EUPHEMISMS IN ENGLISH: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF MEANING, FUNCTION, AND USAGE

Shukurova Madina Askarovna

Associate Professor of English Linguistics Department, PhD
Bukhara State University

Abstract

This article examines the definition of euphemisms, their characteristics, types, functions, and usage in everyday communication. It also discusses the role of euphemisms in culture, media, and professional settings, highlighting their importance in effective and respectful communication.

Keywords

euphemisms, figurative language, politeness, communication, semantics, culture

ЭВФЕМИЗМЫ В АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ: ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ ЗНАЧЕНИЯ, ФУНКЦИЙ И ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЯ

Шукурова Мадина Аскаровна

доцент кафедры английского языкознания
Бухарского государственного университета, PhD

Аннотация

В этой статье рассматривается определение эвфемизмов, их характеристики, типы, функции и использование в повседневной коммуникации. Также обсуждается роль эвфемизмов в культуре, СМИ и профессиональной среде, подчеркивается их значение для эффективного и уважительного общения.

Ключевые слова

эвфемизмы, образный язык, вежливость, коммуникация, семантика, культура

INGLIZ TILIDAGI EVFEMIZMLAR: MA'NO, FUNKSIYALAR VA QO'LLANILISHNING LINGVISTIK TAHLILI

Shukurova Madina Askarovna

Buxoro davlat universiteti Ingliz tilshunosligi kafedrasi dotsenti, PhD

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada evfemizmlarning ta'riflari, ularning xususiyatlari, turlari, funksiyalari va kundalik muloqotdagi qo'llanilishi muhokama qilinadi. Shuningdek, evfemizmlarning madaniyat, ommaviy axborot vositalari va professional sohalardagi o'rni, samarali va hurmatli muloqotdagi ahamiyati yoritib beriladi.

Kalit so'zlar

evfemizmlar, obrazli til, odob, muloqot, semantika, madaniyat

Language is not only a means of expressing thoughts but also a tool for maintaining social relationships. People often avoid direct expressions when discussing sensitive topics such as death, illness, age, social status, or failure. To do this, they use euphemisms. Euphemisms help speakers communicate politely and avoid causing discomfort or offense to listeners. They are widely used in everyday conversations, literature, media, politics, and professional environments.

The term *euphemism* comes from the Greek words *eu* (good) and *pheme* (speech), meaning "good or pleasant speech." This origin reflects the main purpose of euphemisms: to make language sound more acceptable and less disturbing. Understanding euphemisms is essential for language learners because they reveal cultural values and social norms embedded in language.

Definition and ccharacteristics of Euphemisms: A *euphemism* is a word or phrase used to replace another expression that is considered unpleasant, rude, or too direct. Instead of stating something plainly, speakers choose softer language to reduce negative impact.

Some key characteristics of euphemisms include:

- Indirectness: Euphemisms avoid direct reference to the subject.

- Politeness: They help maintain respect and courtesy.

- Cultural dependence: What is considered euphemistic varies across cultures and societies.

- Context sensitivity: The meaning of a euphemism depends on the situation in which it is used.

For example, instead of saying *"He died,"* people often say *"He passed away."* The meaning remains the same, but the emotional tone is gentler.

Euphemisms can be classified into several types based on their usage and purpose.

1. Euphemisms Related to Death and Illness. These are among the most common euphemisms in English because death and illness are sensitive topics.

passed away → died

under the weather → ill

terminally ill → dying

2. Euphemisms Related to Work and Economy. Used frequently in professional and political contexts.

let go → fired

downsizing → job cuts

economically disadvantaged → poor

3. Euphemisms Related to Age and Appearance. These euphemisms help avoid sounding disrespectful.

senior citizen → old person

full-figured → overweight

4. Euphemisms Related to Social Issues. They are often used to sound inclusive or politically correct.

physically challenged → disabled

ethnic minority → racial group

Euphemisms serve several important functions in language: 1. *Maintaining Politeness:* They help speakers avoid offending others. 2. *Reducing Emotional Impact:* Sensitive topics become easier to discuss. 3. *Protecting Social Harmony:* Euphemisms prevent conflict and embarrassment. 4. *Reflecting Cultural Values:* They show what a society considers taboo or sensitive.

For instance, in workplaces, euphemisms are often used to deliver bad news professionally and tactfully.

Euphemisms are widely used in media and politics to influence public perception. Politicians often use euphemistic language to make serious issues sound less alarming. For example, "*collateral damage*" is used instead of "*civilian deaths.*"

In literature, euphemisms help authors address delicate topics without explicit language. Writers use them to create subtlety, symbolism, and emotional depth.

Although euphemisms are sometimes confused with idioms or proverbs, they serve different purposes.

Euphemisms soften meaning (e.g., *passed away*).

Idioms express figurative meanings unrelated to politeness (e.g., *spill the beans*).

Proverbs give advice or wisdom (e.g., *Actions speak louder than words*).

Understanding these differences helps learners use language accurately and appropriately.

Euphemisms are not only used in formal settings but also appear frequently in daily conversations. People often use them when speaking about topics that could

make others uncomfortable. For example, when talking about weight, instead of saying "fat," people may use *"full-figured"* or *"plus-sized."* Similarly, when addressing financial problems, people might say *"economically challenged"* instead of "poor."

In families, euphemisms are often used to protect children from harsh realities. Parents might say *"gone to sleep"* instead of *"died"*, or *"went potty"* instead of *"urinated"*. These soft expressions help children understand situations without feeling scared or upset.

Euphemisms are particularly common in workplaces and professional communication. They help deliver sensitive messages politely and avoid conflict. For instance:

- Human Resources may say *"let go"* instead of *"fired."*
- Politicians often use *"collateral damage"* instead of *"civilian deaths."*
- Business leaders might refer to *"downsizing"* instead of *"layoffs."*

Using euphemisms in professional settings creates a tone of respect and prevents direct confrontation. It is an essential skill in corporate, legal, and medical communication, where clarity must be balanced with sensitivity.

Writers and journalists also rely on euphemisms to discuss delicate topics. In newspapers and news broadcasts, phrases like *"passed away"* or *"suffered losses"* are used to describe death or destruction without sounding harsh. In literature, euphemisms can serve artistic purposes. Authors often use them to create subtlety or to explore themes such as death, social taboos, or morality. For example, in classic novels, phrases like *"no longer with us"* are used instead of direct references to death. This allows readers to reflect on the topic without being shocked by blunt language.

Euphemisms are highly culture-specific. What is considered polite in one culture might be considered vague or even offensive in another. For example, in English, *"passed away"* is a polite way to talk about death. In some other languages or cultures, more direct expressions are acceptable or even preferred. This makes understanding euphemisms important for cross-cultural communication and learning English as a second language.

In conclusion, euphemisms play a vital role in English communication by allowing speakers to express sensitive ideas politely and indirectly. They help maintain respect, reduce discomfort, and reflect cultural norms and values. Euphemisms are widely used in everyday conversation, professional settings, media, politics, and literature. For language learners, understanding euphemisms enhances both linguistic competence and cultural awareness. Therefore,

euphemisms are not merely decorative elements of language but essential tools for effective and respectful communication.

THE LIST OF USED LITERATURE:

1. Allan K. and Burridge K. *Forbidden words: Taboo and the censoring of language.* Cambridge University Press. 2006.

2. Crystal D. *The Cambridge encyclopedia of the English language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press. 2010.

3. Fromkin V., Rodman R. and Hyams N. *An introduction to language* (11th ed.). Cengage Learning. 2018.

4. Mieder W. *Proverbs: A handbook.* Greenwood Press. 2004.

5. Askarovna, S. M. (2023). A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEXICAL-CONCEPTUAL FIELD OF ETHICS IN THE XVIth-XVIIIth CENTURIES. *PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES AND TEACHING METHODS*, *3*(26), 25-31.

6. Шукурова, М. (2023). XVI-XVII ASRLAR INGLIZ TILI ETIKA TERMINLARINING STRUKTUR TAHLILI. *ЦЕНТР НАУЧНЫХ ПУБЛИКАЦИЙ (buxdu. uz)*, *41*(41).

7. Шукурова, М. (2023). MODERN LINGUISTICS AND SOME PROBLEMS RELATED TO TERMINOLOGY. *ЦЕНТР НАУЧНЫХ ПУБЛИКАЦИЙ (buxdu. uz)*, *42*(42). извлечено от https://journal.buxdu.uz/index.php/journals_buxdu/article/view/10953

8. Erkinovna, Y. F., Djurabaevna, D. N., & Askarovna, S. M. (2020). The expression of politeness category in the Uzbek and english languages. *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation*, *24*(9), 607-611.

9. Askarovna, S. M. (2023). Some Concepts on Systematization of the Vocabulary of Ethics. *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching and Inclusive Learning*, *1*(2), 11-14.

10. Askarovna, S. M. (2023, October). MODERN LINGUISTICS AND SOME PROBLEMS RELATED TO TERMINOLOGY. In *INTERDISCIPLINE INNOVATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH CONFERENCE* (Vol. 2, No. 13, pp. 65-68).

11. Шукурова, М. (2021). Stages of the development process of the lexicoconceptual field of ethics. *ЦЕНТР НАУЧНЫХ ПУБЛИКАЦИЙ (buxdu. uz)*, *5*(5).

12. Шукурова, М. А. (2016, April). Социолингвистическая природа этической лексики, формирование и систематизация. In *VII Международной научно-практической конференции*.

13. Shukurova, M. A. (2021, February). COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE SEMANTIC PROCESS OF ETHICS TERMS OF THE XVI-XVII CENTURIES. In *Archive of Conferences* (Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 258-260).

14. Shukurova, M. A. (2020). COMBINATORIAL-COMPONENT AND FUNCTIONAL-SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF TERMINOLOGICAL UNITS. *Scientific Bulletin of Namangan State University*, 2(4), 309-316.