

Identifying Euphemism and Dysphemism

Below is a table of euphemistic (softened language) and dysphemistic (hardened language) phrases from the field of warfare. These phrases were used extensively around 2003 – 2005, the years in which the US and allies conducted the invasion of Iraq. Do you know what these phrases mean in plain speech? After you've completed this exercise, listen to George Bush's speech justifying the invasion of Iraq. Note down when he uses language that you think is euphemistic or dysphemistic. Discuss your findings:

Phrases from Bush's Speech	Type	Plain Speech Alternative
Weapons of mass destruction	Euphemism	
Regime change	Euphemism	
Coalition forces	Euphemism	
Operation Iraqi Freedom	Euphemism	
Peacekeeping mission	Euphemism	
Collateral damage	Euphemism	
Friendly fire	Euphemism	
Targeted strikes	Euphemism	
Pre-emptive action	Euphemism	
Liberation of Iraq	Euphemism	
Axis of evil	Dysphemism	
Brutal dictator	Dysphemism	
Harboring terrorists	Dysphemism	
Rogue state	Dysphemism	
Threat to civilization	Dysphemism	