analysed – *Despicable Me 3* (2017), *The Incredibles 2* (2018), *The Adams Family* (2019), *Toy Story 4* (2019), *Batman: Hush* (2019), *How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World* (2019), *Wolfwalkers* (2020), *Soul* (2020), and the two 2020 episodes of *South Park – The Pandemic Special* and *End of the Pandemic Special*. The analysis of animated films was based on synchronic study since the selected animated films were made in the period between 2017 and 2020. In such a short period nothing important could have happened to make any significant impact on the language of animated films.

The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) was selected as the source for the secondary corpus in order to determine the distribution of some of the identified dysphemisms in the primary corpus, and to provide an adequate comparison. However, despite the fact that COCA contains more than one billion words in eight different genres or categories, it cannot represent the “entire English”. In order to confirm the results from COCA, the internet has been added as additional corpus. Google is the search engine which has the largest index of websites in the world.

Definitions and descriptions of dysphemism and other terms necessary for understanding the concept have been given according to

the contemporary literature in the field of linguistics. The qualitative method was applied to analyse and interpret the results obtained from the animated films, and the quantitative analysis for the native corpus in order to determine the share of dysphemisms.

The paper represents a continuation and a follow-up to our previous research¹ (Gorčević 2014) in which we presented data concerning the topic at issue, where the author studied both euphemisms and dysphemisms in various language registers.

3. CASE STUDIES

3.1. Various dysphemisms in animated films

To begin with, the satirical disclaimer in *South Park*, which appears at the start of most episodes just before the title sequence and is an in-joke to the program, contains dysphemisms.

“(...) All celebrity voices are impersonated... *poorly*. The following program contains coarse language and due to its content *it should not be viewed by anyone.*”

In other words, spending time watching the program is absolutely not worth, which is already a bad criticism. However, these dysphemisms are here as an authors' joke and satire. What follows are some common dysphemisms found in the series.

“Alright, students, *shut up!*”; “You're not getting in, *pal.*”; “Have fun social distancing, *loser!*”; Look, everyone, *there's a gay man shopping!*”; “What you believe is really *stupid!*”; “No, stop! *They're monsters!*”.

These dysphemisms are no different from the ones used in ordinary animated films. Expressions such as *shut up*, *pal*, *gay*, *stupid*, and *monsters* may be found in animated films with 12+ PA (Parental Advisory). *Gay* represents a generalization of dysphemetic terms related to groups that are not socially favoured. It can be either a euphemism or dysphemism, which depends on the context.

In the following dialogue there are several dysphemisms. The central one is about losing a job. It is a very sensitive topic nowadays, so people are very cautious when talking about it, and lots of euphemisms are used. However, a character (Dru) uses dysphemisms instead – I didn't *get fired from my job* and *At least I had a job!* Beside these ones, here are some other dysphemisms in the dialogue – *a total loser*, *What*

¹ Autor's previous research (2014) has demonstrated that euphemisms and dysphemisms are used in different registers to a significant extent, and that irony, exaggeration and swearing are the most productive linguistic processes in creation of dysphemisms alone.

have you accomplished that was so great? (and the answer to it) Nothing! And (...) you were such a failure.

(Dru): "Oh, yeah? Well, at least *I didn't get fired from my job like a total loser!*"

(Gru): "*At least I had a job! What have you accomplished that was so great? I'll tell you what! NOTHING! No wonder Dad thought you were such a failure.*" (Despicable Me 3)

The Adams Family series is a satirical inversion of the twentieth-century American family. They are an eccentric rich aristocracy who enjoy in the macabre and horror, hence, the deliberate use of dysphemistic expressions instead of positive ones when the intentions are absolutely affirmative is their normal discourse.

"No, *he seems perfectly demented.*"; "Have a good day at school, dear. *Do your worst!*"; "What did you say, *little ghou!*"; "Where's my *little wraith?*"; "You are *as radiant as a barrel of nuclear waste.*".

Mr. Close-But-No-Cigar means that something, in this case someone, is not a competitive endeavor (not decent enough to gain a cigar as a reward). This compound is used when one comes close to success but does not quite make it, resulting in nothing in return.

"You know *him - Mr. Close-But-No-Cigar*". (Soul)

The following paragraph presents various dysphemistic expressions. They are divided into several different groups:

– *Animal epithets as dysphemisms*: These are expressions used to marking an individual or a group with some perceived animal quality. There are countless terms in which people draw animal comparisons, and many of them convey positive feelings. However, these expressions can also be pejorative and highly offensive. In animated films animal epithets are often used as: – *metaphors*, directly naming people as animals ("*That snake!*" (How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World); "*Quiet, coyote!*" (Soul); "*Slay the foul beasts!*" (ibid); "*Stupid old Bat, my venom is stronger!*" (Batman: Hush); "*This herbicide bomb will make nasty work of you and your pets.*" (ibid); "*Bats with Cats, now? Ugh.*" (ibid); "*I saved all your asses against Cyborg Superman.*" (ibid); "The police are gonna get us! *Pigs!*" (Despicable Me 3); "*The beast is loose!*" (ibid); – *similies*, explicitly comparing people with animals ("Oh, yes, *as a monster!*" (Wolfwalkers); "Fell out of the sky *like a dead pigeon.*" (Batman: Hush), or – *nicknames* ("*Good Kitty. (...) Say it for me, Kitty.*" (ibid); "What's new, *pussycat?*" (Soul);

– *Dysphemisms about physical disabilities*: "*I should kill you for that stupid beard!*" (Batman: Hush); "*Her face reminds me of a death mask.*" (Despicable Me 3); "You mean *that one-eyed, scar-faced man that everybody laughed at?*" (ibid); "How is my brother finding a wife

like you *when he is so bald?*" (ibid); "Hey, *eyebrows*, get off the lawn!"; "Hey, *mullet head*, let us out!" (Despicable Me 3);

– *Dysphemisms about mental disabilities*: "It's all in this *stupid brain of yours!*" (Soul); "I am staying right here until *your stupid body dies.*" (ibid); "*You dumb, baby!*" (The Croods: A New Age); "Oh! *What an idiot!*" (ibid); "I feel like how Ruffnut is everyday... *dumb. So dumb.*"; (How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World) "*You're crazy! You're absolutely insane!*" (ibid); "*He can't be that smart.*" (ibid); "Why the long face? I mean, mine's long, but yours is really long - *all face and no brain.*" (ibid); "*You thoughtless, worthless, stupid meat!*" (ibid); "That woman seems *deranged.*" (Despicable Me 3); "And if you can't control your actions, *you're not quite sane!*" (Batman: Hush); "Wow, this toy sounds like *a complete idiot.*" (Toy Story 4); "This is my *tardy* sister, Evelyn." (The Incredibles 2);

– *Derogatory names as dysphemism*: These terms tend to lessen the merit or reputation of a person or thing. "They seem to have some kind of primitive language, but you can't speak it, huh, *smarty-pants?*" (The Croods); "*You called me a cave girl!*" (ibid); "It's called acting, *hoser!*" (Despicable Me 3); "Freeze, *dipsticks!*" (ibid); "Which one of you *losers* is agent Gru?!" (ibid); "This time, *I'm canceling you, and all the losers who rejected me!*" (ibid); "Oi, *noob!*" (Soul); "*These weirdos* are going to help me get back?" (ibid); "Ha-Ha! Look at this *weirdo!* *I bet it's super dumb!*" (How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World); "Parker, these people are *freaks.*" (The Adams Family 2019); "Still *a sore loser*, as always!" (ibid); "How you like that, *cheater?*" (Toy Story 4); "While you guys were being detained, I was approached by *a dude* who represents *this tycoon.*" (The Incredibles 2); "Only one way to deal with *this freak.*" (Batman: Hush); "(...) but *reckless playboy* Bruce Wayne can." (ibid); "How about the address of her, *pheromone-controlled minions?*" (ibid); "*Amateurs!* I was just getting started!" (How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World); "Aah! I feel like the same *screw up* I was before I met *Toothless.*" (ibid); "Show yourselves, *you wicked creatures!*" (Wolfwalkers);

– *Wordplay as dysphemism*: It is the witty exploitation of words, especially puns, can be used to tone the the sentence negatively. Here are some examples: "(Mr. Incredible addresses Underminer) *Consider yourself undermined!*" (The Incredibles 2); "Just don't forget my big raise, *Mr. Moneybags!*" (Batman: Hush); "Hold still, you *wascally wabbit!*" (ibid); "Look at this *fancible crap.*" (ibid); "*I'm going to kill you!* – *You're not going anywhere except down!*" (ibid); "*Big talk from a dead man!*" (ibid); "Hang up those saddles and get married! – *The 'M' word!?* Gross!" (How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World); "Hello, Gru.

How's your transition coming? You know, from world's worst villain to world's worst agent?" (Despicable Me 3);

– *Entire expression (or utterance) as dysphemism*: Sometimes not only a word or expression can be used dysphemistically, but also an entire utterance. Here are examples to illustrate it: *"You're dishonest. All you make are bad decisions. You are unwise and you won't make it in the world. You're so selfish. No one would ever want to be around you. Loser. Oh, the world needs remarkable people and you are the least remarkable soul I've ever met. You'll never find your spark. Imbecile. I cannot help you."* (Soul). *"The show was canceled. Hollywood rejected him, and Bratt quickly plunged into a downward spiral, starting to actually believe he was the character he played on TV."* (Despicable Me 3); *"They're a bunch of monsters! I will relish hounding you until that nuclear waste dump of a house is gone and your mutant family along with it!"* (ibid);

– *Giving commands or orders as dysphemism*: *"I said, get out of here! Go!"* (Soul); *Stop talking! My unconscious mind hates you!* (ibid); *Get out! It's hideous! It's horrible!* (The Adams Family); *"Shut up!"* (ibid); *"Oh, just shut up and walk."* (Wolfwalkers); *"Hey! Stop pushing so fast!"* (ibid); *"Enough of your stories!"* (ibid); *"You must do as you're told! No more fairy tales!"* (ibid); *"Get out of here!"* (ibid); *"Never speak of such pagan nonsense in this town!"* (ibid); *Don't move! Hold it right there, you wildling!* (ibid); *"Back off, boys!"* (Batman: Hush); *"Mind your heads!* (How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World) *"Get out of my house!"*; *"Alright, students, shut up!"* (South Park);

– *Combination of dysphemisms*: A combination of different dysphemisms is sometimes used in order to intensify degradation. In *South Park* we have found the following profanities: *"Tell them to suck my asshole. Tell Dr. Fauci to shove it up his ass, and let the FDA chief know he can eat shit off my balls."*, *"This bullshit sucks."* (South Park);

– *Miscellaneous dysphemisms as*: – *proper nouns* ("Joe ain't getting no gig, Dez. You know *him*, - *Mr. Close-But-No-Cigar*." (Soul); "He was known as "*The Bald Terror*." (Despicable Me 3); "It's a *giant Evil Bratt robot!*" (Despicable Me 3); *Bratt*, the name of a villain in Despicable Me 3); "Here we are, in *the dark and creepy Crooked Forest*, in search of the mythical unicorn." (Wolfwalkers); – *idioms* ("If only I could have *nailed Bratt*. (...) But now I'll never get the chance, 'cause I have been *kicked to the curb*." (Despicable Me 3); "Nice try, coppers! *Chew on this!*" (ibid); "Ugh! I can't believe the *nerve* of that cowboy. He was *way out of line*. You did the right thing *leaving him behind*." (Toy Story 4); "*The elephant in the room*." (The Incredibles 2); "*Mind your heads!*" (How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World); "You're

working with Bane and *you're going down!*" (Batman: Hush); "Now, *let's beat the crap out of this asshole!*" (ibid); – irony ("Excuse me, you're thinking about staying here? - No, *I want to be in the wild fighting vulture rats for scraps.* Of course, I want to stay!" (The Croods); "*Oh, that's hilarious. You should be on TV. Oh, that's right, you were! But then you got cancelled!*" (Despicable Me 3); "Okay, *genius*, what do we do now?" (Toy Story 4); "*Would you like a printout, maybe some hot cocoa before you leave?* – I have what I need. – *What you need is to show me some respect!*" (Batman); "*That's some fancy monologuing!* For a guy in cuffs!" (ibid); – slang ("Oh, I'm *busting a gut!* – *Total burn!*" (Despicable Me 3); "They'll *hunt you down like a dog!*" (Batman: Hush); – hyperbole ("*Enough to tranq a herd of elephants.*" (Batman: Hush); "How about we *cut him in two*, and then you?" (ibid); "I'm a *manipulative megalomaniac who's intensely opportunistic.*" (Soul); – metaphor and metonymy ("That *C-lister?! It's like they're all crawling out from under the carpets now!*" (Batman: Hush); "Now *let's beat the crap out of this asshole.*" (ibid); "Gordon! As usual, you're lying there *with your thumb up your ass!*" (ibid); "Next time I see Bratt, *I will moonwalk all over his stupid face!*" (Despicable Me 3); "It's time for us to attack *those townies!*" (Wolfwalkers); "I'm sure it's some *huge den with no stinkers around.*" (ibid); "We're about to be invaded by *a whole army of freaks.* (The Adams Family 2019); "She must have turned the whole town into *stark raving lunatics.*" (ibid);

3.2. Profanities in animated films

Profanity is an interdisciplinary topic because it is studied not only by linguists, but also by sociologists and psychologists among others. As it is previously stated, the language of animated film should not contain profanity for its sensitive viewership – children.

In the Guinness World Records 2001, film *South Park: Bigger, Longer and Uncut* (1999) was said to have the most profanity used in an animated film. Comedy Central's *South Park* is a true factory of cursing or swearing. It is an animated satire from the United States that is known for its profanity and grim, and surreal humour. The vocabulary used in the show is famously offensive and provocative, and, according to its authors Trey Parker and Matt Stone, is close to the language used by boys in real-life situations. The show is anti-censorship and pushes the boundaries of proper speech. Only the tabooest words are censored, and the characters use a lot of profane language.

What follows is the wide variety of examples found in only two episodes created in 2020 – *The Pandemic Special* and *End of the Pandemic Special*.

“If she finds out I started the pandemic, she's gonna be *a total bitch* about it.”; “I'm gonna go out to the bars and get some *pussy!*”; “*You crazy, psychotic...*”; “So that's why everyone in town is being *such an inconsiderate jerk* about me coming back?”; “Should we post the one where you can see the most blood on *teacher's ass* or the one where she makes *the dumbest face?*”; “I mean, what is funny about *blood coming out of a woman's vagina?*”.

Four-letter words. The term “four-letter words” is based on the fact that many, but not all, English swear words are four-character monosyllables. Four-letter words, including common popular or slang terms for excretory functions, sexual activity of genitalia, terms relating to hell or damnation, are considered exceedingly profane in English. They are not characteristic for animated films, but are quite common in South Park. Here are some of the common four-letter words:

C-words – “Yeah, let's get back to the weather, you *cunt.*”; “Nice going, you *dumb cocks!*”;

D-words and its compounds - “(...) and how we should all *suck their dick!*”; “The word is *get a fucking life, jackass! Blow shit out your dickhole!*”; “(...) if you're a *corrupt dickhead without morals.*”;

P-words – “Wow, people are really *pissed* at us for doing the period joke, you guys.”; “I feel like someone *pooped* on my life.”;

S-words and their derivatives – “Are you just gonna stand there and listen to this *crap?*!”; “Oh, you *fucking slut!*”; “Oh my God, I forgot how much it *sucks* to be around everybody!”; “Tell them *to suck my asshole.*”; “This is *bullshit!*”; “I could die tomorrow from this Covid *shit!*”;

In the last two examples a profane word *suck* has different meanings. The latter's meaning is stronger, and it is one of the most offensive terms in English. *Crap* would be a ‘lighter’ version of *shit*.

F-word and its derivatives – “Jesus Christ, you *fucker!*”; “Look, um, do you remember when we *fucked* that bat in Wuhan? (...) You told me *to fuck* the bat! (...)”; “We can't go back to school: there's a *fucking* pandemic.”; “What... *the fuck...* are you talking about!?”; “*The fuck!*”; “Then sell *fucking* Epcot Center! (...) We're *fucking* dying here! *Fucking* what?!”;

Fuck is an expletive that is used to describe sexual activity, but it is also frequently used as an intensifier in jargon. In modern usage, the term *fuck* and its derivatives (such as *fucker* and *fucking*) are used as a noun, a verb, an adjective, an interjection or an adverb. *What the fuck* or *The fuck* belongs to, so called, idiomatic swearing² which is swearing

² According to Pinker (2007) there are five types of swearing – descriptive, idiomatic, abusive, emphatic and cathartic swearing.

without referring to the matter, just using the words to attract the interest or to show off.

Euphemistic and dysphemistic variations of the same word may appear in the same sentence at times:

“Dude, I still can't believe *you fucked* that bat. Haha. *You ever have sex with a pangolin?*”

What follows are some of the dysphemisms from South Park which are a bit less negative than the previous profanities.

“She's gonna be *a total bitch* about it.”; “It's *a freakin'* joke.”; “Jimbo's *a fat alcoholic!*”; “Dude, *get out of my house!*”; “Yeah, we care way more about what's right than you do, *bitch!*”; “I was doing *a crap job.*”; “*That's nasty, teacher. Don't have your period during class time!*”, “*Old people suck!*”; “*I feel like someone pooped on my life.*”

3.3. Religious profanity in animated films

At an earlier time the adoption of obscene language was used to reflect a class divide. Although religious people found the discussion of vulgarity to be entirely immoral, many people who considered themselves to be “high class” used those words to some degree.

Blasphemy is a term that refers to insulting God, religion and faith. The most commonly used profanity today includes religious swearwords or blasphemous expressions. In this section we shall present some of the most common blasphemous expressions found in the corpus.

For Christ's sake (more dysphemistic than *for heaven's sake*) is a colloquial, blasphemous term used to express surprise, contempt, fury, indignation, disgust, or frustration. It may not be suitable for polite company, but in general, religious profanity is less strong in modern English than in some other Indo-European languages. Even though the term was not vulgar at all in the 19th century, since it was a phrase uttered in prayer, it is now considered mild oath. *Hell* and *heck* are exclamations used to emphasize surprise, shock, anger, or disgust. *Heck* is a blend made of splinters of words *hell* and *fuck*. The expressions *What the hell* and *What the heck* are milder versions of *What the fuck*. Some examples are given below.

“*For Christ's sake*, the entire town is in chaos! How *the hell* did you let those kids out of quarantine?!” (South Park); “*For heaven's sake*, what's going on?” (The Adams Family 2019); “Hey! What *the hell* just happened? (...) What *the hell* is this?” (South Park); “No way! I can't believe I'm in a body on this *hellish planet.*” (Soul); “*Heck*, I'm overdue!” (ibid); “Come on! *What the heck?*!” (The Incredibles 2);

We have come across an interesting example of the use of *hell* – in the same animated film (*Soul*, 2020); both versions, censored (euphemized) and uncensored, have been used. The term *double hockey sticks* very much resemble double “L” (ll) thus making the word *hell*.

Souls: *Hell, hell, hell!*” New soul: “Is it *h-e-double hockey sticks (ll)?*”

Jesus Christ has become a regularly used exclamation nowadays. Whether its use is seen blasphemous or not depends on the context. In the following sentence it has been used in the worst possible combination, with the most profane, four-letter f-word *fuck*, or, to be more precise, with its word-form *fucker* – “*Jesus Christ, you fucker!*” (South Park);

Mentioning Jesus in vain may also be understood as a dysphemism.³ *Jeez* (or *geez*), shortened form of Jesus, is an interjection, often standing alone instead of as a part of a sentence, expressing surprise or emotion.

“*Jesus, Mary, Joseph!*” (Wolfwalkers); “*Aw, jeez, more Superhero trouble?*” (The Incredibles 2);

“*Odin be spanked!*” (ibid); “*There it is, the devil’s lair!*” (Wolfwalkers); “*Aaah! You’re a demon!*” (How To Train Your Dragon: Hidden World); “*Holey moley!*” (Despicable Me 3); “*Holy shit! Get back!*” (South Park);

Odin is a prominent god in Norse mythology. The expression *Odin be spanked!* is highly negative having in mind that the animated film *How to Train Your Dragon: Hidden World* exploits Norse mythology. Mentioning devils, demons, spirits and other supernatural beings often make strong dysphemisms as religion has frequently been deeply connected to taboo. *Holy Moley* (or *Holy Moly*) is an exclamation of surprise, a minced oath, most likely a misspelled version of a taboo phrase *Holy Moses*. One of the worst religious profanity is *holy shit*. It is an expression of awe, surprise or astonishment.

Damn and its variations *Damn it*, *Goddammit* (orig. *May the Christian God Damn it to Hell*), when used in non-religious context, express anger, perplexity or amazement, but sometimes they just add emphasis to what is being said. The interesting fact is that these terms have only been found in two animated films from the corpus – *Batman: Hush* and *South Park*. *Batman: Hush* has quite dark atmosphere and looser language with more pronounced dysphemisms. The following

³ Exodus 20:7 reads: “Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”

examples refer to imprecations which are acts of calling for evil or a curse on someone.

"Damn you! Shut up! (Batman: Hush) Damn it! (ibid) "You and your goddamn code!" (ibid); "Wait, God, I know you're not big on conversation, but hold on." (ibid); "Let's just see how your God damn school functions without a God damn counselor! (ibid) Oh, God dammit. Hey, you damn old people!" (ibid); "Where is the damn pangolin?!" (South Park); "May you and your daughter die a slow death and be buried with onions!" (Despicable Me 3); "Curse you, Gru!" (ibid); "Behold! Soon all will tremble before me!" (ibid).

3.4. Ethnic slurs as dysphemisms in animated films

Offensive pejoratives, or slurs, are words or phrases which express disrespectful connotations, low opinion, or lack of respect toward someone or something.

"Slurs are noted for their 'offensive autonomy' (they offend regardless of speakers' intentions, attitudes, and beliefs) and for their 'offensive persistence,' as well as for their resistance to cancellation (they offend across a range of contexts and utterances)" (Popa-Wyatt 1).

Ethnic slurs, expressions of racial intolerance, are examples of a vocabulary category that would often provide an insult to a certain ethnic community. These are pejorative, humiliating, ironic and vulgar expressions addressed to groups that do not belong to the same culture, religion or race.

Out of all selected animated films for the corpus, only the South Park episodes contain ethnic slurs. This animated series, in general, abounds with these units used as insinuations and allegations about members of certain ethnicity. These slurs are disrespectful, insulting and contemptuous:

"You made the deal with the devil when you sold your Mulan shit to China!"; "I know what China's like. Doesn't surprise me all this shit came from there."; "Who cares what started coronavirus?! You guys are being racist!"; "Stan, this is gonna be very difficult for a child to understand, but I made a promise to the American people - to get rid of all the Mexicans."; "Spoken like a true redneck!".

In the first sentence, even though there is not a dysphemism as such, the context in which the words *devil* and *shit* have been used conveys quite negative connotations about China. *I know what China's like*, generally speaking, is a neutral sentence and its negative tone reveals the second sentence - *...all that shit came from here*. The third

sentence, the one about “getting rid of Mexicans”, is a typical South Park sentence where such discourse is a part of their ordinary speech or thinking with an intention of causing offence. *Redneck* is a derogatory term chiefly, but not exclusively, applied to white Americans perceived to be unsophisticated, closely associated with rural whites of the Southern United States.

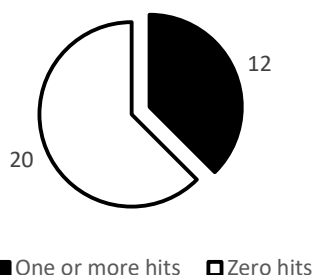
3.5. Animated film dysphemisms online and in COCA

This chapter is based on the investigation of dysphemisms in the native language corpus COCA and the internet. It has been conducted in order to test the subhypothesis that predicts that there are dysphemisms specifically used in language of animated films. We have cross-checked some of the identified dysphemisms from the primary corpus, recognised as peculiar and specific only for this language genre, against the secondary corpora to confirm their use and frequency.

Corpus linguistics has become one of the dominant methods used to analyse natural language. Corpus-based studies encompass naturally-occurring language samples, come close to representing natural authentic real English and give appropriate examples to illustrate the meaning. COCA, large, genre-based corpus of American English, is by far the most widely-used corpora. For the reason that it has so much data from different genres (eight categories – spoken, fiction, magazines, newspapers, academic, web, TV and movies), it provides useful information about the frequency of words, phrases, and grammatical constructions across the genres regardless of the level of formality. Google has also been used in order to search the terms on the internet and to confirm the results.

When it comes to the results, out of 294 dysphemistic expressions identified in the primary corpus, 32 have been cross-checked against COCA.

As follows from the figures shown in Table 1 and Table 2, 20 dysphemisms have not been found in COCA, as opposed to 12 dysphemisms COCA has listed. Having in mind the fact that COCA contains more than one billion words in combined data basis, the number of the found examples in the corpus is insignificant. Graph 1 shows the distribution of dysphemisms cross-checked against COCA.



Graph 1 – Dysphemisms (from the primary corpus) cross-checked against COCA

The following Table 1 and Table 2 contain all cross-checked dysphemisms.

<i>Dysphemisms – primary source</i>	Corpus 2 (COCA) hits	Dysphemism in COCA – secondary source	Genres in COCA
<i>Close-But-No-Cigar</i>	5	The Tar Heels' Smith came that close to another close-but-no-cigar finish.	Magazines 2, News 3
<i>C-lister</i>	4	An issue of Legends of the Dark Knight focused on virtually forgotten c-lister " the Spook "	Magazines 1, Web 1, Blog 2
<i>Not big on conversation</i>	3	Whoever held her captive wasn't very big on conversation either.	Fiction 1, Movies 1, TV 1
<i>Cave girl</i>	3	You talk as if Elis is a real cave girl.	TV 1, Magazines 1, Fiction 1
<i>Total burn</i>	3	This is going to be a total burn!	Movies 2, Web 1
<i>Telling pagan nonsense</i>	3	Nuns tended to drum such pagan nonsense as monsters out of young girls' heads.	Fiction 2, Movies 1
<i>The beast is loose</i>	2	The beast is loose and only you can defeat it.	Blog 1, TV 1
<i>Wicked creatures</i>	2	Ungrateful and wicked creatures!	Web 1, TV 1
<i>Eat my plush!</i>	1	Eat my plush!	Movies
<i>Sheer lack of imagination</i>	1	Or a sheer lack of imagination?	Magazine 1
<i>World's worst villain</i>	1	You know, from world's worst villain to world's worst agent? (Despicable Me 3)	Movies 1
<i>Reckless playboy</i>	1	Rock Hudson bursts on the screen as reckless playboy.	Web 1

Table 1 Dysphemisms in Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) with at least one hit

Table 1 contains four columns: *Dysphemisms – primary source* (illustrates the examples selected from the primary corpus), *Corpus 2*

(COCA) hits (illustrates “hits” or the distribution of the selected dysphemisms in the secondary corpus), *Dysphemisms in COCA – secondary source* (illustrates examples found in COCA), and *Genres in COCA* (shows which genre examples belong to).

When it comes to results, as can be seen in Table 1, each of the previous examples has at least one hit which indicates that they have been found in some of the genres or categories in COCA. The number of hits for the examples varies from one to five.

The two examples from Table 1 *Eat my plush!* and *You know, from world’s worst villain to world’s worst agent?* have one hit respectively and are only found in one genre of COCA (Movies) and belong to the animated films already analysed in the primary corpus - *Toy Story 4* and *Despicable Me 3*. Another two expressions – *Sheer lack of imagination* (Magazine) and *Reckless playboy* (Web) – have one hit as well.

All examples from Table 1, regardless of number of hits, point out the fact that they are not exclusively related to animated films, and are found in the native discourse.

Table 2 shows the distribution of the selected dysphemisms from the primary corpus in COCA and Google.

Table 2 Identified dysphemisms cross-checked against COCA and GOOGLE

Corpus 1 – Dysphemisms in animated films	Corpus 2a – Dysphemisms in COCA (hits)	Corpus 2b – Dysphemisms on Google
<i>(A whole) army of freaks</i>	0	+
<i>(I will) Relish (you) hounding</i>	0	+
<i>All face and no brain</i>	0	–
<i>Beat the crap out of asshole</i>	0	+
<i>Big talk for a dead man</i>	0	+
<i>Consider yourself undermined</i>	0	–
<i>Crawling out from under carpets</i>	0	–
<i>Crazy plant bitch</i>	0	–
<i>Devil’s lair</i>	0	+
<i>Fancible crap</i>	0	–
<i>Fancy monologuing</i>	0	–
<i>Huge den with no stinkers around</i>	0	–
<i>Manipulative megalomaniac</i>	0	+
<i>Moonwalk over (his stupid) face</i>	0	–
<i>My unconscious mind hates you</i>	0	–
<i>Odin be spanked!</i>	0	–
<i>Save all asses</i>	0	–
<i>Slay the foul beasts</i>	0	+
<i>Stark raving lunatics</i>	0	+
<i>With your thumb up your ass</i>	0	+

Table 2 contains three columns: *Corpus 1 – Dysphemisms in animated films*, *Corpus 2a – Dysphemisms in COCA (hits)* and *Corpus 2b – Dysphemisms on Google*.

At first glance, some of the dysphemisms from Table 2 appear as a regular part of daily communication. However, the combination of lexical units within the expressions is specific; these zero-hits indicate that they have not been found in any of the genres in COCA.

In order to confirm that they can be found on the internet at all, they have been searched on the internet with Google. The results thus obtained are summarised in the third column, and they are as follows: nine expressions (marked with +) have been found online; 11 expressions have not been found at all (marked with –), and those are *All face and no brain*, *Consider yourself undermined*, *Crawling out from under carpets*, *Crazy plant bitch*, *Fancible crap*, *Fancy monologuing*, *Huge den with no stinkers around*, *Moonwalk over his stupid face*, *My unconscious mind hates you*, *Odin be spanked* and *Save all asses*. This outcome clearly indicates that they were created for this occasion only. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that even though these examples have not been found in any category of COCA and on the internet, it may be possible to come across them in daily conversation.

CONCLUSION

We have conducted this study in order to address the problem of the use of dysphemisms in animated films. It has been an important question since the language of animated films should be balanced, purged of impurities, suitable for and adapted to the younger population which is regularly exposed to it. Children easily learn dysphemistic expressions which, eventually, become a part of their “micro” vocabularies.

The objectives of the study were to identify dysphemisms in the selected animated films, to explain the sociolinguistic background of some of the most characteristic ones and to confirm the use and show the distribution of the dysphemisms presumably specific only for animated films in the native language corpus (COCA) and the internet (searched with Google).

Considering the results, it is reasonable to conclude that the general hypothesis of the research has been confirmed – dysphemisms are exploited in animated films to some degree, which depends on the nature of animated film. All selected animated films contain dysphemistic expressions, but one stands out – *South Park*. This satirical television sitcom and culture parody with its scatological humour pushes the limits of acceptable communication and challenges

ensorship. Even though we have analysed only two episodes created in 2020 season (out of 309 episodes in 26 seasons), the number of profane expressions is considerable. Those expressions belong to the worst offensive language that is unheard of elsewhere (“Tell them *to suck my asshole*”, “He can *eat shit off my balls and die*”, “Jesus Christ, *you fucker!*”, “*...fucking slut!*”, “*...dumb cocks!*” among others). Similarly, but not to the extent of South Park, some unacceptable dysphemisms for animated films have been found in Batman: Hush, such as “*Asshole*”, “*Pretty screwed up*”, “*Crazy plant bitch*”, “*Shit*” and “*with thumb up your ass*”. Dysphemisms identified in other animated films are, more or less, common and they can be found in any other language genres.

The subhypothesis of the study has also been confirmed – there are dysphemisms characteristic only for the language of animated films. 32 dysphemistic expressions found in the primary corpus have been cross-checked against COCA, out of which 20 have not had hits whatsoever and 12 have had from one to five hits. Bearing in mind the number of words COCA contains, this number is negligible. Furthermore, the same examples were searched in the internet with Google. Out of 20 expressions with zero-hits in COCA, 11 could not be found online. Accordingly, the sub-hypothesis has been confirmed – there are dysphemistic expressions specifically created for animated films, despite the fact that their number is modest.

Finally, we must reflect on limitation of the study. Even though the number of all entries in COCA surpasses one billion words, it cannot represent the English language entirely. Consequently, the dysphemistic expressions identified in the selected animated films, though have not been found in COCA, may possibly appear as such in the natural discourse.

Ordinary language does not violate social norms in communication, while dysphemisms, with lexical inventory with a high content of negative expressiveness do, which presents an important both linguistic and sociological problem. Having in mind their potential and the impact it has on the natural discourse; future studies should be undertaken towards their examination in various language genres and corpora.

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DISFEMIZMI U JEZIKU CRTANOG FILMA

Ovaj rad se fokusira na opservacijsko istraživanje disfemizama u savremenim animiranim filmovima. Jezik animiranog filma razlikuje se od drugih jezičkih stilova, a ovo odstupanje od konvencionalnog jezika predstavlja važan sociolingvistički problem. Glavni razlog proučavanja jeste pretpostavka da autori i pisci scenarija animiranih filmova koriste disfemizme u ovom specifičnom jezičkom žanru, uprkos činjenici da ih treba izbegavati. Osnova metodološkog okvira jeste korpusna analiza koja za predmet ima tri izvora jezičke građe: primarni korpus – izabrani savremeni animirani filmovi (proizvedeni od 2017. do 2020. godine) i sekundarni – a) korpus izvornog jezika (Korpus savremenog američkog varijeteta engleskog jezika - COCA), i b) Gugl internet pretraživač. U ovom radu o disfemizmima postavljeni su sledeći ciljevi: (1) izbor animiranih filmova za primarni korpus, (2) identifikacija disfemizama u primarnom korpusu, (3) sociolingvistička analiza i objašnjenje nekih od najzanimljivijih izraza iz primarnog korpusa, i (4) poređenje nekih disfemizama identifikovanih u primarnom korpusu u odnosu na sekundarni korpus. Autori veruju da je određeni broj tih disfemizama karakterističan samo za jezik animiranog filma i da se ne mogu naći u drugim žanrovima izvornog diskursa. Analiza je potvrdila da jezik animiranog filma sadrži disfemizme i da se njihov broj i priroda razlikuju od filma do filma. Uobičajeni disfemizmi mogu se naći u svim animiranim filmovima, ali oni koji pripadaju najvulgarnijem jeziku karakteristični su samo za animirani film *South Park*. Dalje istraživanje potvrdilo je da se neki disfemistički izrazi identifikovani u primarnom korpusu mogu naći samo u animiranim filmovima, ali ne i u prirodnom diskursu.

Ključne reči: animirani film, COCA, disfemizam, diskurs, engleski jezik, korpusna analiza