

SEMANTIC PROCESSES OBSERVED IN EUPHEMISMS

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ANNOTATION

This article analyzes semantic processes observed in euphemisms. Particular attention is given to types of semantic shift such as metaphor, metonymy, and periphrasis involved in the formation of euphemisms. The study also examines the influence of cultural, social, and psychological factors on the emergence of euphemisms. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of euphemisms in language and speech.

Keywords: euphemism, semantic processes, metaphor, metonymy, periphrasis, semantic shift, language, speech

INTRODUCTION

The lexical system of a language is in a constant process of change, development, and renewal. One of the most significant aspects of this process is semantic change, that is, the expansion, narrowing, amelioration, or neutralization of word meanings over time. This phenomenon is of particular importance in the system of euphemisms because euphemisms are semantic units directly associated with taboos, moral norms, and cultural values embedded in human consciousness¹.

Through euphemisms, individuals express their thoughts in a softer, more positive, or socially acceptable manner. Therefore, the semantic evolution of euphemisms requires analysis from both linguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives. In today's era of globalization and rapid information exchange, language serves as an important medium reflecting social, cultural, and psychological processes within society. During communication, people often prefer to express certain concepts indirectly, using softer, more polite, or aesthetically acceptable forms rather than direct expressions. Such communicative needs give rise to euphemisms. Euphemisms are linguistic phenomena closely connected with social norms, religious beliefs, national values, and communicative culture.

Throughout the development of language, euphemisms continuously undergo changes and acquire new semantic characteristics. Semantic changes, in particular, play a crucial role in the formation and evolution of euphemisms. The expansion and narrowing of meanings, as well as metaphorical and metonymic shifts, contribute to the emergence of euphemistic expressions. From this perspective, studying euphemisms from a semantic viewpoint remains one of the important issues in modern linguistics.

Contemporary linguistic studies interpret euphemisms not only as lexical units but also as cognitive, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic phenomena. This is because euphemisms are closely

¹ Allan, K., & Burridge, K. (1991). *Euphemism and dysphemism: Language used as shield and weapon*. Oxford University Press

related to human cognition, worldview, and social interactions. The use of euphemisms across different cultures also reflects the national mentality and cultural values of their speakers. A comparative study of euphemisms in English and Uzbek provides an opportunity to identify both common and distinctive features within the semantic systems of the two languages. This article examines the semantic nature of euphemisms, the factors contributing to their emergence, and the principal types of semantic changes observed in English and Uzbek. Furthermore, it highlights the communicative functions of euphemisms and their cultural-pragmatic characteristics.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The semantic nature of euphemisms has been extensively investigated by numerous linguists. For instance, D. A. Cruse, J. R. Taylor, and George Lakoff have analyzed semantic changes from a cognitive perspective, emphasizing that meaning is closely linked to the conceptual system of human thought². Allan and Burridge, on the other hand, explain euphemisms through the phenomenon of social taboo and regard them as products of socio-psychological needs within society³.

The methodology employed in this study includes semantic analysis, the cognitive approach, and cross-cultural comparison. In addition, euphemisms in Uzbek and English were analyzed according to different types of semantic change.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main semantic processes observed in euphemisms include the following:

1. Semantic Broadening

Semantic broadening refers to the process whereby a word acquires a wider range of meanings than it originally possessed. In euphemistic usage, this process allows a lexical item with a specific meaning to be employed in a more general and socially acceptable sense. As a result, expressions considered harsh, offensive, or sensitive are replaced with broader and more neutral terms.

For example, in English, the expression *pass away* is commonly used instead of the direct verb *die*. Although *pass away* originally referred to departure or movement, its meaning has broadened to denote death in a polite and indirect manner. Similarly, the term *senior citizen* is frequently used instead of *old person*, providing a more respectful and socially acceptable reference to elderly individuals. In Uzbek, semantic broadening can be observed in expressions such as *olamdan o'tmoq* ("to pass from this world") instead of the direct verb *o'lmoq* ("to die"). Another example is *yoshi ulug' inson* ("an elderly person"), which is preferred to more direct references to old age.

These examples illustrate that semantic broadening plays a significant role in the development of euphemisms by enabling speakers to communicate sensitive concepts in a more tactful and socially appropriate manner. Through this process, language adapts to cultural norms and communicative needs while maintaining politeness and respect in interpersonal communication.

CONCLUSION

Euphemisms constitute an important component of the lexical and semantic system of language and reflect the interaction between linguistic structure, human cognition, and social values. The study has demonstrated that semantic change plays a fundamental role in the formation and

² Cruse, D. A. (1986). *Lexical semantics*. Cambridge University Press.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.

Taylor, J. R. (2003). *Linguistic categorization: Prototypes in linguistic theory* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press

³ Ilan, K., & Burridge, K. (2006). *Forbidden words: Taboo and the censoring of language*. Cambridge University Press.

development of euphemistic expressions. Processes such as semantic broadening, semantic narrowing, metaphorical transfer, and metonymic transfer enable speakers to replace direct, potentially offensive, or socially sensitive expressions with more acceptable alternatives. The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek euphemisms reveals both universal and culture-specific characteristics. In both languages, euphemisms function as a means of maintaining politeness, avoiding taboo topics, and ensuring effective communication. At the same time, the selection and use of euphemistic expressions are influenced by national traditions, cultural values, and social norms. Therefore, euphemisms should be viewed not merely as lexical substitutes but also as cognitive and sociocultural phenomena reflecting the worldview of a speech community. The findings of this study confirm that the semantic investigation of euphemisms contributes to a deeper understanding of language change, conceptualization processes, and intercultural communication. Future research may further explore the pragmatic and discourse-related aspects of euphemisms in different linguistic and cultural contexts.

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