

Exercise 44

Rephrase these straightforward sentences using euphemisms to make them more socially acceptable.

1. That politician *told lies* speaking to the electorate.
2. It was announced that the leader of the state *died* yesterday of a stroke.
3. All *old pensioners* of the town are invited to our charity party.
4. The military technicians worked to avoid *a nuclear accident* at all costs.
5. The president admitted that he was aware of the need of *the poor and invalids*.
6. According to **the** mayor the problem of *slums* in the town was as acute as ever.
7. "Fast food" restaurants have been found to blame for a great number of *overweight* people in the USA.
8. The company is determined to reduce the staff by firing *lazy uninterested in their work* employees.
9. A senior civil servant was accused of taking *bribes*.

Exercise 45

Explain in plain English what the italicized euphemisms might mean in the sentences below.

1. The company is in a *non-profit* situation.
2. **The** rebel fighters *were neutralized*.
3. **The** prime-minister was *economical* with the truth.
4. With all due respect, I think your figures are *misleading*.
5. **There** was *frank and open* exchange of views.
6. The company spent \$12 million on *contributions*.
7. The army *broke off contact* with the enemy.
8. *Highly confidential sources* were used in *technical surveillance* for decades.

Exercise 46

Euphemisms are also used in a rather sinister way. Politicians as well as military people resort to them to cover up some events, or intentionally deceive the public, or even the international community.

(i Read this extract from an essay **written** by George Orwell in May, 1945. What does it say about language and politics? How true is it today?

Language and Politics

In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible. Things like the continuance of British rule in India, the Russian purges and deportations, the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan, can indeed be defended, but only by arguments which are too brutal for most people to face, and which do not square with the professed aims of the political parties. Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness or doublespeak. Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, **the cattle RU-chine-gunned**, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets **this is called pacification**. Millions of peasants are robbed **of their farm! Hid I Wt** trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry. (MI II called *transfer of population or rectification of frontiers*).

People are imprisoned for years without trial, or shot **in the back of the neck** or sent to die of scurvy in Arctic lumber camps: this is called *elimination of unreliable elements*. Such phraseology is needed if one wants to name things without calling up mental pictures of them. A mass of Latin words falls upon the facts like soft snow, blurring the outline and covering the details. The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like the cuttlefish spurting out ink. In our age there is no such thing as 'keeping out of politics'. All issues are political issues, and politics itself is a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred, and schizophrenia. When the general atmosphere is bad, language must suffer.