



EUPHEMISMS IN ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACTION

The article refers to people`s use of obscene vocabulary in communication in there circle, as a result of which in the language (e.g. modern English and Russian) the so - called euphemisim develops and functions.

KEY WORDS: *euphemisim, vocabulary, disfemizm, taboo, speech, lexicon.*

DISCUSSION

In every language there are words, the use of which instinctively or deliberately avoided because they are speaking or unpleasant, rude or impolite, low. Therefore, people often use substitutes such units, called euphemisms. Euphemism, or Euphemism [Greek - "piety"] - replacing words deemed rude or "obscene" by descriptive expressions, foreign words or meaningless consonances (for example in Russian «невыразимые» instead of «штаны», «в интересном положении» instead of «беременная», «клозет» instead of «нужник», «елки-палки» and etc.) It is characteristic that the new designations of "obscene" objects and phenomena lose the character of Euphemisms over time, begin to be perceived as a direct reference to an "obscene" object, and in turn become "obscene".

In the "Explanatory dictionary of Russian language" euphemism has the following definitions: "Euphemism (from the Greek euphemia-refraining from inappropriate words, a relaxed expression) - a word or phrase that serves in certain circumstances to replace such signs, which seem speaker undesirable, not quite polite, too sharp. Euphemisms of this kind are based on synonymy, for example, *задерживается* instead of *опаздывает*, *поправился* instead of *потолстел*, *позаимствовал* instead of *украл*, *попросили* (from somewhere) instead of *выгнали*.

The Euphemism phenomenon is based on: 1. deeply archaic remnants of linguistic "taboos" (prohibitions on pronouncing direct names of

dangerous objects and phenomena, for example gods, illnesses, and the dead, since the act of naming, according to the dialogical thinking of a primitive person, can cause the phenomenon itself) - these are Euphemisms such as: «нечистый» instead of «черт», «покойный», «почивший»; 2. facts of social dialectology.

A similar way of using euphemism through the expression of thoughts is dictated by social conventions. Talking often see the "impropriety" in places where it does not, and then use sophisticated with their point of view, sometimes elaborate expressions reaches the point of absurdity. Many topics, both in English and in Russian, seem shameful, and thereby undergo euphemization.

In English, euphemism has the following description:

There are words in every language which people instinctively avoid because they are considered indecent, indelicate, rude, too direct or impolite. As the "offensive" referents, for which these words stand, must still be alluded to, they are often described in a round about way, by using substitutes called *euphemisms*. This device is dictated by social conventions which are sometimes apt to be oversensitive, which see "indecent" where there is



none and seek refinement in absurd avoidances and pretentiousness.¹

The word *lavatory* has, naturally, produced many euphemisms. Here are some of them: *powder room, washroom, restroom, comfort station, ladies' (room), gentlemen's (room) water-closet, w.c., public conveniences and even windsor castle*. Pregnancy is another topic for "delicate" references. Here are some of the euphemisms used as substitutes for the adjective *pregnant*: *in an interesting condition, in a delicate condition, in a family way, with a baby coming, (big) with child*. The apparently the word *trousers*, not so long ago, had a great number of euphemistic equivalents, some of them quite funny: *unmentionables, inexpressibles, indescribables, unwhisperables, you-mustn't-mention 'ems, sit-upons*. Nowadays, however, nobody seems to regard this word as 'indecent' any more, and so its euphemistic substitutes are no longer in use.

A landlady who refers to her lodgers as paying guests is also using a euphemism, aiming at half-concealing the embarrassing fact that she lets rooms. The love of affectation, which displays itself in the excessive use of euphemisms, has never been a sign of good taste or genuine refinement. Quite the opposite. Fiction writers have often ridiculed pretentious people for their weak attempts to express themselves in a delicate and refined way. "... Mrs. Sunbury never went to bed, she *retired*, but Mr. Sunbury who was not quite so refined as his wife always said: "Me for Bedford"... " (From *the Kite* by W.S. Maugham)

To *retire* in this ironical passage is a euphemistic substitute for *to go to bed*. Euphemisms may, of course, be used due to genuine concern not to hurt someone's feelings. For instance, a liar can be described as a person who *does not always strictly tell the truth* and a stupid man can be said to be *not exactly brilliant*.

Euphemisms are also replaced by taboo, archaic names. Recall: euphemisms grew out of taboo. The superstitious fear of spells, the magical effect of the word, the direct name gave rise to prohibitions on lexemes allowed only to priests and leaders. Belief in magic gave rise to prayers, conspiracies of diseases, fascination. Thus, euphemization, as permitted and decent names, is a

feature of the language inherent in various cultural communities, social strata and historical entities.

In English sources, tabooed euphemisms are considered and described as follows: All the euphemisms that have been described so far are used to avoid the so-called *social taboos*. Their use, as has already been said, is inspired by social convention. Superstitious taboos gave rise to the use of other type of euphemisms. The reluctance to call by their proper names is also typical of this type of euphemisms, but this time it is based on a deeply-rooted subconscious fear. Superstitious taboos have their roots in the distant past of mankind when people believed that there was a supernatural link between a name and the object or creature it represented. Therefore, all the words denoting evil spirits, dangerous animals, or the power of nature were taboo. If uttered, it was believed that unspeakable disasters would result not only for the speaker but also for those near him. That is why all creatures, objects and phenomena threatening danger were referred to in a round-about descriptive way. So, a dangerous animal might be described as *the one-lurking-in-the-wood* and a mortal disease as *the Black Death*. Euphemisms are probably the oldest type of synonyms, for it is reasonable to assume that superstitions which caused real fear called for the creation of euphemisms long before the need to describe things in their various aspects or subtle shades caused the appearance of other synonyms.

The Christian religion also made certain words taboo. The proverb *Speak of the devil and he will appear* must have been used and taken quite literally when it was first used, and the fear of *calling devil by name* was certainly inherited from ancient superstitious beliefs. So, the word *devil* became taboo, and a number of euphemisms were substituted for it: *The Prince of Darkness, the black one, the evil one, dickens, deuce, Old Nick*.

The word *god*, due to other considerations, also had a great number of substitutes which can still be traced in such phrases as *Good Lord! By Heavens! Good Heavens! (My) goodness! (My) goodness gracious! Gracious me!*

Even in our modern emancipated times, old superstitious fears still lurk behind words associated with death and fatal diseases. People are not superstitious nowadays and yet they are surprisingly reluctant to use the verb *to die* which has a long chain of both solemn and humorous substitutes. E.g. *to pass away, to be taken, to breathe one's last, to depart this life, to close one's eyes, to yield (give) up the ghost, to go the way of all flesh, to go West, to kick off, to check out, to kick the bucket, to take a ride, to hop the twig, to join the majority*.

As can be seen from the above analysis, euphemisms can now be caused by both personal and

¹ Arnold I.V. Семантическая структура слова в современном английском языке и методика ее исследования. М., 1957.стр. 37-41



social causes.² Vocabulary serving almost all areas of life is euphemized. B.A. Larin distinguishes three types euphemization:

1. commonly used euphemisms of national literary language;
2. class and professional euphemisms;
3. family-household euphemisms.

In a historical retrospective, the first and second groups come together, and in the movement toward the future, the second group melts until it disappears completely. The third group of euphemisms, which are mostly used in colloquial speech, is characterized by a limited range of ideas from the field of physiology and human anatomy.

There is another classification of Professor A.S. Kurkiev, who distinguishes five groups:

1. euphemisms that arose on the basis of superstition (болеть- нездоров, хворает);
2. out of feelings of fear and displeasure (убить - прибить, ухлопать, укокошить);
3. on the basis of sympathy and pity (больной - не все дома);
4. generated modesty (незаконнорожденный - байстрюк, сколотыш);
5. courtesy (старый - в летах, преклонный возраст).

The classification of B. A. Larin is based on the social nature of the phenomenon, and A. S. Kurkiev classifies the system according to generative motives.

In our country during the period of stagnation and restructuring, euphemisms, which touch on socially significant topics and spheres of a person's activity, his relations with society and power, are most developed. And here there is a lack of understanding of euphemism as simply replacing a rude or indecent word with a more acceptable one. In this situation, the goal of euphemization is veiling, camouflage of the essence of the matter. The reason for the euphemization of vocabulary and reality was the general deceit of the system, the fear of publicizing unseemly or inhumane activities. Trends in the use of "camouflage" expressions were observed in the late 1980s, when coupons for receiving soap, sugar and other essential goods that became scarce were called "high demand goods" and were marked with "Invitation". The government's actions aimed at raising prices, increasing taxes, etc., the government itself called unpopular measures as a phrase. Now

camouflage words and phrases used in these areas are not popular.

To date, the number of words with a negative connotation is increasing. There is a tendency to develop a phenomenon called dysphemism. Modern speech in all variants of the language is accompanied by the phenomenon of dysphemization: spoken language, dialects, jargons - aggressiveness, negative expression are characteristic. Nevertheless, the use of rude vocabulary is not typical for the speaker of correct speech.

The processes of vulgarization, affecting almost all spheres of public life, have led to the fact that coarsening at the lexical level is expressed, in particular, in the increase in the use of rudely vernacular words and expressions such as reptiles, scum, scoundrel. The same is in English: cow-son - негодяй, chump - дурак, clutch - подонок, deadneck - кретин, dim-wit - глупец, dodunk - круглый дурак. Moreover, such units are noted not only in the oral and everyday sphere, but also in some genres of written and public speech, in television and radio journalism. One of the manifestations of freedom of speech in our country, which occurred at the turn of the 80-90s of the twentieth century, was the lifting of the ban on the use of priceless vocabulary in art and semi-artistic texts.

Examples of this are the prose of Venedikt Erofeev, Eduard Limonov. Swear words, obscenities are often used in modern films, television programs and newspaper and magazine articles. Similar vocabulary has recently been used by women and children. The social restriction here is not very significant: such usage is characteristic of the working environment, as well as acting, writing, and journalism.

An interesting phenomenon is the introduction of special terms in the field of euphemism (compare.: вши - педикулез, смерть - летальный исход). It is generally accepted that euphemisms and dysphemisms are short-lived. The condition for the effectiveness of euphemisms is both intralingual and extralinguistic factors. For linguistic reasons include, for example, the presence of "rude", "unacceptable" equivalents. With the use of such words implied unpronounceable euphemisms lose their "ennobling" properties. Many socio-cultural and psycholinguistic factors turn out to be a condition for the effectiveness of dysphemisms, and the observance of a peculiar speech "fashion" is not least effective. Intralingual reasons for the effectiveness of dysphemisms are speaking preference of expressive-emphatic units to neutral, redundancy in the language of a powerful arsenal of stylistic means, including a constantly replenishing layer of impaired vocabulary.

Especially rude and cynical notations are associated with two bright groups - verbs with dominant members умереть, убить, а так же пить

² Акхманова О.С. очерки по общей и русской лексикологии. М., 1957. стр.98-112.



выпивать (alcohol); сдохнуть, скопытиться, отбросить копыта, укокошить, налакаться, налиться, нанюхаться и под. At the same time, the English theme of death is verbalized almost exclusively through euphemisms. For example: to go west, to disease, to depart, to pass away, to breath, one's last, to join the silent, to be no more, to lose one's life, etc.³

The processes of euphemization and dysfemization are two opposing tendencies that occur in language and speech: to mitigate the negative expression of speech, to mask it and to coarsen the utterance, to strengthen negative expression. Euphemisms as stable replacements of rude words and as individually-contextual designations in this regard are correlated with dysphemisms, which can also be occasional formations, and have a constantly fixed meaning. Dysphemisms, much more than euphemisms possess expression, an evaluation characteristic, they certainly carry an emotional component of meaning. Euphemisms can be characterized by both neutrality and appreciation. It should be noted that the expression can be interpreted differently by different generations. What appears to be a successful euphemistic name for one generation in the next generation can be regarded as unacceptable rudeness (dysphemism), requiring a euphemistic replacement.

Thus, the processes of euphemization and dysfemization as part of the formation of the vocabulary play the role of enriching the language, having a weak significant function. However, in the social sphere euphemisms and dysphemism - have a compensatory character, filling the emotional discomfort of native speakers.

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³Arnold I.V. Лексикология современного английского языка.М.,1957.стр.156-157