



ABOUT THEMATIC EUPHEMISMS

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Abstract

This article analyzes taboo and euphemism, the foundations of their formation, the criteria of euphemistic meaning, and the classificatory bases of euphemisms. The stages of euphemism formation and scholarly debates about euphemism are examined, and the role of euphemisms in modern society is discussed. Examples of euphemisms from both ancient and contemporary periods are presented. Euphemistic speech and its characteristics are also studied. Furthermore, the importance of euphemisms in human verbal communication in world linguistics and the research conducted by scholars on this topic are analyzed.

Keywords: Taboo, euphemism, ethnolinguistics, euphemistic speech, euphemistic proverb, pornographic euphemism, euphemism in pastoral speech.

Introduction

In world linguistics, revealing the national and cultural characteristics of universal concepts through examples of euphemisms within the language system has become one of the important issues studied in the modern anthropological linguistics paradigm. The awareness of national identity among peoples, changes in national consciousness and thinking, and their reflection in language create the need to study the relationship between language and culture in world linguistics while taking the human factor into account.

Research on taboo and euphemism shows that the means of communication among people, according to the level of expressing reality, consist of three layers: language (message), speech (communication), and super-speech (euphemistic communication). Euphemistic speech is the highest form of human thinking and intellect, the “essence” of thought, representing reality in a refined, veiled, softened, and figurative manner.

In fact, euphemistic speech can be classified as follows:

According to the level of tabooization of reality

According to the semantic and grammatical formation of euphemisms



According to the degree of expressiveness

According to the method of meaning expression

According to its role in forming the euphemistic layer of language

According to the means of expression

According to the use of non-literary language elements

The word taboo (tabu, tabo, taboo) originates from the Tongan language of Polynesia and means to forbid or to prohibit. Taboo and euphemism are historical and ethnographic categories. However, we do not possess textual evidence proving exactly when, or even in which century, they appeared and developed as stylistic devices. From this it follows that taboo and euphemistic speech are as ancient as language itself and date back to primitive society, clan, and tribal languages.

The introduction of the word and concept taboo into the English-speaking world and later its spread as an international term is largely associated with James Cook, who encountered it while exploring inhabited regions. Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to conclude that the concept of taboo originated solely in Polynesia; its roots go back to the primitive period. According to the object of expression, taboo can be divided into social or ethnographic taboo and linguistic taboo.

Literature Review and Methodology

In general linguistics, Turkology, and particularly in Uzbek linguistics, there are many sources—scientific works, articles, and brief remarks—concerning the causes of the emergence of taboo and euphemism and the purposes for which they are used. L. A. Bulakhovsky writes: “Euphemisms replace the real name of an object or phenomenon that evokes unpleasant associations and allow people to speak about it without creating the ‘danger’ of calling forth evil forces through words... first of all, they function as a formula for ‘preventing danger.’”

N. A. Samoylovich provides a dictionary of 42 words that Altai women were not allowed to pronounce. For example, Kazakh and Kyrgyz women avoided pronouncing the names of their husbands and their husbands’ brothers. As a result, the following expressions were recorded in their speech: “The howler (wolf) lying under the greening (reed) on the other side of the flowing (river) is eating the child (lamb) of the bleating (sheep).” (1)

Similarly, E. A. Agayan notes that in Armenian villages the words “rope” or “cable” were used instead of the word “snake.” (2)

A. A. Reformatsky considered the phenomenon of taboo and euphemism from a broader perspective and stated that:

In military diplomacy, the names of countries, cities, enterprises, military units, and certain individuals are sometimes replaced with conditional symbols (such as n, nn, x, y, z).

From the standpoint of etiquette, dangerous diseases are sometimes not mentioned directly; instead, Latin terms or abbreviations are used.

Secret words and expressions used in thieves' jargon may also be considered euphemisms.

An example of euphemistic or indirect expression:

Jami: "Master Jaloliddin's head was cut off."

Alisher Navoi: "What was the sin of this golden head? What was the sin of this shining sun?" (U. I. Sultan, Navoi, p. 87)

Another poetic example:

When we serve dinner in the evening, one portion is missing; I miss someone — someone of mine. Although my faith is always strong, Sometimes doubts overwhelm my heart. Here:

"What was his sin?" – why he was killed

"Golden head", "shining sun" – Master Jaloliddin

"One portion", "someone", "someone of mine" – the poet's son

"Doubt/whispering thoughts" – fear of death

Discussion and Results

The phenomenon of euphemism began to be actively studied in general linguistics in the early twentieth century by linguists such as J. Vendryes and L. A. Bulakhovsky. Scholars like A. N. Samoylovich and N. A. Baskakov investigated euphemisms through the speech of particular nations or social groups, for example, in the speech of Altai women. Research conducted within specific cultural and mental contexts by A. Agayan and O. N. Trubachev is also of particular importance.

For instance, O. N. Trubachev observed the use of euphemisms connected with European hunters and hunting seasons in the speech of people in countries such as Sweden, Finland, and Estonia, while E. A. Agayan studied the process of euphemization in the speech of residents of Armenian villages. S. Otaev analyzed euphemisms in the Turkmen language, G. G. Musaboev in the Kazakh language, V.



P. Darbakova in the language of the Mongolian people, and N. G. Mikhaylovskaya examined euphemisms found in the languages of the Far Eastern peoples—Chukchi, Khanty-Mansi, and Nanai.

Euphemisms in the Tuvan language were studied by S. P. Vanshteyn and Sh. Ch. Sat, while S. S. Shirokov discussed euphemisms in the English language, noting that some euphemisms emerge as synonyms for rude or unpleasant words and serve the speech of the aristocracy. N. S. Baschaeva states that the term euphemism refers to the softened description of objects or events with negative connotations. The phenomenon of euphemism has also been examined from different perspectives by linguists such as B. A. Larin, A. M. Katsev, N. S. Boschaeva, L. V. Artyushkina, G. G. Kujim, and others.

According to the classification of A. A. Reformatsky, the hidden expressions used in the speech of thieves are not called agrotic euphemisms. However, such euphemisms are also used in the speech of robbers, murderers, racketeers, traitors, and prisoners. In such cases, instead of the verb to kill, expressions like “to finish someone off,” “to settle someone,” “to take care of someone,” “to arrange someone,” “to bring a cap or turban,” “to reward someone,” or “to stroke someone’s throat” are used as euphemistic expressions with a dysphemistic character. For example: “If he holds a grudge, he will finish both of us off at once.”

(N. Qobil, Yoshlik, p. 47)

As mentioned above, euphemisms often demonstrate synonymy. For example, linguistic observations have recorded 65 euphemistic expressions for “to love,” 47 for “to marry a woman,” 140 for “to have sexual intercourse,” 50 for “to get married (for a woman),” 43 for “husband,” 56 for “wife,” 30 for “pregnancy,” 28 for “to give birth,” 42 for “vodka,” 49 for “to drink alcohol,” 18 for “to become drunk,” 30 for “thief/steal,” and 370 euphemistic expressions for “to die.”

In Uzbek linguistics, the term euphemism was first used in 1963–1964 in N. Ismatullaev’s dissertation titled “Euphemisms in the Modern Uzbek Language.” A. Omonturdiyev later studied euphemisms extensively as an object of stylistic research and examined the euphemistic foundations of Uzbek speech. The role of letters in creating euphemistic meaning, especially their high artistic expression in the works of Alisher Navoi, has been discussed in the studies of A. Rustamov, E. Umarov, and Y. Isoqov.



In both world linguistics and Uzbek linguistics, scholars have identified various thematic groups of euphemisms, including:

Euphemisms related to animal husbandry

Euphemisms related to plant vocabulary

Euphemisms connected with shepherds and pastoral expressions

Euphemisms used in livestock trade and market speech

Euphemisms related to wealth and poverty

Euphemisms connected with the concepts of halal and haram

Euphemisms related to theft and stealing

Euphemisms used in oath formulas

Euphemisms related to blessings and curses

Euphemisms connected with family, marriage, weddings, and bride–groom terminology, and others.

For example, in expressions related to traditional wrestling, instead of saying “he was defeated,” euphemistic expressions such as “his shoulder touched the ground,” “his back touched the earth,” “he fell flat,” or “he counted the stars” are used. Likewise, instead of the direct expression “die”, euphemistic phrases such as “may your spring turn into winter,” “may your time come,” “may your departure be final,” or “let water be poured into your mouth” are used.

In modern linguistics, euphemisms are recognized as a complex linguistic phenomenon closely connected with speech culture, social communication, and cultural values. Euphemistic units soften taboo concepts in speech, indirectly express unpleasant or negative meanings, reduce conflict in communication, and help adapt speech to social and ethnic norms. Although the issue of euphemisms has been addressed in some studies in Uzbek linguistics, their thematic classification, pragmatic functions, cultural foundations, and translation issues have not yet been comprehensively studied.

Conclusion

Initially, ethnographic taboo appeared, followed later by linguistic taboo connected with it. The processes of taboo and euphemization developed naturally on the basis of several factors:

Religious and mythological worldview

The magic of words



Ethical and aesthetic norms of speech

Political and ideological necessity

The subjective needs of the speaker

The professional euphemistic layer of language is mainly formed through semantic shifts and figurative expressions. The use of euphemisms is a delicate linguistic art that requires the speaker to possess sensitivity and awareness of realities that should be tabooed or softened during communication. Since ancient times, humans have felt the need to predict good or bad events related to their lives, destiny, and future. This necessity led to the emergence of fortune tellers, astrologers, interpreters of dreams, and predictors. Farmers and herders, whose lives were closely connected with natural phenomena, were particularly aware of this process. As a result, dream books and fortune-telling texts describing unpleasant events—such as death, war, famine, drought, frightening dreams, and earthquakes—often employed euphemistic expressions.

In the future, it is necessary to study the professional speech of the Uzbek language and the historical-evolutionary stages of its euphemistic system in a systematic and specialized way. For a long time in linguistics, taboo and euphemism were studied together with terms such as archaism and historicism, often within the framework of short academic courses. However, this field has developed its own terminology. In relation to the phenomenon itself, terms such as eupheme, euphemic, euphemistic are used; for the field or discipline—euphemics, euphemia, euphemology, euphemological; and for specialists—euphemologist, euphemist, euphemics scholar. The use of such terminology is considered appropriate for the further development of this area of research.

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