

The Origin of Euphemism and Its Stages of Development

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Abstract

Stylistic devices like euphemisms help the speaker to make their speech colorful and make listeners think. The article aims to illustrate the origin of euphemisms and their development stages. Moreover, it discusses some stylistic tropes that are similar to euphemism or close to it.

Keywords: euphemism, stylistic device, dysphemism, linguistics, culture, linguoculturology, taboo.

INTRODUCTION

The origin of euphemism traces back to human societies' long-standing practices of using language to navigate social taboos, sensitivities, and the need for politeness. The term "euphemism" itself comes from the Greek word "euphēmismos," which is derived from "euphēmos," meaning "auspicious" or "sounding good." This linguistic phenomenon involves the substitution of a mild, indirect, or vague term for one considered harsh, blunt, or offensive. Euphemisms are employed for various reasons, including adhering to cultural and social norms, avoiding taboo subjects, softening the impact of unpleasant realities, and circumventing censorship. Historically, euphemisms have been used across cultures and throughout different periods, evolving with societal changes. In ancient times, euphemisms were often related to religion, superstition, and the supernatural, used to avoid invoking the ire of gods or to speak respectfully about sacred or forbidden topics. For example, in Ancient Greece, euphemisms were used about gods and mythical creatures to ensure positive outcomes and avoid attracting negative attention.

In later periods, the use of euphemisms expanded to include a wide range of subjects, such as death, disease, bodily functions, and social issues. The Victorians, for example, were known for their extensive use of euphemisms to conform to the strict standards of propriety and decency of the time. Terms like "the unmentionables" for underwear or "in a delicate condition" for pregnancy reflect the societal norms and attitudes of that era.

In modern times, euphemisms continue to evolve and are prevalent in political language, corporate speech, and everyday conversation. They serve both to soften harsh realities (e.g., "downsizing" for layoffs, "collateral damage" for civilian casualties in military actions) and to navigate sensitive topics (e.g., "passed away" instead of "died"). The development and use of euphemisms are closely tied to cultural sensitivities, societal norms, and the ever-changing landscape of language and communication.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Euphemisms are vitally important in a discourse as well as in a speech as the euphemism is a type of device. The article aims to illustrate the importance of euphemisms in a literal text. Euphemisms are the same stylistic tropes as they can create a good atmosphere in a text or speech by hiding rudeness and harshness in speech. Euphemisms are sometimes called "taboo" in linguistics as well as in stylistics, and they aim to make speech more beautiful, and to express rude words interestingly and conveniently. Euphemisms give colorful meaning to the text it does not matter whether it is literal, publicity, oral, or written. To overcome rudeness, euphemisms, and taboos are helpful in a speech or a text. Regarding the term "euphemism", originated from the Greek word "euphemia" which refers to the usage of "words of good omen"; the term is a compound of "eu" which means "good, well"; "pheme" which means "prophetic speech, rumor, talk". So, the term "euphemism" refers to the good words with the meaning to "to keep a holy silence".

In the study of taboos and euphemisms in Turkic languages, the number of dedicated scientific works is limited. However, taboos and euphemisms are used by many Turkic peoples, especially Kazakh, studied by Turkmen, Altai, Azerbaijani, Uzbek, and Russian linguists. Among them are S. Altayev, N. Ismatullayev, N. M. Jabbarov, and V. B. Darbakova we can cite linguists. Turkish linguists K. Demirci and linguists such as A. Güngör, and U. Söylemez are relatively few in Turkish linguistics engaged in the study of learned taboos and euphemisms.

Taboos and euphemisms have been studied by several scholars around the world, including J.J. Varbot, I.S. Cohn, L. Blumfeld, KK Shahjuri, A. The works by Ismatullayev, N.M. Jabbarov, N.A. Yayimova and many other historical and modern scientists have made remarkable scientific works in this field.

A. Omonturdiyev claimed about euphemism, "Euphemism as a research topic of stylistics is one of the topics that should be studied more deeply".[7.22]; according to J. Vandries: "Euphemism is a more polite and only a more cultural form" [8.175]. L. A. Bulakhovsky gave his opinion as "A euphemism is something that evokes a bad opinion or changing the original name of the event and the evil forces through the word about them call to speak without creating "Danger", ... before everyone "Prevention of danger is the "getting" formula" [8.175]

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

The development of euphemisms can be observed through various stages, reflecting changes in societal norms, cultural sensitivities, and the evolution of language itself. While the specific trajectory can vary depending on the cultural and linguistic context, the general process often follows a pattern known as the "euphemism treadmill," a term coined by psychologist Steven Pinker. This concept illustrates how euphemisms evolve, eventually becoming the very terms they were meant to replace or soften, leading to the creation of new euphemisms. So, there are some stages of development of euphemisms:

- A) Identification of a Taboo or Sensitive Subject: The first stage involves recognizing a topic or term as taboo, sensitive, or potentially offensive. This recognition is often rooted in cultural, social, or political factors and can pertain to topics such as death, disease, bodily functions, social inequalities, and more.
- B) Creation of a Euphemism: Once a subject is identified as needing softer language, a euphemism is created. This euphemism uses more palatable, indirect, or vague language

to refer to the taboo subject. The creation of a euphemism is often an attempt to navigate social norms or sensitivities with greater tact, respect, or politeness.

- C) Adoption and Usage: The newly created euphemism is then adopted by speakers of the language. Its usage spreads as it becomes the preferred term in polite society, official discourse, or among certain groups wishing to avoid the negative connotations of the original term. This stage is critical for the euphemism to become established in the language.
- D) Normalization and Potential Stigma: Over time, the euphemism becomes normalized and widely recognized as the standard term for the concept it describes. However, as the euphemism becomes more common, it may begin to acquire the very connotations it was meant to avoid. This stage reflects the cyclical nature of euphemism usage, where the euphemistic term itself becomes stigmatized or taboo.
- E) Replacement and the Euphemism Treadmill: Eventually, the euphemism may become as taboo or disliked as the original term, necessitating the creation of a new euphemism. This cycle, known as the euphemism treadmill, highlights the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of language and social sensitivities. The term "euphemism treadmill" itself underscores the continuous motion and inevitable replacement process inherent in the life cycle of euphemisms.

This cyclical process reflects the adaptability of language to changing societal values, norms, and sensitivities. It also illustrates the challenges of navigating language in a manner that is both respectful and reflective of evolving cultural understandings. The development of euphemisms is a dynamic aspect of linguistics, offering insights into how societies deal with complex or sensitive issues through language.

The speaker expresses his opinion through language and speech units. In this process from the direct meaning of the basics concrete, objects, reality, the environment of human activity, and people attitude is reflected in speech. But these are alleviating the situation, rough communication, not description, but the correct uses of words culture, speakers are important in expressing their respect and others. In our speech, there are only units related to topics and the environment volume of sheep. The speaker is simply one or rude in choosing such meanings not only softening the words or phrases, but hiding the original meaning, disguised, and thus the intimate relationship between the speakers continues to improve.

Dependence on context and speech conditions in the use of euphemisms: Speech the stricter the social control of the situation, the more euphemisms appear the more likely it is to come out; and vice versa, the control of the speech situation weakness and involuntary loudness of speech, (family members and friends in communication with) euphemisms prefer "open (direct)" meaning or dysphemism. Euphemisms as euphemisms in some circumstances are evaluated differently in another situation. [9.139] Several examples can be given in both Uzbek and English languages, like:

chayon (scorpion) – kajdum or gajdum

iron (snake) - arg'amchi, arqon (rope)

ayiq (bear) - polvon, asalxo'r (strong, honey-lover,)

bo'ri (wolf) – jondor, o'rmon shifokori (a doctor of forest)

qizamiq (measles) – gul, chechak (flower)

vabo (cholera) – o'yin (game)

jinni (insane) – pari (angel), xola (aunt), momo

o'ldi (dead) – vafot etdi, olamdan ko'z yumdi (closed his eyes), in english kick the bucket and many other examples can be given.

In addition, euphemisms representing prohibition, secrecy, death, disease, etc occurs. For example, in Uzbek language instead of the word "died" (o'ldi), "went to his ancestor" (ajdodlari oldiga yo'l oldi), "He gave his heart to God" (yuragini Xudoga topshirdi) and "He commanded to live long" (abadiy hayotga ketdi) are used. [6.36]

According to Quentin Crisp: "Euphemisms are unpleasant truths wearing diplomatic cologne" [10.1]. It is an indirect way of expressing something. While talking about sensitive subjects or something that might be rude, taboo or upsetting, the English language, figures of speech, called *Euphemism* is used to make things sound better. Most importantly, making things sound sarcastic or less offensive. As it is mentioned above, euphemism comes from a Greek word that means the use of "words of good omen".

CONCLUSION

To sum up, euphemisms are words or phrases that can be used to convey unpleasant, depressing, or prohibited information. It is the art of saying things in a way that is less obnoxious, lighter, or in a more subtle way.

The main reasons for the emergence of euphemisms in a developed society are the usage of rude or shameful words and phrases that are against the rules of etiquette. So, speakers replace "You're cheating" with "You're knitting"; Doctors often refer to Latin disease terms or they use special medical terms instead of "cancer", "tuberculosis" instead of the disease, he says that it will lead to death instead of tbc, "may die". Sometimes, words with less negative connotations than words like swearing and slang is used in a text. Although in most cases from euphemisms or the meaning of the text in the use of euphemisms, regardless of which word is used instead significantly softens the negative meaning of harsh words in the texts.

To conclude, So, based on the classification of euphemisms, according to their social nature, the followings can be divided into types of euphemism:

1) Common euphemisms of the national literary language;

2) Class and professional euphemisms;

3) Family - household euphemisms.

I. Taboo-based euphemisms: a) when naming mythological concepts

used euphemisms. b) poisonous insects, snakes, etc. euphemisms used for animal names) predator euphemisms used for animal names. e) disease euphemisms used for names. f) euphemisms used in relation to male and female relationships. g) in women's language euphemisms.

II. Euphemisms based on big secrets.

III. It is used instead of rude words that are considered a crime in society euphemisms.

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