



THE PHENOMENON OF EUPHEMISM IN LINGUISTICS

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6496706>

Abdulxafizova Surayyo Abdulxamid qizi

Master's student of The National University
of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek
faculty of foreign philology

Abstract: *The article deals with the definition of euphemism, euphemistic use of language units, classification of euphemisms. We tried to give clear distinction of euphemism using illustrative examples. The actuality of learning euphemism is determined by the fact that in the latter decades, the use of this phenomenon differs for its specific intensity in various genres.*

Key words: euphemism, euphemia, taboo words, external factors, classification.

INTRODUCTION.

Euphemism is a figure of speech commonly used to replace a word or phrase that is related to a concept that might make others uncomfortable and refers to figurative language designed to replace phrasing that would otherwise be considered harsh, impolite, or unpleasant. There are many articles on this topic in linguistics. We aim to show the importance of knowing the euphemisms, their semantical function and classification.

Euphemism comes from the Greek word "euphemia" which refers to the use of 'words of good omen'; it is a compound of *eû* (εὖ), meaning 'good, well', and *phémē* (φήμη), meaning 'prophetic speech; rumour, talk. Eupheme is a reference to the female Greek spirit of words of praise and positivity, etc. The term *euphemism* itself was used as a euphemism by the ancient Greeks; with the meaning "to keep a holy silence" (speaking well by not speaking at all) ¹.

Euphemism is an appropriate expression used in the place of a phrase or words that may be found inappropriate or offensive. Euphemisms are commonly used in daily language and literature to replace language that some may find displeasing ². Euphemistic language is commonly used in

¹ Webster's Online Dictionary. [Archived](#) from the original on 2007-07-28. Retrieved 2014-03-16.

² <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/>



literature, especially older works, as a way to convey a message without risking the chance of it being barred to censorship for crude language.

Frequently, over time, euphemisms themselves become taboo words, through the linguistic process of [semantic change](#) known as [pejoration](#), which University of Oregon linguist Sharon Henderson Taylor dubbed the "**euphemism cycle**" in 1974,³ also frequently referred to as the "**euphemism treadmill**". For instance, *toilet* is an 18th-century euphemism, replacing the older euphemism *house-of-office*, which in turn replaced the even older euphemisms *privy-house* and *bog-house* ⁴. The act of human defecation is possibly the most needy candidate for a euphemism in all eras. In the 20th century, where the old euphemisms *lavatory* (a place where one washes) or [toilet](#) (a place where one dresses) had grown from widespread usage (e.g., in the United States) to being synonymous with the crude act they sought to deflect, they were sometimes replaced with *bathroom* (a place where one bathes), *washroom* (a place where one washes), or *restroom* (a place where one rests) or even by the extreme form *powder room* (a place where one applies facial cosmetics). The form *water closet*, which in turn became euphemised to W.C., is a less deflective form. Another example in American English is the replacement of [colored people](#) with [Negro](#) (euphemism by foreign language)⁵.

In linguistics, euphemisms have been studied since the 19th century. At the end of the nineteenth century German scientist Paul introduced them as well known scheme of semantic changes. The work of A. Meyer, who studied taboos and euphemisms in ancient society, attracted the attention of scientists to this phenomenon in the first half of the twentieth century. But only during the last decades they became the object of close attention of scientists. In common scientists are unanimous in the investigation of extra linguistic nature of euphemisms.

The main factor of the euphemism of speech is to avoid of communicative conflict, i.e. the goal is not to create a sense of belonging to the intercommunicative discomfort. The euphemistic dictionary is very mobile, it is constantly under influence of external factors, it changes, replenishes and represents a notable lexical layer, capable to attract not

³ Henderson Taylor, Sharon (1974). "Terms for Low Intelligence". *American Speech*. **49** (3/4): 197–207. [doi:10.2307/3087798](#). [JSTOR 3087798](#).

⁴ Bell, Vicars Walker (1953). *On Learning the English Tongue*. Faber & Faber. p. 19. The Honest Jakes or Privy has graduated via Offices to the final horror of Toilet.

⁵ Demby, Gene (7 November 2014). [""Why We Have So Many Terms for 'People of Color'""](#). *NPR*. [Archived from the original on 12 December 2019](#). Retrieved 12 December 2019.



only who study linguistics, but also all those who are fond of English, reading and studying English language literature.

The issues of euphemism, its classification and its occurrence in speech have been extensively studied in Russian and European linguistics. In the XX-XXI centuries, a number of scientific studies on the issue of euphemistic lexical and its connection with other language phenomena arose. Scientists from Moscow, Petersburg, and Volgograd were engaged in the study of the means and goals of euphemism in the Russian language (L.P.Krisin, V.P.Maskvin, V.Z.Sannikov, E.P.Senichkina). B.A.Larin studied euphemisms from a historical point of view on the basis of ancient taboos. With the description of the means and goals of euphemism in the Russian language, L.P.Krisin, V.P.Maskvin, V.Z.Sannikov, and E.P.Senichkina were engaged ⁶.

Along with occasional euphemisms, E.P.Senichkina distinguishes the following categories:

- a) euphemisms that have their own pattern in language
- b) are known to the expressive, euphemisms whose origin is unknown to the expressive (related to a person or thing-event)
- c) historical euphemisms and dysphemisms.

The classification made by R.Holder is noteworthy. He lexically and semantically divides euphemisms into 60 subclasses. This classification indicates the diversity of the denotative content of euphemisms. A. M Katsev divides euphemisms into 10 themes:

- 1) The name of the divine powers;
- 2) Units representing death and disease;
- 3) Names associated with the defect;
- 4) Names related to gender;
- 5) Names denoting poverty;
- 6) Names denoting certain professions;
- 7) Names of mental and physical disabilities;
- 8) Names of clothing parts.

In Uzbek linguistics N.Ismatullaev and A.Omonturdiyev conducted the scientific work on a special study of the phenomenon of euphemism, their stylistic features, linguistic peculiarities of the euphemisms used in the speech of the breeder. A.Mamatov, L.Raupova, Z.Kholmanova, X.Kadirova and D.Rustamova also investigated this theme. Linguist M.Mirtojiev's monograph "Semasiology of the Uzbek language" also has a special place

⁶ Москвин В.П.Эвфемизмы в лексической системе современного русского языка//Василий Павлович Москвин.2е изд.–М.:Лен-д,2007.–264с.



in the study of euphemisms. In his monograph, the scientist pays special attention to the issues of the attitude to the phenomenon of taboo and the history of the study of euphemisms.

Euphemistic language can be found throughout both in literature and in everyday language. But what is a euphemism used for? While everyone uses euphemistic language as a means to communicate something else, the reason for the substitution may differ. Specifically in past conservative time periods, euphemisms were commonly used in everyday conversations to avoid offensive or even taboo language. There are some examples of euphemisms below:

rich: wealthy, well-to-do, well-off

poor: economically disadvantaged, needy, in need

unemployed: out of work, between jobs

to fire: to lay off, to let (someone) go, to terminate, to downsize, to restructure

to quit: to resign, to leave the company

pay: salary, compensation, compensation plan

boss: supervisor, manager

secretary: administrative assistant, personal assistant

janitor/custodian: maintenance worker

fat: heavyset

elderly/old person: senior citizen, senior, pensioner, retiree

problem: issue

worried: concerned

used: pre-owned

lie: fabrication

to lie: to fabricate

to owe money: to have an outstanding payment

cheap (person): frugal, thrifty

bathroom: restroom.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, the use of euphemisms in speech often depends on the values, norms of etiquette and social culture established in a particular society by the norms of speech. Euphemisms are a linguistic and socio-cultural phenomenon with a long history in terms of origin. Learning euphemisms eliminates the complications, misunderstandings that arise in the process of intercultural communication and ensures that communication is successful and productive. Thus, euphemisms can and should be the subject to study not only philology and linguistics, but also



culturology, because in our time, more and more people possess an aggressive behavior. Since it is difficult to imagine the future a man who ignores the requirements of tact, politeness, warning to others, decency, rules of behavior, etiquette.

REFERENCES:

1. Bell, Vicars Walker (1953). On Learning the English Tongue. Faber & Faber. p. 19. The Honest Jakes or Privy has graduated via Offices to the final horror of Toilet.
2. Demby, Gene (7 November 2014). [""Why We Have So Many Terms for 'People of Color'""](#). NPR. [Archived](#) from the original on 12 December 2019. Retrieved 12 December 2019.
1. 3.Henderson Taylor, Sharon (1974). "Terms for Low Intelligence". American Speech. 49 (3/4): 197–207. [doi:10.2307/3087798](#). JSTOR 3087798.
2. 4.Krysin L.P. Evfemizmy v sovremennoy russkoy rechi G' L.P. Krysin G.'G.' // Rusistika. Berlin, 1994. № 1-2. S. 28-49.
3. 5.Москвин В.П.Эвфемизмы в лексической системе современного русского языка//Василий Павлович Москвин.2е изд.– М.:Лен-д,2007.–264с.
4. 6. Larin B.A. Istoriya russkogo yazyka i obshee yazykoznanie G' B.A. Larin G'G.' // M.: Prosvehenie, 1977. 224 s.
5. 7. Moskvina V.P. Stilistika russkogo yazyka. Teoreticheskiy kurs. G' V.P. // Moskvina G'G' Rostov na Donu.: Feniks, 2006. 630 s.
6. 8.Вильданова Г.А. Эвфемия и принцип вежливости в современном английском языке: гендерный аспект. – МоскваБерлин: Директ-Медиа, 2015. –162 с.
7. 9.Webster's Online Dictionary. [Archived](#) from the original on 2007-07-28. Retrieved 2014-03-16.
8. 10.<https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/>